

# SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Paper of the SOCIAL REVOLUTION Group

No. 5

15p

## TUC



## &



## the State

Whilst it is not unusual for workers to find that unions, and particularly the TUC, unite with the bosses to oppose them in their struggles, the current collaboration between the Government and the TUC poses the question in acute form.

This collaboration is seen in many areas. Firstly, there is the overwhelming support for the 'incomes policy' which even its defenders admit means a fall in real incomes. Secondly, the acceptance, with a few minor complaints, of rising unemployment and cuts in services.

The alternatives proposed by the TUC to current economic policy are totally reactionary, which align the TUC with the growing Fascist movement. Such a degree of class-collaboration has been seen before, for example in the period after the defeat of the General Strike, when 'Mondism' (named after its advocate, one of the bosses of ICI) was the policy. However, it is new to the post-war working-class and so must be looked at more closely.

### CRISIS AND CONFRONTATION

The growing difficulties of world capitalism became apparent in the late 60's, in the form of increasing unemployment, inflation and currency crises. Together with the political antagonism of the period, they put an end to the liberalism and low level of class conflict of the post-war period. So the states of Britain and other countries found it necessary to renew the attack upon the working-class in all spheres, and particularly the economic.

At first the British state turned to open attacks on the rights of workers. The '64-70 Labour government introduced incomes policies and tried to control the unions with the proposals of the Donovan Commission and 'In Place Of Strife' but this was opposed by the unions and many MPs, including Callaghan. The attempts of the Tories to control unions by law were even less successful.

*continued on page 16*



# about SR

SOCIAL REVOLUTION is an organisation of libertarian communist revolutionaries. We do not label ourselves as "anarchists" or as "marxists" — rather we see that the only valid revolutionary theory and practice must derive from a critical analysis of the experiences of the working class movement — both its strengths and failures.

SOCIAL REVOLUTION believes that revolutionaries must organise themselves if a revolution is to be made. We do not set ourselves up as some "vanguard" or "elite" party, but we recognise that through combined action comes strength. We see our role as being to play a part in the clarification of the real issues behind seemingly unrelated struggles, and show how they point to a socialist solution. We call upon those in general agreement with our politics to join us.

SOCIAL REVOLUTION is a membership organisation. We organise ourselves on a federal basis, i.e. membership is through autonomous groups which meet for delegate conferences every four months. The delegate conference decides overall policy, which is then implemented by the local groups according to their particular situation. These conferences also play a vital role in the clarification of our own ideas.

SOCIAL REVOLUTION sees the need for unity and co-operation among libertarians. We therefore maintain fraternal contacts with other libertarian groups both overseas and in Britain.

This edition of Social Revolution marks a departure for us in what we are trying to achieve. As from this issue we will be producing only one journal — LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM ceases publication with issue number 10. This change was decided at our spring delegate conference.

We felt that producing two journals was a meaningless exercise. Firstly because while SR was meant to be propagandist, its irregularity prevented us from producing good up-to-date material. This irregularity stemmed from the attempt to produce two regular journals.

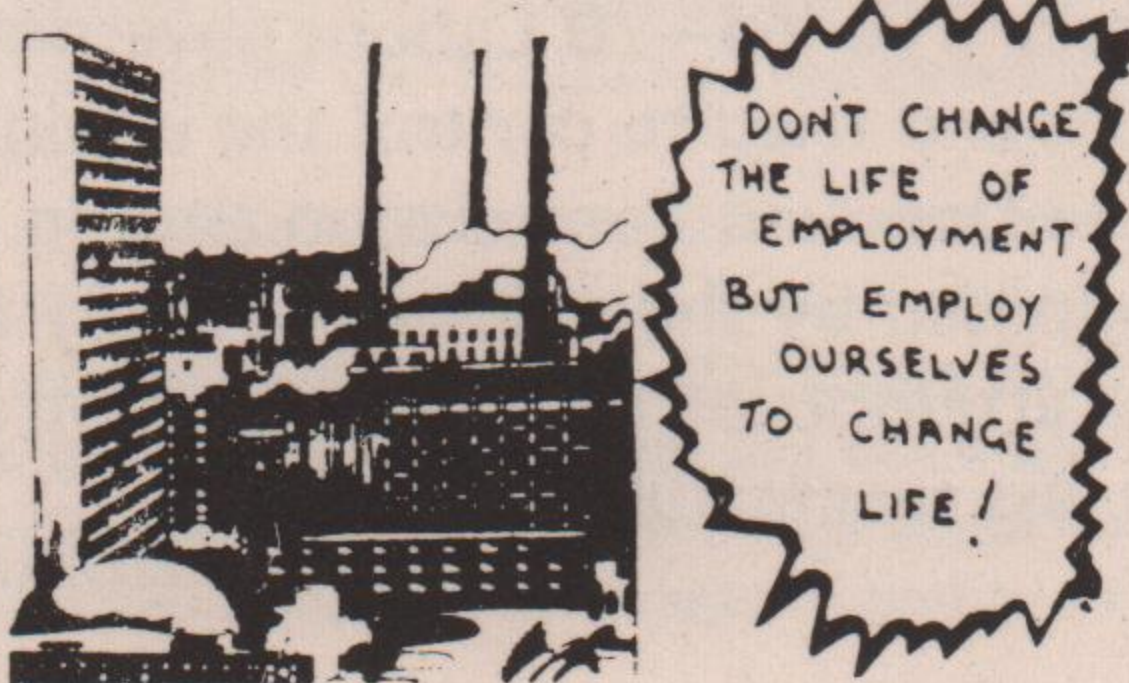
Secondly, while SR sold nearly twice as many copies as LC, we largely felt we were duplicating effort — if they didn't go to the same people, at least they went to the same kind of people, i.e. people with at least some level of political consciousness. This is generally true of every left-wing and socialist paper produced — even though a pretence is kept up that they reach some amorphous "mass".

On the other hand to produce a "simple" paper for the "masses" is to insult the intelligence of the working class. We believe that as long as jargon is avoided then socialist ideas can be understood by anyone who seriously wants to.

With this changeover, SR should become a more "weighty" publication — the articles will present more analysis and discussion and less emphasis on description and sloganising. We hope the result will be a more interesting publication.

Not wishing to produce a mere commodity, aimed only for archivists to read and then file away, we positively solicit contributions from readers and sympathisers. SR should now become a much more regular paper, sales are increasing and we aim to go bi-monthly. Readers can help by taking a few extra copies

.....



# where we're at

Throughout the world a small minority of bosses — private capitalists or State bureaucrats — own and control the means of life: the factories, laboratories, communications and all the other resources we depend on. They leave the rest of us with no choice but that of working for them — in boring, usually socially useless or harmful, and often dangerous jobs outside the home, and bringing up kids for the same kind of life inside the home. They let us produce goods and services only when they can make a profit by selling them, in complete disregard of human needs, so that mountains of food are destroyed while millions starve who can't afford to buy it, so that people rot in slums while building workers are laid off. And when the trade wars between the bosses of different countries hot up into the real thing, it's the rest of us, the working people, who have to make the weapons and are sent off to kill one another.

But plenty of us refuse to put up with it all without a fight. In our workplaces we organise to defend living standards and to gain some control over conditions of work. In the community we form tenants' associations, resist motorways and try to stop pollution. School and college students challenge the way they are indoctrinated. Women, gays, black people fight the discrimination they suffer. Socialists try to spread awareness of the need for a complete change to a free classless society.

These, and others, are all valid ways for working people to express their needs as human beings and resist their conditions of life. Members of the SOCIAL REVOLUTION group are all involved in one or more of these movements. We aim to encourage people to organise democratically without leaders, and to exchange experiences and understandings so that all the different struggles can merge, with one another and across national frontiers, into a united and conscious movement for world social revolution.

The liberation of the working class can only be the work of the majority of working people themselves. The manipulation of self-appointed leaders can only hold back this work. We expect that the main form of organisation for carrying out revolutionary change will be some kind of WORKERS COUNCILS — that is, councils of delegates based on workplaces and neighbourhoods, elected by and under the direct democratic control of working people. These councils will co-operate to produce and distribute the goods and services needed by the community, which will be made freely available as the waste of capitalism is done away with. Work will be the voluntary and varied activity of people controlling their own creativity for agreed human purposes. The united world, without money, Government or war, will belong for the first time to the people of the world.

## SOCIAL REVOLUTION GROUPS

ABERDEEN. Box 23, APP, 167 King St, Aberdeen. Tel: 29669.

HULL. M.R.K. Turner, 56 Nicholson St, Hull.

LONDON. Box 217, 142 Drummond St. London NW1.

## CONTACTS

EDINBURGH. c/o Aberdeen Group.

OXFORD. P. McShane, 11 St. Margarets Road, Oxford.

SAFFRON WALDEN. M. Everett, 11

Gibson Gdns, Saffron Walden, Essex.

SHEFFIELD. c/o Hull Group.



# Problems of Socialism

THE WOMAN QUESTION  
AND LIBERTARIAN ORGANISATION!

This article originally appeared as a discussion document at our July delegate conference in Aberdeen. It provoked considerable discussion at the time. As it was felt that the issue was of more than just internal interest Sheila was asked to re-write it for publication in SOCIAL REVOLUTION.

We hope to be able to continue the discussion, and urge readers to send contributions (no more than 1500 words and double-space typed please). London group would also like to organise a discussion on the subject: please get in touch if you're interested.



As I see it there are three main areas to the problem regarding women that libertarians must face up to. In SR at the present I am the only active woman member. Ours is of course a very small group. But what seems clear, is that no matter the size of the organisation, the proportion of involved women remains small in comparison to male membership. So this leads to the first problem.

## WHY ARE SO FEW WOMEN INTERESTED IN ORGANISED POLITICS?

All political organisations have this problem, but is only a REAL problem to revolutionaries. Womens' social conditioning will, as we know, be the main stumbling block to womens' interest in organised politics. But it should not therefore be used as an excuse for doing nothing.

I know conditioning is not totally insurmountable. Even though my mother would pass as a radical-feminist today, she still suffered conditioning and passed it on to me. School and society did the rest.

Besides if we don't think some social conditioning can be overcome BEFORE revolution, then there isn't going to be any

revolution. The problem here is that we can't help people who are trying to break down their social conditioning unless they come to us and they're not likely to come to us until they've broken down their social conditioning.

That only leaves women who were badly conditioned, like me, and most of them will probably find the women's movement more immediately attractive than Libertarian groups. The smallness of the Libertarian movement militates against it being even heard of by most women in this position. Also because their rebellion is initially against their conditioning and not the society that produced it. But again this should not be used as an excuse.

The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) has declined in the last couple of years. Where do women go when they've 'raised their consciousness' to a level beyond that which the constraints on that movement allow?

A large proportion, we may assume, never succeed in making the connection between their conditioning and the organisation of society, and believe themselves equal and liberated on achieving the editorship of the women's page in the 'Mirror' etc.

Many fall into the hands of the 57 varieties of Trotskyists, who were not slow to jump on the Women's Lib bandwagon. They have successfully created an illusion of interest by forming women's caucuses both within WLM and their own organisations. These women are easily 'brainwashed' — thanks to their social conditioning — to get their priorities right, in which the 'industrial worker' comes at the top (at least they seem to accept the situation as it exists, as decreed by the leadership) against which all other social inequalities pale into insignificance.

Thus 'Women's Voice' is a pale imitation of 'Socialist Worker', printing news about women industrial workers. While 'Socialist Worker' is THE paper of the 'International Socialist' organisation, it being implicit that 'worker' is 'man'.

Many women who first went into the WLM were from 'left' organisations and joined WLM on the rebound. It was these women who were most receptive to radical-feminism, because they saw that the authoritarian patriarchal family was not a capitalist invention, but existed in past societies: feudalism, slavery and, despite what Engels believed, probably in primitive society also. Why therefore should socialism be any different, especially as so called 'socialists' themselves support and reinforce both the nuclear family and sexist attitudes within their own lives and in their political organisations?

We know they mean 'state capitalism' and not socialism. We believe the means help determine the end.

Apart from where they go, there is the problem of what the Libertarian movement has to offer them.

