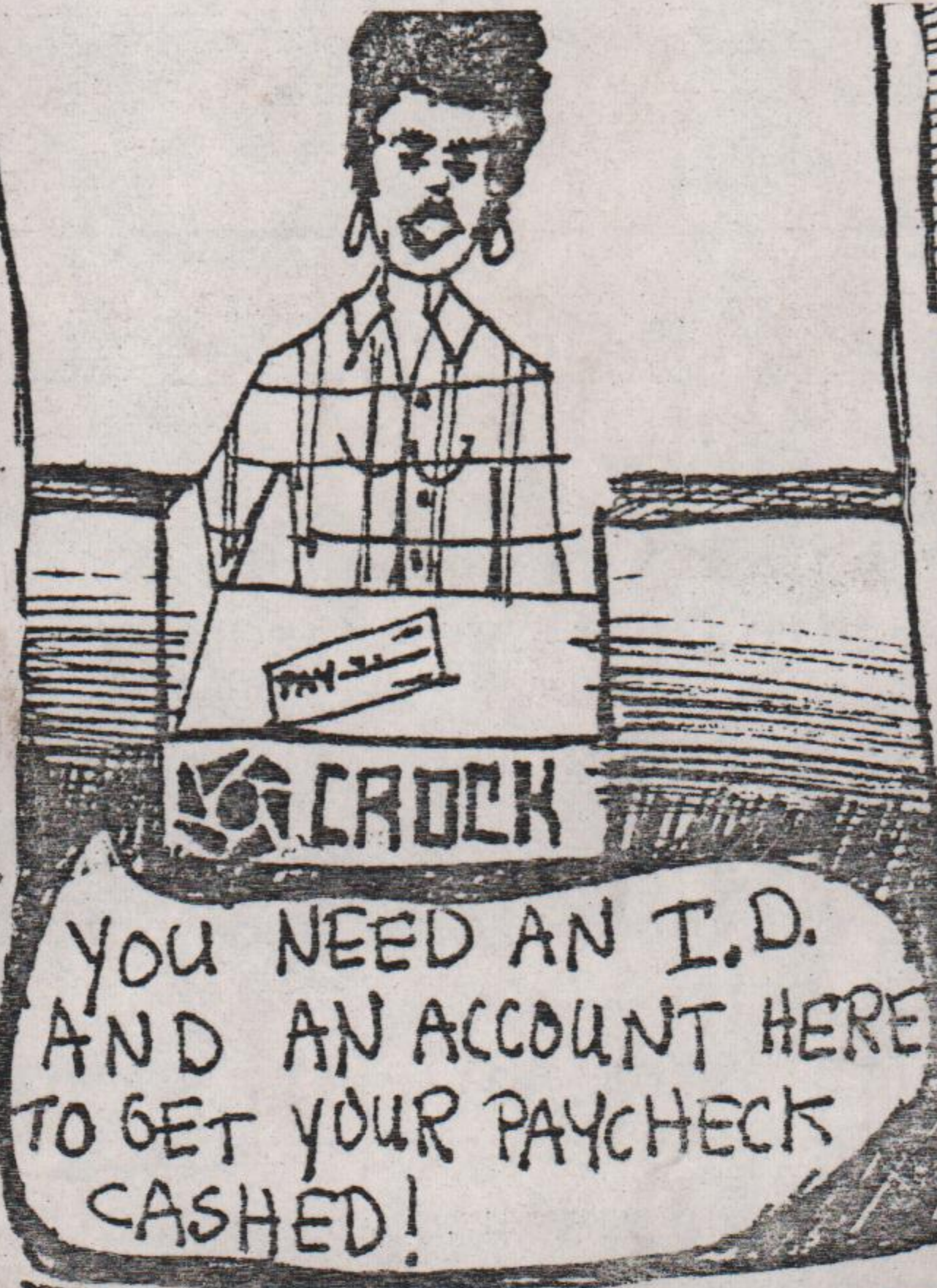
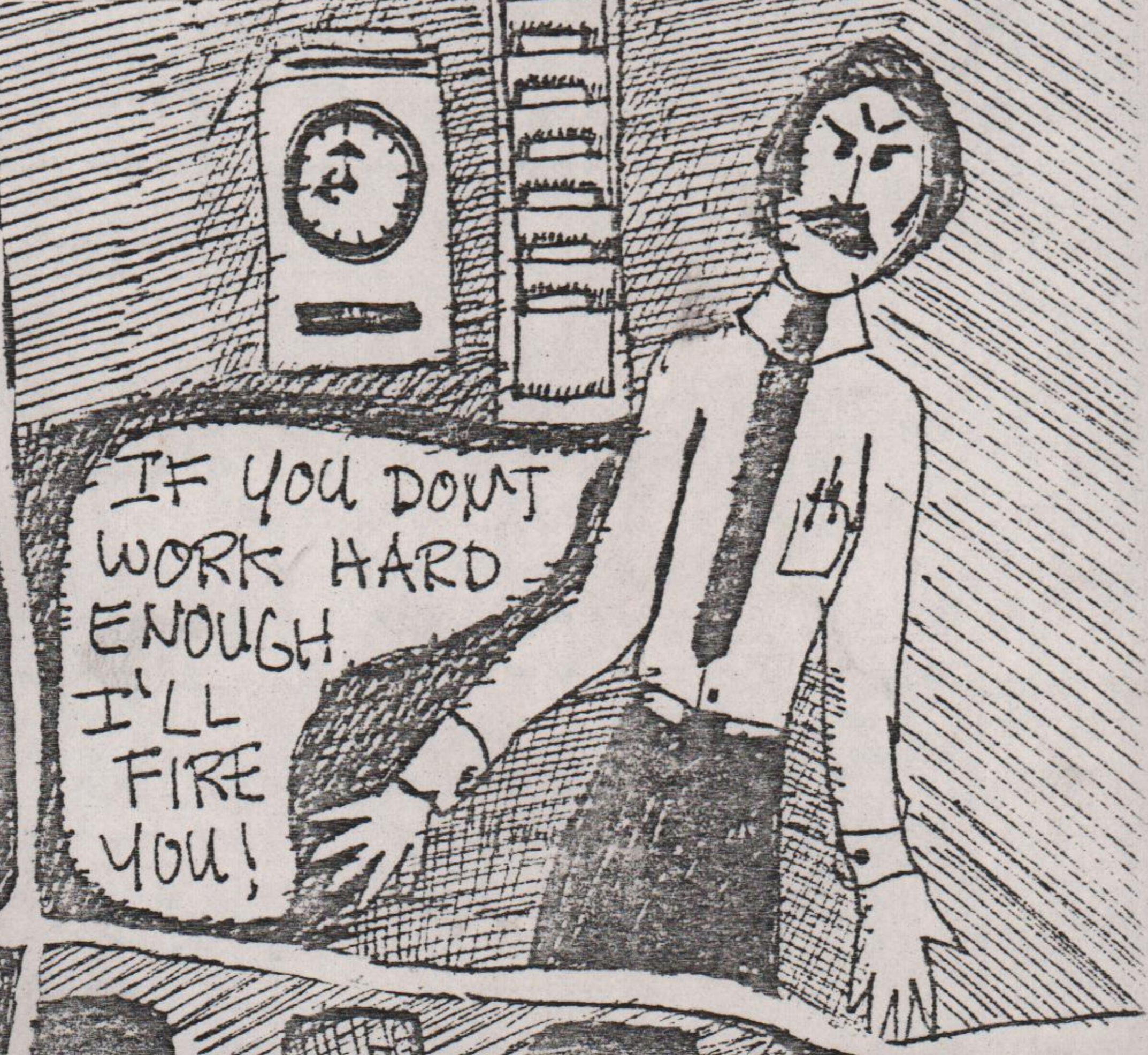




PAY ME OR YOU CAN'T GET ON!



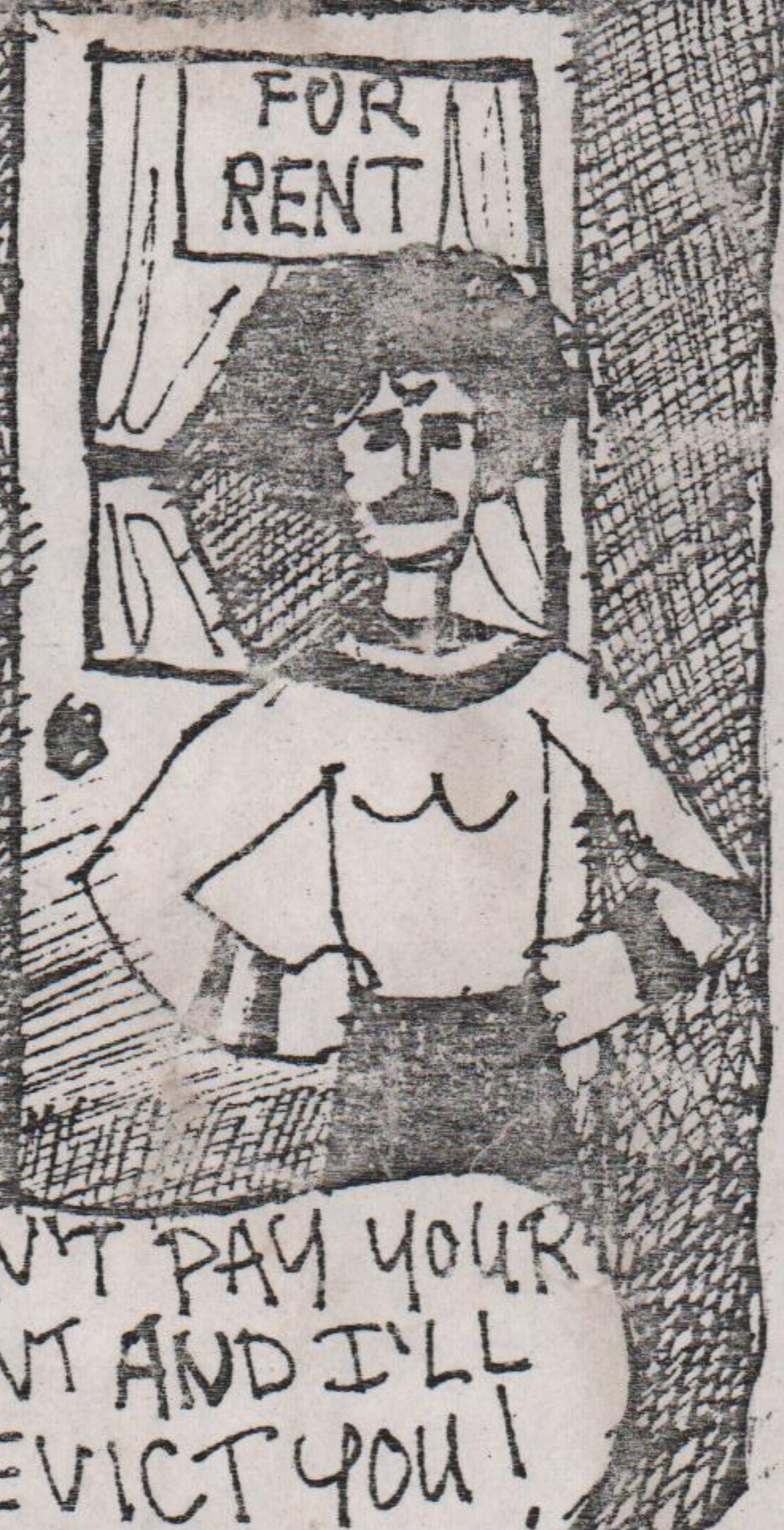
YOU NEED AN I.D. AND AN ACCOUNT HERE TO GET YOUR PAYCHECK CASHED!



