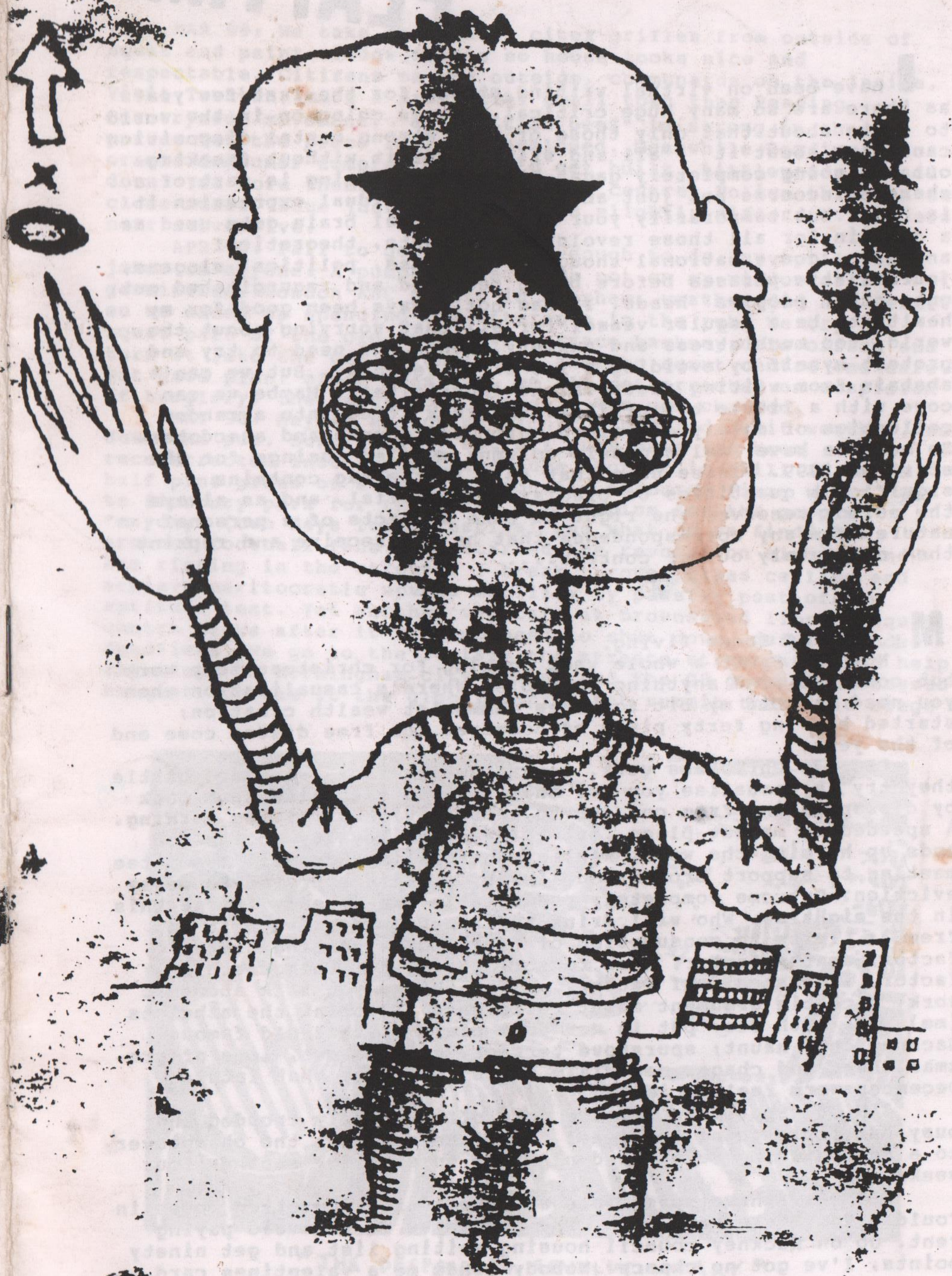


"We only wanted to be loved..."



PROLETARIAN PLAYTIME

I have been on virtual writing strike for the last few years as there are so many huge critical changes going on in the world to write about that only those of very strong mental disposition can think about it all and write about it without freaking out and going completely gaga. Subversive writing is part of a shared discourse not just an isolated individual expression it is true, but temporarily your own individual brain gets used as a dustbin for all those revolutionary texts, theoretical analyses, conversational thoughts and ideas, political slogans, journalistic phrases before being recycled and regurgitated out onto other peoples' heads. It has not always been good for my health to be a regular vessel for all that worrying about the world, too much stress and anxiety. Hence the need to try and protect myself by avoiding a lot of it recently. But we can't abstain from writing about things indefinitely. Maybe we can cope with a little bit of it if we break it up into a random collection of safely contained snippets, chunks and anecdotes. So here we have Paul's gossip column; muddled musings for the start of 1999. Please note that this little rag contains significant quantities of plagiarised material, and as always the editor reserves the right to take extracts of a personal nature from any correspondence that he may receive and reprint them completely out of context....

My year of loose living.

NOV 97: Spent a whole week looking for christmas temp work but couldn't find anything suitable. Where's casualisation when you need it? Did my bit for free communist wealth creation; started brewing forty pints of homebrew for free distro come end of the year.

DEC 97: Christmas work, casualisation is a two sided battle they try to casualise you but then you can casualise them back by disappearing from one job to another without giving warning. A speeded up market place, but collapse of loyalty to the job ends up harming the work. Went along to slimey council committee meeting to support brownwood library squatters trying to delay eviction. Outcome completely predictable. We already learnt this in the eighties. Who will drink the homebrew even when it is free?? Limits to consumption of free goods: getting there factor, apathy factor, snob factor, paying for things ethic factor, it tastes foul factor.... The things you talk about at work: nice big argument about religion(s). I think the atheists (me) won. 19th Dec: put in new dole claim at that old famous Hackney dole haunt; spurstowe terrace, crowded out, lots of pre-xmas cheer and chaos, new claim helps to create that late December warm feeling inside.

JAN 98: Spurstowe terrace dole office nicely crowded and busy but it is going to close! End of an era, but the changeover to a new building means we don't have to sign for another four weeks.

FEB 98: I have moved into a cupboard in a squatted house in Foulden Rd, Stoke Newington. The things we do to avoid paying rent. Go on Hackney council housing waiting list and get ninety points, I've got no chance! Nobody sends me a valentines card.

