

...continued from p.3

**Struggle?**

supervisors as if everything they say must be true. To realise that some of them base much of their conception of their own place in the world on, say, events in Russia in 1917 is one thing: to learn that at the same time they've read only a few official and pro-official accounts, and know very little about what actually went on, is just embarrassing. And to hear them then reel off a list of highly complex facts about, say, the history of philosophy, just makes you wonder what planet they're on. I'm not saying there's anything wrong in having this kind of knowledge, but what would you think of some Russian who based their intellectual attitude on the Clydeside movement of 1919, didn't know much about it, but knew masses about the history of religion?

I make no apologies for concentrating on gripes against lefties rather than talking about real postgrad 'workplace struggle.' Since postgrads get our grants (which are doubtlessly *the best things the 'education' system has to offer*) from various different sources (some of us even work), there aren't actually many openings for collective struggle. Only those seriously into office politics would put much effort into fighting for the right to use the secretary's pencil-sharpener, and more than anything this would only indicate a desire to be an insider. The lack of such openings is exacerbated when the research is highly individualised, as it is where I am.

Universities do, of course, have various resources, such as electronic mail and inter-library loan facilities, which can be

'diverted' to rebellious uses, so it would be silly to say there aren't any opportunities. But much of this diversion doesn't have to be done only by postgrads, and so it's not my concern here.

**T**he point of this article is to warn any rebels who find themselves in a postgrad environment about time-wasters—that's all. In any general upheaval, you certainly wouldn't catch me pissing around in any university scene. In the present, however, it shouldn't be forgotten that in a number of cities universities are major employers. It seems to me that any exciting struggle today could only come from some kind of link-up with the *employees*, whether manual or clerical. So hopefully the next article like this will be by one of them! We hate your employers too (and we usually know some security codes)!



**The Education Workers' Network**

**INDUSTRIAL NETWORKS**

This newsletter has been created by a group of people in education in the west of Scotland. Our immediate aim is to bring like-minded together in a unique forum of debate, including education workers from different sectors and different occupations within schools, colleges and universities in Scotland. There exists a crying need for basic information in our sector and also for basic solidarity with other workers. Other networks already exist in Transport and Public Service.

Trade unions have shown their limitations and now even commonly

offer private health policies, insurance deals, credit cards, and cheaper holidays—for those who can afford them. All this fits in with their role in trying to make us think we can reconcile our needs as workers with those of the bosses and the national economy. Officials who 'represent' us simply function as mediators between management and us. But we're quite clear: the bosses' interests and our interests are totally opposed.

The left has tried for years to get us to elect left-wingers onto National

Write to us: EWN, c/o CW, P.O.Box 1008, Glasgow G42

Executives in order to 'radicalise' the unions. This 'strategy' has led only to demoralisation as these new leaders don't deliver and our situation gets worse.

**CRAPPY SOLUTIONS**

Like many other workers, we're fed up with the same old crappy solutions. We do need to organise—but only on our own terms. The unions and the Labour Party etc. have played politics with us for far too long. It's about time we started to move, to get our resistance organised on the basis of real solidarity. This publication is the first step towards setting up an Education Workers' Network in Scotland.

FREE

**EDUCATE**

No.1 / Not for Rich Bastards, Soft Cops, or Careerists

**Paying Through the Nose**

Is education for all or just for the privileged few? That's the underlying theme of the latest round of education attacks. No matter where you are in education things are getting worse. Be it cuts in grants, more work for less pay, overcrowded classrooms, the use of students as unpaid labour, everyone is affected. This is not the end of it either. Already the government is discussing 100% loans and self-payment of tuition fees, as well as a graduate tax.

**£ Family Values £**

These attacks cannot be separated from other attacks by the Government and their friends in business on the poor. V.A.T. on fuel is also part of the same old story of the poor subsidising the rich. Even when they are caught with their pants down they still have the brassneck to criticise single mothers and robbing them of even more benefits. Like the hypocritical bastards that they are they continue to impose narrow-minded moral values in schools.

**CLASS WAR**

Universities have always been the domain of the privileged. Only about 10% of university students are from working-class backgrounds. Even in F.E. colleges the number of working-class students is falling as the middle classes are the only ones who can afford to attend. As grant levels fall the choice to pursue

education becomes less and less an option.

**Free for all**

In the here and now we are calling for free education for all who want it and not just for those who can afford it. Who'd have thought, in this day and age, that we would be reduced to struggling for basic necessities like the free provision of books and equipment again? We are against being turned into bored robotic workers for jobs that often do not exist in the first place or being forced to scramble up the competitive ladder to become happy little managers. We are for creating the sort of free society where education would be all about encouraging people to think for themselves.