IF YOU DON'T WORK HARD ENOUGH I'LL FIRE YOU!



DO ANYTHING WRONG AND I'LL ARREST YOU!



DON'T PAY YOUR RENT AND I'LL EVICT YOU!



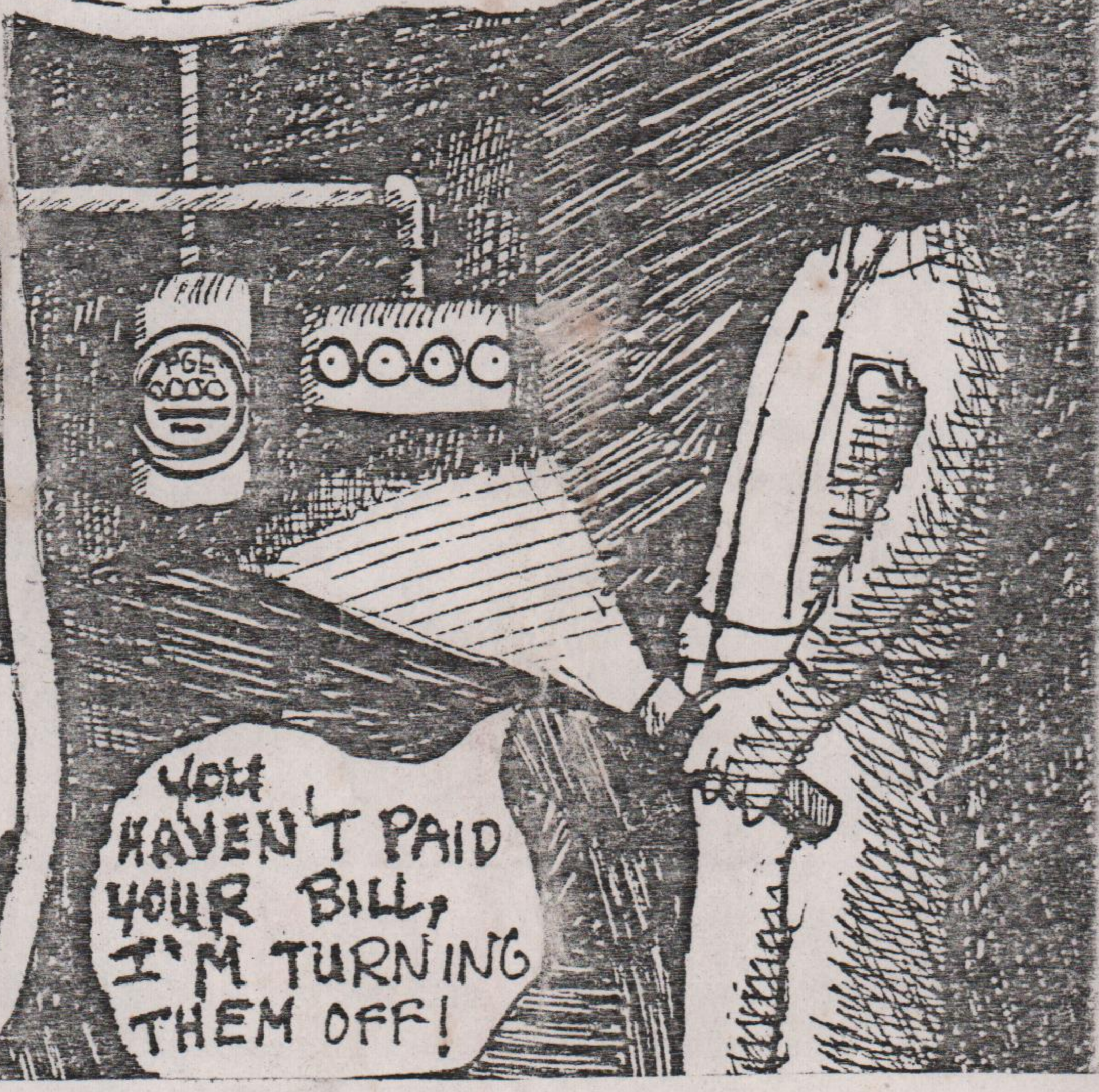
I'M GOING TO DRAFT YOU AND SEND YOU TO KILL AND BE KILLED FOR ME!



NO HEALTH CARE WITHOUT MONEY!



YOU MUST WORK AND PAY TO EAT!



YOU HAVEN'T PAID YOUR BILL, I'M TURNING THEM OFF!

London Workers Group - Aims and Principles

The London Workers Group is an organisation of non-party militants working in the London area. Our aim is to establish and encourage communication between workers in all industries, in order to:

- (1) learn from each others experience and increase our understanding of industry and trades unions within capitalist society.
- (2) seek out and maintain links with other anti-capitalists and anti-authoritarians. While recognising the importance of organised struggle in all areas of life, we choose to concentrate on the workplace struggle. We believe that the formation of autonomous workers groups within each industry is vital. The function of these groups is to spread revolutionary ideas and create solidarity among fellow workers. We would also encourage the formation of local workers groups all over London, to complement the industrial organisations.
- (3) devise and produce effective propaganda including a bulletin covering industrial news, workplace reports, analyses and theoretical articles.
- (4) and provide support where asked for.

Our aim is the establishment of a non-governmental, classless society of producers/consumers in free association. It is clear that unions and left-wing parties serve to perpetuate capitalism, not destroy it. We are opposed to all hierarchical organisation and political dogma, hence our opposition to all political parties. We support all actions that tend towards complete workers control and autonomy as has been experienced through workers councils.

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Once again production delays have held up the appearance of the bulletin, which has meant that events have overtaken some of the contributions.

The LWG meets weekly at the Metropolitan Pub, 95 Farringdon Rd, EC1 (two mins. from Farringdon tube). All meetings are open and participation welcomed (except for party recruiters). Every 4-6 weeks we hold a public meeting on a previously advertised subject. Meetings at 8.15 pm.

The bulletin is open to all contributions. Apart from the aims and principles and unless otherwise stated views are those of individual contributors.

Contact us c/o: Box W, 182 Upper St. London N.1.

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If we're to put an end to our misery and exploitation and to change society and ourselves, first we've got to unite as a class. We must organise according to factory and firm, irrespective of trade, and according to neighbourhood outside of capitalist parties and unions.

All those who claim to "represent" us: Tories, Labour, Leftists, Unions, are united in one thing at least; they are all committed to managing capital. If and when we move on our own, without "representatives" and seek to change the conditions that enslave us, all of them will oppose us violently. AS THEY DREAM OF ENSLAVING US WE MUST ORGANISE TO DESTROY THEM. (From leaflet for T.U.C anti-cuts Demo.)

Trade Unions :

FREE TRADE UNIONS - DO WE NEED THEM ?

This summers upheavals in Poland once again demonstrated that the ruling classes of all countries have one overriding common interest - and know it. Despite the growing imperialist rivalries, the threat of war and the ideological campaigns designed to make us accept the inevitability of such a war, the US bloc intervened with massive financial aid to support Polish capitalism against the universal villain - the proletariat.

The struggle of the Polish workers is therefore shown to be part of the global class struggle - it is our struggle and we must draw lessons from it. One question which inevitably arises is : do we need free trade unions ? What is a 'free' trade union ? In Poland the demand for free trade unions was soon adopted as the principal demand of the inter-factory strike committee (MKS). The central issue at stake here is who will gain most from these new institutions, the workers or capital?

Revolt On three separate occasions over the last decade, Polish workers, virtually all of whom were members of the party-controlled trade union organisations have risen in revolt outside and against those organisations on a massive scale. In 1970 the authorities raised important prices by 30%. This measure was thwarted by widespread revolts : in one incident, workers burned the Party headquarters whilst singing the Internationale.

To buy off this raging working class combativity, Poland moved towards closer cooperation with the relatively prosperous western bloc, which supplied loans and consumer goods. But these could only be paid for by increasing Polands exports, so when the recession of the mid-seventies set in it had magnified consequences for Poland.

