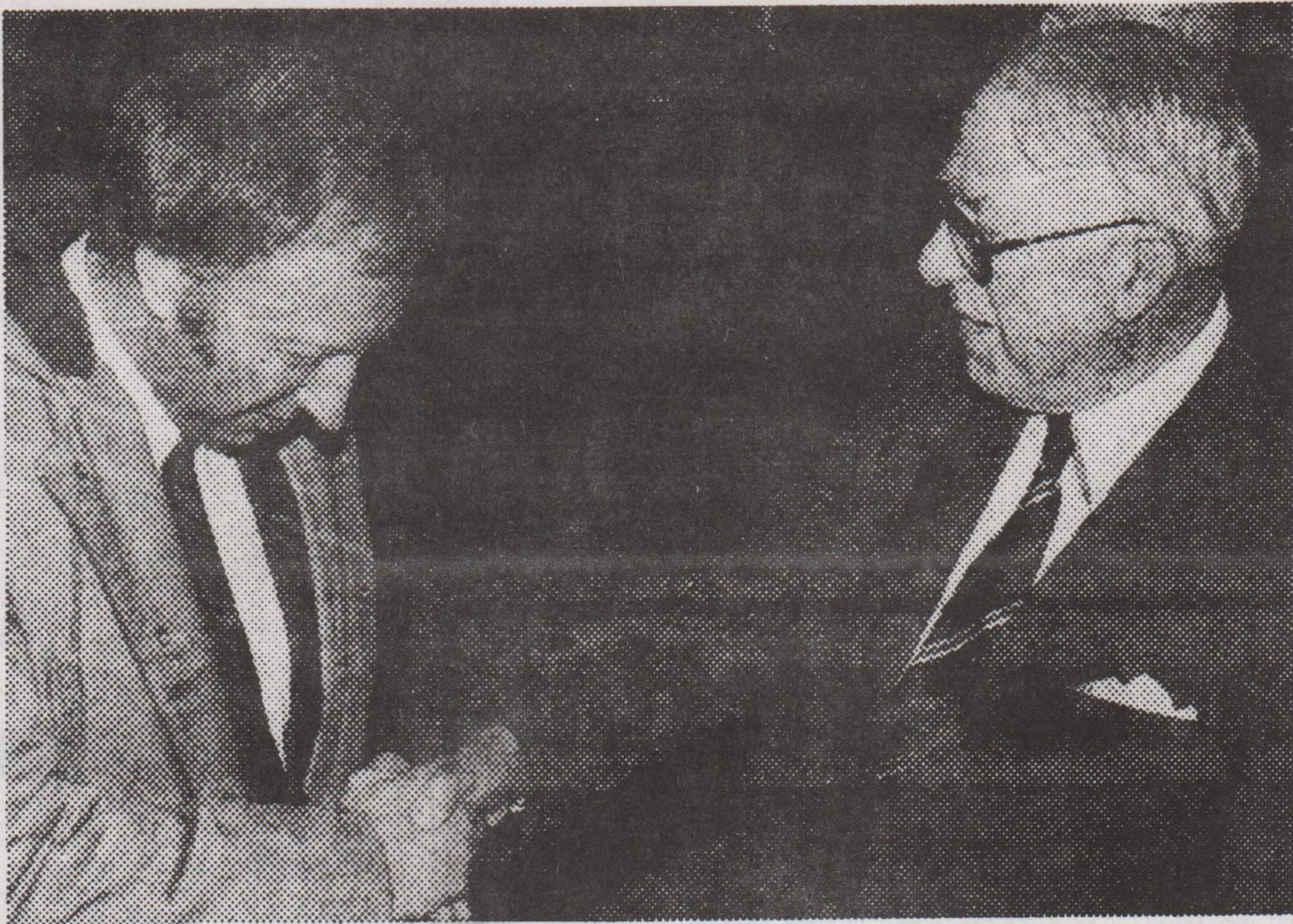


# London Workers Bulletin 14 OCTOBER 1983



WHEN I SAID  
PUT IT THERE I  
MEANT THIS NOT  
YOUR TONGUE UP  
MY ARSE

## Shake on it, Arthur

By TERRY PATTINSON

MINERS' leader Arthur Scargill shook the hand of new Coal Board chief Ian MacGregor when they met for the first time yesterday in London. Everyone expected a storm—but Mr. Scargill just asked Mr. MacGregor to have a new look at plans for pit closures. One miners' delegate said: "It was like a Sunday School picnic."

DAILY MIRROR, Wednesday, September 14, 1983

The Crisis of Reformism, The Revolution is not a Party Affair, Unwaged Report, Class Education, Controversy, Letters.....

SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE !!

ONLY THE LETRASET GETS BETTER



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# London Workers Group

The London Workers Group is an open group of militants working or unemployed in the London area. We meet every Tuesday night (See details below). All meetings are open and anyone is welcome to attend. That includes members of parties - but not party recruiters. Our aim is to establish and encourage communication between workers in different industries and workplaces in order to:

- 1) Learn from each others experiences and develop our understanding of industry and trade unions within capitalist society.
- 2) Encourage the establishment of autonomous workers groups within workplaces and amongst the unemployed. The purpose of these groups is to encourage solidarity and to work to spread and intensify struggles. This process implies working for a wider understanding of the need for a revolutionary approach to work and the class struggle.
- 3) Seek out and maintain links with other revolutionaries. We encourage the formation of open regional groups of revolutionaries to complement workplace groups. The purpose of these groups is to overcome the isolation of individuals or groups of revolutionaries in workplaces or unemployed, and thus to assist them to strengthen and develop their activities as revolutionaries through practical solidarity. To this end we should:
- 4) Produce propaganda including a bulletin covering industrial news, workplace reports, analyses and theoretical articles.
- 5) Provide support where asked for.

The London Workers Group meets at  
8:30 every Tuesday evening upstairs at  
the Metropolitan Pub  
95 Farringdon Rd.,  
EC1 (2 mins form Farringdon Tube)

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Henceforth ALL mail should be  
addressed to:  
Box LWG,  
C1 Metropolitan Wharf,  
Wapping Wall,  
London E 1.



Comment:THE CRISIS OF REFORMISM

The defeat of the Labour Party in the General Election and the subsequent crisis within its ranks, plus the decision of the Trades Union Congress to go into talks with the Tory government, is all indicative that reformist Social Democracy (Labourism) can provide no solution to the problems of the working class in Britain. This crisis is but one part of the general crisis of world capitalism in this period of recession; for politics flow from economic foundations. So long as the working class accepts reformism - which means in this context support for the Labour Party, the trades union movement as present constituted, or those parties, groups and tendencies which render it direct or indirect support, such as the Communist Party, the 57½ varieties of Trotskyism, etc., then the class will be unable to defend effectively its immediate short-term interests or fulfil its function as the historical class which must destroy capitalism in the interests of the human race as a whole.

The development of the Labour Party following the end of the second world war in 1945, the growth of the trades union movement in the same period, created the illusion that as the capitalist system expanded its world market, the working class could secure from the system not only big increases in pay rates, shorter hours of work and longer holidays, but an ever expanding social services system. Indeed, improvements in pay and the general standard of living did improve in the post-war period, as capitalism expanded production and maximised its profits. In this situation did pay off under constant pressure, although not to the extent that has often been suggested. It seemed as if with successive governments of Labour, the working class could erode the very bases of capitalism and that sooner or later, it would be possible to bring about an entirely different system of society.

In reality, the Labour Party has never been a genuine socialist party and at no time has it advocated the socialisation of society, nor was it brought into existence for this purpose, notwithstanding the attempts of small minority parties and groups to push it in this direction.

Historically, the Labour Party in Britain came into existence as the political wing of a reformist trades union movement based on craft and general workers - to legitimise it as an acceptable partner within the framework of the capitalist system. It was not until the end of the first world war in which the Labour Party loyally supported its own capitalist and imperialist government, was there any attempt even to define what socialism was. Before the Labour Party came into existence, the trades unions looked to the radical wing of the Liberal Party to secure parliamentary legislation to protect its legal position and secure some social services. In the 1920's the Labour Party gave the theoretical job of defining the ultimate aims and objects of the party to a bunch of intellectuals of the Fabian Society and this found expression in the notorious Clause 4, calling for the "public" ownership of the means of production, distribution (and exchange). But it was Herbert Morrison, who fleshed out these vague terms by combining municipalisation and state ownership, into a theory of nationalisation, which is not socialism.

It is this concept that has been the hallmark of the Labour Party  
cont. pg. col.



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### The Crisis of Reformism, cont:

ever since and the winning of bourgeois parliamentary elections was the means of securing it. The first post-war Attlee Labour government did precisely this. It nationalised certain basic industries which had been run down during the war, such as the railways, the mines, and a number of other essential public services. But nationalisation is not socialism, it is state capitalism - but even this state nationalisation was limited, leaving intact the key profitable sectors of the capitalist economy. The Labour Party's election manifesto stopped short in its nationalisation schemes, to smaller industries such as pharmaceuticals, etc. As for the working class as a whole, its aspirations - dominated as it has been by the Labour Party - has not gone beyond this in its demands. In fact this nationalisation was a very necessary step for capitalism in this period, in order to rehabilitate it. Massive sums of money were raised by the state by means of taxation to capitalise the run-down industries.

So far as the workers were concerned in these industries, far from setting them and us on the road to socialism, it has had the effect of strengthening the capitalist system as a whole and was not and is not a "progressive" step forward for us. For nationalisation has meant the rationalisation of under capitalised and has led to massive redundancy as re-structuring and technology was introduced. No wonder that nationalisation has become a dirty word among so many workers who have suffered the rough end of this treatment. Workers have been saying this long before Sir Bill Sirs, the Steel Workers boss told this year's TUC: "we have created monsters of destruction".

When capitalism is expanding, trade unions can secure wage

increases and with the aid of the Labour Party get better public services. But once a peak of expansion is reached and an economic decline sets in, then the crisis in the Labour and trade union movement became more and more acute.

The break away from the main Labour Party by a section of its right wing and the foundation of the Social Democratic Party, eroded the vote of the Labour Party in the general election, many workers showed no confidence either in Labour's so-called alternative economic strategy (which is based on old fashioned Keynesian capitalist economics) or any other of its manifesto nostrums. Although the Tory Party was elected on a minority vote, large numbers of workers either actually voted Tory, or abstained. But we would be deceiving ourselves if we thought that these abstentions were primarily a move to the left in the direction of support for anti-parliamentary politics, as some anarchist papers seem to suggest.