**Back to Basics**

All non-management workers in education, cleaners, teachers, office workers, technicians, lecturers, etc., all have the same boss and share the same interest in fighting back as one, along with working-class students, to improve all our living conditions. Being divided into different trade unions or no union at all has never worked. Every year sees the same batch of token sit-ins, lobbies, petitions, Marches in London, and one-day strikes, settled for us by union bureaucrats in the likes of the E.I.S. The N.U.S. is full of officials more interested in launching their careers in the Labour

Party or the unions. We can't improve our daily lives by following them. Meanwhile, the authoritarian far left (SWP, RCP) continue to



Would you buy a secondhand education system from this man?

recruit tomorrow's so-called leaders—also known as tomorrow's managers, soft cops, and bosses. We are sick of these trendy lefty students who radically pose for a few years before getting cosy professional jobs where they try to control us even more. We are working class and proud of it, and we are not interested in arse-licker social climbers. Through this publication we aim to set up an education network in Scotland. We advocate an organisation of all working-class people willing to fight back in education, setting our own agendas without new leaders telling us what to do. ●

## GET IN TOUCH!

Since the number of different types of occupation within the 'education' system is so large, it can only be a good thing when rebels within the different areas swap news of their experiences, gripes, and scams, and league up to give it some. Here we're publishing an account by a research student: we'd welcome further contributions by part-time and full-time blue-collar employees, people doing clerical jobs, undergraduates, schoolkids—and even by researchers, teachers, or lecturers, as long as they're not too brown-nosed or cop-like to hate and fight the system and to treat us as equals.

Rather than pretending that my experiences when doing a PhD enabled me to 'see through the system,' I want to begin by listing the illusions I didn't have at the outset. First, having been brought up and lived almost all my life on welfare before starting as a student, I wasn't someone who needed to find out that the rich stay rich, or get rich, by robbing the poor. Second, nor did I need to discover that the various lefty outfits were a hindrance to working class autonomy: I'd never been involved with any, and I'd known they were on the other side for a decade or more. Third, I had no illusions either that someone could 'do important work for the proletariat' within the academic system.

In doing my first degree at a pretty right-wing college, though, I did find that the occasional Labourite lecturers there tended to be considerably more pleasant than the far more common bourgeois Tory ones. And there were a few 'academic Marxist' texts which I thought were quite useful, namely the 'Autonomist' ones emphasising that working class people already have some power, that our standard

of living is won through struggle, and that some or many of the system's problems are directly caused by that struggle. I liked these insights even while finding the academic style of writing pretentious. This wasn't how Marx wrote most of the time, or other revolutionary theorists, like the council communists or Situationists.

I came to a large Scottish uni from London in '91, to a small semi-autonomous 'School' with no undergraduates. The students were split around 50-50 between 'Marxists' and various conventional types, some of whom were connected in mysterious ways to organisations like NATO, a far Eastern police force and army, and God knows what else. One of the students was formerly a high-up associate of a Middle Eastern royal family. You get the picture. The place was run by a right-wing idiot, now replaced by a businessman.

Only one of the lecturers is a 'Marxist,' and it's basically because of her that half the students are there. She's done some work which reaches quite similar conclusions to those of the Autonomists. Although her starting-point is more 'orthodox'

(she's got a big photo of the counterrevolutionary mass murderer Trotsky in her room) this work is quite useful in that it covers areas Autonomists don't look at. Moreover, I'm sure her contempt for the Uni and the dodgy right-wing types is totally genuine: she's no crawler. One might have thought some of the students around her would be OK.

Obviously unable to associate with the cop-types, I found myself occasionally chatting to the 'Marxist' post-grads. After all, I'd never met any 'academic Marxists' before, and they didn't seem like glazed-eye paper sellers, trade-unionist NCO-types, or party hacks. But they didn't take long to piss me off anyhow.

After a few weeks, I couldn't take them (intellectually) seriously any more. Suffice it to say that their blend of arrogance/ignorance eventually got my goat. There's no point here going into precise details, so instead—while bearing in mind that some are worse than others, and that if someone has problems that in itself is never a reason to mock them—I'll present some general conclusions.

