

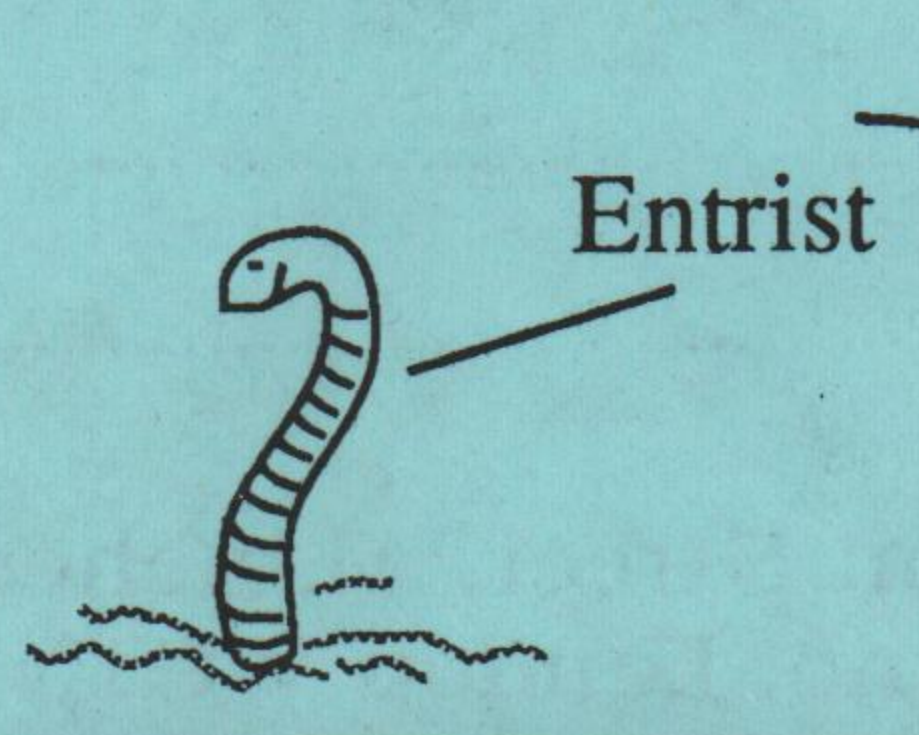
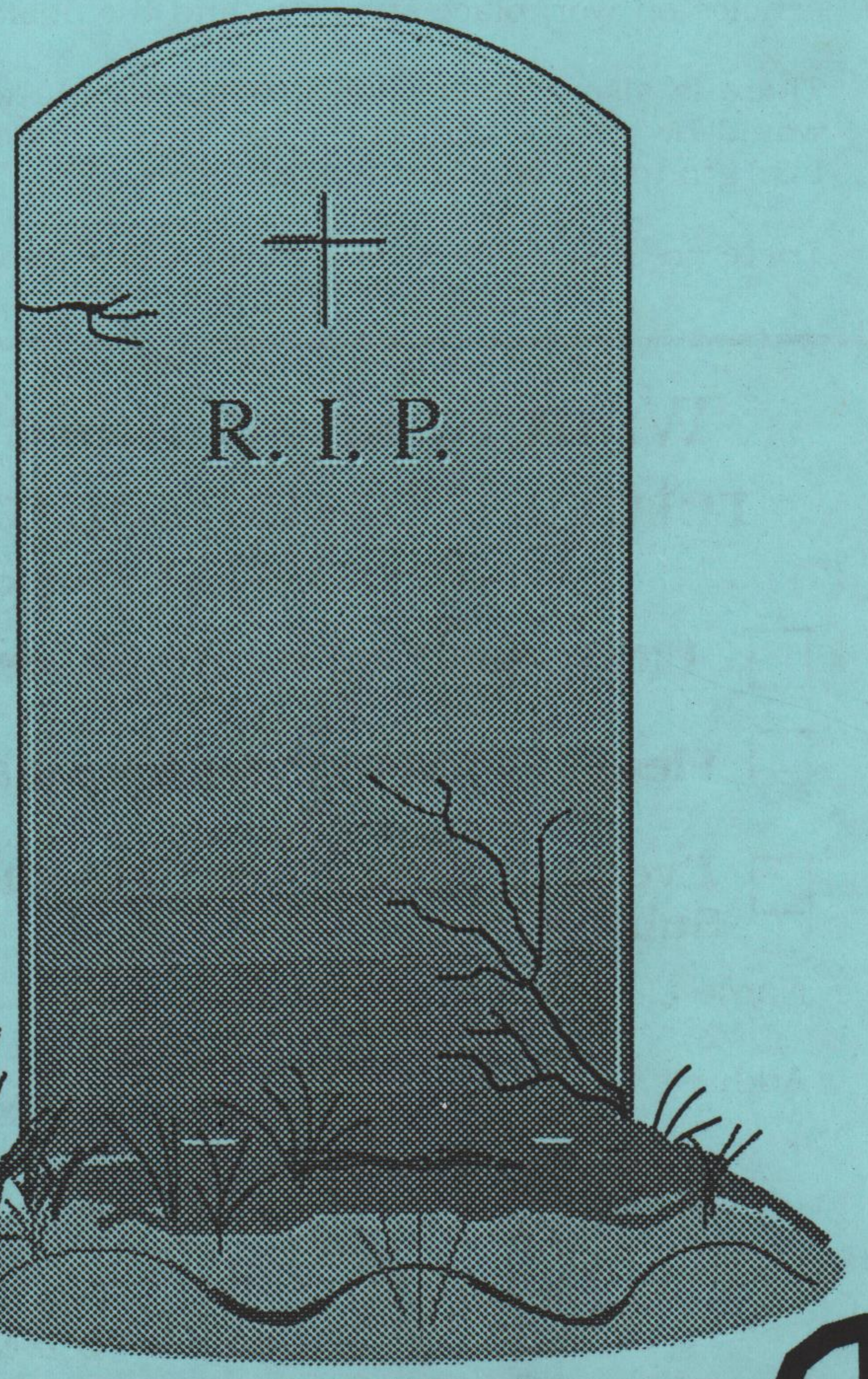
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Subversion

Issue 15

FREE!

We say: **Labour
must follow
John
Smith's
lead!**



*In this
issue:*

* South Africa * Racism * Unions vs. the Workers * Letters * and more!

The Anti-Leader Page

This is not a Left-Wing paper. A Left-Wing paper would tell you that the Labour Party and Trade Unions are falling down on the job. Their job is to defend the working class and they're not doing it well enough. They need to listen to the advice of *real* Left-Wingers.

A Left-Wing paper would (probably) tell you that South Africa is now free, although it still needs to go a bit further.

A Left-Wing paper would also explain how the world would be a wonderful place if racism and fascism and sexism were got rid of. But to get full socialism would still need a further step. Just a little one.

And a Left-Wing paper would say other things, like: National Liberation will stop workers from being oppressed; the Workers' State in Russia is in danger! (optional) and, most of all, the solution to all the problems of us workers is to accept the leadership of the Socialist / Communist / Revolutionary / Workers / Party / League / Group / Organisation (delete as necessary).

This is an anti-Left (or Ultra-Left, or Libertarian) Communist paper.

We say that the Labour Party and Trade Unions are part of Capitalism - their Working Class image gives them the advantage that they can lead us astray more easily, and far from falling down on the job they are holding us down quite effectively. We must fight them as our class enemy.

We say that the South African Ruling Class is now free - the black part of it can now get their share of the profits and the white part has greater stability to enjoy. The workers have gained nothing.

We say that racism, fascism and sexism are just tools of the Capitalists. Some times they play these things up and some times they play them down, but our struggle to be free needs to be *much, much* more than just opposing some of the Capitalists' tools, even though they be the nastiest ones.

We say: National Liberation is just freedom for a new squad of our jailers; Russia has never been a 'Workers' State' but has always been the enemy of the workers; and the solution to our problems is to struggle against the totality of Capitalism (whether it shows its Right face or its Left face) and to keep full control of our struggles. No-one can be led to freedom - we must lead ourselves. Only thus can we achieve a classless, Communist society. **Our aim in Subversion** is to be a part of this process.

In this issue there is an article on the 'New' South Africa, an article about pro-Capitalist anti-racism, and several articles on workplace struggles and the obstacle of the Trade Unions.