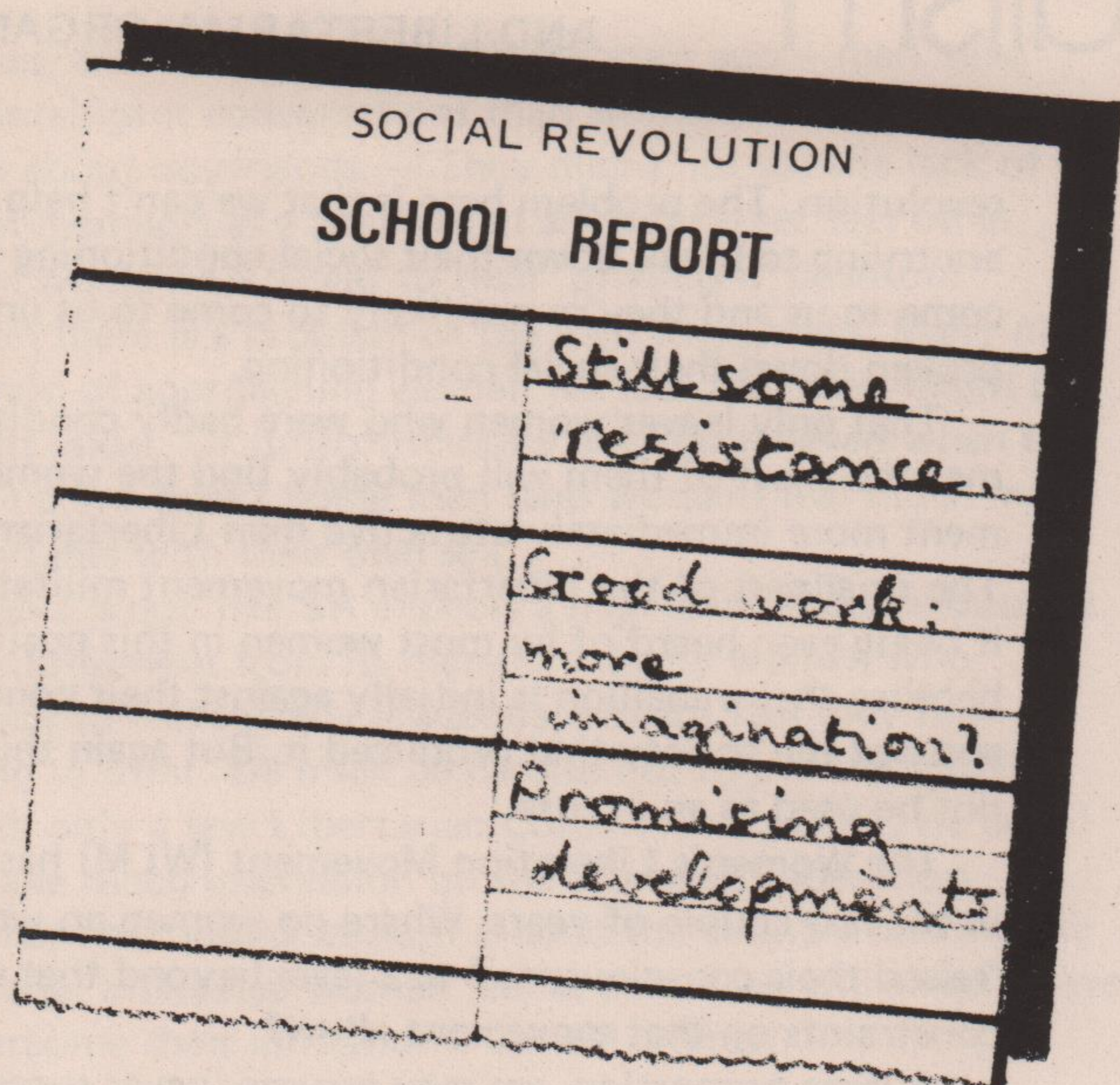
A predominantly male group is self-perpetuating. Most women would feel uncomfortable about going for the first time into a meeting room full of men that she's never seen before, alone. It takes a considerable amount more courage and enthusiasm for a woman to do this, than for a man.

For that reason she is more easily scared off, especially if she can't summon up that extra bit of courage to talk to her she will leave at the end. To hang around would just be embarrassing and she can't take a seat in the bar downstairs alone. So she goes and probably never comes back, her courage and enthusiasm slowly draining away.

There are of course women to whom being the only woman in an all-male group is the epitome of their tomboy

*continued on page 18*





the whole thing a battle between different power-groups, with the dice loaded in favour of the 'middle classes', and the children being kicked around in between? Certainly the Labour Party has been pushed into revealing the lack of real commitment to any educational ideals in its position; the Labour MP was actually saying he was angered when *not enough* children had been found for the Grammar places.....

This is to me a classic picture of the way decisions are made in a capitalist society. The system is fundamentally class-ridden, but everyone tries to pretend it's fair. In Tameside, as throughout the country, worker is pitted against worker in the struggle for the few crumbs to be had. And all are under the illusion, because the crumbs are very few: only a very small section of even the Grammar-educated children will make it to the 'top' — and once there, I'm sure they will wonder what they fought so hard for.

I believe libertarians must take part in the fight for Comprehensive education — it is at least *some* improvement over the branding of kids for life as either 'Grammar' or 'Secondary Mod'. But of course we don't see this as the end of the road. There is a great deal that we can do, in the course

# SCHOOL REPORT

## COMPREHENSIVES

Tameside has become the focus of the latest stage in the long battle over comprehensive education. In the press, and in public discussion generally, the affair has led to argument about the constitutional powers of Ministers, and the merits or otherwise of selection on the basis of reports rather than an 11-plus exam. In fact the only question the Lords, as the 'highest court in the land', were asked to consider was the reasonableness of the proposed selection on the basis of reports.

The Lords' verdict was delivered in record time, and they sat at a time of year when they are normally on holiday, and all this added to the drama of what everyone wanted us to see as democracy in action — a test-case for our legal and constitutional machinery.

The lessons we *should* be drawing from Tameside seem to me to be quite different. What kind of selection procedure children are put through is almost a detail: in fact the Lords' verdict could be seen as underlining what some of us have been feeling about selection procedures for a long time. The system has you sorted out well before the age of eleven, and almost anyone could sort out 'potential Grammar school material'. Or, if you can't tell how a child is going to 'turn out' (i.e. he/she has been moulded), it doesn't matter anyway and they can be sent wherever the authorities decide, as they will almost certainly have learnt not to complain, and to respect the decisions of those who know best. . .

In the public debate, these questions were avoided. Who asked about the effect of the mess-up and the retention of Grammar schools on those who do not get places? How often did we hear questions about the kind of education the kids of Tameside are getting, which ever system they end up with, and the relevance of their education to their future lives and happiness?

What really has been going on in Tameside shows through from time to time, behind some of the things said. For instance, at one point the chairman of the Education Committee said the next step was to 'stop the Labour Government's Education Bill'. Delusions of grandeur? Or was

of fighting for real Comprehensive education, both to emphasise our basic criticisms of the education system under capitalism, and to explain how we see capitalist values and forms of organisation running through the schools and colleges. We have to support those who are pressing for greater equality in education — but stressing that we believe this to be impossible without total equality — socialism — in all aspects of life. We can support those who want to see education cater more for the needs of the individual — but pointing out that in capitalism it is not needs but profits that call the tune. We can support those who want more money spent on education, — but again emphasising that the order of priorities in this society is not determined by social need, so we will only get improvement in education when the system can afford it; and just at the moment we have international bankers to think of!

Similarly, we can support those who are opposed to the constant grading and marking in education — showing the links between this and competition, and how the education system spends a lot of its effort on producing people to fit pre-determined holes in society.

As I see it, there is nothing wrong with supporting reformist pressure groups, such as the pre-comprehensive lobby, because it provides opportunities to contact people who have started to think along the same lines as ourselves, and who only need to meet our arguments to encourage them to take their own positions further. Obviously, in working with non-libertarians we have to make it quite clear where we stand. I am totally opposed to the kind of manipulative use of movements such as the 'Right to Work' campaign, where, as I see it, people are encouraged to make impossible demands of the system, in order to show them that the system cannot give them what they want. We can join in the fight for comprehensives, *provided* we make it clear that our support is not unconditional, that we see each reform as only a small-scale change, and that we are concerned with promoting a particular kind of large-scale and fundamental change; and provided that we make it clear that we believe that only a socialist perspective can fully explain the need for the kind of changes we are fighting for, and the nature of the resistance we will meet.

*continued on page 5*



continued from page 4

## OCCUPATIONS

For two or three weeks during May and June this year, a hundred or more colleges up and down the country were occupied by students, in protest at the cuts being made in expenditure on education. This time the press used the tactic of ignoring the events — although all those involved would testify to the very impressive sense of solidarity, and the high degree of anger behind the demonstrations.

The occupations were carried out with considerable tactical skill. Although they started just before the exams, student support remained solid and exams went ahead without disruption. (Maybe it was a pity the exams were allowed to go ahead, but we've not yet reached the position of students in France in May '68, when the protest ran deeper, and was aimed at the system as a whole . . . maybe that day will come!

The main theme of the campaign was the rising unemployment of teachers, so most of the occupations took place in Colleges of Education, or in Education Departments in bigger Colleges; but attempts were made to broaden the aims. At NELP (North East London Poly), for instance, the issue of racism was tied in — as limits on the number of overseas students (either by quotas or higher fees) can be seen as part of the same move to cut down education in a time of 'financial stringency'. However, this argument did not always get across; even some lecturers at NELP — which has a high proportion of foreign students — argued that it would have been better to stick to the teachers' issue alone, as it was more sure of getting support. This was depressing, as the lecturers' union, NATFHE, has been campaigning on the cuts issue for some time, and one would have expected lecturers to have been more aware of the possibility of their own unemployment if overseas student numbers are cut back — quite apart from any more radical arguments!

One implication of this is surely that all those involved in the fight against cuts in education must look very closely at their publicity and propaganda methods. People not actively involved in the campaign still seem not to understand the connections between the different forms of cutback, or the place of the cuts in the economic situation as a whole. Considering the length of time the campaign has been going on, this is serious, and it would seem that a good deal more talking and arguing has to go on to get these points across.

On the positive side of the Occupations, though, there was the breadth and strength of support at grassroots level, the support from some staff, and the co-ordination that developed between different colleges. For example, London colleges in occupation had joint meetings, and it was as a result of these that the Director of NELP received a number of telegrams threatening to occupy his office if he did not withdraw the legal action he was threatening against students occupying the Barking precinct of NELP. He did not withdraw the injunctions, but the telegrams he received could have been a factor in persuading the authorities not to act immediately.

However, the way the campaign developed in relation to NELP can be used to show what were some of the key problems in this kind of struggle. For although there was a delay, in the end the authorities *were* prepared to call in the police: everyone not actually in occupation was advised to leave the precinct by the end of a certain day, and then an ominous atmosphere developed as the students waited. Exams due to be held on the precinct the next day were abruptly moved elsewhere — thus the only disruption of exams was as a result of the authorities taking legal action.

'Moderate' lecturers were considerably shocked that the Directorate were apparently prepared for a situation to develop in which their students were put in jail. It is to be

hoped that more people have now learned to what lengths the authorities are prepared to go, and how much power is on their side. Several student 'ringleaders' (i.e. officers of the Students' Union) are under threat of suspension as a result of their part in the occupation, and it remains to be seen whether anyone can get the suspensions withdrawn.

So, apart from these lessons, and the growth of rank and file solidarity, it is difficult to see what has been achieved. I think the most significant other gains were those which came *indirectly* from the occupations. Thus, those involved have gained a lot of practical knowledge about how to start and keep an occupation going, and it is to be hoped that this knowledge is shared out! In addition, some useful information was gleaned from files in occupied offices — a practical contribution to the 'open the books campaign'?!

Another useful spin-off was the 'flying' occupation, which individual bureaucrats found when they sat back and relaxed after the occupation was apparently over! The element of surprise was perfect, and I hope will be used in the promised occupations next term.

I hope, too that rank and file students and lecturers have gained a healthy distrust of their own union bureaucrats. . . This is suggested by the occupation that took place of NUS offices, when the NUS tried to call off the occupations.

The problems remain, of course, of finding ways of countering the power of College authorities, of putting the arguments across to non-activists and others, and of making any impact on the Government. I think part of an answer to all this lies in finding more imaginative forms of demonstration — and this also implies recognising that this is the main role of occupations at present: apart from their value as practise-runs for the time when we start the Final Occupation of all our work-places, they are simply a way of demonstrating strength of feeling, and thus trying to pressurise the authorities. In this, unfortunately, they were not very successful, and this is where the main problem lies.

The other important answer lies in learning not to be led into thinking that we can change education on its own, or on our own. The government's attack on education, we must repeat, is part of a broad capitalist crisis, and must be seen as such, and fought as such, by the broad mass of the victims of capitalism. This means strengthening the solidarity that is developing among those involved in different aspects of education, reaching out from education to other public sector workers and consumers, and finally enlisting the support of all workers in the fight against the system as a whole.

## LIBERTARIAN STUDENTS NETWORK

A welcome move in the development of a libertarian presence in education is the setting up of a Libertarian Students' Network. At the time of writing, a founding conference has been held, a newsletter is planned for late August, and another conference planned for 12th/14th November, at Bradford University. Discussion so far has produced agreement on a number of organisational and theoretical guidelines with which we would agree, in particular: 1) the need to involve the whole the whole of the libertarian left, and all those involved in the whole gamut of the educational process who are sympathetic to the aims and principles of the LSN;

2) the aim of working within existing organisations such as the NUS, not setting up a separate, elitist body, but working for democratic control of the NUS by the student body;

3) the necessity of adopting a specific class line and relating the struggle in education to the general struggle against capitalism;

4) the need to mobilise on specific issues and campaign collectively, as well as co-ordinate local initiatives;

continued on page 7



**RECENTLY I travelled 7,500 miles across Russia, from the port of Nahodka in the Siberian Far East to European Russia in the west of the country.**

The whole of this journey was by railway and I stopped off to rest up for a few days at a time at a number of towns on my route, such as Irkutsk in Siberia, Moscow and Leningrad.

### Struggle with China

The trans-Siberian railway runs north-west from Vladivostok on Siberia's eastern seaboard but 'foreigners' such as myself have to board their trains at the civilian port of Nahodka further up the coast, since Vladivostok is a major naval base and therefore out of bounds to all 'non-Russians'

The trains between Nahodka and Khabarovsk are therefore something of a showpiece but at Khabarovsk nearly all the tourists leave the railway to join flights taking them westwards.

Needless to say, the ordinary Russian workers and peasants who use the trains once Khabarovsk has been passed are not considered as important as tourists with hard currencies to spend, so that from Khabarovsk onwards the train service suddenly deteriorates.

### Classes

Still, one has to be thankful for small mercies. The second class carriage that I was travelling in might have been dirty, but there are degrees of dirtiness as with all other things.

unfailingly wrapped up and handed over in a sheet of old newspaper.

You might say that wrapping things up in, and wiping one's bottom on, are all that *Pravda*, *Izvestia* and the rest of them are worth using for — but that is hardly the point.

Living like that again, it takes you back to the era when fish and chips too came wrapped in newspaper. Perhaps the Russian government justifies it as the defence of working class culture!

### Brainless patter

During the periods when you are not actually travelling, the government tourist agency ('Intourist') attempts to take charge of you.

You stay in Intourist hotels and

# on a Russian journey

At times the railway runs very close to the Chinese border so that a good deal of military activity was visible even to a casual observer like myself.

