

# MAYDAY #02

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# 40 YEARS OF RIOTS

Paris 68 - Present

Notes on the situation facing us, May 1968 French uprisings, Beyond theory and praxis: Towards Praxis, Anti-fascism the BNP and the local elections, Solidarity - the fascist trade union



## [ introduction ]

All around the world Mayday is an emergency alert. Mayday magazine's call is for improved politics amongst the multitude, which together with ambition, dynamism, belief and vision can be a source of the next wave of struggles that can improve the multitudes positions globally. We have described some of the tendencies and beliefs in the dominant social order in the UK in order to oppose what is happening, for the first step is not historical reductionism - people do 'make their own history, not in situations of their own choosing, but in conditions created in and inherited from the past'.

Mayday #02 is published similar to #01, to coincide with a 40th anniversary of the 2nd New Left Manifesto - *"Mayday Manifesto 1968: A socialist alternative to Labour government policies. The New left analyses the British Crisis in a world perspective, and gives fresh definitions and directions in the fight against capitalism"*, (edited by R. Williams, A Penguin Special from 1968).

This Manifesto displayed a maturity from the first, more serious (book length), with more people writing for it. The similarities are clear; both have had a *Labour government* that attacks its own voting base because of its detachment from them, and a cosy relationship with the City.

Then, as now, there was cynicism with the processes of government, but these today are more widespread and common. The differences with today include; New Left projects were by then around 10 years in the making, and they had several different magazines and networks from which to draw. The left then was approaching a peak of its influence, while today we live through a class struggle downturn.

Mayday #02 starts from a weaker position, but is progressing and developing its politics, with new people writing for it, we hope to do more and better things within the urgency of the current crises. We have a commitment to all the actions to which arguments lead, and similar to Mayday Manifesto 1968, a belief in bringing theory and practice together and in doing so cutting new paths, meeting new people and bringing more people into progressive political practice.

It is important to connect with relevant humanistic trends in Britain; commitments to democratic practice, honesty, open practice, accountability, a determined humanity, and an active critical and happy intelligence. There is a possibility that we can link up with many different people and groups in the UK, so we can cooperate and share our sources and resources, and improve our practice within the

immense social changes that are underway. This includes an exchange of solidarity and practice with others from around the world who share similar perspectives. This urgently needed and necessary realignment of political forces and practice will be in the immediately arriving years.

What we are seeking to define is a politics of the politically maturing generation, and a way of joining this with the best elements of previous struggles. This will be an emerging process, there maybe some confusion in the real meaning of events

which is only clear in retrospect, and so practice will be testing and require; vigilance, diligence, thought and open discussion, determination and more practice. New politics is immediately needed; the democratic process is already at an advanced stage of decay and opportunities present now may not be available later in the century. This is the

direction of our efforts, towards a new liberation politics for the rest of the 21st century. Mayday is both a challenge and demands responses. There are thousands who have similar intentions and values, and who can link up and involve themselves in practice and analysis. This will be our common futures.

### Recommendation

We have documented a possible capitalist future where, as Naomi Klein describes, public infrastructure is decaying and abandoned, and during capitalist and environmental disasters these spaces will be economically stripped and left like scorched earth policy during war. The well-off meanwhile withdraws further from the public, safe, well fed and secure in their gated communities. This Mad Max vision is not some distant dystopia, it is here now and today. What is needed is not a politics of difference, of hiatus, but one of unity. Let us do many things together about it.

**Together.**



Mayday marches around Europe 2008

## [ notes on the situation facing us ]

**L**iquid Modernity' is the term Zygmunt Bauman uses to describe current social conditions distinct to the post WW2 solidity - 'all that is solid has melted into air'. Full employment and gender roles have either gone or have changed, challenging assumptions. This has created differences, generated many crisis, paradox and contradiction. There appears to be no justice and no rewards for playing the game, meanwhile the rich own the game, fiddle the game, have meta and mega expenses, and start next to the finishing line.

With the decline of respect; for your elders, for your parents, for those in authority, there is no support for the little bonuses of keeping your identity within the status quo, which used to flow from respect. This, contrary to utopian anarchist belief, does not necessarily result in a new libertarian dawn of an open society. Instead, a new wave of politicisation from the right is taking place; conservative boundaries are being reimposed right before our eyes.

The god of money is worshipped daily, but this is the god Thanatos. We are encouraged to peacefully submit to the status quo of domination, violence, environmental destruction and war - the very means of destruction. We are encouraged to not only see the **4 horsemen of the apocalypse** - but to invite them in for tea and co-exist - and leave it to them to sort out for us. However, they created the problems in the first place and we cannot trust our salvation to their hands.

In a situation, which requires much political feeling from the many, there is little or no progressive discussion. The multitude is left to create versions of the future. In some cases they have fallen back on a romantic nationalism under the illusion that fascists such as the BNP will recreate a utopian past where the 'white' community economically looks after itself. However, this state never existed and can never be created. It does solve the problem of thinking and uncertainty though for those who adopt this position.

There is general insecurity and uncertainty, rather than one religion there is many, choice becomes unlimited and people are encouraged to reach their own capitalist potential based within preset possibilities. The economic and social problems create a general instability and insecurity, which permeates every interaction and discourse. Suspicion is normalised and the authoritarian control state divides and rules, with prohibition the only measure it has. There has never been so much law, and the limitless creation of new law covering old and new areas and subjects seems to have no cause. However, genesis is in resentment and a general intolerance, itself encouraged by globalised capitalism, the new middle class insecurity is the voting category that all compete for.

In these conditions, the shock of the different is magnified, as the media hypocrites fall back on old formulas of the British condition to try to create the future. This illusory past of 'British tradition' with so many invented traditions

is a substitute for serious thinking. This future is one with the appearance of change, but one where real change is never contemplated or achieved (Mayday #01). However, the possibilities of the future are outside of any understanding within the British identity. Instead, New Labour or old Tory are both competing for the right (sic) to maintain this tradition of elite rule. Once, the Labour movement was lead by its own (those from the experience of the working class), but now it is lead by Oxbridge elite, same as the old Tory elite, but with different clothes.

### Branded Losers

Both New Labour and Tory promote the myth of the contented good life, a 'secure middle class way of life which you can reach if you try hard enough'. However, this is, has it always has been, a myth, it never existed and can never be created. Though it is the dream that is used as the goal that can be sold to the aspiring. Envy is encouraged as the lifestyle of the rich is sold to the poor; the dream of a rich refined cultural inclusion is promoted, but then systematically denied to the poor who can never reach it, and the new middle class who can aspire to but never reach it either. The wages of McJobs can never pay for the clothes people have to wear to look *ghetto in the ghetto*.

Whereas before we were excluded and pilloried because of

our clothes, now our clothes are the means by which we are kept in the ghetto. We are branded losers, branded by default and by design, as the winners are always in a social sphere we can never reach. Contentment and micro divisions are encouraged; 'we are never like them' - the chavs, charvers, and the criminals - 'we are better than them'. However, the mundane is everywhere 'we can have a holiday once a year', while the rich have a year long holiday every year, and the illusion of free choice and equality before the law is maintained, *but at huge moral, physical and political cost*. The new middle class have to use restraint and discipline themselves into their own role, which frustrates many of their desires and dreams while stressing them. The meritocratic society emphasis and encouragement is denied, as the British aristocratic social structure of public schools permanently excludes its realisation. Italians laugh at, and have great difficulty believing, the hierarchy of the British school system, as everybody has the same education in Italy, which has very intelligent and popular cultures, unlike the UK.

Instead, lottery result randomness is the norm and appears to be the wish, reward is chaotic, there is no virtue in work, and caprice replaces merit. There are no standards anymore as lying becomes commonplace, by the: bosses, politicians and especially by their managers who are the ones who administer society and who have to deal with



the multitude on a daily basis.

Then 'why is not more concern generated' asks the well meaning liberal? The hard fact is that if you are the ideal type upstanding citizen, who accepts their role in society, then the 7 deadly sins and sinners (free loading, teenage pregnancy, migrants, drugs, deviance, idleness, disrespect etc) are the antithesis of your life and your life's drives. Thus, the response is not altruistic, but bitter, instead of caring for others, distance and resentment is encouraged by moral indignation. These feelings even spread within areas where the working poor live, they feel and are looked upon (there is more CCTV on council estates), and in turn look at each other, a culture of vindictiveness and difference is the means of divide and rule.

Not so long ago working people compared their lives to each other in a fairly easy to achieve way, the large workplaces of industry lead to standardised wage levels, and few differences. There was an identifiable other, and that was the manager. On the same estate now, there are any numbers of different occupations, and in areas of concentrated poverty, are areas with 50% of the population on welfare benefits. Previously money was associated with the rich, because workers never had any, but money has now been cleaned of negative dirty connotations and can, so the dream goes, be achieved by anybody. The rich and famous lifestyle has made money holy, no longer are their bosses and workers who struggle over work and wages, rather it is fun money and money is fun. A glamourised dream world of music, entertainment and sport, rather than exploitation and hardship.

Those who get excited take this fun money for fun without asking, and can end up in prison. Increasing numbers of new laws have seen increasingly harsher punishment for the same laws, resulting in an ever-worsening prison system and in numbers incarcerated. Victorian prisons are over flowing (not because people are more likely to commit crime - Mayday \*01) but because of scapegoating of the poor. The number of people brought to court was largely stable throughout the 1990s and this was a time of accelerating prison growth. Between 1996 and 2002 the number of people receiving custodial sentences increased by 32%, from 85000 to 112000 per year.

The hostile unsanitary vermin infested and ugly places called Her Majesties Prisons are totally unsuited for rehabilitation. Instead standards are non-existent and facilities are similar to your local public toilets;

**non-existent or totally disgusting, unfit for animals.**

Recently research indicated Pentonville prison had a regime where 40% were abused, insulted or assaulted by staff. In Wandsworth, it was higher with half the prisoners reporting victimisation by staff and 1 in 8 reporting violence, and staff had physically assaulted them.

The poor however have no one to speak with, no one who stands by them, no medium of ideas circulation is available to discuss their situation collectively so they can work out why they are victimised in increasing numbers and in such a way. Instead, the very appearance of freedom at the same time denies authentic freedom. This is one of the paradoxes of the current media age and the web. The old stability created political practice, which was unsuited to new developments - it instead created a managerial ladder, and the effect is that *the Labour Party has abandoned the poor.*

### Phoenix from the Flames

There is growing realisation that Labour party politics are by far not enough, and increasing knowledge that the leadership of the Labour Party are the left wing of capitalism. Working people have nothing in common with it. Already the FBU and RMT are outside the Labour Party, others, like the Durham Miners Association, despise the New Labour hierarchy, and there are signs that others may follow.

Mark Serwotka General Secretary of the PCS in an article "Building an alternative to New Labour" (Jan 2008 'Socialist Review', mag of the SWP) at least is thinking large, but not going far enough. He complains of 'blind support for New Labour, and of the attitude of other unions, and the problems of linking industrial action'. Without recognising that it is a structural issue and an industrial union (the IWW - Industrial Workers of the World) maybe an answer, and certainly he should think about it given his concerns.

Politically too his concerns about the direction of society and alternatives to it are suggestive, and his observations that the Labour movement should think about serious progress are timely. However, this must not be wedded to old models, but look to the real conditions and a liberation politics for the 21st century. Political practice must become authentically new, and involve new groups and ideas, and not merely rehashed so a new wave of bureaucrats can hold back progress and conditions in the future ●



## [ Beyond Theory and Practice Towards Praxis ]

This article will explore political groups and their practice in the early 21st century. Suggesting a flawed understanding exists because of an inadequate political culture, which blends all too easily into the economic and political crisis. Deeper crisis is not engendering more theory and practice, it is relaxing established groups who become content with their oppositional status, who when and if they are recruiting, are doing it not on the basis of their ideas, but in spite of them. Rather it is important to look at the real praxis of Marx, which is; identified, developed, and suggested as appropriate for the 21st century. This includes developing new open concepts through praxis by serious perspectives of political consciousness and identity within new 21st century social conditions.

In the multitudinous working classes there is lacking;

"The generosity of spirit which identifies itself, if only for a moment, with the popular mind; that genius which pushes material force to political power, that revolutionary daring which throws at its adversary the defiant phrase: I am nothing and I should be everything"

[1]

It is necessary to look at theory, practice, and praxis issues, because there are countless misunderstandings about the relative roles and importance of theory and practice for the movement(s). Indeed, many seek to ignore this issue, as it would question the very basis of their personal ideas, behaviour, and political existence. In terms of undermining preconceived notions that underpin both the construction of their own identity, understanding and participation in politics, which has been and is constantly being developed through political involvement in conservative groups. It does not matter if these groups are nominally or widely labelled Marxist or anarchist, they can in effect have conservative features.

Rather than view life dialectically (Engel's, 1864), they view life constantly, assuming there are no minute or other changes within capitalism. As well as having politically weak justifications, including theoretical and historical understanding of the reasons for their own existence, this assumption that there are no gradual changes, is in itself a conservative perspective (Mao, 1937). There are also self-referential hierarchies, both within and between groups, which encourage more of the same, rather than

open up political ideas and practice. However, now is the time to prove what theory you have, and the only realistic judgement is practical;

*"The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, ie. the reality and power, the this sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question."*

From the second theses on Feuerbach, written in 1845 by Karl Marx. **All the left and anarchists have forgotten this;** however, this is understandable in a context where the Althusserian objective reading of Marx is relatively dominant on the hegemonic left in the UK and even within the anarchist movement, and so this is the teleological theorisation that receives the most widespread coverage. In the case of anarchists, this is somewhat to do with the adherence to 'Platformism'<sup>[2]</sup>. The modernist desire for an homogenous political anarchist party that can 'intervene' at the decisive moments of a revolutionary situation. Unfortunately this historical fetishisation has

blinded some to political realities, and who instead vainly cling and substitute their platformists torch without any or extremely limited intervention in the mass movements and conditions of working class struggle.

