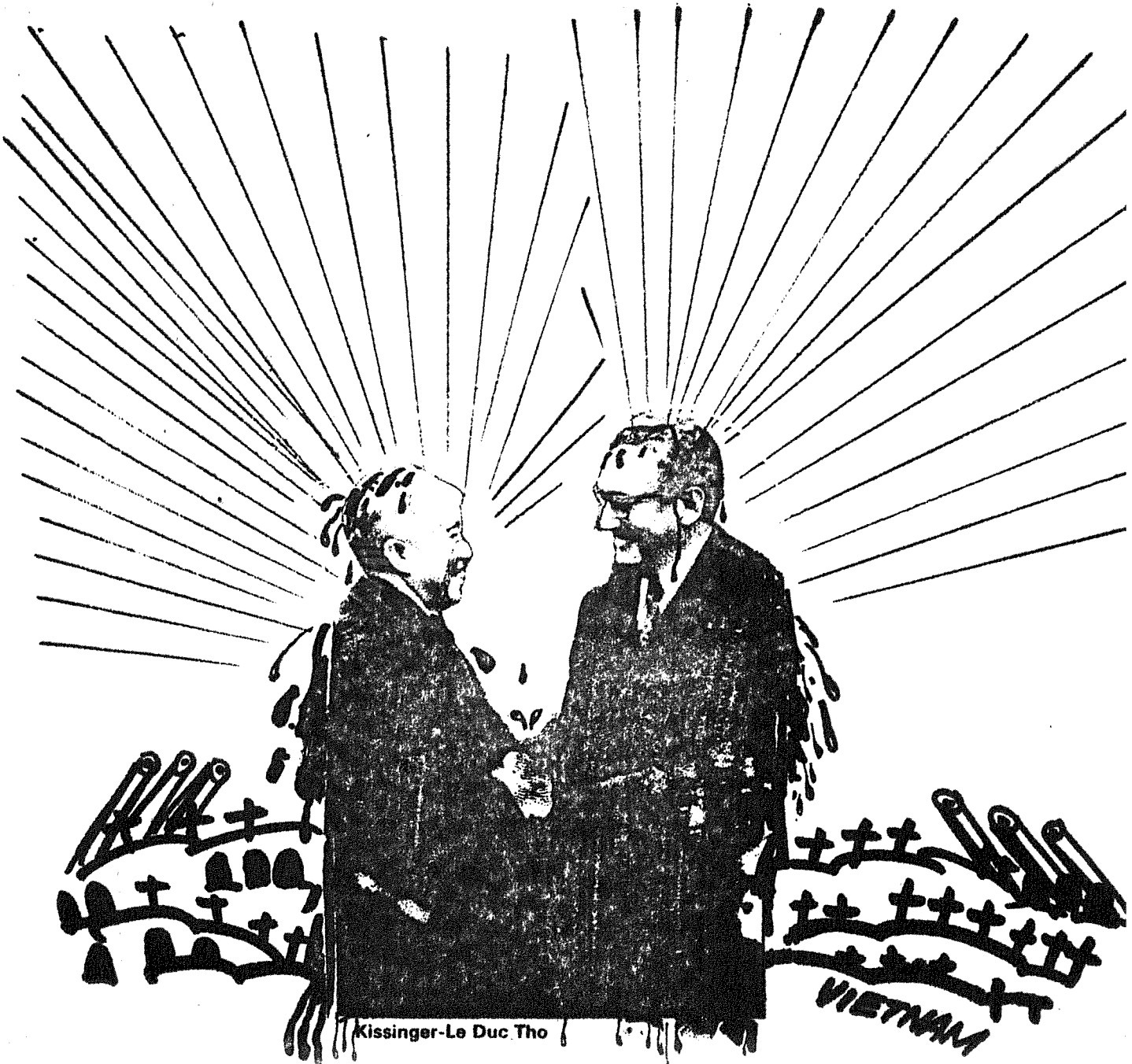


solidarity

FOR WORKERS' POWER



● GM Australia
● Angry Brigade
● Work-Ins
Volume 7, no. 5/5



Kissinger-Le Duc Tho

EPITAPH ON VIETNAM

A ceasefire in Vietnam has been signed in Paris. Le Duc Tho and Kissinger shake hands and smile obscenely at the photographers. The time seems opportune to look back at the slaughter which, over a period of several decades, had become almost a way of life in that part of the world. What had the slaughter achieved? Who has benefited by it? What does the future hold in store?

Today, as the fate of the Vietnamese is again being decided in the capitals of the Eastern and Western imperialist blocs will anyone in Vietnam have the courage (or even the opportunity) to proclaim some obvious truths: that the Emperor is naked, that the fighting has solved nothing, that all the fundamental social problems remain, that the future is grim for workers and peasants alike (both north and south of the demilitarized zone), that the social revolution remains on the order of the day (both in Saigon and in Hanoi). Will anyone go even further and proclaim that this social revolution will if anything prove even more difficult now, for the rulers in both North and South at last have their hands free, to exercise their power to the full against those 'on their own' side.

The future in Vietnam may be one of chronic conflict, or guerilla warfare at times flaring up into more obvious confrontation. Alternatively those in power in Washington, Moscow and Peking may decide to 'freeze' the situation in South-East Asia on the Korean model and profitably to 'reconstruct' (possibly even together) what only yesterday they were busy tearing to pieces. Both 'alternatives' are but variants of capitalist barbarism, because both imply the perpetuation of existing social relations.

Thieu's jails are full of political prisoners. The regime is unlikely to become less repressive as time goes on. Rather it will become, in all probability, even more tyrannical because increasingly insecure as its social base in the armed forces of necessity narrows. In the North the suffering and anguish is unlikely to break the bonds of existing institutions. The Viet-Minh consolidated its power following the liquidation of the Saigon Soviet in 1945, and the physical annihilation of all possible opposition from the left (1). The bureaucratic state structure has been immensely strengthened throughout the years of war. Those who naively proclaimed that the workers and peasants in the North should first achieve 'victory' over the South - and later arise against their own rulers, will discover how utopian such a prospect was.

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- (1) We are very shortly republishing our pamphlet on Vietnam, which deals with these matters in detail. The new pamphlet will contain a considerable amount of additional material on these and related topics.

The casualties of the Vietnam war are not only to be found on the battle fields of Indochina. The war created ideological havoc and did untold harm to the credibility of revolutionaries in the West, for many of whom emotional identification with the N.L.F. became a substitute for rational class analysis. Endless confusion ensued about the nature of Socialism, the class nature of Chinese and Russian societies and the nature of the 'revolution' in the Third World. (2) Even those (like International Socialists), who paid lip service to the State Capitalist nature of these regimes were not averse to aligning themselves with one ruling class against another. Obvious revolutionary truths - such as that 'the main enemy is always in one's own country' - were either forgotten altogether, or applied unilaterally, as if they had no relevance within North Vietnam itself. Widespread illusions were created around the notion that the 'enemies of my enemies must of necessity be my friends'.

The movement 'against the war in Vietnam' was compounded of frustration, guilt, escapism, simple humanitarianism, a desire to 'do something' and an emotional (but unthought-out) identification with the oppressed. These however can never provide a substitute for a proper understanding of the real forces involved in social conflict. In the absence of a revolutionary libertarian alternative to the Leninist chorus, 'traditional' left groups came to dominate the political scene and to impart upon the anti-war movement their very specific imprint: that of future beneficiaries of regimes of State Capitalist type (3). Students were massively involved. Free from the immediate restrictive obligations and concerns of everyday working life they had an opportunity to become concerned with wider issues. But as a future elite whose power would be based on knowledge and the exercise of expertise they found no difficulty in romantically and uncritically identifying with the movement's bureaucratic ideology and objectives. (We are not saying that this identification was either cynical or conscious - but it was real for all that).

The sore of opportunism, kept festering by the traditional left, infected such potentially anti-establishment movements as Womens Lib. and the whole 'counter-culture'. Even sections of the anarchist movement were involved and we saw the emergence of that most finished product of contemporary confusion: the anarcho-maoist! Fortunately all this had little effect on the working class. It is perhaps a symptom of the declining grip of Stalinism that the Communist Parties were not able to inject their class collaborationist poison into the working class movement, as they had done in the days of the Popular Front. In fact few issues in the last few decades have provoked such a divergence of attitudes and opinions between rank-and-file workers on the one hand and, on the other, those intellectuals seeking to speak on their behalf. Workers in the West came to understand how closely the regimes in Russia, China or North Vietnam resembled those under which they sweated to produce surplus value. They sensed that they would have very little control over their lives in such societies. Militants saw that the first casualties in such regimes were the autonomous organisations of the class

(2) For our analysis of this problem see the article 'Third Worldism or Socialism' in our pamphlet 'Ceylon: the J.V.P. Uprising of 1971'.

