

Scope of the Library

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What is the political scope of the KSL to be: is it restricted to the anarcho-syndicalist tradition, or will it encompass the broad class struggle anarchist tradition?

RC (Nottingham)

KSL Replies

We don't want to lay down the law as to what is and what is not anarchism but obviously there has to be some boundary or the collection would need to take up the Albert Hall and be too unwieldy for reference anyway.

The political scope will not just be anarcho-syndicalism but the "broad class struggle anarchist tradition" is something impossible to mark the boundary when dealing historically. The expression "class struggle anarchism" comes from the '70s, with the growth of the hippie movement, lifestyle, etc and the need to differentiate between one thing and the other.

If one refers to the Cores pamphlet this is something new. Most Anarchists of his generation would never have used the expression either because they thought it tautological or suggested something different to them or if they did distinguished between class war and class struggle (so as not to be thought Marxists), or spoken unscientifically in terms of social justice, but they would have meant the same thing.

What we've decided with regard to the books is to include everything possible that relates to activist anarchism. We are omitting pacifism and "non-violence" and what goes with it as there is already an established library of Peace Studies in Bradford, which has an anarchist section. They agree to letting us have their books on mainstream anarchism, and we are passing them books on Tolstoyism etc. This will strengthen both libraries, and perhaps at a later date we can advertise mutually. There will obviously be overlap. This way we avoid censorship or laying down dogma.

On the other hand we don't want to go the way of the "anarchologists" and consider anyone who uses the name anarchists, even though pro-capitalist, is one. Their interest is making their chosen "subject" bigger than it really is. For sheer room we will not include any ephemera that passes itself off as libertarian, and if anyone is interested they can try themselves and see how impossible it is, at least without State funding. If we became State-funded we would not be an anarchist library. We will not be middle class academic orientated. But all books relative to the subject we can get will be included.

In regard to other documentation, KSL was originally compiled in Brixton, and almost all of its contributors were from the anarcho-syndicalist tradition. Since moving to Oundle (with reasonable space) we have sent out more invitations to contribute material. We now have a far wider selection relating to people who were not anarcho-syndicalists but in the anarchist tradition, e.g. Guy Aldred archives. A recently donated (as yet unopened) batch relates to the AWA and ACF. Also we have an enormous unclassified Cienfuegos Press/Refract Archive relating to trials and struggles all over the world, including Angry Brigade trial coverage. There are also translations of Spanish, Italian and French works unlikely within foreseeable time to be published in English (though we hope any publisher interested will contact us. One Russian publisher has already done so in regard to books on Anarchism and Revolutionary history).

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