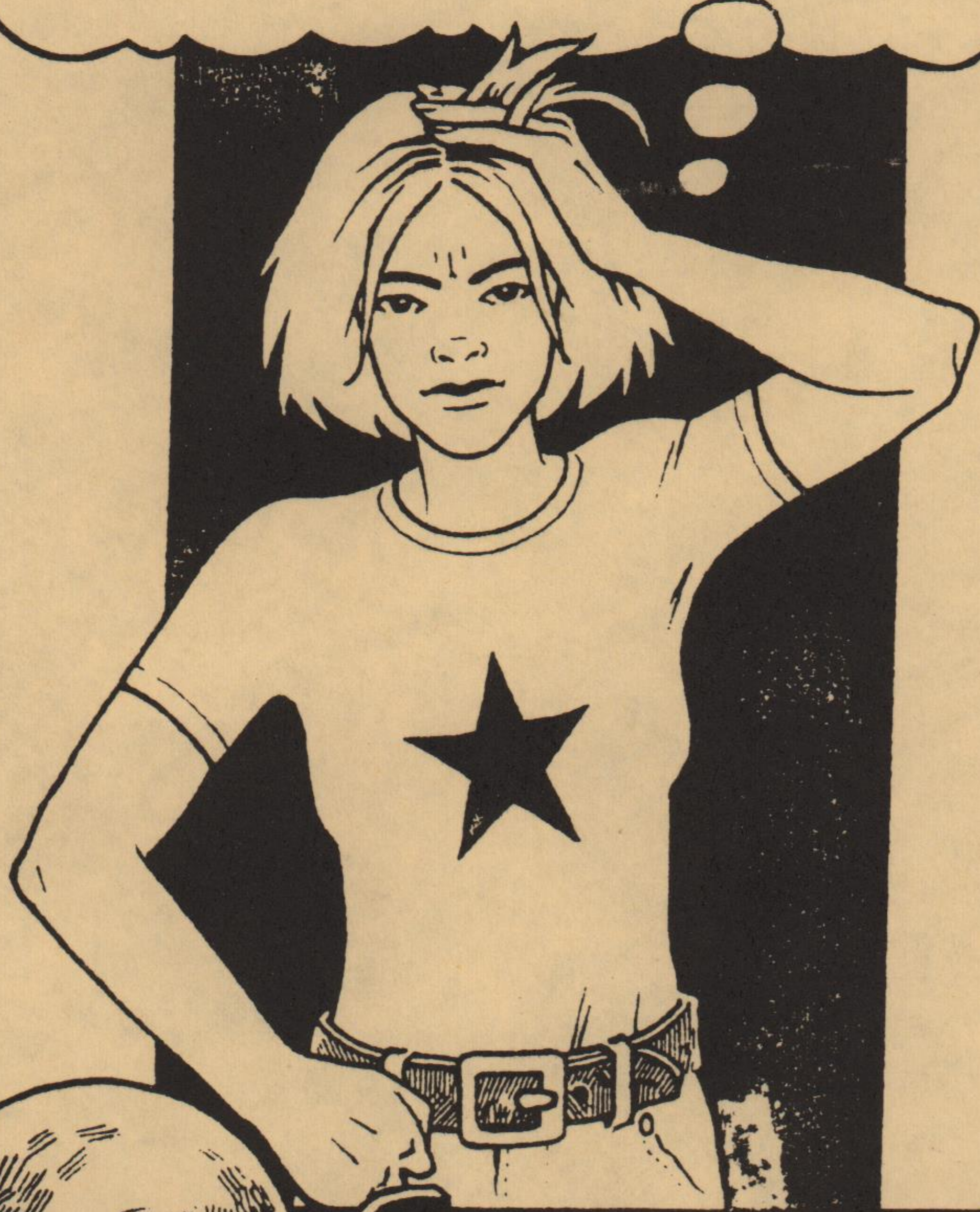


# Subversion

Number 20

## STUFF THE JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE

WAGE-SLAVERY OR STARVATION? —  
THAT'S NOT A CHOICE, IT'S A THREAT!



### also in this issue ....

Liverpool Dockers

Kurdish Anarchists

Texas State  
Death Factory

Democracy and  
Ballots

Posties' strike

Australian Parliament  
Invaded

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JON '96

**What  
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.

# Subversion 20

## Introduction

Welcome to issue 20 of Subversion.

As we go to press (Oct 1996), the Job Seekers Allowance has just come into force across the country. Both Conservative and Labour parties are planning further attacks on unemployed workers. Subversion members are active in the fight against the JSA. The articles in this issue reflect the debate going on within this movement.

Once again we are printing a number of articles from people who are not members of Subversion. These are the articles on the Dockers Dispute, the JSA and the process of capital punishment in Texas. We welcome articles for publication. They increase the level of discussion in Subversion, which leads to a more interesting and informative publication. If you'd like to write something for us, why not drop us a line and let us know what you've got in mind? If you don't want to write an article, but have something to say, then send us a letter for publication.

## Back issues

We have a few copies of Subversion 17 and 19 left. There are plenty of numbers 16 and 18. We also have some of earlier editions. Alternatively, we can provide some articles and our pamphlets on Ireland and Labour on computer disc. (PC format preferably, though we can cope with Macs). For any back issues, just send an SAE to our address.

## The Best Of Subversion

This pamphlet comprises a selection of articles from the first 11 issues of Subversion. It costs £1.00 inc p&p.

## Send us your money!

Once again we are appealing for donations. Many thanks to those who sent us funds last time. This issue has cost around £250 to print (we do 1000 copies). Postage will be in the order of £70.00. So the odd bluey or two would be very gratefully received.

## your questions answered

- Q. Can I join Subversion?  
A. We'll tell you in issue 21.

**Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton Street,  
Manchester M1 1HW**

# Dockers Lockout

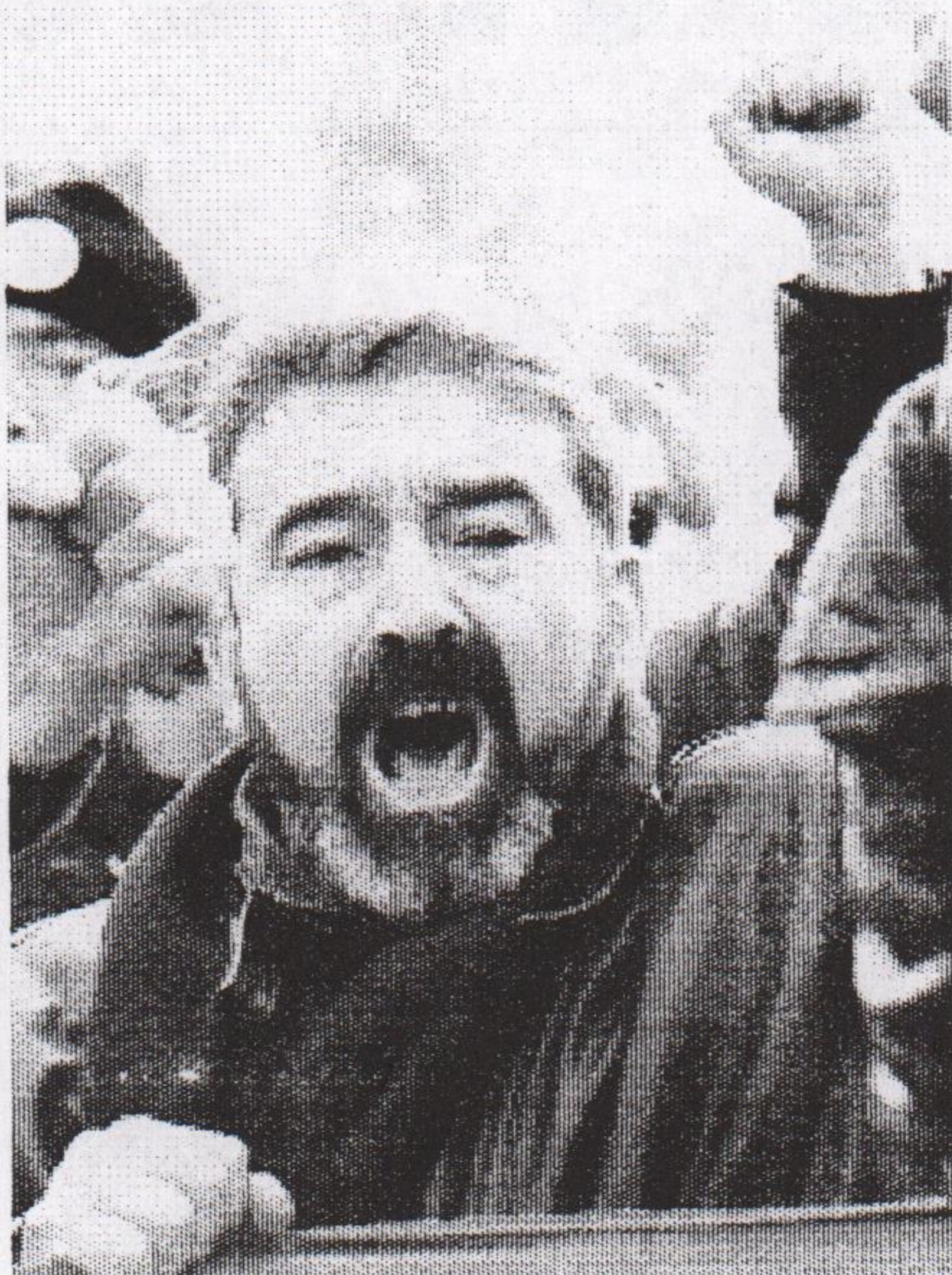


Photo courtesy of LabourNet

**Subversive Note:** Both this and the next article, **Reclaim the Future**, were written by a communist in Liverpool who has been active supporting the Dockers Struggle. This is taken from the latest in his series of reports on the dispute.

As I write [early September] we are approaching the first anniversary of the dispute which was sparked off by the dockers refusal to cross the picket line mounted by dismissed dockers employed by an 'independent' stevedoring firm called Tor-side. In Britain in the 1990s such sympathy or in the words of the legislation, 'secondary action', is illegal.

The policy of the dockers remains one of insisting on the full reinstatement of all dockers dismissed on the terms and conditions they 'enjoyed' prior to the dispute. Now I was going to begin this report/commentary on a note of criticism of the dockers. By concentrating on re-instatement, the dockers I thought, were allowing what I conceived to be the major question of casualisation [what Jimmy Nolan, Chair of the Dispute Committee confusingly calls 'employment contracts'] to be lost from view.

But of course this is looking at events at the surface and missing what is going on underneath. It is, in my opinion the first duty of communists, anarchists or whatever we call ourselves, to look beyond the surface of events and try and penetrate what is really

going on. That is, it is first of all our job to try and understand. So here is my attempt.

The policy of total re-instatement which is endorsed every Friday at the mass meeting of dockers and their supporters is actually what used to be called by the American SDS student movement in the 70s a 'non negotiable demand'. That is, given the changes in the economy since the [Keynesian inspired] National Dock Labour Scheme was abolished in 1989, there is NO WAY the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company can allow a return to the previous situation. In any case a whole new scab labour force has been recruited, trained and is even now driving up productivity levels to unheard of heights. So, for instance when ACL came back to the port, the 80 dockers who left 'voluntarily' were not replaced. The fact that there is now a regular turnover of scab labour which cannot cope with the new casualised way of working and the much reduced pay, does not bother MDHC. They have a core layer of skilled workers who are prepared to take on and train a succession of casualised and atomised workers to do the bulk of the basic work in the port. The fact also, that it has become more dangerous to work in the Port of Liverpool does not bother them either.

