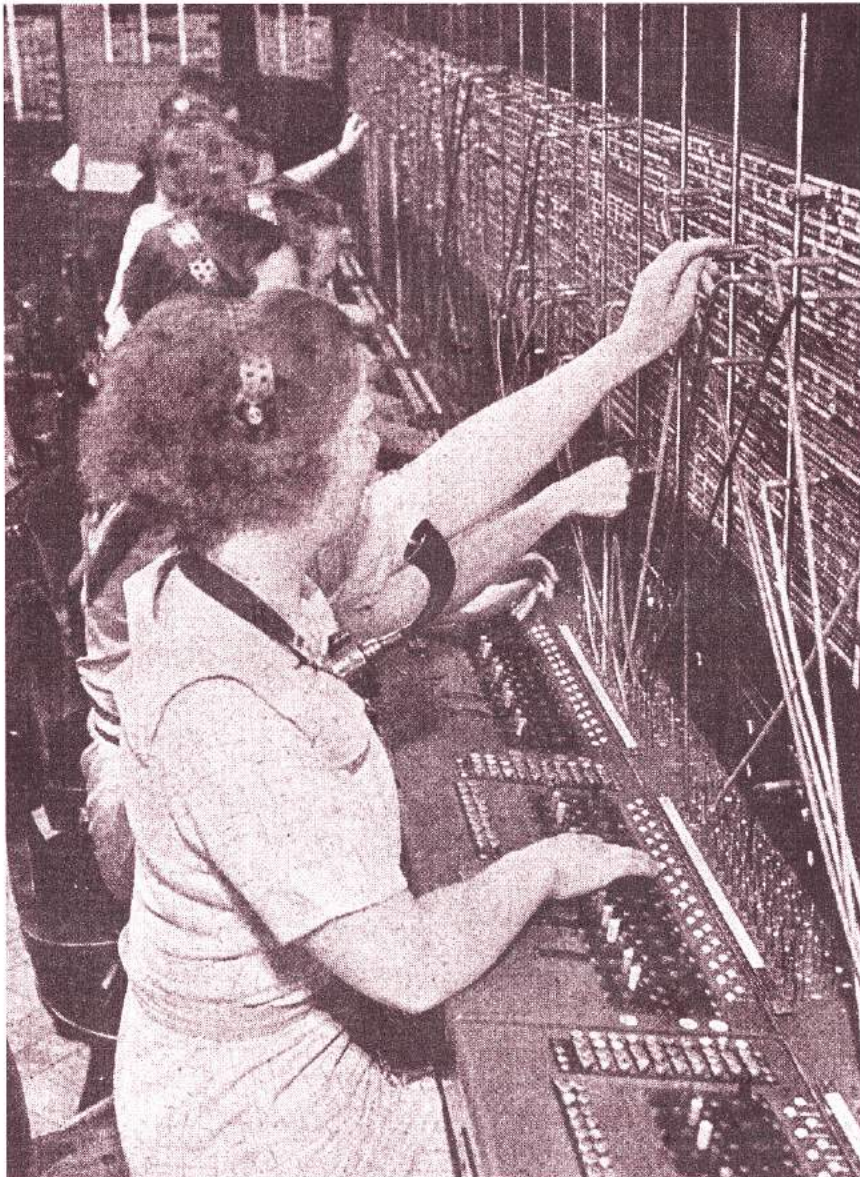


SMASH HITS

a discussion bulletin for revolutionary ideas

October 1997



Get connected...

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first fully fledged issue of Smash Hits, a discussion bulletin for revolutionary ideas and practice. This has come out of the decision to dissolve the Class War Federation in an attempt to rebuild revolutionary politics.

Our aim is to openly and honestly discuss ideas so that we can become a more effective and efficient force for revolution in this country. But this is more than ideas, it is about practice and organising. When we dissolved the Federation, we weren't calling for any truce in the class war. We didn't think that the war was over and we could all go home and live happily ever after. Far from it. Our desire for revolution, our rejection of capitalism is as great as it ever was - if not greater for we have positively broken with the chains of the past because they weren't getting us where we wanted to go.

FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

Capitalism might have changed its spots but there can be no denying the fundamental fact that the vast majority of people are exploited and oppressed - and that society is run in the interests of the minority. Yet those who call for its abolition (socialist/communist/anarchist - whatever the label) are few and far between. Revolutionary ideas are marginalised and peripheral. And revolutionary organisations seem unable to adapt to new circumstances, dynamism and flexibility being replaced by political paralysis and organisational institutionalism.

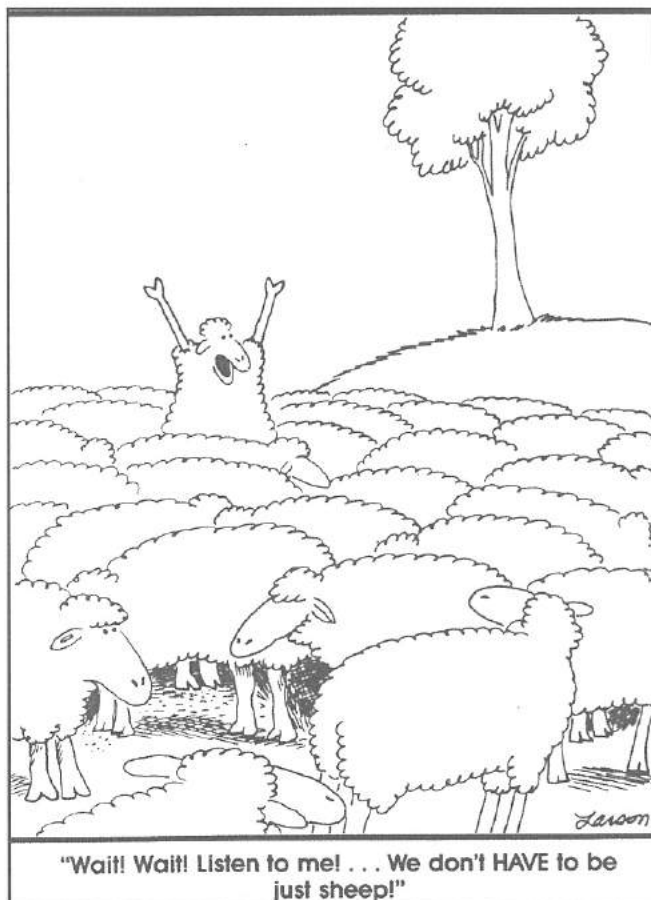
So what are we going to do about it? How serious are we in our determination to liberate ourselves from the chains of capitalism? Is this just a game or do we genuinely want to change society, abolish capitalism and create a world free of waged labour and money? This and other questions are what we want to at least attempt to answer.

MAJOR RETHINK?

But we're not pretending that we have got any right answers - unfortunately, we haven't. All we know is what we have been doing has become increasingly redundant and it's time for a major rethink. We don't intend that this rethink will just end up recreating a Class War mark 2. We think that there might be serious problems with the current nature of political organisations. We think that there may be a need to move towards more inclusive groupings as opposed to exclusive - yet where would the line be drawn?

So we are posing some questions, we are stating that the current form of the Class War Federation is unsatisfactory - and we want to draw people together to discuss these ideas and more. This bulletin is part of that process and it is open to all contributions. There is no editorial line (as you will see from the contents).

We will print all contributions that are sent to us that attempt to honestly debate our current situation. We seek to open its pages to anyone who thinks they have something worthwhile or interesting to say. Maybe we



are all completely wasting our time? Maybe we just need some straightforward populism? Maybe Lenin was right and we should all join a centralised party? Maybe we need to ditch the 19th century terms of 'anarchism' and 'communism'?

There are many opportunities ahead and much potential. We want this bulletin to be at least a part reflection of that, like our other activities of meetings, events and conferences. As the last issue of Class War said, we are currently underachieving desperately while at the same time we have got a whole world to win. So what are we all going to do about it? We might have called time at the Class War bar but that's because we're now off looking for the whole brewery.

**If you've got any contributions or just want to be kept in touch with what's happening, write to BM Box 5538, London, WC1N 3XX.
Deadline for next issue is 31st January 1998.**

BEING HERETICAL

So we've taken the first step - that is we have dissolved the Fed, produced our statement of intent in the last issue, clearly declaring that our aim is not to recreate a Class War mark two...so where now?

Currently I am calling this "staring into the vacuum" because that is what it is - staring into the vacuum. We have rejected our old ways of working as being an ineffective vehicle for our political ideas, but what do we do now? Thus the vacuum as unfortunately no-one has seemingly got any right answers/masterplans/whatever - or if they have, they haven't told me!

SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

But I think that we should seize this opportunity for thinking about how we work and what we want to do/achieve. We have (possibly temporarily) escaped from the fixed tramlines of organisational ideology/practice and we have a chance to reconsider our views, our positions and our practices - what follows is my contribution to this debate and shouldn't necessarily be taken as fixed statements, more as an attempt to put down some ideas.

I think the first thing to do is to consider the political basis of our organising together. It has been said that Class War was practically theoretical, that its basis for unity was more about practice (getting stuck in) than theory (what's your line on the IRA). I think that to a broad degree this is true: Class War did certainly attempt to be more of a broad church than many other political groups. In this it reflected to some extent local groups who tend to unite more on a basis of practical need than theoretical positions.

I believe that this is definitely the best way to proceed - no revolution will ever be made by people thinking along very similar lines, if a revolution does occur its participants will have quite different ideas but they will be held together by a sense of common purpose. The same is true for any group of friends - they don't all think exactly the same, there will always be a variety of ideas and thoughts knocking around. So why should a political organisation restrict itself to a groups of people who think along very similar lines? To put it mildly, it's nonsensical.

LET'S GET TOGETHER

As I said, Class War did go beyond that but in some ways it ended up like that (is that an inevitable result of organisational paralysis?). I think we need to be looking towards being inclusive - setting out to include as many people as possible rather than to exclude people on the basis of theoretical positions. But then the problem is we want to avoid reinventing the wheel every meeting/every paper and there is a need for

some political lines to be drawn - but these could be as basic as anti-capitalist and libertarian. I was told that there was quite a contrast at the Bradford bookfair in May when the Class War meeting followed a meeting of Subversion versus Syndicalists. Shouldn't we be moving away from these debates and looking at what we have in common and what we're going to do about it?

WIDE OPINION

Having wide opinion within an organisation does not necessarily mean that it is doomed to founder or be ineffective. A good example of this is the Haringey Solidarity Group which has everyone from the RCG-influenced to fluffy liberals via class struggle anarchists and ultra-left theoreticians. Such variety does not prevent it from being effective and it has been active since the early 1990s - in fact this variety makes it quite a healthy and open grouping.

I think that most political groups are fairly similar to religious cults: both have ideological purism, both have codes of behaviour, both have defined forms of practice, both push set lines. But surely our politics are about abolishing purism and liberating our individuality?

We need to dump cultism because although it might make us feel safer and more secure in ourselves (which of course is the function of a cult), to everyone else it just makes us isolated and irrelevant. But it has been said that in a revolutionary grouping (you against the world) it can be difficult to avoid the tendency towards cultism - yet why?

Why shouldn't we be able to work in an open manner? Why shouldn't we seek to include everyone who energetically and passionately wants to overthrow this society by liberating themselves and creating a new world?

ORGANISATIONAL PARALYSIS

One of the main lessons of Class War for me has been its growing institutionalisation and organisational paralysis. A classic example of this is how in the early days Class War was able to relate to and be involved in the peace movement (but of course being critical as well and stating its positions), yet ten years down the line and Class War was completely out of touch from the environmental movement. In its beginning Class War had gone with the energy, in the end Class War was sitting isolated in a room above some pub.

As far as the rave scene/dance culture is concerned, I think that CW missed the boat - here was a social movement coming from the streets that was in conflict with the state yet we by and large ignored it and failed to realise its potential. The ironical thing is that Class War itself partly emerged from the last similar movement - punk. Old punks never die, they just become conservative. The whole spirit of punk (do it

yourself, kick it over, open your mind etc - which was often the same as that of the rave scene) was reduced down to sadly defending the faith. What went wrong? How did this happen?

Maybe this is a result of Class War's structure as a political organisation. Maybe we are back in the old arguments of the tyranny of structurelessness/the tyranny of tyranny (by that, I mean arguments about formal and informal leaderships) - or maybe this is not true but we at least need to discuss the whole issue of the structure and how we can structure ourselves so as to be as effective as possible.

One thing that is certainly true: Class War became strangled by its own bureaucracy to the point where a fair proportion of the members also held some official position within the group.

DOCTORS AND NURSES

It's all a bit like the NHS - more managers and less nurses. Part of the problem was the aim of building up a mass organisation and so it was thought that such a structure was needed - but at no time have we ever approached being mass and in retrospect I would argue against this aim. Perhaps what we should be looking at is more amorphous and loose groupings that pull people together when there is a need and still keep themselves open, energetic and dynamic.

Maybe I have become a bit of a Bonist in my old age: I can remember Ian and Lee proposing something along these lines in Leeds in 1993 (1992?). They certainly argued that virtually all Class War's bureaucratic superstructure should be dumped and looking back on it, they were right.

Essentially what we need is one person to collate a discussion bulletin (if it's decided we need that) and that's basically that. The key is that we need to work out what is the most effective structure for taking our ideas forward - whether it's a football team, an occasional gathering together to do specific tasks, a Thursday night drinking group - whatever (remembering that this list is neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive).

HAVING FUN

Class War always said openly that politics should be fun and that in itself represented a break from organised left/anarchist politics where the idea of fun is sometimes frowned upon. One reason for this is that Class War never tied itself to one political tradition and was open enough to pick and choose at will - and one fertile area was situationism/counter-culture of the late 1960s where fun really was fun (or so they say).

So we said that politics should be fun, that it's also about having a good time, having a laugh and not getting deadened by the seriousness of it all. But how far was this actually expressed in our reality? I would say that we made some efforts but far more could have been achieved.



"Oh shit sarge, what's happened to my van?"

We must remember that one of the driving forces for virtually everyone is a desire to have a good time, the hedonistic urge. I read an interview with Iain Banks (the writer - eg "The Wasp Factory") where he said that his vision of a future society was a cross between socialism and anarchism with a lot of hedonism.

Maybe in the paper we should have had more stories about simply having a good time/ a good laugh (and not necessarily just the ones about rioting although there's nothing wrong with that). And it could easily be argued that the free festivals at Stonehenge in the 1970s/early 1980s had much greater political significance and radicalising impact than the Class War International Conference. maybe we should start organising free festivals...

THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

And this is linked to the need for openness: we have to think the unthinkable. Why is class struggle the motor of history? Maybe it is a motor (albeit, a very important motor). Is it really worthwhile to support this strike or that strike, might there not be better ways of being active? Or maybe such basic support should be our foundations for if we can't look after our own then who can we look after? Why are western political ideas simply accepted as being correct? What ideas are there elsewhere in the world about we live and how we can live? While capital has gone global, revolutionaries have remained resolutely eurocentric - don't get me wrong, these ideas might be the best

ones for us in this situation but at least we should consider other ideas/other practices. And we should start moving away from absolutes - too much of our political reality is composed of absolutism when the world itself is composed of greyness/doubts/uncertainty. Too often we seek to force everything into a particular box when there might be different explanations and different possibilities.

POLITICAL ARGUMENTS

A friend told me recently about a political argument she had been having with this man which got fairly heated. Later she realised that it was getting heated at least partly because they had nearly been lovers (so there were feelings of bitterness/resentment which hadn't been resolved? and also because he reminded her of her father).

Now some things are simple - there's no problem in saying the police are the enemy, that the royals are parasitical scum and that capitalism is a system based on exploitation of the many by the few. But beyond these simplicities, what then?

We should be looking for useful tools to explain reality (or should that be realities) and we shouldn't be bound to just one tool and attempt to make it explain all forms of reality.

We should shift perspectives when and where appropriate. For example (thank fuck for that I can hear you cry), an explanation of why the working class in this country seems to be basically content with capitalism (although of course in many ways it clearly isn't) might partly contain an element of psychology as well as the obvious element of class analysis.

Reality should be viewed through more than one perspective if we want to achieve a better understanding and a better ability to improve our situation. As has been said before, a failing of Class War was its one dimensional nature - reality has many dimensions and we should recognise that fact. Of course it's easy to say something like that and a lot harder to actually put it into practice.

FEELING LIBERATED

As the Class War Federation slowly bit the dust over a period of months, I had a sense of liberation - because I believe that by dissolving this organisation we are opening up many other potentials and possibilities. We have been stuck in a rut, doing things by routine without questioning or challenging to any depth because we all needed to maintain the organisation (or at least we thought we had to). Now that need is gone and we are in the vacuum but that's far preferable to being on a life-support machine. It's a bit like a mini-revolution.

Let's be honest about the shape of Class War (shape that I have to take responsibility for as much as

anyone else): there were no more than 70/80 members (some of whom were paper members), there were hardly any papersales outside London, the total sales of the paper didn't top the 4,000 mark, there were bitter internal disputes that led to blocs based on geography which weren't talking to others, no more than three groups actually functioned as groups (as opposed to groupings meeting around someone's house), we were isolated from what little social struggles/movements were happening, there was a lack of purpose or sense of direction, the collective publishing the paper was ignoring the decisions concerning the contents of the paper, some of the formal positions were unfilled (leading to heartache at conferences), hardly anyone was writing for the paper...

This doesn't mean that I don't think there was anything good and positive about CW: there's loads, from the politics to the sense of ambition to the fact that different groups did different pages thereby opening it out more.

HONESTY

But be honest - Class War was failing, it was desperately stuck and unable to organisationally get out of the vicious rut it was in. We can't isolate ourselves from the rest of

society or the rest of the left - struggle is close to an all-time low and the left is heading towards the dustbin of history - but is that any excuse for us to continue on as we are?

Despite being a populist organisation, Class War was profoundly unpopular both externally and internally. Time to burn the body and look again at what we want to do and how we can achieve our aims. Of course there is a chance that all this talk of revolution is completely useless and we are all wasting our time and should be doing better things.

DEFINITELY MAYBE

Maybe...who can definitely know (especially now that we have superseded science) - but one thing for definite is that society is fluid, dynamic and does change. Society has changed a lot in the last 100 years (let alone the last 1,000 years) - the problem is that most of the changes have been against our interests, the interests of the majority of society.

So yes, I believe in revolution, I still believe that the working class has the ability to emancipate itself from capitalism. I still believe that we can create a society without the slavery of paid employment, the dominance of money and the rule of divisions - but it's going to be bloody hard, which is why we need to reconsider everything as a way to determining what is the most effective form for our ideas and our activities.

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CLASS POLITICS

With class politics we should know almost instinctively what we're for and against. Although 'theory' isn't exactly a complete waste of time, it should involve a minimum of distraction.