In 1976 and 1980 Poland again tried to push this crisis onto the working class by raising prices - and again met with widespread revolts.

Poland In Crisis On this latest occasion Polish capitalism was in a particularly desperate situation. 1979 saw a frantic attempt to reflate the economy (social welfare increases, investment grants etc.) - but this failed to trigger industrial growth and only succeeded in causing inflationary pressures which disrupted production still further.

Real national income fell by 2%. All this has had dire consequences for capital accumulation - investment fell 8.2% in 1979. Meanwhile Polands other big problem - chronic indebtedness - had worsened. By the end of 1979 Polands hard currency foreign debt stood at 19.5 billion dollars, by far the largest in the eastern bloc, and almost twice that of the second largest, the USSR. According to a recent US government survey, for Poland to be able to stop the increase in this debt after 1983, she would need to increase exports to the West by 16½% (cited in the Economist). Yet already, when east European exports reach the West, sections of the ruling class start bawling about dumping by 'communist' countries.

Polands problems are perhaps greater at the moment than most industrialised countries, but the problems are basically the same as those facing Britain. So Polands new unions will be operating in similar economic circumstances to British trade unions : recessions which have been getting deeper and deeper, with no apparent lasting solution. Any evaluation of 'free' trade unions must be set in this context - can they advance the interests of the working class while acting under such constraints ?

(Free trade unions cont.)

Western Style Freedom In Britain, Both Left and Right seem united in their answer, as both attempt to bask in the reflected glory of the Polish workers. The Right maintains that the Poles (though not the Polish working class, of course !) have struck a blow for 'freedom' against 'communism'. The anti-stalinist left say that the Poles have demonstrated that 'free' trade unionism is a vital part of 'democratic' life ; in other words the struggle of the Polish working class is equated with the attempts of Murray, Evans and co. to win back their beer and sandwiches at No. 10 ! In short, both Left and Right have exploited the situation to bolster their own ideological positions.

In both cases their arguments are counter-revolutionary. Trade unions are intrinsically reformist. Their original purpose was to establish as high a price as possible for labour-as-commodity, that is, to improve the lot of the working class as a class within capitalism. This reformism was beneficial whilst capitalism was expanding rapidly, by gaining for workers a share of the growing national income, even though unions from the start became bureaucratic and therefore an obstacle to direct class combativity. This economic reformism complemented the political reformism of the party or federation (eg. in suffrage campaigns, campaigns for a reduced working day etc.) So within this reformism, a 'division of labour' separating political and economic goals was established.

Reformism Bankrupt But it has long since been clear that such reformism is bankrupt, since capitalism itself is bankrupt. Capital has integrated the world market so far and has exhausted itself ; economic crises are no longer the motor of new, lasting expansion but of renewed imperialist conflicts ; two thirds of the world starves whilst the remaining third arms to the teeth. In such circumstances reformism

can only benefit the bourgeoisie by fostering illusions. We know this from experience : wage increases are immediately wiped out by inflation, reductions in the working week are only offered as an attempt to disguise unemployment, whilst millions are involuntarily put on short time. It is no longer simply a question of the bureaucratic or authoritarian nature of the unions. With output falling (manufacturing output in Britain is now at 1968 levels !) even if they could somehow be made into genuine working class institutions, the best they could offer would still be reduced living standards. In such circumstances, reformism has become useless even in its own terms.

Neither Parties or Unions The working class can now only advance if it passes from being a class within capitalism and becomes a class for itself, that is, a revolutionary class. This is the meaning of class autonomy. It necessitates a rejection of the old party-union division of labour. Revolutionary change requires a total rupture from capitalist relations, whereas the union and the party can only strive after partial goals within capitalism. Leftists such as the SWP have once again joined the chorus about the failure to 'build the Party' in Poland. But 'the Party' can only succeed in integrating the proletariat politically within capitalism. Hence socialist parties have frequently been the last resort of capitalism : the illusory representation of the 'proletariat in power' obscuring the reality of the separation between the party-state and the masses.

If the formation of "workers parties" is counter-productive, what of 'independent' or revolutionary unions ? Unions can become ideologically independent as they have in Poland, but not independent of the material circumstances within which they operate. If British unions declared their

independence of the Labour Party, it would damage that particular ideological faction of the ruling class, but not the ruling class itself.

'Free Unions' So 'rank and file-ism' - the attempt to create unions independent of the ruling class by installing a revolutionary leadership is sheer nonsense. Proletarian organisation can only emerge and survive so long as there is an actual challenge to and rupture in capitalist relations. Institutions emerging within capitalism must either die or take on a capitalist character, regardless of personnel and revolutionary posturing. Thus syndicalism - the attempt to revolutionise unionism by reducing bureaucracy to a minimum and uniting all workers in one union must fail. Syndicalist federations have either died (eg. the American I.W.W) or become integrated within the democratic state (eg. the French C.G.T) - since syndicalism bases itself on the belief that capitalism will collapse after a long and orderly siege by the proletariat (and is therefore in fact similar to the political gradualism of socialist and communist parties). In reality the revolutionary movement proceeds in a less predictable fashion, with sudden explosions such as have occurred again in Poland. At these moments in the past when the proletariat waged its fiercest battles against capital the forms employed (1) did not prefigure the revolutionary wave itself, and (2) combined both political and economic goals; these forms have been the workers councils and assemblies. It has always been the parties and unions which have obstructed or destroyed these movements.

Workers Autonomy The strikes in Poland were so successful precisely because of the absence of any unions or "workers parties" in which the workers had any faith. The political and economic struggles were simultaneously expressed through the workers own direct creations

- the mass assemblies, unified by inter-factory committees. Meetings were broadcast to everyone by tannoy, and all delegates were instantly revocable at the will of the assembly. The strike spread rapidly since the absence of union officials made it impossible for the government to isolate disputes and negotiate on a factory-to-factory basis (the attempt to do so was dismissed by the workers as a 'typically capitalist' tactic!) Therefore the struggle became a direct struggle between two classes, implicitly a struggle between two societies. How different this is from the isolation of disputes through the divisions between factories and departments and the separation between the officials and the shop floor!

Assemblies During the assembly movement in Spain of 1976-8, militant Spanish workers saw the same logic, and treated the representatives of the reemerging 'independent' unions - the Workers Commissions, the U.G.T and, for that matter, the C.N.T., in the same way they treated the francoist C.N.S. - by expelling them from the assemblies.

Whilst the personnel of the strike committees and the new 'free' unions might be identical, the former, born out of a direct struggle and operating on class terrain took on an explicitly proletarian character, whereas the latter, emerging in the return to the 'normality' of capitalist relations, will become increasingly integrated into the state apparatus, even though they might maintain an illusory ideological independence.

'Solidarity' with who? In Poland this is already becoming clear in the light of recent developments. For example before the one hour strike of October 3rd "Solidarnosc (=Solidarity, the new union) leaders claimed that economic damage would be minimal since at most plants care was taken to avoid the disruption of production cycles" (Guardian Oct. 4th 1980) - a claim worthy of Mr Terry Duffy.

Certainly the more enlightened

(Free trade unions cont.)

elements of the ruling class see the new unions as a great gift. As one Polish political scientist commented: "You can't talk to a mob, but you can talk to a legitimate leader. What we're trying to do is to adapt some elements of pluralistic democracy to a pluralist system. This should make the system not only more democratic, but also more governable" (Guardian Oct. 8th 1980)

Danger : Revolutionaries at work      Whilst Unions and

Parties must be counter-revolutionary, this in no way detracts from the role played by class-conscious minorities within the working class, who, having reached advanced positions before the outbreak of a particular struggle are well placed to urge its intensification and generalisation.

For there will always be ideological factions outside the class hopeful of exploiting any weakness within the proletariat. In Poland the Catholic Church, the social democrats (KOR) and nationalists have all sought control of the movement, thus serving the interests of capital - which ultimately has no enemy but the proletariat. Moreover, there will always be ideological factions within the workers ranks who seek not, or not so much, the generalisation of the struggle but its obedience to their programme and their leadership. For example the Communist Workers Organisation (a small ultra-left Leninist group) commented on the 'free trade union' activists: "This minority achieved a presence in the working class. In its actions (though clearly NOT in its politics) there are lessons for communists to follow" (Workers Voice No.1)

In other words it is fine for an ideological faction to derail the struggle, so long as it has the "correct" ideology. Revolutionary groups must recognise that they are only a part, only one expression of the working class, not the sole bearer of its consciousness, and not a substi-

tute for mass class action.

What Next ?      So the conclusion must be drawn that the struggle in Poland was seriously hampered by the adoption of the demand for free trade unions, which implied the rejection of the workers own means of organisation. The assembly movement, and its unification through the MKS posed the question of a duality of power, the possibility of an overtly revolutionary confrontation. The 'independent' unions, by contrast, give the workers the illusion of having an interest in 'democratic' negotiations and gradualism. In short, it makes it easier for the ruling class to provoke the workers without provoking a political crisis.

But this is only a temporary setback. As Poland sinks deeper and deeper into the mire, it will drag Solidarność with it.

A Gdansk shipyard worker told a comrade visiting Poland at the height of the strike wave that if the new unions failed, the workers would simply renew their struggle as they have renewed it again and again in the past.

E.D.

Solidarnosc leader Lech Walesa :

"At the moment our (govt. and new union) relations are not good but we hope they will improve so we can help them" - Guardian 6/11

"As the chief I have to balance all these people. I must. It is my job. So do not give me labels - moderate or militant - I have to change day by day. Sometimes I have to calm the radicals. Other times encourage the fearful" - Guardian 6/11/80

"Now that we are a fully legalised organisation we need not engage in guerilla tactics. Even when there is just cause, there are other ways to settle our grievances without striking." - Guardian 17/11/80.