Road blocks were being manned by armed troops on roads adjacent to the railway and the army is very much in evidence throughout Eastern Siberia.

There is a constant stream of war materials coming along the railway on east-bound trains (missiles, tanks, troop carriers and so on) and helicopters are continually patrolling overhead.

### "Yellow peril"

The government encourages anti-Chinese feelings among the population (a man from Sverdlovsk in the Ural Mountains whom I got into conversation with talked at some length about the "yellow peril") and at times seems to be the victim of its own paranoia in this respect.

For example, I remember that at one place several hundred miles from the border with China there were still sentries with fixed bayonets to be seen, guarding timber yards alongside the railway.

Presumably the sentries were there to guard against a possible surprise attack by the Chinese army, although the thought did hopefully flicker across my mind that it might have been working class sabotage that had prompted their posting.

### Bad service for workers

Since there is no airport at Nahodka, all tourists who come into Russia from the East have to travel 16 hours by train as far as Khabarovsk.

The third class carriages actually stank and people were jammed into them on endless rows of bunks, instead of being in compartments for groups of four people as we were.

But then, we reflected, you only get what you pay for in capitalist Russia, the same as you do in capitalist anywhere else.

### Poverty

In many ways, a journey through Russia is like travelling back in time for someone coming from Britain. Poverty is a condition of working class life everywhere, but there are degrees of poverty as with dirt.

Travelling together with people for days at a stretch, one gets a good opportunity to see them in various stages of undress and most people were very poorly dressed indeed.

It really is no exaggeration to say that in general they are as shabby and as down at heel as workers were in Britain in the twenties and thirties.

Other things strike you too. Standards of hygiene, for example, are far behind what even avowedly capitalist governments enforce in the West.

On the eight day journey across Siberia to Moscow the train stops for a few minutes every four or five hours at tiny country stations along the way.

As the train pulls in, peasant women from the surrounding countryside are already waiting on the platform to sell to the passengers whatever they have produced produced on their private plots of land.

Generally it is a pretty limited selection — pickled cucumber, tomatoes, cold boiled potatoes, the occasional lump of cheese — but, whatever it is, it is

Intourist guides like to take you around and show you the official sights to the accompaniment of the usual brainless patter about how many bricks it took to build Moscow University and so on.

### Tipping

These Intourist hotels are interesting places. At the first one I stayed at in Irkutsk I tried an experiment and offered a few kopecks as a tip to the porter who helped me carry my luggage to my room.

There was no question of his being offended. On the contrary, he accepted it with alacrity.

Having tried it once, I did not bother again — and had to pay for it in terms of bad service from then on.

### Workers not admitted

Take my experience at the Hotel Rossiya (Europe's largest hotel — perhaps the largest in the world, says the guide with pride) in Moscow for example.

First of all, I had difficulty even getting into the restaurant. The problem was that, being rather scruffily dressed, the head waiter took me for a Russian and told me that only those with special passes (basically this means Party/government officials, business men and interpreters) were allowed in.

I was supposed to take my working class custom elsewhere.

### Tipping again

Having eventually pushed my way in, however, I sat down at a table with a couple of well-dressed Russians who had



obviously had no difficulty at all in gaining entrance. The cut of their suits and their oily manners suggested that they were factory managers or something of the kind and when their meal was finished I noticed that the bill came to 8 roubles.

One of them fished out a 10 rouble note from his wallet and passed it to the waiter with a casual "Keep the change".

This had an immediate effect, the waiter promptly coming alive and bowing and scraping in all directions.

A few minutes later I finished my meal and called for the bill. I paid and waited for my 50 kopecks change. Nothing happened.

I caught the waiter's eye . . . and he smartly disappeared into the kitchens. There was nothing for it then but to make a scene.

By the time I had made enough commotion to have all eyes in the restaurant turned on me, the waiter came running and I got my 50 kopecks back, though with as much bad grace as he could summons.

I did not begrudge him the 50 kopecks. No doubt he was having the usual struggle to make ends meet on an

inadequate wage.

But his struggle to get by was no different from my own and, besides, giving handouts to one another is no way for workers to behave towards each other.

### Crossing the border

My final memory of Russia is back on a train again. The train limped along between black pine forests under a starless sky with drizzle coming down. This was the uninhabited belt of territory, cleared entirely of people, along the Russo-Finnish border.

Just short of the border the train wheezes to a halt at a prearranged point under burning arc lights and on come the troops.

In our carriages we have already been subjected to one search by customs officials, but this is the final going over.

(In Russia, that is. Once into Finland, the train will stop again and the whole pointless exercise will start once more. Not much sleep tonight.)

### Officers and other ranks

We wait our turn. Eventually the door opens and in they come. Two of them —

an officer and a soldier. You can tell the officer is an officer by the better quality of his uniform.

The officer examines our passports. It takes a minute or so and in the end he hands them back, apparently satisfied.

But there still remains the bed. Anything might be hidden under the bed. Machine guns, drugs, photographs of the tsar . . .

This is where the soldier comes in. The officer, being an officer, cannot be expected to handle anything heavier than a passport. It is the soldier who has to up-end the bed and peer beneath it while he continues to hold it up.

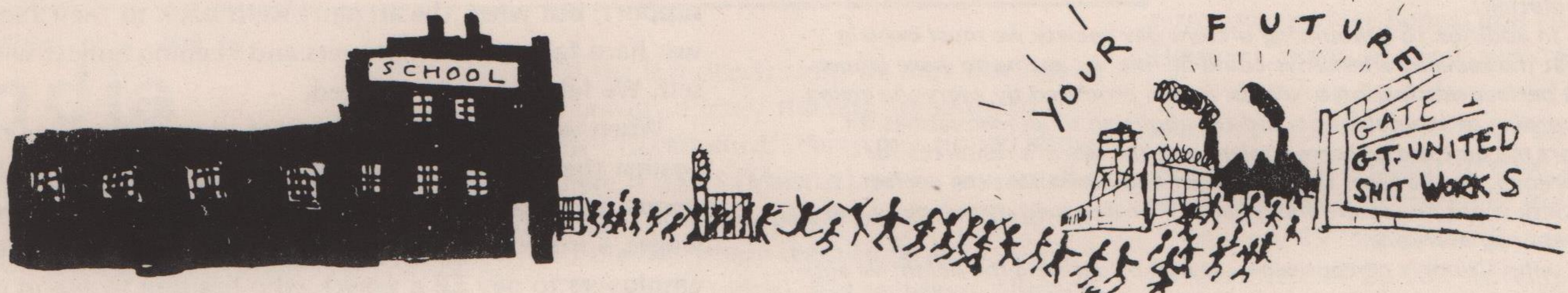
Much could be written at this point. One could go on at length about the anti-socialist nature of customs posts and police officials, of national boundaries and armies.

But after being in Russia for several weeks it is the subtleties like this — the officer with his passport and the soldier with his bed — that one learns to appreciate.

**John Crump**

*continued from page 5*

## SCHOOL REPORT



5) the importance of autonomous local groups.

All these points indicate an approach which I share, as a member of a libertarian socialist group, and which I welcome as someone involved in education. This kind of development is badly needed: I am convinced that libertarian ideas are fairly widespread in education, and on the increase, but libertarians are very often isolated — usually unnecessarily, as they simply have no way of knowing that there is someone nearby with similar ideas. Whatever can be done to bring libertarians together is welcome, and I hope that anyone sympathetic to the LSN will contact the acting secretary:

Jerry Cantwell  
20a Buckland Crescent  
London NW3 5DX

Finally I would like to quote from the provisional aims of the LSN, as I think this is a good start to a definition of a

libertarian socialist position on education. I think such a position has yet to be worked out in detail, and I would welcome any comments, which we could publish in future issues of Social Revolution, which would contribute to such a definition. It is hoped to make articles on all aspects of education a regular feature in SR — so please send 'em in!

"... revolutionary educational change can only be effected when linked to the wider struggles of the entire working class. The long-term objective must be a classless society which has common control of the means of production . . . the LSN is totally opposed to the competitive, elitist and hierarchical nature of the present educational system. Instead, it declares for a free non-discriminatory educational system, open to everyone at all levels, and under the direct control of all participants and workers within all educational institutions."

Ian Pirie.



We welcome letters from readers for publication, though we shall shorten them if necessary.

# LETTERS

Dear Comrades,

The article you published by John Crump in LC9 is one of the most important critiques of the revolutionary movement I've read.

First, it said what many socialists already realise, that is, that everything is not a bed of roses and that we are not winning the fight as fast as many pretend. I believe it is good to come out into the open and say this, unlike the great majority of Trotskyists (IS, IMG etc), who if they do realise this fact, believe admitting it can only have a detrimental effect. They thus continue with the propaganda alleging that the movement is growing bigger all the time, thus they believe enticing more people to become converted to their particular brand of socialism.

Secondly, it analysed the very roots of our dilemma. That is, that the great majority of the working class do not think true socialism is a better alternative.

It seems to me that the main defect with socialist/revolutionary political discussion is that in the arguments brought forward the revolutionary concentrates on the negative, that is, criticism of capitalist society.

If the person agrees with the reasoning which explains the discrepancies of the market system, which our society is based upon, the usual response is "fair enough, but this social system is the best of the worst", indicating a preference for a "democratic" society or to be more precise a "non-authoritarian" society. The moment revolution or communism is mentioned or even inferred all the prejudices and fears "indoctrinated" into most people by the media emerge. That is, revolution is too fast, violent and disruptive and that communism can only exist when freedom is withdrawn and individuality suppressed. (the immediate analogy drawn is with the kind of society experienced under the totalitarianism of state capitalism, ie the mis-named communist countries of Russia and China).

If a left of centre viewpoint is taken, a reformist solution is offered, ie change in society is attempted in a slow, piecemeal fashion, which does not effect the very nature of our economic system which is the fundamental basis of present day society.

The most important and as yet unanswered question is how to achieve the new society. I believe the "pessimistic" John Crump may have hit the nail on the head. The crux of the problem is how to achieve popular support (absolutely essential for a true and secure revolution).

In addition to denouncing present day society we must explain what the socialist alternative could be like ie an end to wage labour, the perfect satisfaction of all our needs, produced by everyone giving according to their abilities, and the abolition of all inequalities. In short the best use of human talent and the world's resources for everyone. At the same time one must emphasise that the perfect society is not pre-determined, but will be designed dynamically and be created by everyone.

John Crump's perceptiveness is that of defining the defensive anti-capitalist nature of the majority of the world working classes struggles, and to achieve popular support for the world revolution socialist consciousness needs to be awakened in the large majority of the working class. How this is to be done has yet to be determined.

I invite suggestions about the means we should be using to re-educate the masses, bearing in mind the tight grip that the power elite has on the media and the education system.

ANDY FORD. Sheffield.

## READERS' MEETINGS

If you are interested in what we say and would like to meet us for discussion, please contact London group, who will be arranging readers' meetings for this purpose.

## AU PAIRS — AN INTERNATIONAL BUNKUM

The experience of the au pair association has shown from the beginning how weak its foundation was. To au pairs with problems it stood as the answer to their personal troubles. Greenshaw Evening Centre, for English language instruction, counted 20 supporters (teachers excluded) to the movement.

But we forgot to find out to what extent they supported it and went straight on. The point came when we had to put ourselves forward and commit ourselves. The association reached its climax when we produced the leaflet. As soon as we obtained some publicity and enquiries, the Greenshaw group fell to pieces — everyone hurried in confusion to get away from anything to do with the association.

In fact, there wasn't a single au pair left in it! I'm not sure what happened then, but it seems that the association has definitely been taken over by outsiders.

Now, apart from the fact that we are exploited by our employers, there is a basic ambiguity in the very definition of an au pair. The families which ask for au pairs do not expect a foreign girl they don't know to be their guest but their employee. The agencies cleverly use the word "guest" to conceal their real role — suppliers of cheap labour.

For there is no doubt that we are employees. Hiding behind the facade of more or less cultural organisations, free from State regulation because international, they draw in every year many young workers for the benefit of one privileged class.

Being an au pair has been for some people a perfect way to raise consciousness. Arriving from the Continent with ecstatic thoughts about the typical English family, their politeness and hospitality, duped by the agencies, the au pairs quickly realise what a swindle it is. The evening classes become the centre for exchanging complaints of those who are "unhappy with their families".

Discharging one's feeling of being fed-up doesn't change anything but it helps to keep up morale. "After all, the others are worse off, and I have only . . . months left to stagnate here."

The idea of the association attracted much sympathy and support, but when the au pairs went back to their families, it was hard facing the employers and keeping honest with oneself. We felt suddenly isolated.

When we talked about meetings outside class, we ran against the first barrier. How could we manage to gather people who have no fixed working hours (but we have fixed wages — ironically called pocket money, which entitles the employers to pay £6 a week), who hesitate to spend money on something which is not strictly necessary, and who are scattered all over the county of Surrey?

For me, the au pair association has been a double failure. The business has not been knocked down or even shaken. I received a letter from an agency manager who, extremely politely, cursed the association. He said there were some good agencies, and he himself was looking after his au pairs. He suggested I send him all the unhappy au pairs I was talking about and would place them. The second failure is that only a few girls have torn the veil and fought for the association with political awareness.

I thank very much some SR members and sympathisers for their advice and help. I hope we shall meet again in our struggles for socialism.

Fraternally, Evelyne Laveaux.



# AU PAIRS

## the union that never was

I'm not an au pair. In fact those men who do try to become au pairs find it almost impossible to get a place, though the agencies will still take their money. For a man to take on such a domestic role is felt by most as ridiculous, embarrassing, contemptible even — and that says something about the status of women.

Nevertheless, I and some other members of Social Revolution (London) have been involved in the attempt to set up an au pair union (or association, to make it sound more "moderate"). So my viewpoint may be of interest, and hopefully those of others will follow.

