




NEWSLETTER
No. 5
LIBERTARIAN
NEWS AND
VIEWS



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Report & Tenants Mutual
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15p



Everywhere the more
valuable in their broaders
and deeper to an ever
greater extent the effort
separating the bourgeois
class from the masses of
the people.
— Mikhail Bakunin



ORA: AIMS and PRINCIPLES

The ORA seeks to establish a society which will render impossible the growth of a privileged class and the exploitation of man by man. The ORA therefore advocates common ownership of all means of production and distribution, on the basis of voluntary co-operation. To gain such a society we shall work towards the abolition of the mechanisms which are necessary to our present unjust and unequal system - such as the wages system, capital accumulation, and money. Goods will be produced to fulfill human needs, both social and individual, rather being produced for the maximum profit.

We are concerned not only to change the material conditions of life but also its general quality, by such means as open access to all facilities for education and leisure.

As a means of working towards the free society, ORA is concerned to promote ever more accurate criticism and ever more successful opposition to the chaotic and oppressive society in which we live; to oppose private greed with social needs; to encourage co-operation in our own interests, rather than the competition which is in the interests of the present system; to build and support organisations to defend people from exploitation, such as tenant associations, rank and file committees, consumer groups, school-neighbourhood councils, etc., and by doing so to help evolve the many and varied means by which people can organise themselves without a privileged or ruling class.

We are opposed to any action or organisation which takes the initiative and control from ordinary people and gives it to permanent officials, parliamentary representatives, or revolutionary 'leaderships'.

We base our work on the day to day struggles for better living conditions and greater enjoyment of life; by linking up the aspirations and actions of ordinary people and developing from them an understanding of the common problems and common enemies, which will act as a guide to our work for a more satisfactory

form of society.

The form that our organisation takes is a realisation of libertarian perspectives in the current situation. We recognise that it is not a social model of a free society and must itself develop in interaction with the developing liberation of humanity.

- a) We are a membership organisation.
- b) We are decentralised with groups having autonomy of action and management. Any delegate or group of delegates has no more than a co-ordinating function.
- c) Delegates are subject to recall at any time by those who mandate them.
- d) We recognise the danger of the development of a leadership of experts and consciously, consistently and openly stimulate the involvement, responsibility and libertarian perspective of the less involved.
- e) All relationships reflect mutual responsibility, and the maxim of 'to each according to his needs'.
- f) We reject vanguard theories because they perpetuate authority relationships into the new society.

The ORA therefore:

- 1) Works for the establishment and strengthening of rank and file groups at the place of work. Against the co-operation of the employers and the state which reflects their interests, we advocate the co-operation of the workers, not just as a platitude but as a necessary weapon for any successful fight against a ruthless enemy.

To implement this, the ORA fights for Trade Union democracy, - to gain rank and file control over decisions and communications at present in the hands of permanent officials, whose interests and lifestyles are closer to the bosses than to the ordinary workers.

This can be done by regular recall of officials, and by making sure of free communications between union branches, and the abolition of craft unions.

The ORA works to achieve a network of rank and file organisations by means of which workers will be able to more successfully defend their interests and eventually to take over and control industry in their own interest.

- 2) Works for the establishment and strengthening of tenants' associations and neighbourhood councils,

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not just to fight local authorities for better housing and other social services, but to create community organisations capable of running these services in their own interests.

3) Seeks to break the control of education by industrial interests and academic elites. The ORA supports moves towards a system which will encourage the development of the individual through such measures as libertarian education - at best the de-schooling of society, at worst, the abolition of streaming and the control of schools, colleges and universities by those who work in, work for, and use them, by means of their democratic control of decision making.

4) Opposes all forms of racism. We consider racial prejudice to have developed not through biological inequality between men, but as a result of the past economic interests of colonial nations, who continue to use the myth as a justification for exploitation. The effect of racism is to divide groups of ordinary people and hamper the achievement of their common interests.

5) Supports the movement for women's liberation, both in society at large and in the radical movement. We support the formation of independent women's groups. The women's liberation struggle will not end with the revolution we propose, but must be a continuing process of education and action to break centuries of conditioning. As with racism, the low status and restricted opportunity of women is a means by which people are divided.

To make a successful revolution to fight against all forms of discrimination and exploitation must be put together and turned from defensive attempts to gain crumbs to a determined battle together to seize complete control of our society.

