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# Spooftversion

Incorporating Subversion no. 24  
and Spooftversion no. 1 Autumn 1998

Free!  
(or donation)

*In this issue: How Socialist is CAMRA? ... Exploding Statues  
The Marx-Dickens Letters ... Can Arthur Scargill Dance?  
Children: Agents of the Bourgeoisie? ... and lots more*

**The PAPER that FOLLOWS  
the GLISTENING TRAIL of**



**the SNAIL of REVOLUTION!**



## Introduction

This issue of SPOOFVERSION has been brought out by former members of the ex-group SUBVERSION. We have renamed ourselves SPOOFVERSION because the word "spoof" is descended from the Latin word "*spufiouo*", which means "cut off the head of the tyrant". It is interesting to see how words change aspects of their meaning over time. Thus this magazine is not to be taken as a modern-day "spoof", or joke, but as an ancient call to arms against our oppressors.

In an effort to inject some light relief into the journal, we have included on pages 11-12 an article that can be best described as dada-surrealo-constructo-lettrist; in comic-falsetto tone it briefly lists SUBVERSION's successes and failures, and the reasons for its demise.

For the historical record we at SPOOF[previously SUB]VERSION are/were a group of effete male and female erotic dancers. We have worked in many parts of Britain, and indeed the world, and all our writings and actions are based on analyses gained from our own experiences, plus some reading up at the local library. The demise of SUBVERSION should be seen as a passing on to a higher plane of activity for we intend to concentrate more on our dancing. By strategically placing ourselves at class struggle hotspots around the globe and then dancing in an erotic way we hope to not only inspire further acts of courage on the part of the proletariat, but also to help break the confidence of the international bloodsucking boss class and their many helpers. *Our dance is a dance of death and a dance of life.*

There may or may not be further issues of SPOOFVERSION, which may or may not be obtained from:

**Box 127  
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## Contents

### PAGE 2

How Socialist is the Campaign for Real Ale?

### PAGE 5

Blast from the Past: The Moving Statues of Leeds

### PAGE 7

Remembering the Paris Commune  
Book Review: *A Victorian Correspondence: The Letters of Dickens and Marx*

### PAGE 8

Are Children Agents of the Bourgeoisie?

### PAGE 9

Can Arthur Scargill Dance?

### PAGE 11

Subversion: The Party's Over!

### PAGE 13

"Leftism Rotted My Brain"  
My Afternoon of Psychogeographic Hell in London

## Publications

If you don't like SPOOFVERSION, you probably won't like these either:

### **The Corpse of the Millenium**

*A Proletarian Gob Special Issue.*

People in the "Western World" live in a society culturally dominated by ideas of hygiene, sport, health and what passes these days for beauty. This was the central aim of the German National Socialist Workers Party (the Nazis). To build a society fit for work and fit for the promotion of a nation - that is, *stupid*. Christian heretics a few hundred years ago might have envisaged this millenium as a time when priests, lawyers, bailiffs, nobility and the rich would finally get their throats cut. But Christianity has become *Rational* and it has made sure everyone else has too. In this idiot world *reasonableness* is the new motto, *democracy* marks the parameters of the game we are allowed to play, and *foolishness* has been conquered.

Send an A5 self-addressed envelope with 1st class stamp/donation.

**Subversion** back issues. Many still available, including:

No. 23: Continuing debates on Fighting the JSA, Getting A Job and Green Communism; Book Reviews; Trade Unions and the Capitalist Left; Liverpool Dockers' Charter

No. 22: Green Communism, the JSA, Getting A Job and Northern Ireland all continued;

Progress/Anti-Progress; The March for Social Justice

No. 21: South Korea; Liverpool Dockers; Green Communism; the JSA; Getting A Job; Northern Ireland

Also: *The Best of Subversion* and *The Second Best of Subversion*: compilations of articles from issues 1-11 and 11-20

For single items send an A4 self-addressed envelope with 1st class stamp/donation. For multiple copies add extra postage.

It seems that today we're working as cartoon heads for another post-situationist, sub-ironic, mealy-mouthed publication that can't find any decent graphics. Did I tell you that your aftershave makes me want to puke?

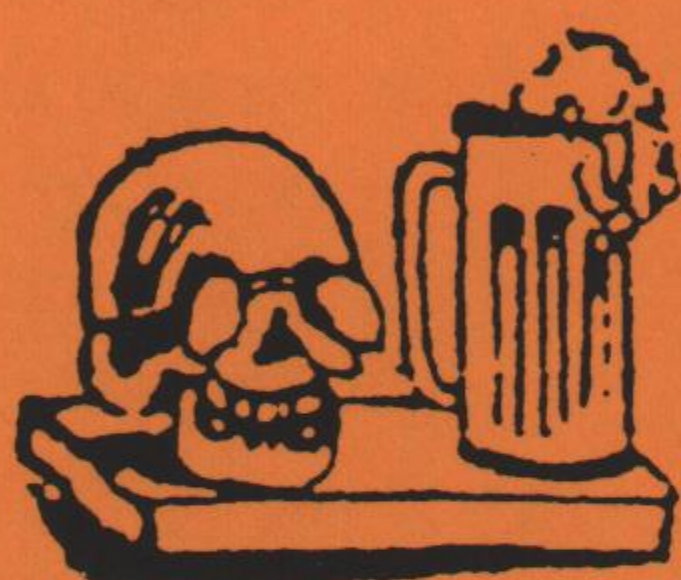


Yes, I say down with *all* bosses.



# How Socialist is... The Campaign for Real Ale?

In the first three decades of this century the temperance movement in Britain achieved a prominence in working class culture and politics that it had never seen before and will probably never see again. The philosophy of the many temperance societies that existed during this period was that drink was the ruin of ordinary folk and should therefore be avoided at all costs. In place of drinking these societies suggested that people should march through urban streets waving banners, have discussions, and, most importantly of all, sing.



There were many types of temperance society, ranging from the Evangelical Christian, to the liberal, to the dialectical materialist, and although the nature of their discussions may have differed they were all agreed on the evils of drink and the benefits of singing. In fact, members of the *Revolutionary Syndicalist Temperance League* of Reading created something of a sensation in 1912 when, as *The Times* reported, "five stout fellows recently laid off from a local tile factory, having avoided drink for a full year, sang popular operatic songs continuously for a week in the main high street". They were supported in this marathon effort by their families and fellow workers, and gained a great deal of respect from the local establishment. They were offered menial, poorly-paid jobs involving heavy-lifting by the owner of the Heelas linen and general goods store, and praised in the local newspaper. Unfortunately, things went wrong when one of their number punched the Mayor of Reading in the face during a civic ceremony and the five were forced to flee the country, eventually settling in Northern Spain.