Solidarnosc leader Andrzej Gwiazda : "Solidarnosc is a mediator between government and society." New Statesman 14/11/80.

Clerical Workers :

REBELLION BEHIND THE TYPEWRITER

Secretaries and clerks have long been indispensable to the smooth operation of management and government bureaucracies. In spite of the leverage that this skilled do-it-all support staff has, collective action has been rare.

High turnover rates in the lowest-paying, most tedious positions, and the growing use of temporary workers (via parasitical agencies) makes it hard to organise on the job. People working in small businesses, or holding middle-level secretarial/clerical jobs tend to identify with the interest of the company or the boss, even though they only receive a fraction of his/her income. Others hesitate to rock the boat because of their managerial aspirations. They believe they can best get more by working hard and proving themselves to the boss on an individual level.

The relatively low wages for clerical/secretarial workers disprove the latter myth, even if some secretaries do manage to crack the £3,000 yr. bracket. The past decades tremendous expansion in the clerical workforce has passed its historical peak. Major corporations in auto, steel, rubber, construction, etc. are laying off thousands of workers, including office workers. Small business failures have also reached record heights this year.

Under the pressure of a stagflating economy, government budgets are being slashed to free a larger percentage of social wealth to meet the capital needs of the large companies. The result for clerical workers is layoffs and wage sacrifice in the public sector.

World-wide, the economy is in crisis. Even in countries that call themselves "socialist", the managing elite is desperately trying to find ways to increase production and impose more discipline on the workforce.

Corporations that employ large numbers of clerical workers have been busily increasing productivity. More work is squeezed out of individual clerks and secretaries through speed-ups and the ever-increasing division of labour into the most repetitive and rudimentary tasks. At the same time the introduction of new technologies (data and word processing, computers, etc.) threatens job security. Citicorp, through the computerisation of their offices globally, was recently able to reduce its clerical workforce by 40%. All of this has led to budding militancy among clerical workers.

Abolish Wage Labour The confrontation between managers and bureaucrats, and the clerical/secretarial labour force has also been defused by a more deeplyrooted pattern of social behavior between the sexes. Since the vast majority of office workers are female, and their bosses predominantly male, there has been a general hesitation about open confrontations over wages/benefits/working conditions. Women are taught from an early age to perform a nurturing function in society - esp. for men. But faced with the harsh reality of being a bossed worker, women are finding that they must "liberate" themselves from the tendency to nurture in order to survive the daily struggles of the anything-but-liberated world of wage labour. Hopefully the demands that bosses "respect" wage-slaves, or that women be "liberated" by entering the "mans" world of work will soon be recognised as historical relics.

When the willingness to fight for ones needs and desires becomes self-conscious, and directs its efforts towards creating a world where people cooperate freely in providing for each others needs without the compulsion of bosses, the human desire to nurture can once again flourish.

Divided, manipulated, and worried about their livelihood, clerical workers as a group still control the flow of information which is crucial to the circulation of goods in the economy. We have the power to bring capitalist production to a halt. With the participation of production workers, we can build a new world motivated by the direct satisfaction of the needs and desires of the community, unmediated by money and the compulsion to earn a wage. The vast bureaucracies, with their mountains of wasteful paperwork and the hierarchical regimentation necessary to control workers and monetary transactions could be eliminated. In fact, we could begin by doing away with the large majority of dreary, petty tasks that take up most of our working time in the office. This would leave us more free time to cultivate our individual talents and pleasures.

The development of computer technologies, now a threat to our job security

(Cont. Page 11 )

Report:

APPRENTICESHIP : WAGE-SLAVERY WITHOUT THE WAGES.

Serving time as an apprentice in a craft or trade means doing much more than learning a skill. Usually, it means working for years at below-breadline pay without any legal protection against dismissal, without the right to strike or take any form of action against the employer, and without any guarantee of work at the end of the indentive period. It's no accident that apprentices are said to 'serve time'.

Feudal The origins of the system were in the middle ages and in several ways it is still a feudal practice. Apprenticeship is the way to skilled status in many of the older crafts where once the skilled workers were small businessmen : tailoring, cabinet-making, the building trades and baking are all examples. Apprentices were taken out of their homes and sent to live with the master; the wage was food, a place to sleep - often the workshop - and the possibility that one day the apprentice would become a partner in the business, or receive master status from the craft guild and set up on his own, perhaps with his own apprentice.

'Mystique' This accounts for many of the modern conditions of apprentices, as well as the nature of the trades themselves, which are surrounded in occupational mystique, ridden with conservatism and trapped by rigid trade hierarchy, jealously preserved. No 16-year old apprentice is paid enough to live away from the family home. S/he is forced to serve a period of indenture of four, five or six years before being paid the normal minimum for the job. Why? And why do the unions allow it?

Servility The function of apprenticeship is, firstly, to give the employer a source of cheap, docile and unorganised labour. Secondly, to provide time for the apprentice to learn and practise servility. They must learn to tug a forelock, not only to the 'governor' but also to the senior workers and bureaucrats in the craft unions - descendants of the medieval guilds, organisations of the developing middle class.

Printing The example I will take, because it is the one I know best, is the general printing industry. The apprentices pay scale is based on

age and rises as a percentage of the normal minimum (£80). The normal period served is four years. A 16-year old will get around £33 per week, which is 40%, rising to 60% in the second year, 80% in the third and 95% at the age of 19 or 20. During these four years the apprentice will spend very little time learning basic trade skills. Even most employers reckon on making a profit after the initial six months. The rest of the time is either spent doing shit-work like cleaning the workshop - work which ought to be shared - or else working to increase the bosses profits like everyone else.

Skills The unions dont just negotiate "on behalf of" apprentices; they are as responsible as the bosses for the bad conditions apprentices live and work under. The relatively high wages of skilled workers are based partly on the shit pay of apprentices. (The negotiated proportion of apprentices to skilled workers is 1:7). Apprentices work is not an inferior product : by the second year most have learned the detailed skills of the job. Printing is surrounded in mystery, but in reality operating a press is about as difficult as driving a car. Once the basic method is learnt, you can operate more or less any unit.

Unions The print unions are way ahead of most trade unions in terms of 'organisation' and the reforms they have negotiated for skilled workers. The vast majority of general print shops employ less than 40 people, yet the National Graphical Association (NGA) has negotiated closed shops in more than 70% of factories. Wages are usually much higher than the basic : around £120 per week is normal. The basic working week is 37½ hours, though some chapels have already negotiated 35. Holidays, sick

(cont. over)



(Apprentices. Cont.)

pay, redundancy pay and benefits are better than usual.

Bureaucrats This apparent strength however, derives from the fact that the print union NGA - like other 'craft' unions - is merely an arm of administration in the industry. Outwardly militant but inwardly reactionary, the NGA hires and fires workers on the bosses behalf, as well as carrying out the normal function of trade unions, to negotiate the rate of exploitation. They rarely take industrial action; the recent strike and lock-out was the first for 50 years. On Fleet Street - a small section of the industry - militancy is the response to a crisis of profits and the threat of lost jobs. The union fights hard enough when it's threatened with annihilation, but in the meantime can offer no solutions to the problem of the new technology. In other words, they're all right as long as print remains a high profit, labour-intensive industry, but when profits get squeezed and button-pushing becomes the main job of the minders, they will sink along with the old methods. Gradually the old practices are becoming useless - even as mechanisms of reform - and yet the union bureaucrats are defending to the death the old division into skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, each with their own unions and their own rates, even when they do the same jobs.

Isolation Apprentices - isolated as they have always been in the factories - will never get anything from unions to which they cannot even belong: as the terms of the indentures say, the apprentices loyalty is always to the boss. The apprentice must carry on working during any strike or lock-out. Reformers in Parliament have given apprentices their best break in years, however, by legislating that they must attend a place of further education at least one day in five. This has given them, not only a days rest - because this is what the apprentices have usually succeeded in turning it into - but also a chance to meet, talk, and - if they want to - organise. Some years ago, apprentices attending the London School of Printing did precisely that,

although the National Union of Students (that well known undergraduates club) has since taken over, incorporated and effectively ignored the part timers.

Organisation How should apprentices organise? This question highlights sharply the difference between the idea of workers autonomy and the assumptions of the union-oriented left. The first enemy of the apprentices is the union bureaucrat, because the unions will resist any attempt to abolish second and third-class status for certain workers. Apprentices have to convince skilled workers in their workplaces of the need, not only to abolish the apprenticeship system, but skilled status itself. At present, many skilled workers automatically treat apprentices as they were once treated themselves. But without the sympathy of other workers in their own factory, apprentices will not be able to take effective action at work. This would require a high degree of co-operation among all the apprentices in one workplace: without this elementary solidarity, they will be easily isolated and demoralised. Secondly, groups and individuals from different factories must work together, irrespective of whether they belong to a unionised shop. Because apprentices are financially and socially isolated outside the workplace, as well as in it, this type of association will be more like a social club than a union. No bureaucrats or representatives, but facilities for meeting are essential: and this is what is offered by the college. If apprentices decide that they don't like apprenticeship, and that they want to do something about it, they will quickly find out that they won't be able to count on the craft unions for support. They will have only their own resources and imagination to go on with.

SION.

## Discussion Document:

The following article was written as a discussion paper for the libertarian conference in Oxford earlier this year (Where it and any attempt to discuss workplace organisation was received with complete apathy). (As usual.)

Strategy Not Ideology.

The London Workers Group was set up nearly three years ago by a number of people who were disillusioned with the sterile debating society atmosphere of traditional anarchist groups, and felt the need for a non-ideological (i.e. : not specifically anarchist) group which would act as a meeting place for revolutionary workers. We've attempted to hold our (open) meetings regularly, once a week, and have chosen to concentrate on workplace issues because we see them as a but not the vital area of struggle. We haven't tried to thrash out a common ideological position but have concentrated instead on practical issues, particularly revolutionary structures and strategies.

