

solidarity

FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

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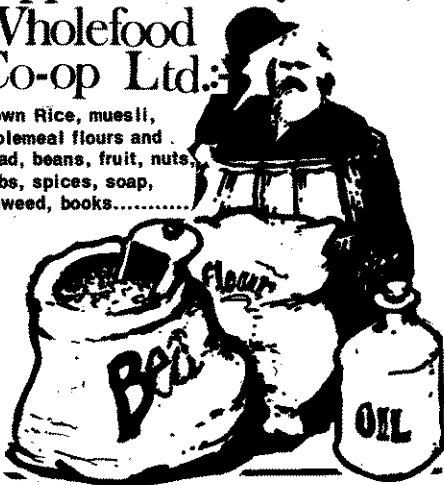
Culture

Sunny Bogness '79

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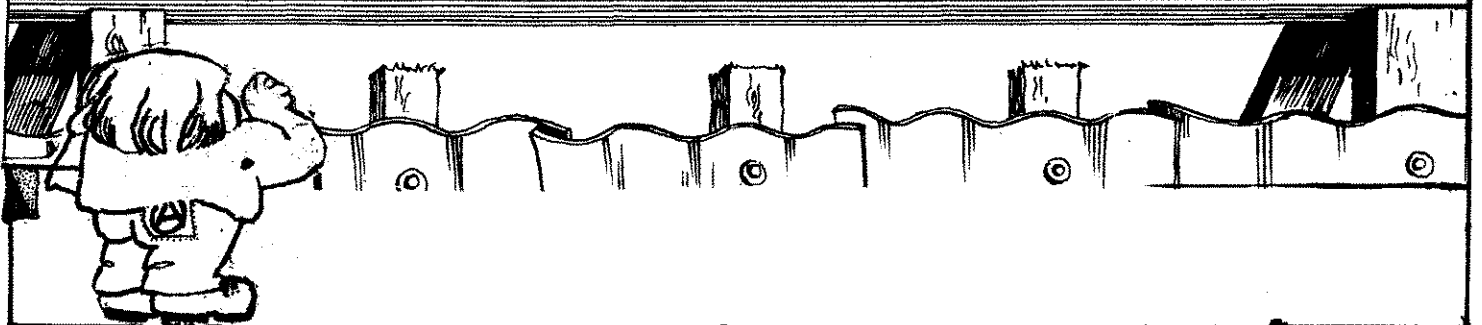


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ABOUT OURSELVES

SOLIDARITY FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION is the national magazine of SOLIDARITY. It is produced by geographically spaced out editorial groups: No 1 & 5 Aberdeen / Dundee No 2, 4 & 7 London No 3 Oxford No 6 Manchester / Leeds No 8 Midlands This issue was edited in Glasgow.

While the contents of the magazine generally reflect the politics of the group as a whole, articles signed by individuals do not necessarily represent the views of all the members.

SOLIDARITY is part of the new movement against authoritarian society. We see our aim as clarifying the meaning of socialism as it is articulated in self-managed struggles. We have developed a critique of bureaucratisation and the other key dynamics of modern society, and seek to assist each other in our activity where possible.

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EDITORIAL

SOLIDARITY AND THE SWAMP - UP TO OUR EYES AND SINKING

What differentiates Solidarity from the traditional left and the radical alternative groups is the insight that the consciousness of the working class becomes revolutionary only when it is no longer imposed from the outside.

Where the perspective of class is not totally absent - as in hollow statements about the universality of one form of oppression or another - we are treated to definitions of class and consciousness which owe more to theoretical speculation than to any observation of social events. Nowhere is there any conception of everyday resistance to capital being implicitly socialist and potentially revolutionary. Socialism, if we are to believe the alternative left's pronouncements, is now to be a matter of "the way people relate to each other". Political discussion has been reduced to a series of moralistic propositions about personal conduct.

The present insistence on small workshop groups intended to solicit the fullest possible participation does not derive from any mistaken notion of self-activity. It answers to the sense of exclusion suffered by radical intellectuals who find themselves deprived of any social anchorage and so attempt to construct an artificial identity by using their group as a crutch. Intropection is allied to a dogmatic assertion of the general validity of personal experience.

The end result is not merely a failure to make the crucial distinction between what is personal and what is social and public, but also an equally debilitating avoidance of argument.

Debate now means no more than a frenetic search for areas of agreement and an endorsement of attitudes which alternates between patronage and sycophancy. And this has resulted in accusations of oppressive behaviour and bad faith in place of any political response to attempts to challenge the ideas and assumptions underlying this egocentrism.

It comes as no surprise that debate has been replaced by a ritualised evocation of oppressions, real or imagined, since to challenge a person's ideas is now held to be an assault on the personality. A stultifying atmosphere has been created in which certain forms of expression and activity (notably formulas of support for and agreement with any opposition to "sex roles conditioning") comprise a new orthodoxy, and all ideas which pay lip-service to it are accepted as equally valid and equally inviolable.

It is necessary to challenge the dubious assumptions which support prevalent notions of personalised politics, since their practical result has been an abandonment of any revolutionary perspective rooted in the social realities of class domination. What we find instead is the cerebral prescription of "emancipated consciousness, itself merely an extension of alienation, although in a form to which the enlightened can give their assent.

Consciousness is not the monopoly of small leftist groups, voluntarist left communists and syndicalists or enlightened radical individuals, manufactured in isolation from the class struggle; it is both a component and a product of social (and not personal) relations which can be understood only in class terms. The whole spectrum of neurosis, anxiety, guilt and self-censorship are social manifestations resulting from sacrifice and submission in pursuit or defence of class (and sectional) interest, and from accommodating and privatising every frustrated impulse to revolt against bureaucratic society. And it is in these terms that the present avoidance of political debate must be seen.

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Nicaragua — a myth is born

The foreign policies of the "developed" Western countries aren't what they used to be! In Nicaragua, an ordinary common-or-garden Latin American dictator - General Anastasio Somoza - is about to lose/has just lost (delete as applicable) "his" country through an armed insurrection, whose most well-known protagonists are the Sandinista guerrilla movement. The Imperialist West, however, far from sending troops and finance to help the "good" General out, has been putting pressure on Somoza to resign and has, furthermore, been making approving noises regarding the activities of the Sandinistas. The situation has become extremely confusing. Somoza has been threatening to invade that paragon of revolutionary virtue, Costa Rica, for harbouring the Sandinistas. Venezuela has responded by threatening to retaliate against Nicaragua if Somoza does invade Costa Rica. Even our own Radio Four has featured interviews with Sandinistas direct from the streets of Managua stressing that the guerrillas are fighting the "just fight" and that, furthermore, they are "not Communists".

So, what's been going on? A senior U.S. State Department official, referring to neighbouring El Salvador (one of the few countries to defend Somoza because it could well go the same way) said that ".....a very small percentage of the population possesses a disproportionately large percentage of the land. A small circle of wealthy families controls the bulk of the country's resources. The quality of life for large numbers of persons is generally just tolerable. Landlessness and high unemployment with under-employment feed the discontent of the masses". He almost took the words right out of our mouths!

The real reason for the West's "enlightened" attitude towards Nicaragua and El Salvador has nothing to do with either President Carter's "wishy-washy liberalism" or a sudden change of heart by our oppressors after many years of revolutionary propaganda from people like us: it has to do

with the fact that as far as "the chaps" are concerned General Somoza has been a "cad and a bounder!". Here is what the Financial Times of Wednesday June 13th had to say about Nicaragua.

"Since 1932 the power.....has been concentrated not in the hands of Fourteen Families (the ruling elite in El Salvador - explanatory note) but in those of only one, the Somozas.....Either directly when they occupied the presidency, or indirectly through nominees when they did not, the Somozas have had Nicaragua in an iron grip for nearly five decades. Anastasio Somoza the elder was installed as head of the National Guard which was established by the U.S. army at the end of its occupation. He subsequently took control of one of the two long established political parties, the Liberals.....The last few years have seen increasing collaboration among the dynasty's opponents in Nicaragua. The Liberals' traditional opponents, the Conservatives, have stiffened their opposition to the Government as business has seen Somoza interests becoming overwhelmingly powerful and Somoza rule increasingly bad for non-Somoza companies. The professionals and church people have joined with Conservative businessmen to form the Group of Twelve which has been widely acclaimed and is the most popular political organisation in the country.... The Group of Twelve has in its turn moved closer to the FSLN, the Sandinista guerrilla movement which has been attacking the Somoza government and its troops since August last year and which launched a major offensive throughout the country this month."

So there you have it! The only way to get a foot in the door of the Nicaraguan economy is to get rid of Somoza. Not surprisingly, therefore, Somoza now faces the hostility not only of the USA (which put his family into power in the first place) but also of Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama and several European countries. Even Israel and Spain have promised to stop supplying arms to Somoza. N.S. (London)

ITALY repression

Italy has been ruled throughout the post-war era by a two-Party system of Government, consisting of the Christian Democrats in Government, who claim to represent the Catholic side of Italian culture, and an official opposition consisting of the Communist Party and sometimes the Socialist Party (when the latter aren't part of a coalition Government with the Christian Democrats) who claim to represent the socialist element in Italian culture.

In the late 60's the Communist Party's claim to be the "real" opposition came increasingly under fire as autonomous workers actions (not to be confused with the present-day "Workers Autonomy") in factories throughout the north of Italy, in particular, posed a great threat to the ruling regime. The Communists and their toe-rag union soon came to the rescue and after riding the tiger of wildcat strikes, and so on, for awhile managed to restore order and obtain harmless concessions from the employers. Out of this student-worker militancy of the late 60's a number of leninist and maoist groups experienced a certain amount of growth and other new ones were formed. The Red Brigades, incidentally, descend from this milieu.

Even the anarchists (the originators of the labour movement in Italy - the words socialism and anarchism were synonymous at one time) were forced to enter the latter half of the twentieth century after the premeditated state-organised massacre in Piazza Fontana, Milan, was blamed on the anarchist Valpreda and as a result of this witch-hunt another anarchist, the railway worker Giuseppe Pinelli, was murdered by the police inspector Calabresi and his cronies during interrogation and then defenestrated.

In 1969 the main organisers of the counter-offensive by the State were the Christian Democrats, and the man who has up till these last elections been the Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti, was then the Minister of Defence and the chances are fairly high that not only did he know what was going on but

that he also may have had a hand in the practical side of the formulation of the "opposed extremisms" theory. Now it is the Communist Party's turn to defend the regime.

