Colin Ward's New Statesman & Society Essays

Colin Ward

Contents

Introduction

Colin Ward is one of the great radical figures of the past half-century, but his impact has been subterranean. His name is little mentioned by commentators and is scarcely known to the wider, intelligent public, even in his native Britain. A striking indication of his intellectual and institutional marginality is that he did not even possess a regular commercial publisher. In a *Festschrift* intended at least in part to remedy this unsatisfactory state of affairs, the editor, Ken Worpole, ably demonstrated the correspondence between Ward's concerns and contemporary debates and problems.[1] I suspect that Ward himself would have contended that this linkage can be made because of the commonsensical, realistic, *necessary* nature of anarchism as such (and not just his especial brand), if people could only see that, and its obvious relevance to the needs of the twenty-first century – and with this I would myself agree, it being one of the implicit themes of this book. But equally there can be no gainsaying the very real originality of Ward's oeuvre.

Colin Ward was born on 14 August 1924 in Wanstead, in suburban Essex, the son of Arnold Ward, a teacher, and Ruby Ward (née West), who had been a shorthand typist. He was educated at the County High School for Boys, Ilford, whose other principal claim to fame is that for thirty-eight years its English teacher was the father of the poet and critic, Kathleen Raine, who was to write venomously and extremely snobbishly of him, the school and Ilford in her first volume of autobiography. The young Ward was an unsuccessful pupil and left school at fifteen.[2]

Arnold Ward taught in elementary schools, eventually becoming a headmaster in West Ham, which, although a county borough outside the London County Council, contained the depths of poverty of Canning Town and Silvertown. He was a natural Labour supporter and the family car (a Singer Junior) was much in demand on polling days. To grow up in a strongly Labour Party environment in the 1930s was far from stultifying – whether politically, culturally or morally – as is attested by Colin Ward having both heard Emma Goldman speak in 1938, at the massive May Day rally in Hyde Park, and attended in April 1939 the 'Festival of Music for the People' at which Benjamin Britten's *Ballad of Heroes,* with a libretto by W.H. Auden and Randall Swingler, and conducted by Constant Lambert, saluted the fallen of the International Brigades at the Queen's Hall. He also recalled the milk tokens, a voluntary surcharge on milk sales, by which the London Co-operative Society raised a levy for Spanish relief.

It was Ward's experiences during the Second World War that shaped, to a very large extent, his later career. His first job was as a clerk for a builder erecting (entirely fraudulently) air-raid shelters. His next was in the Ilford Borough Engineer's office, where his eyes were opened to the inequitable treatment of council house tenants, with some having requests for repairs attended to immediately, while others had to wait since they ranked low in an unspoken hierarchy of estates. He then went to work for the architect Sidney Caulfield, a living link with the Arts and Crafts Movement since he had been articled to John Loughborough Pearson (for whom he had worked on Truro Cathedral), been taught lettering by Edward Johnson and Eric Gill, and also studied under and later worked as a colleague – all at the Central School of Arts and Crafts – of W.R. Lethaby, whom Caulfield revered. Lethaby, a major architectural thinker as well as architect, is one of the nine people whom Ward was to name in 1991 in his *Influences.*[3] Next door to his office, Caulfield – who was brother-in-law to Britain's solitary Futurist painter, C.R.W. Nevinson – let a flat at 28 Emperor's Gate to Miron Grindea, the Romanian editor

[1] Ken Worpole (ed.), *Richer Futures: Fashioning a New Politics* (London: Earthscan, 1999), esp. pp. 174–85.

[2] Kathleen Raine, *Farewell Happy Fields: Memories of Childhood* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973). Much of the detail in this chapter derives from correspondence and conversations with Ward over twenty-five years, and most particularly from an interview of 29 June 1997 [hereafter 'Interview with CW']. The conversations published as Colin Ward and David Goodway, *Talking Anarchy* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2003) [hereafter TA], are the nearest he came to autobiography. There is no published listing of his writings, although at the time of the *Festschrift* he produced an invaluable 21-page typescript 'Colin Ward Bibliography'.

[3] Colin Ward, *Influences: Voices of Creative Dissent* (Hartland, Devon: Green Books, 1991), pp. 91–7. For the early career of Caulfield, who had contributed to Hampstead Garden Suburb, see A. Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Survey* (London: Duckworth, 1985), pp. 24, 137.

of the long-running little magazine, *Adam.* It was Grindea who introduced Ward to the work of such writers as Proust, Gide, Thomas Mann, Brecht, Lorca and Canetti.[4]

Ward was conscripted in 1942 and it was then that he came into contact with anarchists. Posted to Glasgow, he received 'a real education' there: on account of the eye-catching deprivation, his use of the excellent Mitchell Library and, as the only British city ever to have had a significant indigenous anarchist movement (in contrast to London's Continental exiles and Jewish immigrants), the dazzling anarchist orators on Glasgow Green with their Sunday-night meetings in a room above the Hangman's Rest in Wilson Street and bookshop in George Street.[5] He was particularly influenced by Frank Leech, a shopkeeper and former miner, who urged him to submit articles to *War Commentary* in London – the first, 'Allied Military Government', on the new order in liberated Europe, appeared in December 1943. After visiting Leech, sentenced for failing to register for firewatching and refusing to pay the fine, while on hunger strike in Barlinnie Prison, Ward, who had no clothes to wear other than his uniform, found himself transferred to Orkney and Shetland for the remainder of the war.[6]

It was in April 1945, as the war drew to a close, that the four editors of *War Commentary* were prosecuted for conspiring to cause disaffection in the armed forces – they were anticipating a revolutionary situation comparable to that in Russia and Germany at the end of the First World War, one of their headlines insisting 'Hang on to Your Arms!' – and Ward was among four servicemen subscribers who were called to give evidence for the prosecution. All four testified that they had not been disaffected; but John Hewetson, Vernon Richards and Philip Sansom were each imprisoned for nine months, while Marie Louise Berneri was acquitted on the technicality that she was married to Richards.[7] The following year, still in the army, but now in the south of England, Ward was able to report on the postwar squatters' movement in nine articles in *Freedom, War Commentary* having reverted to the traditional title; and when he was eventually discharged from the army in the summer of 1947, he was asked to join *Freedoms* editorial group, of which George Woodcock had also been a member since 1945. This was his first close contact with the people who were to become his 'closest and dearest friends'.[8] This Freedom Press Group was extremely talented and energetic and, although Woodcock emigrated to Canada in 1949 and Berneri died the same year, was able to call upon contributions from anarchists like Herbert Read (until shunned in 1953 for accepting his knighthood), Alex Comfort and Geoffrey Ostergaard and such sympathizers as Gerald Brenan, the member of the Bloomsbury Group who had become a notable Hispanicist and whose exploration of the origins of the Civil War, *The Spanish Labyrinth* (1943), was a major work of history.

The file of *Freedom* for the late 1940s and early 1950s makes impressive reading. During the 1940s *War Commentary,* followed by *Freedom,* had been fortnightly, but from summer 1951 the paper went weekly. The bulk of the contents had always been written by the editors; and in 1950 Ward had provided some twenty-five items, rising to no fewer than fifty-four in 1951, but the number declined as he began to contribute long articles, frequently spread over four to six issues. From May 1956 until the end of 1960, and now using the heading of 'People and Ideas', he wrote around 165 such columns. Given this daunting, spare time journalistic apprenticeship, it is hardly surprising that his stylistic vice continued to be the excessive employment of lengthy, partially digested quotations.

By the early 1950s characteristic Ward topics had emerged: housing and planning, workers' control and self-organization in industry, the problems of making rural life economically viable, the decolonizing societies. He was alert to what was going on in the wider intellectual world, attempting to point to what was happening outside the confines of anarchism, drawing on the developing sociological literature, and, for example, writing (sympathetically) on Bertolt Brecht (5 August, 1 September 1956) and excitedly highlighting the publication in *Encounter* of Isaiah Berlin's celebrated Third Programme talks, 'A

[4] See Colin Ward, 'Fringe Benefits', *New Statesman and Society,* 8 December 1995, for an obituary appreciation of Grindea.
[5] Interview with CW.
[6] Colin Ward, 'Local Hero in Netherton Road', *Guardian,* 3 August 1988, is a brief memoir of Leech.
[7] Colin Ward, 'Witness for the Prosecution', *Wildcat,* no. 1 (September 1974); *TA,* pp. 29—32.
[8] Interview with CW. For Ward's reminiscences of the Freedom Press Group, see *TA,* pp. 33—42.

Marvellous Decade', on the Russian intelligentsia between 1838 and 1848 and much later to be collected in *Russian Thinkers* (25 June 1955). But who was reading his articles? *War Commentary* had fared relatively well in wartime on account of the solidarity and intercourse between the small anti-war groups, principally *Peace News,* but also the ILP with its *New Leader.* With the end of the war and Labour's electoral triumph in 1945, the anarchists were to become very isolated indeed, Freedom Press being unswervingly hostile to the Labour governments and their nationalization and welfare legislation. Ward recalled Berneri saying towards the end of the forties, 'The paper gets better and better, and fewer and fewer people read it'.[9] The isolation and numerical insignificance of British anarchism obtained throughout the fifties also.

