

BIG FLAME



Educational Bulletin Of The Anarchist Federation - Issue #9

DIY ANARCHISM -help yourself

SABOTAGE

by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

General Forms of Sabotage

Sabotage was adopted by the General Federation of Labor of France in 1897 as a recognized weapon in their method of conducting fights on their employers. But sabotage as an instinctive defense existed long before it was ever officially recognized by any labor organization. Sabotage means primarily: the withdrawal of efficiency. Sabotage means either to slacken up and interfere with the quantity, or to botch in your skill and interfere with the quality, of capitalist production or to give poor service. Sabotage is not physical violence, sabotage is an internal, industrial process. And these three forms of sabotage are aimed at affecting the profit of the employer. Sabotage is a means of striking at the employer's profit for the purpose of forcing him into granting certain conditions. There are many forms of interfering with efficiency, quality and production. Working-class sabotage is aimed directly at the boss and at his profits, in the belief that that is the solar plexus of the employer, that is his heart, his religion, his sentiment, his patriotism. Everything is centered in his pocket book, and if you strike that you are striking at the most vulnerable point in his entire moral and economic system.

I have not given you a rigidly defined thesis on sabotage because sabotage is in the process of making. Sabotage is as broad and changing as industry, as flexible as the imagination and passions of humanity. Every day workingmen and women are discovering new forms of sabotage, and the stronger their rebellious imagination is the more sabotage they are going to invent, the more sabotage they are going to develop. Sabotage is not, however, a permanent weapon. Sabotage is not going to be necessary once a free society has been established. Sabotage is simply a war measure and it will go out of existence with the war, just as the strike, the lockout, the policeman, the machine gun, the judge with his injunction, and all the various weapons in the arsenals of capital and labor will go out of existence with the advent of a free society.

And then, someone may ask, "may not this instinct for sabotage have developed, too far, so that one body of workers will use sabotage against another; that the railroad workers, for instance, will refuse to work for the miners unless they get exorbitant returns for labor?" The difference is this: when you sabotage an employer you are sabotaging somebody with whom you are not interdependent, you have no relationship with as a member of society contributing to your wants in return for your contribution.

The employer is somebody who depends absolutely on the workers.

Whereas the miner is one unit in a society where somebody else supplies the bread, somebody else the clothes, somebody else the shoes, and where he gives his product in exchange for someone else's; and it would be suicidal for him to assume a monopolistic position, of demanding so much for his product that the others might cut him off from all social relations and refuse to meet with any such bargain. In other words, the miner, the railroad worker, the baker is limited in using sabotage against his fellow workers because he is interdependent on his fellow workers, whereas he is not materially interdependent on the employer for the means of subsistence. To him this is not an argument but a struggle for life. He knows freedom will come only when his class is willing and courageous enough to fight for it. He knows the risks, far better than we do. But his choice is between starvation in slavery and starvation in battle. Like a spent swimmer in the sea, who can sink easily but who struggles on to grasp a stray spar, suffers but hopes in suffering - so the worker makes his choice. To this worker, sabotage pierces the nerve centers of capitalism, stabs at its hearts and stomachs, tears at the vitals of its economic system. It is cutting a path to freedom, to ease in production and ease in consumption. Confident in his powers, he hurls his challenge into his master's teeth: *I am, I was and I will be*