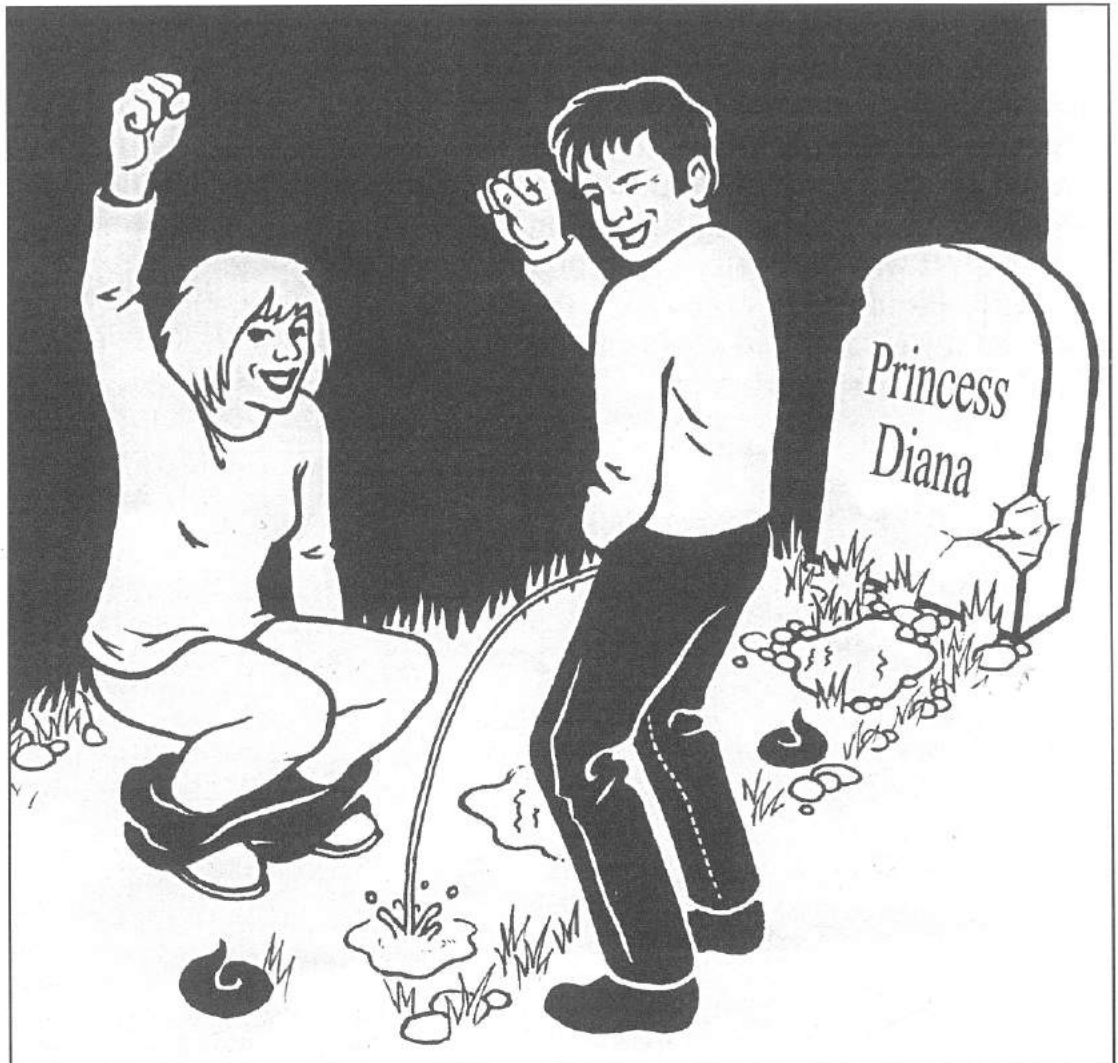
An examination of anarchist and workers' movements, anti-state upheavals worldwide throughout history to the present day is always more interesting and rewarding than theory pure. I welcome the present move toward more contact, exchange of ideas and information plus the regeneration of our movement.

PITFALLS

However the pitfall remains that this could just become another rapidly diminishing talking shop. I believe that in order to avoid this, priorities should be shifted away from the theoretical to street-based politics, our only point of mass contact. With the Labour "honeymoon" over, times ahead could prove interesting.

We should support the activities of groups such as Reclaim the Streets, plus any future mass mobilisations such as those of the low-paid or people put on to workfare schemes. We should have a large physical presence, distributing thousands of well-designed, easy to read, comprehensible populist-style leaflets. We should be ready to make a contribution, should things "turn nasty" for the authorities. We can't do this unless we're there.

We also need to organise our own events, street manifestation. Reclaim Mayday, no more tail-ending a bunch of rancid Stalinists, have our own march through a working class area, leaflet nearby estates. We should



take the offensive by helping to produce numbers to confront the next reactionary "countryside rally", make sure they are given a warm welcome next time they come to London.

MASKING UP

We must support the initiative next year of the march on Buck House. And prepare, hopefully, for a mass "Anti-millennium" movement. It's a good guess that some people are thinking along these lines anyway. All street actions should be preceded by an effort to mobilise our numbers, produce and distribute leaflets and other forms of propaganda. To keep momentum and coherence we should support a mobilisation once every three or four months.

Without this I see no growth, dynamism or contact with those sections of the population numbering millions who are alienated from the economic, political and social system. On the other hand by working together to get our forces out on the street we could start thinking about developing a mass movement that goes beyond mere anarchism.

M

GRAVEDIGGING IN GRAVESEND

I welcome the initiative which Class War has taken in getting people together to discuss the way forward and want to offer the following thoughts. And before I forget to mention it, I think it is a mistake to stop producing the paper, Class War, it was generally an excellent, popular tabloid which really hit the mark, sold well and and should be re-launched as soon as possible.

As someone who has been politically active for about the last 16 years, most of these as a revolutionary, and as an ex-member of first the Communist Party, then the Socialist Workers Party and part of many local and national campaigns, a few things have slowly become clear to me.

BUILDING THE PARTY?

One is that in the present economic and political climate existing in this country, the idea of forming a rigid party along Leninist lines is not the appropriate way for our class to organise.

It generally has the effect of attracting a few, mostly middle class students in the university towns and cities, pushing them into frenetic activity to "build the party", sell papers etc. and after a few years of this, they end up disillusioned with "revolutionary" politics and leave to pursue a "grown-up" life in the real world.

And in general revolutionary politics (both socialist and anarchist) are viewed as a stage of youthful rebellion to be grown out of, a childish utopian phase that some people go through, rather than a coherent political force rooted in working class communities. The point is - how do we change this?

PITIFULLY WEAK

Why is it that, in 1997, the revolutionary movement (by this I include all the socialist, communist and anarchist parties and groups) is in the most pitifully weak state, in fact rapidly shrinking and disintegrating in most cases.

Obviously this is such a complex issue, we could write at least one book on the subject which we haven't got space to deal with in detail here. But it's possible to identify a few key points. I think we first have to understand that the failure to build a strong revolutionary movement is first and foremost a reflection of the very low level of class consciousness generally in our class.

Apart from a tiny minority of politically-minded and active people, the basic economic and political structure of our society and their position in it is not of great interest, let alone concern, to most working class people. That isn't being elitist or cynical or

defeatist, it's something that's got to be faced up to. OK, it's something we want to change, but first we have to acknowledge that it exists. This might seem like stating the obvious, but a hell of a lot of socialists and anarchists seem to think that if only they got their programme, manifesto, theory, style of newspaper,

This might seem like stating the obvious, but a hell of a lot of socialists and anarchists seem to think that if only they got their programme, manifesto, theory, style of newspaper, wording of leaflet, time and place of meeting right etc then hey presto! the working class will suddenly wake up and realise the need to overthrow capitalism.

wording of leaflet, time and place of meeting right etc then hey presto! the working class will suddenly wake up and realise the need to overthrow capitalism.

The reality is that it will only be when an issue, or several issues co-inciding, like strikes, a crisis in the NHS, education or whatever actually hits working class people in the face and they see for themselves the need to get together and organise to fight back, it's only then that we see in practice that through our own actions we can actually change things and that a revolutionary movement capable of challenging the capitalist state has a chance of establishing itself.

REMEMBER THE POLL TAX

The poll tax is a good example of how an issue can, almost overnight, unite and politicise a substantial number of working class people - we got together, fought back in the courts, council chambers, on the streets and defeated an attack on our class against all the odds.

When another similar issue arises, we need to be able to build on our experiences straight away, which is why I believe the most important thing at the present time is to keep together a network (not a rigid, sectarian party) of politically-committed people, so that when there are upheavals in society we can react quickly to pool our knowledge and resources to help our side move forward.

I don't suggest that we all sit at home individually doing nothing, waiting for things to happen and then react when they do, there are things to be done. Much of it is a long, hard unglamorous slog of slowly building respect for your political ideas in your local

community by always being there and doing the work in local campaigns - everything from stopping health and education cuts to exposing corruption and hypocrisy in the local ruling class.

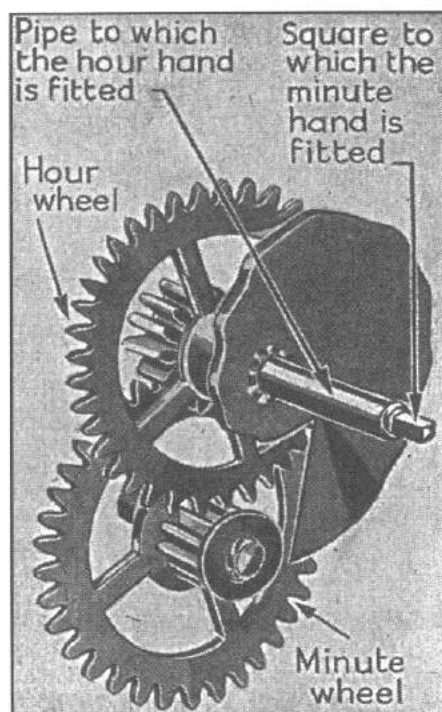
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

It means knowing your local area and community, making roots in it and with as many other anti-establishment people as possible, making contact with and getting to know the journalists on local press and radio, so that we can sometimes use their media to get and message across.

I can only say what happens in our town (Gravesend)

and our county (Kent) as examples of what can be done in the present difficult circumstances and maybe others will consider using similar methods elsewhere.

In Gravesend a group which grew up mainly from working against the poll tax and the fascists, has stuck together and remained active through other issues like anti-workfare and campaigning against council cuts. We produce



Is time the motor of history?

a bi-monthly publication, "The Gravedigger", which is sold mainly in Gravesend (on the street at a weekly stall) and to local subscribers, but also gets circulated across the country.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

Through this bulletin we try to present people with an alternative view of what's going on in the town, the stories the other papers won't print, digging the dirt and taking the piss out of the local establishment - councillors, magistrates, police.

But it's not just local gossip, we aim to give it a hard and uncompromising political edge, but with some humour as well. After years of trying to sell dreary old political newspapers, "The Gravedigger" has been very well received by the sort of ordinary working class people who wouldn't touch Socialist Worker with a bargepole.

The value of producing something like this is that it keeps us in touch with what's going on, gives people a chance to write and develop their own political ideas

and gives us a solid focus in a very barren and difficult time. It should be possible for small groups of people in every town in the country to produce a similar production, only a very small thing admittedly, but enough to get under the skin of every local ruling class and give our side the confidence that we can and do make a difference.

But what it needs is good local knowledge, roots in your own community and earning the respect of people through actions, not just words and empty propaganda. And it is a long, hard slog - a lot of unrewarding work that doesn't seem to bring much in return, but that is what needs to be done.

GET LOCAL

I think that the importance of working in your own locality and community has never been given the priority it deserves by revolutionary groups, it's been neglected in favour of huddling together in national groups and national demonstrations, which might help morale and give an illusion of strength, but in fact are built on sand if parallel work isn't being done in small towns everywhere.

As far as the whole of Kent is concerned, we have got together with various other socialists, anarchists, environmentalists, trade unionists and animal rights activists to form a loose county-wide organisation, the Kent Socialist Alliance, which meets once a month to discuss activity and produce a monthly newsletter sent out to about 200 people which simply lists events and actions and meetings in Kent and London.

It's a very basic form of organisation, but it is keeping together a whole layer of different political activists in a non-sectarian network, who can share information and help each other. At the monthly meetings we limit the agenda to activity, all political differences and theory are kept until after the meeting over a drink, this is the deliberate policy so that we don't descend into yet another squabbling, navel-contemplating debating society.

Again, this kind of alliance is something which could be done all over the country, in London and every other county.

STAYING ON COURSE

Finally, so many revolutionaries get disillusioned and give up in despair when after a few years of their own activity, nothing seems to have changed - the point is to look at things long term and broadly, not just from your own personal, limited horizons.

It might take generations yet before we get rid of this rotten system, we can't just give up because nothing seems to be moving at this particular moment in our own lives. It takes commitment, a long-term view and an understanding of what we're up against - capitalism won't collapse overnight however much we might want it to, there are no short cuts or magic formulas - it will take years of hard work.

G, Gravesend Resistance

BY ALL MEANS NECESSARY

By all means necessary -part of what I liked about Class War was that heading. For me it's a very positive thing and stands in contrast to much of the left's narrow thinking. Unfortunately Class War didn't quite live up to the slogan.

Personally I consider myself a Reformist. Unfortunately most of the people attracted to the ex-CW initiative consider themselves Revolutionaries. Although none of them have or are ever likely to take part in a revolution. Unfortunately they seem to have picked the wrong country 80 years too late.

YOU'RE TOO SEXY!

Revolution is undoubtedly a sexier word than reform. I can't imagine Oasis or the Beatles singing about reformism. But reformism is what most people want in this country. They don't want to storm through the streets being shot at by the army. They don't want to hang the queen. But they would like to have a bigger share of the cake and work less hours.

A lot of people are involved in anarchist groups who are so completely out of touch with ordinary people, it's funny. Students and unemployed people or just plain unfriendly people who go on about community politics but don't know any of their neighbours.

I think it's important to be realistic if we want to

break out of the leftwing ghetto. CW's attitude to the Labour Party and elections was to me rather infantile. I really despair of things like the anti-election alliance. Would you really like to live somewhere that people didn't have a vote at all? The electoral process in this country is flawed to say the least but it's still miles better living here than in Indonesia, Turkey etc apart from the weather.

MORE DEMOCRACY

We should be calling for more democracy not just having a go at the limited form of democracy we have just because we don't like the results. Until people on the left look at why they are so isolated, they won't be effective. CW 73 was a really positive thing to do but I hope that this ex-CW initiative will really look at all ways that can change things.

I'm not a reformist who's against direct action, I think that direct action-type politics and reformism go hand in hand. The poll tax revolt in Trafalgar Square was a great day for all of us who champion the cause of violent reformism. What's needed is more days like that, but they can only come about with widespread public support.

That means taking the slogan "By all means necessary" seriously, thinking the politics through and leaving the frightened parent politics behind.

R

I STARTED...SO I'LL FINISH IT!

by Ian Bone. Reprinted from *Animal*, no. 1.

"If you have an Organisation with an avowed policy of doing nothing, then, eventually, even the most serious of the serious tendency is bound to ask, as they do now, 'Why do we need an Organisation to do nothing?'"

In the early days Class War (C.W.) was often called a 'comic' by its detractors on the left. We didn't mind. We would stand next to the leftie papersellers shouting 'get your gutter rag fuckin' stupid anarchist comic here' and the punters would queue up - we had the product they wanted, the lefties didn't.

However there was a problem. Some class warriors harboured a secret desire to be taken 'seriously'. They felt embarrassed when they went down the pub and were mocked by their leftist chums for not having 'serious' politics and selling a comic which was 'good for a laugh' but nothing else. To be taken seriously by

their peers in leftie and republican groups was the summit of their ambition. They wanted to grow up and leave such childish stuff behind them.

"Stuntism or Bonism is childish and we grew up. What we need is real theory."

But there were obstacles to being taken seriously. Firstly the paper as it was with its cartoons like "Wot no theory!" and "But where's the analysis?" as well as stickers like "Fuck the Revolution, where's my pint?" were derided by the leftists. Secondly Class War didn't have that very serious thing that all serious groups must have...A THEORY!!!!

We didn't have any fuckin' theory for godsake!!

BOLLOCKS TO THEORY!

If only we had a theory we could take 'positions' on proper grown up issues like Bosnia and the IRA and give our angle on important events like all the other lefties did.

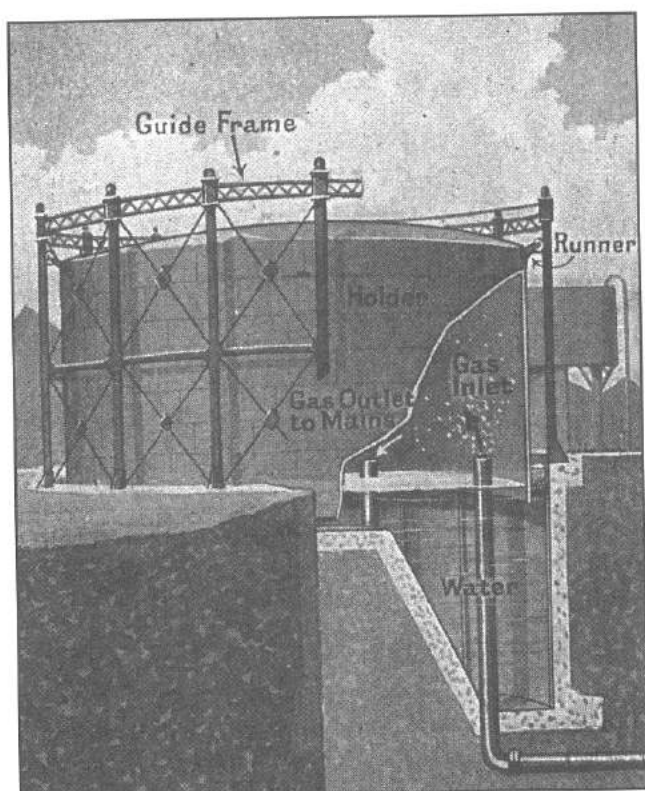
It was embarrassing for a chap to go down the pub and to be asked your position on the Tamil Tigers and be forced to admit you didn't have one! A theory was needed to make sense of all these complex world

events so we could write about them in our paper just like the grown up lefties did.

Finally there were still people out there on the streets doing silly things like organising Bash the Rich marches and trips to the Henley Regatta and Rock Against the Rich tours and throwing bottles at Neil Kinnock in Hyde Park and smashing up Wood Green shopping centre and making records.

STUNTS

These were collectively to become known as stunts and were not taken seriously by the left. Till this day the serious tendency has nightmares about stunts. Four



A guide framed gasholder....

years after the last reported sighting of a stunt the Bristol group still writes: "We're tired of carrying on with stunts." Even when there are no stunts the past history of stuntism is rolled out continuously as an excuse for political bankruptcy. But that's to jump ahead.

The serious tendency determined that the battle against stuntism was to be a battle for the soul of the organisation and one which had to be won to turn Class War into a 'seriously credible organisation'.

THE PAPER

"More over-socialised leftism from the pioneers of all talk, no action. Includes an extensive history lesson on the reasons behind the Irish potato famine. Whatever happened to hospitalised copper?"

Review of Class War no 70, Bypass magazine.

The socialist worker version of CW we see today is the proud product of the serious tendency's dominance of Class War. They actually do think that it's a good

paper, "far superior to the early issues" and are bemused that no-one buys it. It does all the things that all the other leftie papers do - history lessons, book and film reviews, and gives C.W. positions on worldwide events. Like all the other papers it gives the C.W. line on the latest news. It is totally safe and predictable - a sort of Class War painting by numbers.

In Bristol's recent document "A critique of would-be Bonists" they write of the the much admired theoretical centre pages that "it came through a need to develop a feature-length article that would explain certain issues relevant at the time."

"Ah so that's it then!" Like all the other leftie papers C.W. EXPLAINS complex issues so that they can be understood by the mugs out there who can't understand them without such expert analysis. The advantage of this explanation technique as any good Trot will tell you, is that you put your own interpretation on the events in the hope that the punters will buy it wholesale.

This is what comes of getting serious, you develop an exalted view of your own theoretical importance. As an early issue of Class War might have said, "You don't need to explain that class society's unfair you just need to go out and kick a few of the bastards." Hospitalised copper was worth a thousand articles on how nasty the police are.

IT'S SO UNFAIR!

In "Revolutionaries and other impediments to revolution" the author whines that everyone is unfairly slagging Class War off, "there are groups and individuals around who are constantly negative, never have anything good to say about anything, who can't wait to slag CW off."

