

AUGUST 1979

MEMBERS

Huddersfield Anarchist Group
 Hull Libertarian Collective,
 Leeds Anarchist Group, 5 Tor
 Leeds Autonomous Group, c/o
 Leeds Black and Red Society, c/o
 Black Jake, c/o [redacted] e R
 Sheffield Anarchist Group, c/o
 Sheffield Libertarian Society,
 York Anarchist Group, c/o Stu

EDITORIAL

Most people now accept that anarchism, if anything, is a way of life, rather than a valid political stance, so we find it understandable that, with few exceptions, NEAF groups never do anything apart from occasional token gesturing and growling. What we do find surprising is that a collection of people who are supposedly freethinkers, dedicated to creativity and free exchange of ideas (and similar slogans) cannot even be bothered to contribute to the newsletter which was set up at their request to propagate their ideas. Perhaps NEAF members have ceased to think; perhaps they are having ideas so profound that they cannot be circulated, lest the Chomskys and Bookchins of this world steal them. Perhaps they are all dead/ in jail/ suffering from writers cramp. Whatever the reason, we do not intend to continue crying into the wilderness. Unless we receive contributions for the next bulletin, we intend to call an emergency meeting of NEAF, which we are sure all of you dedicated anarchists will be eager to attend (just like the last one) and hand over the secretariat to whichever group wins what will no doubt be a hard-fought struggle for the privilege.

So, if you want the bulletin (and NEAF) to continue, how about some contributions? For example, Leeds, what are these unspecified belly-aches about decision-making at the Conference (which you could not afford to attend)? What's the latest on Druridge Bay, Black Jake? Harrogate, do you still exist? IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?

NEAF RIP?

'Central Committee'

OBITUARY

Herbert Marcuse.

Famous mainly for his unreadable prose and declaring things historically inevitable after they had happened, Marcuse is now dead. Long may he remain so.

Tom.

DISCUSSION

As a member of the DAM I would like to reply to the Hull group's criticisms of the DAM's Aims and Principles, and set the record straight about who is or is not eligible for membership.

The comrades from Hull state that points 1 (that DAM is a working class movement) and 2 (aiming to create a classless society) are contradictory. They are not. Once you accept that only the working class can create a classless society, it follows that any movement which aims to abolish the class system has to be primarily working class.

The working class is uniquely placed to both overthrow the class system and institute a classless society. It creates the wealth of society and therefore doesn't need the classes that exploit it, is in a position to overthrow them (by taking over and running industry and working the land in its own interests rather than those of the bosses, bureaucrats and technocrats) and, having overthrown them, can bring class rule to an end because the working class doesn't need to exploit or live off other classes.

Anarchism is a product of the class struggle, ("in historical terms anarchism originated in the workers fight against capitalism in the last century" p.6 Programme of the Federated Anarchist Groups of Italy) and anarchists have, in the past, accepted the central role of the working class in overthrowing the class system., ("Labour's emancipation means at the same time the redemption of society", in achieving its freedom, the working class "will also have liberated the rest of mankind. Because of this, the proletarian struggle is the struggle of everyone." p.51-52 ABC of anarchism, A. Berkman).

The fact that this is not immediately obvious to the comrades from Hull prompts me to ask: who do you see think are the agents of social change? How do you see a free and classless society (i.e. anarchy) coming about?

The Hull group say that point 3 "fails to tell us HOW?" Not surprising, point 4 does that. They then tell us that point 4 doesn't, either! But it does: "In order to bring about a new social order, THE WORKERS MUST TAKE OVER THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION". This, together with the negative proposals (abolition of state, wage slavery etc.) establishes the principles on which the new social order will be based.

They also complain that point 4 doesn't tell us what 'THE new social order' might be. No, but point 3 does tell us that the present system will be replaced by "SELF*MANAGED PRODUCTION FOR USE NOT PROFIT". ((this para. should come after sentence in capitals in previous para., then continue...)) The Hull comrades should remember that these are Aims and Principles, not an exact blueprint of how the new society will work.

