

12798

5

# Subversion

---

## PUBLIC SECTOR CUTS UNITING OUR STRUGGLES?

As the annual budget setting process got underway in local authorities around January, the local and national press started filling up with startling news of drastic cuts in almost every conceivable local service. A couple of months later there was apparently contradictory news in some cases of jobs and services being saved!

In fact nothing had really been saved, it was just part of the usual public bargaining between local and central government aimed at fixing us into the democracy game and softening us up for what were by any account very real cuts, affecting real people.

These real cuts, many of them devastating in their effects on the most disadvantaged of our class, have not passed without protest. In Manchester alone there have been a good dozen separate campaigns involving marches, demonstrations and petitions by users and workers alike. But each campaign has pursued its own particular case separately and in isolation, only occasionally, and usually accidentally, coming together face-to-face. Even on these occasions there has been no resultant unity or joining of forces. The situation in Manchester, as far as we can tell, seems fairly typical in this respect. These type of campaigns have been easy meat for the skillful 'divide and rule' tactics of the politicians and union leaders.

Continued on Page 3

**INSIDE:**

**Somalia**

**Militant and  
Gay Liberation**

**Class War**

**Spain 1936**

**free!**

# What We Stand For

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities. The following is a brief description of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.
- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.
- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.
- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.
- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc.), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.
- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.
- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.
- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.
- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.
- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

## Want to Get Involved?

If you agree with our basic principles "What We Stand For" and are in general agreement with the views expressed in

articles in this and other issues of **SUBVERSION**, then why not get involved?

There are a number of ways you could do this.

1. Join **SUBVERSION**. You can do this if you are in agreement and live in the north of England. We have members in Manchester, Leeds and Oldham.
2. Write to us and let us know you are out there!
3. Take extra copies of **Subversion** to give to friends or distribute at meetings (be realistic, though not pessimistic, about the number you might be able to pass on ).
4. Try writing short articles for future issues. We will happily give you advice on what the right length is, and will make suggestions about topics if you want.
5. Send us some money! Cheques and POs payable to **SUBVERSION**.
6. Arrange to meet us.
7. If meeting us is difficult, you might like to have a local contact address published in **SUBVERSION** and use this to find out if there are others locally of a like mind.

## APPEAL

*We've always aimed to produce Subversion for free distribution. In the past we've been able to do this either through using cheap facilities in Manchester, or more recently on our own press. Unfortunately, we can no longer use the cheap local facilities - along with other political groups we've been banned by Manchester Council! We've also been experiencing some severe teething problems with our own press. That's why our pamphlet, **Labouring in Vain**, is taking so long to get out. So once again we've had to have an issue printed commercially. Production and mailout of this issue will cost over £200.*

*So we're asking you, our readers to make any donations you can, however big or small.*

*Make any cheques or PO's payable to Subversion..*

## Uniting Our Struggles continued from front page

There have also been a rash of local strikes by council workers. Some as in Islington and Newham in London involving over a thousand workers. But again these strikes have remained separate and there has been no movement towards any kind of coordinated national strike action.



*Islington strikers burn letters from the council.*

In addition to the obvious hardship to those who have lost services or been made redundant, conditions for the workers remaining have grown steadily worse, with mounting management pressure to increase productivity, all against the background of a compulsory competitive tendering process accepted by Labour councils and unions alike. Politicians and senior management in the councils are carrying out a determined campaign to weed out troublesome workers, not just political activists but also those suffering from ill health or anyone with a 'bad attitude' who isn't willing to commit themselves 'body and soul' to their new corporate strategies. Despite all the trendy talk about teamwork and

equal opportunities 'management by fear' is returning with a vengeance!

## A Hackneyed Tale

The following description of conditions for workers at the London borough of Hackney is very familiar to those of us working for councils in the North West:

"In the case of local community activists, the Council has reportedly withdrawn facilities for some groups to use its properties for meetings - and in one case the local Labour Party allegedly discussed setting lawyers and private investigators on its critics. And in the case of Council employees, where Members and Officers have real power, the picture is a horror story. It's worth selectively listing just what's going on, for comment is simply superfluous: it has been made a sackable offence for employees to squat in Council properties; it's a serious disciplinary offence to talk to the media or to Councillors about Council services (with real sackings to back the threat up); every employee has been asked to register with the Council if they belong to any voluntary group active in Hackney; despite condemnation by the NCCL/Liberty, being in arrears of Council rent or of poll tax renders people ineligible for many jobs (again backed, according to one union, by at least one sacking for poll tax non-registration and more allegedly in the pipeline, plus staff being moved jobs because the Council itself has cocked up their rent payments); the Council has retrospectively decided to use personnel and payroll data for totally different purposes, namely hunting for people in difficulties with rent and poll tax. "New Management Techniques" are all the rage, including the Total Quality Management approach that was lauded as an exemplar of good private management in last year's American election...by the rabidly right-wing Republican party.

"And, last but not least, there are corruption, racism, and a massive wave of disciplinary actions with many sackings. According to the local NALGO, it

recently had over 100 members facing investigation for Gross Misconduct, with

## Uniting our Struggles

continued from page 3

over 98% of them black, yet it believes that many of the accused are completely innocent, and that for many others, even if disciplinary action was conventionally justified, management is going for dismissal when it's totally disproportionate to any "offence". Meanwhile, the local paper reports humiliating results for the Council when it defends its earlier dismissals - but no reinstatements, so the climate of fear is perpetuated. It is widely alleged, including by some dismissed staff, that the "corruption" and "fraud" allegedly involved in many dismissals go far higher, but that certain leading local figures are simply covering it all up.

