

flux



*A magazine of
libertarian socialism*

STITCH-UP CITY

Issue 6
75p

Great Art of our Time Number 269:



Mrs Munch Bemoans the
Tomato Sauce Stains on the Wall.....

flux

A Magazine of Libertarian Socialism
Issue 6
May 1993

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Editorial

"Lock 'em up!" That's the latest solution to juvenile crime by the powers that be. Not the most original of ideas, admittedly, but there's one big difference with these repackaged borstals - they're privatised!

At first sight the general public's response to juvenile crime appears self-contradictory. On the one hand, there is widespread cynicism about policing methods, especially when it comes to securing convictions - as Andrew Green recounts in this issue. But on the other hand, we get a general, uncritical yell for 'justice', most grotesquely shown by the attempted lynching of two ten year old boys accused of Jamie Bulger's murder.

In fact, this isn't such a great contradiction when we realise how threatening juvenile crime is. Threatening, that is, to the illusion of domesticated bliss. In a society in which work is more and more skillless, boring and insecure, we are increasingly turning to consumption to give meaning to our lives. Our houses have become more important to us, our cars give us mobility and the means of temporary escape, as do TVs, videos, all the comforting gadgetry. Opportunistic break-ins and TWOC-ings shatter these individual havens from a grimy world. We can't help taking it so personally.

Domestic security firms flourish. Meanwhile, the state uses these fears to justify increasingly overt control and intimidatory policing. It even gets us to police ourselves, from Neighbourhood Watch, to Pub Watch, to Card Watch. Neighbourhood Watch encapsulates the right-wing solution to crime. Its not-so-hidden agenda is to make us blame each other and ourselves ("Why oh why didn't I install laser beam triggered alarms to my inner city bedsit?"). Meanwhile we are distracted from looking at the role of capitalism or the state in all this.

But give the right its due. At least its solution connects with working class fears of losing hard-earned belongings, and justified anger at anti-social crime. Contrast this to much of the left, who when not completely capitulating to the right-wing agenda, pretends nothing's really happened.

What the left should be calling for is regeneration of these alienated, broken communities. Not the GLC or Derek Hatton way, in which local organisations come to depend, precariously, on local government handouts (see both 'The Judy Greenaway Interview' and 'Pole-emic'). Instead we should be struggling to rebuild community solidarity, from the anger that already exists at long mistreatment and neglect. It is partly in the communities, we might add, that the 'New Social Movements' (see this issue) have both arisen, and made the most impact. The left cannot afford to say that the working class estates are less important than the dwindling shop floors.

This isn't to say that things aren't happening on the industrial front. From miners to rail workers to the Timex dispute, strikes and pickets are taking hold with widespread support. Even 'middle class radicalism' (see this issue for a plea to take it seriously) has reared its head again, as teachers prepare to boycott school testing.

Which all goes to show, as far as socialism is concerned, that you can't keep a good idea down.

The FLUX Collective
May 1993

STITCH-UP CITY

OR

from the City of Fear

When Scott Tomlinson's car was surrounded by armed men, onlookers thought he was being robbed. Scott thought they were going to kill him. He drove off, knocking two of them over. The armed men were members of a Greater Manchester police specialist squad, the Tactical Firearms unit, and they were attempting to make an arrest in their own inimitable way. The crime? The Drugs Squad had found drugs and firearms in a house belonging to Scott's sister. She hadn't lived there for three months: and the police knew that Scott hadn't been there during this period, because they'd had the place under surveillance (or so they claimed, in order to obtain a search warrant - later, when the defence wanted to call Detective Sergeant Paul Boone who was supposed to have been carrying out the surveillance, he said he hadn't been watching the place after all). The evidence against Scott? He had a key to the house, and two fingerprints of his were on a carrier bag found there - along with many other people's prints. How could they construct a case on such little evidence? we wondered. He explained: his reckless driving was represented as an indication of guilt. Scott received an eleven year sentence for possession of drugs and firearms.

Violent ambushes are just one tactic of the GMP. Combine them with a plot to have the victim in possession of a gun, and you can conjure serious crimes out of the air, such as "conspiracy to rob" and "possession of a firearm with intent...". Jerry McCarthy was short of money, so for £60 he agreed to deliver a sawn-off shotgun to a pub car park where Allan Bretherton was waiting for him. Unknown to him, Bretherton was a police informer and agent provocateur. The Firearms Unit was lying in wait: they rammed the car he was driving and smashed its windows with clubs. It was his employer's BMW. DC John Fox of

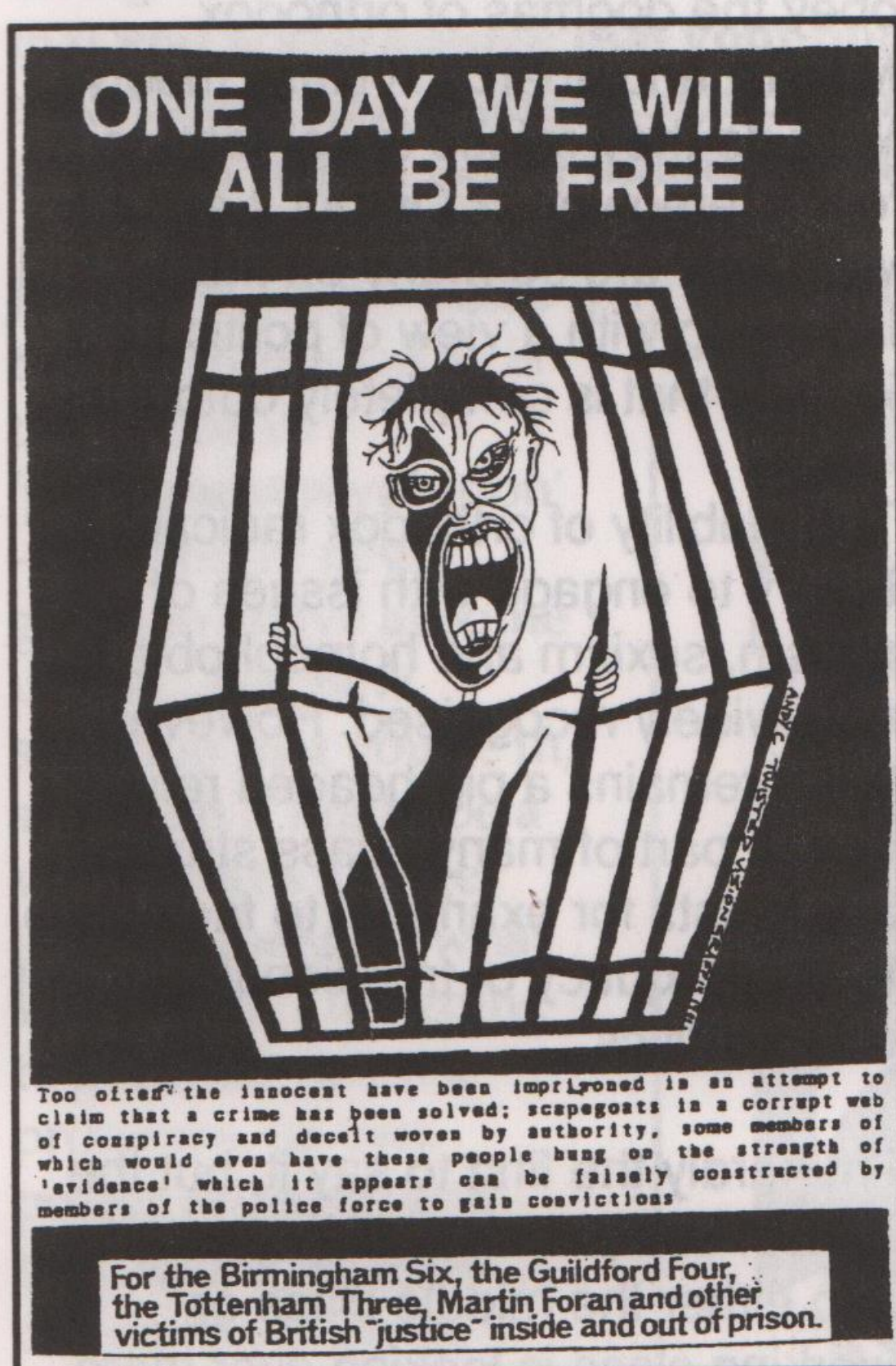
the Serious Crimes Squad was there to charge Jerry with conspiracy to rob. Bretherton was in the car park and in the police station where they took Jerry. Although well known to the police, Bretherton wasn't charged with conspiracy, and wasn't available to appear as a witness at Jerry's trial. DS Kevin Ryan questioned him. Jerry was sent down for nine years. We have been told by several people that there are other cases almost identical to Jerry's, involving Allan Bretherton - that of Harold Love being mentioned often.

This is the creative side of police work. You don't need crimes, just a little help from villains in return for favours, like bail instead of a remand in custody, or a word from the prosecution to the judge so they'll get shorter sentences. You can get convictions against anyone - even fellow police officers. When they came to stitching up PC Ged Corley, it wasn't so easy to find villains who'd make up stories about crimes they'd committed with him. Many refused, but in the end they found a few, including Brian Sands, George Allen and Paul Ramsey. Then there was a problem that Corley wasn't available to commit the armed robberies for which they wanted to frame him, since he was on duty at the time, so the "master criminal" Corley was invented, the brains behind



the "Corley Gang". He was sent down for 17 years, but released on bail even before his successful appeal was heard: he sued the GMP, settled for £235,000, and now drives a green Rolls Royce round Manchester, "to show them" (his former colleagues). Sands, Ramsey and co are doing time for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, and Chief Superintendent Arthur Roberts, Inspector Peter Jackson and DS Kevin Ryan (see above) have been charged with the same offence.

As Sharon Raghip once said, "It's



not just rotten apples, it's whole orchards." The routine of malpractice is established through its successes. When they nicked George Allen for robbery of the Jackson's Boat pub, he cashed in on the favour he'd done them by helping to stitch up Corley. In return for a light sentence and leaving his two accomplices out of the frame, Allen names as his accomplices two men he'd met casually, Robert Hall and Mick Royle. Allen brought forward his two mistresses as witnesses, and for their part police contributed a statement extracted from an ex-girlfriend of Hall, and the case thus cobbled together was enough to send the two men down for ten years.

Creative policing makes for better clear-up rates: if the suspects don't expect to be arrested, they're easy to catch, and they don't have any defence prepared; better still, invent the crime and it's instantly cleared up. If someone dies, it must be murder - even if at first it was obviously an accident (as when Ian Marriot inhaled hydrofluoric acid fumes, a tragedy now compounded by the 20-year sentence given Mark Taylor for this "murder") or self defence (as when Darren Southward fought back against his mother's violent ex-lover, and was persuaded to plead guilty to murder because he was told - falsely - that his mother, also charged, would be freed if he took all the blame: Darren is in for life).

Such victims as these populate the fictional underworld that the GMP create and bring before the courts and the gullible media reporters who wait for the ready-made news packaged for them by their friends in the CID. But is there not, then, a criminal underworld operating in Manchester? Armed robberies take place, and the violence generated by the criminalisation of drug use (for example) is now notorious in some areas of Manchester. Those who commit such anti-social acts may be part of an underworld, but it's not the same underworld as that represented to the courts and the public by the GMP. It's an underworld on whose fringes the police operate, working with grasses and agents provocateurs like Allen and Bretherton, so they know about the underworld - they are aware that people like those mentioned above are not part of it.

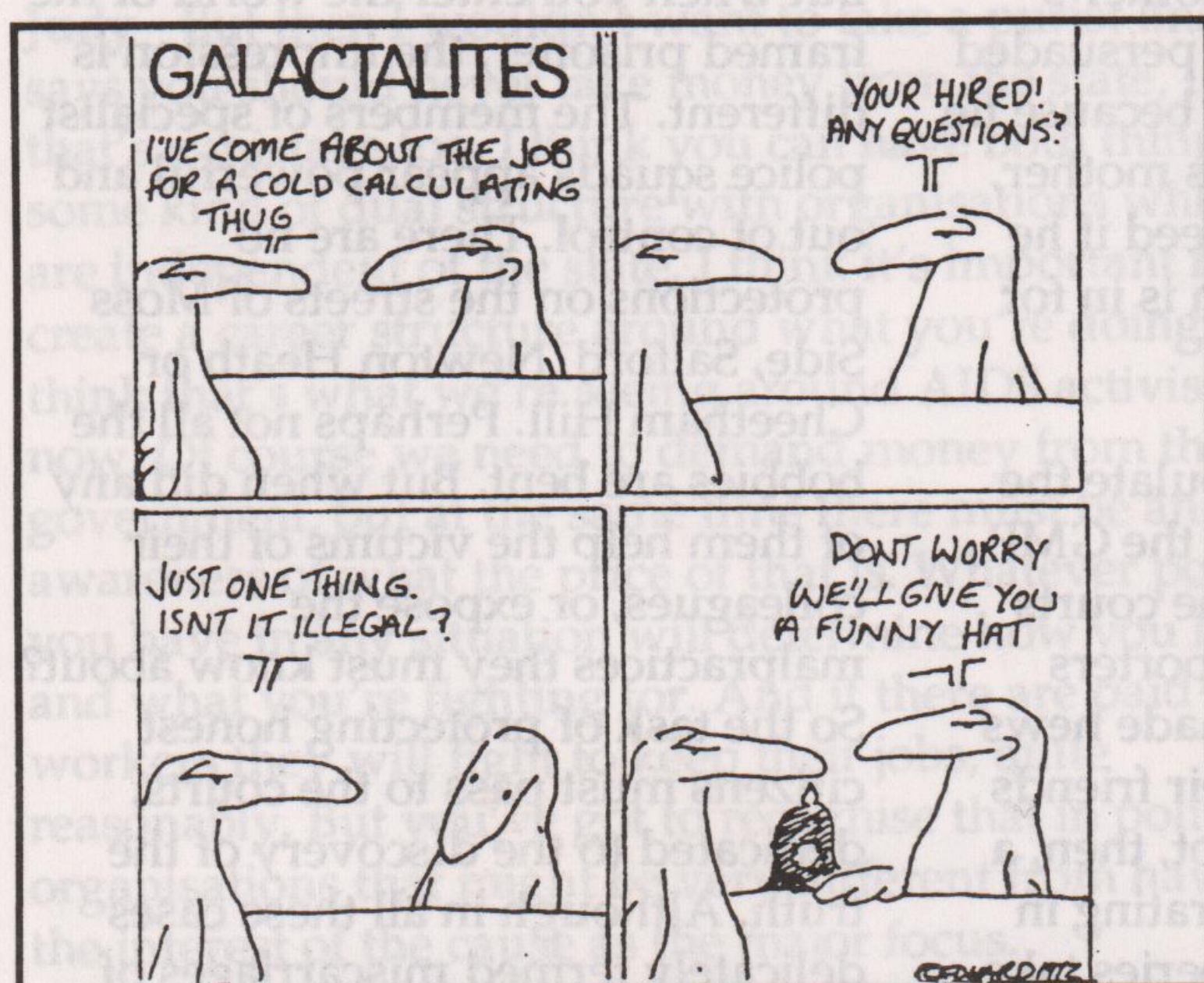
Four of them - Scott Tomlinson, Jerry McCarthy, Michael Royle and Mark Taylor - were listed in 110 cases of possible miscarriages of justice in *The Guardian* on 16 July 1992. *Conviction* supplied information on these and other cases from the Manchester area for that dossier. Mike Royle's appeal was successful, but we had additional cases for the revised list published on 11 November, and more letters