Some Perspectives Since the State rules us by keeping us divided, we find ourselves oppressed in specific categories - as workers, women gays etc, and it is natural that we will struggle in those categories. However a genuine revolutionary movement must transcend the divisions and fight as a whole on all fronts. A basic premise is that a revolutionary movement be capable not only of organising for the revolution, but also of fighting the day-to-day struggle. In the case of a workers movement this means fighting for better living standards and working conditions. The major failure of anarcho-syndicalism is its inability to move beyond the workplace. Consequently while often achieving good results in the everyday struggle it does not have the potential to become a genuine all-embracing revolutionary movement.

While it's inevitable that people will organise in terms of their own oppression, the necessity for the eventual dissolution of boundaries means that we should avoid building centralised, monolithic organisations, be they

avowedly anarchist, syndicalist or whatever, since this just leads to organisations talking to other organisations and inhibits genuine communication between people. What we need is the formation of autonomous groups, to act initially as meeting places, consciousness-raising groups, sources of propaganda etc. Groups organised around similar issues should obviously federate for purposes of co-ordination, but there ought also to be co-ordination on a regional basis between groups organised around different issues. To some extent this will happen informally by virtue of groups having overlapping memberships, but local conferences, meetings and social events will be useful.

Workers Groups These will exist initially as geographical gatherings of revolutionary workers (like the LWG) to exchange ideas and experiences. We believe that workers autonomous activity will occur as it becomes necessary to the day-to-day struggle and that our experience in workers groups will help us to contribute constructively to confrontations which arise in our own workplaces and also give us the resources to assist other workers in their autonomous struggles (even if only at the level of standing on picket lines). At another level contact between local groups can lead to the formation of industrial networks which facilitate communication between workers in the same industry in different areas.

Eventually, the generalisation of the class struggle will lead to the formation of genuine autonomous workers groups at the workplace (the steelworkers flying pickets may have been an early manifestation of this process), but these groups, thrown up by the necessities of the situation will be qualitatively different from our own, essentially voluntaristic, associations. We do not regard it as possible to set up a revolutionary organisation which will inexorably grow into the organ of class struggle. What we can do is to develop analyses, tactics and strategies useful to that struggle.

Methods Tactics will be based on workplace occupations and other forms of direct action as developed by the syndicalists and industrial unionists. In

(Strategy not Ideology cont.)

our view the form of any confrontation is at least as important as the content of the demands - thus to win a 10 minute longer tea-break is better than having the union negotiate a shorter working week (even if that was likely these days), because it builds confidence and solidarity. Each dispute is practise for the next.

The ultimate aim will be mass occupations on a regional/national level and at this stage the extension of the struggle beyond the factory gates becomes imperative. It's not enough to take over the factories, we have to take over the streets as well.

Conclusion Local workers groups are neither the nucleus of a future mass organisation, nor are they outside the class struggle. As workers we inevitably participate in the class struggle and workers groups provide a forum for us to exchange our experiences and develop our ideas with other consciously revolutionary workers.

It ought to be obvious (but it seems it never is as far as some leftist communist groups are concerned) that in calling the above a discussion document we are indicating that it is just that - and not the "line" of the LWG.

In issue 33 of their journal the International communist current criticise an article in our last bulletin and in the course of this suggest :

- 1) that the LWG mistakenly sees itself as a workers group rather than a political group.
- 2) stating "will the LWG remain 'open' to all sorts of confusion by running away from its responsibilities to clarify important issues, or will it supplement the more positive aspects of its development with a better understanding of the need for political coherence", it clearly suggests that we should adopt a common ideological 'line'.
- 3) following from this it suggests we

should censor contributions to the bulletin on the basis of this 'line'. Taking these points in order we would like for the benefit of anyone who may have been misled by the article, to 'clarify' the following :

- 1) We are perfectly capable of distinguishing between a workers group thrown up in a particular situation of class struggle, and a group of workers like the LWG, a workers circle. The I.C.C's difficulties on this point seem to derive from their own inability to overcome a view of 'politics' as a specialised activity demanding its own "professional bodies" to ensure "standards". The class origins of such views must be obvious.
- 2) The LWG sees its responsibility as the creation of an open discussion group - a forum within which workers can 'clarify important issues' for themselves. For the LWG as a group to 'clarify' issues would require the adoption of a common ideological platform - presumably what the I.C.C mean by "political coherence". Beyond certain basic minimum positions we see the development of such a group ideology as useless, and as exemplified in the ideological 'militantism' of the I.C.C themselves, as a potential obstacle to the development of a genuine class consciousness by the working class for itself.

As a workers circle and not a factory base group, the 'revolutionary consciousness' of those who participate in the LWG will be formed in the interaction between their activity as revolutionaries at work and their activity within the group. 'Consciousness' doesn't arise within, cannot be "stored" ready for use within, (and in real terms is very seldom found within) small groups or parties wholly outside of the factories (or whatever site of class struggle is involved).

By 'militantism' we mean that attitude which sees revolutionary activity as something external - unrelated to the real needs and desires of the "militant" himself. Thus implying that

revolution doesn't involve revolutionaries changing themselves and their own lives as well as society in general. Thus defined it can be seen as an obvious (and particularly pernicious) characteristic of the 'leftism' the I.C.C purport to have broken with.

As to "remaining open to all sorts of confusions" our meetings are open to the I.C.C unless we should find them as a group consistently hindering, as opposed to contributing to, discussion.

3) On the question of editorial policy our bulletin is open to all contributions - hence the clear statement that apart from the aims and principles or unless indicated articles reflect the views of their authors not the LWG. Having sufficient faith in the ability of our class to create a free communist society we see no reason to worry about confusing some abstract and illusory 'working class', existing somewhere 'out there', by publishing views which we don't agree with. Indeed we believe for our class to achieve a revolutionary consciousness will require dialogue - and dialogue being a social relation involves a reciprocal openness by those participating in it. By the same token we're not impressed by the sort of "faith" in working class power which rests on the dogmatic and superficial 'settling' of problems in advance through a pretentious facade of ideological 'clarity' - or platform as it's known in the trade.

London Workers Group

Typists note: The I.C.C suggest the adoption of the pseudonym Nat Soper by one of our contributors shows a "touching identification with ones own union" - are we thus to assume that the use of pseudonyms by I.C.C members in the same issue of their journal, such as Melmoth - presumably from the gothic novel Melmoth the Wanderer, Marlowe - from Raymond Chandlers character? and C.D.Ward - clearly derived from the book by H.P.Lovecraft - represent a touching identification with the juvenile romantic (not to say petit-bourgeois) heroes of their users? I think we should be told.

Job Report:

First Week in Print "What's up with your back mate, did you try picking up your wallet by yourself?" "Must be expensive though, having to hire a taxi to drive your wage packet home!"

That's the sort of reaction you can expect if you announce that you are working on "The Street". But let's dismiss the myths first- the image created by the very newspapers which Fleet Street Print-Workers wage labour supports. For while labour militancy, and the uniquely important position of the media in the commodity spectacle - the eyes, ears and mouthpiece of the ruling class - has kept certain sections of printworkers in the "labour elite", my wages, and therefore thousands of others, it seems reasonable to suppose, do not even approach the commonly held assumptions about printworkers.

Having said that, my job as a dispatch clerk does have a number of advantages over virtually every other job I've had. This is almost entirely due to the degree of collective self-organisation amongst the workers themselves. We arrange things so we cover for each other as much as possible, spending the minimum of amount of time on the job itself. In my experience this is only really effective at large workplaces which are divided into small departments, with minimal labour mobility, and obviously no clocking in. Otherwise it is difficult to establish close relationships with fellow workers, and defend your position from the management.

"You'll find there are some rough diamonds here, not like you're used to" the personnel manager told me on my first day. Obviously he was worried that a nice college boy like me might be contaminated by mixing with these proles who seemed to frighten him a bit. He also seemed shocked and slightly offended when I said I had no career ambitions as such. Presumably he expected me to say that I wanted to work my way up and become a personnel manager like him.

Anyway, the main difference between this bunch of workmates and those I've had in

(Cont, over)

the past is that this lot are far more sussed about doing as little work as possible. The inter-reliance which results makes the place more bearable than other less organised places in another way - you get far less petty hates and petty jealousies between workers.

However, though the fact that no-one feels they owe anything to the company does make work more tolerable, work is still a four letter word here as elsewhere. Skiving here and there is just a matter of survival and personal hygiene, and as yet at any rate, little more.

P.A.

(Rebellion behind the Typewriter  
Cont. from page 5.)

could be used to develop a network of global communications. In this way, our needs can be directly coordinated with the available labour-power and raw materials.

We can't leave this task up to professional leaders or intellectuals. We will have to make this new world ourselves, for ourselves.

(The above was reprinted from one side of a leaflet produced by the Nasty Secretary Liberation Front, which came from Berkeley California.)

Office work is one of the key areas of the current phase of capitalist restructuring. Traditional distinctions between 'responsible' office work and 'unskilled' factory work are vanishing. (Pay differentials based in favour of office work have long since gone). Labour costs are cut through deskilling, and workloads increased thanks to the greater control over the labour process that restructuring gives the boss. At least in those areas where its possible to profitably restructure the job. If office workers become little more than machine operators, does this break down office/factory differences as regards autonomous

organisation? Or isn't it as simple as that?

We'd be very interested in peoples experiences in this area and their thoughts on the possibilities for activity it opens up.

### Are Strikes Effective?

With the many great difficulties at the present moment, strikes have ceased to be quite as effective as they should be, since there is a great division between the producing classes and the workers organisations; with competition, even within the unions and their leaders only maintaining the so-called strikes for the benefit of whichever political party profits most.

