

Smash HITS#3

A DISCUSSION BULLETIN FOR REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

£1.00

Autumn 1998



**class
organisation
power**

CAPITALISM BOMBS WHILE THE ANARCHISTS FIDDLE

This is Issue 3 of 'Smash Hits', our first issue since the Mayday '98 Conference in Bradford, that ran concurrently with the Bradford 1 in 12 Club's 'Reclaim Mayday Festival'.

Smash Hits was involved in, and fully supported, MayDay '98. At the conference it was encouraging to see such a wide ranging turnout of comrades representing many currents in our wider 'movement' - sitting down discussing ideas in a fraternal and positive manner. For once it was a conference that did not dissolve into point scoring and personal abuse, and we hope this is a trend that will continue at the October '98 Anarchist Bookfair in London, and in the coming months and years. A report on the conference is now available - get it.

NOSEDIVE

Meanwhile, back in the real world.....following the nose-dive of the 'tiger' economies in east Asia, followed by Japan, the Russian economic and social system is close to collapse - or "anarchy" as the world's capitalist media misleadingly put it. If only! This has led to spectacular (temporary?) losses on the American and British stock exchanges, and no doubt many comrades will have enjoyed the spectacle of watching the capitalists and their state agents squirm.

However, it would be a major mistake to believe that the complete collapse of capitalism is imminent, and that a bright new future is only just around the corner. For when capitals profits suffer, the trickle down theory really begins to work - yes it's us and the rest of the working class who will be made to pay for it (strange how it never really works the other way around when capital's profits soar).

Rising inflation and taxes/lower wages; the increased casualisation of labour; new Labour's new Deal - or new lower paid unorganised labour; tighter immigration and other state controls.....are just part of the package designed to make us pay for their chaos.

At the same time Clinton has demonstrated once and for all that

we really must 'take the toys from the boys', with his unilateral bombing of targets (?) in Sudan and Afghanistan, supported afterwards by.....Blair ! Whilst most commentators agree this was at least partly designed to cover up his embarrassment at home, where he has been well and truly revealed as a serial woman abuser, there are other reasons for this murder too.

TOP GUN !

Partly it was a response to the attacks on American embassies (where the major casualties were innocent civilians), always seen by Americans as an attack on their manhood. But also it was a

warning to anyone getting a bit cheeky - "don't fuck with us 'cause we're bigger than you and we can blow you away".

The embassy attacks, coupled with the obscene bombing in Omagh, also allowed, in Britain at least, the state to introduce the most draconian and repressive law in memory. Another convenient measure to contain the fallout of an imploding capitalist economy.

And what of the anarchist/libertarian responses? Despite the best intentions of those in Bradford, and indeed of those of us putting out this mag, there has been little co-ordinated (or unco-ordinated!) response in Britain that we know of.

No matter how much we wish it, capitalism will not just disappear up its own backside and replace itself with the sort of society we dream of. We really must move on from the sort of pathetic behaviour highlighted (again) in this mag, and we genuinely mean all of us 'cause we're as guilty as the next person.

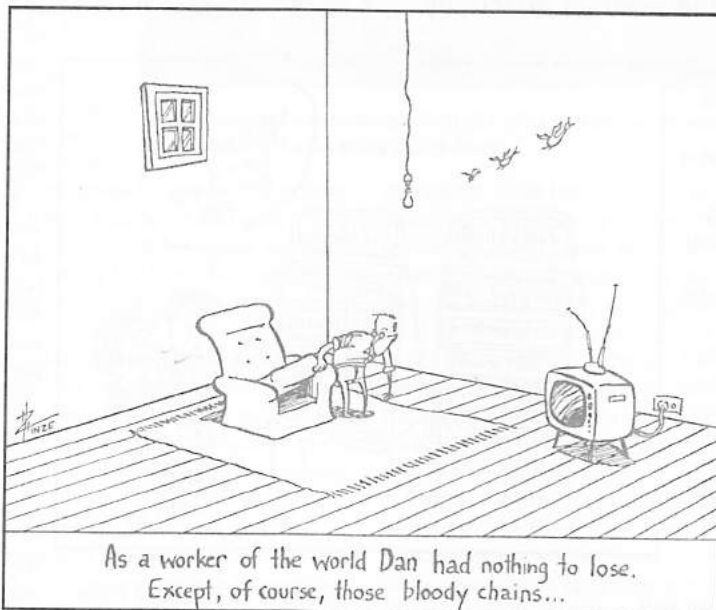
If we want the next 100 years to be any better than the last it really is time we got our act together, cut the crap and the backbiting, reach firm common ground, and began to take back the initiative - that means consistent, hard, local work and propaganda AND small and large scale direct action on many different fronts. Make our diversity our strength.

Smash Hits Collective

This mag is produced by a loose collective based in London. Our starting point was the publication of Issue 73 of Class War (which signalled the end of the old Class War Federation) which we were in general agreement with. We aim to produce a discussion bulletin for the movement as a contribution to the struggle for a social, economic and political revolution. We will take articles from any source that will discuss and generate debate on issues relevant to our movement. Please submit them to the address below - deadline for next issue 31/1/99.

The word 'anarchist' gets mentioned a lot in these pages - we would like to stress that we are not overly attached to this description, what we are interested in is creation of a social movement that challenges and ultimately destroys capitalism - we don't care what it's called. Originally we intended to print everything we received, but this has not been possible due to space/cost and the content of some of the articles. In future we will not print any article submitted that contains personal abuse directed at another person/group - keep it political.

Copies of Smash Hits are available from us for £1, payment in advance. Bulk orders of 5 or more copies are available at 50p each, payment in advance. For large orders on a sale or return basis please contact us to discuss. All payments should be made using stamps or by cheque/PO payable to 'Active Distribution'.



As a worker of the world Dan had nothing to lose.
Except, of course, those bloody chains...

NOSTALGIA IN THE UK

As we write, in this month's (May's) GQ magazine there's a nice little nostalgia piece on Eighties protest, complete with quaint little photos of earnest crusties on Poll Tax riots which are no doubt suitable for home framing. Such indications of our own irrelevance might be easier to stomach if we were up to bold new adventures. However Smash Hits, created as a forum for new ideas, has largely the same old saws in it - syndicalism, localism, why we should all join the ACF and even an article by Colin Ward!

Okay, so forests of good new ideas aren't going to spring up overnight. But it does seem indicative of a general tendency for us, not knowing where we're going, to instead venerate our own past. Even people too young to have ever been at Stop the City or the Brixton riots have been steeped in our lore to the point where they can repeat it by rote.

Even actions which were actually total failures, such as the Bash the Rich marches, have been transformed in our memories and added to the collection of cups. Depressed at the low turnout at last night's meeting? Never mind, let's tell the one again about the paraplegic guy who got wheeled round the looted supermarket, that always goes down well.

Maybe we're never going to get out of this impasse until we take a cold and dispassionate look at our own roots, and see the early 80s as a set of events arising out of specific conditions and not some golden age where cider flowed, insurgent probes filled every streetcorner and chocolate bars were bigger.

EARLY 80S: GOLDEN YEARS?

One of the ironies about 80s anarchism was that it was created, and probably always defined, by Thatcherism. At the time many in the establishment saw the country as in the grip of militant unionism - as evidenced when the Miners drove the Tories from office in '74. One of the workers' main weapons was full employment, creating labour scarcity and with it the closed shop etc. Determined to break this grip at all costs the new Government decided to re-create unemployment, hoping to strike fear into potential strikers by creating a repository of potential scabs.

However, this move had an unforeseen consequence - they created a generation of young unemployed who had never known work discipline. (Of course they'd been through the preparatory world of school-discipline, but that hadn't prepared them for the new entrepreneurial world of 'job hunting' individualists rather than 'job-taking' workers.)

Moreover, combined with the deep blue sea of unemployment was the devil of a widespread counter-culture (anarcho-punk, free festivals, a large squatting network etc.). And the devil, of course, finds work for idle hands. Many soon found causing trouble was a good cheap way of having fun, that bottling speakers at CND rallies was more of a laugh than having to listen to the boring bastards.

In short, in attempting to close one avenue of class struggle

(the workplace) they inadvertently opened another. Of course, not all '81 rioters were unemployed - but all were fighting on a new frontier capital wasn't prepared for. On many of our early outings the cops were literally caught on the hop. (It should also be pointed out, however, that probably only a minority of rioters had any direct links with the anarcho scene. And of course only a minority of the new unemployed ever got involved in either - three million troublemakers would have been unstoppable!)

RADICAL NAIVETÉ

Okay, so what was the ideology of these young hooligans? A word of warning here! Nowadays there's a virtual academic sub-industry devoted to "explaining" social eruptions such as punk. And of course each analyst has his own theory held apart from all the others - after all, that's how they earn their living. Surrounded by

all this there's a tendency for us to copy capital's mindset and each have our own cleverly phrased and neatly constructed "explanation" of the thing that anarchism was "really" about.

But, like most actual movements, anarchism was a volatile mixture of all sorts of contradictions - populist (antipathy to "fancy words") yet wilfully extremist (fixated with violence beyond any context), puritanical (glorifying poverty) yet hedonistic (into heavy drugs consumption) etc. These contradictions aren't some barrier which specialist thinkers see through to explain the real essence of the movement to us, they were the essence of the movement. If it

had ever transcended them, it would have become something else.

But while we can't reduce anarchism to a coherent set of political ideas it did throw up certain typical attitudes. Adilkn's 'Cracking the Movement' perhaps best sums up the spirit. They write of 'the Unclassifiables' who "transformed themselves into 'activists', toiling day and night to various ends...With radical naiveté they were available for any cause. They'd cook for it in their restaurants, set donation jars on the bars of their coffeeshops, watch the videos, go to all the benefits, come fix a squat up here and there. Everyone was welcome.

"Years of constantly living in the present made every argument involving a historical continuity simply a pretty story from which not a single conclusion had to be drawn. Each action stood completely alone, there was nothing to be learnt from it for a future occasion...The strategic thinkers had to reactivate them over and over, to entice them into contributing to the impression 'that it's all happening again'. They made up the movement."

ALTERNATIVE SHOPPING

They're writing of the Dutch squatter scene, but substitute 'flea pit pub' for 'coffeeshop' and you won't go far wrong. Visit either and you'd likely find a minority of 'strategic thinkers' (usually a few years older and straighter looking) whose job it was to provide tasks for the mohawked mass of do-ers, or 'activists'. In short we never broke with the organisational forms of the Trots which we so fetishised our hatred of - which of course is the same as that of capital itself.

These tasks were picked from a shopping list of oppressions - animal abuse, anti-fascism, squatting etc. Due to the more disparate social/cultural origins of the 'activists' this net had to be



cast wider than with the Trots, almost any cause could be cause of the week. We'd use this supposed "openness" to try and deny our division into thinkers and do-ers. (The Trots would even comply with us in this myth to paint us as "disorganised" or "single issue").

But this stretching meant an even greater incoherence than the Trots, not only could anything be brought up at meetings, nothing was allowed to be sorted into any 'hierarchical' order of priority. This incoherence had to be covered up by giving activism the tempour of religious fervour.

Anyone had the 'right' to do anything, apart from the great unthinkableables of fascism and theory. No-one at any time should be allowed the luxury of sitting down and thinking about what we were doing, in case they confronted us with our own void of thought.

Essential to the perpetuation of this was the personalisation of capitalism, which was presented not as an economic system but merely as a bunch of people! Attacks on the working class were seen not as part of capital's need to restructure itself globally but as coming direct from Thatcher's personal nastiness. At its best this countered liberal notions of the enemy as some abstract "mode of thought" which floats above society, and led to some who richly deserved it getting gobbled on or roughed up.

But at its worst it became some quasi-revolutionary version of 1984's Hate Week. We became radical hit-men, fantasising about bumping off our shopping list of targets whereupon our shopping list of oppressions would magically disappear. Our critique of political representation didn't go much further than saying Kinnock was no better a person than Thatcher. (Absurdly, in Smash Hits 2 Andy Anderson is still writing about how "capitalism is nothing more than an economic system originated and developed by middle class people...this system will end when we expropriate the middle class").

(Worse, anarchism borrowed punk's fixation with British traditionalism - typical targets were the Royals, "toffs" at Henley, fox hunting etc. Ironically, these archaic elements had by then become a barrier to Britain becoming a modern capitalist power - school tie networks stopping careers being open to ability etc. - and a major part of the restructuring project was removing them. While we bayed witlessly outside their Society Balls it was Thatcher who held the real knives for them. However, especially since this became more blatant with Blairism, this is one mistake most of us know not to make again).

PUNKS AND WORKERS

Anarchism's 'breakthrough' is usually seen in Class War circles as getting anachos to support workers in struggle. In part, this is a fair enough point. Many did move from such threats to capital as not eating meat or buying anything on major record labels to physically contesting the State.

But the central obstacle this faced was rarely addressed, which was getting a movement subcultural in origin to support what was essentially a foreign culture. Endless arguments about Miners eating meat were never the real issue. The point was that these were the very Mums and Dads you spiked your hair up to piss off in the first place! By supporting them anarcho-punks became Anarchists - became genuinely political.

However, the divisions inherent in our counter-cultural origins were at best suspended not overcome. Workers might be grateful for the practical support of these funny-looking people, but "they" we remained. At the end of the demo we'd traipse raggedly back to



Another nostalgic photograph from the miners strike as communities defend themselves with bricks against the invading police force

our squats while they returned to their semis. For most anarchism remained a 'look' and attitude first, and a set of political ideas second (if at all). Class War itself was a good barometer of this, often announcing it had "left the anarchist movement" in order to become a mainstream working class organisation - only to find the need to "leave" it all over again a short while later.

It's also worth pointing out the distinction between the things we supported (Miners and Printers strikes, inner city riots etc.) and the much smaller events we had direct involvement in (disrupting CND marches, Stop the City, anti Public Order Act etc.). We were responsible for the riots only in the minds of Mirror journalists.

Class War called for the rioters to "open up the second front" in support of the Miners, yet the cities stayed defiantly quiet throughout the strike. Unencumbered by Lefty notions which tried to turn insurgents back into victims we could comprehend the rioters' motives. But that doesn't mean they were listening to us in the slightest.

LATE 80S - THE DARK AGES

By the late Eighties we'd become increasingly marginalised. As Aufheben have pointed out this was due to a combination of the 'stick' of dole squeezes (especially the '87 Fowler Review) with the 'carrot' of new found social affluence ('Fragmentation of Anarcho-Punk' from 'Kill or Chill', Aufheben 4.) Not only were new people not coming into the movement, many were leaving in droves.

This led to those that remained clinging to their ideological fixations with greater and greater fervour, even perversely trying to make our marginalisation into a virtue. Actions that had once been intended as examples to others became badges of our difference from "them", that contemptible branded herd who looked straight, paid rent and had jobs. Ultraism became our excuse to become exclusive - which in the long term means you either fade away or fossilise.

This in turn created a vicious circle where working people were less and less likely to listen to us. The boom was giving them ownership of their houses and satellite dishes to hang outside of them. Why were they going to listen to a few hate-filled cranks with their bizarre obsessions about "not selling out"?

1990s: EVEN DARKER AGES

Of course the Nineties are, at least on the surface, the very reverse of this. Workers see bosses raking in greater profits than ever before while their wages fall and the threat of job insecurity grows. Today our enemies are getting away with murder - at times literally. Yet nobody's doing anything about it! This paradox has

led to many orthodox anarchists crying into their beer "but objectively the conditions are right for anarchism!" What is it we're not seeing?

Part of the problem is that anarchists have often had an oddly ambiguous position on assaults on the working class. Many insist that attacks on wages or benefits are "good", even as they campaign against them, because they are "good for revolution". This crudely linear logic is, if anything, Leninist - suggesting working people aren't going to revolt unless absolutely forced to.

Underneath this apparent opposition to 'reformism' is a failure to understand history. Job security and benefits were a concession won by previous generations of class struggle, not a clever ruse thought up by the bosses to keep us in line.

Recent years have shown us the fallacy that people will revolt when there's "no alternative". There's always alternatives, there's the bottle, there's all sorts of drugs, there's domestic and petty violence, there's a thousand and one ways of hiding your head and not thinking about it. People are likely to explore them all until they start to see practical positive alternatives.

ANARCHO FIXATIONS

Compounded with this is an anarcho fixation with the Left. Trade Unions, single-issue pressure groups, Trots, local democracy etc. - all were seen as enemy agents, defusing revolt. Obviously there's a lot of truth to this, but becoming fixated with it became very convenient for us. We could happily believe in "the working class", pure and unsullied in their endless antagonism to capital, without worrying why there hadn't actually been a revolution yet. Oh, that was all the fault of the Left, those sell-out swine! In short, we came to put the cart before the horse.

But the Left was never an intrinsic part of capital, just one tactic available to it. Nowadays there's so little revolt to defuse they're largely redundant. The recuperators aren't needed on the picket lines so they've been shown the dole queue. This has left us pretty high and dry, in some cases even propping up social democracy in order to ritually denounce it!

There's also been attempts to portray our own successors as Leftist recuperators! Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass and Food Not Bombs are often slated as 'pacifist' or 'single issue'. But RTS, for example, are not bombarding riotous proles with happy house music until they turn into party heads, rather they're trying to devise ways of getting party heads out from the clubs and onto the streets.

Crucially, these groups are trying to recompose around the lower point of struggle they find themselves in. Criticisms of them which ignore this fact are useless, based on a 'radicalism' which is bogus and empty. Even supposing they are talking to the wrong people, are we talking to anybody?

ALIENATED NATION

But overall it's alienation which is the key to understanding the current context. When people don't riot or strike it doesn't necessarily mean they're happy in their acquiescence, it often means they just don't see any practical means of opposing it.

As the Situationists used to argue every aspect of capitalist society conspires to portray us to ourselves as individuals, as consumers, as order-takers, as anything but active ingredients in history. The only thing to add is that capital's got a lot more sophisticated about this than when they were first writing about it,

and we've had nearly twenty years of the (post) Thatcherite cult of 'individualism' to contend with.

Anti-opencast activists from Selar recently reported a chat they had with some locals: "after a sympathetic conversation one boy, living half a mile from the eviction, said he'd watch the news the next day to catch up on events." (from 'Autonomy, Media and Representation', Do or Die 6). From workplace to traffic systems to telly - watch the lights and follow the path.

Of course, anarchism was readier than most political movements to encompass ideas about alienation. However, there's often been a tendency to just add it to the shopping list, or put it on the backburner while we discussed more immediate issues. Partly this is understandable, it is easier to talk about tangible things like the thinness of wage packets or the tedium of work.

Unless you're careful, gabbing about alienation can make you sound like some New Age crank. However, it's arguable our prime task should be to find practical ways of circumventing this problem.

BETTER OR WORSE

Anarchism never came anywhere near its often stated aim of overthrowing capital, of course. However, while it's almost impossible to quantify such things, it probably helped slow down the reimposition of austerity upon the British working class.

Despite its many weaknesses, it's worth remembering that had it just been a disempowering waste of time it wouldn't still be exerting the fascination over us that it does. At our best we grasped, more through intuition than reason, that political liberation doesn't belong to some distant day called 'the revolution', that it's a process in which we take back control of our own lives from the 'logic' of capital - and that we can start off that process any time we come together.

More hazily we recognised that the true goal of the 'political activist' is not to get better at the job or learn to exert more influence - but to negate his/her own role by making such activity so widespread the label loses its meaning. At our worst, of course, we were Leftists without a bath.

But such flashes of insight rarely lingered. Eighties anarchism walked a knife-edge, forever slipping one way into pseudo-militant ultraism and another into lifestyle liberalism. It was the view from the brief periods up on that edge that kept you going, even when the troughs became longer and deeper, but the pattern never broke.

OUTGROWING SUBCULTURES

The movement was ultimately unable to outgrow either its subcultural origins or its own internal limitations and contradictions. Instead, facing hard times, it ossified into a set of rules that had to be kept so rigid because they were actually past their relevance.

In the above we've largely avoided talking about who's been indulging in this fetishism of the past. To some degree or another, we've all been doing it. Now let's all cut it out. Paradoxically, defusing its spell means looking hard at the real thing, in its context, in order to salvage from its remains whatever still seems workable for today. We've nothing to lose but our scrapbooks!

The Bash Street Kids

BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS

This article was written in August 1997 immediately after the first Conway Hall meeting to discuss the aftermath of the final issue of 'Class War'. A couple of minor changes have been made August 1998.

Class War has rightly pointed out that the anarchist movement in Britain is in crisis. Few other publications have attempted to be as frank and, although Class War has been ridiculed for many years by the editors of other anarchist publications, it is these very publications which deserve the most criticism.

Most appear to be anaemic fetish-style magazines written and produced for a tiny, self serving group of train-spotters obsessed with the Spanish Civil War (this is not a cheap and predictable jibe, it is still true). What has distinguished Class War from the rest of the anarchist movement has been its popular approach to ordinary people and its attempt to create anarchist organisations in local areas and in the workplace. Having said this Class War does deserve to be criticised on its own terms.

SUCCESSSES AND FAILURES

There is a crying need for an anarchistic trade union willing to ignore anti-trade union legislation and adopt direct anti-management tactics and Class War has not been able to establish such a union, nor even offer assistance to workers looking to do so.

That autonomous trades unions can come into being in modern Britain has been proved since the early 1990s by the formation of the illegal offshore oil-workers union and the "prisoner's association", which for a time virtually usurped control of Britain's prisons from the warders.

In the realm of political involvement Class War has a checkered history of success and negligence. Class War's involvement in the anti-Brynley Heaven campaign in Hackney in 1988 won them a lot of respect and proved how powerful Class War could be when it applied its sloganeering and printing techniques to a struggle at local government level.

Offering to run a candidate against the Tory replacement for victim of the Brighton bomb (when the other parties had stated they might let him run unopposed) was a cheeky and appropriate action, but involvement in the Kensington by-election was a mistake, it was a genuine recognition of the electoral system and reduced Class War to the level of an also-ran stunt party (fittingly coming second to the Monster Raving Loony Party).

Having joined the electoral spectacle at its most trivialising, Class War then failed to put up a candidate at Millwall when it was desperately needed in 1993. That the BNP were allowed to capitalise on the disaffection of Millwall voters, turn a class issue into a race issue, and obtain a councillor, must remain a stain on the reputation of Class War, who were aware of the situation as it developed and alone had a high enough national profile to have opposed them successfully.

BASHING THE RICH

But even in its most apparently trifling actions Class War has had some notable successes. It has perhaps never been fully appreciated how inspiring the "Bash the Rich March" on Hampstead in 1985 proved to be to anarchists across the world. People from Australia, Europe and America have all told me how thrilled they were at the sight of an organisation willing to march on the richest district of city with violent intent, something many of them had only dreamed of doing in their own towns.

The Hampstead Bash the Rich march was perhaps the closest Class War ever came to evoking the spirit of the Gordon Riots upon

Let's cut ourselves free
from
AUTHORITY



which it was originally based.

Class War is a magazine. Using the printed medium to convey an anarchist perspective is not a neutral decision but one which is worth exploring. As an anarchist paper Class War has been accused of being, like Viz, based on a parody of the Sun tabloid. In reality Class War is more like an underground echo of the 1960s Daily Mirror.

If one is producing an anarchist magazine with a populist approach it is worth asking why Class War did not attempt to become a weekly or daily publication. In recent times Britain has only had one vaguely anarchist mass-circulation tabloid weekly, "The News on Sunday", set up by former Angry Brigade activists in the mid-1980s.

TABLOID

The News on Sunday was a titanic failure, but was not a poor quality one. It might be worthwhile Class War discussing the book "Disaster" which charts the fall of the News on Sunday and was written by two Sun journalists, few books could be more informative as to why anarchists failed in the world of national tabloid production.

At present Class War has become a similar organisation to the Trotskyist press (although it does not own its own printers as they

do). Class War could reconstitute itself as a radical flyposting organisation willing to plaster places of work with inside dirt leaked to them by workers in order to intimidate the bosses.

LOTS OF PROBLEMS!

Bizarrely the ending of the Cold War has appeared to have harrowed the libertarian left in Britain more profoundly than it has Marxist and Trotskyist groups. Arguably this is because the Trotskyists would carry on producing their trash even if Trotsky himself were to return and ask them to stop, but also it may be due to the fact that the British Anarchist movement has historically been issue driven and not based on sound analysis.

Proud moments such as the London anarchists squatting the Tube for the people during the Blitz when Churchill had ordered them closed are then followed by years of complete inactivity. More recently Punk and the following peace movement produced high points such as anarchists blocking the route of the Falklands parade and the Stop the City demonstrations, but the late eighties saw the City riding rampant over the country and a rise in regional nationalism.

Now it is environmentalism which is attracting the bulk of the anarchist movement, once again stunt driven and of dubious oppositional danger to the state (which has felt so threatened that it has turned some activists into media stars!). All of the above incidents are, without value-judging the people involved, stunts followed by long periods of inactivity.

It is wrong to criticise Class War, as many have, for being a sensationalist tabloid when the publicity stunt has long been the basis of anarchist action in Britain. To be a proper anarchist one must be a threat to the state, and give rational reasons for being so. This requires analysis, of theory and methods and the identifying of the state's points of weakness.

A BIT OF CLASS

Undoubtedly the weakest point in Class War's programme is its concept of class. Class War advocates working class solidarity but has been unable to define what being working class entails. On any standard definition of class this author is working class. However I have absolutely no pride in being so, I was not able to determine the type of family I would be born into any more than I was able to determine my race.

Whereas the concept of "class struggle" is scientific, implying the dialectical evolution of a class society towards, hopefully, its abolition, the concept of "class war" is alienating. Advocating a war between the classes is little different from advocating a war between the races. Like racism, class hatred is destructive.

Though "Class War" as a title is obviously more exciting and eye-catching than the predictably Marxist sounding "Class Struggle" would be, it will never be more than a slogan of Borstal politics not far removed from "all coppers are bastards". This is a central reason why Class War in format, content and achievement has failed to be taken seriously.