The idea of an au pair organisation came from someone from France, working as an au pair in the Surrey stockbroker belt. F (as I'll call her) had been involved in the school pupils' movement in France. She started thinking of a union some time after she had contacted us, when she and the other students at the local English language class commiserated on the way they were treated.

She asked her English teacher if she could talk to her class about the idea. The teacher held a debate on it, and "the class answered quite positively to the suggestions". She planned now to contact other au pairs by leafleting language classes, that being the main place where they get together.

I helped draft the leaflet from her notes, another member of SR helped duplicate it, and a third helped distribute it (zero response, as far as I know). As it gives an idea of what it all was about, we reproduce the leaflet here.

The contacts were other Surrey au pairs who seemed to be interested.

At the same time she contacted various papers: "The Guardian" published a short article, and so eventually did "Spare Rib". "Morning Star" told her she should first contact an existing union — presumably the International Branch of the T&GWU. "Time Out" had just published an article exposing abuses by agencies and families, and were prepared to publicise the association when the response could be coped with. F also had an interview at the BBC.

At this time F left for Scotland, after that to return to France. I agreed to try to get those interested together, though I didn't have the time or inclination to be very much involved over the long term. A number of people had got in touch from all the publicity — a manager and an ex-manager from au pair agencies, someone from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Intercoop (a cooperative of English language teachers). An assortment of busybodies from the libertarian left, like me, were also more or less interested. Everyone, except the au pairs.

There were a couple of meetings, and we decided to set up an Au Pair Advice Centre, so that au pairs could phone in for advice. There would be an effort to investigate and improve the legal situation, and to issue a press statement, lobby MP's, and other activity of a conventional reform type.

*continued on page 17*

### AU PAIRS — GUESTS OR SERVANTS?

The Home Office regulations state: "The relationship should be on the basis of social equality and not on a mistress-servant basis." BUT we are often treated as servants, not as members of the family. When I asked: "Why don't we talk more to practise my English?", I was told: "We are interested in your work, not your English accent."

The regulations limit work to 5 or 6 hours a day, BUT we must often work up to 10 hours a day.

### WE NEED TO ORGANISE TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS!

This leaflet is produced by a group of au pairs who plan to form an au pair association.

- \* to meet and help one another
- \* to fight for better pay and working conditions
- \* to defend and improve our legal rights
- \* to obtain better and cheaper instruction in the English language
- \* to help and inform au pairs arriving in this country
- \* to fight the abuses of the au pair agencies and to try to replace them
- \* to find British friends who can help us when necessary
- \* to arrange social and cultural events, cheap excursions etc.

Even if you happy with your situation, you have no guarantees.

We hope you will join us. Contact:



# WORLD WIDE



## india road to reaction

In looking at the political situation in India, one must bear in mind the features which distinguish it from most other countries, even in the 'Third World'.

Firstly, its size. In terms of population and area, it is comparable to Europe as a whole. As a consequence, there are enormous differences between areas; at least 20 languages exist, most with different alphabets. At the same time, it has not in the past been centralised.

Delhi only became the capital after the British found Calcutta too full of nationalists, and Bombay and Madras are potential centres of power. This poses difficulties in the way of political control.

Further, it is still a mainly rural country. Despite the enormous growth of the cities, especially Calcutta, at least 80% of the population live in villages. This is not so in Latin America for instance.

At Independence, British India broke up into India, Pakistan and Ceylon. Since then, India has been governed by the Congress party. This includes a very varied collection of tendencies, but officially espoused nationalism and 'socialism'.

In the late sixties, severe strains began to develop under the impact of the beginning economic crisis, and particularly the failure of the so-called 'green revolution', which used new varieties of cereals to try to increase output. These strains led to the development of opposition groups, such as the Tamil nationalist DMK in the Southern state of Tamil Nadu. The congress party split, with Mrs. Gandhi (the daughter of Nehru and not related to the religious leader) getting control.

Her Congress (Ruling) won an election in 1971 and continued to rule, with the help of the "Communist" Party of India (the pro-Moscow one). The campaign was fought on a left-wing platform, particularly 'abolish poverty'. Basically, the idea was to unite the masses with the industrial bourgeoisie and especially the large bureaucracy against the more traditional rulers, represented by the Congress (Opposition) and other groups. For instance, the government removed some of the remaining privileges of the Princes.

Of course, this alliance did not last long. The new bosses preferred an

alliance with the old ones, and the Congress (R AND O) relied heavily on landlords and others and local level. For instance, it was decided that a certain number of candidates should be from the bottom 'untouchable' caste. But they turned out to be those few who owned businesses.

At the same time the existence of an important bureaucratic segment was hardly recognised, let alone thought worth attacking. But in fact they have an important influence politically. Any job with a degree of privilege (and particularly the Civil Service) becomes the monopoly of an educated group, who are of course primarily the children of the wealthy. In some parts, a degree is necessary to become a bus conductor.



Naturally, this group does not see itself as privileged. It supports "socialism" on the following argument: "socialism" = nationalism and bureaucracy = more jobs for us. It was this attitude which enabled a Government minister to say, after Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan in 1971 "Bangladesh has a secure socialist future, because it is firmly based on the middle class".

*continued on page 13*

An active organisation carrying out the social revolution, the "70s Front" is naturally ready to confront many questions, such as: What are your beliefs and ideals? How do you see the future Hong Kong revolution? And so on.

Such questions are, honestly, hard to answer, but nonetheless demand thorough analysis, lest our action come to lose all its vitality, our words and deeds become rootless and our blindness laughable. The below can be said to be our first, tentative attitudes toward the above questions.

### OUR IDEALS

In certain cases people ordinarily say: "I'm an xxx-ist". Likewise, we are often asked, "What ism are you?" Questions such as these put us in a predicament — which doesn't mean that we've no ideal nor beliefs, only that we've yet to come upon the perfect banner representing our thoughts.

Those whose heads hanker after worn-out ways, treading the straight and narrow of rigid self-restraint; who, without a shred of principle, take the teachings of the prophets and priests and call them their own ideas — they represent the flight from freedom. The aim of revolution is to change society, not to register the correctness of this or that ism. With an open attitude, we therefore recognize, criticize and welcome all progressive thought. Any "pure xxx-ism" is absolutely meaningless.

So, to answer the questions above, usually all we can say is: "We are socialists." Socialism is a tied in which we find many currents, some of them mutually opposed. Those who insist on classifying the ultimate aim of socialism according to two distinct higher and lower stages, communist and socialist, bring up the "transition question", a theoretical basis advanced so as to perpetuate the state machine, oppress the people, and secure the advantage of a small elite after the elimination of capitalism.

In general, socialist currents and sects share one point: they all favor the abolition of private ownership and the return of production capital to the public ownership of society. They seek to re-make society on an egalitarian base so as



# THE SAME CLASS STRUGGLE

## china cultural revolution or social revolution ?

to establish an ideal society which meets people's needs. Since we too share these concepts, we too call ourselves "socialists".

But compared to all the other socialist strands, we especially stress the humanist spirit to be found in socialism. As Marx stressed in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, if communism lacks humanism then it isn't communism, and humanism lacking communism isn't humanism. One who seeks complete independence and freedom can only exist in a society both rational and prosperous. And a rational and prosperous society's existence, in turn, depends on whether

This is part of a statement issued by the Seventies Front in Hong Kong, which we are reprinting from the magazine "Libero International" ("The Seventies" is a working class district of Hong Kong.) The group consists of both Hong Kong Chinese and libertarian refugees who left China at the end of the "Cultural Revolution", when the "extreme democratic faction" was being suppressed. Their address is 158 Shauiwan Rd., Hong Kong.

On the whole we agree with the views in this statement. The main weakness is that it still sees problems in national terms, as if a successful social revolution could be achieved in China in isolation from the rest of the world.

the individual character is to fully develop.....

The most revolutionary aspect of a revolution lies precisely in his/her independence and freedom. Come the day our individuality is wiped out, we're robbed of our freedom, and all is done at the direction of a solitary authority, leader or party, then we'll have reached the ideal society — if this isn't the biggest joke the world has ever seen, then it has got to be the most beautiful!

We are resolutely against all authority: authority suggests suppression. And against all power, no matter its shape or

form. We affirm that, under freedom and equality, a socialist life is founded on mutual cooperation and free association.

But unlike the proverbial thief who covers his ears that the ringing of the bell he's stealing won't give him away, we don't deceive ourselves by denying the existence of the class struggle in the society before us. We are, however, resolutely against encouraging class hatred as the driving power of the revolution. Hatred will only bring in its wake retribution, suppression, stripping of the people's rights and the distortion of the people's humanity. . . .

Violence perpetuates the slavery and robbery of the masses — precisely this principle serves as the foundation of contemporary society. A violent socialist revolution is necessary, and if we are to radically transform society and construct in its place one of free workers, there is no way for us to accomplish this save by a violent socialist revolution



But naturally we cannot encourage and sing the praises of violence. Rather than saying violence inevitably and logically proceeds from revolution, better to say that we are forced to resort to violence because, in order to secure their own profits, the anti-revolutionists suppress us with violence.

. . . In the last analysis is the Chinese social structure under the communist regime socialism? This, more than all else, calls for urgent analysis.

First the economic side. The Chinese communists are stuck as ever in the rut of capitalism . . . . The economic system under the Chinese communists is simply one where the capital resources have been rationalized, domestic markets brought under state control and nationally-operated ventures come to replace private ones.

But nationalizing production resources has little to do with socializing production resources, and even less to do with realizing a socialist economy . . . . In China, nationalizing production resources means only that the state has become the general capitalist; and its control powers are all

concentrated in the hands of a small clique of party bureaucrats. Thus have the party bureaucrats, in turn, metamorphosed to where they've taken "protective custody" of productive resources.

As ever before, the industrial workers are wage labor, people plundered and repressed. Having failed to eliminate



capitalism, the Chinese communists have driven the capitalist system to the extreme . . . . Not only do wages not reflect the value of labor itself, but are low compared to other capitalist countries. Not only are wages not subject to supply and demand, likewise neither is return on investment regulated, so that the push for attainment of the greatest scale of return on investment has been rendered into the guideline of the People's Economic Plan.

This kind of policy is reflected in the universal low wages and shortage of consumer goods, and is reflected all the more in the flow of goods from the mainland to Hong Kong. The application of political force to the suppression of labor, to the increase in expropriation of value, and to the exalting of the return on investment rate all leave any traditional capitalist system trailing far behind in a cloud of dust . . . .

The socialist economy we seek:

1) is not the nationalization but the socialization of production resources. In

*continued on page 12*



# china

*continued from page 11*

areas of production control, all responsibility for coordination and control will lie with Workers' Committees, comprising representatives chosen by the workers. As for the form of production, the division-of-labor system will be abolished — including the division between industrial and agricultural labor, between mental and physical labor, between that of managers and producers, and between



dissimilar production processes, thereby ensuring that every last worker becomes the embodiment of creative power;

- 2) abolishes the wage labor system;
- 3) determines social production according to mass consumption, and plans an economy where need determines income.

As for the political aspect in China, the party directs everything, and the Chinese Communist Party has been influenced by the foul weed of the Leninist vanguard party organized as a high-level, concentrated formation, founded on the principle of "democratic centralism". Theoretically, policy formulation involves a democratic-style discussion by standing party members or their proxies, thereafter to be collectivized and implemented. And should there be an opposing view, once the matter is put to a vote, the majority will must be obeyed absolutely.

On the surface this appears both democratic and collective; actual circumstances are quite the contrary. In this case ample democracy means nothing more than the opportunity for those attending the meeting to understand opposing views. But it does not necessarily follow that this will solve the problems, because a policy's correctness can only be tested in the crucible of actual implementation.

Under centralism, minority opinions lose all chance of being tried and tested, and naturally which way is right cannot

## SOCIAL REVOLUTION 12

be determined. Therefore, when events reveal majority decisions and consequent policy to have been in error, the people must go on believing that that was the only way. As far as those who hold democratic centralism sacred are concerned, to allow any chance of implementation to dissimilar ideas or policies represents the path of adventurism or the stupid dissipation of 'actual energies.'

But we'd like to point out that the opinion of the majority is not necessarily the correct one. If it is majority opinion that serves as the refuge for all policies, is not this too a kind of adventurism? Rather, wouldn't it be far safer to allow different policies a chance at experimentation and actualization, so as to provide mutually complementary, supportive policies?

And as for the line that this would mean a dissipation of actual energies, there's even less of a leg to stand on. For the concrete expression of actualized energies is to be found in the efficient application of all resources, and the quick — and accurate — attaining of projected targets.

Democratic centralization suffers from one serious defect: it becomes a warm bed to bureaucrats. This is the result of high-level centralization of power as well as information and materials.

Consider the case of an ordinary party member: though s/he is legally entitled to criticize and review the policies of his/her superiors, yet, unable to obtain the relevant data, how is s/he to conduct a vigorous criticism, an effective review? In such cases where decisions flow top-down and not bottom-up, the slow development of absolute submissiveness to one's superiors is the result . . . .

"Without the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party, without CCP members serving as the mainstream pillars of the people, the independence and liberation of China would have been impossible, as would the industrialization of China and the modernization of its agriculture." — Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol.III, "On Coalition Government". This passage fully reflects a reactionary toward the interests of the revolution, the masses, and the party, etc.

And it is with just such attitudes that a small group of bureaucrats, regarding the advantage of the party as that of the revolution, see their own interests and theirs only as the interests of the party. And whenever they meet opponents of different mind, they immediately attack them as "counter-revolutionaries" or a "conspiracy party". Under the pretext of dictatorship of the proletariat, gradually all become subject to a progressively unscrupulous repression.

Not only is this true for extra-party affairs, but also within the party too — as demonstrated in the reactionary line, "No party outside the party, no faction within the party." If such a dictatorship is meant to protect the fruits of the revolution, and to bring the passage to communism, then it amounts to the most colossal absurdity.

