ANARCHIST NETWORK NEWSLETTER

November 1991

Union Street

P.O. BOX 150 EAST BRUNSWICK 3057

Dinner

The next Ⓐ house dinner Saturday 2nd of November at 7pm.
All welcome.

Next Union Street Meeting
Monday 4th November at 6.30p.m.

A.S.F. Discussion Meetings

The A.S.F. is holding regular discussion evenings on the first Monday of every month. These are held at the Lincoln Hotel on the corner of Queensberry and Cardigan Streets, Carlton at 7pm. As the next date clashes with the next Union Street meeting, check with the ASF for details.

Newsletter News

Well, I am happy to say that last month's article about lack of material for the ANN has produced some results. So keep up the good work and keep it coming.

One piece received was a short story/forward to his book from Ken. It was a very violent piece focused on child abuse. I didn't think that this was relevant to the ANN but I wanted to let you know that it had been received and not printed.

NEXT EDITIONS DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS 14th November.

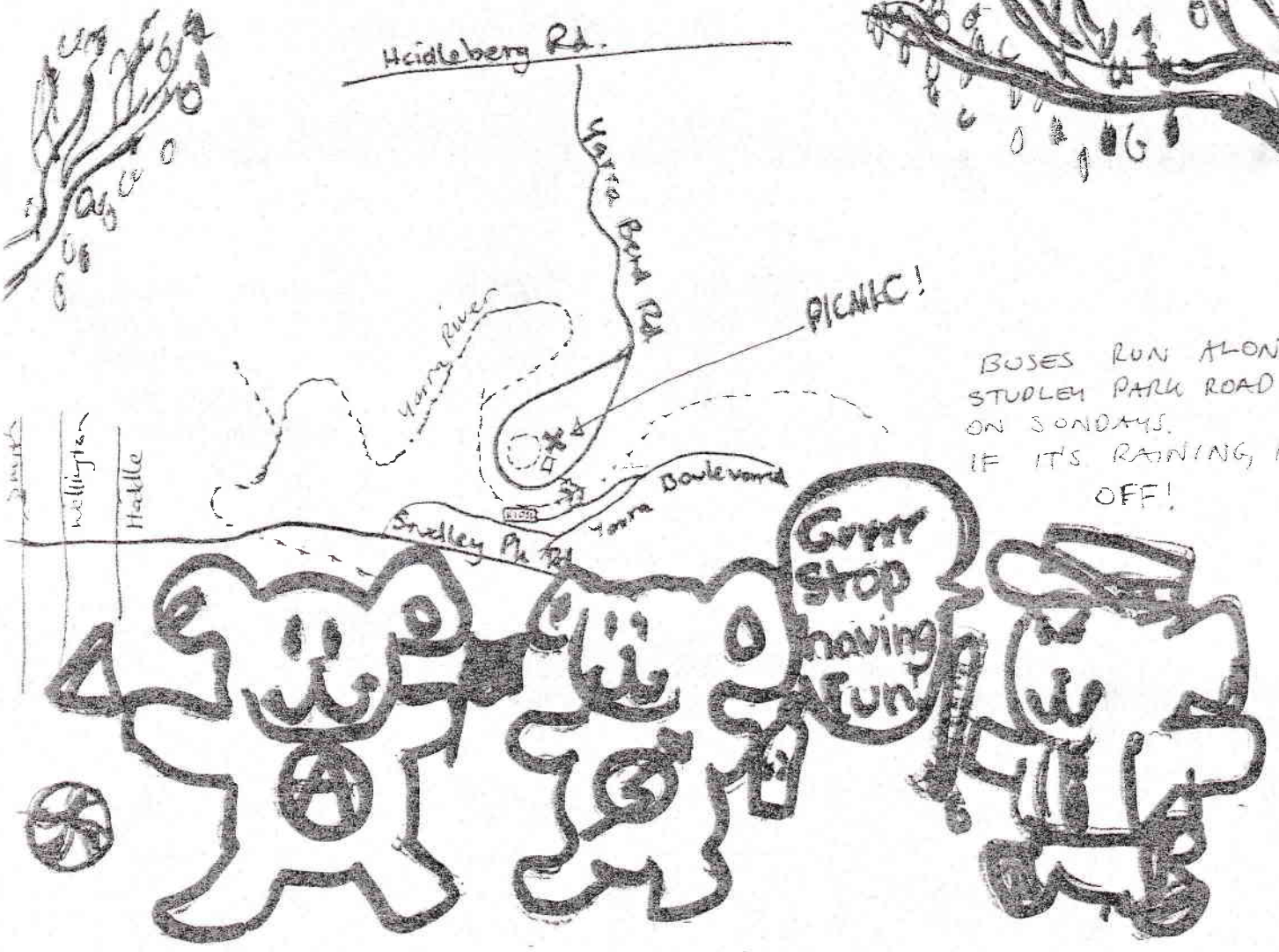
PICNIC!