The decision of the Trades Union Congress, despite some opposition, to open talks with the government and in particular with Norman Tebbit, the Employment Minister, on so-called "trade union" reform and other matters, is all part of the same process. In effect this is a contemporary version of the Mond-Turner discussions which dominated the unions in the debacle of the general strike of 1926, the solidarity of which frightened the life out of the reformist Labour Party union leaders. We can expect that as a natural corollary that the affiliated union leaderships will be prepared to accept lower wage increases, so that the capitalist system can pull itself out of its economic crisis. We may even face a situation where the employers refuse all wage increases, or as in the hungry early '30's got wage



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 The Crisis of Reformism, cont:

reductions negotiated with the agreement of some unions.

Then alongside this is the mass unemployment of some 3 to 4 million unemployed, which is being continually aggravated as the capitalist economy is re-structured, unprofitable sectors closed down, and technological developments constantly reducing the labour force. The tragedy of the unemployed is that they are in a much weaker position to those in employment, for they have no economic clout. They are outside, as it were, the economic system and their social security benefits even at their current low rates can only be sustained if the economic downturn is halted. With the Tory government in power hell bent on reducing taxation on the wealthy, the social services are under increasing attack and in this Tory attack will be the unwaged - the unemployed, pensioners and all those who cannot bring economic pressure to bear on the capitalist class. The Toxteth and Brixton riots are a small indication that in some depressed areas, the mass unemployment and poverty, the exasperation is very acute. Moreover, as a result of an entirely new system of paying benefits, atomising the unemployed, making it very difficult to organise their forces, in so far as they have shown the understanding and ability to do so. Unlike the 1930's where there were mass unemployed movement, very closely integrated with the trade union movement, no such movement exists today, except a reformist claimants movement which is for the most part divorced from the organised workers. No useful class purpose is served by perpetuating this division of the class.

This briefly sketched background does pose for us an opportunity to develop our ideas about the future structure of the working class along entirely different lines to existing reformist working class organisation, divided into economic and political wings.

We have not only to expose and challenge the reformist ideology and organisational structures of the class at present, but to constructively develop a positive alternative that can serve the class and help towards its re-orientation. To refuse to face up to this need, leaves us and the class at the mercy of the capitalist class.

Firstly, it requires of us a much better understanding of the economic function of the capitalist system and its present stage of evolution. For unless we know the enemy and how he operates, we cannot hope to overcome him. We can take some small initiatives in this direction in providing facilities for our own circle to improve our own understanding with a small education class, or large, if we can get it.

Secondly, if it is true that we can learn from history and the mistakes and tragedies of our own class, then we can do much more in the direction of digging out material on past struggles, for which some of our members have already shown initiative. We could dig out and publish some of the theoretical contributions made at times of intense revolutionary activity, e.g., Russia and Europe, the USA, etc. in the period 1917 to 1923, and later.

Thirdly, I think after our original foundation some four or five years ago, we ought to be very much more advanced in our ideas as to how we should develop an alternative revolutionary strategy, from the beginnings of new autonomous groupings within industry and



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The Crisis of Reformism, cont:

and amongst the unwaged, expanding and developing towards a better understanding of the structures needed to bring about the social revolution and to hold it on course. It is not sufficient to talk vaguely about "people taking control over their own lives" and achieving a new "free society" in loose utopian terms. We are not in a "utopian" period of history. With all the difficulties of building workers' councils, and the problems we face within them when they do come into existence, we still need to think out in advance their structures more closely and clearly. The current crisis favours us in such a task.

We discussed workers councils earlier in the year on my insistence and this was introduced by P.A. (he supplied a two page precis in which he referred to the problem of bringing them into existence and keeping them on course). We have to deal with this question again and again.

His conclusion was: "Although I share some criticisms of traditional councilism with anti-councilists, my feeling is that councils offer the best of a bad job: as a stage in the transition to socialism (shades here of my Trotskyist past!) - in other words, as an essentially temporary means of seizing social power - nobody's come up with anything better, either in theory or Practice". (My emphasis - J.T.)

Some have offered even other criticisms, without spelling out what they consider to be the alternative(s) if autonomous groups move in this direction.

Without going into any great detail in this particular contribution, I would just briefly refer to some criticisms that constantly recur when we deal with this

implicitly showing a lack of enthusiasm to get to grips with the question.

One is the concept of "spontaneity" which (with variations) suggests that the question of how workers councils can be organised can be left to a time when they do come into existence. This is the favourite theme of the so-called revolutionary parties who (like the Bolsheviks and their descendants) do not want the working class to establish their own class organs until they are strong enough and ready to take them over and dictate their powers and development. In other words until they establish their political hegemony over them, on the specious grounds that the class is not capable of solving its own problems, without their intervention ("Intervening in the class struggle" as they always put it). This bureaucratic and elitist concept I think we should reject.

Another objection is that voiced by those who think we can immediately (in the short term) jump from a capitalist system of production, to a non-class society in which the wages system is abolished and a society in which we have "from each according to his ability and each according to his needs," a utopian catch-all which has no real meaning.

Yet another variant is the idea that a post-industrial society should be organised along some kind of decentralised handicraft production. In this way it is hoped to abolish the alienation of the present industrial system with its ecological disasters. How this is to be done on the morrow of the workers' revolution is usually left floating in the air. This is a favourite theme



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The Crisis of Reformism, cont:

of many intellectuals and the middle strata oscillating between the working class and the capitalist class. Ecology thus becomes in their eyes the main problem and not the class relations of capitalist society, which is the major ecological problem in itself!

Since we take over the means of production and distribution with the workers councils and take over the other functions of society, the workers councils are not limited in their scope solely to production - as some seem to think. They take on the role of organising the whole of social life.

We do not abolish problems with the transfer of class power; we then have to deal with an entirely new set of problems, within the context of a different and higher form of society. If the workers councils dont extent their hegemony over the whole of society, the pre-existing capitalist state forms will continue, masked no doubt, with the Leninist/Stalinist/ Trotskyist oncept of a "workers state" i.e., rule by a party/state bureaucracy.

To sum up: the current economic and political crisis favours us in our educational, propganda and organisational activities. An alternative "Campaign for Workers' councils" through the development of autonomous workers' groups should be mounted. We have never had a more favourable opportunity since 1945,

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J. Thomas.

STATE INDUSTRIES....."MONSTERS!"

There was a revealing statement made at the TUC conference in September by "sir" Bill Sirs, leader of the iron and steel workers union, when he charged that the Labour Party and trades union movement, in initiating and supporting nationalisation, had "created monsters of destruction, destruction of communities, including industrial capacity and jobs."

This is a belated recognition that Clause 4 of the Labour Party's constitution, which led the first (Atlee) Labour government following the war in 1946 to nationalise certain run-down wartime industries such as coal, railways etc., was not socialism but was in reality state capitalism (despite the inclusion of some prominent trade union leaders on the boards of these industries, such as W.Allen, former general secretary of ASLEF.

Some of us pointed this out at the time and were ridiculed, then and subsequently, by members of the Labour Party, Communist Party and sundry Trotskyist groupings. Nor did we change our analysis when the effects of nationalisation began to be felt, when rationalisation began to bite and the left of the labour movement began to demand "nationalisation with workers control" as did the Institute for Workers Control and those who supported it such as Jack Jones (TGWU) and Hugh Scanlon (AUEW).

Bill Sirs went on to say: "We find ourselves in the ironic position that the public sector we have brought into being has caused more upheaval than the private sector." Yet despite this admission of Labour's culpability in helping to bring about massive redundancies, he had the nerve to then urge the TUC to support a composite notion to co-ordinate industrial action in defence of public services - a plea to make the "monsters" less monstrous.

We pointed out that nationalisation (Clause 4), so strongly supported by the Left in the Labour Party, was a very necessary sop to capitalism as a whole in the post-war reconstruction

Continued Page 20 Col. 2



THE REVOLUTION IS NOT A PARTY AFFAIRIntroduction

This article first appeared in "Die Aktion" in 1920. It appears to have been written in May 1920, shortly before its author Otto Ruhle left for Russia to participate in the second congress of the Communist International. Two years previously its author had been a deputy in the Reichstag (the equivalent of an MP). He was the second Social-Democrat to vote against the war credits. By 1918 he was a member of the German International Communists and still retained his seat in the Reichstag.

His dramatic change of political position reflects the revolutionary upheaval in Germany following the first world war. Two important aspects were, firstly the direct involvement of the social-democrats in the suppression of the workers movement, shattering the myth of a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism (this proved to be a road to nazism). Secondly there was the experience of the workers councils. The basis of Ruhle's ideas on the general Workers Union is modelled on such experience. Aside from putting forward a method of organisation for the revolution, the crucial aspect is that the revolution is to be carried out by the workers themselves, starting at their individual workplace i.e. a social revolution rather than a political revolution carried out by decree.

At the time of writing Ruhle did in fact belong to a political party, the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD). This was a split off from the official Communist Party (KPD) a split which comprised of about 40,000 members, 4/5 of the KPD. When the KAPD was founded in April 1920, Ruhle and his comrades were involved specifically with the intention of dissolving it into the "General Workers Unions". These were groups of revolutionary workers based primarily in the workplace, although the unemployed, those working for small companies and others outside the immediate production process were organised on a geographical basis. These groups were organised on a federal basis, with revocable mandated delegates sent to regional and national bodies. Their role was not to participate in negotiations nor to attempt to modify the evils of the capitalist system, but to prepare for revolution. At the time of their formation into a national organisation in Feb. 1920 they had about 150,000 activists.

In July 1920 Ruhle travelled through Russia to attend the Communist International Congress in Moscow. He was appalled by what he saw:

"Russia has the beueaucracy of the commissariat; this is what rules. It has no council system. The soviets are chosen according to lists of candidates drawn up by the party; they exist under the terror of the regime and thus are not councils in a revolutionary sense. They are "show" councils, a political deception. All power in Russia lies with the bureaucracy, the deadly enemy of the council system."

Basic Issues of Organisation, 1921

The Bolsheviks had just had their ninth congress where one-man management was institutionalised as the replacement for collective workers management. Trotsky had just published "Terrorism & Communism". This nauseous peice of capitalist propaganda has such comments as:

"The unions should discipline the workers and teach them to place the interests of production above their own needs and demands."

In short, the Bolsheviks were busy crushing workers resistance to their state capitalist programme. On arrival at the congress Ruhle was presented with 21 conditions for participation ( in particular these included acceptance of a tightly centralised parties and working within trade unions to win them for the party) . Ruhle had had enough, and returned to Germany without participating.