It was to break from the treadmill of weekly production that Ward began to urge the case for a monthly, more reflective *Freedom;* and eventually his fellow editors responded by giving him his head with the monthly *Anarchy* from March 1961, while they continued to bring out *Freedom* for the other three weeks of each month. Ward had actually wanted his monthly to be called *Autonomy: A Journal of Anarchist Ideas,* but this his traditionalist comrades were not prepared to allow (he had already been described as a 'revisionist' and they considered that he was backing away from the talismanic word 'anarchist'), although the subtitle was initially, and now largely redundantly, retained.[10] *Anarchy* ran for 118 issues, culminating in December 1970, with a series of superb covers designed by Rufus Segar (who was responsible for ditching the subtitle from no. 28).

In a review of the 1950s and statement of his personal agenda for the 1960s Ward had observed:

> The anarchist movement throughout the world can hardly be said to have increased its influence during the decade... Yet the relevance of anarchist ideas was never so great. Anarchism suffers, as all minority movements suffer, from the fact that its numerical weakness inhibits its intellectual strength. This may not matter when you approach it as individual attitude to life, but in its other role, as a social theory, as one of the possible approaches to the solution of the problems of social life, it is a very serious thing. It is precisely this lack which people have in mind when they complain that there have been no advances in anarchist theory since the days of Kropotkin. Ideas and not armies change the face of the world, and in the sphere of what we ambitiously call the social sciences, too few of the people with ideas couple them with anarchist attitudes.
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> For the anarchists the problem of the nineteen-sixties is simply that of how to put anarchism back into the intellectual bloodstream, into the field of ideas which are taken seriously.[11]

As editor of *Anarchy* Ward had some success in putting anarchist ideas 'back into the intellectual bloodstream', largely because of propitious political and social changes. The rise of the New Left and the nuclear disarmament movement in the late fifties, culminating in the student radicalism and general libertarianism of the sixties, meant that a new audience receptive to anarchist attitudes came into existence. My own case provides an illustration of the trend. In October 1961, a foundation subscriber to the *New Left Review* (the first number of which had appeared at the beginning of the previous year) and in London again to appear at Bow Street after my arrest during the Committee of 100 sit-down of 17 September, I bought a copy of *Anarchy 8* at Collet's bookshop in Charing Cross Road. I had just turned nineteen and thereafter was hooked, several weeks later beginning to read *Freedom* also. When I went up to Oxford University twelve months afterwards I co-founded the Oxford Anarchist Group and one of the first speakers I invited was Colin Ward (he spoke on 'Anarchism and the Welfare State' on 28 October 1963). Among the members were Gene Sharp, Richard Mabey, Hugh Brody, Kate Soper and Carole Pateman. Gene Sharp was different from the rest since he was American, much older (born 1928) and

[9] Interview with CW.

[10] Colin Ward, 'Notes of an Anarchist Columnist', *Raven,* no. 12 (October/December 1990), p. 316; Colin Ward (ed.), *A Decade of Anarchy, 1961—1970: Selections from the Monthly Journal 'Anarchy'* (London: Freedom Press, 1987), pp. 8–9.

[11] CW, 'Last Look Round at the 50s', *Freedom,* 26 December 1959.

a postgraduate student, who had already published extensively on non-violent direct action – as he has continued to do, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973) being especially noteworthy. Richard Mabey, after working in publishing, where he edited several of Colin Ward's books, has become an outstanding writer on botany and wildlife, initially with a markedly alternative approach: for example, *Food for Free* and *The Unofficial Countryside.* Hugh Brody is many things, but principally an anthropologist, authority on the Canadian Inuit and advocate of the way of life of hunter-gatherers, as in the acclaimed *The Other Side of Eden.* Kate Soper became a Marxist philosopher, author of *On Human Needs* and member of the editorial committee of the *New Left Review,* but is also one of the translators of Cornelius Castoriadis into English. The work of the political philosopher, Carole Pateman, has been discussed in chapter 12. The Marxist social historian and a former editor of the *Universities and Left Review,* Raphael Samuel, was later to tell me that he had attended some of our meetings. By 1968 Ward himself could say in a radio interview: 'I think that social attitudes have changed... Anarchism perhaps is becoming almost modish. I think that there is a certain anarchy in the air today...'[12]

Ward's success was also due to *Anarchy*'s simple excellence. This should not be exaggerated, for there was definite unevenness. 'The editing, according to an admiring, though not uncritical contributor [Nicolas Walter], was minimal: nothing was re-written, nothing even subbed. "Colin almost didn't do anything. He didn't muck it about, didn't really bother to read the proofs. Just shoved them all in. Just let it happen."'[13] Ward put the contents together on his kitchen table. Coming out of *Freedom,* he frequently wrote much of the journal himself under a string of pseudonyms – 'John Ellerby', 'Frank Schubert' (these two after the streets where he was currently living), 'Tristram Shandy' – as well as the unsigned items. Even the articles scarcely differed from, and indeed there was significant recycling of, his contributions to *Freedom* back in the 1950s – for example, the admired issue on adventure playgrounds (September 1961) had been preceded by a similar piece in *Freedom* (6 September 1958). Sales never exceeded 2,800 per issue, no advance on *Freedom's* 2,000–3,000.[14]

The excellence, though, lay in a variety of factors. Ward's anarchism was no longer buried among reports of industrial disputes and comment on contemporary politics, whether national or international. It now stood by itself, supported by like-minded contributors. *Anarchy* exuded vitality, was in touch with the trends of its decade, and appealed to the young. Its preoccupations centred on housing and squatting, progressive education, workers' control (a theme shared with the New Left), and crime and punishment. The leading members of 'the New Criminology' – David Downes, Jock Young (who had been a student distributor of *Anarchy* at the London School of Economics), Laurie Taylor, Stan Cohen and Ian Taylor – all appeared in its pages. Nicolas Walter was a frequent contributor and Ward published his pair of important articles, 'Direct Action and the New Pacifism' and 'Disobedience and the New Pacifism', as well as the influential *About Anarchism* for the entire hundredth number of *Anarchy.* From the other side of the Atlantic the powerfully original essays by Murray Bookchin (initially as 'Lewis Herber') – 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' (November 1966), 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' (August 1967) and 'Desire and Need' (October 1967) – later collected in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (London, 1974), had their first European publication in *Anarchy.*

On demobilization from the British Army in 1947 Ward had gone back to work for Caulfield for eighteen months, before moving as a draughtsman to the Architects' Co-Partnership (which had been formed before the war as the Architects' Co-operative Partnership by a group of Communists who had been students together at the Architectural Association School). From 1952 to 1961 he was senior assistant to Shepheard & Epstein, whose practice was devoted entirely to schools and municipal housing, and then worked for two years as director of research for Chamberlin, Powell & Bon.[15] A career change came in 1964–5 when he took a one-year course at Garnett College in south-west London to train as a

[12] Richard Boston, 'Conversations about Anarchism', *Anarchy,* no. 85 (March 1968), p. 74.

[13] Raphael Samuel, 'Utopian Sociology', *New Society,* 2 October 1987, an exceptionally generous evaluation of Ward's work, occasioned by the publication of *A Decade of Anarchy.*

[14] CW, 'After a Hundred Issues', in Ward, *Decade of Anarchy,* p. 276.

[15] For Ward's work in architects' offices, see TA, pp. 62–5.

further education teacher and he was in charge of liberal studies at Wandsworth Technical College from 1966; but he returned to architecture and planning in 1971 by becoming education officer for the Town and Country Planning Association (founded by Ebenezer Howard as the Garden City Association) for which he edited *BEE (Bulletin of Environmental Education).* At Garnett he had met his future wife, then Harriet Unwin, whose mother, Dora Russell, had still been married to Bertrand Russell at the time of her birth, but whose father, as of her younger brother Roddy, was an unreliable American journalist called Griffin Barry.[16]

It was his editorship of *Anarchy* that released Ward from the obscurity of *Freedom* and Freedom Press and made his name. During the 1960S he began to be asked to write for other journals, not only in the realm of dissident politics, like *Peace News* and *Liberation* (New York), but such titles as the *Twentieth Century* and the recently established *New Society.* From 1978 he became a regular contributor to *New Society*'s full-page 'Stand' column; and when *New Society* was merged, ten years later, with the *New Statesman* he was retained as a columnist of the resultant *New Statesman and Society* with the shorter, but weekly, 'Fringe Benefits', until its abrupt termination by a new editor in 1996. His first books, *Violence* and *Work,* came as late as 1970 and 1972 respectively, but these were intended for teenagers and published by Penguin Education in a series edited by Richard Mabey (whom he had first met when he visited Oxford to speak to the Anarchist Group in 1963). He resigned from the Town and Country Planning Association in 1979, moved to the Suffolk countryside, and became a self-employed author.

