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Libertarian Communist

15p

Up Against The State

The elections have been cancelled. We have to wait a few months yet to find out precisely who will be at the helm of the state. The choice might not bring socialism any nearer but it will certainly affect how we are governed (see pps 2-3). The main parliamentary parties may differ in exactly how they want to put the state to work, but their politics are compromised by their attitude to the state. Their politics are those of the status quo.

Today the state intrudes into almost every aspect of our lives. Many of us are its employees. The state has the right to deny abortion facilities, to legislate over our sexuality. In its name certain 'freedoms' are upheld whilst others are held in check or attacked. The state is the mechanism which modern capitalism has seized to maintain its workforce through the welfare system and to keep them in check through its apparatus of political control. It increasingly intervenes to regulate the economy, to balance the contradictions making for destabilization, to maintain profitability and counter those whose challenges are throught to, or are sought to be shown to, threaten its fabric.

Yet the state is not a simple plot by the ruling class to put down the discontented and hoodwink the masses. The many headed monster that is the modern state has yet to fully coordinate itself in this way.

Contradictions will exist, and will continue. Police Commissioners can take action independently of other authorities. The boys in blue certainly acted off their own bat in evicting the Huntley St. squatters recently, employing bulldozers and riot shield technology. But they pulled into use the new extensive powers of the criminal trespass law and the courts to legitimize their military assault.

So, despite its internal divisions, significant sections of the state are increasingly feeling the need to respond firmly, and jointly, towards discontent. They take for their model the West German state and gather their techniques from their own experience in the north of Ireland. It's apparent success in justifying its role there has enabled the state to bring in repressive legislation, such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act, torture Irish political prisoners and acclimatize the British working class to a higher level of 'necessary force' in its dealings with the direct action of dissent.

The racism implicit in Britain's domination of Ireland is reflected in the enactment and execution of our immigration laws. In Bradford's Armley jail, recently, 24 Asians, subject to constant abuse, were discovered to have been crammed six to a cell for 23 hours a day awaiting deportation. Much of the harassment has been carried out by arbitrary police raids, but increasingly it is being processed by the state using the labour of ordinary Civil Service clerical workers.

Yet the development towards the model 'Strong State' is uneven and confused. Victims of their own propaganda, sections of the state are prone to "over-react". Cow towing to the needs of the German government, an attempted song and dance has been made around the arrest of 'Baader-girl' Astrid Proll. The defendents in the Persons Unknown case have somewhat ludicrously been painted as our very own Red Army Fraction. Much more importantly the state seems very uncertain as how to proceed with the Official Secrets case of Aubrey, Berry and Campbell. The prosecution has already been forced to drop the Section I charge against Duncan Campbell of "collecting information about defence communications, which might be useful to an enemy, for a purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the state".

However, it we do not act now, the state will be able to paper over the cracks of its own confusion and proceed more securely on the road to a new totalitarianism. And it looks as if the economic necessity for this may not be all that far away.



Photo Chris Davies (Report)

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In The Dock...

Anarchist Bombers

The Anti-Terrorist Squad have been busy. While NF supporters have been murdering Asians and fire-bombing Anti-Nazi League and Peace News offices, Detective Superintendant Bradbury has been justifying his existence by 'nipping in the bud . . . a nation-wide conspiracy to overthrow society'. No bombings have been carried out by the left in this country for over two years.

Iris Mills, Ronan Bennet, Daffyd Ladd and Stuart Carr have been on remand in Brixton prison for over three months charged with 'conspiracy to cause explosions' with 'persons unknown'. Since then two more have been arrested Iris Mills has been virtually in solitary confinement and the police say they want four more arrests.

The evidence they have against those in prison is flimsy indeed. Weedkiller and wiring found in a flat. A car found in South Wales. Arrested in May, the defendants were eventually charged in July with the 'dishonest possession of firearms' (air pistols and an air rifle) and one defendant with robbery. Their committal hearings were arranged to coincide with that of a middle eastern guerilla and vague intimations have been made about links with the 'Baader-Meinhof Gang'.

One link is clear. As in other advanced capitalist countries, the police in Britain are becoming increasingly militarized. Alongside troops at Heathrow, with riot shields, riot tactics and assorted weaponry they are seeking to emulate the German 'Strong State'. Harassing a harmless group of anarchists justifies state expenditure on repression, ups the level of paranoia and lays the groundwork for criminalizing all political dissent.
Support and donations to:–
PERSONS UNKNOWN, c/o Box 123, 182 Upper Street, London N1

Britain's Torturers

October is now set as the date when it is expected that the opening hearing of the International Tribunal on Britain's presence in Ireland will take place. An international week of action is planned to coincide with the opening of the Tribunal, whose sponsorship list is already wider than that of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation's tribunal on West Germany.

In Britain it is supported by trade union branches and trades councils not normally associated with any solidarity work on the Irish question, has impressive backing from the student movement, has begun to gain support within the women's movement.

Over the summer the state has been increasing the intensity of its repression. Troops have shot unarmed republicans. Thatcher has promised the return of a Stormont-type regime. The media has been spouting garbage such as 'Spearhead' and striving to smother or remould dissent. But the dissent has been gathering apace both in Britain and Ireland. Resistance on the ground is spreading. Tours both north and south by the Relatives Action Committee have been publicising the plight of the prisoners in H Block, Long Kesh. In Britain a many-thousand-strong demonstration demanded political status for POWs and an end to the silence on their torture.

The Amnesty International report and a startling 'troops out' article in the *Daily Mirror* have helped revitalise a solidarity movement which could, if built, break the media silence on the protests of Irish prisoners on both sides of the Irish Sea.

However the pressure must be kept up. An independent Tribunal will help point to the reasons why the British State needs to rely on repression and why this can only be ended by the withdrawal of the troops. But much support and publicity will be needed if there is to be any significant degree of success.

Editorial

THE "BALANCE" OF POWER



It was a Labour government that put the troops in ten years ago. The repression stepped up under Heath and would undoubtedly get worse under Thatcher. A Labour party that hardly even discussed Ireland can't hold any real hope for putting an end to British Imperialism. That hope lies in the building of a mass movement in Ireland, and in widespread solidarity action in Britain. *Photo Derek Spiers (IFL)*

"Only practical action by the government to create a much fairer distribution of the national wealth can convince the worker and his [sic] family and his trade union that an "incomes policy" is not some kind of trick to force him, particularly if he works in a public service or nationalised industry, to bear the brunt of the national burden."

Those words appeared in the Labour Party manifesto for the first of the two General elections in 1974. They heralded the period of Labour government now facing the prospect of electoral condemnation.

On the hustings of February and October 1974 the Labour Party argued that its political advantage over the Conservatives was that it alone could ensure mutual aid and co-operation between the major forces of contemporary society.

The Conservatives had attempted to solve the problems of a troubled capitalism through direct confrontation with the organised working class; but their Industrial Relations Act had met with militant opposition, and their incomes policy had been broken by the miners in a major struggle. Added to this, their attempts to stimulate the economy through public expenditure had given a massive boost to domestic inflation.

Contract

Labour held up its alternative—the Social Contract. With a fine sense of irony, the terminology of business agreement was conjured forth to illustrate "an entirely new recognition of the aims of social justice".

Under this Social Contract remarkable changes did take place. During the first three years of the Labour government's term of office, for instance, real wages suffered their worst fall since the post General Strike period of 1926-29, unemployment rose to its highest post-war level and important public services were further weakened by expenditure cuts.

Were these developments part of a "fairer distribution of national wealth"? Did they add up to anything but a very old-fashioned sort of recognition of the aims of social justice?

Of course not. The occasional spectacular bankrupt property tycoon like William Stern does not alter the fact that Labour's central objective has been the resuscitation rather than the weakening of the strength of capital, and hence the preservation of the essential anatomy of social inequality in wealth, power and everything else in Britain today.

Speaking to the TUC conference in September 1974 Harold Wilson, then Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party, gave a rather more accurate prophecy of what Labour government would be about.

"The Labour government wants to see industry prosper, and this means a Stock Market strong and confident enough to help industry raise the finance required for industrial investment. . . For this investors must have confidence in the viability of industry and that means its profitability."

Possibly, he himself saw no contradiction between such sentiments and the verbal egalitarianism of the "Social Contract". Real life has, however, revealed in clear outline the incompatibility of business necessity with true social equality—equality either in terms of deliberation of social priorities or in terms of relative remuneration. **It has been the needs of capital, not the decisions of society, which have called the tune.**

Some of the general aspects of capitalism from this point of view are examined in the article on "Socialism and Democracy" in the present issue. Such things as falling real wages, speed-up and unemployment are obvious examples of how what is from the business point of view a real need to improve market performance becomes discomfort at the hands of an alien power for the worker. Less obvious, perhaps, is the way other aspects of society are affected.

Nationalization

It is here, if we are to believe Mrs Thatcher, that we will find Labour Party "socialism" rampant at the expense of hard-headed business realism. The Tories will make much of this at the coming election.

Public welfare and educational provisions do make an important contribution to our quality of life. They can be seen as important gains for the working-class. They can hardly, however, be equated with "socialism", a term which should be used to describe a completely different structuring of the organisation of production.



ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

Police armed with riot shields, bulldozers, and The Criminal Tresspass Law, recently evicted the people using the Huntley Street flats as their homes. The squatters, through direct community action, had all but assured themselves of the victory of re-housing on their own terms. But the police authorities felt that they had to make use of their spy-gathered material and test out the new powers at their disposal. Labour conference might not oppose the Act, but we can.

Clearly there is no real collective ownership of the nation's "key foundation industries". The original object of the exercise was to transfer the losses of ailing industries into public hands, and, wherever possible, to subsidise private enterprise profit at the expense of the individual consumer. They are run more or less according to private business practice, which is indeed where the majority of managerial staff were trained.

Taxation

Taxation will be one of the Tories' main planks. Once more it is a chief area in which Labour's efforts have been directed towards helping private enterprise at the expense of the average wage-earner. Income tax and personal National Insurance have been increased as a proportion of government revenue, whilst the majority of corporations have enjoyed tax-relief.

In addition companies have found considerable financial aid other than tax-relief. Aid in the form of investment grants, loans, employment premiums, regional aid to industry etc. has not been one of the areas to suffer from the attitude that "we must all tighten our belts".

In Labour's drive to create conditions for the re-awakening of the profitability of British industry, the cost has been cuts in essential services and rising proportions of peoples' incomes going on tax. Here again, therefore, business necessity becomes for the worker discomfort at the hands of an alien power.

Profits have been boosted in other ways: by the low rate of pay increases, the relaxation of the price code, falling import costs and unemployment. Even though the financial situation looks more rosy now than it has done for some time, the conditions for continued profitability look fragile.

In the short term some pundits look forward to a consumer-led boom and an export drive bolstering profitability. Others hear that the inadequacy of budgetary measures, the drastic slimming of British Steel and the prospective increases in import prices could counteract this. More fundamental than these short-term contradictions are the high cost per unit output of labout and the disequilibrium of the world market. Problems in both these areas are reflected in a continued sluggishness of trade and the lack of competitiveness of many of its firms.

Productivity

Equilibrium in the capitalist system as a whole can be portrayed in its simplest terms as capitals exchanging with each other at a level of adequate surplus. But however much governments attempt to regulate this equilibrium, there is always a point beyond which they are ineffective—that point being the desire of each capital entity to maintain autonomy over its own production of surplus and to maximise this. In the final analysis, therefore, reaching of equilibrium in the system as a whole must emerge as the aggregate of innumerable individual enterprises trying to assert their own market health through the means already mentioned.

On the level of the individual corporation, it is natural to respond to poor results by attampting to make one's own product that much more attractive and profitable to sell. Many different variables can affect the equation, from product attractiveness to how well the shop-floor is layed out. Given a good product and efficient marketing, however, the crucial factors for profitability all relate to the workforce—how much it costs and how well it works—in other words, "productivity".

Clamour for increased productivity lies behind numerous contemporary initiatives, from various projects for "industrial democracy" to the British Institute of Management's "SPUR" campaign (a fearsome name—it's intended to represent "Drive on Strategy, Performance and Utilization of Resources", but watch out for managers wearing cowboy boots!). It also provides a convenient starting point for interpreting what the Conservatives now have to offer.

Tories

The Tories are making a big song and dance about Labour's "socialism". Alas, if what we have argued is correct, this is a mirage.

This does not mean, however, that the entire Conservative approach is based on a rhetorical fantasy. At the same time as being "anti-socialist" they are also the champions of **"payment by results"** and **"productivity incentives"**. We could say that they intend to play the tune of capitalist government in a slightly different key. They are offering workers two superficially very attractive options—**reduction of income tax** and **greater latitude in pay deals.**

The argument behind the tax policy is that it will give employees at all levels of industry a greater incentive to work harder without increasing corporate labour costs. What however is really being posed initially are changes in the patters of working class consumption rather than any overall increase. This is because the reduction in income tax revenue will have to be compensated by further cuts in expenditure. When we ask where, the answer is either "socialism" or "wait and see". We know that the police and armed forces aren't going to suffer. We must expect, therefore, further assaults on those areas most important for the working class—the municipal and social services.

The Conservative wages policy bears a similar psychological message to that of their proposed tax cuts. It's also indicative, however, of their willingness to take a gamble on what might be termed "turning the industrial front line back over to the bosses".

Class War

They are given hope in this by the conjecture that the balance of class forces on the shop-floor has been swung in capital's favour by the years of Labour government themselves.

Since the Donovan Commission on Trade Unions in 1968, successive governments have been aware of the importance of shop-floor organisation in the germination of militant disputes, and have seen the desirability of bringing this rank and file structure under the firmer control of the more accessible, and in empirical terms, politically more amenable, national leadership: or at least of bringing shop-floor agitation into effective defusing arbitration bodies. Some efforts in these directions have been thwarted—not just by the rank and file but also because the union leaders were determined only to be strengthened in a manner which put no extra liability on them. The present Labour government has however presided over great success. Within the unions, the leaderships have used their support of the government to back up a continued political and bureaucratic offensive against militants: this is their part of the deal through which they are proud to be "consulted" as to what has already probably been decided. And there have been structural innovations. The Arbitration, Conciliation and

Public Sector

Advisory Service, for instance, although pretty toothless when faced by an intransigent employer, at once provides everyone interested to dampen a dispute with a firther "There are channels for this sort of thing, you know" gambit.