Temperance societies had arisen in the

second half of the nineteenth century in response to the need of liberal reformers from the upper classes to instil their own senses of decency and morality into the working class. The working class was perceived by most of its betters as some sort of stupid but dangerous beast that had to be controlled. However, the days had passed when that control could be

secured entirely by force, during the nineteenth century workers were gaining strength in the class struggle by sheer weight of numbers and by the fact that they were starting to see how, collectively, they could

improve their lot. Dangerous and unhealthy ideas of socialism had to be thwarted where they sprang up in the minds of workers. The Church, which had done such good work in previous centuries when the ordinary folk were forced to attend services, was no longer fulfilling its moral function, new organs for the diffusion of sound thinking had to be created, one of these was the temperance society (others were: education; journalism; extension of the franchise; whippet racing; cleanliness; and Impressionist Art, to name only a few).

Drunkenness had long been a "problem" in the working class. For many, of course, it was an escape from their bleak, slum-dwelling, over-worked, poverty-stricken existence.

For many male drunkards it was an escape from the demands of family life, where, after a hard day's work men were often greeted at home by noisy and difficult children and a wife who constantly expected her husband to do chores around the slum.

The most despised drunkards, of

course, were mothers who seemed to have abandoned all their dignity when they took to the beer and consequently neglected their children, husbands, relatives, and gruelling day job. Others liked drinking for the taste of it and the average strength of a beer before the First World War was six per cent. During the war the strength of beer was reduced drastically by law, along with opening times, and it is only in recent times that British beer has begun to approach the strength and quality of pre-WW1 beer.

Beer in the North of England and Scotland has never recovered from this reduction in strength.

Beers such as Boddingtons, Tetleys, and McEwans continue to insult its drinkers with their insipid taste and strength, while northern drinkers seem to have fallen for the lie that good beer should be tasteless, weak and with a frothy head. In the south the renaissance in good beer is now well established, much of this has to do with the unfavourable public reaction to Watney's Red Barrel beer of the 1970's (Red Barrel was the result of the socialisation of Watney's beer production, something we will come back to later).



Drunkenness in the working class was also seen as a problem by early socialists.

*The Confederation of Dialectic Materialist Teetotallers of Greater London* declared in their paper, *The*

*Insurrectionary Teetotaller*, that "Drink is effectively a conspiracy by the Ruling Class to keep the poor and dispossessed of this world in the thrall of stupidity and delusion. Not only does drink prevent us from seeing our

(continued on page 3)



## How Socialist is CAMRA?

(continued from page 2)

situation as it really is, it also drains us of the strength and determination to gather together to put things right". In other issues drink is blamed for disrupting family life, turning husband against wife, causing crime and assault amongst members of the working class, and leading to portliness. "Who is the victor," the paper asked, "When the worker is drunk? Why the owners of the breweries and the rest of their Parasite Kind!" Not only were the Dialectic Materialist Teetotallers fervent agitators for socialism, they were also one of the best harmonising groups of all the temperance societies, rivalling even the *Peckham League of the Righteous Sons of Temperance*, who had in their midst two Italian tenors who had once sung professionally.



*The Nihilist Drinker* was produced by forty-seven farm labourers, of which thirty-two were men. The paper advocated the seizure of breweries by the workers and the free distribution of beer to all. This was what they termed their "last demand", having analysed the failure of the post-war revolutionary wave and being aware of the capitalist nature of the new Soviet Union *The Nihilist Drinker* argued that the one feasible demand left was that for decent and free beer. This caused a heated

apology and rejection of this theory, along with any advocacy of a workers vanguard, in the very next issue of their bulletin, the Impossibilists were ridiculed mercilessly in the wider revolutionary milieu. Soon after this debacle one of the founders of their group died in an accident in the woods (which in those days was more like a factory), and another one was informed by a solicitor that he was the heir to a large gaming estate on the borders of Scotland. The two surviving members struggled on for two more issues but finally gave up in the summer and pursued a series of arson attacks on the motors cars of the wealthy (they didn't want to risk the lives of domestic staff by attacking their houses) before escaping to the Isle of Wight where they ran a small bed and breakfast. They were finally arrested in 1953 and sentenced to twelve years each, both died in prison.

**B**y the beginning of the 1930's it seemed clear that the revolutionary wave that had swept across Europe in the wake of the First World War had truly receded (although, ripples were still making an impact in other areas of the globe, for example, south east Asia). Workers turned more and more to drink and the influence of the temperance societies waned, a feeling of existential nihilism gripped European workers. Guy Aldred, the famous Glasgow anarchist, wrote, in his paper *The Spur*, in 1933, "Defeat has cost us dear, the workers have lost their spirit but found their spirits". By "spirits", Aldred was referring mainly to gin and cheap blended whisky. As a connoisseur of single malts, Aldred found this development particularly disheartening. Out of this despair however, in Britain at least, a new more positive movement began slowly to take shape. The first publication to tentatively express this new mood was a little paper from Shaftesbury entitled *The Nihilist Drinker*.

### *Drinking can lead to heated domestic disputes*

debate in revolutionary circles in the southern farming communities of England. Two coppice workers from Hampshire were soon producing their own flyers under the title "*Demand the Impossible*", which refused to accept that workers should limit their revolutionary ambitions despite the adverse conditions.

The Hampshire Impossibilists, as they became known, gained ground quite fast and by the end of 1934 they could boast a membership of four and a print run of their flyer of over twenty. But things were not to go so well for the Impossibilists during 1935. They made a serious blunder in one of their leaflets on the question of "production for use", in which they confused the concepts of valorisation and voluntarism and somehow ended up with the theory that only the common rabbit was qualified to take the vanguard position in workers struggles. Despite an object

The defeat of the Impossibilists made it easier for the more reformist groups around *The Nihilist Drinker* to gain greater influence amongst the workers. Finally, by the end of the 1930's a regroupment had occurred in which a kind of umbrella organisation, which called itself *The Campaign for Real Ale*, held sway.

**T**he Campaign For Real Ale soon revealed its credentials as a labourist, recruiting organisation with a very weak analysis of the capitalist economic system. Despite its insistence on cheap but quality beer for all, the Campaign showed no hesitation in supporting the Second World War, and throwing its weight behind Winston Churchill. Some of the local branches of the Campaign objected to such manoeuvres by the leadership but they were soon quashed by being expelled or arrested under temporary new police powers in place during the war.