Non-Adulteration and Over-Adulteration

[Indirect sabotage] is the most dangerous of all. Suppose you said to dyers, to a sufficient number of them that they could do it as a whole, so that it would affect every dye house in the area: "Instead of introducing these chemicals for adulteration, don't introduce them at all. Take the lead, the zinc, and the tin and throw it down the sewer and weave the silk, beautiful, pure, durable silk, just as it is. Dye it pound for pound, hundred pound for hundred pound." The employers would be more hurt by that form of sabotage. To advocate non-adulteration is a lot more dangerous to capitalist interests than to advocate adulteration. And non-adulteration is the highest form of sabotage in an establishment like dye houses, bakeries, confectioners, meat packing houses, restaurants, etc. Interfering with quality, durability or the utility of a product can have very positive benefits for society: Suppose a milkman delivers milk that is half water with chalk and some glue to thicken it. The union strikes but doesn't win better conditions. So they turn on the water so the mixture is four-fifths water and one-fifth milk. You will send the "milk" back and make a complaint. At the same time thousands of others will do the same, and through striking at the interests of the consumer they are able to get better conditions for themselves and compel the employers to give a pure product. That form of sabotage is distinctly beneficial to the consumer. Any exposure of adulteration, any over-adulteration that makes the product unconsurable is a lot more beneficial to the consumer than to have it tintured and doctored so that you can use it but so that it is destructive to your physical condition at the same time. Destroying the utility of the goods sometimes means a distinct benefit to the person who might otherwise use the goods.

Interfering With Service.

The waiters in New York were only 5,000 strong yet won a good deal demonstrating their power to the employer to hurt his business. They drew up affidavits and they told about every hotel and restaurant, the kitchen and the pantry conditions. They told how butter was sent back to the kitchen and somebody with their fingers picked out cigar ashes and cigarette butts and matches and threw the butter back into the general supply. They told how napkins, used possibly by a man who had syphilis, were used to wipe the dishes in the pantry. They told stories that would make you sick. I found that was one of the most effective ways of reaching the public. I was asked to talk about the hotel workers' strike. I told them about the long hours in the hot kitchens; about steaming, smoking ranges. I told them about overwork and underpay and how waiters had to depend on the drunkenness of some patron to give them a big tip; that sort of thing. They were stony-faced. So I started to tell them about what the waiters and cooks had told me of kitchen conditions and I saw a look of frozen horror on their faces. They were interested when I began to talk about something that affected their stomachs, where I never could have reached them through any appeal for humanitarian purposes. Immediately they began to draw up resolutions and cancel engagements at the big hotels and decided their clubs must not meet there again. They caused quite a commotion. When the workers went back to work after learning this was a way of getting at the boss they did not hesitate at sabotage. What they had not been able to win through the strike they were able to win by by making the food non-consumable and compelling the boss to take note of their power in the kitchen.

Interfering With Quality

The second form of sabotage is to deliberately interfere with the quality of the goods. In this we learn many lessons from our employers, even as we learn how to limit the quantity. You know that every year [things are produced] that never find a market; bananas and oranges rot on the ground, fruit is dumped in the ocean. Not because people do not need these foods and couldn't make good use of them but because the employing class prefer to destroy a large percentage of the production in order to keep the price up. If they sent all that they produce we could be buying things cheaply. But by destroying a large quantity, they are able to keep the price up. And this applies very many other staple articles required by the majority of people. Yet if the worker attempts to apply the same principle, the same theory, the same tactic as his employer we are confronted with all sorts of finespun moral objections.

Stopping The Machines

Suppose if an engineer went on strike and took a vital part of the engine with him, without which it would have been impossible for anyone to run that engine. There might have been a different story. Railroad men have a mighty power in refusing to transport soldiers, strike-breakers and ammunition for soldiers and strike-breakers into strike districts. They did it in Italy. The soldiers went on the train. The train guards refused to run the trains. The soldiers thought they could run the train themselves. They started and the first signal they came to was 'Danger.' They went along very slowly and cautiously, and the next signal was at 'Danger.' And they found before they had gone very far that they were run off on to a siding in the woods somewhere. Laboriously they got back onto the main track. They came to a drawbridge and the bridge was up. They had to go across in boats and abandon the train. By the time they got into strike district the strike was over. Railroad men have mighty power in refusing to run trains and putting them in such a condition that they can't be run by others. They make it a practice to ensure the service is paralyzed. With freight of course they do different things. In the strike of the railroad workers in France they [sent] a great trainload of fresh fruit into a siding in one of

the poorest districts of France. It was taken care of by the poor. Something that was supposed to be sent in a rush from Paris to Havre was sent to Marseilles. And so within a very short time the whole system was so clogged and demoralized that they had to say to the railroad workers, "You are the only efficient ones. Come back. Take your demands. But run our railroads."