I now move on to how Class War, or a similar magazine, could do considerable damage to the Establishment and to bosses, by becoming a radical, libellous whistle-blowers' journal. In the mid 1960s London journalists were aware that the Kray twins were sewing up the violent crime world and that they had police assistance in doing so.

What no journalist could understand was why these out-of-control hoodlums were being used by the police as trustees of the underworld when a host of more controllable gangsters would have been preferable. Suddenly one photo delivered to the Daily Mirror explained it all. The picture showed, sitting together on a sofa, a leading Tory lord, the chairman of the Labour Party, a known, catburgling rent boy and the Kray twins.

This picture was dynamite, it would have blown apart the Establishment in a massive corruption scandal. It was the equivalent of having a picture of Cherie Blair, Ffiona Hague and the wife of Liverpool's Ungi family enjoying a lesbian embrace whilst Special Branch officers look on. The Daily Mirror staff were baying

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for the picture to be published, this was in the national interest because the Krays were obviously out of control but protected by government at the highest level.

The owners of the Daily Mirror refused, they, after all, were members of the Establishment. Despite the existence at the time of a so-called anti-Establishment clique of Oxbridge chums surrounding Peter Cook and the satirical movement, this photograph was only published in 1997!

CLOSING RANKS AGAIN

But one does not have to reach back into the 1960s to find the Establishment at all levels closing ranks to protect itself against the general public. In 1992 the then Chancellor, Norman Lamont entered an off-licence in Paddington accompanied by two prostitutes whose livelihoods he had ensured by producing a titanic recession.

The off-licence manager, John Ogonunu, quickly contacted the press and gleefully explained that he had it all on the off-licence's security cameras. What happened next is instructive. Fleet Street refused to publish his story, telling instead some nonsense about a bottle of champagne and cigars which the Chancellor was argued to have bought.

So a hidden game between the Establishment ensued, the general public could never have worked out that a "bottle of champagne" was meant to be code for two prostitutes, yet every paper and even "Have I got News For You" enjoyed a "daring" game of coming as close as they could to hinting the truth. Threshers, Tory party donators, quickly destroyed the footage from the security cameras, and Mr Ogonunu was rapidly (and illegally) deported to Nigeria by the Home Office.

What this whole incident tells us is that the Establishment, whilst enjoying the discomfort of a famous person caught out and the thrill of being "in the know", will never inform the public if, by doing so, a serious threat to themselves is implied. Revealing the sexual antics of backbench MPs is one thing, exposing the Chancellor is dangerous and therefore censored.

Libel laws are the reason frequently cited by the press for not sharing its secrets with us but this is nonsense. In 1988 the Observer published an entire Government Report against the Al Fayed's breaking the Official Secrets Act let alone libel law and got away with it. The truth is that the press is controlled at the top by the ruling class. By this I do not mean simply Fleet Street, but Socialist Worker, Private Eye and even local papers (controlled through reliance on police reports and advertising revenue as much as by ownership). One amazing exception to this was the scandal sheet Scallywag.

The Scallywag story proves that, if you take on the

Establishment, even if only at a tabloid magazine level, you can nevertheless produce an amazing anti-state reaction. For some time the laughable suggestion that John Major had a black, social worker mistress in Brixton became common currency in London.

A tiny magazine distributed in Camden pubs and published by a retired journalist chose to publish the story on its cover. Taking their cue New Statesman followed suit and got landed with the first libel suit to be brought by a serving prime minister.

New Statesman backed down and lost a fortune in out of court settlements. Scallywag invited the prime minister to sue them announcing that they would turn his appearance in court into a trial of his crimes against the British people.

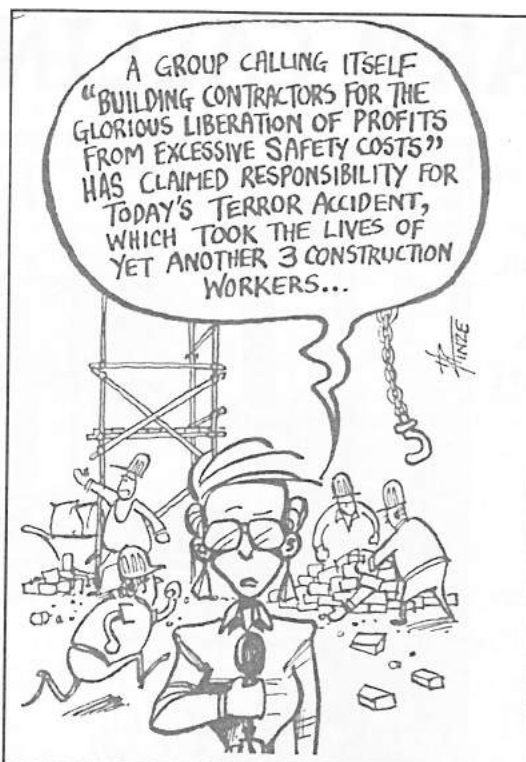
Sensing the danger he was falling into Major agreed to drop his action if Scallywag merely apologised and agreed not to repeat the libel. By now Scallywag saw that it had the prime minister on the run. Far from apologising it reissued the story on its new front page adding even more absurd libels. Major had to limp away. This is how powerful an out of control publication can be against the Establishment and it is a role which Class War could play.

GOING PLACES

Since the ending of the Cold War there has been a global speed up in production and, in and out of work, conditions have become a great deal harder. We could and should establish an international survey of people's experiences at work in the First and Third Worlds. Not a futile contact list of "fellow anarchists" but some form of communication with workers who can relate their experiences and from which we can begin to gather a global picture of modern capitalism and how to oppose it.

On the subject of environmentalism, in my opinion we cannot target this fake (and potentially far-right) political movement hard enough. I was quite frankly disgusted to hear people defending Reclaim the Streets at the Conway Hall meeting (July 1997), so the new greens have got some vaguely anti-capitalist ideas have they?

They want to get a job or try living on a giro rather than daddy's allowance and see how vague their anti-capitalism is then! For my money the appearance of Earth First! sympathiser David Bellamy as a Referendum Party candidate and David Icke as a new age advocate of the anti-semitic Protocols of the Elders of Zion says all



you need to know about these latter day "Wandervogel" (these were the middle class Nietzschean green activists who camped out in Germany's forests to commune with nature around 1900 and adopted the swastika as the symbol of their nature-first movement, guess what party they ended up joining in the 1920s).

As for animal rights if my memory serves me right it was the Animal Rights edition of Class War produced by middle class squatters in 1984 which almost destroyed the paper and forced it to abandon its collective-based production system and adopt an editorial structure.

There should be absolutely no room for vegetarianism or green activism in any future anarchist production that purports to be attacking the class system. The self-righteousness of militant vegetarianism is a tremendous turn-off for most people.

EAT STEAK

Right now (1997) central government has outlawed T-bone steaks but there is no longer an unblinkered anarchist

movement to organise illegal "beef-ins" in defiance of the government ban (and so once again it is the far-right which is reaping the benefit of anarchist apathy by rallying the anger of "patriotic" beef-eaters).

The anarchist movement has been perceived to have been privately gloating at the (non-existent) prospect of tens of thousands of meat-eaters dying from CJD, a fascistic fantasy which conveniently (and tellingly) unites the smugness of militant vegetarianism with environmentalism's neo-Malthusian desire for mass-depopulation.

The fox hunting debate has seen enormous rallies by the Countryside lobby in London. No class based attack on these toffs has been organised because the anarchist movement is still only able to relate to the fox-hunting issue in terms of the nauseating stance of animal rights rather than supporting a ban on hunting to piss off the rich or else demanding the legalisation of dog fighting and bear baiting as working class sports.

1. One of the most publicised acts of class warfare of the 1980s, the co-ordinated mass destruction of luxury cars across two Home Counties in a single night, was claimed not in the name of Class War but by the "Wessex Freedom Front".

K

AFTER BRADFORD...

'Conference Reports And Personal Accounts of MayDay 98'

Over 200 people from different groups and no groups came together from 1st to 4th May 1998 to discuss and debate political ideas and how a revolutionary movement to transform society can develop. This pamphlet covers all the notes from each group plus personal accounts from some of the participants.

Get it for £1 from London MayDay Group, Box BM 5538, London, WC1N 3XX (make cheques payable to Active Distribution)

ALARM CALLING!

The Labour Party's present dominance of local government should present opportunities for local anarchist papers to flourish. In many large cities the Labour Party's council majorities are so overwhelming as to be equivalent to town hall one-party dictatorships - with opposition councillors only numbering in twos and threes or completely wiped out.

Prolonged Labour Party rule has usually been accompanied by the stench of corporate corruption and the recent scandals in monolithic Labour councils like Doncaster and Paisley shows there's one old Labour tradition that still burns brightly.

Combined with an already established healthy contempt for local politicians and a collapse to recent low numbers voting in local elections - only 11% in a recent Bristol by-election - local anarchist papers could seize on the opposition power vacuum and take the initiative in developing popular local resistance.

WHERE ARE THEY?

Unfortunately such papers don't seem to exist anymore. Bradford's "Knee Deep in Shit" was one of the most sustained attacks on local government corruption and more recently the "Hackney Heckler" and Gravesend's "Gravedigger" have attempted to keep the tradition alive. On all too many other occasions however local anarchist news sheets have merely addressed other anarchists rather than trying to reach out to the wider working class.

In Swansea in the 1970s a paper was produced which did break the pattern, establish a mass circulation and have significant political impact. I write about it here to encourage others who might be thinking about effective challenges to their own local states and Labour mafiosos.

THE SWANSEA MAFIA

Swansea was as corrupt as fuck in the 1970s. Probably still is. Council houses, teaching jobs, building contracts, planning permission - all available from your local Labour councillor. Your local one party rule tin pot twin town. Freebies, backhanders, hotel bills, trips to Ascot, extensions to your semi, jobs for the boyos out of college. Being a Labour councillor made you up for life. There were councillors whose occupation was given as "school caretaker" who were living in mansions in Derwen Fawr and holidaying abroad five or six times a year.

The money changed hands in nightclubs. Everyone knew about it - it wasn't a secret. It was talked about openly. Most of the fuckin' town had benefited in some way anyway so who wanted to blow the fuckin' whistle? The local paper knew. The cops knew - they were part of it. Inspector Ron fuckin' Rees fucked off to Hong Kong with his turd from the golden shitpile. I've passed your name onto the secret police Rees you fuckin' scumbag.

Meanwhile the property development boys carved the ugly, lovely town up. Trevor Wignall, Derek Wignall, Brian Cornelius, Malcolm Struel, Terry Francis. The Swansea Mafia had the town by the



Friendly bobby directs punter to nearest Alarm seller while building burns in background

bollocks and Gerald Murphy the council leader in their pocket. Every development that went through the council came back to these five "businessmen". They were the smart ones - make millions from planning permissions in return for a free side of salmon or artexing some councillor's bathroom extension.

What do you do when everyone knows about it and no one gives a toss? What do you do when most of the heavyweight villains, scrap merchants, bouncers and freelance psychos are already on the mafioso payroll? You could pay some bouncer to kill their own granny and still get change of a tenner....WHAT YOU DO IS THIS!

You research like fuck in council minutes and Companies House. You write a 20-page anonymous pamphlet called "The Swansea Mafia" detailing payments for contracts and every corrupt act you can discover. You sneak off to Birmingham and get 5000 printed in a leftie printshop. You bring them back on a scheduled bus service to Swansea sweating like you're going to rip off some Colombian cartel.

You distribute them at dead of night - all in one night - through 5000 letterboxes on every big council estate in Swansea. You're exhilarated, but scared shitless. You move house. You swear everyone to secrecy. You barricade your door. You have weapons by the bed. You've lit the blue touchpaper but will anything happen?

For a week fuck all! Then BINGO! Front page of the Evening Post, Western Mail, TV. Council denials. Every fucker in every pub reading it. I see pink copies, green copies, upside down duplicated copies. Photocopies of photocopies, overnight photocopier millionaires, copies written in longhand and copies in bus queues. I see dogs distributing copies out of knapsacks.

FUCKERS HAD THEIR CHIPS

The fuckers have had their day. Murphy and five others go to gaol. We don't get carved up. The Swansea mafia have revealed the power of the mass distributed populist political tract and I have taken good heed of it!

Of course nothing really changed. A few corrupt councillors who didn't play by the rules and got found out were gaoled - but the ones who did play by the rules were just as bad. The five

honest councillors or honest businessmen - we were anarchists for fuck sake! We didn't want any councillors or any businessmen. Good or Evil: they were all fuckin bastards to us.

It was good to see our arch-enemy the local council leader carted off to gaol - Leyhill open nick naturally - but the next one would be just as fuckin' bad. No political movement had been created. The publicity had forced the authorities to clean up the more blatant acts of corruption but the Swansea punters had remained inactive. Was there any way we could have taken things further without an automatic return to the status quo? Could you galvanise the punters with this kind of anti-corruption stuff or would they remain spectators?

We found an answer and it was called "ALARM" and I can say without any doubt that ALARM was to become the most effective political paper I have ever seen.

THE ALARM

What we had discovered with the Swansea Mafia pamphlet was that it was possible to engage the political attention of the punters by concentrating on local issues but not by presenting it in an overtly political way. People told us that the Mafia pamphlet wasn't political because it was "the truth".

People who would never read any of the leftie papers and who considered themselves non-political were fighting to get their hands on the Mafia pamphlet. So all was not lost with the working class - there was a way to get political ideas across after all! What was needed now was something that wouldn't just gain their interest in a passive way but would encourage them to organise and to act for themselves.

The other surprising thing was that though most of the information in the pamphlet was common knowledge, the fact that someone had had the bottle to write it down, print it and distribute it emboldened loads of other people to speak out about what had been going on for years.

So how could we take this further? We decided we had to produce something that came out regularly, that we couldn't continue to be anonymous but would have to sell it on the streets and pubs, that it should concentrate on exclusively local issues, it should be funny, not "political" in a party-building way - we would not label ourselves socialist or anarchist, that it should contain swearing - we wanted to write as people spoke.

WHAT THE FUCK?

One of the best compliments I had in my Alarm-writing days was that I wrote just like I talked. Since every other word I use is "fuckin'" to write without swearing would have been impossible. The swearing issue caused a lot of arguments - some people thought we'd be restricting our audience to youngsters or politicos or punks (this was 1977 by the way!) or men.

I stuck firmly to the "let's have lots of fuckin' swearing" line. If you called the council leader a "wanker" in print that was fine, but if you called the council leader a "fuckin' wanker" that was even better. If you called the council leader a "FUCKIN' WANKER" and stuck it on the front page that was better still. Circulation would shoot up, you'd see people pouring out of the city centre boozers on Saturday afternoons trying to find more copies.

Of course there were contradictions. People felt compelled to

moan about the swearing but went on buying more copies. One of our regular bulk buyers had a long chat with me about "the swearing" one rainy Saturday afternoon. We were "spoiling our case", "we had the information, we didn't need to use language like that", "we weren't going to be taken seriously", "I can't show it to the wife (the paper that is!)". Then he went on to increase his weekly order from 50 to 100 copies.

People aren't swayed by rational arguments. They complained continually about the swearing but really they liked it because it was part of the ferocity of the paper's response to a town stinking in corporate greed. But let's go back a bit before the (close to my heart) swearing issue takes over.

It was Autumn 1977 and one of those happy coincidences when some very sparky, imaginative people all happened to have come together in the "Gateway to Glorious Gower". ALARM No 1 appeared in October 1977. As ever it consisted of two duplicated A4 sheets

stapled together. Its first print run was 50 copies, price 2p.

The first few issues were distributed within our social scene and printed on a duplicator repossessed from the bourgeois academics of Swansea University. It was to come out every week - duplicated Friday afternoons, distributed Friday nights and Saturdays. Its contents were at this stage corruption news, Swansea scandal and gossip, gratuitous abuse of the Swansea craelael, gig reviews, good cafe guide, bad pub guide, etc. etc.

ON THE PISS

By Christmas we were selling 500 a week just through social contacts. January saw our great leap forward out to the streets

and pubs. We would sell for two hours Saturday mornings in the town centre, go to the pub for two hours - change the 2ps up into notes and get sloshed - then return to Oxford Street for another three hours of drunken rumbustious paper selling.

We advanced to a scanned illustrated cover page but often the duplicator was so bad you could hardly read the contents. When people talk about how important presentation, layout and graphics are in newspaper production, I think back to those Oxford Street days when punters would be holding the paper up to the sunlight to try and decipher the names hidden in the folds of the creased-up stencil duplicated pages. Fuck the presentation - get the fuckin' contents right first.

And Alarm's contents were more than fuckin' right. Despite the jailing of Murph the Swansea Labour council had still been enmeshed up to its cesspit ears in shit. As a result of the Mafia pamphlet and Alarm the Labour Party was swept away in the May '78 election and the Ratepayers returned with a sensational majority. This was a seismic change in a town totally dominated by Labour for 50 years.

MORE OF THE SAME

The Ratepayers continued as Labour left off however - totally fuckin' corrupt and playing ball with the Swansea mafioso who didn't mind who the fuck was in power as long as they were partial to a free lunch. Music to our ears. We were like pigs in clover - we couldn't fail to hit the target. Octogenarian Ratepayer leader Sidney Jenkins quickly became a laughing stock as Alarm christened him Sid "Vicious" and the Ratpack. Information on dodgy deals flooded in - pressed into our pockets on scraps of

paper on Saturday afternoons, anecdotes, stories, some of them 40 years old, anonymous tip-offs, meetings in quiet pubs.

We started doing our "pub runs" on Friday and Saturday nights. Five car loads of Alarm sellers would divide the Swansea pubs up between us and hit them with paper sales between 8 and 11pm on week nights.

The nearer to 11pm it was but the more papers you sold.

These weren't sales in "friendly" anarcho-leftie-alternative culture pubs; these were the most vicious, blitzed, no-go area pubs no sane leftie would ever set foot in. The Cadle Mill in Blaen-y-Maes, the Rum Punccheon in Tarnhill, The Bonymaen Inn, the Gatehouse, The Gors Inn - where no paper seller had trod before or since!

We would sell 50 or 60 in every boozer - the punters wondering why we were late, buying us pints, showering us with written and verbal information, more scraps of paper and articles by proletarian wordsmiths who'd never put pen to paper before, arguments breaking out, drunken assaults on us by mafioso payroll merchants compensated for by the local heavies kicking the shit for us back.

THE SCRAP METAL BOYS

Unofficial minders looking out for us, the scrap metal boys from the Haford riding gunshot for us buckshee. Grinning Blaen-y-Maes villains telling us stories of how they'd been paid to do us over by you-know-who - but if anyone touched us just mention our names to them. Phil "the div" Williams, the Lorrie brothers, Kenny Richards, the Lenny McLeans of Swansea tilting the balance of terror in our favour. John hanging out in the Gatehouse pub, with his Jacques Mesrine persona, knowing more about the Abertawe armed blags than the cops.

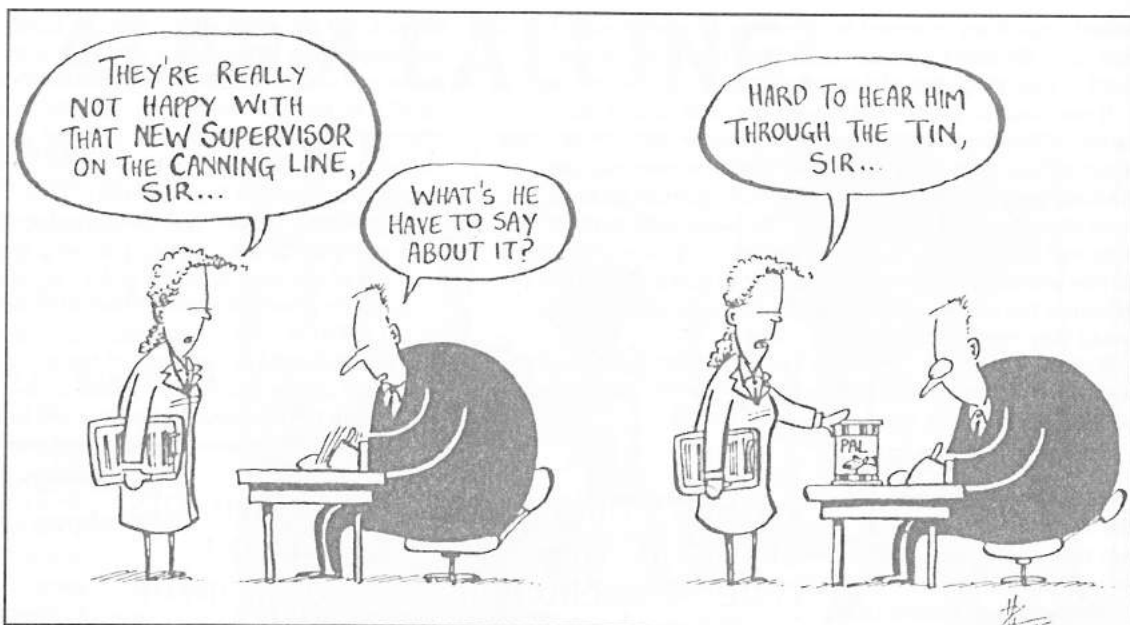
The pub sales functioned as political meetings. People who would never contemplate going to a meeting in their life would talk politics with us in the boozers for hours. Rowdy ramshackle arguments involving 20 or 30 people. Shouting, cheering, laughing, jostling.

Hairy as fuck - you didn't know if the big fucker coming at you was going to press a fiver into your palm or a knife into your stomach. We were bombarded with money. Commonplace to get £1 for a 2p paper but often fivers, tenners or £20 notes handed over with conspicuous effect.

The circulation went up to 2000 - 3000 - 4000 - 5000 A FUCKIN' WEEK in a town the size of Swansea. We ended up selling in every boozer in Swansea every week. No shithouse landlord dared ban our paper sellers. The Evening Post paper seller in town used to sell Alarm as well hidden under the Posts.

Our town paper sales on Saturdays used to turn into sprawling political debates. Pop into any town centre boozer on Saturday afternoons or evenings and every fucker was reading ALARM. The political ideas flowed thick and fast - abolish the council, scrap the mayor, we don't need no fuckin' council, occupy the guildhall and the mansion house.

Reports from factories and workplaces flooded in - shit and scandal in the factory bosses, meetings: Ford, Bayla Bay, Port Talbot steelworks - the paper selling on the shopfloor slagging off jobsworth foremen and anyone who took the boss's side. News from



schoolkids, from nurses and porters in the hospitals slagging off the consultants and the rip-offs, a football column allegedly written by the Swans manager Harry Griffiths and later by Tommy Smith - "Tommo Talking" - sales in the North Bank at home games. School sales, hospital sales, sweatshop sales. At 5000 a week practically everyone in Swansea read the paper.

COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL

Things were starting to happen that totally subverted the council's authority. Someone wrote in from Townhill saying his council house garden wall had collapsed and his son with learning difficulties could no longer safely use the garden, and the council were refusing to mend the wall.

The Direct Labour department - Alarm readers all - ignored the priorities for the day, went to the house on Monday morning and rebuilt the wall against the bosses' orders. Social need taking over from bureaucratic indifference.

The paper was ferocious - "an organ of organised class hatred" I used to describe it as - with a vulgar humour which often had you laughing for days afterwards. The mafioso were on the run. The Ratepayers collapsed.

When Sid "Vicious" Jenkins was arrested on corruption charges as he came out of the Guildhall he shouted to a TV reporter waving a copy of Alarm at him: "I haven't read it. It's all untrue. It's all the work of anarchists!" How we laughed our little cotton socks off that night.

NO HAPPY ENDINGS YET

This story doesn't have a happy ending despite the enthusiasm with which it is told. We didn't create a popular people's movement which led to an insurrection in Swansea in 1979 which somehow failed to make its way into the national papers.

The reasons why are too complex and involved to bother with in this account. But for two years we had created an authentic weekly people's paper in Swansea. Like the Mafia pamphlet people said Alarm wasn't "political" because it told "the truth" as opposed to the "political" lies of the council. We had made our version of what was going on in Swansea the common-sense version. We'd inverted the usual process where we are the loonies and the authorities have the common sense.

Albert Parsons, the editor of an earlier anarchist magazine called Alarm, was hanged, as people used to remind me. I escaped with just an iron bar over the head one night. Maybe scandals such as Donnygate will encourage someone to have another go. I hope so. And good fuckin' luck!!

I (Bristol)

MY EXPERIENCES AS A WORKING CLASS CONTRIBUTOR

In 1997 I contributed an article to an established anarchist magazine for the first time. What prompted me to do this was the desire to write about the collapse of a pyramid scheme in Albania. I was excited that the scheme was apparently about to unravel an entire country's economy, having previously written a leaflet attacking such a scheme ("The Flightline") when it divided the London squatting community I was part of in 1987.

FIRST PLANS

At first my plans to write the article were of little interest to magazines, so I had to produce bus-shelter posters and leaflets which I posted up around my estate instead. As the scheme collapsed the situation in Albania rapidly changed from financial crisis to full scale anti-capitalist revolution which I was able to monitor via workplace access to the Internet.

At this point a well-known, London-based anarchist magazine showed interest in publishing information about the Albanian Revolution. I was told I could submit an article if I produced it very quickly due to the up-coming copy deadline. I was extremely pleased to have the opportunity to write about Albania and reach people further than my local borough.

As far as I could see the situation in Albania was revealing unprecedented insights into how modern states and capitalism operated. Naturally I assumed that the editors of the anarchist magazine would share my excitement at the disintegration of the Albanian state and would devote a lot of space to analysing the revolution and its effects. I was therefore surprised by the attitude which they showed to my article.

EDITORS ATTITUDES

Although an edited version of my article did appear in the magazine a contemptuous preface had been added to it. This preface appeared to disown the entire article, suggesting that it was drawn from dubious sources and was "possibly wrong" (as it was drawn from Albanian news-agency reports it was in fact more accurate than if it had relied upon international reporting).

None of this had been discussed with me nor was any indication given that this was the opinion of the editors and not (as many people thought) part of the article itself. When I complained I was reassured that all the articles in the magazine regularly carried such disclaimers. In fact no other article did, although a few had explanatory notes.