Those of you who have been following my reports will know that we have argued that this is a generalised and long term trend in all workplaces - and it spells the end of the post war Keynesian based consensus which we had all become used to. Space prevents me from going into this in any more detail here, but we are working on a much longer analysis in which we hope to demonstrate this clearly. All this being the case, the dockers official policy is, I have come to realise way behind their real thinking and practice. The only 'negotiations' going on are those sponsored by Bill Morris and the T & G national and local officials, ably abetted by the ITF, who have made it quite plain that a 'compromise' must be found over the heads of the dockers. And obviously not in the interests of the dockers but because Morris and Co have been visibly shaken by the dockers international campaign and the open discussion on 5 continents of the idea of forming a new international dockers union.

Morris came to Liverpool and attempted to lay down the law about 'unofficial action' and going through official channels and just showed how out of touch he is. Unfortu-

nately, although many dockers would willingly have told him where to go - they are held back by the fact that they are still to a major extent financially dependent on the union, and could find themselves slung out of the T & G building which they have made their own almost, for the past 11 months. And more importantly because

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**....struggle is what the dockers have been engaged in. And struggle, as we know changes everything. Wherever dockers have gone to speak in this country they have faced concretely the question of casualisation, they have urged workers to struggle...**

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they are at the end of the day only some 500 and as yet neither they, nor us have seen any 'echo', or sufficient evidence from other groups of workers similarly affected, in conflict with 'their' unions.

I said at the beginning that the dockers had allowed the question of casualisation to slip from the forefront of their campaign, but actually that is not quite accurate. Because the campaign is around a 'non negotiable demand' for re-instatement, the dockers are not sitting around waiting for the MDHC to cave in - because they now understand that they will not. Mike Carden on the dispute committee posed the question at the time when ACL came back to the port and when there was some understandable gloom about the future of the dispute - where can we go? There is no offer 'on the table', all we have is struggle.

And struggle is what the dockers have been engaged in. And struggle, as we know changes everything. Wherever dockers have gone to speak in this country they have faced concretely the question of casualisation, they have urged workers to struggle, to support them financially but also to learn how they have done things for themselves and to have the confidence to do things likewise. In the process this group of workers has been utterly transformed. What was

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Reclaiming the Future

The weekend of 28/29/30th September saw Reclaim the Streets activists in Liverpool to support the sacked dockers. We view this as a very significant development. The following is one observers report of events as he saw them.

*Just a short note to describe the weekend of 28/29 September. I am only going to describe what I personally saw. Any reflection on the events will have to wait until I can check my impressions with others.*

## Reclaiming Liverpool

The 'eco-warriors' who came together under the banner of 'Reclaim the Streets' to support the dockers struggle brought with them new ideas, new ways of doing things and an almost naive curiosity about the dispute. On the Saturday there was a demonstration through the city centre which was odd mixture of the old and new.

New was the colour, the music and the feeling of excitement which many of these

## Dockers Dispute (continued)

*(Continued from page 3)*

by their own admission a sectional, racist and inward looking, male dominated group is now working consciously to transform itself into something else. Some of these people can never go back to the kind of life they had before.

If we needed concrete proof of this, it is in the recent approaches of the dockers to eco-warriors and other 'marginalised groups' for help and information on ways of waging the campaign; it is also in the contacts the dockers and the support groups are beginning to make with other 'social' movements against the Job Seekers Allowance for instance, which will hit dockers just as it hits other members of the unemployed. Within all these movements the dockers are starting to play a role in 'knocking heads' together. So many of the delegates who have gone all round the country have come back saying they are fed up with having to put up with members of the Left playing their silly games.

Dave Graham

people brought to what has been in the past a rather tired, social democratic trudge through the streets. When we got near MacDonalds the state showed that it took the new elements seriously when the OSD in full body armour and holstered pistols, blocked off the road . . . just in case. Then when we got to the Pier Head, traditional meeting place for the struggles of the 70s, what a transformation! Instead of the cobbles and Liverpool's version of the Tatlin tower [a monument to an earlier attempt at trade union internationalism, that of Ford shop stewards to co-ordinate a struggle internationally], there was a manicured lawn and a podium. Our history transformed into a tourist trap. The Tatlin tower, 'temporarily removed' during renovations has no doubt been cut up so as no longer to embarrass the Council or the MDC which now 'owns' the Pier Head. Another piece of our history turned against us - it was almost too much to bear.

## Along come the filth

...In the evening, whilst we were just having a quiet drink, one of the WoW burst in to say that the OSD had surrounded the Custom House on the Dock Road. This is one of those 2 storey government buildings, now abandoned by the state, which the eco-warriors had squatted since the previous Wednesday. Social space that any movement needs and which the dockers have, precariously, in the form of their use of the T & G building in Liverpool.

Suddenly, a crisis. All the arrangements for co-ordination that the dockers and eco-warriors had made - mobile phone telephone numbers for just such an emergency, were not answering. Does the state know when they are switched off? Were the OSD just waiting for people's guard to be lowered? What sort of mobilisation did they expect at 9-30 on a Saturday night?

We rushed down to the Custom House - Jimmy Nolan wanting us to impress on the eco-warriors the need to avoid a futile confrontation, would they be in the same frame of mind? How do they handle situations like this? What seriously were the 20 or so us who went supposed to do? I called at a garage to buy spare batteries for my flash on the camera - but if the OSD were serious, on past experience you don't get to keep your equipment intact.

In the end when we got down there, the younger Torside dockers had the situation 'sorted'. The OSD had gone, there was only one busy on the door and a 'deal' had been agreed that the all nighter could go ahead -

provided it was not made known in the city. The fact that the Custom House was stuck in the North End, and a good taxi ride away was going to be sufficient to prevent that. Motto - next time squat some 'social space' nearer to where people are.

Still it wasn't so bad. There were hot showers, the building was fully carpeted, the heating worked and the rooms were big enough for a huge party. While I was there I got the chance to use my flash - taking a picture of the 'throne' - the toilet the customs used to use to 'await results' for those intent on smuggling 'illegal substances' by swallowing them. Meanwhile, a cafe was organised, the sound system arrived and the party went on and on . . . .

On the Monday there was a picket of the Seaforth dock and the same people were there to help. Along with some of the dockers [including a couple of stewards] they were arrested attempting to invade and occupy some of the cranes . . .

What impression each has gained of the other I cannot say at this stage.

But who knows, social movements have to start somewhere.

**PS OSD is the 'Operational Support Group' - the ones who lounge around in vans waiting to crack heads. Every country has its equivalent.**

**'Busy' is slang in Liverpool for uniformed police.**

**WoW stands for Women on the Waterfront.**

Dave Graham

## Collective Action Notes

The latest issue of this publication from the USA contains a complete selection of DG's articles on the Dockers' Dispute.

Price £2.00 from  
PO Box 22962,  
Baltimore MD21203  
USA

# Do Kurdish People lack a state?

**Subversive Note:** We received a copy of this leaflet from a group of Kurdish Anarchists. It was written for distribution on Sept 1st, 1996 at a "Peace in Kurdistan Festival". We have edited it slightly for language and shortened it a little for space.

If readers wish to contact the authors, we can forward any correspondence.

Kurdistan is a land where Kurdish people live in an organised feudal and capitalist system, where working people, especially women and children, are suffering from poverty, ill treatment and the oppression of authorities, which are represented by Kurdish parties (Kurdish Democratic Party, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) and PKK of Northern Kurdistan, whom they are for freedom!, of Kurdistan as much as Yasser Arafat (the hero!! of the national liberation!!, for the past two decades) is doing for the freedom!, of poor Palestinian people!!

After the IRAQI authorities were forced to leave the South of Kurdistan in March 1991 by the sheer force of uprising by soldiers and poor people of the South and Kurdistan of IRAQ, for that short period the poor people in their unity against government felt their strength and showed to themselves and the world what kind of storm will come when the bottom of society is on fire and in revolt.

To crush and strangle the uprising as quickly as possible, IRAQI government thugs, with the help of the allied troops in the area, united in a holy alliance against the revolt to bring back law and order to the South of IRAQ and massacre unarmed slaves, as happened to our comrades in the Paris Commune at the hand of the French government and Bismarck's troops 125 years ago.

Then in Kurdistan, Kurdish parties

(PUK and KDP) in the name of free



Kurdistan and supported by landowners, merchants and a large number of shop owners who control the movement in the market, established themselves as the new bosses of Kurdistan,

crushing with an iron fist any discontent and challenge to their power and their properties like any other authority in the world.

Of course, this doesn't surprise us as Anarchists. Clearly we see that classes means clashes, we see any government means violence, murder and robbery against poor working class people of this rotten world. ....

That is why we say, it is a big lie and an unforgivable lie to tell the world though the mass media that a majority of the Kurdish people are suffering in life because all they lack is a powerful Kurdish state!! The truth is that the poor population of Kurdistan are suffering like the working class population of the rest of the world in many ways from the brutal forces of the capitalist system and their own authorities.

Our task, as Anarchists, is to tell the workers, teachers, students in Kurdistan on farms, in schools, at workplaces not to be fooled to struggle for a change of bosses from Turkish to Kurdish, from Persian to Kurdish, from Arabic to Kurdish! They should understand and take lessons from their own history and working class history, that the solution is in a Communist-Anarchist revolution, is an enormous and a bloody task, the preparation for that aim must be organised and linked on an international scale, otherwise we waste our energy without it.

Light with the flame of revolt, hearts and consciousness of Turkish, Persian and Arab workers, students, soldiers to end the power of warmongers, the power of poverty and the power of money.

Your mission is to destroy authorities for ever, not to create a new mini-one in the name of Kurdistan. Kurdistan and the rest of the world could be a garden for life without states.

Long live Kurdish language and music.

Long live the spirit of Communist-Anarchist revolution in the middle East and in the rest of the world.

Our aim is to wipe out religion, state, racism and money.

**Kurdish Anarchists.**

**subversion discussion meeting**  
**Green Communism? Issues of Ecology and Social Transformation**  
**Friday November 22nd.**  
**Hare and Hounds, Shudehill,**  
**Manchester City Centre**  
**7.45 pm**  
**subversion discussion meeting**

# Texas State Death Factory

This month marks six and one half years of incarceration for me here at the famous Huntsville Walls unit. If the walls and bars of this institution could speak out they no doubt would weep endless tales of cruelty and agony, not the least of which would include the multitude of men murdered officially here by the state since the 1850s by hanging, electric chair, or the latest most antiseptic method, death by lethal injection.

Having lived at this fascist cowboy gulag long enough to make a few observations and inquiries about the state-sanctioned murders carried out here, my fellow cons and I have collected a few facts about the methodology used by the state in these affairs, and the professional state hacks who are the perpetrators of these deeds. As well, some other professional scum are mentioned who are accomplices in these acts. But first a small historical account.

