

CLASS STRUGGLE ANARCHIST NETWORK

ONE DAY NATIONAL DAYSCHOOL

SATURDAY, 8TH JUNE, 1991.

10AM - 6PM

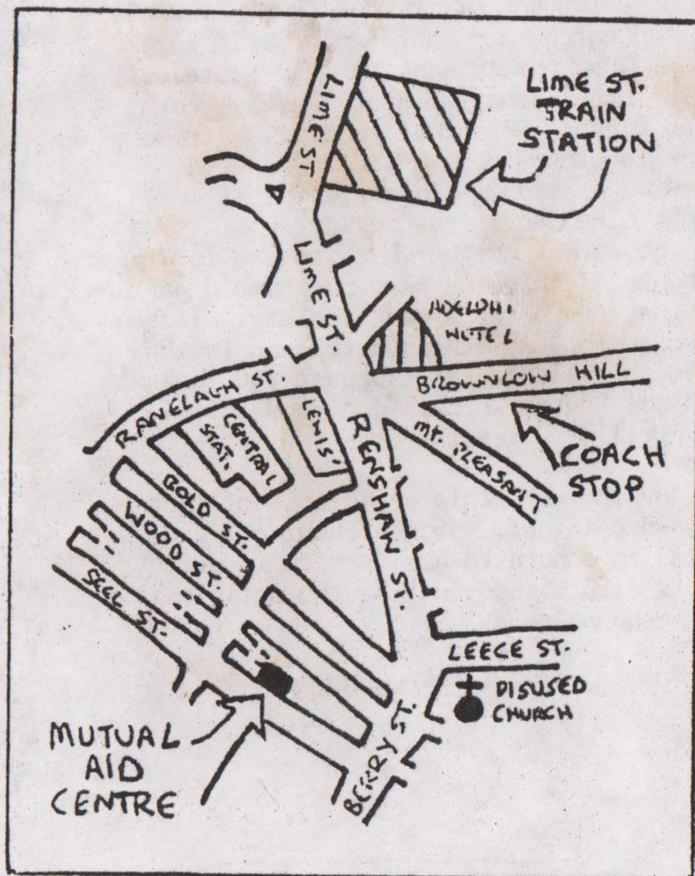
AT

THE MUTUAL AID CENTRE, 45 SEEL ST, LIVERPOOL.

THE MAIN FOCUS OF THIS MEETING WILL BE ON PRACTICALITIES - ON WHAT PEOPLE ARE DOING TO BUILD THE MOVEMENT NOW - RATHER THAN ABSTRACT THEORISING.

THE DESPATCH INDUSTRY WORKERS UNION, THE NORTH WEST EDUCATION NETWORK, AND HACKNEY SOLIDARITY GROUP HAVE BEEN INVITED TO LEAD OFF DISCUSSIONS.

BRING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.



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MERSEYSIDE

ANARCHIST

NEWSLETTER

20P

NUMBER 28 JUNE '91

Fury as pay showdown looms over city strike

NEW CHAOS LOOMS IN WAKE OF CITY STRIKE

NON-PAYERS PUT £71 ON CITY'S CHARGE

CHAOS DEEPENS

COUNCIL REBELS DEFIANT AS PUR GOES ON

LIVERPOOL JOBS CRISIS THE WORK ETHIC & MORE HISTORY, ECONOMICS

Left wing breakaway sparks council chaos

Strikers fear more job cuts

Defiant binmen threaten fresh rubbish chaos

Council gets tougher in city bin war

Three flee shop fire

City blimen refuse to move rubbish mountain

Social services and housing staff vote on new action

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Their move throws the council political structure into turmoil and pits

By Neil Hodgson

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BASIC ANARCHISM.

Anarchism is revolutionary anti-state socialism. In practical terms, anarchists aim for the destruction of the power of the ruling class and of all relationships based on domination and submission. This means taking over our industries and communities and changing them to meet the needs of all, as well as the ecological needs of the environment. Without this takeover we can struggle within capitalism but never replace it.

Anarchism will be created by millions of people, not a dictatorial elite (we are not marxist-Leninists), and all will have their part to play in shaping it. Power will lie with the organisations thrown up by and for the revolution, not with the political parties who will try to dominate and destroy them.

The new society will not be born through abstract ideas, but will come out of the realities of struggle and the need for working class people to unite. Such struggle doesn't just involve resistance to ruling class power (strikes, mass protests and other forms of direct action), but also construction - the building of new, locally based federal organisations examples of which go from the original soviets of the Russian Revolution to the Miner's Support Groups of the 1984/5 strike), plus the forging of solidarity and the willingness to go further.

There is no truce in the class war. The answer to ruling class power is continual and ever-widening struggle - for social revolution and anarchism.

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP.

Hello folks,

This issue has something of a theme, with articles on the interrelated topics of 'work' and anarchist economics.

We also have a letter in reply to the article on agricultural anarchism which appeared in the April edition of the newsletter. Both the letter and the article stirred up some controversy in the Anarchist Group, as one or two comrades felt they bore no relation to class struggle anarchism. We eventually decided to print the letter with a short reply.

This apart, there's a good range of topics this month, with contributions on the state of Liverpool City Council, the Gulf War, and more

Read on.....

THE EDITORS.

AS EVER, THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR AND NOT NECESSARILY OF LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP AS A WHOLE.

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DEADLINE JULY/AUGUST ISSUE
Monday June 24th

THE CRISIS ON

LIVERPOOL COUNCIL



While any anarchist can - and should support the struggle of Liverpool City Council's workforce against the policy of compulsory redundancies currently being pursued by the council's Labour leadership, some questions have to be raised about the solution which is being pushed at the workers as being the only way out for them.

Recently in the May local elections, six independent Labour candidates stood against the official Labour candidates. They campaigned on a platform of no redundancies and opposition to rent rises and the poll tax. Five of them were elected. If you add them to the 29 Labour councillors suspended from the Labour group for refusing to vote for rent rises and for opposing the implementation of the poll tax, that gives a block of 34 Broad Left councillors (although they may wish to trade under another name).

