

# solidarity

FOR WORKERS' POWER

## ABERDEEN



Consolidated Pneumatic  
TOOL COMPANY LIMITED

work at c.p.t.

germany : k.a.p.d.

housing in aberdeen

technology and workers' control

no. 3.

6<sup>D</sup>



## EDITORIAL

In the late sixties, there has been an upsurge in revolutionary politics which has resulted in many more publications of a socialist nature being put on sale at factories and colleges. Solidarity differs fundamentally from all other socialist magazines as Solidarity politics differ from all other "socialist" politics. It is often said by Solidarists that Marxists call us anarchists and anarchists call us Marxists. This paradox is a result of the inability of traditional revolutionaries to understand anything which falls out with their own outdated categories. The organisation of and the function of a Solidarity magazine clearly shows the differences between the aims and principles of a Solidarity group and those of other left wing political groupings.

The anarchist movement in Britain has, in the last ten years, consistently failed to make any significant contribution in the communication of revolutionary ideas. "Freedom", the anarchist weekly, throws its pages open to anyone who cares to contribute. The good articles which do occasionally appear in "Freedom" are completely lost in a forum of views ranging from individualism to syndicalism and from pacifism to political terrorism.

A worker buying a "Freedom" is faced with a mystifying morass of differing views, all of which are printed in London, a long way from Aberdeen.

On the other hand, the Trotskyist publications do present some unanimity of opinion within the different journals. The tone and content of these journals is completely different from that of Solidarity. The writers for Socialist Worker and Newsletter find it possible to separate principles from tactics, they advocate continual struggles for "transitional demands" which cannot be achieved without the collapse of capitalism. Their confused logic is that once the working class realises the uselessness of fighting for these concessions within capitalism, they will support the revolutionary party to overthrow the system. Once supporting the revolutionary party, the workers will find themselves once more in a bureaucratic structure very similar to capitalism.



In this structure the ordinary supporter has very little control. Again the Trotskyist publications are produced centrally by people who have no idea of the local conditions and attitudes.

Solidarity never hides its politics we are Revolutionary socialists and we do not believe that struggles for sixpence an hour or for left-wing trade union officials will bring socialism and we say so. We fight anything which obscures from the working class their revolutionary role. We do not intend the membership of Solidarity to become immense, we urge workers to form their own organisations within the factories to fight for self-management. We believe that individuals should have control over the decisions that daily affect their lives.

Solidarity magazines are a reflection of our views and organisation. They are, for the most part, produced and sold locally by people who have shared the experiences of and know the conditions of other workers in their own areas. We see the role of the magazine as that of an interchange of experiences in struggle and descriptions of work between workers. We do not see the area covered by the magazine being expanded as there is a definite need for all our energies and resources being used to serve the workers in the Aberdeen area. We print what is most relevant to this function, occasionally articles will appear from other parts of the country when the lessons from these other struggles are relevant to Aberdeen workers. We welcome letters from workers in Aberdeen describing their struggles and conditions of work or merely commenting on the magazine.

6

APPEAL FOR MONEY

"Solidarity" (North London) is engaged in producing a 70,000 word paperback on 'The Bolsheviks and Workers Control 1917-21'. To finance this they need loans of money, which will be acknowledged and repaid. Send these to: H. Russell; 73A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent. The pamphlet will cost approx 5/-.

This pamphlet deals in great depth with the question, and is an important contribution to the present debate on workers control.

STILL AVAILABLE!

ABERDEEN SOLIDARITY No 1 contents; Trawl Strike, Stoneywood, Tenants, France 68.

ABERDEEN SOLIDARITY No 2. contents; Trawl settlement, Mugiemoss strike, sheet-metal dispute, Alienation & workers control.

Order these (10d. post paid) from N. Roy, 138, Walker Road, Aberdeen.

# INSIDE CONSOLIDATED PNEUMATIC

"The humanity of the wage-earner is more and more attacked by the nature and conditions of modern work, by the oppression and alienation the worker undergoes in production. In this field there can be no lasting reform, there can only be a constant struggle." (Paul Cardan, in Modern Capitalism and Revolution).

