

THE Sun

Saturday, May 22 1982

14p THE PAPER THAT SUPPORTS OUR BOYS

LONDON WORKERS BULLETIN NO.12

Alternative Economic Strategy, Print, Rail, Poland, Rural Life, Self-Management, Technology, Council Communism, IDB Conference, Assemblies more tiny unreadable type than ever before, ho hum.

THAT'S RIGHT BOYS,
OVER THE TOP!
I WANT TO GO FOR A SNAP ELECTION
AND CLING ON TO POWER ON YOUR BACKS.
YOUR DEATHS WON'T BE FOR NOTHING!



ER, I'M NOT SURE HOW
TO MAKE POLITICAL
CAPITAL OUT OF THIS
WAR

President Leopoldo Galtieri
The Presidential Palace
Buenos Aires
The Argentine

Margaret Thatcher, P.M.
10, Downing Street
London S.W.1.
United Kingdom

10/3/82.

My Dear Friend and Ally,

THREE OF MY MATES WERE KILLED
FOR THIS FUCKING FLAG

I always had the greatest admiration for yourself and your regime, we seem to share so many of the same ideas!

However, we have been having a lot of trouble lately, as I hear you have too. You know the sort of thing, the ungrateful scum we rule rioting, subversives constantly plotting against us, the usual trouble a firm strong government encounters. Like your good self, we've tried all the usual things, repressive legislation, police murders, state terrorism, but things get no better.

However, I think I've thought of a mutually beneficial solution to our troubles.

As you've probably heard, we've been progressively building up our armed forces, (you never know when they'll be needed), people are starting to wonder what it's all for, and of course, you must be aware of all that military hardware we've sold you, to protect yourself against internal unrest and the International Communist Conspiracy. And you must be aware that your nation has laid claim to our Falkland Isles ever since our friend Juan Peron took control of your country. Well what I'm suggesting is that we hold a war, as soon as is convenient. There's nothing like war and blind nationalism to take the rabble's minds off how we exploit them, and I think this will help us both no end. Of course, we'll need to lose a few ships and soldiers, and a lot of Falkland Islanders will be killed, but I'm sure you will agree the ends will justify the means.

Naturally, we'll have to "win" in the world's eyes, but we'll let you earn a reputation as a tough government too. Besides, when it's over we can arrange to share all the minerals that lie under the sea there, and further strengthen our regimes, and when the fuss has died down we can carry on selling you all the arms you need.

Time is of the essence, as we have an election on May 6th, and I want to get as many people rallying around me as possible by then. By the way, if you want to get a better reputation internationally, drop round for a chat about elections, they're nothing to be afraid of, and the mob fall for it all the time, it's kept us in control for centuries. So you are cordially invited to a war, off the Falkland Isles, in a couple of weeks.

Yours

Margaret Thatcher

R.S.V.P.

LET'S BURN
THE FUCKER

YEAH, WE'D DO BETTER
STRINGING UP SOME POLITICIANS

LONDON WORKERS GROUP

The London Workers Group is an open group of militants working or unemployed in the London area. We meet every Tuesday night — see details below. All meetings are open and anyone is welcome to attend except party recruiters. Our aim is to establish and encourage communication between workers in different industries and workplaces in order to :

1. learn from each others experiences and develop our understanding of industry and trade unions within capitalist society.
2. encourage the establishment of autonomous workers groups within workplaces and amongst the unemployed. The purpose of these groups is to encourage solidarity and to work to spread and intensify struggles. This process implies working for a wider understanding of the need for a revolutionary approach to work and the class struggle.
3. seek out and maintain links with other revolutionaries. We encourage the formation of open regionally based groups of revolutionaries to complement workplace groups and activities. The purpose of these groups is to overcome the isolation of individuals or groups of revolutionaries, in workplaces or unemployed, and thus assist them to strengthen and develop their activities as revolutionaries through practical solidarity. To this end
4. produce propaganda including a bulletin containing industrial news, workplace reports, analyses and theoretical articles.
5. and provide support where asked for.

The LWG meets weekly at the Metropolitan Pub, 95 Farringdon Rd, EC1. (Two mins. from Farringdon tube). Every 4-6 weeks we hold a public meeting on a previously advertised subject. Meetings at 8.15 pm.

CONTACT US C/O: 11 LEYDEN ST. E.1 (Post Only).