(continued on page 4)



### How Socialist is CAMRA?

(continued from page 3)

After the war the Campaign decided to follow Clement Atlee and the new Labour Government, and in 1951 the Campaign itself was rewarded for its unflagging new devotion by being made Secretary of State for Overseas Trade. The post was filled by a rota of twenty-two executive members of the Campaign. This was the highest post the Campaign ever attained but there were problems with the rotation system. One young post-holder, Michael Foot, who went on to become a Labour M.P. and Party Leader, recalled in the 1970's: "It was really a terrible shambles, often six of us would appear at Government functions because we had all misread the roster, then it would be a hell of a job to fit us all in the one place at the dinner table, and, of course, we never got enough to eat. It was terribly funny really, what with all the rationing that the general public had to put up with and all, and we would often fight over the trifle and get it all down our suits. Ah, yes, halcyon days..."



With the return of a Conservative government in the mid 1950's the fortunes of The Campaign For Real Ale went into a long decline. This was also a time when the quality of beer began to hit new lows as the breweries conglomerated and produced far greater volumes than previously. But many workers were still unhappy about the beer they were forced to drink and, disheartened by the ineffectiveness of the Campaign, began to form autonomous beer appreciation organisations. One notable group was "Good Beer or Barbarism", which took its name and philosophy from the more scientifically Marxist French drinking group, "Socialisme ou Barbarie". Both groups held with the theory that capitalism was in terminal decay (decadence theory) and that it would take only a few monumentally good drinking sessions across the world to send it to its grave. But this strategy relied on good quality beer, which, in the 1950's and 1960's was really only

obtainable in Belgium, where, ironically, much of it was brewed by reactionary Trappist Monks. So it was that many radicals in the period agitated for the raising of beer production levels in Belgium to facilitate an export push that would bring capitalism to its knees. The

massive contradictions in this plan were partly brought into perspective by the *Situationist* movement in 1960's France, but even the Situationists held back from dumping the theory of capitalist decadence. Guy Debord, the writer of "*The Society of the Spectacle*", went so far as to try to bring about the downfall of capitalism all on his own by going on long drinking sessions around Europe, some say he was close to being successful.

Back in Britain the group *Solidarity* began advocating "self-management", which was to have a profound impact on the history of British beer. In the 1970's brewery workers across Britain began to gain real power on the shop floor, so much so, in fact, that two companies socialised their whole production process as a way of avoiding long strikes and financial ruin. In Watney's, the bosses put on overalls and the workers sat in the managers offices going over the books, for a few short months everyone worked as an equal and a feeling of real positivity gripped the people involved. Collectively they decided to bring out a new beer to mark the success of their self-management initiative. They called it *Red Barrel*, and it was an unqualified disaster. Instead of trying to produce a real ale of distinction they had produced a "plastic" beer. Instead of listening to radical beer drinkers around the country they had merely gone for a symbolic name. To this day the true reasons why Socialist Watney's made such a stupendous mistake have not been fully revealed, although some suspect the involvement of the State.

Anyway, this was just the spur the virtually moribund Campaign For Real Ale needed. They organised pickets of

Watney's, recruited hundreds of new beer drinkers, and finally got Watney's to withdraw *Red Barrel* from the domestic market. Watney's never recovered from this humiliation, they sacked their entire workforce and introduced a quasi-fascist management style that had been developed by Cadbury's, the chocolate manufacturer. [Interestingly, a survivor of the other self-managed brewery experiment still lives on in the form of Fuller's E.S.B., or Extra Socialist Bitter, made by Fuller, Smith and Turner of Chiswick. The experiment at Fuller's ended in 1978 when the owners organised a dawn raid on all the homes of the brewery workers, smashed up their bathrooms and sacked them.]

Self-management had proved to be an impossible strategy for workers, it now became clear that only a total demolition of every aspect of the capitalist system would be enough to ensure freedom. However, The Campaign For Real Ale chose to ignore the fact that dictatorship of the proletariat was the only viable option for the protection and advancement of good beer. Instead the Campaign decided to lobby government and recruit as many people as possible on a vague and misleading anarcho-syndic-eco-socialist ticket. And now, having been retuned by Thatcherism, the Campaign has come into its own as an almost professional body that someone like Tony Blair might well admire.



And what of beer itself? When will proper beer have its place in the sun? When will the likes of Boddingtons be tipped down the toilet forever? And when will we be able to enjoy a drink knowing that all the bosses are dead and gone?





# Blast from the Past: The Moving Statues of Leeds

*"It is impossible to walk around this city without seeing on every street corner and in every public square images of our oppressors: kings and queens; aristocrats and industrialists; explorers and scientists; politicians, generals and admirals. The early Christians at least had the humility to build their churches out of wood because they expected the Second Coming at any moment. The present-day ruling class erects tributes to itself sculpted from stone and confidently expects them to last for all eternity. It is time we shook them out of their complacency".*

With these words a small group of anarcho-communists announced the start of a series of actions which was to grip the northern English city of Leeds in a fever of excitement throughout the winter of 1928-29. Their first target was a statue of the scientist Joseph Priestley (so-called "discoverer of oxygen") which stood on the west side of City Square. On the morning of 6 November 1928 this entire monument was found to have been blown to smithereens during the night, its parts lying scattered all around in a radius of several hundred yards.

It is likely that Guy Fawkes Night was chosen for this first action as the noise of an explosion would be less likely to attract undue attention or suspicion. However the extent of the devastation indicates perhaps some miscalculation in the quantity of explosive used, even though we know that the group included a number of former soldiers and ex-miners (sacked in the aftermath of the General Strike), who certainly ought to have known what to do with explosives and detonators.

Explaining the destruction of the

scientist Priestley in a letter published in the *Leeds Mercury*, the group stated: "The regimenting of workers in the factories and the phenomenon of people toiling endlessly in poverty are

*just as much the result of science's role in society as spectacular inventions and handy gadgets. In the Middle Ages the feudal rulers relied on despotic politics and an ideology of religious dogma to maintain their grip on power. In the modern age the capitalist ruling class employs parliamentary politics and the ideology of science for the same purpose."*

Over the next few weeks a number of statues met a similar fate: on 11 November, in Woodhouse Square, the iron-founder and former Mayor Sir Peter Fairbairn; on 13 November, in City Square again, Vicar of Leeds William Farquhar Hook; on 29 November, by the corner of Woodhouse Lane and Hyde Park Road, Sir Robert Peel. These attacks were followed by two further daring raids on a now heavily-policed City Square: the first (on 19 December) succeeding in toppling from his mount Edward Prince of Wales (also known as The Black Prince, and absurdly described on the statue's base as "Upholder of the Rights of the People in the Good Parliament"), then three days later returning to complete the destruction of the Prince's horse as well.

