

He was then sentenced to 8 1/2 years in prison in his absence, with others receiving 5 years, most either being found not guilty or guilty of lesser non-imprisonable charges. Since 2008 the trial has left a legacy with 5 outstanding appeals to the conviction and inflated prison sentences. These appeals - now reduced to 4 defendants after the outcome of an earlier appeal hearing of one of the defendants - again sees 3 of the 5 hunger strikers of 2003 appear in court including Simon Chapman.

At this stage, the fact remains, that what we are fighting now is the same process of repression that we fought successfully in 2003. In Simon's case especially, documented video and photo evidence clearly shows MAT riot police plant molotov cocktails in black bags and strap them to his body. Simon has maintained, and which photographic evidence illustrate, that he was carrying a light blue rack sack with nothing more than water bottles. This blatant attempt to artificial manufacture culpability remains a reflection of the nature of these trials.

We therefore express our solidarity to the 4 defendants facing the courts and prosecutors of the Greek state, and reaffirm our commitment to fight in solidarity with them. Simon is back in court in early 2011 and the campaign needs all the publicity and financial assistance it can get. Our commitment for the freedom of the Thessaloniki 4! Solidarity and dignity against repression! London Thessaloniki Solidarity Group - September 19th, 2010
Please email us at thessalonikisolidarity@gmail.com:

Public letter from Simon Chapman detailing arrest and subsequent treatment at the Thessaloniki riot against the EU summit, June 2003

I'm not sure if people know what happened before/after my arrest so I'll quickly outline it here. The march set off in militant style and soon the air was filled with the sound of breaking glass. The first gas came in and in the crowd surge I lost sight of X. Me, A and B continued on to a square where the gas started raining down - so far my goggles and half-face gas mask were working fine. The crowd surged again and I lost A and B, so I headed over to the rest of my affinity group. We ended up all squashed together with maybe 600 people, with clouds of gas coming from front and back, and my skin was starting to burn, my eyes were streaming. The crowd was all crushed together, people wailing for water for their eyes, pushing this way and that. Though I knew the safest place in that type of situation was in the middle of the crowd, I decided to go to the edge to see if I could see X, A & B. Then a huge cloud of gas enveloped me and I couldn't see a thing. So I'm at the edge choking, blind, on the edge of panic - a voice inside me is saying "be cool, be cool" and I kept it together. And then CRUNCH - everything went black and sparks of light shone in the darkness. At first I thought a badly aimed brick had hit me, but only a second later there was another bonecrunching blow to my head and I knew it was cops. I go to run but I'm already falling, scrabbling along the wall through broken glass, still blinded by gas; as I move the batons are raining down, sometimes 3 or 4 hitting simultaneously across my body. I feel boots kicking me as well.

I thought I could crawl back to the crowd, but when I look up all I see is an empty smoky street and cop boots coming towards my face. BANG goes my goggles and glasses, and I realise I am in deep, deep shit. I try to get up but at that moment a hand comes down and pulls my cap and gas mask off and a final blow smacks me where my hair meets my forehead; I feel a splash of blood run down my face and everything goes black. I was only unconscious for a few seconds I think. I'm dragged to my feet, and boots and batons are still coming, mainly at my shoulders and legs. 5 cops have hold of me, dragging my rucksack off my back. They hold me and search it, then take me to the side of the road and sit me down. A cop comes up behind me and smacks me across the back with his baton, then kicks me at the base of the spine. This STILL hurts! My face is a sea of blood - I can feel it leaking from several places, running down my neck. C and D would have seen what happens next, the cops bringing the bags of molotovs to me.

I can feel a fit-up coming on! The next 2 hours are truly terrifying - I am cuffed with 2 bags of molotovs strapped to me. Some are leaking. The cops lead me into the road where rocks and molotovs are landing among us and present me to the rioters like I am a trophy. If one of these molotovs lands too close to me I would be a ball of flames faster than you could say "human rights". Over the next 2 hours I am beaten with batons, fists, a hammer; wacked (*sic*) across the head twice with a length of wood, headbutted, kicked, slapped and constantly exposed to teargas. I could hardly walk or breathe. The whole left side of my back was purple, yellow, black, blue and I was covered in cuts, bruises and lumps. So it was quite rough! I never thought I would be so glad to finally get stuffed - well kicked - in a cell where 10 other demonstrators were languishing!

MAYDAY

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An introduction to Red Anarchism / Current Perspectives / The Strategy and tactics of Class War / Is There Anyone Out There? By Paul Baker / Autonomy and class composition - a Northern UK historical perspective

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Page 4. "Current Perspectives" - current political problems with the anarchist and Marxist milieus are identified and there background examined. This includes an historical assessment (back to the 19th century *First International*) of the root of the problem and more current examples

Page 7. "The Strategy and tactics of Class War" - Given that the class struggle is about to develop and change, entering a new phase with the implementation of unnecessary cuts to the detriment of the working classes and their communities. It is essential to clarify what we want and how we are to do it. So this article is a deep theoretical investigation of the issues of class warfare from a humanist and realist point of view. Emphasising that the totality is more important than partial and one sided contributions of political groups who behave more like cults than authentic participants in developing working class movements

Page 14. "Is There Anyone Out There?" By Paul Baker is a recent contribution to the campaigns for working class political regeneration that provides evidence for many of the theoretical insights of Mayday from deep within the struggles of North East England, and the group concerned is Tyne & Wear Left Unity

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An introduction to Red Anarchism

Firstly we start with an apology to Dan Jakopovich for spelling his name wrong in the previous issue of Mayday. A huge portion of humble pie has been swallowed here and the correct spelling and article title is here - Dan Jakopovich, "Revolutionary Unionism: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow".

Next, it is interesting to note that there have been demands for Mayday to clarify what it is and where it has come from, and so Mayday will firstly identify its' political pedigree, and then talk about issue 6.

Mayday magazine originated out of the downturn in the Anti Globalisation cycle of struggles involving people from prominent class struggle groups. It was clear that anarchist/ecological activism is not enough, it was also clear that the old left was not enough either. Mayday is an attempt to learn from critical Marxists, Anarchism, and to criticise the Ultra leftist streak, which taints some anarchism. It is not often that anarchism is criticised from within, but Mayday has done just that, identifying an anarchist inability to think political growth and work with other groups who are not like them. This is part of the 'ultra leftist' turn that contra the New Left simply writes off

work *within* trade unions, or other groups within different arenas & alliances who include different ideas & people, and who are not one dimensional pure. **Anarchism has been unable to practice beyond itself as the complete lack of authentic alliances, working groups and united or popular blocs or fronts shows. Contra to mainstream anarchist belief, this is a fatal problem with the politics.**

The 1907 International Anarchist Congress declared that "the trade unions [are] both... combat units in the class struggle for better working conditions, and as associations of producers which can serve to transform capitalist society into an anarcho-communist society".

There are other problems with anarchism, such as conservatism, an inability to plan and think politically as a movement, and a lack of political ambition. Thus the Marxism of Sivanandan, Gramsci, E.P. Thompson, Negri et al is informing much of this critique. The New Left, Anarchism's and Marxism's will be discussed using evidence from the recent history of the movements. Our website www.mayday-magazine.com already has a lot of evidence about how we have attempted, since the 1990s in different forms, and in the form of Mayday since 2007. To spread dynamic and popular forms of political engagement in the important and large issues of our time, rather than small-scale sect impotence and irrelevance.

The various writers and artists who have written & designed for these projects include; **David Lamb** (Animal 1), **Dface** (Mayday 2), **David Douglass** (Mayday 1), **Ian Bone** (Mayday 1, Animal 1), **John Bowden** (Animal & Mayday 3) **Larry O'Hara** (Animal 2), **Dan Jakopovich** (Mayday 5), **Roger** Bristol Radical History Group (Mayday 5), **Jacob Bauthumley** (Mayday 4), **Colin West** (Animal 1-5), **Trevor Bark** (many & various), and various anonymous comrades who have contributed in many different ways; design, writing, funds, copying and so on. **Thanks to you all.** Of course there is a glaring issue with these names, and that is the lack of writers who are women. This we do aim to correct when possible, although there is no timescale as we are not going to beat ourselves up about it.

Themes

The various events reported on & advertised in the magazines include; Postal workers struggles, Hillgrove Cat farm campaign, the 20th centuries first ever March on the Monarchy in 1998, Anarchist and Working Class bookfairs, unemployment, economics of the credit crunch, various events against the Countryside Alliance, different Reclaim The Streets (Cambridge & London), several anti fascist articles, different anti globalisation protests, prisoners struggles, analysis of the different social movements, and National Union of Mineworkers events.

The **first issue of Mayday** was published to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the first New Left Manifesto in 1967, the second issue with the 40th anniversary of the publication of the 2nd New Left Manifesto in 1968. Mayday is more than attempting to join up older political forms with newer ones however; it is an attempt to have a

totalising view of the historical situation and our movement of movements, imagining political growth through praxis straddling both black and red camps.

When addressing www.Platypus1917.com - *Mayday* identified concerns with political practice and memory that can 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.

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, virtually no regular independent forums (*Mayday* participates in one in North East England), 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 Left & anarchist organising as a cult is a huge problem in the UK.

A recurring problem is the distinction and the differences between anarchism and the Left; for *Mayday*, we have dissolved the distinction as an impediment to theoretical and practical endeavours. For us the historical baggage either does not matter or is an impediment to greater unity and better politics; those who insist on hard lines 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. Nevertheless, 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 *Mayday* hopes 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 to unimportance for us. They have not; struggles are still our focal concern. This is similar to *Platypus* and their criticism (vis à vis Nicholas Spencer) of the anarchist tradition.

Platypus's (www.platypus1917.com) 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, 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 go beyond it, yet. We also draw wisdom from Antonio Negri, that "organisation is spontaneity that reflects upon itself", which is a good description of where we are at. *Mayday* contributors have derived from different experiences, gatekeepers of at least three important cycles of struggles¹, were all participants, and we view the next struggles to be as important as the older ones. 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 Lukács, 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 theirs 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."

Current perspectives – Mayday #6

What concerns **Mayday 6** is the separation of the vast majority of what calls itself 'a part of anarchism' from the political life of the working classes. This of course is not solely, or even mostly, the fault of the current generations. This is an historically derived problem and it is important for us to talk about these issues and how they have arisen. A further problem is the fossil like nature of Marxist and anarchist party/organisation/federations who talk the talk but do not walk the walk. There is no political practice of any realistic size from any party that can properly be analysed for effectiveness, and that is because of the small scale of the efforts. Even the recent Trade Union and Socialist coalition suffered from old left hang ups, and I do not think anybody would say that it was a success at the General Election. That is not to say that it could not improve, but it would have to improve its organisation (the Socialist Party would have to learn to be more humble) and change many of its perspectives whilst seriously opening up its form.

Marxist and Anarchist Pedigree

If we start in the 19th century this gives us a full understanding of the range of the historical debate about the relevance of anarchism to the class struggle. While the recent growth of anarchism from 1968 onwards has been widely described, the origins of the situation are crucial. The Paris Commune (1870) saw a large amount of spontaneity in the political revolt and was a proto United Front, Lefebvre noted that the followers of Bakunin and Proudhon allied themselves with the Jacobins and Blanquists.

¹A cycle or 'cycles of struggle' is a category that describes the historical process of how class struggles originate, develop, grow towards their peak and then decline. The Poll tax is an obvious example, and this theory is from the autonomist movement in Italy.

It had daringly repudiated the state, although Bakunin was to comment that the internationalist anarchists comprised only a 'tiny minority' of the participants.