Since the brief moratorium on capital punishment ended in 1976, 104 prisoners (not counting those killed in 1996) have been put to death by the state of Texas. There has been a progressive numerical escalation of state murders yearly in Texas as well as the rest of the death penalty states in the US since 1976. Texas however leads in state homicide, having put to death one third of all those executed in the US since 1976. The 1990s in Texas have been a particularly bloody decade with state murders being carried out in a more conveyor belt assembly line fashion, repetitive, efficient, and somewhat clandestine. The fact that these state murders are no longer isolated events, but repetitive, serves to desensitise the people in the region somewhat. In 1993 and 1994 I counted 14 state murders per year, yet 1995 saw 19 state murders carried out in all. As the political and economic context continues toward the extreme reactionary and more stringent legislation is passed limiting appellate options for death row prisoners, the Texas death assembly line will get much busier.

Up until recently all state murders were carried out at midnight in typical prison fashion. As of late, a change of policy has the murders carried out at 6 p.m. while we cons are locked down for the evening count. During the midnight phase, the soon to be murdered was transported over here from death row on the Ellis 1 Unit some time in the a.m. He takes his last ride taking in the sights of a world that has changed vastly since his entombment knowing life's sweet hum will likely cease very soon. This ride is usually taken after spending anywhere from 8 to 17 years in confinement fighting appeals. For many, such a ride has been taken once or twice before having only a last minute stay of "execution" retrieve

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## **While the future state victim whiles away his remaining hours waiting for death the professional vultures and leeches get ready for the bloodfest.**

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them from the state's death clutches.

Upon arrival, then as now, the prisoner is appointed a clergyman (unless he declines) to talk with if he wishes while he sweats out his last few hours hoping for a miracle or a stay to be granted by the political bosses. The last clergyman (nicknamed the "Killer Clergyman" by some) quit his position here probably as a matter of conscience since he witnessed every execution here since the moratorium was lifted.

It is said that this same clergyman overstepped his capacity as savior of souls and counsellor of salvation, and actually helped the pigs send one condemned man off to the great beyond by helping to subdue the fellow when he wouldn't relinquish his life peaceably. The prisoner obviously didn't buy into the hereafter spiel.

While the future state victim whiles away his remaining few hours waiting for death in his holding cell, having his

last meal (cheeseburger and french fries best alternative and most frequent choice) all of the professional vultures and leeches get ready for the bloodfest. This assortment of social pariahs, participants, facilitators and spectators consists of various bourgeois media scum waiting to get their scoop, high-ranking screws with their pinched solemn authoritarian faces emanating officialdom, the top pieces of shit at the faecal hierarchical apex (wardens etc), the Texas attorney general (a political hustler and liar), some Texas Rangers (notorious machine-gun wielding strike breakers and scab herders), doctors, coroners, lawyers are all present.

As the day wanes on, the prison kitchen where I was forced to perform non-wage labour would have some of the less class conscious convict slaves cook up a massive assortment of artistically decorated confections consisting of doughnuts (standard pig staple), fried pies, cookies, cinnamon rolls, bear claws, as well as cheese plates and cheeseburgers topped off with gallons of fruit juice. All of these culinary delights, more conducive to the ambience of a birthday party than a death fest, are put forth for the spectators to gorge themselves on at the tax payers' expense. As the lard condiments are consumed by the cop spectators, they're gripped in a massive euphoric sugar rush and the blood lust sets in. They all sit around laughing and joking, slapping each other on the back and reinforcing each others' faith in the state awaiting the big moment. Unfortunately the prisoner's family is forced to witness their son's death in the company of this lot.

When execution time edged closer, the prisoner was brought in and strapped to a specially fashioned swivel gurney with a microphone dangling just a few feet above his head. In this way any sound the prisoner may utter from now until his death is made audible to the pigs and the prisoner's family who are all watching from behind a glass viewing window.

One of the physicians' assistants here on the prison medical staff (another accomplice) comes in and hooks the prisoner up to an I.V. which leads to a euthanasing device. This device has three tubes leading away from it for three state murderers to secretively (out of sight) drop their death chemicals in. The reason they use 3 tubes is because two state murderers only administer fake solutions while the third administers the potassium chloride

**"The second man had one bag of personal effects. Before I could finish inventorying his stuff they were driving his body out in the hearse."**

which stops the heart. This is supposed to obfuscate guilt much like the dummy rounds used in firing squads. To show that they are good sports about the whole thing, the pigs also offer the prisoner an adult diaper. These are kept under special lock and key.

So the condemned man waits in this condition 'til midnight and if no stay is granted by the courts or the governor (George Bush Jr is our current head crook) the death freaks carry out their foul deed.

It's actually debatable if three different people are chosen each time as killers. Some sources have it that it's the same three people volunteering to do it each time. It's known that one of the killers is an ex tunnel rat in Viet Nam who smells of sadism. He is a high ranking official of the cess heap. This "god and country" fellow is reported to get paid 1,000 dollars per murder but is said to brag "I'd do it for nothing". The same individual when making his exit after an execution night is said to whistle a merry tune if the execution was carried out but to be extremely red faced and pissed off if the prisoner was granted a stay.

So the prisoner goes out watching his family for the last time surrounded by a bunch of doughnut eating cops, media scum and other agents of death cul-

ture. The coroner pronounces the deed final and the state murder victim is bagged up and driven out of the prison compound in a black minivan to the mortuary. If his family doesn't claim him, or he has no family, he gets a nameless numbered headstone courtesy of the state amongst the multitude of other state murder victims in the prison cemetery.

As I said earlier, the execution time has been changed to 6 p.m. now. It's usually fairly certain now when a death row prisoner is shuttled over here that a stay of execution will not be a prospect. There are some exceptions though.

We had a double state murder here not long ago. I look for this to be a more frequent occurrence. One source states that it was his job to inventory the condemned prisoners' personal effects on the night of this double killing. "The first execution took a long time, but then came the hearse driving out the first body. As they were driving out with the dead man the second condemned man was being driven in and the two vans were parked at opposite sides of the gate for a while. Then they slowly passed each other. The second man had one bag of personal effects. Before I could finish inventorying his stuff they were driving his body out in the hearse."

The same source reports: "After one execution, the hearse was driving through the checkpoint and the screw in the back of the hearse guarding the body was actually sitting on top of the dead prisoner. Out of respect for the dead I offered said screw a milk crate to sit on."

The latest addition to the death house

is a partition in the viewing area which will allow the crime victim's family to witness the murder along with, but separately from, the prisoner's family. This ostensibly is supposed to promote something called closure. All it really does is legitimise the state as problem solver, authority and arbiter.

One final word, when the screws are confronted as to how they feel about being participants in state murder, they all bleat like the sheep at Nuremberg, "I was just doing my duty."

By K.G. Quotes from A.O.C. and other sources.

*In Memoriam.*

The murdered of 1995 in Texas.  
Jan 4 Jesse D Jacobs Jan 17  
Mario S Marquez Jan 31 Clifton C  
Russel Jan 31 Willie Ray Williams  
Feb 7 Jeffrey D Motley Feb 16  
Billy Gardner Feb 21 Samuel  
Hawkins Apr 6 Noble D Mays  
Jun 1 Fletcher T Mann Jun 8  
Ronald K Allridge Jun 14 Karl  
Hammond Jun 20 John Fearance Jr  
Aug 15 Vernon Sattiewhite Sep 19  
Carl Johnson Jr Oct 4 Harold J  
Lane Dec 6 Bernard Amos  
Dec 7 Hai Hai Vuong Dec 11  
Esequel Banda Dec 12 James M  
Bridle

Huddersfield ABC organise support for class war prisoners. They can be contacted by writing to:  
Huddersfield ABC  
c/o 17-21 Chapel St  
Bradford  
BD1 5DT  
UK



# The JSA and the Dole Workers Strike

Here, in Brighton, we have been involved in the rather uphill battle against the JSA for more than a year now. When the selective strikes in the Employment Service began last November all three Job Centres in Brighton came out on strike. We gave our full support to the strikers and took up the task of leafleting the entire two week signing-on cycle, explaining to claimants the reasons for the strike and its connection with the implementation of the JSA. Since the end of the strike we have established close relations with the more militant workers in the dole offices which are now being formalised in the 'Brighton Against the JSA' group that is to be formally launched on May 1st. This will bring workers in the Benefit Agency, the Housing Benefit Office and the Employment Service together with claimants and other people opposed to the JSA.

However before considering the significance and potential of Brighton Against the JSA and similar groups, we would first like to respond to the articles on the Employment Service Strike in *Subversion* 18 in order to clarify a few points.

Firstly, we think it is important to emphasise both the immediate basis for unity between claimants and ES workers and the importance of the current changes that are being imposed within the welfare system. Performance Related Pay, the JSA, 'active signing' and workfare projects are not simply another set of measures to cut costs and reduce the numbers on the dole. They are all part of a single concerted effort to radically restructure the administration of the welfare state and the class compromise embodied within it. A point that was soon grasped in the course of the strike by many of the strikers.

However, to understand the full implications of this restructuring it is perhaps necessary to place these changes in an historical context. (To do this properly would require more than a little research which we have yet to do. However, we can tentatively put forward a brief sketch which for present purposes should be sufficient).

The present benefit system for the unemployed was originally established as a central part of the post-war settlement of 1945. As such it expresses the post-war class compromise. The deal was simple: in return for benefits sufficient to cover short term subsistence the unemployed would have to make themselves available for any suitable work in their trade or profession. This deal pre-supposed two things, first the government's commitment to 'full employment' through the use of Keynesian demand man-

agement policies and secondly a general acceptance of wage-labour by the working class. Given 'full employment' most unemployment would be short term and cover people for the few weeks while they were between jobs. Anyone not seeking work, who was not completely unemployable, would soon be found work by the employment exchange, as it was then called. With the relatively small numbers of unemployed the costs of paying benefits were limited and could easily be paid out of transfers from the working class as a whole through National Insurance contributions or general taxation.

With the crisis of the 1970s, which saw the flight of capital in the face of increasing working class militancy, it soon became clear that Governments in the industrialised economies could no longer sustain a commitment to full employment. In Britain the initial response to the development of mass unemployment was to mitigate its effects as

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## **Performance Related Pay, the JSA, 'active signing' and workfare projects are not simply another set of measures to cut costs and reduce the numbers on the dole.**

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much as possible. The Labour Government at this time was committed to a strategy of defusing class militancy through a corporatist deal with the unions that came to be expressed in the now infamous 'social contract'. This demanded an 'equality of sacrifice' from all sections of the working class. To minimise conflict with those in work, wage restraint had to be matched by a commitment on the part of the government and employers to minimise compulsory redundancies and achieve the necessary reductions in the work force through 'natural wastage' (i.e. not replacing people who leave or retire). However, this 'freezing of posts' simply led to a dramatic increase in youth unemployment as those leaving school or college found it harder to find work. In response to this increase in youth unemployment, which threatened to place a whole generation outside the experience of wage-labour, the Labour Government introduced the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOPS), which was later extended and made compulsory as the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), the first in a series of dead end make-work schemes which pretend to offer training or work experience for crap

money.

The Labour Government's strategy was eventually smashed in the winter of discontent in 1979. The new Tory Government under Thatcher adopted a radically new strategy. Abandoning the old social consensus it sought to use mass unemployment to impose a substantial restructuring of British capital. Within little more than a couple of years of Thatcher coming to power unemployment doubled to over three million. Mass redundancies decimated whole industries leaving vast industrial waste lands in many areas of the country. Yet the Government was careful not to exacerbate the situation at this time.