from prisoners from the Manchester area coming in. *Conviction* is a very small voluntary organisation, and it only helps prisoners who say they have been framed for serious crimes, with sentences of six years or more. All cases come to us unsolicited: we dare not invite prisoners to seek our help - there are far too many framed prisoners in British gaols. So perhaps this self-selected clutch of cases tell us nothing about the operation of the criminal justice system in Manchester in general.

But when you enter the world of the framed prisoner, the impression is different. The members of specialist police squads appear powerful and out of control. There are no protections on the streets of Moss Side, Salford, Newton Heath or Cheetham Hill. Perhaps not all the bobbies are bent. But when did any of them help the victims of their colleagues, or expose the malpractices they must know about? So the task of protecting honest citizens must pass to the courts, dedicated to the discovery of the truth. Although in all these cases delicately termed miscarriages of justice, the evidence is minimal, inadequate and tainted, it's upheld by the courts, and presented in such a way that juries are convinced that the people in the dock are villains, underworld characters who live by



crime, who actually committed the crimes that are being described to them by respectable police officers, barristers and judges. The explanation of how this effect is achieved, again and again, and how all the supposed rights and protections of defendants are in practice turned against them, is too complex to explore here (and was competently explained in *Conviction* by Doreen McBarnet, published in 1981). But the effects are clear. (1) Police methods are approved: any conviction based on malpractice is a sign of encouragement to continue that malpractice. (2) The general public are reassured that the police are clearing up crime successfully. (3) The general public are told that the city in which they live is a frightening place and that their only protectors are the police. (4) Everyone is presented with the inescapable conclusion that crime and policing are necessary and unavoidable parts of everyday life. And (5): the working class is shown that its enemies are within its own ranks (virtually all victims of framing are working class, most victims of crime are working class) - that it can never be united as a class, divided as it is by the delinquency it breeds.



Victims of the criminal justice system - defendants found guilty - are needed for the continuous renewal of these effects. Powerless, they find only one set of allies: the lawyers paid for by a kindly state. And who comes when a suspect cries for help from the police station? In Manchester, it's very likely to be not a solicitor, but a legal

executive who is an ex-police officer. Perhaps they are already acting for grasses such as those who gave evidence against Corley and others. A solicitor's approval and encouragement, against Corley and others. A solicitor advised Darren Southward to plead guilty to a murder he hadn't committed on the morning his trial was due to start, giving him only a few minutes to decide whether to change his plea. In case after case we are told of barristers who ignore clients' instructions, failing to challenge police evidence, failing to call witnesses available to help the defence, calling defendants to the witness box when they don't want to be called, not calling defendants to the witness box when they do want to be called, not asking them the questions that defendants want to be asked, and giving the impression that they would prefer to be helping the prosecution. Barristers will do nothing that might upset their colleagues - prosecutors and judges. Lawyers prefer clients to plead guilty, so they can get on to the next case, and the next fee. There is no one left to help defendants. And that's why stitch-up city is such a frightening place.

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Public

Political identities are complex, contradictory and often disconcerting. People whose 'objective interests' might seem to lie in radical change are often sickeningly conservative. On the other hand revolutionary aspirations are sometimes expressed by individuals with a middle class background, a group who, according to orthodox radical theory, have an interest in maintaining the status-quo.

What's going on? Why don't people obey the dogmas of orthodox Marxist and anarchist class theory? Why do they refuse to conform to 'our' stereotypes? Or, put it another way, why are so many on the left still labouring with a view of political identity that is completely outdated?

The inability of orthodox radical theory to engage with issues of racism, sexism and homophobia is now widely recognised. However, there remains a pig-headed refusal on the part of many (class struggle anarchists for example) to face up to the inadequacy of traditional views of class politics.

I'm hardly the first to say it, but the idea of compartmentalising people into either the middle class or working class is looking ever more ropy. This neat dualism has been subverted in a multitude of ways. One of the most important has been the advent of welfare capitalism. Within welfare capitalism, or late capitalism, the state co-ordinates and intervenes in the 'free market'. It pays and manages, for example, those items of social expenditure which are necessary for the reproduction of capitalism yet have grown too expensive and complex to be left to the business sector, things like education and training. [As any astute tory knows, if the welfare sector was abolished British capitalism would collapse, a fact of economic and political life that explains why it is no smaller today than it was in 1979]. The result of all this intervention is to massively

Sector Radicalism. It Exists!....

increase the size of the education and welfare sectors, a process that promotes social mobility and destabilizes class allegiances and identities.

And yet, instead of looking critically at these shifting political identities, a sizeable and dominant portion of the libertarian left has decided it prefers to live in a bizarre fantasy of its own creation, a world in which the 'authentic' political identity of the various classes is viewed as objective and eternal, rather than as a constantly changeable social creation.

Dream on. Working and middle class politics as they actually exist, here in 1993, don't even approximate to the desperate fantasies of many of today's ultra-radicals. And nor have they for some time.

The mismatch between the ideal and the reality is so transparent, the talk about objective, 'authentic' interests, so obviously wishful, that some libertarians seem to have decided that the best policy is to dispense with a plausible theory of class politics altogether. For groups such as Class War class has become an aesthetic issue: the working class are portrayed as a bunch of Sid James clones, engaged in some endless Carry on Class Violence farce, good natured morons who like nothing more than a biff up with the bill.

This all too familiar cliché has entertained diner guests in the home counties for hundreds of years. Now, however, it's being recycled into a supposedly affirmative aesthetic of extremism - it is a transparently playful and self-conscious caricature, a fiction

that works on the level of fiction, but is completely removed from the important task of developing useful or plausible representations of class identity.

Crude portrayals of class identity also have a damaging effect on our understanding of the middle class. Middle class radicalism has never been properly addressed or understood within revolutionary theory. Instead simplistic, moralistic stereotypes have been conjured up. The middle class, it has been argued, cannot be trusted. A few odd-balls may see the light and 'come over' to the 'other side' but the 'real' nature of their kind is quite different and predetermined: to control and manipulate the working class and otherwise do the bidding of the bosses.

I want to suggest an alternative way of looking at the middle class. This isn't just a theoretical parlour game or an exercise in personal self-vindication. Understanding the nature of modern political identities is vital for the development of libertarian left politics. If we carry on taking a contemptuous and/or crude view of the middle class (and this often works out as self-loathing and self-rejection, both useless and indulgent activities) we risk placing ourselves at the mercy of a deeply misleading view of modern political process, one that will be unable to lead the movement out of its present ghetto.

I'd suggest that a more plausible and useful way of looking at class is to stress that it is fractured and that its constituent groups can have very different, indeed contradictory, political interests and histories. The tension between those professionals in the business, 'free-market' sector (managers etc.) and those in the public sector (including students) is the most important of these fractures. The former group has an

entrenched commitment to capitalism and the reproduction of the status-quo. The politics of those connected to the public sector is, however, more ambiguous; it is often open to anti-capitalism ambitions.

Of course, this commitment, like the welfare state itself, is contradictory. Welfare professionals can be egalitarian and democratic one moment (the teacher tells us we are all equal; the social worker forms an anti-racist group etc.), authoritarian and reactionary the next (the teacher tells us to sit down, shut up, and conform). Yet despite this tension there remains a potentially powerful subversive tendency amongst the public sector middle class, a tendency that has manifested itself in the enormous support students, teachers, social workers etc. have given over the years to numerous radical struggles (from anarchism to anti-sexism, from the SWP to anti-racism).

The receptivity of this group to left ideas (of all kinds) is neither coincidental nor unimportant. Non-market values are built into the moral structure of the public sector. Equality of opportunity and public service are considered almost sacred values by public professionals and many of the students whom they influence, values which remain in a constant state of tension with our amoral, 'free market' society. Thus, although there are hundreds of ways the welfare state serves the reproduction of capitalism (for example, by attempting to create a trained and disciplined population), it also contains the seeds of an alternative, oppositional consciousness.

I'm not arguing here that the public professions are more radical than the working class. Neither am I saying that they're not plenty - perhaps the majority - of individuals within this group whose grasp of the political connotations of their work is virtually nil. What I am suggesting is that that isn't the end of the story; for

.....Honest!!

alongside the conservatism another tendency exists, a tendency towards radicalism, a tendency that is rooted, not in do-gooding altruism, but in the moral contradictions that wend their way through the heart of public provision in a capitalist state.

For those who may be tempted to agree but think that I'm describing a marginal phenomenon, of little importance compared to the potential might of the working class, I'd simply point to postwar history. Alongside (and often in advance of) other groups, students and other middle class oppositionals have fermented many of the most important 'revolutionary' moments of our era (in the West at least). From Paris 1968 to Prague 1989, it has been the spawn of the universities, of the art colleges, and other such public institutions who have produced some of the most trenchant and radical opposition to the authoritarian state.

This doesn't mean, of course, that public sector radicalism is somehow superior to the radicalism of other groups. What it does mean is that we need to stop being embarrassed about non-working class radicalism and start using its incredible potential to our advantage. If we are serious about libertarian change then we have got to start taking every potential site of radical consciousness seriously.

Alastair Bonnett

Shameless self-promotion: I've written about these issues in a lot more detail in **Radicalism, Anti-racism and Representation** (Routledge), a book which is due out October 1993, surely the ideal christmas or birthday gift for that difficult-to-buy-for relative or friend!

BACK ISSUES

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"Hypnotised by the overtly fascist, we become less aware of those fascist moments which have become part of the web and weave of everyday ("democratic" capitalist) life. Missing all this fascism is seen as the unacceptable bogey on the fringes, and anti-fascism becomes simply a defence of liberal democracy"

This was the view of Flux contributor Andy McLure, in his article in Flux 5 about the Left and fascism. But what exactly did he mean, fascist moments? Here's an example.

It's common to hear lefties dismiss the tabloid press as fascist. Understandable as this might be it isn't accurate, for the simple reason that the Sun, Mail, Star, Today etc. are very clearly Tory papers. Nationalist, bigoted and reactionary, the cotton wool in the ears of England's dreaming, the political stance of these papers is Conservative.

In stark contrast to Conservatism, fascism has historically combined elements of overt populist state socialism with explicit and unashamed nationalism and racism. Today, openly fascist groups such as the BNP use three key themes to communicate their ideology.

Firstly, they lean heavily upon elements of populist socialism, such as mistrust of politicians and bureaucracy and hatred of the rich. Secondly, they take up people's genuine interest in their own communities, but move it away from its roots in their shared experience, offering instead pseudo-scientific explanations based upon racial identity. Thirdly, they proclaim liberal values of self-determination and racial tolerance, although not to argue for mutual aid and self-help: instead, these values are made to support calls for the repatriation of "non-whites" and the withdrawal of (already pitiful) overseas aid - as the only way to guarantee the peaceful co-existence of cultures.

You could pick up any issue of the BNP's paper "The Nationalist" and see all three of these themes. They sit in clear contrast to the popular Conservatism of papers such as the "Sun": the "Sun" is obviously anti-bureaucracy rather than anti-capitalist, and irrational rather than superficially rational in its racism. And to varying degrees the same goes for the other tabloids, which are all very clearly Conservative rather than fascist - with one striking exception.

The exception is a paper not usually thought to have any political agenda beyond the continued objectification of women; a paper that, apart from knee-jerk reactions to its daily fare of bare breasts and telesex lines, has been largely ignored by the Left. The exception is the "Sport".

The cutie in column 3 is modelling a t-shirt advertised in a recent issue of the "Sunday Sport", as part of their "Buy British Goods" campaign. The shirt's slogan (*British by Birth, English by the Grace of God*) expresses mythical nationalist sentiments and a vague sense of threatened identity, above a St. George-on-his

-charger logo that the BNP themselves might have supplied. But the Sport's nationalism doesn't end with t-shirts and tits: here's the beginning of a recent front-page story that appeared under the headline "YOU FAT LAZY SODS":

ARAB bullyboys planning to flog a Brit half to death for calling them lazy bastards are whingeing Wogs who cannot even fight their own wars.