Asinus Asinorum (the ass of asses)

The struggles and debates within the First International around the same time are widely known, are written about elsewhere, & so we will briefly comment upon some important points. The growing movement saw many affiliations to the First International, in Germany a hundred unions were helped to affiliate by Wilhelm Leibnecht et al. Marx was the German regional secretary and in the Reichstag in 1869 August Bebel boasted of this affiliation. Meanwhile Bakunin founded an *International Social Democratic Alliance* (ISDA) and aimed to enter en bloc, but this scared Marx who tactically manoeuvred against Bakunin. Pouring over the programme and statutes of the ISDA Marx petulantly scrawled in the margins that Bakunin was **Asinus Asinorum** just like any teenager. Bakunin correctly foresaw the problem of a 'Red bureaucracy' taking control of the state and Marx counter attacked getting the Bakuninists excluded at the La Haye Congress in Sept 1872.

Henceforth the links were broken between Anarchism and Marxism: a disastrous event for the working class as each of the two movements needed the theoretical and practical contribution of the other.

The anarchists had grown increasingly frustrated with the First International, a proletarian internationalist movement, & derided it. Alternatively, they attempted to organise an Anarchist International, Malatesta called it the "redoubtable International". This committed the same errors the Ultra Left were to commit in the 20th century, by creating a pure organisational form, at once; anarchist, communist, anti parliamentary, anti religious, & revolutionary. **In effect, they cut themselves off from the mass life of the working classes, separated from the working class movement, it inevitably degenerated, & it became sectarian & followed its own interests rather than the interests of the mass movements.** What then becomes significant are the reasons behind these developments, some of which were within the anarchists control and some that were not.

The rapid development of industrial capitalist development around Europe and the USA, the growth of bourgeois democracy (parliamentary democracy in the UK) & the gaining of political liberties and rights are some explanations. The steady increase in the numbers that could vote meant that they could see the achievement of very real advances in living and working conditions, which in turn meant that they were receptive to reformist ideas. Unfortunately, for anarchists, this meant that the international working class movements were to fall under the control of reformist social democrats whose aim was not revolutionary. Their aim was the lawful control of the state and the realisation of short-term demands of immediate interest. Thus, the anarchists found themselves a minority and instead of looking at the situation and concluding that there was still room for militant activism within the mass movements. A struggle for different libertarian positions within the mass organisations that was & is still necessary class struggle that opens up future possibilities. Instead, the anarchists did the opposite;

"Free rein was given to utopian doctrines, combining premature anticipations and nostalgic evocations of a golden age; Kropotkin, Malatesta, and their friends turned their backs on the road opened up by Bakunin, on the pretext of keeping their doctrine pure. They accused Bakunin and anarchist literature in general, of having been 'too much coloured by Marxism'. The anarchists turned in on themselves, organised themselves for direct action in small clandestine groups which were easily infiltrated by police informers" (Guerin, 1970, p.74).

From 1876 onwards, Anarchists had caught the extreme voluntarist bug, which makes these practitioners look like ideological headbangers with a proto religious zeal that ethically elevates themselves and their small groups above the masses of the working class. **Black Flame** by Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt accurately describes this historical moment in the late 19th century, but the ultra left voluntarism has been present in the early 21st century. It was the Berne congress that launched the 'propaganda by the deed' offensive, and Malatesta who helped to organise the first insurrectionary attempt with 30 armed militants in Italy on April 5th 1877. Even Kropotkin swallowed the heroic self-sacrificial myths of dynamite, and the social democrats who were consolidating their hold over the working class movement were not slow to condemn anarchism as illegal utopians.

France 1880 saw the distance between anarchists and socialists harden with the new-born workers party throwing itself into electoral politics at the Le Havre congress. This parliamentary cretinism was to hold the movement back as much then as it does today. Other events saw the social democrats consolidate their position by expelling anarchists, the Brussels Congress 1891, and the London TUC in the late 19th century. It was the Zurich congress of 1893 where the social democrats announced they were to exclude all non trade union organisations that did not recognise the need for political action ie parliamentary action & the conquest of power via the ballot box. The social democrats had been exposed by the Dutch anarcho socialist Domela Nieuwenhuis and she was booed.

Kropotkin took a decade and was one of the first to repudiate 'propaganda by the deed' and warned in a series of articles that 'we must be cogniscent of the illusion that we can defeat the capitalists with a few pounds of explosives and isolated acts'. It was imperative that anarchists penetrated the trade unions to detach the mass of the working class from the opportunists who were deceiving them. In 1895 **Fernand Pelloutier** wrote in "Les Temps Nouveaux" (the New Times) that the Trade Union must become a practical school of anarchism, the Trade Union was a broad autonomous zone without the baggage of electoral politics where arguments for class unity and direct action could be popularised. The 1907 International Anarchist Congress declared; "the trade unions [are] both as combat units in the class struggle for better working conditions, and as associations of producers which can serve to transform capitalist society into an anarcho-communist society".

While there was and continues to be some disagreement the original critique of pure anarchists who are too good to be involved, and that includes half-hearted attempts, still carries force. **Monatte** declared "Trade Unionism opens up new perspectives for anarchism, too long turned in on itself... trade unionism has renewed anarchism's awareness of its working class roots; [and] the anarchists have made [a great] contribution to setting the working class movement on the road to revolution and to popularising the idea of direct action... If, instead of criticising the past, present, or

even future mistakes of trade unionism from above, the anarchists would concern themselves intimately with its work, the dangers that lurk in trade unionism would be averted forever."

The new Syndicalist (Mayday 5) and trade union tactics paid off and syndicalism grew around the world (Black Flame). Anarchists made the trade union movement in France and many places elsewhere (including the UK) a force to be reckoned with in the years before WW1². The social democrats lost most of their control over the working class movement & Sorel considered the anarchists' participation in trade unionism to be one of the major events of his time. Anarchist doctrine (syndicalist and other) had been tested with the mass working classes around the world and emerged richer and renewed from the experience.

This example shows that the balancing act between **a correct understanding of the possibilities of action and political forms is an essential nettle to grasp**. While fetishism of legality, a legalistic perspective, has been one characteristic of the class collaborationist tendency of socialism that believes it is possible to transform capitalism without entering into conflict with its privileged elements. However, the leadership at the highest level is not naïve, instead it is a sign of parasitic corruption of and by these leaders. *Entrenched in a society they pretend to be fighting. They recommend respecting the rules of the game and support tokenistic and irrelevant action, and certainly no conflict*. Essentially the working class can only respect capitalist legality if it ignores the real role of the state and the deceptive nature of democracy; in short, the first principles of class struggle.

If the worker knows that; the state is a complex web of institutions designed to defend the interests of the property owners against the rest, that is, to maintain the exploitation of labour and impose work (slave labour), always decreed by the rich against the poor, that the law is virtually always enforced along class lines (always and everywhere there are next to no rich people in prison) and enforced by magistrates belonging to the ruling class, that coercion begins with a bark from a policeman, passes via a beating and the cells to the prison, and ends sometimes with death – is a systematic exercise of legalised and thus normalised violence against the exploited and powerless. Then the only way the worker can view legality is as a fact to be dealt with, whose different facets she should know about, with its different application and pitfalls, however that could be nothing but a purely material obstacle to the class.

Around the world the workers movement has had to win gains for itself and **only a headbanging anarchist or ultra leftist thinks that the capitalists taking away all progress for the working class is a good thing**. To respect legality would be to make yourself impotent and be fooled by it, though it would be equally disastrous to ignore it and hope it will go away. The advantages for the working class movement are the greater the less we are fooled by it. **The right to exist, organise, campaign, and spread by the organisations of the working class is something that needs to be constantly re-won and extended**. Sometimes amongst good revolutionaries there is a tendency to oppose all that exists due to political laziness and an unsophisticated approach. It is easier to be ultra left, **outside and against and do nothing**, rather than to lead mass action --indirectly they thus have disdain for organising legally in arenas they do not have control over.

²Pioneers of the significant syndicalist CGT in France before WW1 came from the Anarchist movement; Fernand Pelloutier, Emile Pouget & Pierre Monatte.

The Strategy and Tactics of Class War

In a situation that has so far managed to contain class struggle we are now approaching a point when the class war is going to manifest itself and class struggle is going to appear more open. Capitalists wish ordinarily to contain class struggle, and rule through ordinary capitalist discipline and the status quo thus manages to manage (sic) most peoples lives sufficiently for the appearance of capitalism to appear ordinary and natural.

In that situation, those not playing the ordinary power game of creating a voting bloc of sufficient size (no matter that it is not the majority) are easily excluded. Thus, it can create the *appearance* rather than the substance of democracy. Rather than authentic democracy, capitalism rules via elective dictatorship, the included and those with a vested interest maintain this façade of authentic democracy, and instead different factions of capitalism compete to grab the attention of this voting bloc of sufficient size.

Approaching the Class War in this period means that we have a responsibility to discuss honestly and openly the possibilities of our time, and the positive and negative experiences of previous initiatives and theory. Thus it is time for the ART OF WAR, or the art of class warfare to be outlined. There are a couple of all time classics of strategy that deserve a mention; **The Art of War** by Sun Tzu, **On War** by Karl von Clausewitz, and some other less well known examples such as **The Book of Five Rings** by Miyamoto Musashi.

For the purposes of this article and the discussion of defence of the working class, the legitimised use of purposeful violence to attain political objectives needs careful consideration if we are not to be seen as 'nutter's and easily written off, criminalised and separated from the mass of the working class. Anarchism traditionally has allowed itself, deliberately and unconsciously, to be associated with such random acts of violence so that it is easily associated with terrorism. The conduct of class war has nothing to do with the way existing society was built (education, the relative size and capabilities of industry and the working class, the building industry, architects, economics, technology, logistics etc) rather we have to take these things as given and create theory that can move with the time of now (jetztzeit, Mayday 1). Instead, we have to focus on decision-making capabilities of activists in the field, in the sometimes dramatic and bloody drama of confrontation that is often the climax of class struggles when the red mist makes judgement more difficult and more important. It is also important however, that we think about employing the available means, and encourage and impel the largest forces possible towards outcomes that are more desirable.

It is imperative that we take into account manifold unknowns, organisational and mobilisation successes and difficulties, unquantifiable moral factors, with realistic attempts to build new working class centres of protest in the economic struggles to come. The class struggle is a constant dialectic between moral and physical efforts from all of the participants, each penetrating and acting upon the other. The relationship between means and ends has been described very well already by Franks (**Rebel Alliances** – the Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms) and these strategic and tactical considerations have to be taken account of. The use of the

available means in struggle towards working class ends is important, unfortunately divide and rule is used to militate against class struggle as some older politically experienced workers are opting for voluntary redundancy to get a better pension while they can. While this makes perfect sense for those concerned, it does divide the workforce. In a situation of political weakness, it is difficult to ask people to make voluntarist sacrifices for an abstract class struggle and it is also true that some retired people are contributing funds for the movement to use. These examples, sometimes with contradictory effects upon the class struggle, are part of the realistic terrain of class warfare.

There are further distinctions between intermediate stages of struggle, which are ends in themselves, and they contribute to the overall direction of struggle. Political successes cannot be judged in isolation, for they are only 1 side or part of the many sided goals of the movement. It is difficult to predict where the confrontations and engagements of class struggle are going to gestate and there will be more concrete plans emerging now the Tories have declared their Comprehensive spending review.