There are reputedly a further twenty or so Labour councillors who can more or less be relied upon not to support council leader Harry Rimmer over the redundancies. According to the popular wisdom, if these councillors vote with the other 34, there will be a small majority on the council in favour of rescinding the redundancies. Even if Rimmer resorts to horse trading with the Liberals to get his way, which is what he did to get the redundancies through in the first place, he would not be able to muster enough votes for his purposes.

The council workforce might very well believe that, if this scenario falls out, then all their problems are over. All they have to do is to get the right councillors in and it will all be done for them.

There is a little hole in the bag as far as this reasoning is concerned. Come

NOW IT'S NO HOLDS BARRED

**REBELS MAY
GO IT ALONE
IN CITY'S
LABOUR
'CIVIL WAR'**

A no-holds-barred Labour civil war raged in Liverpool today as jubilant leftwingers discussed an official challenge to the city council's ruling moderates.

The sensational election triumph by five rebel Labour candidates has greatly increased the chances of the Broad Left going it alone by forming a formal opposition group on the council.

They would then be entitled to a set number of places on committees and would put up candidates to challenge for all key positions.

By Chris Walker,
local government editor

They are expected to make the crucial decision this weekend. They also seem certain to select somebody to fight the

Walton constituency in the General Election against Labour choice Peter Kilfoyle — the full-time party official who has spearheaded the city's anti-Militant purge.

But Labour leaders nationally and locally are determined to carry the fight to them, despite last night's poll setback.

Council leader Harry Rimmer has made clear he has no intention of resigning.

LIVERPOOL
ECHO
3.5.91

next year, this same Labour majority will be expected to implement the poll tax, "by law". (Regardless of the result of any general election it looks as if the poll tax will still be with us next year.) They are pledged not to implement it. This means that the city could face a re-run of the disqualification from office and the surcharge which happened to 47 Labour councillors in 1987 after they refused to set a "legal" budget.

If this happens, the question must be asked, - what use will these Labour councillors be, however against redundancies they may be, from the point of view of protecting jobs? If we have commissioners running the city, or another council elected, what guarantee will council workers have of their jobs not being attacked?

Elected representatives - however conscientious - can only operate within the limits of the existing system. Any gains won within this system can always be reversed - at some time - by the ruling class. The 80s were a classic example of how the seemingly permanent post World War II consensus was smashed.

Workers should never rely on any party or politician to do things for them. They will never take control of their own lives by merely being passive voting fodder. Only by coming together, in our communities and workplaces, and controlling production of what we need regardless of profit, will we be able to make gains that nobody will be able to reverse.

DAMAGE LIMITATION

The Council Tax is a calculated attempt to defuse the momentum of resistance & defiance engendered by the Poll Tax. It was devised to neutralise the advantage to the opposition parties that Ribble Valley demonstrated & which still lingered on during the May Elections in England & Wales.

It is a form of property tax, with 7 bands from 2.5 times a "contribution" for properties above £160,000 assessed value, to the lower end of the house market. Unlike rates, richer people and the extortionate valuation of house prices in the "home counties" are protected. A major slap in the face to the Poll Tax is the removal of people on Income Support, students, student nurses etc. from liability. While one person households (monads) can claim 25% rebates, households over the presumed 2 persons are only penalised if somebody claims Housing Benefit for rent rebate purposes & they are affected by the Non-dependent rules.

The Council Tax is two years away and council services may be decimated by then. Pressure will mount for the Tories to grant an "Amnesty" to those on the 20% level of 'contribution' and if they are forced in this direction for all the "Can't Pays". The struggle against recovery action has to generalise resistance against cuts, thus shortcircuiting the plans of the established parties to "Divide & Rule". Labour may be able to promise a return to Rates as a more immediate means of ending the chaos, but as collaborationists their role in enforcing the Poll Tax will be remembered.

Gaults
THE
BAILIFFS

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Our Ref: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 1991

The Occupier

[REDACTED]
Liverpool

Dear Sir/Madam

We act on behalf of the Liverpool City Council in the collection of Community Charge.

We are trying to contact [REDACTED] a former occupier of [REDACTED] and any information you could give to assist us (forwarding address, estate agents/solicitors used, landlords, workplace, telephone number etc.) would be appreciated and treated in the strictest confidence.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

GAULTS

This letter - a failed attempt to get people to grass on their neighbours - is the latest from the local bailiff scum. These bastards are so scared they won't even sign their own names, and yet they expect us to tamely hand over the details of other members of our class. These are the paid lackeys who snoop and steal in the name of Liverpool City Council, doing the dirty work of councillors, politicians and the rich in general.