We must understand that dictatorship is only meant to maintain the special class interests of the ruling class, and the proletariat hasn't its own class property interests. So there's no such thing as a so-called class dictatorship. The entire process of stripping the bourgeoisie of all its capital should be a revolution involving the whole of humanity. To set up, at any point in this process, a controlling party dictatorship under the fine-sounding name of "dictatorship of the proletariat" is simply a dirty insult to, and shameless deceit of, the proletariat.

No matter whose hands hold the reins of the state, the result is still suppression of the people. In a nutshell, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely".



Therefore we resolutely oppose the vanguard party concept, instead advocating a myriad of mass organizations, each producing its own ideas and policies. At the same time this assures a consciousness-raising struggle of the people on the people on the broadest possible scale. The consciousness of the people is the main condition for the fruition of the true socialist revolution. A revolution directed by a party or a few "heroes" cannot possibly be a revolution liberating humankind.

Simultaneously, we oppose using the pretext of dictatorship of the proletariat to strengthen the instrument of the state. Simply put, we oppose all dictatorships, all governments, all forms of statism, and all authority. We stand for endlessly-evolving freedom, for we sense, intuitively, that individual freedom is the prior condition for the freedom of all, and that once the individual is robbed of his/her freedom, freedom for all cannot possibly exist. Likewise, when the collective good ignores or suppresses individual interest, that spells the end of the collective good.



## WHERE IS CHINA GOING?

In China, the true meaning of socialism has been distorted and corrupted. A cruel, relentless dictatorship, ubiquitous security agents, the impersonal concepts of the murky religion of "socialism"... made people feel dark and secretive.

Just when all hope was lost, the "Great Cultural Revolution" burst forth in a shower of sparks, penetrating the darkness with a gleaming light, illuminating for China the road ahead, whereon performed those socialist fighters who, for the sake of truth would not submit, but would fight back, struggle, and ultimately seize the victory.

The Great Cultural Revolution, beginning with a top-to-bottom false revolution, was transformed into a bottom-to-top genuine revolution. The masses would never again be made fools of, never again let themselves be led by the nose into bringing down those designated as the so-called class enemy. . . .

On their own, they organized and took control, and they discovered that even without the bureaucrats and supreme directives, their factories could maintain and even increase production. And they found that their lives were fuller than ever before, the gap between people closed. In order to thoroughly smash the bureaucratic structure — the "revolutionary committees" — mass revolutionary organizations appeared.

This spontaneous mass movement was diametrically opposed to the religious socialism of Mao Tse-tung; the authority of the "pope" lost some of its glamour. Repression failed time and again, ideology momentarily came to life, and for the

first time the people came into contact with the tide of true socialism. One by one, groups representing the vanguard of the masses, who had come to a socialist awareness began to emerge in the ranks of the ultra-left. Their growth heralded the death of Mao Tse-tung Thought.

The fear-stricken bureaucrats shed their masks, revealing their ferocious features, and mobilized the state apparatus to lord it over the people. Then the military fired its guns, and the revolutionary generation became a generation ground underfoot. The revolution died. Long live the revolution! The flesh may disappear, but the idea will stand strong in the face of armed repression.

The ultra-left factions of the Great Cultural Revolution symbolized the dawn of the Chinese revolution, but we must point out that, though they consciously opposed the bureaucrats and though they sincerely struggled for socialism, yet over 20 years of authoritarian control has forged an authoritarian character in a great majority of the people. Hence, even within the ranks of the ultra-left, not a few of the anti-bureaucrat fighters still sub-consciously fashioned themselves after their rulers.

This is history's tragedy, the poisoned legacy of the Mao Tse-tung dictatorship — and will become a great obstacle to the coming revolution. To mitigate this disaster, it is precisely here that we revolutionaries overseas who, taking advantage of our relatively free contacts with all the new trends in revolutionary thought throughout the world, should apply our energy.

## CONCLUSION

The future of the Chinese revolution is tied up with the question of whether or not the ultra-leftists can spark off an all-encompassing socialist revolution; and that for Hong Kong with its success or failure. This does not mean that we in Hong Kong must wait by the stump for the hare\* in anticipation of the arrival of the Chinese revolution.

On the contrary, we must fight to oppose all irrational systems and let the mass movement in Hong Kong serve as catalyst for the Chinese revolution. To prevent the Hong Kong mass movement from falling into the ruts of the toppled cart of Kronstadt, the Chinese revolution remains the only effective assurance.

\* an old Chinese proverb which refers to the story of the man who, having seen a hare go down its hole, decided to sit down at a stump nearby and wait for it to come out again; the saying means to wait in vain, or to passively wait instead of taking constructive action.

### OUT SOON !

"The Enslavement of the Working Class in China" by Dirk Wouters.

A new pamphlet from **SOCIAL REVOLUTION (London)** exposing **State Capitalism in China**. Includes revealing documents of the cultural revolution not previously published outside China. 25p.

*continued from page 10*

## india

Nationalist and separatist groups will probably prove more of a problem especially in the South. The regime may increase centralisation to deal with them. But they are likely to focus discontent for some time. If they were successful, they would of course attack workers just as much as the current regime.

Whilst the workers will continue to struggle, in the current situation there seems to be little chance of socialist awareness developing for some time. Part of the responsibility for this rests upon those who have put forward socialism as meaning more bureaucracy.

At the same time one must recognise that most of the population are in the countryside, and that most of them are not petty-bourgeoisie or middle-class but agricultural workers (even if unemployed). Movements based solely on the towns are doomed to failure.

Of the left opposition, we may distinguish 3 groups. Firstly the left. In addition to the "Communist" Party mentioned above, there is a CPI (Marxist), and a few smaller ones. These groups are not only Stalinist to the hilt (there seem to be few Trotskyists today), but engage in alliances with the right wing groups. Also, the Maoists suffer from the unpopularity of China. The arguments between them have caused splits in Britain, e.g. in anti-racist action.

The movement led by Bhavé and J.P. Narayan has gained some support among pacifists in Britain. A mass movement against corruption was the immediate cause of the emergency. However, it entered into an alliance with the right wing, who are just as corrupt when in power, and seems to have died a deserved death now.

### REPRESSION

Severe repression is nothing new to the Indian masses. Those who agitate among villagers are likely to be killed, or arrested

as 'Naxalites'. The Naxalites, or Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), carried out some acts of terrorism in West Bengal and elsewhere. However, many of those arrested were never shown to have done so. They were kept in prison for periods of several years without being brought to trial, and in some cases were tortured or killed.

In early 1974 a rail strike was broken by the arrest of 20,000 workers and the use of troops. Thus the working class probably noticed little when open dictatorship was introduced in June 1975.

The first acts were to attack the rights of the press, and to lock up large numbers of political activists — initially right wing Parliamentarians but later all left opposition. Strikes are banned — with the blessing of the TUC. The DMK government of Tamil Nadu was suspended when it refused to support the emergency.

According to David Selbourne who visited India recently, a British Leyland factory in Madras has a police station in the works. Gangs go around beating up known militants, and threatening their families. Despite this, workers are still finding ways to resist, just as they do in Chile.



# CACTL

## CONFERENCE ON DIRECT ACTION AND CRIMINAL TRESPASS

On Saturday 27th—Sunday 28th November the Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL) is convening at Reading University, which provides a unique opportunity for activists in all fields of direct and autonomous action to exchange ideas, experience and information, and in so doing overcome the divisions created by the misconceptions and artificial images — those of "trade unionist", "squatter", "tenant", "student" etc. — promoted by politicians and the media.

Basically the proposed programme for Saturday consists of two sessions of workshops in which discussion will be initiated by people who have direct experience of the struggle or type of struggle being examined.

Proposed workshops will be on Green Bans in New South Wales and Birmingham (and trade union and community joint direct action in general), direct action in Italy, industrial occupations, squatting, rent strikes, student occupations, direct action on the cuts, dossers, single homeless and gypsies, mass trespass, State response to direct action.

Each workshop will run in each session so that the various groups at the conference don't only go to workshops that deal with their own areas of action. Films and exhibitions dealing with the history of direct action will be shown throughout the conference.

The conference will be opened and the sessions divided by plenary sessions that will give information on the proposed criminal trespass bill; discuss ways of carrying the campaign against the bill forward; place the proposals in the context of the State's response to direct action, and show how the ground has been prepared for their introduction, by media distortion of squatting and rank-and-file trade union activity; and to examine the general history, effectiveness and potential of direct actions.



The final day will include a summary of the first day with report-backs from the workshops; discussion of the political use of the law, and regional meetings organised around existing CACTL groups.

These proposals are provisional. Offers of help, suggestions and criticisms to CACTL, c/o 6 Bowden St., London SE 11. (01-289 3877). Admission will be by ticket (£2), accommodation provided — the conference will be open, but labour movement (?) bodies will be encouraged to send delegates.

## Publications

### Available at last

**Anton Pannekoek's  
"WORKERS COUNCILS"**  
the classic of Council communism.

Send 60p + 15p postage to Box 217,  
142 Drummond St, London NW1.

**LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM 10.** Out now. Includes articles on IRELAND, BWNIC AND TOM, an editorial from COMBATE, STATISTICS IN A SOCIALIST SOCIETY and more. 22p including postage.  
Also available are a few copies of LC 8 and 9. 16p each, inc p&p.

We now have an account at the Co-op Bank.  
Please make all chequest and postal orders payable to "Social Revolution".

**MARX'S EARLY WRITINGS** — is a short duplicated pamphlet, a good introduction to Marx's early work. 10p including postage.

**LIBERTARIAN WOMENS NETWORK** — Newsletter now available for 50p sub from Alison Malet, 1 Lynwood Place, Dundee, Scotland.

**PHILADELPHIA SOLIDARITY** — libertarian socialist publication from America, available from London SR group, 18p including postage.

A modest proposal for **HOW THE BAD OLD DAYS WILL END.**  
Copies of this article from Charles Lutwidge in California, whose views on revolution and the new society we share, are available from us free.  
Send a stamp.



# stop the Dublin hangings

On Wednesday June 9th, two anarchists, Noel and Marie Murray, were sentenced to hang by a three man tribunal in Dublin. The sentence was passed for allegedly shooting an off-duty policeman whilst escaping from a bank robbery. A third accused, Ronan Stenson, is to be tried later — he was given a respite due to his poor mental and physical condition following treatment at the hands of the Garda (police).

The trial, before the Special Criminal Court (SCC), resembled a kangaroo court more than an example of justice. There was no jury, the Murrays spent most of their trial in the cells after they tried to point out the political nature of the trial. The court refused to listen to allegations by the Murrays about the nature of the police evidence.

The police interrogations used considerable brutality to extract *verbal* confessions from the accused — confessions which the Murrays tried to retract. The tribunal, however, ruled that the statements had been made freely and voluntarily and that both the accused had been properly treated by the Garda.

Their appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal has been turned down, but they have been granted leave to appeal to the Supreme Court against their sentences.



## THE POLITICS OF THE MURRAY TRIAL

What is clear from this trial is that they were not tried for any "terrorist" action. They were on trial for their political beliefs and to provide scapegoats for the failure of the weak Irish government to deal with the IRA.

The political nature of the trial was evident from the very start. The Gardai, Michael Reynolds, died on September 11, 1975. On September 23rd, the Garda used the shooting as an excuse to raid the homes of known anarchists throughout Dublin. About 200 raids were made — not only against anarchists, but also against their friends and relatives — using the method of "guilt by association".

Subsequently groups and individuals in Eire have protested against the "trial". They have been subject to police harassment and charged before the courts "for scandalising the SCC", "contempt" and other such "offences". Clearly the Irish government is trying to prevent the growth of any real opposition and protest against the "trial".

The verdicts themselves reveal the political nature of the proceedings — we may ask whether IRA men and women would have received the death penalty? The weak Irish government needs to look tough, so it picks upon those without mass support to back them. This trial shows the Irish government attempting to bolster its authority by resorting to savage acts of brutality against libertarian revolutionaries.

## DEFEND THE MURRAYS

It is absolutely vital that a protest movement is organised here in Britain. Appeals to the Supreme Court have little chance of success, the Murrays need all the help we can give. We must admit that we think protest can only achieve a little, but if the Irish government can be embarrassed enough they may climb down.

The best way we can do this is if we demonstrate our support for the Murrays. Resolutions of solidarity and support should be passed by trade union branches and in student unions. The meetings organised by the Murray Defence Group and any demonstrations they call, should be attended.

The address of the Murray Defence Group (London) is Box 2, 142 Drummond St., London NW1.

## TERRORISM

Individual acts of violence can have no place in the development of revolutionary action. Carried out in isolation from the class struggle, they often represent the worst form of elitist action. Those who defend 'terrorism' assume that some spectacular act of individual or group "heroism" can inspire the working class to perform revolutionary deeds. It thus rejects the need for clear, patient agitation and propaganda by socialists.

Often terrorism inspires cynicism and apathy amongst those the terrorists claim to represent, especially when the victims are all too often workers themselves. As such, the terrorist is the enemy of the socialist movement and SOCIAL REVOLUTION condemns such action.

However we recognise that a socialist revolution will probably involve violence. But not as the stupid action of a group of megalomaniacs. This violence will be the self-defence of the revolutionary workers against the attacks of the reactionary, dispossessed ex-ruling classes. In this situation, however, it would probably be of a limited nature, and can only succeed if there already exists a mass socialist consciousness.

## subscribe!

### SUBSCRIBE TO SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Make sure of getting your copy of all our publications. £1.50 will bring you copies of everything we produce up to that value (inc. p&p)

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....  
Make all cheques, p/o's etc. payable to SOCIAL REVOLUTION. (Libraries and other institutions, the sub.rate is £3.00)

Reduced rates are available for bulk orders i.e. over 6 copies.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The new address of London SR is now Box 217, 142 Drummond St, London NW1. Address all correspondence to SOCIAL REVOLUTION at the above address.