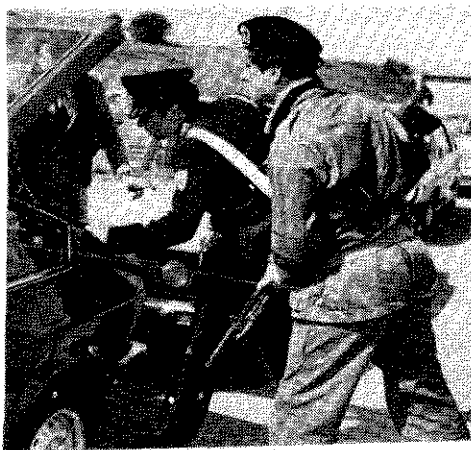
In 1977, at the height of the disturbances in Rome the Party received a great insult from "the movement" which they have clearly not forgotten. The PCI had sent their very own "super-prole". General Secretary of the Communist-run union, CGIL, Luciano Lama, to talk to the Metropolitan Indians, Autonomists, Anarchists and so on then occupying the University. To cries of "Lamas belong in Tibet" and other less complimentary slogans about the Party's policing role he was thrown out of the university grounds along with his bodyguards. By this time, of course, the Party was already lending "critical support" (their only criticism being that they did not hold any ministerial posts) to the Government led by "the only man in the Christian Democrat Party whom we can work with", Giulio Andreotti.

In April of this year a dramatic series of arrests took place involving many lecturers, left-wing journalists and others, among them several self-made "leaders" of the Autonomous Movement. The arrests were instigated by a magistrate, Pietro Calero, who is also a member of the Communist Party, and the charges centre around their supposedly being the ideological leadership of the Red Brigades. In fact "terrorist activities" and the inability of the police to apprehend its perpetrators has provided the basis over several years for the arrest of a great number of activists and militants engaged in a large variety of struggles in factories, in poor areas of cities, in the women's movement and so on. These arrests have tended to take the form of abductions and the victims' relatives and friends only find out where and why they have been kidnapped by the State after a great deal of bureaucratic hassle. On this occasion, however, the people arrested have been so well-known that a general sense of outrage has gripped the whole of the Italian and French left intelligentsia. These arrests amount, in fact, to a round-up of all left-wing dissidents against the PCI's "historic

compromise" strategy. Naturally, even Party members who have been over-critical of "the line" have received a lot of unpleasant attention from the police resulting in not only their incarceration but also the suspension of their Party membership until they have proven their innocence.

Amongst the absurd claims being made by the imaginative magistrate Calogero is that Toni Negri (a "leader" of the Workers Autonomy) attended a secret meeting in London a few years ago in which, together with representatives of the Autonomy Movement from many European countries including Britain, Germany, France and probably the rest of the world, the armed overthrow of European society was planned. The "secret" meeting referred to was, in actual fact, a meeting of editors of various journals and magazines dealing specifically with political theory, who had been attending a meeting of the Conference of Socialist Economists. So, be warned! Although Italy may be a comfortable distance away the collective imagination of the European Police Force stretches as far as these islands and in a witch-hunt questions of guilt or innocence are irrelevant!

N. S. (London).



← abstaining in style

The recent general election in Italy revealed that the third biggest Party in the country is not, as is claimed by the newspapers, the Socialist Party

(who only managed to obtain three and a quarter million votes) but the abstentionists and ballot-paper spoilers, who between them managed to get over seven million votes. As many of you already know voting in Italy is compulsory and, consequently, the apathetic thing to do during an election there is to go out and register your vote. It came as a shock, therefore, to the main political parties to find the morning after that as many as 4,049,440 Italians had boycotted the polling stations. During every election the anarchists, who probably number about 20,000 at most, always run a lively campaign for "revolutionary abstention". The Autonomists, who are probably larger in number, have also mostly campaigned for "abstention" on this occasion. These two political tendencies on their own cannot totally account for this extraordinarily large number of abstentions, and a decade of the "far left" demonstrating their ability to add significantly to the already large volume of leninoid rhetoric and very little else, there has been a general loss of confidence amongst Italians in the whole range of political processes being offered by their various salespersons.

The "spoilers" were particularly inventive this year. The Roman daily "La Repubblica" carried out a brief analysis of the spoiled votes at one of Rome's polling stations and came up with some amusing registered "votes". One ballot paper contained a love poem to all the Parties of which the last line read: "A long and tender kiss to you". Of course, this voter had put an X alongside all the left parties as well as alongside the Christian Democrats and also added the Red Brigades' star. Other "voters" were either insulting or obscene with "don't break my balls" (or similar) being a common entry. The latter type of "voters" were predominantly sexist in their comments and illustrations. However, economic points were also scored. One voter left a 500 lira note (about 30 new pence) attached to the ballot paper with a message which read "Eat this as well you thieves!". A similar point was made by another "voter" who left a slice of salami attached to the voting slip.

N.S. (London)

TORNESS AND THE ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT

The occupation in May of the nuclear power station construction site at Torness near Edinburgh highlighted major questions for the anti-nuclear movement in Britain. Several hundred people carried out direct action involving the occupation of the contractors machinery compound and damage to property, and machines, in defiance not only of the police but of the informal leadership of the Torness Alliance. The 'respectable' Alliance leadership joined with the police and the mass media in hysterical condemnations of 'wreckers'. A small group of Solidarity members who were involved in the occupation write here about what happened at Torness and what it means for future anti-nuclear activity.

WHAT HAPPENED AT TORNESS?

In the evening (Sat. 5th May) people met in their Regions to discuss strategy for the occupation, brought forward by popular demand, to Sunday morning and later on for a mass meeting. Without microphones or a suitable meeting place, chaos was the predictable result. Then, instead of the mass assembly, a meeting of 'spokespeople' elected from affinity groups met.

This meeting decided that the fence would be cut to gain access to the site only if it was impossible to occupy without damage (a real non-question since people had already removed large sections of fencing). There was also a reaffirmation of the general 'No damage to property' ruling. It is debateable whether this spokespeople's meeting actually represented the majority feeling of occupiers on this issue. And whether it did or not, there is no good reason why, on this issue, there should be only one policy, to which everyone has to adhere.

On site, the police and security guards protected the machinery compound and the office building at the main gate, and left the outer site unguarded. Useful work was done uprooting surveying poles, diverting a stream to cause flooding, and making some imaginative slogans for passers-by on the A1.

The 'organisers' called a mass



TORNESS



keeping it clean

meeting - at a point well away from the machinery compound. As this was about to start people ran up to report that demonstrators had broken into the machinery compound, but that the police were trying to stop them and had arrested two people. Those of us in Solidarity were among the many who wanted everyone to make immediately for the compound, to ensure its successful occupation. The reformist Alliance 'leaders' and some pacifists argued that there must be a lengthy discussion on the issue. Around two hundred people headed for the compound and left them to it.

At the machinery compound, a large section of the fence was down but the police were standing in a line in front of the machinery, ordering people to go no further but it soon became obvious that they were too few to prevent the demonstrators taking control of the compound.

Once inside the compound we felt the most productive activity was whatever did most to disrupt and hinder the building of the power station. Small groups and individuals, flitting in and out of the ranks of earth moving equipment, did as much damage to the machinery as they could. Some people however, in the middle of the machinery compound, held a meeting to argue the pros and cons of damaging the equipment which was all around them. Sundry 'leftists' got up and denounced damage to machinery, including a spokesperson for the Socialist Workers Party (the SWP appear to be confused over the issue: some SWP'ers have since denied that they oppose sabotage).

Nevertheless we felt the machinery compound occupation on the whole was a positive event and we were glad when we saw hundreds more demonstrators coming towards the compound. Re-inforcements,

not exactly. These 'comrades' lined up outside the compound and started chanting 'Out, out out!' Those of us inside largely ignored them.

Some time later, with it starting to rain and numbers dwindling, the compound occupiers met to discuss what to do next. Unfortunately most people there didn't realise that police re-inforcements had arrived to re-take the compound, and that the informal leadership of the Torness Alliance had made a deal with them, involving the police holding back while the Alliance 'leaders' adopted the 'new non-violent tactic' of acting as alternative police officers and trying to persuade us 'wreckers' to leave.

In retrospect, (knowing now what exactly was going on) we feel the best decision might have been to stay put in the compound. Certainly it would have been worth while if the occupiers had been together enough to cause damage on a larger scale, probably involving acting in larger groups and being prepared to counter police attempts to stop us. But at the time we, and most of the people there, didn't see much alternative to leaving united. Nevertheless we do feel the machinery compound occupation was a very positive action - especially if it is an encouragement to continuing direct action against the building of Torness.

The remaining two days of the occupation were largely anticlimax, with the machinery compound securely guarded by a sizeable contingent of police - though some people did good work in sacking an office cabin, thus boosting the total damage estimate to £20,000.

It was interesting that opposition to the compound occupation came not only from

open reformists in SERA, SCRAM, and Friends of the Earth, but also from pacifists who consider themselves 'non-violent revolutionaries' along 'Peace News' lines. Such people were noted trying to stop people damaging machinery and urging the occupiers to leave the compound. Peace News' coverage of the May event has been strongly slanted against the compound occupiers. A striking example of how pacifists' total commitment to 'non-violence' can lead them in a confrontation to side with the authorities and against those challenging private property and capitalist legality.

THE TORNESS ALLIANCE

Over the period of the Torness occupation a small group of people, including some members of Edinburgh SCRAM, and SERA, and a member of the USA Clamshell Alliance, acted as an 'informal leadership' by dominating spokespeople's meetings, doing liaison work with the police, and giving out the official press statements. These individuals all favoured total 'non-violence' and keeping on friendly terms with the police and capitalist media, and opposed damage to property.

People need to develop the ability to organise actions like Torness democratically and effectively, without either the development of such an elite, or a descent into chaos and confusion.

Some decisions - such as when to start the occupation - need to be collective majority decisions which the minority should abide by. These decisions should be made, after full discussion in smaller groups, by properly organised mass meetings that allow everyone a direct vote. But many decisions - such as whether or not to damage property - don't need to be collective decisions binding on everyone. For example, those who want to sabotage bulldozers and those who want to plant flowers can both just get on with it - they are not mutually exclusive activities.

Some members of leninist groups, such as the International Marxist Group and the Socialist Workers Party, are trying to import their notions of 'democratic centralism' into the anti-

nuclear movement. For example Socialist Challenge of 17th May states 'the most disturbing thing was that some of the anarchists unilaterally decided to sabotage equipment in the compound - not holding themselves accountable to either the Torness Alliance or the majority of the occupation. There is no means of overcoming divisions in the movement over tactics without democratic decision-making'.

Imposing a uniform strategy on all involved in the anti-nuclear movement can only stifle the creativity and development of the movement. Further if, in such a broad based campaign, the strategy was to be limited only to actions that the majority of people were themselves prepared to carry out, then revolutionaries would probably be faced with the choice of either totally abandoning direct action against property or having to completely cut ourselves off from the rest of the movement in order to carry out the activities we believe in.

HOW SHOULD WE FIGHT NUCLEAR POWER?