"To fight these attacks and abuses is far from easy. Politically, the claim that it's all designed to improve services goes down well with anyone who knows the real standards on offer in the last few years. Real fraud and corruption are a permanent feature of local government, not just of Hackney, so repression under the banner of fighting it carries a lot of moral authority - even if close study of the details shows many people being framed and scapegoated on nonsense "evidence" and charges. And one pretext for the new management techniques is to better know how resources are really allocated, in order to use them more efficiently: who could argue with that?

"Nor does your correspondent want to act as adviser to the local Labour Party dissidents: however good their intentions, the facts of life in local government, its power over local residents and workers, means that promises for a distant future will have to be treated with caution even if anyone tries to make good on them. The unions themselves are not much better: member-involvement is poor, and most employees are frightened; on top of that grass-roots weakness, it turns out that many of the full-time officials, like many senior council officers, are leading Labour local government figures in nearby local Councils. And dismissed employees seeking legal redress keep discovering that law firms specialising in industrial relations...are also

specialists in work for their friendly neighbourhood Labour Parties." [from RED BANNER].

We're sure this list of nasty 'goings-on' in Hackney could be substantially added to by many of our readers from their own experience elsewhere.

In Manchester there have been numerous 'disciplinary' leading to sackings, which despite ritual union protests have gone largely uncontested and the situation is getting worse. Undoubtedly senior management in the local authorities are having some success in this war of attrition.

## WHAT NOW?

This growing frustration of workers in the local authorities, the rash of protest campaigns and sporadic strikes in the public services, and in particular the initial angry nationwide response to the announced mine closures, have convinced many activists that there is both a need and a potential to unite struggles, particularly around the public services.

This 'feeling' has been reflected in the organisation recently of several different national conferences, all with the common acclaimed theme of "uniting struggles amongst workers and in the community". They have been sponsored by an assortment of semi-official trade union bodies, anti-cuts campaigns, miners support groups and others. We have attended two in Manchester and have seen material for some of the others.

On the positive side they have allowed some exchange of information between some very different groups of workers in struggle. People attending them may well have come away at least feeling that they weren't 'on their own'. The conference participants have also expressed genuine distrust and often outright hate of politicians of all hues as well as union leaders. But that unfortunately is about as far as it goes.

The predominant ideological

influence of the left at these conferences has proved yet again to be a dead weight on the development of any original thinking or effective organisation.

The genuine desire for real united class action has been squeezed into the theoretical formulae of this or that left-wing group. Grandiose, meaningless resolutions have been subjected to tortuous compromise wordings that reflect the relative strengths of the left factions in attendance, following on from predictable and pre-rehearsed debates. Stale old slogans are dusted off and presented as new. Those who have stopped thinking altogether parrot their 'demands' for the TUC to call a general strike. The more adventurous, but equally 'out of touch', suggest we call a general strike ourselves! In both cases we find that this 'general strike' is meant to be little more than a token 24-hour stoppage anyway!

on the same platform or demo, with any 'link' being provided behind the scenes by one of the left groupings.

Very occasionally, the recognition seems to surface that it's not just the Labour and trade union leaders that are an obstacle to the development of effective class struggle, but the whole organisational form and mode of operation of the organisations they lead. That there is no trade union and labour 'movement', just a body of institutions that were never up to the mythology created about them and which were long ago integrated into the apparatus of capitalism.

But clearly the full horror of this recognition for people, many of whom have devoted their lives to working inside (or alongside) these institutions is just too painful to accept. Material reality can't be allowed, in the end, to intrude on their cozy assumptions.



PICTURE: BRYN GRIFFITHS

Thus such people can say on the one hand "...the remedies will have to come from below and will take place despite, and in opposition to, the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions", and in the next breath make demands on Labour Councillors to reject

No-one is actually analysing the common causes and threads running through the struggles which are taking place. No-one is asking what potential there is and how we can unite in common action, with common demands, the struggles already underway or about to start. The 'unity' that is continually talked about seems little more in most cases than the lining up of various 'campaigns'

their role as bosses and recommend us to "...struggle to force union leaders to lead a fight or make way for those who will". All this demonstrates at best confusion and at worst deliberate manipulation.

Of course if there is enough pressure from below - not in the form of branch resolutions and the like, but through unofficial and wildcat actions - union leaders

## Uniting our Struggles

continued from page 5

will respond. They may even call 24-hour 'general strikes'. But the whole purpose of this will be to try and control the movement and smash it!

## Independent Class Struggle

To defend our wages and conditions and our benefits, to fight cuts in services and jobs, to fight for our needs against the requirements of profit and the market, we urgently need to develop an INDEPENDENT movement of our class. Struggles may start off within the confines of trade unionism and under the influence of Labourist ideology but they must rapidly go beyond these confines. They must begin to consciously recognise who the enemy is - not just the traditional establishment, the Tories, churches, judiciary, press, etc., but also the capitalist institutions, like the Labour Party and the trade unions, inside the working class.