There is also a discussion article, "Revolutionaries in the Workplace". It looks at how new, alternative unions would be just as bad as the old ones. It was written from the practical experience of the author in a 'Rank and File' group working in the Post Office.

There are also articles on Poverty, CFCs and correspondence with our readers.

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The New South Africa

(the Same Old System)

Nelson Mandela has not disappointed us. Here's what we said four years ago (SUBVERSION no. 3), not long after he was released from prison:

"When the MPLA, Frelimo, Zanu, Sandinistas etc. came to power the masses discovered the same thing they did after the French Revolution - plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose (the more it changes, the more it stays the same).

"...When [groups like this] come to power the result is always the same. They get on with the business of running capitalism and exploiting the working class.

"...When the ANC comes to power it will be exactly the same, only they're being a bit more obvious about it than most. This is because of the dovetailing of interests between them and the Nationalist Party at this moment in history."

We knew he could be relied on.



"I just couldn't let Subversion down..."

So let's look at what has happened so far:

The Myth: The glorious tide of democracy would sweep over the land, consigning the parties of white privilege to the scrap heap, crushing the Zulu fascists and bestowing the bounty of material well-being on the mass of black workers.

The Reality: None of the above

has happened, nor looks likely to happen.

The most striking characteristic of the ANC government is the extent to which it has "bent over backward" to accommodate the other factions, in particular the Nationalist Party and the Zulu fascists of Inkatha. So much for the scrap heap.

The first budget of the new government was described as "cautious" - i.e. it is quite acceptable to the white old guard. Notably it retains VAT on basic foodstuffs which was a particularly hated policy among workers when the old government brought it in - their hardship will be none the sweeter for the letters ANC in the government's name. So much for the mass of black workers.

Mandela has also lost no time in promoting the idea of stepping up the Arms Trade - whoever in future is killed by military produce from South Africa will no doubt rest easier in knowing they have been killed by a non-racial bullet or shell.

The famous first democratic election was also not all it was cracked up to be. It is clear that in Natal there was wholesale fraud - the final published results bore no relationship to how people actually voted and were simply agreed between the main parties as an additional negotiating point. It has also been argued, quite plausibly in our view, that the *whole* election result throughout the country was agreed in the same way - this would explain the remarkable delay in releasing the figures. So much for "democracy". (Bourgeois democracy is of course a con trick, giving the form of *legal* equality to a situation of total *inequality* of power and property - it originated as a means of enshrining the rule of the capitalist class, with the support of the rest of society who

imagine they are "equal" and that therefore it is *their* system too. The point here is that *even that* is sorely lacking in the "new" South Africa. In the same vein Mandela has also ensured a continuing institutional role for the Zulu monarchy, publicly praising the king - today even the left don't believe that the ANC is socialist, but the ironic thing is that Mandela is not even any good by the standards of Bourgeois democracy!)

So why does the old con trick keep on working?

Movements like the ANC, that is to say "democratic" or "national liberation" movements will keep on succeeding in conning the working class as long as the basic lies of Bourgeois democracy keep on being believed.

The basic points that cannot be repeated too often are that:

* Workers have no country - all countries belong to the capitalists.

* Bourgeois democracy is just a fig leaf for the tyranny of the capitalist class. The vote is a choice between which of our rulers shall rule us - it is not worth having, and is indeed an extra stick to beat us.

* The fake-socialists of the Left tirelessly promote policies which will lead workers down a blind alley, for the greater good of capitalism. As a part of that they are unswerving in their devotion to movements of the "democratic" or "national liberation" type, and despite often criticising them when they come to power if they too blatantly repress the working class, they will *always* support every new one that comes on the scene.

* The only course that our class can take is to resolutely oppose all states and all factions of capitalism, whether fascistic or

Continued on page 6

What's WRONG with anti-racism

Subversion is not anti-racist because "we are all human beings" or "we all have the same colour blood" or "we should all be able to live together, respecting each others different cultures, religions, colour, etc". Subversion is anti-racist because racism is one of the ideological tools used by our rulers to keep the international working class divided and unaware of the thing which binds all the worlds workers together: the fact that we are the working class; that we must sell our labour power to survive; that we are wage slaves. Racism has been used to justify genocide and slavery in the past but now it is used to help keep class consciousness at bay. Instead of seeing the world as being made up of bosses and workers we are meant to see it filled up with "foreigners". We are meant to see all the people who live in France as one group, instead of as it really is: a small group of exploiters and the mass of exploited, just as it is in Britain. Just as *we* are encouraged to identify with the very same scum who rip us off, make us work, sack us, send us to war, we are also encouraged to identify "foreign" workers with the very scumbags who rip *them* off. We are meant to blame migrant workers for local unemployment. We are meant to fear everyone in Japan or Germany because they are surely conspiring to wreck "our economy", aren't they?

Divided and ruled

Just as racism in its basic forms helps dilute and divert working class consciousness so does the "anti-racist" formula: "we are all human beings". This sort of argument tries to say that "we" are all in it together, "we" means bosses and workers, the leaders and the led, the powerful and the powerless. Once again we (the working class) are supposed to identify with our exploiters (the bosses/bourgeoisie) and THEIR murdering economy, capitalism.

This use of the word "we" to describe all humans is a clever way of denying class, notice how Greenies say that "we" have ruined the planet. Are they stupid? Do they really think that all humans are to blame, all the masses of people who have been thrown off the land, all the masses of proletarians who have starved, been killed by poverty, forced to work like slaves all their lives? Anyone with half an ounce of sense can see that the great majority of the worlds population has never had any control over even their own lives let alone the actions of those people who live on our backs. Anyone who uses the word "we" to describe every person in the world either has no idea that there is an exploiting class and an exploited class, or wants to have at least some say in the ordering about and bleeding dry of the working class. And this is certainly the aim of left-wingers who say "we are all human beings", as well as the "green" movement.

Pro-capitalist anti-racism

The anti-racism of the Labour Movement is a pro-capitalism

anti-racism, you won't catch the leader of the TUC saying that racism is a tool used by the ruling class to keep the international working class divided. The leader of the TUC will say that racism is a cancer that divides *society*, and that it is stirred up by right wing elements. Yes, racism may be stirred up by capitalism's right wing defenders, but society is already divided into classes - only a defender of capitalism and the present order of things could call racism a threat to society. There is NOTHING about this society worth defending but it is essential for workers to fight racism in the working class as part of the struggle to raise class consciousness and unite against capitalism. While the Labour Movement might defend a black member of the boss class who is under racist attack we could not. What we would do is use the incident to point out the fact that racism is a tool of the ruling class to keep us confused and in our place, but we could never defend this black boss or her/his "right" to trade, give orders, make profits, etc. - if we defended the rights of anyone to lord it over us we would be anti-working class.



A bit of anti-racism never did our careers any harm

What is race anyway?

At the beginning of this article an example of racism was given which involved only attitudes between France and Britain. Some people might say that this is not racism because the French and the British are of the same "race", they might call it "chauvinism" instead. The people who argue this obviously think that there are real differences biological between people in the world, they would categorise all people with the same skin colour into a specific racial type (African, Eurasian etc.) therefore arguing that "racism" can only happen between these different coloured groups and that only "chauvinism" can happen between people of different countries but who share the same colour. Other people argue that racism can only be defined in terms of a "dominant country" exploiting a "minor country", or the legacy of this exploitation. Thus British people can only be racist to people from all its ex-colonies, although in effect they really mean anyone in those countries that Britain is perceived to be superior to. In this philosophy people from the ex-colonies cannot be racist towards white British people, what we might perceive as racism (e.g., "fuck off, you white bastard") is, in fact, anti-imperialism!

Class

It's not worth trying to find your way around the torturous and inane logic of the proponents of the ideas described above. If we want to understand what racism really has to do with our daily lives, what the reality of it is, then we must look at it from a class perspective. We must understand who actually benefits from it and why it is an enemy of class struggle. Never mind all the dubious *philosophical* ins and outs of it: racism sets workers against workers and obscures who our real enemies are - the manipulators and benefactors of a divided and confused working class.