Oh dear, oh dear. What the fuck do you think CW did in the early days but slag everyone off - but now we get some liberal bleating which sounds like Harry Enfield's Kevin about how unfair everyone is to CW.

What the author is really saying is this: "Yes in the past when we were mindless stuntists we could be properly criticised. But now we've been a serious Organisation for years with theory and a proper paper and a book and big words. Yet we're still being criticised for all those crimes of Bone and it's just not fair. If you don't stop it we'll give up and do nothing (Hasn't that been the policy for the last four years anyway?) then you'll have no-one to shout at."

THIS IS THE SUB-TEXT

Just as the Tories continually blame the '60s for all they perceive as wrong despite having been in power for years. So the serious tendency continually blames the stuntist era for their own failures. The serious tendency, and the left, had long lost the working class feel and spirit of the present times.

"CW is overwhelmed with baggage from the past, the myths, the lies and the fantasies have been a millstone round our necks 'BLAH BLAH' we're tired of carrying on with cliches and slogans and stunts which make very

little difference to the status quo."The poor worthy put upon serious tendency. There just ain't no justice for the virtuous.

WOT! NO FEORY!

"Without action you're just posing." Early issue of Class War.

Having rejected stuntism the serious tendency mutated into the "DO NOTHING" tendency - the two went hand in hand since if you were a serious revolutionary then kicking rich people in the street without any analysis was only a stunt. The case was made that too many stunts and frenetic activity were stopping CW from developing a theory or as they put it: "They were more to give us something to do without thinking why we were doing it."

So what was needed was a halt put on any action so that the organisation could spend more time getting its theory together. Hence 'stuntism' had to be demonised to make sure no-one fell back into the bad old ways.

MISTAKE

The fundamental mistake here is to divorce action and theory as if the latter could develop without the former. Since the early days Class War had been developing, out of its stuntism and intervention in industrial struggles (Miners Strike, Wapping) and riots (Brixton) NEW political ideas of its own. They appeared in the paper in articles such as "What do we do when the cops fuck off", "War zones" and "After the riot".

Gradually the creation of working class communities becoming no go areas for the state, and of the physical community being the main focus of resistance rather than the workplace, came through in the paper and early issues of the Heavy Stuff (eg Darren Ryan's article in Heavy Stuff 1). But these were ideas which did not develop out of thin air but developed out of our own initiatives (stunts) and interventions in other struggles.

The theory developed out of our practice and could be tested in practice. Is it any wonder that having abandoned 'doing anything' to spend four years developing "real theory" the serious tendency has even failed to produce ANY theory - the yardstick by which their success could apparently be measured! Other than declining paper sales.

DEMORALISED MOVEMENT

What they have produced is a demoralised movement with no further suggestion for development beyond "calling a big meeting to discuss the future". Mystic Meg presumably to be invited! The last issue of the Heavy Stuff remains Dave Douglass' articles on the miners strike. A faction calling for a halt on all action

to develop theory has failed to produce one issue of its theoretical journal in five fuckin' years! NO PRACTICE, NO THEORY COMRADES!

The Bristol group's latest contribution consists of some tired Rainbow coalition ideas which even Jesse Jackson gave up on years ago. There is of course no mention of the political opportunities the working class might grasp out there beyond the walls of the hermetically sealed theory development unit, such as the unpopularity of the royal family for example. Oh, no comrades, got to get the theory right - no return to stuntism!

The one bit of leftist theory it was thought worth appropriating however was "substitutionism". This was then used to theoretically justify a policy of doing nothing, and attacking stuntism. Any suggestion that CW might take some political initiative or action was decried on the grounds that CW must not substitute itself for the working class.

Only when the whole class was ready to move would CW get involved in some way - possibly "explaining" what was going on to the more

backward members of our class! Thus the Organisation became incapable of acting at all in the face of the theoretical cries of "substitutionism" and "stuntism".

IN DEFENCE OF STUNTISM

Stuntism was, and still is, the snootily derogatory term the serious tendency used to deride any initiative CW took on its own agenda, rather than tailending the left with their own preferred serious analysis of the situation.

Stuntism included the Henley Regatta, the Bash the Rich marches, the Rock Against the Rich Tour, the Notting Hill by-election campaign, disruption of CND and Labour Party rallies, the anti-yuppie campaign, the Better Dead Than Wed Royals record...You get the picture - anything that made CW vibrant and exciting with a working class agenda of its own.

The serious tendency have done an effective Stalinist history interpretation on this period to denigrate and deride it. Contrary to their analysis it was the stuntist campaign and the vibrancy of the early issues of the paper that gave CW its impact among our class. Take the Henley Regatta - the classic "stunt" according to the serious tendency and one which merely "substituted" CW for the class as a whole and therefore should not have happened.

HA, FUCKIN HA HA!!!!!!

The Henley Regatta was designed (1) To put the shifts up the rich bastards at the regatta, (2) To get maximum publicity for what we did. Successful on both



Is it a stunt? No, it's an overturned car.

counts - long live stuntism - and a fuckin' good laugh as well. BINGO!

Others were a flop - the Hampstead Bash the Rich march a fiasco even! Mainly because the police had got their tactics together by then and made us look idiots. So we made some fuckin' mistakes. That's when you learn lessons and develop some new ideas on how not to get fucked over next time - practice - theory - better practice.

The Stop The City events were similar. Small scale event first time, massive success second time, complete fiasco third time as the cops got their act together. You then develop other tactics and actions - you don't give up the fuckin' lot just because you've been made to look stupid on a few occasions.

But being made to look stupid was the one thing the serious tendency feared more than anything - imprisonment or death in the cause of the struggle they feared not, but having ones leftist chums sniggering at one was just too much for one to bear!

The other big gripe the 'sophisticated' tendency have with stunts was that they were hyped up to the press and everyone else and the reality fell far short of the hype therefore damaging CW's credibility. A cross the poor dears have had to bravely bear till this day.

MEASURING BY NUMBERS

On the contrary the stunts were the occasions when you could actually measure in numbers what effect CW was having. We didn't have a fuckin' clue how many would turn up to the Bash the Rich marches or Henley Regatta. Was our paper a waste of time? Was anyone listening? Would anyone act?

We got our answer by the numbers who turned up to these events, who came to the Rock Against the Rich tour, who voted for John Duignan in the Notting Hill by-election, who bottled Neil Kinnock in Hyde Park, who came to Molesworth, who bought the fuckin' record! There was the measurable reality of where we were at - still small but significantly gaining an audience who were prepared to come on actions with us.

But contrary to this, the serious tendency were so horrified at what they saw as the poor turn out at these events that they turned tail and fled, adopting a policy of never calling a specific CW action again so that the paucity of our support could never be revealed. It was they who deluded themselves about CW's support in future because they were too scared to ever put it to the test.

VICTORY TO STUNTISTS?

Stuntism was honest - what you saw was what you got! 200 at Henley, 60 votes at Notting Hill, 8000 at the RAR gigs, 12,000 papers sold, 50 at Molesworth - these were the measurable outcomes from which we could determine the success or otherwise of our strategy. 'Keeping your heads down and never fighting another battle' was a recipe for brain paralysis. And we got it in 'Victory to the Hit Squads' - the most ludicrous CW

front cover of all time! "VICTORY TO THE (non-existent) HIT SQUADS!" CW sellers at the big miners demo reported bemused looks from miners as they touted the 'Victory to the Hit Squads' issue in Hyde park. The problem was that THERE WEREN'T ANY HIT SQUADS!! Wrong strike comrades - seven years too

By the time of the 1992 Leeds conference CW had descended into a state of catatonia. Every proposal for action was defeated by a big majority and any hope of re-establishing a populist movement had vanished. If you have an organisation with an avowed policy of doing nothing then eventually even the most serious of the serious tendency is bound to ask, "Why do we need an organisation to do nothing?"

late! The original CW cover bearing this title in the 1984/5 strike was a great success at a time when miners' hit squads were systematically mounting large scale attacks on NCB property.

Because they had long since abandoned any practical activity the paper group could only think to run the same cover 7 years later when it had no conceivable relevance to the struggle. The suggested cover of full page photo of Heseltine with the caption WANKER across it - a sure fire seller and in keeping with the mood of the rally. Was rejected by the paper group on the grounds that it "didn't have any politics". OVER AND OUT.

NO POPULISM

Isolation from action had deprived the paper group of any feel for populism. The photo of the three party leaders with "wankers" underneath was rejected on the same grounds for the 92 election issue, "no politics comrade". Instead we got an endless series of ninja turtles and overturned cop cars as the blanket answer to everything. In February this year I saw a pile of unsold CWs from last August still on sale at Compendium. The Olympic Special - the only torch we want to see and an overturned cop car. Well relevant to fuckin' what?

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POST 92

Since then CW has been gripped by inertia and a complete poverty of expectation that anything could be achieved beyond "getting the paper out" and a personal ANIMOSITY towards myself that has nonsensical consequences.

The CW comrades decided to have nothing to with the Anarchy in the UK events because "Bone's organised it". So we have Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, a black class struggle American anarchist speaking at a big rally and the CW comrades paper selling outside but refusing to go listen to him for fear of being seen to collaborate with something I've organised!!

Being turned into an "ism" by the Bristol group's recent "Critique of would-be Bonists" containing endless attacks on myself eg "Slandering his opponents - where have you seen that before - You guessed it - BONE!" I thought it time to say a few words in my

defence before I got - Trotsky like - painted out of the picture altogether. Revolutionary movements get fucked up more by personal animosities than by police intervention. Radical ideas such as those CW began with got, and will get, recuperated into everyday leftism.

"Do Nothing" CW cannot rise phoenix like from the ashes. Different circumstances require different forms of action. What we can say is this:

The need for a combative class struggle on the streets movement is as necessary now as when Class War started in 1983. What form it takes is what any class warriors with any fight left in them need to be urgently discussing.

As for Me - I'm up for it!

Ian Bone, March 1997.

A SHORT RANT IN RESPONSE!

The previous article ('I started...So I'll finish it') was written by Ian Bone, one of the founding members of Class War and a leading light during the 1980s and early 1990s. It is a rewrite of Class War's history through the perspective of Ian and ignores or trivialises the truth whenever that conflicts with its revisionism.

But first lets get to the point. The real reason that Ian is so against the last issue of 'Class War' is that it fails to mention him anywhere! What a disaster - poor old Ian, the man who set up and single handedly fought the good fight throughout all those years does not get a mention anywhere. Just to point out - no-one else gets a mention either.

Ian was very important to Class War, he had enormous energy, great creative imagination, was extremely articulate (he could talk the best revolution by far) - but Class War was a lot more than one individual, many other people put in vast amounts of time, risked their liberty (and occasionally lost it), slogged their guts out....if Ian gets a mention, why shouldn't they?

BIGGER THAN YOU

Class War was much much bigger than one individual and to bring it down to one individual undermines its whole spirit. Our struggle is never going to be about some heroic leader.

So to the actual article itself - the basic problem with it is that it pretends that upto about 1992 Class War was a vibrant and dynamic organisation and then it was taken over by "the serious faction". Upto this time, Class War was out and about, active on the

streets, selling loads of papers, doing plenty of stunts - "anything that made Class War vibrant and exciting with a working class agenda of its own". Shurely shome mistake shomewhere?

During the 1980s Class War went up and down like the proverbial yo-yo. Virtually all of the named examples in the article were over and done by 1986/87 at the latest (like bottling Neil Kinnock, the Bash The Rich marches, Stop The City, Henley, etc etc). And when was Molesworth? 1983? 1984? Long time back in the past - those were the old days but somehow Ian manages to make them spread over right upto 1992.

COMING TO LIFE

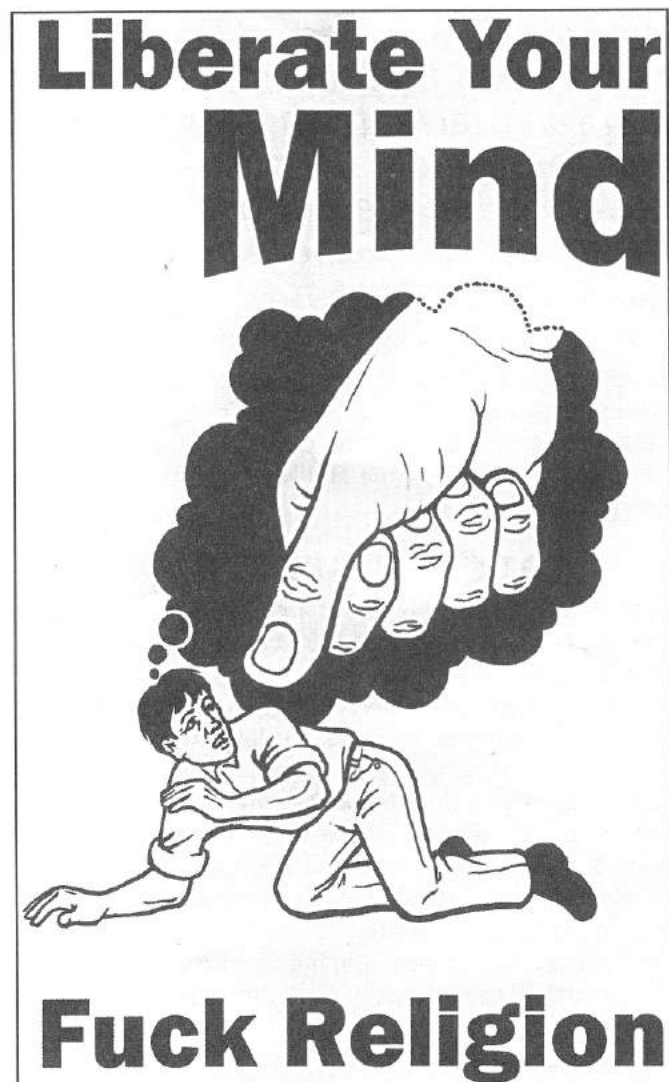
Class War came to life in 1983 and like a screaming baby quickly found life in what was going on around it: the miners' strike, the post-1981 inner city riots, it all provided a perfect platform as theory and practice merged into one and Class War was related to by a small but significant minority - loud, confrontational, violent, in your face and viciously opposed to the rich/the Tories/the Labour party, it was the perfect paper at the right time.

As well as getting stuck in (both verbally and physically) during the miners strike, the 1985 riots, the Wapping dispute, Class War also started to spread its own wings - organising two Bash The Rich marches, partly getting together a semi-riot through Wood Green in an attempt to "open up the second front", going up mob-handed to the Henley Regatta...those were the days.

But then it all tailed off, lost its own energy and towards the 1980s was a pale shell of what had been. There were enough meetings in London held in some rundown squat in Bow with about four people - and outside London little else was happening apart from producing the paper (like a vulgar Trotskyist group, the

paper became more important than anything else - the mantra of must get the paper out wasn't just invented in the 1990s, it was right there in the late 1980s).

One possible reason for this doesn't get a single mention in Ian's article - the creation of the Federation in the mid-1980s and no prizes for guessing why - yes,



the initial establishment of a Class War bureaucracy, that crucial first step down the road to seriousness (Class War was a real, proper political organisation now that it was a Federation!) was Ian's big idea at the time.

From the early days of wrecking Rolls-Royces (pre Federation), Class War then had a 'wreck a roller day' advertised in the paper -but it was expected that other people would go out and do it, not the people putting out the paper!

And not only did the Federation start Class War down the road to bureaucracy, it also caused a significant minority of people to leave - the first split. But this is not mentioned anywhere in Ian's article and, looking back on it, you could say that setting up the Federation was a bad mistake.

So Class War (post riots, post Federation) was dying on its feet until Thatcher, like the dealer to the junkie, give it the shot: the poll tax. Back came the riots, back

came the violence, back came the mass resistance to the state and all its agencies - but, again, this doesn't get a single mention anywhere in Ian's article.

IAN AS THEORETICAL GURU

The irony about Ian criticising the serious faction's theory is that Ian himself is a very theoretical and well read person who could no doubt go on for hours about the Tamil Tigers or whatever - as could some other people in Class War.....but who really gives a fuck about the Tamil Tigers in this country and when did you ever see them mentioned in the paper (or hear anyone talk about it in the pub)?

But don't throw out the baby with the bathwater: the Tamil Tigers are irrelevant in this country but what about the trade unions, what about the green movement, what about numerous other things that we have to understand? Ian writes "we didn't have any fuckin' theory" but he always had plenty and the joke was on the libertarian organisation called Class War that upheld working class self-emancipation and had a very knowledgeable leadership and less knowledgeable followers.

Theory didn't drive away the membership, didn't lose the paper its sales - because all that happened when Ian was still supposedly there during the late 1980s. Theory came out of a sense that the ship was sinking with all hands and we needed to reassess what we were doing and if that meant not having the same article on some pub punch-up and putting in one on the Labour party, then so be it.

After all, you can only read so many articles on pub punch-ups (as much as you can only read so many articles on the Labour party). And that was a problem from those days, the one-dimensionality of the paper - it was good at its time but then it started going nowhere but some people could never accept that fact and just wanted to relive the glory days again and again.

BEING SERIOUS ALL OVER

Ian sets up this division between "the serious faction" and the "non-serious faction" (ie himself and others) - but it's a blatantly false division as many of the so-called "serious faction" have stood there enough times shouting out "get your bleeding anarchist rag here, PC Blakelock chop chop chop". And it's these people's experiences that have now led them to dissolve the organisation because of their frustration and feeling that it was too tied to the past

We could call actions but then no-one (or hardly anyone) would come and it would be completely demoralising for all concerned. There's nothing wrong with calling actions on our own, what is wrong is simply calling them without any thinking through and seeing them as being vitally important. So it's about asking questions and seeing what answers we can come up with, not just ignoring reality like an ostrich upto its neck in the sand. That's no way to getting a revolution.

One joke about Ian going on about the serious faction is that he himself used that word in the first issue of the Heavy Stuff (1987) - in his introduction he stated: "At the Bristol Class War Fed conference in March it was decided to publish a Class War 'theoretical journal'. We felt that many people were attracted to our paper by its bluntness, vibrancy and humour but failed to involve themselves in our political work because they either thought we were not 'serious' or had difficulty working out the political ideas behind the brashness of the paper". Ian was the founder of the serious faction shock horror!

Ian goes on to discuss what ideas Class War had, what we thought of syndicalism and working class history - anyone for a spot of theory? Incidentally, it is a very good article as is the rest of the magazine (for a photocopy, send £1 to the box number) - but it does slightly undermine all that Ian was saying in his previous article.

LIE, LIE AND LIE AGAIN

Ian weakens his argument by his favourite tool - exaggeration: "they actually think that it's a good paper...and are bemused that no one is buying it". But plenty of people did buy it throughout the 1990s (when the so-called "serious faction" were supposedly in charge), we were printing about 5000 copies and on good issues were selling upwards of maybe 4000.

But sales were declining as was the regularity of the paper and the amount of stuff that was written for it - incidentally, maybe one of the reason that sales were declining was that some people (like Ian and the editor of 'Animal') hardly ever did paper sales...unless, of course, it was an easy one like some big demonstration.

And, of course, the sales during the 1980s went up and down like that damned yo-yo - and doesn't Ian remember during the supposed heyday of Class War (mid-1980s) 2,000 copies of issue three being dumped in some bin in Brixton? Things are always a lot more complicated than they actually look.

And the line that there were no more stunts doesn't hold much water either. In London, at least two big stunts were organised in the 1990s (as well as the Communities of Resistance tour in early 1990s, one of Class War's best initiatives and something that we did completely as our own action) - the state opening of Parliament and some rich bastard's ball...both of which were abject failures. And it has to be said that the same was true of the last stunt that Ian was involved in, that one with ships in Bristol where everyone got nicked and then afterwards certain people got completely pissed up.