This most famous piece of statuary in the entire city was painstakingly re-assembled and then, to protect it from further assault, re-erected high up on a towering plinth where it still stands to this day. Similar steps were taken to save Queen Victoria (corner of Woodhouse Lane and Clarendon Road) from further attacks, while other monuments such as that honouring the Duke of Wellington (corner of Clarendon Road and Moorland Road) had dense, prickly shrubs planted all

*(continued on page 6)*



*Joseph Priestley (1733-1804): so-called "discoverer of oxygen"*



## The Moving Statues of Leeds

(continued from page 5)

around their bases to prevent explosive charges from being placed anywhere nearby. Later still, battalions of troops were drafted in to mount an around-the-clock armed guard on certain strategic monuments. They were taunted by passers-by who would jeer: "Today it's just statues of the bosses you're guarding, tomorrow you'll be asked to shoot us down to save the bastards themselves!"

Perhaps in response to such measures, the group's first attack of the new year was aimed at a different type of target. During the night of 17/18 January 1929, in Burmantofts Cemetery, the large grey granite gravestone marking the burial place of the MP and pioneer of ready-made clothing Sir John Barran was blown to pieces. It was also apparent that an attempt had been made to dig open the grave itself and to extract what remained of Barran's body.

Of all the actions carried out by the group it was this one which provoked the most outraged reaction in the local press. An editorial in the *Yorkshire Post* was typical in its description of the Burmantofts Cemetery attack as "a scandal devised by perverted minds and perpetrated by depraved sub-human lunatics".

Some extracts from a reply issued by the group show how easily they were able to dismiss such remarks: "It is true," they said, "that we intended to dig up John Barran's body and give him the good kicking he sadly never got while he was alive... Why should he be left to 'rest in peace' in death when he never allowed his workers such luxury in life... We never heard the *Yorkshire Post* describe it as a scandal that one man should amass such riches as can hardly be imagined on the backs of hundreds of workers toiling for 16 or 18 hours a day in crowded, dimly-lit, 'sub-human' sweat-shops... So long as we continue to direct our anger against the bosses, and not inwards against ourselves or fellow members of our class, you will not make so-called 'lunatics' out of us."

It is said that the writer Lewis Grassic Gibbon was so inspired by reports of the Burmantofts incident that he gave the title *Grey Granite* to the last novel of his brilliant trilogy, *A Scots Quair*. And despite the newspapers' attempts to whip up hostility against the group, widespread approval of what it was doing was evident in the spate of 'copycat' attacks on monuments and graves of the ruling class, not carried out by the group itself but by unknown supporters. These took place not only within the city but also in outlying districts such as Pudsey, Churwell, Morley, Guiseley and Garforth.

These 'sympathetic' actions were seldom accompanied by the kind of detailed propagandistic statements with which the main group usually claimed responsibility for explosions. More typically they would be announced as the blowing-up of H. R. Marsden (corner of Woodhouse Lane and Raglan Road) on 3 March 1929 was: "We don't know who the --- Marsden was and frankly we don't give a ---. The fact a statue was put up to him is all we need to know and that's why he ---ing got it."

Perhaps the most striking of all the so-called 'copycat' attacks was against the Leeds University War Memorial sculpted by Eric Gill. A stone relief depicting 'Christ driving the moneylenders out of the Temple', it had aroused great hostility from local capitalists on its unveiling in 1923 because Gill had portrayed the moneylenders wearing modern-day bourgeois clothing. After being blown-up it was repaired at great expense (the equivalent of £1.19 million at today's prices) and moved from its outdoor site

to its present-day location in the University's Michael Sadler Building. The reason for this attack was to be found in the single word *ABUSER* painted on the wall above the rubble, showing this to be a rare instance of an action directed against the sculptor himself.

The attack on the Gill sculpture on 29 March 1929 appears to have been the last in the series of actions. It is unclear why they stopped, but the coming to an end of the long, dark winter nights which provided a cover for these activities may have been one factor. In all at least 27 statues or monuments were reported to have been attacked and 6 graves disturbed, although it is likely that many other actions went unreported in order not to encourage the movement.

Some critics have said that the whole 'campaign' was entirely futile, because for every statue that was blown up, the bosses just erected another in its place. On the other hand, every time they issued a statement claiming responsibility for an explosion, the group did manage to get some basic revolutionary propaganda published and circulated in the local newspapers. Perhaps their greatest achievement, however, was that such was the care taken by the group in planning and carrying out its actions, in the whole 5 months from November 1928 to March 1929, not a single one of its members was so much as questioned in connection with these events, let alone arrested, tried, convicted or imprisoned.



War Memorial sculpted by the abuser Eric Gill



## Remembering the Paris Commune

**D**uring the 1950s and 1960s the *Daily Mail* ran a series of articles on great revolts and uprisings throughout history. On 18th March 1962 they examined the Paris Commune of 1871, below are a couple of extracts that we thought were worth reprinting for a laugh if nothing else.

*Engels' remark, "Look at the Paris Commune - that was the dictatorship of the proletariat," should be taken seriously in order to reveal what the dictatorship of the proletariat as a political regime is not (the various forms of dictatorship over the proletariat in the name of the proletariat).*

*The Commune had no leaders. And this at a time when the idea of the necessity of leaders was universally accepted in the proletarian movement. This is the first reason for its paradoxical successes and failures. The official organisers of the Commune were incompetent (if measured up against Marx or Lenin, or even Blanqui). But on the other hand, the various "irresponsible" acts of that moment are precisely what is needed for the continuation of the revolutionary movement of our own time (even if the circumstances restricted almost all those acts to the purely destructive level - the most famous example being the rebel who, when a suspect bourgeois insisted that he had never had anything to do with politics, replied, "That's precisely why I'm going to kill you").*

*The Commune represents the only realization of a revolutionary urbanism to date - attacking on the spot the petrified signs of the dominant organisation of life, understanding social space in political terms, refusing to accept the innocence of any monument. Anyone who reduces this to some "lumpenproletarian nihilism", some "irresponsibility of the petroleuses," should specify what they believe to be of positive value in the prevailing society and worth preserving (it will turn out to be almost everything). All space is already occupied by the enemy..... Authentic urbanism will appear when the absence of this occupation is created in certain zones. What we call construction starts there.*

## BOOK REVIEW

### *A Victorian Correspondence: The Letters of Dickens and Marx*

Edited and Annotated by the International Communist Current (ICC).  
Published by The Fabian Society. £18.00.

**T**his is a surprising book to come from the ICC and the nagging doubt remains in this reviewer's head that maybe they have made the whole thing up as some sort of elaborate joke. But for what purpose, and aimed at whom? And why have they involved themselves with The Fabian Society?