Papist Plots and Anti-Semitism

If you want any proof of the good work racism has done for the bosses you only have to take a

cursory glance through history. In the 1840's and '50's the Tory Party began a campaign against Irish workers in Britain in order to divide the Chartist Movement. Tory henchmen carried out several atrocities against workers in the North and West which were blamed on Irish workers. Meanwhile the ruling class tried to whip up fear of "Papist Plots" and migrant labour taking work from "the English". While the specific incidents have been forgotten the effects of this campaign to divide the working class are still evident in England. It's no coincidence that anti-Semitism began to be encouraged in Germany after World War One, things had to be done to fragment a proletariat that had created a revolution in 1919 and might try again in the economic depression of the 1920's. It was funny how a couple of years ago we heard lots about strikes in the new "unified" Germany but now most of the news concerns the "rising tide of racism". It has proved very handy for the German Labour Movement and the bosses in general to be able to urge workers to see "society" under threat from nazi types. It's a brutal way of diverting a rising class combativity, and who benefits? The bosses of course.

Recession

In general, it seems, we are likely to see more racism when the economy is in "recession" and when it seems likely that workers might fight back. Since the Trafalgar Square riot and the defeat of the Poll Tax we have seen a marked rise in actual racist attacks, media coverage and the Labour Movement getting back on the anti-racist bandwagon. Is it a coincidence?

Today racism does have fairly deep roots in the working class but racism and nationalism tend to be pushed aside during rising class struggle. What we must ask ourselves is: who would benefit from a dissipation of the spirit of rebellion that was brought on by the Poll Tax? Certainly the bosses and certainly the Labour Movement, of which even the left wing (Militant) crapped themselves because of the riot. Instead of getting out of hand, thinking that if we beat the Poll

Tax we could beat other things, instead of escalating the class struggle, it's much better for us to worry about rising nazism and go on well-policed and harmless marches where we can hear our Labour Movement leaders going on about the "threat to society" posed by racism. But they don't really want racism to go away, just as they don't want capitalism, oppression and wage slavery to go away either. And racism is so useful to world capitalism that only a fool could believe that they'd let it disappear. Racism can only be defeated in class struggle and only the destruction of global capitalism and the creation of true human community will put it to rest forever, because no longer will it serve any use.

Opportunity Knocks

It will be argued, of course, that things like Equal Opportunities [specifically, the Commission for Racial Equality, 1976] have done a lot to erode racist attitudes and allow black workers, as well as women and the disabled, to "do well" in the workplace. In fact bosses in large companies (including local councils, Royal Mail, etc.) see Equal Opportunities as a numbers game.

Managers are given targets for the percentage of black workers they should employ and if they achieve these targets they look much better to their superiors. It goes something like this: the Government realises that black people need to be better integrated into the workforce (why does the State like black police officers?), so they set up things like the Commission for Racial Equality, which, very handily, makes the Government look like it disagrees with racism;

Employers are then encouraged to set up an Equal Opportunities policy, being persuaded that they don't really want to look like an old fashioned racist and sexist company, do they? And anyway, local councils and Government might not buy products and services from companies that don't pursue Equal Opportunities, they've got the black, women and disabled vote to think of, after all. And so

POVERTY IN THE USA

managers recruit more "under-represented" people, not because anyone in this whole chain is actually anti-racist but simply because everyone in the chain is looking after their own interests (i.e. their profits or power).

We mustn't let ourselves get caught up in their game. The very least that Equal Opportunities might have done for black workers in Britain is have made it easier for them to get a job now. But even this is not true, is it? There is a far greater percentage of black people unemployed than white people, let's face it, it was easier for black people to get work in the 1950's, when there was no such thing as Equal Opportunities!

The capitalists are playing games with us. Black workers are supposed to defend a "society" that has Equal Opportunities written into law, that says it is anti-racist, and yet black workers are worse off now than they were 20 or 30 years ago (as all workers are, of course), and for all this Equal Opportunities bullshit we now have another "rising tide of racism". Racism and "anti-racism": for our rulers both are tricks to keep us under the heel.

South Africa, continued "democratic", whether right or left. Our only goal must be the destruction of capitalist society itself, worldwide, and the creation of a truly free and equal society, without oppressions or divisions, where no-one has power over another, but *all* of us have power over our lives and over our destiny.

This is what *we* mean by the word Communism.

Let us conclude with another quote from what we wrote four years ago - let the final words of that article be the final words of this one:

**DOWN WITH DE KLERK
DOWN WITH MANDELA
FORWARD TO COMMUNIST
REVOLUTION.**

As the economic crisis continues to bite, despite the official claims of "recovery", the US Budget Deficit likewise continues to grow. In Britain we've seen our "own" government hitting at the living standards of the poorest to try to decrease the UK's deficit and reduce public borrowing. Something similar is happening in the USA. One of the current popular pastimes amongst the rich and powerful is to blame pensioners! They claim that pensioners are taking more than their "fair" share from the US Treasury. This is a process we are familiar with here, with the media blaming "social security scroungers" and "single mothers".

The media are trying to create an image of pensioners living in the lap of luxury at taxpayers expense. Two different reports show how false this is.

The Urban Institute reports that there are nearly 1.9 US pensioners who have to choose whether to buy food or medicine, 1.3 million who have to choose between buying food and paying rent or other bills and 1.1 million who go whole days with nothing to eat.

The US Census Bureau reports that there are nearly 4 million over 65 living in poverty in the USA. Poverty hits women especially hard. One in five over 75 live in poverty. It hits ethnic minorities even worse. 43% of black women over 75 live in poverty!

All this in the richest nation in history.



It's not just pensioners. One in ten Americans has to use a soup kitchen at some time. This picture shows a church-run kitchen in Birmingham, Alabama. Children are among the hardest hit by hunger.

PIT SENSE OR NO SENSE?

Pit Sense Versus the State - a history of militant miners in the Doncaster area, by David John Douglass. Phoenix Press, £4.50.

This thin volume unfortunately does not live up to its title. Most of the book is a recital of union resolutions and a commentary on the activities of Doncaster miners in the N.U.M. during the 1984/85 national strike. For those not familiar with the mining industry or the structure and

those of genuine revolutionaries. Douglass makes a reasonable job of exposing the left's contradictory and arrogant attitude towards workers in struggle but his position in the N.U.M prevents him from dealing adequately with revolutionary criticism.

A reasonable demolition job on Douglass's arguments has already been done in the Wildcat pamphlet "outside and against the unions"

the action is to maintain their control not promote the workers' interests.

Secondly, capitalism is made up of numerous sectional interests. The ruling class is only united when faced with a potentially revolutionary opposition. In normal circumstances different sections of the ruling class are at each others throats. Different sections will be on top at different times. It is quite possible for trade union officials or a particular group of trade union officials to have to fight for *their* interests or even their survival *within* capitalism. That may even require wheeling in their members to do battle on *their* behalf. In some cases, and we suggest this applied to the miners and the NUM in 1984/5, *both* the workers and the union officials and their organisation can be under threat at the *same* time. In this situation understanding the *different* interests of each when both are involved in a 'life or death' struggle is much more difficult, but none-the-less necessary. The old adage that "our enemies' enemies are not necessarily our friends" is worth remembering.



Friends of the miners queue up for their copy of Dave Douglass's new book.

functioning of the N.U.M. it is also quite difficult to follow, lacking as it does a preliminary chronology of the strike or annotated diagram of the N.U.M.'s organisational structure.

Indeed the purpose behind the writing of this book is difficult to fathom until you reach the last 3 short chapters which are largely a duplication of material previously published in the pamphlet 'Refracted Perspective'. It then becomes apparent that it is an attempt to provide some documentary evidence in support of Douglass's defence of trade unionism and the N.U.M. in particular against criticism by revolutionaries. Basically he believes that "unofficial" action is parallel to and supportive of "official union action, rather than the beginning of a move outside and against the unions, as we believe. Partly this is done by falsely amalgamating the views of the "left" (particularly the trotskysts with

(60p from us, or direct from Wildcat, BM Cat, London, WC1N 3XX). Other useful material on this debate can also be found in "Echanges" (from BP241, 75866 PARIS CEDEX 18, FRANCE in English and French). We don't intend to repeat all these arguments here but a few points are worth making.