Our class, despite the arrogant and pessimistic warnings of the left, is quite capable of this. Without the benefit of the left to advise them and up against Stalinist and military dictatorship Polish workers, briefly in 1981, showed the potential which exists. They organised their own strikes and occupations through mass assemblies and directly elected committees made up of recallable delegates. These actions were coordinated through central committees with delegates from different workplaces and areas. Common demands were thrashed out. Workers in one sector refused to go back unless the demands of all

sectors were met. They organised an embryo system of dual power which challenged the apparatus of the state at all levels. There are many other examples.

We need organisations which can help that process along. Not 'rank and file' groups hanging on the coat-tails of the trade unions. Not 'campaign' groups which operate within the framework of capitalist democracy through petitions, lobbies and media stunts.

We need groups that bring together the minority of committed militants in the workplace, independent of union and sectional divisions, to discuss and inform struggles and agitate for their extension wherever practicable. Such groups need to concentrate on the real struggle and not to be sidetracked into union reform campaigns or grandiose schemes to set up new unions, which would just end up the same as the old ones. Outside the workplace we need 'solidarity' groups which promote mutual aid and direct action. Any such groups need to be under the direct control of the people involved, without being tools of different left groups. Some anti-poll tax groups and miners support groups have taken tentative steps towards transforming themselves this last direction but sadly most seem to have been content with a 'campaigning' role.

The conferences so far have given us no confidence that they will play any positive role in developing a genuine independent class movement. Despite this, Subversion will continue to take every opportunity to intervene in such events and would urge others in our political camp to do likewise.



# Somalia

Looking at the papers and television before Christmas we saw the familiar images of starvation and death in Somalia. This time, however, there was to be a difference. The Americans were going to sort things out, they were going to deal with the gunmen, feed the hungry, "Restore Hope", then do the unimaginable and leave. It was like watching the cavalry coming to the rescue in the nick of time.

Looking at those same papers and television broadcasts today we are presented with a different set of images. Apparently the US are leaving, being replaced by the UN. They've fed a lot of people and the risk of starvation has significantly reduced. But, we're led to believe, it's all been a bit of a cock-up. The warlords are still there, their gunmen are still armed, no central power has been re-established. The image that is portrayed of the Americans is one of basically well-meaning, but essentially not very competent do-gooders, who fail to grasp the reality of the situation.

## Famine and Debt

This, however, misses a number of key points. Why did the famine in Somalia start in the first place? What were the real intentions of the USA in intervening? What have they achieved as a result?

Somalia is one of the most debt ridden countries in the world. Even in the 1970s its public debt to other countries stood at over 80% of its GNP. It had one of the smallest GNPs in the world, less than \$200 per head and tiny exports, with 69% of its \$0.09 billion coming from animals. So, in 1977, Somalia



was in a desperate economic situation and could truly be said to be a disaster waiting to happen. Yet aid and loans continued to pour in. Why? The answer was simple, for military reasons.

The most important thing Somalia has to offer is its geographical position. One look at the map on this page shows this. Before 1974 Somalia was supported by the USSR, while its neighbour, Ethiopia, was dominated by the USA. In 1974 there was an abrupt change. The Ethiopian regime of Haile Selassie was ousted and replaced by a pro-Moscow gang. The Americans in turn poured aid and weapons into Somalia, then ruled by Siad Barre. There followed a war between the two countries.

## Changing Sides

As long as Ethiopia was under Soviet influence it paid the USA to support the Barre regime in Somalia. Unfortunately for Barre this was not to continue. The pro-Soviet Ethiopian regime was overthrown at the same time as the USSR was finding itself increasingly incapable of supporting client regimes around the world. As it became clear that the USSR was losing the Cold War, the USA realised it no longer needed to support regimes like Barre's to prevent a rival controlling its

oil routes. So the Americans withdrew their support. Military aid stopped.

What was left was an extremely poor country, threatened with famine because of continued droughts and the need to export food to pay off debts, heavily dependent on food aid and awash with arms. With the overthrow of the Barre regime all central authority collapsed, the various clan leaders set about taking over their own regions and controlling the only thing left worth having - food. Whilst the warlords fed their own gangsters millions began to starve and die.

We must repeat, however, that the cause of the starvation is not natural. It is the direct product of the policies of the USA and USSR in the region over the previous 25 years.

## Christmas gifts?

So why did the Americans intervene before Christmas? One thing is clear, their motives weren't simple altruism. The USA never does anything that is not in the direct interests of the USA. This has been true of every one of their military adventures since the country was founded.

The end of the 1980's saw the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. We were told it would bring a new era of peace and co-operation. A New World Order, with the United Nations taking a more dominant role in the maintenance of peace and order.

What we've seen instead is something different. The USA remains the world's only superpower, but the end of the Cold War has seen a fragmentation of the old blocs. On top of this the USA's position as the capitalist top dog is being threatened by erstwhile allies. The

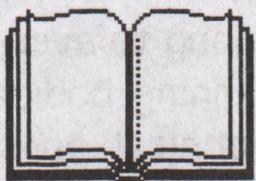
fiasco in ex-Yugoslavia was partly the result of one of these, the German led-EEC trying to assert itself in Europe. German policy seems to be to incorporate Russia within its sphere, which would make Europe a very real superpower in its own right. In the Pacific, Japan is carving out its own sphere of influence. The whole Middle East is a centre of potential conflict, even after the Gulf War, with the USA finding its supply of reliable allies dwindling.