TIMES CHANGE

One of the problems with stunts is that in the 1980s we could count on getting a fair sized number of people out, ready for action - the Stop The City/punk generation with other malcontents thrown in. The Trafalgar Square riot was the highpoint of this but

since then it has downhill all the way with kids, raving, frustration/boredom, mortgages, new movements, fear of going down undermining what had been. It's a bit of a cliché but you could argue that the

It's a bit of a cliché but you could argue that the shock troops are now off their heads on Ecstasy and waving their arms in the air. You can't recreate the past, nor can you live off the past - all that counts is the present and the future and what the fuck are we going to do about it?

shock troops are now off their heads on Ecstasy and waving their arms in the air. You can't recreate the past, nor can you live off the past - all that counts is the present and the future and what the fuck are we going to do about it?

TALKING SPECIFICS

Just to talk specifically about a couple of stunts that Ian mentions. He says that 8,000 came to the Rock Against the Rich tour but didn't virtually all of them come to see Joe Strummer? That doesn't mean that we are against doing such things but lets at least be a bit honest about it.

Another little point about Rock Against the Rich that Ian forgets to mention is that he was actually strongly against it because it conflicted with the Notting Hill by-election - and as for that, don't forget that Class War's candidate was beaten by the Monster Raving Loony Party. Sometimes jumping in with both feet and no thought doesn't actually work out. The best thing about that, by the way, was that the Tory candidate got beaten up by some people around Class War.

Perhaps the real definition of a stunt is that it's an idea dreamed up by someone who then gets other people to do all the hard work and put their necks on the line - while the originator of that ideas disappear off. Yes, "without action you're just posing", too right but you have posed as much as anyone else if not more - because isn't that the be all and end all of your hyped politics, isn't it all about the pose at the end of the day? But then maybe that's a bit unfair because at times Ian has got his hands dirty and has been directly involved.

The point with the hype is that it only lasts so long and then the emperor is revealed as he really is - with no clothes on. Fuck the media, who gives a toss about them - what about people who are genuinely interested in what Class War was doing and came along to the meetings, only to be sadly disillusioned.

As Ian himself once said (he always had the best stories), some young lad came along to the London Class War meeting and afterwards came up and said

yes, he liked it but he wanted to go to his local branch up Camden way - actually, sorry, this is it. The balloon was punctured and sadly deflated. At the end of the day, revolutionary politics have to be honest if they are to be anything - hype and buzz are acceptable and can be used on certain occasions but you can't hype up revolution out of nothing...or do you think that you can Ian?

ONE BIG MEETING?

Perhaps you do because that is what your 'Ten Days That Shook The World' was: one big hype that had more American punks at it than anyone from this country (maybe a slight exaggeration but you get my drift). And the reason it was boycotted by so many people is that we had all seen your handwork before and we were pissed off with picking up the pieces - not to mention being pissed off with that rainbow coalition that you assembled (I think the pacifists had more meetings/events than anyone else - rather ironic, considering that you helped to marginalise pacifism in the anarchist movement during the 1980s).

But in retrospect the real irony is that we are now trying to reach out to other people beyond the narrow confines of Class War politics (apart from ideological pacifists that is - our standards are higher than yours!).

Just to point out another inaccuracy - people did go into the Lorenzo meeting and weren't just "paper selling outside". Yet maybe you didn't realise that as you fucked off back to Bristol before it was even over, leaving other people to pick up the pieces (where have I heard that one before?).

TIPI VALLEY

At the election in 1992, we put in a lot of work into an anti-election campaign, loads of leaflets distributed, meetings around London, flyposting, graffiti, all that kind of stuff - and this culminated in a march down Whitehall which was resoundingly successful (apart from the fact that there were barely 500 people on it) in that though the cops weren't very keen on it, off we went, did the circuit and hardly anyone nicked. Ian made some stirring speech and then afterwards came up to me and said how funny it was, going on about the working class while "it's like Tipi valley out there".

And just to talk briefly about this recent election - out came with Ian with his 'wankers' posters, boasting that half a million were going to be printed. As usual, the hype was far greater than the reality and maybe a few thousand were handed out.

MORE PROBLEMS

There were problems going on and these problems have been going on for a long time now and that was what ending the paper and the organisation was all about - an acknowledgment of these problems and an attempt to resolve some of them rather than just running around like rats on a treadmill repeating the same stories from the 1980s.



And that, after all, is so much of what 'I started it...' is about - it's all about living in the 1980s, just like the old punks clinging on, it refuses to accept that times have changed and moved on, that no longer can we just repeat what we used to do because we're not getting anywhere.

You would have thought that Ian would have been glad because at a conference in 1992, he put forward a motion to close down the paper and rid the organisation of all its bureaucracy - but it was rejected. Now we have seen the light and realised that the road has come to an end but simply because Ian doesn't get a mention anywhere, he's up in arms about us doing what he wanted us to do about four years ago! There's no justice in this world.

BACK TO BASICS

Class War was a child of the 1980s, its energy, imagination, drive and spirit related directly to working class struggle of that time. But struggles change and those who don't change with it get left behind as has the left.

We don't want to be left behind, we want to be part of whatever is emerging from the cracks and to play our full part in it - and that means dumping what we've got because it isn't going anywhere and, after all, surely that is what we want....to be going somewhere?

N and others

MINUTES OF NATIONAL MEETING OF FORMER MEMBERS OF CLASS WAR FEDERATION(& OTHERS)

Present: four from Bristol, four from London, three from Leeds, two from Birmingham, two from Wolverhampton, one from Worcester, three from Cardiff
Took place in Bristol on 19/7/97

This is a summary of the minutes and except where dealing with practical matters, all ideas are simply being aired and nothing was decided.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We have moved further down the road than where Class War was. It is essential that we move past the stage of discussing/mainly agreeing with the content of the last paper. We need to look forward and put forward a dream that will appeal to all working class people including those that are 'comfortably off'.

We need a more positive approach in which we need to show that revolution is something worth having. People will take the rough if there's something worth having. Capitalism relies on this all the time. For us to rely on hating everything is not good enough. That is too easily boxed into being part of the 'loyal opposition'.

The left is in disarray because it is becoming more and more isolated from the working class. We need the working class with us now. We need to have a dream and sell it. Life can be at its best all the time and not just for five minutes a week. Capitalism sells people freedom through wealth. The lottery for example: 'if you win then you will be free to do anything you wish, with no more worries.'

WHAT ORGANISATION?

We need to convince people that we are worth listening to and joining in with. We have to know what sort of organisation is required for that purpose. Our ways in the past/present have failed - if selling papers was going to start a revolution surely it would have happened - we need to make our ideas workable for all of us and get them across as wide as possible. What is needed now? What is plausible? We need to be bold and vibrant, we need to be prepared to experiment.

The left is seen negatively, always arguing among themselves. If we could work together it would be a step forward. So far from meetings around the country it seems that people are not yet prepared to part with their old baggage. Whilst being interested they are holding back until something more is on offer. We need to take the positive from our past and move on. We

don't want to discuss CW anymore and avoid old arguments, 'syndicalism vs left communism' etc. The anarchist scene is only part of anti-capitalists, whilst we should try and salvage what is worthwhile, we shouldn't limit ourselves to the anarchist scene, after all we live in a country of 57 million people and the anarchist scene is about 57 people in their own little world along with the SWP, RCG etc.

The corpse of the anarchist movement is not the ideas, it is the size, it is so minuscule. 18 months ago

The corpse of the anarchist movement is not the ideas, it is the size, it is so minuscule. 18 months ago it had an upsurge, now it is dead. Many anarchists think that anarchists make the revolution, we should seek to be a current of thought that affects/interests people. We should aim for the sky not the top of the gutter, nothing on the left attracts us, we have to be something new, be ambitious and if it fails we can always go back to hunt sabbing.

it had an upsurge, now it is dead. Many anarchists think that anarchists make the revolution, we should seek to be a current of thought that affects/interests people. We should aim for the sky not the top of the gutter, nothing on the left attracts us, we have to be something new, be ambitious and if it fails we can always go back to hunt sabbing.

BUILDING BLOCKS

We have to build something that starts with the working class, taking on where our class is at. The working class choose from what's on offer, Lab/Lib/Con or whoever, recently they chose Blair, not because they were hoodwinked but as the 'best of the bunch'. We need to get into our class' heads. We need to move our orientation away from marginal. Changing political

culture is to be able to communicate our ideas wider. The way we do things is crucial. People in struggle tend to organise in an anarchist/grassroots way (and politicians often fuck it up), they change things through their own needs, will and vision. Class War in the past fell into the trap of thinking that there is only one working class culture. The working class is diverse. The world is not black and white, it is grey and it is constantly changing. The left spend too much time doing things that are not part of 'normal life'... meetings in smoky backrooms, papersales. If we have something to say we must say it where people are at.

Perhaps the best approach is to try and address people not 'tainted' by political groups who have their own niche and place in the market. Old forms of working class power have been smashed, we need to re-form (not reform) and have a go back. Unless we come with new methods we will be stuck in the old ways. Politics isn't just about demos and meetings.

THE ITALIAN JOB

We could look at the Social Centres in Italy - social and political activity but minding that we don't end up sliding back into the anarchist ghetto. Communists and fascists have used sports clubs (as an example) to build movements. Reclaim the Streets has some good ideas and has an anti-capitalist current.

These ideas will be attractive to some but again not all of working class. Someone suggested Easton Cowboys, a local Bristol football team, as a good model - self-organised, open, inclusive, a social group that has drawn people into 'politics'. The danger of 'going back to the community' is dissipating your politics and ending up with a handful of people getting paid jobs. There is a need to keep some form of political organisation.

BEING LOCAL

Local activity and being part of a national current are not mutually exclusive. Acceptance of mass class violence is a step forward from the 60s and 70s. Struggle is at an all-time low, we need to examine ourselves with that in mind. Need to confront our past failures in practice and ideas.

Over the next few years we need to develop a strategy to see us through the next 20-30 years. We have been good at tactics but weak at strategy. Is it more effective to target more disenfranchised groups? Is it by being active that you pull more people in? Class War targeted specific sections of the class but our class is massively different...is it so bad to have a black BMW after all? We have never addressed 'Sierra Man/Woman'. Should we? Or leave them to Blair and the Tories?

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

At present meetings have taken place in Leeds, London, Nottingham, Bristol and Birmingham. Notts is disorganised, Manchester Class War has disbanded for unrelated reasons. Scotland is not gelling as yet. No news from Lancaster. Cardiff response to paper is good but no ideas for moving it on. London meeting suggested monthly networking meetings to discuss ideas and action, and a big mobilisation for the Anarchist bookfair, maybe invite 1 in 12 and others to talk.

A meeting held at the Northern anarchist bookfair in Bradford (May) was good, but people not prepared to commit themselves. Maybe we have misjudged things, people are not prepared to get involved until we are proposing something concrete as opposed to staring at the black hole. Solution is some form of self activity.

Must be careful not to end up in the situation where you do something because you think you ought to. An open national weekend meeting in Bradford was suggested to co-ordinate the process. CW's process of dissolution has started people talking which is inclusive...we must build on that. We need to have some ideas to put forward to that meeting otherwise we end up with the same discussion and get nowhere.

THE IWCA

It was acknowledged that we share a lot of common ideas with people in the Independent Working Class

Association and that our politics are not that different to Red Action. We should open dialogue with RA/IWCA and broaden our Discussion Bulletin.

Was the IWCA set up as a cynical ploy or was it an attempt to widen the politics of AFA? The BNP stood back from the streetfights so leaving AFA isolated/with no-one to fight. The BNP wanted to win the battle for minds, so RA tried to respond. The IWCA is a response to a political situation rather than a front organisation. Whilst there may be problems in some areas ie London in others there are not.

Bristol were delegated to write to the IWCA/Red Action and air our suspicions and reservations in a frank and honest

way in an attempt that they may be resolved.



Support your local blooms!

CONCLUSION

A positive meeting. We need to push forward now, we need to up the momentum and avoid drifting. We want the Discussion Bulletin to be a movement wide vehicle for debate and ideas. Must be inclusive. November meeting in Bradford? Only problem is accommodation. Aim for it but it's not set in stone. London comrades producing Discussion Bulletin, first one to come out in October.

REALIGNING THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT: SOME IDEAS

OUR BROAD AIMS

1. To change the whole political culture of 'being a revolutionary'.
2. To bring together a pool of people involved in struggle.
3. To realign revolutionaries/the revolutionary movement in Britain.
4. To set up an umbrella organisation for all revolutionary groups. It's particularly hard being a small group because on the one hand you want to be involved in something concrete (a 'single issue?'), yet you still want to retain an overall revolutionary perspective. We need a structure which revolutionaries can feel part of, without necessarily having to join. Such an organisation must be political without being sectarian.

WHAT IS REALIGNMENT?

1. Re-inspiring people we know have similar politics.
2. Beginning to change culture so that 'being political' is normal – we need to bring politics back into everyday life.
3. Changing political culture, the way 'politicos' work. We all need to accept that all struggles are linked – by being involved in one struggle we are involved in all struggles.
4. Without these cultural changes, 'realignment' will simply mean the bureaucratic reorganisation of a national group.

WHAT ARE OTHERS DOING?

We are not alone. There are other people who are interested in 'new ways of doing politics', and linking diverse struggles. For example:

1. The series of 'Intercontinental Meetings For Humanity Against Neoliberalism', or 'Encounters'. So far there's been one in Mexico (1996?) and one in Spain (August 1997). There was also another international meeting in Berlin in 1996. The last meeting, the one in Spain, lasting 9 days, was attended by 3000 comrades.
2. Some of the Internet discussion groups (e.g., aut-op-sy, labournet, anarchy).
3. Magazines like Radical Chains and Aufheben, who are trying to theorise 'new social movements' in terms of class and move beyond 'anarchist vs. Trot' understanding of politics.

HOW SHOULD WE RELATE TO THESE THINGS/PEOPLE?

It's very easy to criticise: how many people have the time and money to go to a foreign country for a meeting? Are these people 'ahead' of us because they are looking towards international realignment, or is

this goal unrealistic?; are local groups the best we can do at the moment? Who has access to the Internet?. Radical Chains and Aufheben read as being esoteric and academic. But can we afford the luxury of dismissing them? Perhaps 'it takes all sorts'.

HOW DO OTHERS SEE US?

Reaction to Class War, no. 72 was generally positive, if critical. But few people are queuing up to get involved



and help 're-found the revolutionary movement'. People quite like the idea of what we want to do, but are unwilling to take what they see as a leap into the unknown. They want evidence of more concrete ideas; till then, most want to wait and see.

IMMEDIATE AIMS AND THE CONFERENCE

1. We want to get as many people together as possible.
2. 'Handpicking' (who we see as) bona fide revolutionaries isn't an option (a. why should they

come? what are we offering?; b. are we to be sole judges of who can be involved?). We have to appeal as widely as possible, and therefore accept that there will be many people who we perhaps don't agree with very closely. This doesn't mean we wish to throw open the doors to all and sundry.

3. We are looking towards a realignment of revolutionaries in Britain. However, despite the positive impact of Class War no.73, we don't think it is possible to organise a conference around this theme. Realignment will be a process; it won't happen because of resolutions and discussion at one conference alone. Basically, if we advertise the conference along these lines nobody will come.

WE WANT THEM INVOLVED!

4. Despite their limitations, the 'Intercontinental Meetings', Internet discussion groups, etc. seem to be quite successful, certainly involving genuine revolutionaries. We shouldn't ignore this. They are obviously exclusive, but participation in our conference will make them less so. We want them involved now. We can also invite campaign groups (e.g., Reclaim the Streets, Liverpool Dockers, AFA) to set up stalls or exhibits.

5. Because we don't think it's possible to resolve a revolutionary realignment, the conference needs more concrete objectives if people aren't to leave thinking it a failure. A more realistic objective might be simply to meet other revolutionaries and activists and ask

definite questions.... We need to work out what these questions are, and make them clear on conference publicity. Again, we might learn something from participants in the Intercontinental Meetings and Internet discussion groups. If things go reasonably well, we could aim to launch a movement-wide (paper and ink) discussion bulletin on the back of the conference.

6. The conference should probably be organised along workshop lines, each led by a facilitator who knows what they're doing (so we don't get side-tracked). Hopefully we can invite others to organise and lead many workshops, or even streams of workshops. But there should also be time spent together. Social activities are really important for breaking down barriers and establishing trust.

7. November is too soon. We need time to discuss ideas amongst ourselves; we need to involve other people; we need to be able to publicise widely at least two months in advance. All this will take time. We suggest March 1998 (it's too cold and dark in January and February); but, we should have a definite date and place to advertise at the Anarchist Bookfair in October.

Once you've read this and we next meet we need to agree and be certain of why we're having the conference and what we want out of it.

A,B,D,K,N (Leeds Class War).

NOTTINGHAM CLASS WAR REPORT

IWCA

The plans in Nottingham is to involve ourselves with a broader group of people using the Independent Working Class Association to this end. Members of Notts Class War were part of the original IWCA in Nottingham and have continued to meet with like-minded people to look at how to run the group.

We are starting off with a leaflet specific to the Hyson Green/Forest Fields area, mainly in response to the local residents association, formed recently by an unelected group of councillors, police etc. The leaflet is anti-council, anti-police and pro-working class and will be distributed to every (we hope!) household. This will probably be followed by a public meeting.

ANARCHISTS/AFA/IWCA

A couple of us attended the 'Anarchists in AFA' meeting held recently in Nottingham. We agreed with the proposal coming from that meeting suggesting that the anarchists in AFA will involve themselves with the IWCA - a document outlining these suggestions is being drafted. There are plans to hold a conference and it was suggested that this could be merged with CW's conference.

This is a proposal to the Bristol (ex-CW) meeting: "The CW conference proposed to be held later in the year to be merged with the plans of the Independent anarchist meetings whose aims are conducive with CW's and could make the conference more constructive". Contact with Bristol AFA should make this clearer.

PAPER

Feedback has been very good and could point the way to repeating this style of paper - well thought-out articles presented in a similar way could make up further issues. Notts would be willing to contribute. Paper money - roughly £60 which we intend to raise from members' contributions or sales of the paper at gigs etc.

THE FUTURE (sort of)

We want to continue to work locally and believe that it would be worthwhile doing this through the IWCA rather than going through the long and painful process of setting up another organisation.

Notts lot

A CUNNING PLAN, SIRE.

I think the intentions of the majority of members of the Class War Federation who put their full weight behind the last issue of Class War were:

1. Instigate thought and debate to follow from and expand on the sentiments of that last issue.

2. To work primarily locally to encourage enthusiasm for a regrouping of anarchists/libertarians in Britain. The idea was always to encourage aligned and non-aligned politicians along with working class people who had followed the ideas/view/sentiments of the paper, but realised the need for different organisations and networks and a fresh look at class struggle activism and the politics behind this activism. To some extent this has happened, mainly in London, it seems.

3. To work towards a national 'anarchist' conference with maximum participation in its preparation, agenda, aims etc.

4. To move on from the successes (and disappointments) experienced while doing the above, to continue to concentrate with others, in networks and (new) organisations, on the galvanisation of, and ways forward for libertarians in Britain.

IT'S GOING TO BE HARD

I think the above has proven hard. I believe that this is because many of us have been subject to some of the very aspects of capitalism that we hate the most: without an organisation telling you what to do, where to be, how to participate (whether you were a member, supporter or critic of Class War) the ground is moved somewhat and it is no longer useful to either toe party lines or to agree with what the organisation says or to criticise/disagree with it.

To some extent there is a vacuum and there is no 'leadership of ideas'. There is no more Class War to rally behind or rail against. We have to think for ourselves, re-examine old ideas, chuck many of them out and move forward. Equally, things are moving slowly and some of us are frustrated with this.