In saying that trade unions and trade unionism are a barrier to the successful extension and development of the class struggle we are *not* saying that unions will *never* support or even organise industrial action.

Firstly, the trade union officials if they are to maintain their role as the workers' 'representatives' and junior partners in the management of capitalism must be able to demonstrate their control of their 'constituency'. This means that in the face of militancy amongst their members 'action' of some kind has to be proposed - but the *purpose* of

Thirdly, whilst we think it is necessary in any major struggle for workers to move outside the union framework, this process can often happen in practice, in only a halting and partial way. It is up to revolutionaries to encourage this process not try to tie it back into the union framework as Douglass wants to.

And lastly it is true to say that there are many aspects to the nature of the British coal mining industry and its relationship to miners and the union which make the case of the NUM not entirely typical of British and other unions. Douglass continually makes the mistake of generalising from the experience of the NUM rather than looking at the actual experience of other workers and the unions they belong to.

All in all we have to say that the writing of this book was a wasted opportunity.

CFCs ~ still with us after all these years

Two decades ago scientists first confirmed that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) depleted the ozone layer in the earth's upper atmosphere that protects animal and plant life from the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation. By that time CFCs had been widely used as a cooling fluid for refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners for four decades and for years as a solvent and spray propellant.

In 1985, scientists were surprised to discover that a hole in the ozone layer had developed over Antarctica and that it was growing nearly every year. Not long ago, a second thinning of the ozone layer was discovered over the Northern Hemisphere. The 1980s were also the years of the upsurge in "green" politics. Moves to ban the use of CFCs were claimed by Green politicians to be the result of their propaganda, consumer pressure and the victory of common sense. Actually, by this time, a number of large companies had discovered that by marketing "ozone friendly" products they could steal market share from their competitors.

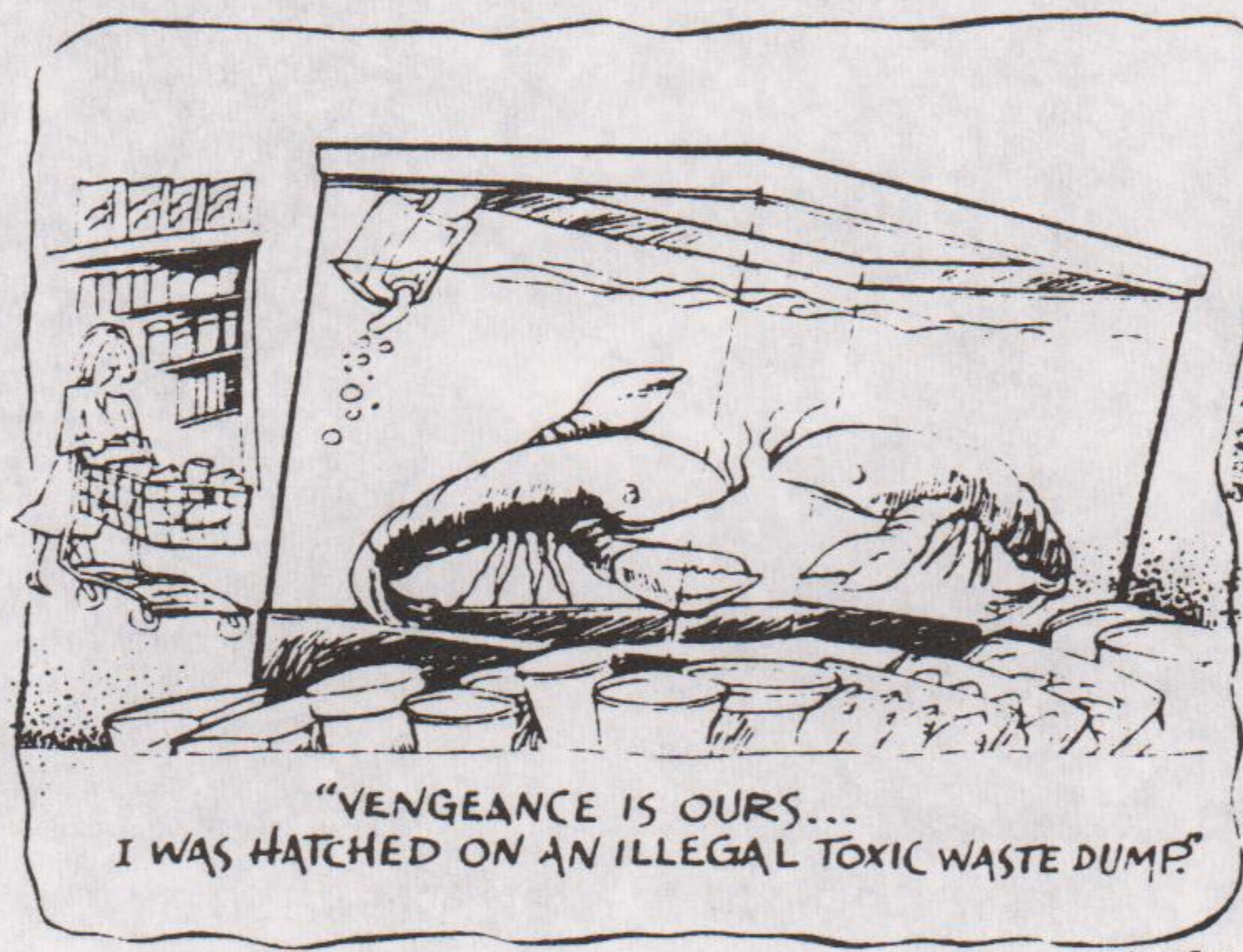
As soon as "benign" alternatives had been developed governments moved to "action" and an international agreement called the Montreal Protocol was signed in 1987, which mandated cutting CFC production in half by 1999.

But it turns out that the Montreal Protocol wasn't what it seemed to be. Ozone depletion is occurring at a more rapid rate than ever. This is often blamed on developing countries in the so-called "Third World" still using cheap CFCs. Greens are then led into the xenophobic and racist politics of blaming the problem on nasty foreigners.

Reality, however, is different. It is apparent that there are powerful capitalist interests in industry and the state which are acting to allow the

destruction of the environment to continue. Important amongst these are the chemical giants and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the USA.

CFC production has been cut in half, but the production of halocarbons increased. Typically, CFC producers have turned their attention to the next most profitable compounds in coming up with "alternatives" to CFCs. Du Pont, for example, has reportedly invested \$500 million in facilities for the production of hydrochloro-fluorocarbons (HCFCs) and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). These are hardly benign alternatives.



HFCs don't destroy the ozone layer. But they have 3,200 times the effect of carbon dioxide on global warming - the trend (caused presently mostly by the carbon dioxide released by capitalist industry and automobiles) toward ever greater temperatures that could eventually melt the polar ice caps, flood low-lying coastal areas and reduce the temperate zones to deserts. HCFCs do damage to the ozone layer, but at a rate one-sixth to one-fourth of CFCs. In 1992 the industrialized nations agreed to phase out HCFCs - by the year 2030.

The list of available alternatives for virtually every present commercial application of CFCs, HFCs and HCFCs is long

and growing.

Even when alternatives are cheaper (which is not always the case), their uptake has been slow. The US and British states has made sure that new products are held up until after existing CFC producers have had the chance to produce their own alternatives. The EPA has been a particularly effective forum for protecting the interests of companies like DuPont and ICI. A spokesman for one producer said that his company's alternative air conditioning product had been delayed. "We have felt blocked from the marketplace until after the chemical companies established themselves as viable substitutes".

In a sane world these substances would not be produced. Increased ultraviolet radiation can cause increased skin cancer and cataracts, weaken the immune system in humans and other animals, and diminish and destroy crops - and recent research shows these effects to be much stronger than previously thought. Sunscreens, once thought to be

effective against the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation, do little to prevent damage to the human immune system, new research shows. As former United Nations Environmental Program chairman Mostafa Tolba recently observed, the sun's ultraviolet radiation may turn out to be "AIDS from the sky."

This whole sorry story is a testament to the antisocial nature of the capitalist system. Like Nero fiddling while Rome burned, the capitalist state is fiddling too - trying to maintain the profit margins of some of the dominant elements of the capitalist system while the risks of ozone depletion increasingly endanger life as we know it.

REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE WORKPLACE

The first thing to state is that the last thing **SUBVERSION** would want to encourage is the creation of a *rank and file movement*. Rank and file movements are always and without question *union movements*. They are inspired by the mistaken notion that The Unions have *failed us*, instead of the truth: which is that all unions are our enemy. [Unions are organisations that negotiate with the bosses over the ways and rates at which we are exploited, but in no way do they object to the principle of our exploitation. Unions support capitalism and work, and need capitalism to survive.]

DAM RANK AND FILISTS!

Take the case of the postal workers' **COMMUNICATION WORKERS GROUP**:-

The CWG was set up by members of the Direct Action Movement (DAM) and was a rank and file postal workers group. The DAM promotes anarcho-syndicalism as a means of working class organisation. Anarcho-syndicalists want to organise unions democratically and imbue them with anarchist politics. Such unions, imbued with anarchist methods and ideals, anarcho-syndicalists argue, will be revolutionary.

CWG never got to the stage where the DAM members pushed for it to become an actual union. CWG, through its bulletin, Communication Worker (CW), aimed to inform and radicalise postal workers, to emphasise that active solidarity across trade, industry and union divides was essential if victories were to be won. In the tradition of rank and file groups CWG was open to all militant workers, including low-level union officials, i.e. shop stewards.

For most of the time CWG worked on the basis of an agreement between the various political tendencies. These ranged from anarchist, or anti-state communist to trotskyist, as well as the original anarcho-syndicalism. As time went by these divisions became more pronounced. Eventually we had to re-emphasise the groups broader rank and file nature by drawing up a basic aims and principles. Due to the variance of views within the organisation these common denominators had to be fairly low and it was generally felt that the aims and principles were virtually meaningless as soon as we had written them.

COMPROMISING POSITIONS

This compromise didn't last long. Some of us felt we needed to make deeper and clearer criticisms of unions and rank and filism. We all saw the potential (however distant!) for a group like CWG to eventually replace the union - in small ways, over certain areas, or totally. To some this was highly desirable of course, but others had misgivings. We realised that we could only replace the existing postal workers union (UCW) with *another union*, and if CWG expanded and became more successful this is eventually what the group would become.

The question became: how to work in a rank and file workers group, clearly and consistently attacking the union, without letting the group turn itself into a reformist organisation or union. We liked to see ourselves as a revolutionary group, but what would happen if we were flooded with militant, but reformist-minded workers? What if these workers wanted the group to articulate reformist demands? What if we gained more support in a workplace than the existing

union, would we then participate in a day to day dialogue with the employers, would we help make deals, would we accept the "legality" of exploitation as long as it was a "fairer" exploitation and one we had actively agreed to? Would we behave in just the same way as the old union once we had become the permanent workplace organisation?

The first problem we tried to tackle was the old one about being swamped by different minded individuals.

KEEPING OUT THE RIFF-RAFF

There was no formal way of preventing people from entering the group, we just hoped that if we didn't like someone's politics then the rest of the group would agree and that person wouldn't be let in. Obviously this wasn't very satisfactory. Some thought we shouldn't let SWP members in, for example, because they were actively pro-statist/authoritarian and they might try to hijack the group. Others thought we should let them in as long as they didn't stray out of line too much or try to push their politics down our throats, thus causing interminable political arguments. Others thought we should let them in since they were militant workers.

This problem was never satisfactorily resolved, the reason being that it lies at the crux of the argument over whether a rank and file group can be revolutionary. That is, whether a group that attracts an increasing number of non-revolutionaries can remain revolutionary in all its publications and interventions.

Our temporary solution was to print our basic aims and principles in the bulletin and hope the "wrong" sort of people wouldn't want to join anyway! [

In the event this never became a practical problem, partly due to the fact that the CWG didn't survive that much longer.

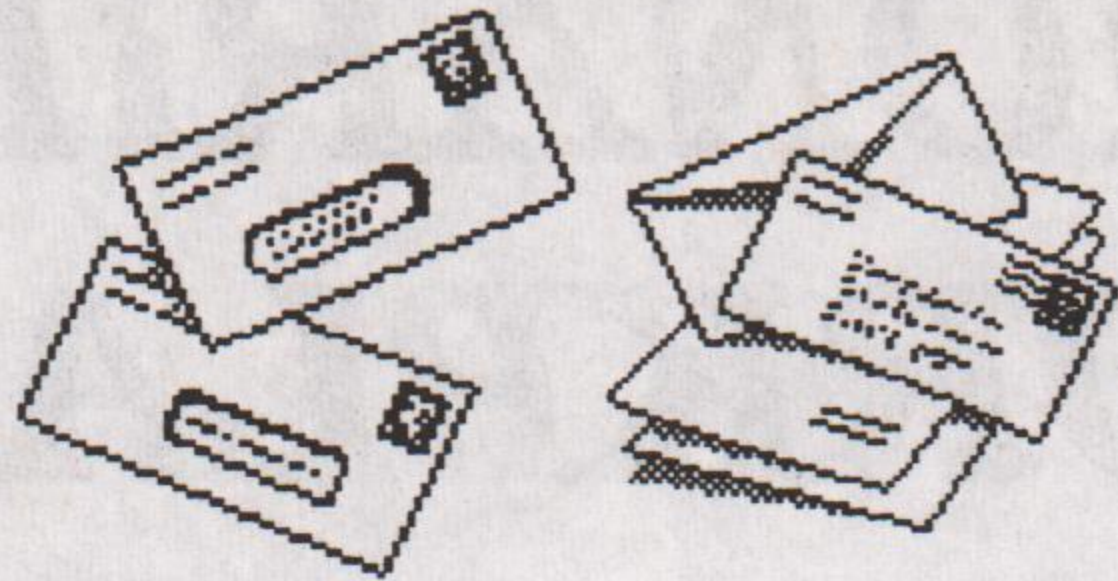
It has been argued that we should set up groups, encourage people to join, and hopefully their experience and learning in the group will turn them into revolutionaries. This might be alright if you have a hierarchical Party of thousands and are recruiting one or two people a month. But if a drastically smaller group (a few people), with egalitarian methods, recruited that many people as members then they would soon find themselves outweighed by the new recruits and unable to brainwash them fast enough to keep the group on its original lines!

We have enough reformist organisations around already, we don't want to inadvertently create any more.

To cut a long story short, the anti-union tendency finally realised the impossibility of keeping, or rather *making*, this rank and file group revolutionary. By no means did this mean we had fully developed our ideas but we did know that we no longer wanted to make the compromises towards unionism that were necessary in working with anarcho-syndicalists and leftists.

WORKPLACE GROUPS

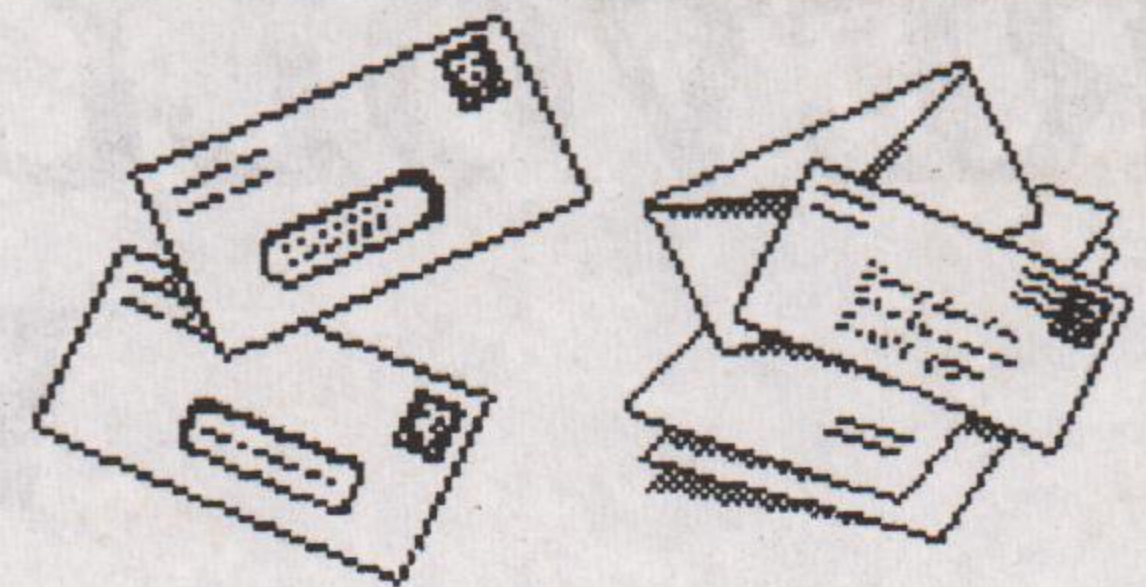
There is a knee-jerk reflex amongst a lot of revolutionaries when talking about "the workplace", they say that what we need are workplace groups. Beyond this though little practical is usually done or suggested. It's time to face up to the hollowness of this slogan and forget about trying (or talking about trying!) to set up our exalted Revolutionary Workplace Groups. What we *need* is more revolutionaries *everywhere*. If we have more revolutionaries everywhere a few, at least, are going to have jobs. Revolutionaries in their workplaces will respond to disputes, attempt to escalate workplaces struggles and generally try to show other



