

Subversion

Number 22

**In this issue: "Green Communism" - Letters, Replies, Debates ...
Fighting the JSA ...Still Thinking About Getting a Job?
The IRA and the class war ... Riots in London**



Is This The Way They Say The Future's Meant To Feel?

Subversion 22

INTRODUCTION

This issue of Subversion is made up almost entirely of discussion with and amongst our readers. For those in the movement who prefer debates behind closed doors and the miraculous appearance of a 'line' on everything from the Russian Revolution to the best toothpaste for revolutionaries this may be disconcerting.

For ourselves, we find the growing number of non-members reading Subversion critically, writing to us, adding to or contesting articles, and writing from their own experience, a very positive development.

The parameters of the debate in Subversion are clearly *revolutionary*. We perceive a growing core of common politics emerging amongst many revolutionaries and a clarification of where the real differences remain - many of which will only be resolved in the practice of the class struggle.

This issue can mostly be read and understood on its own, but if this is the first issue you have picked up we urge you to write off for the back issues to get a more rounded view of the subjects being discussed. We of course welcome letters and articles from readers contributing to current debates and opening up new areas for discussion.

Our address is on page 9.

This is a small note about **READING**. It would be better for us all to read in groups so that we could discuss important aspects of what we are reading, however, this is probably not possible for most of us, so it is essential that we read everything carefully. Read everything as if you had to write a letter in reply to it. Definitely read it twice. Have patience with the writers of articles, who may not be able to express their thoughts absolutely clearly, think about what they are trying to say, don't just write them off because they have used some phrase or other that you dislike. Finally, try to read everything SUBVERSION publishes while naked.

Want to get involved in Subversion?

There are many ways you could get involved in Subversion.

For instance:

- Correspond with us on issues raised in our bulletin
- Write articles for inclusion in our bulletin (let us know in advance an outline of what you're thinking of writing)
- Take extra copies of the Subversion bulletin to distribute to friends or at local meetings/events
- Copy and distribute relevant articles more widely
- Contribute financially on a regular basis

Ideally we would like to see Subversion grow and become more effective by joining up with other local active groups following a period of joint discussion and activity. But we recognise that at the present time many individual revolutionaries are fairly isolated. If you're in this situation and you already do most or all of the above list it would be a logical step to consider joining our group. If you live in or within easy travelling distance of Greater Manchester we would urge you to do this. If you live further away the practical benefits of joining would be less but we could still guarantee:

- Regular minutes of our meetings
- Access to material we receive
- Regular contact through letters/phone calls/email
- Draft articles for Subversion for comment

In this way you would have more influence on the direction and activity of the group.

Obviously if we had a large influx of individual members like this we would then all have to discuss new ways of organising that would more effectively involve everyone.

So - think about it!

What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.

We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.

We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.

We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.

The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.) is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.

Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.

We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.

We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.

We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.

We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Everybody's Talking About...

Green Communism

The article on 'Green' Communism in **Subversion 21** has provoked a lively reaction, reflected over the first few pages of this issue. There are **critical letters** from **JM** (below) and **Oxford Green Anarchists** (overleaf), which we answer on page 4, followed by a substantial contribution from a contact in **Hastings** (page 5). Finally we round off the debate (for now!) with an article reprinted from **The Poor, The Bad and The Angry** (page 8).

LETTER FROM JM

Dear Subversion,

I would like to respond to the essay 'Green Communism' printed in your most recent issue.

This essay is so ill-informed and wrong-headed that it really does not make a serious contribution to debate. There are so many basic errors in the essay that it would take an entire essay to address its mistakes! So rather than critique its fundamental flaws, I will just focus on some key points. I cannot - and would not want to - speak on behalf of all individuals involved in the anti-civilisation anarchist current, but as someone participating in this current I want to offer a personal response to the inaccuracies and slurs aimed at what your essay reductively refers to as 'anti-technological anarchists'.

First, your writer could do everyone the favour of taking anti-civilisation ideas seriously, rather than just engaging in uninformed assertion and smear tactics. Anti-civilisation anarchism is *not* 'militant reformism', nor 'militant, liberal reformism'. It does not just 'call itself anarchist'. Anti-civilisation anarchists do not merely 'claim to be anarchists' and certainly haven't 'fallen for the lies of capitalism hook, line and sinker'. Part of this is sheer ignorance. (Using Bookchin's *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* as a guide to the anti-civilisation current is like using National Front propaganda as a guide

to understanding the lives of Black Britons. Your author's cheap jibe (taken from Bookchin) that at least in the kind of society Zerzan envisages no one would have to read 'the crap he wrote' cuts no ice, as your author clearly hasn't read Zerzan anyway, but just parrots Bookchin!). But part of this consists of outright smears. Your author wants to undermine anti-civilisation anarchists by name-calling: they're not anarchists, they're liberals; they're not revolutionary, they're reformists; and they don't have a sophisticated analysis - they're naive and (of course) capital's dupes. Give anti-civilisation anarchists some credit! Judge the ideas. Look at the primary texts, not Bookchin's second-hand distortions! Know what you're talking about before you publish work on it!

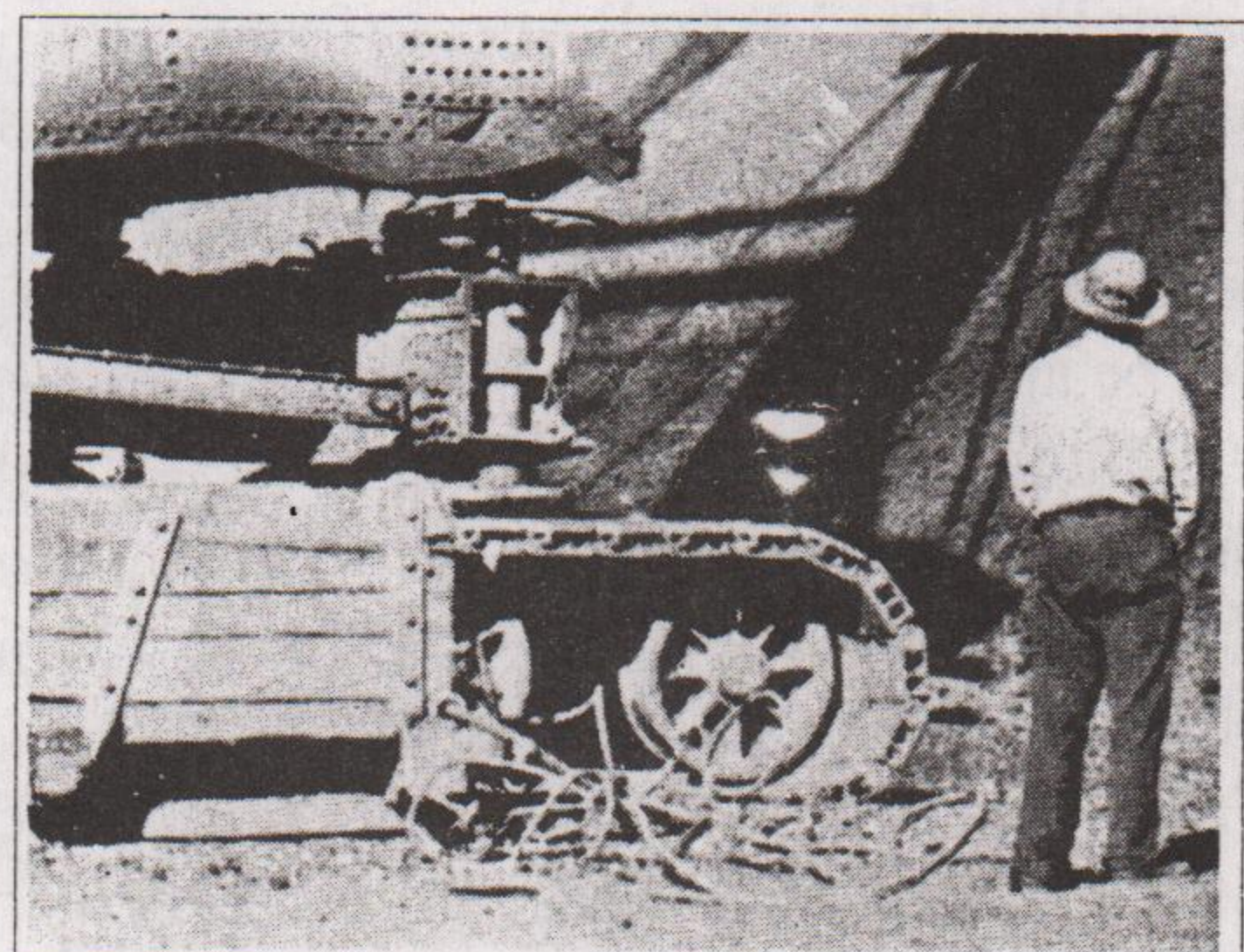
Anti-civilisation currents *extend* the classical anarchist analysis *beyond* the traditional emphasis on capital and the state. *Of course*, capital and the state are important sources of power and need to be abolished through revolution. There's no argument there. But there are other forms of power which *preceded* both and which need to be abolished along with them, if an anarchist revolution is to succeed. Your author writes "...the destruction of the environment is the result, not of civilisation, not of technology, but of the domination of the planet by capital." But *power* - including the power to engage in environmental destruction - developed *before* capital. Capital is just the latest (and deadliest) form assumed by power, and civilisation is the name anti-civilisation anarchists use to characterise the ensemble of social relations and techniques of coercion and control within which capital and the state emerge.

"Capital would like us to think that the problem does not lie in the control of production and the existence of wage labour", writes your author. It's reductive to say that 'the' problem can

be located in any one issue. But in one respect your author is right. Production and labour is a crucial problem. But the problem is far deeper than your author seems to suspect. The issue is not merely 'the control' of production, but the *abolition* of production; not merely the existence of 'wage labour', but the existence of *labour in any form*. Anti-civilisation anarchists aren't just 'anti-technological anarchists': they want to abolish power in all its forms, *including work*. To assert a pro-technology anarchist position means envisaging the continuation of labour in an anarchist society. But who is going to force people to labour in a power-free society? Not me! Are you? And will you want to keep on working? I won't!

Anti-civilisation anarchists recognise that work is *in itself* a primary source of oppression. But your author, appropriating wholesale Marxist analysis, assumes that there are such things as productive forces. These are just the alienated energies of people working for capital. If everyone stops working, the 'productive forces' disappear. And so, incidentally, does technology! Technology, in a sense, is a red herring. Anti-civilisation anarchists oppose it because it is a powerful means of oppression, alienation and environmental destruction. But a more fundamental issue is the destruction of the whole social nexus - i.e. civilisation - that makes its very production and usage possible.

In resistance,
JM.