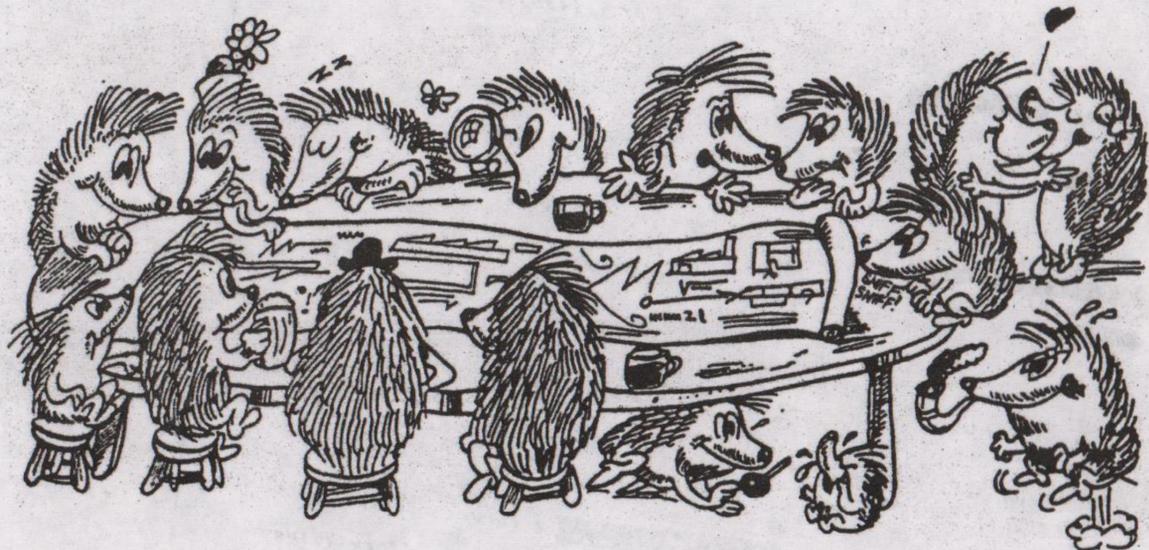
DON'T CO-OPERATE! In Liverpool, bailiffs have kept a low profile so far - though many letters

When people say to me, "Yes, but how can this be achieved?", I always answer "With great difficulty". Workers in Britain have, for at least two generations, become strangers to the notion that they don't need leaders to do their thinking for them. It will take time to wean people away from the dependent, passive position that the manipulators and the politicians want them to occupy - following "recommendations" on how to vote at the ballot box and at the union meeting. It will be an uphill struggle, but the consequences of years of contempt for the working class can be reversed.

have been sent out threatening visits that have never happened. If they do turn up DON'T LET THEM IN (WHATEVER THEY SAY TO YOU) and SIGN NOTHING. If they threaten a visit, get in touch with your local Anti-Poll Tax Union, or friends who will help you fight them off. In many parts of the country bailiffs have been followed and chased off. Some have been hospitalised. Make them feel like the scum they are.

MAKE LIVERPOOL BAILIFF FREE.

ECONOMICS



Anarchists have long wrestled with the idea of alternatives to money. This article provides an outline of how post-revolutionary exchange and distribution could be organised.

Under capitalism, the working class are slaves to money, which they have to get to provide for their basic needs, while the rich use money chiefly to acquire more money. Distribution of goods, including basic necessities such as clothes and food is inequitable and chaotic. Those who actually make or produce the goods receive less reward for their labours than their employers or the owners of the tractors, lathes and sewing machines. After being under-paid the workers are then overcharged for goods as they are loaded with parasitic price increases as distributors and retailers all take their cut and increase their prices. Workers are then subject to advertising, convincing them of what their needs are, causing every-one to believe that they have to buy the cheapest, longest-lasting, best-looking, fastest or most satisfying (whatever that is.) This is despite many of the products being the same but just with different labels. Capitalist society parades a vast array of products - flash cars, big houses, expensive holidays, which it assures us is available to everybody. Whereas in reality these are only available to a small minority (rich filth).

We don't need these wasteful symbols of consumption, what we need is equal distribution of resources to ensure a good standard of living for everybody.

The abolition of money without compensation will be one of the first tasks of the social revolution. Without money it will be impossible for any-one to fall into debt or to exploit another for wages. There will be no lending and no possibility of being able to hoard or make a profit through investment. This does not mean that society will revert to barter as a means of exchange. Instead a persons' labour will become their means of exchange. This will be on the basis of: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. With the workers in control of both production and distribution it will be possible to provide for each persons' needs. Those unable to work through disability, age, illness, etc would have their needs seen to. However, those who refused to work would be at liberty to provide for their needs by themselves. In times of scarcity, distribution would be to those most in need first.

This will need to go hand in hand with the socialisation of land, which will mean complete abolition of land ownership. It will all be public property. No-one will have the right to buy, sell

or rent land. Common ownership of other items as cars will allow sharing and co-operative usage. People will no longer be economic individuals, the target for marketing and exploitation. Instead work will be shared to abolish unemployment. This will allow members of society to work less and this, combined with their own control of their workplace in common ownership, will change every-one's perception of work. Taxation will be abolished, as work to provide public services is prioritised and carried by workers in return for their needs being met. With workers control of workplaces, production of useless products will cease. This will simplify distribution and cause less exploitation of natural resources. Research into dangerous technology will also cease for the same reason, and energy will be diverted to socially useful products.

Obviously it will not be possible to produce all that is required to meet peoples' needs where they live. Redistribution of goods and services to ensure the welfare of those in an anarchist society will be a key feature of the new way of life. Workers will be required to be more flexible than under the present regime. It will be necessary for workers to work where there is the need. This may sound unreasonable. However workers will no longer have to worry about economic redundancy and will have the opportunity to gain a breadth of work experiences. Federal management of workers and distribution will ensure the efficient inter-relation of all the industries and services in the area.

Far-sighted anarchists believe that these federations could get together at an international level to exchange data and ultimately balance supply and demand, direct, distribute and share out world industrial, agricultural and service production among different regions. In this way, crises in trade and employment, and enforced stagnation could be avoided. This will further help to stamp out competition and replace it with mutual aid.

In Spain in the 1930s, in many areas produce that was in abundance was free for everybody to take. Other items in short supply were distributed through a form of rationing. This relied on having producer and consumer cards issued to workers, and tokens depending on the size of the family. A modern equivalent might be some form of credit card, although in the long term many anarchists would aim for a society without forms of exchange.

This raises questions about the difference between need (that is what some-one requires to exist - food, shelter, clothes), and wants (things other than needs - records, musical instruments, sports equipment). Broadly speaking, the new society's function will be to provide for people's needs. People's wants will be solved through: co-operation, such as tuition and workshops to acquire skills, communal ownership of equipment, sharing - such as bicycles - and there will still be private ownership of purely personal items.