CONTENTS

Alternative Economic Strategy	Page One	Is Workers Self-Management Just Self Abuse (Two)	Page Fourteen
Job Reports Print	Page Four	Industrial Technology—Less or None ?	Page Sixteen
Rail	Page Seven	Council Communism Today	Page Nineteen
Holidays in Poland	Page Eight	In the Course of Time	Page Twenty-Two
Country Life	Page Ten	International Discussion Bulletin	Page Twenty-Two
No Job Report	Page Eleven	Toulouse Conference Report	Page Twenty-Four
Is Workers Self-Management Just Self Abuse (One)	Page Twelve	More on bloody Assemblies in Spain	Page Twenty-Five

It's been nine months since the last issue of the bulletin, but you can stop holding your breaths now comrades. . . . er, comrades. . . . hullo . . . comrades ? . . .

Anyhow its the usual old ragbag. dynamic accounts of proletarian self-activity and deep theoretical rubbi insights. Our cover was ripped off from a poster produced by someone in Unpopular Books and the letter from Margaret Thatcher was sent to us by Toxic Graffiti and also ripped off. Our thanks to both of them.

The two pieces on Self-Management were rewritten from the two presentations at our meeting on the subject — the best we've had in some time. The article on the AES started life as a similar presentation — but then got out of control.

If you're not on the mailing list to receive the bulletin or details of advertised meetings drop us a line. We'd love any contributions to the ongoing task of making the LWG bulletin — the only bulletin in the world produced by the LWG ! — even more unique. Comments and criticisms are also appreciated.

We've heard from a couple of people that they never received replies to letters sent to us. If you write please note the address above — however if this is our fault our sincere apologies.

Financial contributions to the bulletin — especially towards postage — gratefully received. However if you know of anyone who'd like to receive it let us (or them) know. After all it's free.

This issue represents yet another advance in technology being partly typeset before being electro-stencilled and run off on our wonderful duplicator. Anyone wanting duplicating done — not fascist or reactionary material obviously — please contact us.

Unpopular books are a non-profit mail order book and pamphlet distributors and publishers which are setting themselves up at the moment. The intention is to produce a catalogue/review three times a year, listing books and pamphlets available - but also containing articles, reviews, even a few jokes. The first catalogue is in production at the moment (in fact as soon as I've typed this I've got to type some more of it). If you want a copy its free — just send us a 20½p stamp to cover postage. It will be worth it. Over the summer we'll be publishing a number of pamphlets, hopefully of interest to LWG bulletin readers. The first — a reprint of 'A Modest Proposal for How the Bad Old Days Will End' is available now (28p inc. post).

Unpopular Books, CLB, Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London, E1.

Alternative Economic Strategy

REFORM or

COUNTER-REVOLUTION

In recent months there has been renewed speculation about the imminent demise of the Labour Party. Whatever the reasons advanced — Foot's charismatic leadership, the challenge of an even more mediocre centrist leadership in the SDP, the right wing victory over the left, or the failure of the right wing to defeat the left etc. etc. — Labour seems to have become an outside chance as an election winner. Doubts even extend to the viability of Labourism as a candidate for future government at all, as its working class vote shrinks, and the collapse of the Left's "Forward March" (which peaked with Benn's defeat in the deputy leadership elections), and of the evangelical force of born again labourism among the

scattered tribes of leftism, seems to destroy its most likely chance of renewal.

It might be argued that all of this has reduced the famous Alternative Economic Strategy (AES), to the status of a historical footnote. By such an argument "What if the AES had been applied?" should join such idle questions as "What if Lenin hadn't died?" or "What if Tariq Ali really existed?". To believe this would be a mistake. As ideology the AES is being applied right now, just as in the same terms Lenin casts as long a shadow as he ever did. As for Tariq Ali — well two out of three isn't bad.

It's certainly too early to write Labour off as an electoral force. After all, one strategy on its 'hard' left anticipates a second, even third, term of opposition, against the Tories or a centrist coalition, in the process destroying the current leadership, allowing time for a credible left leadership to replace it, and for the build up of social and economic conditions desperate enough to stir that popular discontent, in face of which a (by current standards extremist) left alternative strategy will become politically acceptable. Of course this is all far too risky for the majority of Labour politicians, who are interested in the rewards of power right now. But even laying aside the pipe dreams of these 'hard' and 'soft' demagogues as a lot of (crystal) balls, there seems no especial reason why Labour shouldn't take its turn as government in the future. Though of course anything is possible from a party which can elect a compost heap as its leader.