One of the first acts of the new Tory government was to abolish earnings related benefits to prevent an explosion in benefit payments following their proposed policy of mass redundancies, but beyond that the first Thatcher government for the most part maintained the conditions and levels of benefits. At the same time the policy of mass redundancies was cushioned by substantial redundancy payments, particularly to older workers who had worked for a long time in the industries that were being wound down. For the government at that time the consequent expansion in the welfare budget was seen as a price worth paying for the major restructuring of British industry. Inefficient and 'overmanned' industries could be closed down while the threat of redundancy and mass unemployment encouraged those still in work to accept the eradication of restrictive working practices and greater 'flexibility'.

In order to curb the increasing costs which resulted from the policy of mass unemployment the government attempted to hold down administration costs. This resulted in a significant relaxation of the benefit regime. Firstly, the increase in the numbers signing on was not matched by a corresponding increase in the numbers working in the DSS or the Unemployment Benefit offices. With the consequent increase in workload the welfare departments had to increasingly concentrate on their core activities of paying out benefits and reduce their policing and snooping activities. [Another important change at this time was the transfer of the administration of housing benefits from the DSS to local authorities. This meant that there was no longer routine inspections by the DSS of claimants houses, which had been an important means for checking that people were not cohabiting, working on the side, or making false



claims]. Secondly, along with most white collar public sector workers, pay was held down further undermining the notion that it was middle class work. As a result of both the increased work load and the demotivation of dole workers through the decline in their relative pay and status, combined with the fact that for most people there was little if any 'suitable employment', the pressures on the unemployed to find work diminished substantially during this period.

Having defeated the miners in 1985 the Government felt confident enough to tackle the problem of the high costs of mass unemployment. This resulted in the Fowler review under which Supplementary Benefit was replaced by Income Support and special allowances for laundry and heating were abolished in 1988. In order to prevent the young becoming too accustomed to not working benefits were withdrawn from 16-18 year olds and the level of benefits were cut by 30% for those under 25. In addition significant changes were made to the conditions of entitlement for benefits. It was now no longer sufficient to be 'available for suitable employment'; it was also necessary to be 'actively seeking work' even if there was no work to be had!

It was also at this time that regular Restart interviews were introduced to pressure the unemployed to accept places on the various training Schemes. During the late 1980s periodic drives were made, mainly it seems to reduce the unemployment figures before an election. As a result a cycle emerged. Before an election the government would expand training and various make-work schemes, and issue directives to the employment offices to fill the new vacancies so as to reduce the unemployment figures. The long term unemployed would then face repeated Restart interviews until they accepted a place on a scheme. Then following the election the Government would face the need to cut back on public spending and the training schemes would be cut back, Restart interviews would be curtailed, and it would become very difficult to get on a scheme even if you wanted to.

So, as we have noted, in the early 1980s, with the aid of mass redundancies and high unemployment the productivity of British industry was transformed and with it the profitability of British capital. Whereas in the 1970s Britain had been the 'sick man' of Europe prone to the 'English disease' of industrial unrest, in the 1980s Britain became the cutting edge in the restoration of capital's profitability.

Yet sustaining high unemployment together with a relaxed benefit regime meant that increasing numbers of the unemployed had

little incentive to compete in the labour market. As the 1980s wore on increases in productivity through more flexible working conditions had to be paid for through increasingly high wages. Indeed, for most people in work the 1980s saw wages rising far faster than prices in contrast to the real cuts in wages which were experienced under the last few years of the previous Labour Government. Even in the boom at the end of the 1980s unemployment did not fall much below 2 million yet even these levels did little to curb the demands for pay increases significantly above the rate of inflation.

It took another severe recession, and with it another substantial increase in unemployment, to break rising real wages and introduce the increased job insecurity of short term contracts and part-time work necessary to maintain the profitability of British capital. But with this recession of the early 1990s has come the burden for the state of increased long-term unemployment. Even now, after 4 years of 'economic recovery', unemployment is still higher than it was in the late 1980s. Furthermore, attempts to press down the wages of lowest paid workers are now running into the floor of benefits.

As even Peter Lilley admits, following the Fowler Review there is little scope for cutting the level of benefits since they are so low already! The strategy of the government to reduce the welfare bill has consequently been twofold. Firstly it has sought to withdraw entitlement to benefits from increasing numbers of people. As a result benefit entitlements have been progressively withdrawn from students and from foreign workers, and most recently from asylum seekers. The habitual residency test and the all work test have been introduced. Secondly, the government has sought to tighten up the benefit regime. This has led to the requirement that claimants expand their job search after three months and the provision for more regular Restart interviews to check up on the unemployed's job seeking, and the introduction of compulsory Jobplan and Restart courses after one and two years of unemployment.

However, these efforts by the government have repeatedly run into problems due to

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the entrenched working practices and workers resistance in the Dole offices. Seeing themselves as overworked and underpaid many dole workers have been reluctant to work harder to discipline the unemployed on behalf of the government. [As well as the differences between individuals there have been significant regional variations in how enthusiastically workers have enforced the benefit rules, which has affected how claimants have seen their role]. This entrenchment has concrete expression in the common experience amongst claimants of being helped through some of the trick questions by counter staff and by the need for the government to instruct workers not to give claimants advice on how to claim the most benefits. It has also been demonstrated in the repeated failure of the Department of Employment to impose more regular Restart interviews. The Department of Employment had to repeatedly initiate drives to impose stricter benefit controls, only to have the situation revert to normal once the drive was over.

It is in this context that we have to grasp the significance of the implementation of the JSA and the recent Employment Service strike over Performance Related Pay. The JSA is part of a concerted attempt to radically restructure the administration of benefits in order to break the long established working practices and workers resistance. The Benefits Agency and the Employment Service are to merge, resulting in the relocation of many workers and widespread redundancies for others. The overall effect will potentially be a significant assault on emergent class recomposition in this sector. With this restructuring the government not only hopes to increase efficiency in the administration of benefits but also open the way for the imposition of stricter benefit regimes which will force the unemployed to compete in the labour market and thereby

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

undermine the pay and conditions of those in work.

Already, along with other government departments, the DSS and the Department of Employment have been formally constituted as semi-autonomous agencies that are supposed to have an arms length relation to national government at Whitehall. Instead of the old command structure these agencies are supposed to have contractual relations with central government and are expected to fulfil certain contractually agreed performance targets as if they were a commercial enterprise. These performance targets, which are mostly based on cutting costs i.e. the numbers claiming benefits, now have to be imposed on the workers. The old civil service system of pay and promotion based on seniority has now to be replaced by pay and promotion based on performance - which in this case is largely based on the numbers that can be forced to sign off or accept workfare schemes.

Originally, management sought the loyalty of dole workers through the security of employment offered by civil service pay and conditions, limited career prospects for those who stayed long enough, and to some extent the middle class aspirations then typical of white collared workers. As we have seen, over the past 20 years this arrangement has already been significantly undermined. But now the whole agreement is to be torn up. Instead the government hopes to use the stick of casualisation and job insecurity and the carrot of performance related pay and promotion to encourage dole workers to do its dirty work. But this is by no means assured of success. As has already happened it can lead to increased hostility and antagonism from the workers as they become more and more proletarianised. The contractual relations of the various benefit and employment agencies may place the onus on local management, but what happens if the contracts become impossible to implement? The stakes are therefore fairly high and success by no means assured.

Hopefully this brief historical sketch, incomplete though it may be, goes some way towards giving a context through which we may be able to grasp the full significance of both the recent Employment Service strike, the JSA, and their connections with other current changes to the benefit system. It may also allow us to shed a little more light on the controversy raised by the second article, 'Solidarity, Good and Bad', in *Subversion* 18. This article raises the problem of the class alignment of dole workers given the repressive functions they have to carry out in their work for the state. This is of course an important question and one we

cannot hope to deal with adequately here.

Yet what we must say, and a point at least implicit in our historical analysis, is that in addressing this question it is vital that we are not too rigid or dogmatic. Firstly, we have to bear in mind how peoples reaction to their function and position within both capital and the state can change in certain historical conditions. Clearly many factory workers who have no repressive functions

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**The government hopes to use the stick of casualisation and job insecurity and the carrot of performance related pay and promotion to encourage dole workers to do its dirty work.**

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to perform on behalf of the state or capital can be 'anti-proletarian' in that they scab on strikes for example; on the other hand in very exceptional circumstances those in overtly repressive functions, such as the army or even the police, might revolt and come over to our side! [This doesn't mean that we believe the police are 'workers in uniform' or any other such nonsense that would prevent us attacking them when we have the opportunity!].

Secondly, it is important to recognise that the structures of the state and capital are the embodiments of class struggle. They are expressions of given class compromises and are transformed when such class compromises are renegotiated. (Thus, for example, for the state Restart interviews are a means of pressuring the unemployed off the dole but up until now they have had to be presented and organised as a means of 'helping' the unemployed to find work).

Apart from taking too rigid and dogmatic a view, the problem of 'Solidarity, Good and Bad' is that it seems to be based on the false assumption that the Employment Service is faced with a mass of claimants who are refusing work so that its primary function is to force them all into work. Although it is true that over the past 20 years mass unemployment has led to increasing numbers who use the dole to refuse work, it is still true that the large majority of the unemployed want work if only because they need the money. The primary function of most dole workers, particularly those on the front line, is not repressive but simply the administration of benefits i.e. registration of claimants and paying out of benefits. Of course this may mean that some dole workers distinguish between 'genuine' and 'non-genuine' claimants or have a 'hate the

punter' mentality, whilst others may be careerists and hope to curry favour by being overzealous in those 'repressive functions' that they do carry out. But the important point is that these attitudes are not given in stone. They are open to change, particularly in a period of change such as the present!

Indeed we can see the strike and the ongoing resistance to the JSA by dole workers as being against the intensification of the policing aspect of their role. Many dole workers recognise the sharpening of the contradiction in their position and have attempted to resolve it by striking. Our common interest with the strikers is that they don't want to behave like cops just as we don't want them to. At meetings with strikers a common sentiment they expressed was that they had joined to 'help people not to police them.' This reflects a certain patronising attitude to claimants but one that began to be undermined by our engagement with their struggle. Our shared interests were immediately obvious to the many other workers who have been virtually conscripted off the dole and who can still see themselves on the other side of the counter.

But perhaps the weakest part of this article is the picture it conjures up of a powerful movement of class conscious claimants being able to impose conditions on its solidarity! [That is not to say that we would support any strike unconditionally or even any strike by employment workers regardless of the issue. The point for us was not an abstract ideological issue of whether or not to announce our support based on what side of the class line we judged the workers to fall but an attempt to seize the practical opportunities offered by the strike. Our extensive practical support for this strike was on the

**GET UP, GO TO  
WORK, GO HOME,  
GO TO BED, GET UP,  
GO TO WORK, GO  
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WORK, GO HOME,  
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basis and condition that it was in our immediate interest that it succeeded]. The problem is that at present we have little to offer in return for such conditions! From our experience the vast majority of claimants were sympathetic to the Employment Service workers strike - once it was pointed out that it would not affect their benefits - but virtually no one, apart from ourselves, was prepared to do anything more about it! This is not to say that the unemployed cannot organise themselves. Indeed here in Brighton Justice?, the group set up to oppose the Criminal Justice Act, is more or less entirely made up of claimants. But there seems to be a reluctance amongst this milieu to organise themselves as unemployed. Apart from a few individuals, Justice?, dominated as it is by liberal and life-style politics, has failed to become involved in supporting the Employment Service strike or in the anti-JSA campaign. That this problem is widespread was clearly evident in the recent demonstrations in London and Kent which could only muster a couple of hundred people.