To clarify the system of exchange in simple terms, for example, coal miners will deliver coal they mine to public yards for community use. In return they will receive from the community's production the machinery, tools and other commodities they need. This is free exchange without the medium of money, without profit, on the basis of requirement and the supply on hand. Without money we lose price, not value. Price is determined by supply and demand so varies with shortages and surpluses. Without money we will also lose wage scales, the hunt for new markets, scarcity of capital restricting development and speculation. Under capitalism, more labour is used to sell goods than to produce them.

The dogma is one of more efficient and economical production. Life in anarchy may result in greater inefficiency in some sectors as safety standards rise and the needs of workers are taken into account. However, when a significant proportion of your life will be in work, why should it be organised on the basis of efficiency and therefore exploitation? Slightly less efficient industry might bring about higher levels of skill in the workforce, with more hand-made goods produced and will certainly bring greater satisfaction.



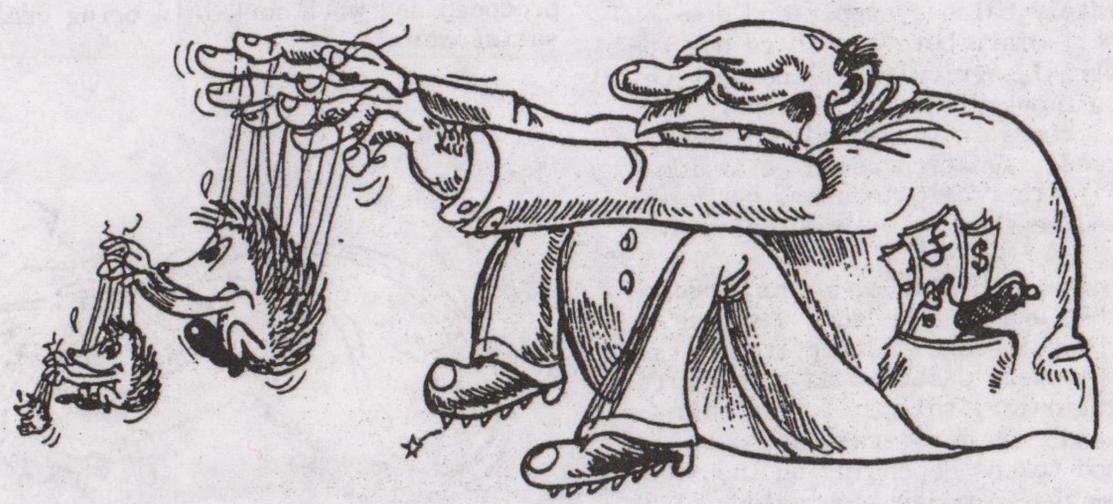


Some anarchists have argued for a system of redistribution based on the work performed by an individual. This would reintroduce inequality through unequal wages and also differing values for different types of work such as regarding a two-hour life-saving operation by a doctor as more valuable than stacking 200 boxes of bananas. Shirkers would be dealt with by a quiet word in the ear or in severe cases by public disgrace.

Much of this article may appear idealistic or utopian. Eradication of money is a difficult concept to grasp when we all think about it every day, and it is such a massive control on our lives. In order for a non-monetary society to work, a higher level of moral development of human kind is required. This won't happen overnight. Deeply ingrained capitalist values will have to be exp' ded and buried.

As work would be organised around need, debate exists in anarchist circles as to what happens to those people who choose to do work which does not directly relate to need, such as artists, actors and performers. Some would have them left out on a limb to fend for themselves, Others consider that provided they put in enough useful work, they be encouraged to pursue their ambitions.

The desires for greed, exploitation, profiteering, dictatorship and careerism will have to be replaced with equality, sharing, mutual aid and freedom. These need not come at once, but they must come on a societal and individual level. Anarchism must rise from the grassroots, from personal development, to those you know, to those in your area, and so on, until the whole world is free of the root of all evil and capitalism. ●



Graphics from: "Workers councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Economy", Wooden Shoe Pamphlet, 1984.

THE WORK ETHIC

What is work?

In capitalist societies, it is something people generally do for a fixed wage, for a certain number of hours every day and between certain times each day. Waged work is a central feature of people's daily lives.

Of course there are exceptions. There are vast numbers of unpaid workers (eg. housewives, voluntary workers, family carers), also students, retired people, unemployed people, and an elite few who live exclusively off the labour of others. (The royal family is a classic example.) But waged work is still considered 'normal'. The work you do is the standard by which your social worth is measured. Work is, in various subtle ways, promoted as a moral virtue in itself.

We must work 'to make our contribution to society.' Of course, we're allowed some leisure too, but only when we've earned it. And only outside working hours. Leisure is a separate thing, to be done in our own time, away from the workplace.

Work in capitalist society implies drudgery. It is something which must be done of necessity, to obtain the means for physical survival and to earn the money and time for leisure. Few people can find their work a source of creativity, or can take a satisfaction in it for itself. Most workers have no choice, no discretion, and no control over their work or their working conditions.

However, this view of work, as being central to a person's existence, a measure of their moral worth, and completely distinct from leisure, is only 150 years old. In other words, it is only as old as capitalism. Older notions of work were quite different. There is nothing natural or inevitable about current views of work.

Unfortunately, there has been little debate within the anarchist movement recently about the nature of work. But since anarchists are concerned with ach-



-ieving a society where every-one has control over the nature and conditions of their work, we should be exploring possibilities.

Some anarchists seem to have become infected by the capitalistic idea of work being a moral virtue. Whyever should it be? Why should any-one need to prove their fitness to be a member of society by the amount or type of work they do? Should work and workplaces be so separate from other forms of human activity? If a person enjoys the work they do, is it still 'work'? If not, why not? We need to start exploring new definitions.

ORIGINS

The phrase "the Protestant work ethic" might sound familiar. It is a concept that originated with Max Weber (a 19th century sociologist) but it plausibly explains how current concepts of work fit the needs of capitalist society. According to Weber, modern notions of work can be traced back 400 years to the Calvinist religious idea of "predestination".