If we are right in arguing that the AES is still a threat to the working class, it's necessary to understand that this threat has two separate thrusts, taking two quite different forms. As a 'real' strategy to be pursued by a future government, it only exists now as a gang war, conducted through competitions in econometric fortune telling and draft manifestoes, to decide which gang of Labour racketeers will elect the "Capo of Capos" and determine the code of the Family. More important today is its role as an ideological justification for

'Socialism' — the intellectual blueprints for consolidating the new 'electoral base' Labour needs to develop in the ambitions and dissatisfaction of Welfare State functionaries (the 'new' left) and among the mass of increasingly deskilled and powerless workers.

ELECTORAL BASE

All political parties, SDP included, depend on building an electoral base of hardcore support, on various social strata and localised interest groups, from which to make a bid for the largely negative 'floating vote' (the majority which only votes against an existing government rather than for an alternative). Traditionally Labour has represented the interests of Industrial as opposed to Financial capital. As capital has become more monolithic — breeding Multinational Monopoly on the one hand, and the need for increasing state intervention to underwrite the system on the other — Labour has become the representative of nationalised and national Industry (instead of Monopoly Capital), of the State planning "infrastructure" (roads, urban development, 'manpower services' inc. education and health, Technological research etc. etc. etc.) rather than of the buccaneering Entrepreneurial Capital (dominated by the investment power of financial institutions) which will spearhead any genuine future economic boom — however unlikely that seems at the moment.

The conflict between these different interests is quite real, one of those famous contradictions capitalism cannot overcome. So "The demand of capital is not simply to find leaders or a majority but also to find an opposition – to provide itself with a focus for its own uncertainties, and set them on display" Hence the need for political "bipolarisation –the alternation of two parties whose action is quasi-identical, but supposed to represent different solutions . . . it makes for more effective government than the centrist game. " (Guerre Sociale - The question of the State). With the collapse of the "two party" consensus politics of the fifties and sixties along with the end of the post-war economic boom, the need now for Labour and Tories is to recreate this bipolarity, a need that's more urgent with the emergence of centrist political forces (the potential coalition of Labour right, SDP/Libs, and Tory wets.) Labour needs a new radical image to oppose to Thatcherite Tory radicalism. "

The Labour strategy must take account of the special interests of its electoral base – this is complicated by the need to recreate this base. Traditionally the base was composed from the 'Labour Movement' and lower and middle level State functionaries of one kind or another. It is the spectacular rise of the latter that provides the forces of the 'new left'. The incorporation of the post-68 "alternative socialwork" left, (self-help/housing/co-op/counselling groups) into the lower levels of the "Local State", has brought this strata, still on its long march through the institutions, to the slopes of "real" municipal and national power. (The Ken Livingstone effect.)

It is the "Labour Movement" component which is in decline. 'Movement' was in one sense always a misnomer - the strength of the organised Labour movement lay in those sectors of the working class 'fixed' by trade or occupation (broadly speaking Craft Unionism) and those semi-skilled and casual workers 'fixed' by their concentration in the new working class 'ghettoes' (around the docks for example, or in single industry towns). This traditional working class is itself changing – caught between capitalist restructuring (Industrial and Urban) but equally changed by its relative increase in material welfare (particularly since the war). This and Labours own accession to being a 'natural party of government' has undercut any interest workers had in supporting it. Labour presides as firmly as the Tories over the barriers to further material gains (most visibly through wage controls and taxes, but more generally as the 'visible' face of 'the system'). In material terms Labour are unable to offer anything more than the Tories – they are only capable of redistributing the shares in 'the cake' – in favour of public sector employees for example, as well as by taxing everybody equally heavily, rich as well as poor. Reflecting this much lamented decline in its 'working class' base, different sections of the party have different ideas on what to do. For the right its the pursuit of the interests of the relatively more affluent sectors of the working class, in competition with the centrist parties. Thus someone like Bob Mellish, now become chairman of the Dockland Development Corporation, can see this capitalist urban development as the logical extension of Labour municipal development plans in the past, and talk about building homes for "young married couples". Clearly invoking the stereotype of the 'Decent' working class family man. (Its still not fashionable in leftist circles to point out how this sterotype is as reactionary as its counterpart, the tory blue rinsed housewife and mother. Both backbones of one of the most reactionary capitalist institutions, the 'Strong Family'). On the basis of this sterotype was constructed the edifice of the welfare state (family allowances, pension and social security rights tied to the 'family wage', council house policies favouring the 'nucleur family' etc.)