Sunday 10th November

1pm, at Yarra Bend Park

Remember the Haymarket Martyrs, hanged Nov 11th, 1886, + Ned Kelly, hanged Nov. 11th 1880...

BRING FOOD, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, DRINK, KIDS, YOUR FRIENDS...!



BUSES RUN ALONG STUDLEY PARK ROAD ON SUNDAYS. IF IT'S RAINING, IT'S OFF!

INSIDER

Sexual claims

ARTIFICIAL WORLD

Hi! I got last months ANN and realised that for quite a while now it has been pretty bereft of anything substantial. I am in jail and when things are being discussed in ANN it is a source of information for me. Jail is pretty boring and even when I am busy; working, studying, playing cards, watching Tv or even sleeping, it is still jail. Life is pretty monotonous, get up with a bell, walk in this line, eat this food, work here, do this, do that. It is easiest if I don't think and yet thinking seems to be my game.
The BIG questions, what do I do when I get out?, how do I get the money to do it. I suppose it's no different from being outside I just have more time to think about it. My life when I look at it seems like one long succession of stumbling. From one thing to the next, always hoping that I will find something that seems me, seems right. At the moment the general idea is 'go and live in the bush, grow vegies etc, maybe potter or something', I think that this is common to all of us but there is this nagging urge to 'do something with my life'; why?! Why do I want to please other people? Oh, I have these romantic dreams of making really good documentaries but where the hell do I get the money! So my future remains unresolved, it probably will for most of my sentence.
On the back of this page is an article I found in a magazine, some of you will throw up in disgust, if nothing else it's an honest reaction, however I hope that it will stir up a bit of conversation amongst most people. I have this silly idea that Anarchists are real thinkers, not ethnocentric(my big word of the year) or unthought out. Why do we believe some things the government tells us and not others? I suppose that inside us all there is a Mother or Father or church or policeman. 'Don't trust anything it's all a plot'.....
Don't let ANN die.

XX
David

Environmental plan

alternative future

Jail terms for

'should be decriminalised'

polygamist

Joh lied

Red tape

toxic kids

Letters!!!

by Marianne Stuit

Pedophilia means, literally, love of children. Nothing is wrong with that, you think. But there is. Sexual relations with minors is illegal. Parents who permit such relations to take place can be punished. For some years now there has been a movement in The Netherlands to decriminalize sexual relations between adults and children who have reached the age of 12. Such people claim that these relationships can be valuable for the children involved, that children have sexual feelings and they ought to have a say in how they express them, provided, of course, they are not based upon force or moral compulsion.

Parents who allow their children to have contacts with pedophiles feel very vulnerable. Nevertheless, they refuse to forbid these contacts. Their motives for doing so, and the practical measures they take to deal with this situation, were investigated by *Nieuwe Revu*. "Thanks to *Oude Pekela*," (site of a notorious hysteria over child pornography – Editor) "everyone is suspect," said one of the parents. "A witch hunt is being threatened."

Rene was nine when he went with a group of his friends to the house of a youth leader. His mother Ria said, "I still remember thinking, 'Wow, this man really loves kids.'

"My son came home with all sorts of stories. He and his friends were allowed to do lots of things by his new friend. They could play the radio loud. They played games, got soft drinks. At home my son always gave vivid reports of everything he was involved in. After a couple of visits he said that there were photos of boys on the walls of his friend's house. So that disturbed me a bit; you can't kid yourself, this man has to be a pedophile.

"Later I reproached myself. In those first weeks I was too negative. I fell into the fear trap, said things that you used to hear, like 'Look out.' Your first reaction in such a situation is not honest. That probably restricted my son a bit.

"His friend knew that I was concerned. I read about the phenomenon and spoke with my son. And the man picked it up. He kept asking, 'What does your mother think about it now?' And then my son would say, 'You don't have to be afraid to tell her. She understands.' A little later we had that talk. I told him right off that I had no objections as long as my son himself wanted the relationship. I told my son, 'I think what you do is fine, but I don't want you doing things in exchange for something else.' Because his friend did a lot for him. Permitted a lot. The man was about 30, and he organized everything. So I went into this very deeply with my son. I said, 'When you really don't want to do something, don't think 'Oh, how lousy that is for him!' You really don't have to do that.' Maybe that's why nothing unpleasant ever happened. They are still good friends.