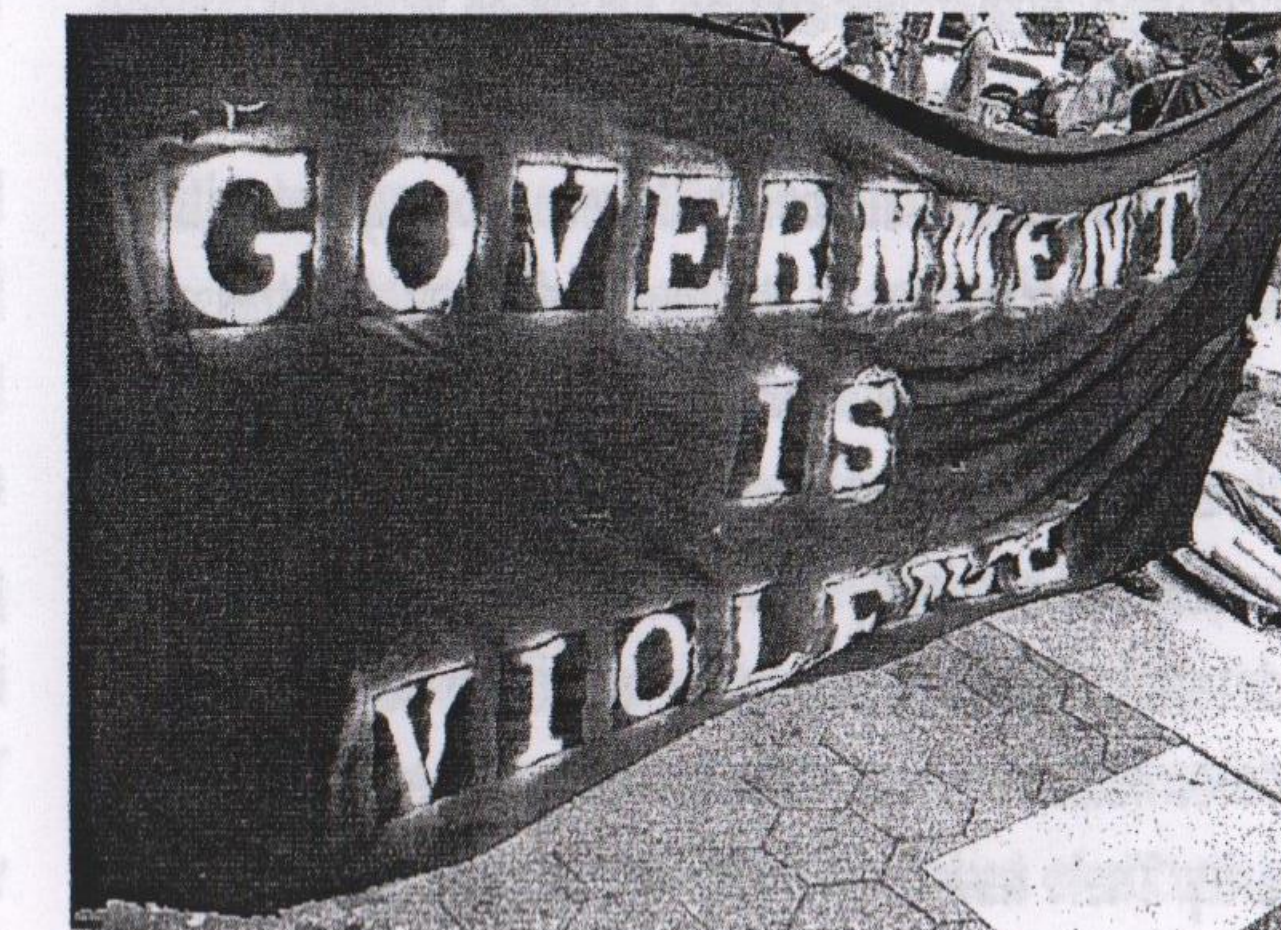
Apart from the usual suspects (add your own pet old left group hate figure at this point) currently the objective reading of 'later Marx' is a position promoted within the Historical Materialism journal, and at its conferences, mainly by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leadership active within it. In response it is necessary to both identify the lack of authentic, or even any, political practice, by the leadership of the SWP who instead regurgitate old theory in new forms, and rage against the continuity in Marx that Hardt (2005, in Murphy and Mustapha, eds, 2005) describes as being theorised by Negri. Other writers have commented upon the mechanistic orthodox interpretations that bastardised Marx, including Dunayevskaya (1971);

"Current reduction of Marx's concept of PRAXIS to the 'practice', ie. The carrying out, by the rank and file, of the 'theory', ie. The party line that the leadership, the intellectuals, have elaborated FOR them. This is not a 'translation' of the word praxis, it is a perversion".

A further serious problem hindering praxis is the role of the leadership of existing political groups, socialist to anarchist, all shades in between and more adventurous. Rather than enable the development of working class consciousness in their practice, they instead mediate between the multitude and capitalism by inserting themselves as self described ideological bearers of certain traditions. This carries on via tyrannies of both structurelessness and tyrannies of inclusion and exclusion, the included leadership keep out those who may challenge their insipid leadership, and this is despite some being avowedly anarchistic and horizontal. Yet their own practice contradicts themselves repeatedly. The limits of inclusion here being the sensibilities that their organisational form was designed to prolong - there is nothing natural about these formations.

They are caught in a dichotomy between being seriously anarchistic, and enabling their organisational form to continue - the traditional spontaneity v. organisation debate. This impasse leads to inaction and sterility of political practice, which is reduced to safe and routine social democratic forms. Sometimes, like the sterile Marxists, they excuse themselves by pointing out their their routine workerist propaganda, which does not include

other more open politics but rather is as predictable as the trade unions they lamely criticise, but worse, it is impotent criticism, designed never to result in action, save for the 'glorious day' sometime in the future. There is circularity to the logic used, which cannot break out of an impasse of their own creation. The justification of themselves as 'existing' is no longer good enough, *if it ever was*, they must prove their worth in new practice through having clear practical intentions and seriously opening upon their political forms. Since when have anarchists paid any attention to legality when participating in protest forms? The historical working class did not, and certainly, the anarchist partisans during WW2 did not.



### Political Crisis - Environmental, Economic, Political

Official ideologies and political forms are bankrupt, economic forms are not Northern Rock like anymore too, and so the continuing demonisation of the other through nationalistic propaganda functions to divide the multitudes and legitimate the curtailment of civil liberties and suppression of any dissent. Despite our times being one which is pregnant with more than quadruplets of Damian [The Omen] like horrors and destructive tendencies, which call for the most urgent and dynamic attempts to improve our responses to these crisis. There are many stuck in ruts of their own making which they are grinding further into the mud. There is a huge need for more praxis not less, for more practical conferences beyond group boundaries, for more political excitement and interesting forms of participation rather than none or safe ones from those in their nice comfort zones. There is a desperate need for more theoretical, practical involvement and participation with the issues of our time. Not in the old zones, but in the new areas of 21st century political practice which necessarily must be one of promoting human rights, of networking and spreading struggles, of working against conservative religions, of promoting new self help solidarity and communism between our peoples wherever they may be.

[1] Karl Marx, 1844, Deutsch Französische Jahrbucher

[2] Anarchists who defeated white armies but not the red wrote the Platform of Libertarian communism, in order to improve anarchist practice in revolutionary situations.

## Like God - Cynicism must be killed

If cynicism did not exist, the ruling class would have to invent it. The 'popular peoples' front of Judea' image of the left has to be eradicated completely. Old language and practices of reform and revolution have to change their form. It is no longer good enough to repeat old worn paths, we must reinvent a language in our time which speaks against the current language of oppression to encourage theory of the over coming of limitations and capitalism, of the transformation of the economy to a participatory communistic one, of participatory democracy and a new culture of liberation. We hope to discover these new meanings in practice and debate for; social justice, emancipation, leadership, culture, liberation, equality, political activity, history, critique, and positive super session - towards situations which become pregnant with the positive possibilities of the multitudes self and class liberation. There are some existing zones of liberation in certain single-issue campaigns such as in the gay movement, but here they must not only be for self-determination, but also encourage other struggles for self-determination at the same time through reciprocal solidarity. There have been some examples of this in the past, notably during the 1980s and 1990s, but they must happen again.



We are reminded of the occasion when Russian resistance to Nazi Germany was caught in a beautiful expression of the endless lightness of joy and humanity of being communist: After jumping under a bridge a half submerged officer, whose column was strafed by German planes, saw an untroubled large green frog on the bank, he smiled in wonder at the sheer quality of being. This is humanism in the direst situation possible, yet our so-called anarchist and communist leaders never encourage or participate in serious confrontation, never mind participate in growing alliances and imaginative protests outside the closeted parameters of their group. Their approach, temperament

and emotion is always the same, there is no passion, no gut-busting belly laughs, no ambition beyond their cult, and certainly no imagination. Instead, the mundane is produced by the melancholic attitudes of 'realism', which further increases their desire for control of acceptable forms of practice. Their so called revolutionary organisations, once in the beginning a good idea, quickly become stale and moribund. Woodcock (an historian of anarchism) was right, at least about one thing, that anarchism rejuvenates itself periodically around the world as the conditions for its values and practices constantly reoccur regardless of stale political practice. It would be more revolutionary for those groups to disband and start again because there is nothing worth defending by their continued existence.

Like the Campaign for a New Marxist Party who at least has a serious grasp of the problems, and some within has useful knowledge, the anarchists should start a Campaign for a New 21st century programme beyond their party forms. The movements whose traditions we all inherit did not look like the stale groups of today. E.P. Thompson described the real experience of and for the working class movement, and anarchist movements' political forms both showed the following around the world in their practice. Our class formations in multitudes of experiments was motivated and practiced, NOT by many sad bowed realists stuck to the machines of their workplaces, but by many diverse peoples. Semi-employed, unemployed, artisans, artists, and so on, lit and carried the flames of resistance, which manifested people's discontent in crucial times of our classes' formation and development through direct action. They had no wish to be self-sacrificial however; it was because their class experience led them to imagine political resistance in such a way that included preserving memory, and dangerous confrontation that was necessary for themselves and for their class.

The moment of resistance that flowered in their minds was inseparable from class experience, though some, engaged in these creative and dynamic political activities, took part more than others did. Some became notable and respected leaders in their village and town or even on a regional level. It was not however an unreflexive attitude, it was more often based upon what worked. Thus, food rioting and price setting worked throughout Yorkshire for many years around 200 years ago, and in the industrial centres such as Sheffield (Wells, 1977). Moreover, democratic forms of politics often worked hand in hand with more militant tactics, including, but not limited to, arson. This is a level of sophistication that even our political ancestors achieved,

who do not have the benefits of modern society. There was no distinction between the extreme and social democratic politics because there was no democracy for the poor as the denial of the vote to them meant that all the poor's political forms were controversial. In our times the comparison is that 'more extreme' tactics are supported by ever growing numbers of people who are excluded from official politics because they have no representation, this is when the Labour party is no longer automatically the party of the working classes and the poor.

The current crisis of political forms and participation in both the status quo social democratic arenas and for the anarchist and socialist opposition means that we should be even more open to ideas than normal. Organisations started during the ending of the post WW2 social contract and Keynesian Welfare state that finally ended in the early 1990s are totally unsuited for the new times, unable to adapt to political life in the 21st century. Though they are not alone, some organisations (including some websites and campaigns) started in the early 21st century are unsuited to the task because they fetishise some historical ultra left politics.

However, we look around the world despite the dearth of them in Britain. In Canada, the Autonomy and Solidarity group wish to develop socialism from below (Founding statement 2003), and they seek to "support initiatives that lead to increased openness, transparency, discussion and exchange" and they oppose processes which lead to included and excluded definitions, that is static minority or majority positions, and to do this with honesty. Unfortunately, political expediency is the order of the day with all exiting political forms who think they preciously, alone, can be 'THE organisation of the revolution as they have something supremely meaningful to contribute'.

## Problems in praxis

Whilst the anarchist movement (the libertarian milieu that manifests at climate camps et al) is very good at appearing anarchistic, this façade is placed around the real democratic decision-making processes or lack of them. As such, there are tremendous political problems, which are subsumed because these events appear to come about as if by chance. However, a movement, which ignores political education, or authentic debate that could inform true choices and democracy, via systemic tyrannies of structurelessness, is an anarchist movement in name only. The reality is that anarchists, autonomists, independents

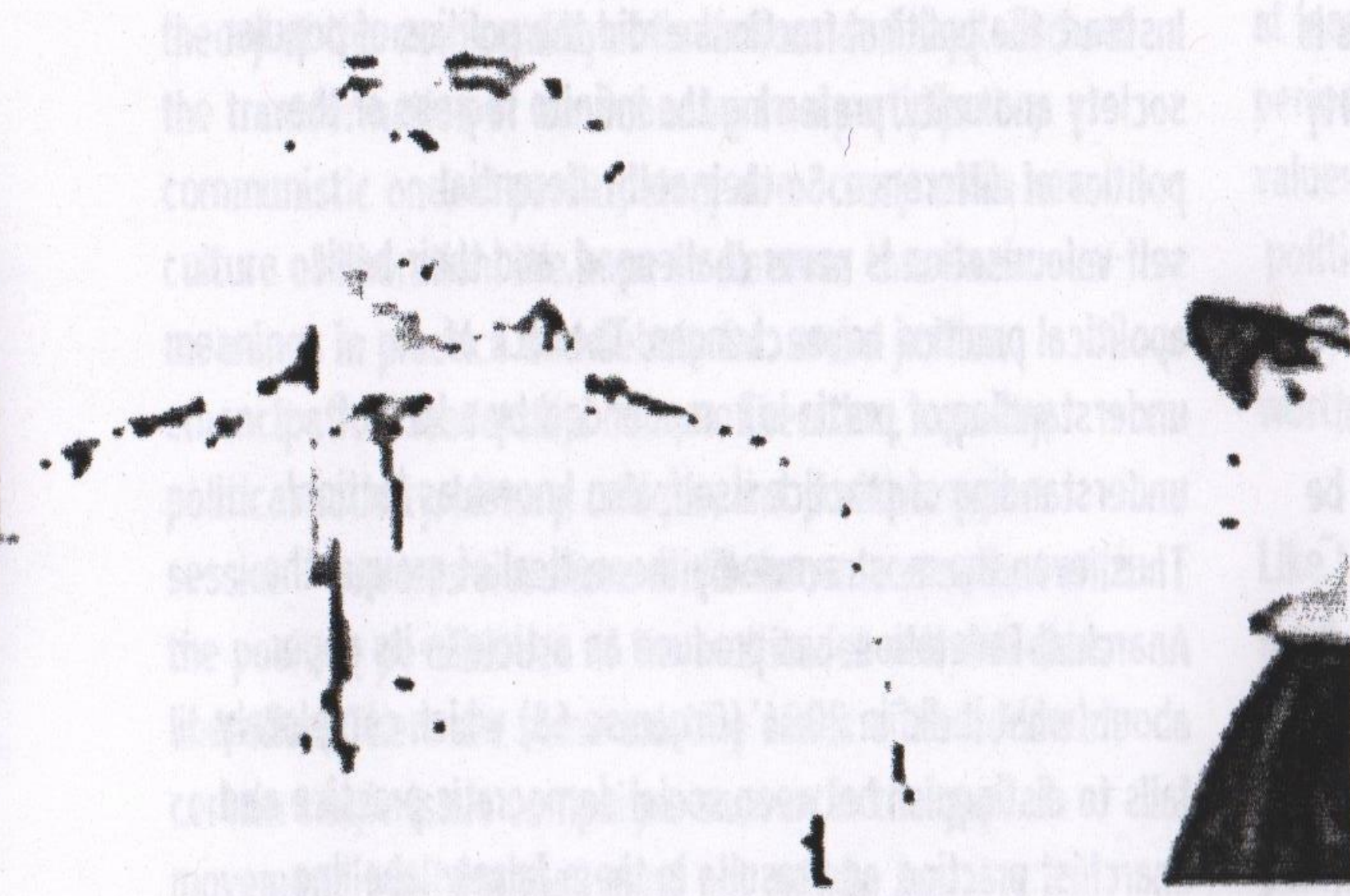
etc, avoid politics and a movement focussed within capital city ignores political organisation needed in other areas of the country. This apolitical proto politics is because of the low standards the movement has, and the lack of genuine forums for discussion and debate. One Bookfair a year does not a debate, or a movement make.