How its best to fight nuclear power depends very much on why the British government, and governments in general, want to develop nuclear power. The advocates of a respectable pressure group approach seem to think that the government is mistaken and misguided and have not realised the dangers of nuclear power. Therefore what is needed is to convince the government that they are wrong through argument, and through showing them that lots of people are against nuclear power.

But a much more convincing analysis is that the government want to develop nuclear power because to do so is in the interests of the state and the ruling class. They realise the hazards of nuclear power - but they care more about the benefits they will gain. These include: the securing of the massive amounts of energy needed in a centralised form by a wasteful profit-orientated industry; the supply from nuclear power stations of plutonium and tritium for nuclear weapons; increasing the importance of an energy source which is under the direct control of government, this being in the interests

of the increasingly important state capitalist section of the ruling class; the reduction of dependency on the militant miners, while the workforce in nuclear installations is tightly controlled and vetted; the profits to be made by powerful capitalist corporations from the huge amount of work needed to manufacture and build nuclear reactors; a decreased reliance on oil from the OPEC countries. In addition those who are fuelling the existing political trends to a more authoritarian society are willing to support the Nuclear Industry, irrespective of any supposed need for the energy it produces, because it appears to provide a 'technical' cover for the introduction of authoritarian measures.

Thus for the anti-nuclear movement to have an impact it must outweigh the advantages the system gains from nuclear power by the amount of trouble its development will cause - in terms of social disruption, political unpopularity, and increased financial costs due to disruption, sabotage, etc.. It is not a case of convincing the government by argument - it is a case of forcing them to re-consider. And in view of the way in which nuclear power serves fundamental capitalist interests the success of the anti-nuclear movement will be limited until it consciously challenges the existence of government, private and state property, and profit based industry. Ultimately energy sources will only be developed in a safe, ecological, human fashion when the resources involved have been taken into the direct control of the entire community.

In order to have any chance of forcing the government to change course the anti-nuclear movement must put a major stress on direct action. There are many forms this can take. mass occupations involving as much disruption of work and damage to building and machinery as possible and smaller 'guerilla' direct actions such as preventing particularly important machinery being brought onto the site:

If such actions became widespread and continual, it could considerably disrupt, and increase the costs of, the building of Torness.

The movement is a long way from this scale of action at present - Torness in May can only be regarded as a start.

For us, direct action is not only an effective tactic. Through taking direct action people directly fight against the system themselves. There are no 'mediators' such as MP's or trade union negotiators and people themselves collectively assert their own needs by their own actions.

Damaging capitalist property being used in anti-human way involves people demonstrating in practice that peoples needs should come before capitalist property rights. If generalised it involves rejecting the rights of the state, companies or individuals to own any of the means of production.

Direct action, democratically organised, for aims which are genuinely in working class peoples interests, is consistent with, and hopefully helps towards, the consciousness and organisation needed to overthrow all hierarchy and create a whole self-managed society.

A form of direct action with great immediate effect would be a refusal to co-operate by sections of workers involved in the manufacture, transport, or construction of the nuclear power station. Such actions have a precedent in the Australian 'Green Bans Movement'. There, building labourers refused to work on construction projects they considered to be against working class interests, such as pulling down houses to build offices. The high unemployment and uncertain prospects in both the British building industry and in the manufacture of power station machinery make for an absolutely massive task there. Possibly there would be more chance of headway in at least raising the idea of workers refusing to transport important machinery to the site.

SCRAM SUPPORTER: 'We're from SCRAM and we've just come to talk to you about what's happening with the occupation of the site at Torness.'

1ST WORKER: 'Oh, its a pity you're not occupying the site today, we thought we might get another holiday.'

2ND WORKER: 'With a bit of luck we might get another day off because of the damage to the machinery!'



THE REFORMISTS' ARGUMENT - OUR REPLIES

Reformists in the Torness Alliance argue that the anti-nuke movement must be respectable, to help obtain mass support. Numbers are important - but equally important is that masses of people are prepared to take direct action which will worry the authorities. The government will happily ignore mass opposition to nuclear power if those involved aren't prepared to do anything. Getting support on the basis that a totally legal pressure group campaign can succeed will only lead to mass disillusionment when this strategy fails.

The 'respectable' Alliance people are obsessed with obtaining favourable mass media coverage. It is disastrous for the anti-nukes movement to tailor its actions specifically to getting good media reports. The mass media are all controlled either by the state, private corporations, or extremely rich individuals. Once any movement takes direct action in opposition to the law, confronts the state, or threatens any of the basic values of the system, the mass media will hammer it. The only way the anti-nukes movement can guarantee continual sympathetic media coverage is by staying respectable - and ineffective.

We should take responsibility for our own actions and judge them by our own criteria. When we engage in activity, reality is what we ourselves do, and how we inter-act with others present; reality is not our actions transformed into another spectacle in the media. 'The revolution will not be televised: the revolution will be live.'

Many argue that the anti-Torness movement must maintain good relationships with the police. But the police are part of the state, the whole purpose of which is to protect the power and private property of the ruling class.

Developing 'friendly relations' with the police hierarchy is absurd. Of course they're going to be friendly, as long as the Alliance leadership ensure that the law is only broken in the most symbolic way, and do the police's job for them, by controlling demonstrators who step out of line.

There is much controversy over the question of 'non-violence'. As far as we know the only violent acts at Torness were the actions of the police in arresting two people. There was a considerable amount of damage to machinery and property. Private property is violence against people. It is impossible to do violence to property.

The question of violence arises only in relation to people. Here, we disagree with the absolute commitment to 'non-violence' in all circumstances held by the Torness Alliance. This attitude can lead to extreme submissiveness to authority, for example, the 'Torness Alliance Occupiers Handbook' recommends that if attacked you should not retaliate but roll up into a ball and think of something else!

The anti-nuke movement should be as non-violent as it is possible to be without the effectiveness of its actions being adversely affected. We should not avoid entering into actions merely because the police might try and stop us, thus raising the possibility of physical confrontation - such an attitude would quickly condemn us to total ineffectiveness.

FUTURE ACTION

RE-OCCUPYING AT TORNESS

Representatives of 10 anti-nuke groups met in London on June 17th to discuss a re-occupation of the Torness construction site. It was resolved to re-occupy for a week or so in September following the SCRAM day of action (set for September 15th). The re-occupation will aim to delay construction work. The June 17th meeting resolved to involve all the anti-nuclear groups wishing to participate in and publicise this occupation. More information from Reading Anti-Nuclear Group, c/o Students Union, Whiteknights, Reading.

In search of... THE RULING CLASS

There I was with about five days to go before the election having a quiet pint when I am introduced to an SWP member. This came as a moderate surprise because they have not been so thick on the ground recently. Inevitably the conversation swung to the election (with a 100% swing) and inevitably the conversation followed the familiar tram tracks:

HIM: Vote Labour without illusions, keep the Thatcherite plague at bay, there may not be much between them but that difference is important, meanwhile build the Party of the true elect.....

ME: Labour is the better capitalist party of the two, it can both massively rationalise industry and manage working class opposition through the trade unions, I've been through all this Tory invasion of the Body Snatchers before with the 1970 Heath election but found I quite enjoyed the 3 day week..

All good knockabout stuff with the usual snideries and sneers like him flashing his proletarian credentials in the shape of being a bus driver and me flashing mine as a self-employed building worker. (With me asking him first what he got his degree in...) It was all a bit depressing really.

One of the reasons I found it depressing, I have since decided, was the chaotic state of part of my political thinking. I can give you a critique of your Marxism, your Leninism, your Labour Party just like that. Road blocks on the only possible road to socialism through massive popular self-activity, I'd say, Nineteenth Century throwbacks who are slipping us a new ruling class while they attack capitalism and capitalists. Yeah, yeah, all good stuff but while I can

generalise well enough about bureaucracy to engage Trot bus drivers with BA's in boozers what is our society

now? Who are the people that run it? (Give me names)

What are their aims, their interests? (Quantify them)

How do they relate to one

another individually and

institutionally and how do

they relate to capitalists

and aristocrats? (Give me real life examples)

What I am trying to say, I suppose, is that libertarians like me have got no class analysis. We have reached a level of adequate description of the society we live in. We know from the institutions we work in and rely on that this society is best explained by the contradictions of hierarchy not those of the ruthless drive to maximise profits. We can see how Labour Left nationalisation freaks and Leninist Party World Domination freaks have helped demobilise opposition to this administrative hierarchy. We can see the ever-increasing number of administrative strata between a decision and its execution. We can see the muffled mind-tearing irrationality (for us) of their super rational planning. We know that when we organise things for ourselves they can see nothing but the symptoms of a diabolical chaos.

But we aren't really certain of who 'We' and 'They' are. We can point to a Len Murray or a Lord Robens or a Richard Marsh and say 'There's one!' We can be acutely aware of order giver/order taker relationships up the hierarchy in, for example, education. (A school kid directed by a school teacher directed by a headmaster directed by a local authority directed by a Whitehall department

directed by.....) We can be aware of a social dynamic where people behave themselves in order to supervise more and more people and their reward consists of a smaller number of supervisors above, higher status and wages. But we can't say where someone changes from being more than ruling to more ruling than ruled. We can describe but not locate a ruling class. (If 'class' is the right word - but we'll come to that later.)

And this is where Marxism nourishes some revolutionary prats that Solidarity cannot reach. Marxism can locate the centre of decision making in our society as the directors and owners of banks and the largest private industrial companies. Personally I find this wildly unsatisfactory as I'm sure many readers will. We can subject such a concept to our ever-ready critique. But one has to admit that it makes sense of society even if it gets it wrong. By characterising our society as bureaucratic capitalist, a Marxist can stretch the concepts of proletariat (workers by hand and brain) and capitalist class (owners and controllers of capital and their allies) to the limit and characterise all bureaucracy as the railway lines down which the capitalists' decisions are passed. And in fact, it seems to me that the Trots (or at least the sharper ones) are in the process of recuperating a lot of what Solidarity has been saying in this way.