We believe that no existing regime can be called socialist. In place of capitalism, various countries have achieved a system of rule by self-perpetuating bureaucracy, based not on the individual control and ownership of private property like the British ruling class, but on the collective control of all production through the control of an all-powerful State.

To us the only revolution worth having is when ordinary people rid themselves of all those who live off

6 them, and organise themselves in their own interests. For this reason "anarchy" is the alarm cry of Prime Ministers, City magnates and all would-be officials. (The word means 'a society without rulers'). They equate this with chaos, since they believe, and want us to believe, that they are indispensable. But there have been times when people have successfully organised vast cities and created "anarchy": in Russia in 1917 (destroyed by the Communists); in Spain in 1936-38 (destroyed by an unholy alliance of Communists and Fascists); in Hungary in 1956 (destroyed by Soviet "workers" tanks); in France in 1968 (held back by all the established political parties). These events are part of a continuing process - the Spanish people are still threatening the Franco dictatorship; the Polish workers are not cowed after 20 years of similar repression; and in France the regime is becoming more and more of a police state to suppress the ideas and hopes thrown up by 1968.

The ORA is opposed to State militarism. It believes that the main use of State violence is against its own citizens. This is obvious in dictatorships but even in the free world there are clear examples; when Ulster Catholics refuse any longer to accept second class citizenship, they are met by CS gas; when homeless people attempt to solve their problems by squatting in empty houses, they are terrorised, persecuted and imprisoned.

We believe that the ruling of all countries are our enemies just as the ordinary people of all nations are our friends. We oppose all wars between the ruling classes of all countries in their fight for profits.

The only necessary armed struggle is when oppressed people find it necessary to rid themselves of exploiters by violence. This condition will always be imposed upon the revolutionary struggle by the bourgeoisie, in that they will never give up their power peacefully. An armed struggle of the people to defend the autonomous revolutionary institutions is not that militarism which is the jack-booted violence of the State.

The ORA is internationalist. That is to say, we recognise that many of the problems facing the world - poverty, scarcity of resources, pollution - are problems which can only be faced by all the people co-

cerned. It also means that we recognise our common enemies as all ruling classes who govern in their own interests and who will certainly aid each other (as in the past) against their own peoples.

Just as the ruling classes find it necessary to recognise common interests through the international police, military and economic organisations (Interpol, NATO, the Common Market) we recognise that the interests which bind us to ordinary people everywhere - desires for peace, freedom and a better future - shall be the basis for international solidarity and organisation.

ORA CONFERENCE

**LEEDS OCT.13th.
to 15th.** DETAILS: T.Bavage,
flat 3,35 Richmond Rd
LEEDS 6

ORA PAMPHLETS

from J.Neal, Langwith College,
University of York.

TRIAD : ORA (GLASGOW)

ANARCHIST MAGAZINE

CARTOONS, PICTURES AND
INTRODUCTORY ARTICLES TO
A WIDE RANGE OF ANARCHIST
IDEAS.

Jean MacLeod % Whyte,
138, Fergus Drive, GLASGOW NW

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cont. from p.4

We then broke off for tea which we supplied free. This gave people a chance to talk amongst themselves which they did.

When we resumed we passed around a piece of paper asking for names of those who would volunteer to be 'block collectors', who would collect subs and lists of grievances and when the paper came back we had four names. We had in fact jumped the gun.

They weren't prepared to accept a Tenants association based on a loose organisation. From the floor came the demand for a committee, and on a show of hands this was carried. We then asked for a temporary committee (to arrange the next meeting). This was done on a voluntary basis and four people came forward. A leaflet was drawn up by these four after the meet and distributed by them, urging all the tenants to come to the next meeting to vote for the association's committee.

That is the position at the moment, we did however manage to get over at the meeting the point that distribution of the workload was essential, which was accepted by most people and the need for a democratic committee subject to recall.

We will meet the provisional committee to discuss the formation and technicalities, legal and general, of the Tenants Association. It is here that we hope to bring in some ideas of our own.

Any group requiring more information are welcome to get in touch with us, we also have a few leaflets that might be useful. Please contact us through the Newsletter at;

104, Bishopthorpe Rd., YORK.



AN OPEN LETTER

TO ORA

Much contention was aroused at the last conference by the association, real or imaginary, of certain comrades within the York Anarchist Group, and the Labour Party and the coming local elections. In view of the fact that it was not fully discussed, coming up briefly in the group reports section, and of the misunderstanding and heated opinions aroused I was asked to write something (explain my heresies?) in the Newsletter. I choose to do it in the form of an open letter to ORA members.