Ideology The great majority of the people affiliated to such organisations don't agree ideologically with the control of direction that the militancy activates from above, but since they are affiliated they must accept their decisions, and from the domesticated majority that decide in favour of the administration which manages them from above.

Unity If the strikes were directed with the vision of all workers within the community, they would see that everyone of them has as great an importance in the profession which they carry out as any other. We are all important because we are united within the community, and especially when the communities are free and collective.

With this sentiment, workers must demand wages on a national level in order to end the division and competition between the producing classes, and all the workers acting as producers will contribute, to establish a better world to live in.

Equal Wages The difference that exists today between wages in different industries must not be accepted, since it is a

weapon for creating divisions to the benefit of the elite financiers who dominate the banks, industry, commerce etc. - so that as for strikes we can almost say that the losers (morally and materially) are those dependent on a wage. Certain workers who work in certain industries could be termed rich workers, and those who work in less important industries could be called poor workers. Which to my mind is not a positive social justice. With all this confusion we end by fighting each other, and all this effort is undoubtedly negative, we must abandon anything which leads us off the path and make steps in the direction we should be struggling.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY & SOLIDARITY.  
SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR ALL WHO DESIRE IT.

Jose.

#### Quote of the Month :

"Finally....we read in last weeks Sunday Telegraph that the government is considering closing down all of the country's 672 High Street job centres.

But the pictures not all black."  
Socialist Worker 22/11/80.

#### EARLY RETIREMENT PROGRAMME.

As a result of automation, as well as a declining workload, management must, of necessity, take steps to reduce the current workforce.

A "Reduction of Employees" programme has been devised which seems the most equitable under the circumstances.

Under this plan older employees will be placed in early retirement thus permitting the retention of employees who represent the future of the Company.

Therefore, a programme to phase out the older personnel (over 40) by the end of the current financial year will be put into effect immediately. This programme will

be known as RAPE ( Retirement, Aged Personnel, Early ).

Employees who are "RAPED" will be given the opportunity to seek other jobs within the Company, provided that, while they are "RAPED" they request a review of their employment status before actual retirement takes place.

This phase of the programme will be known as SCREW ( Survey of Capabilities of Retired Early Workers). All employees who have been "RAPED" and "SCREWED" may apply for a final review.

This phase will be known as STUFFED ( Study of Termination of Use For Further Education and Development ).

Programme policy dictates that employees may be "RAPED" once, "SCREWED" twice, but can get "STUFFED" as many times as the Management sees fit.

#### Job Report:

Rail : Cutbacks And Overtime Basically speaking, the railway industry, being

starved of the cash it needs to run as an unprofitable service in competition with private transport, is in a state of irreversible disintegration. Like the sewers, non-prestige routes and rolling stock are wearing out faster than they are being renewed.

Low Pay The workers who run the service are low paid considering the unsocial hours and lousy conditions of work. Train drivers, traditionally a craft conscious body of militant trade unionists, going soft and reactionary, now earn less than the industrial average. As a driver my net weekly income for a flat 40 hours is £75.

Sunday Working For the majority of workers who have dependents and large bills to pay, there is only one way to make ends meet. Do all the overtime they can get hold of. The pleasure

of increased consumption or buying your own home makes up for the extra exploitation.

For drivers, it is generally unusual and frowned upon to work more than 8 hours a day - plus there are rules governing how much work we can do in one shift and there must be at least 12 hours between finishing and starting work.

Working Sundays is the usual way of supplementing our income as it pays time and three quarters.

Rest Day At small depots like on the Southern Region and where I work, management is able to offset the chronic staff shortages and resulting train cancellations by offering the carrot of "rest day working".

It means that drivers are offered work on their day off (which can be any day of the week) and is paid like a Sunday. It certainly is an incentive to most of the guys I work with and I think, like all overtime, it is an abomination. It ends up with people, maybe not every week, but once is too often, working EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK, until the next round of cuts.

Rationalisation The unions and management are very much in agreement as to the solution for British Rail. More government investment, rational transport policy, modernisation and cutting out jobs altogether. No guards on trains, no staff on stations, more ticket machines and automatic barriers, more inspectors, more police (the unions called for more police protection after the youth rampage at Neasden injured a motorman).

And, of course, more productivity, which brings us back to overtime. Because if they can't, or won't get more productivity out of the workers by improving the equipment we operate and the conditions we work in, they get it by giving us more work to do.

Happily, working over 40 hours is, still, voluntary.

P.T.Card.

The latest edition (No. 3) of the International Discussion Bulletin (see our last bulletin) is due out at the same time as this issue of the LWG Bulletin.

Available from Box 666, 182 Upper St. N.1. ( inc. Postage)

From the same people the LWG has been sent a circular about a proposed international conference in London next April (18th-20th) 'On the Basis of Proletarian Autonomy'.

The conference is intended to bring together those groups participating in the Int. Discussion Bulletin and interested individuals.

The organisers state :

"We feel that it is important that the debate is established within a certain framework, or minimum positions of adherence. This is to ensure that there is sufficient consensus to form the basis of dialogue."

The suggested minimum positions are at the moment:

1. Revolution is explicitly seen as the overthrow of commodity production ie. the wages system, money etc., along with all the patriarchal and hierarchical relations which accompany it.

2. Although the critique of capitalism rests on an understanding of its political economy, the movement in society towards communism is based on the desire to qualitatively and collectively transform our lives. Its foundations rest on the desire to break free of capitalist society.

3. Reformism only offers to prolong our misery. No longer able to secure real lasting reforms, reformism can only re-arrange the relations of exploitation to the overall disadvantage of the proletariat.

The modern form of reformism is leftism, which includes Social-Democracy, Leninism, Stalinism,

(cont. Page 16)

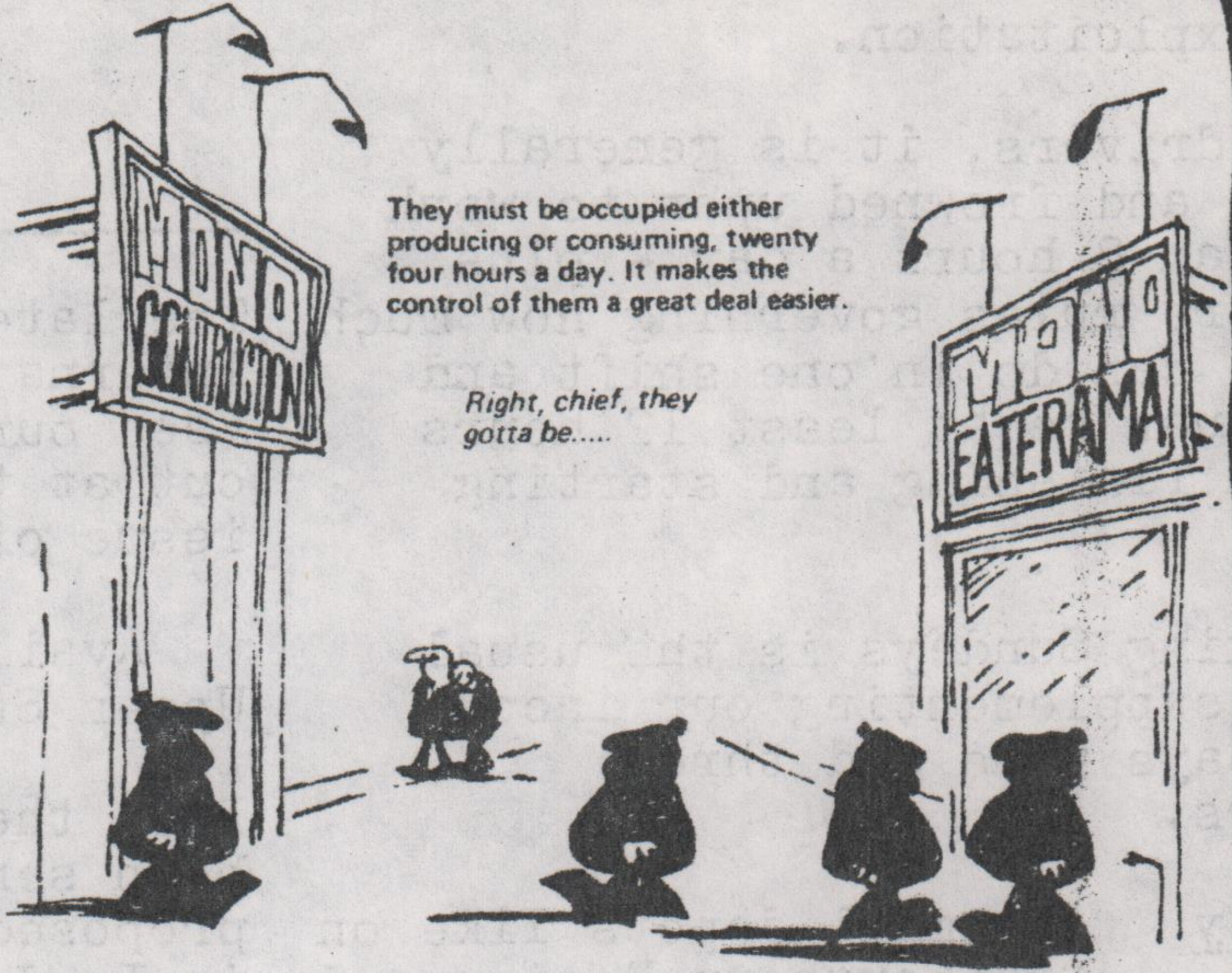
The problem is not only that the masses must produce, but they must also consume what they have produced.



Sure, boss, they gotta consume.

They must be occupied either producing or consuming, twenty four hours a day. It makes the control of them a great deal easier.

Right, chief, they gotta be....



If you allow them time to think and analyse their situation.....why, my boy, that would be revolution!