In fact it would seem clear that the rationale of the social democrat local and national state bureaucrats has been anti-capitalist. What they object to is the waste of capitalism, its inefficiency. They see their role as tidying up through planning the casual brutalities and waste caused by capitalism. They are the left-wing, the socially responsible section of

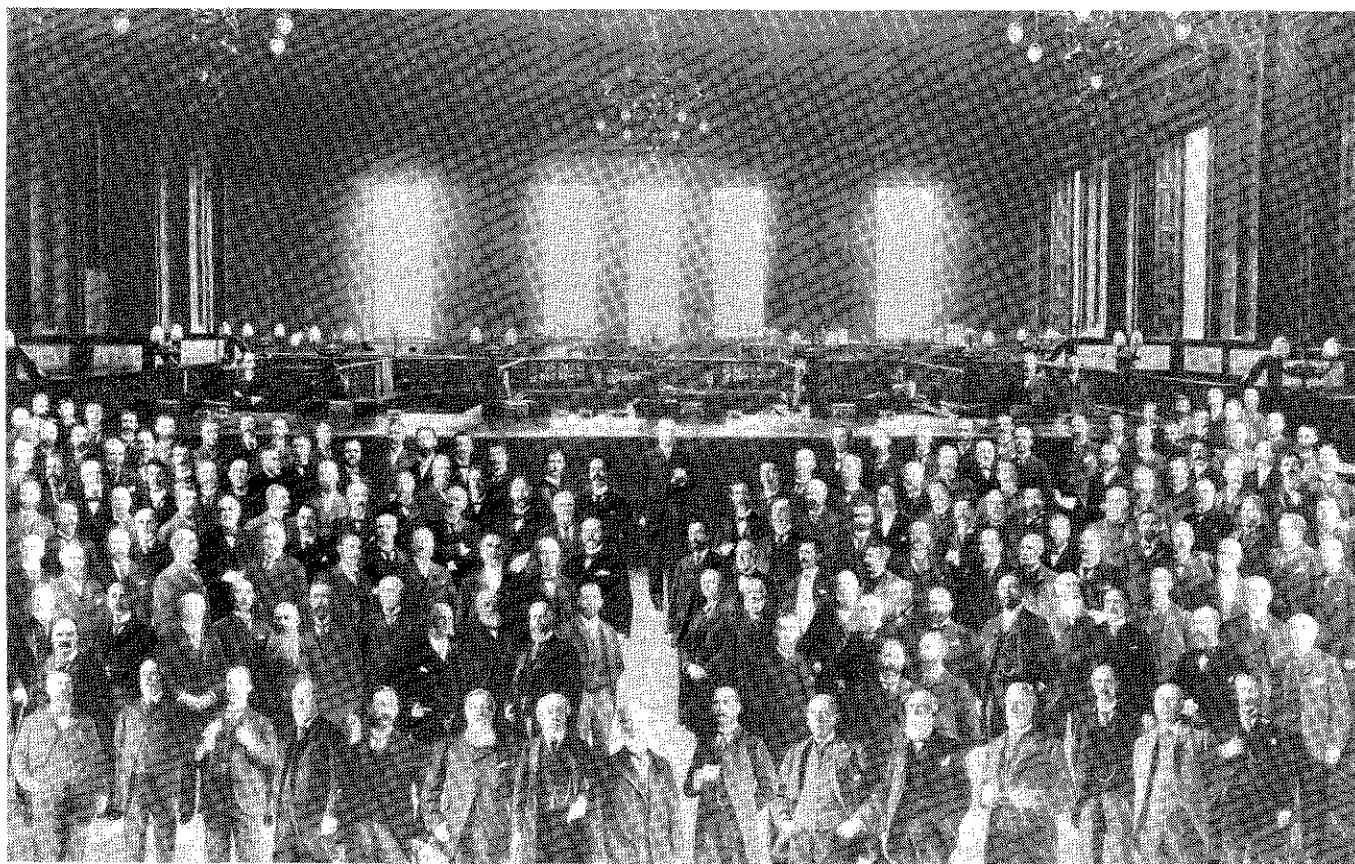
a managerial elite which has grown up quite autonomously in the 'private' sector as capitalist enterprise has led to and in turn to corporation. But it goes without saying that this socially responsible managerialism would do anything for us except get off our backs.

We're in something like the position of socialists in the Nineteenth Century who were trying to locate the centre of power in the capitalist class when the conventional

If we are saying that we have a bureaucratic society and not a bureaucratic capitalist society then we have to locate power in a different way. In an autocratic system an autocrat rules. In a bureaucratic system everyone tends to get called a bureaucrat. This is clearly not very helpful and I will use the word to describe a ruler in a bureaucracy. (By definition there are more than a slack handful of them, Stalin although he ruled through a bureaucracy was not a bureaucrat but a

others: they want to control but not to destroy them. Those in whom even this kind of relatedness is lacking, who are still more narcissistic and more hostile are the necrophiles. Their aim is to transform all that is alive into dead matter; they want to destroy everything and everybody, often even themselves; their enemy is life itself.....

'The world of life has become a world of 'no life'; persons have become 'non-persons' a world of death.



oppositional wisdom insisted on finding it in the aristocracy. There were all those fabulously rich landlords with annual rent rolls of millions yet year by year they were being absorbed, married into, economically overtaken and politically undermined. Their 'natural ruler' image persisted long after their actual power was finished. In our period of history everyone has been thinking of the Capitalist Bogeyman with his top hat, frock coat and fat cigar as the natural exploiter. Its very difficult to get across that an altogether paler figure has taken over.

dictator.) So where is the bureaucrat in a bureaucracy? Where is the pale ghost in the machine? Where are the chief necrophilous technique freaks?

While the 'normal' anal-hoarding character is lacking in aliveness, he is not necrophilous. Freud and his co-workers went a step further; they discovered that sadism was often a by-product of the anal character. This is not always the case but it occurs in those people who are more hostile and more narcissistic than the average hoarding character. But even the sadists are still with

Death is no longer symbolically expressed by unpleasant-smelling faeces or corpses. Its symbols are now clean, shining machines; men are not attracted to smelly toilets, but to structures of aluminium and glass.....We must conclude that the lifeless world of total technicalisation is only another form of the world of death and decay.' Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, pp 463-467.

It seems odd to have to ask the question. There are plenty of academic treatises on bureaucracy yet they don't seem to

treat it as a class system or, putting it another way, as a system that serves the interests of those who dominate it at the expense of others. (The use of the word 'class' is perhaps wrong. A feudal system could be described as a caste system, a capitalist system as a class system while the present system would have to be called something like a grade system. The measure of technical and administrative ability and adaption to hierarchy is the precondition of contemporary success rather than profit making ability or family.) There is one point, however, that should be raised before we attempt an answer: perhaps the whole structure is as alienated at one point as it is at any other. That being at the top of the tree gives one a bigger wage packet and fewer bosses but that the whole forest of trees is completely out of anyone's control. So you might as well keep on consuming and hoping that you get as many of your three score and ten as possible before the big whimper. I don't believe it. I'm not going to try and argue against it except to comment that it sounds like a secular version of Christianity: this life is a vale of tears but there's no reward afterwards for enduring it. But the hidden point in such pessimism is that there's nothing you can do about the here and now and if there is an elite in control that would be a very handy belief for the masses to have.

No, the ruling groups in our society are the ones that take the decisions which fundamentally control all our lives. It has been estimated that 2000 people effectively run the Civil Service. When the Department of Industry wanted to push the use of microprocessors it decided to run seminars where 'the opportunities and options will be explained to 50,000 key decision-makers in industry' (Observer sometime in March 1978). There are matching grades in state bureaucracy and industrial bureaucracy - and the two are becoming increasingly entwined. The personnel shift from one sphere to another. Take Richard Marsh, once a Trade Union official, then a Cabinet Minister, then a British Rail chief, then a Manager of a private firm. Taken together with key figures in finance, academia,

unions and the law we are talking of perhaps 60,000 people who act as a generator of decisions. We can consider the layers below that as broad-spectrum technicians with responsibility for formalising general decisions and semi-skilled technicians who take rote decisions out of a book. We can see how this structure collides with the people at the sharp end, engaged in production, health care, education and so on. But when we've said all that, what have we said? We cannot locate our elite because we don't know the structure of it, as I said before.

Frankly, there is a great deal of work for us to do. The nearest thing to the kind of stuff I think we need is Anthony Sampson's Anatomy of Britain. But as it was published in 1962 it is out of date. Further it is written in a spirit of Wilsonian white-heat-of-the-technological-revolution which is not what we need at all. And it doesn't really amount to an anatomy of Britain at all, rather it is an anatomy of 'who runs it and how, how they got there and how they are changing.....this is a book about the managers.....' (as the blurb puts it). The book's virtues are that it considers all the managers. It is effectively a detailed description of the negotiating

elites who between them generate the decisions that affect our lives. It does open the way towards an assessment of the concrete trends in society and a quite specific laying of responsibility for decisions at the doors of individuals or groups.

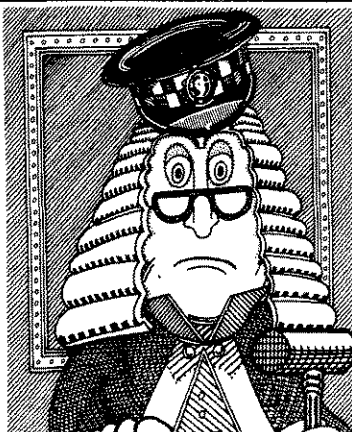
(In fact such an analysis was carried out by the group which was the precursor to the Red Brigades in Italy. Having found out the people who were responsible for decisions they did not like they decided to go out and shoot them. This strikes me as a bit one dimensional.)

All this brings me back to my discussion with the SWP cadre in the pub. There is a difference between the Thatcher government and its predecessor but the important thing is to be able to relate these differences to the managerial sponge which will mop them up. We know the managerial sponge will mop them up, we have the faith. And our faith has served us better than the faith of believers in the second coming: we have said things will come to pass and they have! Our faith thereby has become stronger even if our knowledge has not. For we do not know what function all this market forces ideology has in a planned economy - and it will stay planned, make no mistake. (Keep the faith!)



Does it represent the wriggings and discomforts of Tory small business men in a world that makes life difficult? Is it a smoke-screen behind which corporatism can advance, claiming the while that its success is due to market forces? Or is it some kind of Tory maoism, a mindless repetition of slogans which make the world seem a simpler place? Where were these ideas generated?

Perhaps all that stuff is only suited to bar-room banter. But there are more important matters rather closer to our concerns. There are things we need to know before we can do what a decent political group should do, namely help to change the world. Take some mundane questions like say, worker co-ops, the National Enterprise Board, Lucas Aerospace. The National Enterprise Board appears to have been set up as a committee butchered version of a left Social Democrat proposal for a state (ie objectively socialist, ho ho) interventionist force in industry or as an entrepreneur in its own right. Note the role of such people as Stuart Holland and Wedgewood Benn in all this. Note also the support that is very widespread amongst sections of the working class for Benn. This in part rests on a realisation that as things stand the chance of workforces of places like Lucas Aerospace being able to take over 'management prerogatives' are very small. A sales pitch that seems rapidly to be gaining ground is that a Bennite Labour government through some kind of organisation like the National Enterprise Board could force through an increasingly 'managerialised' role for groups like Shop Stewards Combines in firms. Note the 'workers control' rhetoric surrounding this sales pitch and pointed to in the workers' co-ops at Meriden and Kirby where everybody buckled down and worked like maniacs, or so we are told. If this is tied up as a package of state economic intervention, state-backed 'workers' control' and managerialisation of the Shop Stewards movement it becomes the basis for attempted Bennite putsch in the Labour Party. A Labour Party which, incidentally an awful lot of erstwhile revolutionaries seem to be joining - and I'm not talking about deep entrists either.