MAR 98: We take down metal citex grilles from outside of squat and paint window frames so house looks nice and respectable. Citizens on the outside, communards on the inside. Visit Taunton, more a provincial small town than Reading. Countryside movement, "eat british beef" is strong in these parts. But the place is less developed. Meanwhile Reading: The oracle consumer complex starts to get built. Littlewoods closed down. Yet more theme pubs in the town centre. Police threaten to close music venue just because it is slightly different. Nowhere near subversive.

APR 98: Fail to get up early enough to do any april fools jokes on anyone. A pumpkin seed in a pot on my window sill germinated. London ABC picnic in clapham, weather did not permit so we ended up spending the afternoon in the pub. We try to squat part of the old spurstowe terrace hackney dole office and turn it into the new north london anarcho squat centre and cafe. Not good plan! alarm goes off, we all get arrested on suspicion of burglary, the "spurstowe eleven". Two get charged.

MAY 98: Mayday anarchist picnic cancelled, shit weather, so down the pub. Surprisingly not all pubs have yet been reconstructed into yuppy theme pubs. But it is still £1 for a half pint glass of slightly alcoholic coloured fizzy water. Off to finsbury park for the trade onion opium for the people "mayday" (two days late) festival and what do we find? The arsenal football fans have started the revolution already and are rioting in the streets. I break through glass ceiling and achieve meritocratic upward mobility by passing post office aptitude test. Yet another veg cafe at brownwood library squat centre weeks after it was supposed to shut down, defying those deadlines. We go to the reclaim the streets streetparty and help lay siege to birmingham city centre and the G8 government bosses banquet. Or was it the global capitalist summit that laid siege



"THE DESPAIRING REVOLUTIONARY"

to reclaim the streets? Streetdemos simultaneous with many cities around the world, simultaneous hangovers the following day. Quite exciting as far as declassé ecoprotest activism goes. Class struggle content not quite clear. Social revolution still several lightyears away. I do various flatsits for friends and relatives. What with so many atomised households there is a growing army of atomised house and flatsitters. Will I ever get to settle down? Flatsitting: the soft cowardly way to squat. We live rent free everywhere but feel at home nowhere (because it's somebody else's home!). Get wisdom tooth pulled out but retain wisdom.

JUN 98: I did the double and went to both north and south london reclaim the streets parties. Both exciting but brixton was best; more spilling out and crossing over with the surrounding population, more proletarian... police appear to implement their secret "get soft" policy, in preparation for the next clampdown. Over 100 one and two bedroom flats up for squatting on an estate in waltham, running water, carpets, curtains,... must rush off to the locksmiths. I move in and then move out; it's too big and hectic and it's in WALTHAM.

JUL 98: Facing real unemployment, can't find any suitable summer temp work at the jobcentre.

AUG 98: Move into new squat; sandridge court tower block. Nice view shame about the estate. Foulden road felt like it was empty. World economy got tummy upset, russian rouble devalued 50%, moscow banks crash, neoliberalism in a cul-de-sac, goodbye yuppie theme pubs. Swim my first ever length of swimming pool at age 35. We confuse the council by using their metal door against them with our own lock. Why won't it open for them? Is there anybody in there? Prisoners justice day we join picket of holloway womens prison, a good event with a lovely summer atmosphere and no police.

SEP 98: The novelty of living behind ones own metal door in 11th storey flat where the lifts keep breaking down is not quite what it was. Rather than liberated autonomous zone I am suspecting we are in fact unwitting guinea pigs in some progressive self managed open prison living experiment.

OCT 98: Anarchist bookfair and gathering at conway hall emotionally and physically tiring. Too much déjà vu. A democratic open forum and marketplace for all sorts of rubbish. I've been going to this annual anarchist version of christmas duty for 15 years or so! I have signed a little pledge stating my refusal to go to the anarchist bookfair next year 1999. We must break the anarcho habit and not feel bad about it. Goodbye anarchism.

NOV 98: My flatmate moves out of the squat. I am left here on my own in the alamo, the concrete treehouse. We'll not be moved, we'll not pay rent, we'll feel isolated and miserable etc... Carry on signing on, I'm one of the lucky ones not getting hassle. Comrades G & E convicted following on from spurstove terrace squat attempt in april. Electricians on the jubilee line extension actually win a strike shock horror. By the end of the month I finally abandon the titanic (squat) but actually it's not sinking. New squatters still moving into the block! "A squat on every floor up to the 9th", matey on 3rd floor tells me. I've moved into a spare room of comrades flat in east london. Next year's recession starting early, january sales brought forward.

DEC 98: In the post office doing xmas casual work at mount pleasant. They ask me to do emergency overtime as they haven't got enough workers, I turn them down. Huge place, big mix of people working there, old fashioned mass production type of workplace. Parallel history: As the new high tech computerised sorting machines are overloaded they still have to have loads of us manual sorting on the other side of the room. Growth in electronic communications means a growth in communication traffic in general, snail mail (pop a letter in the post) continues to expand. I do a one person overtime ban and defy their bribes, then realise quite a few others are doing this individually anyway. Political discussions at work mildly encouraging. I don't hear anyone say it is a good idea to bomb baghdad. Actually manage to have positive conversations and make friends with fellow workers. Mount pleasant to shut in year 2000 and much of the operation to move up north. Add "moving north" to my possible longterm plans. Put in new claim and successfully get it backdated to xmas eve, that's nice....



"There's nothing happening at the moment" is the ruling cliché of the day on the anarcho/lefty activist scene. Translated what the people saying this really mean is that they're not happening at the moment. Just because the activist scene is in a bit of a doldrums it doesn't mean that loads of things both formal and informal struggles, aren't going down all over the world. The self fulfilling "nothing's happening" cynicism of the activist scene leads it to try and project its cynicism onto everyone else, it ends up believing its own propaganda. Sometimes there is the qualification "well OK lots of struggles are happening but in different countries, not here". But there is no excuse for alienating such struggles by regarding them as "other" or "elsewhere" or "over there". They are an integral part of our own lives, more than ever before what happens in the class struggle all over the world, even in places we haven't even heard of, has a direct affect on our own lives "here".

If the criteria for "something's happening" is it is within one bus ride distance then there are of course massive struggles over work discipline, conservative values, housing, open spaces, environmental battles, many of

these struggles go on in daily life microresistances around us all the time. Often we do it ourselves even if we are not consciously aware of it. Even if this isn't good enough for the cynical ("you're just rationalising weakness" they whinge), recent industrial action by the likes of the jubilee line electricians and tube workers etc. show that good old 70s glamrock style formal industrial strikes are not only still in existence but are still capable of being won, even in the UK. A quick flick through the pages of something like the Wobbly paper "Industrial Worker" shows there are plenty of traditional formal industrial disputes happening if that is what you want. They might not be big and glamorous and pre-packaged and laid on neatly on a plate for activists to consume and latch onto but they are still going on. (The point about "supporting" strikes is not so much to applaud and hand out leaflets but rather to spread the action into your own situation, however difficult that may be; go slow/ overtime boycott/ discussing the issues with your workmates/etc., and to widen the demands; general real reduction in hours/ less commuting etc...