Anyway, the book makes for some interesting bedtime reading, especially if you concentrate on the letters rather than the ICC notes, which mostly consist of lines such as: "Marx clearly never wrote this letter even though it has been authenticated by seven leading bourgeois academics, three independent forensic scientists, and two librarians..."; and, "Dickens clearly proves himself here to be an agent of counter-revolution as well as a senile gibbering wreck of a fool...", etc. We are printing just one extract, to give a taste of the book, but would like to state

that it seems that in this miserable world one dead writer is worth more than a thousand living human beings.

15th June 1861

Dear Karl,

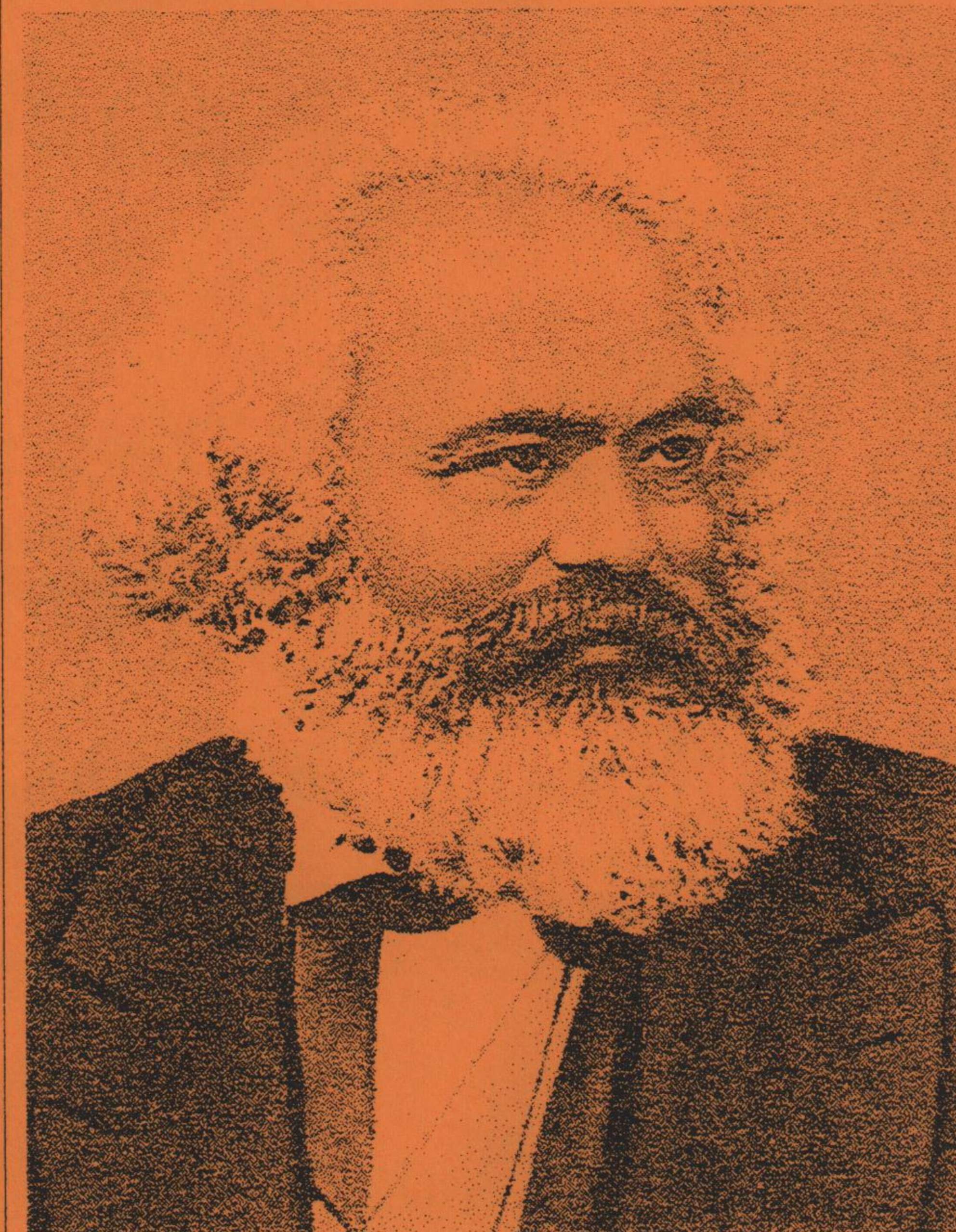
It was very pleasant to see you again in Bognor, and how your English has improved! I have been thinking a lot about what you said about surplus value and I must honestly admit that I still don't have the foggiest idea what you mean. Of course, I understand the misery of the labouring folk, indeed I have written about it more eloquently than any other writer, but I do not think that our condition has anything to do with science, although, undoubtedly, scientific principles, such as the laws of supply and demand do exist and do affect us. As I grow older I think the reason for the misfortune of the labouring classes can be found in a

certain kind of moss which exudes a mild intoxicant, it seems clear to me that people of a lower order than you and I are susceptible to this gas, while we, dear friend, are not. What do you think, my old Teutonic chum? Your faithful servant,  
*Charles Dickens.*

28th June 1861

Dear Charles,

Thankyou for your letter. It saddens me that a man of your supposed intellect cannot grasp the simple facts of surplus value, you are lucky indeed that I did not  
*(continued on page 8)*





*A Victorian Correspondence*

(continued from page 7)

berate you with the theory of dialectic materialism, for I think your tiny head would have exploded and your liver would have packed its bags and left. You English writers are such dolts. I have read your "Oliver Twist" and let me tell you, man to man, that it is a piece of crap. How the boy had a toffs accent is beyond me, and why all your stories have to have such unlikely happy endings, well, it just makes me sick.

As for your delusions about the effects of moss on the working classes, I am truly flabbergasted. How does your wife put up with you? Also I would like to tell you that after meeting you recently my maid remarked on a very peculiar smell about your person, she said it made her vomit for a full two hours and has seriously damaged her chances of bearing children. I tell you this as a friend.

My best wishes,  
Karl Marx.

7 July 1861

Dear Karl,

Oh, dear old Karl, how I laughed on reading your letter! Your comic wit is surely something to be savoured. I am, however, concerned for the well-being of your maid and you must tell me if the flowers I sent to her arrived safely, I do hope she is feeling better now. But enough of that, you will be pleased to hear that my theory of the effect of moss on certain social classes has been taken up by the Royal College of Science! How's that for you? Soon I envisage writing my own Communist Manifesto, only I will call it the Moss Manifesto, and it will lay down a programme of peaceful revolution whereby all moss will be eradicated from the planet and all men will finally stand as equals in an Utopia of Love. I already have the backing of several leading industrialists to

whom the burdens of power and unbridled wealth are nothing more than a millstone hanging around their necks. I will set up my own International Moss-Gathering Mens Association, I will grow a proper beard, like yours, instead of this wispy little thing that I now wear, oh, my heart is filled with joy...