## THE COMPANY AND THE FACTORY

The Consolidated Pneumatic Tool Company, a division of Chicago Pneumatic, is an American-owned firm of compressor manufacturers with factories in America, Britain and Europe. As the result of a merger they recently became linked with the Caterpillar group, also American owned.

The firm in Britain has its headquarters in London, and three factories; one in Woolwich, the others in Aberdeen, and Fraserburgh, 40 miles to the north. The actual compressors are made in Fraserburgh, and the attachments, -eg, -drills, wrenches, rivetters as well as concrete vibrators, are made in the Aberdeen factory, which also does contract work for I.B.M. and Cummins. Over 1100 are employed in Fraserburgh, while there are about 600 workers in Aberdeen.

The factory is situated in an industrial estate to the south of the city, and was opened in 1952, in the great flood of American capital which poured into this country after the last war. Many traditional revolutionaries seem to have a pet hate for American capitalism; for us whether the boss is American or Russian for that matter, is only important in that some may be more advanced in exploitation techniques than others.

C.P.T. is a closed shop, with the manual workers mainly in the A.E.F. The place is well-organized at shop steward level, and the stewards do good work. The management co-operate closely with the Union, trying to maintain good relations, and there have been cases in the past of

militant shop stewards getting a 'shift-up'. There were big strikes in the Fraserburgh plant in 1964 and 1967 but apart from token sympathy action, no comparable struggles in Aberdeen as yet.

One marked thing about the factory is the insistence of the management in retaining complete control. For example, pilfering, tolerated in other places, is a crime in C.P.T. They clamp down hard on anyone stealing any tools, and recently notices appeared in the toilets threatening anyone who stole soap with instant dismissal!

#### C.P.T. AND ENGINEERING IN ABERDEEN.

Engineering has always been a fairly important industry in Aberdeen, with about 3,000 workers employed. The industry has certain differences from engineering in any other city of a comparable size in three ways.

Firstly, the enterprises are small-scale, the largest apart from C.P.T. employing 300, the average 100-150. Secondly, the plant and techniques employed are very backward, and thirdly a very high proportion of skilled labour is employed, time-served men doing work in small batches,

In C.P.T. however, this is not the case. It is now twice the size of the next biggest works, having grown from 400 to 600 in 4 years, and further expansion being certain. Also many of the smaller places do contract work for C.P.T. Secondly the vast majority of workers in the factory are semi-skilled, working one machine-tool and doing a limited range of work. Many have no previous experience of engineering. Finally, the machines in C.P.T. are more modern; I don't want to exaggerate, there are machines in the place falling to bits, but generally they are fairly modern and some are ultra-modern.

#### WAGES AND CONDITIONS.

Conditions in the factory are fairly good, and very good for Aberdeen. The place is regularly cleaned and kept at a constant 60° temperature. Milk and coffee machines line the walls. Hot water is always available for washing, the canteen provides a cheap midday meal. The not only in the workers interest, the more intelligent managers of today realise that workers will work harder under these conditions than in cold and dirt.

Wages are the highest in the city for semi-skilled

engineers, many C.P.T. workers earning more than skilled men in other shops. The basic rate of over £13 is brought up by various supplements to a guaranteed £15 a week, and on top of this the average bonus is £2 18s (a management figure which many workers would dispute). This means that machinists in the factory are earning between £17 and £18 for a 40-hour week, and about £22 for the night shift.

C.P.T. is the only works in Aberdeen running a big night-shift (attempts are being made to double-up on all machines eventually), and where plentiful overtime is available on day shift to make up the wage. Most of the workers will say that it is for the wages they stay.

Recently we put in for a wage rise of about 30/- a week after the inspectors got 22/-. The management offered 15/-, and the bringing forward of a new bonus scheme which gives an allowance of  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour for a tool change where previously this came off your bonus time. The men were in a pretty militant mood, and a strong position, but in the end accepted the offer.