The Labour left, itself a product of the changes in 'class composition' since the war, can at least see the folly in pursuing this mirage. Quite apart from the immense hatred of Labour urban management that has built up in the inner city communities that have been devastated by it, the changes in capitalism since the war have precisely broken down the central position of the nucleur family. The post-war boom saw large sectors of the working class recruited into the work-force, most notably women and young people. This not only provided these sectors with relative financial autonomy from the 'family wage' – thus eroding the economic importance of the family – but allowed the development of Youth and Womens cultures, which not only developed the new awareness these sectors discovered about their roles in a system not geared to their participation, but also allowed the development of these areas as distinct markets for selling commodities (take only the fashion markets for example). The left has thus sought to develop a new community in these sectors, (not merely women and youth, but black and asian communities, and among the new layers of the 'reserve army' created by unemployment).

In the short run Labours hopes of electoral victory lie in retaining some hold on its disappearing traditional vote, while developing its 'oppositional' stance in these new disadvantaged' working class strata. Hence Foots juggling act between left and right. Hence also the centrality of the attack on unemployment as an election issue. Hence all the ideological apparatus of the AES and talk of a more Just society and work for all.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY In the light of this background, lets look at the AES. I talked above of the two different forms of the AES, as ideology and as 'real' governmental strategy. The best place to start is with the former. A typical example is the book 'The Road From Thatcherism' by CP hack Sam Aaronovitch. Starting from the premise that "as things stand now and are likely to be for a considerable time, to have a job, to earn ones keep, to establish ones worth amongst workmates, to acquire and use skills and abilities, to advance in ones work, is important for self esteem and sense of purpose" (So speaks a 'principle lecturer in Economics at the Polytechnic of the South Bank!'), the AES is designed to repair the damage to Industry caused by Thatcherism, and get everyone back to work. Just what we all want, right? But this is just the start – the aim is to move from a system based on increased accumulation by a small sector of capitalists to a "system based on satisfying peoples needs". Workers will "control" their own work, and have the opportunity to develop themselves with the additional resources produced by expansion. "Why should we want the output of goods and services to grow at a faster rate in Britain than in the past?" Because "there is much unsatisfied need for both goods and services and because new needs are always arising, especially if more and more people are given the chance to develop their abilities". (So speaks a 'Communist'). Of course we'll need (centrally planned) effort put into energy, conservation and new renewable forms of energy so as not to eat up non-renewable resources; and the use of social policy and directed investment to prevent pollution and so on thats enough of that. What it all boils down to is obvious; the further development of capitalism, but on an equitable and socially conscious basis, thus encouraging the participation by all that is vital if its to be possible. And at this point floods in all the leftist newspeak – "accountability" "democracy" "control" "planning" "social responsibility" etc. etc. Thus the AES will attack the "waste of human and material resources which takes place through mass unemployment and under

used capacity – to use and develop them to meet the needs of people”, its aim “to increase popular involvement in all areas of life, including the control of the national economy, shifting power away from big business” and “to attack poverty and class inequalities as well as discrimination based on sex and colour”

Sounds pretty hot stuff eh? Well what does the AES actually propose to achieve all of this. We now turn to the other face of the AES as ‘real’ governmental strategy. And here we run up against an immediate difficulty – there is no such thing as the AES. It is merely the name applied to a number of packages of policies (with broadly the same features, but differences according to which section of the party is speaking). Since “no such definitive policy package exists” (Micheal Meacher) its possible for every section of the ‘broad church’ of Labour to have its own flavour of AES. Here at any rate is a typical policy package, designed for mass public consumption :

- *expansion of the economy to raise output, restore full employment and bring about higher standards all round;

- *large increases in public spending to reactivate the economy, provide jobs both directly and indirectly, and to restore public services;

- *exchange controls to stop the city and international finance from undermining the strategy through a ‘flight from sterling’ and financial crisis;