So what is the function of this cynicism? It can be a nervous defence mechanism for those who have become resigned to watching the struggle of others from the sidelines, who are giving up on subjective struggle themselves in their own lives and in the meantime are bowing their heads and just accepting a niche in this system out of fear, not even a good niche, a sad small niche. But there is no need for this counter-revolutionary pessimism and losers talk. Despite the bad things going on in the world, what with the growth in size of human society and so on, there are probably more positive revolts going on in the world than ever before. As the capitalist system itself goes through its global convulsions on an even greater scale and changes everything at a faster rate it actually makes worldwide social revolutionary upheavals more thinkable and possible in ways that it wasn't before. Pessimism is self defeating in the end, it consumes the pessimists leaving only optimism making sense. Only optimism is useful and worthwhile.

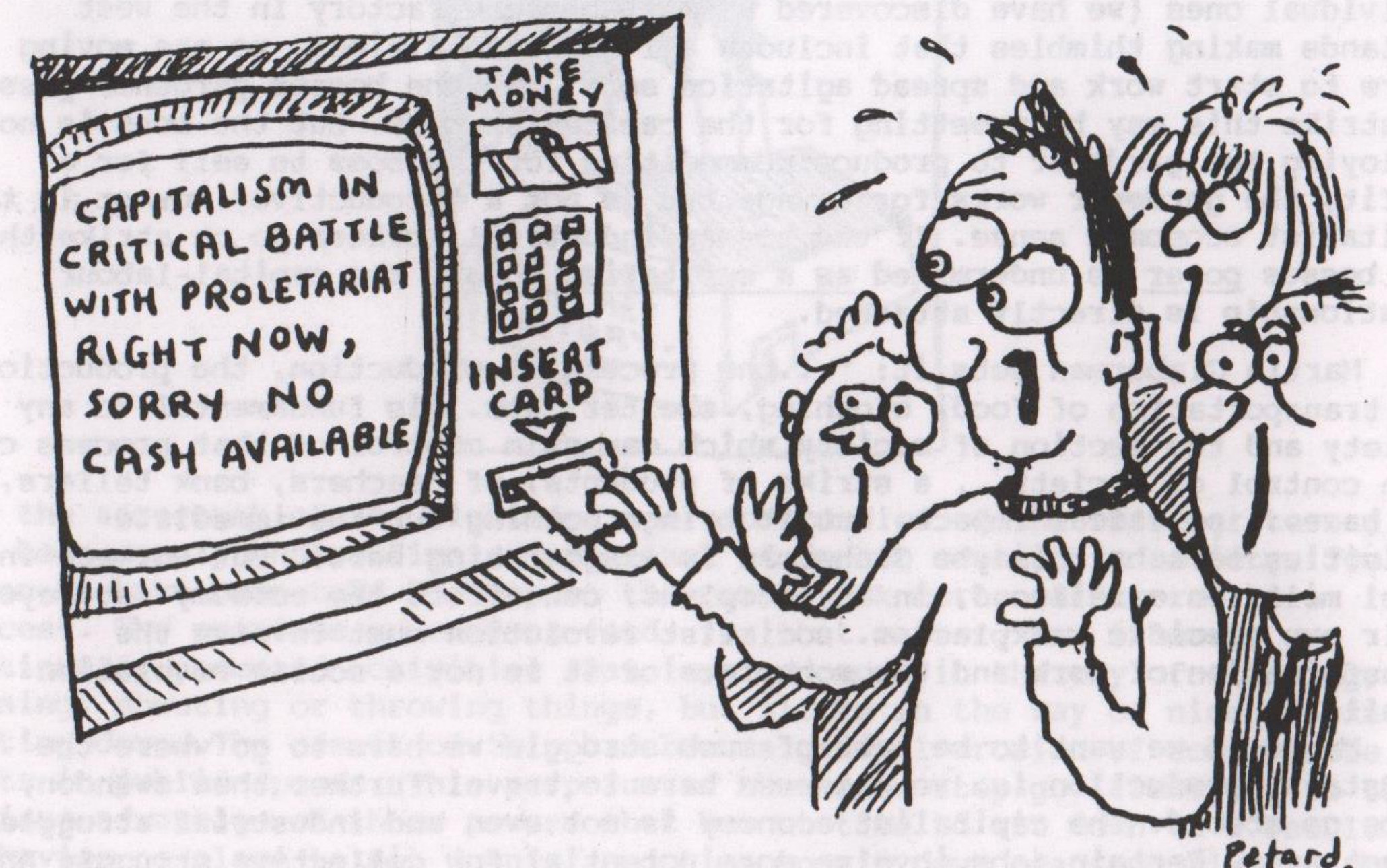


As for these naughty electricians and their wildcat strikes on the jubilee line extension one might say they are just a necessary highly skilled group of workers the employers can't immediately replace who are working to an irrational deadline that leaves the employers open to blackmail. As such they were negotiating their rational price in the market and getting it, a price far above the flat rate original union deal which the management dismissed in favour of casual contracts some time back. The attack of casualisation has gone into reverse due to the skills shortage. The employers shot themselves in the foot. The workers have in effect rejected the original official union deal as they are literally better off without it.

Non-union labour is not necessarily the cause of lower wages, no indeed is casualisation as such. To the contrary the failure of the unions to win a better deal for many workers has encouraged many of them to seek a better deal outside union controlled work. Millions of workers see no point in having their terms of employment stitched up by full time union officials whose life-style and interests differ totally from theirs. Some skilled workers in particular prefer to take advantage of direct bargaining instead when the opportunity arises. Many employers do not see the trade unions as an enemy. From the employers point of view a well disciplined trade union workforce bound to longterm fixed agreements is their idea of heaven. It saves them all the hassle of constant ongoing bargaining. A high turn over of temp workers dropping out of the job can sometimes force employers to put wages up.

Trade union labour doesn't necessarily have a lower rate of exploitation than non trade union labour. Sentimental attachment to union jobs for the sake of it (or likewise sentimental attachment to public sector jobs for the sake of it) can actually be used to encourage workers to accept worse conditions out of a hijacked loyalty to collective labour (or "public services"). It is not always the case that the trade union rank and file will be made up of the most rebellious workers in the workplace. Personal experience of my own with the inland revenue staff federation taught me that sometimes trade union membership can be made up of the most conservative, corporatist, loyal workers in the workplace. Loyal well behaved employees are more likely to keep a foothold in the workplace and a union sub paid on a regular longterm basis than wildcat workers. Leftism clumsily equates all organisation with trade union organisation. Workers who are not paid up members of an official trade union are patronisingly presumed to be "disorganised". The unevenness of class struggle gives rise to the paradox; while some workers are fighting for the right to join a trade union others are finding they can struggle better outside them.