Following a recent discussion in Bristol, I thought that this basic plan might help libertarians in the above aims:

1. Continue networking with groups and individuals, while attempting to avoid the stale old political meeting in the smokey backroom of a pub that tends to put off all but the most dedicated (white, male, childless) politico. We very much like the London idea

of picnics, for example. I also like the idea of meeting interested folk on their own territory, rather than the typical lefty 'meet you in the pub' or 'two of us'll pop round to see you at your place'.

Equally, this discussion bulletin is an obvious forum to share ideas, plans, disagreements, political developments. I hope it is well used and well worth reading every time. I'd like the bulletin to have a catchy name so that people involved can identify with it, and use the name as they see fit. I say this because it seems as though we need some kind of general identity at the moment. It also seems true that people need to hang their hat on something and publications tend to act as useful pegs. On that note, we should do our best to encourage maximum readership of and contribution to the bulletin.

AND MORE...

2. Continue (or increase) the production of whatever propaganda local groups/individuals see fit.

In Bristol we hope to launch Image Nation - which will, without a banner headline or political group name, produce leaflets, posters, graffiti, articles etc. on whatever we want.

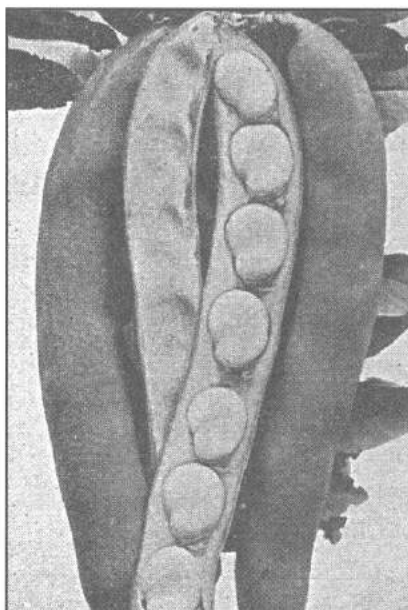
A now out-of-date overdue poster idea was to show a car crash with the caption Dodi Did Di, Di's Dead, The State Don't Mind Because The State Does You (or words to that effect). One of the best things libertarians/anarchists do (and have done) is the production of propaganda and its production and distribution seems to keep interest.

3. To use these predominantly local groupings to prepare for, organise and bring off a successful and meaningful libertarian conference. I don't think this should have a particular time scale, but should be taken as a priority.

4. These may seem like mind-numbingly simple and unexciting ideas, but I think a lot of momentum, and therefore enthusiasm is being lost, because we don't know where to go next. Until we have a general agreement on the nature of class, the best approach to class warfare and the networks and organisations we want to use, we'll be floundering.

It seems to me that the process of preparation for a national conference, with a keen eye on what that conference is a springboard for, is a necessity in galvanising our (new) ideas and way forward for the next millennium.

BALDRICK TENDENCY, BRISTOL



Broad beans are best!

STUFF IT UP THE ARSE OF THE RULING CLASS!

An area I've been very keen on for a long time is us libertarians having a crack at a class analysis for the '90s, or more importantly, for the decades ahead.

It's plainly not effective to rely on the ideas handed down to us by the left, with their interpretations of what Marx, Gramsci etc. had to say. Neither is it appealing to rely on the idea that revolution is inevitable. There hasn't been one in the world's history and without a huge push, I've no reason to expect capitalism to fall off the cliff during my lifetime.

BEYOND MARXISM?

I think we can go down in history as the people who superseded Marx, but this is only incidental because my main argument is that the Left, anarchists in particular, seem heavily reliant on a concept of class that is as outdated as the flat caps and donkey jackets that were de rigeur for Militant paper sellers 13 years ago.

The point I'm trying to make is that a flexible and relevant understanding of the way that class, and particularly the (international) working class is comprised and is affected by capitalism, is essential to our politics, our political development and how we act within our class ie what issues are important, where we concentrate our energies, what allies we make and what issues and potential allies and enemies are effectively red herrings. I'd be pleased if this could become an area that runs through issues of this bulletin, and here's why.

UNDERSTANDING

To have an understanding of the way that capitalism functions is a key to understanding what capitalists will and won't do in order to maintain profit for the lowest outlay. Generally my understanding is that this takes the form of the way in which money is spent, we are exploited and the State is constituted and influenced in making decisions.

These decisions take the form of prison, police, legislation education (or lack of it), social conditions, the dismantling of welfare benefits (Welfare to Work), blah, blah, blah!

This is, after all, the purpose of capitalism - the maximisation of profit and the control of the means of production. Increasingly it seems that it is not the furnace or the printing press that is the means of production, but us, human beings - producers. However, I disagree with the quaint old anarchist idea that capitalism is a huge conspiracy theory, a many

headed evil beast with a single beating heart. It is only a way in which economic systems are ordered, and leads to capitalists competing with each other for our hearts, minds and cheque books. At present, they seem very effective at doing so, and as an economic method, there are no areas of the world not affected.

IT'S ALL BLURRED TO ME MATE!

The edges may be blurred and class mobility slightly easier than it was 200 years ago, but if you accept the idea that there are ruling, middle and working classes in every country, then the work we have to do is to clarify what it is to be working class and how now the middle class are employed to keep the working class in order on behalf of the ruling class.

If we can do this, taking full account of the increasing diversity of the working class, and its apparent lack of solidarity, we can have an informed position from which to attack.

This means not only concentrating on the ways and means of global capitalism, but also on the ways that capitalism encourages and nurtures divisions within our class - based on income, unemployment, age, gender, ethnic origin, sexuality etc.

DESIGNER ANARCHISM

A comrade once explained to me the idea of recuperation - by which capitalists sell back your own produce to you. An example is designer @ T-Shirts at absurd prices. Selling rebellion back to the kids is a good way to profit and to reduce the effect of this rebellion by introducing it as a commodity. Arguably, the presence of the rather unpleasant Swampy on the telly, in The Mirror etc. is another recent example. It's certainly helped various capitalists make a few £s from struggles against them.

The diversity amongst working class people is another area that we have to get a handle on. Without wittering on, my example is that African Caribbean folk where I live seem very suspicious of the increasing Somali community, who, in turn, appear to have far more in common with each other than people of their own class.

Although tensions exist, some refugees I have met will identify more with people of the same country who would have had them dead very recently, than they do with fellow working class Jamaicans.

I'd like this to kick off an ongoing discussion - how about you?

BALDRICK TENDENCY - BRISTOL

EDITED VERSION OF REPORTS ON SECOND ENCOUNTER.....

First one by Andrew Flood

Like the first encounter the organisation of the second encounter in itself deserves a few comments. The encounter was planned and organised on a European level with three continental meetings, the first in Zurich in December of 1996, then in Prague and finally Barcelona. The encounter was thus organised without a central committee through co-operation on a continental level demonstrating the possibility of a different way of organising.

The news of the encounter flowed down many paths in many languages. It made huge jumps via the internet and fax and smaller ones as leaflets, pamphlets, on radio shows, in photo exhibitions and during a million conversations. In these ways the news of the encounter to be was put into the hands of those marching in Derry in February 1997 against the massacre of civilians by the British army there 25 years earlier, but it also reached landless campesinos occupying land in Brazil, refugees from the Western Sahara in camps in Southern Algeria, anti-road protesters in Britain, 1st nation activists in Canada, those running a 'pirate university' for workers in Turkey, environmental campaigners in Columbia, academics in South Africa, anarchists in Poland, the list goes on and on.

It echoed right down to the villages in the mountains and jungle of the Mexican South East where the idea of the first encounter had emerged from...

GETTING INFORMED

The information sub-table of the culture mesa consisted of a hundred people meeting as guests of the Ateneu Popular (Popular/peoples centre) in the Nou Barris suburb of Barcelona. The first and only item on our agenda was how we were going to conduct the discussions. Put 100+ activists in a room with this alone in front of them and you're asking for trouble, and indeed this resulted in an afternoon of discussion on whether we should meet as one large group or not and the following morning what areas of discussion each group should have.

We came up with quite a novel solution which recognised the different reasons people had in coming to the encounter and the particular needs they had.

There were three topics of discussion:

1. A critique of the existing (neoliberal) media;
2. Our experiences of alternative media;
3. Constructing a the network of communications between struggle.

Rather than each group taking one of these the first group of around 25 people discussed 1, 2 and 3. The second group of around 40 people discussed 2 and 3 and the

third group also of around 25 people discussed 3 only. This meant those who had come for developing an analysis or an

education



Participants await leadership

could join the first group while those of us in a rush to construct something practical joined the C group. Although it wasn't obvious at the time the process of reaching these decisions was in itself very useful in drawing the group of 100 or so together and defining the purpose for which we had come...

ISN'T IT CONCRETE YET?

This seems a fitting place to comment on the purpose of the encounter. Too often such meetings are designed and judged only in terms of concrete written outcomes. So everything becomes streamlined to reach these outcomes and commonly democratic process goes out the window. This may occur directly by having a pre-set and rigid agenda and eliminating all discussion of this or in an indirect way by not allowing time for translation and understanding of what is being said.

It was a strength (if perhaps also at times a source of frustration) that at the information table at least this was not allowed to happen. Despite the fact that we were some 100 people speaking many different languages and from widely varied experiences, our discussions aimed at generating if not a consensus then at least the formation of a question to be voted on that was reached by seeking consensus.

BLUEPRINT MASSIVE

Perhaps using the more traditional way we would have emerged at the end of the week with a massive blueprint of intermeshing cogs in a global information

network but like so many grandiose documents before it this would have represented another paper tiger destined to spontaneously combust in the heat of any real struggle...

We spent much of our time deciding what needed to be discussed, this in itself of course highlighted many vital questions. In time I hope some of the detailed agreement reached in these discussion will be made available on the net, for we made some effort to produce agreed documents/statements...

How can we show solidarity between the different nodes of communication? How can we develop the many media forms? Can we construct a network of exchange of people so those travelling can come into contact with local activists? How do we prepare to defend the nodes of our network and the network itself from the repression which will inevitable follow success? How can we arrange an exchange of skills within the network so that people can be trained where this is needed?

ORGANIC GROWTH ANYONE?

One problem with this discussion was the different expectations people had of the network and of what was possible. Some had clearly come with the idea that at the end of the week we would have a detailed plan of a new network of communication and how it could be put into operation. But the network we have described is an organic one already in existence and already growing. Our role was more to begin a description of it and come up with ways to encourage its growth.

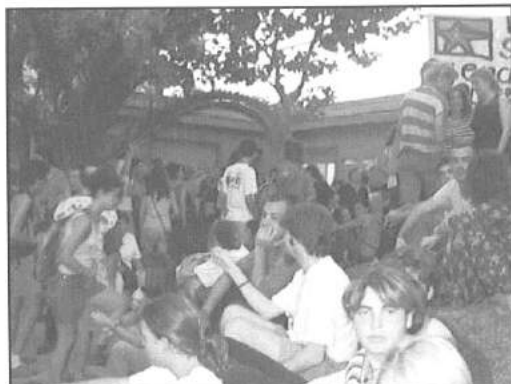
Another highlight of the week was the showing of a video of the Milan train occupations. These occurred in June of this year when 4,000 Italians occupied two trains in Milan and succeeded in travelling right across Europe to the demonstration against the EU summit in Amsterdam, focal point of the European march against unemployment.

The video was produced by Italian autonomists from a social centre in Rome that we were thrilled to learn was in an old military fort complete with a castle and a drawbridge. Both of these were two among many examples of how the encounter was bringing people from different traditions of struggle into contact with each other so that we could draw inspiration and learn from each others struggles.

HAVING A GOOD TIME

Outside of the formal sessions, a constant one to one exchange of experiences was also taking place, as we met over breakfast, dinner and lunch or for a drink in the bar. There, criticisms of the organisation of the

encounter were mulled over, too many parties, too much travel, not enough attention on subsidising the expenses of people from Africa, Asia and Latin America.



Sitting down for Jesus

Alongside this were the more personal experiences of struggle in our respective countries and our individual experiences of organisations involved in those struggles. These threw up many, many political issues, new perspectives and new ways of looking at old problems. The value of this sort of exchange cannot be over estimated, by seeing the struggles of others we come to understand out struggles better...

STRUGGLE ON...

The 2nd encounter ended but the encounter for humanity and against neoliberalism goes on. Each returning activist is telling this story in their own words, in their own language to their friends, their organisations and within their struggles.

From there perhaps many more will take interest and come to see the need for "...a collective network of all our particular struggles and resistances. An intercontinental network of resistance against neoliberalism, an intercontinental network of resistance for humanity. This intercontinental network of resistance, recognising differences and acknowledging similarities, will search to find itself with other resistances around the world. This intercontinental network of resistance will be the medium in which distinct resistances may support one another. This intercontinental network of resistance is not an organising structure; it doesn't have a central head or decision maker; it has no central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who resist."

Edited reports of Madrid Mesa 1a, "Work and the Means of Production", and 1b, "Creating Conditions for a Life with Dignity" by Franco Barchiesi

We came together to help make a world of dignity and justice and well-being for all humanity. This should include the dignified, democratic participation of us all, women and men, in producing the material things we need, redistributing the wealth, raising our children, and taking care of each other.

But neoliberal capitalism offers us misery and exploitation so that to work is to create the chains of poverty and subservience for most of us and wealth for

a few. The system of capitalist work is a system of divisions and hierarchies: isolated individuals competing with each other through competing national economies, hierarchies between women and men, between north and south and within them, by race and national origin, by wage and kind of work.

AGAINST CAPITALIST WORK

So our struggles against work must also overcome these divisions if they are to be successful. Changes in the nature of work under neoliberalism are inherently contradictory.

On one hand, employment is more necessary than ever in order to survive. But employment is less and less available and rewarding. This creates the conditions for increasing conflict against capitalist waged work. So we meet in this mesa to share our understanding of work under capitalism and to develop the ideas, strategies, demands and networks of communication and struggle that will enable us to go beyond capitalism and create a diverse and just world, to dare to invent our future...

Capitalists try to reduce all of human life to work and consumption in the market. Capitalist work is thus exploitation, so that the demand for capitalist work is the demand to be exploited. Many ways are used to force us into this exploitation. However, to work as humans is to produce and reproduce our conditions of life and means to relate with each other. The human way to work is not of competing atomistic individuals, but of social individuals working in cooperative, dignified, and democratic arrangements...

BLOODSUCKERS

Today, neoliberal capital uses every kind of work in its efforts to suck profit out of the lives of people. Much of the work in the world, perhaps that of half the people of the world, is done in ways that are not directly or immediately part of the market. This comprises mostly forms of agricultural work and life, but also includes the many areas of the informal economy. The rule of money finds ways to exploit this work, make profit from it, and to bring it under market control.

Neoliberalism depends on increased exploitation of the unwaged and more unpaid work from everyone. Unpaid work includes all the work traditionally done by women in the home to raise children, make men ready for work outside the home, nurse the sick, care for the elderly, and reproduce the entire domestic sphere.

It includes unpaid forced overtime, time spent looking for work, and labour obligations for landlords

and local political bosses. Neoliberalism also blurs the distinction between waged work and semi-slavery by imposing flexi-time, on-call labour, self-employment, working at home — all ways in which the whole life is, like in slavery, reduced to work for capital.

The neoliberal offensive removes labour protection laws relating to limits on hours of work, security of labour contracts, and the minimum wage. It imposes workfare in which capitalist work is made a requirement for receiving state unemployment and welfare benefits.

Capitalists try to reduce all of human life to work and consumption in the market. Capitalist work is thus exploitation, so that the demand for capitalist work is the demand to be exploited....The human way to work is not of competing atomistic individuals, but of social individuals working in cooperative, dignified, and democratic arrangements...

New superexploited and insecure forms of work are imposed, especially on women and increase the exploitation of the family. These policies are imposed in both north and south, and they make conditions in the north more similar to those in the south...

Struggles to reduce capitalist work time, to control land and the means of production, and to build alternative ways to produce and reproduce our life can unite diverse people against the inhuman vampire called neoliberal capital. We recognise that to survive we engage in many particular struggles over immediate issues, but when linked these

struggles can open the door to wider and deeper struggles.

PRINCIPLES

We need therefore to develop principles with which we can analyse our struggles to see if they put us in a better position to overcome the inhuman way of life we are forced into, whether they reduce hierarchies and create wider spaces of shared democratic participants.

Some of these principles include: to reduce the risk of being co-opted by capital; to ensure that our struggles and demands correspond to many sectors, needs and aspirations; and to ensure they embody a principle of human liberation. We must therefore be sure that reductions in work in one place are not at the expense of work in another. We can also develop principles that distinguish between projects imposed from the top or outside by capitalism, and those from the bottom and inside, from the people.

The struggle to reduce capitalist work allows more time to struggle against capital and more time to develop alternative ways to produce, live and redistribute domestic chores...

ALTERNATIVE SPACES

Creating alternative spaces for production and social life is good in itself because these spaces enable relations that are outside of and beyond the market. They also can put limits to capitalist expansion and support creation of spaces in which struggles can grow

and be protected. We can learn through this how to create many visions of ways to organise our lives and production. The satisfaction of needs outside of direct control of the capitalist market enables us to fight capital on a terrain that is more favourable to us.

These forms of alternatives can develop out of traditional forms of work, but some traditional forms involve exploitation and also must be abolished. Many forms of third sector work (supposedly depending neither on the market nor the state) are not true alternatives to capitalist work, but instead are a new form of lower-waged capitalist work.

NORTH AND SOUTH

All these struggles — to reduce work time, guarantee income, gain control of means of production, and developing alternatives — can be raised in both south and north, but in different ways that respond to the different particularities.

These struggles can be contradictory, so we need to pay careful attention to how they can support and strengthen each other and not be used against each other. Our struggles are much stronger when they are combined so that each particular demand is not isolated or coopted.

We need to create a process of building on and enriching our struggles that includes careful study and honest discussion. It is also important in this process of work to transform the relations between women and men in both personal and political lives. This means that men, not only women, assume the responsibility of this struggle.

NEW WORLDS

To make successful struggles and to win a new world, we need many forms of organisation. We insist on the right of all people to organise and defend themselves from attack by states, corporations, paramilitary and fascist groups...

To win our demands along the way toward a new world that contains many worlds, we must develop strategies and analyse them in light of our goals and principles. We must also understand the institutions and process of neoliberalism in their military, financial, political, ideological and cultural forms, as well as neoliberal forms of production and consumption.

We understand that the neoliberal capitalist system is only one of many expressions of exploitative power that exist, some of which pre-date capitalism, including patriarchy, racism, and caste distinctions. We are committed to fight against exploitative power and oppression in all their multiple forms and guises.

We have agreed to create networks as a fundamental

form of organisation, rather than parties or other forms of organisation. We see these networks as horizontal and participatory, as ways of living in part the future we are struggling to make, though we recognise that the construction of the networks as such will not solve the problems of power and democracy in the ways we organise ourselves.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

But we have many questions about the best ways to proceed: —how can we build upon existing networks? —should we set up our own network and undertake struggles specific to our own network so that people will take the Encuentro even more seriously? —how should we begin networks — locally, regionally,

nationally, globally, or by subject or some combination? —how can we include struggles not represented by participants in the network? —how can we create new ways to link struggles and networks and support each other? —how can we best use a mix of electronics and print media to reach people? —are there limits to networks as a form of struggle, and if so, what more do we need to create?

Actions coordinated across national boundaries by a network for practical struggle can take many forms including: —civil disobedience —boycotts of

specific transnational corporations, against their labour practices, their attacks on indigenous peoples and their ecologically destructive actions —campaigns against payment of taxes for destructive ends, such as the military —political and solidarity strikes —mass public actions against austerity, structural adjustment and the institutions which impose them, and all neoliberal practices; and —self-defence by any means necessary.