(3) We hope shortly to publish an article on the 'Revolutionary bureaucrat before the Revolution' which will illustrate what we mean.

itself. Their reluctance to become 'identified' was not due to 'support for American Imperialism', or to the physical distance separating them from the battlefields in question. It was only in small measure due to chauvinism. Workers felt that the conflict had little relevance to their immediate problems and that there was little they could do anyway. At a more fundamental level still, this reluctance to be involved sprang from the refusal of working people to exchange one servitude for another, and one form of exploitation for another. As a docker put it to us, a few years ago: 'If they (the North Vietnamese and their 'unconditional' supporters over here) are the wave of the future, give me some dry land'.

WHO WROTE IT ?

(answer p.13)

'Stalin's life was one dedicated to revolution, to the working class, to the noble Communist ideal ... His role in the war against the German and Japanese fascists assumed extremely great significance for the world revolution and for the whole of mankind ... He waged an unremitting combat for the purity of marxism-leninism and the development of its potentiality ... On a world scale, within the Communist International (1919-1943), Stalin gave constant and vigorous support to the workers' movement. ... That is why, like the Soviet people, entire progressive mankind highly values Stalin's services and work. Communists throughout the world regard Stalin as an eminent Communist leader and a great proletarian revolutionary' ...

'The Soviet Union ... advancing vigorously under the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party headed by Stalin has blazed the trail for us, opened the door for us to see the radiant future and is encouraging us to overcome all difficulties'.

- a) the Chairman of the Albanian Institute for Posthumous Rehabilitation?
- b) Henryk Ibsen, in 'Ghosts'?
- c) A North Korean or North Vietnamese bureaucrat?
- d) Monty Johnson?
- e) Stalin himself?

WHAT NEXT: THE LOCK-IN?

(This article was first published by InformationsCorrespondance Ouvrières (c/o P. Blachier, 13 bis rue Labois Rouillon, Paris -18, France) in their issue of October-November 1972).

Since September, most large French firms have given their employees a 5 to 6 percent rise of their own accord. But workers in small firms are still fighting hard to get similar increases. On the whole the forms of struggle used are not new and have already been put into practice before the summer: selective strikes, occupations, the locking-up of managers. In one case, however, workers took the struggle one step further.

In Charleville-Mezière (1), on the "advice" of the unions, workers had been trying the usual methods of scattered strikes for several months, but to no avail. On September 13, 1972, yet another meeting between management and union executives (2) took place. The workers were so fed up that they downed tools, broke into the conference room and told the negotiators on both sides that they would not be let out until an agreement satisfying their demands was signed. At lunch the "prisoners" were served a free cold meal by the demonstrators. In spite of numerous appeals to "reason" by the regional secretary of the C.G.T. (3) the door was only opened at 9p.m. ...with an agreement for a 5p an hour increase, which up to then had been refused by the management.

In France locking-up managers has been quite a common practice. Union executives usually stand between management and workers to try and protect the former and control the latter. Although union bureaucrats had often been criticised, shouted at and insulted, words had never been put into practice - they have now. In this small factory in the north of France workers put bosses and union executives where they belong - together, on the side of capitalist order.

True, it happened only once and it is an isolated case. True, the level of exploitation is still determined by bosses and union bureaucrats. It cannot be otherwise as long as capitalism exists. What is important is that through their action workers have clearly shown who is on which side and drawn the dividing line of the class struggle. In a modern society no struggle is isolated. A factory (or an office block, or a hospital,....) does not live in a vacuum. This particular action, apparently isolated, corresponds to a certain level of class struggle and development of consciousness. Workers locking up both their union delegates and their managers, telling them what to do and what not to do, is an important step towards fully autonomous workers' struggles.

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- (1) In the middle of the heavy industrial belt of the north of France.
 - (2) There are no equivalent to shop stewards in France.
 - (3) Confédération Générale du Travail, CP-dominated biggest French confédération of trade unions, especially powerful in industry.

EDINBURGH TENANTS STRUGGLE

The tenants fight against the Housing Finance Act continues despite the dual trad. left mystifications of the role of the unions and the Labour Party (e.g. I.S. "Link up with the unions, force Labour Councils to act"). This article about the Edinburgh tenants, continues along the lines of the article in the last Solidarity, namely - that only collective understanding can provide the basis for meaningful tenants' action.

On October 5, 1972 Edinburgh Corporation voted to implement the Housing Finance Act. On November 20 rent increases of about £1 per week came into effect. Tenants' Associations have existed for some time in many parts of the city, and combined to form the All-Edinburgh Tenants' Association to oppose the increases. The decision had been taken to withhold increases rather than attempt a total rent strike.

Door-to-door canvassing resulted in several hundred tenants signing a declaration that they were willing to join the collective refusal to pay the increase. A proportion of them seem to be carrying out this intention. Other actions have included demonstrations, pickets at rent collection points, street and factory meetings and production of leaflets and bulletins. Many of these are still going on.

But the promise of a couple of months ago, (when meetings of Pilton T.A., for example, could draw a hundred people, and street meetings in areas like Wester Hailes could draw 50 at short notice, with volunteers coming forward as convenors for their street or block) has not been fulfilled. External signs of commitment would not matter so much if tenants were deeply involved with the struggle on an informal basis - talking about it, knowing their neighbours were refusing to pay, and confident they might influence events. Unfortunately, it would be self-deluding to pretend that this is happening so far. The most consistently active seem to be those of us with a political viewpoint to supplement our commitment as tenants.

The problem is not, as the International Socialists have suggested, a 'crisis of leadership', but the question of what limits people's ability to dispense with leaders and take things consciously into their own hands. Although Local Authority housing brings people together in a physical sense, they are juxtaposed rather than being involved collectively. They have the same landlord, the same management in some respects, but the imposition of authority and the simultaneous necessity to resist it, are much less obviously present than in the productive process. In each privatised compartment, traditional values, fostered within the family, reinforce themselves and militate against initiative.

This situation is only made worse by the orientation of traditional left politics towards trying to get people interested in choosing 'better' leaders, instead of encouraging autonomy. Edinburgh was one of the places where the Corpor-

ation dithered about a bit before deciding to implement 'Fair Rents', so there was a lot of preoccupation with Labour Councillors - putting pressure on them, urging votes of 'no confidence' when they 'sold out' (as if one should have confidence in the others; as if one couldn't have every confidence in them to act as good Labour politicians anyway). And we still get the monotonous reiteration of the adjective 'Tory' before every reference to the Rent Act, with the implication that Labour should be voted in instead. Securing their own power would of course be the prime aim of any Labour politicians 'pressurised' into 'taking up the fight', i.e. invited to take it over (it's not, after all, their fight), defuse and defeat it.

Going along with this, the objective of linking tenants and industrial workers tends to be approached through orthodox trade union channels, aiming to influence the hierarchy instead of making it redundant. As someone said, if you want to talk to a trade unionist, don't go to Vic Feather (or even the secretary of the local Trades Council), go to the bloke next door. However, there has been some emphasis on the desirability of rank-and-file link-ups, not with a view to substituting industrial action for tenants' struggle but to bring out the common interests and potential mutual support between groups artificially differentiated by the system.

On January 11, 1973 the All-Edinburgh Tenants' Association changed its name to the Edinburgh and District Tenants' Action Committee, re-emphasising the aim of fighting rent increases. Provision was made for affiliated TU branches, shop stewards' committees and similar groups (not including political organisations as such) to have one voting delegate each, while each Tenants' Association has two. We hope this will help to get it together in a more dynamic form, but we're still hamstrung by constitutionalism, which allows people to be alienated by their own previous decisions about office-bearers elected with no provision for recall, regular delegates whose absence leaves their area unrepresented, and the diverse interests of community involvement. (As an example of what the last can lead to, one delegate suggested that something we might act on at an All-Edinburgh level was wall-slogans, because people were concerned about them; he didn't mean we should use them as a method of propaganda, but that we should exert influence on Corporation and police to stamp them out!)

We have to combat the differences between tenants, e.g. 'respectable' versus 'problem' families, as well as between tenants and other sections of the class. Only their collective involvement, consciousness and confidence can guard against incipient bureaucracy - and replace those of us who are self-selected activists. In the meantime, we can raise some of the questions basic to the tenants' situation: not only why sudden and escalating rent increases, but why we have no choice about where and how we live; why the division between workers in the home and workers in the factory; how much (or little) sense it makes and what we can start doing about it.

L.W.