A stalinist grumpyist argument is sometimes put forward that workers are better off staying loyal to the trade unions and sticking to union rates even if that means accepting relatively lower rates during a boom in demand for skilled labour as this will enable workers as a whole to hold onto gains and job security come the downturn. But if the union is unable to secure high rates in a period of boom how are they going to secure high rates and full employment in a future slump? Employees might not want to stick with the same employer anyway. The best way to build up strength for a future slump is for workers to take as much advantage of the vulnerability of particular employers during the boom. With one union blanket rate workers can lose the benefits of wage drift and its escalating momentum of pay claims. One loses the advantage which stronger groups of workers can gain in times of boom when their demands can spearhead, and provide a focus for, a wider spiralling of wage increases.



Maybe there appears to be less class struggle now, but, even if this is actually true, with the falling rate of profit and all that "less" class struggle becomes necessary to cause capitalist profitmaking a problem. The political centre appears heavily entrenched but the economy becomes more vulnerable to the "jitters" caused by even minor proletarian foot dragging and inertia. A strike like the jubilee electricians' strike is not only a sign of the weakness of certain specific employers to certain strong skilled workers. It is also a positive sign of much wider weaknesses of capitalism and hidden struggles of proletarians. The so called "skills shortage" is in part a product of the refusal of many proletarians to subsidise the employers by getting themselves skilled up in employable skills at their own expense in dingy evening classes, or on government training schemes. It is a sign of refusal of job flexibility and of course a sign of general refusal of work, breakdown of labour discipline, outbreak of the desire to play and party...

Rather than waiting for someone to provide us with the industrial entertainment we desire we'll have to try and organise some of our own. If transitional reformist demands have any use, it is not so much a "minimum wage" we need but more a real and substantial general reduction in hours. Although in practise in practise, where a demand like the 35hr week has been granted (germany?) by the system it has tended to be a bit of a con. As for the minimum wage it will in practise either be set so low as to be a worthless joke (and a clever means of keeping wages down by preventing informal wage creep in an otherwise unregulated labour market). Or if it is set at a sum of any significance it will soon be eaten away by monetary juggling; fare rises, tax rises, general inflation etc... The system will swing between fixed collective agreements in permanent employment and casualisation... both contain advantages and dangers to capital depending on the historic situation.

Where is the best potential for a strike with social revolutionary implications?? Perhaps impossible to predict until it actually happens. Perhaps where "economically productive" (labour directly involved in commodity production) coincides with socially useful production (food, clothing, heating, transport...), where work is communal/ international/ where workers have frustrated collective aspirations and dreams as well as individual ones (we have discovered a small obscure factory in the west midlands making thimbles that includes all these conditions, we are moving there to start work and spread agitation soon). If the bosses gardener goes on strike this may be upsetting for the capitalist boss. But the boss is not employing the gardener to produce commodities for the boss to sell for a profit, the gardener works for a wage but is not a "productive" worker in the capitalist economic sense. If the bosses industrial workers go on strike then the bosses power is undermined as a capitalist boss, the capital-labour relationship is directly attacked.

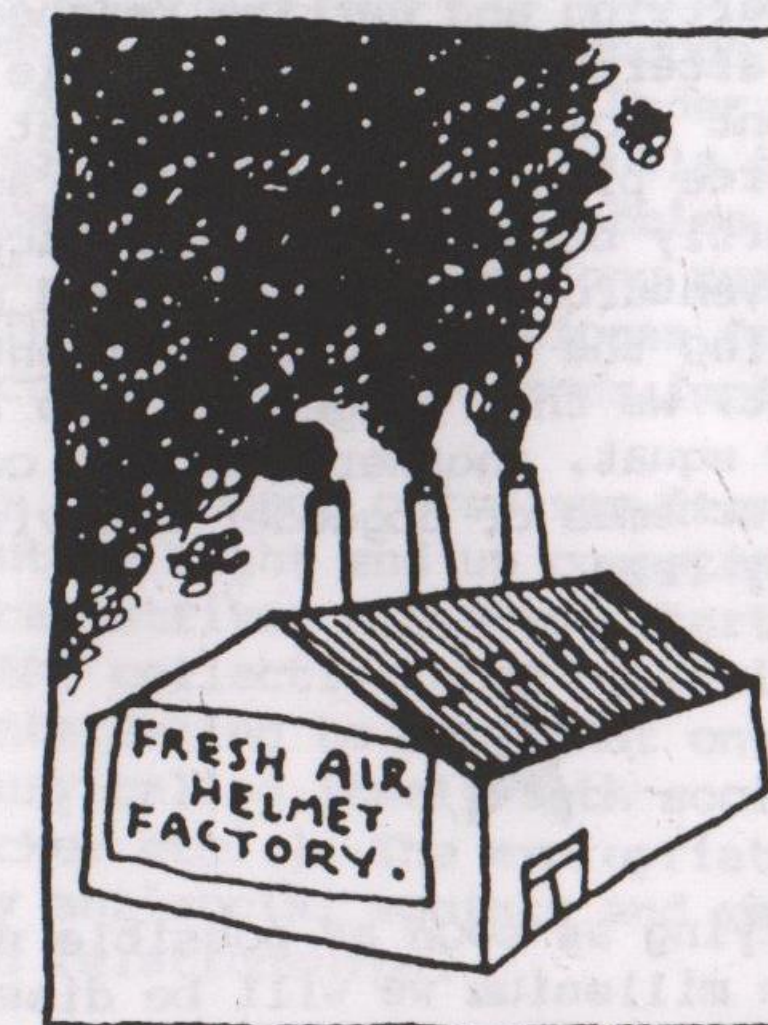
Martin Glaberman puts it: "...the process of production, the production and transportation of food, clothing, shelter, etc., is fundamental to any society and the section of society which can gain control of that process can gain control of society... a strike of students, of teachers, bank tellers, may have... political impact, but it brings nothing but the immediate activities to a halt (maybe Glaberman is exaggerating here). But workers in a steel mill, on a railroad, in an autoplant, can affect the economy far beyond their own specific workplace... socialist revolution must involve the transformation of work and the workplace or it is not a social revolution at all."