However within the KAPD, the majority wished to remain linked to the Communist International, and in fact to constitute the basis for the german section, ousting the KPD who were trying to form a mass party through merging with the German Independent Socialist Party (USPD). Gorter's "Open Letter to Comrade Lenin"



was a polemic in their struggle to gain re-admittance into the communist international and, along with other "Left Communists" to form a revolutionary opposition within the Communist International. They attended the Third Congress of the Communist International where under pressure from the Russian Communist Party they admitted that in no way did they sympathise with the Kronstadt Rebels who had been suppressed a few months previously. However in consequence of this congress they realised it was impossible to form a revolutionary opposition within the Communist International and on this basis denounced it as counter-revolutionary.

However to return to Ruhle, he was expelled from the KAPD shortly after his return from Russia when the KAPD decided to re-open relations with the Communist International. The Dresden section of the KAPD promptly dissolved itself into the local section of the General Workers Union of Germany (AAUD). (Dresden was where Ruhle was based) In Hamburg the AAUD expelled any members who wanted to remain within the KAPD. The split became more openly realised when Ruhle's tendency broke away from the AAUD itself to found the General Workers Union (Unitary Organisation) (AAU-E) in October 1921. This organisation had about 100,000 members, leaving a similar number in the AAUD which remained close to the KAPD.

This article is significant in that it makes a break with previous thinking within the revolutionary movement. It must be distinguished from Anarcho-Syndicalist views. (During this period the German anarcho-syndicalists were regrouped in the German Free Workers Union (FAUD) founded in December 1919. Although many of the members participated in revolutionary activity, this was often disavowed by the leadership who were more concerned with the formation of fronts with the KPD. In fact about half the membership was to leave the FAUD to constitute the economic organisation of the official communist party, finally to be dissolved into the old social-democratic unions. (At its height the FAUD had about 200,000 members.) Crucial differences were that the FAUD was anti-political, organised along trade lines and officially adopted a pacifist policy relying on the glorious general strike to achieve revolution. (this at a time when workers militias were involved in armed struggle with the state). The AAU-E believed in the integration of revolutionary politics into the workplace organisation, they were organised along geographical lines, and they did not make a fetish of the general strike, and saw the need for arming the workers.

## I

Parliamentarism appeared with the domination of the bourgeoisie. Political parties appeared with parliament.

In parliaments the bourgeois epoch found the historical arena of its first contentions with the crown and nobility. It organised itself politically and gave legislation a form corresponding to the needs of capitalism. But capitalism is not something homogenous. The various strata and interest groups within the bourgeoisie each developed demands with differing natures. In order to bring these demands to a successful conclusion, the parties were created which

sent their representatives and activists to the parliaments. Parliament became a forum, a place for all the struggles for economic and political power, at first for legislative power but then, within the framework of the parliamentary system, for governmental power. But the parliamentary struggles as struggles between parties, are only battles of words. Programmes, journalistic polemics, tracts, meeting reports, resolutions, parliamentary debates, decisions - nothing but words. Parliament degenerated into a talking shop (increasingly as time passed). But from



the start parties were only mere machines for preparing for elections. It was no chance that they originally were called "electoral associations".

The bourgeoisie, parliamentarism, and political parties mutually and reciprocally conditioned one another. Each is necessary for the others. None is conceivable without the others. They mark the political physiognomy of the bourgeois system, of the bourgeois-capitalist system.

## II

The revolution of 1848 was stillborn. But the democratic state, the ideal of the bourgeois era was erected. The bourgeoisie, impotent and faint-hearted by nature provided no force and displayed no will to realise this ideal in the struggle. It knuckled under to the crown and the nobility, contenting itself with the right to exploit the masses economically and so reducing parliamentarism to a parody.

So resulted the need for the working class to send representatives to parliament. These then took the democratic demands out of the perfidious hands of the bourgeoisie. They carried out energetic propaganda for them. They tried to inscribe them in legislation. Social-Democracy adopted a minimum democratic programme to this end: a programme immediate and practical demands adapted to the bourgeois period. Its parliamentary activity was dominated by this programme. It was also dominated by a concern to gain the advantages of legalised field of manoeuvre both for the working class and its own political activity, through

the construction and perfection of a liberal-bourgeois formal democracy.

When Wilhelm Liebknecht proposed a refusal to take up parliamentary seats, it was a matter of failing to recognise the historical situation. If Social-Democracy wanted to be effective as a political party, it would have to enter parliament. There was no other way to act and to develop politically.

When the syndicalists turned away from parliamentarism and preached anti-parliamentarism, this did honour to their appreciation of the growing emptiness and corruption of parliamentary practice. But in practice, they demanded something impossible of Social-Democracy: that it take a position contrary to the historical situation and renounce itself. It could not take up this view. As a political party it had to enter parliament.

## III

The KPD has also become a political party, a party in the historical sense, like the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Independent Social-Democrats (USPD).

The leaders have the first say. They speak they promise, they seduce, they command. The masses, when they are there, find themselves faced with a fait-accompli. They have to form up in ranks and march in step. They have to believe, to be silent, and pay up. They have to receive their orders and carry them out. And they have to vote.

Their leaders want to enter parliament. They have to elect them. Then while the masses abide by silent obed-



ience and devoted passivity, the leaders decide the policy in parliament.

The KPD has become a political party. It also wants to enter parliament. It lies when it tells the masses that it only wants to enter parliament in order to destroy it. It lies when it states that it does not want to carry out any positive work in parliament. It will not destroy parliament; it doesn't want to and it can't. It will do "positive work" in parliament, it is forced to, it wants to. This is its life.

The KPD has become a parliamentary party like any other; a party of compromise, opportunism, criticism and verbal jousting - a party that has ceased to be revolutionary.

#### IV

Consider this:

It entered parliament. It recognised the trade unions. It bowed before the democratic constitution. It makes peace with the ruling powers. It places itself on the terrain of real force relations. It takes part in the work of national and capitalist reconstruction.

How is it different from the USPD? It criticises instead of repudiating. It acts as the opposition instead of making the revolution. It bargains instead of acting. It chatters instead of struggling. This is why it has ceased to be a revolutionary organisation.

It has become a Social-Democratic party. Only a few nuances distinguish it from the Scheidemanns (SPD) and the Daunigs (USPD). This is how it has finished up.

#### V

The masses have one consolation - there is an opposition. But this opposition has not broken away from the counter-revolution. What could it do? What has it done? It has assembled and united a political organisation. Was this necessary?

From a revolutionary point of view the most decisive and active elements, the most mature elements have to form themselves into a phalanx of the revolution. They can only do this through a firm and solid formation. They are the elite of the revolutionary proletariat. By the firm character of their organisation they gain in strength and their judgement develops a greater profundity. They demonstrate themselves as the vanguard of the proletariat, as an active will in relation to hesitant and confused individuals. At decisive moments they form a magnetic centre of all activity. They are a political organisation but not a political party, not a party in the traditional sense.

The title of the Communist Workers Party (KAPD) is the last external vestige - soon superfluous - of a tradition that can't simply be wiped away when the living mass ideology of yesterday no longer has any relevance. But this last vestige will also be removed.

The organisation of communists in the front lines of the revolution must not be the usual sort of party, on pain of death, on pain of following the course of the KPD.

The epoch of the foundation of parties is over, because the epoch of political



parties in general is over. The KPD is last party. Its bankruptcy is the most shameful, its end is without dignity or glory.... But what comes of the opposition? of the revolution?

## VI

The revolution is not a party affair. The three social-democratic parties (SPD, USPD, & KPD) are so foolish as to consider the revolution as their own party affair and to proclaim the victory of the revolution as their party goal. The revolution is the political and economic affair of the totality of the proletarian class. Only the proletariat as a class can lead the revolution to victory. Everything else is superstition, demagogy and political chicanery. The proletariat must be conceived of as a class and its activity for the revolutionary struggle unleashed on the broadest possible basis and in the most extensive framework.

This is why all proletarians ready for revolutionary combat must be got together at the workplace in revolutionary factory organisations, regardless of their political origins or the basis by which they are recruited. Such groups should be united in the framework of the General Workers Union (AAU)

The AAU is not indiscriminate, it is not a hotch-potch nor a chance amalgam. It is a regroupment for all proletarian elements ready for revolutionary activity, who declare themselves for class struggle, the council system and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is the revolutionary army of the proletariat

This General Workers Union is taking root in the factories, building itself up in branches of industry from the base up - federally at the base, and through revolutionary shop-stewards at the top. It exerts pressure from the base up, from the working masses. It is built according to their needs; it is the flesh and blood of the proletariat; the force that motivates it is the action of the masses; its soul is the burning breath of the revolution. It is not the creation of some leaders, it is not a subtly altered construction. It is neither a political party with parliamentary chatter and paid hacks, nor a trade union. It is the revolutionary proletariat.

## VII

So what will the KAPD do?

It will create revolutionary factory organisations. It will propagate the General Workers Union. Factory by factory, industry by industry it will organise the revolutionary masses. They will be prepared for the onslaught, given the power for decisive combat, until last resistance offered by capitalism as it collapses is overcome.

It will inspire the fighting masses with confidence in their own strength, the guarantee for victory in that such confidence will free them from ambitious and traitorous leaders.

From this General Workers Union the communist movement will emerge, starting in the factories, then spreading itself over economic regions and finally over the entire country. i.e a new communist "party" which is no



longer a party, but which is, for the first time communist ! The heart and head of the revolution !

### VIII

We shall show this process in a concrete way:

There are 200 men in a factory. Some of them belong to the AAU and agitate for it, at first without success. But during the first struggle the trade unions naturally give in, and the old bonds are broken. Soon 100 men have gone over to the AAU. Amongst them there are 20 communists the others being from the USPD, syndicalists and unorganised. At the beginning the USPD inspires most confidence. Its politics dominate the tactics of the struggles carried out in the factory. However slowly but surely, the politics of the USPD are proved false, non-revolutionary. The confidence that the workers have in the USPD decreases. The politics of the communists are confirmed. The 20 communists become 50 then 100 and more. Soon the communist group politically dominates the whole of the factory, determining the tactics of the AAU, at the front of the revolutionary struggle. This is so both at the small scale and large scale. Communist politics take root from factory to factory, from economic region to economic region. They are realised, gaining command and becoming both head and head, the guiding principle.

It is from such communist groups in the factories, from mass sections of communists in the economic regions that the new communist movement - through the council system - will come into being.

As for "revolutionising" the trade unions or "restructuring" them - How long will that take ? A few years ? A few dozen years ? Until 1926 perhaps. Anyway, the aim could not be to wipe out the clay giant of the trade unions with their 7 million members in order to reconstruct them in another form.