These confrontations to come are constituent elements in an overall and developing cycle of struggle, they are the building blocks for a new class-consciousness in the 21st century & are both ENDS and MEANS. They are ENDS insofar as the forces are encouraged and deployed into the arena of class struggle in order to fight, and they are MEANS in that any achievements can be springboards for the attainment of yet further and more important ends. Any reciprocal solidarity that is essential for building class struggle is part of the building blocs of class-consciousness and new ways of being. This is a realistic and authentic relationship between TACTICS and STRATEGY. Tactics are concerned with struggles, their planning and development in practice; Strategy is the overall political coordination of these confrontations in an ever-growing dynamic cycle of struggles. The ends are better outcomes and preferably victory but only Ultra Left or Death or glory headbangers expect us to 'fight to the last' regardless of all circumstances. Rather it is in mass consciousness that activists should pay attention to reasonable points of view, as these are the mores and morale of mass behaviour. This is not to say that these are fixed, they do change, especially in struggle, and it is in relationships with mass experience that authentic working class politics is to be found.

At the same time, strategists have to distil from the mass of cuts what are the real aims of government, often government department press releases are used to test the water and are the extreme to see what they may be able to get away with. Similarly, in struggle there is a position which is advanced, a level of cuts & jobs, which is higher than they need, but what they announce so they can appear to be benevolent when they give in a little. Everybody has to be cogniscent of the fact that politicians are liars, two faced compromised and expedient fall gals and guys for the capitalist system as a whole. They are representatives of capitalist hegemony.

There will be many struggles and different potential focus, and activists have to judge which is likely to be more rewarding, which is winnable and which is likely to lose. That is not to say, like the OLD LEFT, that we abandon people and communities when it is clear there is a defeat. The old left parties used struggle to recruit and then move on, often not getting in touch with anybody from a defeated struggle. This is not good enough, and gives the Left a bad name. Anarchists may have done this too, but currently there is no example to hand. Activists should primarily struggle where they

are, in the struggles that concern them. That is not to say that there may not be exceptional circumstances that demand immediate practical solidarity – such as the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigade, but those that exist (Palestine, Columbia etc) are not going to detract from the mass class struggles that are & are currently about to deeply affect the UK.

Overall, it is impossible to identify the capitalist centre of gravity in this situation. A centre of gravity that could potentially tip capitalism off balance, where we could rain blow after blow in order to stop any potential recovery. Rather we can only assume that several streams of struggle have the potential to form together through reciprocal solidarity & form overwhelming power against the class enemy. Then, by daring to win all, can capitalism be potentially defeated. There always maybe a point when activists instead of preferring minor success in their comfort zones, may for the long-term good attempt major success, these moments however are impossible to predict.

If there is a major confrontation, almost certainly to happen in London unfortunately, then activists should be aware that when the police are attacking the crowd there are some indicators that show a serious class struggle is about to occur. Firstly, from a minor starting point many poles (sections of the crowd in different locations) are in the business of confronting the police. These crowd confrontation points often shift quickly, and the experienced eye can tell that when the police are moving &/or retreating then activists maybe in a position to rub this in. 24hr Tv (Sky/BBC) is a good source of overall information about crowd movements and what is happening, of course, we are not to trust this information site but it is one that can be useful sometimes if we are in communication with each other.

From a War of Position towards Generalised Resistance

The class struggle was once rather like the World War 2 airforce battle command centres, where air force chief of staff would push the squadrons around on the map. The Miners strike could be said to be the last struggle where the old left tried this sort of organisation. Rather today, there is a tremendous amount of confidence building needed and organisational activities and planning necessary to build the reciprocal confidence necessary for large scale mobilisations. Currently (sic) there are many streams of social life, inside and outside the workplaces, that need to be encouraged to form larger rivers that flow into a generalised ocean of class war. Distinguished class warriors never or rarely emerge from the ranks of the supposed organisers of class warfare, the socialist parties, but **for the most part are independent people** who are not weighed down by the baggage of authoritarian socialisms misguided beliefs and practices. The schemers whose highpoint of political achievement and ambition is taking over leadership roles rather than encouraging and/or fighting the class war says it all. The divorce between the practical lessons real class struggle can make, and the bitterness that factional fighting produces is a chasm that cannot be bridged.

A truth must be stated at this point, and that is that contrary to what any party or federation (Anarchist or Marxist) would have you believe, is that **there is no holy grail**. There is no common formula for success and the parties and federations are not helping to create an approximation of it at present either.

They aim at fixed values, and a common perspective, regardless of it never having any generalisable validity. Parties and Federations deal in simplifications, rather than the essences and practices necessary for class warfare, they aim for basic agreement in a situation where everything is uncertain, and calculations have to be made with variable quantities. They focus on neat policy and basic practice, whereas the class struggle is intertwined with psychological forces and effects. They consider only unilateral action by their minute party forces, rather than the class war, which consists of an everlasting interaction of conflicting forces. Parties and federations cannot take account of all interconnected elements, eg; the uncertainty of all information, the range of possibilities too vast, the importance of moral factors, and the unpredictable actions of the adversary that can change everything. The element of uncertainty arises because of the impossibility of gauging enemy intentions and reactions.

Thus, at best we can work on probabilities, which in turn mean **there is a substantial element of luck**. Even the best Generals and Air Force marshals were & are successful gamblers who had the nerves to back their judgements, parties and federations who do nothing will never be up to the task. Their only role is a reactionary one, parasiting their cult on the back of an unfolding class struggle they are never authentic players within as their organisational form doesn't teach people to think and act for themselves so activists become withdrawn into circular party logic which justifies their own lack of action and participation. Some of these people have too much theory and way to little working class anger and activity.

No amount of theory in a moment of crisis tells you what to do.

The only way to learn is independent and autonomous activity without prejudice, which grounds results collectively with other participants attempting similar or comparable things in similar conditions within specific struggle contexts.

Dangerousness

Class War is not a hobby; it is not something that you can easily get yourself away from. In Ireland in the 1970s, the British state abandoned the rule of law and imprisoned 1000s of activists without trial, thus changing the terrain of class warfare at a stroke. In these situations, we would be telling lies if we did not make the life and death nature (British state 'Shoot to Kill' death squads) of these issues clear. In the pursuit of the mass class struggle during *the thunder of its rages* (Ruggiero – Political Violence) judgement is affected and refracted in a manner completely different to post hoc explanations and justifications of and for party positions. Like EP Thompson (The Making of the English Working Class, The Poverty of Theory etc) we have to consider the class 'friction' – the banging together of competing elements that is the environment in which all class struggle takes place.

Many unforeseeable and innumerable everyday incidents can combine to improve or lower the general possibilities for class warfare, they can improve or lower expected levels of struggle, so that it is possible to fall short of intended goals. The class struggle is comprised of many parts; each component has individuals, every one of whom retains a capability of agency. Each union is made up of many individuals,

bureaucrats and good activists, and the least important thing could delay matters and occasionally make things go wrong. This inherent tendency for things to go wrong has been known as 'Murphy's Law' (in the British army at least) and it perhaps needs a new Pc title but you get the drift of the argument – that actions can be compounded by external and even less controllable factors, such as the weather. Simple movement such as walking cannot be achieved easily in water, so in class struggle it is difficult for efforts to achieve even minor results. Action in class struggle is like movement in treacle, difficult and awkward, sometimes you like it and sometimes you do not.

Friction

It is this Friction that distinguishes theories of class struggle from impotent ideology and over simplifications – from real class war to class war on paper or party publications. An understanding of these vital points has to be the starting point for 21st century political engagement. An activist on a major event (J18/Poll Tax etc) can never be sure about the relative strengths of the enemy, where activists are likely to have the best results, much less what the enemy (police in these cases) was likely to do. Sometimes activists are split up, separated from their friends because of the dynamic nature of participation. Only a few experienced activists make sure they stay together in what have been called 'affinity groups', and there can be worth in this, as well as making practical organisational plans between affinity groups, and of course higher more military decision making such as linking up separate demonstrations columns that events in London have experienced. Activists in the field also get; tired, hungry, caught short and apprehensive, injured perhaps and even frightened.

In these conditions, it is not neat theory that matters but morale that assumes a central importance and the capability of activists. Thus training can be of central importance too, e.g. medical, legal etc. **Activists are not born class struggle genius, it is simply a highly developed aptitude for the class war and this includes an intuitive intelligence, and courage (physical and moral), fortified by determination.**

Key activists become repositories of an instinctive capacity to clear away the mud and fog of class war to see what is happening and what needs to be done. A flair present at 2 levels, in the decision-making arenas of the movement and also particularly important on the street – to be able to select the right course of action almost without thinking and certainly without going through tedious party decision-making procedures that paralyse the participation of many people.

The strength of will, or Peoples' will, is rarely needed when things are going swimmingly, successfully. Rather when the conditions get choppy, when much is at stake, when things no longer run like a well-oiled machine, that activists must display determination. It is not obstinacy, it is qualitatively different as it is rooted in intellectual insight and composed of a potent blend of intellect and moral courage. Thus, a mobilised people must be enthusiastic and brave, adaptable, and have the stamina for the long haul.

We should note that the army isn't always on the side of the ruling class, and the direction the army takes in revolutionary situations is decisive. However, we should

also note that in 1943-45 an American Colonel inquired into how US troops behaved under fire. Amazingly he found that only 15% of trained combat riflemen fired their weapons in battle. Even in the most aggressive companies, the figure rarely rose above 25%. The rest did not flee – but they would not kill. We should then pay attention to the ending of war, why people STOP fighting. It is only when this happens that a battle or war has been lost and won. Victory arrives when military personnel begin acting in a non-military manner. Germany lost WW2 even though they killed far more personnel than the Allies, but the will to win had evaporated. The German 'Dad's army' Home guard gave up in early 1945, & entire regiments of the Wehrmacht queued up to enter the prisoner of war camps. Hitler's Deputy Martin Bormann admitted 500000K had deserted the armed forces. Organised resistance had collapsed – the war was over.

Moral factors then based in the context of political understanding are the ultimate determinants in war and theories are useless if they did not give them full value. It is possible to study **class war** not in the abstract, but in the reality. Comprehensive and accurate theories and practice (praxis, Mayday 2) can only be developed starting from the root of the matter. In the history of the development of issues, class compositions and class struggle and the dialectical relationship between them. The study of this historiography (Mayday 5) is itself an exercise of choice and judgement. The bulk of party histories and accounts of struggle are so unreliable as to be almost useless. They are often one sided, create a narrative that leads to the party or justifies party positions, and they are also often incomplete and inaccurate when not full of convenient myths. Material must be checked if authentic positions are to be generated, different Marxist and anarchist accounts should be compared. So far, material is produced that attacks the other ideology, rather than trying to explain different positions through more comprehensive & concrete evidence. Thus, the Trotskyites attack the anarchists and the anarchists attack the Trots, it is childish and pathetic, completely unrelated to the class struggle – as if either side is covered in 100% virtue. The Trotskyites are tame, the anarchists often impotent with voluntarist and isolated views and participation. Rather new ethics in mass practice are the real test of revolutionary vigour.

Thus, the historical data has to be subjected to criticism and new synthesis built out of what evidence there is and not merely the de fault option of adopting even more impotent Ultra left positions. We may start with authentic independent historical research without prejudice, the building of the historical record – the gleaning of fact from urban myths, rumours, and fiction to establish a reliable record of the actual unfolding of events and struggles. Secondly, the complex process of relating cause to effect has to be analysed – having expounded what happened to go onto explaining why e.g. Were anti fascist tactics in the 1970s responsible for the defeat of the NF (thus does it matter what anti fascist tactics were used at the time and do they have any lessons for today), or was it the rise to power of Thatcher who killed the NF? Only then are critical judgements able to be deployed, the evaluation of the means employed by the different participants concerned, and an authentic judgement upon their successes and failures.