Top of the USA's priorities in maintaining its position has been to use the UN as a cloak and legal justification for its activities. So the UN sanctioned the war in the Gulf and subsequent adventures against Iraq. The UN is charged with sorting out ex-Yugoslavia. The UN is supposedly going to take over the operation in Somalia. The USA's main rivals have no permanent seat on the Security Council, so lack real power in that body. It remains firmly under the thumb of the USA.

The Somalia operation achieved a number of things for the USA. Firstly, it was a simple way for the US to prove that it is capable of intervening militarily anywhere it chooses to. This, in itself, serves as a warning to rivals both real and potential. It helps keep wavering allies within the fold. Secondly, there may be no enemy fleet in the Indian Ocean, but it is around the Horn of Africa that a good deal of the USA's oil and nearly all of Europe's oil goes. In an increasingly unstable region of the world, Somalia once again becomes an important area for the USA to be able to control. The USA may be withdrawing most of their troops (5000 are to stay), but they are being replaced by soldiers from client states acting under the banner of the UN. Thus Somalia remains safe. It

matters little that the warlords remain, control over Mogadishu and other key ports is maintained.

The USA has achieved all these goals as a result of Operation Restore Hope. It was, in fact, a major triumph for their foreign policy, and achieved in their terms at comparatively little cost. For the rest of us it serves as a warning that far from the world becoming a safer place, that instability is increasing. Once again we have to recognise that the only real alternative for working people is to make the choice of socialism or capitalist barbarism.



## review:

**Abraham Guillen, Anarchist Economics: An alternative for a world in crisis.** *The economics of the Spanish Libertarian Collectives 1936-39.* Industrial Syndicalist Education League/La Presa, PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester 15. £1.00.

This pamphlet adds another volume to the bulging library of anarchist publications which regard the setting up of the workers' and peasants' collectives at the start of the Spanish civil war in 1936 as "one of the most, if not the most, extensive and profound revolutions ever seen".

Abraham Guillen's argument is that the Spanish collectives can serve as the model for a revolutionary alternative to both Western-style capitalism and Eastern-bloc 'communism'. But Guillen picks out from the Spanish events some of the most negative features of that experience, so that in the

end his "alternative for a world in crisis" amounts to nothing more than a variation on the same lousy old capitalist theme.

Basically, Guillen promotes a vision of relatively autonomous and self-sufficient communes joined together by market relations (i.e. buying/selling or barter).

On the distribution of goods within each collective he mentions that some of the Spanish collectives "freely distributed among the collectivist landworkers that which was abundant but rationed that which was scarce".



CNT poster for agricultural workers.

This seems to us a reasonable way of tackling the problem of material scarcity which may very well temporarily confront us when capitalism is being overthrown, so long as any rationing system is based on the principle, 'to each according to their needs'.

Guillen however proposes that each person's consumption would be regulated "in accordance with quality and quantity of work done", with "production cards", on which "the value of work done by days is recorded", being used as a kind of "credit

card" or form of money.

The adoption of this principle, 'to each according to their work', would amount to the re-introduction (or rather continuation) of the wages system. And indeed to the extent that similar schemes were actually put into operation in Spain (there were numerous variations on the production card theme and hundreds of different local currencies) the overall thrust of the collectivisation movement was towards the retention of essentially capitalist relations rather than in the direction of socialism/communism.

This can be seen even more clearly in the relations between collectives. As very few collectives were self-sufficient, central warehouses were set up where collectives exchanged their surplus produce among themselves for the goods they lacked. Here hard cash was often dispensed with but the relative proportions in which goods were bartered were still determined by monetary values - for example how many sacks of flour a collective could obtain in exchange for a ton of potatoes was worked out by calculating the value of both in monetary terms - and no collective was allowed to withdraw a sum of goods worth more than those it had deposited.

Guillen wholeheartedly supports this system, describing approvingly how "if local products could not satisfy the consumer, the collective, through its council or appropriate section, obtained, on an equal exchange basis, the goods and services needed", and how "a self-managed system was thus formed, where goods, products and services were exchanged according to their real work-value relationship".

He fails to comprehend how rapidly this system of relations among the collectives would lead to the main purpose of production becoming (or remaining) for exchange via the market rather than to

directly meet people's needs. And, once again, insofar as this is what did actually happen in Spain, the collectivisation movement's development was driven by basically capitalist dynamics.

Had the Spanish collectives been moving in a genuinely communist direction the tendency towards self-sufficiency and autonomy for each collective (which Guillen elevates to the level of a "biological principle") would have been reversed in favour of centralised planning by delegate bodies. The wealth produced by each collective would not be regarded as its own private property. Instead, in relations among the collectives the same attitude would prevail as existed within each collective: "The concept 'yours and mine' will no longer exist...Everything will belong to everyone." The role of the central planning bodies would be essentially simple technical ones such as finding out what goods were needed where and arranging their transportation from one place to another.

In Guillen's model there is central co-ordination but it is co-ordination of exchange relationships. Throughout the pamphlet great stress is laid on forms of organisation - "direct democracy", federation, self-management, and so on - but the content of these organisational forms remains in essence a market economy.