PROGRAMME

- 1) We are not an electoral front for a political party or parties. We aim to build the strength of the rank and file. We do not aim to capture full time union positions. Full time officials may not join this group.
- 2) A living wage for a 35 hour week, which would make non-essential overtime and the bonus system unnecessary. The present IWM bonus system is divisive, splitting worker from worker, office from office. All workers in the industry should receive the same wage.
- 3) No speedups, no redundancies, recruitment of more full time staff with a view to a further cut in hours. No loss of pay.
- 4) Union officials should be subject to a limited period in office, not exceeding 2 years. All officials to be elected by and constantly accountable to the membership. Officials to subject to immediate recall, and to be paid the average wage. No officials to spend the majority of time away from the shop floor.
- 5) All disputes to be controlled by the rank and file. Strikes to be run through regular mass meetings of all strikers. These meetings to coordinate picketing etc. Any and all delegates must be accountable to, and subject to immediate recall by the mass meetings. We are against postal ballots and secret negotiations.
- 6) A single union for all communication workers. We are against sectionalism and for the widest possible solidarity.

This was the original programme of the Communication Workers' Group



What We Stand For

- * We aim to build the strength of the rank and file. All struggles must be called and controlled by the rank and file.
- * We are independent of all political parties and trade union bureaucracies.
- * We aim to build an organisation involving all communication workers.
- * Our immediate aim is to build an organisation involving all communication workers.
- * Our long term aim is the creation of a classless, stateless society where everyone is free and equal, through the institution of workers' self management, and the destruction of the state.
- * We believe all struggles should be spread to as many sections of the working class as possible, and that solidarity is the key to winning any dispute.
- * We are against all forms of discrimination (such as sexism and racism) that cause divisions within the working class.

This was the later and more radical version.

workers what a crap situation we are all in. They will argue against the economy (capitalism) and its union lackey, and during struggles they will actively participate in specific actions: like producing leaflets, secondary picketing, sabotage, setting up and speaking at unofficial assemblies, etc.

If we happen to be a few revolutionaries at one workplace and produce regular propaganda specific to work, this is fortunate, but *obviously* we are also acting as revolutionaries together outside work.

The time has come to finally put

to rest the myth of "workplace groups" and their desirability - unless we are talking about *temporary* groupings of workers formed during struggles to perpetrate specific acts of propaganda or violence against the bosses, union and economy in general.

believed a few more crumbs off our masters' tables would appease our real class interests.

Our message must be revolutionary, not reformist. We support the struggle of the working class to improve its living standards. We aren't interested

in reform campaigns that, *by their nature*, are only aiming at modifying the economy, which means modifying our exploitation.

However, just because some people want to turn a struggle into a reform campaign does not mean that we don't support the struggle. The anti-Poll Tax fight was an example of this.

It was primarily a struggle of the working class to resist an attack on living standards.

When there is a pay dispute we try to show the way to win it but also why pay rises will never be

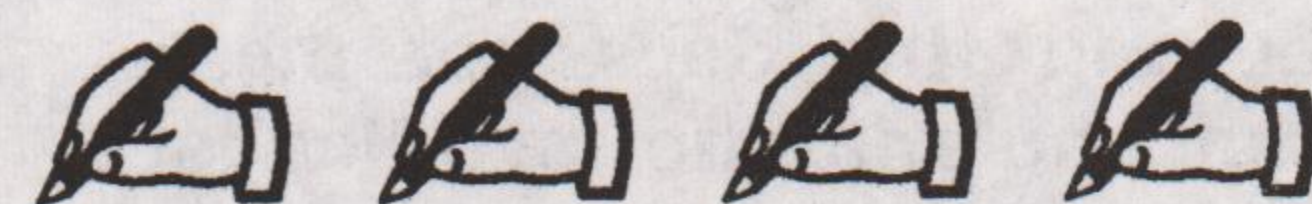
enough. When

we go back to work, whether we have won or not, it is not the revolutionaries that should negotiate with the bosses, others can do this. Some might say this is "purist", to not negotiate with the bosses ourselves if we agree that, in the circumstances, such negotiation is inevitable.

Well, we may win the odd battle in the class war but the working class is always in defeat while there is wage-slavery - so *revolutionaries should never lead workers back to work*. To do such a thing is to help the bosses manage our oppression - *which is what reformism is all about*. If we have to go back to work we go as proletarians, not as "managers".

Just as we shouldn't take union

posts we shouldn't encourage the creation of rank and file groups or movements. A revolutionary rank and file movement is a contradiction in terms, there can only be a *revolutionary* movement.



Letters

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

Dear Subversion,
A brief reply to your comments on questions raised in Issue 14. I did not raise the "old thorny union question" in the manner you imply but your use of it in order to deliver a patronising lecture on reformism is unnecessary. Neither I, nor most of your readers I suspect, need it. We worked that one out for ourselves a long time ago.

Whilst admitting that you are offering nothing new and obviously borrowing your ideas from all and sundry you praise the ACF (Subversion No. 11) for having, "rejected most strands of the anarchist movement as represented by anarcho-syndicalism, lifestylism, anarcho-pacifism, radical liberalism and so on."

I was not aware that an anarchist "movement" existed. The last three in your list represent nothing tangible. They are figments of their own imaginations and your bracketing of them with anarcho-syndicalism is a crude conflation worthy of the average Trot, serving only to make you appear inept. One wonders how many variants might have followed but for the "and so on".

In your response to my note you claim that, "many anarchists either became 'Marxists' or idiotic liberals." Doesn't this imply that they didn't understand anarchism in the first place? Their departure (from what?) proves nothing. Just out of interest, some figures might be interesting - any chance?



"Well," said Pat after he read the first issue of Communication Worker, "I'll just get Mrs Goggins to shoot the bosses and then we can form a workers' council, smash the state and abolish the wages system."

Some might say that this is all a bit too "purist" and that we should be involved in creating or sustaining reformist demands or campaigns in order to supposedly escalate the class struggle, however, there are plenty of reformist workers around, ready to demand a wage rise, or abortion rights, etc, without going further. Some lefties think we have to formulate reformist demands for workers to take up because otherwise they wouldn't think of any themselves. This is patronising and wrong. Workers are constantly making demands. For us to take part in putting forward demands would be merely to lapse into reformism, as we gave the impression that we

It appears that you are not as opposed to unions as you at first implied, recognising that workers, using the "fundamental nature of unions" i.e. solidarity, have managed to force concessions from employers and the State. That there are not yet revolutionary unions strong enough to move beyond this does not mean that the anarcho-syndicalist methodology is incorrect. Certainly there have been mistakes in the past, they have been debated to death and serve to prove the anarchist point about supping with the State.

Rejecting all political "labels" doesn't really solve anything. However, a distinct political viewpoint is something different in that it clarifies a present position while providing an opportunity to build upon ideas fought for successfully in the past. People without such viewpoints are often "labelled" by their opponents and can be stuck with that definition until they can prove otherwise. Your position as "revolutionary communists" presumably sets you apart from those student groups with identical 'positions', whose aim in life is to flood the world with over-priced glossy magazines extolling the mouthings of the central committee but you will be hard-pressed to explain the difference to the passer-by. It seems particularly odd that a group proclaiming itself the bearer of vanguardist ideas (in the best sense of the term) should be so reluctant to define itself in any immediate, separate, meaningful way.