Does DAM accept students as members? Of course. The DAM already has members who are not wage-earners (students like Paul Buckland, unemployed like myself) which is why there are 'minimum' dues for the unwaged. All members, however, must accept the Aims and Principles and the orientation towards the working class.

"And what about dope-smokers?" Paul was writing as an individual member of the DAM expressing his individual viewpoint on the need for the DAM and the need for people to join it. He was not writing as an official spokesperson for the organization. His comments about people smoking dope while others work and "self centred idiots" who "are not anarchists" are his own affair and it is not up to me to defend or explain them.

However, he did sign his last article Paul Buckland FOR LEEDS DAM. I would like to point out that the three members of the DAM in Leeds have never met together as a group. Leeds DAM does not, therefore, exist. Paul was not delegated by this non-existent group, or by the other two DAM members to write anything for Leeds DAM and the first that we know of it was when we saw it in the Bulletin. I presume it was a slip of the pen. The debate that has been opened up is important; I hope we can continue it with as little acrimony as possible.

Finally, as a member of the IWW? I'd like to point out that the IWW is not, as Paul states, aiming to become the British CNT. There are important ideological and organizational differences between the two organizations.

Tony Kearney. (DAM member)

REPLY

Since the bulletin is so thin this month, it seems like a good time to start a theoretical discussion of the points raised by DAM, so here goes headbangers stop here.

What DAM seems to be ~~saying~~ presenting is a set of aims and principles which would have been more suited to the 19th century than they are to present day society. This, is partly due to a reliance on 'anarchist tradition'

If there is one thing that anarchists certainly don't need, it's tradition. "But we've always done it this way is no justification ~~for~~ of continuing to do it this way. This applies especially to DAMS insistence on the working class as the only agents of social change. The role of the working class in anarchism deserves a far deeper treatment than can be given here, but a few points must be mentioned.

First of all, what is the working class? We have left behind the days of workers in rags and capitalists in stove-pipe hats (though it is still possible to point to instances of both.) A more realistic picture is of a spectrum of people, at one end grinding poverty, at the other, conspicuous wealth. No-one is ~~totally~~ totally a worker or totally a capitalist; a worker with savings (or who participates in a pension fund, now some of the most investors in the country) is to that extent a capitalist. Also, with the growth of the salaried managerial class, and the huge number of non-productive workers in service industries, the ~~question~~ old notion of classes has become totally useless as an analytical tool.

The question of who is exploiting whom becomes even more confusing when we look at the global situation. The workers of Britain are the capitalists of the world, relying on the slavery of S. Americans and 3rd world inhabitants for their continuing prosperity. How many tears do British workers shed for these genuinely exploited workers? The British worker is certainly no paragon of virtue, "uniquely placed to overthrow the class system."

"Who do you think are the agents of social change" asks Tomy. This is a real cri de coeur and one which all radicals must utter sometime when they realise their own helplessness. Is it a comforting but totally romantic notion that some particular group constitutes the 'chosen few' who will save the world; popular choices are the workers the young and women. The simple fact is that anyone can become disillusioned with capitalist/patriarchal society, hence anyone can be an "agent of social change."

It is possible to go even further. If we abandon the dogmas of anarchism, it becomes clear that in present day consumer society, it is not the workers who desire a radical change in society. On the whole, they want more of the same - more canned foods, more cars, more colour TVs. The most obvious place to look for the agents of social change is among those who have been educated not conditioned, who can clearly see the ideology of capitalism; who have tasted the fruits of consumer society and found them wanting - in a word, among the disaffected middle class, and especially among students. Indeed, it has largely been these people who have been in the forefront of the major social upheavals which have occurred in modern times - America in the sixties, France 68, Baader-Meinhof etc.