Muirhouse, Edinburgh

BOMBED OUT POLITICS

In spite of the fatuous assertion of Justice James that 'We do not have political trials in this country', the police hunt for the Angry Brigade, and the Prescott-Purdie and Stoke Newington 8 trials have provided an instructive picture of the political police at work. The bombings were made an excuse by the police for a series of legalised burglaries in which diaries, address books and papers belonging to people not accused of any offence were removed to swell the Special Branch files. Those arrested were held for long periods with no access to lawyers and were then remanded in conditions in which their guilt was effectively presumed before trial. When the trials finally took place the main charge was the all-embracing one of 'conspiracy' - a favourite for political prosecutions because of its vagueness and the scope it allows for guilt by association.

The reaction of the press was predictable. For a long period Fleet Street, although aware of the bombings, made no mention of them. When the Stoke Newington 8 were brought to trial the defence case, and the shifty evasiveness of the political police when cross-examined about their activities, went almost totally unreported. When the verdict was finally given, the vagueness of the prosecution's case and the jury's scepticism over much of the police evidence were obscured in a wave of press fantasy over 'international terrorist conspiracies' and 'sex orgies'.

The traditional left groups such as I.S. and the I.M.G. reacted to these events by the agile performance of political somersaults. The early police raids were greeted by a long period of total silence which, with the trial of the Stoke Newington 8, was replaced by opportunist phrasemongering. Thus Red Mole, which in its February 1971 issue had made cryptic suggestions that the Angry Brigade was being used by the police, was one of the loudest in calling for 'Solidarity with the Stoke Newington 8'.

However, for libertarians, a serious analysis of the politics of the Angry Brigade is essential, even though such an analysis will inevitably be met with accusations of 'lack of solidarity' (ignoring the fact that several of the Stoke Newington 8 were critical of the Angry Brigade tactics in court), and from the more inane of physical cowardice.

The tactic of bombing is defended by the Angry Brigade apologists as demonstrating the weakness of capitalism and the practicability of armed struggle at the present time. However in the present situation, in which the vast majority of the working class are not convinced of the need for the overthrow of capitalism, the most that could result from a campaign of armed struggle would be a successful coup d'état in which a small group imposed their concepts of socialism on the majority. (Of course a far more likely result would be an intensive campaign of repression, probably supported by large numbers of workers.)

Thus urban terrorism is a logical enough tactic for self-proclaimed leninist groups such as the German Baader-Meinhoff gang and the U.S. Weathermen, but it can have no place among those who see socialism as being brought about by the self-activity of the working class as a whole. (Those who argue that terrorism provokes over-reaction by the authorities, which then radicalises large numbers of people, only reveal still more clearly their manipulatory attitude to the working class.)

In the case of the Angry Brigade, its actions seem to be the end-products of the political perspective put forward in recent years in 'Frendz', 'Oz' and other underground journals. The apparently ultra-militant positions taken by articles in these papers on topics such as Northern Ireland masks a refusal to discuss the nature of a socialist society and a denial of the role of working class consciousness in bringing about a revolutionary situation.

Instead, the only criterion by which each group is judged is its militancy in support of its objectives. Women's Liberation, Gay Liberation, the IRA, Black Power, the NLF (and, in the case of the Weathermen, the Manson gang) are all supported uncritically, no attempt being made to see whether each struggle develops socialist consciousness or encourages reactionary ideas such as racism or nationalism. Instead, analysis becomes limited to meaningless incantations such as the Angry Brigade's 'Bogside, Clydeside, support the angry side'.

The reluctance of the supporters of this type of politics to analyse individual struggles often leads them to cover up for authoritarian and manipulative elements. For instance one pamphlet issued by the Stoke Newington 8 Defence Committee quotes the words 'On January 12, 1971 we held strikes and meetings, and we bombed Robert Carr'. The 'we' who called strikes and meetings was in fact the T.U.C. and the Communist Party.

History provides us with examples of where this type of confusion may lead. The most relevant is that of the Italian Futurist group of revolutionary artists of the 1910's who, in their preoccupation with violence and life style strongly resembled some to today's underground. In their earlier years they supported the working class movement. But when the movement disappointed their hopes of general holocaust they switched their allegiance to Italian militarism and Mussolini.

Solidarity is very far from being a pacifist organisation. However, the disastrous results of strategies of individual terrorism have been demonstrated time and time again. Although, as stated earlier, we are aware that any attempt to discuss these issues will inevitably be misrepresented, to avoid such a discussion would simply be an act of irresponsibility.

Roger S.

CONTROVERSY

In vol.VII, No.3 we published a critical review by Steve Place of the pamphlet 'The Right to Work? or The Fight to Live!'.* The author of the pamphlet here answers some of the points raised in Steve's review. We welcome further contributions to this discussion.

Basically, I found Steve's review too trad marxist. But just some specific points, before the general issues.

S.P. called claimants, women, blacks, gays and schoolchildren my 'revolutionary prodigies': this phrase is an insult to the people mentioned. What I do believe is that different sectors/groups 'beneath' the ruling class have different strengths and weaknesses, and that traditional 'class analysis' is hopelessly inadequate and unsubtle.

S.P. says that I consider domestic blue film shows to be examples of building the alternative society. Bullshit. I was only pointing out that sections of the working class 'are already into illicit communication at an advanced technological level'. The same equipment could be used to begin building revolutionary popular culture. Nobody is saying that home or church hall movies can finally compete with the BBC any more than domestic power tools and scrap technology can compete with £500 million steel complexes. The point is that we aren't totally powerless, and should use what we've got.

Revolutionary strategy which concentrates only on struggles within institutions may be good for a Leninist revolution in which everybody stays in their place and the linkages come from a Party. But for a libertarian revolution to transform every aspect of our lives, including the rigid institutional separations of politics, work, love, play, culture, etc. - for this kind of revolution we have to look for a complex dialectic between struggles within institutions and those by-passing them or alternatives to them or their breakdown altogether. Alternative society innovation is only irrelevant to class struggle and revolution for those with incredibly stunted notions of these latter two terms. Indeed, as the grip of marxism begins to loosen, we can begin to recognise much 'alternative society' thinking and living as the suppressed current of utopian socialism that Marx never tired of attacking, but which now needs to find re-integration. (See Murray Bookchin's superb 'Post-scarcity Anarchism', Ramparts Press, £1.50.)

* Obtainable from Francis McKenzie, 53 Kitchener Road, Selly Park, Birmingham 29. 10p.

Steve says I 'barely mention' industrial re-organisation. There are only six whole pages detailing the existence of 10 million MALEMPLOYED - in relation to which unemployment and unpaid work have to be discussed, or else claimants will fall into a defensive partial strategy. One chief way that the meaning of work can begin to be broached again (after a long period of suppression by those on left and right whose only yardstick is profits) is via non-official work carried out by those excluded from - or who refuse - official wage-slavery. Work isn't a bottomless pit for one's energies: the products or processes go through to other people and through to nature. Women, claimants and eco-freaks are in a position to see this. Many industrial workers can't. O.K., so there are other things 'workers' can see which those outside officially-designated 'production' can't see. Which brings me back to my initial point that different groups/sectors (areas/occupations/sexes/'races'/sub-cultures, etc.) have different strengths and weaknesses in terms of building a good society. Nor is there any position above society from which to make an exact balance sheet. Male industrial workers may have most POWER to 'get the Tories out', but (a) will they use it? or drift towards Social-Fascism in the long run? (b) if they do use it - will they tend to construct/support a mass Leninist Revolution (which strengthens the role-structure), or will they themselves live differently, anti-role, anti-mass, and make a joyous people's revolution on pluralist lines?

ANALYSING OUR SOCIETY

Steve says that my pamphlet doesn't take 'an objective look at the essential dynamics of capitalism'. I do in fact discuss (pages 10 to 12) several long-term trends which seem to me objective: new technologies, shifts in employment from socially necessary to less and less necessary work, etc. I may have failed. But I'm unconvinced that Steve's very traditional sole emphasis on the point of production and profits takes him any closer to an 'objective' grasp.

Just how does one analyse capitalist production? Let us distinguish five approaches. Solidarity has rightly gone beyond simple economic determinism based on profits and the market (1) to emphasise the contradictions within a plant (2). But to get a rounded picture we need to see workers as persons who (have to) work. How do people experience their work as one activity in their weekly round in their own environment? (3) We also need to look concretely at the goods and services and their use in the community. What counts as work? What doesn't? And why? (4) Finally a total analysis of production must include consideration of the by-products of production as they affect people and their environment. (5)

(3) + (4) + (5) together go beyond critiques/analyses of the economy and of bureaucracy to pose the questions of de-institutionalising work and of building new communities and a new environment.