The aim is to seize hold of the commanding levers of industry for the process of social production and so to decisively carry the day in revolutionary combat, to seize hold of the lever that will let the air out of the capitalist system in entire industrial regions and branches.

It is here, in a nature situation, that the resolute action of a single organisation can completely surpass a general strike in effectiveness. It is here that the David of the factory can defeat the Goliath of the union bureaucracy.

### IX

The KPD has ceased to be the incarnation of the communist movement in Germany. Despite its noisy claims about Marx, Lenin and Radek it only forms the latest member of the counter-revolutionary united front. Soon it will present itself as the amiable companion of the SPD and USPD in the framework of a purely "socialist" workers government. Its assurance of being a "loyal opposition" to the murderous parties who have betrayed the workers is the first step. To renounce the revolutionary extermination of the Eberts and the Kautskys (SPD and USPD) is already to tacitly ally oneself with them.



Ebert - Kautsky - Levi. The final stage of capitalism reaches its end, the last "political relief of the German bourgeoisie. - the end.

The end also of parties, the politics of the parties, the deceit and treachery of the parties.

It is a new beginning for the communist movement - the communist workers

party, the revolutionary factory organisations regrouped in the General Workers Union, the revolutionary councils, the congress of revolutionary councils, the government of the revolutionary councils, the communist dictatorship of the councils.

Otto Ruhle

1920

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### Discussion

This article was written some 60 years ago. Whilst some of it is relevant today other parts are more dated. It was written at a time when there was a mass revolutionary movement. Ruhle writes of 20 communists in a factory of 200 workers in his example. We would find it hard to find that many in a pub! His article was read by hundreds of thousands, this translation will be read by hundreds. What I see as important is his stress on subversive activity as opposed to touting a political programme. On a much smaller scale we must encourage and support autonomous groups of workers who take the struggle into their own hands. The trade unions have shown themselves both unable and unwilling to offer effective support - they are more interested in following the interests of their bureaucracies. As work discipline is generally tightened up there will be continual workplace revolts conducted outside official channels and against official instructions. Any attempts to "take over" the unions will merely provide another generation of bureaucrats to piss on us.

Ruhle's stress on workplace groups is important in opposition to the struggle in the committees where all the sell-outs are made. But today people's lives are less directly dominated by work. Workers are less likely to live just down the road from where they work in a community dominated by the factory hooter. The quantity of labour power (work) that goes into a commodity has decreased rapidly over the last 60 years, which is why the range and quantity of goods available to workers has increased somewhat, while the rate of exploitation has also increased. Whilst the power of capitalism is still based in the production process, it has extended to all areas of social life as state institutions or semi-state institutions have organised health care, education, family life, sport etc etc etc. A revolutionary movement would encompass subversive activity in all these spheres.

At a fundamental level, capitalism is a social system which makes work the central factor for the bulk of the population - the working class. This may be waged work, or unwaged work in the home rearing children and keeping house. The rapidly receding "affluent" society allowed for the development of other interests through the consumption of commodities for some workers. Unemployment and downward pressure on wages is limiting the number of such workers even further, underlining the centrality of work.

Communism on the other hand is a society which is based on the creative development of both the individual and society, as the individual will no longer be alienated from social wealth. Work will not be abolished, but it will no longer be the central principle of our lives. This essential if the working class is to abolish itself as a class, and not merely set up a state bureaucracy to rule according to the slogan "From each according to their ability, to each according to their work". (This perversion of socialism continually crops up in state capitalist countries the world over). Such a communist transformation cannot simply be made on the basis of achieving social power in the factories, but must in turn sweep aside the factories as social institutions and integrate work into social life as a whole.

Richard Essex



In May of this year we received news of an attempt by the Practical Anarchy group in Glasgow to set up a Clydeside Workers Group. This is the text of a letter by one of our number to the group in Glasgow expressing a personal view about the prospects for doing this, drawing heavily on the history of the LWG.....

May 17/ 1983     A PERSONAL VIEW

Dear everyone thinking of creating a Clydeside workers group,

Maybe as a founder member of the LWG I can say something usefull, although I know Fuck-All about the Glasgow political and work-place tradition of late, and hence about the real possibilities and character of a Clydeside group.

Three or four of us- 3 anarchists and one workers councillor, and all in different industries, decided to create the LWG 6 years ago with these aims (roughly) ---to educate each other, to spread ideas in workplaces, to be part of the labour movement (rather than the political movement), to meet openly and weekly and to regular publicised meetings on all subjects relevant to the labour movement. Also to back each other up and give support towards autonomous groups in our own industries/workplaces. We went out of our way to be undogmatic, down to earth and to contribute to struggles rather than muscle in in a vanguardist or elitist way.

For the first couple of years the group floated between 3 and 7 people (we never had members) and we tried to build up a contact list of attenders and "sympathisers" as our bedrock, regularly informed by post of all discussions. Up to 1981 the group grew to 6-10 active people and widened out to involve more unwaged people( we never intended to be only "workers" but to have an inbuilt bias that way to avoid becoming isolated from the workplace area of struggle). In the last year or so we've taken off a bit, getting 15-20 (and more) people each week, bringing out "Playtime" as well as our more informal and irregular bulletins. However, in the last 3 or 4 years we've drifted away from our attempts to be part of the labour movement (getting involved in strikes, making strong efforts to contact militant unionists etc.) as the "political" nature of our group and discussions has grown. So most people who attend come via involvement in other groups, and very few because they hear about us where they work. Ironically the one area of struggle where we do have an organic presence is the unemployed groups movement which has developed in the last 2 years (about 12 groups active and federated in the London area) in which various of us have been involved in right from the start.

We've never had any problem from the Left parties who've ignored us we're glad to say. The only problem in this direction was a year-and-a-half flirtation/manipulation attempt by left-communist party ideology via the International Communist Currant (who'd been banned back in 1978 due to their recruiting attempts) in 81/82. But although in some ways we were strong & in fact learned a lot from having to analyse the general situation and our attitudes more closely (due to their "heavy"academic/marxist line) and working out how we differed from them theoretically (we were always totally opposed intuitively), I think we also suffered from being drawn further away from the labour movement and towards the whole middle-class realm of ideas and debate for its own sake or in order to "intervene"(an elitist concept).

However, influence in workplaces is not easy, and although we should do more to contact people and to spread basic libertarian ideas there, in London the two main barriers are the isolation of any group in the enormous sea of very diverse and divided workplaces(especially where there is no connection between where people live and where they work, and no great tradition of class struggle except in a few major industries) and secondly the deeply rooted Labour Party/Trade Union control of ideas and organisation on the shop floor.

However, I feel we could do more and that there are possibilities we have failed to grasp. We always seem to have deep, meaningful, discussions about the role of the group - "how should we organise ourselves?", "what do we believe?" etc. in which we all tear our hair out! These continual basic open discussions are healthy up to a point but also frustrating. I feel that involvement with struggles at work or amongst the unwaged keep a group like ours down to earth.

As far as how we run our meetings is concerned— we've always had an open agenda, passed around, on which people write what they think should be discussed. This usually ends up including personal job/unwaged reports, Playtime and bulletin, general situation, next publicised meeting (not many lately) and other libertarian/anarchist activities going on. We try to keep things informal, yet responsibly organised at the same time.



One problem has been the inability to involve many women in the LWG, either due to underlying sexism, or the subject matter of our activity or just the chicken and egg problem (any woman coming along may feel intimidated by 90% men and so not come back therefore making it harder for others next time). Also very few parents come as we meet in a pub and in the evening and don't offer help with babysitting (although we did do this back in 1978 I remember). I've always felt that we were a group active around the issue of work in its broadest meaning (including childcare, anti-work etc. -although we rarely had many students coming) but we do tend to have a bias to workerism in the wage-slave sense.

At the moment we include a wide range of occupations and unwaged people but have never managed to create any stable presence in a particular industry or workplace beyond individual activity. Recently a print group was set up involving 2 Fleet Street workers, 2 trainees & 2 small-press workers. But shiftwork and the very diverse nature of their workplaces meant it never got off the ground. Otherwise we've never really had more than two people in any identifiable industry and, of course, some people don't identify with their industry anyway and don't have a strong desire to create a presence their.

So involvement in workplace struggles has been on a purely individual basis, and collectively we have abandoned attempts to participate in picketing/strikes etc. due to past frustrating experiences (and the drift away to intellectualism that I mentioned earlier), leaving our main contribution as our regular public discussions (~~XXX~~ i.e. on the rail, health, water-workers, steel etc. strikes). This is our weakness.

Just recently people have used the growing size of the meetings as a communication forum (rather than a collective) so initiatives within the group have developed. Hence Playtime is one such initiative by 7 or 8 people (open to all and answerable to the group) and also quite a few leaflets, mostly for lefty demos, have been produced. Maybe this process will spill over into activity in the area of workplace struggle.

Finally some thoughts of mine-- I helped to create the LWG because I felt that workplace struggle was fundamental but not the only area of resistance. Most of us share this view although councilism and anarchosyndicalism tend to put the workplace central to struggle and the re-organisation of society. I disagree and feel the aim is not so much workers control as human resistance in all spheres and a transformation of society based on the re-creation of the community.

This might include seizure of much of production, but also its abolition, especially in the light of the centralised and hierarchical character of industrial society.

Life is full of contradictions- between destruction and creation, reformism and revolution, politics and human relationships, organisation and freedom... no blueprint or monolithic or dogmatic strategy or formula can substitute for ~~the~~ continual questioning and learning through experience. It is not for us to go out and tell people what they should do or think, but to try to participate constructively in the society around us, (...typists intervention-- What about destructively?????.....) to educate each other and to act for ourselves.

Ultimately the processes leading to class conflict and social change are everywhere but well submerged and when they come out in to the open they will move mountains. We are making our very small but valueable contribution.

In solidarity,

Dave

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#### BLACK SHADOW JAILED

Shadow Wignal, also known as the Black Shadow appeared in court on the 16th September accused of setting fire to the labour exchange in Coldharbour Lane. He refused to recognise the court but was still sent down for four years.

The fire caused £10,000 worth of damage but no-one was injured. It seems some claimants were delighted, standing outside and cheering, but others who had turned up for their personal issue money were rather pissed off.

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#### CORRECTION TO PAGE 9

Those of you who aren't clairvoyant will have trouble making out the 2nd and 3rd lines on page 9. (The correction fluid didn't work properly). These lines should read:

"...along with other "Left Communists" to develop a revolutionary opposition within the Communist International. They attended the third Congress of the Communist International ...."