Green Communism Debate continued
LETTER FROM OXFORD GREEN ANARCHISTS

Dear Subversion,

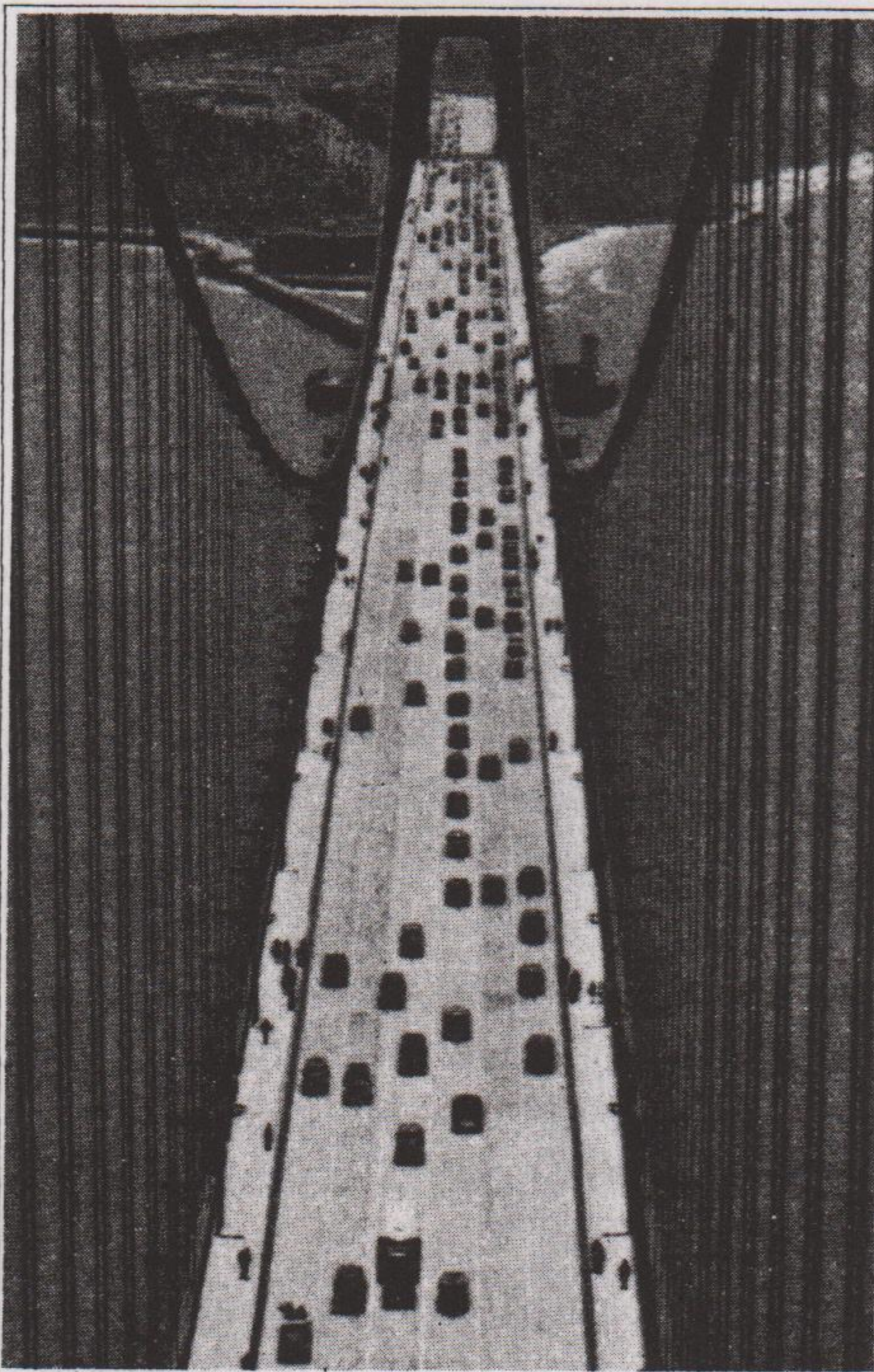
Thanks for Subversion 21 - keep us on your mailing list.

In response to 'Green' Communism, you still fail to distinguish between technology and tool use. You should know from John Zerzan's definition in the *GA* you quote from that technology is 'the ensemble of the division of labour'. According to Mumford's *Technics & Civilisation*, the first technologies were ancient armies and work-gangs, not their weapons and tools. The real issue is how they were organised, not how they were equipped.

Subversion thinks that uttering the magic word 'Capitalism' explains everything but it should be obvious that a society divided hierarchically between organisers and the organised can never be equal or free. Mumford's ancient armies and work-gangs preceded capitalism by several thousand years and he also suggests the rise of the clock and the consequent intensification of organisation around it created capitalism. Unlike FC, we aren't reductionists. It's not simply a case that technology is economically determined or vice versa - there's a dialectical relationship between the two.

We're amazed you 'cannot conceive of cities going', as if they weren't as much a product of history as everything else. Cities are technology, a complex process that has to be organised in a way that makes a future free and equal society impossible. You'd be less enthusiastic about Bookchin's 'libertarian' municipalism if you took David Watson's point on board that 'the city as polis created not only politics, but *the police*.' If you're talking about 'breaking them down into more human size', you're either effectively arguing for an end to cities or not talking about a scale that's really 'human' after all. As to this bit about 'planting trees', we've been around long enough to call it tokenism when Statists do it.

Your comment about 'a return to back-breaking labour' shows you haven't understood the first thing about anarcho-primitivism. Scarcity is a product of Civilisation, the powerful rationing those powerless and dependent on them, to exploit and control them. Nature is abundant as demonstrated by hunter-gatherers who work under 20 hours a week to meet their basic needs. They're in control of that work too - it's unalienated. The more civilised things have got, the harder we've had to work. You surely won't disagree that civilisation has been built on the extraction of surplus value - our ancestors' sweat - but there's more to it than that. We've also had less control over the work we do (and every



other aspect of our lives) the more complex, interdependent and organised the economy has become. We have to challenge such organisation itself, not just the organisers, or any new society will otherwise just reproduce the old one. Your comments on appropriate technology for a post-revolutionary society are an inappropriate compromise based upon a fundamental misunderstanding.

Holding a stage view of history, you seem to think communism will come out of capitalism's contradictions but all we can see is a society which is encroaching more and more on us and

making us all more and more dependent on it in the name of 'liberation from Nature'. That won't free us from alienation, it's just *more* separation. We got it right at the start and for the vast majority of human history. People were free, equal and self-determining when *primitive* communism prevailed, without even the individualist distinction between Self and Other - as Bookchin himself argued in his seminal *Ecology of Freedom*, Chapter 5, before reformist municipalism addled his brain. Civilisation, whether capitalist or not, won't facilitate our liberation - only its destruction and the end of our dependence on it will. All the truly radical currents in history appreciated this as obvious - you might find Zerzan's *Who Killed Ned Ludd?* most instructive here. Your ridiculously misrepresentative caricature of *GA*'s revolutionary strategy is half a decade out of date but even here our emphasis on direct action and breaking dependency comes through.

You do indeed 'have much to learn' from groups like 'Reclaim the Streets' as they have rejected the compromise with Civilisation your presentation of Capitalism as a be-all and end-all implies. Liverpool's significance was not that the dockers took RTS on board - RTS had been doing other revolutionary stuff for years - but that more archaic conservative, workerist currents weren't seen by them as worthy of the same consideration.

Rather than referring readers to the poisonous smears of Bookchin and his partner Janet Biehl, you'd have done better concluding 'Green' Communism by referring them to David Watson's *Beyond Bookchin* (Black and Red, Autonomedia, 1996) and Bob Black's *Anarchy Beyond Leftism* (CAL, 1997) to ensure they will have something useful to contribute to the struggle in the future.

Yours, for the destruction of Civilisation, Oxford GAs.

Green Anarchist can be contacted at:
 BCM 1715, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

Green Communism Debate continued
**SUBVERSION REPLY TO JM AND
 OXFORD GREEN ANARCHISTS**

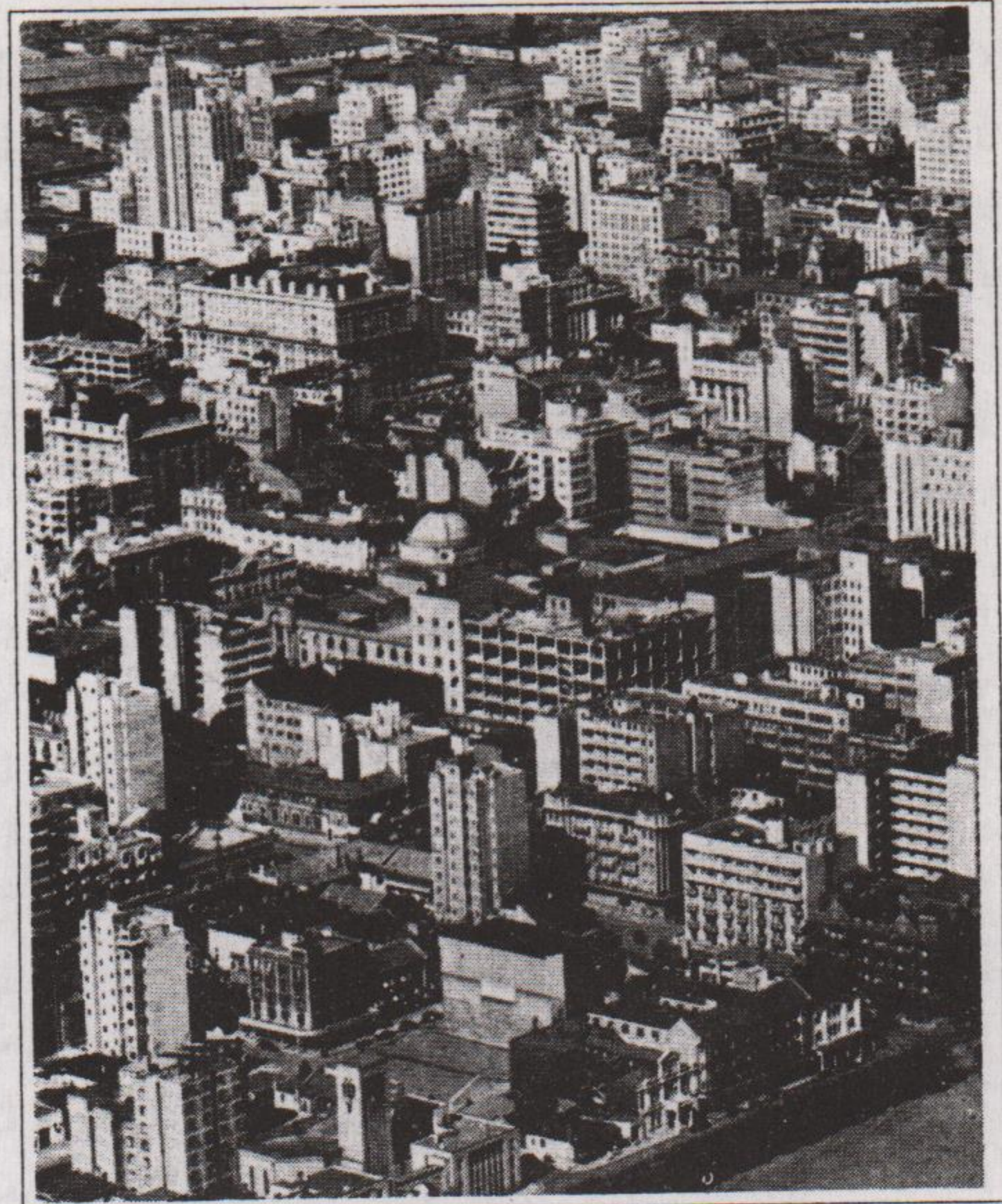
There are many points raised in these letters. It's probably best to start with the bits we agree with. GA are quite right when they talk about the dialectical relationship between technology and society. For the benefit of the uninitiated, this means that technology and society don't develop independently of one another. Changes in technology lead to changes in the way society is organised, equally changes in social organisation lead to changes in the technology that society uses. The one influences the other and vice versa. Equally important, however, is the effect of class struggle on social development. When our class struggles, social organisation and technology change to meet the threat we pose - which of course means the working class has to respond in a different way. It is our contention that it is this conflict which is the most important. Our article 'Green Communism' tried to explore (in part) how struggles that are labeled as 'green' or 'environmental' are often a part of our class's response to capital's attacks.

Both letters accuse us of holding a stages theory of history. However, GA also seem to do so. They talk about the stage of 'primitive' communism (an expression coined by Marx and Engels), to describe a time in pre-history when people were 'free, equal and self-determining'. We are not in a position to dispute this, neither are we in a position to agree. Civilization came into being when social classes emerged. It represents the domination and exploitation of the many by the few. There have been many examples of 'civilization' - all have represented different forms of class society. We have no problems with JM's assertion that 'other forms of power preceded' capital and state. Different civilizations have used different forms and combinations of domination: patriarchy, democracy, religion, race, brute force and most recently the domination of class by class through mindless toil enslaved to machines.

We do not hold the view that communism only became possible with the creation of modern capitalism, we have had many idle discussions over pints of beer, arguing whether it would have been possible in earlier social epochs. And broadly speaking we think it could have been. But it was idle speculation for one simple reason. We do not live in the era of the Peasants Revolt or of Spartacus. We live in 1997, in a time when the only social system in the world (with maybe one or two insignificant exceptions for a few thousand people), is capitalism. Capitalism uses any form of domination that is useful to its own needs. So patriarchy remains (but watered down), religion remains (but in the back seat), racism remains too, seemingly as strong as ever, but pre-eminent is the domination of people by machine - of living labour dominated by dead labour, working to extract surplus value (profit) for the ruling class. We believe that by destroying that relationship and the state which supports it and hence the domination of the ruling class and its lackeys, that a genuine human society can be created - an end to the 'civilization' that has dominated history for the past thousands of years.

We believe that the result of the struggle against capitalism (the currently existing form of civilization) could end in the creation of communism. GA seem, at a glance, to want the same thing. But on closer examination what they actually appear to want is a return to 'primitive' communism. As far as we can tell this is shared by other primitivists. They believe that the time before civilization was a time of plenty and ease. They approve of the idea of a society 'without even the individualist distinction between Self and Other', an end to cities and in the case of JM 'the abolition of production; not merely the existence of wage-labour, but the existence of labour in any form...including work'.