Maybe if we want to be part of such struggle we have to go where the industrial production is, we may even have to travel further than swindon, maybe go abroad. The capitalist economy is not even and industrial struggle is not even. Certain jobs involve more potential for collective struggle and

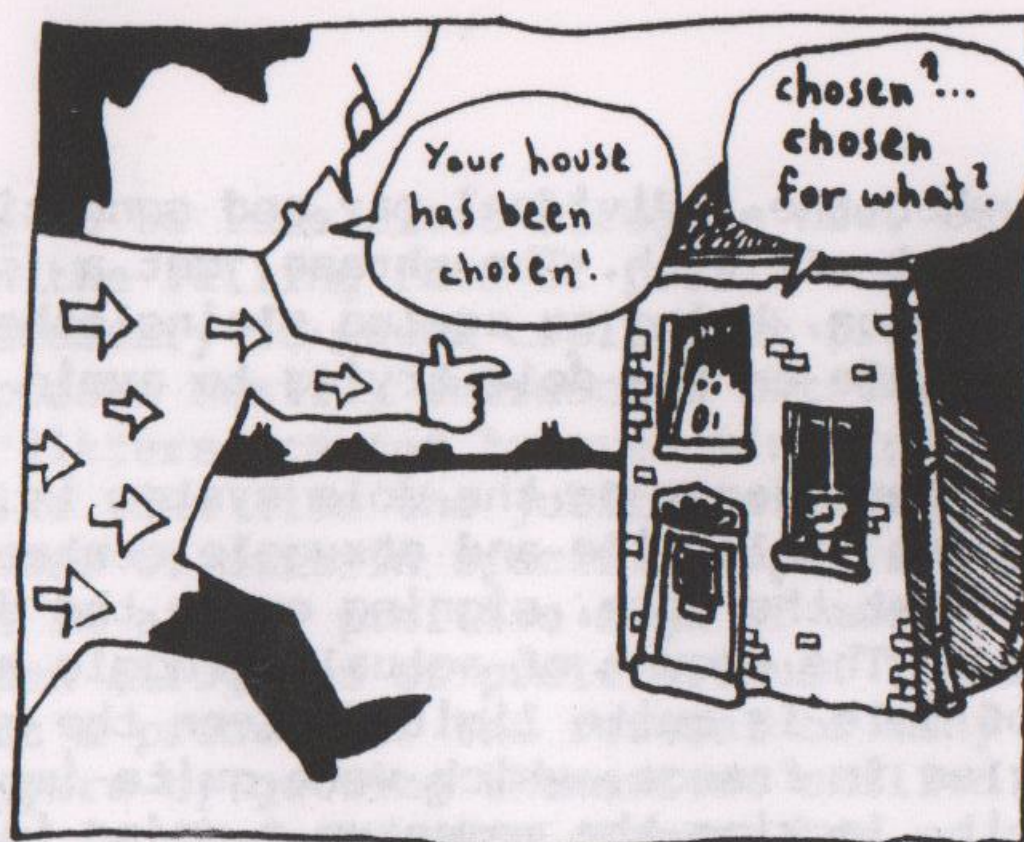
revolt than others, even when the individual pay and conditions are not necessarily the best to start off with. The phrase "get a job" sends a shiver down the spine, particularly as, being an ageing plainclothes anarcho-punk, one has spent most of ones life on the dole trying to avoid "getting a job"

as much as possible. As if dependency on the dole system is any better than working. One can't spend ones whole life and struggle centred on the jobcentre, filling in forms at the dole, signing on at the dole, handing out leaflets outside the dole... The amount of actual struggle unemployed workers can put up at the point of dole is quite limited. Even the recent wave of unemployed workers struggles in france, which were quite impressive, nonetheless reached a limit, lacking the momentum a major industrial struggle running along with it might have given it, and could go no further. (Of course it is also useful, for example, if industrial pickets find unemployed workers spontaneously joining in with them, like in kent during the miners' strike in 1984/5)

You can't really "fight" a handout, you either accept the handout or you don't accept the handout. This is why revolutions tend not to be made by the unemployed. Why does the anarcho doleite have such fear of getting a job? The loss of time is certainly traumatic, having to do all those stupid things you have to do at work is also brutalising. But there is another factor here. Getting a job means that every day you will have to deal with and talk to the whole diverse varietyb of "ordinary" people, good, bad, ugly, pretty, rather than spend your whole time talking exclusively to people only your own sociological subcultural subgroup. The "never work" anarcho doleite attitude sometimes overlaps with a certain subcultural elitism and snobbery and fear of other people.



"In the aftermath of the eighties, one repercussion of the thatcherite era has been sorely underestimated- the lack of decent seating in society. Too often we have been told to keep on the move, work more, earn more, be a success. The previous government (and, for that matter, new labour), continually promoted activities that involved much in the way of standing, running, shouting or throwing things, but little in the way of nice relaxed sitting down. The result of this has been a gradual erosion of comfortable seats in public spaces. This perpetuates the manic stop-go lifestyle, to the obvious advantage of those powers that be: no time to sit down is a result of having no place to sit down..., no time to sit down means no time to stop and think, to question the powers that be." (taken from the Sofa Manifesto; 63 Seaforth Ave, KT3 6JS)



Yes, a whole house full of items, FREE! 99 foulden road was expecting the bailiffs monday morning after many months of happy squatting. So they announced a tat party for sunday afternoon 15th march 1998. They opened the door and invited people to come round and take away any remaining items in the house they could make use of for free. A share out for the proles, well a few passers by anyway. A sign was put up outside: "Free stuff, don't be shy come inside and see what you can find." There was everything from electrical appliances and cutlery and cookery books and clothes and even a free piano! After exploring upstairs and downstairs and sifting through odds and ends piled up in various corners I ended up getting myself a plug in shaver, a very nice tea cup, a glass dish, postcards and a working set of christmas lights!. Shopping done I carried on exploring and sifting for curiosity purposes, every mystery object an instant conversation piece and source of unlikely story.

For some visitors the free space was more important than the free items. After having spent the night partying and getting smashed they took advantage of the quiet sunday afternoon free jumble sale to collapse onto the middle of the floor in the front room and lie staring at the ceiling. What were we going to do with the free piano? not quite the sort of thing I could stuff into my carrier bag. Shortly before midnight a hackney squatters van was brought into use and an adventurous bunch of us had a laurel and hardy style laugh bundling and jangling the piano out the front door down all the front steps and into the street. We then lugged it into the van, saved to live and play again in another squat, another home. No compromise with green pounds or alternative trading schemes or dogooder activist fundraising no,... today everything was absolutely free.