But just who DO these Saudi towelheads think they are?

The MOMENT that they're in lumber they come yelling for help from us, the Americans, the French, anybody to do their dirty

*** Turn to Page 2**

Alongside such rabid and racist nationalism, the Sport regularly indulges in bash-the-rich and anti-Tory monologues; the item quoted above ends by criticising the Conservative government for doing nothing to help a "Brit" in trouble abroad. The Sport was always opposed to the poll tax, and has published features on such topics as the plight of homeless people and the impossibility of living on benefit - features that would be more at home in the Daily Mirror. In the Sport, vicious nationalism (NA) and populist socialism (ZI) sit side by side.

Wrap this up in a mixture of visual and explicit textual titillation ("he slipped his finger deep inside me, another, then a third .. then he plunged his tongue deep inside and I squealed with delight" - you get the flavour even without being told the gender of both actors) and you get a heady brew.

The regular appearance of the Sport is, in a lowbrow kind of way, one of those fascist moments that Andy McLure referred to. Far from being harmless fun, or an appropriate target only for humorously-challenged feminists, the Sport is the nearest thing we have to a mass-circulation fascist daily.

This might sound extreme. But the whole point of showing how the Sport (unlike other tabloid papers) promotes a fascist ideology is not to emphasise the difference between it and the other tabloids. The point is to show this, and at the same time to realise the similarities and continuities.

This is important because fascism - as represented by groups such as the BNP - is only one expression of a complex economic and socio-cultural phenomenon. In Germany and Italy in the 1930's, forces integral to capitalism were concentrated and combined and the result was overt, swastika-waving fascism. Today in Britain the same forces are still present, but the BNP is only their most blatant expression - and not necessarily the most dangerous one.

I sometimes think about fascism, its myths and horrors, and ask myself how it could ever gain a foothold. Then I remember a Labour Party activist who once told me that he often reads the Sport, and that "its far better than the Sun because at least its left wing" - and I get a glimpse..

FASCIST Moments



Every issue of the Sport reweaves the colourful, irrational threads of modern fascism. You may object that "no-one takes it seriously" (though look at the UDM's "Buy British Coal" campaign). But the Sport's effect is more subtle and insidious than blatant propaganda, and so not being taken seriously might make its political message both easier to swallow and harder to notice.

Clearly, no-one reads the Sport to find out what's happening in politics today. But neither do people read it critically - and there lies the danger. Effective propaganda need not be true: it simply needs to be repeated many times, and to have a surface veneer of credibility. Draped lazily around the tits and bums, woven softly into the soft porn, the Sport gives its readers myriad examples of nationalism and socialism being quietly stitched together as a part of the fabric of everyday life.

Given this, the recent disclosure that David Sullivan, publisher of the Sport and owner of a massive porn empire is now the richest man in Britain, should be very disturbing news indeed.

Duncan Farley

p O L e - e M i C

The Other - Militant - Labour Party.

Whilst the Labour Party slip and slide and slide where they've always slid, Militant Labour are now well and truly 'out of the closet'. They were launched as an independent organisation following an internal split, which saw the departure of their erstwhile guru Ted Grant, and a number of pilot schemes. These included Leslie Mahmood's 'Real Labour' candidacy in the 1991 Walton bi-election, the launch of Scottish Militant Labour last year and Dave Nellist and Terry Fields standing against official Labour Party candidates in the last General Election.

In the Walton bi-election Mahmood won over 2,500 votes - which is not a discreditable amount for an independent candidate. However, in the following General Election she called on 'Real Labour' supporters to vote for the Kinnockite Peter Kilfoyle. This highlights the key dilemma for Militant. Are they a temporarily exiled opposition to the Labour Party establishment, still set on capturing the Labour movement machine as it is? Or, do they see themselves as an independent political force in their own right?

This dilemma was again apparent at their launch press conference, when Peter Taaffe said that although Militant Labour would mount an electoral challenge to the official Labour Party, they would pick their areas very carefully, to avoid the Tories slipping through on a split vote. Hardly an electoral threat!

As it stands, Militant want it both ways: to plough their own furrow ('reaching the voters Labour cannot reach' - especially 'Youth') whilst keeping open the avenues back into the Labour Party.

However equivocal Militant are in their attitude to the Labour Party, their jumping ship in this way must affect the debate on the possibility of a political life outside the Labour Party. This has to be a good thing.

In the meantime, "Militant Labour will be where all workers are prepared to fight. (They) will be prepared to organise and provide the necessary leadership." (Militant, April 2nd 1993).

This begs the question. What kind of leadership and organisation are Militant generously offering to provide?

Militant's 'credibility' rests on two events above all. Firstly, their claimed leadership of the Poll Tax Campaign and their control of Liverpool City Council in the mid-80's.

One of Militant's main election slogans is 'Who led (or as one wag had it 'Who bled') the Poll tax Campaign?'. Those of us who saw first hand Militant's tactics in that campaign - packing meetings with dubiously credentialed delegates, manufacturing paper organisations, dominating local groups and federations, their sheer hostility to independent initiatives such as the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign - can be in no doubt as to the kind of leadership Militant offer.

Perhaps the most telling moment of all was Militant's Steve Nally offering to 'name names' after the Trafalgar Square riot. This was an act of sheer panic by an organisation who feared that they had lost control of a movement. Better to collaborate with the police force, than have an independent movement!

Militant's control of Liverpool Council is equally instructive. Derek Hatton (OK, not part of the gang now but a definite Militant suit at the time) said on taking office:

"Not only are we going to change Liverpool, we are going to prove what Militant is all about. The revolution starts here..." They certainly proved what Militant were all about. But whose revolution were they starting?

Like the Labour Party they have just left, Militant operated within a distinctly reformist vein. In their attitude to the capitalist state there is little difference between the Militant and the Official wings of the Labour Party. Hatton said, "The plan was straight forward. We had taken office. Now we would bring the train to a standstill. Everything had to stop. Then we would re-route the engine and the whole council train onto our track. Those who wanted to stay on board could do so, but anyone who objected to the route we were taking would have to go." In those heady early days Hatton thought he was in Crewe. He may as well have been.

Like Militant's 'leadership' of the Poll Tax Campaign, their 'revolutionary' control of the council house is the stuff of myth and distortion.

The voluble promise of 5,000 council houses never happened. The pay roll was crudely manipulated to give 'jobs for the boys' (Militant only discovered sexual politics in the last couple of years). Notably, there was the Militant placeman from London, Sam Bond, appointed to advise the council on race issues in the city (no local black people available?) and the 'Red Guard' security force, who in the final days locked the revolutionary councillors out of their own council house.

By bringing local union stewards into the council decision making process, Militant tried to create a passive stage army of the council workforce. Their deeply cynical attitude to their own workers came to a head when, trying to force the government to bail them out in 1985, they decided to issue 31,000 redundancy notices. So much for their revolutionary conquest of (local) state power!

Although they said they wouldn't really issue the notices, this act of brinkmanship fractured the alliance between Militant and key local union people. In an atmosphere of loud recrimination the fight for jobs and services in Liverpool collapsed. Hatton went onto to other things and Alan Bleasdale had a field day.

Militant Labour represent an extremely odd amalgam. Hardline rhetoric couples with town hall boss politics. A reformist belief in Parliamentary change (the Socialist revolution equals an Enabling Act to nationalise the top 200 companies) mixes in with the worst elements of Leninist arrogance.

The slipping, sliding, modernising Labour Party may have left the Militant little room for manoeuvre inside. Outside, their elitist, 'revolutionary' reformism offers nothing we haven't seen before.

John French

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New Social Movements

Old certainties are threatened by New Social Movements. Marx and Engels critiqued the "true socialists" (1) of the 19th century whilst their loyal contemporaries bemoan the 1980's emergence of post-material (2) interests and struggles. What this article attempts to do is debate the growth of movements which do not exhibit class struggle in a conventional sense and to examine the potential of such organisation. I want to look at the appeal of political action which deviates from the smoke filled meeting rooms whilst at the same time I have wished to point out the strategic holes and theoretical deficiencies in stripping the economics from political understanding and behaviour.

'Marxists'

Marxists do not like the denial of class conflict which often goes on in non-Marxist circles. To most Marxists class relations are the most fundamental and significant characteristics of capitalist society. To change society, therefore, its economic base must be radically transformed. And the agents of such a process are the historically portentous working class. The strategy is clear and the strategists ready and waiting. Or so they will be - in time. Crudely put.

Stereotypically, people who become involved in New Social Movements are not concerned with the harsh

In this article *Carolyn Willow* examines topical debates around New Social Movements and class struggle. In arguing for a wider definition of materialism, she puts the everyday person in their broader social environment and recognises how resistance can take many forms.

realities of capital and economic exploitation. Their battles are with patriarchy, racism, homophobia and the oppression of disabled people for example. They have no analysis of the significance of class in determining social relations and their aims are one dimensional and partial. This is a misconception but one which is promulgated both within and outside of such movements. The means of protest, sites of struggle and internal organisational structures of these groups often appear so different from traditional class based campaigns that assumptions are made that class conflict has no place in the heads of the participants involved. The person attending a trade union meeting is automatically imagined to have some awareness of her or his class position and the role of the working class in usurping the power of the bosses. Yet the lesbian or gay bloke marching through London at Pride is seen as incapable of thinking about anything but gay

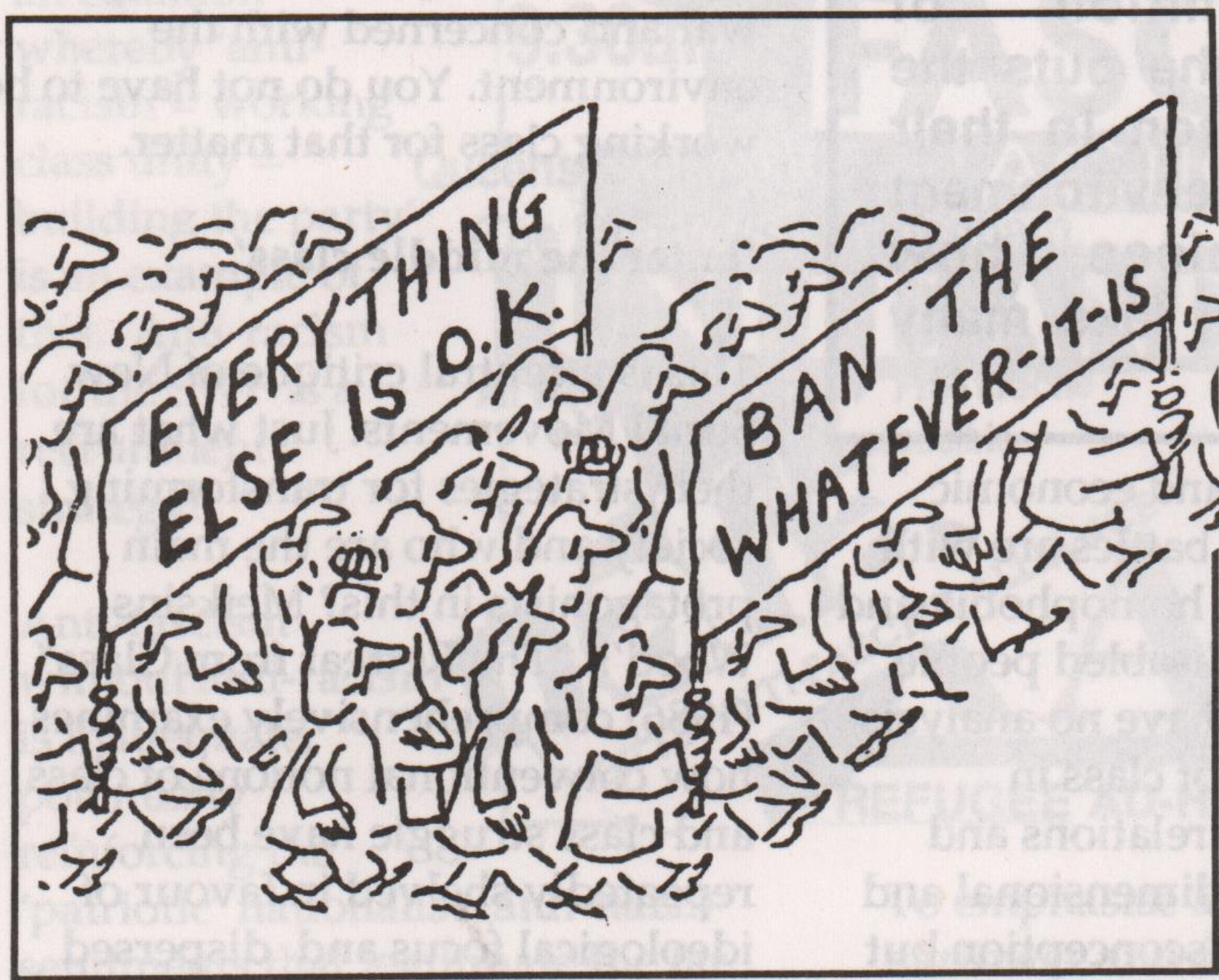
oppression and insular lifestylism. Actions to counter capitalism have a certain feel to them and do not include sitting in circles at meetings, jolliness and recycling carrier bags. Of course you do not have to be anti capitalist to be pro women, against war and concerned with the environment. You do not have to be working class for that matter.