The Conservatives have hinted at certain further modifications in the legal framework of industrial relations. James Prior has suggested, for instance, that small companies may be exempt from the provisions of the Employment Protection Act. In the main, though, they have abandoned any attempts to re-legislate the class struggle; an attitude which will in practice place emphasis upon how they would respond as a government to the building up of specific major disputes. They have managed to be rather vague about this, though Mrs. Thatcher has indicated her hope that the referendum might be used to gauge the "voice of the nation" in any particular circumstances. It is, of course, not impossible that they might resort again to statutory guidelines.

Would the Conservatives be more likely than Labour to engage in a major social confrontation with the whole or parts of the organised working-class? Despite their remembrance of their previous defeat some considerations to suggest that this is more than likely. The party's more aggressive pro-business profile may embolden employers to hope for the hard stuff and be less reluctant to court situations where call for it might arise. The Tories lack those organic links with the labour movement which have been so important in the dampening of class-conflict under Callaghan. They also have closer contacts with the police and military establishment that has been systematically strengthening its ability to take form action against mass struggle.

It is the case that if the Tories win the coming election it will be a really serious setback for the working-class, not just in Britain, but also internationally. The Tories have already hinted that they would probably bring in much tighter controls on Britain's black community. They might bring in identity cards. They will certainly look into ways of further restricting the rights of black British citizens to enter this country.

The Tories are also keen to pursue an even tougher line than the present government in Ireland. There is a strong possibility that the Tories may not have an overall majority in the next Parliament but will need to form a coalition with the Ulster Unionists in order to govern. The Ulster Unionists would then be able to impose their own solution in Ireland, which hardly bears thinking about.

The Tories will severely cut expenditure on social welfare, as we have already argued, and also lead a more general ideological assault on the idea of concessions to the working-class in education, housing, health care, etc. It will not just by a quantitative attack on working-class gains, but also an ideological one, a qualitative one. It will not just be hospital budgets that are under attack, for instance, but the whole idea of public health care.

Vote Labour

There are several brands of revolutionary who always scent revolution just around the corner. They should not underestimate the **psychological** and material losses suffered in the last few years. It is no good demanding that "the Tories do their own dirty work" or by believing as an article of faith in the effectiveness of abstentionist campaigns. It is a painful thing to advise comrades to vote Labour given our analysis of their track record. However, we are in no position to withstand the Thatcher assault and not suffer greatly. This time next year it may not be just the Persons Unknown who are being used for practice in repressive tactics by the state; those tactics may be being used against the entire left within the working-class.

It is true that whichever way you vote the government will always get in. The point is that it does make a difference which one gets in. Of course, we do support, though critically, the Socialist Unity electoral alliance. We disagree with some aspects of its programme, in particular the section that begins "the resources are there to meet our needs" which tends to shirk away from the real need there would be for for a socialist mode of production for for the whole programme to be secured. We also support candidates being run by the Socialist Workers Party, although they tend to emphasise schemes for resistance to capitalism without presenting any alternative vision at all! With them their emphasis is also often on building the SWP at the expense of the movement. The Workers Revolutionary Party, who are likely to run up to 60 candidates in the election, seem to have a most thoroughly sectarian attitude, putting forward an extremely arid view of the eternally correct party, as well as having some rather bizarre planks to their programme, and are unlikely to gain much resonance within the class.

Socialism

As we have argued, although Labour is not responsible for the crisis, it has implemented capitalist solutions to it. We believe that real collective solutions are needed, based on the idea of the common ownership of resources, achieved by communal assessment of our present needs and objectives.

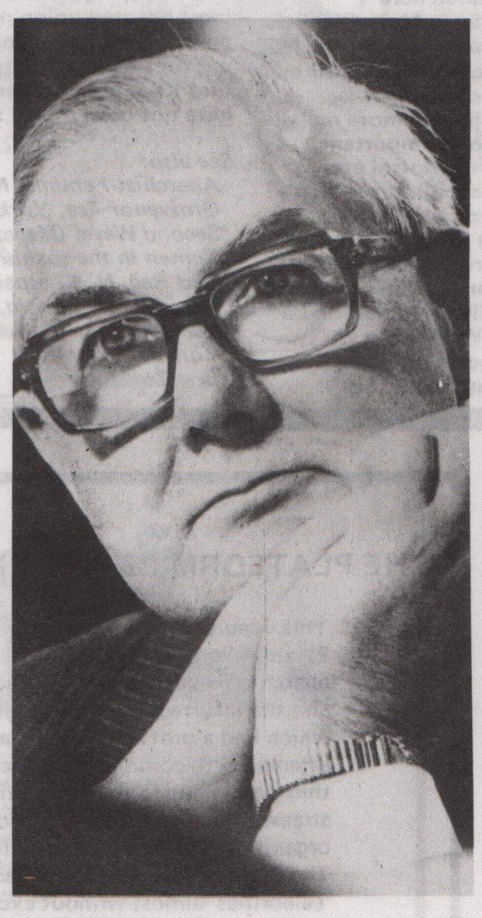
We believe that socialists should put forward options around needs arising from present experience whose resolution posits the overturn of existing social relations; in other words needs suggested by the present development of capitalism but which it contradicts rather than moves to satisfy. This is undoubtedly difficult in a climate in which most people either prefer the devil they know to the uncertainty of the struggle for socialism or even aren't conscious of alternative solutions to their experienced needs.

The only way the oppressed can develop their own perspectives and break away from their subordination is through direct struggle. The process of developing a more general perspective for socialism depends in part upon the level of such isolated activity. It is in their struggles that sectors of the oppressed and subordinate layers display capacities essential for the establishment of socialism which the normal running of capitalism tends to wear down: such as solidarity, self-organisation and self-consciousness.

The opportunities that the coming elections present for socialists are considerable. We believe that our readers and supporters should try to use people's increased interest in political ideas at this time to draw them into activity. There are a number of issues which either will arise in the election, such as racism, incomes policy, etc., or, perhaps more relevantly, British involvement in Ireland. These issues should either be contested or raised by revolutionaries.

We believe that these elections should be used as part of the overall project of building a strong, independent working-class opposition to the left of the Labour Party which can determine democratically the objectives that we should fight for on on the road to socialism. Leafletting, putting forward ideas at election meetings, contesting any appearances by the National Front or other Fascist groups are the sort of activities that we should not only undertake, but also attempt to involve others in at this time.

EDITORIAL BOARD



"GRILLED OR FRIED?" This seems to be the choice offered to labour movement activists at the next elections. That's why our main priority should be the building of an independent fight back against the politics of austerity — presenting a clear socialist alternative within the working class.

BUILD A PUBLIC SECTOR ALLIANCE

Public services in this country are under vicious attack from the employing class. Resources are being turned away from the 'Social Wage' into the paying off of government debts and the provision of grants to industry.

It is working class people who feel the effects of this process, both as users of the services and as workers employed in them.

Unfortunately, public sector workers who attempt to protect either their living standards or the level of services are often subjected to the most hypocritical abuse by the ruling class. The authorities attempt to obscure their general responsibility and their intransigence in negotiations by blaming the workers for any inconvenience or suffering associated with the need for industrial action in the public sector. In most cases, moreover, public sector workers have difficulty in winning grievances when their action does not immediately affect the employers profits.

Only realisation of the *common* interests of the working class and of how the current crisis is an attack on the working class *as a whole* can provide a basis for the unity and solidarity necessary for successful resistance.

Such unity will not be built easily. Nor will it be the result of any single, simple process. Two elements will however, be of special importance. First, the growth of unified action amongst public sector workers themselves, and their creation of a common strategy for the public sector as a whole. Second, the support of the wider labour movement for this process and its contribution to the achievement of a workers plan for the services involved.

Alongside the ever-present task of solidarity with workers in struggle we require understanding of the social processes at work and of the general objectives required by the workers movement—objectives for the particular services for the public sector as a whole.

In this issue our public sector alliance coverage is centred on the Civil Service. In the next issue we hope to cover what's happening in housing, in particular in direct labour organisations. If you have anything on this for the paper, or indeed anything you want to contribute to the next paper, please get it to our contact address

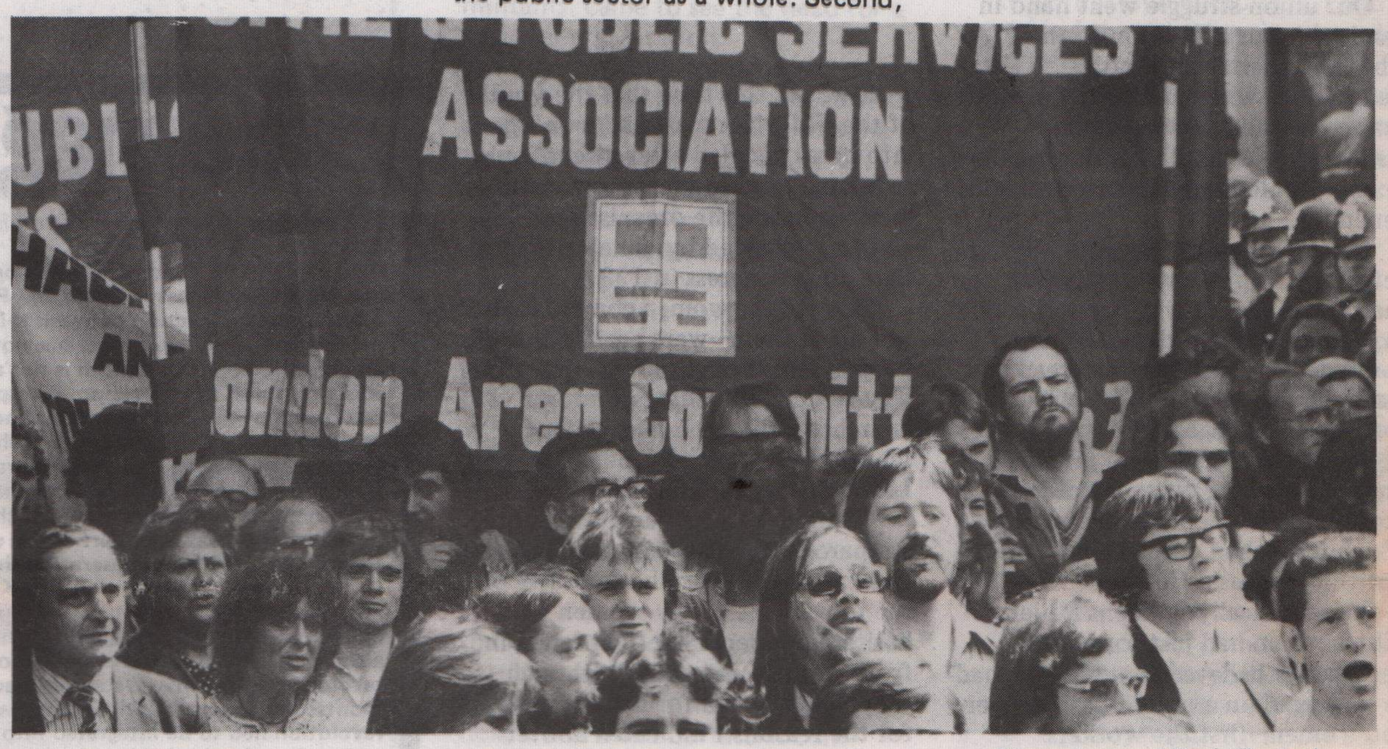


Photo Andrew Wiard (Report).

SERVANTS OF THE STATE

You may have read with astonishment that the May Conference of the Civil and Public Services Association, the union of clerical workers in the Civil Service, recently elected a left-wing National Executive. This includes a member of the International Marxist Group, and several members of the Communist Party and the Militant Group.

How has this come about? In effect the Civil Service has suffered in exactly the same way as other parts of the public sector. Civil Servants have seen their wages eroded by inflation and the rigid incomes policy of recent years. They have been hit harder than those in comparable jobs in private industry as they have not been able to negotiate regradings and bonuses by which private employers get around the letter of government guidelines.

Allied to dissatisfaction over pay, another strong reason for increased support for left-wing candidates has been resentment at the outdated conditions of service that the Civil Service maintains.

The two left groups within the CPSA are the Broad Left and the Redder Tape group. The latter is not particularly influential at an electoral level, but has had a considerable impact on militants within the union. Although increasingly closely linked with the SWP the group retains wider support in some areas. It has consistently fought for a fair deal on pay, and it is at least in part as a response to this that Broad Left in the CPSA is organised in untypically open and democratic lines. The Broad Left contains Militant Group and Communist Party members as well as revolutionaries, and some unprincipled careerists from the more moderate reaches of the Labour Party. It has functioned well as an electoral machine against the Tory Party backed "Moderate Action Group", which stands neither for activism nor even moderation, but has yet to prove itself a force capable of co-ordinating rank and file action.