Now in terms of contemporary society this provides a solution to two problems one new and one endemic. The first is the microprocessor 'revolution' and the second is rank and file industrial militancy. The problems from the more macho managerial point of view could be solved by getting rid of the work force altogether. This would - and is - leading to great difficulties because of work force resistance of which Lucas Aerospace initiatives are but one variety. The super-liberal managerial response however would be to try and integrate oppositional forces into the managerial hierarchies, into the technosphere, to use Galbraith's term. Here their technical innovations with preservation of jobs in mind could be integrated with the other concerns of the corporation and the bloody warfare resulting from the treatment of skilled and intelligent people as pure order takers could be avoided. And the ideologue of such a process is Benn.

Some things need to be said about this. First, it represents a hierarchical recuperation of a self managed process. Secondly, it strengthens rather than weakens hierarchy although it implies considerable changes of detail within existing hierarchy. Thirdly it is a solution which would be rather more pleasant to live with than an unbridled corporate barbarism. Fourthly it is suited to present day realities in that it recognises the overwhelmingly defensive stance of the working class, often capable and effective but nevertheless defensive. Fifthly, libertarians have barely perceived what's going on and if they have they have not published studies, critiques or polemics nor have they come up with anything better.

I am in no way trying to claim that it is someone else's fault and not mine - it is our fault. We have not developed the detailed concrete understanding of our society to the point where we can make realistic (or better still be-realistic-demand-the-impossible) suggestions suitable for making a self managed society. We can criticise but we can't counterpose. The immediate reasons for this I think are these. Firstly, we've been engaged in a long drawn out process of Bolshevik-bashing which might have cleared our heads but it hasn't filled them. Secondly personal politics have absorbed so much of our time. But what started out as a realisation of how much of the world was in us and you couldn't change out without the other has largely ceased being a dialectical process and has become moralising and one dimensional: its worst manifestation being anti-sexism. Thirdly people out of impatience, initiative to escape the daily grind or find meaningful work have set up a network of alternative projects from printing presses and papers to farms and whole food stores. I have been involved in such projects myself and I know how it makes the rest of the world seem an awful long way away.

But we've got to get stuck in and analyse. Who will do it if we don't? This is not elitism its just that someone's got to go over the barricade first even if no-one remembers later who it was. Or, to mix metaphors, once someone gets the door open everyone can get through. And we've got to spread it about, to intervene, discuss and have a good time with it. I particularly like the words of Galbraith: '..... we must also still have diligence. In recent times the politically emancipated, or those who so regard themselves, have tended to identify difficult matters with the obscurantism of the Establishment. Study is a tedious disguise for wickedness, a way of diverting people from the simple disconcerting truth. This does not arouse my sympathy.....It is one thing to liberate man from physical toil. To exempt him from mental effort is premature'. (J. K. Galbraith, Economics and the Common Purpose, p.12)

J.Q. (Leeds)

Dear Solidarity,

Feminism or Moral Indignation?
- A Straw doll in Solidarity.
(Solidarity No.8)

This article reads like a string of hard, sharp observations, some of which the Womens Movement would do well to take note, but ultimately the argument is hollow. The writer clutches at straws, sets up a straw doll in order to knock it down.

The use of the image 'states breasts' is significant. Our culture is - patriarchal. Why make the state female? Such is the tone of the phrase (lecturing to put it mildly) G.W.'s contempt of women seeps out of it.

The writer is confused as to what position class should have in relation to sex analyses. The article moves from an attacking stance, 'class not sex discrimination', through the milder comparative statement, 'Much more pertinent.....class dominated world' (fourth paragraph), to fizzle out in the 'complicated interweave of class differences amongst the sexes'. It is this shifting of position which makes the article apparently difficult to confront.

To take the first quotation; (which, incidentally, women may discover as the writer, from his lofty position has already done), 'the violence perpetrated by its institutions is usually based on class not sex discrimination'. The campaigns 'Reclaim the Night' and 'End Violence Against Women' are not primarily directed against institutions (although most women would agree that the state's institutions do create them). The campaigns aim at presenting people with the suggestion that matters such as rape and violence in the home are political. They point out women's lack of fundamental freedoms which are the very first step women have to make to become those 'autonomous self-managed individuals' which G.W. advocates.

Why the preoccupation with either class or sex discrimination? Oppression seems to me more like a synthesis of the two, as suggested near the end of the article. The violence is all part of the hierarchical competitive, possessive model which is our society. Making this false distinction seems to be falling into a neat cerebral trap which only

LETTERS

confuses and creates further polarisation. Divide and rule?

At no point does G.W. explain what he means by class or what relevance it has to "women's issues". This would be a more valuable contribution than a lot of snide jibing and making out a league table of oppression and its analyses. Which comes first class or sex? (This was nicely enhanced by the picture at the end - I wish you were black....!)

We are all increasingly turned into objects and cheapened. The attitude of treating others and ourselves as possessions must be changed.

Further polarisation of the sexes - by a section of the 'Womens Movement' or Solidarity does not help awareness of what conditioning does to divide us. It is very important for women and men to find their own strength, if necessary, independently. Men often unwittingly and unwillingly G.W. frequently mentions puritanism and guilt in the article, in connection with the women's movement and men against sexism groups. It does not need a great stretch of the imagination to see what this reveals about the writer's own feelings. The power of guilt is still underestimated in our culture. Certainly the Womens Movement is not free from perpetrating its own guilt trips (relating to men for instance), certainly there is a puritanism in it (bred from rebellion and despair at the way women are seen and treated in our society). That is not to justify the Womens Movement. Like class, it is something we should examine more but both are concerns which women are aware of.

Liz H.
(Leeds)

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO
SETTLE THIS ARGUMENT!



Dear Solidarity,

Its very tempting to cite the article ('Feminism or Moral Indignation') as evidence for the connection between blindness and masturbation. At the least, GW is short-sighted.

This sustained wank is not a "critique" of feminism, it is the fantasy of a fearful misogynist that the feminist movement struggles only to reverse the hierarchy of power in patriarchal society. A fantasy which leads to such ridiculous ideas as female prison warders assigned to deal with the defenceless pricks sent to them by female magistrates. Fantasies about knife-brandishing prick-haters might get you off, GW, but they certainly aren't relished by feminists who view a revolution as being something rather more than a castration of rapists; who view Maggie Thatcher's position as something rather less than a victory for feminism.

How dare you assume, GW, that reformist notions of "equality of opportunity", etc. are what the feminist movement is about. You obviously are hugely ignorant about feminism, if you view all feminists, as campaigners for capitalist reform.

The excursion into sexual politics soon turns out to be a mystery tour...equating feminist attacks on pornography with moral crusades shows a gross attempt to deny that the degradation of women's bodies is part of the essential ideology of patriarchal society. The image of women as available bodies perpetuates and reproduces alienated sexuality; this image is, of course, necessary if men are to define and control women.

Are you seriously suggesting that the flaccid male nude of female-oriented porn is the image of men maintained by patriarchal society? Is men's domination over women threatened by the objectification of male bodies that the male stripper represents? Indications of repressed, alienated sexuality they may be, but the female "mental rapists" do not perpetrate the actual atrocities of men, and to suggest that "mental rape" is flourishing within the dank realms of vicarious sexual experience is a deliberate mystification.

I suppose lesbianism is an area of "vicarious sexual experience", too. Well, up yours, GW. If you are labouring under the delusion that in a self-managed society, sexual freedom, sexual autonomy means heterosexuality then up yours again.

The forked tongue of the male-dominated "libertarian" left, is admirably exemplified by this article.

Congratulations, Solidarity. This article is a triumphant cock-crow for patriarchy.

Yours separately,
Jane Papachlimitzos.
(Birmingham)

Re Feminism or moral indignation you can all go fuck yourselves. I call myself an anarchist but you are all contemptible. I want nothing to do with such a low, bunch of sexist scum who print such blatant misogynist articles, with hatred for women strutting from every sentence. We've heard enough of this crap about your seminal fluid and its need for release. Go wank yourselves to death, I hope it falls off. I'm sure no self-respecting woman would let GW (Great Wanker) or the rest of you liberal freespeechers near her. 'Panty wetting at Tom Jones'. All these disgusting hot, wet cunts writhing around. Yuk. What a mess. Just as well, you feel that way since you'll never get a chance to get near it. No wonder we're sex starved, who wants incompetent, fumbling, impotent cunt haters. All of a sudden I feel an enormous solidarity with Mary Whitehouse. Right on, Mary! Let's deprive these little men of their fascinated thrill of attracted disgust at our little flower. They deserve nothing.

Anon
(Genuine)



Dear Solidarity,

The article in your last issue concerning the use of "therapy groups" to control American POW's in Korea certainly made fascinating reading. However, I think that Dave Lamb's attempt to equate radical experiments in group participation with such subtle forms of repression is highly questionable.

Libertarians usually distinguish between forms of organisation created by people to meet their own needs, and those imposed by hierarchies and repressive social attitudes for example, we don't confuse workplace self-management with capitalist proposals for industrial democracy. So rather than cite all the authoritarian uses of "therapy" (from R.D.Laing to Japanese factories) I would suggest that a radical critique of support groups should be based on our experience of such groups themselves.

To begin with, as Maurice Brinton pointed out in his article on Jonestown, most of us have some kind of need for company, affection and approval, which is often deeply frustrated within the confines of modern society, making us a good deal less pleasant in the process. The search for new ways of living together, possibly in closer and more compassionate groups that seek to build understanding and self-confidence, is therefore an essential part of the social revolution.

The failure of most of the groups I have been involved with seems to have been bound up with two factors. Firstly, their artificial nature; it's very easy to imagine you have a close relationship with someone in a weekly encounter group, only to be brutally disillusioned when the relationship is tested in "real life". Secondly, the groups quite naturally reflect the social context in which they are formed. The last few years has seen a marked return to authoritarian values, especially in radical circles. Consequently, support groups do attract people who see therapy as an end in itself, or as a means of imposing an ideology through group discipline, as well as people who genuinely want to create a vehicle for liberation.

I have found though that these negative tendencies are

most pronounced in the every day activities of the radical social scene - the "swamp" of vague leftists and feminists who imagine themselves non-aligned, but whose current ideas normally bear a striking resemblance to the latest policies of the left groups. It is impossible to remain within this milieu and face the heavy social disapproval engendered by criticising state socialism or orthodox feminism.

As an example of this, I was once involved with a student paper that was attacked in print by the local Feminern. A number of libertarian feminists privately expressed the opinion that the article was a pack of lies - but not one would agree to say so in public, for fear of their sisters' disapproval, and because they had swallowed the line that for women to debate issues publically was to expose weakness and division to the male world.

So, in a nutshell, support groups can be used equally well for self-programming or brainwashing - the real point is to break completely with the repressive social life of the left, and to begin to build a community of our own.

Man-Thing.