'Enter the middle class'

This is a central critique of New Social Movements. Just what are their strategies for transforming society and who are the main protagonists in this? Meiksins Wood's "The Retreat from Class" (1986) comprehensively examines how conventional notions of class and class struggle have been repeatedly shelved in favour of ideological focus and dispersed struggles and identities. Concrete materialism is sacrificed to discourse and humanitarian objectives. And the working class are made redundant by their middle class contemporaries, who are best placed to engage in non material struggles. It is argued that working people on the one hand are over worried about the economic things in life - like feeding our kids and paying the rent - to have the time and energy to protest about the environment, to explore the intimacies of our psyches and to go on weekends to find ourselves. Conversely we are also not necessarily the (only) ones capable of transforming capitalism. Enter the

middle class.

The role of the intellectual vanguard is nothing new. What has increasingly developed, however, is the belief that the working class has persistently proved itself impotent in resisting capital. The Marxist belief that economics determines politics has been severely challenged and the argument put that working people have not exploited the contradictions of capitalism nor attacked its central flaws. A crisis of socialism itself follows, a crisis which suggests that we are in new times. And these new times are distinguished by variation, individual expression and disparate ways of organising. Exit the working class who are no longer reliable in forwarding the interests of the people.



'New Times?'

And so we return to the purpose and potential of New Social Movements. What are the hopes of those involved? It is unfair to regard all social movements as only being concerned with short-sighted goals. But it is fair to suggest that an anti-capitalist stance is crucial in any attempt to secure long-term change. It is untrue to state that the only resistance going on at the moment (and since the mid-1980's) is concerned with non-economic issues whilst it is true to say that economics are threaded throughout

most struggles apparently unassociated with class. Take squatting, hunt sabbing, pregnancy testing in Women's Centres, protesting at traffic pollution - it does not take an imaginative mind to link these with a struggle against capitalism too. As Raymond Williams (3) notes, "All significant social movements of the last thirty years have started outside the organised class interests and institutions. The peace movement, the ecology movement, the women's movement, solidarity with the third world, human rights agencies, campaigns against poverty and homelessness, campaigns against cultural poverty and distortion : all have this character, that they sprang from needs and perceptions which the interest-based organisations had no room or time for, or which they

had simply failed to notice.....there is not one of these issues which, followed through, fails to lead us into the central systems of the industrial-capitalist mode of production and among others its system of classes". The New Times(2) offered by Marxism Today is an unhelpful fait accompli and one which was

defeatist. To recognise that people have different political priorities at different points in their lives (some forced upon us, others voluntary) should not result in the complete abandonment of the socialist project. Rethinking is needed - to resign into some Rainbow coalition theory is negligent, if easier.

New Social Movements are not really so new. The Women's Movement, the Black Civil Rights Movement and the Gay Liberation Movement were all born in the fifties and sixties. In themselves these groups highlighted the failure of the Left (both reformist and

revolutionary) in capturing the hearts and minds of scores of women, black people and lesbians and gays for example. This is a significant point and one which requires continual consideration. What is it about the Left which makes it so unappealing to many? Why is there so much resistance to expressing these new interests? How is it that the means and methods of the Left are so often alienating and discouraging to those on the outside?

At the age of sixteen I set up, together with a bloke I knew (also about 16), a South Shields branch of Youth CND. We got a starting up donation from NATHFE and pestered our friends to join us in our fight against Cruise. At the same time the bloke who had helped set up the group continually pestered me to join Young Socialists. I stood my ground and repeatedly refused - my instinct warned me against it. It wasn't until many years later that I thought about why I had been so resistant to joining the YS. Basically it just sounded so boring. I had also imagined that the group would consist of blokes similar to the one who was hassling me to join. Straight, well read, into procedural motions and running meetings on time. With hindsight I regret not trying out YS - though it could be viewed a lucky escape (the bloke in question remains in South Shields and is a local Labour Councillor). I write this not to bore you with my life but to show some of the turn offs around left organisations. I was against Cruise and a proud feminist by the age of sixteen although I didn't call myself a socialist until much later. Yet economics had certainly affected my life more than nuclear weapons.

Why is this? Of course this is no original debate - the left has been at pains for decades to win back its natural supporters - those who, if it weren't for all these other distracting groups, would feel at home smashing capitalism. So theories have been adapted to accommodate black people, women, disabled people and lesbians and

CAPITALISE

TOGETHER WE'LL CRACK IT



gays for example. But people take offence to being tagged on and that is how it often feels. There is something very satisfying in joining in struggles with those to whom we feel real affinity. And it is fair to say that the ways in which we organise on the left can be very alienating to those uninitiated. And to those who want to enjoy and be creative whilst resisting and refusing.

'Stitched Up Theories'

The point is that the left have tended to have theories and positions all stitched up and have been heavily reluctant to modify or to challenge their powerful stance. A recent event emphasised this to me. It happened at my local anti-fascist meeting where the gathering comprised mostly men and all white people bar one bloke. A discussion was prompted by the black bloke who presented strong arguments for black people organising separately from white people. Almost immediately the debate focused upon how not all black people have class consciousness and crass examples of how white people are oppressed too were cited. The implicit question was what to do with black people who are not anti-capitalist. Very interesting given that the main question should have been what do we do with socialists who are not anti-racist and socialist theory which inadequately addresses race. Being anti-racist doesn't just mean going on

demonstrations and shouting out slogans. White people need to really think about our own values, our beliefs and we need to examine how our view of the world excludes black people's histories and experiences. For those of us engaged in revolutionary politics it is necessary to ponder on our theories and to re-think in a non-defensive and panicked state. Racism and xenophobia are integral to our society - if we want a better society then these too need to be addressed.

Conversely theories and agendas can continue to deny the day to day experiences of real people. People's lives and interactions are very complex and our sites of conflict are different. When I'm afraid to walk around my own neighbourhood at night that fear is very real and the threat (from men) of violence is not something to be minimised. When I then go to meetings at work and I'm the only woman there I get irritated. Back home I might go to a political meeting which is dominated by white men and using the very same methods which the men at my workplace use. Yet these men are socialists, revolutionaries! I'm not saying that all men are bastards, what I am saying is that a failure to really get to grips with sexism (or any other oppression) shows and it saps the energies and motivations of those excluded. Interestingly at the above meeting there was much talk about certain (little in numbers) black people and women being

"bridges" between mainstream left campaigns and more separatist organisations. This is not good enough for me - I am a libertarian socialist and my notion of socialism does not affix race, gender and sexuality for example. They are integral to my theories and (hopefully) my practices. I want to be able to join with other socialists in large campaigns and to organise separately with women because I want to - not because I'm forced to. To accept the notion of bridges allows white men to sit around tables pontificating about the non-socialist consciousness of women or black people or lesbian and gays without importantly examining their own partial position. Racism, sexism and homophobia are too important to be left to guest speakers or special delegations.

'Widespread Dissent'

Political dissent can be expressed in a variety of ways - and people in this country are now protesting against a whole multitude of issues. We have disabled people blocking Telethon and roads with wheelchairs, we have lesbians and gays strutting through streets snogging and flaunting and we have men going into woods to reclaim their wildness. What needs to be considered, though, is whether or not all forms of dissent can be legitimately (or usefully) termed political. The personal is political was a powerful slogan used to draw

the connections between our (women's) day to day existence and wider structures, power relationships and patriarchy. This term is now excessively used to describe any individual act or way of behaving. Thus isolated actions like becoming a vegan or taking up knitting (if you are a bloke) have been proclaimed to be political ends in themselves. This is taking advantage of the concept. One can certainly describe the political motives behind drinking Barleycup instead of Nescafe but this, in itself, is not enough. And this is one of the criticisms levelled at those engaged in New Social Movements. That such involvement is not enough.

If one wants to transform society then the only sensible position to take is to be anti-capitalist. As a libertarian-socialist I am bound to argue that engagement in New Social Movements needs to be within a wider framework of engaging in a positive rejection of capitalism and all of its manifestations. This implies a recognition of the various ways and means of struggle and gives importance to resistance both in and outside of the workplace. At this point it would be useful to be somewhat critical of the term "New Social Movement". The essential problem with the term is that it is used to encapsulate everything from New Age Travellers to lesbian separatism to black nationalism. The only common denominator that I can find here is that none of these activities fit into the traditional way of (political) things. Their target is not (overtly) capitalism, so the theory goes. But there are links with capitalism (just as there are obvious non-correlations) and the struggles are hard, concrete material struggles. People do not choose to be black or female or disabled - we are born into a society where life is



Movements as great flourishing and energetic currents whilst describing class resistance as barren and drained. Some movements, for example the activism around HIV and AIDS and growing resistance of black people to racism continue to expand whilst the "Women's Movement" has lost its bite.

'Culture and Class'

going to be hard because we are women, black, disabled etc. The same is true if we are born into working class and poor families. Our resistance is fluid and will take different forms at different times. There is a kind of machismo association to class struggle and namby-pambiness associated with New Social Movements. This is dangerous and flawed. There is nothing squidgy about confronting racists or telling your male boss to fuck off.

'A flawed opposition'

The image of class resistance on one side and New Social Movements on the other is, of course, a simplistic generalisation. Methods and ideas in the one area have crawled their way into others. The current Women's Pit Camps outside threatened coal mines illustrate well how strategies used in the Women's Peace Movement have been transferred to traditional class resistance. There is a general acknowledgement on the left that meetings ought not to be dominated by white men and it is not (altogether) uncommon for meetings to have rotating chairs, child care facilities and an unspoken rule against butting in on women speaking. Although I'm impatient at the breadth of development, it has to be said that there has been some progress. Feminism has impacted socialism, as has black and gay and lesbian activism. Similarly it is misleading to represent New Social

The development of New Social Movements does not necessarily parallel the death of the working class. Class theory, however, has to be reconstructed. Many have argued that the proletariat as we once knew it has gone forever and cite electoral leanings and trade union membership/activity as indicators of this (4). It depends on how you see things - especially upon how you define class. If class is economically determined then the majority of us in this country are forced to sell our labour to survive. What we produce or offer to the labour market will be socially graded and some of us will have more power within the constraints of work than others but we are, nevertheless, all workers together. This is a neat theory and one which provides hope - but it is too simplistic. Cultural factors too need to be considered. Here stereotypes are used to locate whether we are working class or middle class - such a method often leads to the conclusion that we are all middle class now or that we are living in a classless society. The percentage of people owning their homes, cars, videos and contributing to private health care are all cited as evidence that the proletariat is an endangered species. Whilst this cultural emphasis conveniently bypasses the economic inequalities endemic in capitalism, so the pure class analysis ignores very real conflicts in the workers together proposition. And this returns us to a central critique of traditional

Marxist thought - that Marxism has in practice skirted over the very real differences operating within the working class. The presumption that people are born into fixed (material) environments with little opportunity for negotiation is a pertinent feature here. Classes are comprised of people and people do shape and affect the conditions into which we are born. Workers do not experience the world in the same way - whilst economics regulates my social condition so does my gender, the colour of my skin, my sexuality and so on. But recognising these differences does not automatically lead to a fragmented notion of class; it is a more wholesome, thorough approach and one which can easily make space for different and more complicated interactions with our environment. That is to say, we are human beings born into a society which regulates, categorises and controls according to a whole variety of factors - we cannot resist everything all of the time. There are valid reasons why we get involved in x and y instead of a and b.

'Pessimism'

It is true to say that there are a whole spectrum of opportunities to resist open to working class people. The role of the workplace in collectivising and generating activism has seen developments both related to the fact that workplaces are hard to come by and to the growing fear and pessimism surrounding fighting the bosses. A lot of this is courtesy of Thatcher's embittered attack on the working class and to critiques of trade union bureaucracy from those traditionally alienated from the left in general and trade unions in particular(5). Those of us without jobs who may have gone through higher education will have had more opportunity to experience community and non-conventional campaigning. Many working class people have had their first taster of activism during their time in the higher education system (myself included). Of course we now see the reverse of 60's expansionist policies and such education is reverting to its rightful

owners. Nevertheless it remains that more of us are familiar with organising outside of the workplace. In a similar vein, where we live and who we live beside matters. The "ghettoisation" of working class neighbourhoods has local councils and central housing policy to thank. But what it means is that poor and disenfranchised individuals are concentrated together thus allowing for conditions of collective fightback. For example, my local anti-poll tax group made a lot of noise about how the poll tax was affecting our communities and made direct comparisons to the more visibly prosperous and affluent neighbourhoods close by.

'Libertarian in practice'

Class identity, formation and means of struggle changes over time and there is no question that traditional images of class struggle are too outdated to be useful. The nature of British society has changed. The factory worker skilled in her or his particular task has been transformed into the generalised pair of hands who can set her/his mind to anything. The bargaining power of those not in short supply is inevitably hampered by the thought of hopeful others ready to take our place. Technology has radically altered the workplace and resulted in widespread deskilling of workers. Theories focusing upon the potential of workers have had to adapt to the growth of the (so called) middle class professional on the one hand and the never-employed on the other. Whilst more people protest in ways and places far away from the traditional left, it is heartening to witness many of these movements stressing participation, localised agendas and people doing (and controlling) things for themselves. Libertarians have always contended that workplace struggle alone cannot lead us to a liberated socialist society. Yet it is important. What I would like to see is a re-negotiation of class theory and the recognition that our economic conditions are not the only thing to smack us in the face.

