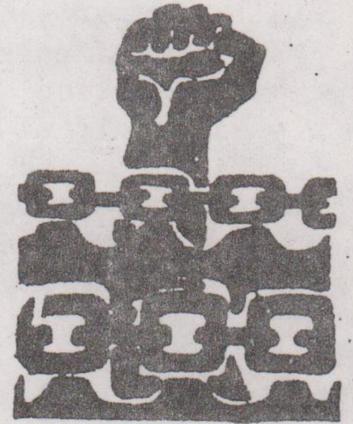


BULLETIN



OF THE NOTTINGHAM GROUP OF THE ANARCHIST-COMMUNIST FEDERATION

This is the first of a proposed series of bulletins put out by the Nottingham group of the A.C.F.. Our aim with this one is really to simply let you know of our existence. Should you wish to contact us our address is printed inside, we invite criticism of and disagreement with anything printed here. Even more we invite those who sick and tired of the stale solutions to the crisis that besets us, and who wish to participate in our activities to get in touch.



VOTING LABOUR Without Illusions ?

The Labour Party hasn't got a cat in hell's chance of winning the election. Greenwich points the way to, if not a rout, then certainly to a not-very-inspiring performance.

The left tell us to vote Labour without illusions, even large chunks of Labour's own left have no faith that Labour can actually do anything but keep the Tories out. But voting Labour without illusions is the biggest illusion of all, and in pursuing such a line the left shoot themselves in the foot.

Should by some twist of (mis)fortune Kinnock enter the portals of number 10, we know full well, on the basis of Labour's past record in government just what to expect. Attacks on the working class, in the interests of some spurious national unity! Will the demands of capital, so readily articulated now by Thatcher, change because the government changes it's hue from blue to rose pink? Surely not.

The Labour Party would find itself again in the Disney world of trying to reconcile it's reformist pretensions with the demands of capitalism for profit - necessitating rationalisation, unemployment, low wages, the destruction of workers organisation, cuts in the dole etc. etc.

Perversely, it was Labour themselves who contributed to laying the ground for Thatcherism, giving credibility to that particular brand of populist reaction. The identification of socialism, in the popular mind, with bureaucracy, incomes policy, austerity measures...and the Winter of Discontent, as workers inevitably fought back against

their 'own' party, did much to destroy the appeal of 'socialism' and gave Thatcher space to shift the so-called consensus to the right. A direction in which Kinnock is now crawling.

Socialism has nothing to do with managing capitalism, or attacking the working class.

We look to the redefinition of socialism, not as a party or as a set of policy documents or as an aspiration to government, but as a social movement, at once oppositional and libertarian. A movement that brings together all groups of the 'oppressed' and the working class on the basis of generalised self-activity, provides a far more enduring basis not only for defence of what we have but for the further project of social change, than does any voting without 'illusions'.

ISSUE ONE.

Where We Stand

We believe that :

1. Capitalism and other social systems, in which wealth and power are the property of a ruling class or elite, must be destroyed.

2. Reformist and statist solutions will necessarily fail and therefore revolution is the only possible means of achieving anarchist-communism. How far such a revolution will be peaceful will depend on how far the ruling class is prepared to go in defence of its power, through the use of violence and state repression.

3. Genuine liberation can only come about through the self activity of the great mass of the population. We regard parliament, representative democracy and political vanguardism as obstacles in the way of a self managed society. Institutions and organisations which attempt to mediate in the fight against domination cannot succeed. Trade unionism, as it is presently constituted, plays an important part in maintaining class exploitation, insofar as it regulates and justifies it through collective bargaining and bureaucratic structures. Nevertheless, it is important to work within the trade union movement, in order to build up a rank-and-file workers movement which encourages workers control of struggle and cuts across sectional boundaries.

4. Workers and other oppressed sections of society will, in times of revolutionary upheaval, create their own democratic institutions, whether they be based on the workplace or the community. To this end we encourage the creation of organs of struggle based on the rank and file, independent of political parties.

5. Pure spontaneity is unlikely to be sufficient to overthrow entrenched class domination.

Anarchists must indicate the libertarian alternatives to class society, participate as anarchists in struggle and organise on a federative basis to assist in the revolutionary process.

6. Capitalism is international and needs to be fought internationally. We therefore try to maintain contact with as many anarchist-communists as possible in overseas countries as the preliminary stage to the creation of an anarchist international.

7. We do not simply seek the abolition of class differences, for inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, age, sexuality and gender. Personal relationships are often based on domination and submission. We seek not only an economic revolution but also a social and cultural one, involving a thoroughgoing change in attitudes and organisation in our everyday lives to free us in our social and personal interactions.

8. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

ACF

CONTACT NOTTINGHAM A.C.F -

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THE TRADER DISPUTE AND ALL THAT

Early in December last year nearly 90 printers were sacked from Trader Web Offset, by its owner Lionel Pickering, also the proprietor of the Trader Group of free newspapers.

On March 8th a march and rally were held in Derby.

Its message was powerful and to the point - the sacked workers simply refuse to go away. At a time when prospects seem bleak and people un-hopeful and cynical, their defiance and determination comes as a refreshing boost to us all.

Refreshing moreover because this demonstration/rally was not an officially organised event but was the work of the sacked printers themselves. All along this has been a dispute run by the rank and file and for the rank and file.