Unwaged report:WE ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

In the last issue of the Bulletin (six months ago), I wrote a long piece describing the efforts of some unwaged people to organise and campaign. Particular hassles of being unwaged are: being denied some of the necessities of life, being pushed into the "margins" of society, finding it hard to establish a community of friends and neighbours to develop resistance to the State, and struggling to discover our personal and collective strength as people and as part of a wider class.

Over the months I have found that I have so much to do, so many people to meet as my confidence and contacts grow, that I doubt if I'll ever have the time to be employed ever again. And good riddance. I described how the group I was very active in in 1982 developed - the Islington Action Group of the unwaged - developed elitist and bureaucratic trends. The two of us who were pushed out however have involved ourselves very usefully with the local Claimants Union, which seems to be gathering strength and initiative all the time. I had initial reservations about "helping to get people their rights" rather than "fighting the system" itself. However, the principle of working-class solidarity, of respect for every individual and of being open and practical as a group is in fact the bed-rock of revolutionary activity which which too often concentrates only on analysis and debate.

In some ways the Haringey and Islington Claimants Union is like the early working-class mutual aid societies which became trade unions. The system would like to channel us into being either part of the welfare services, or to "represent" claimants (like the unions). Many Claimant Unions indeed are like that - we are trying to develop the almost buried revolutionary traditions of the early trade unions. The Federation of Claimants Unions at its last

conference (which are convened three or four times a year) in different forms each time over the last 15 years, re-affirmed its commitment to social revolution (the abolition of State and Business) to achieve its stated aim of a "Socialist society in which all necessities are provided free and is managed and controlled directly by the people".

It is very interesting and indeed frustrating to someone involved in unwaged activity that the vast majority of unwaged people either do not wish to create specific collective organisation, or are unable (due to isolation, poverty, etc.) Whilst benefit fiddles, street culture do exist on a wide scale, it is also true that many people are depressed, isolated, intimidated or unsure of what to do with their lives or how to cope with poverty or children, etc. We are part of this unwaged environment and try to encourage self organisation, solidarity and understanding of what is going on - primarily by example and our involvement.

Recent activities, along with our back up for any person needing advice or support, have involved leafletting against voting, against "right to work" attitudes, and campaigning against harassment of claimants by fraud squads. We often discuss getting things for free via fiddles or stuff thrown in skips or that nature itself offers us (herbs and plants growing wild, etc).

We work with other similar groups through the Federation.



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Unwaged Report, cont:

(We are the co-ordinating group for the London area) and the London and S.E. Federation of Unwaged groups. However, one body we are very wary of is the bureaucratic and leftist National Unemployed Workers' Movement - it has many honest and active individuals and groups supporting it but it is more an institution seeking recognition from the TUC and to "represent" the unemployed rather than a self-managed movement.

So anyway, unwaged people face quite a challenge in breaking down their isolation from each other and those employed. (What can unite us all is our resistance to work in and out of wage labour, our struggle to secure common basic needs and our resistance to the common oppressor - the organised inhumanity of the industrial capitalist system we are forced to accept.

Solidarity and sharing is our strength.

Dave M.

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Note for All Claimants: the secret social security payments instructions (3,000 pages) are now being published - cost £25 from HMSO. No individual is going to pay (or be able to pay for a copy) but it is supposed to be available in every DHSS office and can be consulted on request. - D.M.  
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Comment:WORKING OVERTIME?

Some comrades seem to be under the impression that those of us who object to working overtime do so from the altruistic motive that it will put pressure on employers to employ more workers - or at least reduce the rate of increase of unemployment. They say that it is a desperate handle for trade unions to use in the face of

Comment: Working Overtime? cont:

falling membership. Or that banning overtime is an attempt to combat unemployment and introduce some utopian co-operative dream of job sharing.

(I know of at least one individual putting forward anti-anti-overtime arguments - presumably to soothe his conscience for working regular overtime, the proceeds of which albeit finance a good cause.)

There is, of course, more to it. Overtime is cheap labour - cheaper for bosses to employ regular workers on overtime rates than employ extra workers.

Regular overtime gives workers a false sense of high earnings, whereby unions/bosses keep basic rates low. But most important, working overtime is a major incursion into that most precious commodity - one's own time. Minimum hours should be adhered to strictly.

In capitalist society life is divided into work, rest and play. Whether work is an actual job, unpaid domestic work, studying or dealing with dole/social security. It is every revolutionary's responsibility to minimise the time they allow the boss to have.

Remember: The more overtime you do, the more tax you pay, the more profit you make for the rich. It makes you more productive, more efficient, more complaint. Dont make it easy for the bosses, Fight for the right to be lazy!

Stepneyhack.

News Brief:Murdoch's Millions

Robert Murdoch's News Corporation records a profit of £36.1 million in the year ending June 30, up from £3.2 million the previous year.



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Comment on educational trends:

CLASS EDUCATION

Education should not just be for a few, or about the preparation for a profession. But with new proposals to make students pay back grants once qualified, then education will affect job prospects to an extent not felt before. This will not just be a further move towards educational establishments being training grounds and research centres for capitalists, but will make it easier to maintain the class basis of education and thus jobs.

Perhaps it is worth while noting how the American education system works, with having to start paying back grants within four months of qualification. There is no need to go into the details about the ramifications of such a system. But can you imagine being a student on food stamps, with the prospect of \$15,000 (plus) to pay out? Clearly, this is a very great contributing factor to the right wing basis of American university students, it is only the rich that can get further education. We do not wish for a similar for a similar style of education in Britain.

Already with present trends in education, with low qualifications and the way the social security system works, the class basis of work, the industrial/military system is being bolstered to an increasing extent.

If one is on social security then one can not do certain types of training as this would be seen as a reason for not being available for work. Thus one cannot increase one's chances of getting a job by increasing one's skills and so a very subtle attack is being made to the education system, i.e., less demand means less courses available. If you have worked hard all your life and decide to do some vocational training mid-life, then if you have saved over £2,000 its hard cheese, you will not be able to get social security until that money has gone.

This means that anyone who has dependents will become very reluctant to go off voluntarily and retrain. Even part time courses to get qualifications that used to be available are no longer there.

Take for example the Library Association qualifications. What is true of the L.A. is also true of many other "professional" organisations. Many of the same criticisms of the LA can also be held against the BMA, or the legal profession. They are class orientated, and work in such a way that they are hard to get into because of financial constraints in training, etc. I would also contend that it is the same for many so-called professional bodies and it is getting worse I would therefore maintain that as presently used, the word "professional" means within the job market "self-pro-creating mafia". This, with the Ministry of Death propaganda to join the "professionals" makes the word "profession" a very dirty word.

The professions are class orientated and work in such a way that they are hard to get into because of financial restraints.

However, to come back to the L.A. system. In order to get above a job-grade, which one could get above within other "local government" departments, which is not all that great, one has to have an A. charter. Job experience takes no account of this, which is the case in other local government" depts. In order to get qualified it takes three years. If you already have a degree, then it takes one year.



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Comment on educational trends, cont:

post graduate course, i.e. three to four years. After that it takes another three years to become chartered, i.e. some six to seven years. If one already has a degree, then it would still take seven years to become chartered. In order to get into a position that in other jobs with some employer one would be attached without a degree! This three years to get chartered used to be one year and one was able to get qualified on a day release course. No. Longer. Anyone who has been working in libraries for a number of years, who has got dependents, and wants to get on, can only get on by getting out. Moves are afoot to make life better, i.e., to give higher gradings to hose at the bottom, but that's no solution to the problem. Within libraries you have a situation of these with poor job grading, with those grades are unattachable working side by side. This means that libraries are becoming more class based and those who run them are increasingly having less and less understanding of what real local needs are. Imagine two people working side by side, in many respects doing the same work but one having really good prospects, while the other is in a dead end job. This leads to a lot of resentment.

With the decrease in apprenticeships and increased need to qualify in places of full time education, then the power of the professional organisations will increase. If one has to pay back for one's education, then the results are only to be dreaded. As workers we have much to thank those studnets who are campaigning the idea of grants becoming loans. For once we have no cause to shout "bloody studnets!"

Beetle.

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STATE INDUSTRIES... "MONSTERS!" Cont:

of the capitalist economy and had nothing to do with socialism.

Is it to be wondered at that nationalisation has contributed so massively to unemployment in Britain's basic industries such as coal, rail, steel, electricity, gas, water, ship-building? Meanwhile those trade union leaders who supported these nationalised industries are now frantically calling upon the workers being thrown on the scrapheap to resist the closures which inevitably take place, whether the government of the day is Labour or Tory, so that instead of "big" monsters we get "dwarf" monsters.

What is conveniently forgotten is that when the Tories have been in office since the war, they showed very little inclination to denationalise while the older industries were being restructured by an enormous input of state capital for technological improvement and to finance massive redundancy and the throwing of millions on the labour market, for the most part never to work again.

The present Tory government while continuing to support even further restructuring of the state industries, and always mindful of the fact that the public industries were brought into being by kind permission of previous Labour governments, is now looking to these industries to see which parts of them that do make a profit can be hived off for privatisation to the benefit of private enterprise and even greater profit to those with spare capital in their buckets. For verily the whole purpose of the capitalist system is to accumulate, accumulate and make the wealthy even more wealthy, completely regardless of the social consequences for the class that creates all the wealth in the first place - the working class.

J. Thomas 16/9/83



# Letter from BRUM

Controversy raged over LWG articles about the class position of Social Security officials. The letter below was written in response to the Workers Playtime and Scorcher articles reprinted on the following pages. The Playtime article was about the Birmingham SS strike, sold out by the union executives.

Dear London Workerist Group,

I did not have enough time to discuss in full the last issue of *Workers Playtime* at the Claimants Union conference (Swansea, March 11-12th) but there are a couple of things that I want to say, specifically about the DHSS strike here in Birmingham. Being in the Claimants Union (C.U.) I was 'involved' from day one as it were. Basically the article is OK — the factual content is good — but the analyses are a cause for concern. As far as the background to the strike, the unions have been complaining about low staffing for years, but nothing was done. Claimants could stand for hours in their dole office, no 'striking for our benefit' then. When ethnic monitoring was talked about, we in the C.U. went along with immigrant groups to the S.S. and Employment Offices to get some move against the introduction of this blatantly racist scheme. What we got was violence and indifference from the staff. We at the C.U. have been witness to so many Specialist Claims Control Unit (S.C.C.U.) 'interviews' where the S.S. staff co-operate all the way. They prosecute for 'fraud' because they can get more money from the courts in these cases. They take payment books off single women accused of co-habitation. They refuse emergency payments. And so on.