Work is one kind of energy exchange in the total social economy of society, one form of practical-sensuous existence, one form of give and take. We constitute our selves/each other as humanity not just through work, but also through art, love and play. Marxism is ingrained with a whole series of bourgeois male chauvinist, scarcity assumptions. Indeed, we can see historical marxism and even more leninism as the natural ideologies (in the strict marxist sense!) of an alienated industrial proletariat. Cardan's whole attempt to replunge Marx's Unmoved Mover (The Economy + Technics) back into 'the totality of social life' is superb. But it has few practical consequences if we continue with S. P. to call the industrial side 'basic' to everything else, and the working class (by which Steve explicitly means industrial workers) 'the only section of society where revolutionary self-organisation can meaningfully be encouraged'.

Value is not just created in factories, making things. (If so, the factory thing-makers are indeed the source of all revolutionary potential.) Value is generated by activities and relationships-in-community as well as by making. As in so many other areas, Marx can expose reification in bourgeois value-systems, but proceeds to build his 'scientific' theory on bourgeois assumptions.

Likewise, to highlight only one kind of oppression (exploitation at work) is to acknowledge that ownership (or profits or bureaucratic order-giving) is magically different from other kinds of domination and authority. If we aim to abolish the very idea of ownership we do it by exposing it as one form of domination, replunging one person's or group's) appropriations into the bath of everyone's claims and counterclaims for using : not by by raising it on a pedestal which reflects the capitalist mystification of legal property, i.e. absolute and irrespective of use. Once ownership/exploitation is seen as one form of authority/submission we can see that power lies in the whole cycle of unequal give-and-take, in every sphere of life. Workers create property, which then enslaves them; deferrers create top status people, who then despise them; Party militants make political surplus value for a Centre, which then expels/betrays them; etc. Even the power of 'the Army' is given to it by soldiers who obey orders.

WHY NO REVOLUTION?

So why doesn't the industrial working class realise its power and collectively revolt?

(a) I.S. ascribes passivity to misapprehension of national political truths. The solution is seen in terms of pedagogies - not surprisingly with half the I.S. Executive being college lecturers! The Party as Skool.

(b) The Reichians point to the problem of deep psychological conditioning - with therapy-type answers. Again this is partially correct.

(c) But suppose we also see the worker as conditioner in the patriarchal nuclear family. Suppose we see the worker taking shit at work because he can still pass it on, via domestic colonialism and his status in the community. This status is a complex thing with many dimensions. White, male, skilled or professional, supervisory or custodial, middle-aged, house-owning are all attributes making for relative conservatism in a fundamental sense (though the workers concerned may be 'good militants', 'rank-and-file trade unionists' or 'Labour lefts', etc.). My partial 'resentfulness' towards these workers, which upsets Steve so much, is not 'arbitrary divisiveness' but an attitude shared by those blacks, women, claimants and young people to whom the shit is every day being passed on. Young workers/blacks/women/'unskilled' and/or low paid - these workers will tend to see themselves less as 'workers', and therefore be able to identify more with a general people's revolutionary movement, which is anti-work ethic.

A revolution based on high status workers and institution-based intellectuals can only be leninist: those who live authority in their everyday lives, be it in the home or the Skool or the club, will everywhere identify with it. Of course unions have different interests from workers, especially low-status workers. But we also need to ask to what extent they do partially reflect the interests and integration of white, male, skilled, middle aged workers. Blaming it all on the unions prohibits us from asking why unions are still followed. Perhaps because the stratum of workers I have talked about does have status to lose: a medium position in the overall class/caste/status oppression structure. Anti-claimant ideology isn't simply a mechanism used by the cunning, up-there enemy, Capital, to fool workers. Nor will it all come out in the wash of revolution. Like sexism and racism, anti-claimant ideology has to be fought here and now, wherever it arises. Like sexism and racism, too, the work ethic is class society in one of its aspects. It is in no way 'secondary' to the REAL enemy (Capital or the State).

Naturally, the trad left sees any challenge to the hegemony of the top working class stratum as fragmenting the left. But for many of us a certain lowering of the centre of status-gravity is the precondition for an ultimate non-oppressive revolutionary unity of all the non-ruling-class forces. The trad left will forgive male industrial workers a hundred picket line wolf-whistles or remarks against blacks or claimants by putting it all down to the 'problem' of false consciousness, the 'influence' of racist ideas. The imperfections of the workers' movement are taken notice of merely to strengthen the basic assumptions about the industrial worker ingrained in traditional theory. The response is 'I must write a good article about claimants/women/blacks for the people who 'ultimately count', those for whom Socialist Worker is written'. By contrast, the imperfections of the women's movement, black power, claimants' unions and young people's movements are taken as reasons not to take these movements seriously. The lack of success of the newer movements is also seized upon to 'prove' that they must always be marginal. The success of the workers'

movement is merely assumed. Don't we all know that the workers in Russia made a 'successful' revolution (which 'somehow' went wrong)?

There's a cartoon which shows the boss telling off the foreman who tells off the worker who tells off his missus when he gets home, who takes it out on the kid, who pulls the cat's tail. O.K., that's one part of the cycle. But the other half is just as real: the way in which real qualitative national/political/economic change is itself dependent on thorough-going sociological change at the level of personal relationships, in small groups, neighbourhoods or communities. Societies change as a whole, or, as in Russia, as a whole fail to change. There is no way in which we libertarians can somehow drag the tiller of a mass male industrial revolution over from leninism to anarchism, so long as we still share the leninist/marxist one-way deterministic understanding of society, seen as existing at the national-political-economic level first, and then only in the sphere of everyday life. Something isn't more real because it can be quantified (as profits) or reported in Central Committee minutes.

The whole of the authoritarian left is based on grievance-mongering against out-there powers (implication: join us and make us the out-there powers). Libertarians have to criticise our giving of our power out-there, not its wielding by 'them'; the failure of responsibility to organise directly, not the union sell-out; the credence given to Experts, not just the experts' claims. We have to realise that we are the source of all power, responsibility and wealth. We really are. And if we look on society in a thoroughly social way, and no longer through crudely political spectacles, we will see that anybody who talks of 'under Socialism' will remain an underling. Anyone who talks of 'in' a socialist society will be in something he/she cannot affect (a prison perhaps?). We are the creators of socialism and we do this by living differently. Socialism is nothing more than the sum total of the ways we socialise. The ways we socialise are real at all levels; any amount of marxism, even minus leninism and plus any amount of self-management politico-industrial knobs on, is still inadequate to understand this, as Steve's review shows.

K. P.

WHO WROTE IT? (see page 3)

The text was first published as an editorial in the North Vietnamese journal Nhan Dan (Dec. 21, 1969) in a special issue to commemorate Stalin's 90th birthday anniversary. Quoted in the Vietnam Courier, December 29, 1969.

CHRISTMAS IN MANAGUA

Nicaragua, a vale of tears in Central America, American semi-colony since the 1900's and the Somoza family's plantation since 1936, has lost its capital city. The destruction of Managua and the sequel that followed the earthquake are horrifying examples of the state of affairs in that republic of 2 million inhabitants.

An earthquake of similar intensity (6.5 Richter scale) hit Los Angeles, USA, in 1971, killing 70 people. But Managua lost 8,000 people and 20,000 lay wounded amid the ruins in a few minutes. A few dozen more were to be killed by Somoza's army later for 'looting' business property (a large part of which belongs to the Somoza family). The difference in casualties is not due to a propensity of Nicaraguans to die like flies (though thanks to the Somozas and the American companies in Nicaragua the mortality rate is one of the highest in Latin America) but because in Nicaragua any natural catastrophe is compounded by a chronically decayed social structure.

A few buildings, like the 16-storey Bank of America and the Hotel Intercontinental (which housed the American millionaire Howard Hughes) survived unscathed. Most homes and buildings collapsed like a house of cards. Even the entire backside of the Presidential Palace slipped into Managua lake, to the intense discomfort of dictator Somoza. A Scottish engineer who escaped from the ruins of the Balmoral, one of Managua's largest hotels, said that at least half the destruction was due to shoddy building. 'You could put your fist through most of these spit-and-chewing gum walls' he remarked.

The Somoza family, who own Nicaragua in partnership with American companies, own the industries which are directly connected with construction (i.e. cement and timber) and have controlled interests in the import of steel, building materials, etc. The Somoza's tentacles extend of course from construction and engineering concerns to insurance companies. The architectural shoddiness of Managua is a direct result of these facts. It wasn't for nothing that Anastasio 'Tachito' Somoza, the present dictator, sobbed wrathfully when he was told that shopkeepers were burning their ruined properties: they had been insured by Somoza against fires, not quakes! Martial law was introduced mainly to safeguard the Somoza's property, and 'Tachito' even threatened to evacuate the 400,000 Managuans at gun-point when looting became widespread.