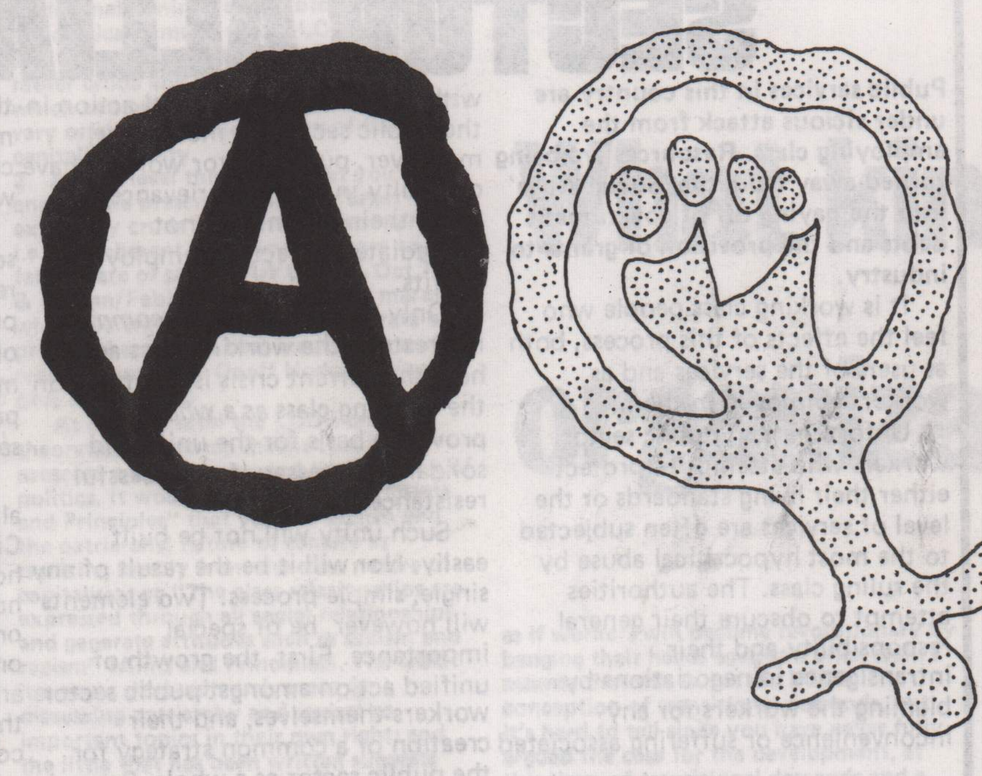
It is a fact that revolutionaries in the union have in the past ignored the difficult question of their attitude to their function as servants of the state. This problem would be sharply heightened if, for instance, a Tory government were elected and used the Civil Service to implement a vile racist measure such as identity cards for black citizens. Since revolutionaries in the past have ignored this question of function they would face considerable difficulties in urging such action as a refusal to implement this type of legislation. However, the problem is a difficult one which does not have easy solutions, all we would say is that it has to be faced up to as the state becomes increasingly directly repressive, on the West German model.

The immediate problem though is that of a strategy as a battle looms over the next round of pay rises. The union is already committed to fight for a considerable rise, and is also opposed to any government pay policy. The union leadership has already entered into alliances with the other Civil Service unions and also with other public sector unions. Unfortunately most of the other Civil Service unions are as much employers' unions as 'employees', and in both cases unity at the level of union leaderships is hardly what is needed. The problem is one of building commitment on the ground, of strengthening the rank and file and increasing its ability to manage its own struggles. It is already becoming apparent that the Broad Left majority on the National Executive contains several members who are stronger on rhetoric than action.

In the forthcoming struggle it will fall to activists in the union at branch level to force the union leaders to take a firm line, as well as trying to strengthen the commitment of their membership. Support for other public sector workers now, and attempts to build closer links with them at the level of Trades Councils and elsewhere, can help any CPSA activities that may arise. Workers in the public sector have nothing to lose and everything to gain by uniting in opposition to cuts and redundancies and against wage policy imposed by their common employer, the state.

International

MUJERES LIBRES





Pepita Carpena was a founder member of Mujeres Libres (Free Women) the libertarian womens organisation set up during the Spanish Civil War. She has lived in exile for over 40 years where she has continued the struggles that she began in Mujeres Libres. The following article comes from the French paper Front Libertaire edited by the Organisation Communiste Libertaire.

Civil War

In 1936 people felt very deeply that there was a need for a specifically feminist movement, because of the euphoria and intense activity in the midst of the Civil War.

However many conrades of ours had understood very early on their position of double slavery--as workers and as women above all. They had joined the CNT (the mass anarchosyndicalist union). These Free Women felt that it had the highest level of consciousbess of all tendencies—a rare thing for women at the time.

Our union struggle went hand in hand with our affiliation to the FIJL (Iberian Libertarian Youth Federation) where all the problems that concerned us were being discussed: our condition as women, sexual problems, and social problems generally.

Culture played a large part in our activities. It mustn't be forgotten that at the time it was rare to be able to study. The majority of our comrades had just learnt to read and write, almost all had to go out and work from the age of 12.

Their conditions were pitiable—only by teaching ourselves did we acquire the elementary knowledge which we lacked. Most of us were not very enthusiastic about working in the specifically womens Mujeres Libres which had just formed—because we believed that struggle had to be waged on a united basis as men and women—first the workers struggle, then each of us in ourselves, in our homes, in our everyday life. We had to try and remove the great prejudices which we held from years of habit and christian education. Many comrades were attempting to do this.

We managed to impose ourselves a little on the unions as militant—but imposing total emancipation as individuals in our own right—that was another matter.

Sexism

It's vexing to note that the same comrades who were the most devoted union militants were so reactionary from the point of view of womens liberation. It wasn't unusual to see these comrades ignoring women comrades, considering them incapable of understanding problems. When they would address them, it was with an air of condescension, as if they were doing them a favour.

This became even more obvious when discussions were held in our offices, where those comrades became more and more conscious of the chasm between the sexes—a chasm caused by prejudices which were difficult to destroy even among our Young Libertarian friends. I could tell you many stories about the time I spent in the FIJL before the war started in 1936. I don't just want to criticise though—many comrades tried to understand and advance, making up for the 'smart' ones who had misunderstood the ideas of free love.

When the war started there was a great deal of activity among young women, who were weary of all the chains that tied them down. Discussion meetings filled up. A vast project of work started for our revolution.

It was at this time that the youth of the FIJL (for reasons I won't go into here) decided after discussions at branch level to create a womens sections inside the organisation.

It was decided by a majority at a Barcelona congress in 1937.

Many of the women comrades—but not all of them—were against this project. We thought it was the wrong way to go about things amongst anarchists like us, it was blatant segregation, especially since Mujeres Libres was already in existence.

Comrades Lucia Sanches Saornil, Amparo Pochy Gascon and Mercedes Compaposada were the founders of the movement. Many women hesitated at declaring themselves in front of male comrades, although they felt the need for it to be created, for the reasons I indicated above: because of so-called male superiority, which our comrades demonstrated without realising it, and which held back our women comrades.

Many of our women comrades swelled the ranks of Mujeres Libres, although at first I was not very enthusiastic, later realising that there was a lot of work to be done among ourselves.

We could see what was going wrong with the same men comrades, that they could only be liberated if we liberated ourselves.

A period of great agitation followed, and permanent questioning. Women demanded what they had demanded and acquired in 1977 (in France). It mustn't be forgotten that the Republican government gave women the right to free abortion—something that was only given because of the struggles of these admirable women. Our comrades of the CNT tolerated but never recognised us in the movement, although we asked to participate on an equal basis as FIJL did.

Problems

I believe that at the time faced by all the probelms created by the war and political struggles they decided to leave on one side a problem that they considered unimportant. But no one can forget the immense role that women played in the home as an educating mother, as a comrade, as an integral individual.

Our perseverance meant that some comrades considered our problems and began to be interested in us. Furthermore as many began to understand that their own liberation depended on ours, a great advance was made in our struggle. This meant that later, our young comrades have become better integrated. It is true that a great evolution has taken place, the young generations are used to working together as men and women, which seemed incongruous before, but seems normal today. It is almost abnormal to speak of the prejudices that we met throughout our lives as militants. Few women alas passed the threshold of being simply the wives of militants, to be being militants in their own right.

Pepita Carpena, August 1977.

THE IMPACT OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT on revolutionary politics is one of the most important developments of this, or any other, century. Despite concessions and attempts at co-option by the traditional organised left, the movement remains vibrant and autonomous.

Kornegger on Anarchism

P. Kornegger, Anarchism the feminist connection, Black Bear, 25p.

This pamphlet is divided into two parts, the first deals with anarchist experiences in Spain and France, the second part looks at the connection between this and feminist struggle.

Unfortunately Kornegger has not understood much of anarchist history. Anarchism is not a set of idealistic beliefs, it is a response to oppression. A response *against* the reformism of the Second International which attempts, (and as this present labour government shows fails,) to improve the position of workers by collaboration within capitalism; against the vanguardist elitism of the Leninists; and against the bureaucratic manipulations of the Stalinists.

Anarchism was then part of the wave of class opposition to exploitation and immeseration that lasted from 1900 till its final defeat in spain in 1937-8. Kornegger does not ask why this wave was defeated. She ignores the betrayals of the collectives which she admires, not only by the marxists, but also by the anarchist leadership who subordinated the revolution to the liberal-stalinist leadership. Prieto, Lopez, Montsenny, Olivar, Santillan, etc., were all agreed that the revolution had to be integrated into the bourgeois state, rather than developing its own organization and programme: a planned socialized economy and workers militias. The collectives were not "destroyed from without" (by Franco), they were destroyed by the stalinists Lister and 'El Campensino' who launched an armed attack on them in the Levant and Aragon in 1937. Similarly Kornegger may observe that there was inadequate preparation causing the failure of the 1968 revolution, but she is unable to say what this means. Kornegger draws no conclusions as to how anarchism encapsulates a strategy to unite the working class by destroying wage labour and installing workers power.

Kornegger dismisses the experience of women in these two revolutions in one word "unchanged". This is also untrue. Libertarian communist has translated here (below/above) an interview with an activist in Mujeres Libres up to 1939. The interview makes one essential point: the MJ were not allowed to participate in the movement in their own right. Similarly most histories of the period (Dolgoff's, Leval's, Peirats's all ignore that women did gain more rights, they did not achieve equality, but there were important changes in abortion rights, more jobs, birth control etc.

The Second part oft the pamphlet raises questions that I feel loathe to answer, as a man uninvolved in the WLM. Nevertheless I dont want to dismiss these ideas as unimportant. Comments like "the similarities that the feminist movement has with traditional anarchism represent a weakness . . . We hope that this unity will develop around a common (class) programme" (Anarchist Worker No. 35 page 3) or "When one worker calls another a 'poof' its the boss who wins. (AW NO. 33 page 5) dont help. They ignore sexism. Surely comrades we should be fighting sexism thereby removing the causes of divisions that exist now, rather than deploring the fact that divisions exist: *because of male supremacy*. Radicals treat *causes* not symptoms. Our approach in AW No.35 p.3 was better, but we have not been consistent "the fight for equal pay, for adequate abortion facilities, for the provision of creches and nurseries are important struggles, but they often risk being destroyed by sexist divisions in the working class. That's why its essential that women's caucuses are created in the trade unions. Not only there, but in revolutionary organizations as well, forcing male militants to confront their own sexism, forcing the organizations to make action against sexism a priority." In short I think we need to pay more attention to feminist criticism.

Kornegger's new pamphlet makes me think. Is it possible to live in harmony, healing wounds, integrating feeling and thinking in the context of continued exploitation and immiseration at work? Is radical feminism 'almost pure anarchism' against the acceptance of the nuclear family and middle America etc or is it "We reject the idea that women consent to or are to blame for their own oppression. Women's submission is not the result of brainwashing, stupidity, or mental illness but of continual, daily pressure from men. We do not need to change ourselves but to change men" (in *Feminist Revolution*, Restockings, 1975, page 54). How do you work for a total feminist-anarchist revolution? What political consequences flow from consciousness-raising (Rape Crisis Centres, Women's Health Collectives)? Kornegger does say "we lack an overall framework to see the process of revolution in." Will other people be transformed only by "a decade of reading, discussion, and involvement? Do affinity groups work? Historically the Iberian Anarchist Federation was based on affinity groups, but the FAI neither helped to lead the revolution nor challenged male supremacy "Its annoying to note that the same comrades who were the most devoted union militants were so reactionary from the point of view of women's liberation. (see above). How can our dreams of the future be worked on now. I dont think that Kornegger has answered the problems, but the questions have not been solved at all in practice by the LCG.

See also:
Anarchist-Feminist Newsletter, from Sophie Laws, 43 Grosvenor Tce, York.
**Second Wave. (Magazine edited by Kornegger)*
(Women in the spanish revolution, Liz Willis, Solidarity.
Red Rag, N. 12 especially the article by Sheila Rowbotham.
**Men Against Sexism, Snodgrass, Times Change.*
**available from York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate, York.*

Tony Zurbrugg

THE PLATFORM OF THE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISTS

This document was written by members of the Dielo Trouda(Workers Truth)group. They were class struggle anarchists who had participated in the Russian Revolution and the insurrectionary mass movement in the Ukraine, which had a profoundly libertarian impulse. They attempted to communicate their experiences and what they had learnt to the international anarchist. They stressed the essential need for disciplined libertarian organisation,built on and relating to the working class. The Platform was severely attacked by the anarchist 'celebrities' almost without exception,who saw the formation of just such an organisation as a threat to the 'inalienable rights of the individual'.

This historical document has been rediscovered and has been instrumental in the development of libertarian communism in the 1970s.

send a cheque/P.O. for 20p+7p p&p to LCG ,27 Clerkenwell Close,London E.C.1.

BULGARIA

Behind the umbrellas the barbed wire

While the Western press gives a considerable coverage to the persecution of dissident intellectuals, most of them holding reactionary opinions, it tends to ignore the continuing repression of genuine socialist opposition within the working class and among some intellectuals of Russia and the 'satellite' countries.

While some dissident intellectuals are allowed to leave and go into exile, workers in opposition to the bureaucrats are imprisoned and put in psychatric clinics with not a word from the press in Western Europe and America.

A glaring example of this is the country of Bulgaria.

Bulgaria, on the Black Sea, has a population of 8½ million.

It also, after the USSR, has the highest number of political prisoners, numbering thousands.

Bulgaria has been through many upheavals, including the revolutionary movement that developed around 1870 that had both a national liberation and a purely social character.

When the movement against Turkish domination developed, the national problems of Western Europe, (Italy, Germany) had passed and social problems occupied a primary place.

So the national liberation movement in Bulgaria was strongly influenced by the socialism of the First International.

Bulgaria's most loved poet, Khristo Botev, much influenced by the revolutionary anarchism of Bakunin, died fighting in the mountains in 1876, two years before the liberation.



The image of Bulgaria in the media has taken on a sinister tinge recently with the KGB-style umbrella murders. The country's strategic position in the Balkans makes it vital for the Soviet Union to maintain its control.

Background

And in fact, anarchist communism began to take hold in Bulgaria, where the Anarchist Communist Federation was formed in 1919. Those who had been active within the trade union movement, the peasant co-operatives, the cultural movement, or as local propaganda groups or individual militants, came to see the need for a national organisation.