(Oxford)



Dear Solidarity,

Were I ever to admit to anything, then I should certainly admit to being in almost complete agreement with the critique of group participation, so comprehensively mounted in recent issues of your magazine. I was particularly struck by Dave Lamb's article in your last issue, and eagerly look forward to some future article developing the positive side of his argument - viz. a theory of proletarian individualism. One problem, however, still troubles me. How can such an enlightened magazine be called 'Solidarity for Social Revolution'?

Yours fraternally,
Max Stirner (no relation)
London.

Dear Comrade,

In the article We Have Ways (Solidarity, No. 8) you discuss the campaign of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation to secure the rehabilitation of Nikolai Bukharin, the most prominent victim of the show trials in Moscow.

With many of the things you say in your article we are bound to agree. Although you do not acknowledge it, it is clear that you have read the pamphlet which I published on this case: this makes all the more surprising your statement that our motives may be called "into very severe question".

Far from whitewashing Communist leaders like Togliatti, my pamphlet is the source of much of the information which your author cites about Togliatti's role as an apologist for the Moscow trials.

I am surprised that at no point do you mention the reason for our campaign: which is that we received an appeal from Bukharin's son, Larin, on behalf of his mother, Larina, who is still living.

This Foundation has conducted numerous campaigns on behalf of political prisoners and critics of the official orthodoxies of the USSR and many East European countries. We shall continue this work, which will no doubt lead many official apologists to question our motives. It is a pity that Solidarity withholds support for our campaign, when it is obvious from the tone of your article that you are in far greater agreement with us than with those who still refuse to permit the re-examination of the Bukharin and other trials.

Yours fraternally,
Ken Coates
(The Bertrand Russell
Peace Foundation Ltd.)

Hello,

I recently received, quite by accident, Solidarity for Social Revolution No. 6, Dec/Jan 1979 issue. I have seen your pamphlets in the past but never the magazine. I must say I quite enjoyed reading it, especially the bit entitled "Anti-Sexism... the affirmation of alienation". Without going into the subject at length, I will just say

that often what appears as "radicalism" is just the advance guard of capitalism - clearing away of social and cultural barriers to further capital. Examples abound: "natural liberation" (e.g. Vietnam, Algeria); the Civil Rights Movement here in the USA, which had as its result the (partial) up-grading of blacks to consumer status, etc. It seems that your article has made a good argument for including feminism in the list. In America, and no doubt in England as well, anyone

publishing this type of article would catch a lot of heat from knee jerk feminists and leftists; don't let their "automatic writing" seduce you away from your goal "to be consciously revolutionary rather than an ideological instrument of economic reform". They (marxism especially, and some anarchists, feminists and others) have reduced the radical critique to a litany of minority group complaints, i.e. women, blacks, secretaries, one eyed servo-croation pederasts, etc, as if human society was not in some deep seated way in need of complete overhaul and re-organisation. Indeed to hear a marxist party, overwhelmingly white male, talk only of the oppression suffered by blacks and women raises serious psycho-analytical questions about why they do it. There is obviously much more to be done than the integration of previously marginal or excluded groups. Saying this raises more questions than it answers. What "role" or "stance" does the revolutionary take in response to this type of reformism, especially when it reaches the proportions of a mass movement? The CP USA never addressed this question when it built the CIO in the 30's and 40's, and paid the price in the 50's, basically by disappearing without trace, shoved out of organised labour as soon as they were no longer needed. I shan't attempt to answer this question in this letter, its obviously the major question a revolutionary grouping has to face.

All this talk aside, I do want to subscribe, and show you the magazine I work on, 'Black Rose' (coming separately), formerly anarchist but not any longer. I enclose £5.00 cheque, I hope properly filled out, etc. Please send

sub starting with issue No. 7 or later.

Yours,
Charlie Gamble
(Cambridge, USA)

P.S. I enjoyed your cover "Driving on the Left", very funny. But in America, you know, we drive on the right.



Lefties in the Midlands are being hammered by the local judiciary. After anti-NF demos in West Bromwich and Leicester, fines of between £300 and £400 are being dished out, and Asian and black kids are being ordered to pay up to £20 a week out of wages of £35.

In Birmingham a racist night-club which operates a quota system for blacks, Pollyannas, has been picketed for several months, and 10 pickets have been arrested. Their fines are likely to follow the pattern at West Bromwich and Leicester. Four libertarians were also arrested after a brick went through Pollyanna's window. Luckily the police could not press charges against three of us for lack of evidence (despite planting "some rags impregnated with inflammable spirit and showing signs of burning" in one comrade's car). But the fourth has just been fined £415. We need cash to pay off this fine, and those of the pickets whose cases come up soon.

Cheques/contributions to B'ham Campaign Against Racism in Clubs Defence Campaign, c/o Labour Club, 14 Bristol Street, Birmingham 5.

MANIFESTO FOR RADICAL DIPLOMATS

"Alternative Socialism - the manifesto for radical diplomats" was first published as a duplicated pamphlet some years ago by Spontaneous Combustion. Although the object of its attack is a particular statement of the 'alternative movement' (Keith Paton's 'Alternative Socialism') its critique goes further than this one document,

and it is no less relevant today than when it was first written. As the article on Torness elsewhere in this issue shows, the anti-nuclear movement exhibits some of the characteristics for which Paton is taken to task and even within the Solidarity network itself there are those whose ideas appear not so distant from those espoused

by the 'alternative socialists'. In republishing this statement we hope to recommence debate on the whole notion of 'liberated zones' and to bring this debate to an audience which may not have seen the original pamphlet.

P.G.
(Glasgow)

In writing this I aim to clarify common confusions amongst those who claim to be changing the world, highlight their origins and where they might well lead to. In some cases admitting confusion is a step toward a more critical attitude. But when it manifests itself as an openness to all existing vaguely 'oppositional' schools of thought, it reinforces a socially manufactured lie which asserts implicitly that the right questions have already been asked, and becomes an evasive non-dogmatic pose for those desperately searching for new insights and new ideologies. In talking of 'confusion', I don't, however, megalomaniacally claim to be totally clear: an elementary aspect of the revolution is the process of becoming clearer about ones relationships and about the world in general and the dialectic between the two. Although sometimes arrogance is a defensive form of self-assertion, I have at times in this work consciously used it as a way of cutting through Patons' absurdities. I trust that readers/fellow proletarians/human beings will arrogantly challenge the foggy aspects of what I have written.

"THOSE NOT BUSY BEING BORN ARE BUSY BEING DIPLOMATIC" - Engels, 'The Origin of the Alternative Society, Enforced 'Love' and the State of Utter Confusion'.

The major failing of Keith Patons' pamphlet (from which all other contradictions arise) is its attempt to benevolently unite innumerable disparate

fragments of 'critical' movements under the all-embracing umbrella of a 'common humanity': he wants a (r)evolution which will be nice for everybody.

This virtue of tolerance, which is compelled to think only the 'best' of everybody, is paraded to cover up its predictable consequences: frustration, stasis, stupidity, and, ultimately, acceptance of the society it tries to change (e.g. support for Wedgwood-Benn, Left-wing Capitals' Recuperator-in-Chief. Benn combines, through his self-made mask of 'sensible' - i.e. bourgeois - concern, his guilt for his aristocratic background with the elitist arrogance of that background: he is the saviour of the working class, benignly leading them to the glorious dignity of running their own exploitation under the domination of the crisis-ridden world market). The diplomatic role stems from the belief that one can overcome the frustrations that arise from being isolated by basing ones' relationships on the lowest common denominator, on the principle "the more the merrier". Not only is this notion of "building the new society in the shell of the old" conveyed of in primarily quantitative terms, it merely recreates a different form of illusory togetherness from the rest of society, another image of community smoothing over real separation (significantly, Paton uses 'we' throughout his pamphlet to mean intermittently "us

in the alternative society", "us freaks", "us whites", "us British" and "us Westerners": all identities, unless linked to a common collective critical project, are ways of evading the struggle for individual autonomy which must be one of the fundamental bases for such collective activity: "we" is almost always a lie). The formula on which I would base any future common projects with individuals is "Be cruel with your past and those who would keep you there".

Patons' well-intentioned missionary role is based on the idea that we are all one in the ocean of our possibilities beneath the islands of our fixed ideas and roles. This hypothetical truth in no way helps us towards changing the world which is the material basis for our separate islands. It logically leads to his ridiculous idea of influencing the ruling class, whose self-identity has not only been built up by years of conditioning but is reinforced daily by the world they manage, by their total immersion in the rationale of the market, by the confirmation given it by all those within the ideological enclave which is the ruling class milieu: only madness, a 'nervous' breakdown, a complete shattering of their sense of relation to the world and each other could make individual rulers see through the shell of their inhumanity, but I feel there are far more useful and exciting projects than dropping

acid in the House of Commons water supply. To even think of trying to appeal to the rulers' "better natures" in the name of some abstract humanity is not only a dangerous Utopian mystification, but a total mis-direction of energy away from any genuinely radical attempt to intervene in history and in 'our' own history. This altruistic 'convincer' role, which wants to save people from their self-oppression, reminds me of an ex-Catholic Trotskyist I used to know, who shouted to the cops as their truncheons lashed out over our heads from their vantage point on mounted horses, "Comrades - remember the 1919 police strike!" To want to help, in a reciprocal way, those people genuinely seeking some autonomous experiment, is very different from trying to shake complacently bored sleepers awake by appeals to our common humanity: in the former the relationship is potentially mutually clarifying and exciting...the latter, a frustrating and draining exercise whose only reward is a feeling of pitying superiority (as I was thinking this out, lying in a park, a park-keeper-cum-cop came up to me and told me it was against the bye-laws to sit on the grass. I tried to appeal to his 'better nature' by un-aggressively asking him, "You don't enjoy this, I don't enjoy this - so why are you doing it?" but he evaded by eyes, told me he didn't want to argue and threatened to arrest me...trying to caress the paralysed, scream at the deaf - for me, at least - is just an adrenalin-flow which never succeeds in reaching buzz-point but leaves me feeling irritably uncomfortable: to make it a full-time strategy for changing life would be pure masochism).

"HE WHO BUILDS A NEW WORLD IN THE SHELL OF THE OLD WITHOUT SUPPRESSING THE WORLD THAT CONTAINS IT, BUILDS NAUGHT BUT HIS OWN ILLUSIONS" - old Chinese proverb (circa Barcelona 1936).