Briefly two points are of importance: my own personal intention of voting Labour, which I think is too trivial to go into, (it was never suggested that York group members should vote Labour or canvass others to do so) and secondly the tactical point of working within Labour grass-roots organisations (there are such people as grass-roots Labourites whether you choose to believe it or not) in this case tenants associations.

To me much of the argument of those opposed to this was purist ego-posturing, but I stand to be corrected on this as with other points I wish to raise.

Basically, my reasoning is thus. Although we may be posing an 'alternative' to capitalism-bureaucratism or whatever we wish to call it, that is not the same thing as having the organisational means of putting it into practice, something some comrades did not seem able to distinguish. The problem is how to build up that effective organisational alternative. Now clearly one cannot build it in isolation and then enter the struggle, and we can only build it if at the same time we are achieving practical things, no matter how small. People are quite rightly interested in the delivery of the goods, only materially cushioned students are idealists and only as long as they are materially cushioned. So

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there has to be a relationship (call it dialectical if you have to) between building an alternative structure while at the same time being involved in alternative action outside this that does not at this point in time exist. To bring this to the concrete situation, in York we are faced with (1) a non-militant working class community, (2) the rent act, (3) no organisation of our own to fight it. (There will be three of us here this summer.) From this, our problem is, as outlined above, to fight the rent act and build ORA in York. Therefore we believe we have to (and can without selling out or becoming reformist) become involved in the tenants' association which Labour is setting up; (the I.S. are doing the same but it is another argument why we don't go in there), for three reasons: to gain personal experience, I have never done anything remotely similar before, and to make ourselves known and credible and finally in the hope of winning people to a more general discussion of our ideas.

I don't know whether this explains fully enough the position we are in.

Finally I would like to draw a few general theoretical points which I think are involved in the logic of this argument.

Firstly, we do not as yet live in a society of open class war: this is not a truism because some comrades seem to think we do and the atmosphere of a left conference planning strategy as though there were helps engender this feeling. (This is not cynical; I think it is the only possible way, yet we must be conscious of it.)

This of course begs the question: what is the state of class antagonism at present. My own plagiarised view is that we exist in, what has been termed by John Rex, a truce situation. This has arisen from the fact that the ruling class can no longer rule without loss of privilege, while the established 'socialist' parties are unwilling to accept the cost of 'dare to struggle, dare to win', but will accept concessions that do not actually alter the fundamental power structure between wage and capital. This truce has created a new system with its own ideology in liberal democracy. (I'm not, by the way, so pretentious as to assume that I've accounted for the rise of liberal

democracy, but I think this is the direction we should be looking to.)

Do not get me wrong; this does not mean in any sense a reformist conclusion.

For this truce lasts only as long as the material conditions for its existence (which are changing) and as long as the balance of power lasts. This latter is definitely changing as evidenced by the attempt (failed, of course) of conservatives to return to Laissez-faire economics by curbing the organised, if reactionary in terms of the class struggle, strength of the unions in the Industrial Relations Act, and the Lane Davis fiasco.

To go off the point briefly. This raises another issue: whether it is better to have a Conservative or a Labour government. Two views were expressed outside ours - there are only three - that it makes no difference, and that it was better to have reaction in the form of the conservatives rather than Labour, since it legitimised class difference. I think both of these are false. Firstly, it is unhistorical to say it makes no difference and secondly with reference to what has been said above, it is better for the working class to make the offensive rather than the Tories whose ideology is more clearly that of the ruling class.

To draw an end, what do we do in this situation? First we must break down consensus ideology and secondly build organisations that will challenge the power and 'dare to struggle'. These must be, and if built, on libertarian principles, cannot form a truce since if they are that, the working class cannot sell itself down the river and in any case will not be in the truce making system. The paper must play the first role and it must also be noted that in relating the struggles going on we are not only breaking down ideology but building the optimism necessary for the total resumption of the actual state of society - class war. This latter I think is the basis of I.S. success with Socialist Worker.

On building the O.R.A.I. refer you back to our position in York as we see it and hope for more optimistic challenging replies.

Fraternally,
N.H.

It has been suggested that, in case it's not clear, I state that I am not advocating any form of infiltration, but that we participate as O.R.A. members.

not me but
Neil Hunt.

WHAT IS ORA?— THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

The Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists was founded, at a conference in Leeds in November 1971, by anarchists from all over Britain. We were dissatisfied with the low level of anarchist thought and activity to date.