The office that went on strike after Erdington was the one that 'serves' the 'vagrants'. The worst served get the worst service. The C.U. produced a leaflet saying that we did not agree with the strike, and that for the strike to be successful it needs the support of workers in the Inland Revenue, Ministry of Defence etc. for this limited type of strike punishes claimants and simply saves the government money. There was a T.V. crew there, but our speeches were not shown. In fact the media response was a kind of sympathy for the strikers — nobody gives claimants any sympathy. When people came to see us at the C.U. during the strike we said burn the dole office down. We had tried to 'forge links' with the unions during the strike, but because we did not 'support' them they did not want to know.



What annoyed me about the article in your rag was this wonderfully intellectual analysis of why we claimants should actually support the bloody S.S. You then say why we should not. I hate to use the work 'vanguardism', but there is a sense of 'we have the monopoly of truth/analysis' about the mag, and about the DHSS article in particular. 'We have it all sussed' — do this and do that and the system will fall. It is too wordy, too intellectual; the typical reaction of people not involved in the thing they are writing about. The problem with the article is that it says nothing really, the points are lost under analysis and rhetoric. It is OK for 'people like us' who like to think that we have this degree of 'political sophistication', but I can imagine the response of people who come to the C.U. here, most of whom are illiterate, if I showed them the article and tried to discuss the analysis with them. The problem with papers/articles such as yours is that the analysis can run ahead of the events and people that it is supposedly aimed at.

A couple of things about the strike: 50-70% of staff were working during the dispute, one office stayed open throughout, the emergency offices were staffed by SCCU members fresh from Oxford. The strike has brought no benefit to the strikers and real hardship to claimants. Now we have the 'poverty lobby' coming here to 'analyse the effects of the strike'. With the strike coming so soon after the Oxford incident, the DHSS and police must have had their notepads open and pencils poised waiting to see what claimants will put up with. The strike actually came at the worst possible time — winter, near Christmas — and there was not even a murmur of discontent. Against this, your 'in depth' seems even more pointless.

As for the article distributed at the C.U. conference it serves its purpose well — it is a pity that the print leaves black marks on your bum. Unknown to the left you are nicking their slogans and analysis; or is it just to show how empty and worthless they are? There is '... both the unions and the left are getting further away from the majority of the revolutionary class'. There is a constant sniping at the 'working class' for not being revolutionary, and holding up a banner of 'the dispossessed' on the basis of a few riots. There is a naive anti-work ethic throughout the piece, which smacks of the stuff written by people who have never had a 'working class job', but have spent their 'working lives' in some university or polytechnic, or as social workers who come out with the 'we know where it's at' attitude. Basically both articles are written from a distance with misty eyes, and are as full of contradictions as the leftist nonsense that they purport to replace. 'Revolution by Proxy' is the phrase to use I think.



The leaflet goes on about some guy burning down the dole office, and in the next paragraph, as in the *Playtime* article, pleads for solidarity with the S.S. You talk about the C.U. 'jerks' who want to be social workers (and as a C.U. member I know the feeling) and that 'we' do not need them. But who are 'we'? The C.U.? Claimants? Do you believe that you represent the view of the claimants? The analysis is far too simplistic. Nowhere is this more apparent than when writing about 'the riots' and 'Black people'. (You are all white I presume.) All that crap about how contact would 'undoubtedly have been established between rioters and early morning shift workers . . .' which would have led to an insurrection like Paris '68 (yawn,yawn).

The prescience of the point in question is, I believe, based on wishful thinking. You have this typically Southern idea of Liverpool, the 'Boys from the Black Stuff' syndrome, where Liverpoolians are seen as some kind of happy ape, resistant to all forms of authority, full of solidarity, like the miners. You also have the same sociological jargon for black people, the same old white leftist misconceptions, the same old pathetic categories. 'The culture of young blacks means living your life out on the streets. Honestly, it's not far short of racism, 'uncle Tom-ism' beloved of trendy white lefties: get ethnic man! Revolution is smoking dope and engaging in petty crime; ignore the sexism, the racism, the reactionary self-indulgence — it's much more radical than anything that the white working class has to offer. Grow dreads, be 'black' without experiencing the oppression, lie back, drift off and imagine it. You could be in your student bed-sits again, curled up with Marcuse.

I would not be so presumptuous as to say what life in Brixton is like, I do not live there. But life here in Handsworth seems pretty similar; where the 'progressive' black groups and people that I work with suffer the violence of the dope smoker/petty crime/hard crime crowd. Where all those white punks on rope think it's such fun, so revolutionary, to drop acid at a blues and miss the point; then say let's riot for a few quid. Why work? Drop out at the state's expense. 'Bombs not jobs'. There is probably a lot more to say, but I have to go to bed now.

Yours fraternally, sensitive, angry,

Marcus Clayson.



# SS strike: whose benefit

This is the second half of the article in Playtime 1. about the SS strike. The first half was a detailed account of how the strike was sabotaged by the union.

## ISOLATION

Union sabotage is no surprise. The unions aim was to trade worsening working conditions for a "big" pay rise. Faced with militancy over conditions they did their best to limit it to small areas, and restrict struggle to useless activities like one day strikes. Taking charge of negotiations they traded the strikers demands for union participation in a 'joint review' with "ministerial involvement". The inability of the strikers to rapidly extend the strike themselves meant that their sacrifices were ultimately useless. The unions knew that only by refusing to cooperate with emergency centres and shutting down the benefit computers could sufficient pressure be put on the govt. to win the strike. (Local authorities would then be obliged to make emergency payments to claimants at great difficulty and cost.)

Indeed while the strike was on the CPSA voted to reverse previous policy and do all those things in any future strike over pay. As CPSA senior vice-president said: "Public sympathy never won a dispute for anybody." In this strike however the strikers were deliberately isolated - understaffing was treated as a local problem to be negotiated and the strikers were 'special cases' due to 'appalling working conditions'.

Leftists took up this theme parrot fashion, and called for solidarity for the strikers as they belonged to an important sector of white collar militancy. Such calls for solidarity largely fell on stony ground. Oxford Claimants Union did collect 900 signatures from claimants supporting the strike - but at a subsequent national claimants union conference they were notably isolated in arguing for such support. Most claimants and ex-claimants regard calls for solidarity as a sick joke in light of their experiences at the hands of the SS.

## BLOODY MINDED

At first sight this refusal of solidarity might seem reasonable. Some SS officers try to help claimants - but aside from pressure of work the system itself strangles any good intentions. Staff who appear pro-claimant are swiftly moved off the public counters if not back into the dole queue. And many SS staff allow themselves to adopt the attitudes towards claimants the system encourages. No-one who's spent any length of time in SS offices will fail to have their share of horror stories. At this point the leftist argument about the increased militancy in SS offices has to be seen in context. The CPSA and SCPS were traditionally right wing unions. Only recently have the effects of cuts and pay restraint had an effect on militancy. This has been increased by the influx of younger, often better educated people into the civil service. Many having resigned themselves to a shitty clerical job opt for the SS as an opportunity to do "something socially useful". As a

result militancy often goes hand in hand with leftist ideas. (One result the Broad Left capture of the CPSA exec. last year - where they have acted like any other bureaucrats.) However militancy is most commonly expressed in the form of bloody-mindedness about the job. And bloody-mindedness is by no means automatically channelled into class struggle. It can as easily be directed at claimants and fellow workers, as at management (often enough at both).

Refusal of solidarity on these grounds is understandable - but also unjustified. Misdirected bloody-mindedness is scarcely unique to SS staff - its general among workers who have to deal with "the public" or "the customers". Its quite unreasonable under the circumstances to demand that SS staff act like angels before supporting them.

## WHOSE BENEFIT?

There are more concrete obstacles to solidarity - ironically highlighted by this strike. The strike was presented as for claimants benefit, to fight for a 'better' service. Yet its quite debatable whether its in the interests of claimants for the system to run smoothly. They certainly suffer from mistakes and delays in payment due to understaffing. They equally certainly benefit from the situation since understaffing means the policing functions of the SS are also swamped. At one level the SS have less time and manpower to harrass women over cohabitation, chase people for not "genuinely seeking work" or to force people off the register - all part of the normal functioning of the system. At another level as benefits are held down below poverty line levels and people are forced to supplement them illegally, understaffing means less time spent chasing moonlighting and fiddling.

Many SS staff would like to see a liberalisation of at least the first of these aspects. But the social security system is an essential part of the apparatus of power wielded by the capitalist state. Given a level of poverty and unemployment its the job of the SS to maintain those affected - thus making sure the poor are not forced to organise themselves to fight for a living. But to do so at below poverty line levels - thus maintaining the incentive to find work and not lose it. SS militants who want the system to run 'properly' and to offer an 'adequate service', are only asking for this part of the states social policing apparatus to run efficiently and fairly. A fair days benefit for a fair days observance of the rules. Since in reality the system can't afford adequate benefits this is scarcely in the interests of claimants.

## COMMON INTERESTS

Responding to calls for solidarity with cries of "Soft Cop" are unreasonable - however understandable. All of the

administrative and policing arms of capitalism have swollen enormously in recent years - from the extra layers of personnel and supervisory, clerical and accounting staff in industry, to the massively increased state bureaucracy. SS workers are only different in that workers are more visibly affected by what they do. The lowest levels of the SS are as badly paid and overworked as any other section of workers. To single them out because their activities harm other workers is illogical - the nature of capitalism is that all workers are forced to compete with one another, and perform activities which in part if not solely harm other workers. But the full implications of this argument must be understood - if its illogical to refuse solidarity on such grounds, its equally illogical for SS workers to seek solidarity on the grounds of defending the system.

Demands for better pay or conditions can only ever benefit particular sections of workers in the short term. What capital's forced to give with one hand it takes back with the other (whether by more work, shoddier goods or higher taxes or inflation). Consequently at this immediate level the only common interest of workers is in seeing that wherever bosses and workers are in dispute that the workers win. (The principle obviously applies through all sections of the working class - employed or unemployed, waged or unwaged). That equally means refusing to take the pressures and divisions the system imposes out on each other, but turning them back on the bosses and the system they administer. At times like the present when bosses have been frightened into acting tough by increased competition and falling profits, and workers have been cowed by the fear of unemployment, solidarity at this level is particularly important. The string of defeats over the last couple of years demonstrates this all too clearly.

## SOLIDARITY

To the extent that workers allow themselves to be isolated by capitalism and accept without challenge the divisions it imposes - to the extent that they follow its rules and discipline and cheat one another - the possibility of solidarity is diminished and each isolated section is more easily kept down.