To sum up, the "anarchist economics" Guillen supports is simply the dead-end of self-managed capitalism, which is every bit as reactionary as private or state capitalism. The communist society Subversion is fighting for can only be established by the complete destruction of ALL private property, money, wages and markets - whatever their form.

# Militant and Gay Liberation

Militant have recently relaunched themselves as "Militant Labour", this time openly admitting their existence, rather than pretending to just be a newspaper with "supporters". They claim they're really going to represent the interests of the working class. here we are printing the second part in our short series written by an ex-member of Militant. It should serve as a timely warning to any who are taking Militant's new guise seriously.

At the end of 1986 around 20-30 members of Militant who were gay held a secret meeting. The aim of this meeting was to discuss setting up a separate caucus and a gay organisation in Militant and the labour movement. Just around two years before this an attempt had been made at setting up this organisation, but documents relating to this matter had fallen into the hands of full time NCO's, hence the need for ultra secrecy this time.

Learning from this, only comrades who were 100% trusted were told and invited. They were to discuss historical and political reasons why gays are oppressed. The meeting was a success and two representatives were sent off to Lynn Walsh to demand an official caucus for lesbians and gays. At first this was rebuffed and the people who had organised the meeting were accused of ultra leftism and acting in a separatist manner.

When threats of INDEPENDENT ORGANISATION and resignations followed if demands were not met, Militant changed its tune.

A year later, at the height of the campaign against Section 28 pressure began to mount for major articles to appear in Militant.

Back page space was found for coverage of the demonstration against Clause 28 and Gay Pride that year.

The leadership of Militant did not like the self organisation of its gay and lesbian members. The level of discussion and organisation was a threat to the full time apparatus. They had become too loud and too independent. This went against the grain of the members of



Militant being tame and subservient to the organisation.

At a crunch caucus, Lynn Walsh opposed the demands for gays and lesbians having the "democratic right" to choose their own sexuality and counterposed it to "toleration of lesbians and gay men", thus exposing his and Militant's prejudices.

To screams, boos, hisses and howls of total uproar, Walsh replied, "I meant the 17th Century definition of the meaning of toleration." To many this was the last straw. Over 20 people left Militant for good. Many left over the rest of the year.

Then some 4 years later a pamphlet was printed accommodating gay men and lesbians, fitting them in with the sphere of nationalisation of the top 200 industries, etc

The demand for repeal of Section 28 was then dropped.

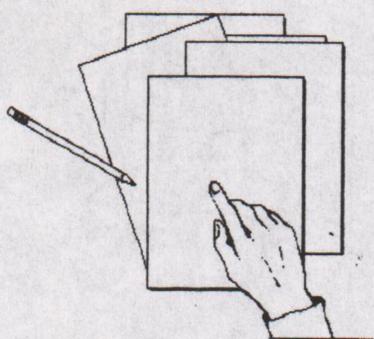
Militant had shown their contempt for gays and lesbians and indeed for the whole working

continued from previous page

Wherever it is active Militant opposes independent activity and organisation by workers - anything that it cannot control itself. If Militant leads the fight then any members of the working class who follow them will be led right up the garden path.

Events in Liverpool and the anti-poll tax campaign should be warning enough.

You have been warned.



## Correspondence

We welcome letters from readers. We think it makes for a much more interesting bulletin. We try and publish a selection each issue, along with a properly considered reply.

# What is the working class anyway?

**Introduction: Our review Class War's book, Unfinished Business, in Subversion 11, brought two letters. We publish them here with our reply.**

Although having some sympathy with your criticism of Class War, in particular its obsession with 'profile', a few other points I must take issue with. In particular your assertion that Class War in its book 'Unfinished Business' gets into a muddle over class.

You say Class War is wrong to put squaddies in with the working class when the police are then placed as (reactionary thugs of) the middle class. You consider it more accurate to place everyone in relation to the means of production.

As C.W.'s book correctly states though, mutiny within the army is an historical reality that has little parallel within the police force. Thousands of unemployed workers are cornered into taking up shit lives - bound to long contracts within the armed services. Coppers on the other hand are well-screened, well-paid and well-used to sticking the boot directly into the public.

Subversion, being seemingly unaware of this reality, leaves me wondering. Surely Subversion you are not peddling that naive crap that the police are only workers in uniform? If so don't expect sympathy when in an upsurge of struggle you're gunned down by a police force joyously wielding their Armalite toys. Does working class blood have to be spilt time and time again as testament to the failure of blinkered Marxist analysis?

Or, could it be that, having teachers making up [a large part of] Subversion, it is you yourselves who have the hang-up about class?

Arguing, as Subversion have done at length, how teachers are part of the production process, therefore share a common interest in revolution with the rest of the working class. Let's look at this.