We are going to start the partying as soon as possible now it is 1999. If we wait for riotous events at the millenium we will be dissappointed as the system will have the whole thing sown up by the time we get there. Idle speculation about millenium bugs and millenium riots and millenium collapse is just an alienated projection of a sense of weakness in the present. We must pre-empt their pre-emption and start the revelling early. We should always bring anticipated struggle forward.

There are four fundamental socio-economic classes at a rave: 1. PLUTOCRATS, the petty mafia gāngster capitalists who run the place, 2. MERITOCRATS, an elite of DJs and sound system technicians etc., 3. PROLES, bar staff and cleaners... 4. MUGS! er that's you and me folks, if we're silly enough to go to the things. Raves; a glamorous way of getting mugged.

Eating hermits isn't necessary. Humans are capable of being sociable and living in large social groups numbering millions. On the other hand they are capable of living in complete individual isolation for stretches lasting up to several years and survive well as hermits. Hermits can explore remote places and collect knowledge about them, they can meditate, dream, write poetry, just be a curiosity for society in themselves. The hermit can remember language and convey information to someone even after several years of not talking to anyone, as a result the antisocial hermit human can nonetheless perform socially useful functions, even by accident. It can be in the social interest for a community to encourage some of its members to temporarily engage in individual antisocial behaviour. Hermits are never genuinely outside society. A tribe that lives closely together is vulnerable if a contagious disease hits. But if that tribe encourages some individual members to spend a part of their lives away from the community before returning to social existence then on the long run this tribe might increase its chances of survival. Individual antisocial behaviour can sometimes give rise to new forms of social interaction: individual delinquents can find common cause and create a counter culture to the prevailing conservative culture.

Humans can cooperate and practise social interaction and behave as communal beings while all along secretly individually plotting and scheming against each other. Social cooperation can give rise to new opportunities for individual competition: people can cooperate to build a boat and then argue about who gets to sail in it. Communes can create markets: the individuals in them might compete to prove their usefulness to the commune (the activist scene is full of such meritocracy). We can cooperate to bake a cake and then argue over the slices. All of these things are of course influenced by the pressures and forces of the wider historic situation they occur under.

Under capitalism a group of workers on a building site can cooperate closely in the process of building a block of flats but can at the same time be motivated by the individual desire to earn enough money to buy one of the flats and seek solitude in domestic isolation. Under communism the community the community might encourage different individuals to selfishly explore and pursue their individual creative talents and hobbies so as to increase the sum of skills and abilities available on the long run for the community to tap into and make use of. The old communist slogan from each according to their abilities to each according to their needs implies individual difference.

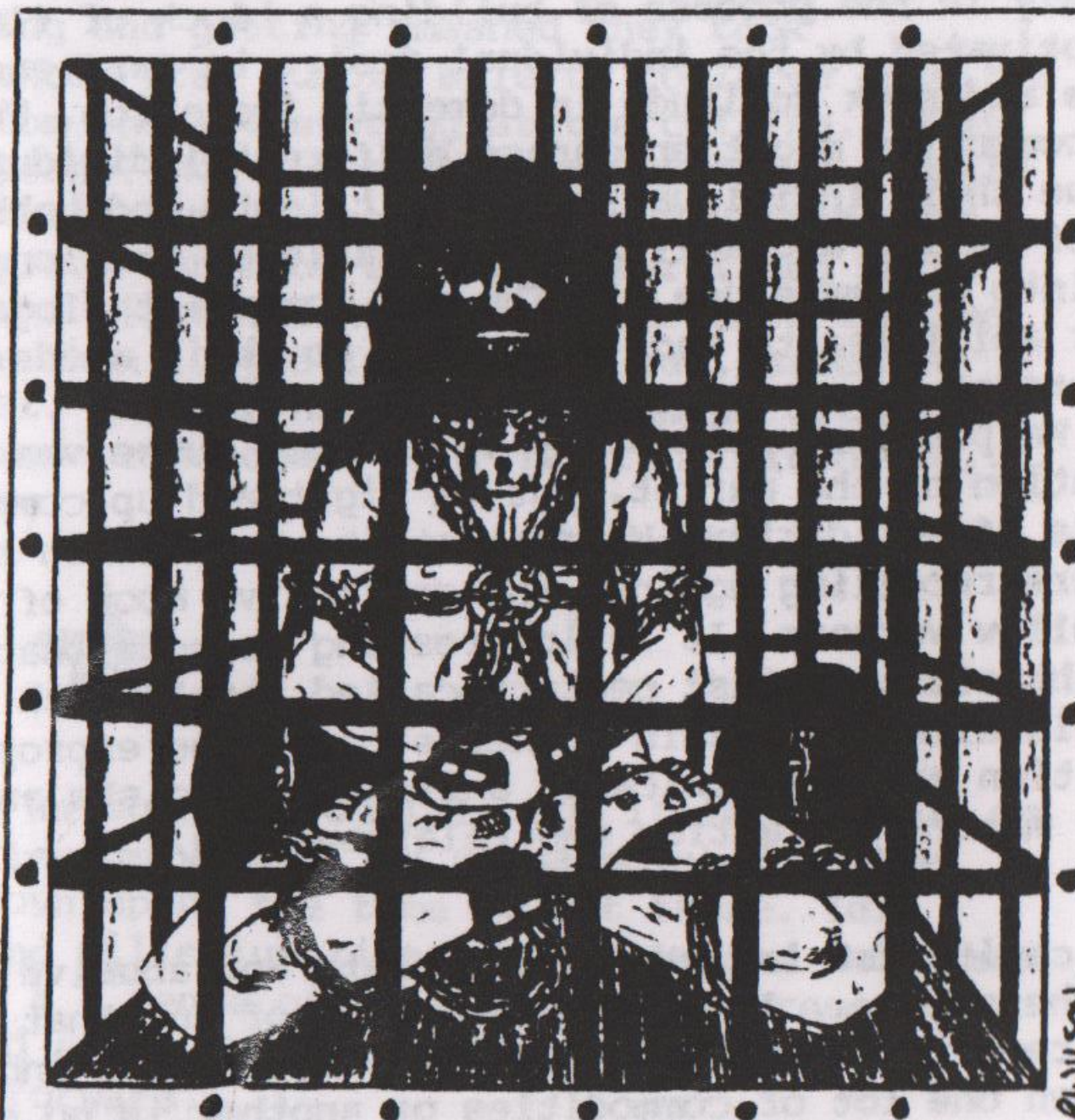
We practise solidarity to protect ourselves from the violence and isolation of the market, but we might end up competing to benefit from the fruits of solidarity. Wildcat strikes are often started by "individualist" workers rebelling against the collective mood of resignation of the majority of fellow workers. It is interesting to note that one school of socialist thought starting last century called itself both socialist and individualist (Benjamin Tucker etc.). The expropriationist anarchist tradition are paradoxically antisocial egoists and yet very communistic in their material practise and relationships.