But beyond the short term, the common interest of workers isn't in seeing the system run "properly" - in capitals terms that can only mean making sufficient profit to buy off discontent - and today capitalism can't even do that. Our common interest is in seizing control of our lives and activity. In overthrowing the things - wage labour, commodity production, the exchange economy and the state - which prevent us creating a world based on



LONDON WORKERS BULLETIN No. 14

our needs and desires. Genuine solidarity can only begin to emerge when solidarity with one another's defensive struggles against the attacks of capital, turns to the offensive in common struggle to overthrow it. Not for the working class to capture and control the system - but for the working class to overthrow class society, to abolish themselves as functionaries of the system along with the system itself.

It is because of this that there is genuine difficulty in responding to calls for solidarity of the sort made by the DHSS strikers. Because genuine solidarity can only begin at the point at which workers are ready to confront and subvert their own functions.

While the article above was criticised for being too liberal towards the SS our leaflet below was criticised for lack of proletarian solidarity with them. Strike me pink, wot a b\*\*\*\*\*d, eh playmates? Its a fair cop gov. but society's to blame. (Class Warrior Typists Note).

**WHOSE BENEFIT? CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM.**

**VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION** Starting in October people will no longer have to register at a Job Centre before claiming benefits from the DHSS or Dole. Instead, there will be a new system of...

**AVAILABILITY TESTING.** The burden will now be on you to prove to the DHSS that you are 'genuinely seeking work'. You will be asked to provide details of your job search, including the dates and times you are available to work. If you are not available for a job, you will be asked to provide reasons for this. You will also be asked to provide details of any other work you are doing, including part-time work, voluntary work, and work in your own home.

**ETHNIC MONITORING.** This is a new check, you will be asked to provide details of your ethnicity. This is to ensure that the benefits system is working properly for all ethnic groups. You will be asked to provide details of your ethnicity, including whether you are of African, Asian, White, or Other ethnicity.

**POSTAL CLAIMS.** You will no longer get an interview at the DHSS. Instead, the dole office will give you another, even longer, form (a B1PC) to fill in and send off to your local SS office. This may sound great - no waiting or queueing. BUT... the form is 8 pages long with 109 questions. If you fill it in wrongly, it will be sent back for you to do again. You won't get any money until it's right. In a recent tryout, only 1 person in 20 did it correctly. You will be asked about your relationship to other people in your household. Beware - for example, if you say your landlord is a relative, or that a person of the opposite sex who isn't a dependent lives in the household it can lead to even longer delays and reductions in benefit. (Still it's not all bad - 1000 of the bastards will lose their jobs as a result of this change).

**COMPUTERISATION.** Over the next few years, the DHSS system is to be computerised. This will mean that you will have to provide more details about your situation, and that the system will be able to check your details more thoroughly. This will also mean that you will have to provide more details about your income and assets, and that the system will be able to check these details more thoroughly.

**UNIFIED HOUSING BENEFIT.** From November 1983, council housing benefit will be merged with other housing benefits to form a single benefit. This will mean that you will have to provide more details about your housing situation, and that the system will be able to check these details more thoroughly. This will also mean that you will have to provide more details about your income and assets, and that the system will be able to check these details more thoroughly.

**TAXATION OF BENEFITS.** This has already started. It means that you cannot claim a tax rebate on your benefits. This will mean that you will have to pay more tax on your benefits, and that the system will be able to check these details more thoroughly. This will also mean that you will have to provide more details about your income and assets, and that the system will be able to check these details more thoroughly.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE LONDON WORKERS GROUP ABOUT THEIR LEAFLET ON SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS.

Manchester Wildcat group were quite impressed by the leaflet "Whose Benefit? Changes in the Social Security System" published by the London Workers Group and we have decided to distribute it in Manchester.

However we felt that the leaflet was marred by the following line "still it's not all bad - 1,000 of the bastards will lose their jobs as a result of these changes." We are going to delete these lines by Tippexing them out.

We don't want to glorify the role of DHSS workers. Some of them, such as members of the Fraud Squad are no better than the police. But these are not going to be the ones who lose their jobs. Many DHSS staff - clerks and typists for example - are ordinary workers trying to earn a living as best they can. As such they are subject to the same frustrations and attacks as the rest of us. Important links could be forged between these DHSS workers and the unemployed. Insulting people and telling them that you are glad they are going to lose their jobs is not the way to forge those links.

Obviously some DHSS staff can be obstructive when the mood takes them, although often the rules of the bureaucracy they work for leaves them no choice. But DHSS staff who are deliberately obstructive rightly deserve our anger and any way of expressing this anger should be encouraged.

A reduction in the numbers of DHSS workers will have the effect of making things worse for claimants. Dole queues are not enjoyable for most claimants, and an extra thousand in the dole queue from the DHSS will not make things better for anyone.

On a personal note I would like to add that I dislike intensely the term bastard as an insult. As someone who disapproves of marriage I think anyone who chooses parents that are not married deserves to be congratulated not insulted.

Steve, on behalf of the Manchester WILDCAT group.

Other or Refusal. You can insist you are put down as a 'Refusal' if you wish.

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THE GUARDIAN Tuesday September 27 1983

Tebbit says dole 'fraud squad' has saved £1m

By David Hencke, Social Services Correspondent

Mr Norman Tebbit, the Employment Secretary, is claiming that up to £1 million may have been saved in benefit payments by using his new fraud squad, the Regional Benefit Investigation Team, to persuade suspect claimants to stop drawing unemployment benefit.

Letters sent to unions by Mr Mick Downing, management side secretary of the Department of Employment, say that 869 people in the West Midlands, North-west and South-east of England have been persuaded to stop claiming benefit.

According to his figures, if each claimant then avoids claiming benefit for 26 weeks

some £503,000 can be saved. If a claimant can be stopped from applying for benefit for a year the savings rise to £1,314,019.

The letters have been sent to Civil Service unions to counteract adverse publicity about the nationwide establishment of the teams

The letter confirms that the object of the exercise is to persuade people not to claim, and that the department would break even if all suspected claimants could be deterred from claiming for 10 weeks.

The trial exercise has cost the department more than £307,000, including an expenses bill of £96,693 shared between 30 people. Mr Downing says that the average claim per day for expenses is about £18.



# THE SCORCHER ARTICLE

This article was originally published in the Scorcher. It was reproduced as a leaflet by a London Worker. Hence the confusion in the letter from Brum as to its origin.

Unknown to the left, incapable of original thought because of their dead weight of history and ideology, the major point of class confrontation has now shifted away from the workplace onto the streets and into the realms of everyday life outside of work, (it seems).

The official labour movement, which has always excluded all but wage earners, is now disintegrating before the eyes of its leaders. A majority of the 'working' class are not now engaged in producing anything. As trade union membership dips below 11 million so the number of unemployed creeps closer to 5 million. The campaign against redundancies in the old industries - power, steel, transport, engineering - is lost and the unions are busy trying to reconstitute their power base by recruiting among the civil service, management and the professions. White collar unions like NALGO, TASS, CPSA gain in strength as the giants of the past, TGWU and AUEW, lose theirs. By recruiting among middle class groups, such as social workers, the left will have a better long term chance of power in the union bureaucracies - the Militant Tendency now control the CPSA. But in fact both the Unions and the Left are getting further away from the majority of the revolutionary class. Only a small section of the working class has been able to sustain its job security and living standards while the rest get relegated to menial, insecure and part-time jobs. To ignore these fundamental changes in class relations and continue fighting the battles of the past is absurd. The only experience common to all sections of the working class is not unemployment but poverty. The working class fight in the short term is not about struggling for employed poverty, it is about fighting poverty itself.

Everyone knows, whether single people or families, that it is impossible to survive on dole money - you would either commit suicide or starve. So people find ways of getting more money. This takes many forms. Working while on Social Security and not declaring your earnings; members of your family working - women doing part-time bar work, cleaning, canvassing - and not declaring it; payment for such work will often be 'off the cards' ignoring statutory deductions like tax or insurance; straightforward fiddling of the social security by fraudulent claims - false addresses, extra rent, special claims for bedding, furniture you already have, cashing 'lost' giro's etc; theft - from robbery, burgling warehouses, nicking lead, shoplifting; selling stolen goods; fraud - running up huge debts on hire purchase, credit card and mail order catalogue rip-offs; fiddling your gas or electricity meter or reconnecting your supply when cut off; not paying your rent or rates or fines. Of course it's not just the unemployed who do this. Many workers take second jobs where there's no tax or insurance cards; they act as sales agents for goods, stolen or otherwise, in their factories; they steal goods or money from the factories or shops where they work; often they steal parts and reassemble the finished product in their own homes e.g. washing machines; they make things for themselves at work using the bosses' materials and the bosses' time.

The stealing of time from the boss is more important than stealing actual goods. When you sell your labour power to a boss his profit is gained by paying you less than the value of your work - hence the permanent struggle to get as much back from him as you can, whether through wages or fiddling. But you also sell your time to him - 40 hours a week, a huge chunk of your life - and the struggle at work to re-possess this time is the one that leads to the most class-conscious activity. Thus during the ASLEF dispute the press discovered that many train drivers would be in the local rather than on the loco - their mates having clocked in and done their work for them. Clocking in for others, fiddling time and overtime sheets, sleeping on the job, playing cards, sabotaging the assembly line are all ways workers collectively seize back their time from the boss.

## illegality

Thus many people have developed their own ways of getting money outside of the official economy. All of them are illegal and labelled criminal by the state. Millions of working class people are now forced into illegality by the state by the simple daily struggle to survive. The only 'crime' of the claimants sent to gaol by the Oxford magistrates was to be homeless and unemployed. Whole working class communities now face similar threats every day of their lives.

In the past people have kept quiet about this illegality because of the ever-present fear of the nark - the 'good citizen' who phones up the SS to tell them your wife's working in the local pub. Thus things are kept private, with accompanying feelings of fear and guilt, rather than made collective, with accompanying feelings of solidarity and aggression. But now things are changing - West Indians are breaking down the fears and setting the example of everyday insubordination. The culture of young blacks means living your life out on the streets - not tucked privately away in your house, divorced from your neighbours. Having already seized back their own time - through unemployment - the blacks seize back their own space as well by permanently occupying the streets. The blaring of sound systems and blatant flouting of the law by conspicuous dope smoking means they are systematically harrassed by the police because they are supposed to be either at work or at school. Brixton sets an example for anyone looking for enjoyment without the sacrifices of official employment - the compulsion to sacrifice your life at work in order to buy it back after working hours. It's a positive culture which denies the necessity of a job for either identity or enjoyment. Although the police choice of target is obviously racist it is also the public character of black people's response which marks them out for special police attention.