Ward's third book, which appeared in 1973, was his first for an adult readership and is his only work on the theory of anarchism, indeed the only one 'directly and specifically about anarchism' until the publication in 2004 of *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction,* which happened to be his final work.[17] *Anarchy in Action* is also the one that has been most translated, currently into seven or possibly eight languages, for it is, as George Woodcock considered, 'one of the most important theoretical works' on anarchism."[18] It came into being almost accidentally since Walter passed on the contract after he found himself unable to produce what was required. Ward had wanted to call it *Anarchy as a Theory of Organization* – the title of an article that had appeared in *Anarchy 62* (April 1966) – but the publishers, Allen & Unwin, insisted on *Anarchy in Action.*

It is in *Anarchy in Action* that Ward makes entirely explicit the highly distinctive anarchism that had informed his editorship of and contributions to *Anarchy* during the preceding decade. His opening words – alluding to Ignazio Silone's marvellous novel, *The Seed beneath the Snow,* translated in 1943 and which he remembered reading on the train back to Orkney after a leave in London – have been much quoted:

> The argument of this book is that an anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism.

His kind of anarchism, 'far from being a speculative vision of a future society ... is a description of a mode of human organization, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society'.[19]

Acceptance of this central insight is not only extraordinarily liberating intellectually but has strictly realistic and practical consequences: '...once you begin to look at human society from an anarchist point

[16] See Harriet Ward, *A Man of Small Importance: My Father Griffin Barry* (Debenham: Dormouse Books, 2003). Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree,* vol. 3: *Challenge to the Cold War* (London: Virago, 1985), esp. pp. 259–60, writes warmly of Ward. Roddy Barry published a single short story, 'Giancarlo', interestingly in the *New Reasoner,* no. 9 (Summer 1959), pp. 40–9.

[17] Colin Ward, ' "I Think That's a Terrible Thing to Say!" Elderly Anarchist Hack Tells All', *Freedom,* Centenary Edition, October 1986, p. 63.

[18] George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists: Essays* (Kingston, Ontario: Quarry Press, 1992), p. 231.

[19] Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 11.

of view you discover that the alternatives are already there, in the interstices of the dominant power structure. If you want to build a free society, the parts are all at hand.'[20] It also solves two apparently insoluble problems that have always confronted anarchists (and socialists). The first is, if anarchism (or socialism) is so highly desirable as well as feasible, how is it that it has never come into being or lasted no longer than a few months (or years). Ward's answer is that anarchism is already partially in existence and that he can show us examples 'in action'. The second problem is how can humans be taught to become co-operative, thereby enabling a transition from the present order to a co-operative society to be attained, and is the same problem the solution to which, it has been shown in chapter 2, separated Morris from Kropotkin. Ward's response here is that humans are naturally co-operative and that current societies and institutions, however capitalist and individualist, would completely fall apart without the integrating powers, even if unvalued, of mutual aid and federation. Nor will social transformation be a matter of climactic revolution, attained in a millennial moment, but rather a prolonged situation of dual power in the age-old struggle between authoritarian and libertarian tendencies, with outright victory for either tendency most improbable. As he explained in a remarkable manifesto of 1958, 'The Unwritten Handbook', published in his 'People and Ideas' column, his is an anarchism

> which recognizes that the conflict between authority and liberty is a permanent aspect of the human condition and not something that can be resolved by a vaguely specified social revolution. It recognizes that the choice between libertarian and authoritarian solutions occurs every day and in every way, and the extent to which we choose, or accept, or are fobbed off with, or lack the imagination and inventiveness to discover alternatives to, the authoritarian solutions to small problems is the extent to which we are their powerless victims in big affairs.[21]

George Woodcock observed in an essay on Paul Goodman that, according to this conception of anarchism,

> the anarchist does not seek to destroy the present political order so that it may be replaced by a better system of organization ... rather he proposes to clear the existing structure of coercive institutions away so that the natural society which has survived in a largely subterranean way from earlier, freer and more originative periods can be liberated to flower again in a different future.

Woodcock continued:

> The anarchists have never been nihilists, wishing to destroy present society entirely and replace it with something new... The anarchists have always valued the endurance of natural social impulses and the voluntary institutions they create, and it is to liberating the great network of human co-operation that even now spreads through all levels of our lives rather than to creating or even imagining brave new worlds that they have bent their efforts. That is why there are so few utopian writings among the anarchists; they have always believed that human social instincts, once set free, could be trusted to adapt society in desirable and practical ways without plans – which are always constrictive – being made beforehand.[22]

Anarchists seek, in summary form, the end (that is, the goal) of voluntary co-operation or mutual aid using the means of direct action, while organizing freely. Ward is primarily concerned with the forms

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[20] *Ibid.,* p. 13.

[21] *Freedom,* 28 June 1958. Quoted also in TA, pp. 54–5.

[22] George Woodcock, 'The Artist as Conservative', in Peter Parisi (ed.), *Artist of the Actual: Essays on Paul Goodman* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986), pp. 16–17, reprinted with changes (and errors) in Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists,* p. 231.

of direct action, in the world of the here-and-now, which are 'liberating the great network of human co-operation'. In 1973 he considered that 'the very growth of the state and its bureaucracy, the giant corporation and its privileged hierarchy ... are ... giving rise to parallel organizations, counter organizations, alternative organizations, which exemplify the anarchist method'; and he proceeded to itemize the revived demand for workers' control, the de-schooling movement, self-help therapeutic groups, squatter movements and tenants' co-operatives, food co-operatives, claimants' unions, and community organizations of every conceivable kind.[23] During the following thirty years he additionally drew attention to self-build activities – he was particularly impressed by achievements in the shanty towns of the poor countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia – co-operatives of all types, the informal economy and LETS (Local Exchange Trading Schemes).[24] New self-organizing activities are continually emerging: '"Do-it-yourself" is ... the essence of anarchist action, and the more people apply it on every level, in education, in the workplace, in the family, the more ineffective restrictive structures will become and the more dependence will be replaced by individual and collective self-reliance.' This is another quotation from Woodcock, who was one of the most appreciative and perceptive of Ward's commentators; but otherwise discussion of his writings has been remarkably limited, presumably because they are perceived as insufficiently theoretical, the unpretentious originality of his pragmatic anarchism not being appreciated. He observed that it is in the Netherlands and Germany with their down-to-earth empiricism that his books are most popular in contrast to the excessively rational and intellectual France and Italy.[25]

It is Ward's vision of anarchism, along with his many years of working in architecture and planning, that account for his concentration on 'anarchist applications' or 'anarchist solutions' to 'immediate issues in which people *are actually likely to get involved'*.[26] Although he told me in 1997 that in his opinion 'all my books hang together as an exploration of the relations between people and their environment' (by which he means the built, rather than the 'natural', environment), and while this clearly covers three-quarters of his output, it seems rather (as he had put it thirteen years earlier) that all his publications were 'looking at life from an anarchist point of view'.[27] So the 'anarchist applications' concern housing: *Tenants Take Over* (1974), *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (1976), *When We Build Again, Let's Have Housing That Works!* (1985) and *Talking Houses* (1990); architecture and planning: *Welcome, Thinner City: Urban Survival in the 1990s* (1989), *New Town, Home Town: The Lessons of Experience* (1993), *Talking to Architects* (1996) and (with Peter Hall) *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard* (1998); education: *Talking Schools* (1995); education *and* the environment: *Streetwork: The Exploding School* (1973) (with Anthony Fyson), *The Child in the City* (1978) and *The Child in the Country* (1988); education, work *and* housing: *Havens and Springboards: The Foyer Movement in Context* (1997); education and housing: *Undermining the Central Line* (1989) (with Ruth Rendell); transport: *Freedom to Go: After the Motor Age* (1991); and water: *Reflected in Water: A Crisis of Social Responsibility* (1997). As can be seen from this (incomplete) list, a surprisingly large number of his books, despite their distinctiveness, have been written in collaboration, something he particularly enjoyed.[28]

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[23] Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 137.

[24] For LETS, see Jonathan Croall, 'Local, Mutual, Voluntary and Simple: The Power of Local Exchange Trading Systems', in Worpole, pp. 145–58.

[25] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2nd edn, 1986), pp. 421. There is, however, a penetrating analysis of *Anarchy* by David Stafford, 'Anarchists in Britain Today', in David E. Apter and James Joll (eds.), *Anarchism Today* (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 91–6, as well as Ruth Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), chap. 4, 'Practical Anarchism'. Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), shamefully contained no discussion of Ward (though this is rectified in the 2nd edn (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), pp. 676–7), unlike the stimulating Rodney Barker, *Political Ideas in Modern Britain* (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 203–5. See also David Miller, *Anarchism* (London: J.M. Dent, 1984), pp. 151, 205 n26; and George Crowder, *Classical Anarchism: The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 195–6.

[26] David Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 14; CW, 'After a Hundred Issues', p. 279 (Ward's emphasis).

[27] Interview with CW; Goodway, p. 21 n52.

[28] See TA, p. 84.