Most capitalist industries are nasty and abusive to somebody or something somewhere(er... I'm trying to think of any that isn't, maybe the selling of fake rembrandts to art collectors...). Making individual consumer choices between one lot of commodities or another is no solution to exploitation and oppression. But what also needs to be stressed here I think is that consumer demand of mass consumers does not always determine production at all. Under bureaucratic capitalism in the U.S.S.R. many a thing was produced that individual consumers had no immediate demand for. Today basic industries like pharmaceuticals, construction, household goods, are privately owned but nonetheless subject to a great deal of corporate and governmental planning on a global scale. Even if millions of consumers tomorrow morning individually

chose to stop consuming say drugs tested on humans and animals or records produced by a corporation involved in arms production, despite the unevenness of capitalist production, it would probably make only a small difference. Government and business can well increase subsidy and investment to deliberately maintain the existing levels of production in such industries for whatever strategic purpose. They can just stockpile the produce, shift it to other markets, invent spurious alternative uses and needs for it, deliberately let it rot...

Individual ordinary consumers have virtually no control of; "the depletion of the rainforest", "the hole in the ozone layer", "the oppression of such and such a people" and all the other doomsday guilt clouds the spectacle now uses against us to manipulate more work and impose austerity and sell us new alternative products. The level of suffering and cruelty under patriarchy/capitalism is not really influenced much at all if I leave my lightbulb on or off, or if I buy a packet of vegan biscuits instead of a packet of cheesy wotsits. To the contrary by inventing new alternative markets for things like "cruelty free toiletries" or "fair trade foods" capitalism develops more exploitation and as a result creates new cruelty. Focussing on the individual consumer choices obscures class contradictions. Standing outside macdonalds on a saturday morning picket and shouting at customers for eating there is not class struggle but declassé protest activism. It is also very sad, I have done it myself far too many times, I know what I am talking about.

IMPRISONED OR LIBERATED?



"The circle can be broken but only if people want to break it and know how to... It is up to them to break their own circle. No self discipline= no self respect. A person with no self respect can have no respect for others,= no principles= no cause= no solidarity."

Reg Wilson

HMP Wakefield.

UNCONDITIONED FREEDOM...
THE SYSTEM IS IN THE MIND
AND WHAT'S IN THE MIND
DOESN'T EXIST!

The tobacco industry exploits and poisons and kills human proletarians the world over. I've no doubt it also destroys resources and harms the environment. I know a lot of comrades who smoke tobacco. They smoke it because they like the sensation, it helps them relax, they like the ritual of rolling up and lighting up. But they also smoke because they are addicted. Some of them try very hard to give up. Some manage to give up for good, some try to give up for a while and then find themselves smoking again. Smokers can be quite aware smoking is bad for them and that the tobacco industry is evil but through force of habit carry on nonetheless. Should we rage at the smoking comrades in our midst like some hardcore consumer vegans rage at those of us who eat honey? We could do, it would make us feel good and righteous, but it wouldn't help create communist relations, nor would it actually successfully stop the tobacco industry anyway. And what about about comrades who spend half their money on alcohol? what about an intervention against them for supporting the breweries? Should coffee be banned in anarchist communes? What am I ranting on about? On the consumer terrain we are all guilty to a greater or lesser extent of collaboration with the cruelty inherent in capitalist production. It is on the terrain of workers' revolt against work, seizing space and resources and creating communist alternatives that lines are more clearly drawn in practise.



One of many completely bunk theories I'm working on at the moment is the idea that the revolution is in fact a fifty year process and it has already started. It started thirty years ago with the revolutionary upheavals and international wave of struggle and radicalism in the sixties and it still has another twenty years to complete. Right now we are in the grip of an ongoing stalemate between a crisis ridden global capitalism and a temporarily contained incomplete social revolution. The attacks and restructuring imposed by capital over the last twenty five years are in part a response to this incomplete revolution. But the faster capital keeps changing everything to prevent revolt the more it creates disruption and new impulses and possibilities for revolutionary change.

Despite being crap this theory is useful in several ways. It deals with the question of a "transitional stage" before communism as already being de facto in progress. Also if comrades despair and sigh when is this revolution thing ever going to happen you can fob them off with a "its already started dear, didn't you know." It also gives you plenty of time to organise your post revolution reunions and garden parties.

Capitalism as a system is uneven and disjointed, it is never coherent or uniform. Likewise the proletariat it creates and builds up beneath it is uneven and disjointed, there is no one big proletarian movement, party or historic event that can overthrow the capitalist system in one swoop. Revolution is a drawn out process involving as much spontaneity and chaos as design.

Here's my thesis on Russia (everyone's got one these days): Russia is a very big place where people balance bottles on their heads and do very awkward strenuous dancing that can't be good for their sciatica. The soviet union was really a secret gangster capitalist market economy masquerading in public as a state socialist collectivised economy. The market was run by sargeant Bilko like hustlers wheeling and dealing in the military industrial complex and the like. Indeed it was only the hidden parallel capitalist market place, the "sargeant Bilko economy", that enabled the collective industries and enterprises to function at all. Capitalism in the U.S.S.R. was

weak and underdeveloped compared to the west but it was capitalist nonetheless. Whether or not there was any temporary or partial "suspension of the law of value" during the period of the soviet union, with their tanks and art treasures and bureaucratic power and uranium and plutonium the soviet ruling elite were objectively part of the bourgeois class in relation to the world proletariat. Basic capitalist forms such as money, commodities, wage labour, were a part of daily life for millions throughout the period of 1917-1990.

There are many bad theories, stalinist, orthodox trot, weirdo maverick trot, that explain the soviet union as the socialist paradise, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, a bureaucratic collectivist twilight zone, but all insisting the soviet union was not capitalist. All these theories are dishonest as they aim to conceal the bourgeois class interests of lenin and co. once they had seized state power in Russia. If the soviet union was not capitalist then the west would have had to militarily invade and colonise its territory at the end of the cold war before it could start to invest in Russia and the former soviet states. The fact it did not need to do so gives the game away that there was already a capitalism there to start investing in.