## THE T.U.C., THE STATE AND THE CRISIS

*continued from page 1*

The main effect was to radicalise whole sectors of workers and convert even the leaders of unions into militants (for a time). Trade Union legislation was opposed by a major official stoppage on Mayday 1973, and by the successful defence of the jailed dockers. Incomes policy was smashed twice by the miners, and the degree of public support was obvious — in '74 even 'The Lancet', the major medical journal, supported them.

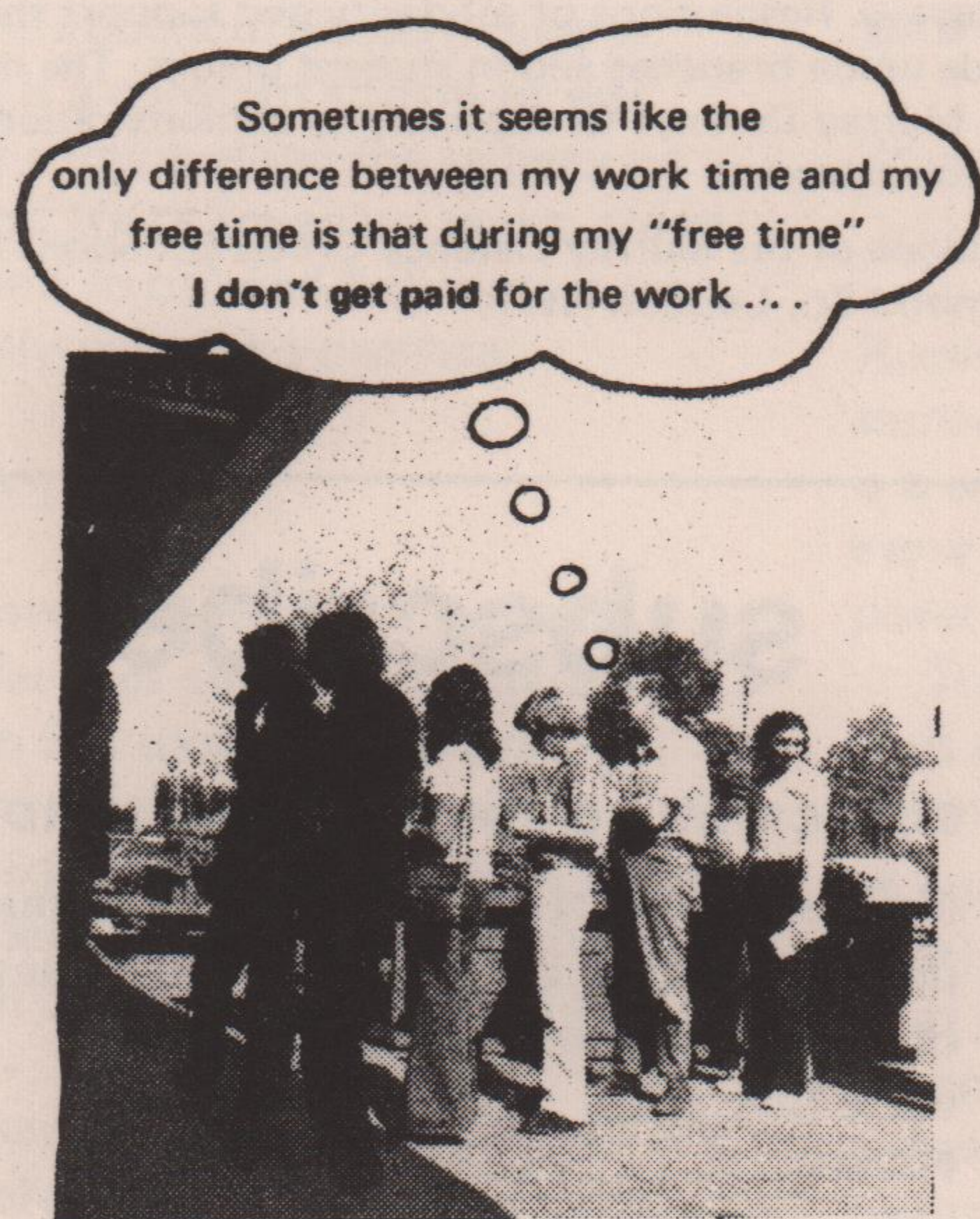
This time the government was smashed as well. So the incoming Labour Government tried new tactics.

### THE INCORPORATION OF THE TUC

For a few months there was little control of the working-class by the new Government. Industrial militancy spread to new sectors, particularly the NHS. Here even the 'professional bodies' were driven into action, however limited, and the traditional low pay was substantially raised.

Soon, however, the needs of British capital asserted themselves. By the summer of 74 the first 'Social Contract' had been produced by negotiation between the Government and the TUC. This was fairly flexible, to avoid any conflict from a still militant working class, and was frequently criticised for this reason by commentators.

The method of obtaining agreement was to say to union leaders "The financiers are forcing it on us, and if you don't accept, we'll have a general election and get the nasty Tories back". The first part of this statement is true. The financiers are the embodiment of world capital, whose crisis demands an attack on the workers. The Labour Government is forced to surrender, and cannot explain the situation in Socialist terms (because they are not Socialists).



So they fall back on garbage about the 'national interest' and the TUC accept it. The Labour left and the "Communist" Party also see the issue in national terms, and propose to solve it by isolating Britain from world capitalism. This is of course impossible — Britain has always been an integral part of global capitalism, and indeed largely created it. The only effect of this propaganda can be to help the real nationalist tendencies, such as the National Front.

As one part of the 'contract' was accepted, a stricter part was prepared. 6% and now 4½% increases when inflation is still well over 10%, massive expenditure cuts which will increase unemployment further, have been accepted with little protest. Whilst the actions of the working-class can surprise all 'experts', one can see today little serious opposition.

Only in Scotland has there been much resistance — 30,000 workers struck and marched through Dundee in a protest against cuts — and here it may be diverted into the SNP.

The incorporation of the TUC has meant that the union structures have taken over some of the functions of the State — a fact deplored by Constitutional purists. This means, for instance, that considerable powers over redundancy have been given to unions, in the Employment Protection Bill and elsewhere. For instance, in a closed shop a worker sacked at the request of a union loses all rights of appeal and redundancy pay etc.

This is not something irrelevant to the social contract, nor is it merely a sop to keep workers quiet. It is an integral part of the strategy. If the unions are to become the mechanisms of control of the working-class, they must be given the power to do the job properly. Although workers may in many cases benefit from these laws, we must see them in context. The only way workers can protect employment is by mass action.

We are used to seeing closed shops used against workers who commit such dire offences as talking to members of other branches or having black skins, but soon they will be used in this way much more. The struggle against the closed shop (which is not the same as shopfloor workers deciding who should work) is now an important issue.

### BUREAUCRATIC CONTROL

This situation has made it necessary for unions to improve their methods for suppressing opposition. One instance of this is the new rule on proscribed groups (rule 14) in the rules of Trades Councils. This prohibits association with any organisation opposed to TUC policy, and replaces a rule proscribing "Communist (ie. Communist Party oriented and Fascist groups". Trades councils (local bodies representing all unions) which do not accept it are not recognised.

This rule has 2 purposes. Firstly, it permits action against ad-hoc groups, and organisations like the International Socialists, which were not covered by the old rule.

Secondly, it marks the end of the old period of antagonism between the TUC and the CPGB. The Party is now recognised as being a loyal part of the apparatus. Indeed, in many cases it leads the manipulation of the bureaucracy. This is so in the National Union of Teachers for instance.

The case of Oxford Trades Council shows this alliance in action. After a long battle between the CPGB and the Trotskyist 'Workers Socialist League' for control, the CP and its friends organised a meeting to which others were not invited to alter rules, and then walked out of the AGM. After this they appealed to the TUC, who withdrew recognition and are trying to set up a new Trades Council.

This affair shows us the bankruptcy of the Trots. Also, because of their bureaucratic outlook, they can only oppose the TUC by more manoeuvres, and when these fail they can only resort to hysteria. For instance, instead of trying to win over uncommitted activists, they lump them all together as 'bureaucrats' and then behave in a manner whose only effect can be to alienate such people.

### THE FUTURE LIES AHEAD

The situation at the moment looks unpromising, with little resistance to the Government policy and more and more workers looking to right-wing solutions. However, on closer examination one can see many possibilities for future developments. The left has shown itself already to be totally bankrupt.

Unlike in the '20s and '30s, there are no major groups such as the CPGB who can pretend to be revolutionary and so divert workers. It is unlikely that the time is right for a



*continued from page 16*

right-wing solution. The activity of Fascist groups will probably decline in the face of resistance from immigrant workers.

In this gap there is a good chance of genuine socialist ideas gaining ground. The main task for those of us who seek to help this is to clarify and propagate our ideas, and to make sure that we are separate in the eyes of the workers from the various groups of the state-capitalist, Leninist left. In practice this is probably the most difficult problem.

Phil McShane.

## au pairs *continued from page 9*

This sort of work is not completely futile and may help some people, but it does not promote basic social change. This is because it continues the relationship of patronage in which au pairs are already, even if a more benevolent kind. Those with more resources or experience do things *for* others, making the decisions, whereas in the long run people can only liberate themselves by their own efforts. This is why some of us felt we should no longer be involved.

However, it is possible that some of the au pairs who get involved in the Advice Centre will want a different kind of organisation, more under the control of au pairs themselves, using available help as needed.

What happened to the original group of au pairs in Surrey? Some of us tried to find out. One of them had been visited by journalists from an evening paper — against her will, but the family did not believe that — and got into trouble with the family, and also her agency. Nor did the others want to know anything about it — their enthusiasm had evaporated, or perhaps was never really there.

Of course au pairs are in an extremely weak position to do much themselves — isolated, inexperienced, very transient, with poor English and from many different countries. They depend completely on the family with whom they stay, who can throw them out at any time without any money. The "personal" nature of their position makes it embarrassing to protest — "you feel like a child" as one commented.

These are all aggravating problems, but I think that the main problem is the same for au pairs as for most other groups who are less weak. That is, that most people have been socialised to lack the initiative, self-confidence and awareness to organise, to fight back, let alone to make a revolution. On the whole, the more oppressed a group is, the more they lack these abilities, and the more likely their activity is to be taken over by those who do have them to some degree.

This is no-one's fault — to attack the one side as apathetic and deserving what they get, or the other as manipulative and elitist, are equally half-truths and equally beside the point. We shall overcome this somehow or otherwise get nowhere.

Au pairs find themselves in the no-woman's land between being employees and being "guests". Officially they are "guests" — in an unpaid, except for some pocket money, "personal" position, in which exploitation is masked by the claim of intimacy. This position is modelled on that of women as housewives: women in sufficiently well-off families can sub-contract some of their duties to the au pair.

In reality, au pairs are often treated without any intimacy — eating separately or with the kids, not allowed to watch the TV and so on. That is, they become low paid workers living in.

They have to decide in which capacity they want to improve their conditions — whether to regularise their position as workers, or to demand more generous treatment as "guests". The two aims may involve opposed strategies. Which type of oppression do you prefer?

I would like to finish with an appeal to those who call themselves revolutionaries — libertarian, "marxist" or feminist — to face the problems of getting people to struggle for their own liberation frankly in their literature. In left-wing anarchist *and* women's liberation papers, struggles are often described as autonomous and under the control of the people involved, when they are not or only partly so. This may be explicitly lying, or implied by what is not said — in the good old Civil Service tradition of "the truth, part of the truth and nothing but part of the truth".

This is so, for example of the article on au pairs in "Spare Rib", from which nobody would realise that what was being organised was an Advice Centre by non-au pairs. To what extent is this habit self-deception, and to what extent the manipulative deception of others?

Reading all the "militant" stuff produced by all the different groups, I'm sure plenty of people have the same reaction as me: "Ah, it's all happening — struggles here, struggles there, struggles struggles everywhere: Except here, where I am, and people grumble a bit but that's about it. Are we in the same world?"

The self-confidence which lies give us is illusory, and most people see through them. R-r-r-revolutionary militancy is one of the drugs which we might as well give up.

Stephan.

*continued from page 18*

This is even more apparent in the French language where all objects are divided into masculine and feminine articles. Though not so blatant in the English language it remains implicit to it.

Given the slump in the world's economy and the concomitant slump in the movements of the 'left' after the late 60's boom, we can't expect to make much headway at this time. The problem for Libertarian groups is the same for other 'left' groups who don't share our aims. As male membership grows so will the concentration on 'male' issues. It is not accidental then that women are always discussed in the same breath as sex and the family, while men are discussed in terms of work and politics.

We all agree that the revolution means more than just removing the capitalists' control over our work in favour of workers councils. — That's why these problems are so important, it's half our lives.

I haven't offered any solutions, I don't think I can. This is a social problem, though self-flagellation is not entirely ruled out, at least until we've all agreed that there is a problem and try to do something about it.

As I've covered a wide area in a short space, I hope that other people will take up the discussion. Sheila Ritchie.

Recommended — 'Anarchism — the Feminist Connection' by Peggy Kornegger. Reprint available from Alison Malet 1 Lynnewood Place, Dundee. 5p + postage. Also available from Alison Malet: *Libertarian Women's Network Newsletter*.



## Problems of Socialism *continued from page 3*

fantasies, and who identify with the male ego — men have more intelligent conversations than women, who only want to talk about boyfriends. — They might not see the lack of women members as a problem at all, but rather feel other women would be a threat to their 'privileged' position.

Then there is a problem of the men themselves. Many men are afraid of approaching women for fear that they might be thought sexist. Or (un)consciously are you relieved when she doesn't come back? Some men (and women) feel much more comfortable with their own sex.