This does not fit into our views for a number of reasons. Firstly, we wonder where all the billions of people in the



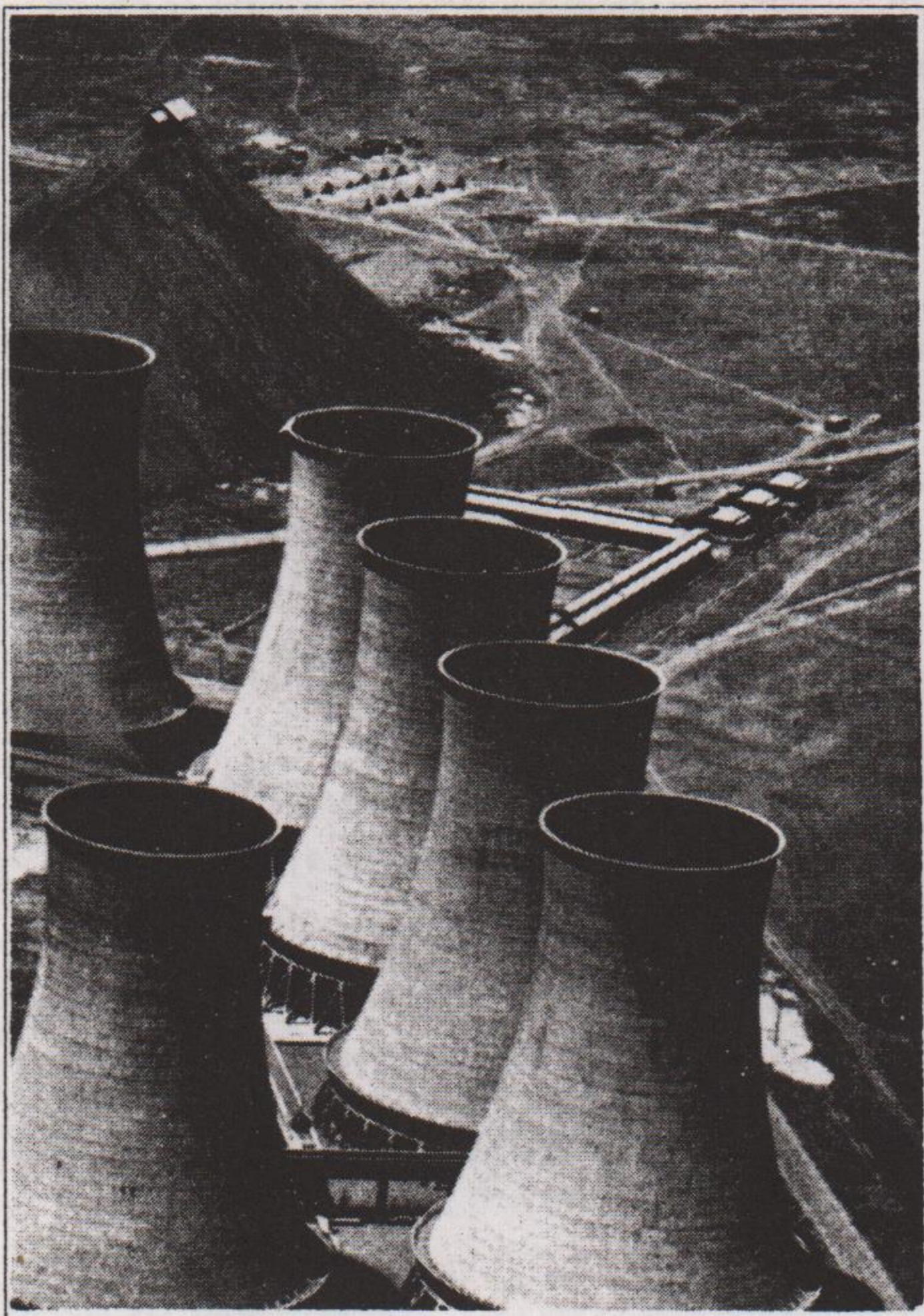
world are going to live. We wonder where they are going to find food, how they are going to feed themselves. We presume that neither GA nor JM are advocating genocide as a way forward to the new society. That was why our original article accepted that cities would survive in a future society - indeed a view we have heard expressed by RTS activists who are also anarchist communists. Just how things would develop as human history unfolds is, of course, a completely different matter. We have only a limited idea what a communist society would look like at its beginning, let alone after a hundred or two years. We would speculate that abominations like London, Paris, Manchester would disappear.

Secondly, we are not at all against labour. It is our view that making things is fundamental to human being. We are against working for others and being exploited. We are against human labour being dominated by machinery. We want labour to be a creative activity, not a form of drudgery. It's an old expression, but we want to break down the division between work and play. In the context of the modern class struggle we see tendencies towards a 'refusal of (alienated) work' - a refusal to accept domination by bosses and their right to screw more out of us at their will. To some this means struggle at work, sabotage, not exerting themselves, not giving the bosses their creativity. To others it means simply avoiding the labour process altogether. In either case we support them.

Green Communism Debate continued
 Thirdly, we are not sure what GA mean by 'without even the individualist distinction between Self and Other'. We are not herd animals. On one (apparently contradictory) level this is exactly what capital and the state are aiming at for the majority of society - it uses many ideologies which strengthen the 'nation', the 'community', 'democracy' and so on. We would classify these as socially totalitarian ideals. As we said earlier, we have no idea what a communist society would look like after a hundred years or so. However, we can predict that even in its early days the kind of individualist competition prevalent today will die an unlamented death. However, communism will be created by people as they already exist, not by some idealised form of humanity. In that context many of the current limitations of people will carry forward. We debate amongst ourselves just how much people will be individuals and how much they will be social beings. We suspect that they will realise that a free society will allow the free development of all. Individuals will be social beings - not atomised, isolated and uncared for.

We finish by repeating GA's signing off, though we suspect that we mean something fundamentally different.

*For the destruction of civilization.,
 Subversion*



LETTER FROM S., HASTINGS

Dear comrades

Congratulations on the article 'Green Communism' in Subversion 21. It is good to see the small anti-state communist milieu in this country turning its attention to matters ecological as is also shown in recent articles in *Organise!* and *Wildcat's* critique of Marxist 'progressivism' and engagement with 'primitivist' ideas. As is clearly recognised by your article continued capitalist expansion (otherwise known as 'Development' or 'Progress') can only lead to increased degradation of the biosphere and human immiseration.

People holding anarchist and communist positions have always been involved in protest movements against the destruction of nature, harmful technologies, abuse of animals etc etc. And this is right - at its most basic level it is right simply because the world which capital is creating - a world dominated by concrete, plastic, machines, pollution and stress - is not the world we want.

But in terms of theory, analysis, what can we offer to an understanding of the dire situation we find ourselves in and a strategy for getting out of it?

So far the only recognisably anti-capitalist line to emerge has been the so-called 'primitivist movement' which you mention. Now, I agree in general with most of your criticism of it but it is as well to remember that as ideas develop quite often a healthy corrective to past errors will go too far and then have to be corrected itself. When these ideas first emerged I was quite attracted to them (ie Perlman, Bradford, Fifth Estate etc etc) because they were a refreshing, exhilarating challenge to the technology worship so prevalent not only in the Left but also amongst genuine anti-capitalists. The problem as I see it with these ideas, at least in their more extreme form, is that it is just as ridiculous to say that you are anti-technology as it is to worship it. A bow and arrow is technology, a digging stick is technology, to gather and

prepare herbs to cure a sickness is a technological procedure. Humanity is a technological species, it is our ability to understand and manipulate the natural world which makes us human.

To me those who maintain that they are against all technology are like a mirror image of those reformists in the Green movement who are incapable of going beyond environmentalism:- both see technology as being the problem rather than the social relations which give rise to it, one lot advocate lead-free petrol and windmills while the other lot appear to demand a return to the stone-age.

Technology is not neutral, it is produced by society and hence it serves the perceived interests of the dominant forces in society. This is not the same as saying that all technology is bad and should be abolished. Certainly after thousands of years of class-society and centuries of capitalist expansion there is very much which must be got rid-of but we would be mad not to see that much of what has been learned over the centuries will be useful in creating the sort of sustainable, pleasurable world that we as communists want to see. Just because we want to abandon the private motor car it doesn't mean we have to abandon the wheel. Communists have always been, rightly, wary of drawing up blueprints of the future but if we are going to engage in a critique of capitalist technology, of the way in which capital organises production and social life then it is very unconvincing to simply say that once the social relations of capitalism are overthrown everything will come right inevitably. People want to know a bit more than that.

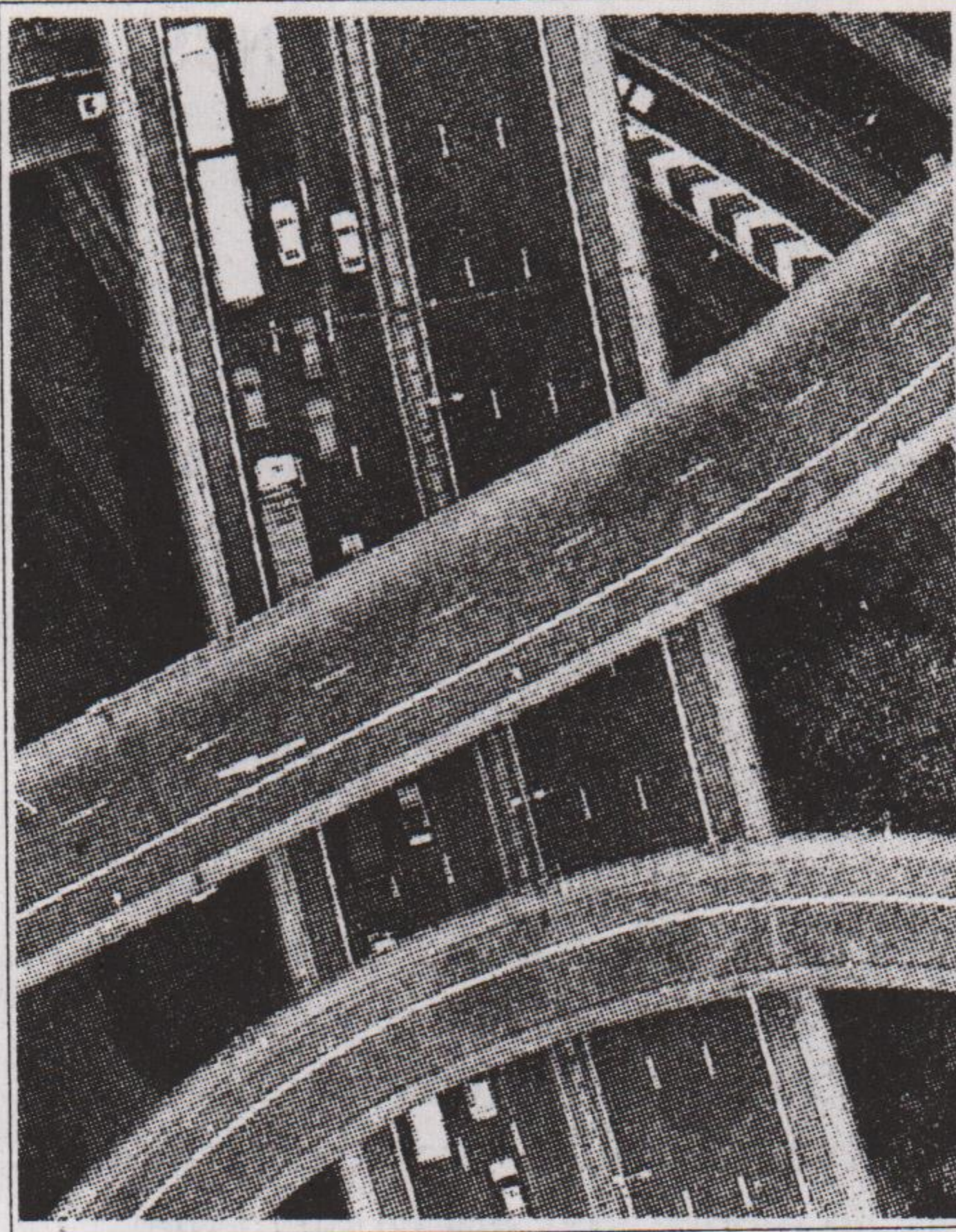
As you pointed out in your article one strand of the emerging Green ideology tends toward trying to get people to accept a self imposed austerity out of misplaced guilt at capitalism's environmental destruction. Communists on the other hand envisage a future society of abundance; not only is hunger and crude physical deprivation to be abolished but life is to be richer, more pleasurable, more creative and fulfilling

Green Communism Debate continued than anything conceivable under capitalism. Since late twentieth century capitalism poses *itself* as the society of abundance and *its* expansion as the road to ever greater abundance we are really obliged to point out the difference between our concept of abundance and capital's and how it would be brought about.