## 1981 'no-go' areas

The 1981 riots saw the first breaking through the surface of this underground economy in its new collective rather than private form. The largely selfish,

individualist character of everyday mass illegality was left behind by a more social seizure of goods - indeed by a collective grabbing back of the entire neighbourhood and its resources. The "no-go" areas not only excluded the police but began to include wider layers of the surrounding population, who having been trained in illegality through work in the black economy were now emboldened by the example of others to seize back collectively what was theirs in the first place. After the riots the authorities and the Left were bemused to find no organisational trace of the movement left behind. It had gone back into the struggle for survival in everyday life - a struggle which the state is determinedly criminalising in all its aspects.



*"I blame unemployment for the increase in law and order."*

## S-S attacks

Besides the obvious increase in police powers and activity the main areas the state has chosen for its attack are through social security and employment legislation. The number of unemployment benefit review officers, fraud officers, liable relative officers and special investigators attached to local SS offices continually increases - as the number of people actually capable of paying you any money decreases. The latest innovation is the Special Claims Control Unit. These are teams of investigators (often ex-policemen) who move from office to office to 'blitz' claims. They systematically investigate one in every twenty claims, looking particularly at women, long-term claimants, people with skills who might be fiddling etc. Houses are watched, neighbours are questioned and so forth. If they have any grounds for suspicion, however feeble, you will be called for interview where they will try and intimidate you into making a statement or withdrawing your claim. Their main stick is the "non-prosecution interview" where you will be told that you could be prosecuted for a fraudulent claim but, out of the goodness of their hearts, if you agree to withdraw your claim for 6 months they will not prosecute. The purpose of this is to force long-term claimants off the



register to join the 17% of unemployed people already not bothering to sign on. New social security rules are increasingly designed to keep people away from the offices themselves, so as to avoid the possibility of violence or collective action - thus the introduction of the new postal forms for your first claim. Though there is a high incidence of attacks on individual S.S officers it is amazing that S.S offices have not yet been the scene of even one riot yet alone continual disturbances as they should be. The purpose of the design of the offices, the long waits, the way they continually fuck you about, is to keep you demoralised and divided. How many times do you see people moaning about the claimant in front of them who is, quite rightly, arguing for ages at the reception interview - rather than taking collective action against the S.S office itself. In September, in Stockwell, south London, a black walked into his local D.H.S.S. office with a large petrol can and started splashing it all over the floor and seats. Other claimants realised at once what he was going to do. Instead of moaning about their turn in the queue they said "Yeah, right man, we've been fucked about too long" and threw matches at the petrol as they made a speedy exit through the doors.

As for those leftist CPSA members who work in SS offices and when taking industrial action recently said, "We're on strike for your benefit" - well if you really want to take action for our benefit, then just start giving out the large discretionary payment giro to all claimants - then we might begin to think we're on the same side! As for those claimants union jerks who are after careers as alternative social workers and think they can represent us - you can fuck off too - we don't need anyone to mediate our anger.

### Tebbit's Law

Through its large number of youth training and MSC work schemes the state further aims to divide and criminalise the unemployed from employed members of the working class. Tebbit's latest proposals to guarantee all school leavers "some experience of work" aims to isolate the youths who remain ungrateful for this wonderful opportunity. The aim is to dragoon people into acceptance by offering them "the everyday discipline of work" at poverty wage rates while making it more difficult for them to claim S.S. This would politically strengthen the police in harassing those who still insist on "hanging out" and refusing work as they could be portrayed as criminally work shy.

The forging of the link between the common interests of the unemployed and the employed at work is now vital if we are to go beyond mere survival and contemplate the possibilities of going further than the 1981 uprisings. In 1981 there was no instance of rioters calling on the employed working class at work to join in, bringing the strike weapon into play - when the smoke cleared there were no occupied factories in sight. In the nights of rioting a spontaneous coming together, particularly in the Northern cities like Manchester, Hull and Leeds, of rioters and people at work was a distinct possibility. In Toxteth for example on July 4th the police were clearly losing the battle for control of the streets. The rioters were moving towards the main arteries of communication, used in the early morning by tens of thousands of workers. If the police hadn't fired C.S. grenades around dawn contact would undoubtedly have been established between the rioters and these early morning shift workers.

Solidarity between the employed, and hostility towards the police is probably more out in the open in Liverpool than any other British City. We can only guess at what would have happened if such contact had been made. What we can say is that when it does happen riot will be turning into insurrection. The day to day experience of working class communities based on an illegal struggle to survive makes the prospect increasingly likely.

It is fundamental to the state's strategy to try and keep these new forces in opposition to it marginalised, to try and keep the traditional division between, on the one hand, the employed and "respectable" unemployed and, on the other, the workshy and criminally inclined unemployed. But, as we have already seen, millions of people are now forced into illegality for everyday survival so that these divisions are disintegrating. The criminalisation strategy has the reverse effect to that intended - it not only fails to isolate the few but, instead, vastly increases their numbers. The division that has been created is between, on the one hand, the unemployed and the low paid employed, and, on the other, the small elements of the working class who aspire to middle class status, fearfully seeking to maintain their job security and living standards, looking gratefully at the police and the trade unions to protect it from lawless elements and the abyss of poverty into which it might fall.

**The Scorcher - a Cardiff based anarcho-situ-nationalist paper with a tasty line in venom is now defunct.**

### A (different) London Worker Replies:

This correspondence raises several questions. I agree with Marcus's rejection of the myth of the groovy black lifestyle or that of horny-handed northerners fair bristling with revolutionary class consciousness. These are just images projected to mask just another sub-cultural strategy for survival. Although they may be the basis for a limited resistance to the corrosive effects of living in this society, they hold no inner truth which will light the spark of proletarian revolution. In fact it is only when such resistance goes beyond ethnic or geographical boundaries that there is a prospect for some major upheaval. This happened to a limited extent during the riots, but as that movement developed the stress turned from confrontation with the police to a search for opportunities for looting and the immediate gain of commodities.

As for the Birmingham SS Strikers, well they may be scum, but if they are taking on the bosses they should be supported - not because they are such charming people, always helpful, blah, blah, but because strike action, and unofficial strike action in particular breaks the bonds of structured alienated relationships. When they are on strike they can't hide behind their desks, grills and other defensive paraphernalia, but must respond in some sort of human way.

All this talk of "forging links" - well a lot of it's counterfeit. Solidarity goes beyond a common ground of interest - a bartering of politico-economic muscle. It is our response when we see other workers fighting back: we want to join in, we want to take things further. The left is scared of such solidarity, things would get out of control, they want to limit solidarity to a fiver in the collection tin. Hence the vacuous CPSA slogan "We're striking for your benefit" - they're just taking the piss, because we all know that when it's over it will be the same as usual for claimants.

I do think it's worth insulting people if they behave like shits - that way they are more likely to question their role as supervisors of other peoples poverty, than if they are just spoken to nicely. As for the choice of insult, I feel it is more appropriate to look at the social neuroses behind such expressions (in this case feelings of social inferiority) than just adopting a moralistic, rationalistic stance to something essentially emotive.

Richard Essex



ARE YOU GETTING IT REGULARLY ? NEVER MIND, TRY WORKERS PLAYTIME.  
AVAILABLE IN BULK QUANTITIES – THE PAPER THAT REFUSES TO SELL OUT.

**WORKERS PLAYTIME**

Popular yarns  
of class war

Woy, Worzel and Maggie demonstrate a 100% swing  
to Proletarian Autonomy.



**ALL  
OUT  
FOR**

**MENT**

**OUR FRIENDS WRITE :**

I find many of the sentiments expressed in certain 'anarchist' papers hypocritical. I quote here from an article in Workers Playtime.....

. . . Personally this sounds too much like SWP rhetoric for my liking. Is this the voice of an anarchist? (Freedom Letters)

As for the articles in Workers Playtime sounding like SWP rhetoric, most of the people in London Workers Group are 'pure' marxists who think that by tacking the word autonomy (never clearly defined) on to the holy writ of Das Capital (sic), they can call themselves 'Libertarian'. (Freedom Letters)

If we use force people will not accept us and will destroy us. So, 'play-mate', stop reading Stirner, its bad for you. (Freedom Letters)

This paper, as shown by its title and equally joky byline "popular yarns of class war" is only half serious in treating such questions as the attacks of the bourgeoisie, workers struggle, war and the perspective of communism.

Indeed why have 'some members of the London Workers Group' bothered to put together this collection of 'just the views of the individual contributors', this so-called 'discussion forum', for no declared reason distinct from producing the LWG's Bulletin, which itself is a collection of anarchist, councillist and autonomist articles, also without an editorial 'line' (p.9), ie programmatic coherence? . . . . .

the LWG's confusionism, masquerading as discussion, is reinforced by its localism and refusal to organise systematically. Without breaking through this vicious circle, revolutionary intervention will indeed remain a bit of a joke. (World Revolution) (sic)

some hard thinking is needed about 'our' activities and our publications. I see the LWG as part of that 'our' more specifically than the larger 'ultra-left' movement but I doubt if 'Wildcat' is seen in the same light by LWG? We need to ACT together more on a national basis and this needs to be taken into account when taking decisions about 'our' publications. (Letter from member of Wildcat)

reason

**WORKERS PLAYTIME**

MAN AND PARTY  
IN PERFECT



About a week after the notorious Haleswood 'vandalism' (see by worker called Paul Kelly was accused by a foreman of bending the centre console to the floor of the Escort (a popular pr... racket, you don't have to fit the console.) Kelly was suspi... various appeals were heard. On Tuesday March 8th, he was s...  
This led almost immediately to a pretty obvi... line over... want to... into the... accept... could... 2000... voted... back...  
A week later on 15th March, 3500 of the strikers attended a union-called meeting and voted overwhelmingly to stay out. Obviously somewhat perturbed by this result, the union (TGWU) made the strike official a week later, and 100...

To The London Workers Group,  
Box LWG,  
C 1 Metropolitan Wharf,  
Wapping Wall,  
London E 1

I would like to subscribe to "Workers Playtime". I enclose £2 for an annual subscription.

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Workers Playtime is produced by some members of the London Workers Group. It is not the public face or theoretical journal of the LWG. Articles reflect the thoughts, fantasies and inadequacies of their authors (in no particular order).

Playtime is intended as a forum for discussing the reality of class struggle. If you have something to contribute—news, feedback, whatever—we would like to hear from you. There is no editorial line—but that doesn't mean we don't know what we disagree with.