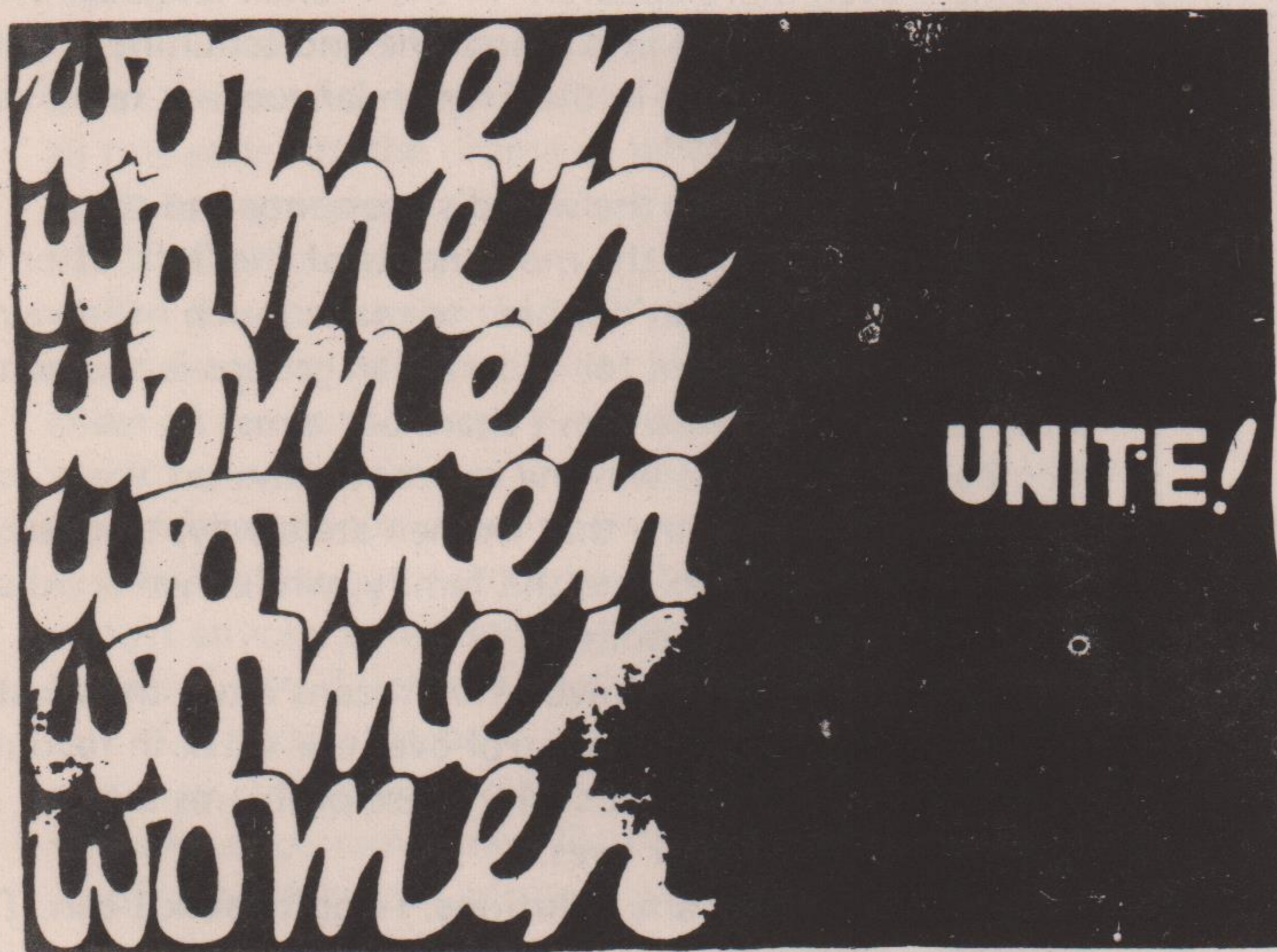
Then a group like SR expects a high level of consciousness and commitment from its members. Many women who are made to feel socially inadequate might feel they have nothing to offer. We must be careful not to put them off.

With only a few Libertarian-Communist women, we could not make much impression on the Women's Liberation Movement nor could we rush around the country making the occasional interested women feel at ease. Men will simply have to overcome their inhibitions. So will women.

### HOW FAR CAN WE GO WITH BREAKING DOWN OUR OWN ATTITUDES, FRUSTRATIONS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONING BEFORE REVOLUTION?

By making explicit exactly what we expect personally to gain from a new society. What sort of relationships do YOU want that are denied to you in capitalism? We say in our pamphlet *Introduction To Social Revolution* that only revolution can fully liberate us, but that we must try in our every day lives and our organisation to reflect as much as possible in capitalism, the sort of social relationships we would like to have after the revolution.

I think we fail. Firstly, we don't make our desires explicit in order to save us and others embarrassment, and because we are afraid of what our desires might lead to. Secondly, for men who live with women who aren't communists, there is a reluctance to upset the status quo. A reluctance — I may point out — that is not shared by women who 'raise their consciousness' through Women's Liberation.



Maybe we are afraid of freedom, afraid of the unknown in ourselves, and afraid of letting down too much of our character armour, leaving our inner-self revealed and vulnerable in a generally hostile world.

### WHAT CAN LIBERTARIANS DO TO HELP?

We want the sort of society where we are all free from economic and social constraints. Where we can relate to each other on a level that is determined solely by our feelings for

each other, without the intrusion of money or the market. If the means help determine the end, then it is important that women as well as men desire revolution and are willing to work for it.

A pamphlet *Women's Struggle in Portugal* produced by women in 'Big Flame', uncovered on their visit to Portugal that some groups of so-called revolutionary men in the worker's and neighbourhood councils expected their wives to carry on just as before. When some women in Montijo occupied their factory demanding a pay rise — that would still be giving them £15 less than the national minimum wage of £55 per month, set at that time by government legislation — their husbands, fathers and boyfriends gave them little support. Despite the owner closing the factory, the women continued to make and sell track suits.

"Many husbands, fathers and boyfriends have felt threatened by the women's militancy and have tried to discourage them. Some of the women in the factory have been forced to split up with their husbands rather than stop the struggle at the factory." The government refuses to nationalise it and they can't form a workers co-operative to get financial help because "... as women they have no legal entitlement to sign the official forms ... their husbands or fathers must do it on their behalf ... AND THEY HAVE REFUSED!"

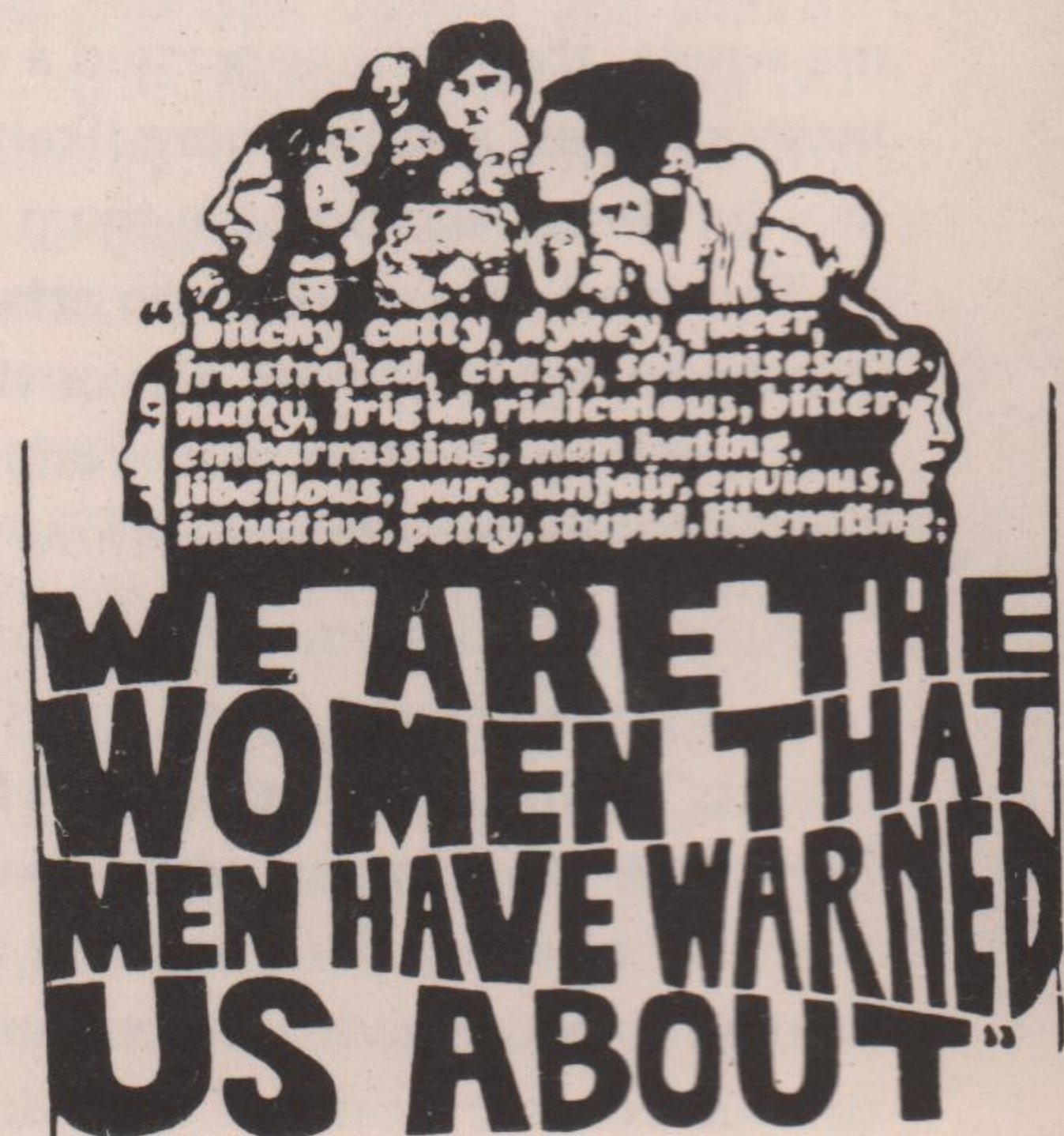
This is the danger in believing that it's all right to wait til after the revolution to break down social conditioning and why the women's movement is so important to us. So what can we do, what about Libertarian propaganda? Although Libertarians don't quite fall into the trap of 'Socialist Worker' of ignoring all aspects of life outside of the 'industrial struggles' (though I sometimes feel 'Anarchist Worker' is moving in that direction) it could be the language we use.

We're so rational, objective, scientific — male-associated words — we use that style to avoid being accused of the dreaded crime of 'utopianism', that smacks of irrational, subjective, emotional — female-associated words. A criticism of the patriarchal domination of the language of the 'left' can be found in 'Alternative Socialism' by Keith Paton pp.20-21.

He quotes Marx as an example:

"Just as philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its intellectual weapons in philosophy. And once the lightning of thought has penetrated deeply into this virgin soil of the people, the Germans will emancipate themselves and become men." Keith goes on "... up till now socialism has remained encapsulated within the patriarchal cosmos."

Unfortunately, although Keith makes the effort to avoid the 'lefty' patriarchal jargon trap himself, he instead has evolved a whole new 'hip' intellectual jargon, which at the best is amusing but at worst incomprehensible. SR are aware of the elitism created on the 'left' by the use of jargon, and have consciously tried to guard against it, but the language we use itself has evolved from our society's patriarchal heritage.



*continued on page 17*



# REVIEWS

of his life before a period in mental hospital, memory he had lost as a result of electro-convulsive therapy.

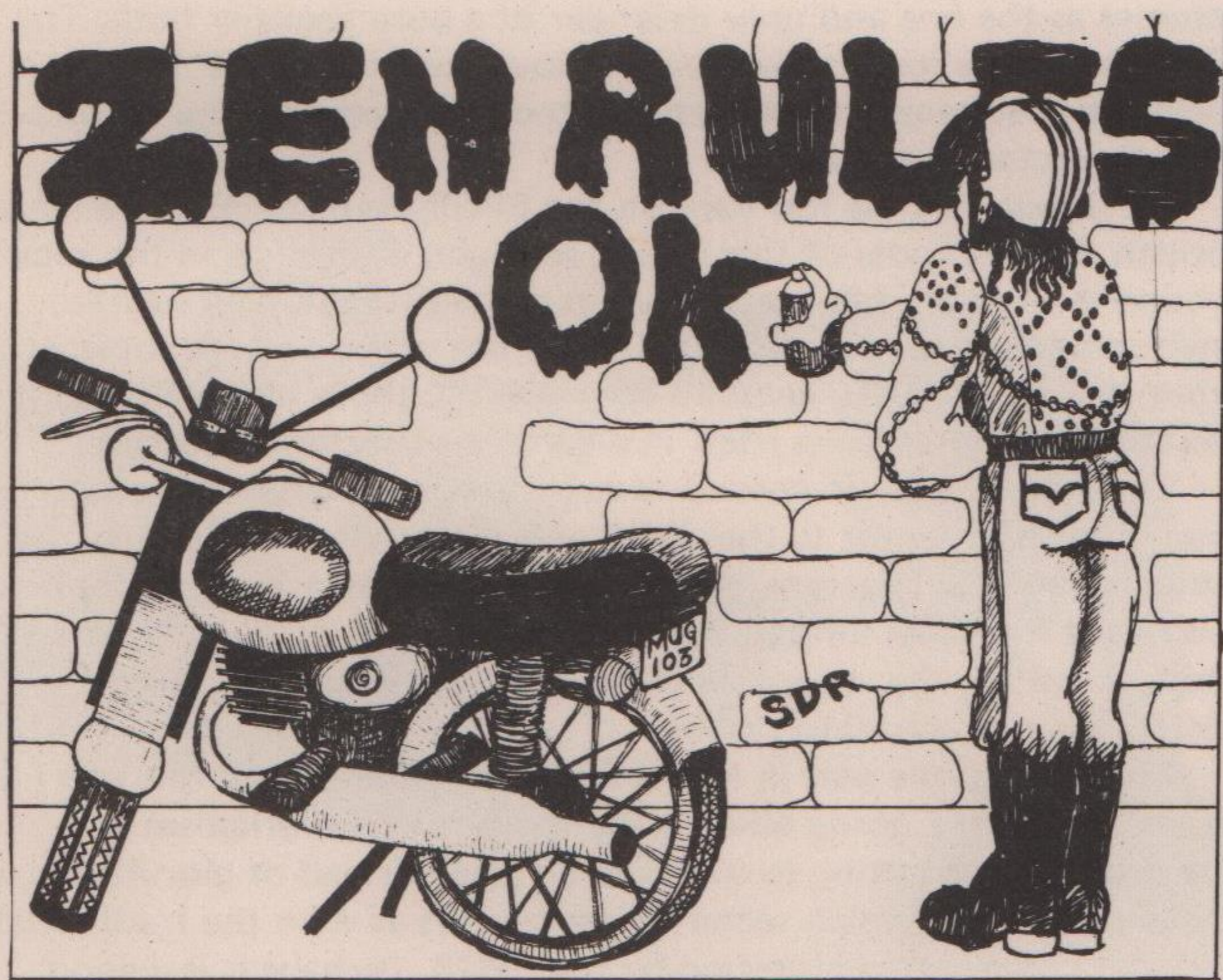
This involves an account of his philosophical investigations in this earlier time, and also an attempt to apply these investigations to the problem of the relation between man and technology, instanced particularly by motorcycles.