### THE BONUS

In C.P.T. 'production' is worshiped above all else; many of the machines are working from 19 to 22 hours a day, there are no tea-breaks, and drinks must be taken at the machine, standing up. Most workers are on a production bonus, apart from certain categories, eg. the platers who get average shop bonus each week. The whole bonus system is unfair and is the main wedge the management uses to divide the workers.

It is easier to make bonus in some sections than in others, where times are harder. Also within the sections themselves—grinders, lathes, mills—times vary enormously from job to job; sometimes you can make a good bonus taking it easy, at other times you have to slave to even make time. Finally there is a tendency for the good jobs to always go to the same people; this is not only the gaffers pals, but also those who don't complain. If you shout, you might get a time changed, or onto another job. If you sit quietly they just heap the shite onto you.

All this means that some men are making a regular £6 a week bonus, while others are scraping in 30/-. The bonus also acts as an invisible gaffer, they can always tell how hard you're working by what you're making,

there is no need for close supervision. Also, you tend to make yourself work, since you feel you can earn more by this. Most folk work hard, hurrying to the toilet and back to work (perhaps this is the reason that in C.P.T. there is hardly a scrap of graffiti on the bog walls). The management profit all along the line with the bonus system, the workers, who work three times as hard to earn £18 as they need to earn £15 are the losers. However, it puts a weapon in the mens hands; in any struggle a simple refusal to work the bonus system would cost the management a fortune, and the workers little, all that is needed is to work to time.

### ALIENATION

"I get so bored here I don't know where to look. I've seen it all, every face, every machine, every brick in the bloody wall. I say to myself, I can't bear it, so I clench my teeth and clutch a spanner and stick it out. I couldn't manage any other way" (Peter C Brown 'Smallcreeps Day').

An article in the last issue of Aberdeen 'Solidarity', 'Alienation and Workers Control' suggested that the main factor causing alienation under capitalism was not the nature of work itself, but more the authority relations of capitalist industry and the relationship of the worker to his product.

Undoubtedly the factors mentioned in this article are important, but as soon as you go into the machine-shop of C.P.T. it is apparent that the nature of work in modern production is the prime cause of alienation, i.e., the feeling of meaningless and lack of control over your own life.

The well-ordered rows of machine-tools, each with its operator beside it, and his job, usually piles of castings beside him; the fierce din of compressed air guns and the machines immediately suggest that it is the work itself which is alienating.

In C.P.T. most components are so standardised, and produced in such numbers, that there is usually little skill in any job. The only opportunity for initiative is in "setting-up", but here you are usually working with jigs, and a setter does this for you. Once you have done this you perform the same operation on a batch of components—usually 200 or 300, sometimes 500 or even 1000, time after time. No variety, no initiative, just steady monotonous work requiring constant attention, and lulling you into a semi-stupor. This steady work, and standing all day, means that you are pretty tired by the end of your



eight hours work. You can fight the monotony of turning the same job, or milling the same slot, or boring the same hole by going for tea, to the toilet, up to the next machine; some people add to the din by singing.

Related to this question of alienation is that of 'capitalist technology', which in C.P.T. takes on real meaning. The trend towards simpler machines doing a limited range of work is general throughout industry, and in C.P.T. you can see this in machine-tool design.

There are automatic lathes and capstans, limited purpose mills, semi-automatic grinders. All these are even more unsatisfying to work and add to the boredom. And the trend is towards even more simple machines, ones which are tape-controlled and self-regulating, and of which a man could easily supervise six have been designed.

But there is a choice in machine design; these machines are designed because it is cheaper for the bosses to run them. But it is possible to design modern versatile machines, on which people could be trained to do a wide variety of interesting work. But the capitalists will not introduce these, since they are interested only in production and profit.

### CONCLUSION

The nature of work and the methods of exploitation at C.P.T. means that we may see big struggles there in the future. Militants should prepare for them now, and press for elected works committees to run them, not the Union officials. These struggles can be the link between immediate issues and the struggle for workers power.

And under workers power, not only would the factory be run by a democratic factory committee, which would change the boss-worker relationship, but also the techniques of production would be gradually altered to make the work more interesting and satisfying.