Your faithful servant,  
Charles Dickens.

21 July 1861

Dear Charles,

Thankyou for your letter. Good God in Heaven! You are an absolute cretin! Recently I read your book "Our Mutual Friend" and I see quite clearly that you have based the character of the poor river-man's daughter on me. Me! If news of this outrage gets out I will surely be seeing you in court, where you will be divested of every penny you own. Scoundrel!

My best wishes,  
Karl Marx.

Dickens and Marx continued to correspond in this vein until Dickens' death in 1870. The letters prove that revolutionaries today must go beyond the limits of the Dickensian analysis.



# Are Children Agents of the Bourgeoisie?

It has come to light recently that the seemingly perfectly natural biological function of producing children in the human species may be the result of a genetic aberration, or *alteration*, that occurred at the rise of the first civilisation, in Cameroon, West Africa, forty billion years ago. Documents have been discovered in the Central Library of Cameroon's capital city, Yaounde, which describe a dramatic change in the lifestyles of humans of that area many billenia ago.

It seems that before the rise of towns and politics and exchange systems people lived for a good 400 years and did not reproduce, although sexual play was a popular pastime. However, at some point shortly before the building of the first town hall in history it seems that sections of the population began producing offspring. The records show that this was a time of great despair and gnashing of teeth for the people. Suddenly they were swamped by little people who had to have their every whim catered for, and who made the people tired and distraught, which consequently drastically reduced their lifespan.

Strangely, at the same time as this happened another phenomenon was occurring: some people were gaining economic and political power over others and making them work for them. Now, the historians and scientists who have discovered this event in history have, of course, managed to misinterpret the facts they have in their hands due to the fact that most scientists and historians are either complete fools or slavish propagandisers and apologisers for The Establishment or the status quo. These professionals see nothing wrong with a society that has one section of the population forcing the rest of the population to work and die for it, in fact they usually don't even see that this

(continued on page 9)



## Are Children Agents of the Bourgeoisie?

(continued from page 8)

is what is going on. But we radical wierdos of the lunatic fringe can see precisely what is going on and therefore we can interpret this historical discovery in the correct way and use it to further our knowledge of the world and thereby aid the struggle of the working class in its often unconscious battle against its exploiters.

So, after many discussions, international day conferences, articles,

thought, and drinking, we have come to the inescapable conclusion that the human body has been tampered with by the boss class in order to create a never ending supply of miserable workers and smug overlords. Humanity might have only lasted a mere 400 years without this biological change, but it would have been a beautiful 400 hundred years, without the mountains of murder and slavery that today fill every nook, cranny and open space of this tragic planet.

Today we only have to look at the effect children have on the working class to

see that they do us no good, and in fact perpetuate and enhance our misery. They use up all our spare time; they make us consume more rubbish from the marketplace; they tire us out; they make us withdraw from social life; they make us attempt to condition them so that they will survive in this dog-eat-dog world, which means we are doing the bosses work for them; they make us smell; they rot our brains; and they make us work harder and keep us in line. Every time a worker has another kid the bosses must splutter out their champagne in laughter. It's different for them, of course, because they hire some wage-slave to look after their kids. In general we workers are stuck with our kids, and what can we offer them? A life of slavery and humiliation. It makes you wonder why we have kids at all. But of course we do it because the bosses want us to, and who are we to let them down?

For more on our views on kids you might like to read our following publications:

- Kids: A Disaster for the Working Class.* 50 pence.
- I Love Kids, But I Couldn't Eat a Whole One: The Rise of the Industrial Proletariat in Europe.* £60.00
- Kids on the Barricades: An Exploration of the Use of Kids for Barricade Padding Throughout the Last Three Centuries.* 12 pence.

All these publications, plus many others, are available from the usual address.



*"They make us attempt to condition them so that they will survive in this dog-eat-dog world"*

## Can Arthur Scargill Dance?

**G**lass Factory Worker Reg and his dog, Osman, were not the sad pro-boss gits that his great-nephew, Postman Pat and his cat, Jess, turned out to be. Glass Factory Worker Reg left his job and home in 1908 after a dispute with his mother-in-law [things like that happened in those days], and took his dog to Paris. Here they both got jobs on the French railway as sniffers for gas in long

tunnels.

Labour unrest was rife throughout French industry in 1909, and especially on the railways. Soon after starting work, both Reg and Osman were persuaded to join the big union, the *Confederation General du Travail*, by fellow workers. This was a union which sought to enlist all workers into its ranks in order to pursue its aim of a

society where no man had to go to work if it was raining. As Reg and Osman discovered, after attending many union meetings, there was a fairly wide range of opinion within the CGT. There were those who thought that the fundamental demand of no work on rainy days was really going a bit too far, and there were those who demanded that even on overcast days work should be halted.

(continued on page 10)



## Can Arthur Scargill Dance?

(continued from page 9)

One leader of the extremist faction was Emile Pouget, a man in his late forties who had been trying to overthrow society since his youth. Pouget objected to the fact that workers had to toil in any weather, while the rich bosses would shelter in their mansions drinking champagne, smoking big cigars and sniggering if there was a spot of drizzle outside. To change this state of affairs Pouget had as a young man advocated assassination, hostage-taking and cake-throwing as a means of intimidating the ruling class into giving the workers what they needed. But in his later years Pouget saw that only a systematic programme of strike action, sabotage at work and mass formation dancing would force the bosses to give way. In *Le Syndicalisme Revolutionnaire*, published in 1910, Victor Griffuelhes, a close comrade of Pouget, wrote of mass formation dancing at work as "for us the weapon *par excellence* that present society puts into the hands of the working class."

1909 was a busy year for militant workers on the railways in France. A confrontation with the bosses was looming and the union had to make sure that everyone's dancing would be up to it. From two workers in a lonely signal box, to the gangs of track-layers and ditchdiggers out on the rails, they all had to dance efficiently and in unison. The eyes of the rest of the working class in France, and indeed the whole of Europe, were on them.