How did Ward come to espouse such an anarchism? Who are the thinkers and which are the traditions responsible for shaping his outlook? First, it should be said that some would argue that there is no originality in Wardian anarchism since it is all anticipated by Peter Kropotkin and Gustav Landauer. There is indeed no denying Ward's very considerable debt to Kropotkin. He names Kropotkin as his economic influence; described himself as 'an anarchist-communist, in the Kropotkin tradition'; and, regarding *Fields, Factories and Workshops* as 'one of those great prophetic works of the nineteenth century whose hour is yet to come', brought it up to date as *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow* (1974).[29] It is also the case that Kropotkin in his great *Mutual Aid* demonstrates that co-operation is pervasive within both the animal and the human worlds, in his concluding chapter giving contemporary clubs and voluntary societies, such as the Lifeboat Association, as examples. Ward, with his typical modesty, writes that in a sense *Anarchy in Action* is 'simply an extended, updating footnote to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*'[30] Yet Kropotkin prepared for a bloody social revolution; and Ward also goes far beyond him in the types of co-operative groups he identifies in modern societies and the centrality he accords to them in anarchist transformation.

Ward is still closer to the remarkable Landauer. He even goes so far as to say that his 'is not a new version of anarchism. Gustav Landauer saw it, not as the founding of something new, "but as the actualization and reconstitution of something that has always been present, which exists alongside the state, albeit buried and laid waste."' And one of Ward's favourite quotations, which he rightly regards as 'a profound and simple contribution to the analysis of the state and society in one sentence' derives from an article by Landauer of 1910: 'The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.'[31] What this led Landauer to advocate was the formation of producers' and consumers' co-operatives, but especially of agrarian communes; and his emphasis is substantially different to Ward's exploration of 'anarchist solutions' to 'immediate issues'. In any case, for many years Ward only knew of Landauer through a chapter in Martin Buber's *Paths in Utopia* (1949); and it is Buber, who had been Landauer's friend, executor and editor and shared similar views concerning the relationship between society and the State but, although sympathetic, was not an anarchist himself, whom Ward acknowledges as his influence with respect to 'society'. He was deeply impressed by 'Society and the State' – a lecture of 1950 that he has perpetually cited – in which Buber distinguishes between 'the social principle', exemplified by all spontaneous human associations built around shared needs or interests, such the family, informal groups, co-ops of all kinds, trade unions and communities, as opposed to 'the political principle', manifested in authority, power, hierarchy and, of course, the State. Buber maintained:

> All forms of government have this in common: each possesses more power than is required by the given conditions; in fact, this excess in the capacity for making dispositions is actually what we understand by political power. The measure of this excess ... represents the exact difference between Administration and Government. I call it the 'political surplus'. Its justification derives from the external and internal instability, from the latent state of crisis between nations and within every nation...The political principle is always stronger in relation to the social principle than the given conditions require. The result is a continuous diminution in social spontaneity.

Ward comments that these words 'cut the rhetoric of politics down to size' and that ever since he first read them he has 'found Buber's terminology far more valuable as an explanation of events in the

[29] Boston, p.65; Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Today,* ed. Colin Ward (London: Freedom Press, 2nd edn, 1985), p. iv. See also Ward, *Influences,* chap. 3; TA, p. 85.

[30] Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 2nd edn, 1996), p. 8.

[31] Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), pp. 11, 19.

real world ... than a dozen lectures on political theory or on sociology'.[32] In 'The Unwritten Handbook', he himself wrote that a power vacuum,

> created by the organizational requirements of society in a period of rapid population growth and industrialization at a time when unrestricted exploitation had to yield to a growing extent to the demands of the exploited, has been filled by the State, because of the weakness, inadequacy or incompleteness of libertarian alternatives. Thus the State, in its role as a form of social organization rather than in its basic function as an instrument of internal and external coercion, is not so much the villain of the piece as the result of the inadequacy of the other answers to social needs.[33]

It seems extraordinary that Wardian anarchism was nurtured within a Freedom Press Group whose other members were looking back to the workers' and soldiers' councils of the Russian and German Revolutions and the collectives of the Spanish Revolution. He never believed in an imminent revolution: 'That's just not my view of anarchism. I think it's unhistorical....I don't think you'll ever see any of my writings in *Freedom* which are remotely demanding revolution next week.' When he tried to interest his comrades in the late 1940s in a pamphlet on the squatters' movement – to give them the idea he had even pasted his articles up – he recalled that 'it wasn't thought that this is somehow relevant to anarchism'.[34] Although they deserve great credit for allowing him to go his own way with *Anarchy,* it was not until after the success of *Tenants Take Over,* published by the Architectural Press in 1974, that Freedom Press suggested that he write a book for them. The result was *Housing: An Anarchist Approach*, which, to some extent, did recycle his *War Commentary* and *Freedom* pieces on postwar squatting.[35]

Ward's difference of emphasis is, in part, to be explained by the fact that he was approaching anarchism from a background of architecture, town planning, the Garden City movement – 'You could see the links between Ebenezer Howard and Kropotkin' – and regional planning.[36] He was considerably influenced by Patrick Geddes (who is acknowledged accordingly in *Influences),* Lewis Mumford and the regionalist approach.[37] William Morris was also important – 'As the decades roll by, it becomes more and more evident that the truly creative socialist thinker of the nineteenth century was not Karl Marx, but William Morris' – but not for his political lectures, which were not to Ward's taste, but rather as mediated by the Arts and Crafts Movement (his early employer, Sidney Caulfield, had actually known Morris) and, in particular, as has been seen, by Lethaby.[38] It is Alexander Herzen, though not an anarchist, whom he regards as his principal political influence, repeatedly quoting – just as with Buber's paragraph from 'Society and the State' – the same passage from *From the Other Shore,* praising

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[32] Ward, *Anarchy in Action,* pp. 19–21; Ward, *Influences,* pp. 88–9; TA, pp. 86–7; Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 26–7. See also the Buber-Landauer-Muhsam issue of *Anarchy,* no. 54 (August 1965), where 'Society and the State' is reprinted (Ward's quotation is on p. 241). For Landauer, see Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973); also Charles B. Maurer, *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), and Gustav Landauer, *For Socialism* (St Louis: Telos Press, 1978) [with a helpful introduction by Russell Berman and Tim Luke]. For years this last was the only significant English translation of a book by Landauer, but it has now been supplemented by Gustav Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings: A Political Reader,* ed. Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).

[33] *Freedom,* 28 June 1958.

[34] Interview with CW.

[35] Colin Ward, *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (London: Freedom Press, 1976), pp. 13–27.

[36] Interview with CW. For Ward on Howard and the Garden City movement, see Peter Hall and Colin Ward, *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebeneger Howard* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1998), esp. chaps. 1–3; *TA,* pp. 70–73.

[37] Ward, *Influences,* pp. 105–i. For Ward on Mumford, see Colin Ward, 'Introduction', to Lewis Mumford, *The Future of Technics and Civilization* (London: Freedom Press, 1986).

[38] William Morris, *A Factory as It Might Be;* Colin Ward, *The Factory We Never Had* (Nottingham: Mushroom Bookshop, 1994), p. 21. See also Colin Ward, 'An Old House amongst New Folk: Making Nowhere Somewhere', in Stephen Coleman and Paddy O'Sullivan (eds.), *William Morris and News from Nowhere: A Vision for Our Time* (Hartford, Devon: Green Books, 1990), pp. 127–36.

it as 'a splendidly-phrased political message for every twentieth-century zealot, prepared to sacrifice his generation for the sake of *his* version of the future':

> If progress is the goal, for whom then are we working? Who is this Moloch who, as the toilers approach him, instead of rewarding them, draws back, and as a consolation to the exhausted multitudes shouting, 'We, who are about to die, salute thee!', can only give the mocking answer that after their death all will be beautiful on earth. Do you really wish to condemn human beings alive today to the mere sad role of caryatids supporting a floor for others one day to dance upon? Of wretched galley slaves who, up to their knees in mud, drag a barge with the humble words 'Future Progress' on its flag.
>
> A goal which is indefinitely remote is not a goal at all, it is a deception. A goal must be closer – at the very least the labourer's wage or pleasure in the work performed. Each epoch, each generation, each life has had, and has, its own experience, and *en route* new demands grow, new methods.

Herzen's conclusion is that 'the end of each generation must be itself'.[39] By extension another influence on Ward is Herzen's outstanding expositor in English, Isaiah Berlin, whose major liberal statements, *Historical Inevitability* and *Two Concepts of Liberty,* he also prized. Yet he was familiar with Herzen long before Berlin's 'A Marvellous Decade', George Woodcock having published an article on him in *politics,* whose editor, Dwight Macdonald, was another Herzen *aficionado.* Berlin was to decline Ward's invitation to write a piece on Zeno of Citium, on whom he was due to speak to the Oxford Anarchist Group, although asserting that he had 'every sympathy' with *Anarchy:* 'I am very sorry, I should like to oblige.'[40] George Orwell and his 'pretty anarchical' version of socialism also need to be mentioned; and in 1955 Ward published 'Orwell and Anarchism', a persuasively argued series of five articles, in Freedom.[41]

From across the Atlantic two periodicals, which were available from Freedom Bookshop, were important. *politics* (1944–49), edited by Dwight Macdonald in the course of his transition from Marxism to a pacifist anarchism, Ward considered 'my ideal of a political journal', admiring its 'breadth, sophistication, dryness'. Although Macdonald lived in London in 1956–7 and again in 1960–61, he had by then moved to the right – although participating in the Committee of 100's first sit-down demonstration in Whitehall in February 1961 – and Ward was to meet him only two or three times.[42] *Why?* (1942–7), later *Resistance* (1947–54), was edited by a group which included David Wieck and Paul Goodman. Goodman, who also contributed to *politics,* was another principal influence, firstly and always, for *Communitas* (1947), the planning classic he wrote with his brother Percival, but also for the very similar anarchism to Ward's he began to expound from 'The May Pamphlet', included in his *Art and Social Nature* (1946), onwards. Goodman became a frequent contributor to *Anarchy* and *Anarchy in Action* is dedicated to his memory; yet Ward was only to meet him once (when he was in London in 1967 for the Dialectics of Liberation conference).[43] In an issue of *Anarchy* celebrating the work of Alex Comfort,

[39] Cited in full in Ward, *Anarchism,* p. 32. A shorter version, from which the conclusion is drawn, appears in Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 136. The passage, but in a different translation, is quoted in Colin Ward, *Housing Is Theft, Housing Is Freedom* (Nottingham: Old Hammond Press, n.d.), p. 9; Ward, *Influences,* p. 60; TA, p. 86. (The emphasis is Ward's.)