MORTON.

The article above was written for us by a C.P.T. worker. Comments on it, and further articles from the factory are invited. Anonymity is guaranteed. Send to address below.

### SCOTTISH 'SOLIDARITY GROUPS

Aberdeen : c/o N. Roy, 138 Walker Road, Aberdeen.  
 Dundee : c/o F. Browne 444 Perth Road, Dundee.  
 Glasgow : c/o D. Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton.  
 Edinburgh : c/o T. Woolley, 14 West Preston Street, Edin.8.

# *K.A.P.D. and the German revolution*

some comments.

The interview in the last edition of Aberdeen "Solidarity" with a founder member of the K.A.P.D. threw interesting light on the policy of the Bolsheviks and the K.P.D. during the German Revolution, and also opened the way for a discussion of the reasons for its failure.

However, simply because the K.A.P.D. broke away from the K.P.D. over the latter's favourable policy towards participating in Trades Union and Parliamentary activity, it would be wrong to automatically assume that it is an organization with which Solidarists should retrospectively identify themselves.

In the first place, as is evident from the interview the K.A.P.D. held an extremely mechanical conception of the socialist revolution, which was held to be possible only in times of economic collapse and misery. Socialist consciousness is the grumbling of an empty belly. This conception gripped the minds of the most libertarian of those who broke with German Social Democracy, eg, Luxembourg and Pannekoek, who in other respects such as insistence on the rule of Workers Councils and proletarian democracy we would endorse.

Similarly, the K.A.P.D. was permeated with elitist thinking. As Gorter, their leading thinker stated in his "Reply to Lenin", "...most proletarians are ignoramuses. They repeatedly make mistakes." From this he concluded that an elite party, based on quality was necessary to educate the masses and expose the reformist leaderships. There was always an ambiguity in the K.A.P.D. over whether they or the Workers Councils should rule, and they never fully identified themselves as the future dictatorship. In this respect, as in others we can possibly see resemblances between the K.A.P.D. and the "Workers Opposition" group in the Bolshevik Party. It is more than an accident that it was a K.A.P.D. member who brought Kollontai's text to the west.

Thirdly, it would be wrong to overestimate the hostility of the K.A.P.D. to the Third International to which they adhered in a special status until they ceased to be a viable force in the German left after

1923 or so. Although Trotsky accused them, in the "First Five Years of the Communist International" of intending to establish a Fourth International, there is no real evidence for this. The K.A.P.D. even, on the instructions of Lenin, or 'advice', got rid of Ruehle, Laufenberg and others who were originally party members, but whose implacable hostility to Bolshevism Lenin could not tolerate.

If we are to look for historical progenitors in the area of ideology, the ideas of Ruehle need to be further examined. Ruehle voted as early as 1915 with Liebknecht against War Credits in the Reichstag, and maintained a consistent anti-war attitude afterwards. Almost alone of the ex-social democrats he broke with elitist thinking, holding the profoundly true idea that if the working class was too weak and stupid to achieve socialism by its own efforts, then no leadership can remedy this—the only alternative is permanent class society.

Similarly, at a time when socialism was held to be nationalisation + planning + a social democrat government, Ruehle developed ideas on the meaning of socialism in advance of this. In 1924 he said;

" the nationalisation of the means of production which remains the programme of social democracy as well as of the communists, is not socialisation. Through nationalisation it will be possible to attain a strongly centralised State capitalism, which will perhaps have some superiority to private capitalism, but which none the less will be capitalism"

Ruehle's brilliant critique of the entire Trades Union apparatus, published as the article "On German Trades Unions" in Solidarity Scotland Vol 2 No2, from his book 'From the bourgeois to the proletarian revolutions' (which still awaits translation), is one which all Solidarists would endorse. In it he stated;

"The Trades Unions...develop into auxiliary organs of capitalist economic interest, exploitation and profit making. they have become the bourgeoisie's most loyal shield bearer ...always and everywhere the unions stood at the side of capital ready to help: a praetorian guard always prepared to carry out the most common and revolting crimes, always against the emancipation and autonomy of the working-class"

As early as 1921, Ruehle, and the federation of factory organizations, AAUD-E (which eventually linked to the Syndicalist International), to which he belonged criticised the bureaucratisation of the Russian Revolution and the suppression of the Kronstadt sailors. They refused to participate in the Central German rising of 1921 on the grounds that it was an attempt by the K.P.D. to cover up events in Kronstadt at the same time.