The earthquake of December 23 uncovered the reality of the Somoza's rule. The natural disaster created a barbaric situation totally out of proportion to the earthquake. It was apparent that no facilities were available to cope with the situation. No roads, transportation or medical assistance existed. Somoza had to phone Nixon in order to get international aid, which came in huge quantities. Once it arrived, there was no way of

distributing it to the survivors of the ruined capital. Huge depots accumulated in the airports without anyone knowing what to do with them. Unperturbed by all this. Somoza's army began to show its usual initiative: supplies began to disappear, to be sold later in the black market. The aid proved a great 'aid' to the Somozan army - not a few fortunes have been made in the last few weeks.

The hypocritical charity provided by all the capitalist governments again uncovers the reality of today's exploitation. A natural crisis causes shrieks and whinings from all the 'humanitarians' who rule working people the world over. But the equally 'natural' state of exploitation, of wretched misery, squalor and backwardness suffered by the workers and peasants of a country like Nicaragua brings no tears to the eyes of Capital. This, of course, is also a 'natural' capitalist reaction. But even the 'humanitarian' side of their aid should be taken with a few grains of salt. Many of the factories which produce the small industrial output of Nicaragua are centered around Managua, and were left relatively undamaged. Capitalist production, being a 'natural' state of affairs (just as earthquakes) had to continue as soon as possible. The aid fitted perfectly into this. The biggest problem facing Somoza and the local and American capitalists was to get the fleeing workers back to the factories. Thousands of them had fled the city, with their families and belongings. Many of them had to pay between \$70 and \$100 to leave the city by car or truck. The average daily wage of a Managuan worker is \$1. Needless to say, thousands of workers have lost all their savings and property.

With the aid of the government, the capitalists began to run the plants again. Many businessmen then bought food stocks from Somoza to feed their workers. 'If they don't eat they won't work' a factory owner said. The aid that has trickled down to the workers guarantees that this will be so. In Nicaragua, as in many parts of the world today, the obverse is also true: if you don't work, you don't eat.

J. M.

SOLIDARITY AUTONOMOUS GROUPS

Clydeside : c/o Dan Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton

Dundee : c/o F. Browne, 252 Brook St., (upper flat)
Broughty Ferry, Dundee.

North West: c/o J. Walker, 14 Clare Rd., Levenshulme, Manchester 19

Oxford : c/o 4 St Barnabas St., Oxford.

Swansea : c/o D. Lamb, 16 Uplands Crescent, Swansea.

ON THE SOLIDARITY WAVELENGTH

In our last issue we began an account of the international repercussions of SOLIDARITY-type ideas, recording what had happened in Sweden. In this issue, we turn to the very different environment of Japan.

The earliest contacts of SOLIDARITY with the revolutionary movement in Japan occurred in 1961, at the height of the activities of the 'Committee of 100' (the direct action wing of the anti-Bomb movement). SOLIDARITY supporters were very active, at the time, in that body's Industrial Sub-committee.

During 1961 and 1962 delegates from radical groups in Zengakuren (the All-Japan Federation of Autonomous Student Associations) frequently visited Britain. They established contact with us, as a political tendency active in the struggle against war, yet simultaneously seeking to explain its social origins and implications. The leaflet 'Against All Bombs' produced by the Industrial Sub-committee, in Russian, and distributed in the streets of Moscow during the World Disarmament Congress in July 1962 (to the accompaniment of virulent denunciations in Pravda)* was translated almost immediately into Japanese and widely circulated in Japan. Solidarity vol.II, No.6 carried a full account of the activities, in Russia, of some of the Japanese comrades with whom we had established contact. Under the title 'A Maoist Party in Action' volume III, No.12 of Solidarity carried an article analysing the role of the Peking-oriented Japanese Communist Party during the proposed general strike of April 1964.

These early contacts were with self-styled marxist groups, all more or less leninist, all extremely dogmatic, all seeking to create their own Zengakuren 'fronts' and bitterly engaged in factional disputes with one another. Their critical attitude to the developing libertarian movement in Western Europe is perhaps best summarised in the following extract from an article by Kan-ichi Kuroda, one of the founding members of the Japanese Revolutionary Communist League: National Committee, and for a long time its leading spokesman. The article was published in the Japanese journal 'Criticisms and Perspectives' No.4 (1965).

'Revolutionary "socialists" who (in Western Europe) form the extreme left wing aim at overcoming bureaucracy through counterposing "socialism" (with a model of "direct control of industry by workers") to stalinism The heart of the problem is

* For the full text of the leaflet, in English, and an account of some of the fall-out, see Solidarity vol.II, No.5.

what would be the organisational basis of such "socialism" and what could be done now to bring it about? In short is it really possible to bring "socialism" about with a theory of the mass movement after the fashion of Rosa Luxemburg or the syndicalists - instead of striving for organisational tactics aimed at dismembering, in a revolutionary manner, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the trade unions under their influence...'

This attitude to libertarian socialism possibly explains the fate of the earliest Solidarity texts to be translated into Japanese. Realising the importance of such events as the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Kronstadt, or May 1968 - yet unable to view them through non-leninist spectacles - some peculiar hybrids emerged: Hungary '56 (by A. Anderson) was translated into Japanese by HIROTA Hiroshi and OGAWA Tadashi and published in 1966 by Gendai-schicho sha (Tokyo, Bunkyo-ku, Kohinata 1/24/8) a trotskyoid group. We have been informed that our original text has been quite heavily 'edited' but have been unable to verify this. The introductory assessment to the Japanese edition is quite schizoid. The book 'vividly describes the Hungarian Revolution, estimating it positively'. On the other hand 'it fails to estimate correctly the revolutionary current of Lenin and Trotsky'. Anderson is denounced as seeing the economic systems of West and East as 'systems of the same type, geared to oppression and exploitation' and as 'failing to grasp the relation between revolutionary organisations and workers councils'. The introduction stresses that 'it is through factional struggles and united fronts of revolutionary organisations that class consciousness is deepened and developed'. We are informed that the power of the councils is the supreme form of the united front of the working class'. Amen!

Paris, May 1968 (by M. Brinton) was translated into Japanese by MUTO Ichiyo and published in 1969 (again heavily edited, we understand) by the Unita Shoten Bookshop.

The issue of Kronstadt seems to have reached Japan largely via Solidarity pamphlets - and only within the last two years. Kronstadt 21 (by V. Serge) was translated by HAMADA Taizo and published in 1971 by Gendai-no Me (the Japanese equivalent of New Left Review). The Kronstadt Commune (by Ida Mett), translated by AONO Kazuto and HATA Yoichi, was published later the same year by Rokusai sha (Tokyo, Chiyoda-ku, Kanda, Surugadai 3-1). As far as can be judged by notes and comments, the translators of these 2 volumes seem to have been trotskyists of a sort - but of a species not encountered in the West. The texts are followed by Leon Trotsky's own writings on the subject, the imputation being that this somehow finally disposes of the matter. Readers are however at least offered an option. We were not informed, at the time, of either of these translations - our attention being drawn to them by Japanese comrades closer to us ideologically.

In 1971, contact was established with certain libertarian revolutionaries in Japan (via Hiroshi Ozeki, c/o Muramatsu, 1-38 Hiyoshi-cho, Morigushi, Osaka) and a fruitful correspondence ensued. A Japanese edition

of 'The Bolsheviks and Workers Control 1917-1921' appeared in September 1972 (translated by Ozeki and published by San-ichi Books in a paperback edition). Some 8000 copies have already been sold and a second edition is due out shortly. The text included our statement 'As We See It'. The Japanese trotskyists have had to launch a full-scale attack on the volume explaining that 'the Revolution did not come to an end with the Kronstadt revolt but with Stalin's purges' and resurrecting Kollontai's recantations. If this is all they can muster...