Finally, we would like to make a few comments regarding the Employment Service workers strike. As your other article anticipated the Employment Service strike was successfully undermined by the Union. But it is perhaps important to examine how the union were able to do this. As far as we could see it was clear that there was a lot of anger across the country at the current changes occurring in the Employment Service as a consequence of the introduction of the JSA and this became focused on the question of performance related pay. However, it was not the case of militant workers committed to industrial action being pulled back on the union leash. On the contrary it seems that in most offices there has been limited experience of industrial action and many workers are a bit apprehensive at the possible consequences of taking action.

As a result most militant activists, isolated in their particular offices, have tended to gravitate towards the Broad Left. It was the Broad Left which pushed for the strike, but could only coax the workers out on the basis that all strikers would get full strike pay. It was on this basis that the ballot for selective strike action won a 2-1 majority last November. No doubt the Broad Left, who control the Employment Service section of the CPSA, hoped to escalate the strike from the original 40 offices. But they were resolutely opposed by the national executive who pleaded insufficient funds to finance an escalation on this basis. Perhaps ironically, the national executive were able to 'outleft' the Broad Left in the final ballot which ended the strike by balloting for an all out indefinite strike but with no guarantee of full

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strike pay. This was rejected by a 2-1 majority.

It seems at present that most Employment Service workers are unwilling to break with the prevalent white collar worker mentality and strike on less than full pay. This may change or other tactics may develop. Local strikes are now breaking out in the Benefits Agency and it will be interesting to see how these develop. Faced with the obstacles placed in the way to action by the union some of the more militant dole workers are looking beyond the union to claimants and other workers

through the recently established London against the JSA and Brighton against the JSA groups. The question now is whether, through organisations such as Groundswell, claimants can make a contribution/intervention in these new groups or whether they will eventually become overwhelmed by the leftist baggage many of the union activists bring with them!?

Ivan Boesky for Brighton Autonomists

### Manchester Anti-JSA Group can be contacted

by writing to:

Dept 99

1 Newton Street,

Manchester M1 1HW.

They meet alternate  
Wednesdays at the Vine  
Pub, Kennedy St, off  
Fountain St, near  
Manchester Town Hall

### BOOK REVIEW

*From the bottom up: three texts by Anton Pannekoek.* Published by Collective Action, POB 22962, Baltimore, Maryland 21203, USA. Price \$2.50/£3.

This pamphlet, mentioned previously in *Subversion*, brings together 3 articles written in the 1940s by the Dutch 'council communist' Anton Pannekoek, with a short Introduction which describes the political current to which Pannekoek belonged.

In the first article, 'Party & Class', Pannekoek states his opposition to the so-called "revolutionary party" (a contradiction in terms in his opinion) which seeks to lead and control the working class and to seize power for itself. Pannekoek favours instead fluctuating groups of people who share the same basic ideas, coming together to discuss practicalities, to clarify their views through discussion, and to propagandise their conclusions.

In 'Strikes' Pannekoek traces how, as capitalism developed this century, trade unions became "agents of capital, whose job it is to impose the unsatisfactory capital-dictated working conditions upon the unwilling workers", and what the consequences

of this have been for changing forms of class struggle.

The third (and longest) article is titled 'Why Past Revolutionary Movements Have Failed'. It tries to explain the defeat of the revolutionary wave in Western Europe (Germany especially) at the end of the First World War. Pannekoek's answer is basically that it was the Bolsheviks who did it: "The beginnings of a proletarian revolution in the West had been killed by the powerful middle class revolution of the East". (By "middle class revolution" he meant one whose main task was to develop capitalism).

The Introduction admits that "much of Pannekoek's writings were situation-specific" and that "Without a doubt later capitalist development has long passed them by". However Pannekoek and his comrades' understanding of capitalism and its gravediggers was as advanced as it could be for its time. If nothing else these three articles give an excellent view of a certain stage in the historical growth of some of the political views held today by *Subversion* and groups like us.

# 3 Strikes and a Funeral

Elswhere in this issue can be found the article "The JSA and the Dole Workers' Strike" by a member of Brighton Autonomists. The final part of it is an attack on an article of mine entitled "Solidarity, Good and Bad" which appeared in Subversion 18. The controversy between us links-in to an important debate within Groundswell (the network of anti-JSA groups throughout the country) so I will use the Brighton criticism as the starting point for this commentary.

The first thing I want to say is that the bulk of "The JSA and the Dole Workers' Strike" was unexceptionable and indeed extremely interesting. However, towards the end the tone was sadly lowered by the appearance of swear-words like "rigid" and "dogmatic", signalling the start of a volley of (in my view) hasty and ill thought-out criticisms lobbed in my direction.

There are four points I want to make in reply:

**First**, what's this crap about dogma? What dogma is it, exactly, that my article conforms to? I am not aware of anyone or any group having expressed the viewpoint that I put forward in it - it is simply an attempt to synthesize my own experience and thinking on the matter;

**Second**, the presence or absence of a mass of claimants refusing work is not relevant in my view. You might as well say that the police are not primarily a repressive body on the grounds that the majority of working class people do not break laws on the whole. The point is of course what happens if they DO break the law;

**Third**, I am of course as aware as anybody that there is no mass movement of claimants "able to impose conditions on its solidarity" but so what? Revolutionaries, and class conscious workers, shouldn't accept things which are unsupportable because we lack strength. We pursue our class interest to the best of our ability. Indeed, the article's own footnote on this point (no. 4) admits this, rather contradicting the main point.

**And Fourth**, the remainder of footnote 4 presents the further point that the determining factor should be an assessment of what is in "our immediate interest" rather than an "abstract ideological issue". On the contrary, if there is a conflict between immediate and long-term interest, opting for

the former is precisely the definition of opportunism.

Having said that, I think it would be precipitate to accuse the article's author of opportunism. And indeed, the above exchange may exaggerate the difference between us, since we both believe an attempt should be made to forge unity between claimants and (some) ES workers.

However, the devil is most certainly in the detail, and a fearsome devil it is.

## Knickers in a Twist

Throughout the movement of opposition to the JSA there has been a ferocious disagreement between supporters and opponents of the "3 Strikes" policy which has been adopted by a number of local anti-JSA groups.

*come from individual violent acts from claimants whose money has just been stopped.*

Moderate or not, it has still got some people foaming at the mouth, most notoriously Militant Labour, who have openly sided with management over the issue (see the letter from CPSA official and Militant member Frank Bonner reproduced on the next page)

The existence of the 3 Strikes policy is naturally being used by the ES management to try to force a wedge between claimants and ES workers and combat any resistance among the latter to the JSA, but there's no reason for them to succeed in this, and anti-JSA activists have begun to issue leaflets explaining to staff our desire for a joint struggle, and countering management propaganda. In this, people like

## BENEFIT "FRAUD"?

## DON'T GRASS ON YOUR OWN CLASS!

## POLITICIANS AND THE RICH HAVE STOLEN EVERYTHING OFF US THEY ARE THE REAL CRIMINALS

For those not au fait with this, it consists of the targetting of a particular manager (or in special cases an ordinary staff member) who goes out of their way to harass claimants. The 1st Strike is to send them a warning letter, the 2nd Strike is to send a final warning letter, and the 3rd Strike, if they still don't "mend their ways" is to put their photo and whatever personal details can be obtained on a poster which is then flyposted all over the place. This can be accompanied by demos against them personally or whatever, but the above is actually a quite "moderate" response.

## And the Funeral?

*The fact of the matter is that the greatest danger to ES managers (and other staff) will*

Bonner are an immediate enemy (openly siding with the ruling class is getting to be quite a tradition among Militant members).

Within the Left as a whole there is division over the policy, with some supporting it and some opposed. Sadly, this is also true of the revolutionary movement. People involved in the Brighton Autonomists/Aufheben "mini-milieu" have consistently opposed it from the beginning.

## Groundswell

Groundswell was originally formed by anarchists, but now, and increasingly, contains people from the Leninist Left, such as the SLP,

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the RCG, various Trot groups and the like.

The 3 Strikes was adopted as a nationwide policy and publicised as such, but following this, letters were circulated within the network by Brighton Autonomists and Co. arguing for its rejection.

The argument was that it would frighten the ES workers and bind them closely to management. Subversion believes this is completely false because:

- a) The policy is NOT aimed at ordinary workers but at particular individuals known for harassment of claimants, the sort of individuals moreover who are likely to be held in contempt by any workers who are (potentially) sympathetic to our aims;
- b) It is a part of the strategy of Groundswell to issue leaflets which make this clear to the workers;
- c) There is a "carrot and stick" element in decisions about whether to join a strike or other struggle. Fear of being attacked as a scab can balance fear of the bosses. The knowledge on the part of ES workers that compliance with the JSA will mean lining up with their own bosses against the unemployed, and being SEEN to do so, and thus being an object of class fury and violence, should in our view help to concentrate minds wonderfully.

Unfortunately, the following Groundswell conference abandoned 3 Strikes as a collective policy because of the arguments of Brighton. In this they were aided by some who invoked the autonomy of local groups against the idea of a nationwide policy. This rather fetishizes the concept of autonomy - if we can agree on something collectively we should do so. There's a fine line between autonomy and fragmentation.

The upshot is that the majority of groups and individuals in Groundswell support the 3 Strikes but that the policy has no "nationwide face" and thus will be less widely publicised and some of its potential targets will find it easier to ignore.

### Workerism?

The reasoning of Brighton and Co. derives from the fact that the Brighton against the JSA group has from early on had better connections with local ES workers than any of the other Groundswell groups. But this has led them to bend the stick too far in the direction of "caution" in their anxiety to keep the workers "on-side" at all costs. This approach bespeaks a "workerist" mindset (something the comrades have not been guilty of in the past) - the simple fact is that we are all part



**Employment Service Agency Section**

ES/GEN/29/96

TO: All Members in ES

31st July 1996

## "Three Strikes and You're Out"

*Dear Colleague*

Various fringe anti-JSA groups around the country, operating under the banner of "Groundswell" have started to leaflet ES and BA offices with leaflets advertising a "three strikes and you're out" policy. The target of this policy is members of staff in ES and BA who they believe are over-zealously implementing JSA or "harassing" claimants. Groundswell describe their policy as follows:

- 1st strike If we receive a complaint against a member of staff they will be sent a written warning about their conduct.
- 2nd strike If we receive a further complaint they will get a final written warning.
- 3rd strike Any further complaints against them and they will have details of their harassment widely distributed and can expect an angry demo in their office.

### Unacceptable Threats

The union has opposed JSA since its announcement and will continue to campaign against it. We recognise its unjust nature and the threats and frustrations it contains for members of staff and claimants alike.

However, we cannot accept that threats directed against members of staff can have any role to play in such a campaign. There is already far too high a level of assaults on staff in Jobcentres. What Groundswell is proposing is not simply harassment, bad enough in itself, but it is an invitation to physical assault. The union is fundamentally opposed to such tactics and threats and is taking steps to make this clear to all those who are involved in opposing the JSA.

### What Should You Do?

Management have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of members in ES. The union has written to management asking for an urgent meeting

to discuss the steps they intend to take to protect the health and safety of members in the ES. At present their proposals deal with what they will do if an incident occurs. That is not sufficient. They have a responsibility to take steps to protect members from threats of this sort. I will report back to you on the outcome of these talks as quickly as possible.