NOTES

- (1) THE "TRUE SOCIALISTS", VEHEMENTLY CRITICISED BY MARX AND ENGELS, STRESSED BELIEF IN COMMON HUMANITY AND A FAITH IN MANKIND (SIC). THE THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE "TRUE SOCIALISTS" LACKED MATERIAL GROUNDING OR A RECOGNITION OF THE CONFLICT OF CLASSES AND GREAT EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON THE POWER OF THOUGHT IN CHANGING SOCIETY.
- (2) THE TERM "POST MATERIAL" INTERESTS REFERS TO THOSE INTERESTS WHICH ARE NOT GROUNDED IN ECONOMICS. GENERALLY NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS HAVE BEEN USED AS EXAMPLES OF A MORE WIDESPREAD SHIFT AWAY FROM ECONOMIC MATERIALISM.
- (3) STUART HALL AND MARTIN JACQUES (EDS.) "NEW TIMES, THE CHANGING FACE OF POLITICS IN THE 1990'S" LAWRENCE AND WISHART 1989.
- (4) RAYMOND WILLIAMS "TOWARDS 2000" CHATTO AND WINDUS 1983 PP172-173.
- (5) ALTHOUGH FIGHTING THE BOSSES HAS NOT LOST RESONANCE, THE MEANS OF DOING THIS - I.E. THROUGH TRADE UNIONS - HAS SUFFERED MUCH CRITICISM FROM THE LEFT. SIMILARLY THERE HAS BEEN MUCH CRITIQUE FROM WOMEN (BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE ORGANISED LABOUR MOVEMENT) OF HOW TRADITIONALLY TRADE UNIONS HAVE ALIENATED US AND USED METHODS OF ORGANISING WHICH WE FIND INCOMPATIBLE WITH OUR LIFESTYLES. FOR ONE WE HAVE TO BE IN A WORKPLACE - PREFERABLY FULL TIME - AND, SECONDLY, WE NEED TO HAVE TIME AND ENERGY TO PARTICIPATE IN ENDLESS MEETINGS, ETC. WHILST HOMEPLACE INEQUALITY CONTINUES, ACTIVE TRADE UNION RESISTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE WILL, IN THE MAJORITY, REMAIN WITH MEN. AND THIS IS ONLY A SMALL PART OF A WIDER CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY TRADE UNIONISM.
- (6) WILLIAMS, OP CIT PP153-174.



In this article, John French talks about an Anti-Fascist Movement in which the old problem of sectarianism disrupts co-operation and distorts debate. The answer lies, not in a "united movement", but in a different attitude towards organising.

In the small towns around the Notts and Derbyshire border - Ilkeston, Heanor and Mansfield - unemployment is high and there are estates where almost every family is on income support. These are some of the towns the fascist BNP and Blood and Honour look to for recruitment. In the multi-racial inner cities nearby - Nottingham, Derby, Leicester - the many problems associated with modern urban life are never far from the surface. These are some of the 'killing fields' in the fascist strategy.

We are far from seeing a mass fascist movement in this country. Nevertheless, the context of widespread political alienation provides fertile ground for far right ideas. In any case, the danger is not of a mass movement of the far right - which the NF of the 70's tried to create - but of a 'strategy of tension'. Through 'racial terrorism' and general intimidation the far right could work outside-in, creating no-go areas of the small, largely white towns in the outlying areas and prompting conflicts out of the existing tensions of the inner-cities.

In this article I'm interested in the organised response of the anti-fascist/racist movement to the far right. In my view this is a movement which is prone to the same weaknesses that dog almost any other left campaign one could mention. The movement has, I think, been severely hampered by organisational conflicts between nationally based groups, which have made it difficult for activists to co-operate at the local level. What's more, these conflicts have distorted the debates in the movement over the various ways forward.

This idea of ways rather than simply way forward is important because the anti-fascist movement has to

A Dis-united

struggle over a number of different, albeit connected, fronts at the same time. It is worth listing these briefly:

- * It needs to generate broad grass roots support and participation, understanding that whole communities are affected by the rise of the far-right.

- * It needs to physically confront and isolate the fascist hardcore of the BNP and Blood and Honour - giving a clear message that they'll never enjoy open access to the streets.

- * It needs to help counter the racism which has become sharper across all levels of society and which provides a kind of protective shell in which the hardcore can grow. This includes campaigning against state racism which, through measures such as the Asylum Bill, adds weight to the far right's belief in racial exclusivity.

- * It needs to recognise that black people and white people do not face the issues of racism and fascism from the same place. Accepting this in no way undermines the value of the notion 'Black and White Unite and Fight'. The movement should support the demands of black people for autonomous organisation(s) and confident voices that will be listened to.

- * It should also have something to say about the sense of insecurity and alienation, particularly due to unemployment and the rapid change taking place around us, that causes some white people to make the leap into active racism, and makes passive sympathisers of many more.

'A Movement of Movements'

There are many tasks, and points of departure. I am thinking here of an idea of social movements in which there are many organisational and campaigning initiatives, many points of reference, rather than just one - a 'movement of movements', so to speak. Inevitably there are

many potential conflicts here (for example, the question of where racism/fascism comes from in the first place, or do we press for further anti-discriminatory legislation, or do we kick fascist heads at every opportunity). These are real issues, requiring open discussion: not that they'll ever be finally agreed.

But this is not to deny that there is also vast potential for co-operation over many concrete issues (Anti-Asylum Bill work, support for the Family Campaigns, monitoring and exposing the BNP et al, leafleting the estates where the BNP are active).

This would be a movement in which there would be many opportunities for involvement, people taking up those issues most immediate to them. It would mean activists making definite choices and not giving a blanket endorsement to any one organisation's ultimately partial package. Of course, distinct orientations will remain. But alongside this there is room for collaboration around specific issues, in a context of sharing experience and debating ideas. This is not the anti-fascist movement we have today.

Nationally the anti-fascist movement is dominated by three organisations: the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA), the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and Anti-Fascist Action (AFA). These organisations are all markedly different in perspective and orientation. Nonetheless, they all share one thing in common. They all offer themselves as the exclusive voice of anti-fascism.

The ANL.

The ANL is a classic front organisation. This doesn't mean that ANL/SWP members aren't committed anti-fascists, they clearly are. But it does mean that the

Movement

evolution of the ANL has been shaped to the interests of the SWP.

At the moment, the ANL is trying to establish itself as the 'left alternative' to the Labour Party. Desperate for bums on branch seats the SWP jealously guard the ANL's recruitment potential. However, the ANL will only deliver the bums if, one, other ideas and groups can be kept at a distance and, two, anti-fascism can be bent to mean 'whatever the ANL does'. Dangerously for the SWP collaboration would mean acknowledging that others have a contribution to make. This would compromise the party building ambitions. What else but this makes sense of the lack of any democratic structures within the ANL, and of the difficulties many of us have found trying to work with the ANL at a local level.

The ANL is the clearest example, and it is a sad comment that such attitudes and behaviour are still so engrained within a substantial part of the left.

AFA.

In contrast to the ANL, AFA are a front for no one organisation. Although certain groups do figure prominently, including Red Action and Workers' Power. AFA prides itself on being 'non-sectarian and democratic'. However, AFA also contributes to the unhealthy, fragmentary atmosphere surrounding the anti-fascist movement. Almost no effort is spared criticising the ANL, particularly over their wilful refusal to take the issue of physical

confrontation seriously (be it self-defensive or offensive).

Much of this criticism is extremely well-founded. People are rightly wary about trusting ANL organised events - especially when these involve going into areas with known fascist activity: without security, effective stewarding, knowledge of the area or legal back-up. But the position of the ANL doesn't solely come down to the issue of physical confrontation. Despite AFA's caricature, there is more to it than that, including emphasising visible public rallies and work in other organisations.

"As I said at a congress in South Africa recently: there are two ways of fighting the same enemy. One is for you to come over to my side and help me beat him up. But in the process, you'll tell me what to do and how to do it, and once again remove my authority over myself. The other is for you, who knows him so much better, to hold him, weaken him (from within, so to speak) so that I can beat the shit out of him. That way we achieve the same end without forgoing our different histories. We make the conditions to make a common history together in the future."

A. Sivanandan

But, again in contrast to the ANL, AFA seem to make a virtue out of confrontation. The criticism has been rightly made that AFA's narrow focus can result in a macho, elitist, gang mentality - 'Oh, we're the lads: the lads are here!'. As one former AFA associate describes her experiences leafleting with AFA in Rochdale: "The women did the leafleting; the AFA men did the stewarding. They walked around the estate with no sensitivity for or awareness of the people who lived there."

At one level, what is going on here is the usual sectarian drama with one group 'investing' heavily in what it sees as its opponents' weaknesses. So, AFA see the ANL's emphasis on mass mobilisation as a passive - and potentially dangerous

- strategy which does little more than create media lollipop-waving opportunities for the ANL. In their turn, the ANL see the call for physical confrontation as an elitist strategy - a kind of right-on thuggery - which does little to bring wider numbers of activists into the movement. And of course, there is truth on both sides.

Yet, big mobilisations and physical confrontations are not necessarily exclusive strategies. They could be complementary, each with its place in the tactical armoury. Unfortunately, open discussion on how they might complement each other is made difficult because the discussion is fractured by the organisational rivalry going on between AFA and the ANL. This problem is made worse by the fact that the very identities of these groups has become so closely bound up with one or the other approach.

Anti-Racism and ARA.

It's not only from a concern with wider mobilisation that the strategy of physical confrontation can be criticised. It can also be criticised from an anti-racist perspective. Black

activists are hardly likely to be attracted to this kind of 'seek and destroy' anti-fascist work when they would be the ones most clearly marked out and at risk: from the police and the BNP thugs.

This occurred to me on an anti-fascist demonstration organised to oppose a planned BNP march through the village of Flintham, near Newark. As we were assembling a young Afro-Caribbean man was heard trying to persuade other black people off the demonstration saying that this was how white people organised against the fascists. I think he had a good point.

In the event, the anti-racism of AFA and the ANL strikes me as largely rhetorical. A recent AFA leaflet carried the very ambiguous boast, "We are Anti-Fascist Action, an

organisation largely made up of white working class people committed to smashing fascism." Surely this begs the question: where are the black activists?

In Britain there is a strong socialist tradition of anti-fascism. The experience of the left and the trade unions in Nazi Germany tells us why. But an equally committed tradition of anti-racism is lacking and many Black activists have commented on the hidden racism of the left. The SWP's (by extension the ANL's) refusal of black autonomy in an equation whereby 'anti-racism = working class unity = building the party' is an example of this. Anti-racism for the SWP is a recruitment strategy!

Anti-fascism without anti-racism is inadequate, potentially reinforcing the 'patriotic' nationalist (anti-nazi!) sentiments that legitimate the far right in the first place. But taking up anti-racism clearly raises questions for the way we organise as a movement. The issues confronting black and white activists and the experiences on which they draw certainly overlap, but they are not identical. The idea of a single organisation embracing all facets of the anti-fascist/racist struggle is therefore highly questionable.

For their part, ARA strongly emphasise the broader issues of anti-racism. This reflects the fact that more black activists are involved in ARA (or maybe it's the other way around...).

Black activists can rightly see in white anti-fascism a privilege denied to black people whose daily life is in effect a struggle against racism. Off the anti-fascist picket, demo or whatever I - as a white anti-fascist - simply merge with the crowd.

Black leadership this claim appears to come from the moral high ground but in fact represents the agenda of certain black activists, together with particular white left groups and individuals. That Socialist Action, Ken Livingstone and the CP are all involved suggests to me that ARA

don't mind manipulative white lefties - so long as they make the right noises. And the question is what agendas are those noises hiding?

In general, the ARA leadership have emerged from the Labour Party Black Sections. This means that they seek influence in the existing labour movement and the state (especially the local state). The Black writer, A. Sivanandan has criticised the Black Sections as privileged activists using community

struggles for their own passage into power. Clearly then, there are issues of dispute amongst black activists concerning ways of organising and tactics etc., as well as over broader political perspectives and ARA does not represent the only black voice of anti-racism.

'One United Movement'

So far, I've talked about an anti-fascist movement where national organisational rivalry gets in the way of collaboration between local activists and distorts the debate around the movement. Time and energy is spent wastefully watching out for the (inevitable) conflicts. This, rather than openly discussing differences and - whilst getting on

To emphasise anti-racism over narrower anti-fascism, and to give a voice to black experience, which the white left has traditionally found difficult handling, ARA's constitution demands that all local ARA groups have a 50% Black executive. (Although what happens to local groups if activists prefer not to have an executive as such?).

So far, so good. But if ARA credibility rests on its anti-racist breadth and its demands for Black leadership, behind the scenes things are less pristine than that.

Again, ARA gets into the whole ploy of claiming for themselves the authentic voice of anti-fascism/racism. Because of the notion of

with the job at hand, as we see it - looking at the opportunities for collaboration.

But where do we go from here? Smaller left groups, and the anti-fascist group CAFE (the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe) have called for 'one united movement' (with a democratically elected leadership and approved programme of course). But the very idea of Marc Wadsworth (ARA), Paul Holborrow (ANL) and, say, Gerry Gable (Searchlight magazine, works closely with AFA) sitting around a table to discuss even a conference agenda makes this call absurd. Such a movement would be a minefield of sectarian intrigue, of manipulative dealing and string pulling. It would end in acrimonious collapse before it had even started.

I'd argue that this call - which, let's face it, has become something of a ritual - reflects the long history of a particular way of organising on the left. According to this concept movements are expected to have neat programmes, singular structures and (democratically) hierarchical leaderships.

Ironically, it's the fact that this concept has such deep roots on the left that sectarian conflicts are allowed to undermine anti-fascist collaboration in the first place. It is because this concept is so widely accepted that the claims of ARA, the ANL and AFA, to represent the authentic voice of anti-fascism are given any credence. If there has to be one movement, then each organisation can legitimately claim to be it.