Instead, the political fractions avoid the politics of popular society and unity, preferring the infinite regress of the politics of difference. So their self-referential self-valourisation is never challenged, and their basic apolitical practice never changes. The lack of understanding of praxis is compounded by a lack of understanding of practice itself, also known as 'action'. Thus, even the most avowedly theoretical of groups, the Anarchist Federation, can produce an article in its paper about 'what it did in 2006' (Organise 68) which completely fails to distinguish between social democratic practice and anarchist practice, and results in them falsely labelling their social democratic political practice as anarchist. Though this is easily achieved when self-described and self-referential 'anarchists' have no intention of accuracy or theoretical and political progression.

On this evidence, they believe that anarchist practice is social democratic, but 'we will call it anarchist and nobody will notice', and as such they are found wanting. This is a strange understanding from self-described revolutionaries, although real revolutionaries (E.g. FAI, Mackhno) would wince at what is done, or not, by those who claim their tradition. Mackhno, the man, would not be involved in the AF if he were alive today; not only would they bore him he would have to bite his tongue, and they would not be able to handle his enthusiasm for class warfare.

## The avoidance of the challenge of practice on the streets of Britain is everywhere - where is the anti war movement?

Who opposed 500K foxhunters in the streets of London in 2002? Why did the movements not form any, never mind an inadequate response, to the Price of fuel demonstrations? Why is the political movement not seeking new ways forward rather than using traditional approaches in the age of diversity? Why are the Trade Union hierarchies unresponsive to new conditions? Why do Toffs lead the left? Why do Toffs lead the lead the environmentalists? Why is the monarchy not more visibly unpopular? Where is the response to the crisis of



democracy and accountability, partly caused by corruption?

The answer must involve the conservative nature of the left and some anarchists, which continues because of a lack of serious and accountable theory and practice. We will now approach these issues.

### Back to Basics - starting points

The basis of life for people includes complicated relationships within ourselves, never mind involving any other issues, and a tendency of past Leftism to ignore individuality must never be repeated; "Thought and being are indeed distinct, but they are also in unity with each other" (Paris manuscripts, 1844). This shows the dialectical character of Marx's thinking with crystal clear clarity.

**Thought precedes action, but being precedes thought.** Being is the reality of consciousness, and consciousness the reality of being. But if being is real being, it cannot simply be the predicate of thought; it becomes, itself, subject: "Being is subject, thought predicate. Thought proceeds from being, but being does not proceed from thought. Being exists from itself and through itself... being bears its principle within itself" (Feuerbach - in Jakubowski, 1976, 17). It is not thought which determines being, but, on the contrary, social being which determines the consciousness of people: "The unity of thought and the consciousness of people; "The unity of thought and being

only has sense and truth if man is seen as the principle, the subject of this unity. Only a real, living being perceives real things; only where thought is not subject for itself but the predicate of a real living being, can we conceive of thought as inseparable from being. The unity of thought and being is therefore in no way a formal unity" (Feuerbach).

If you recognise that historically, things change e.g. From the Stone Age to feudalism or from feudalism to industrial capitalism - how do you explain this and other future change? **The solution is in the unity of theory and practice, the dialectical unity of knowledge and change on the move. It is dynamic, it is Praxis.**

Real unity of thought and being can only be arrived at by re-establishing the reality of being: history has to be seen as the real moving history of the people in all its contradictory facets. Marx called himself a materialist, but in all his early writings, he stressed the fact that he is a "humanist". He never renounced this 'humanism', which needs to be remembered for it is the distilled essence of Marxist theory; "Consciousness can never be anything but conscious being, and the being of man is his real life process" (The German Ideology). Being proceeds from real life, and this makes the concept concrete. Human essence is the totality of social relations (6th thesis on Feuerbach).

Marx defines man as a social being "The individual is a social being. His life, even if it may not appear in the direct form of a communal life carried out together with others, is therefore an expression and confirmation of social life... They themselves indirectly produce their own life... World history is simply *the production of man* through human labour"(emphasis added). This is an important statement for it contains within it the key to understanding the authentic social life of people, on their terms. Partial critique and pure theory are not useful for a comprehensive understanding of history, and those who propound them are merely 'cult-like' in their adherence to whatever form of ideological thinking. Likewise, a priori or a posteriori statements about what 'the working class should have done or should do', or if 'only they had better ideology' are unscientific and are merely wishful thinking, divorced from the real social life of the masses and the way that capitalism reproduces itself. Any amount of small groups producing their utopian tracts can be accommodated within capitalism easily, as can forms of behaviour that are isolationist as often they merely reproduce behaviour which is allowed within the status quo.

This status quo comprises of many behaviours, which now will be taken apart. On a scale ranging from ultra controlled, regular, and legal behaviour at one end, towards out of control, random, aggressive, illegal and psychotic behaviour at the other, there is a multitude of possible behaviours in between. In the middle of this is where the ranges of behaviours considered normally as reality by many people exist, and within these are what most people who engage in social life participate. This is a contradictory middle ground, whilst on the one hand they go to work, they may take stationary or a phone call from that work, and on the same day, they will condemn 'criminal behaviour'. Scott (1990) has described these sorts of contradictions in the lives of the subordinate classes as they lived their subordination, and as they create visible and hidden resistance on their own terms.

So their reality is "practical, human sensuous activity" (5th thesis on Feuerbach), but following from this it is essential to understand that participatory revolutionary practice in social life is "practical critical activity"(1st theses). This should be remembered for some politics that has been crass materialism has seriously set back the working class movement (what has been called Leninism), it "does not know real, sensuous activity as such" (1st Thesis). This is because Feuerbach, Lenin, some anarchists, and others "do

**not conceive human activity itself as objective activity"** (Emphasis in original, 1st Thesis).

Even some anarchist platformists have a reified and/or fetishised relationship with their organisations, politics has fallen into 'selling the sect' and the 'recruiting trap'. Rather than firstly encouraging class struggle, they have by passed class-consciousness and try to impose ready created organisational political forms, which are totally unsuited for dynamic 21st century conditions and organised working class politics.

Unfortunately, apart from the yuppies to yuppies transformations, the reified nature of the '68 generation is imposing an unrevolutionary model on the current generation rather than allowing them to develop suitable politics in their own time. However, even some of the new generation are fetishising certain ideological failures and recreating a pure politics from a time long gone in another country for their practice today. At best these people have theory, but they have no practice and little identity, and their fetishised relationship with working class politics is unreal; "The dispute over the reality or non reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely a scholastic question" (Marx's 2nd Thesis on Feuerbach).

This zombie theory, also understood as the 'theory of the living dead', is a mixture of utopianism and untested purist slops. Which has been the de facto politics of anarchist groups until recently, because their politics have rarely been tested in enough practice in enough places to be able to come to any conclusions regarding the theoretical pedigree of their own ideas. This is unsatisfactory to say the least. Though they remain 50x better than the ultra left including left communists.

Marx differed from that idealism and lack of materialism, but he also represented their **synthesis**. He brought consciousness and being into a real unity, that of living wo\man, and avoided one sidedness; "Marx was only able to arrive at this synthesis by removing the problem of the relation between consciousness and being from the plane of abstract speculation and assigning it to science based on experience - that is, by inserting it in reality where it belongs" (Jakubowski, 1976, 27, also Thompson, 1968). This too is vital because as the class traitor Giddens has pointed out, all in some way use this reflexive monitoring, and it is ignorant to pretend that simplistic solutions are possible for a sophisticated capitalist world and sophisticated peoples'.



"In the *social* production of their life, *people* enter into particular, necessary relations independently of their will... These productive relations as a whole form the economic structure of society, the real base upon which a legal and political superstructure rises and to which particular forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and mental life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness". Marx, Preface to "The Critique of Political Economy".

This appears to say that there is *conditioning* only from the economic base, but note the humanism. Also, the following from the German Ideology; "All historical writing must proceed from these natural foundations and from their modification in the course of history by the actions of men".

Marx here is referring to a two-fold process. On one hand, he points out the importance of natural factors as the foundation, premise and condition of production. On the other hand, he demonstrates that it is not only natural factors that determine man, but also increasingly man who determines nature and his own beliefs and environment. Historically different relations of production emerge out of each other because of the contradictions contained within them. People are part of this process; "Social being is certainly founded in the economy, but it is not restricted to it; social relationships, though essentially they are determined economically, reappear in the various concrete forms of the superstructure, for example in legal, political or religious relations.... Any analysis of the extent to which ideological and material relationships interpenetrate must be made individually, according to each particular case; such an analysis will reveal that all the above concepts interpenetrate *dialectically*" (Jakubowski, 1976, 38). The originator of these ideas best outlines the relationship, Marx in "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" wrote;

"Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The whole class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of corresponding social relations. The single individual, who receives them through tradition and upbringing, may imagine that they form the real motives and the starting point for his own activity."

So the working class has a multitude of ideas in its heads; the relationships are outlined by Engels in his letter to Bloch (21.9.1890);

"The economic situation is the base, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its consequences... forms of law and then even the reflections of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas - also wield their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases are the main contributors to determining the forms of these struggles".

Marx distances himself from a position that says that only when we can comprehend the condition of the working class then we can participate and intervene, on the contrary. Marx's materialism is:

"humanist theory (which) enables him to make this activity for the first time into a constituent part of theory itself. He recognises that the laws which man is primarily subject to are social, ie. Human laws, and that the 'circumstances' which in the past appeared to rule over man are in fact human relations, in which it is possible for man to intervene. It is therefore quite logical for Marx to conclude the Theses on Feuerbach with the remark that the point is no longer to interpret the world but to change it.... Marx... regards man as a social product, and nature as human, socialised nature. There is no *"unchanging nature"*, *only nature that is changed by man, who in so doing changes his own nature too*" (Jakubowski, 1976).

Previously, 'man' was only the subject of knowledge; now s\he is also its object. Nature and wo\man form a unity. Just as wo\man is a product of nature, so too the nature which surrounds him\her is produced in its' present form by human society. Once people are considered social beings, nature too is recognised as human and social. Social reality knows itself: thought and being find their unity in wo\man who represent both subject and object.

"The production of ideas, of concepts, of consciousness, is at first directly interlinked with the material activity and material intercourse of men, the language of real life... men are the producers of their ideas... but this changes with the separation between intellectual and physical labour: from this point on, consciousness can imagine itself to be something other than consciousness of existing practice, to have become pure theory." Marx, The German Ideology.

People can think of being other, being different, and do so like this; "There are in fact two forms of reality: the material reality and the "ideal" reality (ie. The reality of human ideas). Political and legal superstructure are as real as the base. Both are social relations consisting of human relationships. Both exist in the idea, both are material realities. As Marx said in "The Holy Family", "The communist workers know full well that property, capital, money, wage labour etc. are in no way the mere creations of their imagination but are the extremely concrete and practical results of their own self alienation", and the same is true of non economic relationships. The reality of social ideas, then, forms a necessary and constituent part of the material reality of social relationships. Material relations are what they are only in conjunction with the ideas that correspond to them. The reality of both is expressed by their social efficacy.

This means that rigid ultra left formula is untenable, the categories they seek to impose never allow them to participate authentically with the masses as they always carry with them barriers, both to practice, research and knowledge, they are always distant. Jakubowski comments; "When Marx made the leap from natural to human, social being, he enabled us to recognise the unity between social life and the ideas that form a part of that life. There is no social being without consciousness and, conversely, consciousness is nothing but conscious being (1976, 57)... it is necessary to emphasise the fact that the superstructure operates retroactively on its (economic) base, and that both spheres therefore determine each other. The retroactive superstructural influence is no less important than the influence of the base itself. The historical process can only be explained by observing the interaction of the two. They do not affect each other mechanically or as externally independent factors; they form inseparable moments of a unity" (1976, 57).

Marx here is beyond economism, Marxists may now try to reinvent their position by recognising that Marxism is more sensuous than the dry and predictable forms of organisation that result from this economism;

"Consciousness coincides with the concept of ideological superstructure, with human ideas. But, in addition to this, social being now reveals itself to its fullest extent, in its concrete totality: it is not restricted to the economic base, but embraces the whole superstructure. Consciousness turns out to be a part of this being; more precisely, it is conscious being. The unity of being and consciousness

now shows itself to be not a merely external relationship but an inseparable association. By "humanising" the problem of the relation between thought and being, Marx came to recognise being as social and human, not merely natural being, and to recognise consciousness as human thought; this enabled him to demonstrate the unity of both. "Thought and being are indeed distinct, but they are also in unity with each other".