In the meantime however, members should report any threats they receive to management and to their local union representative in order that steps can be taken to prevent any further harassment. As I indicated above, the union will be talking to those involved in anti-JSA campaigning to emphasise our opposition to these tactics, to re-emphasise that JSA is a government initiative, not something dreamed up by frontline staff in the ES, and to ensure that these tactics are widely rejected.

### CPSA Campaigning

CPSA will continue to campaign against the JSA. You will have seen a great deal of information circulated to you recently about the problems associated with JSA and the steps we are taking to deal with them. I would encourage you to become involved with the union's activities in this area. This is the best way to work towards our common objectives of a decent and civilised benefit regime administered by an Employment Service which is properly staffed and resourced. We will continue to work with other groups who oppose JSA. Clearly, however, this cannot and will not include groups who threaten and harass CPSA members. I will write to you again when there are further developments to report.

*Yours sincerely*

**Frank Bonner**  
Section Secretary

946/96

**The Civil and Public Services Association - Leeds Regional Office**

49 Upper Basinghall Street, Leeds LS1 5HR Tel: 0113 243 2627 Fax: 0113 243 2618

of the working class (whether we be claimant, employee, housewife...) and the struggle of one part of our class must not be spurned in the (vain) hope another part of the class maybe struggling later on.

It is a sad fact that, of all the political tendencies in Groundswell, the Brighton people formed the most right-wing in the 3 Strikes argument. The result of their intervention was to partly demobilize this aspect of the struggle. Fortunately, all is not lost, as 3 Strikes is still supported by most activists, and is being implemented increasingly. Accordingly, we should be able to give it more and more publicity.

### What a difference "A-Day" makes

This article has focussed on what is only a part of the struggle against the JSA. It will be for future issues of Subversion to deal with other aspects, such as reports of our activities, and more analytical pieces.

The 7th of October (A-Day) is the official implementation, but opinion is divided as to how big the change will be on that day, as the JSA has been gradually being phased in long before that, and this phasing in may continue until the spring.

This is a struggle that is going to escalate, so watch this space.

# Screen off the Bosses, Not the Claimants!

The CPSA, a union active amongst Benefit staff and the 'Employment' Service is organising a strike to demand screens be erected between staff and claimants signing on. This is an insult to all claimants. We are being stigmatised as the problem, when the problem is the new Job Seekers Allowance scheme. ES staff know this will cause problems. The union is trying to direct this concern into scapegoating claimants. The function of the screens is to dehumanise and humiliate claimants. It will encourage anti-claimant attitudes amongst the workforce and in essence is collaboration with the bosses. We must oppose this strike.

Union apologists say that government legislation prevents ES workers striking against the JSA as such, and suggest this is a useful tactic to obstruct the introduction of the JSA. This is two-faced liberal hogwash. The union is hiding behind government legislation to further separate ES workers from claimants.

## Workers Autonomy

We appeal to ES workers:

### ***The Bosses make us sick!***

Have you looked at your boss recently? Aren't they ugly? Doesn't merely the sight of their face make you feel sick? Demand that they are screened off from workers and claimants alike. This could easily be achieved if the ES supplied each boss with a suitably constructed paper bag to wear over their head, complete with eye holes. They should wear these at all times.

We demand that this new rule be implemented immediately.

### ***The Union hacks make us sick!***

What twisted mind dreamt up the idea of screening off claimants? As if claimants are to blame for all the problems that will arise with the JSA. This is not just a red-herring used to divert workers very real concerns about the JSA — it is designed to sabotage the struggle against the JSA. It's designed to set ES worker and claimant against each other. Don't wait for the Union hack to get that plum job in 'human resources management' before insulting them. Tell them where to get off now.

Claimants and ES workers need to learn an important lesson. We must organise *autonomously* of all union apparatuses. The unions have sabotaged struggle after struggle. Their interests are tied up with management and they use every effort to prevent working class initiatives. For example during the Miners Strike ten years ago, dockers refused to unload coal at Immingham. 'Their' union, the TGWU, instructed them to break this boycott and so substantially weakened the strike. The unions moan about tory legislation, but then hide behind it.

There is a growing wave of working class discontent both in the workplace and in the community. We need to set up autonomous workers groups outside all official channels if we are to avoid the defeats of the 1980s.

## ***Workers Autonomy Now! No More Scapegoating!***

Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS

# Democracy and Ballots

## Dear Subversion,

Thanks for the literature you sent me recently and for mailing me *Subversion* 19. It was all extremely interesting stuff and a source of a lot of good information. Keep up the good work! (And find enclosed a contribution to help you to do so).

(...)

If it's OK I'd like to raise a couple of questions concerning the "education" and class struggle issue and the issue of democracy.

Of course experiences in the day to day struggles lead some people to become revolutionaries. Also, I agree with you that upsurges in class struggle and periods of crisis in capitalism provide a POTENTIAL revolutionary springboard. The contradictions, class relationships and miseries inherent to capitalism inevitably lead the workers to confront capital and when this happens there is, of course the POTENTIAL for revolutionary consciousness to grow through the realisation of class position and the nature of capitalism. As the current trends within capitalism continue, squeezing and stamping on the working class ever more relentlessly, alongside the growing realisation of the failure of all forms of running the system; then there is definitely a growing POTENTIAL for the escalation of struggle towards the overthrow of the system. However, how many times has the potential been there in past moments of escalated struggle and capitalist crisis only to disappear or to be channelled into reformist, pro-capitalist directions? And why?

Your correspondent DG, in his last report on the Merseyside dockers' dispute revealingly comments about the dockers that, "...by their actions they rejected wage labour, but they remain unwilling to recognise it...". It

would appear that their dispute has reached the brink of revolutionary consciousness, but this is held back by the general climate of political ideas. That DG goes on to say that dockers only recognise their rejection of wage labour "in private" goes to show that communist/socialist ideas are still incredibly marginalised, to the point of being unthinkable.

Wouldn't things be different if communist/socialist ideas were generalised throughout the working class? The more widely known, discussed, accepted the

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### Subversion seems to damn democracy full stop and I still can't understand why.

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communist/socialist case is, then surely the more likely it is that "day to day" class conflict will escalate into a decisive mass struggle against the money system itself. This is where "education" (or promoting the socialist case) rears its head. I feel that the biggest job is getting the socialist case across as widely and loudly as possible. Capitalism will continue to throw up situations where an escalation of class struggle towards communism is possible, but the more workers there are who are conscious communists or are aware of the alternative to capitalism, then I would think the greater the likelihood there is of getting rid of the system.

Also, would you agree that upsurges of class struggle which don't have a widespread libertarian socialist political consciousness will always run the risk of being hijacked by the Left and the rest of the leadership brigade?

Following on from this, I'd be interested in hearing a clarification of Subversion's views on democracy. I think we all agree that REPRESENTATIVE "democracy" is a farce and that voting for any group

that seeks to administer capitalism or lead us is like loading the gun for your own executioner. Likewise there would be no difference if all state and commercial posts were directly elected as they will always act on behalf of the ruling class and against us. Elected police chiefs (as the SWP plan to have in their "Workers State"!!) would still be thugs-in-chief as much as elected politicians act in the same anti-working class way as unelected ones do. But Subversion seems to damn democracy full stop and I still can't understand why.

Is there anything wrong with democracy in the sense of organisation and discussion as equals, the making of decisions by voting, the election of mandated, recallable delegates to relevant bodies etc.? This is, after all the way a free society would surely work. Democracy is a sham under capitalism because people are anything but equals and the capitalist notion of democracy is used to cover this up.

Going on (!) to the issue of parliament, I don't see why it can't be used as PART of the revolution as it wouldn't be used as an instrument of government, but as a means of demonstrating and carrying out the working class majority's wish to abolish the state for good. Also, bearing in mind that, "...the proletarian movement is the movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority" couldn't the vote be used as a way of ensuring that the socialist revolution IS carried out by the immense majority of our class, and not by a minority that would leave the majority passive and open to manipulation by pro-capitalist or leadership elements? By voting, at least we could know exactly where we were. And it would be on OUR terms, as capitalism would already be in final retreat (hopefully) by this stage.(...)

Yours for socialism,  
BM (Bath)  
Member of Socialist Party of Great Britain



## Subversion Reply

Thanks for your letter...

As you say "we have heard it all before" from the Socialist Party of Great Britain, especially in the north west where we have debated this issue to the point of mutual exhaustion!

However when you say in your letter "...then there is definitely a growing potential for the escalation of struggle towards the overthrow of the system" you have perhaps (inadvertently?) taken one step beyond the usual SPGB approach.

In general the SPGB has only conceived of the 'educative' process of the class struggle from a purely negative point of view. It ignores the possibilities of collective action as a positive experience - the development of class solidarity and confidence in our ability to change material circumstances, if only in small ways. The process is similarly viewed more in terms of individuals' passive reflection in failure, then in the COLLECTIVE advancement of struggle and consciousness.

Whilst *some* underlying long term trends in the development of capitalism (through the interaction of competition and class struggle) appear to benefit the revolutionary movement, in general we see no evidence of any linear, accumulative advancement towards

capitalism's overthrow. What we do perceive are *periodic* advances in the escalation of class struggle and subsequent retreats. It is these escalations which *practically* confront large sections of our class with the *need*, as well as the possibility, of going beyond merely defensive actions towards an attack on both the capitalist economy and state. In the long history of capitalism the period 1917-21 was for instance a high point as on a lesser scale was 1968-70, 1980-81 in more recent times. It is precisely in such periods that revolutionary minorities can have a disproportionate influence by encouraging, both theoretically *and* practically, the combining and deepening of struggle.

That doesn't mean we just go away and contemplate our navels the rest of the time, but rather that the balance of our work between theoretical development, general propaganda and agitational activity is consciously altered in relation to the development of the class struggle at any particular time.

All of this leads on to our critique of "democracy" which goes well beyond a simple rejection of Parliament.

In basing our hopes on the escalation and deepening of class struggle as the *starting point* of revolution, we have to accept that this process is something advanced by MINORITIES, often against the passivity of the majority. As the struggle develops these minorities will inevitably grow and on the eve of revolution will doubtless number many millions. The point

however, is that we cannot *predict* exactly what proportion of our class needs to be actively involved in consciously attacking capitalism (as opposed to passively going along with events or waiting to see what happens) to start the revolution. It's not a matter of the number of bodies as such, but rather the balance of class power. Furthermore whilst the defeat of all the major capitalist states marks a definitive moment in the revolution, the momentum carries on involving more people, in a more conscious way until communism is firmly established as a new way of life.

In so far as the class struggle is advanced by 'minorities' an over concern for 'democracy' in the abstract becomes a barrier to revolutionary activity. Parliamentary democracy in particular and also 'Party' and 'trade union' democracy have been continually used against the activity of militants seeking to advance the interests of our class.

