

Bookfair cooks up awareness

Anarchist Bookfair

1-3 September
Queen Alexandra Hall

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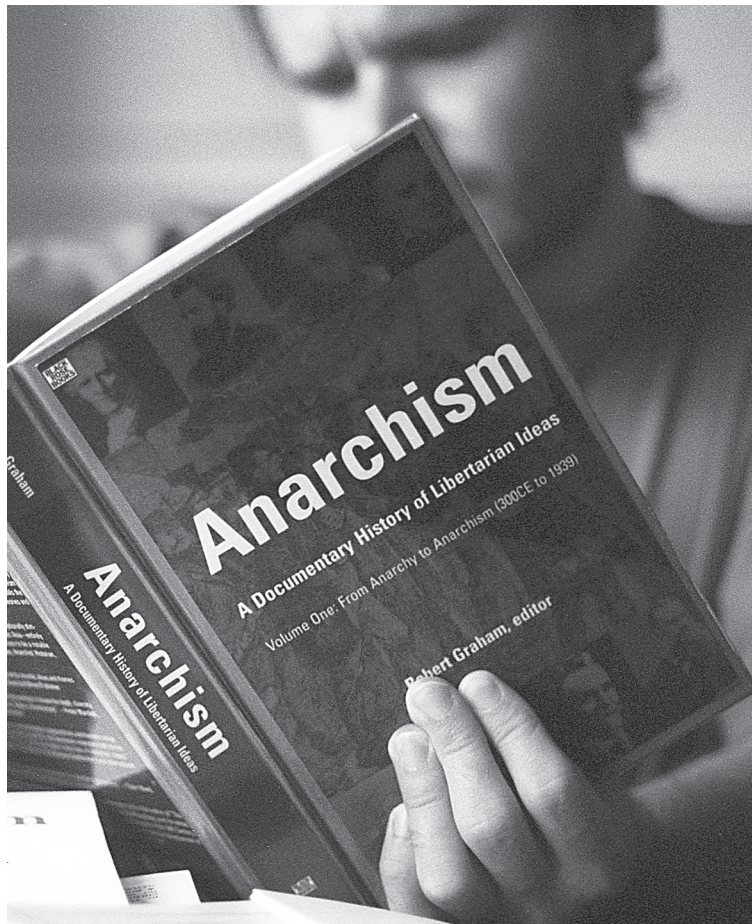
The next time you see hastily-scrawled “anarchism” graffiti staring at you from the other side of a bathroom stall, know this: it’s just trying to educate you.

“A big part of the anarchist political philosophy is education,” remarks Sean Boomer, an anarchist and organizer for the fourth Edmonton Anarchist Bookfair. “The bookfair is meant to be open to everyone. A big part of the reason we do it is to show people that anarchists aren’t scary people. We’d like to dispel some misconceptions.”

Boomer is the antithesis of the stereotypical “radical” on the political left. Softspoken and polite, he has an understanding of what his politics might look like to those on the outside, and is eager to explain the theory of anarchism, in which very little has anything to do with our cultured image of punks and criminals following the mantra of “anarchy in the UK.” There are anarchists who refuse to vote because they consider it to be a validation of an inherently corrupt system, and there are anarchists, like Boomer, who vote in order to make the best of a bad situation.

“The funny thing about anarchism is it’s a very diverse political philosophy,” Boomer explains. “People who attend the Bookfair will be presented with a wide variety of different people, different workshops and presenters, and different ideas. Plus, it’s a great place to meet contacts—especially if you’re new—you’ll be able to see what kinds of anarchist and anarchist-friendly organizations are in the city.”

And Edmonton, as it turns out, isn’t really a bad place for an anarchist to live, despite the stereotypes held about “conservative” Alberta. In his five years of organizing various events, which includes four Bookfairs, Boomer says there hasn’t been a backlash against it.



ALEENA REITSMA

In fact, there has been an unexpected amount of support—support from corners we might not usually identify as anarchist-friendly.

“The *Edmonton Sun* actually had quite a sympathetic article on us last year,” Boomer recalls. “The *Edmonton Journal*, too. I think people overestimate the conservativeness of Albertans. We have a long-established Conservative government here, but if you talk to Albertans as individuals, we’re all over the political spectrum. If you talk to people who are Conservative, they’re not really too Conservative. They vote for the party for all sorts of different reasons.”

Pure conservatism, it seems, like pure anarchism, doesn’t exist. However, there’s always room for people to improve upon their political knowledge.

The Anarchist Bookfair carries books on environmentalism, politi-

cal philosophies and other subjects not related to the defamation of public property or shocking old grannies with spike-ridden jackets and unconventional hair colors. Boomer likes to emphasize the event as being a place for the open exchange of ideas, rather than as the direct preaching from those who know to those who are there to learn.

“The Bookfair has a festival sense to it, and when you’re at that kind of event, you’ll be more likely to pick up something you might not normally pick up,” Boomer says. “It’s important for activists, as well as other people, to pick up a book of general literature, say, to improve their writing or their ability to relate to other people. One of the things you’ll find is that most vendors are—how should I put it? They’re very friendly, off-the-wall people. Most of us are just really interested in talking about these ideas.”



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AMANDA ASH

I WANNA CATCH YOUR DISEASE Australian singer/songwriter Ben Lee hopped about like an energetic kangaroo last Thursday at the Sidetrack. The sold-out crowd wasn’t your typical audience for the venue; giggling girls wearing their Lee swag scammed about (mainly pressed against the stage to get closer to the charmer), but that didn’t stop him from spilling out his pop-rock heart. Lee also claimed to be bringing sexy back, and by the end of the performance, I was sold.