A mass movement began to develop. The authorities replied with customary brutality. Militants were 'shot while attempting to escape'.

When fascists began to prepare their coup d'etat in 1923, the ACF was the only organisation to demand the arming of the workers, the Communist Party having been won over to electoralism.

Fearing that a coup d'etat would rally all anti-fascist forces around the anarchist movement, the fascists utilised their agents in the police and especially their secret League of Regular Army officers.

On March 26 1923, troops attacked a mass meeting held by the ACF in Yamboli. Militants replied to the fire of the soldiers, and a fierce battle raged for two hours.

The two regiments were insufficient and the local fascist commander had to bring up a heavy artillery regiment.

In the massacre that followed, 26 Anarchist militants fell before the firing squad.

In the face of this outrage, the Communist Party did nothing. When the coup came in June, overthrowing the Agrarian regime, only the ACF resisted. Had the CP joined in the uprising, there would have been a strong possibility that the fascists would have been defeated.

"Liberation"

Later in September, the CP, egged on by Moscow, 'took cognizance of its mistakes' and organised an uprising. The ACF gave full support to this, but by now it was too late. The uprising was crushed and many Anarchists, Communists, and members of the bourgeois democratic Agrarians died in the fighting. 35,000 anti-fascists were killed.

The ACF was the only organisation to form electoral guerilla groups, the CP busying themselves with elections again.

When the fascism of the Bulgarian sort was followed by the Nazi occupation, the Anarchists continued to fight, being joined eventually by the Communists.

But the liberation from Hitlerism on September 9, 1944 did not bring with it liberation of the working class.

The Russians instigated a new coalition to rule the country, the Fatherland Front. As in Hungary and other Eastern European countries (see Hungary Supplement) this grouping consisted of dubious elements who had taken part in the 1923 and 1934 fascist coups.

The working class movement was crushed; factory and workshop committees, and local committees, which had been set up in the last days of fighting the Nazis, were dissolved.

The Anarchist movement had its newspapers and its halls closed down.

90 delegates at a special conference held by the ACF were arrested and put into concentration camps.

In Cuciyan and Bogdanovdol camps the worst conditions prevailed. (Bad sanitary conditions, little food, and sometimes 36 hours work without rest, as well as beatings.)

Many militants fled into exile.

When the regime thought it had control of the situation, it released many prisoners in 1952-53, but in 1956 there were further round-ups of libertarian militants at the same time as the Russian troops were shelling the Hungarian workers.

Resistance

Over the last two years resistance has grown to the regime of Todor Jivkov. On May 1st last year slogans hostile to the State appeared on bridges in Sofia, the capital. In June a strike broke out in the coalmine of Pernik, which was followed by four arrests. On 23 June '77 a resistance group blew up the petrol tanker 'Erma' in the port of Varna.

Seven psychatric clinics have been set up to incarcerate political prisoners. This includes clinics at Sofia, Kourilo, Biala, Karkoukovo, Lovetch, Sevlievc, and Soukhodol.

There are sixteen prisons where political prisoners are held, as well as the concentration camps where 20,000 are held—in Belene Bach Samokov, Nojarevo and several others.

As well as persecution of the socialist opposition, many Pomaks (Moslems who have refused to 'Bulgarise' their names) are interned.

There have been many arrests as the result of increased resistance.

The libertarians held in prison are in grave danger, as they have to face appalling conditions.

Already the libertarian sculptor, Alexander Guigov, the trade union militant and libertarian Khristo Kolev Yordanov, and Doctor Petar Kondoferski have died in prison.

Other militants who we know of who remain in prison are the libertarians Athanas Artakov, Luben Djermanov, Athanas Kisov, Alexander Nakov, and Petar Paskov, a militant of the Peoples Agrarian Union.

A campaign of solidarity needs to be built if the libertarian and socialist opposition is not to be wiped out.

Further information can be obtained from LCG c/o 27 Clerkenwell Close EC1.

Tyranny of Structurelessness

In this pamphlet Jo Freeman attempts to sketch out an approach to organisation that would prevent the growth of elitist leaderships-which both highly centralised and highly informal groupings tend tp produce. In revulsion at the hierarchical structures reproduced in many organisations throughout capitalist society,some libertarians have shied away from any meaningful consideration of self-organisation. The Libertarian Communist Group played no part in the writing of this pamphlet but found it highly applicable to the ineffectuality of the libertarian and anarchist groups in Britain in recent decades..

Send 5p+7p p&p to LCG,c/o 27 Clerkenwell Close ,E.C.1. for acopy . 10 or more 3½p each. Please make cheques/P.O.s payable to LCG General Fund.

The people who produce this paper are undoubtedly one of the most super-exploited sections of the working-class. They spend long hours writing, laying-up, and selling the bloody thing, and don't even get paid a penny for it!

We don't mind that so much, after all we are all committed. The point is that we are still running at a loss every issue. The cost of typesetting and printing remains very high.

In the long-term we hope to get round our problems by growing as an organisation and by selling more copies of the paper more frequently.

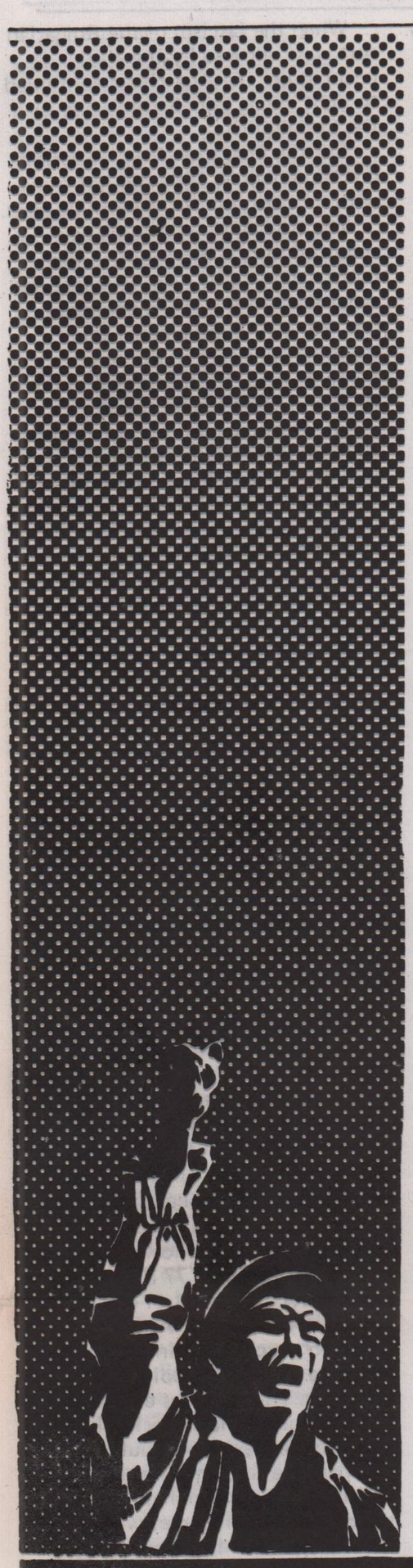
In the short-term you can help. How? Well, by taking bundles of the paper to sell. Also, you could write for us, sending us your news, views and reviews.

Above all, if you support the paper and what we're trying to do, give us some money. Of course, it would be a good idea to take out a subscription (see the box on the back page) but cash would be very helpful too.

We know that these are hard times, with living standards falling and we know that our average reader doesn't have too much to spare. However, every little helps. We expect to have a bulging postbag over the next couple of months, send in plenty of votes!

All copy, donations etc. to L.C.G., 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Cheques should be made payable to LCG General Fund.



DEBATE:

What kind of organization?



Dear Comrades

1. The LCG has rightly chosen to move beyond the theoretical and practical limitations of traditional anarchism, but in doing so the LCG seems to have looked around for a more "relevant" political approach and simply borrowed from the traditional Leninist and Trotskyist left. Theoretically much of the LCG's analysis and hence practice seems to be based on a rather crude and economistic marxism which can only provide a limited, and not very original or accurate view of late 70s capitalist society.

2. At one level this means that you analyse the present economic "crisis" in extremely crude and deterministic terms – i.e. the inherent tendency for there to be a falling rate of profit (*AW* Oct 76, Oct 77, & *LC* Jan/Feb). You ignore those marxists who have argued that the "falling rate of profit" theory is at best inadequate and at worst wrong. (See Geoff Hodgson *New Left Review* 84.)

At another level the LCG's crude theoretical approach means that it presents a very narrow and "male" view of politics. It would seem from your "Aims and Principles" that you see sexism and the patriarchal nature of society as resulting merely from the class nature of capitalism: eg "The class relationships are expressed through all social relationships and generate attitudes such as sexism and racism" (Aims and Principles). The LCG has never devoted much space to discussing patriarchy and sexism as important topics in their own right; and the little that has been written suggests that you only see the struggles against patriarchy and sexism as important insofar as they are a way of uniting other sections of the working class with white male workers. For instance you concluded your report on the prosecution of *Gay News* with the comment that: "When one worker calls another a 'poof' it's the boss who wins because a divided working class is a beaten one!" (*AW* Feb 1977)

By using simplistic marxist categories to explain patriarchy and sexism you in effect subordinate the struggle against patriarchy to the struggle against class and economic oppression. This can only make the women's and gay movements feel that they are being used as pawns in the male, hetero class struggle.

3. The LCG seems to have responded to the failure of traditional anarchism by deciding that it must have a package of demands just like other revolutionary organisations. Suddenly on the front page of *Anarchist Worker* (July 1977) we were presented with the LCG's own package of demands as if they were self-evidently correct and the best thing since sliced bread.

I assume that the LCG's growing list of "demands" are seen as "transitional" and part of the development of a program. Transitional demands, as developed by Trotskyist groups, have rather manipulative connotations as they often aim to create revolutionary situations by getting workers to fight for demands that are unrealisable under capitalism – almost as if workers will become revolutionary by banging their heads against a brick wall. I assume that this is not the LCG's conception of transitional demands, but it's hard to tell since you have never fully argued the case for the development, at this time, of transitional demands and a program.

4. The LCG is putting forward essentially material demands (eg sliding scale of wages) which on their own have no specific libertarian content, and which ignore whole areas of life and day-to-day struggles that are political. For instance there is little or no attention given to the division in society between order-givers and order-takers (which *doesn't* mean accepting Solidarity's bourgeois identification of this as the primary division under capitalism) and the question of "who controls?". In schools, colleges and hospitals the problems of fighting for control over decisions, and the content of education or health, is just as important as fighting the cuts. Related to this is a tendency for the LCG to stress fighting for the correct economic demands at the expense of calling for a fight to democratise unions or for community control of health ane education services. (This is well illustrated in *LC* Jan/Feb pages 1,2,3.)

Similarly the LCG has taken almost no interest in "personal politics" – one of the most important areas in which the fight against patriarchy and the day-to-day alienation of capitalist society is being waged. The women's and gay movements have shown that it is possible to go beyond making just material criticisms (eg low wages) of capitalism and directly challenge the quality of life under capitalism – for instance by demanding the right to define our own sexuality.

5. The political practice of the LCG seems to indicate a lack of thinking on precisely what is the role of a libertarian revolutionary organisation. Presuming that the LCG does not see itself growing into a vanguard party, I would assume that it sees its role as one of working alongside autonomous working class organisations and movements of oppressed groups such as women and black people. But there has been no discussion in *Anarchist Worker* of the contradictions that can arise from this role, nor of the desired relationship between the LCG and autonomous movements and working class organisations. What can the LCG contribute to the growth of such movements, and just as importantly, what can the LCG learn from them?

The LCG seems to have ignored the problems fighting for its own political positions might bring. One danger is that when a revolutionary organisation (particularly one with no mass base) appears with its own particular set of demands, those who are being urged to take up the demands may feel manipulated (do we let on that we see our demands as only transitional or do we keep quiet about it?). Even worse, is the danger that the LCG could end up manipulating struggles in pursuit of what it considers the "correct demands" – just calling ourselves libertarian doesn't mean we won't manipulate struggles: factions in the CNT-FAI were prone to reinforcing their arguments with the barrel of a gun! In either case the result could be to undermine the confidence of working people in their ability to struggle in an autonomous and self-managed way: this was the result of the intervention of revolutionary groups in Portugal. (See Phil Mahler, *Portugal, The Impossible Revolution?*, Solidarity 1977.)

6. The LCG's way of presenting its ideas has often been very sterile and seemingly dogmatic – this is most apparent in the style *Anarchist Worker* had. *Anarchist Worker* pretended to be speaking to millions when it was only read by a few thousand. Its agitational approach, with banner headlines like "SOCIAL CONTRACT *MUST* GO UNDER" ("*MUST*" heavily underlined in bright green) in the April 1977 issue, combined with slogan-filled and muddled front page articles, made it look like a bad copy of *Socialist Worker* or *Red Weekly*. Such an agitiational style is part and parcel of a leninist approach to politics – the party leadership works out the correct demands and neatly packages them into slogans for the masses. . . . But anyway, most people are immediately put off by such slogan sheets, so agitational papers usually end up being sold only to other agitators. Hopefully *Libertarian Communist* can develop into a readable popular paper that's open to the needs of individuals and groups outside the LCG – papers such as *7 Days*, *Wildcat* and to an extent *Socialist Challenge* give positive examples of how this can be done.

7. Finally it is important that a revolutionary organisation should be seen to be open, honest and democratic. Many people have heard bits and pieces about the internal battles within the old AWA and unfortunately the LCG has emerged with a somewhat tarnished reputations. The account of the expulsions in *Anarchist Worker* was inadequate; but more importantly there was no discussion in *Anarchist Worker* of the developments taking place within the AWA until the expulsions were announced and the world was informed that the AWA was to move in radical new directions. If the LCG is to grow and have any real influence then it needs to open up a debate on its "radical reappraisal of anarchism and marxism" (*AW* July 1977) to involve those outside the organisation who think such a reappraisal is long overdue.

John Daniels: York March 1978

Libertarian Communist

Libertarian Communist is the paper of the Libertarian Communist Group. Because of our shortage of both human and financial resources it is necessary to restrict the paper to a bimonthly appearance.

We want Libertarian Communist to provide information and analysis to militants. We hope to provoke political debate amongst those sympathetic to libertarian ideas within the revolutionary movement in this country, and we hope from this to evolve a more precise libertarian communist strategy and advocate that within the working class.

This project needs ideas and information. It requires a much wider involvement of libertarian militants, both at the level of news of struggles and that of discussion and analytical pieces. We believe that an emphasis on theory is necessary in order to combat the failings of the libertarian movement in this country, but in addition theoretical development cannot take place in the absence of concrete struggles. Please contact the address below if you wish to be involved.

What about our activity as a group? An organisation does not stand or fall only on the basis of its ideas. It would be easy for us, as a small group, to devote our energies to keeping alive a small body of 'correct' ideas. It is necessary to continually question our ideas, test them in action, in order to avoid degenerating into a sectarian current like the Workers' Revolutionary Party, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, or the Anarchy collective, all isolated from the struggles of the working class.

Action, then is as vital as theory. No revolutionary organisation should be involved in one without the other. Our members are active in a number of united front campaigns in, for example, education, in anti-racist activities, in work in trade unions, women's groups, cuts campaigns, and in Socialist Unity.

Contact us if you want to give us your support, your views, comments, and criticisms.

LCG, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

OUR AIMS

1) We advocate the replacement of the capitalist market economy by a planned socialist economy directed by the workers according to their own needs through united and democratic organs or workers self-management.

2) We affirm that in fighting for such a solution no revolutionary organisation should seek to carry out a seizure of power independent of the united and democratic organs of the working class.

3) We affirm that we shall never as an organisation seek a mandate to form a government, but will fight for the constant involvement in the act of social self-management of the united and democratic organs of the working class.

4) We place full confidence in and encourage the development of authentic organs of workers democracy as the organisations of working-class unity and of mass self-determination of labour.

5) As part of the process, however, we believe in being consistently political and democratic. This means communicating with the workers movement in the context of first, that generalisations can be made concerning the social events involving us, and secondly, that we can do something about them. We seek to contribute to the working class's understanding of itself as a class, that is, precisely in terms of accurate generalisations and specific social objectives.

6) We seek to contribute to the development of a tradition in the working-class movement of its understanding itself and its history firmly in terms of the growth of the potential for the mass self-determination of labour.

Programme and Unity

Dear Comrades,
I recently showed the last issue of "Anarchist Worker" to some mates at work and down the pub. Their reaction was O.K. For most of them it was the first time they had come across such material, and they were pretty nicely freaked.

That issue was almost excellent – it was readable and full of interesting facts and calls for action, though in their eyes utopian calls, which is to be expected.

The point is, though, that I could never show them a copy of LC no. 1 without being called a nutter. LC no.1 had a lot of good stuff in it, but it was really badly presented. Most of the articles shouldn't have been there ar all but should have been expanded and put in a theoretical mag. It seems that the newspaper was aimed at the rest of the Left. It had a narrow appeal.

The question is where is the LCG going? Either it can attempt to re-define itself in terms of the existing left groups, establish its own disagreements and criticisms of SWP, IMG, etc., and attempt to win over people from these organisations. Or, alternatively the LCG could, and in my opinion should, attempt to develop its own programme of action and determine its position over things like the Labour party, education, womens' lib and gay lib, the state and the army, etc. And from such a strong theoretical basis put forward, through an effective propaganda machine, revolutionary strategy which can gain support from the W/C and create a Libertarian Communist cause on the Left.

The immediate requirement of the Left today is to combat and smash fascism. The LN's presence in the factories and on the housing estates is very strong and their petty bourgeoise rebellion is attractive to youth. The Left must answer the NF point for point if we are to defeat them politically. To do this there must be an effective and frequent newspaper which is readable in the pubs and during tea-breaks and which has slogans that the workers can respond to. If the NF can get support then so can we. But we need an organisation which presents the Libertarian Communist alternative to Fascism.

This doesn't mean a rigid authoritarian SWP-type organisation which is dedicated to building THE PARTY and which mainly alienates non-party-line militants and will probably have the same fate as the WRP—ie. start alienating its own rank and file. Nor does this mean an anarcho-punk type movement that is disorganised and ends up dead.

What is needed is a new organisation that breaks away from stereotype Leninist and Trotskyist ideology and which is flexible and internally democratic enough to allow the effective participation of the many isolated independent socialists and militants, and above all be usefull to them and give them support. There are too many groups on the Left saying this and that and getting fuck all done except confusing the workers. If Lcg joined the Big Flame initiative towards building a new organisation and the left generally combined its resources for this cause—something better than IMG and Socialist Unity—then I reckon Britains got hope after all. And, after all, united we stand, divided we fall,

In solidarity,
Geoff Goss
(Non-aligned militant)
Camberley.
I enclose £5.

Big Flame over ITALY



Dear Comrades,

I hope you can use a review of the Red Notes pamphlet on Italy and the meeting organised by Big Flame at the Hemingford Arms on the 31st of July.

In the pamphlet, the theme is taken up that the left can learn from the events of 1977. An introduction is then given to the background in which these events take place. We are then given a "cultural background". Here, the authors fall into the very trap they have warned of; the separation of the political and the personal. The cultural values are seen as an inheritance from a particular lifestyle, with little explanation of how the lifestyle of politics evolved that gave the various cultures. We are then given a chronology of the March events.

A tract is prepared on the role of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in "Red Emilia". It fails to explain why the PCI has failed to oppose governments of the ruling Christian Democrat Party, especially after 1976. But this is, I suppose, the weakness of reprinting past articles. However it does give a backcloth to the events that took place in 1977 which are then outlined with an occasional look at similar British situations, e.g. the use of radios in the firemen's strike. The Communist Party is shown to be on the side of "Law and Order" alongside of such fascists as Cossiga. But nowhere is there any clear look at the role of the left groups in the "events".

It would have been instructive to have known whether the left groups had built the campaigns or merely taken part in them. For instance was the auto-reductive campaign organised by the left groups or merely aided by the activists. This question is fairly important for comrades in Britain who join a number of campaigns, most of which have little influence outside a small circle of people. An examination of how the left slate was cobbled together might have given useful pointers to those advocating different tactics. Proletarian Democracy could have been compared to Socialist Unity for example.

Writing about the crisis affecting Lotta Continua (Permanent Struggle), we are told of rank and file oppositional currents and the bankruptcy of Lotta Continua is demonstrated by women who speak of members of the organisation being sexist. The leadership attempts to solve the political problems arising from the feminist march being attacked by its own "goon squad" in an organisational manner— i.e. giving extra seats on the executive to women. Not surprisingly the long standing grievances of the feminists finally came out at the conference. The rank and file are telling the leadership that they have personal lives which are affected by political considerations. The economistic practices of the leadership are exposed. However, the leadership can offer nothing except "self-criticism". No criticism is made of the idea of the autonomous women's groups, no evaluation of how it is possible to sell more papers at a time of political upturn whilst the organisation has fallen to pieces, bar that the newspaper kiosks must stock all papers. Have the political contents changed? Does the paper orient itself towards the movement by printing articles from the different currents or does it have its own independent stance? Again these questions are unanswered.

Did the PCI achieve their aim of marginalising the "movement"? It therefore came as no surprise when the meeting on Italy gave plenty of facts but few political lessons for the left. The only offerings from the Big Flame platform being that the students had an even closer relationship to the workers in Italy than in Britain, they were more oppressed, the left was in a crisis after the Aldo Moro kidnapping and that what was needed was a "non-hierarchical horizontal organisation of the working class" to replace the hierarchical vertical unions. The audience weren't too pleased when the International Communist Current suggested that Big Flame were supporting the Labour Party. Big Flame denied this, but I believe that any organisation which calls for a labour vote where it is not standing (Socialist Unity) is effectively supporting the labour party. Big Flame people did not seem too willing to listen, or allow others to listen to ideas that differed from their own. Perhaps this could be interpreted as a result of the releasing of facts without politics, rather than just boorish behaviour on the part of "Big Flame "Supporters".

yours sincerely,
Chris Munn.

Whereas we too would express dissatisfaction and frustration with the way in which both the Red Notes pamphlet and the Big Flame meeting seemed to skirt over several important questions and only offer platitudes on others, we would like to stress that unlike other groups, Big Flame are attempting to get to grips with the problems presented by the Italian crisis. What's more they are opening the controversy to all those interested on the left — those who are far more frustrated by the ignorance, silence and distortion of the orthodox Leninist press.

The ICC were remarkably well tolerated, given their efforts to dominate discussion. Their use of emotive, rather than analytical, arguments tended to provoke others, and obscure rather than clarify the issues at hand.

On the question of voting Labour, we would refer Chris to the Editorial in this issue. There are no once and for all answers to where one stands on this question. It's a matter of tactics; how one evaluates the state of the class struggle.

There is not enough space here for us to attempt to remedy the shortcomings of BF's efforts, although we have covered Italian developments in previous issues, and hope to contribute further to the debate in the next issue.

It strikes us too as peculiar that a group that calls for the formation of a 'non-hierarchical horizontal organization of the working-class', though often in rather a vague way, has recently adopted a much more centralistic/Leninist structure for itself.

Still, the Red Notes pamphlet is a must for anyone wanting more info on Italy. The new edition will have some post-Moro material too.

We Reply

This time it's me what's been sat in a corner and told to cobble together a few words explaining how the LCG really is on the right track, etc.

I have to begin, nevertheless, by conceding that the AWA/LCG has indeed proved lax when it has come to keeping readers of *AW/LC* properly informed as to internal debates and incidents. I'm not entirely sure why this should have been the case. One reason is perhaps that both organisations have been slovenly establishers of proper discussion procedures, failing to isolate important topics and present conflicting views in an orderly manner. Another is that successive editorial bodies, faced with an irregularly appearing journal, have been tempted to prioritise articles about issues rather than "internal wranglings" of presumably less widespread public interest.

The failure was particularly bad in the issues leading up to and following the conference at which a number of the members of AWA were expelled. Unfortunately, it is difficult to patch up such a large error in retrospect without ruining an entire issue of the paper for any other purpose. Anyone who would really like a fuller version can get it by writing to us.

The very fact that the "debate" ended in expulsions is testimony to its acrimonious nature and to the fact that it got somewhat out of hand. Those who proposed the expulsions did so on the grounds that the members concerned had reached the stage of behaving in a wilfully disruptive manner. Rather than debate specific policies they preferred to question the value of having any policies at all, or to dismiss proposals out of hand as irrelevant, Trotskyist, or manipulative. Rather than participate in the work of producing the paper they preferred to pretend it had been "taken over" by their opponents, and so they came up with a series of proposals to "re-democratise" it — including that of suspending its production!

They berated the majority as "middle class Menshevicks", holding themselves as the seed of a new, creative sparkling, type of approach which would bring libertarian communism vividly into the lives of working class people. What this meant in practice we never found out. One member of the minority had been leafletting a bus depot, but we never saw what with. Leaflets were anyway nothing new to anyone — I myself have tried countless styles in numerous places.

I think life for the AWA and in it would have proved impossible had the people concerned continued as members. At the same time though I do personally feel that the procedure of the expulsion was too hectic and precipitous. At the time it was a dilemma to which I could respond only by abstaining; it's true that some comrades left because they felt unable to endorse the way in which the expulsions took place.

The other points raised by Geoff and John cover many of the things with which we have been concerned since the old ORA left the Anarchist Federation. I hope that in answering them I will clarify our present point of view. I think I can best answer by covering three central issues:

A) why do we have policies?
B) are the ones we have "manipulative"; too narrow?
C) are we presenting them in the right way; too brash; too academic; what are we aiming to do with the paper?

A) This has, I think, been gone into in greater detail in the paper since John wrote, so excuse me if I nick things from previous articles. Politics, we argue, is concerned with the characteristics and needs of individuals as members of society. The more these individuals share characteristics which fundamentally determine their experience of life or their way of living, the more do needs which can be defined in common become apparent. We believe, for instance, that there are common needs for the working class which arise from our understanding of its role and situation in the social organisation of labour. It is these needs we attempt to incorporate in our policies, presenting them as **objectives** for the working class and for society as a whole.

The need "to control our own lives" sums up what this entire process is about: but we feel that it must itself be expressed in relation to distinct tasks rather than as a contentless abstraction. This does involve us in an assessment of relative priorities and capacities. What are the main concerns of workers today? What are the available means of collective action? What would be the prime tasks, the first things to be aimed at, in a planned economy? But these very questions are the reflection in us of constant dialogue with and response to the life of the working class as it daily presents itself.

B) It beats me how anyone could see the above as the first sign of "order-giving"; "handing down" the "correct line". To us, it's simply the necessary way of communicating on a social, political, level. It's our **contribution** to the working class understanding itself as a class — precisely in terms of social generalisations and social objectives.

I don't accept that we have a manipulative approach, or attempt to obscure the implications of our policies. We **are** explicit about their connexion with socialism.

Are we too "narrow" in the things we take up? This is a problem easily posed in a sentence but less easily dealt with in one.

John certainly hits on a raw when he complains that "the LCG has never devoted much space to discussing patriarchy and sexism as important topics in their own right." That's a valid criticism and one we already make of ourselves. It also seems true that some articles in the past have wrongly, and probably inadvertently, tended to emphasise the "divisive" aspects of womens and gay oppression at the expense of defining their specific and unique characteristics. Strangely enough, this attitude has never actually been all that widespread in internal debates, so far as I can remember. There the emphasis has generally been strongly in favour of recognising that women and gays have needs which do not arise definitively from the situation of the working class as such and which posit autonomous organisations for their expression and resolution. I would say that it's also been recognised that although socialism may be the necessary foundation for the satisfaction of these needs, it doesn't promise to satisfy them as a defining characteristic of itself. It is a weakness that we haven't more fully discussed such attitudes and the relevant struggles. What can I say? There are only a few of us, there's umpteen things we should know more about, and none of us finds writing articles easy.

LC would like to contain material on the "quality of life" above and beyond surveys of the main economic and political trends and above and beyond the question of sexism. Working conditions, consumerism, housing policies, educational content — all indeed are valid concerns which do call for a social, and hence a political, response. It's also true that we can see aspects of contemporary and historical struggle which reveal sections of the socially subordinate moving to address these problems in a fashion posing greater self-management of them. Here again the extent of our coverage reveals real inadequacies.

There are, however, some types of libertarian response in this area which we definitely reject. We don't see, for instance, concern about the content of work as rendering irrelevant the fight against unemployment, or concern about the nature of health care as rendering irrelevant resistance to hospital cuts. Partly we feel there's a question, as I said, of priorities. Can all distressing aspects of contemporary society be resolved simultaneously — or will we need to take some steps before others? It can also be seen however as a question of the developing consciousness of the working class. Of where social dislocations occur in society at large, of their relative strengths and of what abilities and channels of action relating to them have already been created. Consciousness is not just a question of awareness — it is also a question of the ability to do. Apart from there being much more autonomous concern about the cuts, or maybe in tandem with it, we find that the working class is in a much better position to do things about them, as opposed to things about health care content. It is the struggle around the former which begins to bring the latter into its social competence.

The pliicies we do have are important to us because they provide us with a definite response to the broad outlines of working class development as it is determined by our position in the capitalist economy. They are also our springboard as militants and as contributors to w/c political development; as participants rather than as simply commentators. Paying attention to the basic defining constraints placed on the working class doesn't strike me as being "economism" — I'd say that economism was a question of ignoring the relevance to such questions of the class struggle as a political struggle, as a struggle for political power and influenced at all levels by the nature of the state. Perhaps our actual economics are a little crude at times — I hope you would agree they **are** improving!

C) I don't expect there's anyone on the Left who wouldn't want to be associated with something life Geoff's "effective and frequent newspaper which is readable in the pubs and during tea-breaks and which has slogans that the workers can respond to." But naturally, a paper having both the technical and stylistic merits he envisages, and also a thoroughly healthy political impact (such as he himself, doesn't seem inclined to grant *Socialist Worker*), can't just be conjured out of thin air.

Our point of view, moreover, is not that the socialist movement in Britain is completely bankrupt, but rather that it has certain correctable weaknesses which do, whilst unattended, store up dangers for any w/c developments in relation to it.

Our aim is to contribute to the building of a socialist movement which will be consistent, democratic, creative, critical and non-substitutionist in its relations with its w/c audience, which will be a constant provider of assistance, which will advocate only in the context of making all options clear. But we feel that much excellent building material for this movement, often of a quality superior to what we represent, exists already in the parties of the Left today. Surely, therefore, we must address ourselves to the individuals in these organisations and encourage promising tendencies in them, as much as we address ourselves to those not yet committed to any particular faction.

The limitations of our resources, both human, financial and theoretical, mean that we must set modest limits even to such a modest strategy. We are not in a position to get our point across by setting up a new model mass paper. We lack money, journalists, correspondents, and people to sell the thing. And although we have legitimate doubts about some aspects of the socialist movements and traditions, we don't have all the answers ready packed and waiting mass distribution. We are as yet a critical current rather than a well rounded alternative.

What sort of paper, then, are we trying to produce? Answer: one suited to our project in terms of the audience we can in general expect to reach (our main outlets being demo sales, subscriptions, public meetings, left bookshops and very scattered direct sales in a few localities). This doesn't mean just writing for the Left, but it does mean concentrating on articles which will be of interest to those willing to take socialist interpretations in some depth.

Sometimes, as in the South Africa article in the last paper and as in the Italy article in *LC*1, this means presenting a "survey" of aspects of a situation as a sort of "reference sheet" for militants. We also attempt to present articles exploring aspects of w/c history and socialist theory (in particular, this is the role of the supplements), and regular general views of the, wait for it, "conjuncture" — like the editorial in this paper, or the articles on the public sector. It's through these latter that we intend to advocate our main policies. We would very much like to liven things up a bit with more news — particularly of goings on which may be exceptionally instructive, amusing or daft. We're just bad at getting hold of it.

So, if anyone out there feels like giving a hand, we need:

SUPPLEMENT TYPE ARTICLES:
on bits of history, on economics, on sexual politics, on anti-imperialist movements, on the record of the CPs . . .

SURVEY TYPE ARTICLES:
on sectors of industry (eg. steel), on union developments, on the fascists, on Ireland, on what's going on in the world, on campaigns and issues (abortion, housing, police, nursery facilities, unemployment) . . .

NEWS:
on anything but Spurs and the Mormons . . .

AND MONEY:
not just to pay for materials, but to provide supplement writers with reference material, to subscribe ourselves to a wide range of news and review publications . . .

We can't guarantee publication, but obviously the more we have to choose from the better the paper will get . . . if it survives its other difficulties with regards to resources.

PS; Thanks for the money, Geoff—! I'm sorry I couldn't answer every point of either letter writer directly — I hope however that the above gives you a better general ideas as to what we're about than a "point to point" in the limited space.

Libertarian Communist

ANTI NAZI LEAGUE

What Future?

The anti-racist struggle is in a state of flux. The coming general election will only accentuate this. At the heart of the struggle is the Anti Nazi League. An analysis of its successes and failures is long overdue and is vital to an understanding of how the working class movement should organise against racism.

The success of the ANL has been due to its tapping of the anti-fascism still latent in British society (hence the name Anti Nazi League). Its ability to attract "personalities" to its sponsor list, its effective publicity, and its sometimes unscrupulous skill in claiming the sole credit for recent anti-fascist actions, has made it appear the premier anti-fascist organisation.

While it is true that the Socialist Workers Party organised the ANL to start with and indeed provided it with its political programme, it is not true to say that it has retained undisputed political dominance. Its programme of uniting everyone who said they were opposed to racism and the National Front was aimed at the Social Democratic "stars" who would enable the ANL to break out of the "Left ghetto". **The Social Democratic politicians on the sponsor list have not remained malleable. Their presence has prevented the ANL from taking a national stand against Immigration Controls.**

Some Trades Unions have affiliated nationally to the ANL, and many local Trades Union branches and Trades Councils have also affiliated. The organisations of the revolutionary Left outside the SWP have split on the ANL and the gap between its most slavish supporters (the International Marxist Group and the International Socialists Alliance) and its most virulent critics (the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Workers Socialist League) is very wide.

Success

Has the ANL been a success? I think the answer has to be that its success has been limited and has been intimiately bound up with another, separate organisation, Rock Against Racism. **The organisers of RAR and the SWP have taken hold of one revolutionary principle at least, and it is one of supreme importance. It is that the state's hold on the working-class operates not only through economics but independently through ideology and culture.** Unemployed and insecure teenagers are not only prone to the NF ideology but also to its cultural style and action. RAR recognised that it was the task of revolutionaries to reappropriate everything in youth culture that the NF was beginning to identify as theirs. Boldly and crudely, RAR identified rebel youth culture as anti-racist. Thus punk was drawn from its dubious nihilistic and Nazi-regalia origins, and was placed firmly in the rebel ambit of Reggae and Dub. Punk and Reggae now means 'Black and White Unite.' From the situation of small RAR concerts, the next task was to present anti-racist rebel youth as a national example to millions of uncommitted kids. To do this RAR had to think big and attract big. The combination of Tom Robinson and Steel Pulse at Victoria Park paid off. The cultural vibrancy of RAR proved to countless numbers of kids that their racist mates lived in a barren cultural ghetto.

RAR and SKAN

The ANL Carnival was inappropriately named. It was primarily a success for Rock Against Racism as have been many such events since.

Readers might say: well who cares whether it was a success for the ANL or RAR so long as it was a success? It matters because between the ANL and RAR lies a huge political gulf, although the organisers of both almost certainly don't think so. The gulf between the two groups is that effectively RAR is an exclusive cultural expression of working-class kids and that the ANL is a tactical alliance of revolutionaries and Social Democrats (including the Communist Party) which is constantly weakened in its effectiveness by its internal strains, lack of democracy and compromise.

Indeed it has been as much RAR and its cultural impact on youth



On Sept. 24th approaching 100,000 people gathered to bop against racism in Brockwell Park, South London. Meanwhile the NF mounted a deliberately provocative march of 2 to 3,000 from the Embankment in central London to their new H.Q. in the East End. The Carnival, of course, could not be cancelled, but the organisational and *political* confusion of the ANL and others made an effective defence of the Brick Lane area that day an almost impossible task. We must take our more 'boring', less spectacular, local support work more seriously if we are not to lose the trust of the black communities.

that has stimulated, almost inadvertantly, the growth of largely autonomous Schoolkids Against the Nazis groups up and down the country. It is difficult to assess their durability, but they do provide for a new generation of radical youth a framework that they can see as their own, largely free of the political compromise expressed by the ANL.

To its credit, the ANL has managed to organise some non-aligned militants in local areas who were drifting. In one or two areas, such as Glasgow, the ANL has become a real mass focus for a whole lot of new activists. It has, briefly, captured the media's attention, putting anti-racist positions. It has given the Carnival a national if dubious political edge, the Carnival being something which ANL supporters who don't like RAR music can claim as national anti-racist activity at one remove. **Its failures, however, have been far more fundamental.**

Failures

The ANL always had a sectarian attitude to the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF). However politically compromised CARF was, it at least had an organised base in the Trade Union and labour movement. It provided a substantive and significant arena for revolutionary politics. Its collapse however, was a disaster for every anti-racist, It meant that there is now a massive vacuum in the labour movement. If it is not filled by a substantial, properly constituted, democratic, national anti-racist organisation orientated to the working-class movement, then racist attacks on black workers will increase, tacit support will be given by white workers to discrimination against black workers, and immigration controls will be tightened and made permanent.

Nor does the ANL use its resources to promote the self-organisation of the black community. While it would be unfair to say that the ANL doesn't make such demands as 'black self-defence' and 'black self-organisation' (it does in such local situations as Brick Lane), its constant characterisation of black self-defence actions as being actions taken by the ANL obstructs the ability of black militants to gain self-confidence independently of the white establishment. The claim that the Bengali upsurge is due to the ANL is about as true as the SWP claim that they were responsible for the mobilisation against the NF at Lewisham.

Also, the ANL has not condemned the use of the Public Order Act. In fact, after Little Ilford, Hain claimed the use of the Act to ban the NF marching was a victory. A government ban on only racialist marches might be a different proposition, but to support an Act which affected and represses the labour movement far more than the NF was absurd.

To conclude, it is too mechanical to condemn the ANL as a Popular Front which crosses class lines. However its failures **do** lie in the basis of its political conception. It does not consciously oppose independent working-class activity against racialism, yet often it lies as a political bar to the organisation of such activity.

The ANL will eventually split. The social democrats will not always need it as a left face anyway, but it will split sooner if its more militant supporters take to the streets against the NF in the election, and this would be a split along class lines. It will then be the job of revolutionaries to fill the vacuum that this would create by reconstructing a united front of working-class organisations against racism and fascism.

John Bangs



Mad Bombers

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT (JIM PARTIAL)

The time has come for us to take a long, hard look at these anarchists and terrorists who are making all men of good will sleep uneasily in their beds at the moment, *writes Jim Partial, our man in Finch's Wine Bar.*

I've been talking, off the record of course, with some friends of mine at the Special Branch, and I want to tell you what they told me to tell you. Briefly, they think that there are hundreds of people all over the country who are storing away weed-killer!

Terrifying thought, isn't it?

But there's worse.

Some of these people disagree with the established order of things!

Of course not all these people are mad bombers (in fact my friend at the Special Branch did say that these anarchist people they've arrested aren't actually guilty) but I'm sure you'll agree the police do need to practise these kinds of techniques in case people ever do start to get a bit out of hand.

What about our great British traditions of democracy, I suppose the "liberals" out there will be saying.

The point is that democracy is not some kind of abstract thing. It's something which changes to fit circumstances.

Thank you, Jim. So now we know. We have been warned.

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interpretations made above plus other specific observations concerning the Front and fascism. We see that the leadership of the National Front has a history of open idolitory of Hitler and that many of the party's policies mirror those of the Nazis — not just on race but on things such as hostility to "finance capital", desire for a strong state, both home and abroad, intention to dismantle the industrial organisation of the working class, etc. We have seen that it is possible for the ruling class to remove its support from the parliamentary type state in favour of a fascist regime and that parilamentary conventions may fail a working class faced with such direct action organised on behalf of capital. We can see how the National Front has repeatedly tried to develop the strike forces and mass movement which is the first basis for such direct action (though we wouldn't claim that many of the ruling class as yet see it as operating in their interests). And thus we come to the conclusion that to make sure that the fascists don't take off into becoming a credible option for capital we must show now that we will not grant them the advantage of restricting our opposition to normal political channels, but will seek to thwart them through mass direct opposition, especially insofar as their attempt at intimidation and self-organisation around violence are concerned.

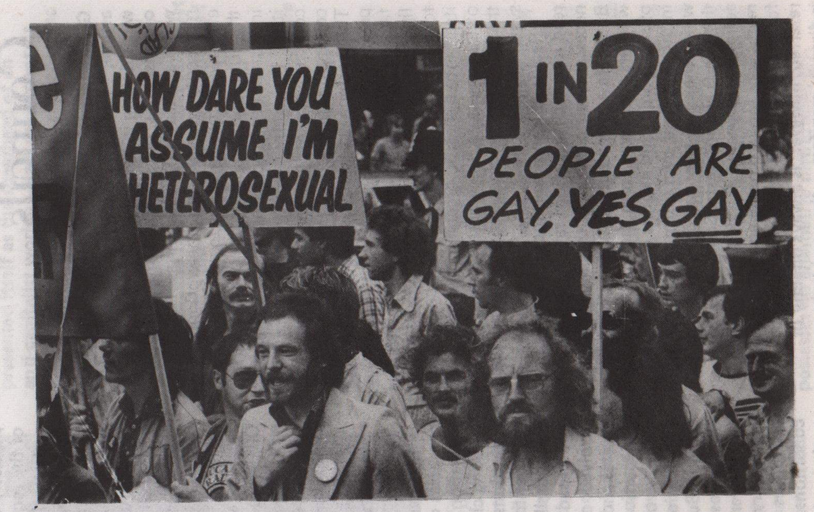
Reject

In similar fashion, our case for supporting unofficial industrial actions upon their merits rather than upon whether or not they are made official relates primarily to our view of working class development outlined in the main body of this article. But it also incorporates further arguments, which time and space prohibit going into here, about the trade unions specifically, which lead us to reject certain aspects of their organisation and practice with regards to the relationship in them between representatives of the corporate whole and the rank and file. (See, for instance, the editorial in the last edition of *LC*.)

Since our analysis of the world shows us a state of affairs in which there is no legitimate repository of egalitarian social unity, we find ourselves repeatedly trying to place ourselves in the living history of its creation — by no means a simple of selfevident project. We do try as part of this, or at least good socialists do, to be careful always to enhance mass involvement in the erection of procedures with real meaning in terms of extended participation in the vital decisions about life: this even under conditions where such participation is forwarded only through the hectic and inefficient mechanism of struggle.

We certainly believe our mission to be a democratic one — in the sense described in this article. Perhaps better people than us have been deluded about the impact of themselves upon the world. At least we seek not to delude others about what this world is, about the options it presents, about the forces at work in it or about how we understand our own role.

I.G.



Oppressed groups — women, gays and blacks — have a particular relationship to socialist democracy. It is vital for their movements to have organisational and political autonomy — both before and *after* a socialist revolution, since it would be naive to assume that their demands would instantly and automatically be met.
Photo Chris Davies (Report)

Libertarian Communist supplements

Hungary



The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was a watershed in working class history. This supplement describes the growing opposition to Stalinism, the uprising, and the eventual crushing of the revolution.

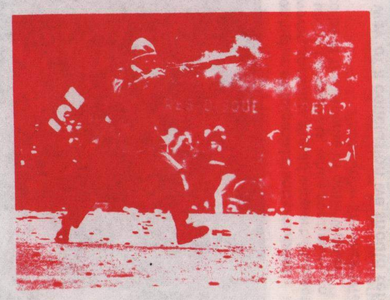


Russia 1917 describes the economic background to the revolution and tries to understand how and why the Bolsheviks became increasingly unresponsive to the real needs of the working class.

Russia

France 1968-the May-June events proved that revolution can still be on the agenda in the present day in Western Europe.

France



All 3 supplements are available-Hungary 5p, Russia and France 10p +postage from LCG 27 Clerkenwell Close, E.C.1.

Libertarian Communist

Special Supplement

10p



Socialism and Democracy



Czechoslovakia 1968. Fifty years before, the Soviets and Factory Councils were a profoundly democratic aspect of the Russian Revolution, where for the first time the Russian peasants and workers took their future into their own hands. This soon degenerated; the mass organs were either brought under Bolshevik control or destroyed, and within the Party democracy was declared "a luxury" and free debate banned. In Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia twelve years later, the workers had their backs to the wall and Soviet "democracy" was imposed at the end of a tank barrel. *Photo Camera Press*

Socialism and Democracy

Since the final months of last year, the LCG has been giving cautious support to "Socialist Unity", an electoral alliance embracing "Big Flame", the "International Marxist Group", some of the smaller socialist organisations and a number of independent socialists. The appearance of such an initiative, alongside the simultaneous decision of the "Socialist Workers Party" to stand candidates in national government elections, must raise amongst a wider audience many basic questions as to what exactly is the longterm political ambition of the "left wing extremists".

Does our standing for Parliament, for instance, mean that despite everything imputed to us we don in fact accept its ultimate sovereignty upon all questions, and are willing to abide by contemporary democratic conventions? Many people certainly associate communists not merely with anti-parliamentarianism but also with dictatorship. The case against us may be easily summarised: we are the people who would deny the rights of free speech and protest to organisations like the National Front; who support "unofficial" Trade Union actions; and whose political tradition is that which in many parts of the world has founded states noted for the rigidity of their political life and the tyrannical stifling of opposition. In every situation, it is said, the communists are on the look out to put themselves over others by use of force. Where they can impose their opinion, they do not bother to argue it.

It is unfortunately the case that communist debate on democracy is presented more in books and journals than in our papers. Even when it does percolate through to the latter it is often in the knockabout form of "look what this or that government is doing to so and so", rather than in terms of proper political analysis. Although *Libertarian Communist* is only in the 4th Division of even the Left press in terms of circulation and regularity of appearance, we hope occasionally to complement the work of the more powerful papers by printing articles of a type we feel they should be publishing but are failing to do so. Now, therefore, we take up this issue of communism and democracy. After all it is particularly important that we are clear about our views on it when in the electoral arena we shall be expected to present not simply our specific policies, but also our criticism of life and society in its entirety.

We all associate the idea of democracy with that of freedom. We all, or most of us, accept that freedom should not be absolute for any individual, principally insofar as the actions of one person or group of persons may have a disadvantageous effect upon the circumstances of others. Seen in its most handsome profile, a democratic society is one attempting to ensure that there are guidelines for social involvement which embody guarantees of individual right neither encroached on by others nor encroaching upon them. It attempts to define a mean and an equilibrium amongst individuals as regards their intercourse with others and with the community as a whole.

It is customary to regard our own country as being an example of a democratic society. But how well does it really measure up to criteria such as those suggested above? The majority of people probably think that it does so reasonably well. They would as like as not give the following reasons. Firstly that politically the unity of the state is based upon the equality of all citizens. We enjoy universal suffrage, free and regular elections to parliament, and more or less effective rights of free speech, association, and opposition. Secondly, there is equality before the law. And thirdly, economic life is based upon free contracts, made between individuals.

The communist assessment is rather different. It judges according to more comprehensive and demanding standards.

We turn first towards consideration of our economic life, it is here that we find the most deep-rooted "un democratic" aspects of contemporary reality.

"Freedom of contract" really doesn't mean very much. It is unreasonable to speak of economic freedoms in isolation from relations of property and production. In a society divided into the property owners and the propertyless, and where the social norms are those of property and money, the crucial difference from a bargaining point of view is that those without property cannot lay claim to an independent basis for existence where property assumes the form of capital. They can exist only as proletarian workers; to obtain means of existence they must exchange their labour with capital. This relationship may become somewhat blurred by charity and state benefits, but it remains the essential reality of contemporary life.

The contract, or exchange, between capital and labour is universally of a common type. The worker obtains money, and with it a means to exist. What the capitalist obtains, however, is generally something much more valuable — it is disposition over the creative forces of the worker. The capitalists put this creative force to work on the other components of production they have purchased, and each aims to end up with an output of commodities worth more than the sum of his original outlay. While the workers through the contract maintain their existence, they do not in general increase their wealth to the extent that they become property owners themselves.

The capitalists and the workers are thus very unequal partners in their "free contract" of exchange, in terms of their relative bargaining strengths and of their eventual remuneration. But the "undemocratic" nature of capitalism does not end with this.

Ideal

The ideal of democracy imagines deliberation amongst equals as the best basis for human affairs. Every individual partakes equally in the determination of the common path. The economic right of capitalism, on the other hand, embraces no such mechanism of mutual assessment. Along with their labour capacity, the workers sell their potential for conscious collective control over their labour. On the one hand, they are bound over to the demands of the market system of the reproduction of capital, and become at worst mere factors in the domination of its accountancy: here are the roots of unemployment, speed-up, fluctuating real wages, etc, too numerous, intertwined, and in some respects obscure, to go into here. On the other hand, work, though vastly more materially productive and remunerative than in previous periods, is still not a property of the workers as a complete expression of their humanity. They lack the exercise of sober judgement over their own activity. Some live in bleak and depressing conditions at the same time as immense amounts of initiative, energy and materials are poured into the amassing of a seemingly endless clutter of comparatively superfluous novelties; furniture, luxuries, ornaments and prestige objects to satisfy not so much the more expansive gestures of the soul as ersatz needs specially made in order to be sold by the advertising wizards.

Deprivation

Is it possible that anyone would actually defend such a balance of priorities if the problems of distribution were put to them as something which would be acted upon? Deprivation exists alongside extremes of self-indulgence, insecurity, overwork and futility exist alongside the liberating might of modern industry, precisely because the balance in our lives between work, leisure, resources and need does not stand in any direct relationship to us but is rather determined through the alien social configurations of the exchange market and the accumulating, commodity producing drive of capital.

At this stage, non-socialists who find the above convincing enough may at the same time feel a little cheated. "It's all very well," they could say, "comparing the capitalist economy with an abstract ideal of democracy and finding it wanting: in real life people, that is those living in the advanced capitalist countries at least, concentrate on the progress which has been made, and the social and political achievements associated with capitalism."

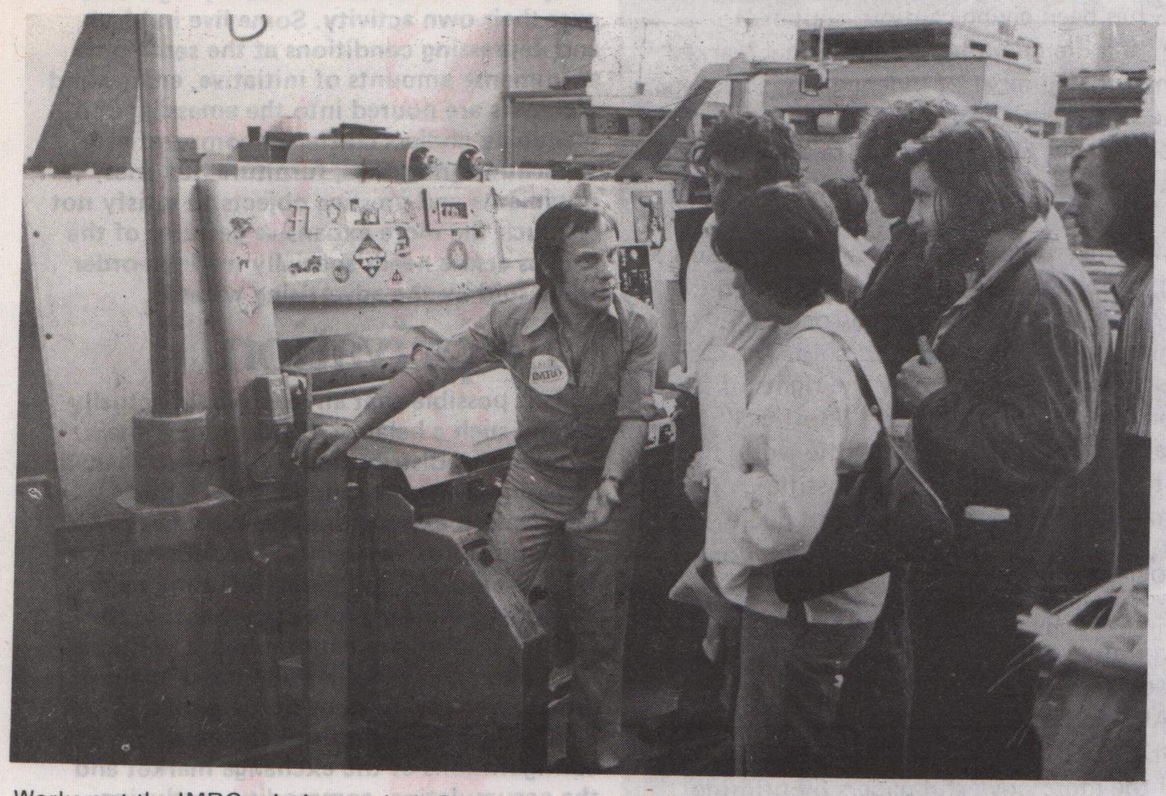
Such observations are valid insofar as it is indeed true that capitalism has in many walks of life brought tremendous benefits which no one in their right mind would want to throw away, and insofar as it is experientially judged not according to abstract ideals but through the act of living



Occupation at Massey Ferguson. Workers have almost no democratic rights over their everyday work — but workplace occupations pose collective power during workers struggles.
Photo John Sturrock (Report)

itself. The point remains, however, that this living is not yet without its examples of dislocation and suffering, which whilst they occur we shall be impelled to seek to eradicate. And also, of course, that it quite legitimately sets expanding ideal objectives for itself. Some people develop out of a multitude of frictions between themselves and their world an acute comprehension in general terms of the limitations of their being as part of capitalism. Others proceed contented until one of its iron necessities should unexpectedly whip out at them and they find no channel for "equitable" consideration of their cause nor redress of their grievance.

Our estimation of the path of capitalist development, moreover, leads us to suspect it of bearing a structural incapacity when it comes to reproducing itself smoothly according even to its own priorities. Needs and aspirations repeatedly find a barrier, and working class powerlessness is repeatedly exposed, in the great crises which can befall the capitalist civilisations. Superficiality as providential as visitations of pestilence or



Workers at the IMRO printing works in Normandy occupied their factory for nine months against closure until they were evicted by French riot police. They rejected the solution of turning the factory into a workers co-operative, seeing this as a solution that served the needs of capital. Instead they posed *self-managed struggle* against the restructuring of the French printing industry and the Barre Austerity Plan, of which the redundancies were a part.
Photo Andrew Wiard (Report)

drought, these great convulsions bear witness in their means of resolution to the subordinate position of the working class, and in the very "spontaneity" of their occurrance to our lack of control over our own productivity.

Limits

Individuals assess their needs and the prospects of their satisfaction according to the pattern of growth and change and achievement of capitalism itself. It is, however, further possible for them to extrapolate from these individual equations of need formation and satisfaction an embracing class analysis and context. Proletarian workers, for instance, may understand the many ways in which their lives are commonly affected by their being members of the capitalist working class. They may rate the limits of their common expectations within capitalism, and if these are too narrow balance the happy prospects of change in the mode of production against the dangers and hazards therein.

Democracy

Our pursuit of the communist attitude to democracy must ultimately involve us in dwelling upon how such a procedure for the working class actually expresses itself. Before moving on to this however, we shall attempt to go a little more into the circumstances in which they must take place. We have given an interpretation of capitalist economics, indicating some of the boundaries which its very structure gives to self-determination for the working class. To complete the picture we must next turn to examine some aspects of those political structures we call democratic which have in some times and places existed in some of the advanced capitalist countries. It is parliamentary democracy, in combination with prosperity, which th prominent apologists of advanced capitalism regard as its zenith: and it is true that precious political freedoms have flourished in this climate better than anywhere else. Isn't parliamentary democracy something through which the working class may express, should it so desire, a critical rejection of capital?

The first characteristic of the advanced capitalist democracies that springs to our attention is that positions of power in them have in general been dominated by individuals associated with the social power of capital. The necessities of the capitalist mode of production, both generally and in its particular phases, give rise to social generalisations in the form of policies for the state. Those social groups which enjoy a special position and special benefits relating to the mode of production also have a special interest in understanding and operating these policies. The very economic privileges they seek to protect give them a head start in the political sphere also. Reciprocal sequences of background, advantaged education, nepotism, influence and freedom from the wage bond have ensured that in terms of personnel it has remained a basic, statistically verifiable fact of life in all the advanced capitalist democracies that the men and women in them have been and are governed, administered, represented, judged and commanded in war cadre s drawn, for the most part if not exclusively, from those layers already associated with the definition and implementation of the needs of capital and with the more lavish harvesting of its material benefits.

Such a repeated pattern of high social origin in state officials is testimony of how the combination of disadvantage in the wider life of society with formal political equalities results in the socially advantaged gaining a distinct advantage in the political sphere. This has had important consequences for the range of social options presented within the arena of mainstream political debate and for the stability of class divisions in terms of their expression through government. Even so, this factor is not an absolute explanation of the history of the advanced capitalist democracies, nor an absolute indicator of their limitations.

Origins

The point can be made that individuals of working class social origin have filled important functions in these states, and that they have been advanced by working class organisation and by working class participation in the parliamentary process. J R Clynes, for instance, wrote in his memoirs of the social origins of some of the members of the first Labour government: "I could not help marvelling at the strange turn of Fortunes Wheel, which had brought MacDonald the starveling clerk, Thomas the engine driver, Henderson the foundry labourer, and Clynes, the mill-hand, to this pinnacle besides the man whose forebears had been kings for so many generations." Compared with the movement into public life of those of the ruling class, the success of these men had demanded incomparably more endeavour and self-sacrifice, not only by themselves but by many thousands of their supporters and other builders of a working class political culture, folk who had repeatedly and wearily to drag themselves into the arduous tasks of study and organisation in the brief hours given them for recuperation from their daily labours.

But the point for the moment is that they made it. What's more their government, in its concerns, indeed bore marks of their backgrounds. It fostered social advance in the area of municipal housing and educational scholarships, legislated moderate improvements in unemployment and pension benefits, and instituted a few public works to assist the unemployed.

Does the emergence of a government such as this indicate that the advanced capitalist state may pliably serve the working class in any aspiration to which it might be inclined?

Signal as the achievement of the early Labour Party undoubtedly was, it never presented itself as the spearhead of an anti-capitalist working-class movement. It did nothing whilst in office to challenge the root causes of either unemployment or deprivation, the two main problems it sought to redress.

Indeed, all governments are structurally divorced from the productive operation of capitalism, and this has meant that reformist governments like any others have responded to the needs shown by capital rather than those shown by society, as the former are unexplained 'givens' in society.

The working class has been able to secure structural participation in advanced capitalist democratic governments only in periods when there has been a degree of working-class benefit from capital and on conditions of 'moderation' (i.e. class collaboration) in working class political demands.

In our opinion this experience does not provide sufficient basis for us to presume that representative institutions in capitalism would serve as an adequate arena for working class anti-capitalist tendencies. In our opinion there are two further reasons for dismissing this possibility.

The first of these is that there is reason to believe that the ruling class will not extend its own adherence to such institutions to the extent of them being recognised as bearing a mandate for deep social reorientation. Business remains possessed, like the working class, of its own patterns of self-organisation outside of the existing formal political structures of the stste. Even where it possesses no alternative institutions for decision making an aggregate of discrete actions relating to the business world can emerge as a distinct social line for capital, in the same way as the working class can build an aggregate line piecemeal. The rise of fascism in both Germany and Italy, for instance, took place during periods of crisis for capital particularly acute for these countries, which had suffered in the Imperialist redivisions after the First World War. Despite its use of anti-capitalist rhetoric and subsequent attacks on some capitalists as individuals, the most important policies of fascism — destruction of labour organisation and militancy and aggressive nationalist expansion — proved an attractive option to many capitalists. It would have found success more difficult without the finance forwarded by certain sectors of the bourgeoisie; and it was also assisted by the leniency which police and judiciary were wont to show towards its use of violence and intimidation against the labour movement and the Jews. On another instance the great Spanish revolution of 1936 was itself precipitated by a right wing military coup against a democratically elected government with radical tendencies. More recently the government of Salvador Allende in Chile, overthrown by a CIA-backed military coup in 1973, was widely regarded as a test case for the parliamentary transition to socialism.

Our second consideration, which is indeed perhaps more fundamental, seeks a further elaboration of our attitude through reference to what we can understand about the needs of the working class in terms of a socialist alternative.

When we talk about a particular historic event (the 1926 General Strike, for instance), we can employ a degree of analysis which allows us to sum up the behaviour of the working class in terms of its revealing some general social propensity. This panoramic device remains our main tool for understanding the broadest movements and potentialities of working class (and hence social) development.

Even the most distinct and critical of these movements is, in terms of its actual unfolding, a process not devoid of contradiction and ambiguities. They tend to proceed in the form of surges of opinion and attitude. Our powers of abstraction, nevertheless, draw out from them recurrent patterns and characteristics. Thus we can note for instance, repeated circumstances

where dislocation between the working class and the particular extant capital-established social direction has been so grievous that the former has, in rejecting the latter, thrown up spontaneously multiple centres of resistance based on the creation of, or emphasis of allegiance to, totally independent local working class organs. These bodies — workers councils, soviets, councils of action — have represented a need felt by the workers to achieve a new level of participation in the making of decisions affecting them: they have been the first awkward expressions of an independent workers power.

Councils

Here is what the Italian communist Gramsci wrote about such movements in an article, "The Turin Workers Councils". (He was thinking in particular of factory based organisations, but his observations do have a wider application.): "Insofar as it builds this representative apparatus, the working class effectively completes the expropriation of the primary machine, of the most important instrument of production; the working class itself. It thereby rediscovers itself, acquiring consciousness of its organic unity and counterposing itself as a whole to capitalism. The working class thus asserts that industrial power and its source ought to return to the factory. It presents the factory in a new light, from the workers point of view as a form in which the working class constitutes itself into a specific organic body, as the cell of the new state, the workers' state — and as the basis of a new representative system, a system of councils."

Really, this indicates more what can be read into such situations rather than what is necessarily automatically there in every case. But there *are* tremendous implications. The workers turn away from the established foci of social unity and express confidence only in those of their own organisations through which they feel they can directly express thir needs and interests. Sometimes this action has appeared as a dead end, with no ready way forward being apprent. The need for the expropriation to which Gramsci referred, however, is always directly or indirectly manifest — the need to become owners of ourselves is felt most generally as the need to somehow pull the world as an outside social reality into a subjection such as we strive for over the world as a material reality, to make our society our own property, to bring it under a control which we acknowledge and in which we can participate. Whenever the working class turns to sole dependence upon its own self-organisation, we see the possibility of the complete overturn of alienation and of the foundation of the mass self-determination of labour.

What does democracy mean under these circumstances? On the one hand it begins to have potency with regards to the entire organisation of production. On the other it retains its formal element of equality of deliberation on the new basis of equality of social position posited within the institutions of workers' power. Experience shows that the latter is essential to the former. Whereas in capitalist societies the lack of democracy in the economic sphere perverts the impact of the structures of political democracy in existing alongside them, in the socialist societies lack of democracy in the economic sphere arises precisely because and as part of the demise of the requisite sort of political democracy.

Establishment of an independent organisation of workers power is essential to the transition to socialism. It provides simultaneously the necessary social-structural base and a much firmer network for the possibly needed task of self-defence. Unfortunately, however, it is not something which may gradually be prepared for within the confines of the everyday social practice of capitalism. Observers of revolutionary situations have noted how they invariably emerge as a sudden, "elemental" response to deep crisis within the established order.

Needs

It is here that we must return to the very processes of social assessment of need formation and satisfaction within the working class. Whenever working class aspirations and capitalist reality grate together like gears out of mesh, it is on one level possible to draw out of the situation two broad alternatives for the workers involved; on the one hand aquiescence in capital and consequent restriction of expectations to guidelines consistent with it — on the other, rejection of capital, and organisation to achieve the restructuring of society. But such alternatives rarely present themselves directly in the consciousness of the workers involved. Partly, this is because the history of capitalism contains many references to advancement in the material conditions of the metropolitan workers and to their winning of specific objectives, so that there appears little basis for regarding every conflict as being absolutely critical to the stability of the social whole. Even in a period of crisis the gains of isolated sectors of the working class may indeed be compensated for through various rectifying mechanisms (price control, value transfer, etc.). There are, however more fundamental causes.

Firstly, the very fact that capitalism appears as the domination of society by alien forces rather than as mutual assessment of work is bound up with the atomisation of economic life amongst separate commodity producers and the consequent placing of emphasis upon local struggles and conditions.

Secondly, again referring to alienation, the weight of experience tends to bestow an empirical, verifiable, absolute reality to existing social relations and to thus create conditions which suspend workers in struggle between acceptance and rejection of them.

And finally, the cultural and educational conditions of working class existence ill prepare working class individuals to imagine general social locations in terms of analytical comparison — with dissatisfaction more often than not consequently residing strictly in individual or specific circumstances. There are thus strong reasons why the working class in capitalism so often moves in terms of turbulent inarticulacy when it comes to the reconciliation of its particular objectives with broader social generalisations. These troubled currents are nevertheless the very life-blood of our general social development, our groping for an authentic voice of self-expression amidst all the powerlessness, bonds, confusions and contradictions of capital's topsy-turvy, mirror-land empire.



The Longbridge toolmakers struck unofficially last year for higher differentials, and provoked criticism from the left as well as the bourgeois media. However, socialists should support ALL action on wage demands, particularly when it is betrayed by the union bureaucrats, while continuing to hammer home the point that wage increases do not have to be at the expense of other workers.
Photo John Sturrock (Report)

Foothold

At this juncture, a summary of the main assertions made so far may well prove useful. It has been argued firstly, that the capitalist mode of production bears some profoundly "undemocratic" characteristics. Secondly, that its consequences and class structure affect the relative accessability of democratic political organs to the working class. Thirdly, that where the working class has nevertheless gained a foothold in these political institutions it has not been in order to fundamentally change society — there has been no attempt to use parliament to directly control all aspects of social production. Fourthly, that the independant self-organisation of capital and its ability to mobilise antiparliamentary forces would probably render any such attempt to plan production through parliament impossible. And fifthly, that the nature of the development of social assessment of need formation and satisfaction in the working class is in any case such as to suggest that its prime location in capitalism lies as an inchoate level in its many struggles, and that socialism is posited as a possibility for the working class only under specific circumstances arising from these and through the associated erection of specific types of social organisation.

The above are important points of reference in the libertarian communist world view. They do indeed add up to a lack of confidence in the ability of parliamentary democracy to be a suitable matrix for socialism. We have a different understanding of what is socially and politically important as compared with those parties which believe that parliament is the sovereign residence of collective social action.

We attempt in particular to relate to the areas of dislocation between the life and aspirations of the working class and the necessities of capital, affirming that that life and those aspirations deserve to be treated differently by society. Consequently, when we formulate a policy what we attempt to achieve is a statement of what the general, social and *positive* resolution of such dislocations could amount to — not being bound in our proposals by the specific prospects of capital. We propose objectives for the working class to aim at, rather than capitalist "solutions". We doubt if capital can meet our objectives, but feel that in a socialist society they might become the central directional references for a proper economic plan. This isn't to say that winning any one objective in any single situation would be either impossible or indicate the dawn of socialism. The way we would put it is that the aggregate tendency of need formation and satisfaction in the working class is towards finding barriers in capitalism and no basis in it for equaitable resolution. It thus tends towards requiring socialism.

Meanwhile, we emphasise that the absence of any mechanism of equitable social distribution means that any section of workers taking up a grievance against capital is faced with the choice of either fighting directly for their cause or aquiescing in the decision of the affair by the alien forces. We also affirm, as socialists, our own willingness to take such self-defining actions, and in general we respond to working class struggles from the standpoint of acknowledging their vital role in the evolution of an eloquent and independent proletarian voice.



Socialist democracy is not passive "Free Speech" when it comes to openly fascist organisations like the National Front. They oppose democratic rights in the working class, and positive action must be taken to deny them a platform for their lies, in order to safeguard those rights and to protect the rights of the black communities against the racist violence the NF provoke.
Photo John Sturrock (Report)

By way of a conclusion we should refer more directly to "the case against us" mentioned in the introductory paragraphs. The first thing we must do here is admit that socialist politics do bear very grave dangers — it would be difficult to think of any contemporary social response which didn't. The particular danger in an anti-capitalist revolution of failing to sustain mass democratic involvement arises partly from the tempestuous aspect of the nature of working class development to which we have already referred, and partly to the specific military and economic difficulties which may initially beset those areas which first attempt the establishment of planned economies.

It is important for us to realise firstly, that the attractiveness of a planned economy doesn't in itself solve the immense problems of organising one, and secondly, that a planned economy bears no automatic, return if not satisfied, guarantee of socialist democracy. Those who desire socialist democracy therefore have special tasks in this direction. In particular they must train themselves as well as possible in the history of revolutions, looking closely at what affects this factor of mass involvement in the social processes then at work and attempting to understand the degree to which it may be consciously striven after with success. We accept that the Left today is deficient in this area, as also in the important collateral task of elaborating and investigating economic planning models and procedures. Obviously such theoretical schemes must be tentative — but surely they need to proceed further than their present stage, and certainly to become a much more central concern of every socialist.

Front

Turning to certain current socialist policies which are widely thought to be undemocratic — such as the nature of our opposition to the National Front and support of rank and file militancy — well, the first point to be made is that these are really secondary to our main arguments on the issues presented above: it is possible to disagree both with them and the main argument, or merely with how they interpret the mandate of this latter. In general, they do of course refer to it. The case for no platform is, for instance, built up out of several of the