Your ideas for a future society and your means of struggle do seem very familiar which is why I return to the point - just who the hell are you?

ROY

SUBVERSION REPLIES:

Dear Roy,
Firstly, we had no intention of being patronising. It is not part of our politics to insult people who appear to be on our own

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wavelength. We are certainly not into scoring debating points. It may have taken us a long time to publish the reply to your first letter, but this was solely due to reasons of space. It was always our intention to include it eventually, when it fitted the general "balance" of the issue in hand. As such, we are quite within our rights to use the reply as an opportunity to make clear our general attitude about unions. Our views do not come out of thin air. They are the result of years of activity in and around the unions. You asked whether a member of Subversion "is or could be a member of a trade union". You did not ask specifically about a particular type of union. Therefore we replied by stating our understanding of how unions operate - before we went on to explain why members of Subversion are members of unions. To do otherwise would have left readers wondering where on earth our ideas came from. Likewise we never claimed to be "leaving the rest of us behind". So we set out to explain what we see ourselves as.

There are two specific points I want to reply to. They are the question of an "anarchist movement" and the "fundamental nature of unions". To start with the second. You misquote us. We nowhere talked of the "fundamental nature of unions" as solidarity or otherwise. The "fundamental nature of unions" is to act as middle men in the labour market, smoothing the way for the exploitation of labour. They are an integral part of the management of capitalism. It is a reflection of how much the working class is dominated by the ideology of reformism and unionism that so many believe that the unions are on their side. Solidarity, on the other hand is something that originates in the working class. It is this class solidarity that has led to all the gains the class has made. I would defy you to identify one struggle that has been won because of the unions. More likely it has been

won because workers act against the advice of their "leaders". The great Miners' Strike of the 1980s is a case in point. The Union's domination of the strike helped lead to its isolation and defeat. All the activities that miners developed themselves, like the road blockades, spreading the picketing or the hit squads were condemned by the union leadership.

About the only example we can think of of an organisation calling itself a union which did not betray the class was the IWW in the USA in the first 20 years of this century. This was because it was not, despite its claims, a permanent union organisation. Rather it was a large core of agitators who recruited workers for short periods of time to fight for specific demands. It never became incorporated into capitalism's management structure because it was physically liquidated by the state and its members were poached by the more powerful AFL.

Our point is not that we need revolutionary unions. We are convinced that the history of anarcho-syndicalism shows that it is just another blind alley. Large permanent organisations of non-revolutionary workers end up negotiating with the bosses and then the state. They end up helping to run the thing they claim to oppose. This is of course exactly what happened to the CNT! Should the DAM's various efforts ever come to anything then they'll go the same route.

As to the existence of an "anarchist movement" of otherwise, we have long experience of the types you refer to. Most recently we attended some meetings called by the East Midlands Anarchists. At these meetings were some class struggle anarchists but overwhelmingly the swamp of liberals, talking about AFA, ALF and alternative money schemes like LETS. There were even some who advocated supporting various efforts by the local state. When we were involved in the Class Struggle Anarchist Network we got involved in fruitless (and in our

view, false) arguments over the value of community against industrial struggle and even had to deal with people who wanted to support Iraq in the Gulf War. Members of your own organisation we met uncritically supported Scargill in the Miners' Strike.

We have argued with anarchist comrades that this mess makes it impossible to "reclaim" the name of anarchism. Whatever contributions anarchists have made to the working class revolutionary movement, and they have been enormous, the name itself has been so corrupted by counter-revolutionaries that there is little point clinging to it. This is even more true of marxism. Anyone who reads the pages of Subversion will see that we have a distinct political viewpoint. Whatever we say, they will attach labels to us. Most anarchists think we are marxists - most marxists think we are anarchists. We stand by our decision, as a group, not to claim either name. In the long term we hope to see a coming together of all who hold views similar to our own, from whatever tradition they claim to come.

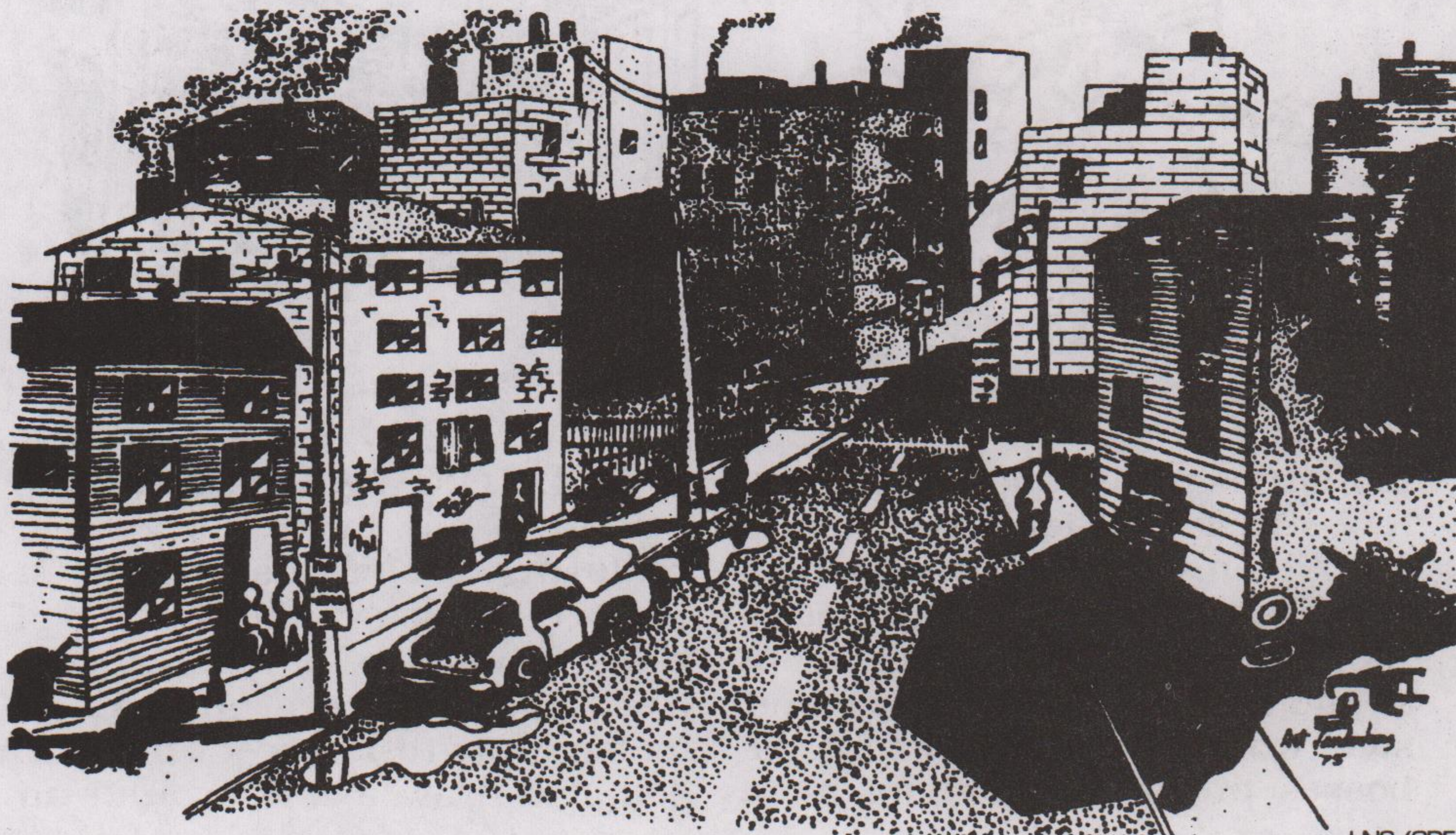
Dear Subversion,
I recently read your paper 'Subversion' and I loved it, the political theory and analysis of topical events was very good, unlike the shit I'm used to reading in the so-called 'revolutionary' (!) papers such as 'Socialist Worker' to name one of

the worst offenders of bullshit-peddling! But I noticed you put that you think the main battleground of class-resistance and conflict is the workplace and I feel I must disagree with you.