Thought as a part of human being, no longer plays a merely contemplative role outside the historical process. It becomes a factor of historical change. This opens the way to recognition of the dialectical unity of subject and object, and of theory and practice (knowledge and change)... The meaning of the statement that social being determines consciousness now becomes clear. Social being does not simply mean economic relations. Economic relations are the foundation of social life and prevail in the last instance. But in any analysis of an individual situation it is social being as a whole that has to be taken into account - the economic and political relations certainly, but also the existing social ideologies and the intellectual tradition. These latter superstructural forces do not act independently of the other factors. They are themselves the expression of certain material relations of production, but relations which are probably already things of the past, which have lost their material reality but have not yet quite discarded their "conscious" expression. (Jakubowski, 1976)

Some Anarchists have long thought similar to this, and their practice has been sensuous, although they and a lot of old style Marxists need to rethink politics based in struggle. The culture of struggle can potentially recreate working class communities and a politics for the 21st century, as reductionism is dead as well as teleology;

"When we want to account for the consciousness of a particular human group it is by no means enough to classify them simply in economic terms or to determine their class identity, even if this is where the most important objective (rather than subjective) roots of their actions lie. A precise analysis must take account of all the concrete factors of their social being. What is important is not just the question of which class they belong to but also (for eg.) the particular layer or role that they occupy within that class, the social position of the family (Eg. The 'white collar "proletarian" who comes from a once rich bourgeois family) and above all, the ideological traditions of the group (religion, received political or philosophical ideas and prejudices etc)... Vulgar Marxists of all political tendencies



usually neglect these wide-ranging factors of social being. In particular, the oscillating political behaviour of the middle layers, who overlap bourgeoisie and proletariat, can only be explained - let alone influenced - if a very careful examination is made of all the essential elements of their social existence. Yet as a rule, this problem is calmly shrugged aside with some cliché about the proletarianisation of their economic existence forcing them politically into the ranks of the proletariat" (Jakubowski, 1976, 59).

Religion, upbringing, and the cultural traditions, political prejudices received in the family environment: all these are social factors, whose importance is no less than that of the economic base.

The relation between consciousness and being can thus only be correctly understood if being is conceived of dynamically, as process.... Social reality in its historical flux is shown to be human reality, ie. The totality of human relations rather than a relation between things. Consciousness no longer stands outside being and is no longer separated from its object. It is a moving and moved part of the historical becoming of reality. Consciousness is determined by the transformation of being; but, as the consciousness of acting men, it in turn transforms this being. Consciousness is no longer consciousness above an object, the duplicated "reflection" of an individual object, but a constituent part of changing relations, which are what they are only in conjunction with the consciousness that corresponds to their material existence. Consciousness is the self knowledge of reality, an expression and a part of the historical process of being, which knows itself at every stage of development" (Jakubowski, 1976, 60).

This humanist/anarchist/Marxist standpoint is an **authentic dialectical relationship between consciousness and being.** Consciousness, as conscious and human being, is; "in unity with being and yet distinct from it" (Marx). "The dialectical unity reveals itself in the interaction within the historical dynamic of human reality" (Jakubowski, 1976, 60). These are not independent relationships "human "being" is now "becoming", and also comprises "consciousness"" (Jakubowski, 1976, 60).

**We can distinguish revolutionary ideas as those, which are practical in intent.**

The knowledge that consciousness is a part of being demands, of the theory which knows this, that it regard itself as a constituent part of practice, a part of the development of being. Theory and practice form a unity: theory becomes practical theory, while practice becomes conscious practice, rather than unconscious activity. Consciousness is a factor in changing social reality, whilst theory is reality's knowledge of itself.

Our **ideas** must intend to be assimilated by the multitude; consciousness is a necessary component and a determining element of practice, and a precondition for the transformation of reality. A correct consciousness of existing relations, and the demystification of the appearance and the ideology which they generate, are the necessary preconditions for the revolutionary practice of the proletariat. Our role as Marx said is to "shout to it (the multitude) the slogan of its own struggle... it will then be seen that the world has for a long time possessed the dream of something, of which it only needs to possess the consciousness in order to possess it in fact" (*Philosophy of Law*, 1844).

To become conscious is thus the decisive step towards revolutionary practice. The consciousness-making characteristic of practice is the second component in the dual form of the unity between theory and practice. Theory must be recognised as the expression of the practical critical activity of the working class, it is "in essence, critical and revolutionary theory" - Marx. Theory and practice must form a real unity, the famous third Thesis on Feuerbach:

"The materialist doctrine concerning the transformation of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself.... The coincidence of the transformation of circumstances and of human activity or self transformation can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice."

**Praxis Problems - Critique of Leninism, 'Democratic Centralists' and other Authoritarians**

For Lenin, (and some Leninists, arrogant, dictatorial etc.) "Historical materialism recognises that social being is independent of the social consciousness of man". This is a NON-dialectical understanding on the relationship between consciousness as conscious being, as intended by Marx, and the subversive possibilities engendered by practice. For Marx consciousness was "conscious being", but it has become an attribute, a reflection, a mere duplicate of matter.

The following remarks show with particular clarity how little Lenin understands the unity of consciousness and being in man: "Consciousness in general *reflects* being - this is the general thesis of all materialism. It is impossible to avoid seeing its inseparable connection with the historical materialist thesis: social consciousness reflects social being" ("*Materialism and Empirio Criticism*", Peking Edition, 1972). Lenin's 'reflection' theory here is opposite to Marx, as Lenin clearly opposes consciousness to its object.

We (this 'we' is concerned Marxists and anarchists) should not be surprised here, because as Negri indicated (1976, in Hardt, 2005); we have to read Lenin dialectically. Both positively and negatively, and use the great bits of his writing, discarding the negative hierarchical and statist elements, and develop them in our own time for our conditions.

**Days of rage Nights of flames**

Stalin even was not totally wrong in everything, which the demonisation in capitalist and anarchist writing would have you believe, e.g. Stalin wrote "Theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illuminated by revolutionary theory" (The Foundations of Leninism, April-May 1924). The 21st century globalised age has created connections between and across every local area and artificial border, and any localised campaign which does not relate to the wider Labour Movement in its official and less official forms, and the international struggles and peoples is necessarily reductionist and limited in its theory, practice and potential. Even if one or two of the groups managed to grow dramatically, they fall into an illusion, that the powers of the capitalist state will allow them to continue to grow uninterrupted, as if the capitalist classes will allow ever-steadier growth of workers power in this manner. They made that mistake with Keynesianism and the welfare state in the US (Parenti, 2001) and the U.K. **they will not do so again.**

Therefore, the missing links in praxis at this stage of history, and the determinant of the next successful wave of the multitudes struggles, are theories of the multitudes ever growing connections in struggles, and a theory of transition towards anti state socialism, and beyond, dual power. The lack of these theories and praxis is a consequence of a priori capitulation to the conventions of bourgeois politics in the UK, 'melancholy realism'. This is emasculated politics, which although originally motivated by virtuous protest, seeks to constrain new human possibilities within old forms. This is not Marxism or class struggle; it is conservatism by another means.

It is the spirit of freedom that has been so widely praised by revolutionaries, authors and poets across all cultures and corners of the globe. In addition, it is part of the heartbeat of Marxism; it is a utopian and missionary belief in the righteousness of working class struggle - **this virtuous and dramatic pose of revolutionary defiance and action**, an essential part of the socialist dynamic and revolutionary way of being. Bureaucrats seek to extinguish these flames, or tone down, and recuperate into the weary self-sacrificial time-served routine of stale ideological purity that is merely self-important philistinism, a convenient excuse to do nothing, and/or the myopic 'realism' of the career politician.

Zizek (2007) indicates that these struggles are old ones,

Mao was writing against 'dogmatic Marxists', and/or those who fail to understand the nature of contradictions, and that is true of some who have failed to understand the inclusive and utopian nature of Marx's theories. Such as Left Communists or Anarchist Communists, who also fail to have Marxist theory. Marxist philosophy has characteristics such as its 'class nature, the other essential part is its practicality, theory depends upon practice and in turn works for practice, or it should, because otherwise it is not Marxist. Thus we work towards truth (Negri, 1985) based upon objective results in social practice and not by subjective feelings or pre written ideological ultra leftist principles.

There are truths at this point in history; old categories and certainties must be abandoned, as they were the creation of Modernism and Fordism. Instead, the multitude must be encouraged through participation to gather and meet across all boundaries of social life, from the cradle to the grave, new socialist ethics for our time must be created utilising all available arenas and creating many more, through social centres, new official and unofficial workplace groups, sporting activities, and much more besides. The class struggle today cannot be viewed as dramatic collisions between different factions; it must be a cultural class struggle creating new values, interests, ideas and priorities taking place continually throughout social life.



**Criticism of the Anti War Movement**  
Some 'Out and Proud' Leninists such as the SWP fail to incorporate this part of Marxism into their theories, and instead develop theory in isolation from practice. Thus their participation in the social democratic practice which built the largest demonstration (1 to 2 Million) in British history, the 2003 Feb. 15th anti war march, effectively also

destroyed this movement by being a social democratic end in itself. Their peaceful strategy completely failed to create a political dynamic that could improve the political situation and perhaps create a dynamic for lasting political progress. Safe moralism dominated in the media in the UK and around the world, and amongst the left, what is new? Nevertheless, many of the working class involved were largely the same as the crowd on the large poll tax demonstration or at J18, and so a *popular working class* campaign (possibly generating notoriety), and perhaps even some conflict, especially around the American Embassy, would have been a better method of participation, it may even have had revolutionary characteristics.

Perhaps the biggest mistake the British working class made was not having a *major riot* on the large demonstration. There is not one hint of self-criticism in SWP public or private relations, who instead fetishise their million strong march, which had no effect and did not even achieve the category of protest, as success. Marxists must do better than this. For protest must not respect the norms of the social democratic status quo or the events are not protest - they are de facto agreement with the way politics is practiced. Protest is not protest just because the state organises it via law and the police. There could have at least been more emphasis on the creation of groups prepared to engage in direct action on a local, regional and national scale. Petitions have never stopped a war yet!

Bonefeld and Tischler (2002) further express the implications perfectly well, "those who seriously want freedom and equality as social individuals but do not wish to destabilise capitalism contradict themselves". However, unfortunately for the revolutionary movement and the working class, those in careerist and managerial roles at work, and at, or towards the peak of the SWP hierarchy, this has become a way of being. Though they are not alone, the British philanthropic tradition (Ruggiero, 2000) has grown large numbers of this sort of leftist, so there is a large self-referential sea of opinion like this, which has a material basis. Found generally within charity, CAB, trade union, council, research, and university employment, as they grow older career demands become more pressing (Young and Haywood, Theoretical Criminology), early capitulation to the work ethic further compromises the choices they can make. Finally, they end up as functionaries of the system, their politics recuperated, and with no meaningful politics of their own beyond compromised survival. Although there are also many who instinctively view society like this article, although they just have not articulated it.

"Social consciousness" as Lenin says above is in direct contrast to Marx's "social being". Lenin emphasises that theory can be 'applied'. The revolutionary position of Marx however, perceived that theory is the conscious expression of the revolutionary practice of the working class. It is a **constituent part of reality; it is cosmopolitan, sophisticated, culturally sensitive, inclusive, and democratic, in short, it is communistic.** It is theory that transforms that reality from the beginning by transforming human consciousness, and which concludes with the practical overthrow of the reality that is theoretically criticised. It is not reductionist theory, which privileges certain parochial sections of the class above others. Social being is something more than natural being of things. For Marx, consciousness is from the beginning inserted into a process that is no longer exactly a simple natural process but rather a social process. Possible only through the activity of people conscious of their goal. Conscious being signifies that the transformation of the content of consciousness has a direct and practical effect. Lenin forgot the first thesis on Feuerbach that revolutionary practical critical activity is "sensuous human activity... itself as objective activity".

Marx's emphasis on "the coincidence of consciousness and reality", lies in the fact that consciousness is not in opposition to reality but exists in this world, as an actual and real part of this natural and historical social world. The unity of theory and practice by which theory becomes "the vehicle of the revolution" can only be a real unity if the moment of becoming conscious is closely linked with action, so that it also constitutes a decisive step towards the practical process of revolution. This necessitates the dialectical unity of subject and object in knowledge, in the historical process, and the unity of human, social being and human consciousness. Social reality is something, which can be known and transformed, as human practice. The theory that expresses this unity of theory and practice is essentially nothing but the expression in thought of the revolutionary process itself, this is praxis, a state of being and events that is yet to be achieved in the UK.

Reality is not the so-called facts at the surface of bourgeois society, things in their isolation as they appear under capitalism. What things are, and how they appear do not directly coincide: "the final form of economic relations as seen on their surface, in their real existence and consequently in the ideas by which the bearers and agents of these relations seek to understand them, is very much different from, and

indeed quite the reverse of, their inner but concealed essential form and the concept corresponding to it" Karl Marx, Capital, volume 3.

The same is true; that what is on the surface is the reverse of their concealed essence, of would be revolutionary groups. Who after initially coming together and having something imaginative and useful to say, mistake that impetus as a transcendental insight, which gives them the light to illuminate the shining path for everybody else, regardless of whether that light is appropriate or whether it is fading because the batteries are running out.

In this article, we have revisited early Marx in his 'humanist' phase, which he never forgot or distanced himself from. This has been in order to take apart relevant aspects of the social world in order to piece them together for a more complete analysis of praxis, what praxis is and what it is not. Certain Marxists and anarchists were identified as having a non-Marxist understanding of political practice and praxis, and little or no understanding of action, whether this is social democratic, Marxist or anarchist. Any so-called revolutionary group is creating no or very little useful praxis today. Stale slops pass for news and theory in magazines, newsletters and websites. Faithfully reproduced like the missionaries of old. It is good to remember Lenin at this point even though anarchists wince at the mere mention of his name, but they have no comprehensive knowledge of his thought. He believed it was more useful to make revolution than to write about it. None serious about his or her politics can disagree with Lenin here however.

If truth is told all the so-called Marxist and anarchist groups today are really only bearers of their ever-fading torch, and are not helping class struggle and class formation. Instead, they religiously reproduce social democratic forms of political engagement and theory, and stay in their different groups. It is the fear of 'failure' and risk that holds them back, which is ironic as they are failing now and today. Rather all that is solid must be melted into air and synthesise with the general working class multitudes whose ways of life are now being shaped and contested, from within and without. There is nothing to fear but fear itself, as imaginative and ambitious steps reap their own rewards. We leave fear and failure to those who revel in their marginalised condition. Those not afraid to live life in new areas, with new people and groups, new formations and alliances, will create the new world.

## Fanfare for the Common People

We have theorised and described what are theory, practice and praxis. It has further been argued that Praxis has been lacking throughout the entire working class movement, including the parties and groups of self described socialists, and anarchists, and its intellectuals. The new lines must be drawn between the capitalist class, their forces, and their hardcore supporters, and those who want something more beyond the insecurity of financial safety when you retire, and the rest of the working class multitude. Upon the common positives through the exchange of mutual aid between both those known to us and our groups, and persons and groups unknown, and not upon the debris of a destroyed society, will the next world be built. Which has not only destroyed the law of value and money, but has created authentic economic socialism, whilst using and seeing democracy and communist values as essential to the project. Utilising these insights, the praxis necessary maybe imagined and put into practice, we can then help to win the class war in the 21st century.

## Fanfare for the Old Man

The working class undertakes, from its particular situation, a general emancipation of society... no class in civil society can play this part unless it can arouse, in itself and in the masses, a moment of *enthusiasm* in which it associates and mingles with society at large, identifies itself with it, and is felt and recognised as the *general representative* of this society. Its aims and interests must genuinely be the aims and interests of society itself, of which it becomes in reality the social *head and heart*. It is only in the name of general interests that a particular class can claim general supremacy. In order to attain this liberating position, and the political direction of all spheres of society, revolutionary energy and consciousness of its own power do not suffice. For a *popular revolution* and the emancipation of a particular class of civil society to coincide, for one class to represent the whole of society, another class must concentrate in itself all the evils of society, a particular class must embody and represent a general obstacle and limitation. A particular social sphere must be regarded as the notorious crime of the whole society, so that emancipation from this sphere appears as a general emancipation. For one class to be the liberating class par excellence, it is necessary that another class should be *openly the oppressing class.*"

From the "Deutsch Französische Jahrbucher", edited in Paris by Marx, 1844.

## Finally

We encourage Praxis, like Gramsci's *Philosophy of Praxis*, we aspire to new political movement and movements, praxis created within these arenas and debated through Mayday and other groups may create dynamic theories both prescient and successful in our time. Our aspiration towards the unity of theory and libratory political practice is a commitment to radical change based upon theoretical understanding - theory and practice become inseparable. Our practice becomes 'Praxis' when it does not merely help self-reproduction but involves new theoretical and practical areas of political involvement and participation, revealed by new groups, subjects, issues and people. We also become and are aware of limitations when we design the Mayday project, this consciousness of what we are, what we are not, and what we could become is crucial to the development of theoretical work and the political growth necessary. It is important to progress political theory, to go beyond what organisations were and improve collective politics by using definitions, statements and ideas to spread this much-improved politics. Improving standards and working towards more effective working class organisational forms.

We are not scared of emotion, antagonism and the white heat of struggles (Ruggiero 2006), and realise that this often is only a small part of the totality, and Mayday is very concerned with existence in all its practical forms and issues. Like the International Workers Mayday, Mayday magazine wants to be a part of the spirit, feel and practice of our time. Unlike stale retro magazines and journals, we will guard against so-called integrity and dignity used as a smokescreen for moribund politics. Rather, Mayday creates its integrity and dignity through the quality of its contribution to practice and theory, no temple is to holy and no existing practice too good to escape comment and critique. However, we will also use humility and humour to guard against precious over reaction and indignant rage. Instead, cool calculating suggestions and practice keeps our impact revolutionary. Get on the one road with and alongside us ●

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"Theory becomes material power as soon as it seizes the masses"

"Philosophy of Law" Karl Marx, 1844.

# 40 YEARS OF MAY 1968

## MAY 1968 FRENCH UPRISINGS

Mick Travis

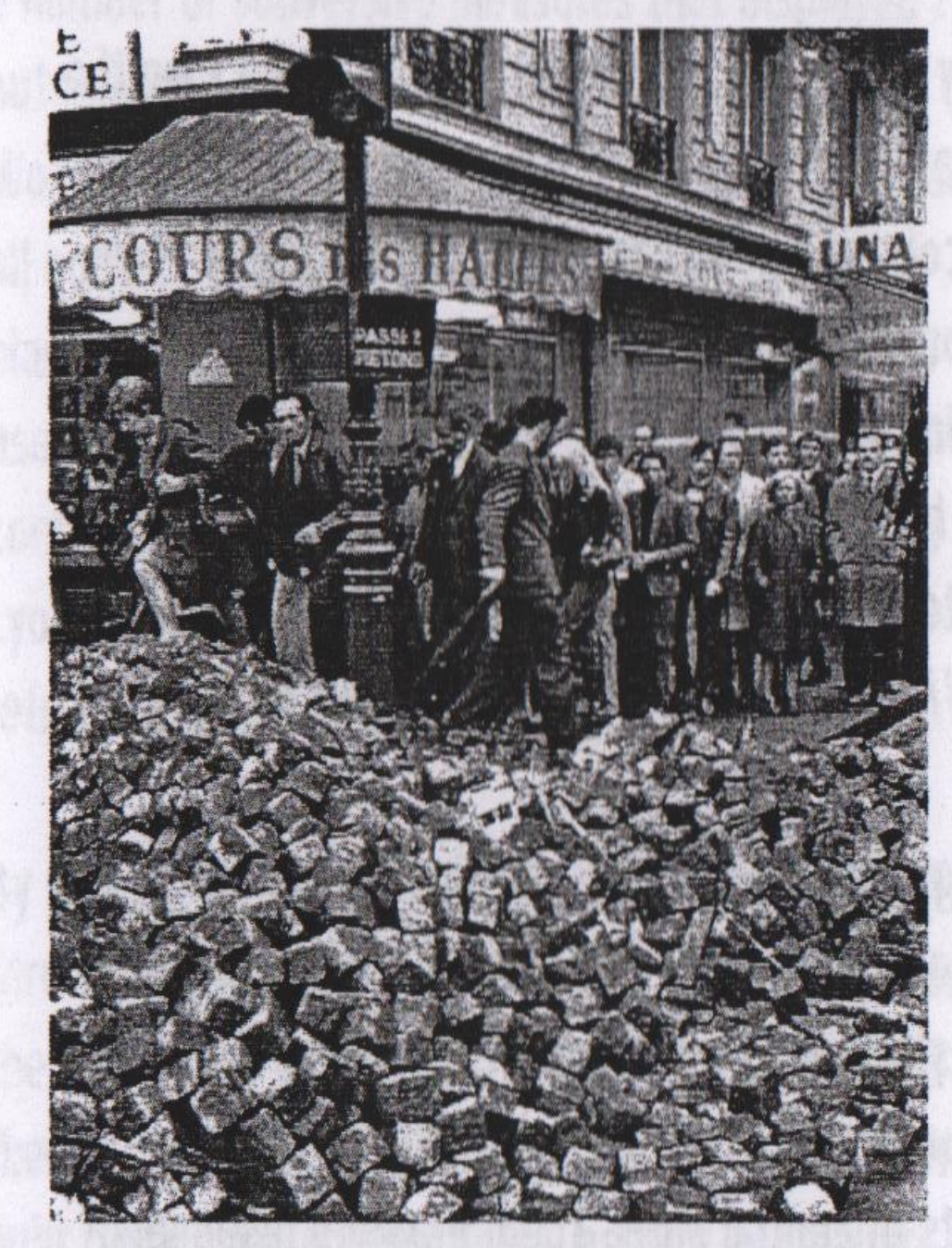
The May 1968 French Uprisings or *Evenements* ('May Events') that swept the country for five or so weeks that year, remain to this day without precedent, marking as they do, the high-point of a revolutionary upsurge which went further and deeper than any comparable movement in an advanced Western capitalist society.

'May 1968' continues to provide a unique example for those wishing to understand contemporary history in the context of a revolutionary rupture, which called into question every aspect of life under late capitalism. The movement of occupations, strikes, and 'action committees' - at its high point encompassing more than 10 million people - no less than the sense of joyful festivity lucidly expressed in poetic graffiti, and passionate revolt expressed in riots amid the inverted architecture of barricaded streets, remains the most wide scale and far reaching social revolt of its kind in recent memory. The events are often misleadingly referred to simply as 'student protests' as if the rest of French society merely watched itself be consumed by revolution from the safety of their TV screens. The 'explosion' of May 1968 - to use President De Gaulle's own description - may have found its initial spark in the student revolt, but only in so far as this was symptomatic of the underlying tensions in wider society. May 1968 also comprehensively debunked the myth that in the 'affluent society' of purchase power and technocratic efficiency, the concept of *class struggle* was all but dead.

Indeed, it may be argued that prior to May, consumer capitalism had few real critics outside the group of thinkers loosely referred to as the 'Frankfurt School', or in the equally unsparing theory of the Situationists, whose trenchant critical diagnoses were largely overlooked until they found direct expression on the streets during the month of May. Of course, a number of those associated with the '68 Generation', came to refer to the events as a 'turning point' in the sense that they lost hope in the possibility of revolutionary social change, and the development and subsequent dominance of *postmodern* and *post structuralist* thought in France during the 1970s can be seen as indicative of this.

May 1968 illustrated the ability of a significant number of the population to take direct control of their own lives through *collective action*. It also demonstrated the spontaneous power of mass social revolt unencumbered by the proclamations of parties and political game playing.

The first flickers of the May 1968 uprising could be discerned in the barely contained frustrations of French student life, viciously dissected by the Situationist International and sympathetic students at the University of Strasbourg in 1966, in the scandalous pamphlet *On the Poverty of Student Life*, which was paid for through the appropriation of funds of the local UNEF student union branch. The antiquated French higher education system, in which students were treated as children, barely independent of the family unit or the reach of its repressive sexual mores as reproduced in the enforced segregation of male and female living arrangements, offered a concrete everyday provocation to the most radical elements in the



university system, of precisely what needed to be challenged. The first actions took place in April 1967, at Nanterre the newly opened model campus on the outskirts of Paris, in which a group of male students began overnight expeditions to the female dormitories and invited a similar violation by female students of the rules forbidding trips to rooms of students of the opposite sex. Students at Jussieu, near Lyon, carried out similar actions that spring.

By November, several thousand students at Nanterre were boycotting classes ostensibly in

protest at the overcrowded, underfunded university system with its stale courses in which success was strictly quantified and judged in exam passes. However in practise, as accounts of the time observed, this took place amid a general mood of subversion become ever more daring which flourished on university campuses across France:

"From the beginning of December 1967 the 'students' of Nantes went further still. After taking over the local branch of the UNEF [French student union], they decided to close the Bureau d'Aide Psychologique Universitaire [student counselling service]. They then organized several invasions of the university residence halls: men in the women's dormitories, followed by women in the men's. Finally, in February, they seized the Nantes rector's office and fought the police ferociously." (Vienet 1992, a.) online at <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/enrages02.html>

By January 1968 the notorious *Enragés* had made their presence felt at Nanterre amid growing alarm from the university administration, which had allowed plainclothes police to conspicuously enter the campus, taking note of suspected 'troublemakers'. In response, the Enragés along with other anarchist elements began photographing the plainclothes police and displaying the blown-up images around campus. By February, the university Dean Professor Pierre Grappin called in 60 or so uniformed police to restore order resulting in battles with several hundred students who forced their retreat. March 1968 saw the founding of the March 22 Movement, an eclectic libertarian grouping of whom Daniel Cohn-Bendit was the most prominent representative. By early May the university authorities had begun disciplinary action against a number of students; few however, could have predicted what was to come.

On May 3, amid rising tension at the Sorbonne Professor Paul Roche, Rector of the University of Paris called the police as several hundred students gathered in the courtyard. The vast police presence, including detachments from the specialist riot squad the CRS, then arrested various students on the pretext that some were wearing crash helmets and were armed with chair legs. However,

"As the police vans carried them away the Latin Quarter erupted. One of the two vans never reached its destination. Only three policemen guarded the second van. They were beaten up, and several dozen demonstrators escaped."  
(Vienet a, b 1992) online at <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/enrages03.html>

By May 6, student protests were spreading as the 'Nanterre Eight' went to face their disciplinary committee. The Latin Quarter near the Sorbonne was by this stage overwhelmed by police, who watched the protests with silent contempt, before attacking without warning. Rector Roche closed the Sorbonne. Protests erupted into rioting in central Paris as students ripped up paving stones to hurl at the police, and overturned cars as makeshift barricades. Running battles took place into the evening with 422 arrests and 345 police injured in protests now involving some 10,000 students. Marches were called for the following day, as news filtered through to Paris of similar spontaneous protests and meetings in cities across France. It should be noted at this point, the relationship between the protests and the official parties of the left. France's Communist Party (PCF) with its own faithful adherence to official Marxism-Leninism was a powerful and conservative force on the trade union movement of the time, dominating the CGT, the country's largest union. From its earliest manoeuvrings, the PCF utterly discredited itself with a breathtaking opportunism aimed at stultifying a movement it could neither understand nor contain. Overtaken by the whirlwind pace of events the PCF leadership was reduced to denouncing the violence of the protestors (but not the police) as being the work of provocateurs or naive adventurists.

By May 7 *lyceen* high school students and working class youths from the suburbs the *blousons noirs*, were to be seen fighting alongside the students in the Latin Quarter, and taking part in discussion groups at the Sorbonne. The demands of the protestors were at this stage simply the reopening of the Sorbonne, the withdrawal of the police from the Latin Quarter, and the release of those arrested. By May 10, what would become 'the night of the barricades', the government met to discuss the worsening crisis, with minister Alain Peyrefitte



maintaining a strong police presence in the Latin Quarter, and the Prefect of Police gaining written authorization to mount an assault to take the barricaded areas. As Maurice Brinton notes in his first hand account, the actions of the protestors reflected the strength of belief in what they were doing.

"They felt they had more right to be there than the police, for whom barracks were provided elsewhere. The cohesion and sense of purpose of the demonstrators terrified the Establishment. Power couldn't be allowed to lie with this rabble, who had even had the audacity to erect barricades."  
(Brinton, 1968 a.) available online <http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/maya.html>

By nightfall, the police began their assault with teargas and CS gas fired at the 2,000 or so protestors - by no means just students - manning the roughly 60 barricades that zig zagged the streets of central Paris. The protestors responded with Molotov cocktails and paving stones, covering their faces with ski goggles and scarves, whilst sucking half lemons to try to counter the noxious effects of the gas. By this stage much of France was moving in support of the struggles taking place on the streets. The police - particularly the CRS displayed an astonishing level of brutality, beating injured protestors, dragging the wounded from stretchers, and throwing gas canisters through the windows of houses suspected of helping or harbouring protestors. By dawn, 367 protestors were injured, 460 had been arrested, and 180 cars had been burned.