We were recently delighted to hear that our pamphlets on the 'Workers Councils', on 'Revolutionary Organisation' and on 'The Meaning of Socialism' will very shortly be available in Japan - all produced by groups of liber-

モーリス・ブント著 尾関弘訳

ロシア革命の幻想

ボルシェヴィキと労働者管理

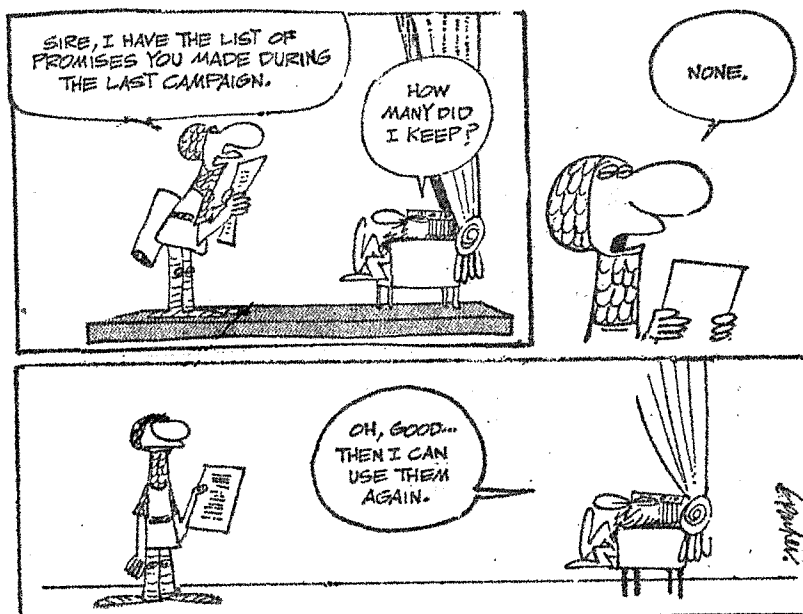
1917
1918
1919
1920
the Bolsheviks & Workers' Control
1921
solidarity

われわれの視点 (AS WE SEE IT)

1 世界中の大多数の人たちは、自分たちの生活に直接に深くかわる問題のいかなる決定をも自分たちでできないでいる。彼らは、生産手段を所有、管理し、富を貯え、法を制定し、国家機構全体を使うことによって自らの地位を不朽にし、補強しようとする者にたいして、ただ自分たちの労働力を売るだけである。

2 前世紀のあいだに、労働者の生活は改善された。しかし、生活水準の改善、生産手段の国有化、労働者階級を代表しているとわめきたてている党権力の強化がいかになされていても、働く者としての労働者の地位は基本的に変わらなかった。人類の大半を占める労働者は、生産外の自由も与えられなかった。洋の東西を問わず、資本主義は非人間的社会を現存させている。そこでは、大多数の人たちが労働を支配されており、消費とレジャーでこ

tarian inspiration. There is possibly a moral to this tale. Our own political evolution has - in a delayed and distorted way - probably been reflected in the sort of people who found something of value in what we had to say. Linguistic problems and the considerable differences in cultural traditions at first hampered the establishment of working relations with comrades in Japan who were genuinely 'on the SOLIDARITY wavelength'. We feel these have now largely been overcome, and that as Japan rapidly becomes one of the most modern and advanced capitalist countries our ideas will be found to be of increasing relevance there.



WORK-INS AND THE RIGHT TO WORK (continued from page 30)

The lesson of these occupations for us is that every struggle has to be rigorously analysed in terms of what it contributes to the autonomy and self-confidence of the working class. To applaud the form is not enough, otherwise we might end up in the same historical cul-de-sac as an earlier generation which uncritically advocated the form of trade unionism without analysing its content. Finally the Stibbes affair shows (as does the Fakenham occupation) that there never can be, in our terms, a 'successful' end to an occupation as long as it leaves the ownership and management of the means of production in society as a whole untouched.

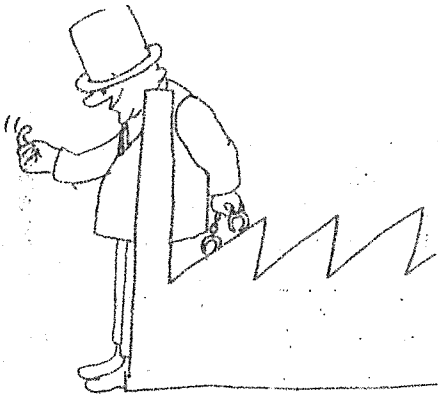
John D.
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

IT'S THE SAME THE WHOLE WORLD OVER... GENERAL MOTORS HOLDENS (AUSTRALIA)

General Motors-Holdens (GMH) has a dominating position in the Australian motor industry, with over 30% of the total domestic sales and a healthy export trade, notably to South East Asia. It is one of the pearls of the General Motors Empire.

For several reasons the history of struggles at Holdens is of interest to workers in Britain, particularly those employed by Vauxhall and other companies owned by General Motors. Firstly, there are close parallels between what happened down under and what has happened at Luton and Ellesmere Port. These make it clear that the actions of the company and the collaboration of the trade union leaders are not isolated aberrations but standard, world-wide operating procedure. Secondly, there are many lessons and ideas which the experience of Australian workers can give us.

Although the Company is much older, the story of Holdens really began after World War II, with the production of the first all-Australian car. In 1949 a grand total of 7,725 Holdens were being produced by 8,361 workers, that is less than one vehicle per man. By 1952 the annual production per worker exceeded 3 cars. By 1957 it had reached $5\frac{1}{2}$, and by 1963 22,664 workers produced 183,987 vehicles, that is $8\frac{1}{2}$ vehicles each.



Side by side with this massive increase in exploitation - and essential to it - the Company, along with Ford Australia, reached an agreement with the ultra-reactionary Vehicle Builders Union. In return for the Company's undertaking to 'request non-tradesmen to join the VBU as a condition of employment' the union signed a 24 clause agreement which gave away the right to hold shop meetings and banned strikes unless there was a 'secret' ballot for which the Company would nominate observers and whose results it could 'check' through its own auditors. Production workers in the industry were handed over, bound hand and foot. All

the VBU leadership were interested in was to achieve the union check-off system, where the Company would deduct union dues directly from the wage packet, and so relieve the union of the effort of actually having to collect subscriptions themselves. The VBU has consistently opposed rank and file action and organisations, and has managed to delay the emergence of Joint Shop Stewards Committees for many years.*

What this agreement meant in practice was shown in February 1958 when Albert Crump, an AEU shop steward at Fishermens Bend, was sacked for holding a lunchtime shop meeting inside the plant. All the tradesmen stopped work, but the VBU managed to keep its men scabbing. The skilled men were out for 17 days without success.**

With the Australian motor manufacturing industry sewn up in this way, it is not surprising that wages and conditions there are relatively bad, even compared with other Australian industries. For example the

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It is interesting to compare the Holden experience with Vauxhall, where the Company only recognised two unions - the National Union of Vehicle Builders (now amalgamated with the TGWU) and the AEU. In return for their sole rights, these unions signed an agreement of which point 7 stated: 'It was agreed that in the light of the Company not being a member of the Employers' Federation, and in the particular circumstances of the Company, no full or formal shop steward system or Committee could fairly be operated'. Our emphasis. (See 'Truth About Vauxhall' by Ken Weller, Solidarity Pamphlet No.12). Instead, the unions encouraged a system of tame, neutered Management Advisory Committees which ensured that wages and conditions at Vauxhall, known in the trade as the 'cabbage patch', remained the worst in the industry. The situation only improved during 1964/65, due to the rise of shop steward militancy in the Paint Shop at Luton and Ellesmere Port, a militancy, needless to say, bitterly opposed by the officials.

**

This episode invites comparison with the struggles at Ford Britain of January 1957, when Johnnie McLoughlin was sacked, of October 1962, when Bill Francis was sacked, and of June 1971, when John Dillon was dismissed. All were leading militants. All were sacked for holding meetings inside the plant. All were part of a preemptive strike decided by management, at the highest levels, to weaken job organisation.

Metal Trades award of November 1971 is enormously better.* With these bad wages and conditions combined with a man-killing tempo of work, it is not surprising that over 70% of the production workers at Holdens are young immigrants.

The general structure of the trade union movement in Australia is very similar to that in Britain. In many cases the unions there originated with and remained part of British unions until quite recently. For example the Australian AEU was a subdivision of the British AEF. Unofficial disputes are common, with Australians having one of the highest strike rates in the world.

Craft divisions are much stronger in Australia. The divisions between skilled and non-skilled are wider. Australian employers in general, and GMH in particular, have not been slow to exploit this fact. Factory organisations are often split along union lines, with more than one shop stewards' committee in a plant.

The Communist Party is quite strong in some trade unions, with a number of officials in some of them, for example the AEU. It has had quite a big influence at GMH, particularly amongst the craft workers, where some leading militants are Party members. However, as always, the industrial needs of the workers have been subordinated by the C.P. to the

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	METAL TRADES	VEHICLE INDUSTRY
Call back	Minimum of 4 hours pay	Minimum of 3 hours pay
Meal allowance	1st meal \$1.50 2nd meal \$1.00 Subsequent meal \$1.50	1st meal \$1.00 2nd meal \$0.50 Subsequent meal \$1.00
Dirt allowance	9 cents/hour	8 cents/hour
Confined places	11.5 cents/hour	10 cents/hour
Hot places	9 cents (115°F - 130°F) 11.5 cents (over 130°F)	8 cents (115°F - 130°F) 10 cents (over 130°F)
Leading hands	(3-10 men) \$5.00 week (11-12 ") \$7.50 week (over 20) \$10 per week	\$3.30 per week \$5.80 per week \$8.50 per week

Also, where more than one disability exists, the employee under the Metal Trades Award, is now entitled to payment for each condition, e.g., if a job is both confined and dirty, the payment is 20.5 cents per hour.

electoral needs of its officials and to the political needs of the Communist Party. The Party identifies the interests of the T.U. apparatuses with those of job organisation when in fact they are opposed. It is an ironic fact that despite lip-service to the contrary the C.P. and other trad militants have often been a transmission belt for union loyalty and its concomitants: union rivalries and conflicts between workers.