Libertarian socialists have always been highly critical of this approach to organisation. We have argued that what is seen as ideological coherence is often just a guise to hide the influence of the group or groups in control of the organisation.

Libertarian socialists have also valued the strength of local organising (and let's not forget that

the problem of organised fascism, at least, is still a localised problem in this country). We have argued that the organisational and ideological divisions promoted at a national level often obscure the relationships and networks between activists at a local level. These relationships generally cut across the organisational divides. They should be a fruitful source of activity and debate. Instead they are fractured by the sectarian atmosphere around the movement, the lack of trust, the intolerance, the non-communication, and the hacks and operators who have narrower political aims in mind.

In my private summation of the problem, I admit, I would lay more responsibility in some directions than others. Nonetheless, responsibility is shared.

And so...

The implications of this view are far reaching. But there are four things I'd want to throw in, by way of conclusion.

Firstly, the answer is not to call on national bodies to put on a unity conference. Rather, it's a question of activists taking responsibility themselves at a local level. This would mean refusing to simply pigeonhole other activists and avoiding seeing 'our' group as the only group worth bothering with. It does mean actively searching contacts and discussion - and co-operation - with activists in other organisations.

The Anarchist dictum 'We need no leaders', meaning that we are responsible for our activity, is a healthy one. We can quibble the precise implications of this, but it ought to at the very least inform all our actions.

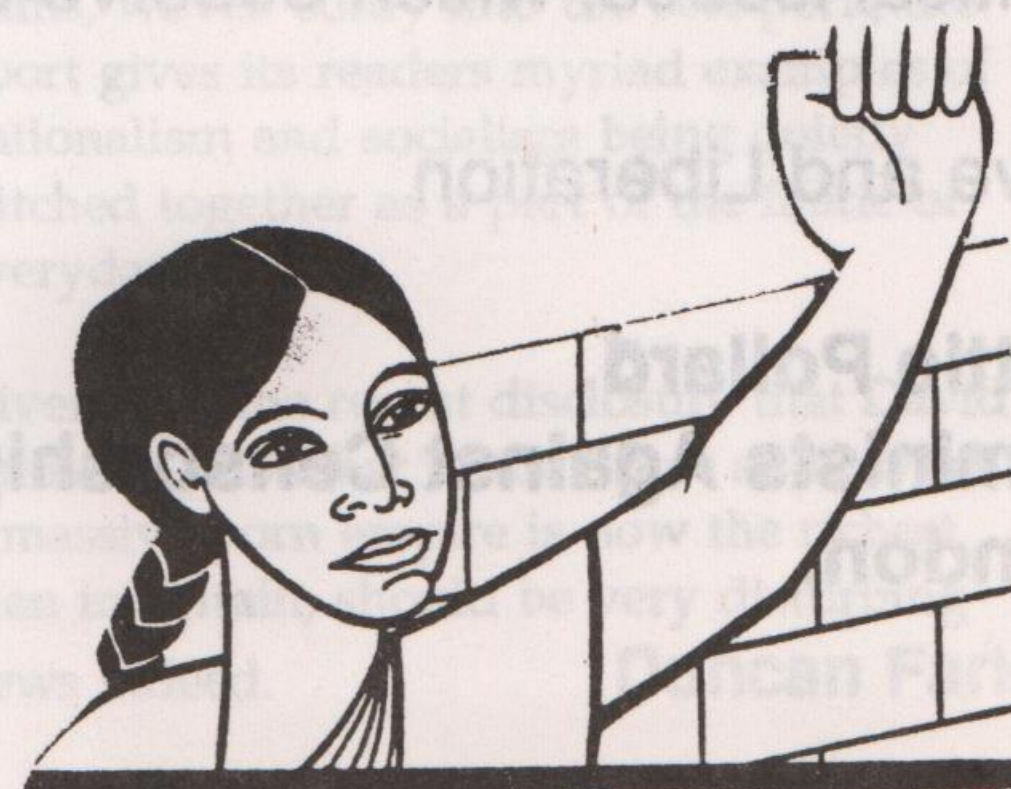
Secondly, whilst we can accept that differences over strategy can bring out some quite fundamental political issues, in the practical here and now we should accept that no one strategy is always appropriate. Anti-fascism is many faceted: here it

might mean us building for a large - but peaceful - rally, there it might mean us physically breaking up a fascist meeting. Again, it might involve us joining an anti-deportation march. As individuals we can't do everything. We have to make decisions. But this doesn't mean that we can't tolerate (shades of liberalism? Ed.) differences, or that we have to behave as if the various perspectives on offer were always incompatible.

If it's coherence we're looking for, then we should remember that this will be more the result of the movement's overall effect, and never the property of this or that group.

Thirdly, whilst I'm emphasising the building of local networks, with or without the backing of 'our' organisation, it obviously should not stop there. Liaison and networking at regional and national levels are vital. The aim should be to create a movement which as a whole emphasises practical co-operation and support.

Finally, some people will argue that all this adds up to an apolitical pragmatism, involving an appeal to co-operation without acknowledging the political differences between people. But I disagree. Promoting an ethos of co-operation where it is possible does not cut out the politics. In fact, we would be creating the conditions in which political and strategic differences could be acknowledged and ideas debated and exchanged openly - without the fear and suspicion of hidden agendas creeping up on us.



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CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Congratulations on an interesting magazine. I read 'Porn ... Yawn' with interest and was pleased to see the analysis from a socialist perspective of how the current anti-pornography obsession developed in the feminist movement. I was therefore disappointed to see Meg Allen exhibiting her personal prejudices against sado-masochism rather than saying that whatever one's personal feelings are about S/M every socialist and feminist should be standing shoulder to shoulder with the 'Spanner' men who were imprisoned by the state for mutual consenting SM sex with each other, the fetish clubs that are harassed by the police and the magazines raided by the Obscene Publications Squad.

Yours is a political magazine and these are urgent political issues, which deserve our support.

Love and Liberation

**Nettie Pollard
Feminists Against Censorship
London.**

TWO PLUGS

Green Flame, 'As We See It' (Aims and Principles)

As the authors put it, "Our aim is nothing less than the creation of a new 'social imaginary', involving a plurality of lifestyles, but rooted in the construction of socially, economically and ecologically self-sustaining communes." By its very nature this project is exploratory and there are no ready made alternatives we can lift from the history books to fill the gap. It is the sense of exploration that makes Green Flame an attractive project. We wish them luck.

Red Banner

Red Banner is a quarterly discussion journal produced by members of Bristol Marxist Forum. It covers a range of issues interesting to socialists, but with a focus on the workplace and issues around the Labour Movement. Its position is critical and open; questions are being asked and an ethos of non-sectarian debate pursued. Themes familiar to libertarian socialists slip in alongside more traditional left concerns and perspectives. Perhaps Red Banner is indicative of a new orientation potentially taking shape amongst disaffected Trotskyists. If so, it could prove fertile and engaging. Bristol Marxist Forum are planning an open conference in the summer. Contact them for details.

Subs. £4/year

**35 Shaftesbury Avenue
Montpelier
Bristol BS6 5LT**

THE JUDY GREENAWAY

INTERVIEW

Judy Greenaway has been active in anarchist and women's groups for many years. In particular, she has been involved in Catcall, and the Anarchist Women's History Group (researching into anarchist communities).

In this interview with Meg Allen, she examines the relationship between anarchism and feminism. She also discusses the effects of professionalisation upon radical projects.

Meg - Do you see anything as distinctive about anarchism or libertarian socialism?

Judy - I think it is very much the emphasis on self activity, people acting out of their own experience and making connections with other people on the basis of shared experience. Rather than some concept of a group that has the theory and gives you the right line that you have to win other people over to. That's the basic idea. I think of it as something to aim towards, a permanent pressure in a particular direction. I think in a country that hasn't got a very powerful anarchist tradition that's our function. You don't expect to arrive at some kind of 'anarchist world' but you can push in a particular direction, keep a libertarian option open. People can do things for themselves, the things people think about their own lives are important and to be taken seriously and acted upon, they don't need someone else to tell them what to do.

Meg - That sounds like you think change comes from nowhere - do you think people act 'spontaneously' then?

Judy - Not 'spontaneously' in the sense that it wells out of nothing. Very often when people take part in things that transform their lives, even in little ways, there's been a lot of prior discussion and thinking and activity and propaganda. Things are constructed out of the world that we live in and again anarchists and libertarians have a role to play in creating a world

within which certain kinds of things are more likely to develop than others. Anarchism isn't about non-organisation, that's a caricature that's used by people who don't agree with us. But it's definitely about participatory organisation and the rejection of hierarchical leadership, because leadership and organisation aren't necessarily the same thing! I'd describe myself as an Anarchist but it's certainly meant different things to me at different points in my life.

Meg - I suppose I describe myself as a libertarian because I'm always trying to avoid the polarised debates that go on. Anarchists characterise Marxism as some kind of structural deterministic monster and marxists tend to characterise anarchists as 'lifestyle', individualist weirdos. As far as I can see you've got to draw on both traditions, that's my 'libertarianism'. It comes from a background of socialist activity. But I know you've been much more involved in anarchist and feminist groups, do you see any compatible elements between anarchism and feminism?

Judy - I think the connections are very strong. One of the questions in my mind when I got involved with the anarchist women's history group was - why have women been marginalised in anarchism? But one of the surprising things is that in the past women have been involved, in a central role. Women's issues were being discussed, the debates around free love were prevalent

The FLUX Interview

from the 1880's onwards, there were strong feminist perspectives within anarchism which have been very much lost. Certainly lost by the few historians of anarchism and by socialist historians who are not interested in anarchist history anyway. It's a situation where men have marginalised women's history and socialists have marginalised anarchist history,

particularly in this country. I always thought that anarchism had

been a tiny marginal strand in UK politics but I know thing that it was, for at least forty years around the end of the century, quite influential. Again it's about who writes the history. Having said that,

whilst many anarchist ways of working might be compatible with feminism, anarchists have used notions of 'individualism' to avoid taking on women's and gay liberation. They say yes of course we want all individuals to be liberated, we recognise the individual. But to take issues of race, of gender, of sexuality seriously it actually involves having to rethink what classical anarchism is about and what being a man, or white, is about and so on. That is where the real unwillingness has been in anarchist circles.

The irony is that those issues have been tackled in groups which I would say operate within an anarchist framework but don't use the label or even realise that there is a tradition to which they might attach themselves. So there's this big disparity, because women's groups, gay groups may use those methods but don't recognise them as anarchist - so I think it's important to name them, to make the connections with a wider theoretical perspective.

Meg - I think that's what I mean by compatibility, between broadly libertarian and anarchist methods and the women's movement. A lot of women's groups use, or used, what might be called 'anarchist' methods. They don't have unnecessary structures and positions are rotated. It's about skill sharing, consensus decision making and the validation of women's experiences. All these sorts of things go on yet no one says "we'll do this in an anarchist or libertarian way shall we?" But that's the way they operate. Their ways of working are compatible with libertarian theory. What I'd argue is that although the many left groups have taken the ideas of women's liberation on board in theory, they've lost the libertarian, the 'empowering' element along the way. They've taken those ideas on board but in their own way, without realising that it's about a whole different way of working and conceptualising politics.

Judy - That's what consciousness raising was all about. In the early 1970's I was involved in a local group, which included a really diverse bunch of women. There was a really broad range, lesbian and straight women and women from different class backgrounds - that diversity was really important. One of the things that women's

liberation was about was learning what you share with other women who have different experiences to you. It wasn't about identity politics which I think some of the fragmentation we are seeing now is around, where it's argued that only mothers can understand other mothers and so on. It was about a process

of sharing that was really important. Crass histories of the women's movement seem to imply that consciousness raising was some kind of quasi-therapy but in fact those groups were much more directly influenced by things like Chinese 'speak bitterness' where after the revolution groups of peasants met to talk about their lives under feudalism. In that process they recognised the shared social basis of their personal experience, it is about developing your politics through speaking your experience. Later on it was a problem because those connections and the ability to listen and share, something fundamental to feminism and anarchism and ideas about everyone having the space to contribute - those women missed that 'process of change'. It's something that unless you go through you don't really see the point of and yet I know it changed me.

Meg - I didn't really get involved in the women's movement until the early eighties, but the experience was very similar and very positive. But at the same time it seemed as if much of the activity had become a replaying of old processes. We didn't always seem to get beyond consciousness raising and I think that's where much of the criticism came from. Many of the debates, porn for instance, seem to become very polarised and made it impossible to stimulate any debate. Part of the 'push' for libertarianism is about stimulating debate, and pushing for dialogue, but it was as if we'd reached an impasse.

Judy - Yes, but I think in a way that's inevitable - because feminist and gay issues particularly are at the very centre of our lives. People have very powerful feelings about those issues and feel uncomfortable about debating with those who disagree with them. It may not be constructive but I think the difficulty is inevitable. Those powerful feelings often get transformed into some

you only have to look to see the difference

between

and



kind of political simplification which does not resemble the complexity of the original feelings, and of course people change. What you often see as a result is people leaping from one very extreme position to another very extreme position. At the end of the day you have to recognise that politics is about change, whether about sexuality or gender or class.

Meg - That's where I'd bring in marxism, what marxism should be about, the dialectic. It gives me a conception of politics as movement, that everything moves on and every historical moment is unique in a sense. For me feminism alone doesn't give that sense of movement of economic and social change. My 'libertarianism' is where I bring the two together, it means I don't have to dump a socialist analysis which has been so useful to me but I can 'feminise' it - change the whole way of conceptualising it. It means that you acknowledge that your politics will change according to the change around you - it's a different approach to that of the traditional left.