Heaven forbid gov



To make sure the masses remain in a condition to be controlled simply, it is advisable to restrict the content and volume of information that is available to them. It is ideal that they are

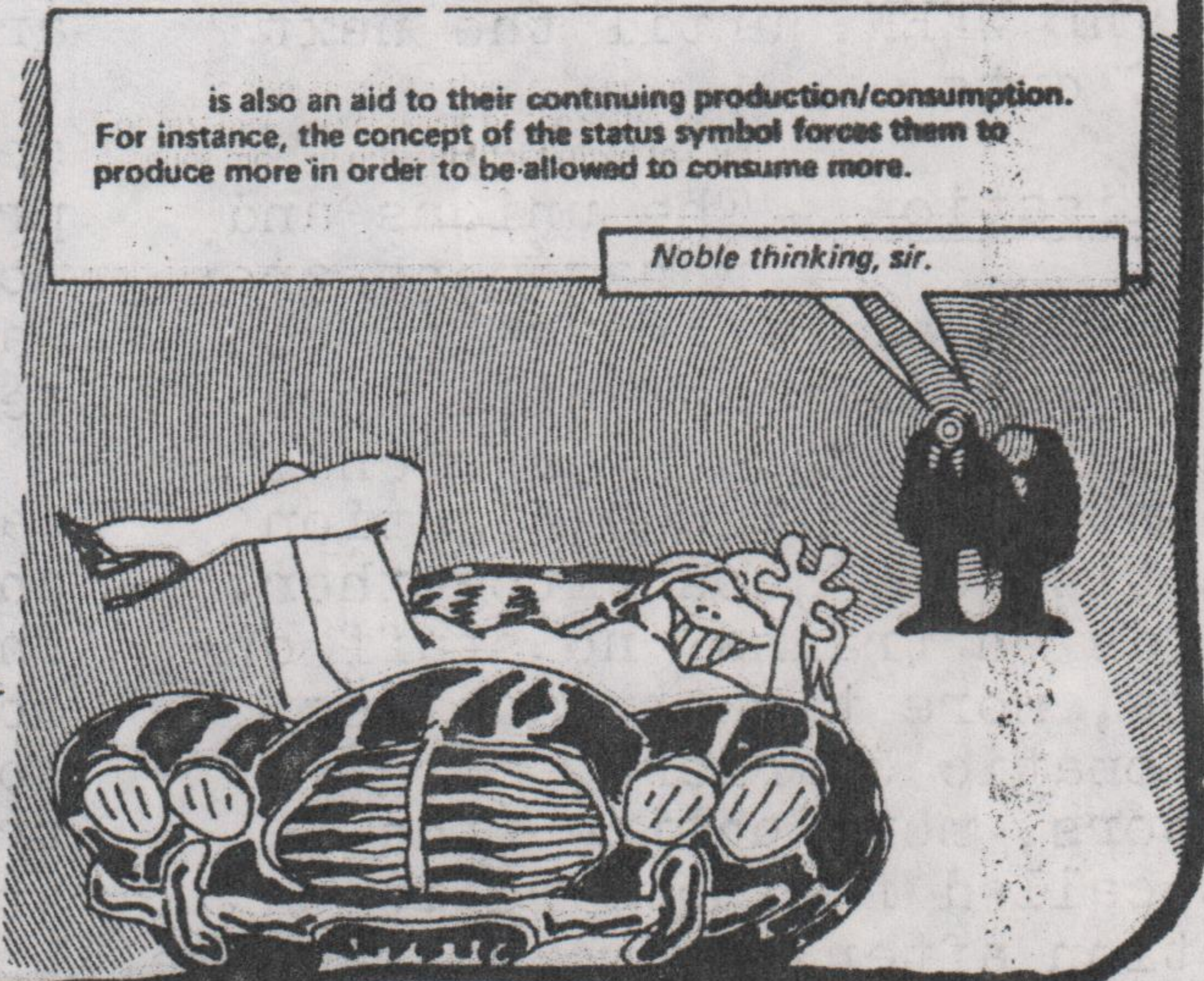
PAY ATTENTION!



subjected to enormous quantities of trivial and irrelevant data. If you can preoccupy them with ideas of fashion, of status, of titillation, they will fail to notice that they are deprived of information that does, in fact, drastically affect themselves and their environment. This filtering of the news that allows only the most trivial to reach the mass

is also an aid to their continuing production/consumption. For instance, the concept of the status symbol forces them to produce more in order to be allowed to consume more.

Noble thinking, sir.



A consistent strain of criticism of the LWG Bulletin has been that it's boring to look at - there's not enough jokes - it's too intellectual - you couldn't give it to the people at work and so on. Well it reflects the content

submitted - and it could well be argued it's not designed as an agitational paper. These criticisms are valid nevertheless. So lets have illustrations, cartoons, jokes, outrageous quotes - whatever - for the next issue. Ok ?





An example of a paper which adopts exactly the opposite approach to the LWG Bulletin is produced by a group of Lambeth NALGO workers for local circulation. Available from Box 33, 182 Upper St. N.1. (25p). "The policy of confrontation with

the TORY's and their bureaucratic replacements waiting in the wings (Labour and 'Left' Politicians/TUC Bureaucrats) has now become not merely desirable but necessary. STEALING YOUR LIFE BACK IS NOT ONLY FUN BUT THE ONLY FREE CHOICE LEFT."

(Int. Conference cont. from P.13)

Trotskyism, Maoism and some variants of Anarchism. It is essential to make a rupture with reformism, which can be outlined as follows :

- a) Rejection of trade unionism
- b) Rejection of Parliamentarianism
- c) Rejection of 'national liberation struggles'
- 4) Whilst the revolutionary movement may take its first decisive step in a certain region or nation, its only prospect is rapidly spreading or being defeated. Class struggle is international and internationalist.

5) Capitalism maintains material divisions within the proletariat, between men and women, young and old, different races, and different religions. The growth of class consciousness must overcome these barriers - not with the illusion of realising equality within capitalism - in order for the proletariat to realise itself as a revolutionary class. For this reason revolutionary groups cannot tolerate sexism, ageism, racism or bigotry within their midst and must criticise the appearance of such in the class struggle.

6) The party is not an appropriate form either for communist minorities or as a mass organisation. The appropriate form of mass organisation is the workers council. Communist minorities have no privileges as regards the rest of the class in that they are a product of class struggle and exist within its midst.

For further details once again contact Box 666 at the above address. Individual LWG members have expressed interest in the conference which is likely to be discussed at our regular meetings.

AUTONOMOUS WORKERS GROUPS.

Introduction On the continent, particularly in Italy, Spain and France, the debate about workers autonomy - the role of unions and parties, the forms of workers organisation both before and during revolution etc. - has taken place over a number of years, and in the context of the emergence of autonomous workers groups (AWG's) during periods of intense class struggle.

This debate has obvious relevance to the concerns of the LWG, and in future issues of the bulletin we hope to look at it critically.

A good deal has been published about workers autonomy in Italy and Spain - almost nothing about France. The following article is translated from "Le Bulletin Critique" - produced by the 'Cercle Marxiste De Rouen'. It was written by a militant who took part in an attempt to set up an AWG in Clermont-Ferrand in 1977-8. We know very little of this group. From issues of Jeune Taupe, the paper of the group Pour une Intervention Communiste we know that they produced a political platform, debated with both the PIC and the french section of the ICC, and issued leaflets after an unsuccessful struggle by Michelin workers. It was a locally based, inter-factory group (among other things there are four Michelin factories in Clermont-Ferrand) It eventually collapsed but there are no details why. (French speakers can consult Jeune Taupe Nos. 15, 16 & 18).

As mentioned in the article, there were a number of attempts to set up AWG's in France at this time. Based on that experience the article offers quite an interesting argument for the importance of AWG's.

Workers Autonomy :

AUTONOMOUS WORKERS GROUPS.

I've no wish to rework the umpteenth fundamental critique of unionism. For me the unions are bodies integrated into the capitalist system, whose purpose can only be to participate in its orderly development. Thus it's impossible to talk of any "Betrayal of the Unions" when they refuse to fight because of their reformist leaderships ; or argue that it's possible to recapture unions for revolutionary struggle by breaking them free from this leadership. On the contrary the unions fulfill their function perfectly. On this score I'll just recall what Anton Pannekoek said, more than half a century ago : "The working class must look beyond capitalism, whilst the unions are entirely confined within the limits of the capitalist system." My intention is only to state why I think the use of union structures, even in limited ways within a clearly defined context, can contribute nothing to the objective of pushing struggle as far as its possible to go. (Above all, from the viewpoint of developing a consciousness of the need for a global confrontation with capital : most importantly, as acquired in relation to the revolutionary project that a struggle, even around strictly reformist demands, can lead to). On the other hand I want to talk particularly about that type of workers organisation which allows participation in these struggles in a positive way - that is, always from the perspective of the necessary destruction of a society divided into classes - and of the problems that are raised by such organisation.

Sabotage If I believe that it's necessary to have autonomous workers organisation at factory level, it's firstly because of the present weakness of reformism. In the context of the crisis we recognise that capital cannot satisfy even the simplest demands without aggravating the problems posed by its restructuring. As a consequence the unions, as capitalist institutions in the workers movement, can offer only ways of sabotaging those struggles which represent, at this moment, an aggravating factor in the social crisis.