[40] Ward, *Influences,* p. 50; letter from Berlin to Ward, 10 January [1964] (for a copy of which I am indebted to Colin Ward). Woodcock's article on Herzen was reprinted in George Woodcock, *The Writer and Politics* (London: Porcupine Press, 1948), chap. 5.

[41] Interview with CW. 'Orwell and Anarchism' has been reprinted in [Vernon Richards (ed.)] *George Orwell at Home (and among the Anarchists): Essays and Photographs* (London: Freedom Press, 1998), pp. 15–45.

[42] Interview with CW. For Macdonald and *politics,* see Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Critical American: The Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (Guilford, CT: Archon Books, 1984); Michael Wreszin, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); and Gregory D. Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the 'politics' Circle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). For Macdonald in London, see NW, 'A Rebel in Defence of Tradition', *Freedom,* 10 December 1994; Vernon Richards, *A Weekend Photographer's Notebook* (London: Freedom Press, 1996), p. 44 and note 59.

[43] Ward, *Influences,* pp. 115–32. See also *Anarchy,* no. 11 (January 1962), a special Goodman number.

Ward drew attention to the similarities between Goodman and Comfort, and the Comfort of *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State* O950) and *Delinquency* (1951), in which he calls for anarchism to become a libertarian action sociology, is the final significant influence on Ward's anarchism.[44]

In total, as he explained in 1958:

> To my mind the most striking feature of the unwritten handbook of twentieth-century anarchism is not in its rejection of the insights of the classical anarchist thinkers, Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, but its widening and deepening of them. But it is selective, it rejects perfectionism, utopian fantasy, conspiratorial romanticism, revolutionary optimism; it draws from the classical anarchists their most valid, not their most questionable ideas. And it adds to them the subtler contribution of later (and neglected because untranslated) thinkers like Landauer and Malatesta. It also adds the evidence provided in this century by the social sciences, by psychology and anthropology, and by technical change.[45]

Ward was, with good reason, scornful of most other anarchists' obsession with the history, whether glorious or infamous, of their tradition: 'I think the besetting sin of anarchism has been its preoccupation with its own past...'[46] Still, despite his own emphasis on the here-and-now and the future, he wrote four historical books, the first two with Dennis Hardy and the third with David Crouch: *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape (*1984); *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (1986); *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* (1988); and *Cotters and Squatters: Housing's Hidden History* (2002). The masterly *Arcadia for All,* a history of the 'plotlands' of south-east England, is simply a natural extension back into the recent past of his major interest in self-build and squatting in the present, while *Cotters and Squatters* draws from their entire historical record in England and Wales; and *The Allotment* touches upon similar issues. In *Goodnight Campers!* the entrepreneurial holiday camps are traced to their origins in the early twentieth century and the 'pioneer camps', in which a key role was played by the major organizations of working-class self-help and mutual aid: the co-operative movement and trade unions.[47] The historic importance of such institutions in the provision of welfare and the maintenance of social solidarity was to become after *Goodnight Campers!* a theme of increasing significance in Ward's work.[48]

He stated his case in 'The Path Not Taken', a striking short article of 1987;[49] but his analysis over the next ten years fleshed out and developed a longstanding preoccupation, as he explored the manner in which 'the social principle' has been overborne by 'the political principle' in modern Britain. Since the late nineteenth century 'the tradition of fraternal and autonomous associations springing up from below' had been successively displaced by one of 'authoritarian institutions directed from above'.[50] He saw a 'sinister alliance of Fabians and Marxists, both of whom believed implicitly in the state, and assumed that they would be the particular elite in control of it', effectively combining with 'the equally sinister alliance of bureaucrats and professionals: the British civil service and the British professional

[44] 'John Ellerby', 'The Anarchism of Alex Comfort', *Anarchy,* no. 33 (November 1963), esp. pp. 329–32.

[45] *Freedom,* 28 June 1958. Also quoted in *TA,* pp. 54–5.

[46] 'Colin Ward Interview', *Freedom,* June 1984.

[47] Colin Ward and Dennis Hardy, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986), esp. chap. 2.

[48] See, for example, three of his articles: 'Those Talking Co-op Blues', *Freedom,* ii June 1994; 'A Token Anarchist's Week', *Freedom,* 29 April 1995; 'Coping with Jobless Capitalism', *Freedom,* 26 April 1997.

[49] Colin Ward, 'The Path Not Taken', *Raven,* no. 3 (November 1987), abridged as 'Rebels Finding Their Cause', *Guardian,* 12 October 1987. The apparently independently convergent views of Michael Young (in conjunction with Gerald Lemos), 'Roots of Revival', *Guardian,* 19 March 1997, were printed with his acknowledgement to Ward omitted (letter from Young to Ward, 21 March 1997, for a copy of which I am obliged to Colin Ward).

[50] Ward, 'Path Not Taken', p. 195. He said these phrases (which also appear in Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (1973 edn), p. 123) were first published in 1956 in *Freedom;* but the original printing is actually located in a long letter of 30 June 1960 to the *Listener,* and his 'Origins of the Welfare State', *Freedom,* 12 June 1959, prefigures it only weakly. For other early engagements with theme see, for example, his articles, 'Moving with Times...But Not in Step', *Anarchy,* no. 3 (May 1961); 'Anarchists and Fabians: An Anniversary Symposium', *Anarchy,* no. 8 (October 1961); 'House and Home', *Anarchy,* no. 35 (January 1964).

classes, with their undisguised contempt for the way ordinary people organized anything'. The result was: 'The great tradition of working-class self-help and mutual aid was written off, not just as irrelevant, but as an actual impediment, by the political and professional architects of the welfare state ... The contribution that the recipients had to make ... was ignored as a mere embarrassment...'[51] Drawing upon several recent historical works, he was able to show that the nineteenth-century dame schools, set up by working-class parents for working-class children and under working-class control, were swept away by the board schools of the 1870s; and similarly the self-organization of patients in the working-class medical societies was to be lost in the creation of the National Health Service. Ward commented from his own specialism on the initially working-class self-help building societies stripping themselves of the final vestiges of mutuality; and this degeneration has occurred alongside a tradition of municipal housing that was adamantly opposed to the principle of dweller control. Here we are presented with a rich, never more relevant, analysis of the disaster of modern British social policy with pointers to the way ahead if we are to stand any chance of reinstituting the self-organization and mutual aid that have been lost. He restated his argument in *Social Policy: An Anarchist Response,* the lectures he gave in 1996 as Visiting Professor of Housing and Social Policy at the London School of Economics and which summarize several of his most important themes.[52]

Down to his death in February 2010, Colin Ward saw anarchism's best prospects in the immediate future as lying within the environmental and ecological movement, and the concluding chapter of his final book significantly is on 'Green Aspirations and Anarchist Futures'.[53] One of his greatest regrets remained that so few anarchists follow his example and apply their principles to what they themselves know best. In his case that was the terrain of housing, architecture and planning; but where, he wanted to know, are the anarchist experts on, and applications to, for example, medicine, the health service, agriculture and economics?

[51] Ward, 'Path Not Taken', p. 196.

[52] Colin Ward, *Social Policy: An Anarchist Response* (London: London School of Economics, 1996) and (London: Freedom Press, corrected edn, 2000).

[53] Ward, *Anarchism,* chap. 10.

New Society

Source PDF: <archive.org/details/colin-wards-new-society-essays-book-reviews>
20 May 1988 vol 84 No 1325

Anglo-Saxon attitudes

S^^^aglee-heanys^ahs, bread.hof Other A levels They. too. audo tinned our particular churl They i n h,m to be the Anglo-Saxon equivalent of a hieh-flver But thev didn't communicate their decision until thev reckoned that it was too late for any alternatives to their own provision to be considered.

1 was nonplussed by this tribalism. After all I had seen last vear the MSC-funded dig in our local churchvard for the grave ot Guthrum. king of the East Angles tn the 9th century, who disdained to make invidious distinctions between Norfolk. Suffolk and Essex So 1 crept across the iron curtain into Essex to learn whether students could be enrolled privately on this particular course. I was told that if students lived in Essex, or in

ANGLO- SAXON, attitudes
('OLIN WARD

any other EEC country, a fee of £321 would be payable each year, but if they lived in Suffolk ' they would be obliged to pay an additional "out-county" fee of up to £2,000 a year.