Although it is *true* it is not *enough* to point out that on a global scale capitalism does *not* produce abundance. Capital's ideological apparatus (advertising, media, education etc etc) is very powerful and if it can convince enough people to *want* its vision of abundance (cars, videos, jet airliners, Rolex watches, Barbie dolls blah blah blah) then it has achieved a significant victory against the tendency towards communism which undoubtedly exists within our species. So if we want communist ideas to be taken seriously by those engaged in actions against environmental destruction we should be willing to at least be prepared to discuss how a communist society would function in a material as well as an organisational sense.

To return for a moment to the advocates of 'primitivism', although for the most part they are reluctant to 'get down to the nuts and bolts' it seems that, despite the extremism of someone like Zerzan, most of them advocate the abolition of all technology developed since the industrial revolution. Although they might talk about being 'anti-civilisation' mostly I think they want to see people living in small agricultural communities with a technology roughly equivalent to that which existed in medieval Europe and trading through barter systems with their immediate neighbours. There are still a few parts of the world where people could exist in the hunter-gatherer mode and presumably they would envisage that that is what would happen.

Assuming that this were to be achieved I see no reason why after a few generations had passed and there were no one around who had had direct experience of the horrors of capitalist



society the whole process of commodity exchange and wage labour shouldn't start up again.

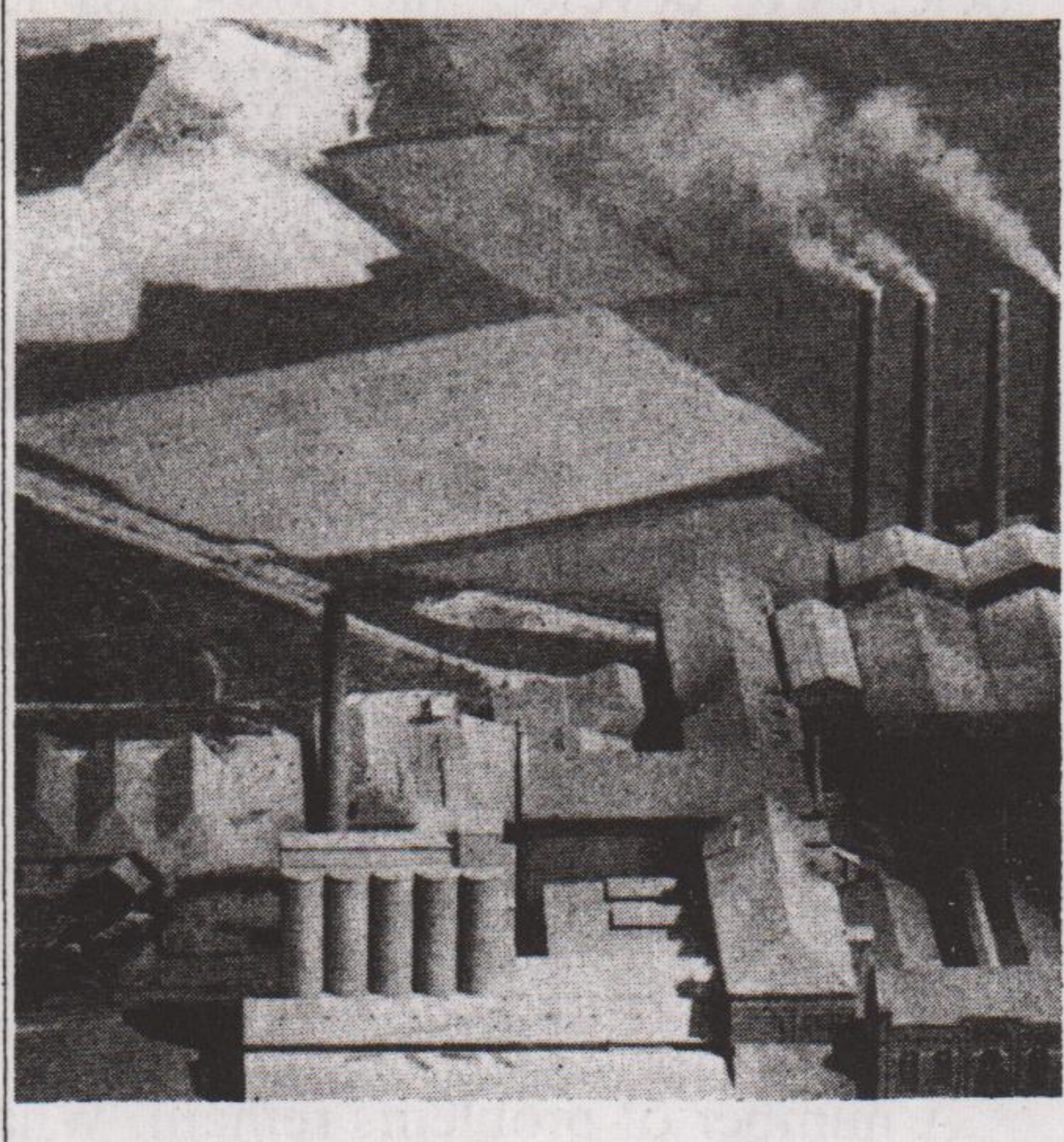
As communists we should argue that far from wanting to see people living in small isolated communities we want to see our species genuinely united on a global scale in a world human community. I would say that this presupposes the maintenance of some technology - as a minimum sailing craft but also probably airships, telecommunications of some sort, radar and radio to make travel safer and so on. This in turn presupposes that there would be a need for some mining, fabrication of metal, production of some source of power etc etc. Although the junk left over from the capitalist era could probably be creatively recycled for quite a while!! As well as transportation and communication there are also other areas where fairly 'advanced' technology might be maintained eg medical and entertainments. Do we want to give up recorded music and the cinema for example? I also imagine that some people would still be interested in pursuing 'scientific' interests eg astronomy, geology, natural history etc, tools would be required which, as above, would require a certain minimum 'industrial' infrastructure.

I must say again that it is quite right for communists to refrain from 'Utopianism' in its negative sense - dotting the 'i's and crossing the 't's on some dream of perfection - but I would

say that the above outline is pretty reasonable; people will not want overnight to abandon every aspect of the technology which exists nor is it possible to do so and communism must be created and maintained on a conscious, global level if it is to have any chance of surviving.

So we must take what is useful from the existing technology and scrap what isn't as well as using all our imagination and creativity to invent new, more human ways of living. Although it is reasonable to assume that a communist society would keep some aspects of 'advanced' technology it would be on such a radically reduced scale that the negative effects of mass capitalist industrialism would disappear. As you point out in your article expansion is one of capitalism's most basic features, if something *can* be produced the logic of capitalist economics is to produce it in ever increasing quantities, to build in obsolescence so that even more can be produced etc etc. In a communist society where production was genuinely geared to people's needs and desires it goes without saying that this would not be the case. So I would envisage that communist society would develop a sort of 'two level system of production' (for want of a less ugly phrase).

Mostly people would be living in communities small enough to allow the convivial, face to face organisation of activities. Most of the necessities of daily living (food, shelter, clothing, basic medical care, furniture, tools etc) would be produced locally in ways in harmony with the local ecosystem and based on organic gardening, permaculture (intelligent design of buildings, living systems, elimination of 'waste' etc), traditional woodland management and crafts and craft production of all kinds using natural materials. Although I feel uncomfortable as a long standing vegan to be saying this, it is also probable that as reforestation progresses (as is vital from an ecological point of view) and rivers and seas recover from industrial and agricultural pollution, hunting and fishing will provide significant food resources for many communities. I



Green Communism Debate continued would not envisage that animal farming would continue on any but the most tiny scale as it is inefficient, cruel and uses up too much human time.

On top of this basic level of production would be a smaller sector of more 'advanced' technology ensuring that people around the world could keep in touch with each other (to exchange information, ideas, maintain friendships etc), that anything that needed to be planned on a regional or global level could be, that people were free to travel around the world if they so wished, that medical emergencies could be dealt with, that people could produce and enjoy sophisticated entertainments from time to time.

The question that we as communists have to ask (and answer) is this: would it be possible for a free society to maintain this minimal infrastructure of 'advanced' technology without recourse to compulsion, to alienated labour or something equivalent?

As far as what I have described as the 'basic' level of production is concerned I see no problem at all, as you say "people will freely associate together to produce and will freely take from the common store according to their needs." People will engage in activities which both please them and which go toward producing the necessities of life and making life pleasurable, there will be no compulsion or alienation.

But what about mining, building wind generators, maintaining a railway

system, producing steel and all the other 'industrial' processes that might have to be undertaken to maintain the sort of infrastructure I have described? Could this be done without wrecking the natural world and imposing alienated labour on people? I would say yes. Let's take as an example steel production. A very limited amount might be needed for such tasks as maintaining railways, producing tools, perhaps building some large structures etc. It is quite possible that one steel plant could produce all that was needed in an area the size of the British Isles in say 2 or 3 weeks each year. It might only take 100 or so people to do it. The plant would obviously have been designed to make its operation as pleasant, safe and non-polluting as possible. Surely volunteers would be found to do the work in shifts in a situation where they could meet with new people and have fun. In fact the whole thing could take on the air of a festival with work being interspersed with performance, games, dancing, whatever people wanted. Even today under capitalism people go off to do grape picking, for example, and regard it more or less as a holiday.

The same would apply to all production involving 'advanced' technology; the amounts needed would be so small that their production would not have to be a burden to anyone, the small scale ought also to ensure that no significant pollution or destruction of nature should take place.

What about tasks in the 'advanced' technology sector which would have to be performed on a more permanent basis such as communications and transport? Again I don't see why it should be a problem. Although the reduction would not be as great as in production it is likely that much less time and effort would have to be put in as compared to now owing to pace of life. If some people like to garden or make clothes why shouldn't some people like to drive a train, fly an airship or help to organise a telephone system? Obviously in a communist society no one can be compelled to do anything and no one would sacrifice themselves to any of these tasks, they

would only get done if people *did* find them enjoyable as well as of use to society. Sharing the tasks out fairly would mean that no one had to do more than they wanted, in fact you might have the opposite problem with everyone wanting to have a go at flying the airship!

What about the energy requirements of such a society? Day to day heating and cooking needs could hopefully be met by the use of efficient minimum pollution wood burners using locally produced wood from vastly expanded managed woodlands. Electricity production would be sharply curtailed, electricity being used for the things it is most suitable for, ie not heating and cooking which is ridiculously inefficient, but for things like communications systems, audio-visual entertainments, computers etc. Wind and small-scale hydroelectric systems should suffice. With massive reforestation countering the 'greenhouse effect' it should be possible to make use of the remaining fossil fuels in those 'advanced' technology processes where necessary. Needless to say the extraction and use of fossil fuels will be on a minute scale compared to today and people would only undertake it *if* it could be done without damage to the biosphere.

So when we as communists talk about a society of abundance we mean one in which people's material needs are met easily and pleurably, where people have every opportunity to travel, learn about the world and create, where people are surrounded by the beauty and abundance of the world and feel at home in it. Capitalism's 'abundance' on the other hand is a mirage based on the buying and selling of commodities and activity carried out under duress.

We firmly believe that the society of abundance and freedom we advocate *is* possible and that in order to repair the damage of industrial capitalism, it is *not* necessary to retreat into some self-denying Green austerity where only our most basic biological needs can be met. But we are not woolly headed idealists dreaming of some impossible Utopia; hopefully the very short and rough

Green Communism Debate continued sketch I have presented above shows that our vision is a practical and realisable vision. I would hope that it might also stimulate the debate in this area.

For example...

If capitalism's 'development of the productive forces' has led to a situation where ecological catastrophe threatens the existence of our species, does this have implications for our view of class struggle as absolutely central to the social transformation we desire? If we stand for the dismantling of mass capitalist industrialism, does this affect our intervention in industrial disputes?

Much could be said about my rough outline of a possible future society by people with a greater practical understanding of industrial processes than I have; which technologies might be of use and which would *have* to go because some of their implications are unacceptable on any scale?

Anti-capitalist revolutionaries often sneer at the formation of communes and pooh pooh advocates of 'small is beautiful' and self-sufficiency etc - and often they are right to because such ventures *can* be, and often are, an attempt to escape reality, to live in a bubble isolated from the struggle against capitalism. But if we wish to see the way that people produce their needs and fulfil their desires *change*, then surely experiments in collective living, organic gardening, permaculture, woodland management etc need to be carried out now so that people can develop and spread the skills which will be necessary in the future we envisage. Nor should such experiments be divorced from the struggle against capitalism - the recent Wandsworth land occupation shows the sort of direction in which these things could develop.