"Parents often can't see it, but for children such a friend is really wonderful. He can identify with their problems, help them with their homework. At school, my son really shot ahead after he got to know his friend. It's just a very good relationship even though sex no longer comes into it. That's because my son is now too old. He is 16. He is no longer physically attractive to his friend. But I know from his friend that sex still happens – with other children. We talk about it; the man just drops by at our home. Physical contact, making love, is important for the children. Okay, so how far do you go? They jerk off a little. I know that some of my son's buddies are looking for that. In our house they go up and sit next to my husband; they just want attention. My son's friend takes it from there.

"Of course, I had my doubts. I used to get really angry if he wanted to get it on with some kid who had just dropped in. I would say, 'That kid came to play and all you can think about is sex.' I told him he should respect that child, that you can only get it on with him if he himself wants it. But you have to understand that this was all new for him, too. He was never able to have just one relationship.

"It's still a tender point for my husband. He accepts it because my son is sexually responsible. My husband was never aggressive in this matter. Of course he could have forbidden it, but then they would have done it in secret. I don't know what would have happened then.

"I know that my son's friend has had a great many relationships where the parents didn't know anything. I'm still surprised at this. I just don't understand it. The children telephone him, he comes and visits them, they eat and sleep at his home, go all over the place with him. But their parents know nothing! Nothing is said. So I'm worried – for him. I'm afraid someday he's going to get into a lot of trouble doing that.

"Now I understand the tremendous problems such a person can have. He risks his job, most of his social contacts, his home and his reputation in the neighborhood. It only takes three or four people, and they can cause so much trouble. The risks are enormous. His parents cannot begin to accept it. Not all of the relations are the same; some children he just cuddles, or he just kisses them. It's only with a few that he goes further.

"At home everything isn't always sunshine and smiles. We quarrel, have confrontations. I want real information to be given. It isn't always quite as nice as pedos say it is. Nude photos are a sore point with me. We've had endless discussions about that, and we've never agreed. I'm against them. Because children have to pose for them. I just can't imagine that children like to pose in that way. They must be given money or expensive gifts. My son won't pose for such pictures. And I don't make any distinction between art photos and porno pictures. All are for sale on the market, and for each photo a child is used.

"You can't away from it. I know there are enough children who will do it, and they are certainly used. Our friend then says, 'That child agreed.' But I still can't accept it.

"If he gets into serious difficulties I will support him. There are so many things I've settled with myself, because we've talked with him so much. It's just terrible for the children who can't talk with their parents about it. They walk around with this great big secret. In that way I think it's like incest. And if something's happened, and if such a friend drops you because you don't want to do sex anymore, where does that leave you? On the other hand, some kids can really exploit such a pedophile, because he is vulnerable. That kind of thing does happen, and it isn't right either.

"Still, I never wanted to forbid it for my son. I think he has the right to make his own choices. And besides, well, what is more wonderful than love?"

Paula is the mother of three sons. All three had affairs with an adult man who quickly became an accepted family friend. Even now that the boys have grown up, a strong friendship continues.

"It all happened so naturally," said Paula. "Just as pubertal boys stop kissing their mothers goodnight, so sex vanished from the relationships." She asked us not to use her real name and not to give too many details. "In this neighborhood, discovery would be deadly dangerous."

Her sons were 8, 12 and 13 when Paula first noticed that something was going on in the family. "He was the oldest boy's music teacher and he came every week to our home. When he gave an enormous cuddle to our youngest boy, I knew something was up. Pure instinct. Even though it was a little embarrassing, I just asked him. He was completely honest. He said, 'Yes, I am a pedophile.' And so we knew.

"Because we could observe how he behaved with our children, all the sharp edges of 'the discovery' were taken off. We asked him to tell the children himself what he felt for them. Afterwards we talked with the boys, with the man present. This complete openness was very important.

"Later he asked them to spend the night with him. We agreed, but the first time you sit home thinking, oh lord, what have I done? But we counted on the fact that we had been open. And also that our children were prepared to refuse to do anything they didn't want to do. We had brought them up that way, and you hope their upbringing will work. And it did. The youngest boy told us spontaneously exactly what had happened. Which was soothing. We asked the older friend to be very careful, not to try to force anything. He, too, found it good that we could speak about these things.