The concepts of liberated zones, socialism in one commune/street/city/head, "getting our real lives together" etc. etc. are the major aspects of alternative society ideology. The idea is that within these spaces people can freely develop in whatever way they wish. Not only does this repress understanding the extreme limitations of this development in the face of the 'outside' world, it also

implies that the 'outside' world never enters the front door, that one can abstractly develop freely, separate from the contradictions of the world. The confusions of Patons' pamphlet illustrate the lie of this illusion: there can be no fundamental liberation without the total destruction of commodity society (which is not intended as an excuse for not changing in a radical direction, merely that one should be conscious of heightened contradictions at each 'stage' of development). None of this is to say that there aren't a few genuinely experimental 'islands' attempting to move in the direction of history, making their experience and conflicts public...Merely that Paton in no way contributes to this movement but prefers to present a spectacle of exciting, joyful relationships. In the upside-down reality of the spectacle human qualities (love, community...) become ideals for emulation precisely because they are what is lacking in reality, and because the illusion of authenticity is necessary for inauthentic life. Patons' rhetoric - e.g. "Life is...as marvellous as our being flows in the lowly river of here and now" - is merely an image of excitement, coming from the desire to seduce with zappy lyricism - the immediate appeal of advertising given a 'radical' twist, an appeal to the pleasure principle which stuns the critical senses, in the hope of reaching the fun-loving guts: but fun and analysis can combine without being evasive.

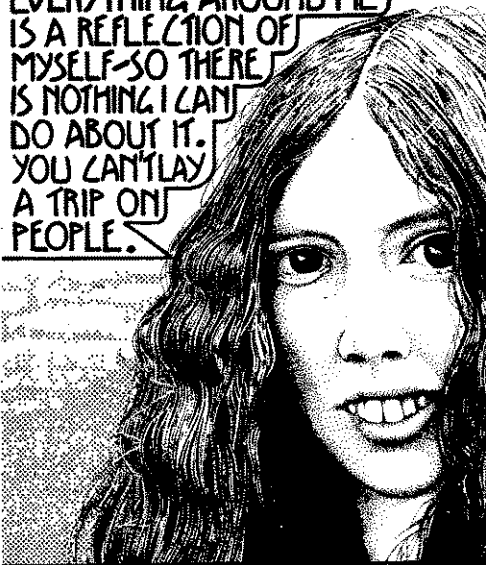
The 'alternative society's' dissatisfaction and rejection of 'straight' society's roles and values results merely in the creation of new ones. Instead of participating in the destruction of all roles and of the society that creates them and makes them necessary, Paton

talks of "the stress of adjusting to new roles". Instead of dealing with the real conflicts of human relationships, Paton sets up new abstract values which we must conform to - naturalness, openness, universal love ("we must love one another or die", he threatens). The genuine unconditioned yearning for harmony is a fragment of humanity which, before the suppression of the conditions which prevent its' realisation, becomes erected into a fixated ideological attitude (pacifism, the social contract, politeness, niceness, "Unity, brothers", "Love 'n' Peace", "Let's not be sectarian, comrades", "Just flow with things, man") repressing consciousness of contradictions and the practice of overcoming them. Often the ideology demands that no-one gets heavy cos that's uncool; and predictability, insipid gutlessness and ethereality is the price many have to pay for this attitude of purity. Meals on wheels, helping old age pensioners and good neighbourliness, which can only result in the most superficial patronising relationships where nothing is challenged, is a way of complacently avoiding subverting either oneself or the other.

In this society, to be negative is condemned as "cynical", "unconstructive", "nihilistic", "misanthropic" or just plain "rude", which are all just different forms of defence against criticism. Challenging someone, or a scene, or a situation has its reward in terms of heightened clarity, excitement, the pleasure of having made something 'happen' and the satisfaction of breaking with the smooth-running of 'things': the capacity to criticise and be criticised is the essence of the revolutionary movement.



I USED TO BE INTO POLITICS—
BUT IT BEGAN TO HANG ME UP.
I KNOW LOTS OF BAD THINGS
GO ON IN THE WORLD—BUT
EVERYTHING AROUND ME
IS A REFLECTION OF
MYSELF—SO THERE
IS NOTHING I CAN
DO ABOUT IT.
YOU CAN'T LAY
A TRIP ON
PEOPLE.



Instead of fighting for, or experimenting towards, a real life, most of the alternative society take on an abstract representation, an image of life, and advertises this change of appearances as real change. The moral seriousness which they attach to their life-style measures their dependence on the new image. Whilst struggle which is not concerned with overcoming and challenging constraints, blocks and inhibitions in ones capitalist-dominated daily life is merely other-directed militancy, the alternative '(r)evolutionary', like the Leninists who say "Join the Party. Follow us", conceives of his message to the world in terms of "Join the movement. Follow the example of my life-style". The slogan of a real revolutionary movement should be "To each according to his desires", adding on in parentheses: "...but examine the basis of your desires, and test your aversions".

The ideology of non-violence concedes to the State and its managers a monopoly of a weapon it will not fail to use, as it has done in the past, and is doing so in the present, against any challenge to its authority. Soweto is the most obvious recent example. The revolutionary violence which negates the violence of the old world must be conscious of its causes (i.e. repressed anger and the violence of the constraints of this alien world) at the same time as it struggles to destroy them. The moral purity of the

pacifists rarely sustains itself in the heat of real struggle: for example, in the 1974 Windsor Festival, when the fragments of the "alternative society" actively excluded the State as well as their would-be leaders (Syd Rawle, Bill Dwyer, etc.) and managed their own festival in a form very similar to that of the workers councils of the past century (mass democratic meetings, mandated delegates etc.). When the State attacked to re-expropriate its power and property, few people "turned the other cheek" and many pacifists forgot their ideology and attacked the cops. Afraid he will actually have to destroy a world in order to achieve a classless society where the free development of all is inseparable from the free development of each, Paton ends up being innocuous decor who holds, and indeed seeks only, the attention of the most retarded, other-directed, sub-christian proletarians, who can easily be seduced by the novelty of his rip-offs from Norman O. Brown etc. The erotic moving order of the future must pass through the 'chaos' of class war, which is the essential means of resolving the repressive chaos of the present.

"SPECTACULAR SOCIETY MAINTAINS US IN AN ORGANISED SOCIAL SCHIZOPHRENIA, OFFERING UP UTOPIAN OR NOSTALGIC FANTASIES WITHOUT PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OR EMPIRICIST ENGAGEMENT IN THE HERE-AND-NOW WITHOUT CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE TOTALITY" - Notice Concerning the Reigning Society and Those who Contest It.

Whilst opposition to capitalist society as a whole is obviously mediated by opposition to a part, a symptom, the ecology-cum-alternative technology movement, fails to really generalise from its particular fetish, and ends up, for the most part, in pragmatic activism, and dangerously confused miscomprehensions of the nature of capitalism. Since capitalism inevitably accumulates enormous powers of fixed capital (in ecology-speak: "inorganic matter") it's clear that the cleaning up of the "environment" involves not merely a question of re-organising the supposedly 'neutral' technology, or, as Paton suggests, creating small-scale ecologically safe

technology within the context of present-day commodity production, but of washing away the whole of the system and its' logic of accumulation before it exodes and suffocates us. The environmentalists usual reaction to this is an anxious "Never mind the Big Picture - let's get down to saving the world bit by bit... I never could stand those long words, anyway". Combining patch-work reformism with moralistic guilt ("We are society. We are responsible") they can do no more than tinker with the system at the same time as they channel peoples' discontent away from fundamentally questioning it: since no-one is publicly opposed to clean air, the ecology movement remains as uncontroversial as it is ineffective. The productive forces which could destroy the planet are the same which make a globally free society an 'immediate' objective possibility: in the possible human community of the future the conscious transformation of nature can take place without suppressing it. The moralism of self-sufficiency - almost like the Tories' "stand on your own two feet" - is a perversion of the desire for autonomy into a vulgar materialist concept of independence, an independence related not to consciousness, struggle and every aspect of social relationships, but purely to the capacity to survive. Considering the complex interdependence of every aspect of the world economy (and therefore, of its' crisis) this idea is pure ideology, since it's impossible. And it's hardly desirable, since it means that peoples' consciousness is even more committed to expending their energies on the hassles of survival than normal. Intertwined with the notion 'small is beautiful', these ideas lead to a parochial regionalism, and the concomitant false identities, insularity and economic competitiveness. The ideology of 'small is beautiful' (decentralised production: breaking up of large units and dispersing them) confuses form with content: it's as if capitals' vastness is responsible for the belittlement of the individual, who is only capable of coping with the narrow confines of the local 'community'. If capitalism has been progressive it's been in the fact of creating the

material basis for a world-wide human community, even though the form of the basis has been totally inhuman.



World-wide production, distribution and communication is an essential condition for creating the means of survival and the abolition of forced labour: it's the world market, the reign of exchange value, which has to be dissolved, not large-scale production. Much of Patons' incoherence stems from his failure to understand this commodity form which is the essence of capitalisms' mediation of social relationships: hence, he can support China, Tanzania (both different forms of capitalism with a 'socialist' ideological facade), the absurdly mystifying Utopian 'Wages for Housework' campaign, talk of scabbing on 'excessive' wage demand strikes (at a time when it is precisely high wage demands which could lead to new forms of working class self-organisation and into the possibility of consequentially challenging the State, the unions and the economy, and of breaking with the labour 'movement' consciousness which is a brake on any form of self-activity), speak of "aid and trade" programs and never talk of the possibility of abolishing wage labour.

Much of Patons' argumental tactic is to juxtapose his ideas against a phoney Leftist bogey in order to present his

false choice (a technique used constantly by the capitalist media). Thus, for example, his liberal homily on free speech completely misses the point. During the epoch of the rise of the bourgeoisie free speech was inseparable from the movement to overthrow the aristocracy, and, as such, was revolutionary. But in the capitalist spectacle, the organisation of the commodity economy, "free speech" has been emptied of its subversive content. Like its illusory counterparts "dialogue" and "communication", it helps conceal a system based on the total suppression of individual free expression: the only people with the power to put their words and "imagination" into action are the organisers of this society. The real movement for free expression should not concern itself with suppressing the existing means (e.g. smashing up meetings) nor with defending them, but with subverting them by showing up their poverty - is "making the petrified condition dance by singing them their own tune".

THE COMMODITY! OTHERWISE OUR LIVES MUST BE SMASHED -- OVER WHICH WE HAVE NO CONTROL -- WILL REMAIN FUTILE AND EMPTY



The struggles of the future must become conscious of their own movement, both amongst the individuals and groups involved, as well as in relation to the global society, both subjectively and objectively. They must learn to act, think and speak for themselves, to understand their enemies, both within and without. They must grasp and publicise the immensity of the tasks before the masses of individuals (consciousness of which advances with the struggle). Without theory, people are decapitated, their bodies flounder in the dark; without practice, they become ghosts of abstraction haunting their own minds: all thought and no play is a shortcut to suicide, all play and no thought is a quick way of getting your throat slit. And with Paton, you get the worst of both worlds...