I never wanted to overburden Suffolk's resources 1 wondered how to pass my son off as a foreigner Vaguely 1 thought of Belgium, because we once knew a Labour mp called John Wilmot whose cousin, Jean Wilmot- Desmedt, kept the Hotel de TAviation in Ostend, where 1 had often stayed as a child. Could we smuggle my son in from abroad?

We had stumbled, all unwittingly, into the never-never land of educational bureaucracy and finance. Since, on inquiry, I was referred to "the rules," I tried very hard in the public library to find out what these rules were, who had made them, and why

What I did learn was that there were six candidates from Suffolk who had been accepted for the music course in Essex, but that all had been rejected for financial support, whether they were high-flyers or low- flyers. Two of them were finally sent there, because those parents who made the most fuss, including me, had their offspring reconsidered at the eleventh, or in fact the thirteenth hour, and accepted.

Like my son, I am grateful for this change of heart, but I have this awful nagging feeling that if 1 had been a little less obnoxious in my correspondence with the county council, he wouldn't be in the course of his choice. I can't

believe that thc fuss making capacity of pa' ents should be the dc'^'-^ 'Sms tional policy.But everything!near

this unacceptable truth.Simkins,

Our local youth organiser, M

set up a Town Forum so that we cou P questions to the district council ehairman our county councillor, our deputy officer and our mp. I raised this particular awkward rssu . and the answers that 1 got confirm the nasty truth that I had inadvertently discovered. The mp, Tim Yeo, confirmed (from his years of experience with the Spas tics Society) t a the parents who pushed the hardest got their children into the course of their choice. The district council chairman thought that a quid- pro-quo adjustment at the end of the financial year would reveal that the transactions were merely on paper The county councillor congratulated me for being a persistent parent. The deputy education officer had a homily about local autonomy and the need to see that the ratepayers' money was well-

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I he Belgian tiiilhorn,'. court's decision, win-,. Commission began iril„ **mgs** At the end ot Inly its intention to abolish I.. obedience to the |u<|Kn„ "all forms of training wh professional qualificatn„, job, even if the course ments of general education in Brussels arc now exanum„., p'" 1 ' because of the three year 'IJ| ment imposed here.

1 don't even know whether ih< reasonable. But I do wish ihut «

it applied at a humbler i- between our own local

uph??1

spent—whereas he knows, just as I know, that the greater part of our education spending comes not from us ratepayers but from us taxpayers, and that Her Majesty doesn't recognise our little tribal loyalties.

The Treaty of Rome includes a clause requiring member governments to give all eec nationals equal access to their education systems. The ruling was tested in the Euro-

ities. As all would-be students and thL ☒ ents know, there are mandatory higher education, but merely dhci" grants for further education It „ ln ther-education sector thai problems „J students who dare to aspire to cross the h tiers between counties. Since these cha much more frequently than national m aries, you wouldn't think that invisible a on the map could be taken that senousf

Many years ago, when 1 was a techs college teacher, the principal explained! on enrolment night that the catchment was determined by bus routes, rather thr county boundaries. The sarroua authorities took in as many of' uur" sux as we did of "theirs." A bit of book-ku at the year end would sort everything ☒;

It emerges accidentally from a recent of DES-sponsored research (Educe. *Planning: LEAs' assessment of* edura *need for the 16–19 age group.* Departm Government, Brunel L1 mrcrGty. £3 today the most frequent contact be neighbouring authorities on pioiiMOtil 16-to-19 age group is on ovcitic problems."

Our education authoritv in Suffolk

be congratulated on achieve success rate in persuadine th- music students not to go '☒ Essex. Whether this was wim. upon your response to the , ment's determination to mA* tion more work-related an- effective. It isn't an easy is

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☒ noiil

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earns this country more (orc, " the top ten traditional together, and involves none ot '☒ 1 initial government invevtmc1

I just want to register th* . tests on behalf of those studs ' realise that their aspiration' ☒ particular specialist course ntu with their abilities, but simplv 1 ' ability to be a nuisance to the ☒ ' "uthonty l think it's shameful

Blitz babies

LONDON AT WAR
Joanna Mack and Steve Humphrifis
Sidgwick & Jackson £9.95
CHILDREN OF THE˜ BLITZ
Robert Westall
Viking £9.95
COUN WARD

Most of us threw out our boring old blitz stories years ago, to the great relief of our relations, along with the Joe Loss records and bakelite table-lamps, only to learn much later that they had been upgraded to the status of bygones or oral history. But we knew at the time that the picture of the Home Front presented by the Ministry of Information wasn t

quite the whole (truth.

But what exactly was this ''whole tru which could come out some day ‘ emerge from the systematic colle t. ,☒

testimony or from the release o

R.E. Pahl: The Politics of Work

Albert Weale: Mr Fowler's Psychology: *Reform of Social St* David Collard: Social Security and Work After Fowler

Plus: Michael Starks on funding the BBC; R. W. Blackbun unparliamentary language; Alan Ryan on recent books about Soo and further reviews of books on planning, local government expo worker co-operatives, Lloyd George, and incest.

A oranda under the 30-year rule? In fact, most of the recent "revelations" of the Now It Can Be Told variety were available at the time or *q* soon after in books like *Our Towns a* **q** *close-up* (Oxford 1943) by members of the (fl Women's Group on Public Welfare, *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey* (Methuen 1941) by Susan Isaacs and others, and (especially important on the inability of local authority departments to cope with a catastrophe like the bh(z) *War over West Ham* (Faber 1947) by Doreen Idle.

These of course were never meant to be "popular" books, whereas *London at War* belongs to the series accompanied by television programmes on lwt about *The Making* o/ *Modern London,* intended to capture a general audience. Like its predecessors, it is superbly researched, remarkable for its illustrations and its selection of less obvious narratives. It is very faithful to the atmosphere of the time and makes good use of the secret government sampling of public opinion and morale.

The personal stories are often heart-rending, and the account of how public officials and departments were slowly shifted by changes in popular attitudes from a punitive Poor Law approach to the victims to one which simply recognised need is very well told and must have overtones for city dwellers today.

Ten years ago Robert Westall wrote a prize-winning novel, *The Machine-Gunners,* based on the true story of some boys in east Yorkshire who looted the machine-gun from a crashed German plane and prepared to start their own war. He found himself deluged with letters from people with their own reminiscences to offer and, as he puts it, "1 didn't find the children of the blitz, they found me." He knows perfectly well how anecdote evolves into myth, but he has collected a range of extraordinary as well as humdrum tales about wartime childhood.

His evacuee yarns have the usual accounts of the grotesque attitudes prevalent among the rural middle class towards the lower orders, as well as that of the eight year old from South Shields who gave up school to pass his time in the fields with the ploughmen , and so was sent home with, however, "a love of country life which has had a profound influence ever since."

He met people who, as children, had defied the official rules on contact with raws to have their spuds turned into chips by Italians or had invaded a camp to meet their favourite Germans. He found someone who at 14. "because he was the smallest,1' had crawled through a foot-wide pipe to extinguish a phosphorous bomb and had later found himself tunnelling to sort out the living from the dead.

Westall tracked down the origins of his machine-gun story and traced a far stranger tale, of three Welsh 13 year olds who held 1,800 troops at bay with 5,00(1 rounds of ammunition outside Barmouth in 1944. Nobody wants to talk about that episode any more but. as Westall says, "children take and make their fun where they can get it, and if it's potentially lethal, (hat just makes it more fun." There's much food for thought in this excellent collection.

Hearts and minds

A WORLD STILL TO WIN
Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook
Faber £4 50
COLIN WARD

Jeremy Seabrook is well known for his marvellously expressed vignettes of the pathos of ordinary life, and is joined here by Trevor Blackwell to give a decade-by-decade intci-pretation of the transformations of the work fng class since the forties. They preface the hook with two quotations: the famous, phrase from the Communist Manifesto, and the pas- save from St Matthew asking what if shall profit a man if he gain the whole world and ^he'mXXn .. dea. even .hough *.he *"-a-*
SkSXSSSSSX
lb.**

fcwoikiiig <>f till* very psychic Wot king people. leiiHHiig lli.tr
l.ifmn ol the heart and flu spoil wild lh« imagination, than may hr won from the llrsli Beelzebub for all life's heartbreaks and di r
that divides everything into good ami evil the awkward and partial struggles by winch people remake themselves, bin never totally or completely.''

The authors go further They warn us that marxism is "the most glaring example ol a socialism which accepts, nay demands, the intensification of capitalist productivism .is a condition of socialist development Rightly they point out that in the "socialist countries this has been "an incapacitating inheritance *for* those in pursuit of real socialist alterna-tives."