***Edited comment from Monty Neill
(involved with US journal Midnight
Notes)***

Mesa 1a talked about several interim goals/demands: less work (and here waged work/employment vs unwaged work for capital vs non-capitalist work all need to be sorted out), guaranteed income, access to/control of means of production.

Mostly this was only touched on, not really discussed, and includes demands for land; thus of the topics of work and production, the sub-mesa focused on work, and developing alternatives (the most



Rough translation: "Princess Di was a modern day saint and we salute her".

contentious of these topics, I think). None of these goals — all of which might best be seen as efforts to position the working class on stronger ground vs capital (as Franco emphasises), all of which are partial and cooptable, and all of which are only partly point us out of capitalism — were really addressed in strategic terms.

Question: how do we initiate a discussion of strategies? In what little was said at the submesa, it seems that people see networks and strategies as primarily, or at least initially, local; but also there are ongoing campaigns of Zapatista support in many places, anti-Maastricht (Europe), anti-World Trade Organisation (planetary; and an issue that involves many kinds of forces); and often people also are involved in national-level struggles. All these involve strategies (clear or not) — goals, plans for achieving them, etc. — which can and should be discussed, analysed, etc. However, they were not. I do not offer a solution to this lack, only to suggest we make addressing it a priority.

KEY ISSUES

Some comments on key issues that were addressed at mesa 1a/b in Madrid:

Reduction of work: mesa 1a Madrid came out in favour of reducing work for capital as an end in itself and for enabling further, stronger attacks on the system, rather than in order to create more jobs — but we can work in alliance with those who see this goal as mainly for creating more jobs. (I recently saw a piece citing World Bank report for 1996 promoting a reduction in employed time in exchange for lower wages and more people employed — so we most certainly must be very careful on this strategy.)

We recognised that work involves much more than employment: but what is the strategy for reducing work for capital that is not waged, e.g., much of what is housework. There have been proposals over the past several decades, but none have succeeded. I look forward to finding out if any of the women's/anti-patriarchy mesas discussed this issue.

DIFFERENT FORMS

This issue also takes very different form depending on circumstances: is one a waged/salaried employee (full or part time), a housewife, a micro-entrepreneur, a small farmer, some combination of these, or unemployed (to name significant sectors of the planetary class of workers)? Reduction of work means different things in these different circumstances.

The discussion at the mesa focused, I think, on the quantitative aspects of work: we seek less work for capital. We did not address the qualitative aspects. As I was reminded in a discussion on my return, the social relationships of work are as central as the quantitative aspects. That is, for example, cooking may be an onerous chore, done to reproduce the family for work and for capital; or it can be a shared act of sociality and a form of pleasure. That said, it still remains

necessary to work to reduce the burden of unwaged work, which is done mostly by women, and we need to develop strategies for doing so.

Guaranteed income: again, we clearly supported it, but again this has different meanings depending on precise class location. We did not address in detail what it means to get such an income, nor strategies for struggling to get it. We say it should not be tied to work for

capital, but what does that mean and how can we begin to articulate struggles in that direction? What kinds of unities and divisions within the



More things happening....

class will develop from pushing this issue? In the U.S., I think developing strategy for this demand is not now feasible, where as developing a strategy for reducing the formal working day might be feasible (putting aside for the moment many questions, such as who cares if the formal work week is 20 hours if you then have to have 3 jobs to earn enough to live; or what about unpaid work for capital).

ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIES?

Alternative economy: Madrid 1a/b sees the efforts to develop alternative economics as part of the anti-capitalist struggle. There was some debate about this at the very end of the 1a discussion, too late for a full engagement in the submesa; and apparently the two Barcelona submesa representatives to a meeting of representatives of Madrid and Barcelona 1a submesas held at the final gathering rejected the idea of alternative economics being anti-capitalist.

We in Madrid recognised that they certainly may not be anti-capitalist, they could be coopted — but then any struggle can be coopted; more, the majority at Madrid seemed to see these as part of developing two things: a stronger base from which to attack capital, and pointing toward new work relations that prefigure post-capitalism (developing aspects of the new society in the womb of the old)...

CO-OPS CO-OPTED

Attempting to create alternative economic forms can be coopted. Indeed, they often will turn out to be new moments of capitalist entrepreneurial development. And we know of cases of "alternative" cooperatives that end up hiring (and exploiting) wage labour (to add the nastiness, often immigrant waged labour), which is certainly not the "new society in the womb of the old", just more of the old society. More,

"alternative" is also a major approach of the World Bank, etc., as a means of capitalist development, co-opting struggles and turning them into "development," etc. Many Non-Government Organisations, including big foundations and development projects, are part of that process, and this issue needs much more investigation as well. They too use the language of "empowerment," "popular participation," "democracy," etc.

Since the WB and many NGOs that are capitalistic are also promoting "alternatives," we need ways to distinguish reproduction for capital from reproduction for struggle. What are our criteria? The mesa 1a/b report lists a few, but this too will need some further thought and discussion. But to repeat, the WB also has promoted a shortening of the work week.

STANDING UP FOR CLASS

In the Midnight Notes ponencia we argued that the class of those who work and don't own/manage significant means of production (to us, the working class; to others and in the mesa 1a report, "humanity"), that class needs to find ways to survive materially without dependence on capitalist-controlled means of subsistence.

To extend this, we can also think of this as developing the ability to control the reproduction of our struggles. We also need to understand that any "alternative" cannot be an anti-capitalist space by

itself other than momentarily — it must link up with other spaces, become part of a network if you will. If such spaces do not support each other and expand — reproduce and grow the struggle — then they will be repressed or coopted. Strategies that want to proceed along this line have to ensure both the growth of networks of alternatives and combat capitalism (and patriarchy, etc.) within the alternative...

NETWORKS AND STRATEGIES

To me, the two big underlying questions are the relationship between networks and strategies (is 'the' strategy the development of networks; what does that mean?); and what is the relationship of networks to revolution (networks = revolution??)... Finally, if strategies are to evolve out of analysis of actual struggles (and thus also of the changing composition of the class through its struggles), we need also to question whether the encuentro format is helpful. That is, does the kind of work of analysing strategies demand the sorts of time and detailed attention that a brief meeting of people who largely do not know each other can provide? I do not mean that as a statement against the encuentro — I hope to be at the next one. Rather, it is to say that we need to think a lot about the uses of the encuentro in terms of advancing struggles and strategies. It may be that most of the work on this will have to be done ahead of time...

THE NUMBERS GAME AND SOME OTHER ROUGH NOTES

At a recent meeting in London, one participant said that we should be wary of playing the numbers game - that numbers didn't matter, what was more important was form and content.

He had a point - you look at things like the massive demonstrations against pit closures in the early 1990s with their 250,000 odd people on them and half the country seemingly in uproar and you have got to agree. Numbers most definitely aren't the whole story. Those demonstrations and that multitude of people fizzled away into nothing almost overnight and in the end they closed more pits than they originally had set out to do.

OBVIOUS POINT

The point was obvious: you can have 20,000,000 people marching but if they aren't going to do anything beyond just a passive display of outrage then the state is going to get on with its job in hand (particularly if that job is as important as physically destroying one of the last sectors of the organised

working class). Numbers don't matter, it's what people think and what people do that really matters and a riot of a few hundred people can have more impact than a march of a few hundred thousand. That's fairly obvious.

But the other side of the coin is that numbers do matter. Any revolution in this country by its very nature will have to be a mass uprising of potentially many millions - and if capitalism is genuinely abolished and we have a truly free society, then that must involve vast numbers of people actively taking control of their lives, their communities, their workplaces. Numbers are absolutely fundamental.

CAN'T WE GET TOGETHER?

By stating that numbers aren't that important was almost like fetishising the fact that people can't work together, in fact don't want to work together and would much rather be in their little (but dogmatically perfect!) groups of three or four.

This is celebration of the fact that many revolutionaries simply can't work together and the irony of that is that their energies are directed towards creating a society where we will all have to work together, a society of mass co-operation. Who is the

joke on? If we can't co-operate together to build anything significant, then we have major problems.

Yet maybe we're just replicating existing society with all its hierarchies and intensely competitive nature. And that shows up elsewhere in the profound miserablism that affects virtually all revolutionaries. We're as miserable as fuck, we're bitter, we're cynical and we've got chips on both shoulders. We're not like

We're as miserable as fuck, we're bitter, we're cynical and we've got chips on both shoulders. We're not like the Christians or other religious freaks with their heavens and hells, all we have got is reality and by god it's grim at times

the Christians or other religious freaks with their heavens and hells, all we have got is reality and by god it's grim at times.

But how attractive is our grimness to other people? Does it put people off? Does it draw them to us? There was a funny incident several years ago when a march of Christians went down Railton Road in Brixton, happily clapping, singing and whatever else Christians do when they are marching. And then they went past the 121 Bookshop where the anarchists stood outside, scowling furiously with their sneering shouts of "fucking religious nonsense".

THAT VISION THING

The anarchists were undoubtedly right - it was fucking religious nonsense. But this blast of miserablism means that our politics are forever entrapped. Whatever happened to the vision of the society that we want to create? Whatever happened to our sense of play, to our sense of laughter, our sense of excitement and pleasure, our creative drives, our open and tolerant manner?

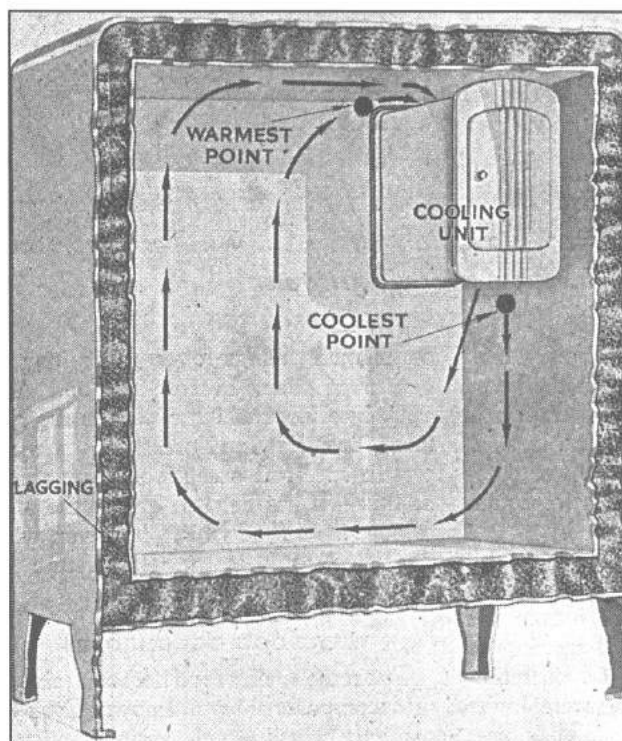
It wasn't always like this (just look to the 1960s for a start and back to the late 19th century). Revolutionary politics weren't always grim and sullen faced, at times they were joyfully bouncing up and down.

To some extent that tradition has been rediscovered by events such as Reclaim The Streets and, of course, it is also in our daily lives (if it wasn't, half of us would be sectioned straightaway). The strength of RTS has been to go beyond the old staid leftie demo format and attempt to create something different, almost towards something such as temporary autonomous zones (for want of a better word). Obviously, there are still problems with this such as its non-violence but I for one definitely know what I prefer.

NEW GAMES?

Perhaps we need to move past the old routine of

leaflets/meetings/papers/papersales/demonstrations and look at other potential areas of activity...like raves, games and culture. This is already happening but



Are all political activists frigid (or just plain cold-hearted)?

we don't seem to be particularly involved in it. Perhaps what we really, really need is a culturisation of politics, to take politics out of the meeting rooms and into the streets.

Because we need to look long and hard at ourselves - and one of the main questions is where have all the kids gone? Maybe they're off having a good time, maybe they're working their guts out, maybe they don't think it matters, maybe they feel powerless, maybe they're up a tree, maybe all that and more. Wherever they are, right now it doesn't seem that they are very much with us when surely the whole point of being a kid is saying bollocks and kicking over the traces? What's going wrong? Should we be doing something else?

NEW INGREDIENTS!

Coming out of these thoughts, there has been a lot of talk about moving away from mindless sectarianism and group patriotism, trying to build up something better. But isn't this simply different icing on the same cake? So what if the remnants of Class War (both old and new), the ACF, the SolFed, the dog and bone all get together to form some other grouping - it's still the same old ideological and practical cake underneath that new icing.

I think we need to think more in terms of trying to bake a different cake (and, hell, it might fail but at

least we tried) - and that's a cake with a lot more interest in cultural activities, that's multi-dimensional and multi-faceted (so it's a lot more than demos and papersales), that's partly based on socialised networks, that grows out of local organising and local politics. It's about making politics relevant to everyday life which means ditching all the confrontationalism, all the strong polemics, all the seeking of grounds for argument.

Think about it - when we're out and about, having chats with friends, are we always eyeballing with our polemical statements, are we always looking to fiercely argue over the fine point of this or that? I don't think so (or if we are, then we haven't got that many left). Most political discussions differ from 'normal' discussions. Maybe you say which is right, which is wrong - but certainly political discussions don't seem to be very attractive to large numbers of people.

DOWN WITH NEGATIVISM!

And politics are also seen as being overwhelmingly negative: no to this, no to that, save what is as about positive as you get in the wonderful world of political activity. How attractive is that? It doesn't seem to have bought people flooding into the movement. And it ignores the fact that virtually all that we are seeking to defend is crap anyway! Maybe we should be looking

a bit more towards being positive, about creating our own situations rather than just reacting.

Some of this sounds a bit like a liberal blancmange - hey, lets all be nice to each other! That isn't the way it

....a lot more interest in cultural activities, that's multi-dimensional and multi-faceted (so it's a lot more than demos and papersales), that's partly based on socialised networks, that grows out of local organising and local politics. It's about making politics relevant to everyday life....

is meant and I fully accept at times there is a need to argue and fight with people over certain issues (as there is in our normal, everyday life). But the point is that we have to at least question some of our assumptions and consider where that leads us - not to do that is an abdication of our responsibility as revolutionaries.

N

BABIES AND BATHWATER

I have been meaning to write a short piece on the relationship between political groups, the movement and the outside world for a while...but it was sort of overtaken by the last paper and the Federation shutting down...but unsurprisingly it's all the same sort of stuff really....except that part of my grand scheme dissolved itself!

I understand all the reasons why the CWF shut up shop and I think issue 73 of the paper is vital...however I'm just getting this sinking feeling that we've thrown the baby out with the bathwater...and to get to the point, that to say all that was said in the last paper didn't necessitate dissolution.

THE ORG IS DEAD!

Yes, I agree the 'org' needed rejuvenating, a make-over and more. It needed being totally new again...I agree that possibly the Federation was unfunctionable with its numbers and bureaucracy...and I still believe there were too many people involved who misunderstood the depth and complexity of what we were trying to do. However much they may dislike it, the early/mid 1980s 'leadership' had Marx, Negri,

Castoriadis and all the rest up to their balding pates and simply Class War would have never happened without the mix of theory, practice/action.

But but but...where does all this leave what we were (are?) saying? And are we really happy to leave the brand name to people stuck in an 80s rut...people who fell for a cartoon version of the real thing?

IT'S A FUNDAMENTAL THING

What of our fundamentals? Our intransigence in our beliefs? In the reality of a class war? That the class war must be won and can only be won by fighting that war in every area? In the autonomy of working class organisations? In populism? - that there is no worth in good ideas if people neither hear that idea nor understand what you're trying to say?

And in the need to create events, to take the fight to the enemy? The idea that theory and community/political work is opposed to 'stunts' was always a myth...the point is balance...a stunt without explanation, publicity and theory is a waste of time...political theory without action is equally meaningless.

Who will now be arguing from this corner? There is a theory that all traces of Class War had to have been dissolved before the progress in London and elsewhere could have happened. I disagree....and this brings me back to my unwritten article...Political groups should

be capable of re-invention, or transforming themselves, of hibernation, of reduction to a tiny core just as much of becoming large if they wish.

Fundamentally I believe that the CWF lost contact with other political people and ended up sectarian and stagnant...If political groups were involved in some sort of movement I believe this wouldn't happen. It is not that national groups are wrong - it is their detachment and sectarianism that is.

And so as not to cry over spilt milk I look forward to

a new group/publication putting forward the 'old' ideas but also creation of a movement in based on all sorts of groups, national, global, single-issue, interest-based but fundamentally local-based groups; providing links between activists; encouraging debate; enabling actions and campaigns; providing social escape...this has been missing for far too long.

G

LONDON MEETINGS

Since publication of issue 73 of Class War in the spring, 2 public meetings have been held in London, both at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.

They have been organised and publicised by a small group of people, who have also been responsible for distributing issue 73 in London and the Southeast. Most of us are former members/supporters of Class War, plus a few other activists in agreement with aims of the paper, and we have met regularly to discuss ideas and deal with the practical side of things. Below is a brief resume of how we thought these meetings went.

MEETING 17 JULY

- Meeting called to discuss contents of issue 73, and particularly to get feedback from the wider movement.

- Attended by approx. 70 people, including former CW members/supporters; individuals from the ACF, Black Flag, ASS, Reclaim the Streets, from local groups in Kent, Brighton, and around London, and many more besides.

- We had asked people to come with open minds and a positive attitude. Generally the response to the paper was good, with some constructive criticism and valid analysis.

- Unfortunately the 6 or so comrades from the group still continuing as London Class War, did not come with a positive attitude, and were more interested in discussing the internal wranglings of Class War.

- There was praise for Reclaim the Streets (RTS) for breaking out of the political straightjacket much of the movement is in. Ways of organising, and to what aim, were clearly seen as matters for further discussion.

- General agreement that getting comrades together to reflect on issues, tactics etc was a positive move, but no-one sure what exactly may come out of it.

- Some discussion on theory/action debate. To many this was seen as a false division, neither excludes the other. The need for theory, debate and analysis was defended, whilst being active at the same time.

- It was agreed to hold further meetings every 4-6 weeks under the name 'London Discussion Forum' as a way of bringing people together to discuss ongoing activities and debate issues relevant to the movement.

MEETING 31 AUGUST

- Suggested topic for discussion was 'If our ideas are so great, why are we marginalised?'

- Attended by approx 35 people, at least half of whom (most particularly several folks from the Socialist Party of Great Britain) had not attended the first meeting.

- The suggested topic was not greatly discussed (avoided perhaps?), but after a rather confrontational start we felt the discussion was generally positive.

- Some comrades from Gravesend Resistance questioned whether this was just gonna be a talking shop or whether there'd be action too.

- In response, it was said everyone had been and was active, but that did not seem to be working. It was accepted that comrades in Gravesend (like elsewhere) put in a lot of work and had a good local group, but in the great scheme of things they, like the rest of the movement, were marginal. Are we content to have a good group of 10-15 people, or do we want more?

- Various comrades made comments on their experiences of working in local and other groups, positive and negative. What do we want out of a group? It's not all about numbers, it depends what you're trying to achieve. 'Revolutionary groups' are often wildly out of touch with the world.

- A number of ideas were tossed around, mainly covering new ways of working and in different areas eg sharing skills, LETS (!?), community action etc.

- A number of people who'd missed the first meeting said how positive they felt issue 73 had been. One comrade made the point that our politics are good because around the world movements with similar ideas continually take on the ruling class.

- Towards the end we discussed future meetings, what we want out of them, and where to hold them.

- It was felt it should be more than a talking shop, although it was positive to try and bring different comrades together to discuss and network. It was felt Conway Hall, despite being a central and easily accessible location, had a cold atmosphere and wasn't conducive to positive meetings.

T (London).

BEYOND THE BULLSHIT?