Thoughts On Violence On Demos

From "What Do We Want?", Class War leaflet 1997.

RTS are undoubtedly a bright creative group with an imaginative and subversive attitude to the struggles they are involved in. They have tried to link up young green rebels with groups of workers taking action, with some success. Several actions have ended with a police attack when the majority have gone home. It is surely time for better tactics. A realistic look at the atmosphere would have told us when to retreat and move off as a body, protecting each other, defending the van with the sound system, avoiding the worst batterings. Tactical withdrawal, living to fight another day..... We should also be aware of the real impact of throwing stuff at police. It's fun, works our anger up and can keep them on the defensive but today's riot gear means not much damage will be done. Obviously it's hard to take loads of petrol bombs into the West End but how about high-powered catapults? Stupid behavior leads to nickings and battered heads, people doing time. We end up spending time and energy keeping out of the way of these people or running around supporting them when they're arrested. To hit the targets we need to hit to take on the state, we need to think creatively about the whole demo thing. Marching into heavily-policed territory where we can generally expect to lose a fight: isn't this pointless?

Know The Score On Demos

STICK TOGETHER

Go with mates, people you trust. Have a list of names somewhere safe with a mate who isn't going. Act as a thinking group, know who's up for what.

MASK UP

If you don't want to get lifted later on, wear a mask up. Also wear plain dark clothes that are tough to identify.

GO EQUIPPED

Junior hacksaws for locks and chains, d-locks for locking up places, paintbombs for visors and cameras

BUNCH UP

A solid line is harder to break than isolated individuals.

UN-ARREST PEOPLE

If someone is snatched they can be won back by a determined small group. If you grab someone back, it's useful to swap clothes to confuse cops looking to rearrest them. Or suggest they move to another area of the fight.

THROWING STUFF

Have some bottle, move up near the front and do it properly or don't do it. People too pissed to throw on target should be stopped, by force if necessary.

DON'T SAY CHEESE

Attacks on press and TV need to be stepped up. Small groups should decide to do this or take along paintbombs or powerful catapults. Mask up!

LEGAL OBSERVERS

We can all be observers - it's up to us to look out for each other. The official observers in orange bibs are there to help us, to stop people being nicked or doing time. Help them help you; give them names, descriptions of people nicked, statements about what happened.

USE YOUR EYES

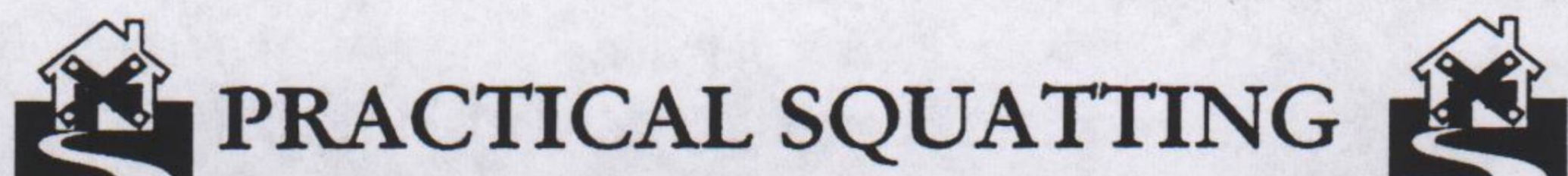
Watch what the cops are doing, if they're getting ready to charge. Watch for spotters pointing people out, warn people who've been spotted, move away if you're spotted.

KEEP ON YOUR TOES

Don't stand still, move around. Keep the filth on the run. Avoid dead ends, spread out, stretch the cops

IF YOU GET ARRESTED

Try to make sure people know you've been nicked. DON'T say anything until you're out and with a lawyer. If you've been beaten see a doctor and get injuries photographed.