In tracing the disarray of the British labour movement they look for the picking up of an older tradition of libertarian socialism " which concerns itself with those "vast lived areas of daily reality" whether of family, locality, gender, sexuality, belief, leisure and edu-cation, which were pushed into the margin by a socialism which imagined that everything boiled down to the economics of the work place, and that the professionals of the welfare industries would cope with these subsidiary margins of human experience

one fact about South 'Afric^
never be forgotten is that Dr Hendrik Ver woerd was a nrafeuor nUr,k Vtr'

Hearts and
minds

A WORLD STILL TO WIN Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook
Faber £4.50
COLIN WARD

— Jeremy Seabrook is well known for his mar- 1 vellously expressed vignettes of the pathos of h ordinary life, and is joined here by Trevor — Blackwell to give a decade-by-decade inter- p pretation of the transformations of the work). ing class since the forties. They preface the id book with two quotations: the famous phrase jts from the Communist Manifesto, and the pas- as sage from St Matthew asking what it shall iot profit a man if he gain the whole world and of lose his own soul.

my The implication is clear, even though the authors strenuously deny that this is what the they mean. Capitalism has bought off the Aec- working class with meretricious consumer- Duth ism, while its international division ot labour ever has used the sweatshops of Bombay and the

ig classelectronic factories of Seoul to undermine A
at all)that elusive prosperity. Not only this, for the

true of demon capitalism has engineered a "violent c 1922 reworking of the very psychic structures of q portedworking people," learning that "no less spec- q

undertacular profits are to be made from its exploi- Ofl

te and tation of the heart and the spirit and the imagination, than may be won from the flesh latter- and blood of those who live under its erving dominion."

•ctrine I felt uneasy all through the book at the Marx- mixture of those evocative thumbnail jstri- alsketches of daily experience and the revivalist

nitive preacher's tone of blaming the capitalist afraid Beelzebub for all life's heartbreaks and disasters. It was a relief in the final chapter to find n this a specific rejection of the mode of thinking rxists that divides everything into good and evil, con- precisely because it leads to "the need for /hite- faith, purity and sectarianism rather than to to be the awkward and partial struggles by which of an people remake themselves, but never totally also or completely."

point The authors go further. They warn us that >xt inmarxism is "the most glaring example of a

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A frame fo'jKng

-wre can be not only modest »"*• as Walter Segal titrated. a doit yoursetf art X\ked any sample of architects in this who was the most loved „h) LO member of their Profession the **L/L,** would undoubtedly gel would . V£al. Most would have met hint as X, for Ire was a famillat figure m the > ,.,re schools, always with a knot of P*lowenng over him as he ,mplsh|v „ed the pretensions of their educa fr,ong'hem t0 abandon 'he cult of otlB an ideal of simple and economic

.jon. In 'he years when Mies and f'-'Le objects of veneration, he would C 10 s,udy the English medieval .«! ! house, the Japanese house and the Irtd* balloon-frame house.

Idelightful things about Segal, the ' ^arkable was the fact that, just as his l^flporaries in the modern movement firing fr°m their Practices into an old be^erment at the public re iecti°n of Cmarchitecture' he began the most siS' T*. phase of his professional career. It " anoiher of his contradictions of the usual %ions. (He told a packed meeting at : Royal Institute of British Architects. \hhe never joined. "I am a limited and L«trian designer and want to remain that ." But the triumphs of his last years were I ^culmination of a lifetime spent in search sensible solutions to modern housing ueds.

His father was a painter and he was born in 1907 in a bohemian commune on the hill above Ascona in the Ticino canton of tfauerland. Years later he reflected that "to 'ta spent childhood and adolescence in an moment of artists, architects, writers, h reformers, ideologues and mystics, (tarlatans and cranks" was in a way a singular ☒neceof good luck, "but there were moments :*h I longed for ordinariness and went to «Ht! So I had playmates in both camps 'Inchmeant that I was affected by the lives of •☒lithe bohemians and the ordinary phi- ^'mes. And I have since found myself all the * moving from one camp to the other. Really able to adjust to one world only, p lived in abject poverty until Bernard l^yet, the wealthy son of a peasant

'11 belonged to Kropotkin's Swiss cir- ^☒fHned Arthur Segal's paintings. ☒ •J dbout his circumstances and became ' 1 q for 30 years. "He supported and u,untless people with a cause to fight ☒ he never ceased to rebuke them lining the anarchist movement. ' — l^mily moved to Germany after applied to Gropius for a refer-

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slabs, ansi xisiiin standard cladding ,|. ami linings in markel sizes Iso ih nth,..„ . he re-used elsewhere). look Wl.k, build and cost Mill It i, there lorl.iv snug... ever I slept in it a lew years ago. wnh ,|,.,.p snow all around

Il led lo a series of commissions up ;ui(| down Ilic country for permanent houses on the same principle, with Segal refining ami improving the method each time A c.irpcn ter. Fred Wade, followed him from house to house, and everywhere the clients found themselves able to do more and more of th', building themselves, to vary the plan and to make additions.

By the mid-1970s Segal was yearning to find one local authority that would sponsor a build-it-yourself experiment ol this kind for people on its housi ng waiting or transfer list Eventually, by one vote. Lewisham borough council in London decided to do so. on pockets of land too awkward or too sloping to fit its own programme. After iwo and a half years of agonising delay—because the proposal didn't fit the standard ways of financing. providing or controlling buildings—it happened.

The members of the Lewisham Self-Budd Housing Association are lyrical about their achievement and the way it has changed their lives. When they did an *Open Door* tv programme. it brought 1.000 inquiries But the bureaucratic and ideological objections are still so rigid that the only re peat ve n t u re so far has been once more in Lewisham where a new group, aided by the architect Jon Broome and the floor-layer Ken Aikms. are building at this moment

Segal recalled his feelings when the first frame went up: "1 was immensely happy like a child almost" h wasn't just a vindication of his building method and its relevance in a country with a need tor cheap, quick, yet durable housing, and with people in unsought idleness It was a triumph for his belief that people could—if aided, rather than pushed around–manage then own lives and shape their own environment. And instead of being dismayed at the countless small variations and innovations and additions" to the designs he had worked out with each individual family, he rejoiced joved io have helped to prove in the most convincing way imaginable "that there i' among the people that live m this conntiv such a wealth of talent." and he teimd i! unbelievable that this creativity will continue to be denied outlets. When he died at the Kv of 7S three weeks ago. his tnends k it thai Ik had. quietly as ever, slipped out ol hU m a blaze of glory

The secretary ot the Lewisham Self Build Ho. c Association is Ken Atkins, ot Gateways Elstree H. Bromley. Kent

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THE PRICE OF THE TICKETJames Baldwin
Michael Joseph £14 95
DAVID WIDGERY

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ULSTER: ONE FLAG, 1*° n*the eve of the first meeting of tOhneneweAnglo-lrish governmeˆ conference, we look at J-OV inaee 405) and at Nationalists K 4061, and this weeks Database focuses on the nort south divide

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New Sa.

Alan Rv Ryan

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Liverpool on the R Mlchael ParklnSo

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Our special Chnst- week will include a by John Berger ☒ year, a look at ho,-, changing the w chorale of voices happening to the f, ranging from the s Edward Shorter to Hoggart and Juli* £

Editor Paul Barter

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STAND
COUN WARD

« founders called it a laboratory of anarchy? Could it happen again?

iVc came to the fiftieth anniversary meeting jjjjsweek in the unfamiliar surrounding of the Royal College of General Practitioners from ☒ variety of motives. For Lord Donaldson in he chair—one of the few survivors of the early days of the Peckham Health Centreit

vvasone of the major i nfluences in a long and busy life. For other veterans, who thought that the National Health Service would cost progressively less as the backlog of ill-health nherited in 1948 continually declined, our iingle experimental investigation of the nature of health, rather than of disease, becomes more and more relevant.

For people like me. curious about the preconditions for resourcefulness and independence in individuals and communities, Peckham was an empirical verification of our deepest convictions. The founders—a hus- band-and-wife pair of doctors, Innes Pearce and George Scott Williamson—wrote in 1938 about their Family Health Club, "It seems that a sort of anarchy' is the first condition in any experiment in human applied biology. This condition is also that to which our members most readily respond ..."

It began much earlier, in 1926, when, involved in welfare work in south London, shey concluded that most urban dwellers *ere so "de-vitalised" that babies were born deficient in health: "the youth of the nation is ihreatened before it is born." To study the -baracteristics of health, they devised the dea of a family club, to be joined on two onditions: first, that the whole family must win; and second, that families must agree to a periodical medical examination.

They started in a small house run as a club 'intiI 1929. The next step was to raise the money from charitable trusts to move to a -jrpose-built family club big enough to be '^-supporting from subscriptions. By 1935 hev had raised the cash, and built the " oneer Health Centre, designed for them by 1|r0wen Williams. It was glass-walled inside lQut. as the Peckham biologists needed to serve what members actually' did The cen- r Qf the building was a swimming pool, at time the second largest in London. There * theatre, a gymnasium and a children's Jrseryon the ground floor, with dance halls, ^feteria, a library and medical rooms.

r from 1935 to 1939, and after the war

,r 1946 to 1950. The experiment finally in 1951. after all efforts to overcome its 'ficidl difficulties had failed. Since "health „ts had become part of the official doc- the passing of the National Health

Actm 1946. the directors approached
'he Muustiy ol Heald,
^',"*7'',"',",c Provision
They faded for five reasons

i “ ***conctinedcxilnsnelvwitlHliesindv and cultivation ol health; not with the Heal ment of disease family; not on the individual***

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It was based exclusively on a locality; It had no open door,”

1.