"Too often we look at things and do things from the perspective of group patriotism. Too often there is a sense of loyalty to your own organisation above everything else. With this goes a sense of one-upmanship, of trying to get one over on each other and of regarding any problems as lying elsewhere" (Class War, Special Issue, no.73, page three).

The above quote is characteristic of the sentiments expressed in issue 73 of Class War. It stresses the need to break down the barriers in the anarchist movement and move away from fixed positions, dogma and group loyalties.

At a meeting of the London Anarchist Forum on September 12th I pointed out that the behaviour of the producers of issue 73 SINCE the split in Class War has been in contradiction to these sentiments. In fact some of you have tried to undermine and destroy those who are to continue organising and working as Class War. In this you have failed.

In a mature response I have been asked to elaborate on my comments, for discussion in your bulletin. I am happy to do so.

WALK OUT

At the March 1997 CW conference in Nottingham, Class War split, some 40% of the membership walking out. Before leaving we requested one of the CWF computers for our future use, as despite London CW having been the largest group in the CWF we did not have one of the CWF computers. We received a verbal "yes" to this, as well as an agreement that a statement of some of our views by James (Luton CW) would be published in your internal bulletin.

Nobody argued against either of the above points and it was clearly stated that we would have one of the computers when they were fixed. Sadly the minutes of the meeting (taken by Dave, Leeds CW) merely record that we asked for a computer but were told that none were working. Whilst the minutes state that James' article would appear in the IB, it did not. Can anybody explain why?

COUNT THEM IN

Most people will be aware that when Class War split, the producers of issue 73 were left with just two members in the London, south east and Anglian regions. Since then they have recruited two ex-members of Class War and Alex, respected for his work with the London Anarchist Black Cross. In addition there may be others I am unaware of.

Over the past few years London CW, along with many others, have worked very hard in supporting prisoners.

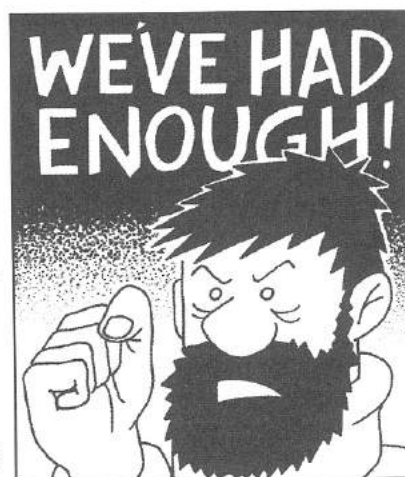
We have appeared as a prison support contact in the ABC paper, Taking Liberties. It was with considerable disappointment that we discovered that the June 1997 issue of Taking Liberties had deleted our address from its contacts list. When this was raised at a London ABC meeting, Alex informed us that this had occurred accidentally as he was unsure if we were still using the same address. (The address concerned is the PO Box 467, one London CW have used for the past decade).

REGRETTABLE INCIDENTS

That the details of our address could have been confirmed by a 30 second phone call is certain. Yet how did we discover that this regrettable incident had occurred? We

received a copy of Taking Liberties in the post, from London ABC.....to our PO Box 467 address! Rather than address it to London CW however, the sender had addressed it in the name of our local bulletin, London Calling. Group patriotism anybody?

Fortunately such childish behaviour has not changed our views of the London ABC, with whom we will continue to work, or our views on prison support work, which remains one of our priorities. However we are not the ones going around the country talking about the need to break down barriers in the anarchist movement - you are!



PERSONALISED ARGUMENTS

The editorial in issue 73 explains the split in CW as down to "personalised arguments". A covering letter sent with the paper to those organisations who received a free copy explains the split as between those who wished to end Class War and those who wished it to continue. Can both be right?

In my opinion neither is. The split occurred because approximately 40% walked out of the Nottingham conference in protest at a secret meeting organised by certain individuals the month before. Those walking out included people who had voted in favour of the review process, the special issue and dissolving the organisation, as well as many who had voted against or abstained on these issues.

I myself never voted against it. As I have pointed

out to the author of the editorial, if you cannot tell the truth about the split you are falling, not at Beechers Brook but at the first fence.

During CW's review process I submitted a draft sports page that was discussed, without objections, at a productive January 1997 paper meeting. Anthony (London CW) had earlier submitted a two page article on religion. When, following the split, this was not used in issue 73, it was requested back on several occasions so as we could use it in our paper.

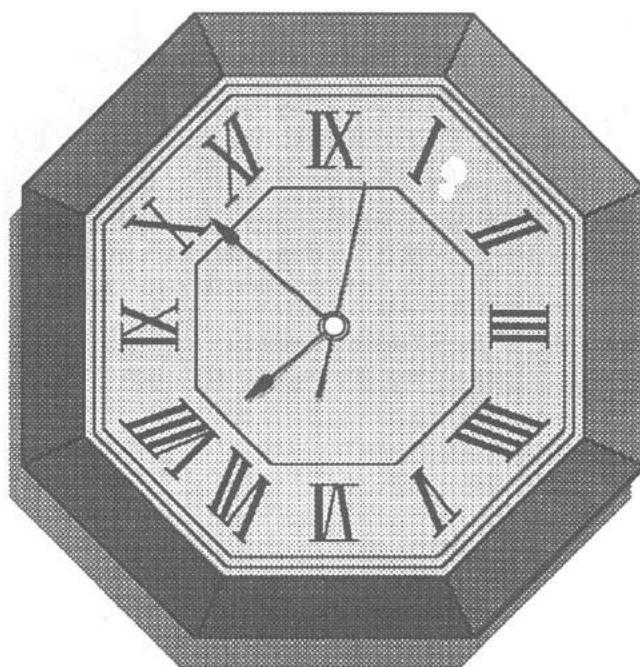
MISLAID?

Equally my draft sports page, despite receiving no objections, never appeared in CW's internal bulletin having ben "misaid". Only the people who had those articles can honestly say what happened to them, but can anybody blame us for suspecting group patriotism again?

My final example of bad faith concerns the extremely inaccurate report of the split in Class War in the May 1997 issue of Contraflow. I am pleased to say that Contraflow have expressed regret for describing 40% of the membership of Class War as a "rump" but was it really necessary to give them such partial information in the first place? After all, if your case is so strong and your ideas so progressive why waste time rubbishing people like me and my comrades?

We have now produced our paper (for copies send 4 1st class stamps to our PO box) and intend to move forwards. We have our own long-term objectives, you presumably have yours. However you cannot get all indignant when we turn up at your public events and

point out, as the above examples show, that your intention of breaking down barriers has certainly not



Time waits for no man

begun with yourselves. If you are genuine with your beliefs why not lead by example, give us the computer you promised us etc and we will do our thing, you can do yours.

Paul, London Class War, PO Box 467, London, E8 3QX

BEYOND THE BULLSHIT TOO

You said that you would be surprised if we put it in, well, here it is. We won't deny the article before is painful, we have had a bitter split and the arguments and misery continues. We're bringing everything out in the open for all to see. Are the internal wranglings of CW of interest to anyone? They certainly must be unintelligible. Nevertheless, we must deal with it.

We put our hands up, yes we had a secret meeting, it was wrong, it was a mistake and it's made a difficult situation more difficult. It was also probably unnecessary? We have acted in a way contradictory to some of the ideas expressed in issue 73 of the paper, yes we admit it, we apologise, again.

If there was a secret meeting though, maybe the other side of Class War should be asking themselves why? After all, it always takes two sides to have an

argument. From listening to the Provisional/Continuity Class War members who have decided to carry on somebody might think that we were a completely manipulative bunch of bastards who fucked you over at every turn as if you said and done nothing to contribute to the situation yourselves.

SINCE THE SPLIT

As to what happened since the split we feel that most of what you have said is nonsense, bear in mind that it was yourselves who produced a press release that talked about us as "having given up", "not being worthy of the name", etc. We cannot imagine that you would have been very happy if we had said the same things about you. From which side is the vitriol coming from? Contraflow have apologised for their article, have you apologised for yours? You seem to be big on demanding apologies from all and sundry yet somewhat lacking in apologising for your own behaviour.

The paper talks about a siege mentality within some groups, you seem to have developed one big time (no-

one likes us, we don't care - where have we heard that one before?). You better stock up on the baked beans, it could be a long one.

Also, in a choice between a conspiracy and a cock-up you invariably choose the conspiracy. Does it not occur to you that the computer was not forthcoming for the simple reason that it was still broken as you were told at the time? Rather than a small part of some ongoing attempt to destroy you? Do you really believe that? That we tried to "undermine and destroy you"? Haven't we got better and more important things to do?

SLIGHTLY PARANOID

We're not being nasty but isn't that just a little bit paranoid? You're in danger of letting your bitterness consume you. As regards James' article for the IB, personally the author of this little piece cannot remember anything about it, if though we were trying to censor you or stop you from having your say, would we publish the beyond the bullshit article or invite you to our meetings? Another memory of James' piece is that he threw it down on the table saying that it was a personal piece representing his thoughts about individual members of CW.

What we can remember of the Notts meeting though is James screaming at everyone at the top of his voice (as usual) and never listening to a word anyone says in return. We can also remember that of the eleven or so provisional CW members who walked out of the Notts meeting, seven odd said nothing whatsoever, you go all the way to Nottingham just to tell us what a bunch of bastards we are and then most of you don't say anything. Provo CW defines itself by not what it's for, but by what it's against - us in this case. Negative politics which is something we experienced a great deal.

We have behaved in a cack-handed way, we are human beings and we make mistakes. Looking back on it, it would have been better to do things in another way but that is the situation that developed, the point is to try and put mistakes right and we did apologise to you immediately after this secret meeting - apologies weren't accepted because you are intent in seeing things one way and only one way. These petty arguments distract us from more important concerns.

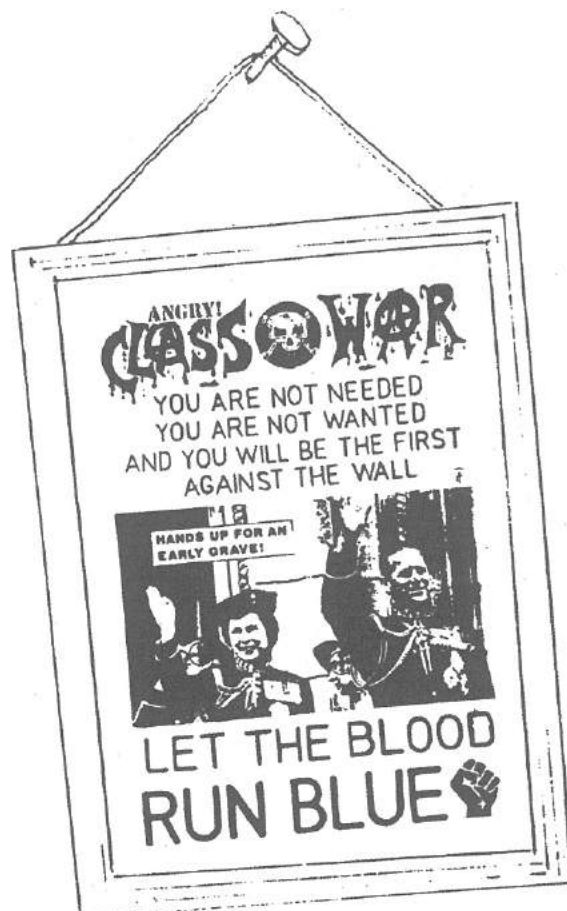
PATHETICALLY SMALL

You seem obsessed by numbers, "we weren't a minority, we were 40%". As if numbers on either side weren't pathetically small which is surely the point to make. You say that some of you who remain in CW voted for the review process, the special issue and dissolving the organisation.

But really you must be honest, you dragged your feet the entire time it went on, you were obstructive at every turn, your input to the meetings was largely negative. Remember the meeting at Brownswood Library? The one where the majority voted to go along with all of this, we remember some London CW members turning up from the pub halfway through the

afternoon, sitting at the back and muttering wankers under their breath. A terrible meeting. Or some of us can remember a recent London meeting where you spent almost the entire time whingeing about the ACF and Leeds CW and as regards the forthcoming special issue, you had virtually nothing to say. We could give other examples.

You say that you were in favour of the review process, what was your input? Articles volunteered



were never forthcoming, the ones that were (religion, sports page, etc) had no place in a paper that was supposed to be unlike any that we had produced before. The fact that these are the articles that you supplied indicates that you had lost the plot (deliberately or otherwise).

FOR FUCK'S SAKE!

For fuck's sake, here we are going through these momentous changes and what do you have to say - very little, really or certainly very little out in the open. Clearly some of you were deeply uneasy about the discussions that were taking place, OK you wanted to continue to produce Class War, where was your argument? Bearing in mind that some of us might have FUCKING LISTENED if you had actually said what you wanted rather than instigating some pathetic war of attrition. So finally you get what you want, not as a result of any positive argument but by default.

You're trying to pretend that you never did anything wrong, that you always tried so hard but you got

stuffed by all these nasty and vindictive people and you being so nice. Dream on. You had enough of your own secret meetings, your own secret contact with other groups before (note - not after) the split, you deliberately obstructed and sabotaged the whole process (having a sports page in our final issue - come on, get real) and then afterwards did your utmost to smear and attack other people in an active rewriting of history.

YOU'RE NOT A CLIQUE?

Look at yourselves, you are nearly all men, young men, most of you live together/in the same area, is this not a clique? Do no secret meetings happen here (or elsewhere?)? Isn't it strange that groups always vote together (ie London thinks this, Leeds thinks that) rather than making a political decision on an individual basis.

In all arguments like this there are always personal arguments that pose as being political. You are being naive if you believe otherwise. Think about this: the prospect of working with SOME of you post-CW was not an enticing one. We know that we talked about breaking down barriers but how far do you take it? A contradiction in terms of what we said - actually we believe this but it doesn't necessarily mean that we want to work with everyone in the world. If you know of a way round this, maybe you will let us know.

You're trying to pretend that you never did anything wrong, that you always tried so hard but you got stuffed by all these nasty and vindictive people and you being so nice. Dream on. You had enough of your own secret meetings, your own secret contact with other groups before (note - not after) the split, you deliberately obstructed and sabotaged the whole process.

When the split come, it was a relief in many ways even though we tore ourselves apart as a result of it. We may have less numbers to do what we have to do, but life is easier. What's the point of working with people in the same group if you have nothing to say to each other and it's even got to the point of people hating each other. Surely the organisation is useless as

an instrument to further the class struggle. Class War was going nowhere, hasn't everything that happened recently proven that?

PETTY CRITICISMS

One of the strengths of CW in the past was that we never bothered to reply to the petty criticisms of other anarchist magazines etc. Has this changed in the recent past? You seem to be obsessed with slights and criticisms from every direction and you also seem to spend a great deal of time and effort answering them (like those letters to Freedom).

Haven't you got anything better to do? As far as we are concerned, these discussions are over, we're sick of wasteful arguments, we

don't want them anymore, hopefully you don't either. If there are more positive discussions/activities to be engaged in, we're certainly interested in that with you or anybody else.

P and others

GENERAL LUDD'S CREATIVE STONE AGE CO-OPS

If we're living in an advanced society, how come we work more than 40 hours a week when most so-called primitive societies have work days of between 2 and 5 hours?! How come we have resigned ourselves to the 9-to-5 clockwork grind and the hierarchy of work when less than two hundred years ago our ancestors fought tooth and nail against the introduction of factory work and wage slavery?!

This article makes the case that regimented work: is not natural or necessary; means that our society is really the primitive slave

society;

was resisted by ordinary people who rightly saw it as the theft of their freedom and humanity; can be replaced by voluntary cooperatives and similar structures;

can be largely superceded by a merging of work and play in to "creative activity for it's own sake".

LIFE IN BALANCE

It's a myth that in paleolithic societies people spent all their time in a desperate search for food and lacked the leisure hours for non-subsistence activities.

Studies of the aboriginal population of Arnhem Land, Australia show that the workday amongst these hunter-gatherers averages five hours eight minutes. Further, the workload seems not to be especially tiresome,

either physical or mentally. To the contrary, some aboriginal groups such as the Yir-Yiront make no linguistic distinction between work and play.

Among the Dobe portion of the !Kung bushmen of Botswana the average work week is approximately fifteen hours. In other words "each productive individual supporting herself or himself and dependents still has 3.5 to 5.5 days per week available for other activities".

DANCING AND WRESTLING

Among the Kuikuru people of the Amazon Basin the subsistence workday is 3.5 hours. The Kuikuru people spend a great deal of the rest of the time in dancing, wrestling, in some form of informal recreation and in loafing around. In Papua New Guinea "the Kapauku have a conception of balance in life so only every other day is supposed to be a work day. Such a day is followed by day of rest in order to regain lost power and health".

We live in an "advanced" civilisation where the basic working week averages between 40 and 80 hours, exclusive of overtime, commuting time, time required for subsistence shopping and food preparation and time consumed in other domestic chores. The way labour time is organised is far more regimented and structured than in even the most rigidly structured indigenous society.

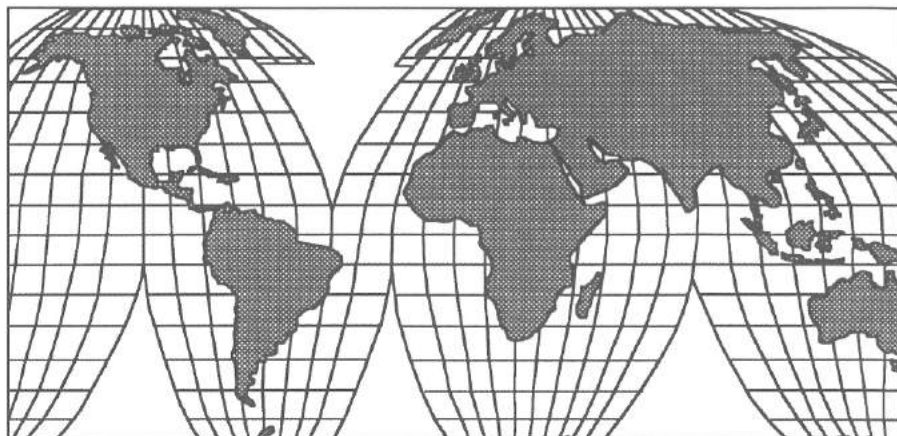
While it is undoubtedly true that industrial society generates a much greater abundance of material items than do traditional native societies, it is questionable whether this leads to a better quality of life, especially in genuine human terms such as sense of personal fulfillment, control over one's time and general peace of mind.

THE LUDDITES

It's a myth that the Luddites were mindless mobs of machine hating vandals with an irrational fear of progress. In Lancashire before the industrial revolution "the workshop of the weaver was a rural cottage, from which when he tired of sedentary labour he could sally forth in to his little garden, and with the spade or the hoe tend to it's culinary productions." Workers had a large amount of control over their own labour. They produced only enough to keep themselves comfortable and if the fancy took them they might not work for days.

But then came the Industrial revolution - after the

introduction of steam driven weaving looms was used to undermine the individual weaver's work and force the population in to factories, the same people existed in "a state of slavery more horrid than that hellish



system...Colonial Slavery". They worked unprecedented hours in regimented factories with dangerous working conditions, and lived in city slums polluted by the belching smoke from factory chimneys.

But the weavers resisted the destruction of their autonomy and the wrecking of their communities. "There is an outrageous spirit of tumult and riot" the magistrates of Nottingham told the public in November 1811. "Houses are broken in to by armed men, many stocking frames are destroyed, the lives of opposers are threatened, arms are seized, haystacks are fired and private property destroyed".

Communities all over the North acted to defend themselves from dependency and wage-slavery. In May 1812 there were 14,400 troops sent to occupy the areas around Nottingham, Manchester and Bolton, including cavalry and units of artillery. Although the whole of the North was verging on insurrection the Luddite rebellion eventually failed, leaving industrialisation as the victor.