Before this a number of pamphlets had been published - some detailing the problems facing anarchists in Britain and suggesting approaches to their solutions - "Towards a History and Critique of the Anarchist Movement in Recent Times"; "Theory and Praxis in Anarchist Organisation"; "An Introduction to Revolutionary Anarchism"; others dealing with particular political questions - "The Bombthrowers: a Study of Terrorism"; "Neither Washington nor Hanoi but Libertarian Socialism"; "Free Speech and Social Revolution".

A duplicated journal - The Newsletter - was started in May 1971 for discussion among those interested in the proposed ORA, and with existing libertarian groups.

There were two main reasons for the formation of the ORA; people were sure of what they were against, or what they'd had enough of, and also people had some idea of what needed to be created. To summarise the positive points that have been made with varying degrees of support:-

1. Libertarian ideas and national organisation are perfectly compatible. National organisation is necessary, will not just happen, and therefore must be created.

2. There are a multiplicity of 'valid' (ie. useful in the development of the revolutionary movement) libertarian tendencies. There is no holy grail which one group can hold. We believe this idea must be put into practice, so we want to create a libertarian federation of the different tendencies and specific campaigns. Within which political debate will be unhindered and at the same time the greatest possible practical co-operation will be achieved.

Without this the development of any one tendency will be one-sided and introverted.

With this each school of thought will be clarified and developed by testing and the work we are able to do will be improved by greater resources etc.

3. ORA will become, or be part of the creation of, the libertarian communist tendency within such a federation.

To summarise then, ORA at present is composed of libertarian communists and some of the most active comrades of the anarchist movement, who whilst agreeing with 1. and 2. above would not necessarily agree with 3. or have another view of ORA's development.

What follows is a libertarian communist argument about the development of ORA.

ORA has been quite successful in attracting comrades who have previously left the anarchist movement because they had given up hope. We are still having a lot of 'teething' troubles with the functioning of the national network, but I think that any criticisms are that it isn't working as well as expected, rather than a fundamental disagreement with the existence of national organisation.

The question of getting ORA off the ground is over with; for what it is worth ORA is the largest of the libertarian groups in existence in the UK at the moment.

The question now is what we should do, what we are able to do, and whether the founding ideas are to be developed or changed.

By our existence we are working on 1. The second idea, that of the libertarian alliance, is necessarily slow but the growing local contacts and the libertarian womens' newsheets, with the acceptance of the idea in other groups, means that such a federation is being formed informally and that there is hope that this will develop further.

The third point is the one which needs arguing.

My first premise is that a clear perspective of our future is the only proper means of judging each specific proposal for our collective activity, whether it be a particular campaign, or, as is currently the case, the founding of a newspaper.

The second need, in arriving at this perspective, is to make clear a number of things which are at the moment tacitly accepted...

- that the class struggle is the motor of social change, that any revolution in this country will be made by the working class. Therefore the bulk of our activity should be centred upon introducing libertarian politics and organisational methods into the struggles which the working class experiences everyday.

That cultural experiments, educational reforms, communal living etc. are all of interest to libertarians, as are any progressive developments in social life, BUT they are relevant to the revolutionary struggle when seen and evaluated through the perspective of class analysis.

- that revolutions are not purely spontaneous occurrences, but are prepared by events and activity in the period before them. It follows from this that revolutionary politics is not simple activism or the encouragement of any and every conflict but of understanding the development of events and using this analysis to encourage the confidence and understanding of the working class through its everyday struggles.

For this the revolutionary organisations must be able to help its militants develop an ever better understanding, and be able to develop continuously by being able to take the separate experiences of its militants and develop collectively a generalised view of the sum total of this experience. This is MUCH more than just the sum total of the experience lumped together and not analysed.

In my view then, it is necessary to adopt firm political positions at the coming conference. With a view to stating explicitly the bases on which the organisation was founded. The major one should be on the class struggle and the role of (a) ORA (b) the libertarian federation. The wording of such should be approached, not as an innocuous statement like most resolutions at any conference on the left, but as stating the guidelines for collective work in the coming year. Points which must be discussed are the womens' movement tenants associations, claimants unions, schools and universities, and the work we can do.

It is in the light of this that I support the proposals for a paper, which if produced in the decentralised manner suggested will demand a high degree of mutual responsibility, which in itself will be the best guarantee of our progress towards effective collective work.

Keith Nathan.