What was more questionable than this however was the fact that, though a full-scale revolution was taking place in Albania, the magazine chose to headline instead as its leading article the syndicated warblings of Noam Chomsky, a rich American academic with no shortage of access to the mainstream media. I was eventually informed that this was done because "the magazine sells

more copies when we put his name on the cover". My article was the only coverage of the Albanian situation in the magazine.

Despite the intended slight towards my article I continued to express my enthusiasm to write more. However it was an entire year before I was invited to do so again. The occasion was another major international crisis which the editors recognised as newsworthy but lacked any coherent theoretical analysis to understand.

DEAD TIGERS

Thus I was allowed to submit an article on the collapse of the Asian tiger economies, a situation I had been monitoring since the summer of 1997 and which I could see had arisen as a result of investor panic after the Albanian revolution. I was more fortunate with this article as it was left intact and no disclaimer was attached to it.

However the attitude of the editors towards me as a contributor was beginning to become clearer. I was told at that point that the only reason my work was being accepted was because of a shortage of copy. I was made to feel that I should be grateful that it was being published at all. At

a social gathering one of the editorial team hinted that he thought I was unfit to be writing for the magazine as I wasn't an "anarchist".

I was starting to understand that the purpose of the magazine was not to promote revolutionary awareness but to preserve a self-contained debate amongst self-styled anarchists, it was in effect a specialist, "fetish magazine" for people terming themselves "anarchist" rather than a vehicle for promoting non-hierarchical revolution.

THE EDITORIAL MEETING

The 1998 revolution in Indonesia, following on as it did from the issues raised in my previous two articles for the magazine, meant that, despite their misgivings, I was permitted by the editorial team to write a further article for the next edition. Ignoring my previous insights into the non-revolutionary outlook of the magazine I set about writing a committed piece which I felt the scale of the uprising warranted.

To my eyes the economic crisis which was effecting Indonesia was a symptom of a far greater crisis to come. It behoved the magazine to take a stance because Indonesia had clearly demonstrated how important it was to combine rioting and class anger with moves towards social revolutionary action and that it was the *raison d'être* of any magazine which claimed to be revolutionary to campaign for proper theoretical analysis in the build up to any revolutionary activity.

This time I was contacted prior to publication, but only to be informed that the committed approach I had taken in my article was objectionable. The comments made by one of the editors were revealing.

I was told that the magazine had "never carried an editorial before", a statement which was as untrue as had been the one about the disclaimers. I was gently accused of trying to be a Trotskyist by preaching to the readership, but eventually the true criticisms emerged. The editor stated that I had a nerve trying to

write on behalf of the magazine as he implied it was not my place to do so, that I had not been involved long enough to be entitled and that in some way the magazine belonged more to him than me in any case.

In the end my crime did not stem from any theoretical error or contradiction. At no point was it suggested that the situation in Indonesia and the world economy were being exaggerated by me and that a committed stance from the magazine was not therefore necessary, instead I had simply succeeded in offending the pride of a proprietor by appearing to challenge his position and power of ownership.

However, as the magazine was supposedly anarchist, this editor stated that the final decision would be taken at a collective editorial meeting and not by him alone. Wary of having my article re-written or defaced as before I immediately requested to attend the meeting.

PLAYING FIELDS

Ostensibly I was present to argue for my article's editorial stance on the failures of the Indonesian revolution to be endorsed by the collective. But the playing-field had been subtly altered before we even began. All articles intended for the forthcoming issue (including my own) had been photocopied and circulated amongst the collective prior to the meeting. I had not received any of these.

I began to suspect for the first time that as a contributor I should have expected to receive other people's articles before publication just as they had presumably received (and then altered) mine. The reason for my being excluded from the editorial inner circle now became immediately apparent.

The editor who had expressed concern at my trespassing on his property (by daring to take a stand on the biggest revolutionary upheaval in thirty years) had already crossed out in pen the most prominent editorial reference in my article before he circulated it. It now appeared that I had hastily decided to re-write the article myself. This reduced the urgency of the article's message and made my presence at the meeting unnecessary.

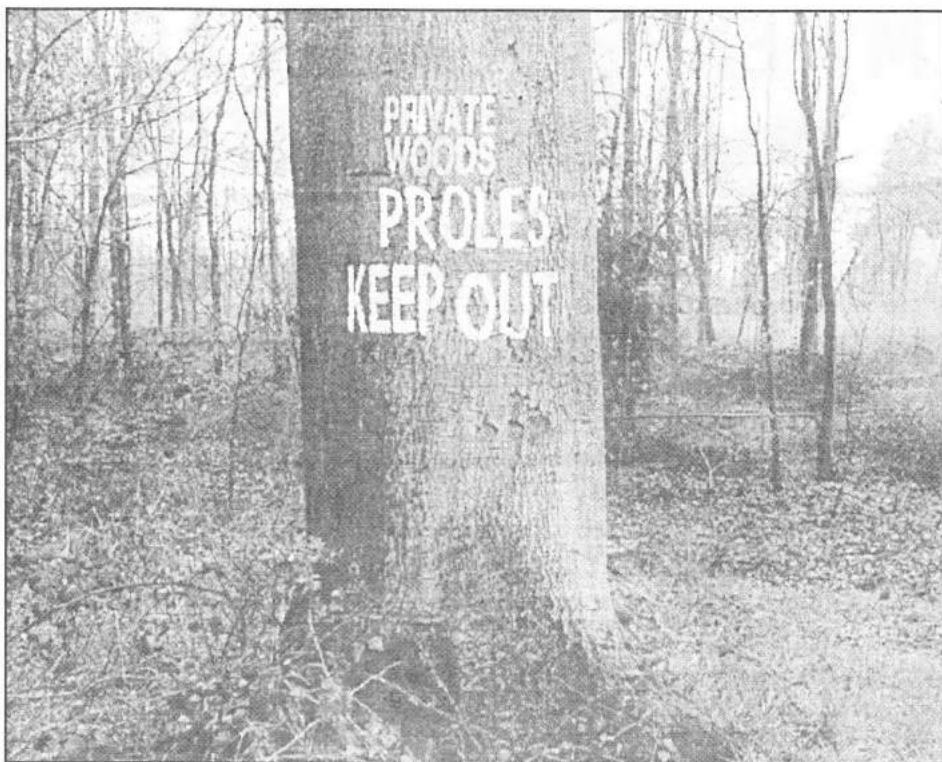
Another member of the (minute) editorial collective then informed me that she had not been able to post any of the articles to me (and thus alert me to the trick) as she "didn't have my address". This revealed the crudeness of the tactics being used against me (my address was easily obtainable as the editors had my phone number and had in any case seen me during the previous week).

PROCEDURAL TECHNIQUES

The editors had used a procedural technique borrowed straight from the hierarchical strategies of a university student union. This was accompanied by condescension when one of the editors presumed to physically demonstrate to me at the meeting how to re-write my article as if I was an illiterate.

If I wanted to have my article published, and I did because I felt that the issues were of vital importance, I would have to pretend not to notice what had been done and go along with the charade. The reason I experienced this as a contributor to the magazine can be summarised in one word, class.

A majority of the editorial team of the magazine are middle class, a few key members attended fee-paying private schools or else went to established universities. Loathe though I have been to condemn activists due to their class background, my involvement



with this anarchist journal has lead me to the inescapable conclusion that as a working-class contributor I have been subjected to discrimination due to my class.

I now believe that, perhaps unwittingly, the upper middle-class people in anarchist publishing circles use their class recognition networking to exclude and isolate working class people who attempt to get involved on equal terms (as well as to defend and protect within the movement blatant radical capitalists, idiots and occasionally even reactionary thugs they have decided to champion). I didn't start out with this prejudice (in fact I've been in denial of it for years), I have been taught it over the past year through my involvement with an anarchist magazine.

I experienced discrimination in the political form of procedural exclusion only after I began to request equal access to the publishing process. Earlier on, before I started to challenge the editors' authority, it took the simpler form of gratuitously insulting remarks.

These were passed on my contributions even though the editors themselves were very poorly read and openly boasted about how little revolutionary literature they had understood. When they praised my work it was with a faint air of surprise, as if they couldn't understand how I was capable, and the constant reminder to me that I had probably got it wrong.

They reacted to me submitting work to the paper as though I expected them to "mark" it, unconsciously lapsing into the role of a superior rather than a comrade. Whilst I frequently had to ask to be considered for publication the editors actively pursued other writers outside their collective where these writers were from the same class backgrounds as themselves. The magazine in question was originally run by working class anarchists.

Though ideological it was linked to a wider working class movement which has now been substituted for a solipsistic hobby-anarchism of middle class activism. In short the magazine is a clique, one which I was allowed to join as a servant but blocked from joining as a member.

SEPARATISM

Its separation from the real anarchism of working-class anti-capitalism meant that it could safely exclude working-class revolutionaries from its own privatised version without contradiction because "anarchism" was not understood to be a description of workers' strategies for overcoming class society, but

was instead defined by them in such a way as to include many irrelevant pet issues.

There is no reason for a revolutionary organisation not to contain upper middle class members. Indeed it is invaluable for them to bring to the group knowledge of how the legal system, bureaucracy, mass media and economy (even student politics) all operate against the working class. Analysis is the means by which revolutionary theory progresses.

Furthermore, if the basis of revolutionary theory is dialectics then the participation of everyone is necessary to understand the laws of motion of capitalist society and to discover the democratic means of transcending it.

However, in Britain, the private school system, linked as it is to a class structure still tainted with the remnants of feudalism, operates as a form of social apartheid.

It is designed to maintain a strict separation between the governors and the governed. Therefore we all have to learn to breakdown the social conditioning which the education system of Britain instills in us in order not to reproduce it. In my case my titanic sense of insecurity and low self-esteem can be traced to the way I was taught to regard myself as mere factory fodder.

Likewise the victims of the private school system are taught to regard themselves as society's natural superiors and managers which is equally psychologically damaging to them. I was once lucky enough to be involved in an unfettered discussion about racism with a group of working class black people. I learnt that the key source of the racism they experienced in everyday life was not from bigots in the street or even contact with the police but from the subtle conditioning they took from their time in Britain's education system.

EDUCATE TO MANIPULATE

There they were usually steered by teachers towards physical sports and discouraged from aiming at careers, especially in the hard sciences. History lessons taught them that Africa had been "civilised" by the British Empire when they saw Britain's actions in Africa as having been more akin to those of Hitler in Poland.

On the rare occasions when these black people had the courage to speak out against these distortions and subtle discriminations they were not engaged in debate but were simply accused of "having a chip on their shoulders" until they eventually came to believe it themselves.

The cumulative effect of this education was that every pupil's natural assumptions, white and black, was to start believing that black people were naturally inferior to white people, incapable of academic achievement and "naturally good at sport" (which they were channelled towards) as if they were closer to being brute animals. In short young black people were taught to fail in later life and everyone was conditioned to see this as somehow inevitable due to the invented history of Africa.

I believe that this structural racism is just a subset of a larger structural classism in Britain's educational system. I think that within the private education system young middle class people are conditioned to regard working class people in general as being naturally inferior and "closer to brute animals".

It is just as difficult for them to dispel this schooled assumption in later life as it is for most of us white people to totally dispel racist conditioning. Merely calling oneself an "anarchist" is not a psychological cure for either. In the case of the editorial team of the magazine I became involved with they have apparently not bothered to challenge much of their socially conditioned prejudice, I doubt they were even aware they were using it.

As I have explored the anarchist movement in London I have become aware of how deeply steeped in clique ethos it is. There is an obsession with secrecy and isolation which leads its members to refuse to promote contact amongst activists or encourage basic unity at all, it is almost inappropriate to describe it as being a movement at all.

This is partially because anarchism is an ideology. But it has

become an ideology in part because cliques of activists, including wealthy ex-students, have sought "ownership and control" of the various anarchist publications.

REPRODUCING

They have then reproduced (or imitated) the cliquish approach of the private schools and, or universities where some of them were educated in order to subvert democratic control through debating society tactics

borrowed from university life. Merely copying the structure of a normal newspaper or magazine unquestioningly ensures that middle class elitism is erected in full second-hand by anarchist editors of whatever background.

In this way the so-called "anarchist press" has become a mini-replica of the mainstream press, as exclusive to the working class as the rest of Britain's media (Note 1).

Many anarchist publications are dominated either by privately educated snobs or by those who studiously replicate their clique ethos which is why their readerships are almost entirely middle class. More detrimental still is that this domination has led to the political agenda of anarchism separating completely from working class struggle and becoming refocussed on the special interests of the radical upper middle classes at a time of massive exploitation for working class people.

This has led to a form of complacent "anarchism" which resembles little more than a radical consumer watchdog movement, obsessed with diet and the content and quality of luxury items (especially the blight caused to urban house prices by traffic and poor town planning, (Note 2)). This phoney radicalism instinctively warns off contributors making references to class issues specific to Britain rather than to a more acceptably vague "global proletariat".

It is based on an assumption that everyone is vegetarian and endorses the ultimate sublimated middle class expression of contempt for working class struggle, the assignment of rights to animals.

HOSTILE TO REALITY

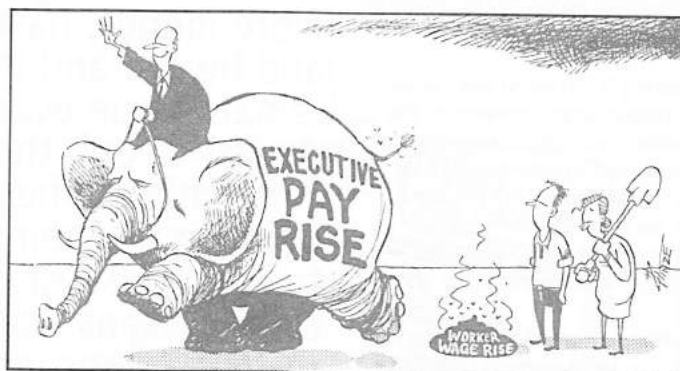
My experience is like that of the working class members of the Red Brigades in the 1970s who emerged to condemn the organisation as being hostile to the reality of working class people whilst celebrating the heroic myth of "working class struggle".

Whilst I believe that the world proletariat is now so large that it includes most members of society this does not mean that the internal class structure of Britain can be ignored as being no longer relevant to anarchist analysis.

All hierarchical structures must be challenged by a real revolutionary movement especially those which occur within it its own organisations otherwise it becomes an irrelevance or even a danger.

When the squatting movement was strong information could be easily distributed by leafleting at communal events, producing fanzines and forming bands. At these times when the anarchist movement was strong the ownership and control of anarchist magazines was, like the magazines themselves, irrelevant.

But now, when few regular focus points exist and the revolutionary anarchist movement is weak and dominated by trust-fund hippies, then the exclusion, suppression and hierarchical



control of working class contributors to anarchist publications becomes part of the means by which political resistance is crushed and prevented from emerging in Britain.

I have seen with my own eyes how the supposedly collective structure of organised anarchism is a sham. I was a contributor to an anarchist magazine for over a year before I had to invite myself to an editorial meeting. I call for a genuinely open revolutionary movement that allows all contributors equal access to the means of publishing and distribution and an equal say in the vital exploration of theory.

With a titanic social crisis approaching it has never been more important to establish a truly equal revolutionary movement. The form which the worker's council or other autonomous organisation will take after revolution will be determined by how successfully hierarchy has been challenged prior to that revolution occurring.

There will never come a day when we can suddenly drop our hierarchical everyday lives because "the revolution has started". Revolutions build out of us challenging these hierarchies in and out of work in our daily lives.

There are enormous risks and sacrifices attached to us doing this and this is why anarchism is a revolutionary movement, otherwise it is nothing but the name tag of fashion accessory activism. All so-called anarchist magazines must begin to reflect this.

ON 'SOME SHARP WORDS'

I include here some comments on the article 'Some Sharp Words' in Smash Hits due to it echoing some of the issues I have raised above in connection with my encounter with the anarchist movement.

All I know about Andy Anderson and the Splat Collective is what I have read in Smash Hits Spring 98. Certainly I would agree that if 'Critique of the Final Issue of Class War' (an article by them in that issue) is an example of their analysis then it is flawed but then all our analyses are flawed unless we submit them for criticism.

So it is the reply which follows Anderson's article which is more interesting. Firstly the most important thing about the response, 'Some Sharp Words', is its inclusion in the same issue. Obviously the author, 'P (London)', was allowed prior knowledge of Anderson's article by the editors of Smash Hits because his response (like those in Viz Comic's letters page) appears immediately after it.

The controllers of the anarchist (or whatever you want to call it) press seem to have employed the same power as the mainstream media, the power to attack and ridicule immediately anyone who dares to raise the issue of class backgrounds (however crudely).

Some Sharp Words begins with a gratuitous personal attack on Anderson, one which quite amusingly laments an eruption of class warfare at a Class War conference. Leaving aside for a moment Anderson's theoretical mistakes and alleged personal behaviour he does seem to have encountered some of the same problems which I encountered as a working class contributor to the anarchist movement.

Anderson appears to have experienced difficulty in getting his "works of genius" (as they are patronisingly referred to) published. For a movement virtually consisting of nothing but small publishers I was amazed to find that when I (like Anderson) wrote a large treatise which I wanted to self-publish I was greeted by a wall of silence.

Everyone became strangely evasive when I asked them to suggest a cheap printers, explain the publishing process or put me in touch with their contacts in distribution even though they regularly produced magazines, books and pamphlets themselves. Since the alternative media centres closed down in London at the end of the 1980s I have been at a loss to find a way of self-publishing.

Assisting people to publish easily should be the chief function for any anarchist movement which believes in truly democratic communication networks. The explanation of Anderson's plight, first hinted at in the sarcastic "works of genius" comment is revealed further on in 'Some Sharp Words'.

The stark sociological facts remain, middle class people (especially those with private school educations) are more likely to have better job prospects, earn more money, have better housing and health and live longer. This remains true even after they decide to dub themselves "anarchist". These life chances, paid for by their parents in order to keep the rest of us as second-class citizens, can be extended to include representation

The most revealing comment is; "Andy Anderson's hatred of the middle class doesn't extend so far as (him) refusing to accept middle class money to print (his book)." Here then is the reason for the anarchist small publisher's reticence to explain the publishing process to working class contributors.

PROPERTY AND THEFT

It is seen by them as being a process which belongs to them, its owners. It is a favour they can extend and just as swiftly take away, the same power and control which I encountered and of course the same power system as that of the mainstream media.

The middle class activists who control the anarchist press are the ones who supply the money and forge the links with the managers and owners of cheap print works, typesetting equipment and distribution. All these links and finances should instead be placed in open democratic control. When they do contribute to debate (rather than to analysing unit sales figures) their writings often focus class anger on the super-rich, this after all alleviates them of the need to examine their own positions in a class society (Note 3).

The stark sociological facts remain, middle class people (especially those with private school educations) are more likely to have better job prospects, earn more money, have better housing and health and live longer. This remains true even after they decide to dub themselves "anarchist". These life chances, paid for by their parents in order to keep the rest of us as second-class citizens, can be extended to include representation.

Middle class people can express themselves better and gain access to self-publishing more easily than working class people and self-styled anarchists are not exempt from this sociology either. This is true of private access to the Internet, to the letters pages of the newspapers and radio, and of course to the control of anarchist publishing. Middle class people are more used to having what they say taken seriously than working class people and they are therefore defensive when working class people start demanding equal access to their media.

ANARCHIST REACTIONARIES

Surprisingly by not discussing class backgrounds in a practical way the London anarchist movement is more reactionary than ordinary bosses. I have had several bosses who have had to teach me how to employ business tactics when dealing with creditors etc.

The need to delegate responsibilities which business demands required them to show me how to network, use an air of confidence and natural superiority and other skills which they learnt at private school. There is no such useful skill sharing between middle class and working class anarchists, the former are determined to never

let any discussion of their class backgrounds develop, let alone to begin practical knowledge pooling. More astonishingly as capitalism becomes more and more intent on opening up communications and linking together more and more people, the London anarchist movement, as mentioned above, has been intent on preventing the circulation of communication between activists.

This process of distributing phone numbers and addresses on a "need to know" basis is not based on security. Addresses are openly gathered at meetings but only for centralised usage. The lack of communication is another method of centralising power within their cliques and linking them closer to the ownership of their media.

NO CHOICE

None of us have any choice as to how we are born but as a revolutionary movement our goal is not "a working-class revolution which sweeps away capitalism" but a revolution which abolishes the class system altogether.

This is a revolution to which all classes can bring their knowledge of oppression, it really is as oppressive to be taught that you are socially superior as it is to be taught that you are a natural dogsbody. No one ought to feel ashamed of their class backgrounds, as human beings we must instead be ashamed of having a class system at all.

We must therefore openly discuss the class structure in order to destroy it. The class position of anarchist activists is not a red herring, it is reflected in the current ownership and control of the anarchist press and this must be replaced with democratic control.

Working class people have our own minds and voices, what we lack, and what a revolutionary anarchist movement should be there to provide, is equal access to the means of expression.

SHRUNKEN VIOLETS

In 'Some Sharp Words' there is a comment about how it is wrong to claim that working class people are "shrinking violets" who can be easily bossed around by middle class people. But of course that is precisely how class society operates. Up at the pointy end bosses hire and fire workers and close down workplaces just to remind people who stick up for themselves how easy it is to intimidate them when you're the owner.

What I have endeavoured to show in this article is just how subtle these techniques can become when the same context is more complex. Whilst working class demands for control of an entire factory can be openly and brutally suppressed, working class expectations that they will encounter equal treatment at an "anarchist magazine" have to be policed by its owners with more delicate, though no less effective, methods of restraint.

And it isn't necessarily the case that these methods are being employed cynically by middle class anarchists. When factory bosses send riot squads in on strikers they too regard such behaviour as reasonable and even-handed (in fact they are almost certain to genuinely see themselves as being the injured party).

Undermining the self-confidence of working class people whilst encouraging them to demand less and blame themselves for their failings is the knee-jerk reaction of most middle class people. It is readily accepted by working class people too because both sides

have been educated since childhood to treat this situation as normal. It takes a hell of an effort to break out of this conditioning especially as it is bolstered by the structures (and police) of everyday reality.

But breaking out of this is precisely what a revolutionary anarchist movement is supposed to help us all to do, to be a sort of combative Alcoholics

Anonymous for all the victims of class society, rich and poor alike.

Believe it or not, in the year I spent contributing to the anarchist magazine I describe above I actually accepted at face value the evasions told to me about why my work was being treated with disdain.

At first it didn't even occur to me as abnormal that I should be excluded from all the decision making processes of the magazine, from group meetings and discussions about layout, editorials, what was to go on the cover, right down to not being consulted about changes to my articles.

That's how ingrained a working class inferiority complex can be and it is a complex which middle class people unconsciously "tap into" as they replicate hierarchies within the anarchist movement. As a working class person one experiences so many threats, rejections and begrudging allowances in life

(from bosses, school, dole etc.) that one is invariably over-grateful to anyone appearing to offer acceptance and recognition.

I was so grateful to have my work accepted by the anarchist magazine that I initially forgot to expect equality from its editors. Maybe a normal magazine can keep its journalists at arm's length (just as they in turn despise the populations they report on) as it is so obviously a product of class society in any case, but an anarchist magazine is duty bound to involve its contributors at once in all its activities. Contribution is membership and membership is ownership.

The first-time votes cast by eighteen year olds weigh equally against those cast by voters of long experience. With this principle alone does bourgeois democracy reflect the standards of genuine democracy. There is no such thing as an apprenticeship for democratic participation.

POSTSCRIPT - AUGUST 1998

Since circulating the above article I have been approached by some activists seeking to redress the grievances I set out in it. Primary amongst these have obviously been Smash Hits who have reproduced the article here and have offered me advice on cheap printing. Also I met two of the editors of the anarchist journal mentioned above, at their request, in order to discuss the issues I had raised.

One of these editors I had neither met nor heard about before. They stated that I had made offensive comments regarding their class backgrounds. Further they explained to me that any slight I had perceived was the result of poor communication and lack of togetherness on their part, cock-up rather than conspiracy, and that I shouldn't take it so personally.

When I asked about the organisational procedures of the magazine they stated that there was no "organisation" as such and questioned my implication of a hierarchical structure. They concluded that I had generalised my experiences with one middle



class member of the editorial board to cover the entire magazine and stated that a great many other contributors took no part in the collective.

When I questioned this separation I was informed that the magazine had to have an editorial board "exactly like a bourgeois magazine" in order to be produced at all. I asked what procedure made one into a member of this board rather than just a contributor and I was told that there was no procedure as members were "self-elected". I immediately elected myself in their presence to the editorial board. I was then told a selection process did in fact exist.

I therefore challenged the editors of the anarchist magazine to explain why they felt that the crisis in anarchism which Class War had confronted in 1997 did not apply to them, why they felt it was business as usual. They stated that their role was to provide an open forum for anarchist discussion which was diverse and which carried no particular line.

I stated that only Smash Hits was an open discussion bulletin board of this sort, its editors printing whatever they received within a clearly defined remit and therefore having no need to be placed under democratic control as they were for the time being merely acting as reproduction technicians in a debate.

This did not describe the situation at the anarchist journal. Nothing at this meeting has caused me to substantially alter the article I have written about my experiences with the journal.

I fully acknowledge that there may be a significant bathwater to baby ratio in it but I maintain that the baby is still substantial enough to warrant discussion.

APATHY IS NOT NEUTRAL

Negligence and apathy in a political organisation (lack of theory) are dangerous. They are not neutral positions but automatically generate ideology. In the kingdom of the incompetent and unquestioning those with a predilection for bullying or contempt will become kings.

A worker's council operates by open mass re-election of its representatives, the editorial board of the magazine needs to be placed under similar democratic control by its contributors. The editors' exclusive process of "friends of friends" nomination to their board is akin to (and I suspect drawn from) the classically middle-class model for exclusion and marginalisation of working class members: the 1980's housing co-operative management committee.

Choosing such an editorial structure is a political action even if done by default. It demonstrates that members are falling back on familiar organisational patterns which past middle class political activities have taught them to regard as natural.