Dear Solidarity,

In Solidarity for Social Revolution No. 1, I wrote an article 'Strike at Highlands Fabricators'. This described a dispute at the oil platform construction yard in which the full-time trade union officials collaborated closely with the management in opposing the workers struggle against a cut in the 'platform completion bonus'. Readers may be interested to know that shortly after this was published, the TUC Education Department banned me from acting as a tutor on their courses for shop stewards, eventually giving as their reason my criticism of union officials in the Solidarity article on the Highlands Fabricators strike.

I had been employed by the Workers Educational Association to teach on these courses on a regular basis for 15 months when the TUC suddenly announced their decision. No procedures were gone through, I was given no opportunity to appeal, none of the stewards who attended the courses were consulted, my trade union branch was not even informed, far less negotiated with over the issue.

The TUC Education Department, in explanation of their decision, wrote to the WEA 'Mr. Vallance's uninformed attack on full time trade union officers and certain shop stewards involved in the Highlands Fabricators dispute displayed at best a lack of knowledge of industrial relations and at worst, an intent to undermine the authority of the unions and their elected representatives in a very delicate situation'.

The Voluntary Organisations Branch of the TGWU, of which I am a member, and the Scottish Group of ASTMS (ATAE), have both written to the TUC protesting against their action. Following the TUC's refusal to re-consider, Aberdeen Trades Council have asked the TUC Education Department to quash their 'arbitrary decision' while I am granted the rights of appeal and hearing.

Any support, especially from people or organisations connected with T.U. education, would be very welcome - more information can be obtained from me at the address below.

Mike Vallance
c/o 163 King Street, Aberdeen.

AUTONOMY & POLITICS

As a "Solidarity" member not involved in low pay disputes or other struggles at the point of production, I'd like to highlight the issues affecting an autonomous movement amongst people claiming benefits.

Cardan's analysis of modern capitalism is projected in terms of a Model whereby production and consumption have been bureaucratised/rationalised to the point where there is a high degree of regulation which eliminates the cyclical crisis pattern pre-World War II. Within this Model, only strictly applicable to the advanced, western bloc, the affluent working class is the rule rather than the exception.

However, "the exception" still exists - people who either through choice (the revolt against work - or against paying tax) or circumstance are unemployed or unemployable. Whether it is a reflection of the relative position of Britain or not, successive Governments have differed little in their commitment to enforce economic sanctions against those not in wage labour. A whole ideology of scroungers/workshy etc. (however anachronistic to liberal reformers) still persists and is perpetuated daily through the media and in the treatment of those claiming benefit - especially Supplementary Benefit.

Privatisation is the lot of claimants as with other groups in contemporary class society. Any political action among claimants comes up against the hard facts that many accept, or at least pay lip service to the scrounger ideology. While this is probably being broken down, it is still a significant obstacle to collective action. An offshoot of this is the productivist emphasis of the Trad. Left with their various Right to Work campaigns which cannot see beyond herding people back into the production process and demanding "Full employment".

However, the actual situation is more complicated. It would be false to see the movement in monolithic terms, just as it's difficult to gauge how claimants unions operate throughout Britain and Northern Ireland. Therefore, to a great extent my analysis is based on

the Glasgow situation where there has been a slow but significant upsurge in self-organisation. Especially in the schemes (housing estates) where there are vast numbers on the dole or the order book a potential exists: often against a background of a hostile environment whereby mobs terrorise their fellow residents.

Against this is an alternative conception towards "organising the unemployed" has developed. On the face of it the Claimants Union movement offers a great deal of encouragement for



libertarians: autonomous groups organising around issues which affect people everyday of their lives; a movement without formal or centralised leadership which calls for: "a socialist society in which all necessities are provided free and which is managed and controlled directly by the people".⁽¹⁾

Active involvement in a claimants union is nowhere substantial and people don't often go beyond a narrow self-interest or an ideological division between "deserving" and "undeserving". Even where there is first hand experience of assertive behaviour against a D.H.S.S. office there is still an apparent reluctance to "put something back into the union". To a degree this may be because a C.U. is seen as somebody's property (although this is common in all forms of organisation, "Solidarity" included) or dominated by an "in-crowd".

In fairly crude terms there are three basic approaches towards the political significance of "the movement". There is entrenched in C.U. attitudes a non-political stance which rejects "outside" manipulation or incorporation by Trots and such like. However, this has been extended by many into an ANTI-POLITICAL position which rejects a critique vis a vis the claimants position in society and sees claimants unions as voluntary self-help welfare rights groups, where conflict is an aberration. On the other hand, there is the standard RADICAL position as articulated in most C.U. literature which puts forward transitional demands of social reform: "an adequate income without means test for all people".⁽²⁾

There is a degree of affinity with people in the POVERTY INDUSTRY such as radical social workers, welfare rights officers, Civil Servants Against the Nazis (the CPSA is the major Trade Union for DHSS staff).

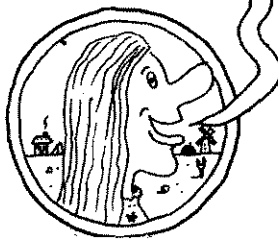
Specific demands such as the scrapping of the Industrial Misconduct Rule and the Co-habitation rule are raised in the light of calling for a total re-assessment of welfare benefits and the "poverty trap". Here the RECUPERATION game is being played, but the ideology is not that of the Trots (too workerist) but of libertarian marxism. This is especially clear among the "in-crowd" who go to Conferences, speak to the Supplementary Benefits Commission, lobby TUC Conferences, etc.. With a Tory Government, however, it is even less likely that their demands will be listened to, however reasonable or liberal.

Taking an offensive position of CONTESTATION are a minority without much sense of cohesion or coherence. There is a more explicit attack on the work ethic and on the structural position of the bureaucracy but there is an unwillingness as with the anarchists to grapple with the real dynamics of modern capitalism and whether a mass movement is even necessary or desirable.

One danger common to all approaches is to confuse "the movement" as an end in itself: "our prime commitment is to the social revolution - not to any particular political group". (3)

"Building" the C.U. movement has to be seen as secondary to the means (self-management of the struggle) and awareness of whose interests demands are taken up:

THAT'S THE IDEA, FOLKS! ORGANISE TO TAKE BACK THE CONTROL OF YOUR OWN LIVES FROM THE BUREAUCRATS AND BOSSES!



"the enemies of our enemies are not necessarily our friends". (4)

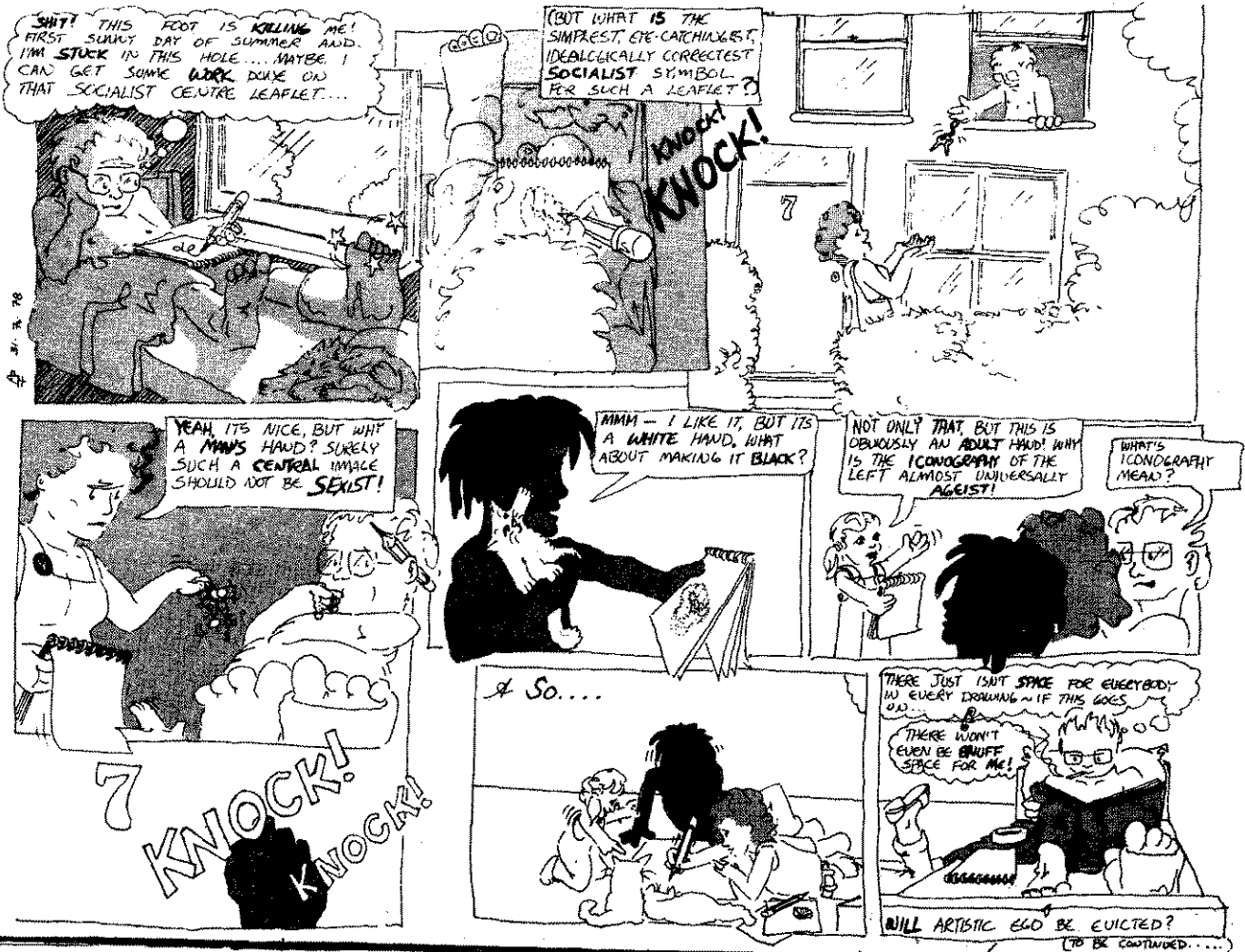
For example, on the question of talking to the so-called radicals of the CPSA, there is articulated the position that implementing the Good Work Strike would benefit claimants rather than withdrawing labour or a work to rule. Allied to this is the fact that the CPSA work under the Official Secrets Act, putting into operation the various "Secret Codes" which intimidate claimants

in their personal lives and prevent claims. To daily reproduce this system yet espouse "socialist" causes is a double-standard common to "the Left" and an offensive position doesn't shrink from attacking radical rhetoric.

Against all the immovable objects of bureaucracy (however enlightened) the revolutionary approach is not to raise demands but to articulate, service and generalise social struggles. Claimants aren't only involved in struggles as claimants and issues such as housing, community resources etc. can only suffer if they are compartmentalised. As the situationists saw it, the critique of separation is a crucial aspect of the revolution of everyday life.

K. M. (Glasgow)/

- (1) and (2) C.U. minimum Charter, pts 1 & 2
- (3) and (4) As We Don't See It "Solidarity".



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