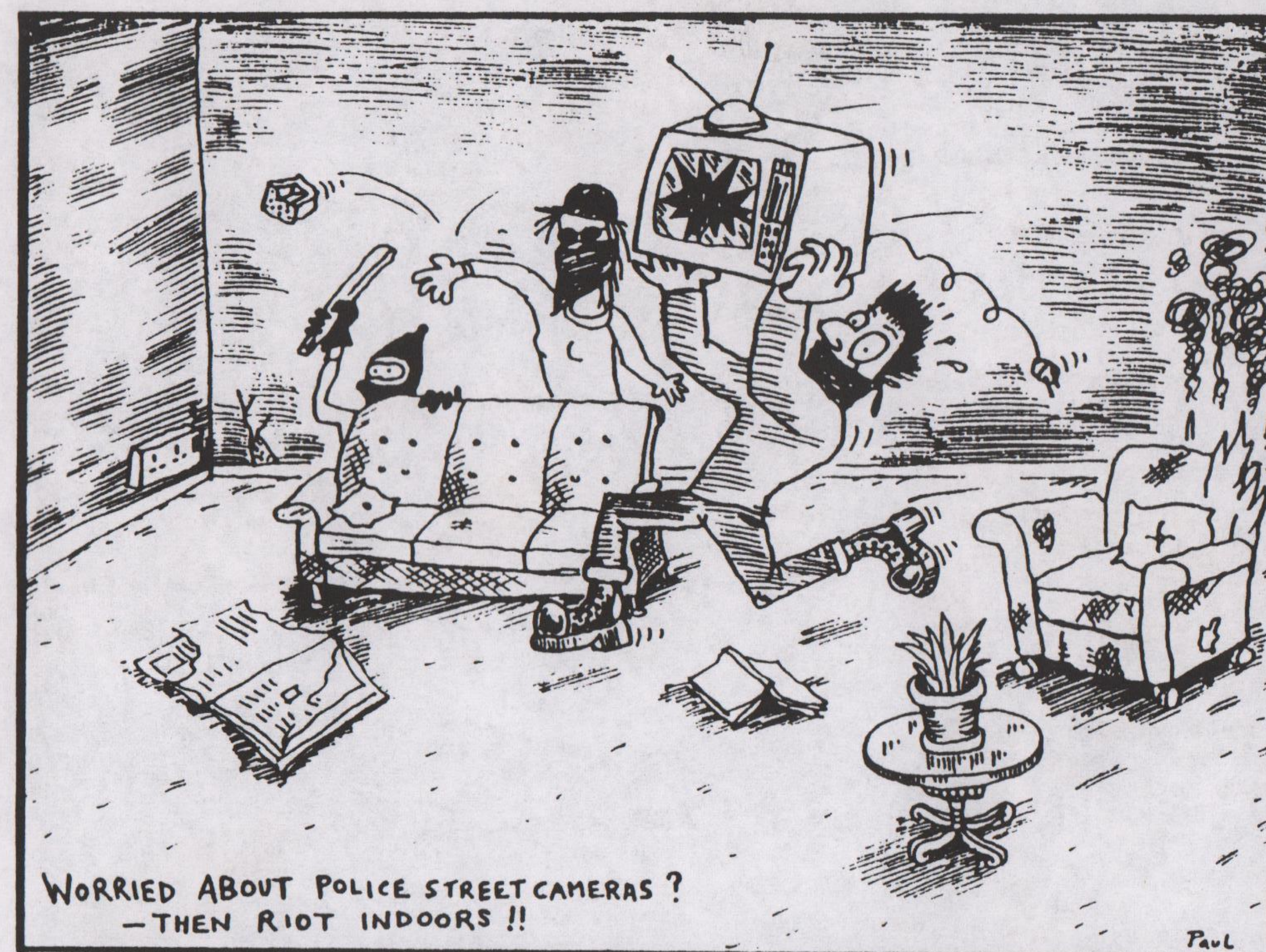
"The executive of the modern state is but a committee for the managing of the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" -This orthodox marxist analysis of the state has always been crap.

The modern state is not a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie, to the contrary the state is just one particularly big powerful capitalist corporation dealing in fundamental monopoly commodities such as legitimisation, law and order, defence, protection. Other capitalists may defer to the state and set their watches by the state, and the state may favour certain other capitalists. But the state serves its own partisan interests as a bourgeois faction, not the interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole. There is in fact no such thing as the "common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" as the bourgeoisie is not coherent and cannot really agree on anything in common. Some capitalists are permanently at war with the state and vice versa. Some non-state capitalists are powerful enough to dictate to states.

State money is not just "revenue" but can include profit from the sale of its various commodities; taxes in exchange for legitimisation and protection, or the sale of state assets and state industries, armaments, licences, lottery tickets, get out of jail free cards... State expenditure is not a drain on capitalist profits, to the contrary, it is a particular capitalist investing its money in longterm strategic investments in order, security, social engineering. Arms spending becomes good hardnosed longterm capitalist investment. Tanks provide new opportunities for accumulating surplus value. Tanks can put down workers' revolt and push up productivity, tanks can win new territory and markets in battle, tanks can blackmail other governments into giving economic aid, tanks can be used to train technicians and engineers, tanks can be stockpiled for many years and then sold for a profit at the right moment on the world arms market. This also goes some way to help explain an "irrational" thing like the prison system.

Today when the capitalist state intervenes in the market it is not suspending the law of value, it is imposing the law of its own value.

world social revolution!



Capital: Self reproducing and self expanding command over future labour. Capitalism, the system based on the rule of capital, commodity relations, wage labour. Capitalist democracy: a dictatorship of the capitalist market, reducing us to lonely atomised voter-consumers free to compete and collide, the opposite of real community.

Communism: Equal solidarity born out of struggle and revolt against capital. World human community. Universal abundance and free access to all the necessities of life, space, resources, materials, food,... Real life begins with personal experiments with your fellow proles. And such experiments sometimes lead to bigger things....

OK, much of what I've written here is a bit crap. Isolation leads to potty ideas. However I'm going to have another bash and bring out a mag compiling stuff from a number of contributors as well as myself. I'm planning on being usefully unemployed for the next few months but I can see this wage labour thing is probably going to hit me again by the end of spring. So the theme for this mag will be along the lines of comrades' personal experiences of job blues and workplace resistance. Tell me how you dealt with your job from hell, whether an all out stoppage or an individual skive. And "workplace" includes the kitchen and the bus stop queue. So send in short articles and stories about your battles with work and what if anything it has got to do with world social revolution by early april 1999 (to Paul, 22 Rangewood Ave, Reading, RG30). I'll probably call it "Treadmill" (as opposed to "Armchair") or something like that and I'll aim to have it hot off the press to inspire folks with on mayday. And don't forget to include; 1.Humour 2.Optimism and 3.The correct and consistant historic political analysis and revolutionary programme.

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