Ignoring teachers relatively high salaries and function to condition and control the next generation of workers, there is some truth in what Subversion says.

continued next page

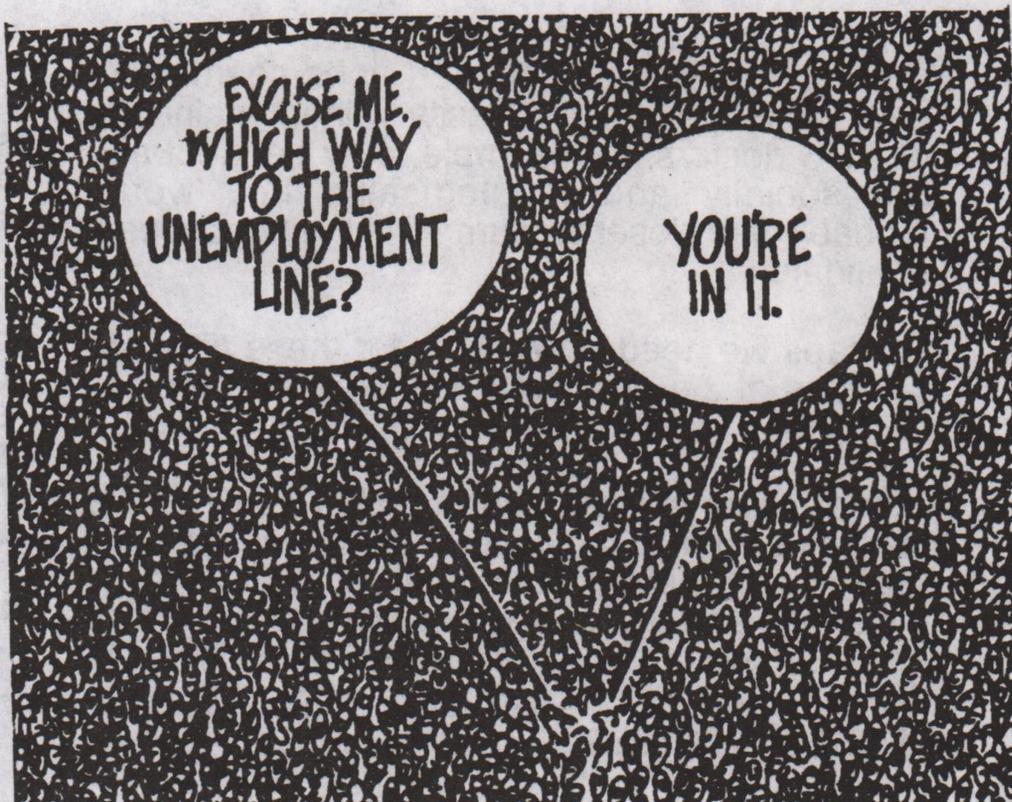
But, despite the proletarianisation of the profession, teachers are still professionals and as such enjoy something of a cultural status. This acts as a link to middle class identification in a way not accessible to the majority of the working class.

I have no problem seeing teachers as middle class. This does not mean I declare them first up against the wall. Indeed I welcome thoughtful, committed members of such middle class professions who contribute constructively to the creation of international Communism.

Now if a copper was on fire I wouldn't piss on him. Class War is trying to put this reality into political terms. Not trying to bend reality to fit political theories.

In Solidarity

Harry Roberts Junior, Class War supporter.



the jobs they do, how are these people going to be involved in class struggle? The same also goes for members of the police or professional army, of course.

In non-revolutionary, and even revolutionary, times hardly any of these types would become communists. Our strategy as communists involves exposing the fact that these people are the enemy of a class conscious proletariat - not by fact of their relation to the means of production (they are proletarian), but by the fact of their ideology and the actual job they do. The same also goes for the unions of course, and the fact that, in the final analysis, a shop steward fulfils a similar function for capitalism as does a foreperson.

Whereas the job of a car park attendant is basically 'neutral', the actual job and day to day existence of a journalist or social worker consists precisely of actively protecting the status quo. They do just the same job as priests used to do (and still do).

Nationalism, for example, is a purely ideological enemy of communism and the working class when it exists amongst the class - but a journalist or social worker is a physical enemy in as much as the person embodies the ideology s/he has accepted and made a living out of. In a revolutionary event people like these will be physically swept aside, however, there will be no revolutionary event if the escalating class struggle hasn't squashed the power of the ideology of nationalism.

The problem for us (strategically) is recognising that some sections of the proletariat are irrevocably lost to bourgeois ideology and that they will ultimately to be smashed physically along with the machinery of state and the bourgeoisie itself. (Universities, for example, should be destroyed).

Dear Comrades,

In your review of Class War's 'Unfinished Business' you quite rightly argue for a material definition of class as opposed to Class War's ideological mishmash. However, when examining our strategy as communists - in addressing different groups of the proletariat - surely we shouldn't discount all ideological factors? This 'strategy' means our identifying of which groups of people we should spend our time dishing out propaganda to, or talking to, or working with, etc. - and which groups we should be suspicious of and not waste our time on. Obviously we don't bother with our class enemies: the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. But I'd also say shouldn't bother with the professional army, police, etc., and a lot of 'professionals', who have often been university trained (the University itself is an ideological institution which extends beyond its campuses into our everyday lives, like the Church used to).