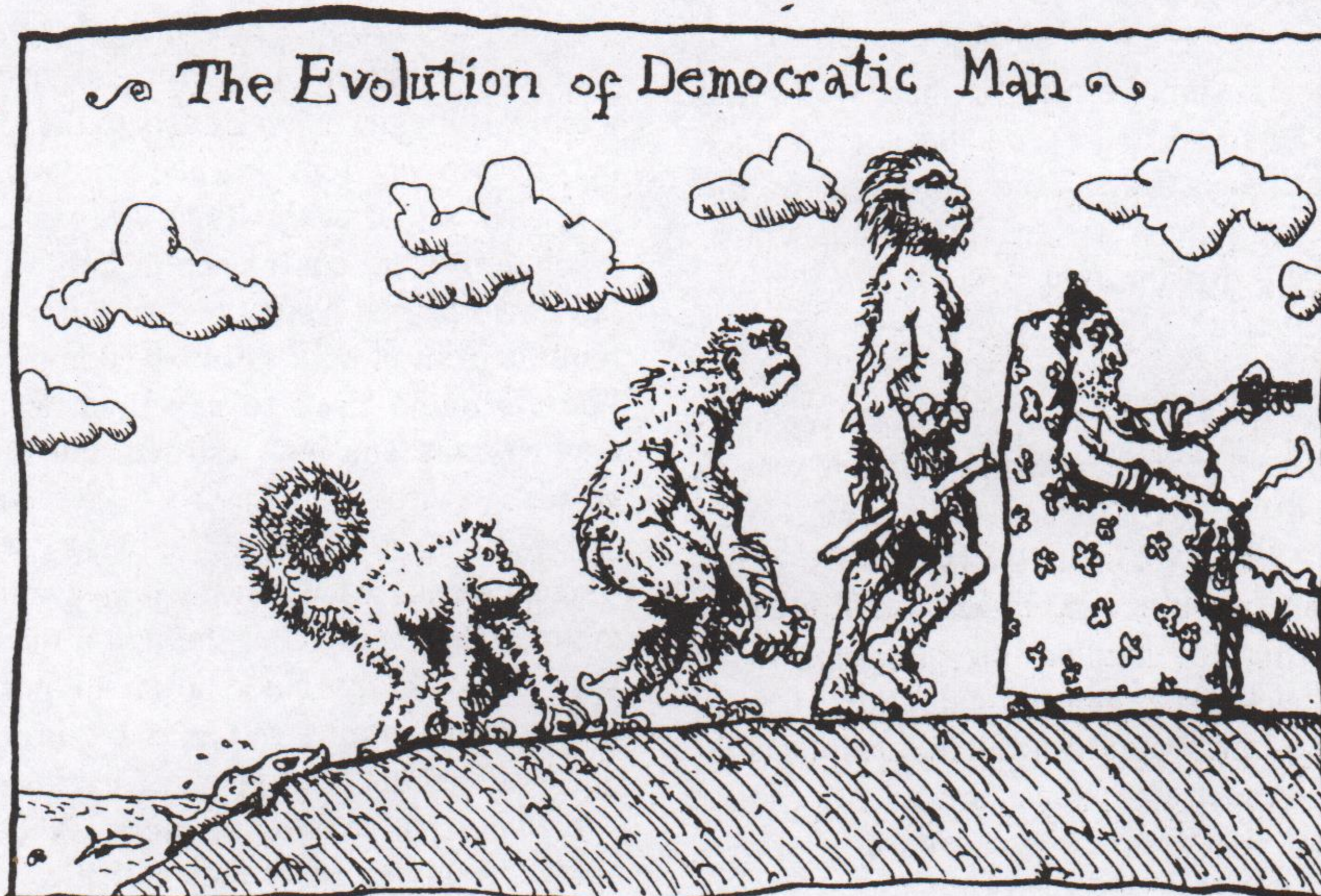
To oppose 'democracy' is not to support 'dictatorship' or 'elitism' but to *practice* equality and self-activity amongst those committed to struggle, and to seek the continual expansion of the struggle on this basis.

We do *not* view revolution in terms of the extension of political democracy into the workplace, the economy or society as a whole. Rather it should involve the superceding of both dictatorship *and* democracy, the abolition of politics and economics as such.

Whether or not the organisation of communist society involves elections and voting (and we might expect much of everyday life to take on a 'natural' process within certain well defined principles) this is *not* its *essence*, which lies in the conscious creation and re-creation of the human world unmediated by 'exchange' and all its ramifications.

We hope this goes some way to further explaining our approach.

Fraternaly,  
SUBVERSION





# Posties, Tippex and Ballots

## More on the postal strikes

We've had 8 one day strikes in Royal Mail now and it has apparently cost them £100 million. A one day strike costs a postie, after deductions, about £25. A lot of posties are disappointed when there isn't a strike day in the week as they are getting used to a

this becomes evident the more you see the unions using them to control their memberships. Flying picketing is - as the bosses, government, and union bosses realise only too well - essential to workers' effectiveness in industrial action. Not only can it spread

**WHEN WILL ROYAL MAIL BE CRUSHED LIKE A SNAIL  
UNDER THE FOOT OF A POSTIE ON A CRISP AUTUMN MORN?  
AND IS OUR DREAM OF TRANSCENDING THE UNIONS ENTIRELY FORLORN?**

five day week, people make arrangements to go out with their families and whenever a strike day has been cancelled there has been a lot of discontent with the Union for messing about with our social plans! While in one respect this could be seen as a positive attitude towards work in general (i.e. anti-work), the way the strikes have been organised has meant that we have had little real participation and the Union has retained almost full control of events and information - this, of course, has made the union bosses very happy. More militant posties are, in fact, very unhappy about the way the strike seems to have been conducted over our heads, without even any explanation of the reasons for the particular tactics used by the Communications Workers Union. A lot of posties think a work to rule would be more effective, while this might well lead to an all out strike (management would probably force us out on some provocation) it would give posties a chance to seize some autonomy from the CWU manipulators.

In Scotland, however, there has been a concerted attempt to defy the "anti-trade union" laws and workers have tried to gain some control of events for themselves. Flying pickets have been really successful, especially when you consider how difficult it is to organise this on single strike days. Since secondary picketing is illegal Royal Mail threatened to sue the Union if it was allowed to continue, this, of course, gave the Union the excuse it needed to attempt a crack-down on such subversive activity. However, because the strikes have only been one-dayers in the main this has not come to a head. Certainly the CWU bosses do not like it when posties take their own initiative, various leaflets from them have threatened all sorts of dire consequences if we do not do exactly as they tell us to. Most "anti-trade union" laws are, in fact, anti-worker laws,

the struggle, but it is important for the mutual morale boosting of strikers and the exchange of information amongst workers. There really is a need for the culture of flying picketing to return and the only way for this to happen is for striking workers to get out and do it! What does it matter to us if the union is fined, will posties really be affected if the CWU has to sell the posh hotel it owns? The unions are taking the piss out of us.

Strikers in the big strike in Scotland last November were ready to send pickets down to offices in England but the Union convinced them that although they had got away with flying picketing in Scotland, English laws would somehow not be so tolerant and the whole thing would be impossible. Union bosses, of course, did not approve of the unofficial mass strike in Scotland and were very nervous about it spreading south, so it was lucky for them that "common sense" won the day.

### WEIRD STUFF

This is complicated! It has transpired through a leak to the press that some strange shenanigans have been going on in the higher reaches of the CWU bureaucracy. Namely that the first strike ballot that the Union held has been found to be invalid and that the second strike ballot we are due to have soon is to correct this error. We have been told that the second ballot has been called partly to appease calls from Royal Mail, the government, the Labour Party, the media, and every other anti-working class bastard to ballot on Royal Mails (unchanged!) proposals, and partly to see if support for the strike is still strong (which is totally mad since the numbers of strikers proves this to be the case anyway!). However, it seems that the original notification

of the strike ballot results which were sent to Royal Mail had had the number of spoilt papers tippexed out. This makes the original ballot invalid.

If the tippex story is true then a couple of questions arise. Why has Royal Mail sat on this information for so long? And will the union be fined? The story is that Alan Johnson, our glorious General Secretary, got an agreement from Royal Mail that they will not pursue the matter, but the threat is that if the tippex story gets out (which it now has!) then private firms may take the CWU to the cleaners for lost revenue. Now, Alan Johnson, who was never in favour of the strike, has wanted to re-ballot the members for a while now on the (crap!) deal so far, but the Postal Executive has refused his wish, since, rightly, nothing fundamental has changed in Royal Mail's proposals. Uncannily, this tippex saga has enabled Alan Johnson to get his way with the Postal Executive, whom he swore to secrecy about the whole thing, since they do not want to let the Union end up in court. Johnson and Royal Mail now hope that the new ballot will go against continuing the industrial action, but even if the ballot proves for continuing it is likely that the majority for will be reduced (those who didn't vote before may now vote for an end to action, for example) and this will strengthen Johnson's hand against the Executive and those of us who don't want teamworking or a crap pay deal.

This also shows that democracy is crap and breeds apathy amongst those it is designed to control - we need working class action not democratic ballots! Real life, not politics!

Anyway, due to Johnson's "lack of enthusiasm" for the industrial action he has had his job of writing the union leaflets to the members taken away from him, and Scotland No. 2 branch, so far at this time, has passed a resolution of no confidence in him. They have also passed resolutions on linking the reinstatement of strikers involved in picket-line discipline cases to any final deal on teamworking and pay restructuring in the APC's.

There are quite a few other actions going on around the country, but the union likes to keep these things quiet, after all posties might start winning things if we brought other offices out in support of workers involved in separate office disputes. What the bosses try in one office they will always try

*(Continued on page 18)*

## News from Australia

# Parliament Invaded! Shock! Horror!

### Introduction

On Monday 19th August, a demonstration in Canberra, Australia, turned into an occupation of that country's Parliament building. The demonstration was called by the ACTU, the official union organisation. Their response was predictable and once again showed how thoroughly union organisations have been incorporated into capitalism's system of social control.

The following article comprises a series of accounts from eye-witnesses who participated in the events of the day, plus a couple of background pieces from other sources in Australia. All these accounts were obtained off the Internet.

As with all eye-witness accounts, what people saw varied and this is reflected in their descriptions. We have made no effort to 'tidy up' what they have to say.

"The ACTU called a demonstration against the Government's industrial relations for Monday 19 August. Parts of the budget were announced over the previous week including massive cuts for higher education (5% cut over three years, no supplementation for wage increases and expectation of increased student intakes), the ABC and ATSIC (truly sickening level of cuts which will amount to 30% in many areas). The Monday 19 demo was broadened by the ACTU into a protest

against these cuts too.

Overall it seems that about 25000 people turned up. By far the largest demo I've seen in Canberra in the 17 years I've been here."

"Big demos happened in most capital cities encompassing workers, students, indigenous people, and have become generally anti-government demos, even though the unions (that initially called them) hoped to concentrate on proposed labour laws that would end collective bargaining and collective national contracts known as awards. There have been a considerable surge in struggles in the past few months, with a steady stream of big rallies of workers and students over sectoral issues, strikes and some factory/workplace occupations, and recently rioting by indigenous people in rural areas. All of these actions have been limited to the general (bureaucratic, conservative) structures of the unions (which are affiliated with the previously-governing Labour party, and which are facing something of a crisis), and of the "peak organization" of the student, Aboriginal, social sectors. Today, c. 15,000 people rallied in Canberra (the national capital) and marched on Parliament House. In the early afternoon, we started getting radio reports of attempts to storm and occupy the Parliament building by hundreds/thousands of people, and protesters (mainly workers and students I believe) spent about two hours in a part of the building and then in a battle with police (with riot gear) in the main foyer of the parliament building." "Other protests occurred in Brisbane (5000), Perth (5000), Adelaide (10,000), and Darwin (500). In Darwin, protestors also occupied the Parliament building apparently for a while. In Victoria, we had a general stopwork a couple of weeks ago of about 30 - 40,000 people."