Ruehle accused the K.A.P.D. of being only distinguishable from the K.P.D. by its rejection of parliamentary activity, and its subsequent history confirmed his analysis.

Given its basic ideas, and the decline of the revolutionary wave in Germany after 1923, the return of most K.A.P.D. members to the folds of the S.P.D. or K.P.D., or their decline into inactivity was inevitable.

R.M.

The above article is a contribution to the debate we hope to continue on the German revolution in 1919; we invite comments on the article, or further articles from readers. Translations of the writings of activists in the Revolution would also be welcome. Send all material to the group address on Page 7.

ooo000000ooo

#### ABOUT OURSELVES.

This is the third issue of the magazine of Aberdeen 'Solidarity' group. The first two editions sold approx. 300 each, of which about 80 were sold outside Aberdeen. We are increasing the printing of this edition to 350, and we hope to sell the increase locally.

Plans for our pamphlet are now under way. It will deal with events in Germany 1919-23, and of the parallels with the situation in Britain at the same time. It will consist partly of texts by participants and partly of original articles

&&&

#### OTHER SOLIDARITY JOURNALS:

##### SOLIDARITY(NORTH LONDON):

VOL 6 No 2 in the press. Copies 10d (post free) from H. Russel. 53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

##### SOLIDARITY (SOUTH LONDON):

No 7 just out. Available from A. Mann, 79 Balfour Road, London, S.E. 17. 10d post paid.

# HOUSING<sup>II.</sup> IN ABERDEEN

In Aberdeen, as elsewhere, housing is one of the greatest problems facing ordinary people today. Aberdeen does not seem to have a homeless problem, but the city, after more than a century of exploitation, is loaded down by some of the most archaic housing around. Despite the prosperous looks of the city's granite tenements, behind the facade, almost none of these flats have a bath or a built-in hot-water system, and almost all of them have shared toilets, often out in the backyard. Indeed it is reckoned that only one third of all Aberdeen's houses have a bath, and only one half a private toilet. It's no wonder that a bout of diarrhoea is considered the city's quickest way to pneumonia.

## PRIVATE HOUSING

The general shortage of houses in this part of the country makes their buying price the highest outside South East England. So it's not surprising that landlords take advantage of the situation to push the rents up and neglect to do repairs, knowing that most tenants are only too glad to get somewhere to live, to think of challenging them.

Of the many horror stories of the exploitation by Aberdeen landlords, here are two I can personally vouch for.

A two-roomed attic flat in Ashvale Place: too small to swing a mouse in let alone a cat; a broken window-frame and a leaking skylight; a toilet in the yard four flights down. Rent? £5 per week!

A two-roomed flat in George Street: the front door opens off the street into the bedroom; total furniture—two beds, a wardrobe, a tiny piece of carpet, a small kitchen table and two chairs; and, of course, an outside toilet. Rent? £6-10/- per week.

## RENT TRIBUNAL

However, wonder of wonders, the State does offer some protection to the tenant of furnished property, in the form of the Rent Assessment Office, the Rent Tribunal, and the 1965 Rent Act.

Any tenant may apply to the Assessment Office (Aberdeen address 47, Holburn Street) for their rent to be reassessed. The Office will inform the landlord and send the Tribunal to see the property. The normal result of their considerations is that the rent is reduced. Here are a few examples



of reassessment:-

The attic flat mentioned above.	-	new rent - £2-10/-.
2-roomed 1st floor flat, Broomhill Road.	-	new rent - £2-10/-.
3-roomed 1st floor flat Holburn Street.	-	new rent - £4.
2-roomed 2nd floor flat, Park Street.	-	new rent - £1-2/6.