By May 11 Prime Minister Georges Pompidou had returned from abroad, and quickly reversed the government's aggressive stance, withdrawing police from the Sorbonne and the Latin Quarter, to the consternation of many of his fellow Gaullists. By mid-May the occupation committees were flourishing, the two most influential also being the two most radical: the Council for the Maintenance of Occupations and the Censier Action Committee. The discussions lasted all day and night, being a fully-fledged experiment in direct, deliberative democracy. It is important to state here, that the May events were much more than merely riots or street protests, important though these were. A renewed *sense of the possible* threw everything into question and it was this open-ended but firm belief in a society radically and essentially different from that of the present, which animated the electric atmosphere of that month. Everywhere poetic graffiti appeared subverting representation and mediation, being as much immediate textual and visual interventions into everyday life as commentaries on it. To cite just two of the most famous is to offer a good flavour of the times: 'Be realistic demand the impossible', was perhaps the watchword of the May movement, just as the potential of a world radically, and qualitatively *other* than the miserable existence of work and consumption could be glimpsed in the recognition, 'Beneath the paving stones the beach' Similarly, tracts issued almost continuously, from both the action committees and independently from anonymous hands calling for revolutionary transformation.

By May 14 occupations of faculties and schools of higher education took place across Paris: The Beaux-Arts, Nanterre, the Conservatory of Dramatic Arts, the Medical School. Many junior faculty came out in support of the movement and participated in discussions at the occupied universities. The first spontaneous wildcat strike action occurred outside the capital in Nantes when workers at the Sud-Aviation plant in Nantes occupied the factory and barricaded themselves in after locking the management in their offices and welding the doors shut. The very next day workers at the Renault factory at Cleon, in Seine-Maritime occupied their factory, also locking in the management, while the workers at the Lockheed factory at Beauvais and Unilec in Orleans were next to stop work, with neither official sanction or support from unions or parties. By May 16 the occupations and unofficial walkouts had spread to Renault-Cleon, while workers of the Nouvelles Messageries de la Presse Parisienne went on strike attempting to disrupt distribution of newspapers in the process. By early afternoon on May 16, the Renault plant at Flins was occupied, while Renault-Billancourt was to follow a few hours later.

Despite the spontaneous strike wave set in motion across France, contact between those in the occupation committees and those taking over their workplaces was necessarily limited, and not helped by the PCF and CGT's determined efforts to contain and diffuse the active participation of the workers. The most radical occupation committees made efforts to link up with strikers, on May 17 calling for a solidarity march from Place de la Sorbonne to Billancourt. Workers at Berliet, Rhodiacta, Rhone-Poulenc and SNECMA occupied their factories, while railway workers and postal workers also stopped work. By May 18 the strikes had spread to Air France and the RATP. As the strikes and occupations took hold of the country, the PCF and CGT made frantic efforts to block further action by workers in their ranks, whilst at the same time trying to take credit for launching the completely unofficial work stoppages. All the while the same established left condemned the rapidly unfolding 'insurrectionary general strike'.

The strike wave was not limited to the factories, as early as May 17, staff at ORTF (France's public

broadcaster) had stopped work, as had air traffic control workers at the Orly control tower. Department stores, shops, and restaurants all joined the strike, in which it was continually restated in tracts and discussions, had nothing to do with wage demands or such like. White collar office 'professionals' in both the private and public sector were quick to join the strike, including those at several government ministries, notably Equipment and Social affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Atomic Energy Commissariat. Everywhere, attempts were made by workers to run production themselves, and coordinate their activities with the wider movement. In Batignolles, the wives of strikers organized community associations to try and maintain food supplies with local farmers, who agreed to base prices on production costs, with free food bonds distributed for children. The strike wave continued unabated. Oil refineries, railway stations, printers, goods depots, and warehouses, ports and power stations were all under worker's control. Strikers carried out a number of subversive measures that displayed the autonomous nature of the movement. At the Wonder battery plant at Saint-Ouen strikers refused all contact with CGT officials, while at the CSF plant in Brest, strikers produced walkie-talkies to use for the strike. Meanwhile, major disturbances continued in several cities, with riots occurring in Lyon, Bordeaux - where the police were forced to retreat - Nantes, and Strasbourg.

By May 22, De Gaulle was calling for a referendum. Street disturbances again flared in central Paris on the evening of May 24, after demonstrators found their route blocked by riot police. As the protestors built barricades against police assault, a smaller group broke away, setting fire to the stock exchange. By this time the various Leninist groups were uneasy with the situation they had played so little in creating. The Trotskyist JCR (Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire) had called for protestors to turn back when confronted by the CRS, while the impotent UNEF student union and PSU (Parti Socialiste Unifie) had blocked access to the Ministries of Finance and Justice. Later the same night rioting moved to the Latin Quarter, with protestors throwing paving slabs and Molotov cocktails at police.

On May 24, representatives from the government, the unions, and employers met in Paris to broker a deal aimed at ending the general strike, in what would become known as the 'Grenelle Accords'. The meeting sounded the death knell for the movement. The Accords offered a pay rise of 35% to around 1.5 million workers, a general 10% pay rise, and the reduction of the working week to 40 hours. At this stage the strikers made their feelings known, booing and jeering union bosses, and refusing to return to work. By May 30, De Gaulle announced his plans to abandon the referendum and call a general election within 40 days making threatening overtures that France was close to civil war, having already consulted his Generals and been assured that the army would remain loyal. On May 30, pro-De Gaulle demonstrations took place in Paris, as the conservative middle classes took to the streets.

As May became June, the return to work and 'normality' began. By June 5 workers in many industries were already ending strike action, with post offices, railways, utilities and mines all returning to work. The next day, bank and other office workers returned. Factory workers at Flins, however, refused to budge and fought pitched battles with the CRS, supported by students, in the surrounding fields for the next three days. Those strikers at Citroen just outside of Paris and Peugeot based at Sochaux, who had not been forcibly removed by police, also engaged in fierce battles with the CRS. Police removed the occupiers of the Sorbonne, and the Odeon on June 16. By June 17 Renault strikers finally returned to work. Following the general election, De Gaulle was returned to power with 60% of the National Assembly and 43% of the overall vote.

Although the movement of May '68 was over, France had witnessed what remains to this day, the closest an advanced capitalist democracy has come to actual revolution. The events of May 1968 return as a recurring dream for all those who believe in the possibility of a new world •

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This article below is a personal perspective and does not reflect a collective or agreed position within Mayday magazine

## [ Anti fascism, the BNP and the local elections ]

Here are a series of observations about the latest round of elections for local government (May 2007), from both before and after the elections. They are gathered in one place to clarify the problems, to see what is really going on, and to think about strategy and tactics for the way forward against the BNP and other far right forces, given the up-coming council elections.

### The Size of the BNP problem

Of course any size is repulsive, but they are not anything other than marginal. In recent years they have gone from totally irrelevant to completely marginal. A problem here and there, but they are not stopping the left anywhere it is trying to do something, and they have no meaningful political life in public, unlike their predecessor, the NF.

In fact, the National Front did not put all its effort into elections and therefore to compare the size of their councillor numbers with the BNP is misleading - the Front put effort into marches more and *the BNP have none of these*. When we talk about activist (bums on seats) numbers, the Front still look to have been a bigger organisation, a different class composition too. Voting cannot be taken as anything other than *temporary* verbal support, which can be fickle and changeable, and evidence for this, is their recent drops in the vote. The BNP have undoubtedly tapped into the lesser educated right wing who were not following the Conservative party.

Therefore, in terms of candidates the BNP are performing averagely for a 'new' party, but even there they can be stupid, barely capable of putting their mark on the form. So watch them by all means, but we still have plenty of room for manoeuvre and they are still a long, long way from power. If they have 49 councillors now (before the election), and after the election have 70, they will not get to power in our lifetimes (if ever). They are not growing at the rate they need, and currently at a rate which will not them into power for hundreds of years.

All that is asked for is proportion, and to stop the obsessive fetishisation of this struggle alone. Even in *some* seats where they are standing (what is that, 4% of total?) they are not filling the vacuum. The crisis is far deeper than that, involving many different issues, is not only a recent thing, and it will not be helped by just focussing on the BNP. However, *anti fascism/racism is one area that highlights problems within the left*.

Are the BNP filling the vacuum politically in the wards where they are standing? They are having no effect in some wards ie. no canvassing and no leaflets - they were hoping their 'reputation' would be enough to succeed alone, this is a failed strategy now, and it is very probable that they have already peaked in terms of gathering easy votes which were already there. The difficult task is now to grow politically for themselves, on the back of their own efforts, which is a qualitatively different and far harder task for Griffin to accomplish, and the first serious test of his leadership skills.

The BNP have tapped into some new working class (Anti) social networks, which were not overtly political before. How many of these social networks are left for them to easily enter is a moot point, and some networks like this are less receptive to the BNP anyway.

As for filling the vacuum, is the Green party standing in many seats 'filling the vacuum'? In the real world of people's experience the BNP are only a small part of the ideological array of choices, and not the only one that prevents/does not help working class consciousness.

## The real problem

A far bigger impediment is *all the left* itself and the anarchist movement, which is split to such a degree that there appears to be little hope of any sort of progressive working class consciousness. The analysis by Hillel Ticktin (Campaign for a New Marxist Party), is a good place to start on the nature of the problem.

The Red Action 'mirroring' strategy was a mistake (simplistic we must copy what the BNP are doing), and their alternative of the IWCA 'working class purism' is simply trapped in old left assumptions and politics. Amongst other things it is a formation which is theoretically short-sighted, empirically flawed in terms of its perspectives, negligent of history, is a strategic dead end, and is not the opposition which is claimed. E.g. The first time they have directly stood against the BNP in a local election (Thurrock, May 2007) after 15 years of threatening it, they were humiliated.

Why, when radicals claim that the 'working class has no borders' do they oppose activities that take them into other communities (dismissing it as 'parachuting in')? Whilst some supposedly anti-racist activity in the past was deeply patronising and alienating, with 'radical' bureaucrats coming in and telling people what to do - it is possible for anti-fascists to engage with people outside their locale in a non-paternalistic manner. Indeed, many are now already doing it. The leadership of ideas must come from the new class constituencies who participate in liberation politics. Politics must never remain the preserve of the old & tired leaderships as that is almost certainly hierarchical and authoritarian.

## 'Griffinism'

Nick Griffin wrote a post election address to his troops, posted on their website on May 8th, entitled "Election 2007... where we must go from here". Designed to keep the morale of his troops up, because a fair number took a hell of a beating, and others hovered at similar levels of failure. The following are comments on that article and Griffins ability (or lack of).

Really, the article was all about the BNP's losses since last time. Griffin blames an increase in effective political practice by those opposed to the BNP, rather than the pathetic councillors they had elected last time, or a simple rejection of their message. He then says that in order to gain more votes next time, they should merely copy the

work done by those who have beaten them this time. This is not a great strategy for changing people's lives for the better, and it certainly involves no thinking by his troops. Its' core message is; 'we'll give you what you have now, but with added nationalism'.

Which means; racism, homophobia etc, hardly earth-shattering stuff from the rotund rabid one eyed Fascist. All the way through the article he talks of getting his hands dirty by work and community 'celebrations' as if this was the fascist Holy Grail. The reality is that it is the superficial politics of New Labour but with added nastiness. The tone of the article is power, power, and power. There is nothing about really improving people's lives in the long term. Just a vague hint at what would happen should they ever get in a position of power - creating "fully-fledged and well informed nationalists". Nothing about the economic problems and BNP chances of holding onto the working class votes they have in the long run when fascist policies are obviously not gaining anything for the working class.

The truth is that you should not get too excited about Griffins' article, as it is not that good. *About average from a petty bourgeois party.* All the rubbish, including 'working for the people', are just hypocritical politicians lies; 'kiss a baby' - but a more 'hard working efficient' variety. It is telling us what we always knew, that they want to be respectable politicians, which means getting a party cadre together so they can reproduce in the long term by getting accepted as an 'ordinary political party'.

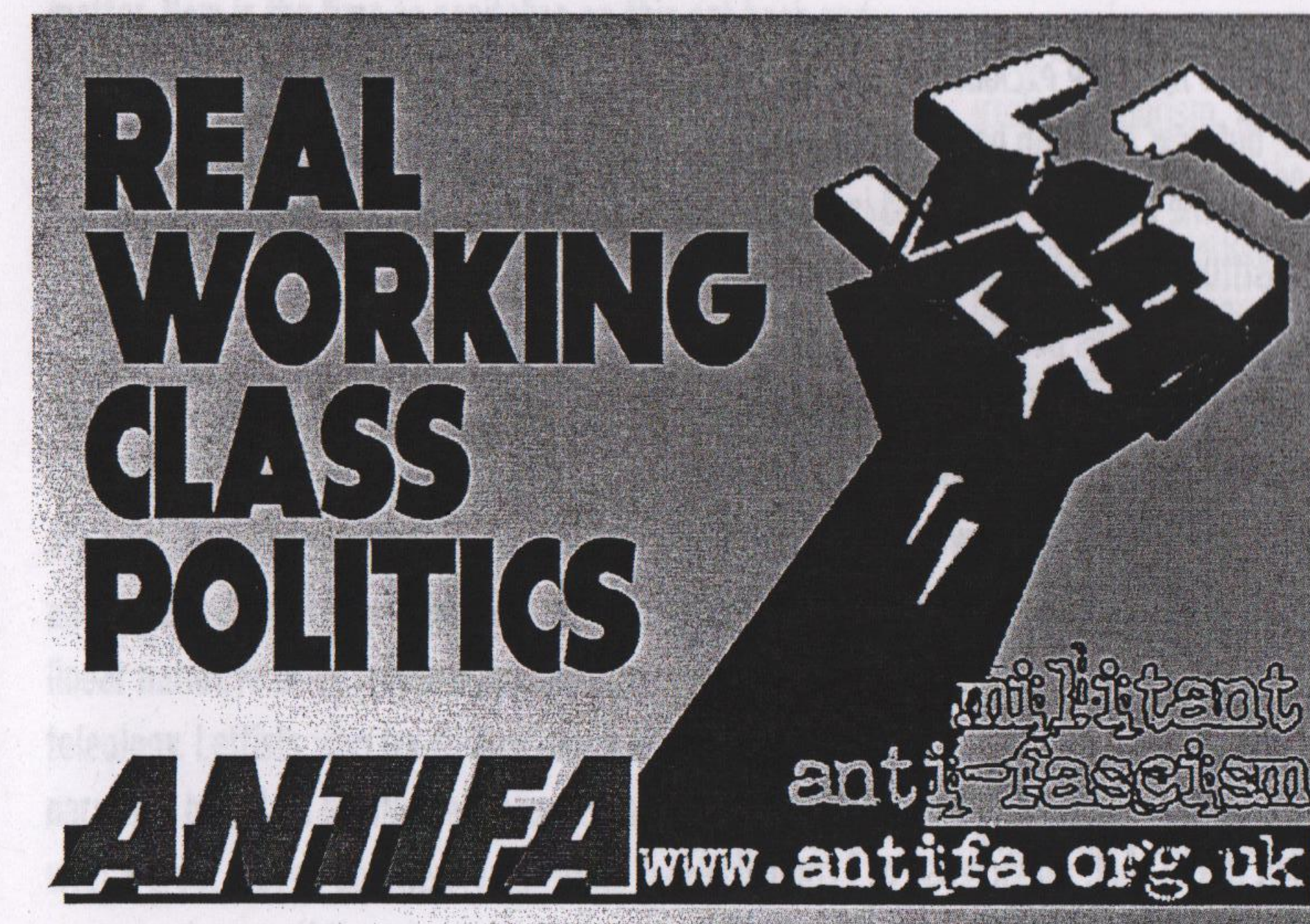
However, this is impossible because their policy puts them outside the mainstream. Thankfully, they are still far, far, from achieving even consideration for the mainstream. Anti fascists seem to have been 'doffing their cap' at Griffin-'ism' too much. He does not have any original insights, he is not that great a thinker (that article was based upon conversations with several senior party members), he does not write brilliant articles, he is a 'good enough-ist', he is just 'good enough' to improve the BNP's chances.