Indeed my meeting with the journal editors began with overtones of a disciplinary hearing suggesting that they hold managerial positions in their jobs. If so they were instinctively falling back on working habits of behaviour to deal with my "insubordination". Petty managerial experience is now spread far more widely amongst the workforce.

Getting workers to manage each other saves money for the real bosses, deflects and diffuses class hatred away from them and is aimed at indoctrinating us all into accepting and subconsciously reproducing hierarchy outside the work-place (as with all pyramid schemes). I may have generalised from my experiences with one or

Those who doubt that class in Britain transcends politics should note that when, in 1989, the boss of a television production company I worked for (as an admin assistant) was attacked by Norman Tebbit for being a Marxist, he was tipped off in advance about the attack by an extreme right-wing Tory MP. The reason this man was willing to warn his ideological opponent in this way was because they had both been to the same public school.

two editors but these editors were the journal's key representatives at major anarchist conferences and were in regular contact with the others. I was in no way involved with marginal or maverick figures. I wrote what I wrote because the questions of revolutionary organisation and of anti-hierarchy are now paramount.

CRISIS

A global economic crisis has arrived and conditions for working-class people (myself included) which are bad already are about to deteriorate dramatically. We must raise a revolutionary response and that begins with the examination of our own pre-revolutionary organisations.

Discussing class is, by definition, divisive. I have

therefore tried to remain constructive whilst writing about my experiences. However writing this article has forced me to face up to the way I was treated.

It has helped me to understand that snide and petty comments, put-downs, ignorance and exclusion are not minor irritations nor over-sensitivity on my part but are in fact manifestations of an overall process of class dominance within the anarchist circle I was moving in. That is why I have now begun to raise these questions.

FOOTNOTES

1. Those who doubt that class in Britain transcends politics should note that when, in 1989, the boss of a television production company I worked for (as an admin assistant) was attacked by Norman Tebbit for being a Marxist, he was tipped off in advance about the attack by an extreme right-wing Tory MP.

The reason this man was willing to warn his ideological opponent in this way was because they had both been to the same public school.

2. This tracks the rise of consumer culture. In the 1960s it was the safety of cars which was the focus of "radical" demands by middle class Naderists (who denounced "capitalism", but only for making shoddy luxury cars). In the 1990s the motor car has been superseded by the private house as the ultimate object of middle class consumption. Therefore middle class activism has begun to refocus on protecting gentrification values by "reclaiming the streets" or the even higher rural house values by "protecting the countryside".

3. The late James Goldsmith is referred to in both articles as an example of a very rich man. Far more appropriate would be a comment on the vastly richer Richard Branson. Privately educated he founded a multi-billion pound empire on a mildly subversive mail-order catalogue business.

The non-theoretical "anarchism" of his early proteges the Sex Pistols proved to be the ideal shock tactic to put him on the path to global wealth. Virgin has demonstrated that, for anyone who maintains a tight grip on ownership and control, an initially anarchist media image can establish a corporate brand as youthful or pioneering whilst covering up the fact that it is based on a shoestring budget.

K

YOU GOT TO HAVE A LAUGH!

This letter was written to the International Communist Current (a tiny ultra-left sect) as a joke really although as it was written it became more than that. They never published it so we thought that we might as well put it in here for a laugh. It's not meant to be the definitive criticism of their politics, merely pointing out some of their more obvious shortcomings of which they seem blissfully unaware or unable to admit to or deal with. They seem to think that politics is entirely about a series of rigid political positions born out of dogmatic theory - and criticism is something they hand out, not receive. It was written out of a sense of irritation really, about every second issue of their paper, 'World Revolution', they would print an article slagging off Class War and telling us that we were confused etc. Yes, predictably they sent us a long reply (the late arrival of which meant that we could not include it in this issue) in which, you guessed it, there's nothing wrong with the ICC whatsoever. We daresay that they will devote chunks of the next 'World Revolution' to tell us that we are parasitic elements that are part of the anarchist swamp etc etc. We have our suspicions about them - we suspect that they are aliens from another galaxy. Contact them at ICC, BM BOX 869, LONDON, WC1N 3XX.

To the ICC:

I was until recently involved with Class War, now I'm involved with what's come out of it....Sometimes CW was confused, sometimes I'm confused, I admit it. It's a confusing world.

Are not ICC types sometimes confused? I've met members of the Jesus Army who were not confused, crazy, but not confused, if only everyone would embrace Jesus it would be alright. A sect such as the ICC has the strange fascination to some of us, the Jesus Army does as well. We wonder what you are about and what motivates you?

Personally I don't spend a lot of time thinking about it, but occasionally...I'm writing to you mainly for my own amusement. I expect very little from you, and I'm wondering whether it's worth the trouble? but nonetheless here it is...

WHERE'S THE PICTURES?

Generally within CW circles and elsewhere a groan can be heard when the ICC is mentioned. London CW did write to you a while back, the letter had some anglo-saxon in it, I believe they were saying that it wasn't worth the time or energy communicating with you, the letter had a sarcastic-humorous aspect to it, which you didn't get, being as humour is not exactly your strong point.

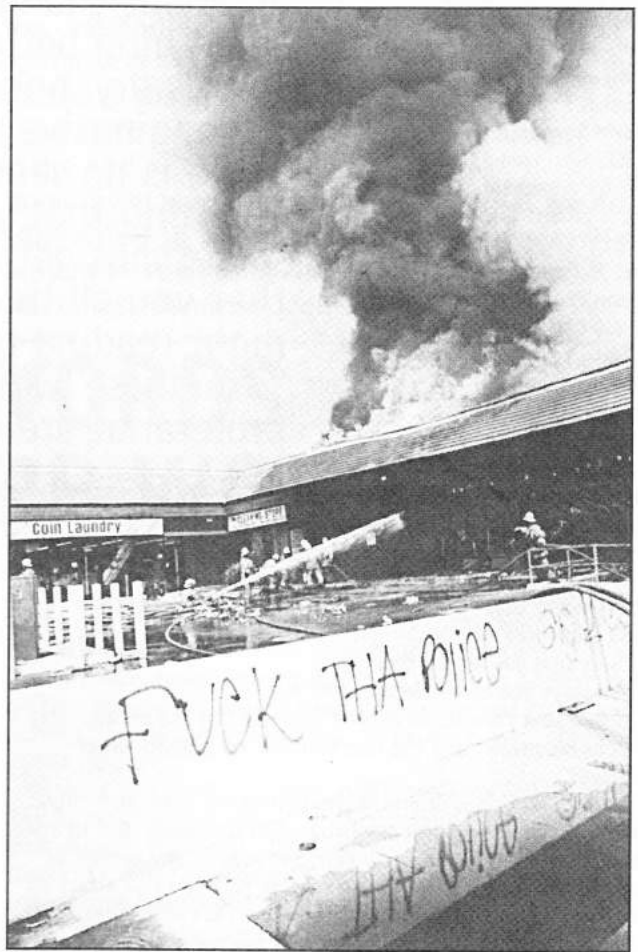
I can remember a little way back from before CW, when I was on the periphery of the London Workers Group. You always used to come to LWG meetings, and lecture everyone on their political shortcomings, that is until everyone got sick of it and told the ICC to go away. I can remember Joe Thomas saying that he didn't need you to tell him "how to suck eggs" nothings changed, it's all very familiar, you still lecture everyone. You lecture CW, yeah, we must have everything wrong as opposed to you lot who have everything right?

There are/were many things wrong with Class War, we admit it freely, there's no perfect politics, everybody and everything is a combination of good and bad bits. Including yourselves although sometimes I get the impression that you think otherwise?

We produced a paper that had a very honest and critical look at CW, we did this in the hope that others would do the same. Unfortunately nearly everyone who has had anything to say about issue 73 of our paper, has extended the criticism of CW and neglected to mention their own problems, when saying this I certainly have the ICC in mind.

ON A MISSION

I'm sure that you do see the working class in terms of its historic mission, which would seem to imply that communism is inevitable?



Proletarians discover their historic mission during the Los Angeles riots

I'm sure that belief is very comforting, to me though it's only possible, not inevitable.

And at the moment it's not looking good is it? The working class, at least in this country, are not interested in revolutionary politics and are by and large suspicious of anyone who is, especially if they are in some political group.

What concerns me is what we say and do that contributes to a situation in which workers regard us as a bunch of lunatics. What does the ICC say and do that contributes to most workers' negative perception of revolutionary politics? Of course you are so small and insignificant that your opportunity to contribute anything is limited, doubly so given the impossibilist nature of your politics, your long association with a nutcase political ghetto (face it we're all in one) would make it very difficult for you to involve yourselves in a real revolutionary situation with real arguments and real people but that is by the by, a long way off, and it would affect us by degrees - think about it?

It's strange isn't it, you can't seem to stop writing about Class War, we're hopeless cases with appalling politics and yet you can't leave it alone? Weird. Why bother? I'm sure the entire proletarian milieu must be forewarned by now?

As we are unlikely to see any navel gazing in the pages of 'World Revolution', I thought that I would do a little bit for you. I'm not really interested in arguing with you on your terms, ie about Russia 1917, Ireland, or trade unions, etc. Not that I/we couldn't argue these points, this isn't what the letters about, this is a different angle. Everytime I've ever had a discussion with a 'World Revolution' paperseller they've tried to move the discussion back onto their own familiar and narrow ground (generally they are

successful). From reading 'World Revolution' one may be led to believe that you are perfect in theory and (what?) practice coherent in every respect. I beg to differ, I see a multitude of problems. And I'm not talking about your position on the Kronstadt Soviet circa 1921 either.

World Revolution is a reflection of the ICC, lets have a look at your paper for a moment. In issue 209, there is an article called "parasites bar the ICC" it's about some splitters called "internationalist perspective" (Judean Peoples Front anyone?). Actually this article is very painful to read, so I've only skimmed through it. The gist though is about a dispute with two former members. They (IP) are maybe even crazier than yourselves apparently they are the "true defenders of the platform" I'm sure Marx would have been impressed.

But what would the proletariat think (not the milieu)? In the unlikely event that some of them got to read this article?

(A) Be impressed with your rigorous analysis?

(B) think that you are all mad?

I will leave you to puzzle over this one.

I'm sure that they would also be impressed by the unbelievably pompous language, and the fact that you are (all) so full of yourselves.

I'm sure that this article in 'World Revolution' is of momentous importance to the revolutionary movement worldwide. But its style, nature, demeanour is similar to stuff I've read in any number of Trotskyist papers. I can remember reading part 18 of an attack on Gerry Healy in some ex-WRP split newspaper. It's all reminiscent.

Is your split with IP of any interest to anyone but yourselves or a very small number of people? Do you believe that such articles have a place in communist? newspaper (well it's there so you must do), remember non-nutcase politics and workers occasionally read even your publication what on earth must they think?

Look at yourselves you are a tiny little sect and yet you are THE PROLETARIAN MILIEU. I won't dwell with the political sleight of hand that lies within the above capital letters, myself being simply working class. You produce a paper - that hardly anybody reads - although perversely this does on occasion include myself! generally to read about what you say about CW! Your paper is pages of dense type with no pictures and definitely NO JOKES after all these are serious issues and you take yourselves very seriously.

WE DID TRY...

Class War always attempted to produce a paper that was down to earth, humorous, with no petty bickering about other anarchos/politicos, it was written for workers about what genuinely concerned them (we tried).

But of course you have nothing to learn from Class War have you? God forbid (yes him) that anyone ever got to look behind your Marxist security blankets and saw that (maybe) there were human beings involved in producing 'World Revolution'.

Let me, confused anarchist that I am, remind you clued up Marxists that communism is about human beings. Somebody once described it as the human community, or are you so far gone down the road of alienation with such a bad case of the political disease that you cannot tell the difference?

You take this wonderful concept, communism which is all about changing the world to something better, and reduce it to this dry, boring, unimaginative abstraction. There is no sense of joy about anything that you do. I sometimes get the impression that you all lie in bed Saturday night reading the footnotes to 'Grundrisse'

You take this wonderful concept, communism which is all about changing the world to something better, and reduce it to this dry, boring, unimaginative abstraction. There is no sense of joy about anything that you do. I sometimes get the impression that you all lie in bed Saturday night reading the footnotes to 'Grundrisse' whilst the proletariat are out pissing it up.

whilst the proletariat are out pissing it up.

I can see those proles now on those council estates and in their factories reading your paper, it must go like this? "Did you read 'World Revolution', they really laid into those parasites from International Perspectives and about time too". Well stranger things have happened. Neglecting the big problem of the ICC having lots of theory and no practice (other than winding up anarchos at their bookfair). For the ICC, politics all takes place on a very narrow black and white one dimensional level.

You have a paper that rarely changes, a copy from ten years ago could be interchangeable with one today.

So, decadent capitalism and strikes of Belgium public service

workers aside, what do you have to say about, for instance?

Sexuality

Drugs

Culture

Important issues for the proletariat...or are they simply bourgeois diversions? Well maybe. Give me Class War anyday. You said at the anarcho bookfair (the leader spoke) that workers didn't need political organisations or words to that effect, I'm sure that there's an argument here but it begs the question of why you exist at all?

Who needs you and your supposed superior position on the Russian revolution (it's over) what do you have to say about our current dire situation? to which your organisation contributes.

STRAITJACKET

I would like to know, but only if you step outside the normal bullshit, and your little ways of coping with the world rather than genuinely confronting it.

Maybe you would say that Class War issue 73 was all doom and gloom and despair, personally I would say that it was revolutionary. In a little world of fucked up revolutionaries I can scarcely imagine any more fucked up than the ICC. In a country of 56 million people do you really believe that those with genuinely revolutionary politics can be narrowed down to the 10-15-20? in the ICC and maybe 5 in the CWO.

If that's the case then we are truly up shit creek. In the meantime you have some problems time to sort them out? comrades.

RB

PS I would be interested to see how you deal with this letter, if you do pick it to pieces, how will you go about it? I think a lot of it is unanswerable so go on print it I dare you.

An article entitled 'A vicious slap of truth in response to...' was received in the summer that responded to the articles on Class War and its history/politics in the first issue of 'Smash Hits'. It covered the early history of Class War and took up points made in the 'Smash Hits' articles. It was then printed in the magazine 'Animal' (available from PO Box 467, London, E8 3QX - send £1, made payable to 'Animal'). As this article had already been published, we decided not to print it again. If you want to read it, get a copy of 'Animal'.

ONE ROUND TOO MANY?

The following four articles have all arisen out of the ongoing debate between the Splat collective and this magazine. Some people might think that is one argument too far - certainly the consensus of the people who put out this magazine is that we need to move beyond personal abuse, beyond simple sectarian slugging and start seeking common ground. Other people might condemn this as liberal bollocks - at the end of the day it's up to you. Incidentally, virtually all the articles in this mag come from working class people. What we do welcome is the fact that other articles have been submitted to the magazine (for example, 'My Experiences As A Working Contributor' and 'The Problem Is You') that do move the discussion beyond its current sterile blockage. Anyway, here it comes - hang on tight....

SOME BLUNT WORDS ABOUT 'SOME SHARP WORDS'

'Some Sharp Words' by Phil (London) in Issue 2 of Smash Hits is a mixture of lies, sarcasm, red herrings, and irrelevancies, botched together with the main purpose of slugging people off, particularly Andy Anderson.

POLITICAL SLAGGING

This Phil gives us one of the worst examples of politically negative slugging seen for a long time - something roundly and rightly condemned several times in the Final Issue of Class War. No surprise then that what he says is rubbish, contributes nothing to a way forward, and might best be left in the gutter. But we do have a few further comments.

Phil (London) may not be as feeble-minded as his article suggests, so the reason why he gives that strong impression must be psychological - in that our overwhelming evidence that the main enemy is middle class so aggravates his friendship with people like ex-public-schoolboy, Norman, that he's gone a bit gaga, thus making him brain-dead to our often-stressed point that we are not concerned with individual members of the middle class, or with sections of it, because our main enemy is the middle class as a whole. (e.g. see book *THE ENEMY IS MIDDLE CLASS** p.20)

Another facet of Phil's dishonesty is his 'Auntsallyism'. This is the practice by party-politicians and suchlike of attributing to people statements they did not make (or a belief/opinion they don't hold) then attacking them for it. For example, he says that by using the term 'middle class' we admit to the existence of the 'ruling class' because it's known that between the working class and the 'ruling class' is the middle class. This is an inane attempt by Phil to overcome his embarrassing predicament.

We have made abundantly clear why we use the term 'middle class' (e.g. book, pp 10 and 109). We have said:

"The reality is that the class of people who dominate the lives of working class people is the middle class. This is a better term than 'bourgeoisie' to describe the dominant class despite the fact that it

is no longer in the middle as it once was (between workers/peasants below and the nobility/aristocracy above) since at the time of the so-called Industrial Revolution and following it, this class took power from the hitherto dominating aristocracy who have gradually ceased to exist as a class. It is also a better term because 'bourgeoisie' doesn't mean much to the vast majority of working class people, whereas they are far more aware of who the middle class are".

As we've said so often, nobody is able to define and describe 'The Ruling Class' they keep prattling on about. Phil's attempt is more pathetic than most. He names the dead James Goldsmith a couple of times, the owner of Tesco's, and "somebody at the commanding heights of a multi-national company".

EVIDENCE

'Revolutionary' Phil wants us to believe, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that there is no hierarchy among the middle class; that it is not middle class people who run and control TV, Radio, newspapers, magazines; that middle class people do not manage and control all industries, that it is not they who run the multi-national companies; that the Judiciary, the Civil Service, the Police, the

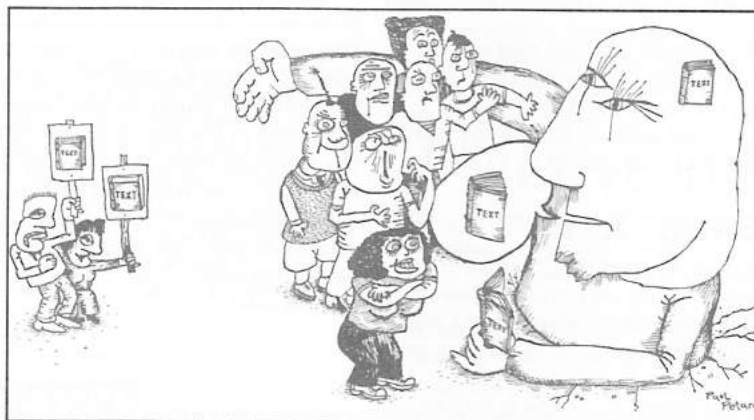
Armed Services, and all leisure activities from sports and holidays to films and theatre, are not in the control and management of the middle class.

He wants us to believe that all governments of the last 150 years have not been composed almost entirely of middle class people, that all political parties we are exhorted to vote for are not run and controlled by middle class people, that almost all MPs are not middle class....

He wants us to believe in a load of bollocks.

The Splat Collective

* Book -- *THE ENEMY IS MIDDLE CLASS* -- available from us -c/o 42 Jakeman Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, B12 9NX. Price £5.00 including p and p.



ANARCHY INACTION

The only copy of *Smash Hits* that I've seen contained, among the rest of the restatement of naive anarchist ideology, three articles that revolved around the arguments between the *Splat* collective and "New Class War".

One reason for this is the recent publication of 'The Enemy is Middle Class', an "Openly Classist" publication. The Enemy is Middle Class consists of two essays by Andy and Mark Anderson about class and the politics of the left communist/anarchist movement. The first, 'First Know Your Enemy' is a wide ranging look at the class make up of society in order to demonstrate the extent of middle-class domination.

The second, 'Why the Revolutionaries Have Failed', deals with a specific debate which occurred when Andy and Mark Anderson wrote to the Anarchist Workers Group (who, to use one of their own favourite phrases, have since disappeared into the dustbin of history). This debate is clearly applicable to the whole of the left communist/anarchist movement.

DOMINATED

The basic argument of both essays is that the whole of the modern libertarian left is dominated by middle-class ideology (and middle-class activists). In order to draw a distinction between the most powerful people in society and themselves, the middle-class left have used the concept of a distinct ruling class (Note 1). We are, therefore, constantly advised by the propaganda of the libertarian left to mis-direct our anger towards a non-existent ruling class, capitalism and the state (Note 2).

The Anderson's argue that what is described as a 'ruling class' (for example, big capitalists, the super rich, top civil servants - basically a semi-secret club of people with power concentrated in their hands) is not actually separate from the middle class as a whole.

They may appear to have different levels of power over us, but they all have the same stake in the status quo - and it could be argued that those that are nearest to us, teachers, police, managers, trade union leaders, political activists etc, are the most dangerous because they can use their power against us all directly, at a personal level.

MIDDLE CLASS ARE...

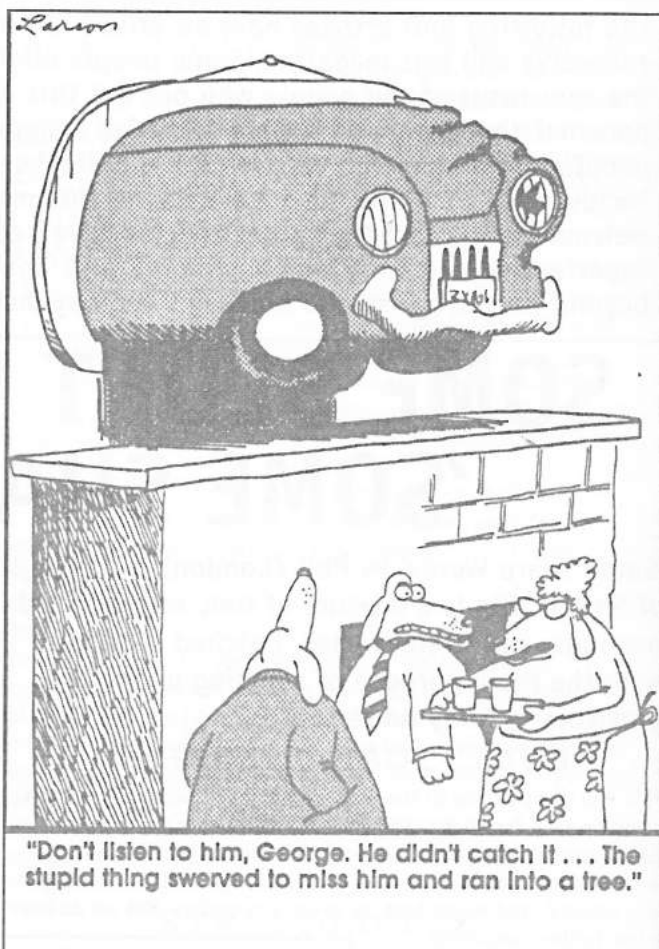
The middle class are the middle class, whether they consider themselves 'revolutionaries' or not. They do not have the same interests as the working class. The anarchist movement is not only riddled with middle-class members, the propaganda that comes out of it is riddled with middle-class ideology.

Not surprisingly, the anarchist movement in general is finding these ideas difficult to stomach. They challenge the very core of what anarchists have been doing and saying for as long as anyone can remember. Recent responses to the Anderson's have been unconvincing and insulting (Note 3). Unless working-class anarchists can take these ideas on board, or come up with a reasoned response, they will continue their downward trajectory into oblivion. It's probably too late for all but a few working-class activists already.

The essays have been published before, but not in a single volume. Their reappearance is timely, in that the anarchist movement is under increasing fire from within.

LIDS AND SWAMPS

The publication, two years ago now, of a pamphlet entitled *Educating Who About What*, blew the lid off the anarchist swamp. People were forced to take stock of what was actually going on, and reality bit. The leadership of the movement didn't like what



they saw. The essays in *The Enemy is Middle Class* have gained new relevance as the backlash from some quarters has grown against the authors of *Educating Who About What*.

Whereas in the past, it was relatively easy to dismiss and ignore these difficult ideas, there are now a growing number of critical working-class activists who are leaving the anarchist movement behind and discovering that independent working-class activity means just that. This is clearly bad news for anarchists, and particularly middle-class anarchists, but it is good news for the working class.

FOOTNOTES

Note 1. It should be noted that this so called 'ruling class' is not related in any way to the old idea of an aristocratic ruling class, which has, to all intents and purposes, withered and died. For a period of history, up until the overhauling of the feudalist economy, this group of people were a real ruling class, with a virtually powerless peasant/working class at the bottom of the pile, and a middle class in between.

The development of capitalist methods of organising production led to the growth in economic and political power of a section of the middle-class, the industrial bourgeoisie. Over time, they reached a position of absolute political power. Along with themselves, they carried to power: their scientists; their doctors; their police; their shopkeepers; their judiciary; their gaolers; their teachers; and their social workers (and finally, their political activists).

Time and again, in country after country, in order to finally overthrow the old aristocracy and gain the freedom to amass

wealth through the capitalist organisation of industry, the middle class used the lower orders as cannon fodder. They convinced us to be their army by persuading us that they were leading us to a life of liberty and equality.

Note 2 Rather than the middle class, their economic system: capitalism; and their tool of domination: the state.

Note 3 See for example, Smash Hits no 2, the article titled Some Sharp Words. This article demonstrated where confusion caused by the anarchist movement's dominance by middle-class ideology has led it.

The author, 'P (London)', failed to understand the subtle difference between middle-class individuals and middle-class ideology (the anarchist movement suffers from both sicknesses). He also failed to understand that we are able to take ideas from anywhere (even things that have been written by middle-class writers) and use them for our own purposes, if we want to. As for throwing out Kropotkin and Bakunin - until they are recognised for what they were, ie the middle class, again misleading the working class... 'P (London)' also failed to spot the actual domination of Class War by its middle-class members. A minor point, but when I was in Leeds Class War, there was never any doubt in my mind who the leadership was.

And finally, 'P (London)' stooped to personal, rather than political criticism (again, 'P' seems to be incapable of spotting the difference) of both the Anderson's and one of the people who produced Educating Who About What.

T

EDUCATING WHO ABOUT WHAT PART TWO

...is being written at this very moment and will be ready when it is appropriately powerful and amusing enough.

All facts, dates, names are being checked and double checked. Educating Who About What, part two intends to take things just that little bit further. What Phil CW said recently inbetween sucking on a public schoolboys cock, reading a peace pledge union leaflet and wanking over his status of being a real working class person amongst a handful of middle class retards..