Landlords are unlikely to be too delighted with tenants who go to the Rent Tribunal, but there is nothing they can do about it. If a landlord threatens eviction on these grounds, the Tribunal will award security of tenure, which can be renewed every six months. In fact, a landlord can not evict a tenant without a court order, and that can only be granted by a magistrate if the landlord can prove that the tenant has committed an offence, such as non-payment of rent or using the property for "immoral" purposes, which would define him as a "bad tenant". Unless the landlord can get his court order the tenant cannot be put out, even if the flat is sold.

There are not many State-blessed ways for the worker to hit back at the capitalist. The Rent Tribunal is one - use it to the full, and take the money back out of the landlords' pockets.

### COUNCIL HOUSING

For most private tenants, the way out of the morass of grasping landlords, is to get a council house. However, this is much easier said than done, and there is very little distortion in this well-known quote from Alderson.

"The man who sets about it (getting a house) efficiently would get an essential job, marry young, father a child a year, find himself a slum flat, share it with another family and develop chronic ill health".

In Aberdeen, with only about 1,000 council houses built each year, and more than 5,000 names on the waiting list, it is clear that patience is a necessary virtue for those wanting a house. In fact, the situation is much worse for most of these new houses actually go to those made homeless by slum clearance etc., or to those in overcrowded conditions, rather than to those on the waiting list.

This situation is perfect for the owners of Aberdeen.

slum and due-to-be-redeveloped property. These parasites have been making a fine profit for years by selling their rotten property at vastly inflated prices to people desperate to get a decent place to live.

Not that getting a council house solves all the problems. Local councils can be just as grasping as the private landlord. It is only a year since Aberdeen Town Council voted a whopping 6/- per week increase in rents which raised the average rent by one third to about 24/- per week. This may not seem very much to the more exploited private tenant or to the reader used to English scales of council rents. But it must be remembered that the normal wage in Aberdeen is below the Scottish average which is itself almost £2 per week below the national level. On top of this most food and other consumer good prices are higher here owing to the high transport costs.

However, there is the rent rebate scheme which applies to those with a household income of less than £14 per week. But, a complicated procedure must be gone through before this rebate can be gained. The onus is completely on the tenant to claim; he must fill in a complex form, apply on a given date and get his employer to corroborate his statements concerning his wages. With all these complications and the consequent embarrassments it is not surprising that probably much less than half of those eligible actually claim.

### TENANTS' ORGANISATIONS

Amongst private tenants there has been little sign of organisations set up to resist the landlords. The one exception to this has been the Tenants' Association in the Holland Street area of the city (see 'Solidarity' Aberdeen No.1.). This association has managed to get most of its members rents reduced and has carried out two well supported demonstrations against the victimisation and harassment by the landlord and her agents. Though perhaps it has been rather quiet over the past few weeks, it is to be hoped that this example of tenants' action will encourage others in Aberdeen.

The council estates have been quiet for a year since the increases in rent mentioned above. At the time of those increases it looked for a while that strong tenants' organisations might be developed to fight them, such was the anger and militancy expressed by the tenants. Unfortunately, the local Communist Party obtained much of the control in those associations that were set up. This meant that, far from being organisations enabling the tenants to fight well against the council, they were turned into electioneering committees for the good of the C.P. Indeed as far as the C.P. were concerned, the whole rents campaign became a means to fight a

council by-election. Thus betrayed by those claiming to have their interests closest to heart, the tenants' militancy was dissipated and the campaign collapsed.

### CONCLUSION

The housing situation does not look like improving at all in Aberdeen. With 80% of the council's housing expenditure already going to pay back loans to the City financiers and interest rates ever spiralling upwards, it seems that the rate of building is <sup>NOT</sup> going to increase significantly. What is more likely, is that there will be a renewed attack on council tenants to bring their rents up to an "economic level" which will be echoed by the private landlords.

With this in prospect, it is no use looking to the traditional political parties of the Left for help. The example of the rents campaign described above, shows that they are unable and even unwilling to offer any meaningful assistance.