# The Misery of Postgraduate Student Life

## Ivory Towers

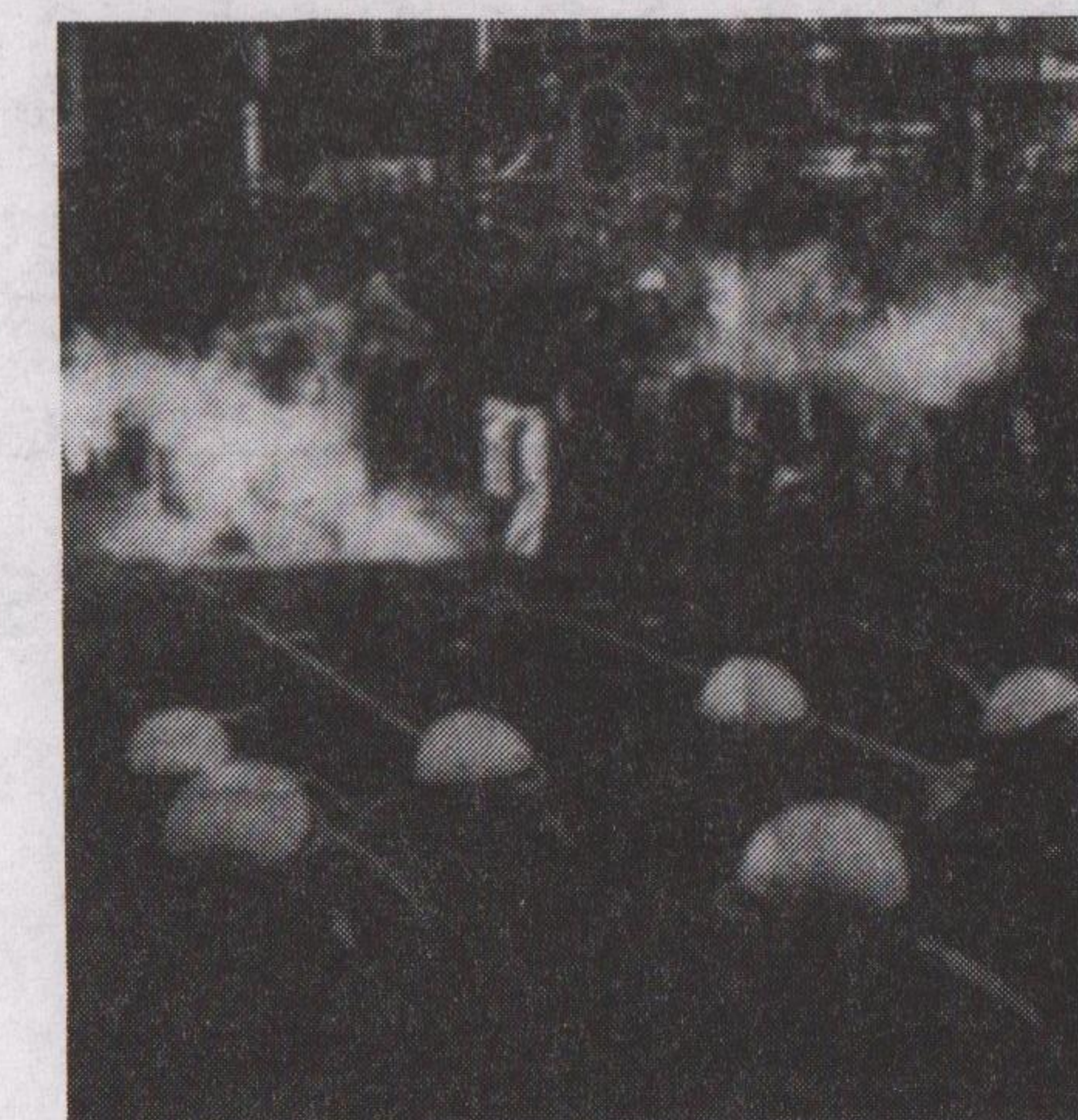
However much they dislike the Right, the postgrads under consideration see the world largely in terms of philosophical conflicts. To take an example: the idea that the market is declining is set against the idea that the market will last forever. What's conveniently forgotten is the role of non-market forms in policing the working class: it's true that we have to pay for things, but the rulers need the cops to make us. No doubt, though, this is too 'empiricist' an 'approach' for our learned lecturers-to-be.

## The Would-Be Establishment?

It's not just that the college-boy wing of leftism is the breeding-ground for the leftist wing of academia. Ultimately they dream of the day when the academic establishment will consist mainly of people like them—they really do. Only then would things be set the right way up. Maybe they don't associate with *Marxism Today*-reading soft cop long-haired sociologist types, but (though they'd never admit it) their view of Marx is nonetheless as a founder of 'really

scientific' sociology. They have no critique of academia as a whole. There is one word for this: stupid.

A comparison can be drawn with far left party types: whereas Labour Party careerists can make it without any big shake-ups in society, parties like the SWP could only take over the government (in fantasy) if there



No Class Today; No Class Society Tomorrow? Student Riot, Paris, 1989.

were a big upheaval. As any sane person can see, their chances are zilch: their real role is to dampen the struggle in the present. Likewise, the chances of a far left takeover of academia are also zilch. The difference is that far left postgrads don't have much of a 'role' in the

present at all: if they don't 'sell out' in the sense of getting into the status-seeking rat race, or alternatively get out of all the crap, they just join the most disgruntled of the academics. Only the *extremely* naive can get into their 40s and 50s and remain earnestly convinced that they're doing something useful.

## Loyal Opposition

Far left postgrads parallel far left party types in another way too: they're the loyal opposition to the soft left. This is the real meaning of their desire to 'rescue Marxism from Stalinism' (or structuralism, or whatever). For people who want to help tune up real revolutionary theory, there's obviously no reason to see the ideas of Stalin or social democracy as any more deserving to be the 'central target' than the ideas of Hitler or the Green Party. The critique of one ideology or many stays an ideological critique unless it links its destiny to the practical movement which undermines *all* ideology: working class autonomy. In the real world, if any ideologies are more important than any others, it's those which are most widely believed. As Marx put it: "The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question."

## Juvenile

It has to be said finally that many of these lefty postgrads are quite juvenile for grown men. (Yes, they're all men). These aren't 17-year-olds who've just finished their Highers. Mostly they're in their 30s or older. Yet they quote their