In England and Wales squatting is not a crime. If you can get into a building without causing damage and secure it, its legally your home. You have the right to get post and services like gas, electricity, rubbish collection and privacy. Its up to the owner to get a possession order and evict you. Even the 1994 Criminal Justice Act did not make squatting illegal; fast-track possession orders can be granted if someone is unable to move in because you're there; an Interim Possession Order (IPO) can be issued.

Finding A Place And Getting In

Have a stroll round an area you'd like to live in and find an empty house. Make sure its empty! Avoid totally trashed places unless you LIKE living without water and electricity. Check out possible entrances: are there wood doors in the back a crowbar could open or only fuckoff firedoors? Is that door locked with a yale you could slip? What about the windows-could you slip the latch with a blunt, flat knife? Even if ground floor windows are boarded, first-floor windows could be do-able with a ladder. When you're going to crack a place, take a couple of mates. Don't go in the dead of night when people are at home and alert. Don't look dodgy; the police could stop you on suspicion.

Securing

Once in it's best to change the locks as soon as possible: chisel the old ones out and replace with a new one of the same size. The main thing is to ensure the owner can't just walk in and repossess the building, so a few bolts will do the job at first or even latching up the yale lock if there is one. You can pick up old locks and bolts at car boot sales and flea markets if you don't have a lot of bread. You can put up a Legal Warning based on S6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (check the library!) which can be helpful in dealing with police or owners.

Dealing With Police/Owners

The police have no legal right to enter a squat without a warrant. They can't do much unless you piss them off; then they'll invent some criminal offence and try to arrest you. This doesn't happen often. Be firm and polite - explain through the LETTER BOX or WINDOW that you're squatting, hand them a legal warning and point out the owner will have to go through the legal process to evict you. Do the same if the owner comes round.

Making It Home

Move your stuff in. Don't leave the building unattended especially if you haven't had a visit from the police or owner yet. Register with the gas and electricity (important if you don't want to be arrested for stealing electricity). Turn the water on. Clean up. Try to get the neighbours on your side by explaining your situation and being generally nice.

Legal Proceedings

If the owner's on the case they will get a Court Order delivered to your door. Don't panic! Get in touch with the Advisory Service for Squatters who can help you decide if you have a case and should go to court. If the owner gets a Possession Order the bailiffs will put in on their waiting list for action. You'll get a notice of when they're coming. Unless you WANT a confrontation, move out and find another squat - there are plenty around! The process should take 3-4 weeks.

Squatters Handbook, £1 from the ASS, 2 St Pauls Road, London N1 2QN 0207-359-8814



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Campaigning Action – First Steps

Starting up a Group from Scratch

Groups like the Friends of Twyford Down and Save Our Solsbury grew from a couple of people deciding to actively oppose road schemes. If you decide to set up a group to initiate opposition, here are a few ideas for getting started. Firstly, get in touch with other local groups with similar interests and see if there is any concern in these circles too. Write letters to the local papers and see who responds, then get in touch with them. When you feel as if you have enough people to kick things off (remember, you'll only need a few) then consider setting up your first meeting. Book a hall, or hold the meeting in someone's house, and make sure as many people who've expressed interest can come along. Organise refreshments. Advertise in sympathetic places that a group is being set up to oppose the development you're fighting, and that a first meeting is being held. Do not invite the press. The first meeting should be open, inclusive and inspiring! You could begin by getting to know one another and letting off steam about the development. If there are lots of people it might be an idea to do this in small groups of 4 or 5. Be at pains not to let a few people dominate the whole meeting. If people decide to respect one another as equals, encouraging active involvement from everyone in decision making and action, then the campaign and the people in it will grow.