"Actually there were industrial actions in all the major cities yesterday to protest not only budget cuts but the proposed Workplace Relations Bill which as currently written would gut the power of the industrial commissions and push workers toward having to negotiate individually with some employers. Here in Brisbane about 10,000 people demonstrated peacefully and marched through the streets. Coal miners went on a 24 strike nationwide."

"The rally was 25,000 strong despite it not being an official strike day, and about 10% of this tried to get into the Parliament. Police blocked the way and things turned nasty. Battering rams were used by Construction workers to bash in the glass doors and people

streamed into the building over the tops of one another. There were several injuries to both protesters and police and 50 or so arrests. The media of course called the action thuggery, the Labor Party and top union officials distanced themselves from the action and will probably use it as an excuse not to call any more strikes or demos and the repressive legislation will get through the senate."

"An Aboriginal group apparently got around or through the police barricades and went up to the front entrance. They were closely followed by groups of workers, especially CFMEU members. Then other people including other unionists and some students joined them. They tried to get into the building and there was a lot of pushing and shoving. Eventually a relatively small number got in. Up to 2000 people may have been involved in the demonstration at the entrance to the building, the bulk of them unionists. I arrived after it had begun and got up to near the entrance of the building but it was very difficult to know what was happening in the front line. It was totally unorganised.

The ACTU started the speeches across the road where most of the crowd was. Some attempts were made by individual union officials to get people away from the entrance, but without much success."

"4 people were arrested, 2 for assault, 2 for trespass - NOT 45 as some media claimed. 45 people may have been detained without arrest (i.e. illegally), but virtually all were released without being charged. I was detained with both the protestors who were eventually charged with assault. One told me he had not done anything and was randomly grabbed, the other had his nose broken by cop after decking a copper for punching a girl in the face - he wasn't sorry. 2 (dodgy) assault charges from a rally of 50,000 - that's NOT violent. Despite union leadership and media claims to the contrary, there was NO distinction between the 'official' rally and the 'riot' - the crowd spread from the stage all the way up to the doors. It was virtually impossible to get up to the doors because of the huge number (10,000?) of people who wanted to get in to the building. The crush at the doors was one of the most intense feelings I have experienced at a demo." "This rally tried to do what every anti-Kennett rally should have done and didn't- confront power directly. The mood was united and festive- I was an anglo guy in a suit and I had Koori's, construction workers, and every kind of person around me in a spirit of solidarity

## Posties continued

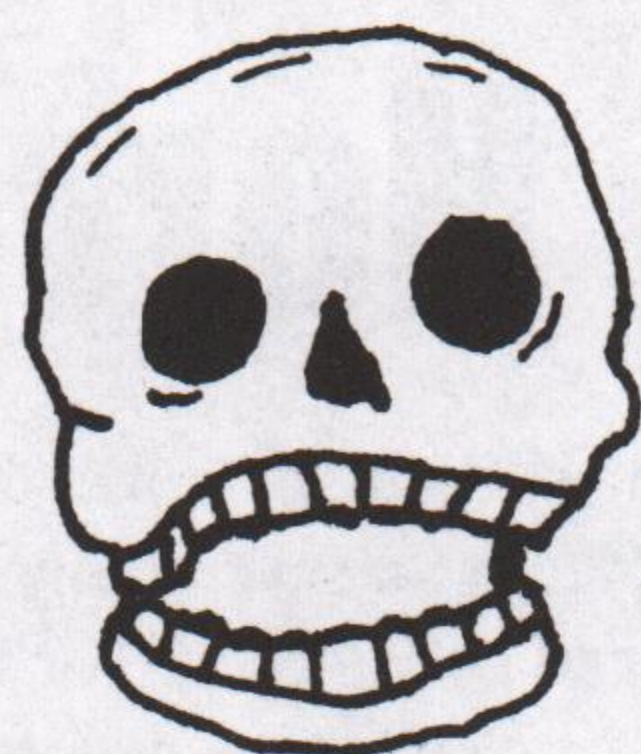
*(Continued from page 17)*

to spread if they get away with it.

Finally, despite heroic efforts by many posties the union has, by and large maintained control of this industrial action and there has been virtually no propaganda produced by the posties themselves. Obviously there is plenty that we should be communicating to each other. Important industries like the Post (**that is, important to the class struggle**) need to have as many trouble-making, revolutionary types in it as possible. Personally, I feel that many radical supporters of a working class revolution don't actually put themselves in a position where they are of much use. Of course, I understand that radical types as much as anyone want an easy life with a well-paid and cushy job, but we could certainly do with more people in crucial industries.

[big thanks to Petey O. for info and sharp analysis]

## GET SOME DIGNITY



Put your feet up on  
the job,  
and blow raspberries  
at the boss.

as it is possible to keep you there. The company is screwing you every minute of every day, don't stick up for the company, or be proud of the company. Only real thickies will identify with their company, not surprisingly many of this sort come from what is called "the middle class". These sad deluded fools think that what they do is important and that they are valued by the company, it comes as a massive nervous breakdown-type shock if

they find out that none of this is true (if they are made redundant, for example).

If the bosses ever want to know what you think about the company and how it could be improved, always say that it is perfect as it is and that you couldn't be happier. If the company wants to know your opinions then it is only trying to get more ideas on how to improve efficiency and make everyone work harder. Whatever you say that has any relation to the truth will be used against all of you, to make you more productive. The company is not interested in your welfare, only its profit margins. Your bosses may seem like decent people (unlikely!), but if they had the opportunity (like their predecessors in the last century, or their counterparts today in other countries) they would love to make us work twice as hard for half the money and stop paying the taxes that go to frivolous things like the NHS. The only reason they don't do these things is because they know that running a totalitarian country is, in the end, more expensive and less efficient than a democracy and also that we would finally get rid of them if they pushed us too far for too long.

Our bosses are more afraid of us than we realise, there's only a few of them compared to the millions of us - luckily for them though we are usually so pathetically dim-witted that we let them get away with virtually anything. They must be laughing their socks off. We wouldn't know what day of the week it was if they didn't tell us.

*This bulletin has been produced by a bunch of miserable workers centred around Manchester. It is not important who we are, it is enough to know that we have been pretty miserable for a long time now! and that we have discovered that our condition is common in the working class across the entire planet.*

*Miserable Worker 1 is available from the address below:*

### **MISERABLE WORKER**

Dept. 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1

...pass round, duplicate, distribute, throw spanners in the works...

and unity. There was a lot of talking, joking, discussing, and mutual support. It was clear what our aim was.

"I was in the gift shop when it was being 'looted'. The aim, as far as I could see, was not to loot the gift shop but gain access to the house. The damage was a by-product of the melee that ensued with the police, and of people's frustrations; it was not the central focus of those involved.

"Lastly I would like to say that I did think there was two rallies. ACTU and trade union officials were continually coming up to the doors and urging people, through megaphones, to return to the 'real' rally. They were treated with laughter, with people saying "enough speeches-we want action". I have my own opinion of where the real rally was.

"After the experience of attending three anti-Kennett (*the premier of Victoria*) rallies, I must say this one possessed an enthusiasm and energy that I have not seen before. If 150 000 people had been there, who knows what might have occurred."

#### **Notes:**

ACTU, the Australian "TUC"

ABC - Australian Broadcasting Commission

ATSIC - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission ( a government funded bureaucracy headed by elected indigenous representatives)

CFMEU Construction, Forestry & Mine Employees Union

Kooris - indigenous people of Southern Australia

#### **Miserable Worker**

If you want copies of Miserable Worker to distribute, but can't afford to print your own, then drop us a line and tell us how many you want. **Miserable Worker** is anti-copyright - feel free to reprint it, with your own address on it.

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Articles on Yugoslavia, the Zapatistas, Prisons, Imperialism and more.

\$4.00 or £2.50 from BM CAT, London WC1N 3XX  
(don't mention Wildcat on the envelope!)

A Subversion recommended read!

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Continuing the attack on the ICC. A good read.  
SAE to Box 15, 138 Kingsland High St, London E8 2NF

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#### **E-mail?**

You can e-mail Subversion at  
106014.55@compuserve.com

# Miserable worker

Winter 1996/97  
No. 2

## If you're not miserable then you must be mad!!

The world is one massive, stinking, miserable labour camp.

It is organised so that profits are made for the bosses and so that we (the workers/donkeys/slaves/ants/zombies/mugs) are kept in line. For if we fell out of line then that would threaten their profits. Everything in this world is judged in terms of its value in money. Nothing is worth doing unless it can make you money. The world is full of talented people who waste their lives stuck in a factory, office, or wherever it is they have to work. By the time you've given up all your time and energy to your boss, there's not much else you can do except watch TV, sleep, or get rat-arsed - and that's only after you've done all the chores that need doing around the house.

It would seem as if our greatest desire was to extinguish everything in us that is human and transform ourselves into an army of moronic robots. But this is not our choice, we have been beaten down and crushed until we obediently do what we are told to do, and we have become afraid to raise our voices about anything important.

We feel most like the moronic robots that we are becoming when we are at work. This is because this is the place where they make the most money out of us, *and where we are most humiliated*. (The second most place is in shops). They pay us as little as they can get away with, and make us work as hard as they can.

The work ethic is so ingrained in us that usually they don't have to try very hard to make us work at the rate they require. At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, a couple of hundred years ago, bosses had no end of trouble trying to make their new workers (who came from villages and previously worked on the land) get down to some work. For example, after a Sunday's revelry workers often would take the Monday, Tuesday and even Wednesday off. These days were known as St. Monday, St. Tuesday etc. and these unofficial mass holidays caused serious problems for the bosses and owners who wanted to make big profits for themselves. So factories and other workplaces became more like prisons and overseers were chosen for the amount of cruelty they could display. Another method they used to make workers compliant was to give them absolutely no choice: land all over Britain and Europe was cleared of people and these people now had no choice but to go to the cities and find work in the new industries. Soon there started to be more people than jobs, and because it was now impossible to return to the countryside, or find any other kind of work, workers knuckled under and finally started doing what they were told.

200 years down the line and we are so well trained that they don't even have to wave a big stick at us to make us do what they want. We should be ashamed of ourselves. We have become little people who can only say: "Yes, sir. No, sir. Three bags full, sir."

Of course, it is probably true to say that most of us feel that we are not the scaredy cats that our ancestors would see us as. We have a multitude of excuses for why we go along with everything. These range from the cynicism of "keeping your head down", to things like: "I can't do anything else at the moment"; or, "It would never work"; or, "It's the other buggers who'll let you down". *Power* (that is: the government, the bosses, the managers, schools, the media, etc) has put us into a trance so that we have few thoughts of our own, they have shackled our imagination - *what mugs we are to believe ANYTHING said by those who want to keep us working hard so that the rich and powerful can stay where they are now!!*

Work is killing us. We should think about trying to salvage some of our dignity. You can't deny it: to varying degrees the workplace is a war zone. We should, just for the sheer mischief of it, if nothing else, attempt to escalate the tension, so that everyone can see the true, vicious face of management and bosses. Throw a few spanners in the works; while you're clawing back some of your own self-respect watch the buggers in charge become the rabid dogs that they really are.

Remember, it is perfectly honourable to lie to and cheat your bosses, they, after all are constantly lying to and cheating you, plus they have the power to sack you. Don't be a good slave, be a wise one.

With sympathetic fellow workers try to organise your sick leave for maximum benefit to you and maximum detriment to the company. Remember the old adage: There's no point being off sick when you're actually ill.

Remember, company profits don't get filtered down to you. Whatever your bosses are making they will still try to pay you as little