And I think that's quite enough to be going on with!

In solidarity,
S. Hastings

THE QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS: NOTES TOWARDS TRANSCENDING THE PROGRESS/ANTI-PROGRESS DEBATE

ONE

Marx's schema of progress can be taken as descriptive, not prescriptive. The Marxist formulation is that humanity began in primitive communism, and is going through various stages of class society (savagery, barbarism, feudalism, capitalism, etc.) that develop the productive forces of the economy before humanity can abolish class society and achieve communism at a higher level. Marx's agent for the abolition of class society, the industrial proletariat, has the capacity to do this, not only because of its position at the point of production, but also because of its aggregation and organization into a self-conscious class by the process of industrial production itself. This describes what has happened historically. It does not describe what has to happen.

TWO

The abolition of class society and the creation of communism could have occurred at any stage of class society. Clearly, if communism existed for primitive, hunter-gatherer societies where the productive economic forces were virtually nil and scarcity practically universal, then class society can be abolished and communism created at stages of society where the productive forces are more developed and certain scarcities have been eliminated. Thus, it is not necessary to wait for the full development of the productive forces and the total elimination of scarcity. Stages of the Marxist schema can be skipped.

THREE

Furthermore, insurrectionary movements to abolish class society have emerged at every stage of class society, spearheaded by non-industrial as well as industrial laboring classes. The slave revolts of ancient Rome, the peasant uprisings of the Middle Ages, and the indigenous rebellions of New World native peoples, no less than the workers revolutions of the 18th, 19th & 20th centuries express authentic communist currents in human history.

FOUR

Finally, it is possible to conceive of conditions which would allow pre-class

societies to develop into post-class societies without having to endure the miseries of class struggle; in other words, to skip the Marxist schema altogether. Had the European invasion of the Americas been delayed for a century or two, the native nations of north America (the Iroquois Federation in the northeast, the Six Civilized Nations of the southeast, the Hopi pueblos in the southwest, etc.) might have developed a continental organization and coordination of truly internationalist dimensions.

FIVE

A number of problems remain. What agency has maintained the condition of human exploitation historically, once primitive communism was subverted or destroyed? The dialectical dynamics of class society as Marx proposed have been found wanting as a sufficient explanation by many, but the current use of civilization as the scapegoat has proven equally lacking. In particular, the notion of civilization is extremely nebulous. What constitutes the basis for civilization? Hierarchy? Agriculture? Language? The whole anti-civilization debate has become an intellectual quagmire, replete with flawed assumptions, questionable methodologies and shaky conclusions.

SIX

Chief among the problems is the issue of scarcity. Scarcity exists in a number of forms, the first being natural scarcity. Certain resources may not exist in sufficient abundance to satisfy human needs and desires. Such natural scarcities are extremely few and for the most part can be dealt with by substituting other resources for the scarce ones. Artificial scarcity is more familiar, as it is the product of class society. Economic monopolies are only the most obvious sources of scarcity. For instance, diamonds would be as plentiful as grains of sand on a beach if it were not for the worldwide diamond cartel. But the very operation of class societies also produces scarcity. During the Middle Ages, when the nobility and clergy expropriated grain and labor from the peasant class, it was common for the peasantry to produce just enough to survive and no more. What little surplus was produced quickly disappeared into a smuggling economy. Similarly, when the Bolsheviks used the Red Army to confiscate

Green Communism Debate continued grain from the Russian peasantry, all of the old feudal habits of that class reemerged. The abolition of class society would resolve this type of scarcity. Finally, there is the scarcity for want of a total liberatory social reality. One region of the world may lack water while another may have an abundance of it. One part of the global economy may not have sufficient productive capacity while another might have an over-abundance of it. If a classless, global community is not created, such scarcity will persist. This raises a final problem.

SEVEN

Is the impulse to abolish class society and create communism, as expressed historically through various social movements, a sufficient agency to achieve totality? Totality was a concept much used by Georg Lukacs, in his work **History and Class Consciousness**. Lukacs described capitalism as a totalizing agent. Not only does capitalism seek to expand globally, to create an all-encompassing world capitalist market, but it also seeks to invade and absorb every aspect of social and personal life. Capitalist domination presently reaches from the furthest recesses of the individual psyche to the aboriginal peoples at the outermost edges of global society. Capitalism has achieved totality; in other words, it has become a total, global social system. Lukacs also postulated that, prior to the totalizing force of the capitalist mode of production, no other mode of production possessed this dynamic. Pre-capitalist societies might have commercial components existing side by side with feudal and slave ones, no one component capable of the hegemony demonstrated by capitalism. Is the impulse to abolish class society sufficient by itself to achieve a global communism? Did insurrectionary Roman slaves or revolutionary peasants during the Middle Ages or rebellious indigenous peoples in the Americas seek to create an all-encompassing classless, global community?

EIGHT

The necessity for such an all-encompassing classless, global community has been made clear by other people. It is not possible to have communism in just one river valley or one bioregion any more than it is possible to build socialism in

one country. So long as predatory capitalism exists anywhere in the world, a threat remains to the liberatory communist society that has taken hold on a limited scale.

NINE

The debate over progress thus is redefined. The Marxist conception of progress is obsolete on two points. There is no historical necessity for stages of economic development to maximize society's productive forces and eliminate scarcity. The working class capacity for self-emancipation does not depend on this, nor does it follow from industrial forms of organization that bring vast numbers of proletarians together under a single roof, subject to a unified form of economic organization. Both of these factors may be helpful, but they are not determinant. What is crucial is the consciousness of the working class as a class. However, consciousness in general and class consciousness in particular does not emerge out of a vacuum. It arises out of the material conditions of society. The question then becomes, can a movement for total liberation come out of a less than total mode of production? Is the impetus for a classless, global community dependent upon the material conditions produced by the global economic system of capitalism? The peasant revolts of the Middle Ages and the Reformation, in their millenarian fervor, shared several universal components with the Universal Church of the time. Yet they were not social movements for total liberation as witness the pogroms of Jews because of their religion that accompanied many of these revolts. Is our ability to conceive of a communism that is based in self interest and not mysticism, which is global and not regional in aspiration, and whose scope is not partial but total; is this necessarily the product of the present advanced, worldwide capitalist system in which we exist?

*Reprinted from **The Poor, The Bad And The Angry**. Write to: PO Box 3305, Oakland, CA 94609, USA. Ask for the publication by name on a separate note inside the envelope.*

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Organise! Journal of the ACF (Anarchist Communist Federation), c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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A Ballad Against Work is a fascinating exploration of the day-to-day realities of wage labour in modern capitalist society. We intend to review this (free) pamphlet fully in the next issue of Subversion. Write to: Collectivities, Majdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, N.I.T., Faridabad 121001, INDIA.

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The Job Seekers Allowance...

The last few issues of Subversion (starting with no.18) have included several articles and letters on the fight against the Job Seekers Allowance, and the possibilities (if any) for joint action with Employment Service workers. We are publishing here two further contributions to the debates on these subjects: (below) a letter and article written by two Nottingham comrades, and (right) the Open Letter of Resignation from the Secretary of Wales Against the JSA. [To save space a few footnotes etc. have been left out of the Open Letter].

Only Doing Your Job?

Dear Subversion

In our opinion the articles in issues 19 and 20 on the Job Seekers Allowance were valuable contributions to an understanding of this issue. If we could contribute a few words on the dole workers who are implementing the JSA. In some ways this appears to refer to the freedom versus determinism debate in philosophy: how much is our behaviour authentically free and how much is it determined by social circumstances? Some dole workers, and their supporters, appear to be arguing that they have no freedom at all over what do, "I'm only doing what I'm told." In a situation where trade union reformism is starkly revealed as an ideology and practice where it is seen as perfectly acceptable for one group of workers to progress by oppressing another group, it is worth looking at their arguments systematically. For ease of presentation we have done this in a question and answer format.

Why pick on me? It's not my fault if the Government have brought in the Job Seekers Allowance. I'm only doing what I'm told.

This is the sort of argument that junior civil servants in the Employment and Benefit Agencies use to try to justify
(continued on page 11)

Dole Bondage? Up Yours!

It is now about two months since I ceased my involvement with the "Wales Against the JSA" (WAJSA) group...and two months since the JSA started to come into force. As I write this I still feel anger, disgust and disappointment at the path that WAJSA has chosen to take. I know other activists who dropped out at the same time share many (but not all) of my feelings (1).

The Decline and Fall of Wales Against the JSA

There had been several repeated attempts in the last 18 months or so to establish an anti JSA/unemployed action group in Cardiff. Activists around the local Trades Council had attempted to start a campaign, and the handful of local anarchists and Earth First!ers were planning to try an set up a "Groundswell" group ["Groundswell" is an autonomous 'national' network of anti-JSA and claimants action groups]. Amongst the Leftist groups in Cardiff, Militant Labour, the Socialist Labour Party, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and Cymru Goch were all planning their own anti JSA activity. However, due to a crossover of activists/contacts the various initiatives were combined to form 'Wales Against the JSA' during the summer (2).

At first things appeared to auger well for the new group. Sectarian differences between the competing politicians seemed to have been put aside. For once it seemed that the ideological trenches had been abandoned. Even more hopeful was the apparent acceptance of the concept of direct action that had been brought to the group by the younger activists with experience in the

(1) Of a group that never consisted of more than 20, 7 or 8 of us quit more or less simultaneously, over roughly the same issues. Unfortunately our experience with WAJSA has left us with little enthusiasm or energy to establish any alternative.

(2) Although the activists were almost exclusively based in Cardiff the couple who weren't and the various groups involved (using their contacts/numbers) hoped to spread WAJSA across Wales (this never really happened, although the group remained in contact with scattered people across South Wales).

recent anti-roads, anti-fascist and anti-Poll Tax struggles. Over 10 000 leaflets and posters were produced and distributed outside Job Centres; several thousand homes, in the area of Cardiff that several of us lived in, were leafleted door to door.

However once this routine had been established the first cracks in WAJSA's "unity" started to appear. Now that propaganda was being distributed proposals to back up this "promise of opposition" by starting direct action, were made. These suggestions were not (yet) rejected outright. Instead the political specialists of the various Leftist groups showed a reluctance to get involved themselves or to attempt to get information (such as the location of JSA implementation managers' offices) that might have enabled the rest of us to take some form of action despite our lack of numbers. Pickets/disruptions of Conservative MPs' and councillors' surgeries were discussed. When the relative scarcity of Tories in the area raised logistical problems it was suggested that we target Labour MPs and Councillors nearer by - this idea was hastily postponed by the Leftists who were/are still clinging to their ideas of "putting pressure on Labour" (not very much pressure obviously!).

Although still giving the idea of direct action some sort of lip service the Leftists began arguing for caution and deferment and were slipping back into their tried and tested (and failed) methods of protest - concentrating instead on "building a demo" and winning support from the Trade Unions. Crucially the Leftists saw the CPSA (the union of many Benefits Agency and Employment Service workers) as the key to success - not us unemployed. At this stage we still hoped to get numbers of unemployed people into the campaign, hoping that such an influx (even a small one) could swing the balance of WAJSA towards a more pro-active and less mediated strategy. Therefore, those of us arguing for action compromised for the sake of "unity".

As time progressed, it became clear (to some of us) that WAJSA hadn't. The date of the demo, and of the implementation of the JSA loomed closer. WAJSA were facing a potentially disastrous demonstration. Most of those arguing strongest for the march (as opposed to

(continued on page 12)

JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE Only Doing Your Job?

(continued from page 10)

their part in enforcing this oppressive measure. The officials behind the counters in local dole offices claim that this is unfair for them to be targeted by their angry clients. They say that they are not personally responsible for the policies which attack the poor. Thus they cannot be held to blame. But this defence does not hold water. If someone knowingly and willingly does bad things, even if that person was not the originator of the policy, then this is wrong. The fact that those immediately implementing the JSA did not dream it up makes no difference. Unemployed people are being oppressed by 'the system' but implementing the system are people who have names and addresses.

If I don't do it someone else will.

Maybe, but another person acting wrongly is no justification for doing the same thing yourself. Two wrongs don't make a right.

I'm not getting paid much to do it; some dole office workers receive a benefit top-up themselves.

If doing something is bad then it does not matter how much you get paid for doing it. It's still bad if you do it for a lot of money or nothing at all.