Points of Contact

You must have a postal address, as people will soon want to send you requests for information and donations etc. Consider setting up a Post Office PO Box as soon as possible rather than using a private home address, for security reasons. However the Post Office will disclose the names and addresses to which the PO Box is registered on request. Safer still is the BM Box confidential mail forwarding service, privately provided by British Monomarks. A BM Box gives your address complete security - except from the police! An easier alternative is to have a "care of" address in a sympathetic local radical bookshop. A telephone contact point is also essential. Initially you may want to use individual private phone lines. Several numbers will share the burden. Alternatively the campaign could pay to have a second line installed in someone's house with an answer machine with a message on it. If a member of your group has access to a computer you may wish to set up an e-mail address.

Group Structure

British direct action campaigns have always deliberately avoided formal hierarchical structures such as, committees, leaders and named positions. Hierarchies are stifling and do not bring out the best in people. Although non-hierarchical structures require hard work, patience and tolerance to work, they are worth it as they are definitely the most welcoming and inclusive way to enable everyone to maximise their contribution to the campaign. Individuals will be able to vary their involvement according to their personal skills, energy and interests, unrestricted by the straitjacket of formal structure. Establishing small but open working groups to tackle specific issues - research, legal support, fundraising - allows efficiency and specialisation without hierarchy. Having no leaders means people have to be self-motivated and the campaign will develop its own unique identity. Guard against being used by other groups or individuals with their own agendas.

Campaign Meetings

Campaign meetings are an essential tool for bringing the campaign together for discussion and decision-making. Although they can be tedious and frustrating they should never be abandoned. Running

successful, dynamic and positive meetings IS possible. Firstly, decide on the purpose of the meeting. Regular weekly meetings are good for deciding basic campaign expenditure, exchanging news, and brief discussions, but aren't suitable for in-depth debates on a single issue, or for detailed action planning. It's best to call a separate meeting to deal in detail with planning or specific issues; alternatively, just get together the people interested, and do it! Some campaigns have set up small working groups to work on particular projects; these can then report back to a weekly meeting. The meeting should have a fixed time and venue, to provide a steady reference point.

Buying, Blagging And Borrowing

Direct action campaigns can be like black holes for equipment and money. With minimal resources beyond determination and commitment, we need to get equipment as cheaply as possible. Materials and equipment are best obtained free by donation, or acquisition from big companies that: a) won't miss them, and b) need them less than you. Skips are an excellent source of timber, plastic sheet, carpet and food. Although technically theft, the amount of perfectly good stuff thrown out, particularly in wealthy areas, is obscene. Ask anyone working on a demolition site, or at the end of the day at a market, if it's OK to take stuff from the skip. They'll probably say yes, as it's cheaper for them than emptying it. Building sites often have spare scaffolding and bags of sand and cement. If they are building on a green field site then liberating materials is a direct action. Businesses may offer discounts to regular customers or people whose actions they support. Bulk orders of goods like wholefoods and rope will be cheaper. Army surplus and junk yards are a good source of cheap clothes, boots, sleeping bags, tools, tarpaulins and other equipment. Boycott local companies that support the development, and let them know why

Wish Lists

Draft a wish list of all your campaign's practical needs with a plea for donations and circulate it widely as soon as possible. It is an easy way for people to help who cannot be there. It is amazing how much useful stuff like CB radios are lurking in people's attics when they should be on your campaign! Make the wish list as beautiful, eye catching and charming as possible. Put everything down, including the boring stuff like socks and photocopier paper (put a photocopier on the list - it may happen!). Also ask for skills such as artists and welders. Send it to mail enquiries you get, distribute it to mailing lists and put it on your stalls.

Fund-Raising

Unfortunately all campaigns need cash to keep running and to expand. This means that someone/some people, will have to put some effort into securing funds. This is a very important role. Your campaign will be most likely to attract funds if it is genuinely inspiring, and your fundraiser is charming and can enthuse people into parting with their cash! The art of getting people to give to your campaign is a delicate one and should be handled with sensitivity. If people have given once, you will want them to give again and to carry on supporting you. If the donor feels that their money is really going to have an effect and they are shown some proof of how well it was spent, they'll be more inclined to give again.

For more info on direct action campaigns try Road Alert! PO Box 5544, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5FB England EMAIL: roadalert@gn.apc.org