It is not only determination they show us, but also a ready openness from which we can all learn, and of which the rally itself served as a prime example. Although the usual "cast of stars" were included on stage, in this case would-be labour M.P's David Bookbinder and Philip Whitehead, a microphone was readily available to anyone from the floor wanting to have their say. This seemed to be the source of some discomfort to the 'stars' on the stage. In fact compared to the two labour candidates' appalling display of sheer naivety the impromptu contributions made far more sense being critical of both trade union and labour leadership. Both Bookbinder (presently the leader of Derby City Council, who to their credit have stopped trading with the Trader at a cost of some 200,000 lost revenue) and Whitehead had been shocked that Mr Pickering done such a deed. They had both thought of him as a friend of the Labour movement! The millionaire masquerading as an ally.....

Despite the relatively low turnout - where were all the Trades Council luminaries, political hacks and unionists - the day served as a genuine expression of both effort and support and we stand by the printers.

Leftists regularly point their accusing fingers at weak and politically backward "leadership" as the main cause of defeat for workers in struggle - and the NGA/Sogat sellout over Wapping is taken as a case in point. The solution offered, following on from this, is that a more combative and radical "leadership" be elected in their place. As things stand they have a point, but only half a story, for at the end of the day the "crisis of leadership" is a red-herring. Albeit a dangerous one. For the control exercised by the hierarchy (especially that over the purse strings) acts as a powerful bloc on rank and file self-activity and a break on the pursuit of effective class action. But the real problem is that workers look to such "leadership" in the first place, rather than attempting to control the running and direction of the dispute themselves, and in the process build their own skills, initiative and confidence. Those who persist in trotting out the red-herring of 'leadership' contribute to the maintenance of working class passivity.

Shocked cries of "betrayal" at the antics of the Deans, Willis' and Kinnocks of this world, spewed forth with depressing regularity, reveal a substantial lack of political sense. What do they expect? Time and again it has been shown that the interests of the bureaucrats and "leadership" and those of the grass-roots do not coincide. There is a history of back sliding, sell out and direct attack on the working class, by both union hierarchies and Labour governments to bare this out. A history that has handicapped the class struggle and the appeal of socialism both.

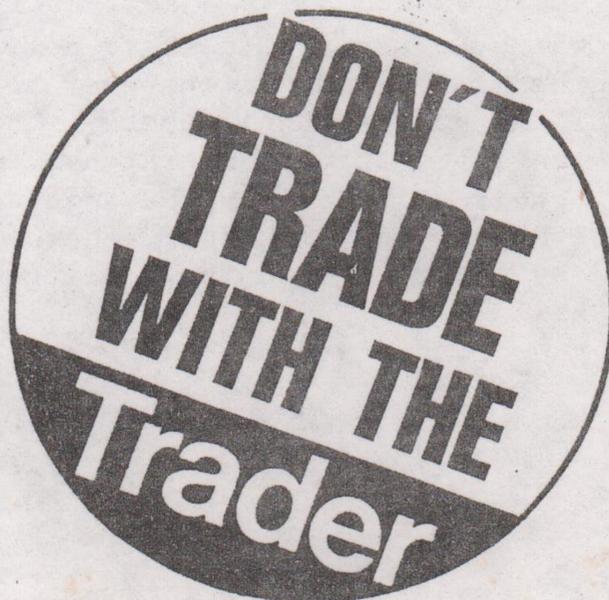
However well meaning a bureaucrat or a politician may be (and there are well meaning ones) they have no choice but to buckle under, play the games of the ruling class and come to regard compromise, moderation and the "lesser evil" as principles to be worn like so many badges of political respectability.

Hierarchical "leadership" and bureaucracy are the prison guards of working class self-activity and are so inevitably. Therefore, it's not a case of "changing the guard" but of planning our escape. This we can start doing by rethinking, redefining and restructuring our activity, and especially our notions of leadership and organisation.

Undeniably there are those who are more active and conscious, but their place is amongst the rank and file - indeed they cannot exist as class fighters outside of it, cut off, as they would be, from their fellow workers.

Here we are defining a notion of leadership that has nothing to do with constraining hierarchy or institutionalised power. The problem then is how to spread these qualities that constitute real leadership, sharing the the initiative, confidence, and awareness and developing structures that encourage more and more people to actively and consciously participate.

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Of course, disputes, however, libertarian the workers' organisation cannot succeed on their own. Indeed they should never be seen at all in isolation. The tradition of sectionalism - whereby particular groups of workers merely concern themselves with their own specific interests and to hell with the rest - has no place in the class struggle. It has handicapped the struggle in a very real sense.

The Trader dispute is all of our concern. Firstly, because with the active support of others (and especially workers in the print and it's related industries) success becomes ever more likely. And secondly, the Trader sackings represent another episode in the general onslaught by the bosses and the state. To the extent that they succeed in picking off groups one by one the more able they are to ride roughshod over all of us. If this dispute is won - and things are looking good this far - the confidence it will inspire amongst others cannot be overestimated.

The ruling class find strength in our divisions, our fear and our pessimism. Against this we must assert our common interests, our anger and our idealism. Making every effort to draw up the links between all groups - workers in struggle, the unemployed (of which there are more than a few actively involved in support work for the printers) women, blacks, gays and lesbians or whoever - on the basis of a shared experience of being kicked around and our common refusal to accept it.

The sacked Trader workers are doing their level best to reverse the tide of pessimism and to inject some defiance in to the struggle. Let them down and you let yourself down, support them and you support yourself.

SUPPORT THE SACKED TRADER WORKERS.



Meaningful Action.

Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even those allegedly acting on their behalf.

From "AS WE DON'T SEE IT" published by the SOLIDARITY GROUP.



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