Theory can then fulfil its tasks when it is used to analyse the constituent elements of the class struggle as it actually develops; to distinguish precisely what at first sight seems fused, to explain in full the properties and characteristics of the means employed and to show their probable effects, to define clearly the nature of the ends

pursued through the prefigurative practice and to illuminate all phases of the class war in a thorough critical enquiry. Theory then becomes a guide for anyone who wants to learn through reading groups, the web or books. It should light the paths, ease activists' progress, train their judgement and help them avoid pitfalls. It is a guide to continual self-education and the task is not to assume Ultra Left holy grails as if by rote, but to turn class struggle from schematic plans of the cult into **the subjective form of a skill that is shared in the context of the developing class war to make it more effective.** It is not a case of knowing this or that element of fact/theory, but of knowing how and having the ability and confidence to stand on the shoulders of giants as we attempt to deepen and generalise the emerging struggles.

21st Century PRAXIS

Such judgements are already based in certain perspectives; thus the anarchists may prefer independent success based solely on the action of participants, other Marxists may not be too bothered (e.g. State action against the Far right) as long as the working class is in a better position as a result. However, we can bear these positions in mind as we see what was possible from a democratic and mass working class point of view with an emphasis on their own activity. What actions were thus most appropriate in struggles, the formulation of theory and its direct and indirect implications for class action is a continuous and reciprocal activity. Historical knowledge moulding theory, and theory illuminating historical judgement, but also the application in practice and the resulting new implications for theory and practice generating a PRAXIS for the 21st century.

We can only learn how to conduct class struggle through learning and thinking through our participation. We can learn from what previously has been done. It is possible to look at what key struggles and figureheads achieved, not only to worship at their temple, but to recognise how their activities were **creative and prefigurative**, and not merely imitative acts constrained by boundaries. That they were unique in and by themselves, and that these inspiring past masters and mistresses teach us so we can take their values into present as we aim to achieve more than our teachers did.

We cannot take for granted that theory is necessarily radical, theory is never the mechanical application of policy from above (Dunayevskaya, Mayday 2), participants **MUST NEVER** use the results of theory as laws or standards, but only as aids to judgement. There were reading groups throughout Russia in the late 19th and early 20th century, and these independent groups became nuclei of political activity. A danger then, as now, is that these groups become separated culturally from the working class or see themselves as superior to the class. This danger can be militated against if there is continuous testing of ideas in practice with other sections of the working class who are not within these groups already. These are things that groups must engage with if new ideas for our time are to be tested and assessed; theory can never stamp out class struggle plans as if from a kind of futuristic truth machine.

"White Heat Red Mist" conclusion

Class struggle is ordinarily low key, using a boxing analogy, currently the protagonists are engaging in pre fight name-calling. Hopefully our side is training at the same time, encouraging other people to come into the boxing ring with us for the serious struggles to come.

Karl von Clausewitz struggled in his time & depicted war as a remarkable trinity; this article suggests that class struggle must be seen in these terms. The Red mist and hatred felt in the heat of conflict is one element, the second is the manifold complexities where chance and probabilities play out. You do make your own luck, although there is the presence of enemy players who may also get that. Finally, all struggles are in the context of the worldwide struggle for working class advance and autonomies.

Struggle is this holy trinity, aiming at a free socialism/communism/anarchism with the highest ethical standards. In the White heat of class struggle, when the red mist descends over eyes, we hate the enemy to an unusual extent, however it is imperative to recognise that struggle involves elements that are more mundane and the unfolding probabilities and chance within which open-minded & creative spirit has to be free to roam. Any attempts at simplification by parties or federations if they try to ignore these 3 different factors, or a half hearted attempt to fix arbitrary or expedient relationships between them **conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone make them totally useless, reactionary even.**

Mayday encourages the struggles to come & hopes that this next generation will participate in the mass struggles and create organisation(s) both huge yet able to act differently locally, and complex and also remarkably simple, that are able to react sensitively and ambitiously in the new terrain of class struggle that is sure to evolve.

"Is There Anyone Out There?" By Paul Baker

The title was suggested by the last Forum discussion and has caused me to ask: who we think our audience is? Who we believe we are addressing our arguments to, in our struggles (if I may call them that); and who would be attracted to our ideas and beliefs? The short answer I would like to suggest is, that most of the political groupings on the left and much of their activity is aimed at an audience that is no longer there and has not been present for a considerable period of time. By this I am suggesting that much of what we (I'm including myself) argue and campaign for and how we go about that – the methods we use to communicate with people – misses and goes over the heads of most people.

We need to ask why and how this is happening. In this, we need to re-examine the views we have of the society we think we are addressing. That should include the nature and character of the audience now and the other ideological messages it is subjected to. We also need to decide whether we are addressing the entire audience-society or a part of it; and if the latter, which part do we hope to attract? This in itself brings other questions: what filters (even barriers) exist between what we believe and

attempt to communicate and what message is received? How are we perceived, and what and how does that perception influence the message communicated?. Clearly, any communication that is taking place between Marxists and the Great British public is minimal and I'm sorry to tell you, they're not coming forth in droves. Perhaps it is time to ask: is there anyone out there and what do we need to do or change in our 'praxis' to persuade them to step forth?

Before further comment a disclaimer: I still regard myself as an adherent of Marx to some extent and I hope my friends and comrades will correct me where they find my analysis goes awry. The suggestions I am about to present below are intended as just that and in a comradely sense. We really all have to learn some self discipline where this medium is concerned and not write-send before we think. The discussions these last few months – as well as the political actions – have been divisive and nobody has achieved anything. We need to learn to treat each other as comrades and grasp that no grouping or individual on the Left, that I can see has found the 'tablets'. If they believe they have, then I suggest they need to think again.

To the longer answer. We are essentially talking about 'class' here. For Marx, a class is a group whose members share a common relationship to the distribution of the 'means of production', they either have them or they have to do something for them. If you substitute the word, 'life' for the word, 'production' to make 'means of life' their common interests should become clearer. Classes then, for Marx arise out of the relations that men and women enter into in order to produce the means for their survival. In Britain, over four fifths, 84% of the means of life are privately owned. 7% of the population own this giant share leaving 16%, which does go around the rest of us but how much is the 84% worth. How rich are the rich? A question seldom asked and that takes me to Marx and Engels second condition when considering society. Class consciousness, how each member of a class becomes conscious of their common interests and acquires an understanding and willingness to support actions which serve their class interests. This can be understood more clearly if we consider the situation of the owning or dominant class in any historical period where, by the advantage of their position, they consciously act together to protect their own class interests. The English 'Establishment' is an example of such a class, with their state apparatus, legal system, private schools, heritage, language, all of which buttress their world view to some extent; yea even democracy and the 'mother of parliaments' is defined and managed to serve and sustain their power and privilege; while that which we see and hear each day and what is mistakenly called 'the news' is little more than an expression of a ruling class taking action to manage and protect its shared interests.

However, when we come to the subject or non owning classes, the process of their conscious recognition of a common interest is neither as direct, nor as simple and this is where the problems we have with communicating our own ideas, to which I have referred to above, have to be applied. For Marx and Engels, particularly in the earlier texts eg, the manifesto, the subject or non-owning class, or 'working class' would acquire a class consciousness through their struggles with the capitalist, owning class and by this, would acquire the political will to support a communist party which would overthrow their masters. This has not happened and they were wrong about this. Before criticising Marx we should remember the times he lived in and the society he will have witnessed, where the great majority were manual labourers and will have appeared as a dispossessed, 'ragged-trouserer' army, and who will have seemed a

homogenous crowd with a common interest in ending the cause of their misery. But they didn't

So, Marx and Engels identified a persons 'class position' as being defined by the place they occupied in the economic structure. However, they also suggested that to act effectively as a 'class for itself' they had to become conscious of their common interest as opposed to the capitalist owning class. If we can agree with that premise and there are arguments to be made against it, we can proceed. What other factors are at play here; what prevents the subject classes from developing a conscious understanding of their situation, and in turn, from acting in their own class interest?

We need to consider the effects of how the 'development of the forces of production' across the globe during the last hundred years or so, have impacted and changed the 'relations of production' and the class struggle. That is for a later discussion and referred to here only to flag up the wider argument. Marx's views in regard to these, are described in the 'Preface to the Critique Political Economy 1852. What concerns us here is the statement from that text: "no social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed." We have to ask ourselves if we really believe capitalism is in its death throes? I don't.

We also need to consider the role of ideology in the context of the technical developments in communications and what power these lend to a dominant class. Gramsci's contribution here is relevant. The ruling class dominates other classes by a combination of force and consent. Force is exercised mainly by the coercive apparatuses of the state, the armed forces, police, law courts, prisons; and also through paramilitary groups such as 'Mussolini's squads', the 'Nazi Black Shirts' and what the National Front aspire to. More important for Gramsci was how a ruling class secured the consent of subordinate classes through the exercise of political, moral and intellectual leadership. Gramsci used the term 'hegemony' to describe the exercise of national leadership, for which the building of alliances was central to his concept: "A hegemonic class is one that maintains a position of national leadership by gaining the consent of other classes and social groups through creating a system of alliances and continually adapting it to changing circumstances".

Ideology for Gramsci was the social cement that binded the system of alliances and which in turn, required constant attention to popular needs and interests and the ability to combine these with the long term interests of the ruling class. Think Labour Governments going out of power here.

Gramsci's ideas also need greater consideration than space here (or I will be writing a book). but central to his argument is how a ruling class maintains its class interests by dividing those below. The ideological struggle is central to this. Marx and Engels were certainly aware of this to some extent. The phrase that comes to mind from the 'German Ideology' "the ruling ideas of any society are those of the ruling class" or "the class which is the ruling material force is at the same time, its ruling intellectual force". Marx was not suggesting that the only ideas in a society were those of the rich or dominant class, but that a struggle or contest took place and that the ideas and values, eg, the laws that dealt with property were more likely to be the ones which favoured the interests of the rich, due to the advantage of their position. Similarly, the class struggle between the wage slaves and their capitalist employers was rigged in favour of the latter; but for Marx and Engels, they also believed that to be a life and death struggle and they described the working class or proletariat or proles as Orwell later

joked as the 'gravediggers of capitalism'. And that is why their view of the role of ideology only went so far: they were very optimistic about the dispossessed.

This has a major bearing on our own political activity because if you are hoping to recruit a cadre force from an ever increasingly conscious proletariat who you believe, will then lead them over the rainbow, think again: they are not listening, do not know who you are, who they are or more important, do not have any collective ideas with regard to the political process and how that effects their continued existence. We need to grasp this quickly when we consider people's consciousness: in an alienated, individuated and fragmenting society where the rich are increasing invisible and where power wears the mantle of celebrity, we inhabit the world of the joker and the court jesters. Do we even take ourselves seriously?

The first condition, a persons class position. In Europe and advanced capitalist nations, though we still live in a society of 'haves' and 'have nots', of an owning and non owning classes, that society, the one that Marx described and lived in has changed beyond that which he perceived: the great mass of unwashed, unfed, unrepresented and unprotected are no longer as homogenous as that which he hoped would soon take up their cudgels. Nor are they working in large centres of production, or waiting for us to lead them over some rainbow. Therefore, the second and third conditions in his model-consciousness and action- must also be amended and re-assessed in the light of the changes to peoples existence' in these parts of the world. (Elsewhere eg, South America, the older view may still apply: I don't know but I doubt it even there). The conditions of people's existence, their relationship to the 'means of production' and therefore, their conscious understanding and willingness or inability to act for themselves have shifted into new and more complex ways of control and disorganisation or fragmentation, if you prefer Comrades, we need to address this, quickly, if we wish to survive as we are living in dangerous times.