*The problem actually stems from historical inadequacies within the Anarcho and Marxist opposition.* Unfortunately, the New Left (1950's and 1960's) did not put down enough long term and innovative roots to reproduce itself and dynamic thought/groups. Instead, the Leninists dominated the existing left parties and Marxism in the UK, in the Universities, Charities, etc. and that led to conservative thought patterns, politics and organisations. *It is from this*

*position of historical weakness that we are now trying to emerge.* It is why our movement appears disparate, sectarian, individualistic, unfocused, and without serious strategic thought. The anarchist, Marxist and autonomist opposition today needs to get thinking about oppositional forms 5, 10 and 20 years from now, and how best we can go about trying to build such movements.

## BNP Doing Well?

There is nothing to be impressed at all with 50 seats out of a national total of 22K council seats, and what percentage of the vote that is, is questionable to say the least. Some anti fascists seem to have an a priori position of 'Griffin' worship. However, RA work from very flimsy evidence and their reflection theory of what anti fascism should look like (reflecting what the BNP are doing) is simplistic to say the least. People with anti fascist NOT STAMPED on their forehead, unlike RA, or antifa.org (although they have plenty of useful things to say and do) will make progress within the multitudes movements.



Describing Griffin as a 'good enough' ist means that he has a degree of competence. BUT he is not that clever from what and how he writes. The growth of the BNP, based in the space on the right that has opened up, is due to; economic change, the decline of the big parties, an imperialist media and the debris of the British Empire. Economic change started of course in the 1970's and those who base their politics upon events, especially quasi sociological ones, since the early/mid 1990's alone have only partial questions and partial answers. Not robust enough for the level of challenges and crisis we now face. Given these wider conditions which worked in the BNP's favour, and the fact that the fascists have been particularly thick in Britain in the past meant they too operated from a position of historical weakness

Griffin has played catch up to where the fascists should have been in the 1970s and 80's. At the minute anti fascists seem to be becoming intimidated, like the elephant from the fat mouse that is Griffin. We (anti fascists as a whole) need to calm down; take stock, treat each other with more respect, network, meet, conference, operate beyond traditional group, tactical, and strategic boundaries, set new agendas, work openly etc. In short, the task is to go way beyond the failed politics of the past, in a positive and progressive manner, and to go forward as a movement. There are enough independents and local groups around as a basis for a mass movement. The Oxford action against Griffin and Irving showed that, as well as the local groups which have sprung up around the country, the C.A.P. in Wigan, and others less formally organised, who operate as coalitions of local independents or individually. This is apart from those groups and individuals mentioned in Mayday #01.

## Post Election Results Comments

The BNP/far right vote in Sunderland is going down. In Sheffield they did poorly, and in Leeds they had a range of results from humiliation to good, but still no election win. The BNP appear to believe that 'now is the time' and are throwing activists/new recruits to the wolves, into seats where they will never win (hence high turnover of candidates in seats from the ones I have checked) as they get disillusioned because they are not breaking through. EG. I know they have stood in one seat, lost, and not put any work into winning the ward, no canvassing and no leaflets. They still picked up 200 votes in this particular case and came last out of 7 candidates, 200 too many it may have been, but it is nothing exceptional. In fact, it



appears that they decided nationally that 2007 was the year to try and breakthrough, equivalent to Hitler's 'Battle of the Bulge' in 1944, where Hitler hoped a counter offensive - a dash for the sea, would force the Allies on the Western European mainland back over the sea to England. That was a failure as well as the BNP at this election.

There is no other explanation for the sudden more than doubling of BNP candidates from the 2006 elections to the 2007 ones. 2004 left 2 years from the highest ever BNP vote in the European elections (808K), to 2006, so there was more than enough time then to get candidates that they may have recruited in 2004 ready for the 2006 election, which instead saw a gradual rise consistent with their established slow growth.

Therefore, they waited another year before throwing all their resources into the battle. It must have been a conscious strategic push. Which thankfully for anti fascists, was repulsed, and the BNP were forced to retreat licking their wounds. It will be interesting to see whether they can maintain the number of candidates or whether it will go down in the local elections in 2008. If this argument is correct then it should go down next year, as they may not have the energy and resources to do the same again, they certainly will struggle to maintain these numbers next year.<sup>[1]</sup>

They are still benefiting from picking up reactionary right wing votes that were always there but had no means to express themselves. This is not a positive vote for Griffin/the BNP still. The Sedgefield and Spennymoor results are also based upon certain nests of runts, the battle for these areas is still very far from lost and will continue. The old left and northern sensibilities are some of what is preventing a BNP breakthrough in these areas.

It would be easy to point out that in 2006 the BNP got a respectable 19.2%, so there is actually a drop of approximately 5% to this year's level of 14.7%. It is also the lowest BNP percentage vote in local elections since 2000, with 2002, 2003 and 2004 elections all having just higher than this. This statistically significant drop so far does not have an adequate explanation. The best one so far is that a combination of better political opposition, people seeing the error of their ways, and a demoralisation within their own voters' ranks has done this.

It has been pointed out that they got 300K votes, but this was based on a more than doubling of candidates, from 2006 and 363, to 2007 and 742 (according to Searchlight, boo, hiss, etc). Therefore, on these figures they have done far less well per candidate in 2007 than in 2006. The only way to calculate how well they are doing would be to breakdown their 2004 European election vote into areas, and see whether they got higher or lower votes per area. Apart from difficulties in comparing wards at European and council elections, I think it would be lower anyway.

There is not any evidence to say they are new votes however, and so 'how well' they have done is very debatable. Picking up votes already there is not really a gained vote - that is the highpoint. If there was some analysis about what proportion of their votes were already there, and what were new that would be interesting. The BNP are going to head for a sharp fall if they think they are going to win seats and get 30%+ in many areas at the same election. They will not do it.

They can pick up votes from the excluded of an old imperialist power, but how they can break into any new class constituency on the numbers they need is difficult to imagine. What constituency/class composition would it be? Perhaps their excluded vote has peaked and they cannot get any constituency that counts. The Labour vote is holding up, bottom line 26%, Libdems doing the same, many many independents appearing in areas where the BNP may have broken through which is helping to prevent the BNP breakthrough.

Again, out of 10.5 K seats contested in May 2007, they did appallingly, let's not forget that. An increase of 1 council seat overall is treading water at best, and a mask which hides the serious overall countrywide drop of 5% in their vote.



[1] Although the expulsions (Dec/Jan 2007/8) and new grouping of ex-BNP organisers may have some effect on numbers too.

There are 2 ways of reading their drop in vote, the first is: If the BNP vote is going to drop every time they extend themselves this gives the anarchists and the left plenty of time to get their plans together and to fight them.

The second reading spread on the Web is that 'the BNP faced a temporary set back in May as they did not grow as fast as they thought they would'. I think the first is better and not just because we 'wish it to be', rather it is a realistic reading of society and politics in a society which is far more complex than it was ever thought to be previously.

There are signs that the left are finally taking fascism seriously and will continue to do so, hindering fascists in some areas. The BNP are not going to get into power EVER at that rate. In this situation, anti fascists would be best served with sabotaging BNP internal party machinery and disrupting their training seminars so they cannot spread their new strategy. How likely this is though, is another matter. Now is the time to capitalise on this set back and spread dissension, unease, scepticism and conflict within the BNP camp. It appears that Searchlight (and the secret state?) agreed and have chosen to try to divide the BNP at this point.

There always was bound to be setbacks for the BNP, they have had things go their way for too long already. Political life has always been composed of positivity and negativity, and especially now when the evidence is against any grand linear narrative of history and involves the end of teleology. Leftists who try to describe a simple anti fascist narrative based on painting a picture of a 'competent BNP with a great leader' are merely parroting fascist propaganda even if they do not intend it and think it can actually be used for anti fascist purposes. They cannot explain the twists and turns of experienced social life with all its pluses and minuses, they are unprepared for contingencies, which go against their accepted perspectives, they struggle and bluster in the face of the unexpected, and say 'we need to know more'.

Their efforts to appear to have 'the correct realist line on anti fascism' of BNP progress end up by crippling their wider political theory by over emphasising just how 'little space for movement is left for anti fascists' or theory which is de facto ultra left in form and content. So far, they are incapable of working with anti fascists who may have different ideas and perspectives to themselves, and have failed to incorporate any black (a generic term here)

organisations into their anti fascism. At the base of this is their old left assumptions and perspectives.

Perhaps there was too much hype about how good AFA was, in a situation where the fascists put themselves on a plate - publicly in front of you, then perhaps it wasn't too difficult to counter them. However, the task for the next generation of anti fascists is to smash the BNP political machinery. This is not too say that political work is not important, in fact, it is essential, and we are working on political projects mainly, though we do keep an eye on anti fascism, for now.

## The Way Forward - The areas' of autonomy

The traditional opposition is always going to be there and so writing off all those who associate with them in advance is not serious politics. It is only the politics of irrelevant purism, which retreats into the traditional Ultra leftist sect. Instead the politics of autonomy means that we work in situations with an open mind (whilst keeping our politics and security in mind) with the aim of creating a more effective anti fascist movement overall. Ultra leftists, Greens and anarchists who criticise so much of the time without having any effective politics of their own are as much of the problem as the liberal left they criticise from a position of isolation. They forget that the point of politics is not to reproduce sterile ideological forms, but to act, and to act with effect. They are without a social base and so they will always be marginal too. Rather political respect of different ideas is central for effective horizontal, potentially mass, and popular front forms of anti fascism. The areas for autonomy are everywhere, there is nothing holding back anti fascist practice except barriers we set up for ourselves, and others who have set up barriers for themselves. The key at this stage is political confidence.

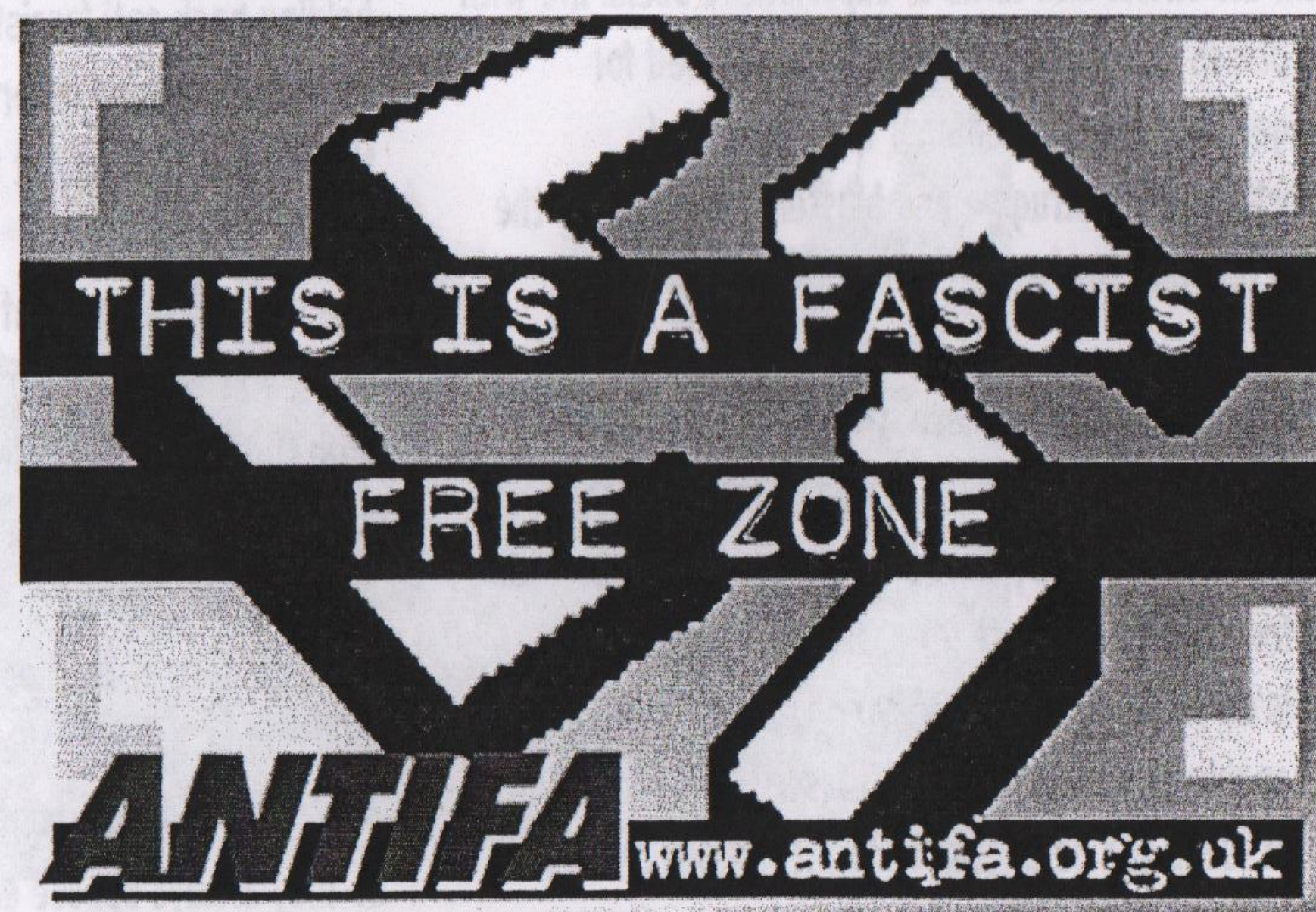
The theoretical areas of autonomy are in the space between the 'left right' wing Searchlight (who practice with the New Labour hierarchy, Trade unions and others) positions and practice, and the ultra left Red Action/ IWCA who say that there is a need to start working class politics again outside of the Labour movement. Their politics are predictable, because they are very often mirror image opposites, but their political implications become inverted so they always oppose each other. It would be funny if it were not so tragic. Therefore, the answer is to be both

inside the Labour movement and outside of it, following the best New Left traditions. The space between Searchlight and the Ultra Left is the new 21st century areas of autonomy, where people are not so ideologically committed and who are sceptical of those who produce politics as the 10 commandments, in short they operate more anarchistically. Despite having considerable problems there is a cultural lag which means that old left politics can be useful, but it is clearly not enough.