We are the inheritors of this state of wage slavery, our lives dominated by the presence of the industrial and post-industrial work system. Where do we look for a way out of the capitalist-industrial nightmare?

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VISIONS OF A NEW WORLD

In the early nineteenth century, out of the ashes of Luddite resistance, there grew new forms of struggle which aimed to re-humanise industrial society.

The Manchester and Salford Association for the Promotion of Cooperative Knowledge, founded in 1830, was part of the a general growth in experiments in cooperative working, with living in communes, with barter systems as an alternative to money (for example, the Equitable Labour Exchanges) and with early unionism. "The cooperators in scores of centres, from Bacup to Brighton, were impatient to raise

themselves immediately by their own efforts". This was occurring in dynamic connection with the development of national unions, which developed a syndicalist model of society where a national assembly to "swallow up the whole political power" would be made up of people delegated directly from workshop and mill: "the lodges send Delegates from local to District and from District to National Assembly".

The aim of these new forward looking forms of organising was complete social transformation through cooperative social power; "voluntary, self-supporting and self-controlled cities" and pioneering new forms of community life including radical notions of relations between the sexes, education, housing and social policy.

EXPERIMENTS

So less than two hundred years ago people resistant to the capitalist-industrial wasteland were experimenting with cooperatives, collectives, barter and communes. A lot of similar initiatives exist today, for example LETS schemes and "This Land Is Ours" as well as the numerous communes and cooperative enterprises, but these would be stronger and more viable if they networked more and cooperated on a practical level.

An example might be the idea of metacoops, where groups of coops share resources and perhaps trade with each other using barter, outside of the money economy. One way to support alternatives might be to exploit initiatives such as Local Agenda 21 and the various inner city regeneration initiatives to take money from the establishment and use it to fuel our fledgling alternative enterprises.

WORKERS PLAYTIME

Our re-discovered strength is the revolt against work. Work defined as forced labour, that demeaning system of domination with it's imposed work tempos, production quotas, punching in and out, written warnings, disciplinaries and hierarchies. Discipline is what the factory and the office and the supermarket have in common with the prison and the school and the mental hospital.

People who are regimented all their lives, handed off to work from school and bracketed by the family in the beginning and the nursing home at the end, are habituated to hierarchy and psychologically enslaved, with an atrophied capacity for autonomy.

NETWORKS FOR AUTONOMY

We can use networks of mutually supporting alternatives to expand the radius of our autonomy, within which we can try to develop a different way of doing things, putting in to practice a different idea of work that allows us more of the life we'd really like, ways of work that are more cooperative, more fulfilling and more creative.

Mixing work with play by organising our activities to be as much as possible done for their own sake, for the reward of the experience, without the distortions which

afflict these activities when they are done to the inhuman rhythm of the coercive work-week. Making a diversity of activities, with the least inviting drudge jobs shared equally and made a game of as much as possible.

So many people say that they hate work; on the other hand that they wouldn't mind doing their job for

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one or two days, with maybe a complete change for another day (e.g. outdoor labour for office staff), and maybe once a fortnight collecting the rubbish or cleaning the buildings. Work as voluntary association for mutual benefit, and work as play, as voluntary creative activity; in short, the establishment of creative cooperatives.

We have a choice. Let's take our inspiration from our history of resistance and innovation, and from indigenous peoples balanced approach to life. Starting to build for ourselves the world we would prefer, right here and now. A world desired by Hodgskin, an early socialist, "where man shall be held more in honour than the clod he treads or the machine he guides", where as Abbie Hoffman once put it, "we can strap our computers to the trees and live within instead of upon nature".

D

This article has been stitched together from four main sources which are all worth a read:

"The Stone Age Revisited" by M. Annette Jaimes (published in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* Winter 1993)

"The Luddite's War on Industry" (published in *Do or Die* #6: *Voices from Earth First!*)

"The Making of the English Working Class" by E.P. Thompson (published by Penguin Books)

"The Abolition of Work" by Bob Black (reprinted in *Towards 2012 Part III* published by the Unlimited Dream Company)

All of these have (very!) extensive reference lists of research papers on which their assertions are based.

REPORT FROM BIRMINGHAM

Heartfelt revolutionary greetings from the centre of the universe (as we know it) here in Brum!!?? Yes, being chosen as the venue for the 1998 Eurovision Song Contest has certainly gone to our heads but we still manage to make time to discuss the destruction of capitalism and the emancipation of the working class. Here are some of our ideas and thoughts on the situation.

Firstly we kicked off with a 'where are we at?' session. Basically what we found was that the Class War no 73 was warmly received with practically everyone that has read it. Great but where do we go from here? A number of us have had contact with other lefties/anarchos and the response has been that they are interested but not prepared to join another organisation or at present taking part in the meetings on any regular basis.

NEW SOAP POWDER

However we must add that we expect to have about twenty people at the next meeting. As in the response that Leeds got from the ACF, Subversion etc, they are very attached to their own particular grouping. So we all agree that just setting up a new improved Class War is no solution.

The beauty of CW was that it didn't seek to lead the working class or the anarchist scene. The most important thing is to politicise the working class and not how many members you can recruit and clone into 'pure anarchists/communists'.

We need to kick some ideas around for what we would like to see in the future and make out some shape to the void that we left to dangle over at the end of issue 73. So we went into freefall and a few ideas came up.....

A CHARTER?

Organisationally those present envisage a network of activists and groups who would be continuing the process of re-evaluation that we are in at the moment as well as maintaining their local activities. Each would be involved in different things unified around a Charter or declaration of some kind. Two existing ideas were talked about - "The Dockers Charter for Social Justice" and the Ipswich Class War "Declaration of War" on the ruling class that was initiated a few years ago. The Dockers Charter has about ten points on it, unfortunately none of us has a copy of it.

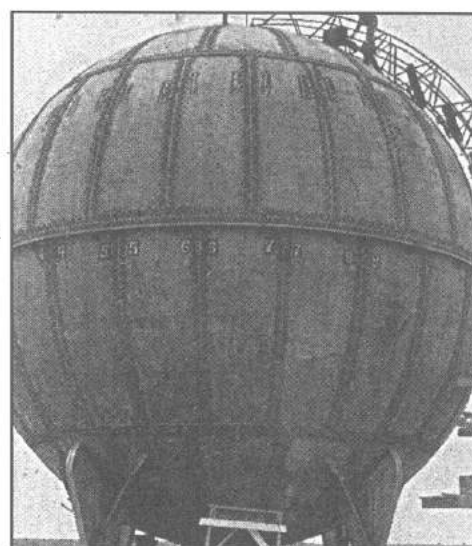
Something similar could be drawn up which could be adopted by groups/revolutionaries to organise around. A kind of brief and snappy Aims and Principles only more emphasis on what we want and not what we are

against. We didn't venture into the content of such as we didn't intend to delve in great depth on ideas as they arose. The tone and language may want to be different to the old CW style but not so wishy washy that it will only appeal to disillusioned Labour voters!!

MUTUAL AID

A national data base of skills and resources open to anyone that needs them. Skills such as page making, printing, writing articles, legal nouse, experience of industrial disputes, etc...the list is endless. Over the years we've picked up lots of skills and experiences that could be valuable to many people. Let's not let them go to waste.

At times some of us felt that the midlands was like a void where you don't get to hear about anywhere or anything happening in either the north or the south. To have



Yes, it's another gasholder.

some form of news base that you can access at any time would alleviate this. Knowing what happens in other communities not only inspires us and gives us confidence, it is something we can show to people in our own communities to show that struggle is taking place....constantly.

NOT THE EUROVISION

We spoke about how perhaps some revos don't appear to have much of a vision of what things could be like and certainly many working class people don't have an image of what life would be like without capitalism. We went on to talk about the problem of putting over revolutionary ideas without being dismissed as a dreamer. Many people look skyward and laugh at us. So we need to push working class victories both at home and in other countries like Spain, Albania, Ireland, etc...It's not just pie in the sky...revolution is still alive and kicking. The news base mentioned above would assist this.

The emphasis of our political activism should be in our own patch producing local propaganda. Is there any worth in going to London for national demos on

this week's big issue? If a revolution is to be built it is to be built on the streets of our local communities and not in Trafalgar Square. Things like local broadsheets, stickers, graffiti etc... Avoid jumping on bandwagons.

On a personal note, in the area where I live (Redditch, just south of Brum) along with others not connected with CW, the plan is to produce a broadsheet attacking the council. Perhaps this is the way forward, working with everyone locally who broadly shares our politics. We don't need to wait till November, December, when the old Fed has decided what to do, before we initiate local activity.

SOCIAL CENTRES ANYONE?

We also muted the idea of opening a social/resource centre, support centre, shop etc. On perhaps the lines

of the 'locals' in Spain that the CNT run with strong local connections. Although a nice idea the failings of other similar projects was discussed but many of these were set up in the 80s mainly with the background of the anarcho-punk scene and so only appealed to a small section of the community.

Politics and the political scene have changed over the past 20 years and we have reacted to some extent. The setting up of centres of resistance would be a different proposition this time round.

M (Redditch)

The meeting above was a very informal affair in the park one sunny afternoon. The next meeting will be more structured with an agenda proposed.

WHAT'S IT FORUM?

The following is a letter from a comrade who attended the 31/8/97 discussion forum in London (see 'London Meetings' report).

Dear London Forum,

About the 31st August meeting: if these 'meetings' are to escape the frustrating superficiality and abstraction of a collection of monologues slightly knocking into each other in a vacuum, very precise immediate issues, with all their theoretical and practical implications, ought to be the focus for discussion.

It's not just that "anarchism and marxism" (NB Suggested as a discussion topic at the 31/8/97 meeting) is a boring topic, nor even that these different tendencies of the old workers' movement were analysed 30 years ago; it's an approach to 'revolution' which is largely specialist. If the anarchist and/or marxist traditions (and all the 60s-70s struggles to go beyond them) have relevance it's only in their application to precise present day contradictions and miseries. If we can't keep up with reality we can hardly subvert it. We have to attack the present and work backwards.

MINIMUM BASICS

The meeting on Sunday touched on so many things that I half agree with, but essentially don't, that for me it's necessary, as part of this beginning with the present, to state and partly re-state, my 'position' (by which I mean the minimum basis for any consequential

discussion which would be some kind of break with the past). If I managed to provoke the guy from the Socialist Party of Great Britain into being upset it wasn't to use the SPGB as an easy target, whose attitudes most of those present could probably unite against, but because the SPGB represents in a crude form some of what I dislike about the pretensions of 'revolutionaries' (including some of my own in the past).

The most obvious symptom of the revolutionary role is the fetishism of organisation, that is the belief that unless you're in an organisation producing some regular bulletin you're not really doing anything, an attitude which dismisses the vast majority of the millions who have contributed to the class struggle over the last 30 years.

POLITICAL CRAP

It's from this that all the political crap of defining a programme begins, with everybody 'united' around a list of very general perspectives (eg opposition to money or wage labour), the publicity of which they hope to 'raise consciousness' with, as if consciousness is a fixed intellectual point to which the falsely conscious have to be converted, as if radical ideas can make sense outside of precise practical struggle and experience. but our 'revolutionaries' are like priests, preaching the eternal ahistorical truths; in fact their first act of revolt should be to subvert that archaic role.

Nor is it a question of being exclusive/confrontational versus inclusive/conciliatory, but of stating your point of view and developing it practically. The real question is what we can do together, doing

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here to include theoretical activity etc. The 'exclusives' want to do things only with those who conform to their ism, their ideology; the 'inclusives' see things in terms of numbers of revolutionaries. the lack of numbers being interested in supposedly radical ideas is more a symptom, not a cause, of the lack of numbers fighting the class struggle.

THE VANGUARD

Struggle is not dependent on revolutionaries: however much 'revolutionaries' criticise Lenin, they still consider themselves more or less a vanguard, if only a theoretical one.

However, if being 'inclusive' means distributing ideas with which you totally disagree - eg Haringey Solidarity Group, with which I'm connected a bit, publishing utterly uncritical articles supporting LETS schemes and several other things, when most of HSG are probably pretty much opposed to them, then I'm exclusive.

If being 'exclusive' means only seeing and speaking and doing things with people who agree with your point of view, then I'm inclusive. Given the present cold climate of isolation, a virtually unprecedented virtual absence of class struggle in this country and a horrific intensification in the monolithic totalitarianism of the State, the market and the colonising discourse towards events (eg Diana's death), there's a tendency towards a very uncritical 'inclusiveness': huddling together seems to provide warmth.

OUT ON THE MARGINS

But if class struggle in this country has never been so marginal, getting together with people on the basis of some vague social critique will only add to the marginality of this critique. Or - if there is some social explosion in the near future - certainly quite possible in the rest of Europe (which may have a knock-on effect here) - it will mean disarming our critique in advance, of those who have hierarchical ambitions, like the Zapatistas and the statist but anti-globalisation socialists, which they hope to realise on the backs of the class struggle.

This would repeat the naivete that led so many workers to defeat in the revolutionary movement at the end of the first World War, without the excuse of lack of historical experience, of not having been warned.

If the social question, so central to a significant minority in the 70s and 80s, has moved to the extreme margins, it's necessary to look at the successes and ultimate failures of the last 20-30 years, their strengths and weaknesses, and the strengths and weaknesses of our own relationship to these more general struggles; and to apply such 'lessons' to the



Where have all the flowers gone?

present. And quick. It's no good saying there probably won't be a revolution in our lifetime or that the Spanish Revolution was a culmination of 50 years of struggle and debate: unlike previous generations, we don't have very much time in which to correct mistakes.

TIME'S RUNNING OUT

Ecological collapse is looming, along with mass madness and the war of all against all. If there's no central class movement (as in South Africa in 70s-80s,

It's no good saying there probably won't be a revolution in our lifetime or that the Spanish Revolution was a culmination of 50 years of struggle and debate: unlike previous generations, we don't have very much time in which to correct mistakes.

Poland 1970 - early 80s, or here, to a lesser degree, from the early 70s-1990) developing over the next generation we will be irrevocably fucked.

Equally complacent is the idea that people are happy with their cars and enough food to eat: such consolations ("there's always someone more miserable than yourself") are endlessly handed out by this society as way of giving people reasons to submit and not to struggle.

It implies that there's a bunch of people 'out there' who are happy with their lot, whereas we are different: in fact the miserable contradictions of the rest of the working class are essentially the same as ours', even if we try to be more explicit about our situation. It is our isolation and humiliation, and not necessarily our

immediate standard of so-called living, that motivates us to revolt, our desire for some dignity and meaning. Besides, even the most passive are extremely insecure about themselves and their future. To see things from the point of view of revolt who, apparently, understands revolution to mean 'blood on the streets' (as if, in this thoroughly counter-revolutionary epoch, people aren't already dying for no good reason, and often in shoddy, mean, solitary conditions) is to reproduce all the old leftist crap about not alienating people, of drawing them in on the basis of the nice bits of revolution.

Did the rioters of 81 care if those content to just



Cops try to catch bricks with bread crates and other such stories from the Poll Tax riot

watch them on TV were horrified? The last issue of Class War said "the problem is not leaders but followers" (in fact there's a dialectic between the two); equally, the problem of this society is not just the rich but the poor who comply with and look up to them. Revolt begins by acting and speaking for ourselves, not by getting the apparently more passive to agree with our vision.

ANALYSE

So, to get back to the first paragraph: we have to analyse "precise present-day contradictions and miseries" and their history. With the aim of developing some practical initiatives, I would suggest the following subjects as possibles:

- Education....
- Ecological collapse: what is radical in environmental struggles, and their limitations: what misery the eco-politicians have in store for us if and when they get into positions of power, how do they present themselves, and act, in the present.
- A historical look at what we have lost in the context of the current welfare to work project, the tendency of workers to identify more with their wage slavery nowadays and the general survival hassles and intensified isolation people face nowadays.

It wasn't always so; despite the efforts of deliberately imposing amnesia on us by the ideologists of the 'end of history', we should try to reclaim this history, look at the strengths and weaknesses of life in the '70s, the Winter of Discontent, the '81 riots, the miners' strike of '84-'85, the Wapping dispute, the various strikes up until the Poll tax, the anti-Poll Tax movement, and the sense of increasing defeat especially since the collapse of the pits.

What practical things could be learnt which could be applied, to a certain extent, in future struggles? What is of interest as part of our understanding of our roots, without necessarily having any precise practical applications?

- Present day cultural anaesthetics, eg virtual reality, the clever manipulative aesthetics of TV, computer games, professional comedians and comedy, the unifying of previously separate cultural elements stilled maintained in a separate specialist consumable sphere, the aridity of modern music, raves, and the history of all of these.
- A look at the subversive independent aspects of the class struggle today in the rest of the world.
- New labour: how much image is so much more vital for it than for Major or Thatcher.

TRADE UNIONS

- The confusions of Trade Unions: a non-dogmatic critique of Trade Unionism, covering recent strikes, the Dockers' dispute, backwards to looking at Unison among health workers, the co-ordinations of the late '80s, the Wapping dispute, the miners strike, the Winter of Discontent and the earlier struggles of the '60s-'70s (all this links in to the above suggestion 3).

- Law 'n' Order: the range of new powers the State has and is going to develop and how will they use these powers. The increasingly pro-State attitudes of an increasing section of the working class (eg pushing for the installation of CCTV cameras on estates or working class areas).

Clearly there are a number of other things to examine, and much of the above can overlap. For me, such discussions can only be useful as a focus for mutual self-

education: there are vast areas of ignorance I need to overcome for myself and I assume others are in the same position.

The practical application of such theoretical research can be worked out in discussion (I think distributing texts almost solely within some self-proclaimed radical milieu or even in ordinary newsagents is not the way to overcome marginality). For the moment I'll leave it at that,

N, B.M. Combustion, London, WC1N 3XX

Revolt begins by acting and speaking for ourselves, not by getting the apparently more passive to agree with our vision.

IN MEMORY OF DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES - SOME JOKES

What's the difference between Di and a 20p?

You can normally scrape 20p together.

What do Eurostar and Di have in common?

They both terminate in Paris.

Why did the Princess die?

Because the Mercedes bends.

What were Di's last words to Dodi?

"I want it hard and fast and up against the wall".

What's the difference between Di and Man U?

Princess Di only hit the post once.

How do they know that Dodi was bleaching his hair?

Because there was Di all over the car.

What did Dodi say to the chauffeur?

"You can either go in the decoy car or come with me and Di".

Diana was on the radio before she died...

And the dashboard, the steering wheel and backseat.

What was the last thing that Dodi said to Di before they died?

"We've got to get something more concrete in our relationship".

What's the difference between a Lada and a Mercedes?

Di wouldn't be seen dead in a Lada.

Who's Di going to see at Christmas (with a bit of luck)?

The Queen Mum.

What was the last thing that went through Di's mind?

A steering wheel.

How did Di feel when she heard of Dodi's death?

Crushed.

Why did Di get divorced from Charley?

Because she was fed up with being shunted from pillar to post.

What's Di's favourite drink?

Harvey Wallbanger followed by seven chasers.

If Di's heart was in the right place....

What was it doing in the glovebox?

Earl Spencer at the funeral, he said...

"Before we could get Elton John, we were going to get Tommy Steel to do 'Crash Bang Wallop, What a picture, what a photograph'".

The chauffeur, he was on drugs...

Speed, smack and crack

What was the last thing that Dodi said to Di before they died?

"Do you want to stay at my place or shall we crash here?"

Why did Dodi have a multicoloured cock?

Because he had been dipping it in Di.

Knock, knock

Who's there?

Diana

Diana who?

Don't tell me you fucking forgotten already.

YOU GOT TO LAUGH!