Certainly, a person's class position exerts a powerful influence upon their beliefs and values but in the world we are in, so do a range of other factors. We need to examine what these are in the context of where we are failing to communicate our message and why a larger number of people are not attracted to our banners. I am going to try and begin an answer to some by positing more questions and statements. A response is certainly hoped for.

1. People are disengaged from the political process. By that I mean they are almost without any conscious involvement or understanding of the society they exist in. Can this be changed and if so, how?
2. A growing number of people are not apathetic and do have certain views but on what are their these based? Think rise of BNP here. What and how are they formed? What are the influences and who/what determines 'class consciousness' in this respect?
3. Working Class. What does the term mean now? Where would you find them? Among the dispossessed victims eg, migrants, asylum seekers, welfare recipients? Are these the people of the coming revolution or have they already been beaten?
4. A large section of the British white population are well off. Certainly so in comparison with some other parts of the world. When working people own large pots of capital how does that effect Marx's view of class struggle?
5. British capitalism is not in its death throes, so is it necessary to prepare to lead the workers revolution? if not, what then is our role?

6. How and what is stopping us getting our message for a better world across, a world based upon sharing and non violence and sustaining our beautiful planet?

Remember, I have been dealing with only one aspect of Marx's philosophy – namely the social class structure or model he used to account for social change. I should add that Marx was essentially an economic historian and much of his methodology is better used to describe historical periods and structures. In this respect, we have been using an historical tool as a piece of sociology which Marx will not have intended. More simply, he was not writing road maps for future revolutionaries to follow. The next important point to make is that central to his methodology was dialectics, 'dialectical materialism' where forces and ideas interact and which I have attempted to show above in the passage that refers to how the ruling ideas of any society are panned out. To finish with a final question which I dearly hope someone can find an answer to. What does capitalist society have to offer people with all of its inequality, violence and anomie; that facilitates people's disengagement with the political process and which allows them to accept the above ills without question; to accept the inequality of 7:84 or £billions spent on armaments or the drug induced neurosis of their neighbours. What is this power that makes a hell on earth palliative, while I can only retch?

Cheers Comrades. Paul Baker.

Autonomy and class composition – a northern UK perspective

The following interview is from a long-term trade unionist, whose Grandmother was in the Communist Party in the early 20th century. His activism in the Socialist Workers Party and higher echelons of the trade union movement covers the major struggles of the short 20th century, from the 1960's to the 1990's. This is shorter than Meiksins Wood's (2005) "short twentieth century", but a relevant description of the timescale for an analysis and history of political practice from the post World War II height of working class power within the Keynesian Welfare State, to the depths of globalised neo-Liberalism now. It is also important because in an age where most of the left is; disorientated, isolated and in confusion. Rather than move further to the right as some have done, the interviewee has chosen to move towards autonomy and anarchism. His argument is that the only answer to attacks on the working class is spreading struggles and helping to create the fight back, this is revolutionary theory as a theory of liberation.

This interesting interview reveals some political insights into the way ahead for the working class movement. Firstly, as E.P. Thompson says an historical perspective is essential, the working class and it's' ideas do not arrive as if by magic, it is a process of historical resistance and compromise. This is the first in a series of interviews that will show the importance of historical inquiry for today's political practice. More than this, without such research, the understanding and practice necessary for political advance in an identifiable area will remain unknown, as the experience of the class and the historical possibilities consequently engendered will ensure struggles do not reach their full potential. The twists and turns of both the local practice of capitalist and state policy, and people's understanding of the differences mean that such attention to detail is necessary for comprehension of experience.

Political practice the informant describes is a popular front approach, and this enabled greater success than was possible if people had clung to the idea that their 'party' was the only one. This is

the way forward today too, by removing artificial boundaries that divide us and by practising unity and equality on an everyday level then the movement will be different from the capitalist world it wants to leave behind. Very often, the petty personal rivalries and disputes of established groups and individuals mean that solace is found within a comfort zone of isolated practice, disguised by a utopian belief in their own groups/circle's strategy and practice. They do not open up themselves to honest criticism which is acted upon, and do not practice enough solidarity. The way out of this is clear, real class autonomy is created within a movement that honestly shares and discusses ideas in practice, and which can move dynamically rather than bureaucratically.

For too long formal left Party's have; not listened to experience, have not questioned while walking, and this leads to elitist programmes and political impotence. For politics is not built upon rhetorical theoretical phrases by would be leaders, or abstractions or abstruse generalities. Instead, Autonomy is produced through the energies, interests and influences firmly rooted in the sensuous particular realities of people's lives. Dialogue is important; asking questions of people's experience is friendly and does not appear as if it is from a member of the Peoples Front of Judea barking the latest central committee slogan. This may lead onto discussion about practical ways of coping with the issue as an individual, and what would be in the working classes' strategic interest too. This autonomy is theory as self and class liberation grounded in experience, rather than top down decision-making telling us how to conduct our own struggles.

The subject is a man with a life long involvement within the working class movement, and is important for many reasons. Perhaps mostly, because this is from a person who was part of the official labour movement and the left, who on reflection, *after* his decades of class struggle has decided that it is Class War anarchism that both articulates class-consciousness and is the best way forward for the working class movement. Autonomous class war participates in and helps create the social conditions where struggles can circulate and spread – it is a question of participation in working class struggles from your own class position, dealing with your own class situation and problems first which opens up other historical possibilities.

North East Class War - NECW- was more than one person in this interview, chipping in questions and observations, and the interview shows that some prior informal chats had taken place. It is a verbatim transcription, as close to the way personal history and class struggle developed as possible. The personal is indeed political - however, politics is experienced personally, within the other variables of class, age, gender, ethnicity and disability, so the interview has rough features in a progressive way. The aim was to discover historical experience through dialogue. This interview is an example of people's class war history in the history from below tradition of E.P. Thompson, C. Hill and Raphael Samuel. Rather than an elite leftist history exemplified by an interview with Ian Lavery, chair of the NUM, in issue 87, autumn, 2005, edition of "Capital and Class". In that issue of the journal there is also a good article by B. Franks about anarchism's and the miners' strike that talks about autonomous class war.

When the informant said the march on the Police station in the mid 1970s; "was a success for us because we challenged the authority in the town. It was a psychological thing – where normally we would have a dozen, 2 dozen members at a meeting, we had we had 2 and a half hundred 300 who had suddenly learnt that they had power, that they could dictate terms."

This agrees with what Class War has always known; that the key to political progression, change, and/or working class power, is **confidence**. There are also descriptions of the social conditions as well as important politics displayed by the participant in struggles, and information about others. This suggests that there is NO need to set up yet another organisation because all else has failed, but that the class war anarchist task is to participate in class struggles and hopefully help to spread them.

Class war in the labour movement against capitalism and the state

NECW - Would you like to introduce yourself briefly?

This is **Seymour Profit** – *the bug in the boardroom*. And my lawyer, if anyone is upset in anyway, shape or form, are called **Norfolk-in Chance**.

NECW – When you were 15 you said some stuff - could you describe how you were introduced to left politics?

I was introduced to left politics far earlier, It starts much earlier, when I was 3 or 4 I was introduced to working class politics by my gran who was a member of the Communist party and a suffragette, she was born in the 1880s and became a member of the Communist party around about 1890, because in 1864 Karl Marx started the first international, and so that's were I learnt my politics, I learnt politics on my grans knee.

NECW – So could you tell us all about her experiences of the General strike.

Strike breakers in Crook, RoddyMoor er and Stanley, and one time in Crook, in the town centre, in Crook town centre there was 5 or 6 pits er so she was heavily involved in that cos of her husband who was a miner – so yes she was, highly involved.

NECW – Was there much violence in Crook – did she see that?

Erm- there was a little, but the violence she used to tell me about was the Crook riot in 1874 er when the Conservative party were leading a procession down Hope street and they were attacked by the miners and their families, and er the Militia were brought in just like at Peterloo with their cutlasses drawn and mounted cavalry were brought into quell the riot and took several hours *too* quell it. And er those held were held in the Queens head pub in the town centre – there was no police station in Crook at the time, so they were taken to cells at Bishop Auckland.

NECW – Did she tell you anything about the hunger marches of the 1930's?

Her husband, he did go and support the Jarrow march, he was there at the outset, and did march initially with them, but had to withdraw because of health reasons.

NECW – The Communist party er used to run the National Unemployed Workers Movement, we don't know if they did anything in Crook?

No, no no -- They weren't they weren't active in the town, in Crook, although they were in larger towns like Bishop Auckland and Durham. Those areas they did.

NECW – But there must have been a lot of unemployment in the area, as you say there were 5 pits in Crook.

Of course - That's five in the town centre, there were up to about 2 dozen within a couple of miles of Crook. The place where my gran was born a place that doesn't exist anymore. Low Bitchburn.

NECW – North Bitchburn?

Low Bitchburn was were the industrial estate is now on Prospect road. Low Bitchburn was at the bottom of the hill, North Bitchburn was at the top of the hill, there were 3 or 4 streets of houses.

NECW – Then we had the second world war, and, when were you born?

1954 – there was some German activity over the town. They were trying to bomb erm Bankford cokeworks which in the 1930s and 1940s was considered one of the largest coke works in Europe and certainly had the most superior Coke, and so that's why German aircraft targeted in, although they were never successful. There was an aircraft which crashed at Roddymoor a mile or 2 from Crook. Everyone killed?

NECW – Is there much at Roddymoor? Is it just an housing estate.

Rodymoor is an old village. Mostly what happened there was the Bankford cokeworks plus the massive pitheap, its still a small village it still has one shop which is a post office.

NECW – So lets get to your first job, when you were 15.

I was one of 2 in my class in the late 1960s who could stay on at school for an extra couple of years till I was 17. But my family had nowt, they never had anything, and it was expected that I left school as early as possible, I did stay on for one extra year, but then I was expected to get out and get a job, you know, cos I wasn't earning my keep. I left school at 15, I left school on Friday and went to Norvites because I was pretty handy at carpentry and joinery so I may get a job at this cabinet place. I left school on Friday got a job the Tuesday morning and started work at Norvites at 15, there was no union activity at that time at the factory at that time apart from one er one who was doing the union stuff. He gave me a book, & I remember it well. I still have it on the bookshelves though I can't find it. It's a book by Robert Tressel. It's called the Ragged Trousered Philanthropists – he gave it to me saying "that's your fucking heritage, this is the building trade for you, this is construction, this is what happens". I read that and I thought well, mebbe I ought to join the Communist party as my gran had done. I don't know whether you've read it? Its' about the trials, tribulations and the discrimination against construction workers building workers. He handed it to me saying that's your heritage, read it. But because me gran had already tutored me in politics, I was ready for it. Someone else reading it they might not understand the, the import of it, they might not understand what it means to, to building workers.

NECW – Your gran had you on her knee teaching you all those morals and ethics.

Of the Communist party

NECW – Yes

I always thought yes I will gran cos I was only 4 years old, 3 or 4 years old and she was teaching me the politics of that age that I would grow up with till I was 15 or 16.

NECW – What did she say?

Erm She used to delight in taking me to the Cinemas at that time, there was three at that time in the town. 2 have been demolished and one is another business. The only reason she took me I think was that she could refuse to stand up for the national anthem at the end because at that time after each performance at that time in the cinema there was the national anthem. She used to say 'sit down boy you're as important and as valued as they are' so I thought it was embarrassing mind at the time, everybody standing up, and one or two saluting, but I thought what the hell was this about and my gran making me.

NECW – About 1958.