## Autonomous Anti Fascist Praxis

This is an (using current in vogue libertarian language) argument for a horizontal popular front of anti fascism, which organises beyond traditional boundaries and explicitly involves those targeted by racists and fascists within the programme. Going back to the 19th century formation of the British working class, it would also be involved in whatever voluntary, charity, welfare support systems there are for those migrants or setting up new ones. These new networks should be secular if possible, but including religious ones if necessary because they have space and some resources. In addition, these official and unofficial institutions exist all over the country already.

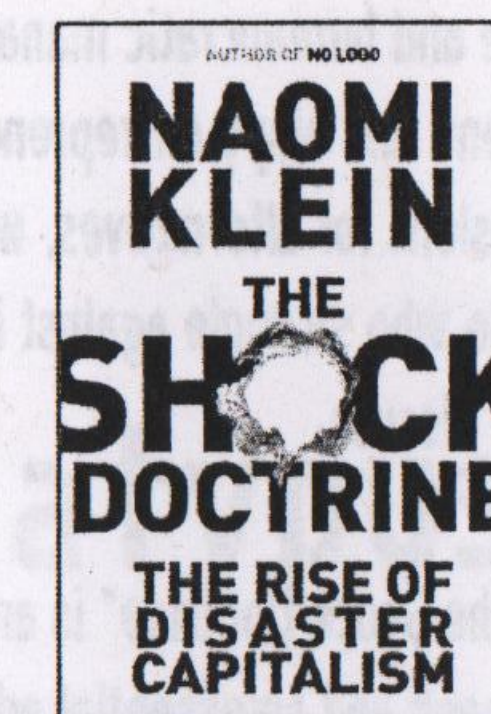
Were the matter not so serious it would be amusing that anti fascism in this country is in a pathetic state, like the left and anarchists as a whole. It is important to try to break anti fascism and politics, as a whole out of its 'ghettoised' sectarian, closed, reductionist forms, rather the network model of organising is more appropriate for the 21st century, and the political and technical composition of the working classes. History will applaud these efforts. In other words this is an argument for welfare functions to be a vital part in the construction of the 21st century working class, or **multitude** as Negri as written. *This is the way from the margins towards autonomous political success.* The key issues are centred upon the circulation of ideas and struggles, and cooperation within and amongst anti fascists, anti racists and others ●



## [ Book review ]

### Shock Doctrine; The Rise of Disaster Capitalism

Naomi Klein



Klein revisits old and newer events such as the Pinochet coup, China, South Africa, Russia, Asia, Bolivia, the USA and New Orleans post Katrina, Iraq and the UK and shows how capitalism just does not develop how it pleases, but has to overcome the resistance it had created. Capitalist operating principles are laid bare in the process, rather than trying to rebuild New Orleans and its public facilities. Capitalism imposed an attack on the public infrastructure: houses, transport, education rights, working and wage conditions were attacked, 2 years after the disaster the privatised electricity company had failed to get the whole city back online, and e.g. they created a privatised educational system. Thus economic 'freedom' as ideology is made simple for all to see.

Humanity and its values are merely an obstacle for capitalism that must be got rid of by any means necessary, the multitude will never vote for those who take away their income peacefully, so crisis (including military coups) is the opportunity to exploit with exceptional measures for capitalists. Violence was a key ingredient in the original creation of industrial capitalism from feudalism and primitive accumulation, and today 'free market' economic policies and 'development' require violence to support them. Autonomist theorists have already pointed out that primitive accumulation (where the working poor can survive without money) is a way of existing that capitalism has to permanently ensure does not happen.

The similarities with Marxism are clear, as Karl said capitalism had created its own nemesis, the proletariat. For Klein accurately documents how opportunistic capitalism is, and by default how conservative the opposition is, and this book indirectly suggests how the movements can improve their politics. The chapter 8 title "Crisis Works: The packaging of shock therapy" sums up the book.

Milton Friedman's negative legacy is documented widely, and his planning, and the circulation of ideas that Friedmann placed, ready to be adopted in crisis is interesting. It complements what is known of the new Right in Britain. Although, Klein's treatment of this UK New

The first decade of the 21st century will be over before we know it, that will be a time of rethinking for many people, but we cannot wait that long. The end of the first two millennia, greeted with triumphalism from capitalism, even though its scorecard was one of worldwide wars, famine, tragedy and mass murder, was a sickening sight.

Then the social movements were engaged in worldwide struggles against the new globalised capitalist world order. However, this disguised the inadequacies of most of the left; anarchists here played a useful role sometimes, but this was despite their politics not because of it. Very often, the best politics came from those reinventing or new to the anarchist tradition. The existing left and anarchist movements groups had already reached the end of their relevance, despite their prolonged death throes, which are still rattling today. Unfortunately, as this is merely a museum full of stuffed dummies.

### Disaster Capitalism?

At the time, many in the media thought Naomi Klein had written the bible of this new movement, "No Logo", and Klein made a worldwide name for herself, parasiting on the back of the new globalised social movement. Milking this newfound prestige, she produced various other articles and books, including 'Fences and Windows', but the latter was merely sound bite faux politics. Recently there has been a new publication, "The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism", which is the authentic sequel for 'No Logo'. We wish she had published them the other way round!

Klein, as a journalist, has an eye for a good story and "The Shock Doctrine" does grab the zeitgeist of our time. Fear and tragedy are in the news and in people's consciousness, and Klein here looks at the capitalist reproduction and development of our time. Including a wider look at environmental issues, how this is experienced by and within capitalism, capitalists, and by the multitude.

Right and Thatcherism (including the Falklands War and the miners strike) is reductionist, and in truth, virtually completely unresearched. Klein manages to get away with this, as what she did write was complementary to her wider thesis. Although her neglect of hatred of the working class within the New Right is symptomatic of a wider problem within the book overall, and that is Klein maintains, just as in 'No Logo', that there is another nice capitalism possible - despite her own evidence! Klein presents 'Disaster capitalism' as merely a moment of capitalist hyper-confidence and practice, suggesting that there are other ways for capitalism to be. This has numerous implications for the starting point for an alternative to 'Disaster capitalism'.

It is clear that capitalism is disaster, and that the multitude is the potential positive super session of the negativity which capitalism creates. This destructive reproduction is a serious problem in the lives of billions and we must work out alternatives to it. Klein thus leaves space for

administrative and bureaucratic managers of capitalism and government, and hippy entrepreneurs to be potentially part of discussions for alternatives, *while we are sure* that it is the people who struggle against it, who are the ones with which to discuss.

To sum up, "The Shock Doctrine" is an important well-written book and an essential addition to the range of evidence and theory against capitalism for the movement. It is easy reading and does not challenge left assumptions, which means it is digestible for all those on the left and anarchists. It will circulate on the business shelves of bookshops too, as it does show how to make a fast buck, even if this was not the intention. It puts meat onto the bones of Zygmunt Bauman's 'liquid modernity'. However, like her other work, it is not as directly useful for activists in confronting problems in their own communities, or in directly helping a new movement grow. Though it will enhance Klein's career ●



## [ Response to Platypus ]

Platypus are a new group in Chicago who are rethinking the Marxist tradition, and they were quoted in Mayday #01. Chris Cutrone, for Platypus, has written a response to the Mayday introduction online in their February 2008 newsletter, raising many important questions. Some of which will be addressed now.

Trying to force clear red water between an anarchist and a Marxist approach Chris describes a "key distinction is the relation of political organisation and historical consciousness". This historical consciousness is primary for Platypus, and we hope we've addressed enough concerns with political practice and memory to be useful. For us experience is a crucial factor, with a concentration on struggles, this is planned to result in praxis, which includes dynamic consciousness, which is grounded in the conditions of our time - rather than the past, and has lessons for political organisation. In short, we aim similar to Platypus.

We entirely agree that revolutionary organisations should be able to justify themselves, but they are overwhelmingly arrogant and uncritical in the UK. There is little serious discussion of politics, no regular forums, and so on. The serious questions about how political action enables transformative action, 'how does political organisation enable transformative, emancipatory, and not foreclosing action? How can the Left 'live' and take form not deadly to itself?' are serious ones for us, even if the UK Left and anarchists ignore them. Specifically the danger of organising as a cult is a huge problem in the UK.

A recurring problem is the distinction and differences between anarchism and the left, we have dissolved the distinction as an impediment to theoretical and practical endeavours. For us the historical baggage either; does not matter, it is an impediment to greater unity and better politics, or those who insist on hardlines effectively have created a sealed little bubble for themselves. Despite this argument - new and interesting articles from both sides continue to appear on 1917 and after, but largely it is a debate for purists and not those looking to develop politics for now and tomorrow.

We have some toes in the anarchist pool and some in the Labour movement. We are also conscious that a third pool needs to be built, and that is the area of autonomy, but that is already a few decades underway as the New Left already (in the UK at least) has inspired and contributed to the theory of existing autonomists e.g. Harry Cleaver, University of Texas. Already autonomist practice and theory is very relevant to these discussions, and it is this hybrid, with others perhaps, which we hope may result in new liberation politics for our time.

One starting point for us has been the ultra voluntarism of anarchism, which demands anarchic

responses to virtually all issues, but which is unsustainable because of the resulting arrest rates. That is not to say that confrontation and direct action have been relegated in importance for us, they have not, struggles are still our focal concern. This is similar to Platypus and their criticism (vis a vis Nicholas Spencer) of the anarchist tradition.

Your highlighting of the writing of history as being urgent for emancipatory politics is very worthwhile, and there are others before us who have thought this. In the UK the Communist Party Historians Group - Andrew Morton, Donna Torr, Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson et al already stated this in 1956 - the year so many people left the Communist Party because of repression in Hungary; we "must become historians of the present too". These British Marxist Historians are important forerunners of the traditions we would like to emulate, and we wholeheartedly concur with understanding "what changes while remaining the same?" The British left/Labour movement problem however is at an advanced stage, our left; the oldest in the world perhaps, has unique characteristics of its advanced fossilization.

Our practice already is with the best parts of this tradition, though we are not in a position to overcome it, yet. We also draw wisdom from Negri, that "organisation is spontaneity that reflects upon itself", which is a good description of where we are at. Mayday personnel currently derive from different experiences, gatekeepers of at least 3 important cycles of struggles, we were all participants, and we view the next struggles to be as important as the older ones, and we want to have an informed basis for the new struggles to come. They will not be totally new, there will always be some connections with the past, but we do aim, with Lucacs, to be "those who can see the furthest".

Platypus further raises an important issue of *when was the left*, not only where it was or where it is. Indeed, this is an interesting historical note, and yours is a great point, we cannot better it; "we do not live in some timeless and perpetual present of oppression and struggle against it, but in... 'the time of now' (Jetztzeit), a time of particular and fleeting possibilities and the ambiguously obscure history that brought them - us - into existence" ●

# [ Solidarity - the fascist trade union ]

**T**he National Address of "Solidarity" the fascist Trade Union has been located in Spennymoor, but who opened it? This could be to do with the prominent case of Mark Walker (the suspended BNP teacher), who has taken on a role of organiser for *Solidarity*, although his brother, Adam Walker is now the President of Solidarity. I think it is possible that the General Secretary of Solidarity (*Patrick Harrington*) has moved to the North East region or is in the process of moving to the region. Solidarity is registered at P.O. Box 93, Spennymoor, DL16 9AN.

## Who is Patrick Harrington?

In 1984 Pat Harrington was the subject of protests by students at the Polytechnic of North London (now part of London Metropolitan University), who picketed his lectures to protest his being able to study philosophy while a prominent member of the National Front (NF), which he joined in 1979, and was deputy editor of their publication *NF News*. Students argued that his presence made life intolerable for ethnic minority students. Harrington subsequently faced a college hearing for a television interview in which, in line with NF policy, he questioned the right of black people to citizenship. Harrington eventually graduated with a Philosophy degree.

## General Secretary of Solidarity union

In January 2006 it was claimed that he was appointed President of 'Solidarity' - The Union for British Workers, which is a front for the BNP as they dominate it, the current Union Executive has included: Simone Clarke, Lindsay Nieuhoff, David Durant, Gerry Aronssen, Mark Walker, Adam Walker and David Kerr.

There is an ongoing connection to Nick Griffin and the BNP. Harrington continues to be associated with Nick Griffin and the British National Party, but he denies that these associations imply ideological agreement? Harrington defends his decision to publish an article from Griffin on civil liberties grounds, which is Janus faced considering fascism is essentially suppression (including violence and murder) of those with whom it disagrees.

In 2008, Adam Walker is now the president of Solidarity and Patrick Harrington the general secretary. The website of Solidarity has been updated and their propaganda is taking a very Strasserite turn, part of a wider Gramscian right wing turn. e.g., they have claimed **Mayday** for the fascist worker and they are claiming the heritage of the working class movement as their own. In seeking to become one big union of the right they are claiming to follow the working class traditions of Robert Owen and the Industrial Workers of the World, ignoring the fact that one big unionism is based upon racial equality and is against all bosses. They are trying to position themselves as a big bosses union, who will side with capitalists in a similar way to the role of the Freedom Association in the 1970s at Grunwick and elsewhere. Their role, if they ever do become bigger than 'One man and his dog', will be to foster splits in the working class, to sell out the working class, and provide the scabs and boot boys to defeat any future working class struggles.

Fascist ideology here is very clear, this is a large part of the historical role fascism had which was to smash the working class movement. The Durham Miners Association amongst many is supportive of efforts to campaign against 'Solidarity' and the BNP ●