"The Educating Crew, appear to be able to show quite clearly that there is a need to redefine myself politically in order to give a more correct and valid picture of my pro-middle class views. It's not very nice to come against these anti-middle class northerners, it seems that they are not going to be the gentlemen I considered them to be. It's rumoured that they are going to call me a very docile liberal idiot, a lapdog, etc and that they will be laughing at me for incorrectly standing by the term class war, when a raised voice at a political meeting ten years ago still has me sobbing like a fucking baby"

Educating Who About What - PO Box 10, Manchester, M19 2XL
Intolerant and focused working class smart arses

(This was a leaflet handed out in Bradford during the MayDay conference).

THE BACKLASH CONTINUES...

Here we go again...I would much rather not be writing this, I can think of any number of things to do that would be more interesting or useful.

Inadvertently though, I have caught myself up in an argument, I should have realised that Splat were desperate for one and that maybe I was falling into a trap and arguing on their terms. I daresay that somebody reading this magazine for the first time, and previously unfamiliar with these disputes will be scratching their head and wondering what it's all about. If it is offputting we apologise. There has been a move to get away from arguing in this way, they represent at least part of our problem although sometimes doing things in a different way is easier said than done (at least for me).

DISPUTE

This dispute with Splat has been going on for years and is a pain in the arse. I might feel otherwise about all this if there were a real debate, a real exchange of ideas with each side listening to each other. But it isn't a real debate, and it isn't likely to be so I don't see where it's going? The protagonists are unlikely to change each other point's of view, at least some of it is simply point scoring. Stuart Home type feuds are pointless, they never go anywhere.

Launching myself into a bit of ironic sarcasm though. Splat should be grateful to S/Hits, we're giving publicity to your book, isn't that what you have always wanted, presumably we have just broken a ten year conspiracy to stay silent about such powerful stuff.

When the "leadership" decided to produce S/Hits, we were trying to produce a movement 'Internal Bulletin' with a wide ranging debate from issue to issue. The starting point being, why are we marginalised and so few in number, why we have so little influence with the wider working class and what we ourselves do to make the situation worse. We would attempt to address some of our many

problems and encourage others to do likewise (it doesn't feel like that right now).

We decided to produce a magazine, and we said that we would print whatever was sent in, whatever it was, even if we violently disagreed with it. Notwithstanding the obvious problems with such an IB, I'm beginning to wonder about the wisdom of such a venture. OK, there is a problem with democracy in terms of producing this magazine and as to who controls it as a resource. We will try to address this as we go along.

NAIVE IDEOLOGY?

Naive anarchist ideology? Maybe. But we have printed what was sent in and hoped that it will pick up as it went along - reaction so far to it has been mixed. Is it worthwhile producing? when we get reams of stuff from Splat and virtually nothing from those people previously associated with Class War. Leadership? Yes we did answer the Splat collective in the same issue last time but then who put the time, effort, money into producing it in the first place? A transgression? A minor one maybe, I don't feel too bad about it, anyway here's another one...

What has always irritated me about the Splat collective, quite apart from its mean spirited miserablism and apart from what you say politically (at least some of which I may agree with), what irritates me is how you say what you say, how you present it. To give an example, prior to the Bradford conference, the Splat article comes to the S/Hits BM box and along with it it says WE DEMAND THAT THIS GOES FIRST ON THE AGENDA AT BRADFORD "THE ENEMY OF THE WORKING CLASS IS THE MIDDLE CLASS" or words to that affect.

Of course no-one from Splat turns up at the organising meeting for Bradford to discuss why this should be so, and no-one turns up at the conference itself either. All we get is this high handed demand that comes across like a political fait accompli, this is the way it is, you will accept what we say. No discussion, just a demand that must be accepted. (A Splat attempt at Gramscian hegemony?). Which is at least part of the reason for my

resentment, because like most people I don't like being told what to think or what to do. When I was about 19 or so and first discovered 'politics' I used to think that I had the right to ram my point of view down anyone's throat whether they liked it or not. I learned very quickly that it didn't work, in fact that it was counter-productive and pissed everyone off. Maybe Splat would do well to consider this, the way they convey their ideas.

CONTRARY TO YOURSELVES

I'm from a working class background, and you've alienated me over a period of time, the fact that I am working class must be inconvenient to you, and that I'm saying things contrary to yourselves, wouldn't it be so much easier if I was middle class. I've disagreed with you and I'm feeble minded then, is every worker that disagrees with Splat feeble minded?

It seems to me that there are a number of separate arguments going on here.

There's one regarding Splat's ideas about class, the middle class is the enemy, which of course THEY ARE, an enemy that is, for the most part, but not the only one. I don't want to dwell upon it because some things were said in the last S/Hits (about which you have been selective in answering).

The world is a far more complicated place than you would lead some people to believe. So, the middle class fuck over the working class on a continuous and daily basis, and it is them that we always meet as opposed to James Goldsmith who only ever appeared to us as a vision in the pages of 'Hello'.

Excuse me, did that only ever occur to Splat then? No-one ever said something like that in the pages of CW and elsewhere over a long period of time. Where exactly did I say that the middle class weren't an enemy? Or that they weren't often a problem in our own ranks?

THE ENEMY

Where did I say that they didn't run this or didn't run that or that they didn't have a certain amount of power over the lives of working class people? Who's putting words into who's mouth here? Let me say this clearly, so that there is no misunderstanding, the overwhelming majority of the middle class are the enemy of the working class and should be treated accordingly, come the glorious day and in the meantime (if the glorious day ever comes and I have my doubts).

I believe, as does nearly everyone I have met, that there is another social class, above and beyond the middle class. We certainly never meet them, we rarely see them either (except for on television or the newspapers).

They are rich, they are powerful, they exert an enormous influence over all our lives, they exist, they are not a figment of my imagination, it is absurd to call them middle class. Rupert Murdoch is one, George Soros is another, Sultan of Brunei yet another. They inhabit a class position, a stratosphere above those whom Splat reserves its worst bile for. They have been called the capitalist class, the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, whatever. Do I really have to argue this? To make matters even more confusing, in

the Splat collective book 'The Enemy is the Middle Class' they talk about a top ranks or an elite of the middle class - in other words, a class division within the middle class, what everyone else calls the ruling class.

There is a social class above the middle class, they don't have to worry about how interest rates affect their mortgage or about being made redundant or having their job downsized, problems that increasingly affect the middle classes these days. Its means of existence is not degraded in this way because its wealth and power places it well above the rest of us. In a period of social peace, the middle class will side with the ruling class because of its relative privileges over the working class, this is part of the reason for the class hatred of workers. In a period of outright revolutionary class warfare, it will end up being split, either defending capitalism or siding with the working class.

Ironically, we probably would never have had these arguments if it wasn't for Class War, who more than anyone were responsible for identifying the middle class as the immediate enemy and advocating sticking the boot in.

Another argument going on is whether the anarchist scene/the libertarian left/whatever you wish to call it is dominated by the middle classes? To which I would say, all of it, all of the time?! Again, like everything in politics, it isn't simple. Some of what Splat says about this supposed middle class domination, is almost in the realms of conspiracy theory, as if they had all got involved with the explicit purpose of fucking us up.

ADVANTAGES

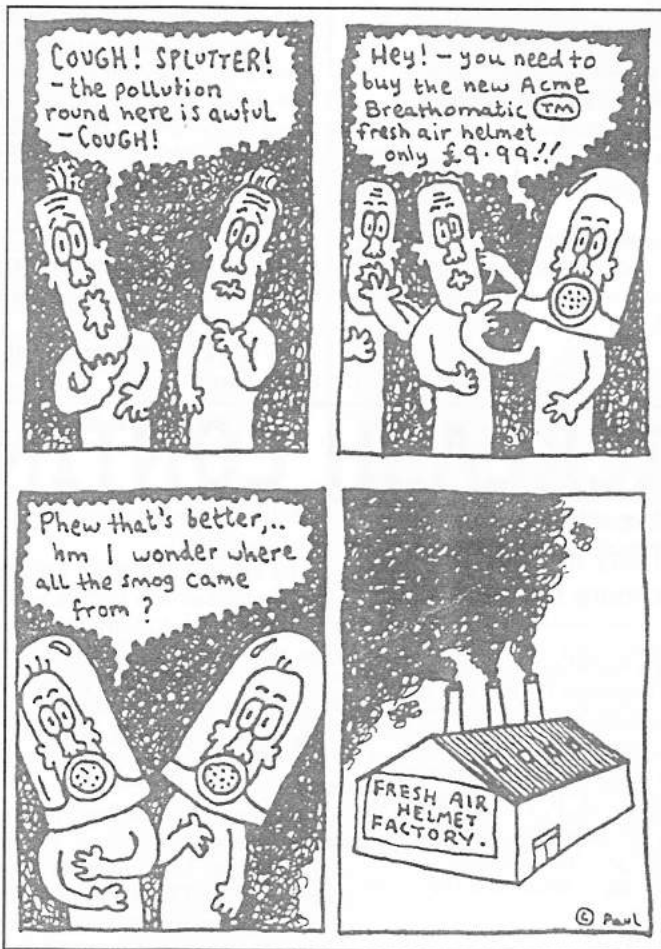
Maybe in some cases this does happen, wouldn't you think though that your average middle class person would take advantage of their class position, superior education, etc and get on in life rather than getting involved with the largely thankless experience of anarchist politics? Unless they had for the most part sincere reasons. But then again maybe our rulers are

hedging their bets with a long shot that a group like Class War may form the next revolutionary government (this is a joke in case you're wondering).

Presumably a middle class person involved with left politics is a class traitor unless of course there is a conspiracy which seems to me unlikely.

Speaking of my own experience of Class War, I would say that the majority of people in it have always been working class, if not lumpen in origin and that it was more or less always run by workers. Again, if you say otherwise what does it say about us 'politicised' workers that it is so easy to boss us around and takeover our political activity, you neglected to answer this point from the last S/Hits.

There have plenty of members of CW over the years who have been middle class in origin and sometimes they have had a malign or destructive influence. I have had many bad experiences at the hands of middle class politicians but I have to balance this against the many negative experiences I have had at the hands of my fellow proletarians, who are themselves just as capable of putting



monopoly on shitty behaviour in the anarchist scene or elsewhere, believe me.

OK, somebody middle class has a better education, more confidence, etc and they can take the show over because of this. Don't you just deal with the situation if and when it arises? From what Splat says, I sometimes get the impression that you are so insecure and worried about them that you are almost on the verge of believing that they are superior.

PITFALLS

Look, I left school when I was 16, I've never been to university and about the best qualification I have is a CSE Grade 5 so if I feel able to deal with them, I'm sure that you can, what's the problem? The development of a hierarchy is the real problem here. All political organisations are prone to this pitfall, even the most informal kind (especially the most informal kind). It is in the very nature of political organisation and it isn't exclusively perpetuated by one class.

The middle class can and often do dominate politics by virtue of the confidence and education gained through their class background - but political organisations can also be dominated in terms of gender, race, age, experience, knowledge, ability. Again, it is one of those problems which there are no simple solutions to deal with. Often it arises out of complacency or laziness. When it develops, we should confront it.

If Class War wasn't/isn't dominated by the middle classes, neither have the other main anarcho organisations - DAM, ACF, SolFed, etc - at least as far as I can see. Nor Red Action for that matter, to give a non-anarchist example of a group that swims on the farther shore of the same pond. Maybe you were referring to the Bohemian lifestyle drop-out side of it all, or Freedom, or what? Is something going on here? Do some Splat members feel a bit of guilt and repulsion at their former association with this very Bohemian lifestyle scene? So, hey presto, an ultra-hardline working class stance.

That anti-capitalist/pro-working class autonomy and self-activity politics are not as successful as they could or should be is beyond dispute and the reasons for this are many and complicated. Offering up simple solutions does nobody any favours and is more akin with an entirely different philosophy.

In itself, I don't care what Splat says politically, it's just a political argument, which in this case I mainly disagree with, so far so good. My problem is because of my direct experience, I have seen how divisive and destructive it can be as a result of this politics. I can remember a bit of civil class war at a Bradford meeting many years ago, not class war, workers yet again at each other's throats.

TAKING DOWN NAMES

Another problem is what Splat says about certain individuals ie certain middle class in origin individuals. So you're pissed off that what was written in the last S/Hits was personal, well I was fucking angry so I make no apologies to you. You say that you are only concerned about the middle class as a class and not with specific individuals within it. In that case, maybe you can explain to me, that page right at the back of your book 'The Enemy is the Middle Class' that did mention specific individuals, was personal and offensive.

I cannot believe that you get on your moral high horse about this one, words like kettle, pot, black come to mind, maybe you would like to rearrange them. What was 'Educating Who About What' if not very fucking personal or maybe this is your much vaunted idea of principled political debate?

It seems to me, that you can say anything you like about anyone, say anything back and you scream like stuck pigs. It's simple - if you can't take it, then don't hand out.

I assume what you are saying is that if so-and-so is middle class they cause us such enormous problems that an unprecedented level of class hatred and venom is in order, and that it really doesn't matter what you say, after all they're middle class, they're in our

movement, they deserve it.

Does Splat have to dehumanise somebody before they can have an argument with them? Oh for the good old days of Pol Pot, everyone with spectacles up against the wall. Somebody once said that the flight of reason breeds monsters. I know many middle class people who are politically active, some I like, some I dislike, some are sincere and put in some good work, some do anything but that. Like most working class people though, I take people as I find them, so I will decide who is OK and who isn't. Splat won't decide for me.

THAT VISION THING

I don't know what it was like for you, but when I first discovered 'anarchism' I didn't think to myself "fuck me there are people out there who hate the middle classes just like me". It was the anarchist vision of a different kind of a world that was the attraction and the realisation that there were other people out there who were thinking in the same way.

I'm sure that it was like that for most people, it seems to me to be a common experience. Being working class is no big deal, it's commonplace, there are a lot of us after all. In anarchist circles though you can walk around forever saying "I'M WORKING CLASS, ME", well fucking good for you.

Do you not feel that you might have overdosed on the class hatred? I know that this might seem strange coming from someone who was involved in Class War for a long time, it maybe is an important constituent part of anarchist politics but never it's be all and end all, if it is I suggest that some of you may have real

All the time then, that Class War has been produced it's just been putting out middle class ideology. Like in the miners strike, when it said open up the second front, riot in the inner cities and victory to the hit squads....Maybe this ideology was reflected in the numerous times that it said workers should be running their own lives.

problems. As far as class is concerned, it is where you are now that matters, not where you come from. Class is not a genetically inherited feature, it is a dynamic social process.

Shouldn't we be looking at what individual middle class people do in terms of their political activity and in the world in general, rather than condemning them out of hand, what is their role?

Overall the role of the middle class is an oppressive one, there's no doubt about a police superintendent, a magistrate, or a social worker, if they are taking working class kids into care. Their job is one of fucking us over, keeping us in line, bossing us around. But is every person who is middle class in background in a position of power and authority, I would say that they are not.

What about somebody who is middle class in background and yet drives a bus for a living (I know such a person). They drive a bus but yet to you they are forever middle class. What you would say is that they can always return to their original privileged class background and this is true, so so often I have seen it happen - but not always. Sometimes people burn their bridges, sometimes people simply move down a class.

In terms of fucking over the working class, how about somebody who works on the front desk of a dole office and takes their job seriously, a working class job, shitty wages and conditions, and yet the power to make other workers lives a misery on a day-to-day basis. I have a cousin who's working class in background and yet

was an executive officer on the DSS Fraud Squad - nearly as low as you could go! Shouldn't you be looking at what someone is actually doing in this world rather than being obsessed by background?

Splat says that the anarchist movement is dominated by middle class ideology, I would say that middle class ideology is what you find in the pages of the 'Daily Mail', but that's just me. You don't give any decent examples to back up what you say, so I could put various interpretations on what you mean. Has it been dominated by middle class ideology from Chartist times onwards for instance or has it been more recent, from the 1970s maybe? I know that crude Marxists have always said that anarchism was petit-bourgeois, what you're saying sounds similar to me.

All the time then, that Class War has been produced it's just been putting out middle class ideology. Like in the miners strike, when it said open up the second front, riot in the inner cities and victory to the hit squads or maybe it was the Class War preoccupation with rioting that reflected middle class ideology. I always thought that middle class ideology was about a nice ordered world. Maybe this ideology was reflected in the numerous times that it said workers should be running their own lives and what goes for Class War, also goes for Black Flag, Organise, Direct Action, and other publications too many to mention who have been saying similar things as far back as I can remember.

RIDICULOUS

Maybe it's the personal relations that you are suggesting are tainted by middle class ideology like the way Class War always organised itself on a libertarian basis to an absurd degree sometimes. Get worried when you read an anarchist publication that tells you obey the boss, do as you are told, don't question authority, etc etc but until then may I suggest what you are saying is ridiculous.

What you are really saying is that everyone who doesn't subscribe to your politics is in the grip of middle class ideology, you have the correct politics, you are the only ones who have the correct politics, how predictable - isn't this what every left group has said since when we crawled out of the primordial slime?

Lots of working class activists are leaving the anarchist movement behind? Apart from the fact of how you are going to stop all the same problems happening all over again, how many times I have heard that one before? About a thousand times or more maybe. Leaving the anarchist ghetto is easier said than done, you're still in the anarchist swamp.

Another one I have heard before is about how the presence of middle class people puts the workers off from getting involved in politics. True to an extent, most workers have an inbuilt hostility to those they perceive to be middle class. The weakness of this argument though is that if you have a group like Splat which supposedly only has workers involved, you should be cleaning up,

with lots of workers straining at the leash to get involved. But I can only observe that this is anything but the case. So there must be a flaw here somewhere.

In the process of writing this article, I gave a draft copy plus copies of the Splat stuff to somebody who has been a working class anarchist of many years standing for him to comment on. His immediate observation on the Splat articles was to make an analogy between them and the virulent homophobe who was in fact a closet homosexual.

I don't see what Splat has to offer, you talk about naive anarchist ideology and yet you suffer from one of its classic hallmarks. You define yourselves not by what you are for but by what you are against. Give me a positive proposal about something that you intend to do, or something that you have done that doesn't involve a negative criticism - a lot of it is just talking really and a great deal of this argument is just about semantics and personalities.

MORALISTIC NONSENSE

You have a moralistic argument posturing as politics, in which the anarchist/libertarian left is being ruined by these "bad" middle class people.

And yet you spend a great deal of your time arguing with, yes the anarchist movement, and writing to publications like this which is presumably dominated by middle class ideology. If what you say is true, ignore us completely and set your own agenda. Comrades, you are not part of a bright new future, you are very much part of a tainted past and you represent so much that is awful about politics.

You are narrow-minded, intolerant (you even wear your intolerance as a badge of honour), you're also dogmatic and there's no sense about live and let live about anything you say and do - and you're po-faced as well (never trust a humourless politico).

We're all in the gutter here although I feel that I have been dragged there. As I said before, there has been a move to get away from arguing in this way which is as likely as anything to put workers off politics. The way you say what you say has made it harder for you to get your ideas across, not easier and none of it would have happened if you hadn't have had one pointless page in the back of your book.

I'm not saying that there should be more middle class people involved or that it is good that they are involved, I am saying that it seems unlikely that the revolutionary movement will ever comprise 100% workers as defined by you. Bear in mind that the goal is a classless society and that a politics based solely on narrow-minded hate will never get us there - have you ever considered Maoism?

P and others

SEX'N'DRUGS'N'ROCK'N'ROLL

Or an anarchist's account of the Fifth Annual Portsmouth Smokey Bears Picnic on 16th August 1998.....

The first picnic, in 1994, was one of a series of actions in Portsmouth in defiance of the Criminal (In)Justice Act and obviously supported the campaign to legalise cannabis. It attracted more than a thousand people negligible policing - no trouble - no arrests. The second year there were sound-systems and live bands again, negligible policing - again, no trouble - again, no arrests.

In the third year the picnic was swamped by the police. A 'hands-off policy turned into a 'zero-tolerance' policy. Council bye-laws were zealously enforced. Erections (ooh-er missus!) on the common are not permitted according to council bye-laws. A paste-up table used as a stall constitutes an erection. So, attempts were made by the police to prevent anarchists, socialists and hunt sabs

from putting up stalls. The stalls went up anyway when there were sufficient numbers of protesters. Entertainment and amplified music fall foul of the council bye-laws. So, the police prevented sound-systems from coming onto the common. Even ghetto-blasters and car stereos were taken from people approaching the common. A handful of arrests were made for 'possession'. The fourth picnic met with a similar response. Nevertheless, even though the third and fourth picnics faced intimidation from the police, they still managed to attract a large number of supporters.

GOING PUBLIC

Rather than be put off by the police intimidation the organisers of this years picnic appeared to have made sure that there was more publicity in the 'alternative' press than in previous years. The fifth picnic was to take place on Sunday 16th August 1998. The local paper, 'The News' carried a first page story the day before about

WHY ANARCHISTS OPPOSE CANNABIS PROHIBITION

Cannabis prohibition came into effect in this country 70 years ago (1928). Since then, millions of ordinary people around the world have been arrested, fined, imprisoned, injured and even killed by prohibitionist governments and states - for little more than possessing a plant!

Yet, even a cursory glance at the scientific facts regarding the use of cannabis as a medical and recreational drug, as well as hemp for industry, shows that prohibition appears at first to be totally illogical. Medical research has long since established that cannabis is less harmful than the legal recreational drugs alcohol and tobacco as well as many prescribed medical drugs. Furthermore, hemp is an extremely strong and durable material and has been used to make rope, clothing and paper for centuries, but can only be grown legally in this country with a government license.

So, what is the purpose of cannabis prohibition? After all, if cannabis is relatively harmless why do states all over the world invest so much energy and costly resources in criminalising huge numbers of cannabis smokers and growers?

Racism formed the basis of early anti-marijuana legislation with dope smoking jazz musicians demonised by a bigoted right-wing press. In the 20s and 30s scare stories about 'reefer madness' spread fear amongst the public who accepted draconian laws to deal with this 'evil'. In the 1950s in the midst of McCarthyism and rabid anti-communism marijuana was even linked with the 'Red Menace'. Later, dope was associated with the 'counter culture'. The truth is that cannabis use has become increasingly widespread and the victims of prohibition were, and are, predominantly working-class (check out the prison population if you doubt it).

It is quite common for groups within the working class to be used as scape-goats for society's ills. Hysterical media coverage of illegal immigrants, benefits claimants and single parents, as well as cannabis users, encourages us to blame other members of the working class for the problems in the world rather than the system itself and those who profit from it.

Corporate business, and capitalism in general, plunders the human population, animals and the environment - across the face of the planet - for profit. This results in starvation, wars, mass

unemployment and ecological destruction, which in turn leads the population every so often to resist, rebel and revolt. So the capitalist media resorts to propaganda to curb popular unrest and to 'manufacture' consent. Cannabis prohibition is based on such propaganda. Noam Chomsky, one of America's leading dissidents says: "One of the traditional ways of controlling people in every society, whether it's a military dictatorship or a democracy, is to frighten them. If people are frightened, they'll be willing to cede authority to their superiors who will protect them: "OK, I'll let you run my life in order to protect me," that sort of reasoning. -

So the fear of drugs and fear of crime is very much stimulated by state and business propaganda... Crime in the United States is not off the spectrum for industrial societies [this also applies to the UK]. On the other hand, fear of crime is far beyond other societies, and mostly stimulated by various forms of propaganda. The Drug War is an effort to stimulate fear of dangerous people from whom we have to protect ourselves!"

'Protection' from the state comes in many forms: CCTV, more police powers, heavier fines, longer custodial sentences, laws to restrict the liberty of the 'offender'. But laws that restrict the liberty of one section of the population, restrict the liberty of us all. CCTV cameras that spy on 'them' spy on the rest of us. Police powers used against a minority can be used against the majority. In other words, an injury to one is an injury to all. We must resist all attempts to divide and weaken our class, and make no mistake about it cannabis prohibition is used to do just that.

Anarchists will fight to end cannabis prohibition and would support the establishment of a genuinely democratic broad based federation to mount a campaign of public education, direct action and civil disobedience. However, the ending of prohibition in itself will not bring about a 'free' society. So, we will also fight to bring about a system based on mutual aid and co-operation where we are able to do as we wish as long as it doesn't restrict the freedom of others. Why not join us?

This leaflet was written by a member of the Portsmouth Anarchist Network (PAN), but doesn't necessarily reflect the views of everyone in the group. PAN was launched in July 1998 and aims to meet regularly to plan and support actions in and around the Portsmouth area (as well as nationally and internationally when possible).

posters promoting the event being pasted on a church notice board! The church minister complained to the police and local paper, thereby ensuring more publicity than a dozen fly-posting teams could ever hope for! Also, as the picnic followed the huge legalise cannabis demo and rally in London in March, hopes were high that it would attract a large number of anti-prohibitionists.

The recently launched Portsmouth Anarchist Network (PAN) agreed to support the event and produced a leaflet entitled, "Why Anarchists Oppose Cannabis Prohibition" (see above in box). The aim of PAN's leaflet was to inject some class-struggle revolutionary anarchism into the event.

On arrival at the common, one member of PAN carrying a paste up table (a potential erection!) was immediately spotted by two coppers who walked straight up to him. One copper pointed a video camera at him while the other informed him that he had reason to believe that the paste up table was going to be erected, thus breaking council bye-laws.

GETTING HIGH

The anarchist called to the disparate crowd to gather round. A crowd assembled around the minor confrontation. This created a focus for the crowd and caused the police to become extremely nervous (one was seen to tremble). The anarchist insisted that he wouldn't erect the table and told the police that, even if he did, breaking a council bye-law was a non-arrestable offense. Even though they took his details, the coppers backed off. The crowd cheered and anarchist leaflets were distributed to people eager to see what all the fuss was about.