Ils basis was contributory (2s hd—12 /:p—a week a family); noi free.

1.

Il was based on autonomous administration, and so did not conform to (he organisational structure of the ni-is

Scott Williamson died in 1953 Innes Pearse went on propagating the Peckham findings until her death in 1978. Proposals for a repeat run in the postwar world have con-

File:Picutre 2051.png

Above Innes Pearse and George Scott Williamson, founders of the Pioneer Health Centre. Right, the centre at night

tinually arisen, linked to other kinds of community self-organisation. I remember a Family Health and Housing Society at Dron- field in Derbyshire in the 1950s. and a similar aspiration in Glenrothes in Scotland in the 1970s. When the original centre closed, members tried to keep alive some of its functions themselves. One of them recalls. “My husband was earning a £5 wage at the time. Where else could the children have gone swimming every day. and enjoyed roller skating. and all the other fun, for half a crown a week?”

But the alternative to the promotion (or even just the investigation) of *health* **is attempting to catch up with sickness. We have a barrage of complaints about the inadequacy of the NHS. We are endlessly reminded that it is the biggest employer in Europe, and that its estimated cost for 1985–86 is the sum of £17,500,000,000— ie, about £350 for every man, woman and child in Britain.**

The nutritionist, Barbara Griggs, has written that “The practice of medicine or therapy has its own science of pathology. The practice of health demands its own science of living, the laws which govern the processes the natural power of growth and development. Peckham is still the only preface to such a

SCKUIk’C Wl‘ klJOWol HOlilIlCf Bill If W.ISOIllv a beginning, arid flic ic csf.iblishinciit <>! .1 lahoiatoiy lo rniisolnlalc flic research already begun and h>puisne flic lulhlment <>l its promise would seem tn he not only icason able but urgent Bel orc we dismiss such a vision ol society as hopelessly utopian, we surely owe it lo ourselves and to our children lo give flic I’cckliain experiment what m hall a ceiilui y il lias nevei had a lurthci lengthy, competently urn and comprehensive trial What alternatives are Icti to us?”

She was iiitiodiicing a new edition pub **lished this week, ol the key I’cckh on book which first came out in 1943** *the Pet kham Experiment: a itmly of the In* **mg** *•.tract tire oj society,* **by lunes Pearse and I ucy (rocker (Scottish Academic Press. £5). It’s an important testimony, with lessons wc should all have learned years ago Isn’t there something. for example, in the conclusion of the Peckham biologists, applicable to those who want to save the inner cities They said.**

“Our failures during our first 18 months’ work have taught us something very significant. Individuals, from infants to old people, resent or fail to show any interest in anything initially presented to them through discipline, regulation or instruction, which is another aspect of authority (Even the very ‘Centre idea’ has a certain taint of authority and this is contributing to our slow recruitment.) We now proceed by merely providing an environment rich in instruments for action—that is giving a chance to do things Slowly

but surely these chances are seized upon and used as opportunities for development of inherent capacity. The instruments of action have one common characteristic— *they must speak for themselves* **The voice of**

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the salesman or the teaehci (lightens the potential users,"

We tailed to grasp (his when we concciwd postwar welfare in terms of bureaucracy and hierarchies Nobody in authority thought that there was any importance m the Peckham concern with the sources and origins of spontaneous action. Can we at lust learn the patience and humility to accept that the only kind of social organisation worth striving for is community self-organisation

New Stateman and Society

Protecting those blessed plots

As the allotment makes a comeback, Colin Ward analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the movement.

]**[The tatty old plot where Dad spent his Sundays"]]**

For the first time since the second world war the allotment movement is growing. Predictions that it would die when the last cloth-capped pensioner locked up his shed have been proved wrong. The environmental consciousness of the 1970s has bred a new kind of allotment owner. But despite this growth the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners has been unable effectively to champion the rights of the renewed movement.

At the "National" 's annual meeting last week, 120 delegates were told of the sixth consecutive year of trading losses and the desperate need for an increase in affiliation fees from the 25p fixed in 1980 to 35p. Reluctantly, and after much debate, the increase was agreed.

For an organisation that celebrates its diamond jubilee in 1990 and represents such growing numbers of people (Friends of the Earth report that the waiting list for allotments has gone up 1,600 per cent in England and Wales in the last ten years) the society makes pathetically small demands on its members and gets sadly grudging support.

Allotment gardening is an ancient occupation. Its name comes from the land allotted to the poor at the time of the enclosures. It epitomises the 19th century struggle to get enshrined into law the last vestige of the natural right of every citizen to a plot of land to feed the family. It is a demand that was echoed in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 — which imposes a duty on local councils to provide plots.

The two world wars transformed allotment holding from a necessity for the poor to a contribution to national self-sufficiency. During the second world war numbers rose from about 815.000 in England and Wales in 1939 to perhaps 1.7OO.(XM) in 1946, when the National had nearly 4,000 affiliated local societies. Today it has 1,378 representing 100,341 members.

The trouble is that this is less than a quarter of all allotment holders. The Department of the Environment abandoned collecting statistics ten years ago, but figures gathered by David Crouch from local authorities suggest that there are half a million.

The National's problem is that experience tells that every increase in the capitation fee brings a fall-off in member societies, and some of the activists believe that it is more important for the society to be representative than to be solvent — and effective. In 1965 the late Professor Harry Thorpe was invited to chair a departmental committee of inquiry into allotments. He reported four years later in a 450-page blue book — all his recommendations were ignored by subsequent governments.

Thorpe saw the post-war decline in allotmentholding, coupled with the new affluence and instant food, as signs that the movement was on the wane. He wanted to consolidate the morass

The right to grow some of your own food is fundamentally different from other recreation

of allotment law into one act and argued for recognition that allotment gardening was part of the "leisure" facilities to be provided by local authorities — especially as these same authorities did not stint on investment in other forms of leisure. Above all, he wanted a commitment to changing the allotment's image from the tatty old plot where Dad spent his Sundays to the leisure garden on the continental model, which is a well-serviced facility for the whole family.

Thorpe was elected President of the National and its name was changed from allotment to leisure gardeners (a movement known as the Yorkshire backlash got the word allotment reinstated). Some councils, notably Birmingham. did not wait for legislation, but began the process of upgrading their sites into leisure gardens. The octogenarian Labour peer, Lord Wallace of Coslany, twice succeeded in manipulating a Recreational Gardening Bill through all stages in the House of Lords only to see it instantly "objected" in the Commons.

Thorpe complained that "one of the main problems is that gardeners are peaceful and complacent, only becoming militant on greenfly, blackfly, slugs, cats and wood-pigeons. Any action is left to old Tom, Dick, Harry or somebody else". But no sooner had Thorpe's report appeared than the interest in energy-saving, ecology and organic fresh food, belied his assumption that "allotirent gardening holds little attraction for the young".

The old timers watc.: d sceptically, knowing that many of the recruits did not realise the sheer continual hard work involved in gardening. But many of the new influx stayed the pace, though there are complaints that they fail to do their share of the organisational chores. Several reasons are given. One is diffidence, for we are told of a wish by incomers not to be part of a trendy middle class take-over of this last remnant of traditional working class culture. Another, put to us by one old gardener, was that "These chaps are pushing paper around all week. They don't want to do it at the weekend too. " The usual reason for both old and new is shortage of time.

In the 1970s councils developed huge waiting lists for allotments. Today areas as diverse as Wigton in Cumbria and the London borough of Hackney all have few or no vacancies. Yet allotments, even on statutory, protected sites are continually under threat. Last year the National was approached by over 60 societies objecting to proposed changes of land use. Councils are obliged to keep an allotment revenue account, but sometimes they load this with administrative costs which are fictitious — like charges for electricity and water even on sites where these services are not laid on.

The attenuated National urges country groups to approach the regional offices of the Sports Council to seek recognition of allotment and leisure gardening as a recreation. There are, of course, objections to the idea that this last survival of ancient communal rights is a mere hobby. Irene Evans protests that "the right to grow some of your own food is fundamentally different from any right you might have to score a goal or sink a putt. "

Since gardening is the most widespread active recreation of the British, the problems of the allotment holder deserve more public support. But equally, the National deserves support from allotment gardeners. Compare its pathetic state with the success of another category of land users, the National Farmers' Union. A delegate noted, "the difference is that the farmers know perfectly well that it makes sense to subscribe enough to maintain a full-time staff to negotiate continually with government and parliament. *We* aren't willing to subscribe enough to run our own internal affairs efficiently. "

Alas, this was evident last week. If the membership would pay as much as members of any other national interest group would, the National could employ a properly funded national organiser to tour the non-member societies, and to lobby local authorities and MPs to reintroduce a bill straightening out the tangle of allotment law. Tom, Dick and Pauline can't do it alone.

David Crouch and Colin Ward are the authors of "The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture" to be published next month by Faber and Faber.

The Library of Unconventional Lives

Colin Ward
Colin Ward's New Statesman & Society Essays

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