"I remember that the oldest, after a couple of overnights, said, 'Mom, now I can sleep in the big bed.' 'Oh,' we said, 'did you like that?' Yes, he found that terrific. I could understand that with the youngest. He said, 'You know what I really like, Mom? When he tickles my back.' I said, 'Oh, that's what he does?' Because you ask in a playful way. From his older friend we already knew that he liked to be tickled but he didn't want to go any further. The boy said the same think, quite spontaneously: 'If he starts fiddling with my P-P, that's stupid.' So we said, 'Oh, he's not allowed to do that?' We still approach it all in that manner, because we want to avoid being heavy about it at all costs.

"That's the biggest fault you can make. Because when adults load sexuality it doesn't help the child one bit. We adults can easily do that. We are off in our own adult world, but that is very different from the world in which pedos and children interact.

"The most difficult thing is that you have to tell your children to keep quiet about such a friendship. But it is necessary. Such people can be fired from their jobs, arrested, even prosecuted in the courts. And you have to spare your friend that. On the other hand, you have to give your children the message that it is completely normal and they don't have to be ashamed. That's what I have a problem with: the taboo, the conflict. That's also the reason why I'm a member of the pedophile task force chapter of the Netherlands Society for Sexual Reform. The people I have met there, their way of thinking, have won my respect. But you must also dare to be honest with yourself. You have some doubts, but your children demand their rights, too. So you have to be very, very honest. Because if you really remember your own youth, you can't just bury your head in the sand.

"I'm not afraid of abuse. Sometimes all it takes is the presence of a child. Then such an older friend will take the child to bed and cuddle him. What's wrong with that? You do the same thing, don't you? In my mind that's just part of bringing a child up. There is so much fear of touching. Maybe it's this fear which makes people so emotional. Of course, I don't say, go out and look for it. But experience shows that this sort of thing can just happen to you.

"Keep in mind that this is a very close friendship for our children. We could easily say, 'Stop it.' But in my opinion you should only do that if you have very good reasons. You owe your children honesty. And only through openness can you get mutual honesty.

"When I hear about things like Oude Pekela and Amsterdam North, my hair stands on end. That kind of thing can start witch hunts. Then I think, 'Those weren't pedophiles. Those were men who were just after money.' The terrible thing about it is that then questions like this can ever be examined in tranquility.

"Of course, it is partly due to our society that makes all these taboos. I can't just normally talk about this with my friends. My children, too, who are now almost adult, come up against such feelings. 'Yuck! That's really filthy!' Only rarely do you come across someone with whom you can discuss it. The worst is that society denies it. And so these men are forced to live under hideous pressure.

"A pedophile is someone who loves children, who does not want to make a child anxious or full of frustrations. Perhaps they make unintentional mistakes. But don't people who have the care of children do that, too? Make it very clear to your kids that they can talk about everything, including things they don't understand very well. You, too, can go and talk with a pedophile. And if such a person makes a mistake, do you have to think he is all bad? I know that many, many children invite such attentions. We have seen that here in our home. It's a game of, How far can I go with this older person? If that happens with someone who has always had to control himself, then, of course, it might just go too far once in a while. Then you have to put your foot down. Take care that such a child learns to make contacts in another way. If everyone is open, you always have a parent with you." "In such relationships, I'm always more worried about the adult than the child," said John. And "it's always the outside world that makes these relationships problematic."

John has brought up nine children. One child of his own, four foster children and another four whose parents gradually agreed to their staying with him. Four of these children had relationships with adults. In addition, as group counselor, he has had experience with children involved in such relationships. One of these children would rather not give details about his own experience, and so John spoke only in general terms, as parent and person in charge of children's upbringing.

"Children choose their own relationships," John said. "I don't use, nor do I want to use, the power that I could wield. I stand beside the child. That means that sometimes I'm in opposition to society. Of course, I have the last word at home – but that happens at most twice a year. Children have the first word – and that happens daily. I try to keep kids' decisions, and their relationships that I don't really like as well, open for discussion. Because your relationship with such a child hold through thick and thin. As a parent or foster parent you can't just say, 'Get out' when a kid steals or is obnoxious or acts stupid.