This was a fatalistic concept, which held that a person's ultimate destiny - whether they would go to heaven or hell - was determined before they were born. Nobody could know for certain what their fate would be. But there were certain

10 clues. People who succeeded in work and lived exemplary lives were the likeliest candidates for a place in heaven.

Over time, this rather complex idea became replaced with the simple one that a person could earn their way into heaven by hard work. A cultural belief was implanted that hard work of any kind was good and idleness was evil.

It isn't likely that most people believed that all work was moral and meaningful. But this concept was ideally suited to the emerging system of capitalism, which needed a disciplined workforce. The 'Protestant work ethic' was an ideology for self-satisfied capitalists who were soon to form the dominant class in society.

This work ethic is still present in present day cultural attitudes. It can be seen in the widespread habit (promoted by politicians and the media, but also accepted by a large proportion of the working class) of blaming the unemployed for their unemployment. It is in the treating of people without work as having no value as human beings. It is in the organisation of society in such a way that those without wages are excluded from what are considered normal social activities and benefits.

Why does the work ethic still exist although social conditions have changed? Under the early capitalist system, the capitalists sustained the work ethic by exploiting the material insecurity of the workers. That is, since there were few or no alternatives to waged work, people had to accept a factory job or starve. However, advances in technology soon made it possible to produce a large amount of surplus wealth with relatively little labour. The labour force became organised enough to win its demands for a decrease in hours and an increase in wages. Then the creation of the welfare state (at least in Britain and northern Europe) removed the stark choice between working or starving.

But in the face of these changes, capitalism has maintained the work ethic by creating new forms of insecurity. Workers have been led to expect more: higher standards of living and higher levels of consumption. Capitalism offers people a vast range of goodies, which can all be theirs if they only work hard enough to earn the money to buy them. If you haven't got the instant cash for something you want, then credit is easy to get -

giving a further incentive to work to earn the money to pay off the debt.

This is why it is no longer enough for the unemployed to simply not starve to death. They are excluded from what is considered a 'normal' standard of living. Inequalities in wealth and status are explained by branding the unemployed as workshy and idle (evil). They are used as a threat and a warning to induce other workers to conform.

JOB DISSATISFACTION

When we have a job we give away part of ourselves to a boss. The experience is often alienating and boring. Workers express their resentment in a number of different ways.

- In Canada the average worker 'steals back' 3 hours and 42 minutes from the boss every week in days off without cause, extended coffee and lunch breaks, reading on the job and other forms of informal leisure.⁸
- Industrial jobs in the US show a worker turnover of 35% a year.
- In Australia 1 in 5 days off known as 'sickies' is unrelated to any identifiable cause.⁹
- A survey of nearly 10,000 US workers revealed that 28.4% were involved in some form of property theft from their employer.¹⁰
- The Government estimates that 10% to 23% of US workers use dangerous drugs on the job. The medical director of Rockwell International's Space Shuttle Division estimates that 20% to 25% of the workers at Rockwell's Palmdale, California, assembly plant were high on drugs or alcohol or both.



CHANGES

It wasn't always so. And it doesn't have to be in the future. Before industrial capitalism attitudes to work were very different, and so was people's experience of work. Before the 19th century, most production was based on agriculture. Most workers' experience of work was determined by the seasons and the weather. They had long periods of work, followed by long periods of idleness. Textile production was based in the home, which meant that the home was also the workplace. Although textile workers were paid piece rates by the trader who eventually sold the finished cloth, they had a large amount of control over how hard and how fast they worked. Pre-capitalist workers often still had to work for a 'boss' or overlord. But they had nothing like the same

commitment to work as modern industrial workers. They worked when they had to and took as much leisure time as they could get. Since there was only a tiny range of goods available to them, once they had worked enough to meet their physical needs their free time was more important to them.

It took time for the new capitalists to change this attitude to work and produce a disciplined labour force. They did it principally by gaining control of the

POSSIBILITIES

The capitalist attitude to work is, then, not the only one. But none of these

older examples are good models of how work should be organised. Work is still drudgery, often done for somebody else's gain. The worker has no autonomy and gets little satisfaction from work.

Could it be different?

An anarchist would say, "Of course it could be. But only with a social revolution." It goes without saying that anarchists believe a social revolution possible.

I don't intend in this article to go into the logistics of how such a revolution can be brought about. (There isn't space to go into the necessary detail.) But I want to show what it could make possible.

Anarchists are concerned with creating a collective society where there will be no bosses, no managers and no waged labour. The organisation of work and the management of industry will be the responsibility of the whole community. Workers will have control over their work and a free choice in what they do. Work can become a source of creativity, pleasure and personal fulfilment. Probably, a certain amount of tedious work will be necessary to meet people's basic needs. But in a system where you don't have to work long hours to create surplus wealth for somebody else, meeting basic needs will require relatively little time and effort. With an economy reorganised on the basis of providing for needs, not profits, and with work shared evenly between those who want it and are capable of it, producing the means for physical survival will account for only a small part of each day.

If this sounds implausible, bear in mind that the traditional societies of Africa and Asia, where people did not try to produce surpluses, were well able to support themselves and also a large proportion of people who did no work. Those societies had no industry; Europe now has the benefit of labour-saving technology. It is not only the affluent, industrialised societies that can afford a non-productive population.

If it also seems implausible that industry could be managed on a collective basis, without the "benefit" of managers, you have only to look at the co-ops that exist now. These operate successfully with shared ownership, and without any hierarchy among the workforce. Decisions are made and work shared out by democra-

12 consensus. At present co-ops have to operate within the capitalist system, which means their workers often have to put in long hours for little pay. But they offer a good model for the collective organisation of work. Co-ops in third world countries are a particularly good example. Often set up by people who are illiterate, they are flexible, accountable to the community, decentralised and democratic. They take account of social factors in what they produce and how they produce it. (ie. they produce what is socially useful and use technology most appropriate to their environment.) Working class people are in no way incapable of learning to 'manage' production. In the present economy, there are several examples of shared ownership and shared management schemes where the workers learned to run their own firms very successfully. (For more details of this, read chapters 6 and 7 of "People Power" by Tony Gibson, Penguin 1979.)