- *import controls to prevent an immediate trade deficit and to allow Britain time to plan its trade in negotiation with the rest of the world;

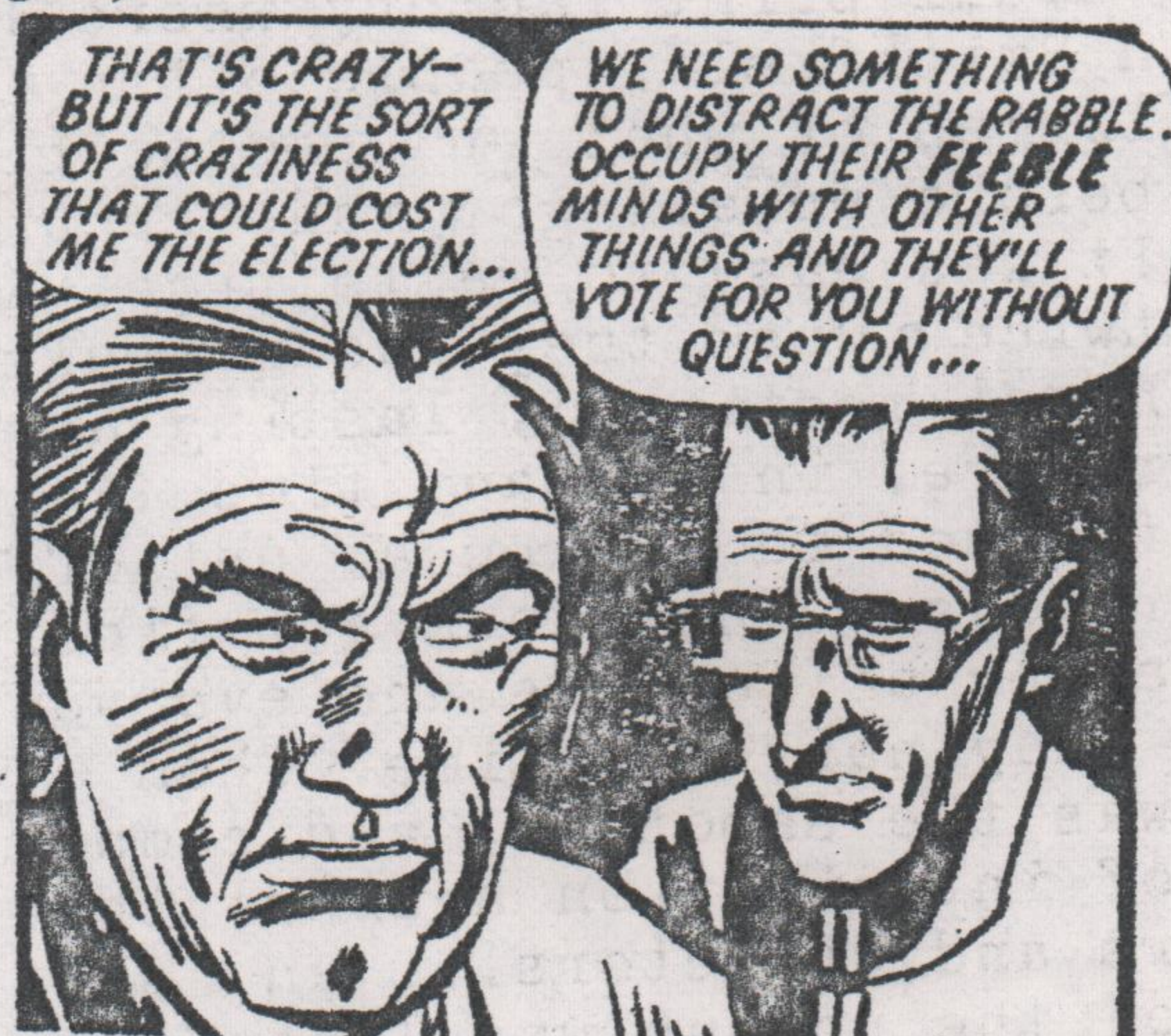
- *public powers over the investment policies of the pension funds and other semi-socialised wealth in the hands of the City institutions until such time as they can be taken into common ownership; and

- *industrial regeneration through expansion of the economy and publicity (sic) directed investment; an extension of common ownership of large companies; and compulsory planning agreements, negotiated between the government, large companies and their workers, to bring about investment production and employment powers in the public interest.