**R**eg and Osman found the union meetings quite inspiring. Held in rooms above cafes or in large dance halls, they would start with a weather report for the week. Often in Paris this was given by Leon Jouhaux, who later that year was to become General Secretary of the CGT. Jouhaux used seaweed and old newspapers tied up in bunches over his front door to predict the weather. After that a militant such as Pouget would give a talk about the parasitical boss class and the need for social revolution. Finally, the participants of the meeting would form themselves into blocks and learn



Scargill: Arm-in-arm with the police against the working class

some rudimentary dance steps. At the end of the meeting, feeling elated from the dancing, they would leave for home shouting "Long Live the Social Revolution! Down With the Tyranny of the Weather!"

**M**onths of this kind of training gave the railway workers the confidence they needed to go on strike against their bosses in 1910. There was plenty of formation dancing throughout France amongst the strikers, one railway shed in Toulouse was occupied for two whole weeks while railway workers danced in formation. The bosses were powerless to stop these actions. In the end the strikers won some considerable concessions from their employers, including the issuing of umbrellas to all outdoor track staff, but their main demand, which was to be given the winter off each year, was not agreed to. Still, it was an important battle for workers and it sparked off several imitation strikes throughout Europe. In Turin, for example, the *Coffee Grinders, Laundry Workers and Gravediggers Federation* struck successfully for an end to working in the afternoons by employing a disciplined formation dance strategy that bamboozled the bosses and even the Italian government, who tried to intimidate the dancers by threatening to steal their children.

In the present day, mass formation

dancing is considered something of a threat to union leadership. However, the strategy was briefly unofficially employed by striking British miners in 1984, notably at the Wimbledon Colliery, where miners occupied the famous nearby tennis courts and danced in formation for three days. Their neo-syndicalist union leader, Arthur Scargill, in what many saw as a bizarre act, came down extremely hard on these miners, expelling them from the union and confiscating all their footwear and their lamps, which were actually British Coal Board property. Scargill eventually had to return the lamps to British Coal after a humiliating court case in which it was discovered that he had tried to sell the lamps at several Sunday market locations in Devon. Despite this, Scargill went on to lead the miners to a glorious defeat. Several commentators in the press have tried to understand why Scargill forbade any form of dancing throughout the dispute, some have suggested it was because he had higher political ambitions for himself, others that with his pronounced "two left feet" he would doubtless have lost the respect of the membership. We here, at the SPOOFVERSION bunker, know that it is because he is an authoritarian, counter-revolutionary, capitalist scumbag who is long overdue a dose of proletarian justice. Certainly, if mass formation dancing had been employed by the miners at the Battle of Orgreave a very different result may have ensued.



# Subversion: The...

**T**en years ago a group of us got together to form Subversion. Some had been in (and out of) Wildcat, others had been politically working together with those comrades for a number of years previously. We wanted to create a new organisation that could carry on the work of developing communist ideas and politics free from the need to label ourselves as either dogmatically marxist or anarchist.

Recently though, despite continuing to agree on our basic revolutionary politics, we have had disagreements about the way forward both organisationally and practically. There have also been some personal disagreements. These have made it hard for some of us to work together. As a result there are now only five of us left in the group and we have had to conclude that we no longer have the energy or enthusiasm to continue our activities as a collective.

There will be no further issues of our bulletin, though back issues and other publications are still available for the cost of postage for the time being. The Box number will be kept open for the next six months. The web site will continue indefinitely, but as the personal responsibility of the comrade who set it up.

## A balance sheet of our activities:

- We have produced 24 editions of the Subversion magazine, 23 of which have been distributed for free. The print run since issue 10 has been 1000 and most have been successfully distributed - many by people who write to us for bundles. We have produced eight pamphlets, four of which are still available. We have produced numerous leaflets.
- In Manchester we have run many public meetings - some good, some awful. We organised these in

collaboration with variously the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) and Class War as well as on our own.

- We organised a national conference on the State and Capital and initiated a series of day schools with the ACF.

- We have attended networking meetings, including the Revolutionary Socialist Network, the Class Struggle Anarchist Network and the Northern Anarchist Network. We continue to be involved in the latter project.

- Wherever possible we have involved ourselves with nationally and locally important episodes of the class struggle. These

included: the Anti-Poll Tax movement, where we helped set up one group and were active in a number of others; support for the Merseyside Dockers - again helping set up the Manchester support group; fighting the Job Seekers Allowance - getting the group going in Manchester as well as being active in other

towns and nationally through the Groundswell network; involvement in the campaign against the M66 around Manchester and subsequently becoming involved in some Earth First! activities in Oldham and Manchester. This list would not be complete without mentioning our continuing efforts where we work and some, admittedly limited, success in initiating industrial action amongst teachers in Oldham. Our work around these issues led to the best articles we wrote. They were based on our real personal experiences of struggle, either as direct participants or through involvement with support groups.

- Set up a web-site featuring not only our own publications, but also important texts produced by earlier communist groups and individuals, a number of whom were participants in the 1918 German Revolution.

- Maintained regular international contacts and correspondence.

In all these activities we have sought to work in a principled and non-sectarian way with other revolutionaries.

This is not bad going, in our opinion, for a group that for most of its life numbered eight members or less.

Most importantly, we have been part of a process that has reshaped those politics that are often labelled communist, anarchist communist, council communist or libertarian communist. We would have liked to have had more influence, unfortunately by choosing to distance ourselves from both the marxist and anarchist labels, we have bred some suspicion amongst those who have preferred their cosy comforts.

Our greatest success was probably the Subversion bulletin. This provided an organised framework for revolutionaries to debate new issues arising in the class struggle. It attracted many contributions from non-members of our group, especially in the last six issues. At the time there wasn't really any other publication fulfilling the same role. On the other hand some of us felt that, in the process, the Subversion viewpoint got somewhat diluted. Moreover, there was too often little editorial critique or comment on the articles we published. At times we were reluctant to take a collective stance on the issues they raised. Whilst some might see this as another example of non-sectarianism, it all too often reflected a laziness on our behalf. This process also reflected the malaise that we had got into. In recent issues there has been little new produced by ourselves other than reports or book reviews. Our own lack of anything new to say is probably the most compelling reason to wind up the group.

Hopefully other opportunities will arise for a publication similar to Subversion in the future.

## So what was the problem?

When we started Subversion we didn't really have a clear idea of the direction

*(continued on page 12)*





# Party's Over!

(continued from page 11)

we hoped it would go in. However, we were pretty clear what we didn't want it to be. We didn't want it to be monolithic, though we did want the politics to be clear and for disagreements to be based on an understanding of what others were saying - all of which suggested the need for pretty rigorous discussion. As time went by, we also realised that we needed Subversion to grow. We never intended ourselves to be a purely local group, indeed although most of us live in and around Manchester, we do have a couple of members in other parts of the country. On the other hand, we did not see ourselves as some focal point for others to join, as some embryo of a new organisation or party. We had always hoped that other groups would emerge in other places and that as a result of practical co-operation a fusion would come about, creating a new communist organisation. That is the reason we have tried to be non-sectarian and have enthusiastically worked in the different networks we mentioned above. It is also the reason that we have worked so closely with the Anarchist Communist Federation.