Existing co-ops in capitalist society tend to be small; this would be a major aim of any anarchist revolution, to reorganise industry to a more human scale.

A WORLD OF AMATEURS ?

Imagine a world where you only had to work two or three days a week to take care of necessary production and services. What would you do with your extra free time? What do you do with your spare time now?

Many people pursue activities in their spare time which are considered only 'hobbies', but which are necessary for personal fulfilment or desirable for maintaining social culture. They might be gardeners, artists, musicians, DIY enthusiasts, amateur footballers. They might run a local youth club, visit elderly neighbours, or be a school governor.

It's not surprising that people often put more commitment, energy and enthusiasm into their 'hobbies', simply because they have freely chosen to take part in those activities. Nothing and nobody coerced them.

Imagine being able to take that same attitude to all aspects of work. Assume that as part of the social revolution, we've created a classless society where people are no longer denied the chance to fulfil their potential whether through

inability to develop self-confidence, or through denial of access to education and training. A society where people need not be restricted to only one job, but can be involved in a range of jobs, according to what interests them.

We're talking about creating an entirely different attitude to work. We would have a society of 'amateurs' in the original sense of the word: people working at their freely chosen tasks, from love of doing them.



CONCLUSION

I haven't dealt with the perennial question, "What would you do with people who were too lazy to work?" because I don't think it's relevant. There always have been people who refuse to accept their social obligations. I believe such a problem would probably be smaller in an anarchist society, where greed and selfishness would be far less acceptable and

The Gulf War is over - or is it? Certainly, the effects of the war are not over for the Kurds, as the media constantly reminds us. However, the Kurds are by no means the only ones still to suffer. In fact, 40 third world countries are suffering economically as a result of the Gulf War.

Hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers in the region, in particular workers from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, had to flee during the war, leaving behind their savings, possessions and livelihoods. These workers are now having to struggle to find a living in their own countries.

Because of their support for Iraq during the Gulf War, both Sudan and Yemen are being denied aid: the USA has cut its development aid to Yemen from \$22 million to \$2.9 million. Sudan is now in arrears with repayments to the IMF and has been denied further credit.

Other African countries which have to import all or most of their oil have been hit by big price rises. In Zimbabwe fuel prices have risen by 50 per cent. Public transport in Uganda had become so expensive that services have been cut and thousands more people have to walk miles to school or work because they can't afford the fares.

Paraffin prices have risen faster than petrol prices, which means that the poorest people (who tend to cook with paraffin) are hit hardest by the price rises.

Of course, you will see none of this on TV. It doesn't lend itself to quite the same instant, sensational images as pictures of starving Kurds on a mountainside. Besides, it wouldn't do for the public to find out who is paying the real costs of the "Allied victory". That would make the victory seem somewhat too hollow.

13 socially rewarding than it is under capitalism.

If this article sounds idealistic - that's how I intended it. I want to show that the current way of organising work is not inevitable, and to inspire people to think of possible alternatives. How the changes can be brought about must be the subject of other discussions and other articles. ●

GULF FALLOUT

The cost of war

5 Tornado aircraft	\$210m	Enough grain to feed 20m Africans for a month
23 Patriot missiles	\$23m	One year's supply of clothes, seeds, pots and storage facilities for 2m Mozambicans
5 Tomahawk cruise missiles	\$7.2m	Save The Children's 1990-91 budget for Ethiopia
Train one Tornado pilot	\$6m	Enough seeds and tools for 100,000 Eritreans hit by drought
10 Scud missiles	\$2m	15 relief trucks plus spares and shipping costs to Africa

HISTORY

REWRITING HISTORY the politics of the AWG

Over the last two issues of the M.A. , members of Liverpool AWG (anarchist workers group) have slagged off anarcho-syndicalism. As an alternative, "two traditions" have been mentioned: "The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists (usually called "The Platform"), and the "Friends of Durruti". This is a brief look at what these two "traditions" actually stood for:

THE PLATFORM

"The Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (as it was originally called) was a pamphlet produced in 1926 by a group of exiled Russian anarchists. These were Piotr Arshinov, (activist and historian of the Makhnovist movement - see below (1)), Nestor Makhno (the commander of the important, anarchist, Revolutionary Insurrectionary of the Ukraine (Makhnovists) during the Russian Civil War of 1918-1921 - until crushed by the Communists), Ida Mett, Valevsky, and Linsky.

Much of the Platform is common sense that any class struggle anarchist would agree with. The bones of contention are its specific proposals on how anarchists should organise, and on the relationship between anarchists and the wider Labour movement. Basically, the Platform called for a tightening up and centralisation of the anarchist movement. A "General Union of Anarchists" was to be formed, based on theoretical and tactical unity and collective responsibility. (where "the entire Union will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of each member"). Every organisation adhering to the Union was to have its secretariat "executing and guiding theoretically the political and technical work of the organisation", and to coordinate the General

Union as a whole there was to be an "Executive Committee" whose duties, among others, also included "theoretical and organisational orientation" (though the responsibilities of this committee were to be fixed by the Union's congress).