Yes

NECW – Your first job at Norvite limited

Which was originally a wood working factory but then of course progressed into kitchen units and cabinets, sink units, that kind of thing. I started work there cos I left school when I didn't need to academically but I left because at that time a poor family and I wasn't exceptional with that. Everybody was fucking poor, none of us had any money, so you were expected at the first opportunity to go out and earn a living and bring some money into the household.

NECW - Did your gran have any influence over your parents or did she want you to go to school?

She demanded that I stay at school but the influence of my parents erm was all economic, that I had to go out and get a wage. My gran hated my dad for the simple reason that my dad for some strange reason was a conservative! And so they didn't get on well at all and to this day I don't understand why my dad was a conservative coming from a mining family and with all the deprivation that came from that. To this day I don't understand it.

NECW – So that takes to about 1969.

1969 or 70.

NECW – Did you have a television by then?

We had a TV – it was second hand and it was b/w obviously and one of the few on the estate that you had to bump start, or fucking kick start it to get it to fucking work when there was only 2 channels at the time.

NECW – Was Alf Garnet on at that time? Did your dad like Alf Garnet?

My dad loved Alf Garnet but I was always - I always thought 'you love Alf Garnet, but you just don't get the point' you're just too thick to understand the point, because it was a parody.

NECW – Taking the piss, Una Stubbs, her boyfriend.

It was, Alf Garnet was basically taking the piss out of the right wing reactionary racist sexist nonsense that was going on, but my dad just didn't get the point. And so you can understand as I was growing up er in my teenage years, there was some hell of arguments in my home. He did, towards the end of his life, he did, start to say to me, you're right, the right wing doesn't have the answers.

NECW – So when did, did your dad pass away.

He died in 1990 and er a lot of unresolved issues that I've had to deal with in my life, because He was not only right wing but he believed in the right wing message, the hang 'em and flog 'em brigade, and, I took some horrific beatings off him but I defied him, as a good anarchist should, right [laughs] I defied him right to the end I defied him every inch of the way. As I say I took some hellish beatings for it.

NECW – There are some very good quotes there, I haven't heard that before.

Well, What's that?

NECW – What you've just said – it sounds great.

Well I, I stood up to him finally, when I was 15, an I said to him if you're ever gonna touch my mother again, or me, or any of my brothers and sisters again. Then I said to him I'll put you in 3 different fucking graveyards – that's er an horrific horrendous thing to have to say to your own father.

NECW – Yes

But I said that to, prevent the beatings of my mother of meself of me brothers and sisters and I thoroughly meant it.

NECW – Did it stop?

It stopped from that day on cos he looked into my heart my eyes and said 'this bastard isn't bluffing'... and I wasn't.

NECW – So er, So did ya experience with your grandmother and your father start shaping, do you believe your political career?

Certainly me gran, because she was a wonderful woman.

NECW – You said you had issues with your father up to that point towards him, your fight between yer, and the fight consequently with your employers?

Well I'd learnt that if I'd stood up to people if I stood up to authority, I think that's the right word, I think that's the right word that I'd take a beating that I decided this time, at the time I was about 14 or 15 I decided that that nobodies gonna give me a beating. I decided I was a decent honest principled person but I will not bow to authority that I disagree with. SO yes I was influenced in that way by me by my father. By the way, I did then, he was always afraid cos we were a poor family that he wouldn't be able to afford a headstone gravestone. I said 'don't worry dad when you die I'll put a headstone on your grave a big fucking heavy bastard to make sure you don't get back out'.

NECW – Where are you in your family? Are you the eldest?

I'm the eldest of my fathers children. Me mother was married twice – her first husband was killed, he was in the forces and he was killed er during the riot the anarchy in, in Cyprus, and I, I never met that man, but, if he was around today I would say 'you were wrong because you were trying to quell er peoples rights'.

NECW – Was that in the late 1940's was it?

Yes, yes... Yes

NECW – after you sir (pours drink)

Please don't call me fucking sir. I remember when I was, when I was elected onto the the Trades Council er the regional of the union, in the regional union and I had an office in the town

NECW – Yes.

And when I started work there, there the people in the office kept referring to me as "Boss" And I had to say "will you stop calling me fucking Boss" – I'm not a boss I'm a union man, that's that's what I do, and, there was one, the the secretary er I know this sounds pretentious, but it was my secretary er she came up and asked permission if she could go, because her child was ill, whether she could... – 'What kind of fucking mother are yer why you asking me? attend to your child. And

she said 'well the previous secretary would have hauled us over the coals for it'. Yes, but he was a bastard but I'm not, I'm a union man. And that office is now, that's just beside the Doctors surgery now.

NECW – Can we take it through the structure of the union?

I progressed there I worked for Barret Developments in Crook, and I was really interested in the politics, I worked for my uncle uncle Billy and he again like me dad my dads brother he was very reactionary very right wing. I became then the convenor for the union UCATT and I moved then onto the the branch, I became a a branch chairman, and I also did a stint as branch secretary and moved on. I was elected onto the Trades Council, Wear valley trades council

NECW – Who were the people at that time on the Trades Council?

The people at that time were, The Crook town Kremlin, I'm sure you'll change the names, there was myself who was with Socialist Workers Party, _____ a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party, _____ a member of the Communist Party, and _____ a member of the International Marxist Group.

NECW - And are these guys still around?

There are only 2 still alive, the other 2 have passed onto that big union meeting in the sky.

NECW – Yes. Right, so, lets get to the first miners thing about 1972 then. What was er the situation like in Crook?

Well we were trying...

NECW interrupts - Was there any mines left at that time?

Yes there was – there was Hole in the wall colliery, which was just above Crook on Church hill, or Catholic bank as we call it, Hole in the Wall was there. There was there was a drift mine at Roddymoor a coupla mile outside of the town centre, they were certainly working there. But er in in the Durham Coalfield, certainly in the SW Durham, coalfield there was never a militant element they more or less went along with what Joe Gormley said as President of the N.U.M.

NECW – He was a right winger.

Yes he was, and I challenged him er at Congress house in London many times. With Joe Gormley you could never get a decent answer out of him, he would never give an answer, he would give a reply which didn't give an opinion or. He was that middle of the road he could've been fucking run over and I told him that on several occasions. But we couldn't, we couldn't get the miners at the time to to really get militant, and it was led er from Durham from the East of the of the mining community at er Easington colliery

NECW – Far East

Yes

NECW – That's the Sunderland coalfield

That's right, and but Crook actually sits on the very edge of the, of the coalfield travel 10 Mile west out of Crook and there is no more coal. This is the outcrop of the, of the coal.

NECW – Right. So '72 erm Is that when you was on the Crook town kremlin or was that in 1974?

I would certainly have been a member of the Crook town Kremlin then but I hadn't risen in the Trade Union movement at that time.

NECW – Right so then we get onto '74, and the er power cuts the miners the electricity striking. Am I right saying that you had a couple of hundred at your meetings at that time.

Yes, we held meetings in a in a small pub, the Millhouse, then it became apparent that we would need a larger meeting room so we moved into the 'E-Light' Hall – that's all we call it in the town, it's probably called Elite Hall and that held about a couple hundred. But even then, more and more people were coming to our meetings cos we were putting forward er more militant ideas and saying 'stand up for yourselves'. So we moved out onto the Green by St. Catherines Church and the Police descended cos they hadn't seen anything like it in Crook it just hadn't happened before, who were these people stirring up all this trouble, and and there was only the 4 of us doing it. And er a small number of our of our members were arrested and taken down to the police station.

NECW – Was that on Hope street at the time?

That police station then I've got to correct myself was then down by church hall.

NECW – Right, and then what happened?

Well we marched as a body from the grass area, the green around the church, the church of England. And we marched as a body to the Police station and er 2 of us were allowed in as representatives of our number, and we put it to them quite simply. We want our comrades released and we're not going to settle for anything less. We said to them, well you've got 10 minutes, we couldn't give them any more than 10 minutes cos it's only 12 minutes 15 minutes from Bishop Auckland where they can bring in reinforcements. So We said "we were gonna we were gonna storm the police station", and er the the first reaction from the desk seargeant was 'you daren't'. And, I pointed, cos I was one of the 2 who were there to represent our number, I pointed out those people out there aren't bluffing, we mean it, we'll take the the station away from you. I pointed out that you only police by consent. And we're never going to allow you to police the way you are at the moment. SO those were released.

NECW – Did the papers ever report it?

I believe at the time the now defunct Northern Despatch or Evening despatch which ceases to be as a newspaper.

NECW – Can you remember how it was reported?

I believe Mike Amos, from the Northern Echo, came out, and I've I've had many a chat with Mike. I would like to say, to take this opportunity of saying to Mike - if I've ever done anything to upset, or annoy him, in any way shape or form **I couldn't fucking care less**. But he did come out, and report on it. I think then he was working for the Northern Despatch, evening despatch. But it was a success for us because we challenged the authority in the town. It was a psychological thing – where normally we would have a dozen, 2 dozen members at a meeting, we had we had 2 and a half hundred 300 who had suddenly learnt that they had power, that they could dictate terms.

NECW – It would be amazing to see again in Crook.

I doubt whether it will happen cos of the destruction of industry, there's very little industry in this town, and it's more or less now become a dormitory town where people travel outside the town to

work to socialise and so, it as an industrial town where we were at the heart of the mining community, the railways, the cokeworks, brickyards, there's none of that left.

NECW – So it's er, Is it still a working class town then?

I don't seriously believe that it was ever a militant town, its always er It's certainly working class, but, they they tend to go along with what the Labour party, have to say.

NECW – Yes. Was your gran still alive in 74?

No she had passed on earlier, but, Gran taught me the basics. I think in my heart, that my gran was always more anarchist than communist. I think, because she was a rebel.

NECW – Yes - she was a Suffragette.

That's right.

NECW – So what did she do for universal suffrage?

She went to Durham, and with various others took issue with the bishop and refused to leave the premises on the basis that anyone who walked in the cathedral is entitled to, to say father, but the police were called and she and her suffragette friends were removed.

NECW – So when would that be about 1910?

That would be 1910 Edward, came to the, Edward came to the throne. It would be, just before Edward came to the throne.

NECW – About the time that woman was killed by the [Kings] racehorse.

Yeah. Devon er it was, er Can't remember the bloody name of it.

NECW – Yeah I can't remember

Yeah it was roundabout that time.

NECW - First World War, So we've had the general strike. Did she tell you what the general strike was like in Crook?

We had soup kitchens in the town and me, my gran certainly played her part there. Er Couldn't provide any food from the family cos the family at the time were. I don't like the word, but they were stealing, they were stealing turnips and potatoes from surrounding fields. I wouldn't call it theft because you've got to provide for those you, you care for so I certainly wouldn't call it theft. But yes there were soup kitchens, and she served at those soup kitchens.

NECW – You said there were 5 pits in Crook

There were 5 in the town centre er in the town and surrounding areas and er a couple of miles out we talking within a square mile of the town centre there were 2 dozen pits and 2 of those survived into the 1970s.

NECW - Did anything happen in the general strike, any conflict?

The only conflict was the people who owned the buildings in the town who owned the buildings weren't too keen on the suffragettes and the striking miners and everybody else on strike. They weren't too keen in the Temperance hall, in the mechanics institute and various other places but there is I'm not a catholic but we had a father Hays at the Catholic church Father Hays was described in the town as the best friend Crook ever had and the best friend the working class in Crook ever had the most respected man in the town and certainly in the 1930s and 1940s he was because he was so different from the catholic clergy he took great pride in helping out working class people and he provided clothing and shoes and meals for working class people and although I can never agree with what the church of Rome is about I respect that man for what he did.

NECW - SO there were soup kitchens in '26, were there any soup kitchens in the 1930s cos you had the means test as well?