I try to give a bit of advice to the people I have to deal with.

This is just self deception. Trying to justify implementing the JSA by saying that you water it down a bit won't wash. You are still enforcing a fundamentally unjust and bad policy. Smiling at the victim just adds insult to injury.

I'm a good trade unionist who's gone on strike to demand my bosses give me adequate protection from angry clients.

All you are worried about is yourself. There is nothing virtuous about taking industrial action in support of a bad cause. Trade union action taken to try to make it easier to implement anti-working class measures is no good.

(Benefit workers need screens when the dole offices already have 'hot links' to the police, are covered in closed circuit TV cameras and patrolled by thuggish security guards? It might appear to some that it is the claimants who are being intimidated.)

If I refuse to enforce the JSA I'll lose my job.

This is possible but there are some things more important than having a job: like integrity. Anyway you could try to get a transfer to another part of the Civil Service or move out into another job. Sure, this is not easy with mass unemployment but if you go along with the JSA where will it lead? Rounding up unemployed people and putting them into work camps? (The already piloted Project Work is a straight slave labour scheme). Deporting those originating from abroad? Where will this creeping fascism end? At the Nuremburg trials the usual defence of those who participated in the Nazi extermination programme was: "I was only doing my job." As a matter of history the Nuremburg court dismissed the, 'I was only obeying orders' defence as illegitimate.

Also, this type of argument is an insult to many people on the dole who have refused to take scab jobs (and been attacked by benefit workers for not doing so). The unemployed workers who have refused to take the jobs of the Liverpool dockers, in an area where unemployment can last a lifetime, should be commended for obeying basic working class principles of solidarity at no little cost to themselves. In an environment where trade unionists routinely cross picket lines such struggles indicate important pockets of resistance to capitalist oppression. But it is not just actual scab jobs. Why should unemployed people be thought of as some kind of sub-humans (Untermenschen) for whom any kind of McJob or dubious work will do? If someone does not want to attack poor and vulnerable people by becoming a debt collector then they should be supported. If

someone does not want to attack unemployed people by becoming a Restart 'tutor', a job which entails becoming a part of the propaganda offensive which attempts to blame the unemployed themselves for unemployment rather than the irrational capitalist economic system, then they should be supported. If someone simply does not want to work for trash wages at a pizza outlet then they should be commended not condemned.

Lower echelon dole and SS workers have always occupied a contradictory class location. Whilst being subject to oppression and relative low pay themselves they have, nevertheless, exercised an important supervisory role over unemployed working class people. With the implementation of the JSA the role of 'frontline' staff at the dole office has been changed for them from one of administration to much more of a policing role. For example, the Job Seekers Directive. It is ridiculous to imagine that claimants can have unity with dole office staff who can collect a bounty for 'shopping' them. Performance related pay means that the dole workers will have a financial incentive to disallow claims. Serious anti-JSA groupings need to confront the fact that workers operate in conflict, as well as unity, in order that they can genuinely represent the interests of the unemployed in any intra-class conflictual situation. If people want to try to make themselves all right by abusing others, then they should not be too surprised if those abused sometimes bite back.

Two comrades from Nottingham.





JSA: Dole Bondage? Up Yours!

(continued from page 10)

direct action) seemed to be the least to build it. There was (not surprisingly) little support from the Trade Unions. Given this, it was suggested that because of a very real possibility that a minuscule turnout for what was being built up by WAJSA as an "All Wales/National demonstration" it might be less damaging to the anti-JSA campaign to either cancel the demo or consider alternative plans. A tiny march would be a display of weakness by WAJSA which could result in a total lack of credibility which we desperately needed. However for many of the leftists the demonstration was, in effect, both the culmination/peak of the campaign in some ways and the campaign itself amounted to the demo, and pleas to the "labour movement". As it turned out, around 150 people, mainly members of the various Leftist groups, trudged around Cardiff city centre in a pathetic spectacle, that at best bemused the Saturday shoppers.

CPSA? No Way!

By this point, an even greater problem had developed within WAJSA. Myself, and most of the other activists had effectively dropped out in disillusion and frustration.

Efforts to woo local CPSA activists by the leftists had finally paid off and several Union reps turned up for the weekly WAJSA meeting. This was seen as good news by the many who hoped it would herald a new phase for the campaign. BUT it actually caused the effective death of the sickly since birth WAJSA group.

The CPSA reps showed up and almost immediately launched into an unprovoked

and hysterical verbal attack on me and other activists. They accused several of us of plotting physical assaults upon their union members and refused to listen to attempts on our part to explain ourselves. It was obvious that they were reacting to circulars they had seen about "Groundswell" and the "3 strikes" policy (3). WAJSA was technically part of the Groundswell network - although in practice all this meant was that Groundswell mailings were passed around at the start of meetings. The "3 strikes" tactic had never been mentioned in WAJSA before, never mind discussed or actually planned (4).

The CPSA seemed to take little comfort in this. They then responded equally negatively to all prospects for mutually acceptable action. The idea of BA/ES workers refusing to do JSA work was dismissed as "ultra left nonsense" by a CPSA member and ex-SWPie, who then declared that she would rather union members implemented the JSA than scabs (5). Suggestions to target the (mutual enemy) management, and perhaps occupy their offices, were denounced as "Mickey mouse terrorism" by a Militant member. The CPSA then stated that they would call the police if we leafleted inside the Job Centre. The Leftists who had previously supported the idea of "direct action" backed the CPSA all the way...

In a scenario that reminded me of arguments with 'fluffies' during the anti CJA struggles - it seemed that those preaching unity and tolerance the loudest were those causing the most division and being the most intolerant of other peoples ideas.

(3) For example the CPSA's "three strikes and you're out" memo to their ES section in Leeds condemning "various fringe anti - JSA groups around the country operating under the banner of Groundswell".

(4) Having said this, I discussed three strikes with some of those who dropped out and the feeling amongst many of us is, maybe we should have advocated three strikes from the start!

(5) Despite the SWP's (relative) strength in the CPSA in Cardiff, they were conspicuous by their absence from WAJSA apart from the usual placards and papers on the demo. They did have a couple of members show up, but only as representatives of the CPSA. One long term SWPer explained to me that their absence was due to the fact that they'd "had enough of meetings and that during the poll tax".

I found myself the secretary of a group whose strategy, tactics, (and the ideology behind it) I was becoming increasingly opposed to. WAJSA's near fetishisation of the CPSA and its 'struggle' had placed it in a position that, it could be argued, was open collaboration with people who: on one hand were willing (reluctantly or not) to carry out the latest of the Government's attacks; and on the other hand acting as a bureaucratic block upon militant action (by us and perhaps by workers in the BA/ES). The CPSA has instead embarked upon a series of one day strikes. Such a strategy is near useless as effective resistance - it does however provide a way of making militant workers harmlessly let off steam [I was put on JSA during one of these one day strikes so they are obviously not that effective]. These strikes were also not against the JSA but for security screens to protect them from us. At the same time the CPSA were distributing circulars denouncing the Groundswell network, happily playing along with the Government's divide and rule tactics.

It would obviously have been to our advantage to have had good operational links with the BA and ES workers. But abstract calls for "unity" and "solidarity" are futile unless there is something concrete to base that unity on, and mutual actions of solidarity. No matter how many empty gestures of support and platitudes are made, the reality of the antagonistic relationships between claimant and dole worker remains to be overcome.

Effective solidarity between claimants and dole workers may well be possible, and I genuinely hope that this is happening in other anti JSA groups. Such hopes, however, cannot be allowed to confine or define the activities of these groups as they have in Cardiff. Any grounds for building such solidarity here seem to have been sabotaged by the CPSA. The attitude of the CPSA representatives was disgraceful. They showed little or no interest in trying to actually stop (or even disrupt) the JSA. At best they were merely concerned with saving their own skins from justifiably angry and desperate claimants. At worst they got involved in order to neuter the campaign and prevent any sort of militant action. Instead of solidarity they seemed to arrive with a totally hostile attitude to the campaign.

The Leftists in the campaign (with the exception of the younger SLP members) fell
(continued on page 13)

JSA: Dole Bondage? Up Yours!

(continued from page 12)

in behind the CPSA. This was partly due to their own Party lines of "pressure the Unions" etc., but it was also down to the composition of membership (actual and potential): white collar, public service workers. When it came to the crunch they chose to side with their own kind as opposed to the "lumpenproletariat" unemployed.

One argument used in defence of the CPSA and BA/ES workers is that they should not be held personally responsible (either individually or collectively) because "they are only doing their jobs". "Only doing my job" has never been a justification or an excuse for anti working class behaviour - which implementing the JSA indisputably is. The same Leftists making excuses for BA/ES workers have no hesitation in (rightly) holding scabs, bailiffs etc. responsible for their actions. I realise that BA/ES workers did not choose to implement the JSA when they first took their job. However they should not have been in much doubt as to the repressive nature of their job (although I accept that they were probably not aware of just what degree of repression). I also accept that using this line of argument, it could be claimed that anyone who engages in any economic activity (waged labour, buying, even stealing) may be playing a role in the "reproduction of capital" and therefore acting in a manner which is (ultimately) anti working class. But there are obviously degrees of intent and consciousness of the nature of my particular activity. Scabbing is qualitatively and quantitatively more consciously and explicitly anti proletarian than working for the dole has been. However the comparison between dole worker and scab or bailiff will, and has, been made by claimants who the BA/ES workers by their actions act in a repressive manner toward.

I am not arguing that, because of this, BA/ES workers should bear the full brunt of anti-JSA resistance. Rather, that while I would welcome any BA/ES worker who is genuinely interested in fighting the JSA; the CPSA have no right and are in no position to turn up to anti-JSA meetings and start making demands of the people that they are going to be attacking as their job (and then have the arrogance/ignorance and insensitivity to deny they are doing anything "wrong"). They cannot simply pass the buck to "The Tories". They have to accept responsibility for the position that they are in and the function they will perform i.e. the nature of their work, before

there can be any basis upon which to plan meaningful mutual action and solidarity.

Unfortunately in Cardiff such solidarity, as we have seen, has been made near impossible by the stance of the CPSA. WAJSA was left with a choice as to whose side it was really on - it seems to have chosen to act more like a CPSA support group than an anti JSA group.



The Role of the Cardiff Unemployed Workers' Centre

Another point of confusion (but not outright conflict) was the nature of the relationship with the local TUC Unemployed Workers' Centre which was being established simultaneously by several people in WAJSA.

Whilst some WAJSA activists had reservations about the Centre, most of us raised no objections and, indeed, saw the Centre as a potentially good thing and even got involved. It was, however, agreed to keep the Centre and WAJSA strictly separate in a formal sense, despite the overlap in personnel. Unfortunately some people could not keep the two separate - using WAJSA to build the Centre. This caused a problem (as well as general confusion) when it was realised that some of the actions being proposed might jeopardise the centre's desired funding from the TUC and the local Labour council. It was suggested that people involved in the Centre "refrain" from anti JSA activity - when it became clear that people would, if pushed, drop the Centre rather than campaigning this matter was dropped.

Unfortunately the illusions that some involved in the Centre had in the Trade Union movement - to the virtual exclusion of everything else - meant that the dispute within WAJSA was reproduced at the Centre with the result that some of those who had walked out of WAJSA also quit the Centre.

I'm So Bored With the JSA

In addition to these problems the Leftists within WAJSA seemed hell bent on turning campaign activity into a chore. Meetings and activity became boring and lifeless. Suggestions of getting a "pop group" to play at an anti JSA rally were accepted - but the Leftists showed more enthusiasm when they were discussing which politician or bureaucrat they wanted to give a speech. They seemed to be under the impression that a Labour MP would be more of an attraction than the Manic Street Preachers...How can we expect anyone else to get involved in our campaigns if we make our own activities so mind-numbingly boring and banal?

Career Opportunities

"Is it worth the aggravation, to find yourself a job when there's nothing worth working for?" - Oasis, "Cigarettes and Alcohol"

Another potential source of dispute within the anti JSA movement(s) is the issue of work.

Those anti JSA campaigners orientated towards the TUC (and therefore this includes most of the Leftist groups) are campaigning around the slogan of "Jobs Not JSA". This may seem like a reasonable demand to many liberal/Leftist campaigners who are in work. However most unemployed activists realise that (because of the experience of our daily lives) the JSA is designed to give people jobs. One major plank of the JSA is force the unemployed into work. Albeit not the kind of work that the TUC et al would campaign for. Jobs with such poor conditions and low wages that even those who believe in the dignity of labour would see the (pre JSA) dole as a preferable option. In such circumstances to "raise the demand" of "Jobs Not JSA" is both in bad taste and patently absurd.