Soon after this the police retreated further because the number of protesters swelled to at least 600 - a hundred or so more than

last year - with another couple of hundred coming and going throughout the day. Despite the numbers there was no sound-system. However, drums, guitars and even one or two ghetto blasters found their way onto the common. Some fly-pitching took place which would have been impossible at the last two picnics. Bongos were lit, and a two-foot joint (I kid you not) was smuggled on to the common to be smoked by a long and eager queue - I pity the last person who toked on that soggy roach! Six arrests were made, mostly on the outskirts of the common, for possession.

With the police keeping their distance PAN members erected their stall. An anarchist flag flew above the stall, and crowd, and was the only flag visible from a distance. Indeed, the anarchist presence was crucial in giving a revolutionary angle to the event, and hopefully some of the protesters will now see cannabis prohibition in the wider context of social control as a result.

This is an issue that anarchists can get involved in. Obviously the drugs barons and gangsters (at the top of the production and distribution pyramid) will never win our support. However, the victims of cannabis prohibition are predominantly working class people, many of whom languish in prison on drugs related charges. Also, the issue is used to justify draconian laws and ever more intrusive surveillance technology (i.e. CCTV). The Drugs War is very much a part of the Class War, although obviously not central to it. It is used to create an 'enemy within', diverting attention from the problems inherent in capitalism. As libertarians we would be wise not to ignore the gains to be made by involving ourselves in the fight against cannabis prohibition.

PAN

THE PROBLEM IS YOU

This article is a response to some of the points raised in the previous two issues of the Smash Hits bulletin. The perspective is that of an anarchist nihilist detached from the mainstream 'class struggle' milieu. So what the fuck's Anarchist Nihilism? Firstly, to clarify the term anarchist nihilist. Anarchist nihilism is a term increasingly adopted by militant anarchists who attack all economic, social, political and ideological forms generated within the existing order, seeing them as a part of the structure that imprisons us.

The aim of the anarchist nihilist is to pull this structure apart and build a new one. Revolution is part of this process, reformism being seen as topologically impossible. The origin of this current is generally regarded to be the eclectic, ultra radicalism of the continental left, which since the pro-situ period has been gradually defusing into English-speaking anarchism, and here both awakening old ideas and merging with contemporary counterculture.

In some ways this trend can be seen as post-situ, though we have a lot of differences with the situationist position as will become apparent.

BAKUNIN'S DEAD

Like Bakunin (a major influence on many of us) we seek not only a social revolution, but an ideological, cultural and intellectual one too (all being part of one experience). Anarchist nihilists also regard socialised value systems and acquired ideologies (including AnarchISM, MarxISM, SituationISM and in particular MoralISM) as all equally imprisoning and divisive. Those of us inclined towards philosophy also extend this 'nihilism' to intellectual forms, and some to even reason itself (others amongst us are merely anti-intellectual. Action speaks louder than words, though not always as coherently).

We are radical sceptics believing in only one thing that grounds us, though not necessarily the same thing, for some this is our objective condition for others our own individual subjectivity (and solidarity with fellow subjectivities). Like all anarchists the anarchist nihilist rejects authority, coercion and hierarchy but extends this further to include all meanings of these words in every area of adult life.

We are neither 'Individualists' nor 'Communalists', but seek a combination of both these social and economic modes in a variety of experiments. We aggressively oppose extreme forms of either.

MOTHERFUCKERS

We are not entirely 'negative' motherfuckers however, being uncompromisingly destructive we are driven by necessity towards the development of new values and practical alternatives now, rather than by abstract idealism or half hearted, utopian daydreams of a better future (though some of our alternatives may seem utopian to the narrow minded bourgeois).

We do think, but prefer the pragmatic adoption of any useful, liberating, theoretical stance relative to existing conditions. These stances need not be monolithic, a pluralist (but not a 'relativist') approach of multi-directional activity should be encouraged, applicable to local conditions and differing perspectives, 'there are no facts, only (finite) interpretations', to paraphrase the old (but true) cliché.

Within the anarchist movement we see ourselves as an avant garde with roots in both the class struggle and 'dissident' anarchist

milieus. We don't want all anarchists to become 'nihilists' but think anarchism needs to be much more radical. In the (much) wider world we do not seek to convert people to our beliefs (or lack of them) we merely seek to be catalysts and supporters of popular liberation and individual empowerment within a new structure of living.

Most anarchist nihilists operate autonomously but two associations (and countless independent micro bands) also exist. The Anarchist Nihilist Accords is an informal international network centred on the free publication Mind The Gap. We seek to develop awareness of anarchist nihilism, perfect its critique and praxis and create a focal point (and maybe a 'subcultural identity') for anarchist nihilists. Many of us are also activists within other groups. The other association, with which we currently have loose links, is the Anarchist Nihilist International.

This group apparently originated in France but we are told has semi-autonomous cells throughout the world (here known as the Black Brigade). It is more formal and structured and mainly concerned with activism.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ANARCHISM

Our primary criticism of 'contemporary anarchism' is its sectarianism. Despite the encouraging progress made at the Bradford Conference this is still a problem, especially with those who did not attend.

The idea that one 'faction' has the 'correct' theory (or anti-theory), methodology or praxis is total bollocks. We each have our own perspectives which are all partially true of a wider reality, and these are not mutually exclusive because we all have the same enemy. An enemy that is only helped by our internal division. Ideologies are always divisive, we cannot convert everyone to one viewpoint, even a simple one (if you think you can you're insane).

The ideologue can only promote their views by suppressing those of others (even if this is dressed up as some kind of 'rational' argument). This is normally done in the name of a 'united front' but the results of it are anything but unity. Unity can only be achieved by respecting differences, anything else leads to damaging divisions and potential totalitarianism.

We not asking all anarchists to join us in our pragmatic nihilism though, just to be realistic. A Revolution needs mass action to occur but not mass consensus. Despite the arguments to the contrary by many bourgeois Marxists and Marxoid anarchists.

PERSONAL ANTAGONISM

Another divisive factor is personal antagonism. Some of this may be based on justifiable grievances, but we cannot go on behaving like children. Anarchism is based on the transcendence of narrow egoism and a faith in the ability of people to change, if we are not prepared to extend this potentiality to our comrades how can we achieve Anarchy in the wider world? Assuming that's what we all really want!

Another criticism is the tendency within the movement towards moralistic stances and puritanism. We demand freedom and pleasure. We denounce the politics of denial. Most people want more not less. Greens may moan of over-consumption, and we agree, but this is not an excuse for restriction and asceticism just clever recycling and lasting goods.

THE ISSUE OF CLASS

Much space in this publication has been spent arguing about Class, perhaps one of our most divisive issues. This is a complex subject but one that can perhaps be resolved by an appeal to a Neo-Bakunite analysis. In the simplest form of this scheme, in any society there are only two conflicting political classes, the rulers and the ruled (one motivated by fear and the lust for power and

the other by their lack of power and spirit of revolt).

Between these there can be an intermediary class whose members can be assessed on whether they actively support the rulers or the ruled, 'Who's side they're on'. Of course this is only a simple model, specific societies in real life are much more complex.

A history of the development of class is interesting but largely irrelevant, history is best not viewed optimistically as a predetermined process (there are no hidden causes and people do not always act in rationally predictable ways) but realistically as a series of accidents, there is no evidence of any metaphysical purpose in the world other than that which we make ourselves (history has no motor, it's a push bike!).

Our only limit is our current circumstance now, it is this that needs to be understood, it is conditioned by the past but not necessarily rooted in it.

Within modern western society the criteria for power is now economic (though this is complicated by the fact that in Britain we are still in a state of transition between a traditional society and a capitalist one). The Splat Collective is right when it declares that the dominant class is the middle class but, as their critics correctly observed, there still is a 'ruling class'.

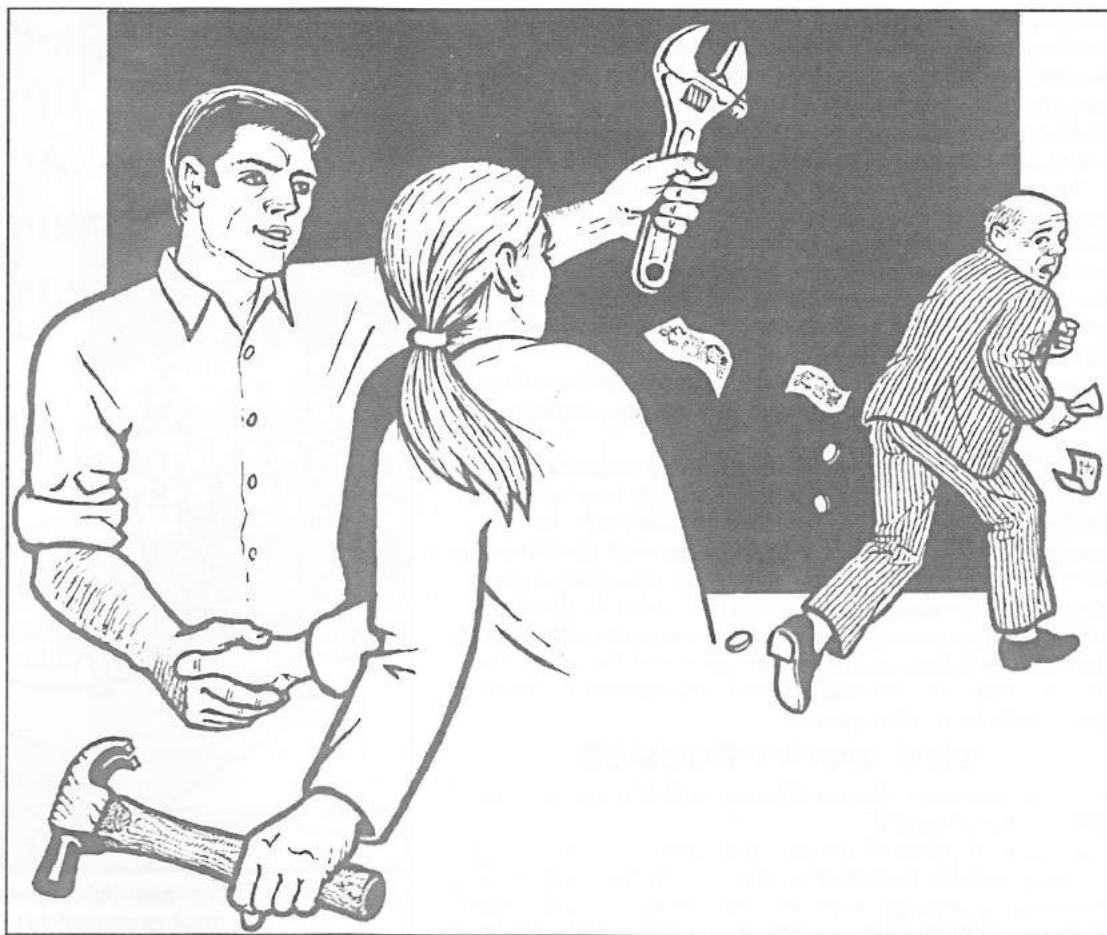
This 'ruling class' is composed of those who have risen from the middle class together with the last remnant of the traditional ruling class (and even most of these have now been bourgeoisified.). Capitalism was a middle class invention (formed from and maintaining the bourgeois mindset), the modern State is the agency that protects it and perpetuates itself as another form of power base.

MAINTAINING WEALTH

Very few of our current 'ruling class' rule for political reasons, most have only one motivation, the maintenance (and increase) of their own wealth. They are a direct enemy that must eventually be removed, along with their sidekicks in the State, but they are not the primary enemy. They are the replaceable helmsmen but the middle class are the generator and the engine of capitalism.

The middle class itself is stratified (by a parallel economic/social status, which some also confusingly call class - though this definition itself is a bourgeois concept), it ranges from top professionals to teachers and social workers but in sharing a common mindset they are all equally the problem (the lower middle class is probably the worst of all because these impact on the lives of individuals far more than the diffuse social effects of the upper group).

Class can not be defined economically. The fact that a train driver earns more than a bourgeois teacher is irrelevant, he/she is just not part of bourgeois society, they are a subordinate



functionary to that society, though in time their income may allow them to become 'educated' and enter the fold, if they are accepted, an acceptance that is never final and would lead them into a life of respectable conformity. If you don't believe this just consider the number of train drivers who have been blamed for accidents caused by management incompetence, shit sticks together.

Even amongst the upper and middle classes today's rich bastard is tomorrow's poor bastard but as long as they conform there is always a place for them in the arms of the bourgeoisie. Given this economic and social mobility it is clear that wealth and social origins are influential but have little to do with class as such.

Power is more important but even this is transitory (if you're male that is, women have little power in society unless they become an honorary 'male'), power is also relative to one's relationship to or within the bourgeoisie (a foreman can be a bourgeois' quisling or a friend of the workers, depending on his alignment and social direction. A bourgeois woman is more privileged than a working class one etc). What matters is culture and who your friends are.

RULERS AND RULED

Society can also be modelled on the concept of two interlocking societies, for most of us a more immediate greater society of conflict in which the bourgeoisie ('ruling' and middle classes) are the rulers and the workers and non-bourgeois the are the ruled; and a more remote privileged and cohesive bourgeois society of rulers dominated by a transitory 'ruling class' of upper bourgeois over the envious lower (and further stratified) bourgeoisie of the more permanent middle classes.

However it must be emphasised that this does not mean that all of the middle class is our enemy. The real enemy is the bourgeois mindset that arises in the middle class and spreads like a virus throughout society.

Any given member of the middle class (and certainly of the current 'ruling class') is more likely to be infected by this than a member of the working class but this is only a statistic.

Bourgeoisified upwardly mobile workers are common place today and many people of middle class origins have escaped their bourgeois conditioning (in varying degrees) and support 'working class struggles'. In some ways a 'middle class' anarchist could be said far more revolutionary than those of us of working class origins who have not had to liberate ourselves to such a degree.

They are certainly invaluable to the struggle in terms of the resources their privileged background brings, both as active members of the movement or as subversives still within bourgeois professions. However the problem is that not all 'middle class' anarchists are fully 'debourgeoisified' and tend to contaminate the movement with bourgeois ideals and delusions which undermine our effectiveness and make us easily recuperatable.

They also tend to have been isolated from the harsher realities of life and so be more 'utopian' (though they are also likely to be less 'screwed up' because of this).

To be fair though it should be said that there are probably as many bourgeoisified working class anarchists, but they have always been better at hiding behind their inherited cloth caps. The solution in terms of anarchist unity is that we need each other, the working class need the resources and clearer heads brought to them by the liberated middle class and the middle class need the unbourgeoisified working class to provide a dose of reality and help them liberate themselves further (perhaps one of the reasons for the many cross-class sex relationships in the movement. Well it's a good excuse for a fuck anyway!).

THE BOURGEOISIE

It is a mindset that is also the ultimate cause of the environmental damage we are producing.

A little more should be said to sum up what I mean when I say bourgeois mindset. Basically I think this can be best understood as the mentality of enclosure. In this model, bourgeois consciousness, originating with the enclosure of land for exploitation and profit and the resultant concept of private property, has evolved through behavioural conditioning into a limited, and limiting, 'Propriat' mindset.

By Propriat I mean the cluster of interrelated concepts around the words proper, proprietary and propriety (look these up in your (bourgeois) dictionary to get a feel for the paradigm). It is a mindset that is inherently limiting and closed, in terms of order, regulation, convention, moderation, centralisation and privatisation, and limited in terms of its narrow minded reductionism, stasis, detachment and exclusive purism.

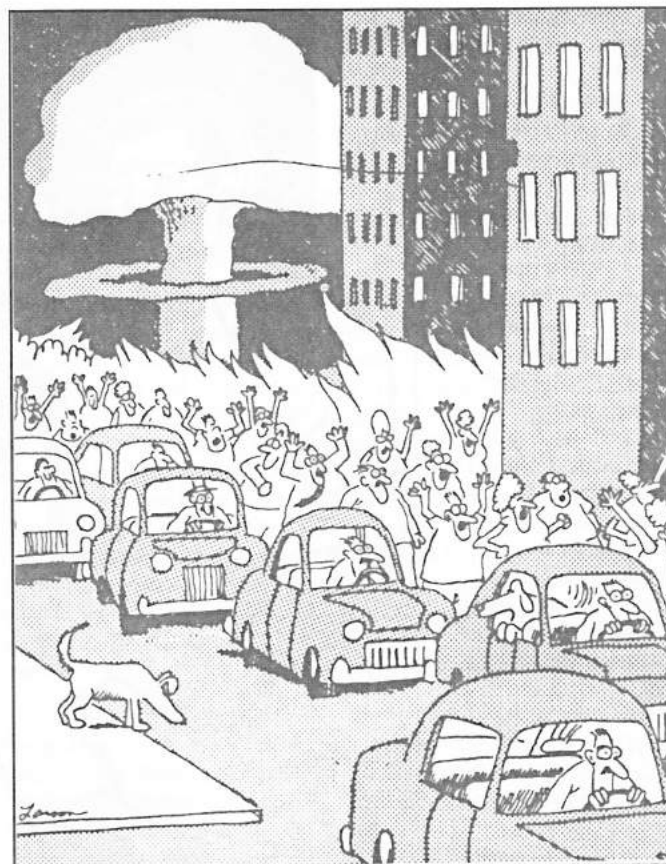
DETACHED CONCEPTS

Everything and everybody (usually equivalent terms for the bourgeois) outside of its various cozy tunnel realities are excluded. It is through this that it defines itself as a class (the first class, all others being neat little, abstract pigeon holes defined by them in relationship to themselves, thus creating an ordered world). Ultimately this disconnectionism results in an alienated patriarchal society of atomic individuals (just as alienated from themselves) in detached, hierarchical relationships.

Desperately trying to achieve a lost social harmony and wholeness in non-confrontational conformity, artificiality and hypocritical, schizoid life styles. (This differs from the Marxist model because it is based on power and conscious ideology rather than mindless economic forces). Not that all of these traits are necessarily bad in themselves (it could even be argued that some are a crucial part of our modern identity) but for the bourgeois they are formed into a rigid mindset that excludes all opposition.

I would define the essence of true anarchism as not just an attempt at the self-liberation of the oppressed but one that affirms those human traits that are excluded from the bourgeois world, but still present in the excluded classes and individuals.

In today's world we nearly all contain elements of bourgeois mentality of course, the nastiest thing about the bourgeois mindset is its ability to contaminate others (due to a variety of factors, including: parental influence, the education system and



And then Jake saw something that grabbed his attention.

media, status factors, our need for a distinct identity and the power and security it offers the excluded).

So the Revolution has to be both a social one against bourgeois institutions and the bourgeoisie themselves (plus their quislings in the working class) and a parallel personal one directed against the bourgeois in each of us. This may seem a marginalising viewpoint to some comrades but I would maintain that the majority of ordinary people have still escaped total bourgeoisification. It is often our bourgeois idealism that alienates us rather than our militancy, and besides, the only alternative is to attempt to achieve a Revolution within the context of the existing society and we have all seen what that produces enough in this century.

SOCIAL LIBERATION

Which brings us to practical issues. How to we liberate ourselves? Well its obvious that a revolution is needed (and by revolution I don't mean a deposition of rulers and the creation of a new order, I mean a reversal of everything, including the idea of order and rule, and in particularly a reversal of bourgeois values, a true social revolution).

Unfortunately anarchism has become seen on one hand by some as a form of radical Marxism in which the working class will in one foul swoop will achieve its freedom and reappropriate power and property, class division and the State will be abolished and everything will be okay, and on the other as a form of weak willed and impartial, radical liberalism. Both of these sound very shallow and bourgeois.

As Bakunin declared, the anarchist revolution must be a political, economic, social and intellectual one. It will encompass change in all areas of life.

CHANGES

This revolution in itself will be a liberating and consciousness changing experience, but the irony is to get there we need a change of consciousness first. This is difficult but can be helped by

mini-revolutions, small scale temporary insurrections that empower people, energise them and shake them out of their political slumber.

These don't have to be riots (though these have an important role) they can be positive insurrections of the RTS type. Stunts have taken a bashing in these pages but if they capture people's imaginations and create positive publicity then these too have an important role.

Carnavalesque demonstrations that challenge existing orders can also be 'revolutionary', far more so than puritanical moral crusades and traditional demos, they will also pull more people in. Not that we want a 'mass movement' though. This objective has caused most of our problems over the years.

We're bored with these calls for mass organisation and 'class solidarity'. The former inevitably leads to structured organisation and resultant bureaucracy that kills any anarchist spirit, and the latter just doesn't exist.

As has been said before in these pages the working class is a diverse group of many cultures and 'subclasses' (it could be argued that it isn't a class at all) the idea of unifying it as a single body is unrealistic and seems somewhat of a bourgeois goal anyway. Beyond this the ruled are a much wider group than just the 'working class', what about the unemployed, the self employed, the underclass, radical students, bohemians and counter cultural drop outs and most useful of all, the criminal classes.

While the working class is very important subsection of the ruled, we think workerist revolutionaries have emphasised them too much. They are probably the hardest people of all to become liberated.

COMMON STRUGGLES

If different anarchist affinity groups work with their own 'subgroups', and are united in a common struggle of the excluded against everything bourgeois, then we could have an effective movement for change.

In terms of issues and plans, there are no common interests or masterplans anymore, all we can hope for is a unified critique of society, the strength of individual aspirations and concerns and the formation of a 'network of struggles'. These struggles would be varied and multidirectional but focused on a common enemy.

If one fails then many more will still be ongoing, another may even succeed, thus we would never experience demoralising defeats only a continual shift of activity. This activity would be both peaceful and creative and violent and destructive depending on local situations and inclinations.

However on violence in general there will be a time in the future, as the population becomes more militant, for all sorts of exhilarating violence (including assassination and sabotage, if that's what individuals choose at the critical moment) but we are not vanguardists and peaking too early in this beautiful orgy could be counter productive. I think for the moment we should seek a more constructive approach and reserve our violence for self defence.

Of our creative tasks, of critical importance today is our increased activity in the community, we need to have much greater connections with 'ordinary people' and build and demonstrate

More down to earth we need to challenge our sexual values. Every raw fuck can be a revolutionary act. Lets start organising orgies! Make our own pornography even. No more left wing puritanism. We each have our own unique sexuality to explore. Show people how sexy anarchism is! On a related note we also need to challenge sexual possessiveness as much as we do the material variety, both are interrelated and an excuse for peace keeping government. Down with bourgeois monogamy, lets have a 'communism of the flesh'.

social alternatives. This is crucial for propagandist, psychological and experimental reasons. The article on local solidarity networks was one of the best in the last issue. Though I think we should beware degenerating into do-gooders and boring social workers.

PERSONAL REVOLUTION

So much for the social revolution, but as I said earlier. I think personal revolution is also crucial. We need more lifestyle anarchism, not less as Uncle Murray has suggested! This is not just to put into practice what we preach (though it would be refreshing if we did), it is part of a liberation from the bourgeois shit internalised in all of us.

We can't expect to totally

change after the revolution we have to begin now or we are doomed to repeating the same mistakes and turn history into a cycle. We need to challenge all our assumptions, live free from self imposed restrictions, and liberate ourselves in all areas.

This does not mean degenerating into a bunch of hippies though, we still need some self-structuring and discipline, especially as we have a need to free our nastier sides too, we've all become so nice and civil (well most of us have). This struggle for liberation from limitation can even take on a spiritual dimension (though not as the word is commonly understood), as it did for people like Foucault.

More down to earth we need to challenge our sexual values. Every raw fuck can be a revolutionary act. Lets start organising orgies! Make our own pornography even. No more left wing puritanism. We each have our own unique sexuality to explore. Show people how sexy anarchism is!

On a related note we also need to challenge sexual possessiveness as much as we do the material variety, both are interrelated and an excuse for peace keeping government. Down with bourgeois monogamy, lets have a 'communism of the flesh'.

Drugs too can be liberating. Imagine the effect on society if cannabis was decriminalised. Sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll, lets see how marginalised we are with that agenda. This kind of liberation may not be easy, new problems come with new solutions, but anarchism will not exist without it.

LIVING IN THE VACUUM

Finally it was astutely stated in the first issue that we are currently 'staring into the vacuum' following the collapse of our earlier ideologies and preconceptions, this was described as a mini revolution and a call was made to extend this period as long as possible while we reorientate ourselves in the modern world.

I say lets stay here, lets 'live in the vacuum', anarchism should be about permanent revolution so lets start now. Free from tunnel vision we can start to respond to the real world and act in a spontaneous and responsive manner. Perhaps we can be real anarchists for once.

S

MAYDAY MAYDAY

"Mayday 98: Struggles for social change: new ideas - new approaches" was a three day conference held in Bradford between the 2nd and 4th of May earlier this year. It aimed to bring together revolutionaries from different backgrounds for some discussion free of dogma and political baggage on what we're doing, why we're doing it and how we could do it better. The conference was intended to be as broad and inclusive as possible, attempting to overcome the factionalism typical of radical politics in this country and to make some links rather than to re-emphasise divisions and disagreements.

It was beautifully sunny all weekend (see - God is on our side) and Bradford is world capital of cheap curry. Everyone who attended came away feeling really inspired and stimulated which all in all added up to a pretty great weekend.

NEW CLIQUES

The structure of the conference reflected the idea of a fresh new beginning - it was intended to be innovative and unlike the way these things are normally organised. Discussion took place in groups of 15-20 and we stayed in these groups for the whole weekend - cliques of people and people from particular organisations were deliberately split up and separated in order to discourage the spouting of a "party line" and to make sure we all made some new friends (some of us need help with these things).

About 250 people initially signed up and more turned up throughout the weekend who didn't get it together to register in advance (guess who...). Which was a pretty impressive turnout considering it was in some ways quite a demanding 3 days: it started early and was heavy talking all day - more so than your average conference because you had to get up again early in the morning the next day and do it all again.

It was many unusual for such a long time to be given to talking about politics with the same group of people. It meant you all got to know each other, and what you each thought about things. Therefore you could actually go into things in some depth.

It felt pretty relaxed too, unlike normal political discussions at conferences where you tend to have only a very limited time and so it all gets really hectic and rushed and tempers fray and you can't have a proper discussion. Or the quality of discussion suffers because you're all in the pub.

The end session was especially good when we were all together in one room reporting back on what we had been discussing for the last three days. It was really funny and made everyone feel really good. It also gave you an idea of the total number of people at the conference and what they were like - before that you only knew about your own group and didn't really have an idea of the conference as a whole.