Judy - I suppose that's why the version of anarchism that I'm attracted to is the notion of 'permanent revolution' - that you're never going to arrive at some utopia. Any new situation that you're in, although it might be a world that's a huge improvement on what went before, it's going to generate its own problems, its own power relations and they will need to be critiques and dealt with. You're not aiming for stasis, society is not static and static political answers are inevitably left behind. Yet that's a hard concept to hold onto because there is a desire for a safe, fixed place with shared feelings and no more struggle, that's why the left groups are continually trying to give easy answers. The problem is that they do that because it's much easier to act out of that optimism. All we see now is pessimism and it's hard to imagine things getting better in the foreseeable future. It's hard to sustain activity in the face of that. That's why left perspectives offer something in the near future. In the face of those easy solutions you have to offer a broader vision of what life is about. They may have easy solutions, but the 'revolutionary self-sacrifice' they often demand, the denial of individual need can be incredibly negative. If you accept that our lives are of value then politics can also be about creating something for

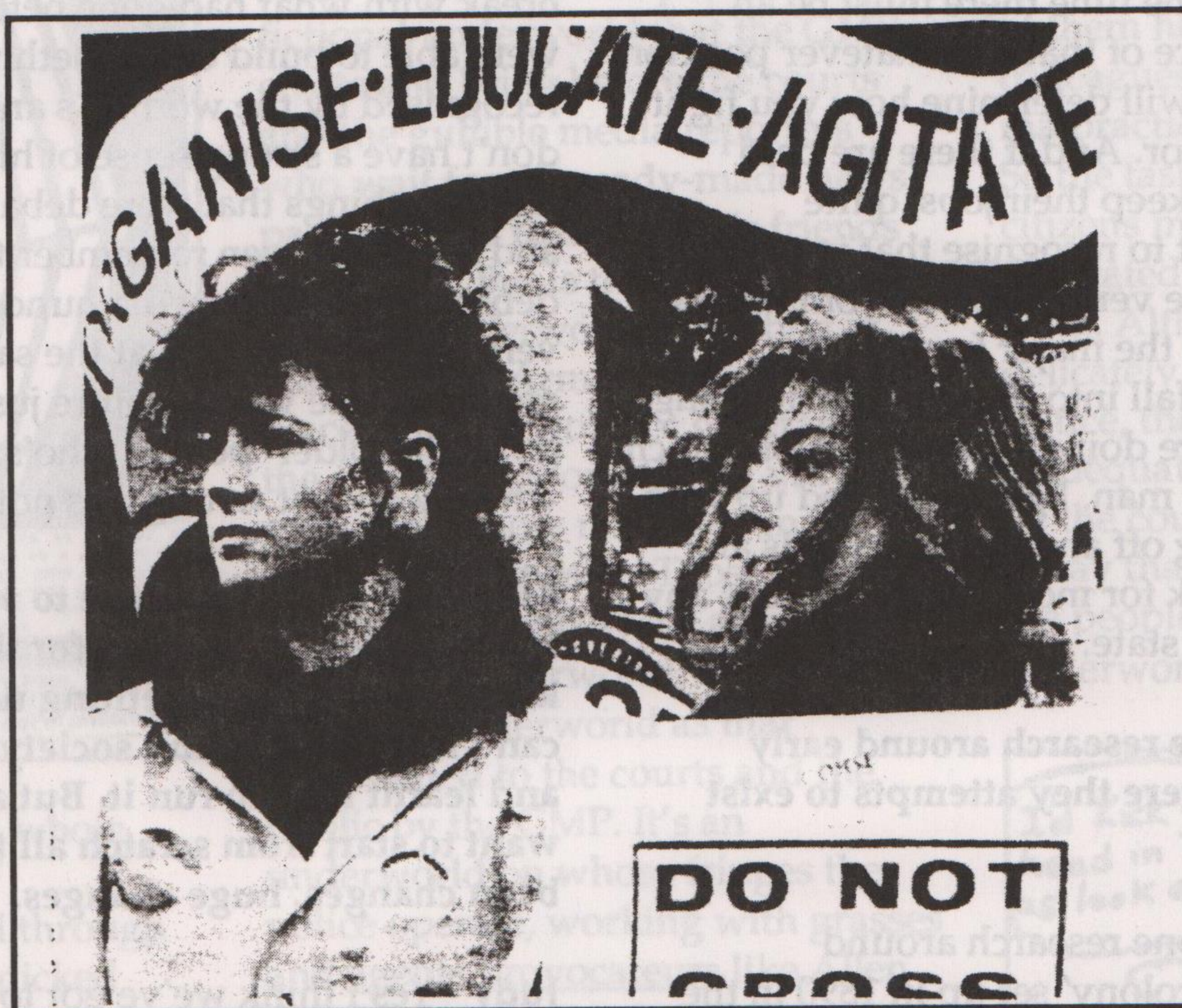
yourself as well. It can be a view of politics which is incredibly positive and self sustaining. The early anarchist movement was not just about political activity and engagement but also it was about a whole lifestyle, about a created culture.

Meg - I remember my involvement with a left group was very much about self sacrifice. It was about how many papers you could sell or meetings you could attend. No-one talked about how much you could realistically do or how you felt as a woman in the group, which was often marginalised. My political security isn't based on a tightly knit group or 'dedication now. It's more about a whole approach to life, that 'push' again. It's about looking at how I do things and not giving myself too hard a time if I don't do it 'right'. It's also about working with people to create a 'space' for other possibilities in terms of ways of living and thinking. I don't think such 'lifestyle' politics have to be separate from a socialist vision. Women Against Pit Closures can campaign for their livelihoods and for their position as women in the movement, and they've used pretty varied methods!

But I come from the left, in the women's movement how do you think that 'anarchist element' makes a difference?

Judy - Let me give you an example, for a while I was on the collective of 'A Woman's Place' which was the London women's centre at that point. We were squatting in an abandoned hospital in the centre of London, very seedy it was! This was the heyday of the GLC and in the end the collective decided to apply for money, for funding, to get better

premises and this involved setting up a whole range of structures. To get money we had to bring in paid workers and change the way we organised - things I really disagreed with. I decided I didn't want to be involved any more because I thought it was going the wrong way. For a few years afterwards I thought I was wrong, I was being too purist, because they did have nice premises and I thought, yes, why can't women have a good place to organise from, why can't women get paid opportunities as workers. But when you look now at all those organisations that were funded by the GLC they've nearly all folded. The ones that survived are the ones that stayed with voluntary workers and so on. I know all the arguments about unpaid work, but for a political group to keep going it has to be on the basis of



The FLUX Interview

people's commitment and I think that commitment gets changed and power relations are changed by having paid workers. There are so many pressures from outside people who determine funding. The GLC did do some great things for London and I regret its going but I also think a lot of groups were killed off by it.

Meg - In Manchester there was the same problem, the eighties saw a left council who provided a level of service which doesn't exist anywhere else in the country. But now those services are all being cut there's a terrible sense of disillusionment, having to start from scratch because everything came under the banner of the council.

Judy - But then I wouldn't want to take a purist line that says you should never take money from the state, I think that's a mistake too. I think you can have both things, some kind of dual structure with organisations which are independent of the state. I think it's important not to create a career structure around what you're doing. I think that's what we're seeing around AIDS activism now. Of course we need to demand money from the government, but at the same time there must be an awareness of what the price of that is. Whatever position you have in any situation will determine how you fight and what you're fighting for. And if there are paid workers they will fight to keep their jobs, quite reasonably. But you've got to recognise that in political organisations that might be very different from having the interest of the cause as the major focus.

At the same time you can fall into the trap of criticising women just because they're doing a particular job, much more so than you would a man. I get pretty fed up with ultra left critiques that slag off anyone who holds any position at all. I don't think for most people there is any option to exist outside the state.

Meg - I know you've done research around early anarchist communities, were they attempts to exist outside the state?

Judy - For example I've done research around 'Whiteway' which was a 'colony' set up in 1890 in the Cotswolds by a group of Tolstoyan anarchists, including a number of women. They wanted to create a new kind of society, which was not completely outside the emerging capitalist state society because they kept contact with the towns. They bought this incredibly stony land and then burnt the title deeds, this land still has no title deeds which creates enormous problems for the present owners! The group that founded it believed in free love, it was very much about having new kinds of relationships between men and women. I think there were some gay people involved but this is not explicit, it's very rare that being lesbian or gay was seen as a political stance before the 1960's. The politics of sexuality at that point was about transforming male/female relationships. There were meant to be equal relations between men and women, which mostly meant that women did some of the things which men would do

and men did rather less of the things that women would do! But also the women did communal laundry, communal cooking. In the end they got fed up with it and decided that it was easier to be washing one man's shirts, and relations were more individualised after a while and it reverted to a couple set up. It still exists today, with a few remnants of that early politics, something less than a political community and something more than a village.

Meg - Do you think we've moved on since then?

Judy - In some ways the issues were very similar! If you look at the arguments in these early communities they were about who does the housework. Women felt very resentful, particularly when they had children and they were very much less able to be involved in politics. Even if men believed in being involved with children it wasn't usually at the same level. In some ways it's exciting and some ways depressing. It seems as if no one has learnt anything but at the same time people were struggling around these issues and yet finding it possible to do things with their lives which were really unimaginably a break with what had gone before. It's something we were able to build on, something that's not been recognised by the women's and left movements. We don't have a strong sense of history. Some of the debates now are things that were debated only twenty years ago and we don't even remember those, never mind the debates that happened a hundred years ago. I find this very aggravating. But at the same time it's really easy to get into a role where you're just telling people what to do as the 'older' person who's done it before and knows where we went wrong. It's not a role I want to play.

Meg - It's a line you have to walk, your whole politics is about people learning for themselves. You don't know how to do something until you've done it, you can't learn how to run society until you've organised and learnt how to run it. But at the same time we don't want to start from scratch all the time and there have been changes, huge changes.

Judy - Yes I think we've got to recognise that and remember that the most destructive thing is to think that there's a 'right answer', to believe that if only you think hard enough you'll come to some solution. Whatever course of action you take it's going to turn out to be mistaken in some ways and have disadvantages you didn't see. There's no right way, everything is a gamble in a sense, but you may as well try and learn from what has gone before. It's really easy to forget what we've gained in this climate. If we think about what the women's movement has achieved in issues like rape, it's thought about in a completely different way from how it was when I was growing up. It's taken as a serious issue in a way that it wasn't. Lesbian and gay issues, abortion rights - anything we have that's worth anything has been fought for in the past, that's something to hold onto.

Meg Allen

REVIEWS

Inside the L.A. Riots
Institute for
Alternative
Journalism, 1992,
154pp.
Price £9.95 pbk.

ON APRIL
29TH, 1992, four
Los Angeles
Police
Department
(LAPD) patrol
officers were
acquitted by a

white jury of criminal behaviour in the videotaped beating of black motorist Rodney King. That same night South Central L.A. exploded into the most severe urban riots in the US this century. Cities around the country followed suit.

The result in Los Angeles? 58 dead civilians; 2,383 reported injuries; \$800 million of property damage, with the loss of 40,000 jobs; 12,000 arrests, 7,000 of which were for looting and the majority of the remainder for violations of a heavily enforced curfew order.

In fact most of the deaths and arrests occurred after the rioting had subsided, as a direct result of a massive police and army sweep through the poor neighbourhoods. This was a panic response from a system taken by surprise. Ironically, these mass arrests did exactly the same thing as after the Watts riots (an area in South Central LA) in 1965 - they brought the courts near to breakdown, and the whole judicial system into further disarray.

Inside the L.A. Riots attempts to deal with all these issues and more. Compiled within six weeks of the end of the riots, the book aims to be the alternative view to the prevailing conservatism of the mainstream media. The book is divided into four: pre-riot commentary; first-hand reporting of the riot; analysis of its implications; and prescriptions for the future. Many of the individual pieces are very impressive. For example, in 'LA's State of Siege, City of Angels', Marc Cooper looks at the total divorce of the LAPD from the communities it polices. 'Civil Liberties in Crisis', details the widespread infringements of constitutional rights during and after the riots, showing quite clearly that the state will employ any methods to suppress dissidence when it has to. Carol Tice notes how the 'Helicopter Journalism' depicted the riots as a re-run of the Gulf War, trying to prevent identification of the viewer with the rioters. And Michael Ventura, in

'Democracy', attacks the belief in social renewal through the Democratic Party, arguing that both political parties serve capitalism, not people. And there are other good, or at least provocative, pieces.

But there are many problems with the overall tone of this book. Particularly in the reporting of the riots themselves, there is an odd detachment. But this is because the writers are detached. There are no pieces from looters, or from demonstrators attempting to torch the Parker Center or City Hall. This maintains the distinction between "us" and "them", and those without economic power are denied a voice even in the alternative press (apart from soundbites). The editors cannot claim that none of "us" would want to write about how we looted for tampons and cockroach spray - people readily talked to the cameras and reporters during the looting, and anyway articles have been published by participants, for example in a recent issue of Wildcat.

The analysis of Inside the L.A. Riots often provided a refreshing recognition that the uprisings were far more to do with class than race: this certainly distinguishes them from the rest of the US media machine. But the liberal establishment is so obsessed with race as an issue, that even its radical margins appear unable to hold onto a class analysis consistently. The most important example of this, I think, is the book's treatment of the firebombing of Korean businesses. Over 1800 Korean stores and liquor shops were destroyed during the rioting, one of the reasons cited being the murder of 15 year-old black girl Latasha Harlins by a Korean shopkeeper (who received community service as punishment). Writers such as Manning Marable and Nora Choi see this targeting as politically immature at best, possibly even racist. But this misses the whole point. The lesson many South Central residents learnt from the Latasha Harlins case, was that property is far more valuable than life (Mike Davis, 'Burning All Illusions in L.A.'). Also, Korean businesses do not represent a community resource: most Koreans lived outside the area, and were seen as syphoning out the little money that existed in the area (Peter Kwong, 'The First Multicultural Riots'). In other words, there is a justifiable perspective which sees the Koreans as class enemies.