The Platform didn't reject syndicalism stating that "anarchists must take part in revolutionary syndicalism as one of the forms of the revolutionary workers' movement" (including "creating anarchist unions"). However, anarchists "must enter into revolutionary unions as an organised force, responsible to accomplish work in the union before the general anarchist organisation and orientated by the latter". The General Union was to be the "pioneer" and "theoretical guide" of workers' and peasants' organisations, and the "organised vanguard" (their emphasis) of labour's emancipating process. (2)

The problem with all this is not the call for organisation - which anarcho-syndicalists would agree with - but the grey ambiguous areas. On the one hand the Platform calls for federalism. On the other, its version of collective responsibility is "the absolute negation of any individual independence and action" (to quote Malatesta - mentioned by Liverpool AWG as a non-syndicalist anarchist). (3)

The Platform calls for secretaries and committees "theoretically" guiding the General Union of Anarchists, and the General Union of Anarchists "theoretically" guiding workers' and peasants' organisations. Though it also states that "this should not be confused with the political leadership of the statist parties", it is edging very close to the idea of a party leadership: an anarchist vanguard controlling a wider labour movement.

The Platform's view of anarchist trade unionists- "responsible" for their actions to the specific anarchist organisation - can be compared to another Programme, also written by a Russian anarchist exile, and

The Platform was rejected by almost all the anarchist movement when it came out. Malatesta called it "typically authoritarian" and an attempt to unite anarchists in "the Bolshevik way". Others reacted similarly- Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Rudolf Rocker, etc..

Arshinov himself - who'd written most of the Platform - abandoned anarchism four years later. In 1930 he rejoined the Communist Party (he'd briefly been a Bolshevik in 1905-6, before becoming an anarchist), and later returned to the USSR. In 1934 he publically endorsed Stalin's regime and, in 1937, was shot during the purges - ironically charged with trying to reintroduce anarchism into Russia.

Makhno broke with Arshinov before his own death in 1934, accusing Arshinov of "trying to introduce Bolshevism into anarchism and its ranks." (4)

Since then the Platform has done the rounds. Organisations have come and gone and it certainly hasn't had any "successes" worth writing home about.

THE FRIENDS OF DURRUTI

Apart from their rejection of syndicalism, the AWG do seem to be Platformists - they seem to see themselves as the "intellectual vanguard" of the anarchist movement, and generally come across as a shadow of the SWP. Their claim to the Friends of Durruti though - after attacking anarcho-syndicalism - is another kettle of fish. Either this is due to ignorance (unlikely), or is a deliberate attempt to rewrite history.

The Friends of Durruti formed in March 1937, during the Spanish Civil War and revolution. Its founders and members were anarcho-syndicalist militants - members of the anarcho-syndicalist militias and unions of the CNT. They took their name from Durruti, the anarcho-syndicalist metal worker and

militia commander - well known for his revolutionary commitment - who died fighting on the Madrid front in November 1936.

The Friends of Durruti were notable for their activities during the Maydays - the government attack on the revolution in



Nestor Makhno - broke with Arshinov

also based on the experiences of the Russian Revolution. "The Programme of Anarcho-Syndicalism" by G.P. Maximov (one of the main anarchist activists in the Russian factory committee movement, and a member of the Central Council of Factory Committees), was published in 1927 and adopted by the anarcho-syndicalist international, the IWA/AIT. It goes into far greater detail than the Platform into the problems of economic reconstruction and revolutionary defence, and, though well out of date, has a lot of practical suggestions that make it still worth reading.

The Programme calls for anarcho-syndicalist unions and anarchist confederations - with anarchists being involved both in and outside of the unions, in the "field of propaganda" (what the AWG calls the "battle of ideas"), and in "the struggle against the political parties". Unlike the Platform, anarchist organisation is seen as parallel to union organisation. Union autonomy is respected.

* * * *

C.N.T.

Agrupación "Los amigos de Durruti"

¡TRABAJADORES..!

Una Junta revolucionaria.

Fusilamiento de los culpables.

Desarme de todos los Cuerpos armados.

Socialización de la economía.
Disolución de los Partidos políticos que hayan agredido a la clase trabajadora.

No cedamos la caile. La revolución ante todo.

Saludamos a nuestros Camaradas del P.O.U.M. que han confraternizado en la calle con nosotros.

VIVA LA REVOLUCIÓN SOCIAL... ¡ABAJO LA CONTRAREVOLUCIÓN!

"The revolution before everything"
Friends of Durruti leaflet - May '37 (7)

May 1937. Against the politics of collaboration and indecision -of anti-fascist "unity" at all costs - the Friends of Durruti called for the armed working class to stand firm and crush the counter-revolution. Their manifesto, published in 1938, summarized their position and made three demands: For a "National Defence Council", elected and accountable to the union rank and file (including those at the front), with all posts up for regular recall; for "all economic power to the unions"; and for the "free municipality" to cover those areas outside the unions' mandate.

This call for a National Defence Council wasn't the radical break with the past that some might claim. The CNT had long had its defence committees, federated at regional and national level. From February 1936 these had been reinforced by Revolutionary Preparedness Committees, to organise the technical preparation for successful insurrection (in terms of arms, transport and communications, potential war industries, fighting groups, etc.). "Libertarian Communism", a pamphlet writ-

ten by Issac Puente in 1932, and widely read in the CNT, may not have mentioned a "National Defence Council" (Puente mentions the "union" and "free municipality" as the main constructive elements of an anarchist society). But this didn't stop Puente joining the national Revolutionary Committee charged with coordinating the CNT insurrection of December 1933.

The need for coordinated revolutionary defence and attack is just common sense.

The final word to Jaime Balius, one of the main activists in the Friends of Durruti: In 1975 he wrote "We stood for "all power to the unions"..."

Anarcho-syndicalists, yes. Platformists - never.

So, there you have it. After slugging off anarcho-syndicalism for being backward looking and out of date (among other things), the AWG claims to look to a pamphlet written way back in 1926 - and to the politics of a group of Spanish anarcho-syndicalists. Confused or dishonest? Anarchists can make up their own minds.