(Manifesto.A radical strategy for Britain’s future.PanBooks)

A lot of this will be (all too) familiar to workers as the sort of crap the Callaghan government came to power on. Equally its obviously “a return to the Keynesian policies on which our postwar recovery was founded.”. Now obviously there’s an enormous gap between this set of policies and the ambitions outlined in the ‘ideological’ strategy. Of course “the strategy would not work miracles. It would not eliminate inflation, make industries efficient overnight or abolish low-paid boring work. But it would create employment, fund social investment, and open up the way for a longer term development of our economy through common ownership. It could also provide the base for building a more open and diverse society with a wider range of individual and social choice than we have had in the trap of an unplanned international market.” (Manifesto) Ah I see – its only going to provide the ‘basis’ for a more equitable capitalism. The gap between the ambitions and actual measures isn’t surprising then. Indeed its the basis of the new consensus on the Left (inside and outside the Labour party) which is developing the ideological AES. Its the difference between a Labour party which has little to offer and so promises a lot, and a ‘broad left’ which has nothing to offer and so has learnt to speak in a reasonable and realistic tone in order to be listened to. I’ll return to the Left later. Does the strategy lead to socialism then? Not even its supporters would claim this – indeed for some its an advantage. Because its not full blooded socialism it “could gain the support of millions who do not think of themselves as socialist” – but of course “the AES

certainly represents a challenge to the power of private capital and therefore contributes to a strategy for socialism” (Geoff Hodgson).



'REAL STRATEGY' I stated above that as real strategy the AES exists as a gang war between different power groups within the party. The term 'real' here shouldn't mislead - the results of this strategy wont automatically be applied by a Labour govt. The actual strategy of a labour govt. next time has already been stitched up between the current leadership and the TUC. The only open question is the fate of the current leadership. Someone may well kick Foots walking stick away - but the left will only have been able to discredit him. Short of a dramatic turn of events there's no possibility of their selecting his replacement in the near future.

The new accord between current leadership and TUC was laid down last july in a document from the TUC/LP liasion committee called "Economic issues facing the next Labour Govt." This sets the real terms for govt. policy, whoever draws up the manifesto. (And Benn seems to have conceded defeat on this as well, recently leaking a draft document in order to force Foot to reject it publically, thus enabling Benn to argue that the leadership are ignoring conference decisions etc.)

The new accord is exactly like previous TUC/LP agreements such as the Social Contract with which the Callaghan Govt. was able to impose actual cuts in living standards. Even the language is the same - here is the tentative agreement on wages policy "To meet the challenge which will be posed by the operation of effective price controls negotiators within both private and public enterprises, including nationalised industries, should take into account the need to secure efficiency in the use of resources and have regard to the impact of settlements on prices". The idea is that an annual assessment be made of prospects for growth of the economy, "involving such key issues as use of resources between personal consumption, public and private investment, public services and the balance of trade". The assessment

(continued on page twenty-nine)

MAKING A BAD IMPRESSION IN PRINT

At the small print factory where I work in Smithfield, people often tell stories of what it used to be like 'before we all got made redundant.' It was easy to waste time. At least twice a week they had compulsory 'chapel meetings', lasting an hour or more, in company time. A lot of stuff used to disappear out of the warehouse. The clock got fiddled as a matter of routine and everyone worked imaginary overtime. Then there was the sabotage, and campaigns of intimidation against the managers and directors... and the power of the unions was legendary.

All this changed in 1979 when the shareholders sacked the M.D. and put a strongman in his place. The whole workforce of about 150 was dismissed and the factory closed down. Six weeks later it reopened, but only a handful of people were 'invited' back to work, and those who took up the offer are the people I work with now. There are no chapel meetings any more, but there's plenty of productivity and time-&-motion to make up for it. Every time there's a hint of trouble they threaten to close the factory down again. Not many want to call their bluff.

SPEED-UP The company recently lost its biggest contract, so they're hinting at redundancies and last week sacked two people for bad time-keeping (as a way out of paying them redundancy money). They continually try to impose a speed-up. We have to fill in a form every day for them to keep as a productivity record, with a 'Standard Minute Value' for each job and a space for us to explain 'lost' time. However, they have so far failed to make anyone give them the information they'd like.