We are best talking to those people who have a more immediate experience of their class position, those to whom class struggle is, or often becomes, a daily reality - i.e.. the working class (but not all those who are not the big or small bourgeoisie). Anyway, it is these people who engage in proletarian class struggle - it is not, for example, Managers and Experts (who generally act to defeat the working class, of course)

As you say, it is only through class struggle that class consciousness, and the eventual defeat of class society, will come about. How could the manager of a supermarket come to a communist perspective without abandoning his/her job? How could an architect (who decides on designs for proletarian living areas, for example), a journalist, a priest or a social worker remain in their profession if they became communists? More importantly, given

continued next page

Some professional or "expert" jobs seem more ambivalent though. University trained engineers, or NHS doctors, for example, may be 'neutral' - but socially and ideologically they would probably feel closer to journalists than to car park attendants.

Perhaps we need new labels for these different sections of the proletariat, so we don't resort to calling them 'middle class'.

You are right to argue that a material definition of class is essential, however, I think defining what the class struggle is, or could be, is at least as important, and part of that involves understanding and pointing out the real ideological divisions in the proletariat and exposing everything that is the enemy of communism.

Having suggested all this I'm not, of course, saying that you don't already know it (or know better, which is more likely!), and I realise that your comments in **Subversion 11** were only brief.

Pete Post, Sydney, Australia.

## SUBVERSION REPLY

Of these two letters, the one from the Class War supporter is completely off the beam, whereas the second one makes some good points which we partly agree with. To answer all the relevant points we need to have a more precise analysis of "class" than the formula "relationship to the means of production".

The first point to consider is how we decide that one class rather than others has the potential to be revolutionary. Why does the communist strategy for revolution base itself on the (existing) economic struggles of the working class? After all, lots of other people suffer from the present system (Capitalism), such as poor peasants, street vendors etc.

The answer is that when workers need to defend their living standards, their immediate response is to struggle, together with their workmates, against the capitalists who employ them. The immediate response of, say, a street vendor would be to either raise their prices (creating a conflict with their customers, including workers), or alternatively to lower them and undercut the other vendors.

What is distinctive about the workers therefore is that they have an inbuilt and immediate tendency both to conflict with the capitalists and to collective action with other workers (at least in the same factory or same industry - but the potential is there for it to spread). We believe that this already existing conflict (which can never be got rid of by capitalism) is the seed out of which a revolutionary movement can grow. Naturally, this "seed" will have to grow immensely, but there's no other "seed" to rival it.

The key point here is the conflicts that are built in to various social relationships. This is not simply a matter of whether someone earns a wage or not, because certain types of job contain other conflicts in the job itself. So to take the most obvious example, being a cop means having a fundamental conflict with workers who engage in struggle - the fact that cops receive wages is a fact of little significance. The distinction that the Class War supporter makes between them and squaddies however is tenuous, as the army has always been (and always will be) used against serious manifestations of class struggle. There is indeed a history of mutiny in the army but we're talking here about draftees, which is a different matter.

There are other groups of wage earners who, in a less stark way, have conflicts with the working class at large built in to their jobs: teachers, with their role of social control and indoctrination of young workers; lower level bureaucrats whose job involves giving orders to others; people whose job involves taking money from workers, e.g. till operators, bar staff, bus drivers - try getting on a bus and saying you refuse to pay (a conflict between you and the owners of the bus company) and see whose side the driver will take. That doesn't mean that all these sections are our enemies, but rather that they are, to varying degrees, in a contradictory position (unlike the police force which IS our enemy pure and simple). We may not put much effort into talking to the more "dubious" sections but we don't write them off and we recognise that under the right conditions many of them will join in the struggle. This is not a question of "ideology" but of the position of these groups in society, in relation to other groups or classes.

All of this brings us on to the second point to consider - the distinction between the present-day working class, whose day-to-day existence is largely passive (acquiescent towards capitalism) and the revolutionary force that can overthrow capitalism. This latter will grow out of the former, but is not identical to it. The former (which can be called the "class-in-itself") is just a "sociological" category whereas the latter (the class-FOR-itself) is a revolutionary category.

When workers engage in struggle their "nature" changes in that they reject their normal passivity and begin to become a class-for-itself. It is this "class-BECOMING-for-itself" that we support.

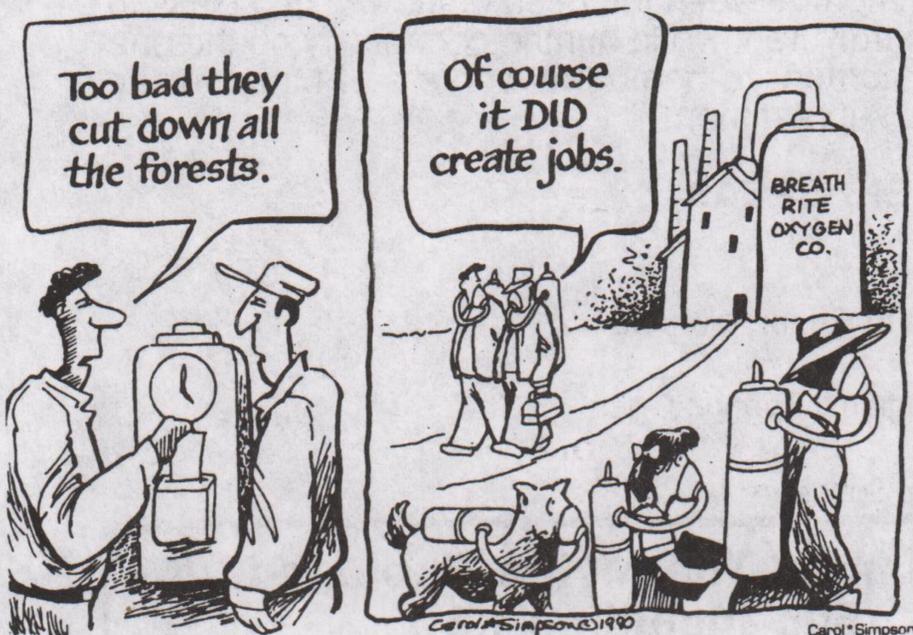
Referring to the "Working Class" is vague because there are really several "working classes" - the passive, sociological working class, the conscious communist working class of the future that is overthrowing capitalism and