In our opinion, groups need to grow or they stagnate. After a period of working together, people either end up agreeing on everything or end up knowing too well what the lines of disagreement are. Groups need a tension within discussions to provoke the development of ideas. If that does not happen, the result is sterility. We were faced, in Subversion, with having reached the point where that sterility was beginning to set in. As we said above, as a group we have produced nothing original for the past two years. We ended up living off other people's reactions to two discussions we started - one over the JSA and the other over the article "Green Communism". Even those responses had begun to dry up.

disagreements we mentioned at the beginning arose. Some of these were personal and frankly, had we been a larger and more thriving group, would have counted for little. As with tired marriages, small problems become multiplied until only divorce is the solution. We also disagreed on the direction the group should go in. One viewpoint was that we should be working towards creating a national network of communists. This should be based on individual membership, drawing upon groups like ourselves, the ACF, Aufheben and the like. The majority in the group felt (and feel) that

## What Next?

At the moment we can see no particular political organisation that we could all enthusiastically join. There are organisations doing good work and we would refer you to previous issues of Subversion for recommendations. In this country we would recommend Organise! as an interesting publication and suggest our readers contact the ACF to obtain a copy [c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX]. It looks like Smash Hits could also provide a useful vehicle for discussion [BM Box 5538, London WC1N 3XX]. For information purposes, both Counter Information [Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow, G1 5QP] and SchNews [c/o On-The-Fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton, BN2 2DX] make good reading.

We still see the need for political organisation and hope to be able to contribute to something new and worthwhile in the future. In the meantime we will continue to be active as

individuals in various ways. We may also, if the need arises and the energy allows, produce future interventions in the name of Subversion.

Our thanks go to our many contributors, readers and supporters during the last ten years.

Comradely,

Subversion

September 1998.

Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW, England, UK.

Subversion on the Web:  
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195>  
 email: knightrose@geocities.com



this proposal, whilst laudable, is impractical. We do not see where the basis for such a network exists. We may be wrong and would love to be proved so. If we are wrong we would undoubtedly support such an initiative. Failure to agree on this point, combined with the other problems was enough to make us look more seriously at the state we were in.

At the end of the day, our main form of activity, as a group, at the moment is the production of Subversion. It is hard, intensive work to produce and distribute it. As we no longer feel any great enthusiasm for doing this, we had to ask ourselves - "What is the point?" Therefore the only honest thing to do is to cease publication and to explain to those who read Subversion why we are doing so.

It was out of this situation that the



# "Leftism Rotted My Brain"

It is true beyond doubt that the ideology of leftiness is a tool of tyranny. It is also true that many radicals have been infected by this poison and whatever name they might give themselves, whether it be anarchist, marxist, communist, insurrectionary authoritarian blanquist headbanger, or Guardian reader, we are all prey to its insidious insidiousness. Here are two things to look out for in your character that might reveal the true extent of your leftism:

1. A tendency to pat sections of the

world's population on the head. This is meant metaphorically and describes that phenomenon whereby worthy, usually white, well-educated female and male politicians show a creepy deference to people like: Northern Irish Catholics; working class women; black people; gay people; leaders of struggles in other countries, even though they might be scheming authoritarian maoists, like the Zapatistas; etc. If you're not from Ireland and you start saying "yer man" then you are showing that you wish you were an oppressed Irish person and not the middle class

guilt-bag that you feel yourself to be in reality. Or if you have organised your political meetings into "encuentros", then you may be an unsuspecting victim of the lefty "pat them on the head" syndrome. If you want to be less cool and more sharp stop being a patronising windbag, think for yourself and examine your own real desires.

2. Finding Jeremy Paxman sexy.

## My Afternoon of Psychogeographic Hell in London by Mr. Arbitrural

I was travelling up to London by train, on my way to a picket of a shop in Oxford Street which had been identified as a seller of consumer products and an exploiter of shop-working staff and therefore an enemy of the international proletariat. I decided to make my way there in a psychogeographic manner, by wandering around and becoming oppressed by the associations of certain buildings and areas. I got off the tube somewhere in the centre of the city and was immediately confronted by swarms of Guardian Readers. It was terrifying, they were everywhere. I realised that they had been with me on the tube too. The ages of Guardian Readers are between the early twenties and early fifties, the young ones try to look intelligent and sensitive and the older ones try to look young. But they all have a certain London Liberal Arrogance. Maybe I'm being unfair, they would probably help you if you were lost or had fallen over, but I would suspect that they would be doing it for ulterior motives. That is, so that they could report back to their local branch of the Caring Guardian Reader Society with the news of how they had helped someone in difficulties.

I eventually found my way to Leicester Square where I felt oppressed by all the gaudy confidence of a hip and tacky capitalism. The buildings rose up

around me like the facades of cinemas. In the middle of Leicester Square there is a small park. A few years ago this was the site of a building that secretly housed the pay-roll department of MI6, it was heavily fortified and disguised as a Chinese restaurant with offices above. The restaurant doubled as the staff canteen, it was a weird place to eat if you just wandered in off the street. Under what is now the small park there is rumoured to be a network of tunnels that lead to various locations in London, and one reputedly goes all the way to Bristol. The park is on a ley-line which links a Harvester eating house in Essex with Canterbury Cathedral, it is one of the very few "bendy" ley-lines known to exist.

Near a rubbish bin in Leicester Square, that was painted green and reminded me of my neo-rustic hometown, I saw a group of Guardian Readers intimidating a group of Independent Readers. The Independent Readers were heavily outnumbered and they stoically suffered the quiet sneering and pointed looks of the other group. But then, in an explosion of action, one of the Independent Readers hurled an empty paper cup in the face of one of the Guardian Readers. There was pandemonium as all the Readers got very agitated and held their arms straight down by their sides. Then one

of the Guardian Readers spoke: "Is this your cup," she said, offering it back to the person who had thrown it. After a short silence he replied quietly, "Yes, thankyou, I dropped it." You could have cut the air the air with a folded-up copy of the Daily Telegraph. I felt quite sick at witnessing such scenes and as I ran back towards the tube station I vowed never to visit this hell-hole of a city ever again. On the phone that evening my friend, who I was supposed to have done the picket with, said I was a right wanker for not turning up.

Below: Map showing Oxford Street and Leicester Square