This account is necessarily self-conscious, but because it is related in terms of his real quest for understanding this does not seem wrong as it normally would. Starting from a background in philosophy, both Western and Hindu, and a job teaching English, he follows the question 'What is Quality?' — in writing and elsewhere.

His account of his teaching experience provides a caustic analysis of the 'education' system, but soon he leaves this and, by way of Poincare and others, comes to the pre-Socratic 'sophists'. It has been commented that "all philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato". An interesting version of this occurs in Dave Brown's "The Illusions of Solidarity", where we are told that 'the revolution all goes back to Aristotle'.

Sohn-Rethel explains this by saying that, although the Classical Greeks did not develop capitalism, they did develop a substantial commodity and money system. Hence the developing capitalist commodity economy took Plato and others as its philosophical spokesmen.

If this is true, we must side with Pirsig and against Brown. For the position developed is an open attack on Platonism. In fact Pirsig uses



for his old self the name 'Phaedrus', Socrates' supposed antagonist in one of Plato's dialogues.

His position is that the despised sophists were correct in asserting that there was a necessary value-judgement prior to any analytical process, and that the later writers were wrong to put analysis (called 'dialectic', but not the same as that of Marx and Hegel) above it.

Pirsig goes on to apply this theory to machines, showing how value plays an important part in our relation to them, and how things go wrong when we neglect them. Hence the title.

One might characterise this theory as 'idealist' and so dismiss it. To do so would be wrong. In the sense of idealism as a philosophical theory the point is rather that he attacks the framework in which idealism and other systems have meaning.

In the social sense it is undoubtedly true. He has no sense of the reality of work. It is all very well to talk of 'quality' in building or repairing motorcycles, but it has little relevance to the man who has to screw on so many nuts per hour if he wants a decent wage. It is significant that 'Phaedrus' means 'wolf' and it is as a 'lone wolf', a creature of the mountains' that Pirsig sees himself.

But motorcycles are not made on the mountain. They are made in factories by people Pirsig would probably see as 'sheep'.

In the earlier period, this neglect of a social dimension was inevitable. He was part of the 'beat generation', or possibly shortly after, when the passivity of the workers meant that all opposition was necessarily personal. The problem is that in his later reflections he has not overcome, or even recognised, this limitation.

PHIL McSHANE

REVIEW: URBAN DEVASTATION: The Planning of Incarceration Solidarity Pamphlet. 25p + post, from 34 Cowley Rd, Oxford.

This pamphlet, briefly but capably, describes and analyses the changes that have taken place in the cities of Britain established by the Victorian industrialists. It shows how the rigid functional hierarchy displayed in Victorian cities, as a result of the complete dominance of the then powerful British capitalists, has given way to something akin to 'organised chaos' under modern bureaucratic capitalism.

The important hierarchy of functions expressed in distinct differences and grades of buildings and roads, allowed people in the old cities a definite sense of locality, and an ability to travel around without difficulty, merely by reading the 'visual message' of the city architecture. This valuable attribute has now been exchanged for more spacy and hygienic architecture which however totally lacks any consistent visual hierarchy.

Anyone can sense this when thrown into confusion, as a newcomer, to one of today's big cities with their maze of ring roads, one way streets, urban motorways, windswept bridges and dangerous underpasses, where a degree in reading signposts or maps is essential to find your way around.

All this, the author contends, is a result, not simply of more private car ownership, but of the conflict of powerful classes and social groups, where none are strong enough to mould the city completely in their own interests.

The corollary of this, is that the solution lies in the majority, the working class, taking control and democratically restructuring the city in their own interests. This solution however, is difficult precisely because the modern city physically (as capitalism socially) separates and divides the different social groupings within the working class, ie. old and young, married and single, black and white, blue and white collar etc. This whole process is well illustrated throughout the pamphlet with photographs and diagrams.

In examining these changes the author comes to reject the views of some past (and present?) libertarians who, reacting against the Victorian city, suggested that a libertarian socialist society would completely disperse the existing urban set-up and base itself on largely rural communes. Whilst I think these views have correctly been rejected as impractical today, it is a pity that the author then holds back from committing himself to the principle of decentralisation.

An examination of the trend of urban development on a national and continental level shows an extreme process of concentration and centralisation paralleling the concentration and centralising of capital in huge private and state monopolies. This trend is proving both socially and ecologically damaging and I can see no good reason for not committing ourselves to a programme of decentralisation in opposition to it.

The exact form and extent of that decentralisation would have to be determined by the socialist majority, but decentralisation in principle would seem to be an essential objective in guiding our day-to-day struggles against capitalism.

The conclusions of the pamphlet are then rather weak, giving no hints as to how the social and physical division of working people in the city might be overcome, nor any positive insights into the great potential for reorganising urban life in a libertarian socialist society. Still the basis for further discussion on these issues is laid and the pamphlet is worth reading for that purpose alone.

Mike Ballard.

—subvertisement—

**SOCIAL REVOLUTION**

is typeset by

*Bread 'n Roses*

c/o 16 St Leonards Road, Surbiton, Surrey

telephone (01) 582 8248

**Aberdeen Peoples Press**

cheap and friendly printers  
for political and community groups

*rapid delivery* to any part of GB

for more details and prices ring

Aberdeen 321857 (weekdays)



THE MONUMENT ROBERT BARLTROP PLUTO PRESS £3.90

It was a happy chance that Robert Barltrop should have sub-titled this book "The Story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain" (SPGB). For story though it might be, history it certainly is not. What it is is a highly personal account of the SPGB's 70-odd years in which Barltrop displays his not inconsiderable talent as a writer and his gift for anecdote.

Unfortunately it is also a book badly marred by Barltrop's attempts at self-justification, so that — particularly in the final sections — anecdote takes over almost completely from any pretence to be writing history at all.

In the *Foreword* Barltrop says: "I offer an assurance that every fact is as I have stated it." The assurance might be offered but it is absolutely worthless. There are 'facts' in his books which are lies — and which Barltrop knows to be lies.

Talking of the group which broke from the SPGB and which later took part in the formation of Social Revolution, for example, he writes: "In the background, astonishingly, was the influence of the Party's old adversary The Social Science Association . . ." (p.182). Astonishing indeed!

What makes *The Monument* such an odd book is that the bulk of it was written from a critical standpoint after Barltrop (who at one stage went under the name of Coster) had resigned from the SPGB in 1960. Tagged on at the end there are then some concluding chapters in which, along with a one-sided and eccentric account of events in the SPGB during the nineteen-sixties and early seventies, Barltrop

## REVIEWS

explains how he eventually came to rejoin the Party — without ever retracting his earlier highly damaging criticisms!

The critical theme running through the first three-quarters and more of the book is that the SPGB is a political organisation which gradually over the years lost its working class identity. One aspect of this is supposed to have been the replacement of earlier generations of self-educated working men (sic.) in the ranks of the SPGB by those who passed through the mill of 'higher education' in post-war years.

This is not very convincing — for if Barltrop thinks there is any way to get educated at a university other than educating oneself, he should go and try it for himself. His argument mainly hinges, however on the Second World War and the SPGB's response to it and the sections which deal with the War and its dress-rehearsal in Spain were for me the most absorbing part of the whole book.

I well remember the deep sense of shame I felt when, as a member of the SPGB several years ago, I first realised that the Party's opposition to the Second World War had not been all that it was cracked up to be. As Barltrop himself makes clear, "from June 1940 the *[Socialist] Standard* no longer printed anti-war material" (p.107) — the concrete form which the SPGB's opposition to the war took being to ignore it!

Despite a declaration of principles which committed (and still commits) the SPGB to wage class war on the capitalist class and its lackeys and to use revolutionary violence where it proves necessary for the "overthrow of privilege", most members of the Party were by the time of the Second World War out-and-out pacifists. Hauled before conscientious objectors' tribunals, "Almost unfailingly, the members replied that whatever the Principles appeared to say they would not fight, even for socialism." (p.115)

One has to be careful about Barltrop's approach here. Part of what he is saying is that "pacifism was, and remains, almost entirely a middle-class (sic.) attitude." (p.117) This being the case, the SPGB's pacifism was bound to estrange it from (or to be a symptom of its already existing estrangement from) the working class. Lurking behind this is the strong implication that there were working class interests at stake in the Second World War and, although he does not mention it, it is a fact that Barltrop himself did his bit for the defence of British capital by joining the RAF.

Yet what was wrong with the SPGB's pacifism was obviously not that the Party refused to fight in support of British capital, nor that it estranged the Party from the working class. Socialists must always be prepared to accept isolation from the rest of the working class as the price to pay for adhering to communist principles when workers are behaving in an anti-socialist manner. What was wrong with the SPGB's

pacifism was that it flies in the face of all class-consciousness.

Even cranks like the Jehovah's Witnesses had the courage to go to jail when they stood by their principles and admitted their readiness to fight in a 'holy war' before the conscientious objectors' tribunals. Not so the SPGB. If SPGBers had simply been lying in their teeth and simulating pacifism in order to trick the tribunals, that would have been fine. But, as Barltrop explains, "Many of the members were telling the truth" (p.115) and the SPGB as an organisation "had allowed inroads to be made by pacifism". (p.117)

Having made criticisms like these, we might think it odd that Barltrop should have rejoined the SPGB. But surely it is nowhere near so odd as the fact that the SPGB's head office should itself have been distributing cut-price copies of *The Monument*.

Why should an organisation which has always fiercely insisted that it has no leaders be so eager to distribute a book which describes E.Hardy as "the undisputed king-pin of the Party" (p.99)?

Up to a point it can, of course, be put down to sheer daftness. There was, after all, no indication that the luminary from the Executive Committee who reviewed *The Monument* in glowing terms in the December 1975 *Socialist Standard* had understood the first thing about what Barltrop had written.

But there is more to it than this. At the centre of the SPGB is a group of tired, old men who have given their lives to the Party. They have given their lives and got back practically nothing in return, so that the chance to now see at least their names and a few of their exploits recorded in print has proved altogether too seductive to let pass by.

Still, for all its shortcomings, the SPGB comes across in *The Monument* as well as in real life as a socialist group. We would be the last people to deny it the credit it deserves. Among its other achievements were to pioneer the analysis of Russia as a state capitalist economy in the English-speaking world and to steadfastly uphold the idea of what socialism really means during the long years of Labour Party and 'Communist' Party ascendancy.

To recognise this, however, is not at all the same thing as concurring with the ridiculous airs and graces which the SPGB assumes as the one and only defender of a pure socialist faith. The SPGB has made its mistakes (and serious mistakes at that) and the socialism it adheres to has been spotted and blemished by all sorts of strange, sectarian accretions.

We should not be too hard on the SPGB even for its sectarianism, though, for the roots of this lie not so much in itself as in the society around it. A small, besieged group in an overwhelmingly hostile environment, it has reacted just like all the other isolated socialist groupings (councilists, anarcho-communists, those in the Bordigist tradition) by enveloping itself in a protective sectarian cocoon.

To say that what is needed today is a non-sectarian socialist organisation different to the SPGB and the others is, of course, to state the obvious, but one does not get rid of sectarianism simply by wishing it away. As long as the conditions which produce it persist (and, above all, this means working class hostility to socialism) sectarianism is bound to remain.

But at least one sees in Social Revolution (and I say this as a non-member of SR) a group alive to the dangers of sectarianism and consciously attempting to avoid its pitfalls, instead of glorifying in the exclusiveness which sectarianism confers as with the traditional socialist organisations typified by the SPGB. Perhaps it is a good thing that people have started to write books about the story of the SPGB because that is where the SPGB belongs — in the history books. The future of socialism must lie with other types of groups.

JOHN CARLTON.

### "ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE"

BY ROBERT PIRSIG Corgi 95p

The first thing to be said about this book is that it is not mainly to do with Zen, and, as the author says "It isn't very factual about motor-cycles either". The title is a deliberate reference to the famous "Zen in the Art of Archery" by Herrigel.

There are several things which it is about. The first is an account of a journey by the author and his son across part of the USA on a motor-bike. On this level alone it is successful. The description of how it feels to ride, compared to driving a car, the account of the changing scene and weather and the close relation of the rider to his environment, make it clear why many people are so excited by bikes, in a way they would not be if they were used just for getting from A to B. Reviewers much more familiar with bikes than I have been impressed with it on this level.

But the real importance of the book lies in three related themes. There is an account of the author's attempt to come to terms with his own past. As the journey progresses he remembers more and more

*continued on page 19*