and the struggling working class ("becoming-for-itself") - this last category is the most important one and shouldn't be confused with the first one (it may be argued that it's the same people but this is wrong because, apart from the fact that it's SOME of the same people not ALL of them, the key point is that it's not a thing that we're talking about but an action, or rather a thing in action - sociology deals in "things" but the "class-in-action" is a revolutionary concept).

Questions such as "are coppers part of the working class?" are therefore in some sense pointless since they refer to membership of the "sociological" working class. They are certainly not going to become part of the "class-in-action" which is the "class" that WE support.

To come back to the question of "relationship to the means of production" as the formula for defining class, the most important "defining" that we have to do is to define how the "class-in-action" will come into being (a constant, repeated event) and how it will develop. Among the factors which determine this, "relationship to the means" of production" is the foremost, but is insufficient because it implies "relationship to property", i.e. being a wage earner or not, whereas the other factors considered in the first part of this reply can be just as important. The best way to put it is probably "relationship to the developing class struggle" - this being determined by all the factors mentioned above.



## *pamphlets*

***Ireland. Nationalism and Imperialism. The Myths Exploded.*** Why the British State and the IRA both defend capitalism. 50p inc. postage.

***Labouring In Vain.*** A socialist analysis of the Labour party from its formation to today. *Out soon.* 50p inc. postage.

***Left-Wing Communism in Britain 1917-21 ... An infantile disorder.*** By Bob Jones, Pirate Press. 60p inc postage.

***Fascism and Anti-Fascism*** by J Barrot, Pirate Press. £1.50 inc postage.

***Back issues.*** Some copies of Subversion 9, 10 and 11 left. Send a donation and 24p stamp.

All cheques payable to Subversion.

Published by  
**Subversion**

Dept 1, 1 Newton Street,  
Manchester M1 1HW

**Dept 10, 1 Newton Street,  
Manchester M1 1HW**

**Subversion**

# **IRA: ANTI-WORKING CLASS BASTARDS!**

The IRA have once again shown their true colours with a disgusting act of callous brutality towards ordinary working class people, this time on the streets of Warrington.

They are an organisation that claims to be fighting against "oppression", fighting for "freedom" - but their actions should demonstrate to everyone just exactly where the working class would fit into their "free" society. Right at the bottom, oppressed and exploited, the same as in every other capitalist society.

In this they are the same as every other "National Liberation Movement". In the name of the "freedom for an oppressed people" they fight for the freedom of the local capitalist class to exploit "their" workers - and these latter are conned into fighting to exchange one lot of bosses (who live abroad) for another lot (who live locally). Whenever such movements come to power they soon reveal their true nature - and the working class finds it has shed its blood for nothing.

Sometimes however, groups of this sort don't wait till they come to power before the "freedom fighter" mask slips: the killings of workers and peasants in Peru by the "Shining Path" rival those of the Peruvian Government; the starving populations in the southern Sudan have little reason to choose between the "Sudanese People's Liberation Army" and the Sudanese Government; and the ANC's torture camps for the disciplining of its own members are now well known.

That such capitalist gangs (which all nationalist groups are) should pretend to be "revolutionary" is not surprising - it serves their aims well. But we've also got to contend with all manner of left wing groups (Trotskyists, Maoists etc) telling us the same thing.

An outrage like the one in Warrington thus brings with it, in addition to the murderous act itself, several different levels of hypocrisy: the lies of the perpetrators about fighting for "liberation"; the expressions of moral indignation by the British government and the pro-government press (terrorists in power criticising terrorists in opposition); and the bleating of so-called "socialists" about how the working class simply must support such anti-working class scum and their "just" struggle (whether "critically" or not).

SUBVERSION and similar organisations have always argued against the lies of "national liberation movements" and fake-socialists (the "Left" for short) and every other organisation or institution that pretends to be pro-working class. But for anyone who hasn't been convinced by our arguments, just ask yourself one question - what could there be in common between the need of the working class to put an end to oppression and exploitation and create a truly free, world human community on the one hand, and on the other the aims of people who are content to bomb the workers of Manchester, Warrington or anywhere else, and the "Socialists" who support them.

## **GLOSSARY OF LEFT-SPEAK**

Freedom Fighter = Capitalist-In-Waiting

Right of Nations to Self-Determination = Right of Capitalists to Exploit Workers

Fighting against Imperialism = Fighting for "our" Capitalists against Foreign Ones

Socialists giving Critical Support to Nationalists = Hypocritical Tossers

**Nationalism and Imperialism in Ireland - The Myths Exploded. A  
pamphlet by Subversion. 50p including p&p**