However, we do not have a scenario of the mass refusal of work. Benefit levels have been pushed so low that living on social security is not something that is commonly done out of choice (6). Never Work! is not an option -

just an unpleasant reality for many who have been left 'on the scrapheap' by capitalist restructuring. More than 20 years of such restructuring has created vast numbers of enforced unemployed and simultaneously has driven down benefit levels.

It must also be noted that if the current attacks are successful and the experiments in workfare are generalised - then we will be working even when we are on the dole.

Do They Owe Us A Living?

Obviously any campaign/group/movement that hopes to develop a successful strategy to resist the JSA has to have some analysis of the JSA and place it in context. Without this any strategy against the JSA will also be out of context and therefore almost certainly doomed to fail on its own terms.

Unfortunately too many liberals and Leftists involved in WAJSA have made little attempt to place the JSA in context. Some merely see it as an unprovoked attack upon the unemployed/low waged, made because of malice upon the part of "The Tories" and/or as a means of reducing social security spending in order to give pre election tax cuts. No doubt the government will milk as much electoral propaganda as it can out of "cutting spending - cutting taxes" and "clamping down on dole scroungers". But the JSA was not introduced in an attempt to swing a few floating votes - this is merely a bonus.

Others have identified the JSA as the latest in a series of attacks upon the working class. Unfortunately this analysis was not followed through and was left as an almost moralistic view. Only seeing it as an attempt by 'The Tories' to drive down wages and conditions with no explanation as to why...other than painting it in simplistic "Tories and Bosses versus labour movement" battle terms. Viewing it on this level has left the Leftist groups pursuing the usual tortuous arguments about pressurising the Labour/TUC readerships and talk of "anger at the Tories". Given the Labour Party's (and TUC's) current and historical support for

measures along the lines of the JSA, the bankruptcy of this strategy and analysis should surely be obvious [Both the Labour Party and the TUC have supported "work camps" for the unemployed in the past].

I make no claim to present a complete, or even particularly incisive analysis of the JSA. But, I will make a few observations that will hopefully provide a modest contribution to the debate.

The JSA is only a part of an international trend. Across the world governments are introducing various forms of "austerity measure"; we only have to look at recent struggles in France, Greece, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Canada and Australia (to name but a few) to see how widespread and varied these measures are (and the resistance to them). In the EU these measures are often in the guise of striving to meet the self-imposed conditions for EMU - the reality of this is an attempted crack down on wages, conditions and spending across the EU. The JSA is one part of the British governments' strategy to shift to a lower waged economy with a smaller and more restrictive welfare state.

This international shift by Capital follows the destruction of the post war "Keynesian" compromise. In an attempt to pacify the "revolting" international working class Capital pursued a policy of "full" employment, rising living standards, higher wages etc. However the revolts of the late 60s and early 70s wrecked this policy. Proletarians had TVs, fridges and holidays in the sun but they still weren't happy! The combativity of the working class forced Capital into a crisis. Capital has responded with "long term austerity with the purpose of enforcing work".

"The purpose of the capitalist strategy is to tilt the relationship between unpaid and paid labour, between capital and wage, back to a position that forcibly re-establishes the pre-eminence of unpaid over paid labour." - Midnight Notes, Midnight Oil, 1992.

More work - less money.

Capital launched a massive attack upon wages and conditions coupled with the deliberate creation of mass unemployment. Simultaneously an equally massive attack was launched upon the rapidly increasing levels of benefit.

Given the militant resistance some governments are facing to their austerity measures - and the memory of the way in

which working class revolt destroyed the Keynesian compromise before it - the JSA is also useful for the British government in the way that it will divide and weaken the working class. The relationship between some claimants and some dole workers illustrated in this letter is a graphic example of this. The JSA will also, as has been seen by the Left, weaken collective action by workers because of increasing pressure upon the unemployed to take any job, including scabbing, and the increased fear of unemployment for those in work. Such a weakened and scared working class will prove easier to inflict further attacks upon.

It is interesting to note that most of the effective struggles in recent years have been outside (and sometimes against) the traditional cops of the Left/Trade Union leaderships. In Britain the anti-roads, anti-Poll Tax, anti-Live Exports movements, the Liverpool Dockers, Reclaim The Streets, postal service wildcats etc. (and lorry drivers actions EU wide) show hints of a small, but potentially significant shift towards struggle outside the agreed lines of the TU/Left methods of one day strikes and days of action. These trends and the links/generalisations being made between



the various struggles could prove an explosive headache for the Government when the next wave of attacks are introduced.

Of course, the current "crisis of representation" does not mean that the Left and the Unions have lost their ability to recuperate struggles - as the example of the miners in 1992 or the CPSA's current strategy show. Indeed the Unions and the

(continued on page 15)

(6) Currently changes to Housing Benefit are proving equally effective in attacking the unemployed. In my case I can handle the JSA (so far!) but housing benefit changes have effectively cut my giro by around ten pounds a week. It is also interesting to note that these changes follow hot on the heels of the squatting laws in the CJA.

JSA: Dole Bondage? Up Yours!*(continued from page 14)*

labour movement are capable of a shift "left" if they need to, the Unions seem to be doing this in the current Renault dispute. The launch of the SLP in Britain may possibly provide a left cover for such during a Blair government...then again it may not.

The JSA cannot be looked at in isolation:

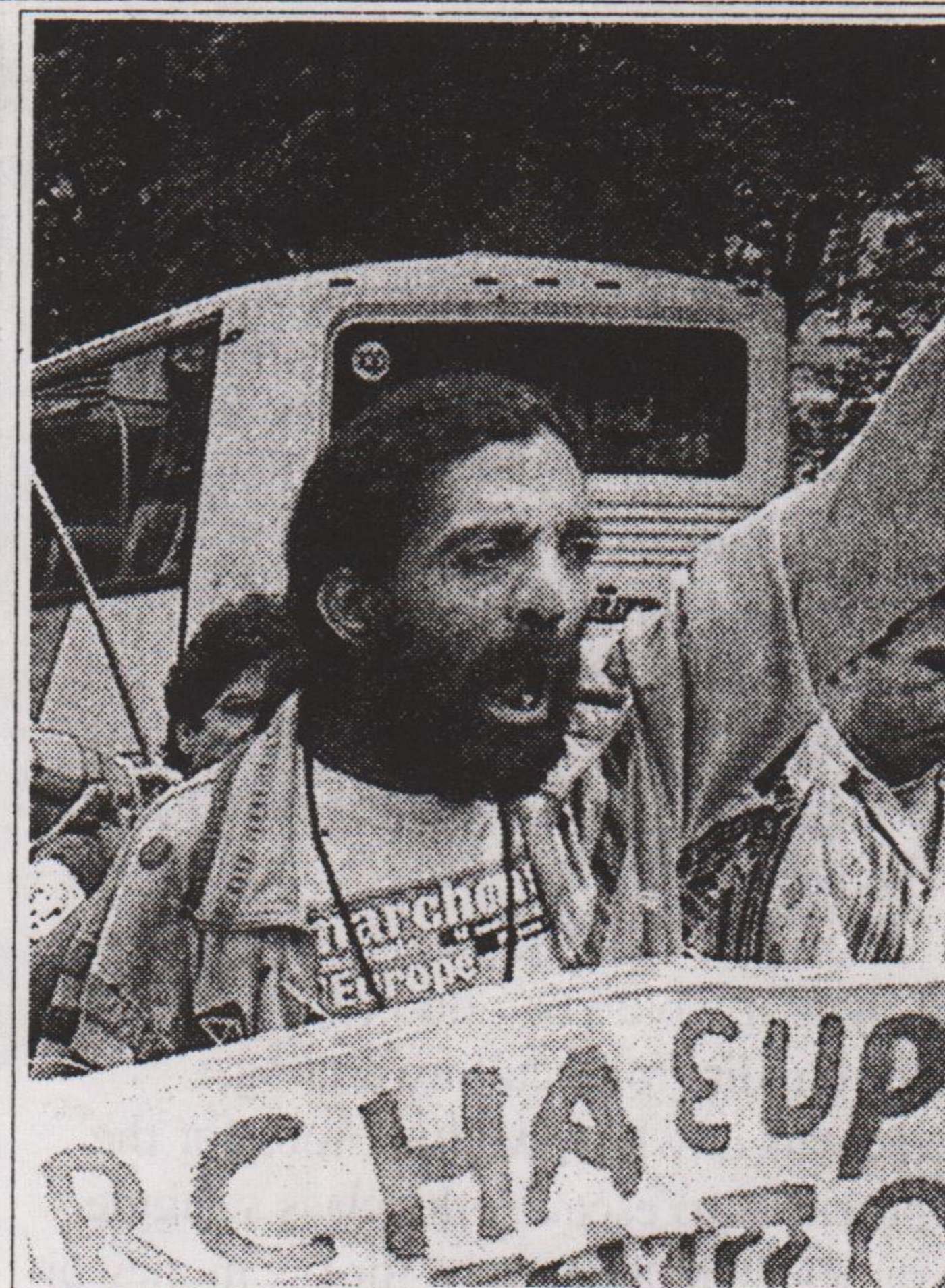
"To fight on single issues in isolation is to fall into a carefully prepared trap - we cannot even win the argument." - Larry Law, "The Bad Days Will End", Spectacular Times, 1983

The JSA is part of a generalised attack upon our class. Our response has to be equally generalised.

The conclusion I have drawn from all this is that the implosion of WAJSA (as a campaigning group) was a product of the political poverty of the Left. As such its failure is liable to be reproduced in any similar "united front". Each of the conflicts about tactics, the CPSA, the Labour Party etc. sprang from ignorance of the reality of everyday life in the social factory for large sections of our class who do not work in stable, organised, unionised workplaces (or who do not work at all) coupled with a failure to place the JSA within the context

of an international, generalised and long-term strategic assault upon the working class. The vacuum left by this lack of analysis was filled by the tired ideas of the Leftists that have made many a struggle impotent. The lack of understanding of the intra-class conflicts that the JSA was designed to inflame led to the application of so-called workerist ideas. Unfortunately the only workers the Left seemed to see were the CPSA and their "struggle". WAJSA's tactics were also designed to appeal towards the TUC/Labour Party and those who have illusions in them. Unfortunately decades of pandering to such illusions has left the Left unable to raise themselves above "Trade Union Consciousness". Such a futile strategy has left WAJSA unable to win even its own limited goals - the defence of the status quo...and they wonder why the unemployed and low-waged ignore them.

"There is a certain kind of professional who claims to represent us...the MPs, the Communist Party, the Union leaders, the social workers, the old-old left...All these people presumed to act upon our behalf. All of these people have certain things in common...THEY always sell out...THEY are all afraid of us...THEY'LL preach towards keeping the peace...and we are bored...poor and very tired of keeping the peace...To believe that OUR struggle could be



restricted to the channels provided to us by the pigs, WAS THE GREATEST CON. And we started hitting them." - Angry Brigade Communique 7, 18 March 1971.

Wales Against the JSA is dead, the Left carry on - ever get the feeling you've been conned?

S. B.
(ex-Secretary, WAJSA)
December 1996

For those of you thinking about getting a job...Part 2

In Subversion 21 we published a "Modest Suggestion Regarding The Targetting Of Key Economic Sectors By Troublemaking Types". This follow-up reflects some of the discussions which the original article generated within Subversion.

Having had discussions with the rest of the Subversion group it now seems that there is in fact little objection to my article of the previous issue. Certainly the claim of "disagreements of a serious nature" has been found to be illusory.

However, it does seem appropriate that I briefly examine the objections that were originally made to the article and that I elaborate some things which seem not to have been clear.

Key Sectors

There was a lot of problem with this

phrase amongst the group. Even though I explained in the original article that all I meant by this phrase was jobs where some level of class conflict seemed to be going on, where this struggle has the potential to further radicalise the workers involved. If people support the struggle of the productive, or toiling, class against the owning class then it makes sense that they get into situations where this struggle is a daily reality, for their own sanity if nothing else!

Obviously moving from one job to another will become more difficult as you get older, which is why I should really have said in the original article that this was an appeal to younger people (under 40 years or so perhaps). But moving jobs is not as difficult as some people make out, unless you don't want to lose the high "middle-class"

wages, or comfy little job, that you can currently command!

Under and Over

It was suggested that I "underestimated" the personal and practical difficulties for revolutionaries in targetting certain jobs. However, just because something may be a little difficult that does not make it an invalid thing to do. This kind of objection smacks of guilt! Obviously it will be easier for younger people to make sure they mess up any chance they have of getting a good and "socially worthy" career before it is too late.