Class Consciousness Because of this it's vital to develop ways of contributing to going beyond these reformist struggles based on demands, towards, and so nourishing, genuine revolutionary activity. As the old man said "the daily struggle is still the training ground of communism". (1) After certain social confrontations, struggles that could be described as "bitter", we witness an 'ebbing away'. Not just of social discontent, but whats more serious, an ebbing away of the

class consciousness produced by the struggle. Very often we see workers, after collectively ripping up their union cards (because of their understanding of the obstructive role played by the unions in their struggles), either giving up all activity or returning one by one to the union. This is due to the absence of a clear revolutionary perspective within these fractions of workers in struggle. This problem can be overcome by the organisation of the most conscious workers outside all reformist structures, in Autonomous Workers Groups. The activity of such groups by underlining and defending the achievements of these struggles and relating them to a clear global perspective, helps future confrontations reach a qualitatively higher level. This development of self organisation in factories is not new. It is illustrated in a very old example in Germany in the 1920's with the A.A.U and the A.A.U.D. (2)

Activity I'm now going to define what I mean by Autonomous Workers Groups - what they should and shouldn't be to play a

(Autonomous Groups cont.)

real revolutionary role. From the start we must understand that it is not a matter of recreating a "new look" reformism under a new name ; of recreating "revolutionary syndicalism" (C.N.T style)(3) which dare not speak its name. And from this perspective an Autonomous Workers Group cannot be a 'transmission belt' (4) in the service of the umpteenth world party, whether it already exists or awaits construction. (On this subject I make it clear that I oppose the social-democratic conception (5) of the party as the sole repository of class consciousness, having the task of directing the struggle to destroy capitalism.) The Autonomous Workers Group must be a political focal-point ; I believe it must defend the strategy dictated by the goal - the communist organisation of society - which is central to its existence, through its own activity in the class. Because of this Autonomous Workers Groups must not be narrow organisations, wrapped around the unconditional defence of a pseudo-timeless programme, but must be able to achieve a theoretical development arising out of the living practice of its members in the struggles in which they are involved. Such a project necessarily implies that such groups are capable of overcoming factoryism, localism and corporatism (all obstacles to achieving a global understanding of the problems that arise). To avoid these dangers the various AWG's must develop their own international co-ordination. We must no longer see in these groups the prefiguration or the embryos of the workers councils, which have quite a different nature. The councils are the mass organisations in which are found the totality of the class in struggle during a revolutionary period. The AWG's are organisations constructed by workers - temporarily the most conscious during a period which is not revolutionary - in order to influence the social reality around them towards the communist project.

Class Struggle The possibility of initiating such activity rests on one indispensable precondition : that is the existence of genuine class struggle. While the activity of revolutionaries can and must influence the class struggle, it can't substitute itself for it. The desire to create AWG's in the total absence of significant struggle will only constitute a sterile activism and even "an enormous bluff", as the I.C.C. would say. That said, in order to put into perspective the inept views of this organisation (for example International Review No. 21 pgs. 6-11), we must recall that the attempts - however ill-chosen and even of dubious possibility of success - to create AWG's in 1976-77 (Sochaux, Clermont-Ferrand, B.N.P - Paris Bank Workers), and the attempt to co-ordinate them, were set in a real social movement (even though embryonic), and therefore that it wasn't a question of bluff.

Revolutionary Groups For me the AWG's are one element among others of the global revolutionary movement. The autonomy of these groups, necessary even in relation to revolutionary groups outside the factories, does not signify an antagonism between these two type types of organisation. On the contrary both are indispensable (neither one more than the other) and they complement each other. In consequence revolutionary workers can participate in two types of organisation at once. A movement to subvert the old society can only come alive through the dialectical relation between these different organisations.

The role of revolutionaries is now clear. The question of a necessary new departure for practical autonomous activity is posed by remaining conscious of the fact that this can only be taken at the present level of class struggle. In the absence of a general upsurge this activity

(Autonomous Groups cont.)

will be forced to return to a very low level.

RENE.

From Bulletin Critique No. 6.  
(c/o Herve Arson, B.P 244,  
76 120 Grand-Quevilly, France)

Our thanks to the comrade from Authority/Box666 who did the first translation.

Like much writing on Workers Autonomy the author draws on the Left Communist and Councillist traditions and terminology - which are unfamiliar in this country. Thus a few notes of explanation.

(1) The 'old man' is a flippant reference to Lenin.

(2) A.A.U & A.A.U.D - I've no idea what the first is - I suspect a misprint. The A.A.U.D was the General Workers Union of Germany.

After world war one Germany hovered on the brink of revolution and Workers Councils and Factory Committees were established on a vast scale. The A.A.U.D was formed in Feb. 1920 on the basis of these existing bodies, which it regionally\* (as opposed to the anarcho-syndicalist F.A.U.D which organised industrially), and with the aim of destroying capitalism and establishing a 'council republic'. Essentially it was an attempt to keep the momentum of the revolutionary council movement alive, in a period of reflux as capitalism re-stabilised itself.

The A.A.U.D was anti-reformist, anti-parliamentarian, anti-trade union and rejected participation in the legal system of factory councils - the means by which the council movement was reincorporated into capitalism. At its height in late 1920 it had 150-200,000 members but it declined rapidly after the abortive armed insurrection in March 1921. It worked closely with the K.A.P.D a left-communist party which split from the 'official' communist party, the K.P.D. Increasingly it became merely a union appendage  
\*this should read 'regionally organised'

under the K.A.P.D's political leadership. It split in 1921 when those favouring federal autonomy and opposing separate political leadership by a party left to form the 'unitary' A.A.U.D-E. It split again in 1922 over the question of involvement in purely economic struggles in a non-revolutionary period. The fragments swiftly became minority groupings with councillist ideologies that were increasingly remote from reality. In 1931 the A.A.U.D & A.A.U.D-E remnants merged against the rise of fascism, forming the K.A.U.D, a propaganda group which called on workers to form autonomous groups and co-ordinate them themselves (and didn't claim like its predecessors to take on itself the future economic organisation of society). Needless to say it was too little and too late, and was swept away by fascism.

(3) The C.N.T is the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union (see our last bulletin). Destroyed by Francoism in the thirties it was recreated in the wave of working class militancy that produced the assembly movement in 1976-8. With the collapse of that militancy in the face of much deeper economic crisis and C.P and Socialist reformism, the C.N.T is left torn between the 'realistic' need to participate on a reformist basis within struggles, and on the other hand an increasingly purist revolutionary ideology. This - combined with tendencies to unnecessary sectarianism, the pressures from state and from leftism, and crucially its failure to make any impression in the key industrial sectors (established and unionised under Franco) has marginalised the C.N.T and led to splits and declining membership.

(4) "Transmission Belt" - Lenins phrase to describe his view of the relation between party and unions. They were to implement management strategy and undertake the political education of the masses along lines determined by the Party. In this way they would become 'schools of communism'. The phrase is often used in Italy and France where the CGIL and CGT unions are dominated by the C.P.

(notes to Autonomous Groups cont.)

(5) "Social Democratic" here means in the sense of the social-democratic parties in the 2nd International pre-1914 (including the Bolsheviki) who all saw the mass party as the key instrument in the revolutionary process (with what results history has shown).

Lastly he refers to Factoryism, Localism and Corporatism; (very) briefly : Factoryism is the idea that the revolution is based in the factories, instead of the factory being seen as merely a key point of struggle in the movement to transform society as a whole. Localism is the tendency to emphasise local autonomy over the need to unite both to destroy centralised state power, and arguably, to subsequently organise production on a non-capitalist basis. Corporatism is the tendency both to reproduce the existing division of labour (e.g Skilled and Unskilled) within Councils, and to become integrated into the management structure of capitalism via. so-called "Workers Control".

The following extract is from an article in the latest issue of *Chartist* (an otherwise pretty horrible socialist magazine-typists note). An earlier draft of it was sent to the LWG by the author Les Levidow.

### SELF-POLICING

But the greatest imperative is to contain the class struggle within disputes between particular employers and their employees, and to restrict those disputes to pay and working conditions. To keep the working class divided up into separate economic interest groups, some measure of self-policing will be required in order to close up the space where the subordination of labour could be challenged across the boundaries of occupation and employer.

For the bourgeoisie, this project requires forsaking the collision course of the Industrial Relations Act and building instead upon the industrial restraint of the social contract, bringing the unions to internalise 'responsible' behaviour. By formulating the Employment Bill's provisions as last-resort remedies rather than as indiscriminate and untimely confrontations, Prior could leave it to the unions to discipline their membership as a precaution against being sued for damages by employers or by anti-union workers. As Eric Jacobs put it, 'The new laws may not be tested in the courts much, if at all. The fact of their presence on the statute book may be itself sufficient to have the desired influence on the unions' behaviour' (*Sunday Times*, 2 December 1979).

While the unions have certainly remained apprehensive about life under an Employment Act, their political approach which once relied for legitimation upon Labour's legislative reforms now prevents them from even defending those reforms, much less superseding them. The unions have instead taken the prospect of an Employment Act as an imperative to renew their bid for legitimation by further subordinating the unofficial union movement. Thus their strategy serves to preclude any mass action which might in fact make an Employment Act unenforceable.

Of course, repeated attempts to incorporate the shop stewards' movement had already led in many cases to the 'bureaucratisation of the rank-and-file'. However this was ultimately a political process, with many shop stewards having felt compelled to act as instruments of the social contract by regulating shop-floor conflicts — if only to take full advantage of the employment protection reforms it seemed to offer, if not to prevent any undermining of the social contract from within. Having adjusted their own daily practice to mediating industrial relations procedures, stewards are now finding that space closing up and their earlier role difficult to recover, now that capital no longer needs to sustain credibility in such procedures as it moves on to other strategies for dealing with the unofficial movement.

British Leyland is a case in point. There Michael Edwardes strengthened the official unions against the unofficial movement by representing the shop stewards' leader Derek Robinson as a 'union boss' somehow oppressing the workers and jeopardising their future employment prospects. Totally disoriented by this strategy, Robinson reacted to his own sacking by criticising management for its ingratitude towards him, after so many years of Robinson's having got out of bed in the middle of the night to cool out shopfloor disputes: 'I have solved more strikes in BL than Sir Michael Edwardes has provoked and this is saying something'. (*Guardian*, 2 February 1980).