The destruction of the old mass-employing 'heavy industries' like steel, ship-building, coal-mining, car factories, etc. and the capitalist assault on the old workers movement (militant Trade Unions and shop stewards groups) has meant that capitalism is no longer threatened by conflict in the workplace as growing unemployment and the displacement of workers from mass-industries into small-employers (offices, restaurants, service-sector firms, etc.) has fragmented and dispersed the workforce into lots of tiny groups rather than fewer mass bodies of workers in factories, etc....

The main battleground of class resistance now is the communities and estates where working class people live, the revolutionary movement (or what's left of it) must focus on campaigns around anti-social crime, housing, poverty, and unemployment for example now rather than continue its obsession with strikes that is a relic of past struggles and a bygone era.

The future for revolutionaries is clear for those committed to the job. We must forge strong links between local groups of revolutionaries and the areas and communities that those revolutionaries are active in. So



then like in Palestine where despairing Israeli troops say "everything we do, good or bad, in the occupied territories boosts support for the intifada". Because the communities of the Palestinians have been thoroughly 'infected' with the radical virus the might of the Israeli army is finding the crushing of resistance virtually impossible, hence the accommodation they are seeking with the pro-capitalist counter-revolutionary PLO.

Anyway I am convinced this is the way forward for the revolutionary movement in this country.

Mark

Dear Mark,

Despite what you say capitalism still owes its whole existence to the labour we do for it day after day, capital and profits can only be created by using workers. Just because in Britain the "old mass-employing heavy industries" have largely been dismantled it doesn't mean that workers in work (at the point of production, one of the places where capital is reproduced) are any less important. In fact, one of the reasons the old industries have been dismantled is precisely because the workers in those

divided (by pay, rank, etc) workforces is a sign that they realise the threat to their existence posed by a united and strong workforce. We mustn't forget this, the biggest fear of the bourgeoisie is that we will stop working for them.

Just as "in the old days" the working class was not simply made up of steel workers, miners, shipyard workers and car workers so today the working class doesn't simply live in well-defined or large estates. Both these views of the "core" of the working class are romantic. The tendency to see only "industrial" or "skilled" workers as the "proper" working class was as wrong a hundred years ago as it is now. Similarly, to concentrate our efforts on council estates, or so-called "working class communities", is to disregard the fact that most of the working class live elsewhere, or rather, that we live *everywhere*.

This isn't, of course, to say that class struggle in the places we live isn't important. We need to fight capital on all its terrains. What we should be aware of though is the fact that what you might call a "working class community" is at best a very limited, and at worst a very misleading term. We don't live in communities, we live in areas designed and controlled by

area on a map and call that a working class community you're inevitably going to include local shops and businesses. The little shop on the corner exploits and rips us off in just the same way as the big superstore down the road (employing assistants, selling goods to us, etc.). Also, we don't just live in our homes or the small areas around our homes, we also spend a lot of our lives travelling, or at our workplaces, or at shops; we should be trying to reclaim all these places as well. If we concentrate on particular working class living areas we will be neglecting the rest of the class and we'll be in danger of forgetting that the real reason that the working class is so dangerous to capitalism and the bosses is because no matter where we live it is our wage-slavery that they are dependent on. If the only thing wrong with capitalism is that some of us live in crappy housing then those of us who don't don't have anything to complain about!

Since the beginning of capitalism "anti-social crime, housing, poverty and unemployment" have been a problem for the working class and it is plain to see that the only permanent solution to these facts of life under capitalism is the destruction of the whole system of exploitation, exchange, rulers and ruled. If our main aim is to get rid of capitalism and create a true human, classless community then we have to attack it on all levels. Fighting and propagandising around issues such as anti-social crime, bad housing, poverty, etc is obviously not enough, we also have to attack the motor of capitalism, the thing its whole existence is actually based on, which is *our productive labour*.

We mustn't be fooled: the working class has not disappeared, and there is no so-called "under-class". Yes, effective class struggle may be difficult, but that's the way they want it. Yes, workforces may have been split up, and a lot of workers conned into thinking that they have no power or aren't even working class, but it's all part of their strategy to keep us as weak as possible at the heart of capitalism, our workplaces.



industries *were* considered to be too strong. [Nicholas Ridley's 1977 plan to take on the miners was drafted in direct response to the defeat of Heath's government at the hands of coal, power and steel workers]. The fact that the bosses prefer smaller and more

capital. Our fight back on the terrain of our living spaces (eg. resisting evictions, bailiffs, roads, etc.) is a manifestation of class resistance, it must not be derailed into so-called "community resistance". If you're going to draw a line around an

SECTION 11 CUTS

This is a copy of a leaflet we handed out at a demonstration called by the National Union of Teachers in Oldham to protest against the sacking of Section 11 teachers. It is typical of the NUT that this demonstration was called on early closing day, in the town centre, during the first week of the local holidays. They called a demo..... but nobody came.

The papers and news are full of the teachers' fight against testing of schoolchildren with the SATs boycott. The NUT too is full of itself, claiming victory against Patten and the Tories. What is not so apparent is that this is against a background of massive job cuts, redundancies and increasing workloads for teachers and others in education. These cuts are carried out by local government at the instigation of the central state. The unions are using the SATs boycott as a way of disguising their own compliance and their real role as middle men in the labour market, managing the process of redundancy for the state.

One example of this is the case of Section 11. Section 11 is the name given to the provision of funds specifically for the education of children from ethnic minority groups. This is funded by the Home Office and is supposedly over and above a school's normal needs.

Two years ago there was a shake up of Section 11, accompanied by many job losses. This year the Home Office has reduced the amount of money it provides to local authorities. This funding cut amounts to around 35% and will add up to around 4,000 jobs, if local authorities fail to make up the difference. Where they do make up the difference, services suffer elsewhere.

Teachers are understandably agitated by this. It is against this background that the NUT has launched a "campaign". Teachers in Tower Hamlets struck on 15th March. The union is prepared to tolerate limited strikes in single areas, safe in the knowledge that its rule book makes national coordinated action for more than 24 hours almost impossible by requiring a 2/3rds majority of all members in a secret ballot before sustained strike action (i.e. a strike with strike pay) can be taken.

In its magazine, THE TEACHER, the NUT has made much of jobs it has "saved". In effect what they have done is reduced the number of job losses and abandoned those teachers on fixed term, temporary contracts, who all lost their jobs on March 31st. These losses are disguised by early retirement or by teachers finding other work. At the end of the day all the NUT is concerned about is the headline figure of compulsory redundancies.

Meanwhile the left, in the form of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), whilst appearing very radical and talking much about racism and the Tories, backs the union's do-nothing policy. In a recent leaflet they called for, "a national day of action backed by a one day strike early in the summer term." The strike call is a total red-herring. There is no way that a ballot could be called and won in the time available to fight these job losses, as around half of them came into force on March 31st. What was needed was local action, outside the union's control - spreading and linking with education workers elsewhere.

There can be no doubt that this cut is racist. It hits at children who are most in need and panders to racist sentiment to save money. It makes the workload of all teachers in schools with significant ethnic minority populations harder and makes the work for all the children harder too.

Moreover, it is being used as a way of forcing significant job losses through at a time when even more are on the way. If teachers are beaten over this, which seems increasingly likely, then the prospects for the future are grim. Already some authorities have seen even greater sackings. Oldham, for example, got rid of around 100 teachers this year - over 50 Section 11, 36 special needs plus others from the "mainstream" due to budget cuts. At one school this had been accompanied by an increase in hours taught amounting to one month's teaching a year for many staff. The future holds more of the same.

Education workers are divided and weakened by the unions. The unions are led by bureaucrats like Doug McAvoy (£70,000 a year) and Mary Hufford (£50,000 a year), both of the NUT. Their interests are not the same as those of the people who work in the education industry. Information is denied us by the union bosses.

Education workers need to get together outside and against the control of the unions.

Members of Subversion and the ACF are planning to launch an education bulletin later this year. It will be open to all revolutionaries. If you would like more information on this project write to us at our Manchester address.



New Labour leader Tony Blech gives the stiff right plunged salute as, in the background, the two runners up watch enviously.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.
- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.
- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.
- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.
- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.
- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.
- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.
- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.
- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.
- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

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1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW**