

# Libertarian STRUGGLE

## for Workers' Power

Resistance to factory closures and cut-backs has, unfortunately, been both small-scale and isolated. Even well-organised plants such as Fords have accepted short-time working as 'inevitable'.

Some workers have welcomed it as a day off. But, the lay-off fund is only expected to last a few weeks — after that, the workers will get nothing. Those who have heavy commitments (HP, mortgages etc) are going to face real and serious problems.

Most important of all, it opens up the way for reduced manning, speed-ups, and the smashing of shop-floor organisation. 15,000 car workers have been laid off altogether.

### PROBLEMS

Successive governments have tried to make sure that sackings are accepted without protest. The 1965 Redundancy Payments Act is partially responsible for this. As a government report noted in 1971: 'The Act has made it easier for many employers to . . . dismiss men . . . with reduced costs and argument'.

The report also stressed another factor. Trade Union officials refuse to seriously oppose redundancies, and many regarded them as 'entirely unavoidable'.

But this is only half the story. The failure to resist closures and cut-backs reflects much more than merely a 'crisis of leadership', despite the claims of most left groups.

In other words, the shopfloor played an entirely passive role. The result was that when, in 1971, the struggle ended, the workers accepted 2000 redundancies along with a four year no-strike agreement.

UCS shows more clearly than anything else that no committee, however devoted, however honest and however militant, can substitute itself for the activity of the rank and file.

Last year's occupation of the LIP watch factory in southern France shows equally clearly the potential of a movement based on mass involvement. Real and meaningful links were built throughout the workers movement in France at rank and file level.

### WORKERS CO-OPERATIVES — A BLIND ALLEY

The much-publicised experiments in workers co-operatives have been hailed by left-wingers as a major breakthrough. Many workers facing factory closures have seen them as an answer to their problems.

But the reality for the workers involved, at for example, the *Scottish Daily Express* in Glasgow is very different. The workforce has been cut back. They have been forced to accept wage cuts, flexibility, mobility and interchangeability. The profit from their labour goes to the state in interest charges and repayments.

Workers at *Triumph Meriden*, near Coventry, are having to increase productivity levels by about 85%. The workers involved have virtually no control; elementary trade union rights have been destroyed.

All this is inevitable. The pressures of the capitalist market are simply too strong. An individual factory cannot break away. There is no such thing as 'socialism in one factory'.

## Fight unemployment OCCUPY



The Social Contract is now showing its real face. For the Queen it means an extra £400,000. For speculators it means pay-offs from the Stock Exchange. For bosses it means increased profits. For millions of workers it means speed-ups, lower wages, short-time working, lay-offs and redundancies.

### NATIONALISATION — NO SOLUTION

The 'Left', almost unanimously, puts forward the idea of nationalisation as an answer to factory closures.

But workers in the nationalised sector have also faced cut-backs, redundancies and falling living standards. They have been milked in the interests of big business. At the end of the 1950's, more than £100 million a year was transferred to the private sector by means of artificially low prices.

The demand for nationalisation in no way takes the workers movement forward. It merely fosters the illusion that bureaucratic control by civil servants is in some way akin to socialism.

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paper of the Anarchist Workers Association

# AIMS & PRINCIPLES

- 1 Capitalism is a class society.
- 2 The basic irreconcilable contradiction within it is between the class which owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, the bourgeoisie, and the class who produce the agricultural and industrial wealth, the working class.
- 3 The social enslavement and exploitation of the working class forms the basis on which modern capitalism stands, without which capitalism could not exist.
- 4 The state is the instrument of the ruling class. To destroy the power of the bourgeoisie, we must destroy the power of the state.
- 5 Russia and China are class societies in each of which a ruling class of administrators collectively owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, and in which a working class, the sole producer of all wealth, is exploited by that class. These states we define as corporate state capitalist in that the ruling class is totally integrated with the state, as is the trade union structure.
- 6 The class nature of society is reflected in all the dominant philosophies: class, race, sexual, social and personal relationships. The class relationships are expressed through all social relationships and generate attitudes such as sexism and racism.
- 7 The conflict of interest between the two classes generates the class struggle. In the history of society, the class struggle has been the primary factor in the determination of the form and structure of society.
- 8 The day to day struggles of the working class reflect the class struggle. The position of the working class as the collective producer of society's wealth makes it the only force capable of replacing capitalism by a classless society. The existing defensive organisations thrown up by the working class, such as trade unions, whose bureaucracy is increasingly incorporated into capitalism, are not adequate for the smashing of the capitalist system, and the building of a free, classless society. However, the working class rank and file organisations such as democratically controlled shop steward committees, factory committees, strike committees, are developing through the place of work. These organisations are the forerunners of workers councils which are the expression of working class power. Outside of work, the working class has developed other forms of organisation that are potentially revolutionary, such as tenants action committees, rent strike committees, and tenant-worker joint action committees.
- 9 Dual power exists before the power of the bourgeoisie is smashed. If the working class are successful, then the organisation of the needs of society will be firmly based in working class hands. This is the collective working class in power, in which the working class destroys all remnants of bourgeois society, such as racial hatred, the family and hierarchies. This is the period of transition between capitalism and libertarian communism.
- 10 From our analysis we reach the inevitable conclusion that capitalism cannot be reformed in any fundamental way and that the only meaningful transformation of society is through the development of working class organisations and by means of a violent social revolution. Violence becomes inevitable for the working class to defend themselves against the onslaughts of the dispossessed ruling class.

## The role of the AWA

- 1 The task of the AWA is to aid the preparation of the working class for their seizure of power. The establishment of an anarchist society is something that has to be consciously fought for by the working class. The AWA is a conscious organised expression of libertarian communist ideas. Through the shared experience, information and knowledge of the class struggle, AWA must be able to analyse and disseminate the nature of the problems facing the working class, and apply these lessons in the class struggle.
  - 2 The AWA aims to offer a lead within the working class movement by example and explanation; and to build into the movement a high level of political consciousness so that it is capable of defeating capitalism and fighting the creation of a new ruling class. Fundamental to this is the contradiction between the organisation as a tendency within the class and its being in ideological advance of it. This contradiction can only be resolved with the establishment of a libertarian communist society. During the period of transition, the potential basis for the emergence of a new ruling class is progressively removed so that the need for a separately organised libertarianism will decrease.
  - 3 The AWA seeks to develop and support working class organisations which are the forerunners of workers councils and to develop in them revolutionary consciousness. The AWA does not seek independent power for itself but seeks to work through the working class organisations.
  - 4 The AWA seeks to establish international links with libertarian revolutionary organisations and groups with an aim of establishing an international libertarian communist movement.
  - 5 The AWA seeks to combat attitudes of sexism, racism and national chauvinism as attitudes that help maintain class society.
- The form our organisation takes is a realisation of libertarian perspectives in the current situation. We recognise that it is not a social model of a free society and must itself develop in interaction with the developing liberation of society.
- [1] We are a membership organisation.
  - [2] Membership is open to those who agree with our analysis of society and its transformation, and who work towards this end.
  - [3] The main policy making body will be the National Conference. Between National Conferences there will be held bi-monthly Delegate Conferences to co-ordinate and carry out National Conference decisions, to decide interim policy and to initiate activity. Delegates are mandatable and rotated. Delegate Conference decisions can be revoked by National Conference.
  - [4] We seek to establish AWA groups in all areas, not only geographical but also industrial, educational, etc.. Groups interpret National and Delegate Conference decisions to relate tactics to their local experience.

As agreed at the National Conference in London, 31st August - 1st September 1974.

# What's happening in the A.W.A.

Since the *Anarchist Workers Association (AWA)* changed its name from the *Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists (ORA)* at the beginning of this year, there have been a number of favourable responses. The change of name, however, should be seen in the light of the historical and political development of the organisation.

Taking inspiration from the French *Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste*, the ORA was started in 1971. It was a reaction to the impotence and lack of formal structure of the now defunct *Anarchist Federation of Britain (AFB)*. The AFB was a real Holy Roman Empire of the left, containing all sorts of 'anarchists' from syndicalists through hippies and liberals to individualists.

The factor that united the 'members' of the AFB was that each one of them called her or himself an anarchist, and they were tolerant of anyone else who called themselves 'anarchists' and intolerant of 'the rest' who were all 'authoritarian'. Common amongst them, however, was the mystical belief that everyone is an anarchist deep inside, if only somehow we could cut through the shit on the surface.

Their tolerance was found to have limits, however, when a faction arose within the AFB suggesting that formal membership, the use of a Chair and voting to take decisions at meetings, and collective responsibility, were needed to halt the decline of the anarchist movement from its peak in 1968. These people were trying to 'Bolshevise' anarchism, was the claim.

As the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists puts it:-

*Such an organisation having incorporated heterogeneous theoretical and practical elements would only be a mechanical assembly of individuals each having a different conception of all the questions of the anarchist movement, an assembly which would inevitably disintegrate on encountering reality.*

ORA's original objections to the traditional anarchists thus tended to be organisational rather than political. It, too, was a hotch-potch including all sorts of anarchists. Gradually, however, the ORA developed away from traditional anarchism, and shed the more liberal elements.

When *Libertarian Struggle* was born, it proved to be a forcing house for the development of the group. The criticisms from the traditional anarchists, who continued their talk of ORA being a Bolshevik-style party, showed itself to be just the way the liberals concealed their distaste for class politics.

It has been noted that ORA publications tended to reflect the concentration on the developing of libertarian forms of organisation - something that had never been tried before in Britain. This went hand in hand with the political development of the group. Pamphlets such as the *Tyranny of Structurelessness* and the *Organisational Platform*

of the Libertarian Communists were not seen as perfect models for a libertarian organisation at this point in time, rather as bases from which discussions commenced. This has culminated in the recent publication of the *Documents of the AWA*.

Near the beginning of 1974, a split took place in the ORA, when some members who had formed the Left Tendency, left. They concluded that it was in the nature of anarchism that the attempts to form a national organisation were bound to fail, and turned to Trotskyism. These were amongst the most active members of the ORA, and the organisation came to a virtual standstill as others, who weren't prepared to take on the workload, also dropped out.

Among those members who remained, some took the initiative to revive the organisation at the national level, whilst at the same time maintaining a consistently high level of activity in the class struggle on the local level. Only this time, past mistakes were learned from, and things were done on a more definite and disciplined basis. The internal structure was made to function once more; enquiries were promptly dealt with. The commitment to libertarian communist politics was re-affirmed, and contact was made anew with libertarian communist groupings throughout the world.

A short run *Libertarian Struggle* was put out in November 1974 and sold out within ten days, all barring a few. This edition showed the developing politics of the ORA and membership has quickly built up in the early months of this year, to the point where we feel confident enough to support a regular monthly newspaper without turning into a paper-selling organisation.

Most contacts thought the obvious class commitment contained in the new name was a good thing. Some reservations were about the use of the word *Association*, as opposed to the word *Organisation*, as this was felt to imply a loose gathering rather than a strong disciplined movement, which is the declared aim of the group. After the long history of the use of the word association in the working class movement has been explained, it usually lessens opposition.

That the name would help rather than hinder the spreading of revolutionary anarchism within the working class was generally agreed. The need for this agitation is greater now than ever before. The ruling class in the months to come will try every trick in the capitalist book to offload their crisis onto the backs of the working class. Therefore that the libertarian communists within the *Anarchist Workers Association* are better placed to help smash these manoeuvres is a step in the correct direction.

R.M. & D.Y.

## SCOTTISH CONFERENCE

*Huge Success!*

Scottish anarchists of many different tendencies met in Glasgow at Easter weekend. A well-attended conference discussed a wide range of issues concerning community, Scottish and international affairs.

On the second day of the conference, a debate on organisation led to the establishment of the Scottish Libertarian Federation, which, it is hoped, will co-ordinate joint action between anarchist groups and individuals throughout Scotland.

The feeling of the meeting was that if the enthusiasm and optimism which had given birth to the SLF could be sustained, then the conference could well mark the beginnings of greater success for libertarians in Scotland.

The SLF can be contacted c/o Alain Cahn 9 Aird St., Port Soy, Barmfshire.

S. McG.

Copy date for the next issue: May 9th send articles, letters, illustrations, etc. to:

LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE  
13 Coltman Street,  
Hull - Humberside.

E.A.

# THE PRESS FUND.

LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE at last has the new Composer that has been so desperately needed since the paper was started. But for libertarian ideas to become more widespread in the heightening class struggle, we still need your donations to help make possible a widely-circulated revolutionary anarchist 12-page monthly journal.

send donations to: AWA, 13 Coltman St, HULL.

## ( Occupy continued )

It diverts the fight against redundancies into parliamentary channels. It does not bring out the urgent need for workers to forge concrete links with other factories in the locality. Most important of all, it avoids the question of workers self-management.

Among the obstacles to an effective fight are the dominant ideas of capitalist society. Schools, the press and television all insist that we should passively accept the manipulation of our lives, feelings and living standards by bureaucrats, bosses and their profit figures. These ideas can only be overcome in workers' organisations through mass involvement in decision-making.

The solidarity and self-confidence needed to build effective organisation can only be constructed on this basis.

## OCCUPATIONS

Sit-ins and occupations are, from every point of view, the most effective form of industrial struggle. As an American writer puts it: 'It prevents the use of scabs to operate a factory, since the workers guard the machines...Bosses are reluctant to resort to strike breaking violence, because it

endangers millions of dollars of company property, vast assembly lines and unfinished products'.

In a sit-down, the workers morale is heightened. They are inside and therefore know for certain that scabs are not operating the machines; they are really protecting their jobs, and this leads to a higher degree of militancy and solidarity.

Those in occupation are protected from the weather. They are never scattered, but are always at a moment's notice in case of trouble. The basic democratic character of the sit-down is guaranteed by the fact that the workers on the line, rather than outside officials, determine its course.

## LESSONS

However, in many cases, these advantages have been negated. Although the UCS 'work-in' caught the imagination of much of the workers' movement, it demoralised many of the workers taking part, and a quarter of the workforce left the yards to look for other jobs.

It is not difficult to find the reason for this. There was little activity during the occupation; the shop stewards committee was in many ways isolated from the workers they represented; meaningful discussion among the workers was curbed 'in the interests of unity'; the negotiations with the management

were carried on over the heads of the rank file.

## WHICH WAY?

The Social Contract is an attempt to make the working class pay for the economic crisis. Militants have always argued that it is a bosses' crisis - it is *their* system and *they* should pay for its defects.

Factory occupations are the most effective way of fighting back. But they are not merely a defensive tactic - they challenge the right of the bosses to run the factories. Revolutionaries must challenge their right to run society.

Several key steps must be taken:-

\*We must demand full pay, work or no work - we have a right to a decent living standard.

\*If short time working is threatened - slow down production. Organise a non-co-operation campaign eg ban mobility, throw a spanner in the works.

\*Don't accept factory closures - occupy. Take over the running of the factory, get other trade unionists, and local tenants groups involved. Don't allow the bosses to move machinery out.

\*Build local delegate rank and file committees.

# WHY MAY 1ST?

That Spring is here again, perhaps — but does that really mean anything for most of us? It's a pretty safe bet that you're not likely to see many May-on your particular street.

When the only flowers to be found are either too expensive, or cannot be picked for fear of prosecution, then there's not really much difference between May and any other month. Prices will go on rising, jobs won't be any easier to find, and life for the working man and woman will be as difficult as it has ever been.

Traditionally, the labour movement the world over has considered May 1 to be of special significance. A day of world-wide solidarity, a time to remember, and demonstrate, our international links, common interests and common goal — common, that is to all oppressed people of whatever nationality.

*The emancipation of labour — social justice for those who produce the wealth of the world. Which is, you'll agree, a fine idea, but then we're just as likely to see the Rites of Spring performed in the streets as we are to see friend Harold take to the street with a smile on his face and a red flag in his hand.*

So you may be forgiven, as the tanks roll by Lenin's tomb in Red Square and May 1 passes like any other day here in Britain, for thinking that all this talk of 'international solidarity' or the 'labour movement' has lost just about all meaning for working people today.

**Does Mayday really mean anything of the sort nowadays, any more than Christmas means peace on earth?**

A quick glance at the history books (if you are lucky enough to find any that deal with such subjects) might shed some light on the matter. At different times and in different parts of the world this month, May, has indeed come to mean something for people — for those people, in fact, with whom the whole idea is supposedly concerned. The oppressed men and women whose only power lies in their labour.

## PARIS — MAY '68

To take one of the most recent examples, in Paris in May '68 several thousand students demonstrating for the release of imprisoned student militants, clashed with riot police

*So why, you may ask, have we attached any special significance to this month more than any other, or this particular day? What is it all about?*



and sparked off a chain of events which shook French capitalism to its very foundations, and reverberated throughout Western Europe.

For the first time in years, the facade was blasted away, and the apparently stable and affluent society of Western Europe was revealed in its true light — a society still split 'down the middle on distinct class lines.

A system of organised robbery of all those who in fact produce all its wealth, and no more benevolent than in the days when the working classes first began to organise for their own protection. And the need arose no less violent against them.

However, of all the lessons that can be drawn from the crisis following the events of May 1968, perhaps one of the most significant of all is the fact that it revealed where lay the real interests of those accepted

'leaders' and 'representatives' of the working class — the union bureaucrats and the French Communist Party.

Faced with a situation which was obviously getting out of hand — in other words, where the working class were showing alarming initiative and little or no inclination to toe the party line — these men, hardly wishing to bite the hand that fed them, made frantic efforts to contain and control the workers' and students' movement and preserve intact the state and existing structure of society.

For us too, on this side of the Channel, the events of May '68 on the continent are just as valid. When Ramsay MacDonald, in knee-breeches and cocked hat, arrived at Buckingham Palace as Britain's first Labour Prime Minister, the Labour Party had long since ceased to have either the potential or the inclination to do anything other than

bolster up capitalism and pacify the working class.

Nor can we depend on the hierarchy of the trade-unions to do anything other than play a similar part in the same process. For, like their French counterparts, when it comes to the crunch, why should they act against their own self-interests by voluntarily abdicating power and responsibility in favour of rank and file initiative.

It's as well to remember that the first large May demonstration in this country was during the agitation for an eight-hour day during the 1890's. A struggle that's been largely forgotten and for something that most of us now take for granted. But this concession was only wrung begrudgingly from the employers after several years, and with considerable difficulty. **No concession from the ruling class is ever given as a gracious favour.**

## CLASS WAR CONTINUES

Look at the present situation — the three day week, factory closures, redundancies — all quite simply testify to the fact that the working class is never fully secure under capitalism, however much they might have gained. The class divisions run as broad and as deep as they ever did, and the struggle can be just as bitter.

*If anything is to be learned from the events of May '68 in France, it is that the working class can only solve its problems by acting independently.*

At such times, the TU leaders and the parliamentary socialists are the last people to whom we can look for help and friendship. Our only real allies are those with whom we share the same common interests — the workers and oppressed people of other countries.

That, in a nutshell, is why May 1 is still important — especially as so much hot air has been expended over the EEC recently, either about our 'national interest' in getting out or 'common interests' in remaining in.

It's clear where the interests of both parties lie — and equally obvious that the working class has nothing in common with either.

I.W.

## Right deceit

Before I ever read George Orwell's essay on language manipulation I was given the view of an American who, because of political affiliation, had been forced to leave his 'homeland' one jump ahead of the non-uniformed police.

He said that the American way was to do whatever was considered necessary or expedient and to lie about it afterwards. Ask the 'Red Indians'.

In order to get the news, he used to read the Black Panther paper and *Time*, estimating that somewhere between the two was a true picture of what was really happening. To me that was a flaw in his reasoning, for the truth is the truth and a slight distortion, knowingly committed, is as bad as an outright lie. (Orwell, again, gives examples of both in *Homage to Catalonia*, the lies of the right-wing establishment and those of the left).

There should be an Orwellian prize for lying journalism, for then I could nominate Eric Jacobs for his article in the March 23rd edition of the *Sunday Times*. In this 'routine piece of informative journalism' Jacobs deals with elections within the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers.

He chides the *Morning Star* for telling members which candidates represent the 'Left', omitting that they also mentioned the 'Right' candidates. Omission is a way of lying too. In order to substantiate, or even justify, this 'act of political manipulation' (as he fears the left will consider it) he has

the gall to state: *'The Right, on the other hand, is not well organised'*. Go tell it to Frank Chapple.

Which brings me to the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), from which the 'left' was purged by the Catholic Action Group (disorganised right wing?) in the fifties. There's no need for Jacobs to turn his talents here because lists of election candidates have been circulated by both factions for years, despite this being against the union constitution, except that at the 1974 annual conference the 'left' were in the majority.

And how did the disorganised right take this? They, under their new name — the moderates — issued a stream of anonymous circulars and then, when it became obvious that opinion was largely against them, one of their acolytes employed the usual stand-by procedures of liars and blamed everything on the International Socialists, 'more traditional Marxist influences', and the rank and file paper *Redder Tape*. (Compare the Kent State murders when it was officially declared that the students attacked the National Guard.)

It was at this point that the CPSA General Secretary, in the official union journal, took the opportunity to berate anyone who circulates lists. The finger being most forcibly directed at *Redder Tape*, not surprisingly for this group had not issued an election list of their own, but had issued a leaflet at 1974 conference showing the 'right' and 'left' lists in order to show up the hypocrisy of the situation.

But, having warmed with a hidden lie, the General Secretary decided to be blatant: *'They (Redder Tape etc) do not aim to change the policies of the trade union movement, but to destroy it'*.

So much for motions to conference, passed democratically in branches up and down the country. So much for the rank and file. So much for the truth.

CPSA militant

## MEETINGS

### TUESDAY MAY 6TH

Southampton AWA presents two films

'THE MINERS'

and

'THE PENTONVILLE FIVE'

introduced by

Dave Young (NUSMW & AWA)

....7.30 pm....Debating Chamber....

....Southampton University Students Union....

....Highfield....Southampton....

— ADMISSION FREE —

### ANARCHISM IN INDUSTRY

A meeting arranged by  
Oxford Anarchists

8pm, May 13th

at East Oxford Community Centre,  
Cowley Road, Oxford.

speakers include: N. Heath (AWA)  
NUPE Steward, in a personal capacity

### Southampton Libertarian Circle

meets on the 1st Thursday of every month

8pm

at *The Anchor*, East St (behind Debenhams)

### BOOKPEOPLE

53, St Mary's Road, Southampton

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Front Libertaire,  
33 rue des Vignoles,  
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# THE WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER

The Working Womens Charter was framed in March 1974 by the now defunct London Trades Council. It is intended as a basis for organisation and action around problems confronting women at home and at work, or as a tool in organising women around specific issues.

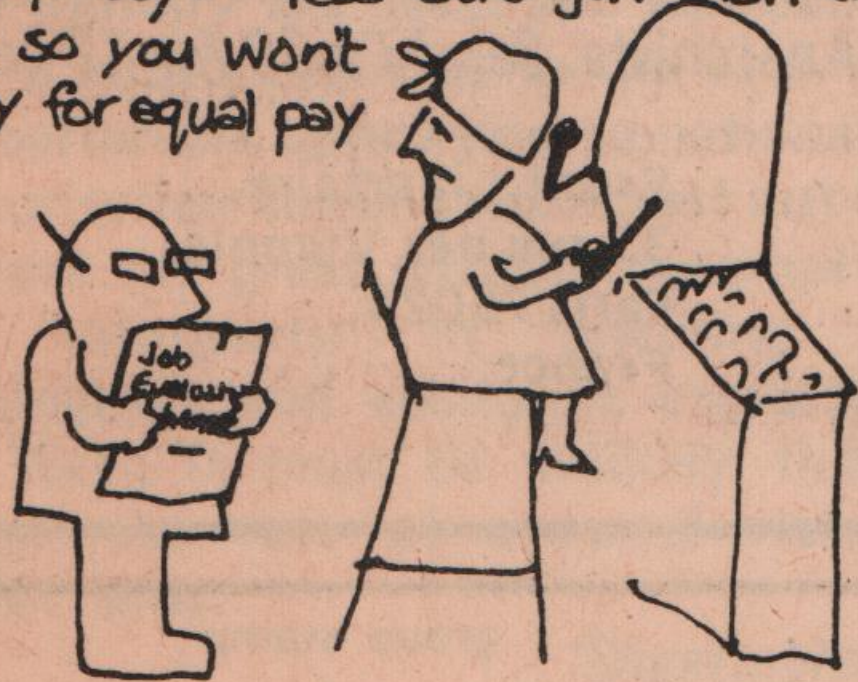
The official version is as follows:-  
*We pledge ourselves to agitate and organise to achieve the following aims:*

- 1 The rate for the job, regardless of sex, at rates negotiated by the trade unions, with a national minimum wage below which no wages should fall.
- 2 Equal opportunity of entry into occupations and in promotion, regardless of sex and marital status.
- 3 Equal education. Training for all occupations and compulsory day release for all 16-19 year olds in employment.
- 4 Working conditions to be, without deterioration of previous conditions, the same for women as for men.
- 5 The removal of all legal and bureaucratic impediments to equality, eg with regard to tenancies, mortgages, pension schemes, taxation, passports, control over children, social security payments, hire purchase agreements.
- 6 Improved provision of local authority day nurseries, free of charge, with extended hours to suit working mothers. Provision of nursery classes in day nurseries. More nursery schools.
- 7 18 weeks maternity leave with full net pay before and after the birth of a live child; seven weeks after birth if the child is still-born. No dismissal during pregnancy or maternity leave. No loss of security, pension or promotion prospects.
- 8 Family planning clinics supplying free contraception to be extended to cover every locality. Free abortion to be readily available.
- 9 Family allowances to be increased to £2.50 per child, including the first.
- 10 To campaign amongst women to take an active part in trade unions and in political life, so that they may exercise influence commensurate with their numbers, and to campaign amongst men trade unionists so they too may work to achieve these aims.

The Charter, although not perfect, bridges the gap between women at home (unpaid labour) and women at work (underpaid labour). For example, most women have worked or will work for some period of their lives, and many women badly need to work, but the problems of child care do not permit us to work full time. Such arguments, of course, are used to discriminate against us for job entry as well as to justify paying us half the male rate.

By demanding improved nursery provision

Sorry my luv, but your levers require 0.0264 lbs/in<sup>2</sup> less strength than the men's, so you won't qualify for equal pay



(aim 6) and maternity leave (aim 7), and by agitating for creches at work (we recommend they be financed by the employer and controlled by the union) we hope not only to show how women's problems in industry are related to those at home, but also to raise the fundamental point that child-bearing is an important social function and not 'a woman's private problem for which she can be penalised at work'.

The Equal Pay Act, which comes into force at the end of this year is regarded with scepticism by the majority of women.

It has too many loopholes to be effective (aim 1). Until we have equal opportunity in training and education (aim 3), equal pay and job evaluation is at best arbitrary — as it stands, it applies to about one sixth of working women — and at worst, meaningless.

The most controversial point (aim 8) is crucial, and is one that we have to be prepared to fight hard on. Many of us are at the same time involved in the National Abortion Campaign, which aims to fight White's restrictive amendment to the present (inadequate) Abortion Act, and present a national case for women's right to control their own bodies.

## HOW THE WWC CAMPAIGN FUNCTIONS

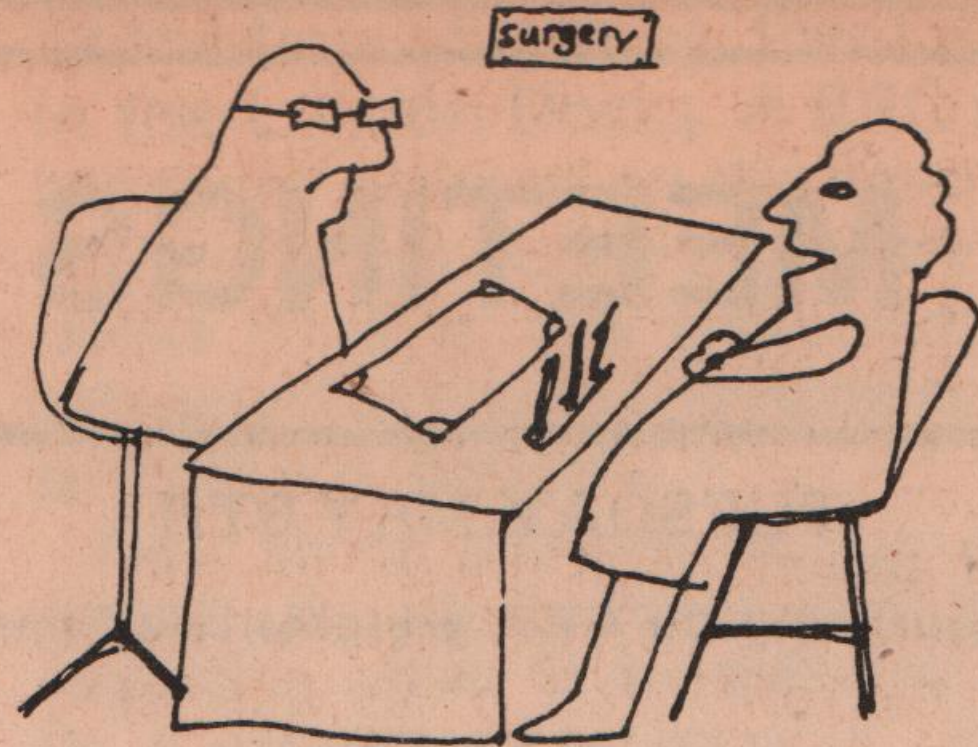
Several WWC groups have been formed throughout the country, and we have been successful in getting the Charter adopted officially by several Trade Union branches, Tenants Associations, student groups, Womens groups and Trades Councils.

There is a London based co-ordinating committee which co-ordinates activities around the Charter, and keeps groups informed. But these activities are evidently not sufficient on their own to ensure that the aims of the Charter are carried out.

We realise that there is much grass roots work to do at work places, and in the unions whose conservatism or recalcitrance is a considerable barrier to our aims.

For example, the Trades Council recently put out a well-designed, two-colour printed job on a 12 point charter, which excluded the social clauses — significantly, points 6 and 8. We must fight to maintain our Charter and our autonomy.

Well, put it like this: I would want it if you would support it!



## REFORMIST OR REVOLUTIONARY?

At first sight, the Charter seems reformist: improving working conditions and local authority day nurseries, when nursery staff are grossly underpaid and waiting lists for children are very long in many boroughs.

But capitalist society is fundamentally not equipped for socialised child care, or for equal pay.

Much depends on how we conduct our campaign. In our propaganda, we must emphasise that the problems women face relate directly to those faced by men: low pay for women undercuts men's wages.

The Charter is not just about equality, for many men have a poor lot, too.

By emphasising complete participation of women, and of all workers in the control of our public and private lives, and of co-operation and support among women and men in industry, we hope to underline the contradictions in a system which divides us falsely, and to pave the way for a system in which the complete emancipation of women is implicit.

Adrienne Lee (SLADE), &  
Islington WWC

The address of the WWC is:  
London Co-ordinating Committee,  
49, Lowther Hill, SE23 1PZ

Bristol Womens Charter group has produced an excellent magazine, which can be had for 12p (incl. post) from: 11, Waverley Road.

# N.U.T. WI

In the last few months in London, there has been an apparent swing to the right amongst the National Union of Teachers membership.

This swing to the right is reflected across the country. The nature of this swing is important because of its repercussions for all rank and file organisations in the unions where they have had some influence.

Within the NUT, the bare facts are these: In the last few months,

1. A Rank and File candidate stood against the incumbent Communist Party member for the General Secretaryship of the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA — the council of the Associations within the Inner London Education Authority). Both achieved a spectacularly high poll, but the Rank and Filer was beaten by several hundred votes.
2. The large scale restructuring of teachers' pay (the Houghton Report) which has meant far greater differentials among teachers, was passed at a special Salaries Conference with an overwhelmingly majority.
3. In two Associations which were previously considered 'solid' Rank and File, there has been a swing rightwards which very nearly removed the well-known and hard-working General Secretary (Hackney Branch) and which in North London's case has removed all Rank and File influence from the committee and officer positions.
4. The number of Rank and File delegates to both the ILTA Council meetings and the National Conference are drastically down.

## ATTACKS

Coupled with this, there have been heavy

attacks against the Rank and File in *The Teacher*, the Union paper, and in the ILTA newsletter. These attacks have been reflected in other Associations around the country, notably, I believe, in Liverpool and Derby where 'extremists' have been named; or as in Liverpool's case, Rank and Filers have been prevented from putting motions to General Members Meetings.

The attacks focus on the (quote) 'IS Rank and File' grouping, who 'have no policy but action from below' and who believe that 'whatever the Executive does is wrong'. The conclusion is that 'IS is trying to build an alternative leadership in the Union, and that this is destructive to unity within the NUT.'

The other attack is that the International Socialists are particularly reprehensible as an 'extremist' group in the Union, because they hide behind so-called independent rank and file organisations, instead of being honest and operating openly as a political grouping, like the Communist Party.

What does all this mean? It means that the old criticisms of IS: that they have consciously tried to exclude other political groupings, tendencies and individuals who have divergent political opinions from them, and yet have believed in a caucusing of the revolutionary left; that they have tried to recruit only so-called 'non-aligned militants'. These criticisms are coming home to roost. After all, if you belong to a rank and file organisation with a majority of members in one political grouping, who exploit that majority nationally, how can you say that group does not use the Rank and File as a front organisation?

Who is making these criticisms now? — the

# STATION WARD HO

an experience

Finsbury Park is typical of North London working class areas facing demolition and redevelopment. Its streets are becoming increasingly tattered by gutted houses and corrugated iron, with neglected houses allowed to run down by local authorities for the sake of compulsory purchase.

Squatters of various descriptions have for some time occupied houses which would otherwise have been gutted. Those squatting range from homeless families to junkies; from working class youth filtering down from Glasgow, aided by their more experienced compatriots, to middle class expatriots and Londoners.

The Glaswegians also comprise young families with children. There also seems to be a wide tendency among non-squatting residents to be well in arrears with rent.

The residents can be roughly given four categories: a significant number of long-standing locals; migrant families; tenants living in their second or third temporary accommodation, handed to them by the Council, and disgruntled shopkeepers, some of whom face serious financial difficulties.

## COUNCIL MOVES

The Islington Council Housing Department has recently made steps to clear the area of squatters, and to purchase houses at an increasing rate. They have also declared that they will close the affected streets to through traffic. During this period, several of the squatters had initiated steps opposing Council action.

The relevance of this situation to working people — beyond squatting as such, and beyond opposing Council authority — stems partly from the composition and attitudes of the squatters (and a number of now active tenants) and from the notion that Islington Council may have gone that little bit too far in their mistreatment of tenants, according to feedback from residents.

For a start, most squatters in the area are squatting for the purpose of cheap residence rather than being a conscious part of the 'squatting movement'. Many are in fact young working class people without any pretence of belonging to any sub-culture. There is therefore less of a distinction between squatters and residents.

Secondly, although the first meeting held by the Action Group consisted only of squatters, it was agreed that it should include and attempt to help all residents in the area. The group refers to itself as a housing group, rather than a squatting group, and is primarily interested in the community as such.

## REAL DEMOCRACY

Among the members of the group are experienced libertarians and anarchists, one of whom has had housing experience with a large degree of success, and several with successful experience at university. The group is organised along libertarian lines — that is, initiative and organisers change with the different matters at issue.

If a person had an idea, she or he would suggest it at a meeting and form an ad hoc committee with those interested to carry out the task. Members of the group are delegated to maintain information so as to avoid overlap. A similar operation style was observed by a member of the group in Copenhagen. This style has been operating successfully for about three months.

The other point of relevance is that it is an attempt to radicalise members of the working class, using housing as an issue. It was popularly agreed that a major point of the exercise was to expose tenants to the real nature of council housing and allow them to experience defiance of authority, acting as a community.

## LOCAL SURVEY

Canvassing was carried out in the form of a petition protesting against the above mentioned plans for road closures. The area was also extensively surveyed with key questions concerning attitudes towards such things as gutting, council policy, renovation versus redevelopment — the results were surprisingly anti-Council.

The survey allowed for basic issues to be discussed, the further breaking of ice between squatters and residents, and results around which a positive platform was developed.

The co-operation from tenants is gradually increasing. This is despite the threat posed to tenants by the Council housing list — part of the developing state capitalism which makes it possibly more obnoxious than private capitalism.

# TCHUNT

*Communist Party! The red-baiting techniques that have begun to be so effectively used are being used by those who, in the early sixties suffered exactly the same persecution. The CP, firmly entrenched in the Union, have felt the time is right to make an alliance with the 'moderates' in the leadership, and attack their opposition.*

## SELF-ACTIVITY

Why do they want the 'action from below' opposition eliminated? Because they know they owe their current status in the Union to the vast apathy of the membership and that if a mass-activist movement is got going, it would throw up its own advocates, and the CP would be swept aside.

They feel strong enough to make these attacks now, because of the failures of Rank and File listed above, and principally because of its failure to organise any effective opposition to the Houghton Report.

This failure lies partly with Rank and File members not yet learning the crucial lessons: that the very people the report affected worst — the lowest paid who do the most teaching — were the least represented at the Union Conference; that the majority of these (primary and infant school teachers) are the most vulnerable to the claims of 'professionalism', that is 'you'll hurt the kids if you go on strike', and careerism, that is 'you'll remain in your low-paid post if you become an active union member'.

## MINDLESS ACTIVISM

Rank and File has not concentrated on the grievances of this section of the membership

which was not usually bad pay, but bad working conditions, that is oversize classes, no preparation periods and too little equipment.

It would be unfair to say that Rank and File do not consider these grievances to be important, but the way in which the organisation operates is to draw these people into doing something about it is unsuccessful.

It is wrong to have a fixed standard of militancy, as Rank and File does, and to encourage blind opposition to the Head and anyone else who might disagree with you, without first seeking out the grievances that they might have with the education structure.

*The reason why so many primary school teachers are alienated from Rank and File is because so many 'militants' have gone in and crashed around trying to impose militancy on people who don't feel strongly on whatever campaign Rank and File is pushing at that time, 'militants' who don't listen to what the other teachers are upset about.*

In general, the NUT membership is not as trade-union minded as many members feel it should be. The only way to combat the CP and the right wing in the NUT, is by an alliance of all revolutionaries where there are points of common agreement, and a far greater sensitivity to the needs of the membership.

The kind of sectarianism produced by the old type of rank and file organisation only weakens the possibility of influencing the membership into a more militant frame of mind, and it isolates revolutionaries within the union.

J.B.

# HOUSING ACTION

in libertarian action and working class organisation.

Many achievements besides those mentioned have been made by the group, including technical architects reports, anti-gutting action, legal contacts and publicity.

The group has been active in attempting to crystallise opposition to the housing authorities around specific issues. One such example was the confrontation of activists and council contractors over the destruction (gutting) of a house occupied by a 'legitimate' council tenant. This included an on-the-spot confrontation between members of the group and a video recording of the event which was shown at a public meeting, along with coverage in the national press.

## AUTHORITIES THWARTED

Recently, the Council held an open meeting concerning the future of local housing for

which it canvassed and informed only selected tenants. The group canvassed by informing other tenants, and encouraged them to attend the meeting.

The result was a meeting of hostile tenants subjecting the councillors to a continuous three-hour session of demanding questions and critical comments.

The group assists tenants with housing problems through its contacts. It has now opened a shop to deal with such problems.

And all this is being achieved under libertarian association, free from power struggles, releasing and encouraging the initiative of all.

*Station Ward Housing Action member.*



squatter & landlords' agent

# ON THE LORRIES

Recent large gains made in wage rates for drivers of heavy goods vehicles as a result of industrial action by Scottish haulage workers and a similar increase in the British Road Services basic rate in England have a far-reaching theoretical lesson for lorry drivers when making future wage claims, as the author of the following article points out:-

**I have been driving heavy goods vehicles for over five years. During that time, I can never remember discussing wage rates and working conditions with other drivers without us assessing our wage limits within the current haulage rates for the goods being carried.**

One lesson of the Scottish lorry drivers strike was that as soon as the wage increases were conceded, the employers federation announced that haulage rates were to go up by 25%. In a capitalist society if lorry drivers cannot get a wage increase without forcing up haulage rates, then we must force up haulage rates. This also establishes an identity of interest between employed drivers and owner-drivers.

It is because we have always confined our arguments with employers to within the context of 'what the vehicle earns' that we have had piece work, bonus work and productivity payments forced on us.

*I would suggest that we have now reached a point where a productivity increase in the road haulage industry is not only undesirable, it is impossible. There are legal restrictions on the speed we can drive at, the weight we can load our vehicles to, and the hours we can drive and work. Most lorry drivers are now working to these limits. Many employers expect drivers to break the 'maximum hours worked' laws in order to get the job done. Not many employers pay our fines when we get caught. If we lose our licences, we are lucky if we get sympathy.*

## ANTI-SOCIAL HOURS

Most lorry drivers work longer hours than any other section of the working class. Also, the times that we have to start work make for a disruption of social life, as does never knowing at what time we can finish work. Most of us do not know on which evening of the week we will be at home and when we will be up the road. We have only ourselves to blame if we do not fight for payments to make up in small part for these anti-social aspects of our job.

Another area in which we are unwilling to defend our rights is in the loading and unloading of trailers. Most drivers are only paid to ensure the safety, security and quantity of the load. Most of us will not stand aside at a drop while two or three men unload twenty tons from a trailer. Very often we are not insured when working in a customers premises: With piece work payments often based on mileage as tonnage it not only means that whenever we get on the trailer we are doing work for which we are not being paid, we are also subsidising the bosses at the firm we are delivering to or collecting the load from. If we refused to ever get on the trailer except to secure the load it would mean that many firms would have to employ more people to load and unload their goods.

Every lorry driver is aware that if there were a nation-wide strike of lorry drivers there would very soon be no goods in the

shops, no factory or building site would be able to work. In such a situation any demands made by lorry drivers would have to be met. Jack Jones and Ken Jackson, T & G Road Transport boss would be afraid of a national road transport strike as would the employers and the government. The power structure of the union would be as affected as the authority of the employers and the government.

## LESSONS

It appears to me that the important lesson of the Scottish transport strike was that the full time officials were forced to negotiate on terms dictated by drivers, not on terms that the trade unions thought best for us.

Most drivers that I know are not keen to take an active part in union branch meetings. Past experience has shown that the T.&G. W.U. is more effective at absorbing and frustrating efforts at improving pay and working conditions than in promoting militant action.

**Until such time as we can build an effective rank and file organisation, it seems to me that our best course of action is to use our present union structure. Our Scottish brothers have shown us that militant action within our union branches can be effective - for as long as we force union officials to act on what we decide and not allow them to decide what is best for us.**

## AWA Lorry Driver

*The above was originally written for an earlier edition of Libertarian Struggle. Since the article was written, the prospect of widespread redundancies has radically altered the situation.*

As far as I know, all haulage firms in Scotland have achieved the £1 per hour basic as a result of their unilateral action. In England the situation is still very different.

We in BRS and the National Freight Corporation have achieved the £1 per hour basic, as have many other firms. Some, of course, are on a better rate than this. Unfortunately many drivers are still on a much lower basic rate than the NFC rates.

One large agricultural haulage firm in my locality pays £1 per hour, but never pays overtime rates. This is in spite of drivers working for this firm frequently driving for 80 or more hours a week.

Faced with the prospect of redundancies this difference in wage rates between one driver and the next, and one firm and the next, becomes the weapon by which employers could reduce all wages in our industry.

Looked at rationally, no driver will be made redundant because he, or his firm, are working at a loss. Any driver made redundant will be told that it is because there is no work for him.

To put it another way, if the amount of haulage in any one area is reduced by a quarter, then a quarter of the drivers in that area will be made redundant. The only way in which profit and loss affect redundancies is that the quarter who are selected will be those with the best pay and working conditions.

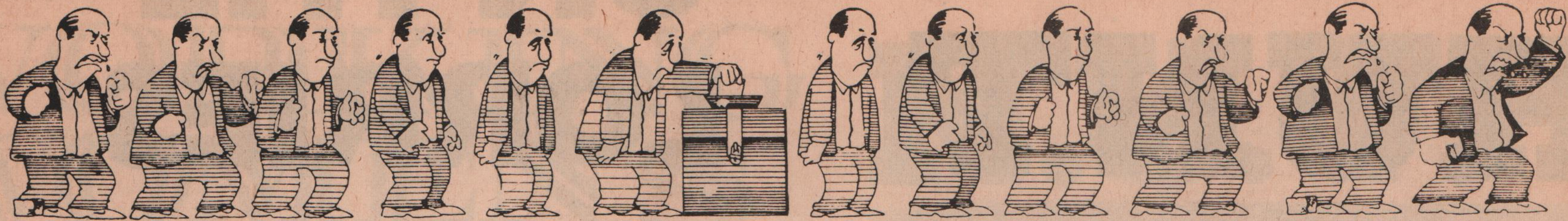
It seems likely that if widespread unemployment goes on for very long, the drivers and firms who survive will be the ones who drive overloaded vehicles all hours of the day and night for low pay. That is unless we who have achieved a reasonable basic can force this basic (£1 per hour minimum) for all haulage workers everywhere.

Printing, Broadcasting and Publishing Industries  
Delegate Conference

*The Fight Against Redundancies*

Saturday 17th May 1975, 10.00 am  
London College of Printing,  
Elephant & Castle, London SE 11

Further details from Bro. Aidan White, Convenor,  
Redundancy Conference Organising Committee,  
61A Farleigh Road, London, N 16. Tel: 01-534-  
4555 [day].



## “birds of a feather...”

*With the referendum on whether or not to stay in the Common Market, we have been treated to a deluge of gibberish on the TV, radio and in the papers. We've heard the shrill voices of Wilson, Wedgewood-Benn, etc., all telling us to follow his or her 'advice'. But from among these 'experts', nowhere do we find a voice explaining the EEC from a working-class standpoint.*

So what exactly then is the EEC? Why was it created? And why the frantic rush by 'our' leaders and bosses to join it in recent years, and now to stay in?

When the Second World War finished, the US was the dominant capitalist nation. But this position posed problems for the American bosses — they needed trade outlets and areas where they could invest their surplus capital.

But this wasn't their only problem — there was the competition for control over various nations between western capitalism and Russian bureaucracy — 'the threat of Communism'!

The Stalinist regime brought whole nations under its control. Armed French and Italian workers were tricked into submission by reactionary 'Communist' Parties.

The US Government was afraid of its

dominant world role being threatened; so it decided to help build up the European capitalist fortresses. The likelihood of using and influencing US-type capitalist economies was seen to be much greater than those under the control of the 'Reds'.

So the US provided Europe, Japan, etc with much economic, monetary and military aid. It was the old trick — often repeated in South America and Indonesia — behind the painted smile of democratic, benevolent foreign aid, lay the diseased features of imperialism.

### MILITARY LINKS

## Vietnam - Whose victory?

In its scale and continuity, the struggle in Vietnam is overwhelming. For 35 years, the common people of Vietnam have fought a terrible battle for self-determination.

The Japanese invasion, the French colonial war, the American intervention, and finally the regime of President Thieu, have not dampened the determination of the national liberation forces.

Throughout all these episodes runs the fine thread of self-sacrifice and courage of the Vietnamese people. Villagers made homeless by 'pacification', refugees flocking into and out of towns, huge B52's dropping massive death-loads on a pitifully armed populace, are part of the bloody record. To have endured this onslaught, to fight back, and finally smash their oppressors, is an incredible feat seldom equalled in modern times.

In the course of the conflict, the methods used by Saigon and its paymasters have spread and intensified the original war. The right-wing 'coup in Cambodia in 1970, closely followed by an invasion of that country by American troops being the most obvious example. The whole of Indochina has been irretrievably lost to western capitalism.

Anarchists must have serious reservations about the political nature of the revolutionaries' leadership. Russia and China through their military aid have, and will continue to play a substantial role in the new Vietnam.

Libertarians opposition to nationalism and authoritarian communism must not however obscure the great advance accomplished by the insurgents. In rejecting political domination and economic exploitation by the West, it must be unlikely that it will accept the role of a vassal state in the Soviet bloc.

*'Sheetmetalworker'*

for the libertarian viewpoint on Indochina

### READ

#### VIETNAM — WHOSE VICTORY?

by Bob Potter

only 25 pence + post from  
Black Flag, 1 Wilne Street, Leicester, or  
Bookpeople, 53 St Marys Rd, Southampton

In order to give a more permanent, strong and cohesive form to this policy of shoring up western capitalism, such organisations as NATO were created. So it was a logical step for the EEC — the Common Market — to be set up.

And it was also quite logical, of course, for US imperialism to actively support this move which protected the whole system. The British bosses weren't quite so clever as their US and continental counterparts, though, and didn't realise the wisdom at the time of the slightly extended saying: 'Birds of a feather flock together — to pluck each other later.'

The 'British Empire' was still there — the British bosses laughed — so why worry about joining the EEC to get new markets which weren't needed, and help give life to European competition?

However, the Empire's days were getting shorter — the sun was setting ever nearer Britain's shores. The independence movements abroad struck deep at its lucrative hold over colonies.

European and Japanese capitalism became more obvious. Finance capital — banks, sterling, insurance etc., — was hit very hard indeed. The great British Pound now found its world role undermined.

During the 1960's there was an increasing polarisation of competition between US firms and European capitalism. The British bosses position could only survive if they became an integral part of a tightly-knit European economy. Otherwise, they would be forced out of the world market into a non-independent role.

So, it wasn't just a case of getting a larger market which has made most of 'our' bosses so keen about the EEC — it's a matter of survival for them.

The whole history of the EEC, and Britain's entry to it, is one of maintaining the maintaining the chaotic capitalist system. This is what the hotch-potch of various pro- and anti-marketters have failed to point out in all their boring 'messages to the people' in *the Sun*, on BBC 1, and elsewhere.

Wedgewood-Benn's utterances have been as anti-working-class as those of Roy Jenkins or Maggie Thatcher. To talk about 'loss of national sovereignty' in the EEC, is to use capitalist language — not socialist.

What working class person decides what he or she can do in their everyday life — in or out of the Common Market? It is the capitalists own institution, just as it was their system before entry.

R. Williams

# media distortion

With the Nation's life in danger, can the country tolerate this kind of behaviour from its Unions? — so asked William Hardcastle on the BBC's news (12/12/74). The BBC is a source of almost constant propaganda. Sometimes blatant propaganda, as in the loaded question quoted above.

And sometimes so skilful, that it is possible for people not to realise that it is propaganda they're getting. One of the main targets of BBC propaganda is strikes.

At the time of writing, there is a strike in the London Docks. A BBC reporter has today claimed on the news (3/4/75 1.25pm) that 'certain people' in the docks (that is, the strike leaders) are suspected of trying to create confusion among the dockers.

After giving publicity to this anti-strike rumour, the reporter went on to mention a meeting at which 'it is hoped that there will be a vote to return to work'. Hoped by whom? — the BBC's audience is not told. By the majority of dockers? That is not yet known. By the strike-breakers? Of course. By the employers? Certainly — and therefore by the BBC.

When a large strike happens in Britain, the BBC directs its attention — and that means your attention — away from the employers, and away from the political system which makes strikes necessary.

### BOGEY MEN

Instead, it concentrates attention largely on the strikers — and especially on strike leaders who can be identified as bogey-men. Strikers have found in the past that the BBC gives a great deal of sympathetic coverage to any workers who break the strike.

Hardships caused to strikers and their families through loss of earnings, are rarely mentioned. But hardships caused to other people ('innocent members of the public') get a great deal of attention. And so does the 'National Interest', which means for the BBC above all the interest of the employers.

### CARRIED AWAY

Now and again, someone at the BBC gets carried away on the subject of strikes. The disc-jockey, Tony Blackburn, recently complained — on the air — about the number of strikes in this country.

Blackburn had just returned from a holiday in Barbados: here are his words — 'When I was away (in Barbados) I listened to the radio and never heard the word strike once.'

When I got back, I switched on a news bulletin and heard the word strike six times.' (Radio One, 2/12/74, 9.25am). This propaganda, in the middle of a pop music programme, has a clear message for working people: Strikes are wrong. They are bringing this country to its knees. So you should put up with whatever wages and conditions the bosses see fit to give you.

### I'M ALRIGHT, JACK

It is at least little strange to hear an ex-public-schoolboy like Blackburn, coming back from his luxury holiday resort, and complaining that some people aren't prepared to put up with a wage which is probably much less than a quarter of what he earns himself.

This wasn't the first time that Blackburn had done some anti-strike propaganda during his programme. During an earlier miners strike, he made a sarcastic remark about Joe Gormley being 'the most popular man in Britain' (ha, ha).

All this, the BBC will allow. But can you imagine what would happen to any disc-jockey who told his audience of millions that a strike leader was a good guy, or that Britain didn't have enough strikes? The BBC will tolerate pro-capitalist propaganda: socialist propaganda would be almost unthinkable.

### LONG TRADITION

The BBC has a long tradition of making propaganda by innuendo. Here's a BBC reporter (Douglas Stuart) posing a question about South East Asia:—

'How close is South Vietnam to total defeat at the hands of the Communists?' (Radio Four, 27/12/74, 10.02pm).

Notice the implication here. Firstly, that South Vietnam equals the Saigon government and its supporters. South Vietnamese neutral or Communists obviously don't exist. Second, that when the 'Communists' win in Vietnam, it is, from the point of view of the BBC, not a victory but a defeat

(...total defeat' for 'South Vietnam').

In its coverage of South-east Asian wars, the BBC is careful always to call one side 'the Communists'; the other side is, however never called 'the capitalists'. They are called 'the Government', or the 'Anti-Communist Forces'. Capitalism and capitalist are words that BBC employees are usually careful to avoid broadcasting.

The BBC's audience is meant to regard capitalist institutions as normal and right — so normal that no special word is needed to describe them, and help you identify their true nature.

It is the other side which is abnormal and 'politically motivated'.

### BOSSSES MOUTHPIECE

A similar trick of language is used to create hostility in this country towards strikes. Here the key word is *unofficial*. This word is thought to have overtones of irresponsibility. *Official* has associations with 'government' and 'official channels', and is therefore a friendly word from the capitalist point of view.

BBC news bulletins will use several times a day the phrase 'unofficial strike'. BBC news however rarely or never lets the word 'official' in this way. To say *due to an official strike* would be, for the BBC, too much like saying 'due to a good strike'.

And for the BBC, there are no such things as good strikes. ONLY bad ones.

### PEOPLES MEDIA NEEDED

These propaganda techniques, used on the side of the government and the rich, are at work every day at the BBC, even though there is no immediate threat to these groups of social revolution.

In a revolutionary situation, the BBC would obviously become even more consistently and hysterically pro-capitalist.

Both in the short and the long term, working people in this country cannot expect the BBC to present the truth about them, or to support their interests in any struggle with the bosses.

There is a great need for working people to create, and gain practice in operating, press (and broadcasting) services of their own. So that in a crisis, public opinion will not be formed largely by the distortions, omission and lies carried by the BBC.

Marian Evans

# REVIEWS

## The Makhnovist Movement

\*History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918-1921)  
by Peter Arshinov (Black & Red) 284pp. £1.25

This paperback\*, printed and published by American anarchists, is the first English translation of Arshinov's work on the revolution in the Ukraine.

Arshinov, himself, was a metal worker in Ekaterinoslav who educated himself through strenuous personal effort. He joined the revolutionary movement in 1904 when he was seventeen, becoming a member of the Bolshevik Party. In 1906, he became an anarchist because of the minimalism of the Bolsheviks which did not respond to the real aspirations of the workers and caused — with the minimalism of the other political parties — the defeat of the 1905-6 revolution.

In the reaction after 1905, mass political activity was impossible, and Arshinov took part in attacks on the Tsarist authorities. He spent some years in exile in France, and was arrested in 1910 on the Austrian/Russian frontier whilst transporting arms and anarchist literature. He was sentenced to twenty years hard labour and was incarcerated in the Butyrki prison in Moscow. Here he met Nestor Makhno, a young Ukrainian anarchist who had received a life sentence for attacks on the authorities. They became close friends and in March 1917, they were freed by the Revolution.

Makhno returned to the Ukraine where he organised a powerful peasant detachment which fought the Germans and the local landlords. From 1918 to 1921, the Makhno groups fought the White Guards, and later the Red Army. They defeated the armies of the White Generals, Deniken and Wrangel.

The Makhnovist movement attracted many anarchists fleeing from repression by the Bolsheviks in the north. The movement itself had a high level of political consciousness realising that the salvation of workers and peasants was the task of workers and peasants themselves.

Geographically, they covered a region of a hundred and fifty miles in diameter holding seven million people. Wherever they held sway, the land was collectivised voluntarily and shared out among the agricultural workers.

The Bolsheviks, seeking to consolidate their rapidly growing bureaucracy, finally acted against the Makhnovists. They were aware of the essentially anarchist nature of the movement in the Ukraine, which was totally opposed to their position. They crushed the insurgent movement by force, and after a great deal of heavy fighting, Makhno fled into exile, dying a few years later in Paris.

This book tells in detail the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian peasants and workers and their achievements in organising society on libertarian communist lines.

Arshinov, through bitter experience, is clearly aware of the nature of Leninism. He realises the class character of the Bolsheviks,

with their base in the social-democratic intelligentsia:—

*The peasants and workers, whose name was invoked millions of times during the entire Russian Revolution, are only the bridge to power for the new caste of rulers... It (Bolshevism) is not only a social, but also a psychological authoritarianism... It lacks even the shadow of what will constitute the essential trait of the real working class social revolution of the future, the ardent desire to work... for the good of the people.*

*All the efforts of Bolshevism, at times enormous and persistent, are nothing more than the creation of authoritarian organs, which in relation to the people, represent only the threats and brutality of former masters.*

At the same time, Arshinov realises the shortcomings of many Russian anarchists:— *The masses urgently needed militants who formulated and developed their ideas, helped them realise these ideas in the grand arena of life, and elaborated the forms and directions of the movement. The anarchists did not want, or did not know how, to be such militants. As a result they inflicted a great injury on the movement and on themselves. An even more important aspect of the helplessness and inactivity of the anarchists is in the confusion in anarchist theory and the organisational chaos in anarchist ranks.*

Arshinov points out the need for anarchists to organise themselves, to establish links among all those who genuinely strive for anarchism and are devoted to the working class. The disruptive and arbitrary elements will then disappear.

This book should be read by everyone who



MAKHNO.

wants a detailed insight into the real nature of the Russian Revolution, the role of the Bolsheviks, and the case for organised class anarchism.

Nick Hillier

'Anarchism is generally humanitarian only in the sense that the ideas of the masses tend to improve the lives of all men, and that the fate of today's or tomorrow's humanity is inseparable from that of exploited labour. If the working masses are victorious, all humanity will be reborn; if they are not, violence, exploitation, slavery and oppression will reign as before in the world.'

The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists.

The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists was written by a group of anarchists who had participated in the Russian Revolution and the ensuing civil war. They attempted to communicate their experiences and what they had learnt to the international anarchist movement. They stressed the essential need for disciplined anarchist 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 a structured anarchist 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 organised class anarchism in the 1970's.

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# Claiming and the Class Struggle.

*The mechanism of capitalism requires that a section of the working class is periodically forced out of work, or simply prevented from ever starting work. This section includes unemployed workers, the sick and disabled, pensioners and single parents — collectively known as claimants. Closely linked to these groups are the low wage earners, and their families.*

What factor is common to all these sectors of the working class? Their sole or partial source of income is in the form of benefits handed out by the vast welfare system. Each year the growth of state power, coupled with increasing economic instability in the social democratic countries, is causing an increase in the number of claimants. This is seen not only in increases in unemployment but also by the growth of such schemes as rent rebates and family income supplements.

In accordance with Keynesian logic, the income of claimants must be sufficiently high to allow some participation in consumption, but low enough not to cause inflation. The result of this is that an entire section of the working class is reduced to a standard of living marginally above the starvation level.

The state makes no effort to hide the plight of claimants — on the contrary, their poverty is held up to the rest of the working class as an example of what could happen to them if they became stropky at work. To this is added propaganda vilifying claimants as scroungers, malingerers and sub-human elements; propaganda designed to divide the working-class — employed against unemployed, married couples against single parents, non-unionised workers against strikers — in short, wage slaves against claimants.

Sir Keith Joseph's remarks on social security must be seen as part of the totality of

the ruling class's next offensive against workers. This divisive propaganda is echoed by the Stalinist and Trotskyist press, which places claimants under the category of lumpenproletariat and sweeps them under the carpet.

Six years ago a start was made on organising and uniting claimants with the creation of the first claimants' union. Since then the movement has grown to the position where there are now over sixty unions around the country. Such unions bring claimants together out of their isolation to fight on a united basis against the gross mis-administration of the existing legislation, and to fight for changes in the social security laws. Claimants' unions are controlled directly by their membership, with no bureaucrats. The unions are federated nationally and the national federation meets quarterly and produces a newspaper, pamphlets and plans nationally co-ordinated campaigns.

The charge is often laid against claimants' unions that they are merely unpaid social workers. This concept is false and contrary to the basic principles of the movement. The activists in claimants' unions do not want to do social work but to pass on knowledge of the social security — its laws and its day-to-day practices — and thereby create a situation where the membership of the union knows how to deal collectively, and individually with the enemy. Socialists in the movement believe that the working class needs to be organised — out of work as well as in work.

It is essential that claimants' unions and trade unions have close links to maintain the solidarity of the working class. Up to now, this has only been achieved in strike situations where a strike claimants' union has been established to ensure that strikers and their families receive their entitlement to supplementary benefit. At some time or other, (through unemployment, sickness and, inevitably, at retirement age) all workers have to rely on handouts from the state. If these handouts are to be sufficient for workers to live on (and at present they are not), they must be fought for by the mass of the organised working class.

With the recession coming on, and the capitalists forced to increase the level of unemployment drastically, it becomes increasingly important to forge links between employed and unemployed sections of the working class.

R.H. (Bristol Claimants Union)

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

India and Bangladesh are on the verge of the worst famine they have ever known. At least 10,000 people are believed to be dying each week through lack of food and the number is steadily increasing. And in Britain's 'affluent society' it is reckoned that 50 to 60 thousand old age pensioners die each year through lack of food and warmth.

Meanwhile the four major grain producers — the United States, Australia, Canada and Argentina — have been cutting wheat acreage (subsidised by the State it fell from 120m acres to 81m acres between 1968 and 1972). The major fruit growers have been destroying tons of fruit yearly, and closer to home in Devon, hundreds of gallons of milk, it has been reported, have been poured away — and so the list goes on.

The reason why food is not grown, or is even destroyed, is because the whole capitalist economy is based upon only one motive: production for profit. Unless food can be sold it is not produced, and when too much is produced it is often cheaper to destroy it. Even now, in India, people are dying on the streets when food can be

bought from any shop if you have the money.

*It is a myth that enough food could not be grown for the world's population. A secret US Government paper was recently published in the Washington Post which admitted that the food problem was largely the fault of the economic system.*

By donating money to charities, or reforming the capitalist system to make it work better, we will not be able to solve the world food problem. The only sure way is for working people throughout the world to take control of the land, and means of distribution of food; so that through an international system of workers councils, food and other necessities will be freely available to everyone.

The best help you can give the starving people in the 'Third World' is to help them discover their own power, assisting them to make a revolution against the international capitalist class, and organise for revolution here.

Eating should be a right — not a privilege — and today's potential food sufficiency should be a reality.

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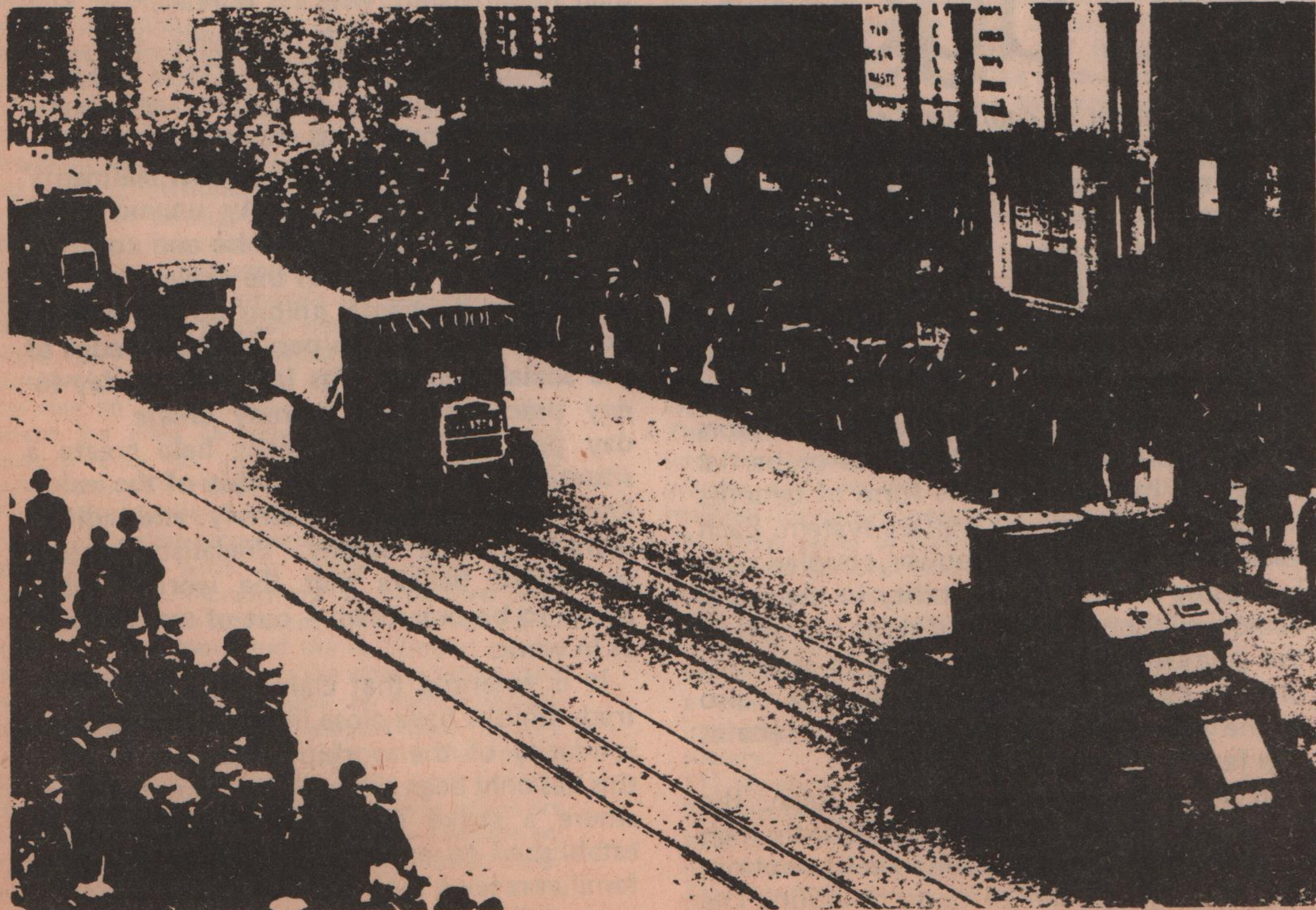
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# Lessons of the GENERAL STRIKE

The concept of a general strike holds a special place in anarchist ideas. Alexander Berkman argued in the ABC of Anarchism\* that 'the strength of labour is not on the field of battle. It is in the shop, in the mine and factory. There lies its power that no army in the world can defeat, no human agency conquer. In other words, the social revolution can take place only by means of the general strike.'



Few would deny that a general strike poses a blatant challenge to big business and government. Unlike many other forms of struggle, it demands a high degree of working-class activity and organisation at rank and file level. The British General Strike of 1926 illustrates this very clearly.

## VICTORY AND DEFEAT

The class conflict of 1925-6 was not simply a response to the economic difficulties facing the coal industry during this period. It was the culmination of offensives and retreats by both big business and the workers movement since the first world war. After the massive defeats of 1921 the workers movement only regained its self-confidence slowly. The number of strikes gradually rose through 1924. In 1925, the employers again tried to force down working-class living standards. The mine-owners proposed a 25% cut in wages, and a return to the eight hour day. There was mass support for the miners. As late as the 29th July, the Prime Minister told trade union leaders that the Government would not grant a subsidy, which would maintain existing wage levels. He argued that *all the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry back on its feet*. Yet, on the 31st, the Government gave way to the trade union movement, and granted a subsidy. The apparent victory was hailed as Red Friday.

## THE STATE PREPARES

Years later, asked why they had given way, Baldwin, the Prime Minister replied quite simply, 'We were not ready'. The state used the time between then and the following May, which was when the subsidy was due to run out, profitably. It divided the country into ten regions, each under a Civil Commissioner. Eighty-eight Voluntary Service Committees were set up to keep local services in operation. The police force was enlarged through a massive recruitment of Special Constables. The Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies was created. Although it was ostensibly an *unofficial* body, it enjoyed full Government support.

## CLAMP-DOWN

In the autumn of 1925, twelve leading members of the Communist Party were imprisoned under the 1797 *Incitement to Mutiny Act*. The workers movement did not prepare.

A left-wing motion at the TUC's annual conference, which called for a degree of organisation was merely referred to the General Council. The Communist Party, and the Minority Movement (a CP dominated rank and file organisation encompassing, at least on paper, representatives of almost a million workers) tended to reinforce this inactivity.

Following Leninist notions of 'leadership', they concentrated their efforts on putting demands to the TUC. This became a substitute for advancing concrete ideas for rank and file activity.

The Party told workers to 'follow the TUC and insist on the formation of the Workers Alliance under the supreme authority of the General Council'.

Throughout 1925, they increasingly supported the 'left-wing' members of the General Council and hailed them as 'an alternative political leadership'. On January 8th 1926, the Party put forward the slogan of 'All power to the General Council'.

The subsidy to the mines ran out, and negotiations began. The tone of these was illustrated by J.H. Thomas, the railway workers leader who revealed that 'I have never begged and pleaded like I begged and pleaded all day today'.

The Government replied by sending troops to South Wales, Lancashire and Scotland. Two battleships, three destroyers and a troop ship were stationed in the Mersey. The Government broke off negotiations. The strike began on May 3rd.

## THE STRIKE

The BBC offered its services to the state. On May 2nd, the Government had invoked the Emergency Powers Act. Consisting of only three paragraphs, it enables the state, in times of crisis, to take whatever measures it sees fit to maintain 'law and order'.

They commandeered paper supplies, and Winston Churchill edited the *British Gazette*, the Government's daily mouthpiece — a valuable propaganda weapon.

At High Mass in Westminster Cathedral, Cardinal Bourne declared that the strike was a 'sin against the obedience which we owe to God'. Picket lines were smashed. On May 6th a fully armed battalion of Grenadier Guards escorted by twenty armoured cars, moved into the docks and set up Lewis guns at vantage points. Riots in Leeds, Hull and Glasgow were put down.

By May 11th, the Cabinet was preparing an Order prohibiting banks from paying out money to any person 'acting in opposition to the National Interest'. The state machinery showed, beyond any doubt, which side it was on.

The trade union leadership gave away its position at the end of the strike. Thomas

revealed in the Commons that 'What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this, if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise any control'. They insisted throughout, that the strike was completely unrelated to politics.

## COUNCILS OF ACTION

Despite the activities of the bureaucracy, rank and file solidarity grew daily. Traditional divisions and sectional splits were broken down. The most visible form this took was the formation of Councils of Action.

The form these took varies. Generally they based on local Trades Councils. The Scottish TUC however simplified matters by sending out a uniform scheme of sub-committees.

The Vale of Leven provides a useful example of a well-organised area. Its sub-committees were as follows:-

1. Organisation of strike
2. Propaganda
3. Commissariat - relief to strikers
4. Defence corps - not very common
5. Transport
6. Building trades

Each committee would have a convenor.

However, in many cases a single industry would dominate, as at Braintree, Norwich, Wolverhampton, etc, where railway workers played a leading part.

In Wales, on the other hand, the miners tended to control policy. Most Councils suffered from the extreme haste with which they were established, although in for example Hull and Preston, they had been set up nine months previously.

Leeds possessed four rival strike committees, mutually jealous, and pre-occupied with a fight for the direct telephone line to London.

Yet throughout, every Council or committee was local in character. Few meaningful links were forged between them. The beginnings of federations appeared only in Merseyside, Dartford, and in Northumberland and Durham, where a general council was established.

The potential power of Councils of Action was shown most vividly in the Newcastle area. The Civil Commissioner, Sir Kingsley Wood, was forced to negotiate with them and ask for concessions.

Vehicles required special permits, issued by the local committees. Bulletins were produced throughout the country, although the TUC General Council attempted to suppress the *Bradford Worker* and the *Preston Strike News*.

## FAILURE

The strike grew daily. The wave was built up and sustained entirely by rank and file efforts. The trade union bureaucracy played very little part.

However, and perhaps inevitably, the

General Council retreated after nine days and called the strike off. They feared the power of the working class far more than that of the ruling class.

Initially the strikers refused to accept this. Twenty-four hours after the official ending, 100,000 more workers had come out. And yet, they returned to work after instructions by union officials.

The demoralisation that followed, paved the way for the defeats in the following years. Living standards were cut back and shopfloor organisation smashed.

## LESSONS

After years of indoctrination, the notion of dependence on leaderships has become deeply embedded in the British working class. Inevitably, this leads to 'helplessness' in the face of betrayals. As we have said, this was reinforced by the political perspectives of the Communist Party and the Minority Movement.

Today, serious revolutionaries and industrial militants must break with the idea of putting demands on the TUC and the Labour Party. That merely reinforces their authority and the existing power structure in the workers movement.

The General Strike illustrates more than anything else the need for militants to build up independent rank and file organisation through class-wide activity.

\* \*

...And whilst on the subject:-


Bob Dent's pamphlet, 'The Lessons of the General Strike 1926', (published by Millenium, 9 Sefton Drive, Liverpool 8) is a very useful summary. It sells at only 10p; so it's well worth buying a few and selling them to friends and contacts.

Roderick Martin's book, 'Communism and the British Trade Unions' is the only study devoted solely to the Minority Movement. It is unfortunately right-wing and superficial. Christopher Farman's 'The General Strike' (a Panther paperback) is subtitled 'Britain's aborted revolution?' It's probably the best and most comprehensive account around. It has a useful bibliography.


There is, as far as I know, no account of the role of the anarchist movement during this period.

E.A.

\*ABC of Anarchism, by Alexander Berkman (freedom press) 25 pence.



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