A good example of the C.P.'s attitude is shown in the pamphlet 'Golden Holden' by John Arrowsmith and George Zangalis, published by the C.P.-owned International Bookshop in 1965. In this pamphlet the main criticism of GMH was that it was American-owned, as if an Australian boss would be any better. The solution advocated for the problems of GMH workers was - would you believe - nationalisation on the pattern of the British Labour Government's takeover of the steel industry!

THE 1964 DEFEAT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In October 1964, following a series of walkouts at the Fishermen's Bend engine plant near Melbourne, matters came to a head when at an unofficial mass meeting largely engineered by the C.P. the men decided to strike in support of a £3 wage increase. The strike was supported by the other factories and lasted 4 weeks. It was bitterly attacked by the leadership of the VBU who, not only collaborated with the employers, as usual, but even refused to allow 'their' members to hold meetings (for example, at the Pagewood Assembly plant, in NSW). Over £70,000 was raised by other workers to support the struggle, often by shop or factory levies of 10/- a week.

The dispute was marked by a massive witch-hunt by the media, State and Federal governments, the Democratic Labour Party and the VBU. David Hegland,* managing director of GMH, made the position of the Company clear on October 20 when he told the unions that he would 'fight to the finish' rather than grant any wage increases.

In a situation of total confusion, due to a lack of preparation for the strike-breaking role of the VBU and an unwillingness to embarrass T.U. 'lefts', the Australian Council of Trade Unions were allowed to hold a ballot. This proved rather reminiscent of the Pilkington strike ballot: hundreds of workers found they had more than one vote, while others didn't have one at all. Most workers didn't bother to vote. The result was a two-to-one vote for a return to work on the Company's terms.

* Hegland is well known to Vauxhall workers. His history is interesting. He was managing director G.M. Copenhagen 1956-58, G.M. South Africa 1958-1961, GMH 1962-65 and Vauxhall 1966-70.

As a result of this fiasco hundreds of GMH production workers ceased paying their union subscriptions. On the track there developed a general and justified attitude of hostility towards the unions. The positive side of this situation could have been used as a basis to create a factory organisation truly controlled by the rank and file. But the blinkered union loyalists of the C.P. could see no perspective other than rule book legalisms.

The Company was not slow to take advantage of the workers' defeat. The tea break was abolished, the speed of the line increased, and all breakdowns or other stoppages of the track were made up for by further increases in speed without additional workers. Timings of jobs were established by production foremen acting as pacemakers. Workers were even timed going to the lavatory. As a worker at Fishermen's Bend reported about going to the bog (see 'Golden Holden', p.35):

'First you must wait in the line until you were relieved. Then when you break off, the foreman keeps an eye on you. This is not hard to do as all the toilet blocks are elevated. Anyone there is in full view of everybody round about. That is embarrassing enough, but if you happen to remain in the toilet block for more than four minutes, the foreman may come up and knock on the door which, by the way, is cut short to leave your feet and head exposed at all times. Years ago, I had seen Charlie Chaplin's film 'Modern Times'. It made me laugh until I cried, but it never occurred to me that somebody would really work out and implement such a method of spying into a man's privacy. When relief men are not available, workers must go through agony. The line must be kept moving and all the men tied to it...'*

In 1966 the craftsmen - mainly in the AEU - at the Elizabeth Body Plant (South Australia) organised a Shop Stewards Committee and produced a monthly paper, the 'Elizabeth Engineer'. This was distributed free throughout the plant. One could make many criticisms of this journal. It had illusions (albeit steadily decreasing ones) in the 'left wing' leadership of the AEU. But it played an essential role in building up a movement capable of autonomous action, and is still going strong. The example was followed in other GMH factories. In 1967, despite determined opposition by the trades unions, the first Combined Shop Stewards Committee was set up at Elizabeth.

The Elizabeth Engineer started a number of campaigns, notably one to nearly double the over award payments, to 30% above the national award.

* G.M. and many other companies seem obsessed with lavatories. What the Freudian significance of this is I don't know, but the bog is one of the few places in a factory where workers have a bit of privacy. They are often used as a venue for informal meetings. Perhaps this explains why G.M. were caught 'bugging' works lavatories in Detroit in 1964.

It campaigned for the abolition of the penalty clauses.* A series of short stoppages was carried through in the late sixties. Although the objectives were not achieved these struggles contributed to the development of job organisation. The attitude of the trade union officials remained consistent: every time there was a mass meeting called by the rank and file, the officials would work overtime and issue notices instructing (generally unsuccessfully) 'their' members not to attend.

At the same time a sniping campaign against GMH was continued. Some of the methods adopted were quite amusing. In July 1969 Alf Brown, a steward at Elizabeth, on night shift, found that his holiday money wasn't ready. So he rang the Personnel Manager at his home, in the early hours of the morning, to find out why this was so. He got his money. One wonders if Vauxhall workers have their bosses private numbers. This might improve communication in industry, in a similar way.

* These fined workers 2½% of the over-award for each hour or part of an hour absent from work. This was on top of their loss of pay, and a 50% forfeiture for two days. In fact, a scheme close to the penalty clauses was proposed at Ford and Vauxhall in Britain in 1970/71. An example of how these penalty clauses operated was when GMH workers had a stoppage in protest against the imprisonment of Clarrie O'Shea, under the Australian equivalent of the Industrial Relations Act. GMH workers were penalised to the tune of \$250,000.



THE 1970 SIT-IN

On March 4, 1970 production workers at the South Australian factories of GMH were laid off for one day due to an unofficial strike of railwaymen. On March 10 a lunch-hour mass meeting of production workers in the Body Shop at Elizabeth was held. As usual it was opposed by the VBU. 1,500 workers nevertheless attended. This meeting put forward a series of demands which included payment of lost wages due to the lay-off, 30% plus payment, a 35-hour week and an extra week's holiday.

The men's anger turned to fury when they received their wage packets on March 12. Sure enough, they had lost one day's pay, plus the bonus under the penalty clause. The men were not a little niggled by the fact that lost production had been recouped by the Company by the simple expedient of speeding up the line for the rest of the week! After dinner the men in the Body Shop downed tools but remained in the shop. Everyone was taken by surprise.

Almost by chance the workers had found themselves engaged in a sit-in. For once they decided to negotiate directly on their own behalf. A deputation was sent to meet the management. The demands formulated by the men engaged in the sit-in, which was also a continuous mass meeting, were:

1. Need for production to stop for morning tea.
2. Workers' control of the speed of the line.
3. Complaints of arrogance shown by production foremen.
4. No restriction of time taken in toilets.
5. Complaints of production foremen working on line.
6. No victimisation of members involved in the dispute.

('A story of a Historic Struggle' published by the
State Council of the AEU, South Australia.)

The first reaction of the management, taken by surprise, was to say that meetings inside the plant were prohibited by Company rules. They stated that there could be no negotiations of any kind until the men started work. However, realising that the situation was explosive, and caught with their trousers down in a situation where they badly needed production (due to heavy demand) they quickly changed their tune. The men's representatives informed the management that while they (the management) were considering the demands, 'anyone scabbing would be carried out on a stretcher'. The management instructed the few men still working to stop.

The workers went home that evening as normal. They returned to continue the sit-in the following morning at 7.30 am. When Harrison, State Secretary of the VBU, turned up to address the men, his advice was for the men to return to work. GMH, he claimed, would never negotiate under duress. He got a very hostile reception. The meeting decided it had no confidence in Harrison and decided to approach Bro. Gnatenko, senior AEU steward - the craftsmen were still at work! - for help and joint action. They went

and physically bore him off to their meeting. Harrison, who was still hanging around, threatened Gnatenko with disciplinary action for interfering in the affairs of the VBU. The AEU men then said they would strike if this happened. The sit-in continued.

At twelve o'clock the deputation of about 20 men returned from negotiating. They went to see Gnatenko, who was now back at work, for advice. A foreman tried to bar their way. He was allowed aside and Gnatenko was again 'forcibly' carried to the men's meeting. The Personnel Manager then ordered Gnatenko, on pain of instant dismissal, to return to his workbench. Gnatenko was 'prevented' from going by the production workers.