That's right. The means test people to this day ask me about the means test and I haven't got a problem with it and I'll explain. What happens with a means test certainly in the 1900s was that you were forced to sell furniture you were forced you were left with just basics, clothing, but a means test I would I would support if it was turned around a little, and keep those who can afford to support themselves. There should be no means test which takes the lower limit we'll tax you we'll punish you we'll penalise you. There should be a cut off put where you say, well if you're above this point, if you've got a 100000 a year what the fuck do you want a benefit for and that's where a means test idea can work but certainly not to target the the very worst off which the Labour government is doing now to their fucking shame and I mentioned this in '81 or '82 to both the Chancellor Gordon Brown, and to the Prime minister Tony Blair who at that time they were anything they weren't powerful. It was conference in Blackpool I'm sure, but that's why I'm not sure it was 81 or 82 but I'm one of the few people whose told the Chancellor and the Prime Minister to go fuck themselves cos I did as part of the Crook Town Kremlin, and at that time they were the best of friends Gordon and Tony, and we the Crook town Kremlin were having an hell of an argument in the corner of conference just out of the centre and I remember Len Murray then the TUC secretary, and Tony and Gordon and one or two others eyeing us up cos we were arguing so ferociously, and I'll tell you now what we were arguing about. We were arguing about where to get a decent bag of fucking fish and chips, on the Promenade - they were thinking what those 4 are up to no good plotting and planning and scheming, but it was about fish and chips.

NECW - Where were we? Soup kitchens in Crook in the 1930s?

Yeah my gran served at them, because there was no strike pay an people either had to fend for themselves or go on the Parish.

NECW - Poor law.

Yeah you were given Parish relief and then it was means tested er someone used to come round, and say 'well you've got...'

NECW - And say 'you've got a table'...

Yeah that's right, 'you've got chairs', and my gran had a piano, a wonderful beautiful piano er which was properly constructed in the 18th century and she was forced to sell that, before she was allowed any money pay for food on a saturday. **That broke her heart.** And as I say.

NECW - When was that then she was forced to sell that?

In the Thirties.

NECW - That was terrible

It was terrible because er me uncle

NECW - That's a fucking disgrace, you can't imagine what its like can you to do that today

It was a disgrace, yes it's like somebody coming here today saying you've got lamps, you've got bookcases, you've got this that and other. I've always said mind, and I've said it to their faces councillors and MPS. If they ever try that kind of stuff with me I'll put a simple question to them. Why would you want a fucking bungalow that's on fucking fire? Its no good to you. COs I'll burn it before I'll allow anyone to take what I've got. And everything in here, there's very little that is new, the beer cans are probably the newest, everything else is second hand. But I would never allow anyone to take, and that is not to say that possessions are anything. I mean, when my mother died me father had died previously, when she died and we had to sort sort out the whole out, all she had after 70 years of struggle was a few bits and pieces of furniture and that's a disgrace cos the strife that she went through she should have had a lot more than she did.

NECW - Passed away?

She passed away in 97, and, as I say she was forever grateful to me from my age of 15 from preventing her taking another beating from this misogynistic bastard who was my dad.

Pause, somebody leaves, goodbyes.

NECW - So you you were born in 54 and your gran taught you?

Most of what I know about politics, It was basically about how to treat women, and I know that sounds sexist but how to treat everyone as an equal and take no crap from anybody and I took some horrific beatings for that philosophy.

NECW - So 15 at Norvite, what have we covered, are we back onto Grunwick, what's Grunwick. 1976.

By then we were, 1976 the Grunwick strike which was, it was not only against Trade Unions it was also a large element of racism in it. And we organised both as a, as a branch and as an area and as a Trades council to book trains and buses.

NECW - My Gran my Mother got a council house for the first time in 1948. That meant they had hot running water and electricity for the first time. What was your grans experience?

My gran was er born at Low Bitchburn erm which was destroyed bulldozed to produce the industrial estate that now stands. But the house, although I am very nostalgic about it visiting it on a Sunday. I'm very nostalgic well they ought to have left that little village where it was. Well I'm wrong they should've flattened it 50 years before they did because it was so substandard er there was no, no hot and cold water, there was one cold tap in the house, no kitchen, certainly no bathroom and outside outside toilets and outside coalhouse and coal had to be carried in by bucket across the street and of course any, an' my gran had 11 children.

NECW - So she lived in that for what period?

She lived in there from just the turn, about 1902 till about 1960, in fact exactly 1962.

NECW - Did she get a council house then?

She was given a council house yes.

NECW – SO that would be the first time she had hot water

That was the first time she had a bath, that was fitted instead of a tin bath out of the yard, and boiled up water which she didn't do by kettle their was this massive pot boiler er for the Victorian range that she had.

NECW – So that would be under a Tory government?!

In...

NECW - 1962

[Laughs] Yes it was, But the only reason was displacement was because er they were going to demolish those to make more profit. Because the houses that were there the houses 3 streets and the pub, didn't have the same potential as an industrial estate, so that little village went by the way.

NECW – That's amazing 1962, people don't realise how soon, how recent hot water and electricity is.

In fact its later than that, in other areas of the town this kind of housing this kind of social conditions continued into the 1970s. Just outside of the town, at Stanley and at Sunnyside, these conditions continued into the 70s.

NECW – Top o' the hill

That's right, yeah. And as I say I get nostalgic about it, because I was a boy, and yes but they certainly suffered from living there. But the range in that house which was the fireplace, She could feed this family of 11 from this coal fired boiler and fire and cooking range. And I think back and I know what people have now, but the struggle she must have gone through, to provide for her 11 children, and her husband, it must have been horrendous for her.

NECW – Anyway lets jump back to Grunwick

Yeah

NECW – You're organising trains and buses because...

We We thought then Grunwick was a central event. If we lose this battle we'll get this kind of thing cropping up everywhere, so we'll throw our whole weight behind it in the Crook area and surrounding district. We organised, we booked trains to go down we booked buses to go down, several hundred of us at a time, and I was down there, at least on a dozen occasions.

NECW – How long did it go on for again, about a year?

It went on for over a year, yes. And eventually er the battle was lost and I would say it wasn't because, it certainly wasn't because of the workers will, or the will of like minded trade unionists to win that battle. We lost, Once again, we lost because of the treachery and cowardice of TUC general council, cos had they brought out our big battalions our heavy artillery, the electricians, the engineers, we could've paralysed the country then as we had in 1974, and although various labour MPs did support us.

NECW – One or two did get in trouble with the police.

One or two yes, and there was never any support from the Labour party as a body.

NECW - there's always been a few labour MPS with some principles, but the hierarchy in general.

The hierarchy of the Labour party, The Labour party has never been, despite its protestations, It's never been a socialist party, what it's been is a sop to the to the status quo, it never challenged the status quo.

NECW – No, they haven't, you've only got to look at their relationship to the monarchy.

Yeah, well, I could say a lot of things about the monarchy, certainly I know the queen is good at waving, come the revolution we'll give her a fucking job waving the fucking trains out of Darlington station, at the station seen as she's fucking good at waving.

NECW – Before we talked about er 74 with the, er who runs the country election, and the Queen called up Ted Heath.

The question nationally was 'who rules the country'? DO the government and established authority or do the miners and the riff raff and the rabble. Which was how we were presented and still are to this day, and we answered the question, Ted Heath asked the question 'DO I run the country, am I in charge, or not'. And we said 'or not'. The queen had no right, at least I do not think so.

NECW – Of course she had no right at all, it was a total abuse of her power, to ask Heath to form a minority government even though he had less MPs than Labour.

I mean, the monarchy is is political to its heart, it knows exactly where it stands and I look forward to the day we'll be allowed the quid pro quo. And say here's something for something. Anybody with three brain cells to rub together will understand either Charles Darwin was right and we all evolved from apes, or the church is right and we all evolved from Adam and Eve. But somewhere along the line somebody has said I'm king, I'm royal and I've got a fucking big army here that says so, and that's how they became Royal.

NECW – That's how the land distribution...

Certainly, although the monarchy's not the largest landowner in the country they certainly own a lot of it. I like to take them on in debate and ask where this Royal bit comes from, if they are superior to me I want them to tell me exactly where they are superior I'm certainly superior to Harry and Charlie. I've no wish to disparage the relationship between Charlie and his and his...

NECW – Horse, Camilla

[Laughs] Yes, but the idea that there is anyone more worthy than anyone else is too nonsensical for words, its too preposterous for words, and I can debate that with anyone and I'll win that debate.

NECW - SO we've got 74 76 and Grunwick, er what happened at Grunwick then?

At Grunwick as it happens as it happens at a lot of demonstrations er you're targeted initially by the police who are acting whether they like it or not, as the, as people who would keep us in our place

NECW – Boot boys of capital.

Yeah and well they're paid to maintain the status quo. One thing happened on one occasion, I was with a delegation from Durham which included female members and we found ourselves at the front of the demonstration, and a snatch squad, I don't think they exist anymore but they were called then the Special Patrol Group.

NECW – Yeah you're right, now, what is it now?

I can't remember, they were called SPG. They didn't have numbers on their shoulders so you couldn't identify which which so called officer of the peace attacked you.

NECW – SO, Kevin Gately, does that name ring a bell?

I've heard of the name, I haven't probably met him but its difficult er.

NECW – He was killed by the police.

Difficult for me to remember.

NECW – Blair Peach was killed by the SPG too.

The SPG were a law unto themselves very often, outside the law. You couldn't bring them to account and we got no help from TUC or anybody else. They attacked us and we were a party of maybe 8, 9 or a dozen and we were singled out by the Snatch squad, I could see the danger straight away. We couldn't retreat back into the picket, we were out there anyway so we were going to have to take what was coming to us. There was only 2 or 3 of us lads, not that we were afraid, we were up for it, but seeing police officers, so called peace keepers, attack attack women, well its not

just reprehensible its just disgusting, so we three together against this snatch squad of about half a dozen. Well we said we'd keep them fucking busy while the lasses make their escape and I apologise for any sexism in there I don't mean it because I can think of a few lasses who'll give me a slap around the fucking head for being so sexist and I don't mean it. I can be accused of a lot of things but er sexism racism etc is not one of my failings.

NECW – So you were put in hospital were you?

Yes I was, I was hospitalised that day, and cos I took a hell of a kicking and there were at least 3, I think **I take great pleasure in having made sure at least one of those officers was probably in a hospital bed not far away from me**, cos handling 3 heavily armed coppers with batons and the rest of it is a difficult thing to do.

NECW – Armour

Yeah, they came in hard, and I've just remembered after all these years how much that fucking hurt after all these years. And I was hurting bad that day, And I missed the train because the train er was leaving to come back North east, and I missed the train cos I was in hospital and I had to ring one or two friends to see if they could put me up for the night. And I found somewhere to crash out somewhere in Crouch end, north London, and thanks to the lads and lasses, and it was a squat, its difficult to believe now cos Crouch End is a very up market place but thirty years ago it wasn't...

NECW – It's the same as Islington, 30 years ago Islington was down market.

Yeah

NECW - I want to briefly mention the National Front in the 70s. You said the NF in Crook was run by...

His name was Wren Brown.

NECW – Is he still around?

He's still. He now lives in Howden Le Wear. Which is a coupla miles South of Crook.

NECW – He's still a twat?

He's always, he was a twat at school, he was a twat when he ran... when he tried to run the National Front to to this day

NECW – He's still a twat.

He's an arsehole – and strangely enough his father was erm his father worked in the brickyards and his family were no better than my family had no more money than us, so why he chose this *reactionary* right wing course of life I've never been able to ascertain.