As for the workers taking over the means of production and distribution, the whole idea seems a trifle ludicrous. Surely one of the basic ills of our society is that people buy things which they do not need in vast quantities, hence a large number of people are producing goods which no-one needs. Thus, 'come the revolution', our new-born anarchist society will be in charge of a

system of production and distribution which is largely irrelevant to its needs. What price syndicalism to the man who makes plastic teaspoons? "Many nominally-socialist countries, by appropriating and subsequently developing a mode of production and initially formulated within a capitalist framework, have been obliged to introduce forms of social organisation and control that are essentially capitalist in nature in order to make effective use of this technology." (David Dickson, 'Alternative Technology and the Politics of technical Change')

There is one approach, which DAM seems to ignore, which circumvents the whole 'ineffectual reformism versus blood-and-guts revolution dilemma'. This is the co-operative/commune movement. This movement is often accused of political naivety, isolationism and so on. Few statements could be further from the truth. In many ways, communards are years ahead of the 'street-fighting men'. They have realised that armed struggle can only "transfer power from one set of boys to another set of boys". (Robin Morgan) What is needed is groups aiming to outgrow rather than overthrow the State. 'What we want is not the overthrow of the government, but a situation where it gets lost in the shuffle'. The commune movement provides the only current means of doing this.

So far as DAM provides a focus for struggle against the State, I am in favour of it; but it is not enough to build a movement on old resentments, on hatred and destructiveness. Positive visions are necessary; visions of new ways of living together as people, rather than as members of the cogs in the production machine, be it capitalist or anarcho-syndicalist. The commune movement is trying this, as is the feminist movement. DAM, on the other hand, has nothing new to offer, just tired old Bakuninist ideas re-expressed to give them a false tinge of modernity, and 'more violent than thou' badges for its members.

Tom, member of, but not writing on behalf of, Hull group.

A supplement to Tom's article:

It is often said that the revolution is a thing of the people. I say to hell with that. I'm tempted to add 'and to hell with the people' also.

Use of the word 'people' in this instance is invariably as a synonym for the working class or, to be slightly more accurate, and embracing (!) the 'have-nots'. It generally excludes the middle class/bourgeoisie and certainly excludes the rich and powerful, and their families. But an anarchist society will have to include everyone; and one way ~~if~~ we can do that is by aiding the natural evolution of a more caring, more

individually responsible citizenry. Sometimes I'm afraid that it will be harder to bring the lumpen proles to our way of thinking than it will the James Goldsmiths of this world.

Bringing people round to our point of view - if that is not a too authoritarian way of putting it (I did say aided evolution) means informing and propagandising. To this end I feel we should be looking to take over or, more practicably, infiltrate in depth, the means of communication rather than grabbing the means of production. Anyway, as advocates of alternative technology, and simple, non-materialistic lifestyles, we have radical ideas concerning production and distribution which most embourgeois workers do not share.

As a member of the middle class by virtue of education and aspiration I have no time for sentimental tosh about seeking a classless society through a working class revolution (to paraphrase DAM). Most of the informed thought, writing and action geared towards establishing a non-authoritarian, and equitable society comes from middle class minds. [OK, that is a sweeping statement and unsubstantiated - because I'm writing this on a holiday weekend and the reference books are closed - but can anyone provide chapter and verse to gainsay it?] A lot of those middle class minds were formed among the proletariat; for it is axiomatic that the cultural and political aspirations of labouring parents produce middle class (and all too bloody often bourgeois) offspring.

Be thankful for the middle classes. Their growing disillusionment with materialism has already accomplished more to further the second stage of progress towards the anarchist dream than the latter day muddling of the unions and LabLibCom Party.

With the middle class the movement is merely going upmarket.

Paul, member of Hull group, offering a personal view.

NUKES

15 Sept, Edinburgh. Stop Torness march and rally. Assemble 11a.m. Waverley Bridge. March down Princes Street to a rally on the Meadows. Speakers, Roy Harper, Boys of the Lough. Any group definitely attending, please contact SCRAM , [redacted] burgh 3.

16 Sept, Morecambe. Anti-Heysham demo. Assemble 11a.m., Central Pier, then 1p.m. walk to Heysham. Further details, Half Life,

[redacted] Lancs. [redacted]