The reality is admittedly more

complex than this. Koreans are first and second generation immigrants who have survived by opening shops in those areas that had long been abandoned by the corporations. Their ambitions have been focused on giving their children a good education, in the belief that this would give them all the opportunities they needed to succeed in American culture. But the way in which Korean storekeepers were unprotected from looters, testifies to their function at the bottom-end of capitalist exploitation. Undoubtedly, there are ambiguities around the conflicts between Asian-Americans, on the one hand, and African-Americans and Latinos, on the other. But these can only be explored constructively if the basic analysis recognises class.

In general, these journalists were not able to comprehend the subtleties of class identities as manifested in the L.A. riots. This is partly because the writers were usually not recounting their own experiences or activism, but were instead commentating, however "sympathetically", on the situation. Similarly, most writers cling onto the belief that the solution is to vote Democrat. True, some writers attack the myth that the Democrats supported welfare spending and urban investment. But it is significant that the last article in the anthology is an excerpted speech from Jesse Jackson. As President of the National Rainbow Alliance, Jackson has a fairly simple solution: vote Democrat, and then lobby for/promote a broad coalition of the disenfranchised, whose power lies in the ballot box. This epitomises the left-liberal view of a democratic society - the illusory notion that the mechanisms of participation in the wealth of capitalist production can be widely shared without really changing (let alone ditching) capitalism itself.

The way in which this book is 'alternative' only serves to show how vacuous the US mainstream actually is. What is really telling is how so very few of these writers can bring themselves to celebrate anything that happened. This shows complete detachment from the widespread cathartic pleasure the rioters seemed to experience, but which all reporters, mainstream and alternative, dumbfoundedly recognised ('Do You Fear the Coming Darkness', Tom Carson). The rioting was uniformly described as nihilistic

Reviews

self-destruction of their community. But whose community is it when you are effectively under siege, with no services, resources, or opportunities?

At the same time, the articles are too despairing about the possibility of change. In fact the insurrection created the context for an ongoing debate about the relationship between race and class, and showed that members of different oppressed groups could act decisively together. It also showed that the federal, state and corporate rulers do not control a self-perfecting bureaucracy which cannot be successfully challenged. On the contrary, the system reacted with shock, then panic, then overt brutality. This is extremely damaging to the self-image of democratic capitalism. Economic and political powers are not abstract machines. They are complex institutions which have been created and are run by people. The riot vividly demonstrated this fact. In everyday life, individuals, groups and communities are continually resisting these systems, putting them to the test, revealing the contradictions. This is one of the crucial ways in which people are empowered to act politically.

Of course a riot, like anything else in capitalist society, is a contradictory event. But as an action it has a lot more to commend it than Inside the L.A. Riots recognises.

Simon Scott

ANSLIM
"Beyond
Sexuality"
Phoenix Press
1992 109pp
Price £4.50

I HAVE read this book twice in a hopeless effort to be less irate about its contents. The introduction promises us "...a libertarian

viewpoint on issues of gender politics, extending socialist critiques of sexual oppression by focusing on the destructiveness and conflict caused by state and capitalist hierarchies of power"(5). An appealing start but one which fails to match what is actually on offer.

We are told at the beginning that the book is written by two men and three women. However, it is very evident that the vast majority of the book is actually written by one man. We are also informed that the authors have various backgrounds in lesbian, gay and bisexual politics. Despite the main author asserting that he is bisexual, the subject matter is irritatingly heterosexual.

A central (and recurring) theme of the book is the examination of women and men's relationships. The author tells us very early on that he wants to have an intimate relationship with a woman (9) and then

continues to construct an elaborate thesis of why women won't have sex with (nice) men like him. Basically we are conditioned to desire macho, athletic boys at school then we proceed to marry sexy men who we can fuck but not hold a decent conversation with. And we are quite happy with this because we don't want our men boring us with their troubles, "when it comes to the practicalities of living with someone day in day out, women may prefer 'unreconstructed machos' to 'sensitive nice guys' for the reason that the former are not sensitive to their own pain and oppression, and so spare their partners from hearing about their problems, whilst at the same time they can be relied upon to go out to work uncomplainingly, day after day"(43).

The author describes how he is repeatedly used by women who want to rant on about their blokes but who then return to them for the sake of economic security. He explains how women categorise certain men as friends and others as lovers, the author fitting the former category. Sex and friendship are clearly separate. Conversely men view sex as indicative of friendship, love and acceptance. Women are less likely to be (heterosexual) virgins than their male contemporaries (105) thus men are "sexually deprived". As there are more men under the age of 40 we women have a "buyer's market"(84).

Further we are told that single men die sooner (82), drink more alcohol and are more likely to kill themselves than their married counterparts. More boys are abused as children and men experience more violence than women. The author accedes that women are more likely to be raped than men but he continues to explain that those men who are raped "...have often been raped multiple times"(100). He also notes that "...a man may not even conceive of saying 'no' to a woman"(100). Citing the (alleged) lack of U.S. research on circumcision he states that this is "...indicative of the fact that men's health is not a social priority, provided they can be relied upon to keep turning up for work"(91).

Men going out to work to satisfy women's wants is a continuous focus, "women are the largest consumers of all personal products, and directly encourage men to participate in capitalist structures..."(104). Another complaint is that we passively allow men to initiate all (heterosexual) contact (85) and that we encourage men to fight over us (79). A more distasteful comment is that if we refuse the author's (sexual) interest in us then we have power over him. An awkward and unsavoury reference is made to adults and children, "...the apparent polarisation of power of the adult over the younger person maybe offset by the power that the younger

has in voluntarily maintaining the relationship..."(82) Here the concept of power has been utterly skewed; how can a child who resists the sexual interest of her father have power over him because she says no? Similarly if a woman refuses the advances of a man she is not exerting power over him, she is simply stating that she does not share his desires. Power is socially constructed and needs to be set in context. Simply saying no to other people's desires is not an exercise of power; the author may feel powerless, frustrated and unhappy but I can confidently state that he is not being oppressed. He merely isn't getting what he wants - a good (heterosexual) fuck.

This is not to say that the whole book is a collection of reactionary splurge. There are some very good and thought provoking discussions and comments throughout. Thus there are critiques of the "men's movement", an exploration of political bisexuality and an interesting interview with an anarchist-feminist. Similarly pornography and transexuality are discussed from a libertarian framework, although the latter is almost exclusively debated from the angle of what lesbians and feminists have said. Unsurprising that we are again led back to women. I must admit that the author has an uncanny knack of saying something quite reasonable then proceeding to expire lines of unreasonable nonsense. I was particularly pissed off by his misrepresentation of women at the 9th Bisexual Conference (65). Couched within a discussion on pornography he cites how women at the above conference, "objected to the term 'bisexual' because it had sex in it". Of course we're all sexual prudes. Well, I was there and I can assure the author (and any potential readers) that both women and men expressed dis-satisfaction with the term - for many reasons. It would be fair to say that the issue over the word sex related to the common assumption that if you are bisexual then you are hopping in and out of bed with anyone and everyone. This is not an assumption that many (bisexual) people are happy with. This example just adds to the chronic hidden agendas of this book.

What I would like to know is what are Phoenix Press doing printing such a book. Fair enough (possibly) if the title suitably relates to the contents and does not masquerade as a libertarian critique of sexuality. Then only those interested in one man's wrestles with women and sexuality can obtain a copy. Potentially very interesting if you're into psychoanalytical theories of projection. I am not. This book argues that an alternative "men's movement" ought to be established which is based upon the issues raised within. I think I'd rather have men howling in woods thank you.

Carolyn Willow

Dave Douglass, 'Refracted Perspectives';

Cajo Brendal, 'Making the Unions Pay' Echanges et Mouvement, 90p

Wildcat, 'Outside and Against the Unions', 45p

THESE PAMPHLETS REPRESENT THE LATEST round in the anarcho/communist Trade Union debate. The Dutch Council Communist Cajo Brendal and Wildcat take their scalpel and crowbar respectively to demolish the myths of leftist trade unionism. Dave Douglass, of the NUM and Class War, gives his reply.

For Brendal and Wildcat trade unions are categorically not defence organisations of the working class. Rather, their role is to act as 'go-betweens', between the bosses and the working class, who negotiate the rate of exploitation and aim to 'normalise' class relations. But the one thing trade unions can't do is negotiate away exploitation. To fulfil this role trade unions need to exercise power over working people, organisationally and ideologically. This power is a block in the way of working class self-liberation and makes the unions fundamentally anti-working class organisations. Workers' liberation requires not trade union action, but autonomous action - in Wildcat's terms "outside and against the unions".

This, of course, is not as heretical as it sounds. The ideology of 'social partnership' with capital has permeated trade unionism since the beginning. A group like Big Flame argued pretty much along these lines when discussing the Shop Stewards Movement in the early 70's. That it might sound heretical really is to do with the sheer lack of major workers/trade union struggle over the last decade.

But what makes this 'communist' position different from most orthodox left criticism of the unions is that Wildcat/Brendal do not see this or that leadership or the lack of a union rank and file as the problem. They see the problem as trade unionism per se.

Dave Douglass' position is more orthodox. Whilst he concedes the problem of right wing leadership and union bureaucratisation he gives the unions his vigorous endorsement. In the process he demolishes some myths himself. He argues that what Brendal sees as 'autonomous' action by the British working class in the post war period was very often action fought by rank and file trade unionists, as trade unionists.

Douglass sees unions as vehicles which workers can take as far and in which

ever direction they choose. And he argues that to be anti-union is to be anti-working class.

There is more than a hint of syndicalism in Douglas' thinking. This clearly sets him apart from the Leninist left, who (in theory) see unions as pre-political organisations whose militancy can only come to revolutionary fruition with the aid of the party. For Douglass, the workers need no party.

The weaknesses of Douglas' position are clear. He overestimates the capacity of rank and file workers to move unions, against the entrenched power and practice of the bureaucracy. He also uses a kind of trick argument whereby because 'trade unions = workers' organisations', workers activity is by definition trade union activity, whether or not against the hierarchy. Importantly, he doesn't really deal with the crux of the Wildcat/Brendal argument - that it is the function of trade unionism which is at issue; and that, however democratic, bureaucratic, craven or bold the leadership - and this includes rank and file self-leadership - negotiation spells compromise.

However, I do sense a certain inconsistency in Douglas' position, a sense that his trade unionism is more pragmatic and conditional than his polemical defence of trade unionism suggests. Then, Wildcat are enough to drive anybody into inconsistency!

Yet there is a great deal to favour Douglas' argument. Firstly, there is a powerful sense of history, culture and tradition. This might involve some mythmaking, but it's not *simply* about mythmaking.

When we understand that people act out of an 'historical sense' of themselves, this notion of culture becomes important. Trade Unions not only mean compromise (the 'communist' argument about function), they are also felt to embody cultural values and experiences of solidarity and collective struggle. As such, however valid Wildcat/Brendal's thesis is, implicit in Douglas' reply is an equally valid point: that Trade Unions are not homogeneous organisations. Rather, they are highly contradictory, 'meaning' different things to different people in different places. Wildcat can iconoclastically cite examples of the NUM leadership curtailing rank and file initiative during the 84 Miners' Strike. But we can also cite numerous examples of workers in struggle during the 80's, as Trade Unionists, for their own notion of Trade unionism, despite the official Trade Union. Unions might be held within the framework of capitalist social relations (willy-nilly negotiating the price of exploitation), but they are not free of the system's conflicts and contradictions.

This contradictoriness makes a

categorically anti-union position difficult to sustain.

The problem with Brendal/Wildcat is their unremitting 'ultra-leftism'. Day to day struggles (for compensation, a shorter week etc) are nothing to these ultra-revolutionaries. Only the complete and utter destruction of exploitation counts. Unfortunately, day to day issues are important, because it is only through struggles around these that the struggle to change society can have any meaning.

This struggle is a process. There are times of advance and of retreat, and there are constant clashes of interest at many levels (bureaucracy: rank and file, the desire for autonomy: the mundane constraints of daily life etc. etc.). It is only through this process of struggle that the high points of revolutionary history have been reached. The Factory Council Movement in revolutionary Russia, the Italian autonomist struggles of the 70's, Anton Pannekoek's demolition of Lenin the Philosopher, whatever - none of these just happened, they were peak moments in a process of struggle. This is how we should see involvement in the trade unions: not as an end but as a moment in the process of struggle. But rather than critical involvement in a process, Wildcat/Brendal offer us only hyper-criticism and abstraction.

Wildcat/Brendal are right to focus in on the trade unions' function of negotiation. They certainly act as an emetic to those lefties who see trade unions as the be all and end all of 'serious' political activity. However, rank and file activity does not mean that you inevitably end up on the other side of the fence. Internal conflicts can and do create opportunities for struggle outside the official structures. Negotiation now (and Wildcat explicitly recognises its inevitability) does mean compromise. It can also up the ante for next time round. The traditions of collectivity which are so much a part of the rank and file trade union perspective (if not always realised in practice) are important. And what's more, taking unions seriously doesn't mean supporting the view that a leftist clique capturing the apparatus will change anything very much of substance.

John French