Paul, Liverpool DAM

REFERENCES

- 1) "The History of the Makhnovist Movement" - Arshinov (Freedom Press)
- 2) All quotes from The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists" (WSM edition, 1989)
- 3) "A Reply to the Platform", Malatesta. In CPAR No.5
- 4) From "Anarchism versus Platformism", a leaflet by Leeds DAM (quotes from "Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War" M.Malet).
- 5) "Towards a Fresh Revolution", Friends of Durruti.
- 6) "Blood of Spain" p381, Ronald Frazer.

- 7) This leaflet is often misquoted, even by anarchists. Its call for a "Revolutionary Junta/Council" becomes "A Revolutionary Junta has been formed". "We salute our comrades of the POUM (non-Stalinist marxists) who have sided with us on the streets" becomes "The POUM will be admitted to the Revolutionary Junta because it sides with the workers". As the Friends of Durruti said, in August 1937: "One; we could not speak of a Revolutionary Junta having been set up because... none had been formed. Two; the said Junta not having been set up we could not have invited a place for the POUM comrades. Three; we salute the POUM because we saw them on the streets defending the working class's interests".
- see "The Friends of Durruti - a Chronology" by Paul Sharkey.



Crabapple,
Berrington Hall,
Berrington,
Nr. Shrewsbury.

Dear Merseyside Anarchist,

The article comparing Crabapple community to 1930s Spanish collectives was like looking for a fruit like an orange, when a banana is found it's rejected out of hand not for its intrinsic weaknesses but just because it's not like an orange. The actual qualities of the banana are irrelevant.

Crabapple wasn't set up to overthrow the capitalist system and that has never been our direct intention, however that doesn't mean we're not revolutionary in our way. Many people put their energies into direct conflict with the present system in the hope of overthrowing it, I wish them luck. However most of these are so busy working on this that they haven't time to experiment with what would be different about any new society. Most communities are attempts to see if we can live and work another way. Obviously, these attempts are limited by the system around us which we have to interact with, but maybe they can give us some idea how we could live in the future.

So what's different about Crabapple?

Firstly, the house land and shop we have are owned by every-one and no-one. No money is needed to join, you may take a bit with you when you go. The place is available to you whilst you're here and is then passed on to others who want to give it a try.

Secondly, we're completely income-sharing. Any money earned or extracted from the state is put into the communal pot. The bills are paid, pocket money is given out and then extra money is available according to availability, need and desire, not according to any-one's working capacity or perceived contribution to the community.

Thirdly we work in a collective, non-hierarchical and attemptedly non-sexist

way. Domestic work is fairly evenly shared out with the men fully involved in cooking cleaning and childcare. Shopwork is also fairly evenly divided but people take extra responsibility as they feel able. Every-one is encouraged to take some part in the organisation side of things. The rest of the work is taken up by people as they feel or see fit, people are encouraged to develop their skills and share what they know.

Decision making is mostly done by consensus with every-one involved, including the children and people in the process of joining. If a decision can't be reached we try to give it enough time for a solution to appear which is mutually acceptable, though sometimes people have to be asked to back down.

Naturally, we don't necessarily succeed in all of this, but at least we are giving it a try. Of course many places and people are trying out these things individually but very few try to put them together into a coherent intergrated lifestyle.

So what does all this add up to? To me it shows that people don't have to live confined lives in little boxes with big mortgages or rip-off rents, a 9 to 5 job with the boss on your back, and the narrow confines of the family when you get home. Isn't that revolutionary? By the way, we're not four families but a complex collection of individuals!

So, what about the shop being linked to the capitalist system? Well, to a certain extent you could say that, but in itself it isn't a capitalist enterprise and we try to work with other co-ops as much as possible. If the capitalist system collapsed there would still be a need for some trade, not all trade is necessarily capitalistic, and supplying basic good wholesome foodstuffs, much supplied by co-ops and small local growers, I think we'd flourish. Meanwhile the shop acts as a noticeboard and display space for many

LETTERS

local political groups such as the anti polltax union, local gays, FoE, CND, women's groups and the local rape crisis centre and even the SWP, all of whom are very grateful for our presence. We have also individually and collectively been involved in many of these groups.

As to schooling our children at home, we have thought of it, but think it would be too narrow and confined a world for them. They mostly want to intergrate well with more 'normal' society anyway, but that doesn't mean that we don't introduce them to other ideas. Wouldn't we be accused of middle-class elitism if we taught them ourselves anyway?

So we may not be what you are looking for, but I think we play our humble part in the search for a new society. If you want to find something more akin to the Spanish collectives I suggest you look at Radical Routes which had a good article in April's "Greenline".

By the way, this article is of course my own opinions, which without a rigid dogma to adhere to are free to flourish, it is also signed, unlike the article it's in response to,

Yours

(UNSIGNED)

** REPLY **

Without wishing to impugn the sincerity of the people in the Crabapple community, such initiatives as theirs cannot, with the best will in the world, be said to be revolutionary. Firstly, the fact that members of that community have themselves managed to escape the 9 - 5 mortgage -paying tyranny doesn't mean that they have struck a blow for freedom for everybody. Options like Crabapple can only ever be for a comparatively small number of people, given the comparatively small numbers of "crumbling stately piles" available plus the land that would be necessary. The status quo is not going to be seriously affected by a proliferation of communities like Crabapple. That alone, to my mind, would disqualify Crabapple from being regarded as revolutionary.

Secondly, even if more properties were available, and more people could set up their own communities, does anyone honestly imagine that the establishment, the powers-that-be, would just sit back and let it happen? Any people attempting to set up communities in any large numbers would find themselves subjected to harrassment of every conceivable kind, and, unless there was a high degree of co-ordination between all the groups involved, all but the most determined would be picked off one by one.

I would not deny that, in some ways, Crabapple does challenge the ethos of capitalism, being self-managing, challenging consumerism, and producing good wholesome food instead of junk food. But the only way to tackle the problems raised by capitalism is to take the system on in the communities where we live, and not to retreat to little niches in the countryside in an attempt to convince ourselves that we are doing something "revolutionary".