"Pedophile relationships have their own value – their strengths and weaknesses. I grant you that a child is king, number one. That has a certain truth which I, as a parent, cannot dispute. But I have other children to look out for; I must run the house, I have a job. In one children's home, as group leader, I had to deal with a lot of run-aways. They had given us their addresses, and often I found them in bed with a man. That was very nice for them. And then I was always reluctant to bring in the authorities, because these children had every reason to search for comfort. Sometimes I thought, if only I could offer them this attention and warmth. I intervened only when the children tried to blackmail the adults.

You give them information about contraceptives, but for the most part they have learned all about that in the schoolyard. Practical decisions which you, as adult, have to make include: permission to sleep overnight, time arrangements. You also have to accept the adult when he comes to visit the child, even in the child's own room. You can't just accidentally burst in. In these relationships I'm always more worried about the adult than the child. These people are blackmailable. They are vulnerable and unsure. Of course you can't just completely give unlimited trust to such a person, but you should strive to achieve as much openness as possible.

If you let that happen you'll immediately observe that they show a boundless curiosity over the body and sexuality of their parents. Okay, I say, that's fine. Let them see you. Let them observe your sexual life. Let the child enter it. Talk about your feelings. Let our excitement show. Let them experience how your sexual life is. The great advantage is that you later hear about what you experienced. With trusted children I have been this open. I've let them see how it works, how it happens. On the other hand, they can push their own limits. They can be open. The boy- or girlfriend can determine how far to go. Children don't have any problems going farther with an adult. It is always the outside world that finds this problematic.

"I saw many children entering pedophile relationships in my work. There were all different kinds of relationships. There were love relationships but also frankly sexual relationships which were based more on pleasure than love. In all of them the desires of the child must come first. A new experience of course can be something of a shock, but there is a first time for just about everything. In itself a new experience isn't necessarily bad.

"I have no problems with photos. Fathers and mothers photograph their dear little ones. Children like photos, since they preserve moments that were important to them. The problem is that society is hostile to adult-child relationships. This casts a pall of feelings of shame over the relationship. Openness, then, is only possible within a very trusted circle. In the last two years it has become even more difficult to talk about such things.

"Children try to understand themselves. That is particularly the case in the transition years, ten, 12, 14, 16, as they develop more and more distance from their parents.

"With foster children you also have to take into account their real parents. With some of them you can talk about it; with others not. You have to approach this all very carefully. There are problems when children have their secrets.

"Children are absolutely not possessions of their parents. Children run around with a hundred secrets: that is part of their identity; they find it exciting. Incest is a forbidden secret, but there are also secrets which give them a feeling of freedom. That children are compelled to keep secrets is due to the uneven power situations in which they find themselves: in school, in their homes. Pedophiles are very vulnerable, powerless. They can so easily be denounced. In the final analysis, the child is always the boss. The child can talk to his parents, or he can stay away. Parents and teachers have far more power over such a child. I work towards a balance of power in the relationship. That happens when you rough-house, for instance. First one of you wins, then the other. It's no fun to lose all the time. That also happens in heterosexual relationships: power shifts back and forth. Then it is a matter of love; otherwise it is mainly a matter of pleasure and fun. □

(Translated from Nieuwe Revu, *May 1988)*

P.S.
THE WRITING IS
very SMALL!!
XX

Over the last year or so I've realized that a certain brand of hard line feminism is irritating me to the point where I feel compelled to speak out against it. Now I admit that I'm a not so young male and many people my age are indeed throwing off their youthful radicalism but I prefer to see my lack of charity as due to the realization that the marxism which underpins the annoying brand of feminism is the thing I'm reacting to- not the challenge to male hegemony.

I've come to see that the battle raging within feminism is a reflection of the dispute between anarchists who base their identity on an "us versus them" dichotomy, and libertarians who have a much more complex (and therefore more difficult to instantly comprehend) idea of the individual's relationship to society. That dispute has been characterized in ANN as one between a class based social analysis and a power based social analysis. In a previous article I called a highly bipolar world view "marxian"- not because it's necessarily marxist but because it uses a conceptual framework borrowed from marxism. The libertarian framework is quite different- I believe that it leads away from the crude reductionism which is currently strangling the old style feminism. Just today (Oct 7th) on Terry Lane's 3LO program I heard Naomi Wolf claiming that male power-brokers are behind the recent back-lash against feminism. The truth is that reductive and simplistic ideologies are their own worst enemy and marxian feminism has all the weaknesses of its marxist parent now currently in retreat right around the world.