EVERYONE TOO NICE

The organisers had obviously been expecting and been prepared for more argument and more argumentative types turning up and trying to hijack everything. But in the event the exact opposite was the case - everyone was far too nice!

We all respected diversity so much that we never actually got any proper argument going so much so that there was a deliberate attempt after the first day to focus on more controversial topics in order to generate some disagreement. Maybe there just wasn't enough diversity and we should have invited some Trots or

something. It has been said - if you're happy in your coalition then it's not broad enough!

Of course, like all these conferences nothing really new came out of it - how could it? Basically all these conferences/gatherings etc. just re-hash all the same old questions and only ever make very slow progress over the course of the years.

But then, you shouldn't expect wonders from these things - just



getting a diverse bunch of people together and talking to each other in a positive spirit is the main thing. What we actually said to each other was perhaps not so important - and could hardly be expected to be startlingly original, with any large group there's bound to be a lot of re-treading of old ground because there's always new people who aren't familiar with what's been said before.

BACK TO BASICS

The main impetus behind this conference has come from the dissolution of the Class War Federation. You may have seen the final issue (number 73) of the paper *Class War* (at least until it started up again under new management). Subtitled 'An Open Letter to the Revolutionary Movement', it raised many similar issues to this conference.

And more recently, the same group of people have been putting out an 'open access' discussion bulletin called *Smash Hits*, exploring similar themes.

The overall motivation that seems to be coming across is that many of the people in *Class War* felt that they weren't getting anywhere and that they were stuck in a rut. So the decision was taken to try and discover where they had gone wrong by deliberately going 'back to basics', to their original motivations for doing it in the first place.

Therefore the conference tried to avoid discussion of more immediate things - like just talking about the next action and the next action, instead favouring taking a step back to re-assess what we're doing and whether we are being successful in achieving our aims.

Of course, this wasn't a *Class War* conference and it wasn't an anarchist conference, many people were involved in organising it and many more attended it who were nothing to do with *Class War* and would not consider themselves anarchists - they tried not to exclude people by putting too much of an agenda on it. The whole idea was to be as inclusive as possible and to be open to new ideas and new directions.

There were four main 'theme' areas that the organisers had put forward to provide a focus for discussion, but groups were free to

tackle these in whatever way and in whatever order they saw fit, or not at all. These themes were:

'Land, Ecology and Environment' - which is self-explanatory really; 'All Worked Up' - wage-slavery and all that; 'Dream Time' - our ideal world, our vision of revolution, what we're in it for; 'Away From the Margins' - how to stop being a scene and start being a movement.

WHERE WERE YOU?

It should be clear from the fact that one of these four topics - ie. potentially a quarter of the entire conference - was given over to 'environmental' issues that there was a clear recognition of where the real excitement and the real innovation is coming from in radical politics at the moment.

The publicity, the structure and the content of the conference went out of its way to attract radical ecological activists, Earth First!ers, RTSers and direct action greenie types in general. And the report produced after the end of the conference summing up the discussions that had taken place only emphasised this further: it contains constant references to Reclaim The Streets as a sort of touchstone of where we should be heading.

So it was perhaps surprising that there were not more of us there. There was a small contingent of some of the more anarchist-oriented Earth First!ers; basically a few of the usual suspects from London, Manchester, Leeds and Brighton, but where was everyone else?

In a way it was a generational thing - us Earth First!ers tend to be in our twenties - a lot of the ex-Class War/Mayday people were about ten years older than us - so it was really a meeting of generations. And it was strange because some of us were to an extent looking to them for experience and 'leadership'.

But it was more a case of an earlier generation who had burnt themselves out and come to a dead end - it was admitted to us that many of them were looking to us for inspiration and considered us to be in the forefront of revolutionary politics in Britain. Which was a bit bizarre because we'd always thought we were in the rear...(British anarchist movement discover they've all been following each other for the last 10 years - "But I thought you were in the lead?").

DEEDS NOT WORDS!

Perhaps it was the taking a step back and talking about first principles and why we're all doing this anyway that put off many Earth First!ers and radical ecological types. Firstly, the need for this is not widely perceived in our movement as people tend to think of us as on a winning streak (just see that roads budget cut!).

Also the 'deeds not words' mentality runs very deep - probably just as well as this has been our strong point. But on the negative side it does lead to an obsession with action and people can be

unwilling to sit and talk about anything that is not immediately connected to action. Also there is the generation gap - we're (on the whole) still all young and idealistic and not burnt out yet ("speak for yourself!" I hear you cry...), we therefore tend to be obsessed with doing things immediately NOW - having a short term outlook.

The truth is, if we are going to have any sort of major change in society then it isn't going to happen tomorrow (or even by the end of the EF! gathering... sorry to disappoint you folks) and we do need to think a bit more strategically and long term.

This conference has come out of the perceived failure of an earlier generation of wild, idealistic, up-for-anything 'deeds not words' types - (and no one has ever been more deeds-not-words than Class War...). But ten or fifteen years down the line and they feel rather like they've been banging their heads against a brick wall and it's time to think a little about what they're doing.

LISTEN

We would be wise to listen to, engage in and learn from this process that they have initiated lest we want to repeat all the same mistakes in 10 years time. And end up repeating this endless cycle of idealistic young activists burning out and getting disillusioned with their failure to achieve anything....

So the question must be asked - why weren't more of us there? If we really are serious about revolutionary change, then we need to be committed to a long term movement that's going to keep building and getting stronger and learning from its mistakes and coming back again bigger and stronger.

In that context we need to learn from others who have trodden the same path before. We keep going on about making links, but if we can't even get it together to make links with these people who are actively reaching out to us who can we make links with?

The organisers deliberately didn't hype expectations of the conference, but referred to it as the beginning of a process to get us all talking to each other. If this aim was accomplished then they would consider the conference a success - anything else that may come of it would be a bonus. However this said, the real test of these things is in practice.

These networks, these discussions don't mean anything unless real practical links are made through doing things together. The Monday was intended as a 'practical' day for discussing putting our ideas into action and there was talk of some sort of national action to build on the momentum established by the Mayday conference. People also expressed a need for a more practical orientation in the possible follow up conference next year. This is clearly a process that we should be involved in - it could be the beginning of something good.

A

A VIEW FROM THE TREES

I'm involved in the radical ecological direct action movement and consider myself a revolutionary. I attended the MayDay 98 conference in Bradford hoping to learn from the experiences of others, discuss ways forward for the anti-authoritarian revolutionary milieu in the UK - as well hoping to meet more people with whom I share common ideas.

This article was written in the few days immediately after the May Day conference. Discussion, criticism and comments are welcome via these pages.

Class is a central tenet of most of the traditional revolutionary movement here in the UK. For the organisers as well as most of the

participants in Bradford it seemed to be the cornerstone of their political analysis of society - including that of how we are to effect the changes desired. Now - before you jump up and scream at the article - I am not going to argue against a class analysis and its validity to modern day society. What I am going to do is posit an alternative view about class.

DIVIDED SOCIETY

This society is a divided one - nobody could argue with that. With some people living in huge mansions, having other houses scattered across the world, numerous cars at their disposal, unimaginable wealth in the bank and servants at their disposal - whilst others own only what they can carry in a plastic bag and shuffle from doorway to doorway. Only a fool would say that class differences are unimportant in the world today.

For me though, class is far more than the traditional definition

of purely economic privilege. A class society is a society divided along power lines (rather than just economic lines - a form of power) - and power works in complex and different ways. I believe that it is no longer possible to divide society into ruling, middle and working classes - these are outdated simplistic concepts from another age.

I think that what we are now seeing is the separation of UK society into two broad classes - themselves with many internal divisions along different power lines - education, gender, sexuality, race, ability, etc.

On one hand we have the people that have always been at the top - the royalty, aristocracy, managing directors of transnationals, high ranking judges and military and police officers. These people function as they always have done.

The other significant class that we have is the amalgam of everybody else - from the homeless ex-convict to the bank manager of Croydon. Yes - I recognise the huge differences between these two extreme examples - but I also believe that neither has an inherently more revolutionary role than the other. Each has the capability for personal change and each also has the potential of taking the other side in any conflict.

POWER

As I said earlier I believe that power operates in many varied ways and complex ways and internally within this class is no exception. Some people who have had a university education may be more predisposed towards domination of certain aspects of the movement - such as office work - and this can carry a certain amount of power with it.

However, others with no education can hold power in other situations - a non-university educated male miner speaking over a university educated woman barrister. What we must learn to do is not mirror the value of society where managerial positions are held in esteem above manual work - but value all tasks for the usefulness that they fulfil.

As a final, but important, point - power divisions extended far beyond being purely between humans. In the world today animals and the natural world are the most oppressed and exploited amongst all living things - and these power relations and hierarchies must also be abolished through the revolutionary transformation of society. To fail to do this is to fail in the revolutionary project.

MISCONCEPTIONS

Flawed ideas about the nature of primitivist theory abounded amongst some of the participants at the Bradford MayDay 98 Conference. It is not my intention here however, due to space and also the desire for you to actually read this, to launch into a long defence of the theories that can be lumped together under the label 'primitivism'. I will, however, make a few short points to try and dispel some of the false misconceptions that some people seem to have about primitivist thought.

The primitivist current of thought is an anarchist one and as such is anti-hierarchy and anti-authoritarian. Primitivist theory is an eclectic anti-ideological tendency and takes strands from a wide range of thought including situationist ideas; anarchism; radical ecology, anthropology and history; and anti-work ideas.

Primitivist theory is critical of the totality of the system (often

KILL CAPITALISM



BEFORE IT KILLS THE PLANET

a PROLE ★ REVOLT production

called civilisation) that we live under - rather than just particular aspects of it. This totality - civilisation - is seen as the overarching context that allows all power relations and hierarchy to develop.

To transform the world traditional Marxism aims for the abolition of capitalism, classical anarchism the destruction of the State as well. Primitivists seek to extend these views to one that also seeks the revolutionary abolition of all power relationships and alienation - civilisation - between ourselves, each other and the natural world.

Primitivists do not believe in going back for one simple reason - you can't. They generally believe in learning from the other societies (usually band gatherer and hunter ones) that are the only examples of long-term functioning 'anarchist' communities - in order to put the positive things about them into practice. (For more details see, amongst others; *People Without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchy* by Harold Barclay (Freedom Press: London 1990))

Most (if not all) of the people who call themselves primitivists have not rejected a class analysis of society - just some of the reductive traditional aspects of it that they regard as outdated - ie workerism and its adherents.

Ignore the cheap inaccurate slurs. Primitivists, as anti-authoritarians, do not believe in coercion or domination of any kind - let alone death camps or forced sterilisation to reduce population. They differ on whether current population levels are a problem but generally agree that if any reduction is necessary it would happen naturally as people regained control over their own lives. Generally the population question is not even debated much within this milieu - it is a hangover from some of the more misanthropic sections of Earth First! in the USA - long gone themselves.

If you any interest in finding out more about anarchist-primitivist ideas take a look at the US publications *Fifth Estate* or *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*. Also worth checking out are writings by Fredy Perlman, John Zerzan, Bob Black and George Bradford. A short introduction to anarchist-primitivist thought (from which bits of this are shamelessly stolen) is available for 50p including postage from: Dead Trees Earth First! c/o PO Box 2971, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2TT, UK.

LIBERAL GREENS?

Misconceptions of the 'Green Movement' seemed commonplace at the Bradford Conference. Many people attending seemed to have either painted us into a corner as liberal reformist types - a la Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace - or had us pegged as wacked-out types who want to live in caves wrapped in a sheepskin! Well, shock horror - we're not really like that! As with the anarchist

milieu, the 'Green Movement' - if it can be defined in any sort of meaningful way at all - is an amorphous mass of people and groups who have very different views on a whole range of subjects. It encompasses every spectrum of ideas and thought; from reactionary authoritarians (very few) to liberal leftists (quite a few) - and from Green Party powermongers (too many) to revolutionary anarchists (not enough).

The most interesting and dynamic part of the 'Green Movement' is the direct action focussed end of the spectrum. This covers the majority of Earth First! type groups - as well as the London based group Reclaim The Streets - and their related networks. This part of the 'Green Movement' significantly overlaps with the anarchist milieu, the animal liberation movement and radical workers struggles. It is in this area - the overlap between these individuals and groups - that I believe lies some of the most inspiring and interesting ground for us to build on for a revolutionary movement.

AND NOW

I attended the MayDay Conference to learn from the experiences of others, try and discover common ground between myself and people with similar views - and then look for ways forward for the revolutionary movement in the UK. I felt that to a large extent that this happened; yet I do feel slightly disappointed about the

unwavering traditional leftist anarchist views held by a few of the participants of the conference.

Some people seemed unable to see beyond their own fossilised ideology. There was - almost totally - a lack of understanding about ecological issues - as well as an unwillingness to expand the critique of hierarchies between humans to one that encompasses the domination of all living things. Coming from people who have been involved in revolutionary politics for a significant time I found this rather depressing.

We all have much to learn - but whilst we do so let's leave our ideologies behind and together create a movement for real lasting and total change. A movement whose aim is for a classless world free from - not just aspects of - but all hierarchy, alienation and coercion. We should be seeking - and living as much as is possible now - a life based on mutual aid, voluntary co-operation and the liberation of desires. One where we can live as free autonomous individuals in harmony with ourselves, each another and the earth. For me this is the only revolution that I am fighting for - nothing else and nothing less. It remains to be seen how this project will unfold over the coming years.

M (Newcastle)

CASTORS, COPS AND CHAOS!

In March 1998 a number of us who are involved in the ecological, anarchist and anti-nuclear direct action movement in the UK travelled to Ahaus, Germany to take part in the resistance to the transportation of nuclear waste.

After our return some of us collectively agreed and wrote this article; and its primary aim is to inform people and provoke thought on the events at Ahaus. With its publication we hope to continue to play a small part in helping to increase the effectiveness of our actions and campaigns here in the UK - whether of anti-nuclear focus or not.

GOING BACK IN TIME

Germany's nuclear programme - and the fight against it - began in the late 1970s with the construction of nuclear power plants. From its inception the resistance to nuclear developments in Germany was strong and was heavily influenced by Germany's powerful and radical environmental movement. However despite these early protests the German nuclear programme continued and today has expanded to produce a third of Germany's total energy requirements - as well as exporting considerable amounts of power abroad.

German nuclear power plants are legally required to deal with their nuclear waste and without evidence that they can safely store or dispose of this waste, the plants are not licensed to operate. The waste storage sites at Ahaus and Gorleben in the north of Germany are the only legally designated sites where waste can be stored before being shipped to either Sellafield in the UK or La Hague in France for reprocessing. It is for this reason that they are so critical to the continued functioning of the nuclear system.

Storage sites for nuclear waste have existed in Germany for over 20 years and they have served as the focal point for resistance for local communities and Germany's large anti-nuclear movement. Nowhere has such opposition been as widespread or imaginative as Gorleben.

Three CASTOR transports to Gorleben have been met with increasing opposition, so far culminating in March 1997 with 15,000 activists being confronted by 30,000 riot police. 7,000 people blockaded the entrance to Dannenberg railway station,

attempting to prevent the successful transfer of the CASTOR from rail to road. Train power lines were felled and burning barricades constructed. A 70 strong tractor demonstration and a giant cross made from 'liberated' railway girders were used to effectively obstruct the road and delay the CASTOR's progress.

GORLEBEN

It was, in part, the process in Gorleben which inspired the resistance to be built in Ahaus. These developments in terms of size and effectiveness appear to be the result of historical context (well established anti-nuclear and environmental movements) and organisational developments (the networking of local communities and other protest groups) as well as the growing momentum and politicisation of the nuclear issue in Germany.

A transport of nuclear waste consists of CASTOR containers each capable of holding 19 highly radioactive spent fuel rods from the core of nuclear reactors. The transport of waste to Ahaus in March 1998 consisted of six CASTORs, three from Grundremmingen nuclear power plant in Bavaria and three from Neckarwestheim in southern Germany. The CASTORs were taken a short distance by road to Walheim where they were loaded onto a train for the 600km journey to the storage depot just outside Ahaus.

Ahaus is a small town with a population of 34,000 in the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, near to the Dutch border in Germany. It seems that compared to the widespread protests at Gorleben the state expected that there would be less resistance to the CASTOR transports at Ahaus since the storage site already contained 305 CASTORs. However substantiated rumours of this nuclear waste transport to Ahaus began a year ago, and inspired by the resistance at Gorleben, anti-nuclear groups from all over Europe responded by spreading information and mobilising people to take and protest in Ahaus.

Resistance to the CASTOR transport in Ahaus was co-ordinated by the Bürgerinnen-Initiative (BI) - a town's peoples anti-nuclear group. They are linked with similar groups across Germany - including ones at Gorleben and Neckarwestheim - and all these groups had been meeting frequently to plan their resistance to the transport. They co-ordinated Sunday marches to the Brennelementezwischenlager (BEZ) - the storage site at Ahaus - which often involved walking along the train tracks, sometimes with spontaneous sabotage happening. The BI also set up a protest

camp opposite the storage site about six months before the transport was due.

Rumours abounded that the shipment of waste to Ahaus would take place over the period of 23rd -29th March. These rumours were fuelled by the fact that all police leave had been cancelled for this period - and the dates were later confirmed by the German government.

GETTING READY

Two demonstrations were organised for Saturday 21st March; one in Munster (the nearest large city to Ahaus) and one in Neckarwestheim. The plan was for people to then move onto camps in the area around Ahaus and prepare for actions the following week. The camps would be organised regionally and/or according to the different types of actions that people wanted to do.

This was not to be though as to many people's surprise the German Interior Minister - Manfred Kanther - announced on Wednesday 18th March that everything was ready for the transport, and it would begin on the night of Thursday 19th. The CASTOR alarm was called on Wednesday night and people from all over Europe rushed to Ahaus, many only making it on Friday morning just before the CASTOR was due to arrive.

We had planned to leave the UK on Friday morning to arrive in time for the demonstration in Munster on Saturday, however, due to the CASTOR transport being early we ran around and just managed to get everyone together so that we could leave on Thursday night. After a night's driving and no sleep we arrived in Ahaus just in time for the action at 8am on the Friday morning. Here's our vision, as much as we can gather, of what actually happened there.

DIARY OF RESISTANCE

Thursday 19th March

The CASTORs are ready to leave Neckarwestheim and Grundremmingen nuclear power stations by road, to be moved to Walheim where they are loaded onto a train.

In Neckarwestheim 200 demonstrators block the entrance of the power plant causing delays and 2 activists dig a tunnel and lock on under the road out of Neckarwestheim. The police dogs refuse to enter the tunnels. The police threaten to use CS gas - but don't - and the activists aren't removed until the evening.

In Ahaus at midday 500 kids bunk off school and carry out a sit down blockade of the train station and this is later joined by more locals. At 4pm 5000 protesters begin a demonstration in the town centre. Police evict the camps around Ahaus; 3 are declared illegal for being within the 500 metre exclusion zone around the train tracks and 2 others are evicted with 9 arrests.

1000 riot police surround one of the remaining 2 camps - 'X8' camp - onto which about 1000 people had moved during the day. At 4pm in Grundremmingen the 3 CASTORs leave the nuclear plant for Walheim.

In Ahaus 150 people managed to blockade the private tracks to the storage site, and are arrested along with a number of people caught barricading. A tractor convoy of farmers from Gorleben on their way to support the protests are stopped and held by police who deflate their tyres.

Friday 20th March

At 2.39am a riot police officer, Christian Lang who had been on duty securing the tracks for 20 hours near Wurzburg in Southern Germany, is killed by a passing train that he failed to notice. D'oh!

At 3am the CASTOR transport leaves Walheim in a convoy watched over by helicopters. It is stopped soon after leaving for 45 minutes by people locked onto the tracks.

By dawn Ahaus is an occupied town. Roadblocks and train cancellations make it difficult for people to travel to, or move around in, Ahaus. Police are everywhere and significantly outnumber the protesters.

At 8am the level crossing on Schorlemerstrasse is blockaded in a protest which lasts for 6 hours. Police cordon off the protesters - but are then cordoned off themselves by masses of arriving people.

More than 1000 people dodge the police cordon and occupy the tracks and soon the numbers grow to at least 3000. People start to remove the gravel beneath the train tracks to make them unstable - and one particularly enterprising bunch of Autonome anarchist/anti-fascist types use a hydraulic jack to lift the tracks up! Police bring in 5 water cannon vehicles and a barricade breaker.

They bring in water cannons and baton charge people. At 9am 150 people are arrested and taken to Coesfeld police station.

At 12 noon in Ahaus the Bahnhofstrasse (main high street) near the train station is blockaded.

At 12.30pm news comes that the transport has passed Kassel, and is therefore expected in Ahaus by 3 or 4pm. Protests are taking place in most of the larger towns along the route.

At 2pm the SEK (special anti-terrorist police unit) march onto the Bahnhofstrasse after a police prisoner transport vehicle has its tyres slashed and number plates ripped off! They violently break up the blockade using CS gas and batons.

At around 2pm people gather in the town centre and though nothing has been organised, a large group decide to move towards the town's outskirts. They blockade the southern tracks at a level crossing near the Kurt-Schumacherring. It is soon confirmed that of all the possible routes for the CASTOR to take this is the definite one. More than 1000 people dodge the police cordon and occupy the tracks and soon the numbers grow to at least 3000. People start to remove the gravel beneath the train tracks to make them unstable - and one particularly enterprising bunch of Autonome anarchist/anti-fascist types use a hydraulic jack to lift the tracks up! Police bring in 5 water cannon vehicles and a barricade breaker.

At 2.30pm the chart-topping German band 'Toten Hosen' draw up to the blockade at Schorlemerstrasse to play a gig and have their van windows smashed by police.

In Legden, a few miles south of Ahaus, 4 people lock onto the tracks, and the CASTORs are briefly delayed. The tracks have to be replaced and repairs take until 5.30pm. Water cannons are used against the crowd.

HERE IT COMES!

All through the afternoon protests continue on the southern tracks at the Schumacherring. The infamous Berlin riot police slowly clear the blockade of the tracks, and reinforce their cordon using water cannons, baton charges, dogs and CS gas. Some people throw stones at the police slowing their attempts to clear the tracks.

Others climb trees next to the tracks, but police chainsaw the first tree down with the person in it and threaten to do the same to the others if they don't come down - they come down! More people lock onto the tracks. Military style police helicopters - most carrying extra reinforcements from areas where the train has already passed - are in the air the whole time and some are shot at with flares.

At 5.45pm the train heading the convoy arrives at the Schumacherring to test the tracks. The blockade is now cleared, but the tracks need considerable repair.

At 7.30pm the CASTOR finally reaches Ahaus and passes the Schumacherring crossing where there is now a stand-off between

place at the entrance to the storage site. During this a barricade breaker rolls over the foot of a woman protester who is severely injured.

At 8.27pm the CASTOR finally reaches the storage site just outside Ahaus. Later that night in Munster people demonstrate outside the police station where many of those arrested at Ahaus are being detained.

Saturday 21st March

Police roadblocks are set up on the roads into Munster and many vehicles on their way to the demonstration are stopped and searched.

Our vehicle is stopped and we are asked if we have any molotov cocktails (!) - they then search us, confiscate our flag poles and let us go. In Munster the planned demonstration goes ahead with around 12,000 people marching through the city - there is a significant 'black block' (anarchist/autonome masked faction) and some scuffles with the police.

Sunday 22nd March

In Ahaus around 4000 people join the 'Sonntagsspaziergang' - Sunday stroll - to the storage site.

Police rampage their way out of Ahaus, trashing the wooden 'X's' set up in gardens as a symbol of resistance and dumping rubbish by the camps.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The number of nuclear waste transports that occur here in the UK has increased since the opening of the THORP reprocessing plant at the Sellafield nuclear power station site in Cumbria. Some of these transports pass through massive population centres such as London; however direct action protests against them have been minimal - both in size and effect - and currently there is little prospect of mass action against them on the scale seen in Germany.

There are many reasons for the limitations of current anti-nuclear activism in the UK as compared to the situation in Germany. Aside from the very different political histories of the two countries (including their anti-nuclear movements) issues concerning nuclear power, waste and weapons are currently not high on the agenda of public concerns and debates in the UK - and this was recently demonstrated by the disinterest over the reprocessing of nuclear material from Georgia at Dounreay in Scotland.

Therefore we should not become obsessed by attempting to replicate a Gorleben or Ahaus style situation over here in the UK. Having said this we can still learn useful lessons from the German anti-nuclear protests. Some of these include....

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

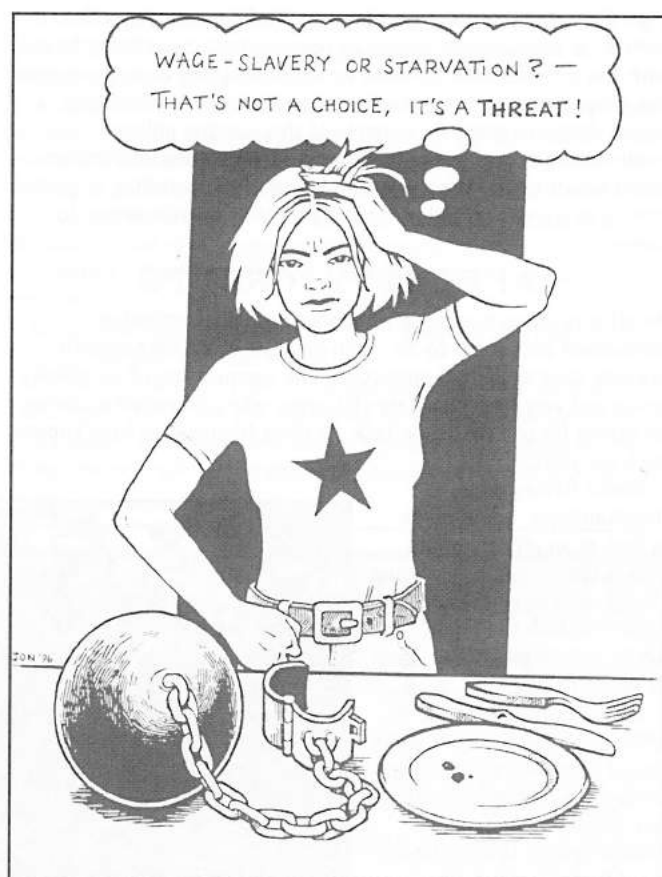
The British ecological direct action movement has often been successful in attracting local support for campaigns and actions. However, this has often take the form of moral or financial support rather than actual participation in direct action. In contrast it has been a major strength of the German anti-CASTOR protests that they were initiated by the affected local communities and supported by activists.