NECW – Was there many of them?

No, I remember in the union I brought this to the attention of the Trades Council.

NECW – Yes

And, they, the NF, had determined they were gonna hold a rally in the town centre – the market square, and so we turned up in force about 80 or 90 of us, at first we couldn't find them cos there was only about 9 or 10 who were standing outside the Church Hall er limply waving Union Jacks

and nobody was paying any attention to them anyway so we went up to them and just told them we didn't want them in the town and we won't tolerate them and we'll make sure they won't find a meeting place in the town, but still to this day, he is as stupid as he ever was and as reactionary as he ever was, because you can have people either wing right wing left wing who can be reactionary and I think he's too stupid to understand his own politics.

NECW – The National Front didn't get anywhere. So, so you've got 1979 and the Winter of Discontent, what was that like up here.

It was a wonderful time, because er it was national, and people in this area tend to follow what's given to 'em by national leadership, so we were taking part and er coming out on strike, and we happened that we at the Trades Council found ourselves at the heart of it and we found ourselves in the enviable position, enviable position of being able to give some leadership er because it was, militant for once in a decade, 2 decades, 3 decades - people were militant. Because our jobs were under threat wages were under threat, and this was coming from a labour government, it wasn't coming from a Conservative government.

NECW – No it was the IMF so they said.

Well Dennis Healey the Chancellor at the time had gone to the IMF and had come back with a package that meant that everybody has a wage cut and 10's hundreds and thousands are going to lose their jobs.

NECW – Dole.

So...

NECW – UB40.

Yeah. And I remember then they did support us, they did support us by the way UB40 did support us on many demonstrations not only from a Trade Union point of view but Anti Nazi League and Rock Against Racism. That was were we were going to get our UB40s and sign on the dole. I also wrote a poem at that time, and it was published, and I still remember it and I'm sure I've got a copy of it somewhere but er people in the town said 'we never thought you were a poet Steve', 'well neither did I, I'm just putting down my thoughts on paper, and I thought well I like this poetry lark I said I'll write a few more and I got a few more published and mind. I'm no fucking Agatha Christy, I just put my feelings down on paper.

NECW – Winter of Discontent finished and the Tories got in, 1981, the riots.

Well it was a kind of, people were fuelled up. They were angry and discontent but they couldn't find a way to express it through the labour party or liberal party or conservative party so they expressed it.

NECW – At that time you've got mass unemployment.

That's right.

NECW - Mass unemployment with...

Social deprivation which we had in this town. They just left us to, to swing in the wind.

NECW – So the Black market was well established by that time.

It was and still is. Er, Yes, I mean. Whatever you needed from foodstuffs to whatever it was available on the black market.

NECW – So Going back before then, in the early 1970's you could get from job to job. It didn't really matter you could say 'fuck off' to the boss.

That's right.

NECW – And get in a job the next day. But 10 years later...

10 Years later it was different, by the middle of the 80's the Thatcher cult, so called Thatcherism, had taken hold she had stripped the unions of its powers, or both of them.

NECW – That's right, 1981 there was the legislation restricting secondary picketing, 6 pickets on a picket line.

We had been stripped, stripped of our powers and and the bosses of course were emboldened by this and they took us on.

NECW – Yes, Warrington and the NGA, and of course the Big thing was of course the miners.

Yes, it was 84 and that again was seminal, and it wasn't only the miners who were on strike, there were ah at least 5 unions involved in that strike. My union was involved UCATT – Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians. We were involved because, our members worked at pit, er for there woodwork and everything that needed to be done in shafts, above ground. We were certainly involved, and it was a kind of hiatus in my family because my step brother was then a pit deputy, and his 2 sons were members of the N.U.M. And I was called in as a kind of arbitrator, well Steve Steve's a union man, he'll sort this out. But to this day it has never been sorted out and the 2 sons will not speak because he did something that I've never done and never would do. He crossed a picket line, and that, in the North East er certainly is sacrilege. You just do not cross a picket line if you do it's beyond the pale. Where you get the song in the north east the blackleg miner and that epitomises the feeling in the North East that a picket line is something to be respected.

NECW – Sacrosanct.

Yes.

NECW – So what was your role in the Trades Council at the time?

I was then secretary Wear Valley District trades council. It was 'You know Steve the only reason why we read the Northern Echo and the Evening Chronicle is to find out what you fuckers are up to on that Trades Council because you're fermenting revolution but we like what you achieve'... because it wasn't only industry matters that we concerned ourselves with. We concerned ourselves with narrow roads on the estate and we got Durham County Council to widen a few of them and we were involved in youth groups and there was a ticket system in the schools at that time. People who got free school meals erm were singled out from those who paid for the meals well at that time most of the town being a working class poor town, they didn't have the money to pay for for school meals but the system adopted by the school was those who got free meals were given a different coloured ticket from those who paid for their meals and we were outraged but instead of going through official channels we decided to talk to people themselves down the school gates and their were dozens of them who said 'this is what's happening and we want it changing'. Between those who have and those who haven't but it fizzled out because even at that age kids understand divisions, understand injustice and they realise that those in the top stream wouldn't support their... because they were talking about going on strike refusing to attend the lessons, that kind of thing. And we were trying to encourage that but they realised that it would fizzle out because they couldn't get the support of other pupils, who were paying for their school meals and to their eternal shame some members of the NUT, who were teachers at that school and I'll name the bastards now. Because they taught me many years before and Armstrong and Brook who were National Union of Teachers representatives and they failed to support those kids and I took it up with them at Trades Council level and at a regional level. Well I was sent a letter by the National Secretary of the NUT, who who threatened

me because I hadn't gone through the official channels, and I just wrote back and I even didn't bother with any pleasantries I just told him 'to go fuck yourself'. And if he wanted to prosecute me go ahead, but that fizzled out to the kids great loss, wherever you go from the very earliest age these divisions are being created because its divide and conquer it instead of us challenging those who keep us in the situation that we're in they encourage us to attack each other and attack each other whether its on colour scheme or sexuality or gender whether its on they're creating these divisions so we attack and fight ourselves instead of attacking and fighting the bastards who created the problem in the first place and let us never forget they started the battle in the first place, by taking our land away that we farmed on hundreds of years ago – they took it away with the Enclosure acts which took our land and farms away and forced us into this industrial revolution where we had to migrate to these big towns and the cities to earn a living. so as I say they fucking started it its up to us to finish it.

NECW – Yes of no doubt. So you've said that er the Crook Kremlin had the IMG, the IS, Communist Party and I've forgotten the other one, the WRP, IS Socialist Workers Party so you all er had a sort of united front popular front approach but behind closed doors you argued vigorously.

We did at that.

NECW – And so can you go to the Poll tax after the Miners strike was defeated, obviously a big disappointment, then you had Wapping 86/87 then the Dockers dispute 89 then the poll tax that was the big one were you still active then?

I was yes, and I was at Wapping er which is the Sun, the Wapping Liar. But Shame to those in the NUJ and to those in the TUC who knew this move was going to take place, but sold out its membership.

NECW – They do that again and again.

But They've always done it. But people keep saying to me, 'But Steve why do you fight this battle', I said 'well its not my battle actually, because this battle has been going on for 700 years, when we were forced off the land and forced into the into the conurbations.

NECW – 'It just happens to be a battle I'm part of'.

Yes, erm When I'm when I'm dead and gone, another generation, I hope, will take up, up the battle and fight on. The poll tax by the way in the town I was probably one of a couple of dozen who refused to pay poll tax,

NECW – Really, in this town?

Yes and I was threatened, to this day If I walk into the Civic centre everybody's grabbing phones cos Steve's in the building, he's up to no good. I dunno why I scare them so much cos as I say I've had a stroke I'm not physically able to...

NECW – So what do you think the problems of the old left politics were?

Like I say with my gran who taught me the old left politics. She taught me to stand up for myself.

NECW – I must say it does sound like you come from a very free thinking tradition. It's free thinking in that I was taught, she tried to teach me that

NECW – Dignity.

Yes, Dignity, morality, principle, these are the kinds of things.

NECW – Humanity.

Yeah, Yes, that peoples' important.

NECW – The great French slogans Equality, Liberty, Fraternity

And these were taught to me by my gran, but I realised I probably realised as a teenager that I was going down the wrong track that others can make decisions for me which are in my best interests. And they're not. Its' up to the people themselves to decide what's in their best interest and to pursue it en block because they can never do it as an individual one against the state and the state is very powerful. You've got to do it as a block, the SWP never really they have this kind of culture where you have this leader who will lead us into this promised land and its not going to happen because people have got to be local, stay local and fight local and then you kind of get a spread effect where others can take a lead from your actions.

NECW – you get strength from your convictions

That's right, you've got to learn that confidence. Once yer once you challenge the state challenge authority you get the idea in your head that 'yes, it can be done'. And not what you read in the newspapers, you suddenly get the idea going through your head that 'yes we can do this, we don't need, we don't need kings and queens, we don't need prime ministers we don't need presidents,' we don't need those things we can do it ourselves.

NECW - SO - that leads us onto autonomous class war

So this is new to me, I'd flirted with anarchy in, in the 70s, sort of half interested in what they say. I remember the first publication I picked up was the Black Flag and I dismissed it because it didn't fit in with what we in the SWP thought was the right way to go forward. All I can claim in my defence was that I was young and naive and now, yes we need Class War because there are only 2 classes, the working class and the ruling class. Anybody who thinks they is middle class is just delusional just because they play golf on a Sunday aft.

NECW – You got the owners and controllers of the means of production but they don't meet the working class. So there's a managerial class.

There's a middle class who carry out their instructions.

NECW – Yes, But you've just said there are only 2 classes, the ruling class and the working class.

In essence.

NECW – In essence, but so, this managerial class in the middle, they're just the buffers, smokescreen.

Yes, They are the buffer, they're there to control, and paid well for it, to control the working classes and you have police. An magistrates an churches and...

NECW – Moralists

Yes, and you have these and that's the middle class who are their to keep the working class in its place and they are rewarded for it by the ruling class with a slightly better house, bit better car bit better wages.

NECW – I agree totally.

Interview finishes but the flow continues...

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Simon Chapman and 3 other defendants to again face the Greek Courts

From the Statement of the London Thessaloniki Solidarity Group - September 19th, 2010 version

The solidarity group was formed in 2003 soon after the arrests at the EU summit demonstrations in Thessaloniki. The entire basis of the arrests in 2003, was and still remains, an arbitrary attack upon the demonstrations, where culpability was placed upon those that the Greek authorities sought to make examples of. From the beginning of the process of detention it was clear that evidence of guilt would not even be based upon recognition of legal facts or evidence but by association. In Thessaloniki during those days everyone was guilty, and for the Greek authorities, it was merely the case of charging those either unfortunate to be detained (then beaten and tortured) many of which coming from outside of Greece. The 7 which were detained, known as the Thessaloniki 7. In response to their continued incarceration, a hunger strike began in early September 2003, lasting 56 days and finally leading to the release of all 7 prisoners for humanitarian reasons. The embarrassment of negative publicity, along with the many solidarity demonstrations and actions throughout Greece and the world, forced the hand of the Greek state in averting a greater problem of creating martyrs for a burgeoning movement. After the successful release and dropping of bail conditions for the 7, a re-emergence of the trials began. This time in late 2007, the initial confirmation for the start of a trial being 8th January 2008. Simon Chapman from London, UK was found guilty of the following charges in 2008

- Culpable of repeated explosion from which there could result common danger for a human being
- Repeated construction of explosive bombs
- Possession of explosive bombs
- Distinguished riot/rebellion
- Distinguished cases of damages in confluence