What's happening to marxian feminism is a salutary lesson for anarchists and libertarians. In the end an ideology must offer the adherent a positive self identity; it should be a useful (and as much as possible, coherent) framework within which sense can be made of the world; it must provide a reason to act and a path to action; and it should expand the adherent's perspectives and provide a sense of personal power. Cynicism, despair and bitterness are the first signs that an ideology is ailing. Marxian feminism's major fault is not that it's initial premise that men oppress women is no longer valid but ~~that~~ once ~~that~~ simplistic assumption has been accepted, acknowledged and addressed it offers no way beyond imagining the world other than in sexist terms.

Recent Melbourne Age articles have highlighted the difference between this marxian feminism (what Beatrice Faust has called "the same old stuff") and libertarian feminism (what Joanna Murray-Smith has called "post-feminism"). But the failure of Age journalists to acknowledge the coherence and power of libertarianism has allowed marxian feminists to continue to claim that "post-feminism" is merely part of a conservative backlash.

As Joanna Murray-Smith says ("Wanted: a joyful new face for feminism in the '90's), many women and men have come to view the "old-style" feminism as "boring and self-righteous ... aimed not at education and self-education but at punishment and villification". She goes on to state that a large part of the power of marxian feminism for a generation of young women arose from its ability to generate a strong group identity (predicated on an "us-versus-them" dualism). But surely it's better to judge a person on what s/he does rather than catalogue them on the basis of the genitalia they were born with. And a radical feminism can be created out of an examination of the way power is invested in elites and social institutions, and the part the repression of women has played in the maintenance of this power.

Historically, most elites and institutions have of course been male dominated but this need not always be the case. Simply replacing men with women may well only disguise and remystify the oppressive nature of institutional power (George Orwell's 'Animal Farm' still the classic representation of marxist myopia). In libertarianism there's a much greater accent on the need to decentralise power and to celebrate diversity, with a greater stress on the idea of individual responsibility for social change (notwithstanding the importance of individuals acting in concert).

This appreciation of diversity at least prepares one for dealing with the considerable variability of women and men. As Beatrice Faust suggests ('Time to call a truce in the battle of the sexes, Melbourne Age, Aug 28th)', there is an overlap on a number of levels and in a number of ways between the genders. There is no simple "male versus female" dichotomy, just as there is no simple opposition between "nature" and "nurture". (While we probably can't do without binary logic, a major difference between libertarians and marxists is that marxists appear unable to think outside their rigid dichotomies)

But back to the Age articles. It is in the interests of marxian feminists to suppress public awareness of conflicting feminist viewpoints. And in her interview with Beatrice Faust (~~in the Age~~) Age journalist Jane Sullivan (unwittingly?) encourages such blinkered vision by claiming that Faust's book "will probably infuriate both conservative and radical readers".

This is an example of the way libertarians are consistently positioned outside diametrically opposed categories (e.g. left-wing /right-wing). Ignoring for a moment the difficulty of defining "radicalism", this style of linear thinking leaves no place for libertarians except as "eccentrics" and "outsider figures". This is an effective way of excluding libertarians from debates on major social issues.

I'm not saying there's no place in feminism for a militant revolutionary arm but its time to challenge the right of marxian feminists and lesbian separatists to present themselves as the sole custodians of the radical feminist tradition. In the end, lesbian separatism can't go beyond reductive slogans like "as all men are rapists, women should keep to their own kind". These catchcries, although undoubtedly meant as a kick in the collective male backside, are the last word in ~~[illegible]~~ negativity ~~[illegible]~~. They certainly aren't able to lead to a new and more positive relationship between the sexes. Libertarianism offers just such a starting point and its growing influence on feminist discourse is a sign that many women and men do indeed want "a joyful new face for feminism in the '90's".

Steve Chapman
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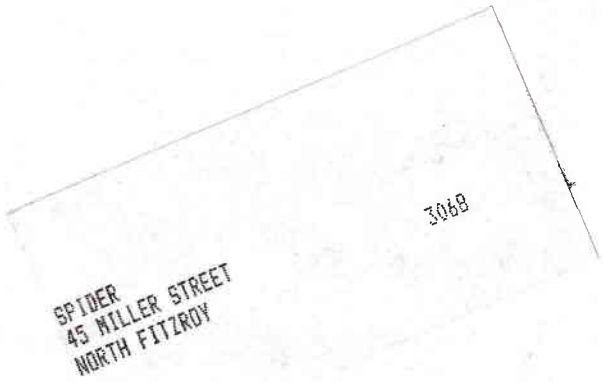
Oct 7th '91

FISH 97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