What is necessary is the establishment of tenants's organisations under the control of the tenants themselves, which will fight the combined efforts of the councils and landlords to intensify the exploitation which spreads throughout our society. 'Solidarity' offers its support and help to any tenants trying to set up such organisations.

N.S.

Read

## THE 'SQUATTERS'

A Report and Critique on the London Squatters' Campaign.

A new pamphlet from SOLIDARITY (South London)

10d postpaid from Andrew Mann, 79, Balfour Street, SE17.

We apologise for the poor quality of the production of 'Solidarity' Aberdeen No.2. We hope this did not destroy the value of the magazine for our readers.

# *technology and workers' control*

I'd like to add two comments to the article I wrote in the last months issue ('Alienation and Workers Control', Solidarity Aberdeen No. 2).

## ALIENATION BY TECHNOLOGY

The first is on the question of technology. I stressed the prime importance of transforming the relations of production because in the struggle against alienation, in the struggle of workers to control all aspects of their lives this stage can be reached soonest. However it is only the first step, the entire technology, the mode of production, must also change.

It is wrong to imagine our present technology as being an unchangeable system, in fact it is constantly being refined by capitalism to maximise its profits, to squeeze a bit more out of the worker. This process can be observed over the last few hundred years in the form of dilution of skilled labour and the development of assembly line techniques. Thus jobs originally performed by craftsmen are increasingly split up and fragmented until we reach the logical conclusion in todays totally dehumanised and routinised assembly lines.

In the engineering industry this process is apparent in so far as the machine tools being produced today have a more limited repertoire of performance than they had say 10 years ago so that the degree of control and initiative exercised by the operator is being continually reduced. The worker is being continually pushed towards the automation or robot that is the ideal of management and industrial capital. The only way in which work can be humanised is for workers to control not only the relations of production but also to control and determine the direction and nature of the means of production as they develop. This is what we mean by workers power.

## Workers Control : Will it work?

I didn't discuss this question or suggest detailed blueprints in last months article, firstly, because plans for workers control and management of any mill or factory can only be drawn up by the workers involved; as to the question of the feasibility of workers control this lies

ultimately in individuals belief in their ability to manage their own lives and working conditions rather than being manipulated and dominated by managers and foremen.

An aura of mystery and power surrounds management, especially its upper echelons but this is largely propagated by management itself, anxious to maintain the myth that the 'chosen few' are necessary to control and direct the 'great unwashed', (that is, you, me and all our mates!). However, anyone who has worked for any length of time in a factory or on a building site, can reel off a list of managerial balls-ups which were obvious to the 'great unwashed' and could have been avoided if anybody had asked them. But if anyone on the shop floor should suggest that the managerial gods just might be wrong, they're usually told by the foreman that they're paid to work not think.

Among themselves the management don't seem too sure of their own infallibility as is apparent from the following quotations from business publications.

The 'Business Supplement' of the 'Times' recently (December 30, 1968) published an article by Mary Bosticco (When your own staff can solve a problem.) In it we find:-

"Would it surprise you to learn that the best possible management problem solver is available to you free of charge?....It is of course your own staff: the people who spend every working day selling your goods, making your products, pounding your typewriters. Your salesmen, the people who see your customers; the men at the bench - who come across the same snag day after day; the clerical staff, and everyone whose work is affected every day by faulty communication and poor management."

In his book 'Modern Automation', David Foster, a former director of several companies, predicts that the boss will be soon made redundant (and not before time, perhaps) by the development of automation. He claims that the secret of management is "a certain special type of Pandora's Box possessed by top managers and hidden away from the sight of hoi-poloi .. It consists of three things, namely vital statistics, trend graphs and simplified business formula..If only the workmen in his factory realised how easy it has now become for the chairman to control a business of 10,000 people, they would be very surprised..Computer automation threatens the very existence of top management in all specialities because their Pandora's Boxes are about to become a millisecond routine on a magnetic tape"

So maybe the boss isn't so important after all.

C.A.