GMH then caved in. They first accepted Gnatenko's presence at the negotiations and then offered a number of concessions. These were:

1. The line to stop for the morning tea-break.
2. The line would only be speeded up in the presence of a shop-floor representative.
3. No more timing of workers going to the lavatory.
4. No foremen to work on the line.
5. The Company would not pay workers for the lay-off time, but would arrange for the overtime to be available to make up the lost money.

The men thought that this was the best that could be obtained at this stage, and voted to end the sit-in. The reaction of the State Secretary of the VBU was to say that the demands which had been won were not official! The men replied: 'we couldn't care less, one way or the other, whether the demands have been "officially" won or not. We challenge any Company official to come out and take them away from us'. Needless to say, none were forthcoming. ('Story of a Historic Struggle')

Even then the VBU did not give up. With the collaboration of management they called a secret selective meeting of VBU stewards at Elizabeth on March 19. Stewards likely to oppose weren't informed. The aim of this meeting was to oppose the call for financial support for the workers involved in the sit-in, and to disassociate the VBU stewards from the Combined Shop Committee. The next day, when word of the meeting got around, the VBU loyalists got their comeuppance. By chance there was a mass meeting called by the VBU officials. This exploded in their faces, and the workers pelted the officials with grapes, bread, salami, tomatoes, and anything else they could put their hands to. The officials were then thrown off the platform. The meeting was taken over by the rank and file, who then decided to support the Body Shop men financially and to collaborate with the Combined Shop Stewards Committee.*

* Perhaps this method of dealing with meetings dominated by officials is another lesson for British car workers?

1970 marked an important breakthrough at Holdens. But it would be a mistake to imagine that everything in the garden is now lovely. Far from it. The struggle has only just begun. For example in November 1971 AEU members in a section stopped work in support of a worker who had been sacked for being unable to keep up with the work tempo. Their struggle was broken by the willingness of some VBU members to scab. There is fortunately a tendency for this sort of thing to decline.

CONCLUSIONS

The experience at Holdens has many lessons for British motor workers. Firstly, that the role of trade union officials is universal and that it is not simply a question of 'good' officials replacing 'bad' ones. The record shows that they behave in fundamentally the same way. Secondly, the Holden experience shows the reactionary and divisive character of loyalty to the union, rather than to job organisation. This 'loyalty' which penetrates right down to the shop-floor, often through the medium of militants - C.P. or otherwise - has retarded the development of a rank and file movement capable of taking industrial struggle to a higher plane.

This article has aimed to show both the international coherence of the industrial policy of General Motors and the consequent fact that workers in widely separated countries are beginning to become aware of where their real interests lie. They are beginning to grasp which demands are important and that it is not simply a question of getting a larger slice of the same rotten cake. Even the slogan of 'parity' should be seen for what it is: an extremely limited demand. Equality of exploitation is nothing to write home about.

Workers are becoming aware that they need a strong, independent and united rank and file organisation, directly dominated by workers, and that there is a need to link up these bodies on an ever-wider scale. They are becoming conscious of the fact that power in the shop over such things as speed of the line, manning, and hiring-and-firing are crucial (rather than the simple, regular increment of wages, which leaves the power of the boss and his allies in the trade unions unchallenged).

Socialist industrial militants must help in every way towards the development of a conscious challenge by workers to the whole filthy system. What is often forgotten is that a socialist industrial programme is not simply about more, but about the destruction of capitalism and the creation of a socialist society.

M. F.

We hope that readers and sympathisers, particularly in Australia, will make every effort to get this article into the hands of G.M. workers, from whom we would, of course, welcome any comments, criticisms ... or polite suggestions!

WORK-INS AND THE RIGHT TO WORK

On December 24, 1972 the labour correspondent of the 'Sunday Times' wrote "If 1971 was the year the work-in was born, 1972 has been the year the work-in actually worked. So that it seems reasonable to assume, now that the technique has become credible and almost respectable, that the next 12 months will bring more widespread factory occupations."

When the capitalist press can cheerfully contemplate the increased activity of workers in taking over, even temporarily, the means of production, it is clear that something, somewhere, has gone radically wrong. As the above quote makes quite clear 1972 saw the 'victory' of the U.C.S.-style work-in over the sit-in type of occupation. A 'victory', that is, in terms of its predominance as a form of action. I don't propose to analyse the advantages of the latter over the former. This has already been done (see Solidarity Vol VI No.12) but I would like to draw attention to the way this form of struggle (with its attendant slogan: 'the right to work') has over the last six months become linked to a new development: management-led work-ins. Up here in the North there have been at least a couple of these 'occupations' which illustrate what I mean.

At Transtec Engineering we were invited, via an anonymous call to a comrade in London, to come and view the 'occupation' ourselves at a place called Craghead (Co. Durham). After arranging a meeting with a worker over the phone we went to the factory (which is in the old pit-baths and has yet to be developed) where we discovered that not only was our contact the foreman but that the occupation had been organised on the initiative of the management! The story was that the Managing Director called Derek Russell and a partner had started up the factory only 3 months before on limited capital but expecting development grants from the Local Council and COSIRA (Council for Small Industry in Rural Areas). They had patented two inventions, a ship's door and a sort of fork-lift for loading containers for which there have been a large number of orders, particularly from the German Federal Republic *. However, the Local Council grant was delayed and the firm was a few days late in paying back a loan to COSIRA and so COSIRA called in the liquidator.

Being an enterprising lad, Russell told the men the story and said that they were all in it together fighting for 'the right to work'. He advocated an 'occupation' which would be run by himself, the foreman and another worker (a friend of the foreman). The thirty or so men, all from Craghead itself (unlike the occupation's self-appointed committee), and nearly all redundant miners before Russell came along, supported the management's suggestion. This was in October.

Since that time the only new developments have been that the men were refused dole because the Labour Exchange said that by participating in the work-in they were not available for work, and though we, for obvious reasons decided not to get involved here, we have since learned that the U.C.S. Shop Stewards Committee (i.e. Jimmy Airlie) have decided to send someone to "see how they can advise and help us"

*It will interest dockers and other cargo-handling workers that Transtec has developed a container-loading machine called Konpak, with which it claimed one man can load/unload a full-sized container with palletized goods in one hour. Both the nationalized National Freight Corporation and the German container industry have been very interested in it.

(Russell, Newcastle Evening Chronicle, Nov. 20, 1972). The local Labour M.P. David Watkins who 'was greatly impressed by the loyalty and spirit of the Transtec men' has also 'promised his support'. Presumably he found, like us, that the only thing 'revolutionary' at Transtec is the container packing machine they have built.

The description of this 'occupation' almost presents its own analysis. The advocates of 'workers control' (as opposed to workers' self-management of production), 'enlightened' management, the Labour 'left' and the CP are united in proclaiming the 'right' of the worker to continue working subject to the same exploitation and control. This kind of 'struggle' as with that at U.C.S. only serves to mystify people even further and the real questions of who shall own and manage the means of production are never raised.

This struggle was almost exactly paralleled at Sealand Hovercraft (Millom, Cumberland) where a management-led work-in of 81 workers ended just before Christmas when support for the firm was promised from other sectors of the capitalist world (in this case Vickers), as M.F. wrote in Vol. 7 No. 2, "the technique of occupation is certainly no cure-all" though the danger at Transtec and Sealand has not been bureaucratic manipulation of workers by **their** so-called representatives but that occupations could help capitalism solve its problems on the level of authority relations.

Whilst Transtec and Sealand are only small firms and it is unlikely that such a ploy could or would be used by management in large firms, work-ins can be of use to capitalism in other ways. At another Durham factory, Stibbes (textile machinery), 80 of the 300 workers have carried out a very militant sit-in against redundancy for 5 months which ended just before Christmas. It was hailed as a victory for the workers by the local press and some militants. But what was the content of this victory? The firm had 'loaned' the plant plus £3000 to only 14 of the occupiers, who are (in their own words) 'directors' of a new enterprise set up to exploit double that number of their comrades. Stibbes have further promised them £10,000 worth of work in the next three months. Thus a militant sit-in to prevent removal of machinery has been converted into a work-in which has solved all the company's problems. Their loss-making factory has been rationalised with a vengeance (only 10% of the workforce survive). The effort put in by the workers should enable the firm to advertise the plant for sale. Hitherto, in the words of Stibbes Chairman, Commander Henry Pasley-Tyler "the trouble (has been) that we have had great difficulties in selling the factory. This exercise will at least show that there is a working unit here, on which someone can build" (Evening Standard, December 8, 1972). Need I say more?

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