In Ahaus, symbolic resistance - such as the campaign's anti-CASTOR X poster - was everywhere but local people were also out on the streets resisting the nuclear transport and police invasion of their town. Most of the kids bunked off school to take part in the protests, and we even heard that an entire class and their teacher had been arrested during one of the sitdown blockades!

One British activist commented on the lack of "usual" divisions between "activists" and "locals", saying that it felt like the whole community was out in opposition. If our campaigns or movements are to grow beyond the counter-cultural ghetto they currently reside, they must be based upon local involvement - not support - and community resistance.

ORGANISATION/MOBILISATION

The strength of the German anti-nuclear protests have clearly been



the result of intense and sustained groundwork at a local, national and international level. Planning for the resistance at Ahaus began a year before the action with the participation of groups across Germany and a lot had been learned from previous protests at Gorleben.

The effectiveness of the mobilisation was demonstrated by the fact that although the CASTOR transport was moved five days earlier than expected - with barely 24 hours notice - over 5,000 people still managed to turn up on the Friday.

The participation of groups across Germany in preparing for the protests had a marked effect on the impact of the resistance. Rather than being a protest with one focal point - Ahaus - the organisation of resistance in towns along the route succeeded in making the CASTOR transport a national issue - a much greater threat to the state. Additionally direct action began from the moment the CASTORs left the plants, so the transport was held up for far longer than if all resources and energy had been concentrated in Ahaus.

STATE RESPONSE

The response of the German state to the anti-nuclear protests can be seen on a number of levels. The size of the police operation (the largest deployment since World War Two) and the amount of resources they are willing to put into containing the protests suggests that they take them fairly seriously. However, since the nuclear issue is quite high on the popular political agenda it seems that the authorities are keen to try and outwit as well as outfight the protests - and the media were complicit in helping with this.

Like any other protest the media played out a particular role in the portrayal, and hence perception of what was going on. It appears that there was quite an effort, in contrast to the hyping up of Gorleben, to downplay the impact of the resistance and we particularly noticed this in the British press reports. Another example of how our protests can never rely on the mainstream media for accurate representation or explanation of the issues involved. The politicisation of the issue may have also been a factor in the pronouncements by the authorities that they would use a "softly softly" approach to the protests.

In the event there was nothing very "soft" about the police tactics, as even random groups of people who were nothing to do with the protests were targeted by baton wielding cops. Alongside the sheer brutality, the police also used their power to simply harass demonstrators. An example of this was the police roadblocking access to the camps and spreading misinformation about which camps existed on the Friday night, resulting in people having to wander for miles in the dark trying to gain access to camps.

AFFINITY GROUPS

An affinity group is a group of people - usually numbering somewhere between 5 to 12 - who band together for a specific purpose such as mutual protection. The composition of an affinity group can vary from complete strangers, who join together during an action for one particular task, to close friends who have known each for years.

Whilst having some disadvantages, going on an action as an affinity group means that people can discuss things such as what they want to do and how they want to act in certain situations, such as arrest or a riot.

A good way of keeping affinity groups together is the use of flags, which in Germany proved invaluable for finding our group in a large and chaotic group. It also showed itself to be excellent for leading off groups if you need to move off in a hurry. As well as this it is a very inspirational sight to see loads of flags belonging to like-minded groups flying in the wind above a militant active crowd.

Police on the continent have a justified reputation for being much more violent than the UK police, and Germany is no exception to this. Because of this people have to look out for each other much more on actions and demonstrations. Affinity groups are much better for this and seem to work very effectively in Germany.

Examples of this that we saw in action included: everyone in the 'black block' march in Munster linking arms to stop police snatch squads, people holding banners along the side of demonstrations to stop filming and snatch squads, groups going out to actively harass police camera crews, the use of autonome medic teams (protesters who are trained in first aid) and good legal support to do follow-up work as well as advice on arrest.

THE IMPORTANT THING IS RESISTANCE

In the anti-nuclear protests in Germany there appears to be more tolerance of, and acceptance of the need for, varying types of action than the UK radical direct action scene. A slogan that summed this up was the chant "peaceful or militant - the important thing is resistance" which was shouted on the demonstration in Munster.

The origin plan at Ahaus was to have different direct action camps alongside the CASTOR route. Each camp was to be organised by a different region - similar to Gorleben last year - and different tactics were expected to be used by each one.

This was supposed to mean that there was much more room for different kinds of protests to happen and so less time would be wasted arguing about what form the protest should actually take - violent or non-violent for example - as is depressingly common on many demonstrations and actions in the UK. This plan was never to be though as all but two camps were evicted before the transport

arrived, and meant that everyone was jumbled together in a more ad-hoc way and on the actions people just got on with doing what they wanted.

What was very noticeable was the way that the different tactics used on the actions complemented one another. At the blockade of the train tracks some people were sitting down in the way, others dug up and undermined the tracks, whilst others threw rocks at the police.

If any one of these had been done in isolation it would have been far less effective than all of them happening alongside each other. The people throwing rocks forced the police to wear riot gear which slowed them down, as well as making them deploy squads for protection thereby tying up more resources. The sitdown on the tracks forced the police to clear up - taking large numbers and time - but also acted as a cover for others to dig up the tracks that significantly delayed the train whilst they were repaired.

This all may be a slightly over-positive view of the different

sections of the movement working together. It must be mentioned that some of the people felt mutually inhibited by other's actions and attitudes - non-violent protesters felt threatened by militancy, and people chucking rocks had to be worried about pacifists shouting at them and drawing police attention.

There definitely were tensions amongst this apparently united front. Even acknowledging these differences, activists in Britain should take stock that at least in Germany they seem to try and work together on

the same protests and actions without evangelical preaching about the "right way" to do things - something that we can rarely boast of.

WHAT NOW?

Whilst devoting time and energy to confronting these nuclear issues, we must never become fooled into treating them as one issue isolated from others. The struggle against nuclear power is merely one area of conflict in a web of resistance to the entirety of industrial capitalism.

This system increasingly dominates and endangers every aspect of our lives and any movement that fails to acknowledge and address its place in this web falls into the trap of partial - and hence false - resistance. To build on the strength of the anti-nuclear movement - both in Germany and in the UK - we must look for, find and make links with the other areas of conflict with the state and capital that have revolutionary potential.

To transcend this ecocidal world the system of hierarchical power relations that nuclear power relies on must be confronted and fought wherever we can do so effectively - and the transport of nuclear waste to the storage depot near Ahaus was one such place. We were inspired by, and have learnt much from, our short time there. We hope to carry the experience and inspiration forwards in our memories and also in our actions.

If you would like a talk done on the events at Ahaus, or for correspondence and discussion with the authors of this article contact: CASTORS, Cops and Chaos! c/o Box B, Public House Bookshop, 21 Little Preston Street, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 2HQ, UK.

CCC

FREAKY FACTS IN A FLASH

CASTOR stands for 'Cask for the Storage and Transport of Radioactive Materials'.

Each CASTOR is capable of holding 19 highly radioactive fuel rods from the core of a nuclear reactor.

This transport train was 570m in length and contained 6 CASTORs.

From Walheim to Ahaus is a distance of only 600km and the train journey should have taken 6/7 hours.

The transport left Walheim at 3am on Friday 20th March and arrived in Ahaus at 8.30pm that night - a delay of around ten hours.

About 30,000 police were involved in the protests of which 18,000 were in Ahaus. These police included normal, transport, riot police (ex-border guards) and members of a special anti-terrorist unit (the SEK).

One of those heading the police operation - Hubert Wimber - is a Green Party Councillor. Democracy: would you like a kick in the head or a punch in the stomach?

Around 8,000 people took part in the resistance at Ahaus - and between 600 and 1000 people were arrested. (Official police reports count 628 arrests and 775 identity checks).

Despite publicising a 'softly, softly' approach to the protests, the police used water cannons, CS gas and baton charges against protesters (and random gatherings of people) and had up to 16 helicopters - most carrying police reinforcements in the air at any one time.

Out of a school population of 12,000 in Ahaus on Friday 20th only 20 -30 kids attended school!

Police reported 33 injuries amongst protesters, the official Red Cross reported 63, and the Autonome first aid group estimated many more - including some severe injuries. Many people are now filing charges against the police for injuries sustained at Ahaus.

LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK FRIDAY 18th JUNE 1999

Laughing All the Way to the Bank - thousands dancing in the streets as businessmen try to get to their computer terminals... financial districts across the world filled not with profit and plunder but with the sounds and rhythms of party and pleasure...

A proposal has been made by activists from a diversity of campaigning and direct action groups to hold an international day of action aimed at the heart of the global economy: the financial and banking districts. The suggested date is Friday June 18th 1999.

This proposal is made in the spirit of strengthening our international networks and follows on from the success of co-ordinated global action during May 1998, when numerous actions and demonstrations took place ranging from 50,000 landless peasants on the streets of Brasilia to 30 simultaneous street parties across the globe to 200,000 people on the streets of Hyderabad in India.

Why the eruption of so much protest around the globe in May this year? Firstly, there was the meeting of the G8 in Birmingham, an annual gathering of the leaders of the 8 most industrialised countries, and, secondly, the second ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva.

So while a rich elite were meeting behind locked doors to tighten their grip on the planet and its people, hundreds of thousands said 'enough is enough', flooding the streets to demand an end to corporate rule and the mantra of the free market. Next year the G8 will meet in Koln, Germany, between June 18th-20th.

The proposal is to encourage as many groups as

possible to organise their own protests or actions, on the same day (June 18th), in the same geographical locations (financial/banking districts) around the world.

Actions could take place in relevant sites, eg. at transnational companies' offices, local banks etc.; they would be organised autonomously and networked by a diversity of local groups.

The day would coincide with a month-long tour of Europe by 500 Indian farmers, campaigning against the WTO and corporate rule.

In the UK it is hoped that a whole range of different movements will take part in protests and actions centred on the financial heart of London - everyone who recognises that the global capitalist system, based on the exploitation of people and the planet for the profit of a few is at the root of our social and ecological problems.

Ideas are flowing between different groups and enthusiasm is building. We'd like very much to hear what you think. Please email:

<rtsdiscussion@gn.apc.org>.

Your message will automatically go out to other interested groups around the world, in order to facilitate wider discussion about this proposal.

Or write to 'June 18th', PO BOX 9656, London, N4 4JY, UK.

NB: We are not calling for another street party, although various versions of the street party are likely to be a part of actions worldwide, this is merely a suggestion that protests and actions, organised autonomously, would have a more powerful effect if they occurred at the same time/simultaneously and in similar locations on our rapidly shrinking planet! In solidarity - the knowledge that we can make a difference if we act together.

LETTERS

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Hang on a bit - I can't believe that. Some 20 years ago bombs went off in two central Birmingham pubs; all the media immediately attributed it to the IRA, with no possible allowance for any other party.

However those who then knew Birmingham centre pubs knew that one was a student pub, the other an Irish pub, sufficiently committed to Irish struggles that it was used for meetings by Troops Out, by the Republican Clubs and - thinly disguised - by Sinn Fein. People in the know identified two of the victims as themselves members of the IRA, at least two others as active members of Troops Out.

It did not seem rational that the IRA would target their own people and so those of us in the West Midlands who supported British withdrawal from Northern Ireland tended to suspect that MI5's dirty tricks department might know more about it than did the IRA. When people were charged and later convicted we talked of a frame-up; but that meant the case got bogged down whether these particular people were the IRA bombers concerned, therefore begging the real question.

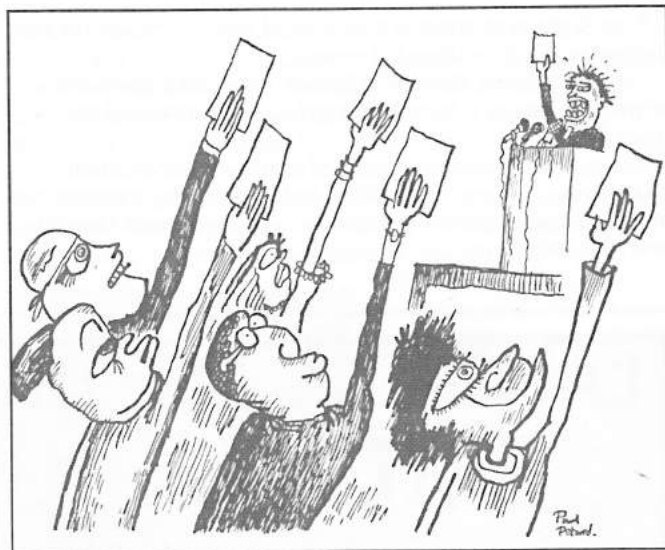
Of course the IRA is an army, a clandestine one at that, so like MI5 and all others such it is hierarchical, undemocratic, apt to manipulate ordinary people to fit its aims, and totally insensitive to the real aspirations of the community around it. But, while it is always possible for hostile propaganda to say "these are such crazies, they bomb for the sake of so doing, they don't know what they want", that doesn't mean it is likely that they are so crassly stupid as to target people broadly on its own side.

MILITARY MINDS

However the military mind is such that secrecy about its own side's doings, and especially its defeats, is deemed essential. Though rumour has it that the IRA engaged in an internal inquiry; found out that after their Coventry cell was arrested, an MI5 agent posed as an IRA member there and founded a new Coventry cell, and that he organised the bombing in Birmingham - at one and the same time discrediting the IRA, killing some of its members and semi-friends and alienating it from others; this has never been made public.

Now, 20 odd years later, at a time when the Cold War has ended, there appears to be peace dawning in Northern Ireland, and many MI5 agents are worried about the security of their jobs; at a time when the bulk of the IRA has been forced by sheer exhaustion to make a peace, which many of its members consider concedes too much; we have a similarly unlikely story. A dissident splinter is alleged to have bombed a town 70% of whose population are Catholic, a town where the largest single group on the local council is Sinn Fein. They allegedly ignored the military targets in the town and chose to put the bomb as far away from these as possible within the town centre.

Once again the story is justified by the claim that "they are crazies, they don't know what they are doing". It conveniently allows the demand that Gerry Adams should inform on the dissidents and hand over weapons; the demand is made in the full knowledge that if Adams so did either, he would be totally discredited and the cease-fire would be over for good.



ECOLOGY AND CLASS

Throughout the environmental and direct action movement it is widely recognised that the inevitable compromise, and so-called 'pragmatism', of the established insider pressure groups, such as Friends of the Earth, is in part due to their innate middle class characteristics.

Not only do they 'work' within a system which provides the opportunities for middle class careerists, but their composition and rhetoric is largely drawn from a bourgeois background, self-generated by access to education, the security of inherited wealth and non-participation in manual labour.

The assumed view put across by some individuals from these organisations includes condemning swathes of the population as ignorant - "unable to grasp the issues involved" - and not interested. The ranks of cars on council estates are taken as symptomatic of this.

The fact that the organisation of employment, restrictive and conditioned by wage labour, forces this reliance is never taken into account. It is the spectacular tyranny of consumer capitalist production and consumption which has created the artificiality and religiosity of accruelement of objects such as turbo-powered cars.

WORTH AND VALUE

For many of the population this translation of worth and value to this from creative and meaningful labour has been the most destructive feature of the current mode of production, whilst it has also proved to be one of the most effective tools of oppression. Furthermore the dual locks of ignorance and apathy are taken by these middle class reformers as reinforced by the victim-like involvement in manual labour which they are elevated from. People have had the real value of work taken from them, only to be criticised for trying to survive off the scraps.

For this they are criticised or ignored by the media pundits and so-called wise men and women, whose chattering at times becomes a babble. Stray words, apparently reflecting concern, may

occasionally rise to the surface, but sometimes this is a mask for contempt. When the mask slips and that contempt is seen clearly for what it is: an assertion of power and authority based upon the exploitation inherent in capitalist work relationships. For this reason environmentally concerned reformers must re-evaluate their judgements about who the people of this land are, and how they are treated. They must stop clinging to naive beliefs; for example equality before the law, not recognising that state power in the legal system still judges according to class.

These dominant attitudes decry the urgency for change and dismiss inspired connections, made through protest and struggle, which reveal the weaker points in the shackles of production and social control. These are waiting to be torn apart by people coming



together. Why is it then that too often slaves to wage labour are seen as willingly uninterested in change. This attitude is generated by class conditioning from childhood, itself an item in the programme of divide and rule.

CLASS CONDITIONING

Each person, individually and together, must disengage themselves from their personal class conditioning. Attitudes must be permanently questioned. The desire to recreate the world must blossom and not be poisoned with the judgements born from either a comfortable middle class upbringing or ghettoisation. Participation in the redefining of work must come from experience and a willingness to learn. The factories, fields and workshops are waiting to be reinvented - production for common needs.

This is the creative revolution which environmentalism, the direct action movement and d.i.y culture can be. Divide and rule overturned and turned inside out, the unrecognised language of class prejudice still prevalent will be cast away. A real revolution starting inside your heart with the feelings you have for others, branching out, strangling the inversions and double talk of the spectacle and capitalist production.

Fighting, working, loving...learning to live free...

UNCLE BULGARIA

A CALL FOR A REVOLUTION TO HUMANISE CHILDREN

Throughout Britain there are all sorts of anarchists, radicals, libertarians and revolutionaries. What they have in common is a desire to overthrow bourgeois conceptions of materialism, power and prejudice and to embrace freedom. No stone of the capitalist state is left unturned, except one!

Young people and those who care for them are at best an irritant who have to be reluctantly catered for and at worst get in the way of more important things. You've all heard or said the following:-

"I didn't choose to have children, they're your problem";

"We always meet in the pub, we always have done";

"You're not committed, find someone to look after your kid(s)".

I even once told someone I would baby-sit on condition they went to a meeting. (I thought I was very right on).

Now how come we can question and reject everything else the British State throws at us but we happily embrace their conviction that children should be sent away to be looked after by someone else until they're old enough to fight or vote.

I say the British State advisedly; all over Europe, South America, Africa and Asia children are born into a different culture, they are the centre of the community, welcome and included. In cafes, bars, parties, festivals and at family events children are catered for and enjoyed.

DISTASTE OF CHILDREN

We choose to condone and accept the British ruling class's distaste of children getting in the way of their fun and their definition of what is important. We choose to accept their prejudice that children are not truly human that they are not interesting or enjoyable.

We forget that but for the grace of god there we'd still be - disliked, ignored, impotent and abused, just because of our size and age. Try telling someone they can't come to a meeting because they've got an adult with them and the venue isn't suitable! What kind of reaction would you get?

So comrades, what's it to be? More excuses, more propping up the British state, more "I'd like to do something about it but it's too difficult" or "I'm too busy being a serious revolutionary to bother about children". Or are we going to cross the last revolutionary frontier and make sense of our politics. So we meet in halls, schools or flats. So we arrange conferences with child friendly areas in the evenings, so most political activity can involve children with a bit of thought and care. So what's so hard about that?

START 'EM YOUNG!

And in return we get more active comrades, we get politics with the dots joined up. Schools are more than just teacher's conditions, they are crude (and generally compulsory) areas of indoctrination.

The media is not just there to mislead and misinform adults, TV and comics are aimed at containing young minds, McDonalds and its ilk want children's hearts as well as your money, so they'll go on buying their crap all their lives.

But most of all we get to enjoy the company of some of the most interesting radical and open minded people we're ever likely to meet, people who hate injustice and want a decent world to live in. Welcome to the next generation of revolutionaries.

T

THE END BIT

And you thought that all we ever did was produce some boring theoretical magazine that was trying to assist in bringing revolutionaries together...?

Well - you're wrong. At heart we're still very much populists. We've produced quarter of a million stickers to shove two fingers up in the face of authority - to put the word out on the street where it belongs. That say what needs to be said.

Send some money (make cheques payable to Active Distribution) and we'll send you a bundle so that you can make sure that everyone knows that there is resistance to all the shit.

So get sticking when you've sent off to.....

BM 5538, London, WC1N 3XX

IF YOU LIKED THIS... THEN YOU MIGHT LIKE THESE

SchNews Excellent weekly news sheet from Brighton that has a whole range of articles on various things, plus upcoming events and regular features such as 'crap arrest of the week'. They have a book covering the last 50 issues of SchNews (and loads of other bits and pieces), available for £6. It is not accidental that SchNews is first on our list - both the book and the news sheet are highly recommended - subscribe and copy. Write to SchNews, c/o on-the-fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2DX.

Counter Information Quarterly bulletin of resistance and struggle produced by independent collective. Covers news from this country and around the world. Write to Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow, Scotland, G1 5QP.

Organise Magazine produced by Anarchist Communist Federation. Available from ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX.

Class War Paper produced by those who have carried on with the Class War Federation. Available from PO Box 467, London, E8 3QX.

Black Flag Longstanding anarchist magazine that has much improved in recent times, available from BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX.

Do or Die Excellent journal that covers environmental activism with a critical look at times - get it from PO Box 2971, Brighton, BN2 2TT

Direct Action Magazine available from Solidarity Federation (anarcho-syndicalists). Write to PO Box 1681, London, N8 7DN.

Subversion Occasional magazine from left communist/anarchist perspective. Available from Dept. 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester, M1 1HW.

Haringay Solidarity Group This longstanding locally-based anarchist/libertarian group now have produced a 'Directory of Non-Hierarchical Groups'. Contact them for more information/ideas about how to get something going and good ideas for local activity- write to PO Box 2474, London, N8 (or telephone 0181 374 5027).

Groundswell This national grouping co-ordinates action against Jobseekers Allowance, Project Work, the New Deal and much more - contact them at Claimants Action Group, c/o OUWCU, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford OX4 1HU (tel 01865 723750).

Between The Lines An irregular and unpredictable magazine that's worth reading - get it from Box 32, 136 Kingsland High Street, London, E8.

Revolutionary Socialist Network Linking various non-aligned lefties and other types who are prepared to honestly discuss what's going on (and don't want to build a party) - RSN, c/o 180 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG1 3HH.

Earth First! Action Update All the latest news from environmental struggles around the country - get it from Cornerstone Resource Centre, 16 Sholebroke Avenue, Leeds, LS7 3HB (and they can also put you in contact with local EF! groups).

Taking Liberties The magazine of the Anarchist Black Cross, has loads of information about prisoners and prisoners resistance. Available from Huddersfield ABC, PO Box 381, Huddersfield, HD1 3XX.

Aufheben Occasional theoretical magazine that can be thought provoking and challenging - contact them at Aufheben, c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 2GY.

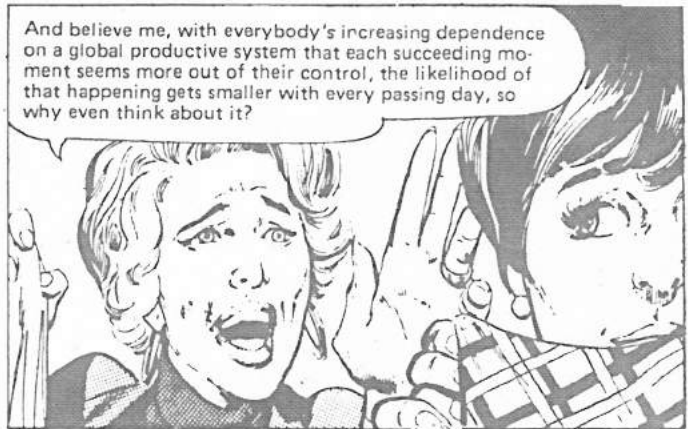
AK Distribution (PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, EH8 9YE) and **Active Distribution** (BM Active, London, WC1N 3XX) both have a wide range of books, etc - send off for a catalogue.

And don't forget - march on Buck House, show those parasitical royal scum what we think of them - Saturday 31st October, meet 2pm Hyde Park corner.

... AS WE JOIN MIDGE AND CINDY, CINDY HAS RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO CONSIDER JOINING THE WORKFORCE; READ ON ...



Darling, I'm really glad you decided to think about joining us— though it's not as if you could really choose not to any more, is it? Not without a lot of other people joining you, anyway.



And believe me, with everybody's increasing dependence on a global productive system that each succeeding moment seems more out of their control, the likelihood of that happening gets smaller with every passing day, so why even think about it?



Besides, you don't have to give up much—just your curiosity, your creativity, your capacity for critical thought. . . oh, and of course, mostly your time—8 hours a day of it, 5 days a week, 50 or so weeks a year for about 30 or 40 years of your life. . . plus, of course, everything you produce, and, ah, your right to decide what to produce and what it gets used for after you produce it. . .

But just look at what you can get! You can buy this, or anything else here you want, anything you see! Isn't that marvellous! And you can even buy things you can't see, like a life-style, or a sense of well-being, or the admiration of your neighbors and co-workers for your stereo, or your car, or your clothes, or your house, or anything!



And then there's all the good television programs, movies, records, concerts—so much great entertainment being produced for our consumption.



Admittedly you can't buy back your time, but what would you do with all that time anyway? I know I'd just get bored, or worse yet, *frightened*, if I had to wake up every morning and decide what I was going to do with my life that day. Besides, face it, this is the way life is, so what can you do about it?



You can say "no,"—darling.

Comrades, proletarians!

Why not get together with some friends and say NO!!! Say no to work — say no to the boss, say no to the union! Say no to the bill, say no to social workers. Say no to nationalism, labourism, religion. Say no to the telly, sport and sliced bread! You'll find that the more you say no to the thousand and one ways this society keeps you down, the more you'll discover your OWN desires! But remember — it's more fun to do it with a friend... and even better with lots of friends!!

**YOU'LL GET
A LOT OF SATISFACTION.**