It was also suggested that I "overestimated" the influence of what would (at this time) be fairly marginal shifts in the work locations of

(continued on page 16)

Getting A Job..Part 2

(continued from page 15)

revolutionaries. However, a few revolutionaries in one particular industry can have a big effect. When, in the past, revolutionaries have started to become a presence in workplaces they have usually had an influence seemingly out of proportion to their numbers. In this respect it is useful to look at the influence "rank-and-file" groups (their dodgy union politics aside) have had in the past.

I think it would be good to encourage the building of a culture amongst radicals in which we took jobs for the potential to escalate the class struggle rather than taking jobs for the money or an easy life.

Greed and Gluttony

It was also suggested that I was arguing for the creation of some sort of "super militant" "professional elite" who sacrificed their own needs and desires to the need for "the organisation" to have influence. However, I'm not arguing that any "organisation" should seek to increase its influence in our class in this respect, only that individual revolutionaries should seek to increase their influence - it is only natural that revolutionaries will already be in contact with each other, what would be interesting would be when they start acting in a unified way at their workplaces. At present there is no "organisation of revolutionary workers" to speak of, this will only come about through joint activity and positive intervention in class struggles.

As for sacrificing our own needs and desires, this turn of phrase makes it sound like our needs and desires are different to those we espouse in our publications. If our needs and desires are somehow "anti-working class" then we've gone badly wrong somewhere in our life!

The purpose of my article was to stir up some thought amongst our readers as to what type of work they are doing or might be considering to do. That's all.

Northern Ireland, the IRA and the class war

Correspondence with a member of London Class War, part 3

You are still not trying to understand what I'm saying, which is amusing when you say "we have never claimed to be Marxist or Anarchist, and if that means people find it harder to put a neat label on us, tough". Your efforts to avoid a label is strange considering the absolutely dogmatic line you have got. My point is that dogmatic lines are NEVER revolutionary ones because no matter how hard you try you have to bend the 'real world, real people and real events' to fit your definitions.

I asked for evidence of the IRA's anti-working class programme, and instead you gave Sinn Fein's. Sinn Fein is not the IRA. Although there are overlaps. You are treating very diverse groups of peoples as if they as a whole form a united Republican movement. This is not the case. There are people on the ground in Northern Ireland who believe very different things, a bit like the British anarchist movement.

By the way, I do think Nationalism per se is wrong, as is money and religion. Thanks for telling me that "your problem is that you don't think nationalism per se is counter revolutionary". It's something I'd obviously never considered...(did you get the sarcasm?).

I never admitted that "if Germany had won the war you would support Britain". You are not listening to what I'm saying and you do not understand what I'm trying to say either.

What I actually said was "if Germany had won World War 2 and we were subject to an imperialist occupation, and we had managed to get a huge bomb to go off in the financial heart of Berlin. Would you be happy? I know I would."

The "we" in this case is not a cross class category and was certainly never intended to imply that I support Britain, but is rather a category which includes the working class as a whole, 'our people'. Because it is always the working class who suffers most in Imperialist occupations.

So, I regard imperialism as occupying working class turf, and if a bomb in the

financial centre of Berlin would lessen the suffering of our people then so much the better.

You have not directly answered a lot of my other points either. The crucial point is where I began "WHAT ARE the actions you would support against the next example of British Imperialist aggressions that always lead to working class catholic deaths or injury..." In a local position where calling on people with guns to get maurauding loyalists or British army out of the area or at least scare them away would help. YOU WOULD JUST SIT THERE AND SAY "THE IRA ARE MURDERING SCUM". And condemn a local working class community not to defend itself.

Because you have a need to impose a dogmatic line on people whose conditions of struggle are exceptional. It is not me who has blurred the lines, it is you who are creating ones which do not relate to concrete problems facing the catholic working class community.

I'll try to say this as plainly as I can, you do not have the right nor the credibility to dismiss extraordinary conditions that there are in Northern Ireland. You are refusing to say what you would do in conditions of intense class struggle, and are instead opting for the typical position of the sad British left. Of merely trying to 'explain' to all us dumb fucks who cannot see what's going on. You do this in order to define what is the only "concrete struggle of the working class

(continued on page 17)

(continued from page 16)

fighting for working class interests". I know there are revolutionaries in Northern Ireland who fight for working class interests, occasionally the threat of guns has to be there otherwise their people would get walked over. REAL revolutionaries do not allow that to happen, or at least they try to stop it. You see, real revolutionaries try to intervene.

This obsession with explaining the world and not setting the agenda has held the anarchist communist movement back for at least 100 years. You see you can never hope to be of revolutionary importance if you sit on the sidelines explaining how the world is to all us dumb fucks who actually do something. You have to be there with the class in

concrete struggles or else you are at best academic posers with inflated vision of your own worth.

Which gets me back to the bottom line, revolutionaries respect/give conditional support to initiatives taken towards self management and violent resistance to capitalist states. Predominantly by the people, and not their 'political' leadership. THIS NEVER implies support for nationalism, or capitalism and it IS STUPIDITY to assert that it does. In fact, it is ignorance of concrete conditions that leads to those ideas. To resist the aggressors is one of the fundamental principles of revolutionary politics. I am not denying that what started out as 'liberation movements' ended up by being capitalists, but perhaps this is because of the likes of you who want no role in these movements. Because you are too pure to 'involve yourselves'. People in struggle have ideological choices to make and it is up to revolutionaries to help in this process. IF YOU CHOOSE TO OPT OUT, like other groups do, you cannot claim to be revolutionary.

Picture the scene, there's a world wide revolution in progress, in Northern Ireland the boys with guns are riding around shooting the capitalists, the IRA are on top of the barricade about to launch the final attack on British military HQ in Belfast. The bloke from Subversion turns up and says the "IRA are murdering scum". You've lost the plot comrades...

By the way, just to disappoint you even more I'm not one of your regular readers because I avoid magazines that only explain the world. I read books and magazines which try to change the world and which will help take the working class to political power. As Marx said, the point has always been to change the world...

Subversion Reply

You begin your letter by accusing Subversion of dogma. Our response to this is to suggest you look at your political beliefs and discover what you would hold on to in moments of extremis and what you would shed? Subversion has a set of PRINCIPLES that we all adhere to. These are based on many years of political activity and discussion and our observations of the real world. They are not plucked out of thin air. It is what we share and consider to be the basis of any political agreement. We see them as essential as a basis for our



revolutionary ideas. Actions not based on principles soon easily become entangled with pro state activities....So we suggest you get real and get thinking.

Your level of naiveté is stunning! Sinn Fein is not the IRA!! Of course it is. What on earth is it if it's not that? Any group aspiring to take over a state such as the IRA does must have recourse to a political process just as the Governments of the world all have their own armies...or perhaps it should be the other way around since armies need governments. Sinn Fein aspires to the same ultimate end as the IRA, that is control over the working class of Ireland for the production of profit. One tackles this control through the ballot box the other through the gun.

I think you should seriously think about the consequences of letting off bombs in any city centre. You obviously have no experience of this, since, if you did, your attitude would be a little more thought out. You are as guilty as the state's producers of Jingoistic shit as they encourage the use of the bomb, rocket and mortar to kill the enemy who they see as less than human. The consequences of bombing a city centre are that working class people get it worst of all. In Belfast, the IRA bombed the bus station. Working class people were going to school, work and home. It was working class people's bodies that were shovelled into black plastic bags. Does that really make you happy?

You ask us what actions we would support? Those of us who were active at the time supported Free Derry as this was a clear situation of working class people defending themselves against attack by the 'B' Specials and unionist hate mobs. At the time IRA stood not for the Irish Republican Army but for the "I Ran Aways". We do support the protection of people from assaults, burnings, kneecappings, punishment beatings, extortion and so on. We say these activities go on on all sides in N. Ireland. The British army use violence to intimidate a section of the population in rebellion. The paramilitaries see themselves as the local state in the areas they control. They can't lock convicts up because they don't have prisons so they break people's knees or expel them to the mainland. Don't tell us these organisations are based on equality as we aim revolutionary groups to be. Bombing city centres doesn't stop these assaults going on.

Your reference to what we would do in a position of intense class struggle seems out of place. There is very little positive, collective, class struggle going on in

N.Ireland. The struggle has been subsumed beneath a classic situation of divide and rule. This situation suits the governments of both countries very well. A class divided against itself does not have the physical or mental energies to fight the real enemies. Why do you think Major kept the 'peace process' so strung out? When groups of people are in struggle we don't ask which organisation they are from provided we agree with the basic tenets of the struggle. We are not supporting the organisation but rather the furthering of the struggle against our common capitalist enemy.

I ask you to picture THIS scene. The working class is fighting against the capitalists as part of the international communist revolution. And where is the IRA? Not on the side of the workers. If the IRA still exists it will be on the same side as all existing states and would-be states.

The IRA doesn't want the same as we do. They want to take control and just as Subversion never says support the Labour Party because they say they'll defend our rights, in the same way we say don't support the IRA. Both are part of the state and are therefore anti-working class.

We feel that this correspondence has gone on for some time and that neither we nor our correspondent has any more new ideas to add. Therefore this is the last we wish to say

(continued from page 18)

Moderation is a mindset that finds its wellspring in the idea that the state is in some sense NEUTRAL - an impartial arbiter standing above and apart from social conflict. Given the dockers' own experiences at the hands of the police and previous articles in the Dockers' Charter on the role of the police, such 'moderation' on their part is a little surprising to say the least.

Let us state the number one lesson for revolutionaries: THE STATE IS NOT NEUTRAL. It cannot be persuaded. It cannot be reasoned with. It doesn't have our interests at heart - only those of our rulers. It will not hesitate to use whatever violence it sees fit in order to crush opposition.

The ideas of 'Justice', 'Democracy' etc. are just con tricks to keep us poor slaves happy.

THERE IS NO JUSTICE - JUST US!

There's No Justice!

The March for Social Justice, the Cops and the Riot

The "March for Social Justice" on April 12th illustrates well the contradictions involved in the struggle of the Liverpool Dockers and the broader movement of which it is part.

There is for instance the title of the march and the "people's charter for social justice" to which it is linked - an attempt to take the struggle down a straightforwardly reformist, i.e. bourgeois democratic path.

However, in this article I want to talk specifically about the violent confrontation (the 'riot', 'mini-riots' whatever people want to call it) between some of the demonstrators and the cops and some of the response to it.

Some people who consider themselves on the said of the working class struggle nonetheless saw fit to condemn those working class people who fought with the cops, accusing them of 'spoiling' what was a 'peaceful event' or words to that effect.

Subversion's position is quite clear. We fully support working class resistance to the police, the state and the ruling class, whatever form that takes, violent or otherwise.

On the other hand, we are well aware of the need for violence to be on our own terms and our own 'turf' - some violence on demos has frankly been stupid from a tactical point of view. (These ideas were well explored in the recent 'Hungry Brigade' leaflet.)

We further recognize that the more the class struggle escalates, the more the ruling class will resort to violent suppression - our class has to be prepared to meet fire with fire.

It is to be expected that all manner of liberals and moderates will raise their voices in outrage whenever the working class uses violent means. This includes a significant part of those false-friends of the class, the left.

The 'cancer of moderation' also exists among some of the dockers themselves, and among a part of Reclaim the Streets, which is a somewhat amorphous group containing a significant liberal element alongside a class-struggle element.

And if the local Liverpool Daily Post is all to be believed, this attitude has been expressed in no uncertain terms by Mike Carden, a leader of the dockers' struggle widely respected among the dockers involved.

It quotes his words as follows:

"Those people who caused the trouble have nothing to do with the dockers. We don't want them on our demonstrations. We're disgusted at the way they behaved."

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"It was very sad and it blighted what should have been a peaceful day

... "We didn't see much of the trouble because we were at the front of the march. But we were surrounded by riot police and kept in the Trafalgar Square area for over an hour. My son was very frightened... "The first we knew of trouble was when we saw a flare set off in Downing Street, but we still didn't know how far things had gone. "We've always had good relations with environmental groups. But if we find Reclaim the Streets were involved, we'll sever links with it."

(Daily Post, Monday April 14th, page 13)

It has been suggested that the above comments are a distortion of Mike Carden's views, but it is difficult to see what 'context' could excuse it. Unless it is a straight fabrication by the Daily Post.

Whatever the truth of the above, the dockers' stewards have given their official statement in the Dockers' Charter #15. In this, although they blame the police and the press (with some justification), they still bemoan the fact that the 'peaceful objectives' of the march were thwarted, and declare their support for 'democratic principles' and 'justice'.

(continued on page 17)