Politics isn't discussed much. There was a leftist, but she kept it a secret. She was in a clandestine caucus in the union, but now she's gone to join a co-op in North London. This doesn't mean people don't understand what's been happening to them in recent years. They don't use terms like 'lock-out' and 'speed-up', but they're quite aware of what they are and what they're for. It's just that these days you can't risk losing your job, because it

isn't so easy these days to get another. The money's not as good as it was but it's still as good as you'll get.

PATRIOTIC UNION The NGA officials always used to help if you wanted to stop work over the heat, the cold, the wage, or the job. These days they lend a sympathetic ear to the boss when he complains about the rates and the wage bill. When the company thought it had lost an HMSO contract to a firm in Belgium, the union bent over backwards to get it back for them, proclaiming that it was a scandal to send 'British' work abroad. Now, personally I don't envy anyone who has to print shit like that, even if they come from Belgium or Mars. The commie convenor used to be a regular troublemaker and a popular hero on the shop-floor: nowadays you only visit him if you think he can do you a favour. His personal motto is: 'The gov'nor is always guilty until proven innocent' (sic). But he's still the gov'nor after all and he's got to run a viable company - hasn't he?

DEFEATISM - is a common attitude among us, and it's a by-product of defeat. People seem to feel that they've still got too much to risk losing any more. While people still have individual paths of escape - changing jobs, angling for redundancy money - they will usually take them. During the last lock-out, almost everyone found another job within a fortnight. If it happens again things will be different, and we know it: that's why some sort of direct action would have more appeal than it did six years ago. Many people have reached the stage where they have everything, and therefore nothing, to lose. Even so, the factory is a depressing place and the idea of an occupation (24 hours on the job instead of 8?) to oppose sackings would likely go down like a cup of cold sick. 90% of what is produced is useless or worse (last week I was printing exam papers for promotion in the Metropolitan Pig Force. I regularly print Zionist propaganda.) If I suggest, as I sometimes do, that we should take



the factory apart and knock off all the machines, the idea meets with instant approval. And I'm quite sure they'd do it, given the right moment.

STIR IT UP

I can't do anything on my own, but the best immediate strategy for an autonomous workers group of one is to do as much honest shit-stirring as possible. In the event of some crisis arising in the factory, it shouldn't be too hard persuading people that union channels are a waste of time, and that we can only rely on our own unity and the sympathy of workers in other parts of the industry. The function of autonomous groups, however, is not to fight for our own right to manage the workplace; it is simply to resist and then attack the regime of work. Of course nobody will do this unless they have some idea of how printing ought to be done; but I have always found that the easiest part of being a militant demagogue was getting people to agree about what wouldn't get printed if we ran the factory, and how it could be run without managers. The difficult part is putting that into a revolutionary perspective....

SCUMBONI

POSTSCRIPT:

Two days after writing the report above, the management served redundancy notices on five of the eight printers, and a similar proportion of the staff in the other departments--warehouse, clerical and finishing. They were served on the five longest-serving printers, some of whom had worked in the same factory for fifteen years and all of whom had been among those invited back after the 1979 lock-out. In the other departments, redundancy notices were handed down on a 'last in, first out' basis.

Why did they choose the 'long-servers'? Their explanation was that, quite coincidentally, these five were incapable of printing work of the high quality which the company wanted to concentrate on in future, and that in order to survive they needed to keep the youngest and least experienced printers. It would not have cost them much in redundancy pay since they had changed the company's name at the time of the lock-out and technically no-one had more than three years' service. They were

offering one weeks money for each of those years, but only up to a maximum of three years, not the fifteen years some of them had been working for the same bosses.

BLUE EYES

The printers' full-time union official steamed in almost straight away, threatening to close the firm down through a strike and official blacking unless the management agreed to negotiate on a 'last in, first out' basis. He correctly diagnosed that the bosses' real motive was a case of 'blue eyes'--they obviously thought that they would be more easily able to manipulate the three less experienced printers in case of future pay-cuts and speed-ups (they would have been mistaken.)

The management conceded this point, agreed to an improvement in the redundancy terms, and almost straight away four of the five originally picked volunteered to take the money (up to £2000) and go. The fifth redundancy was compulsory and it was me. I got £360 for 15 months service.

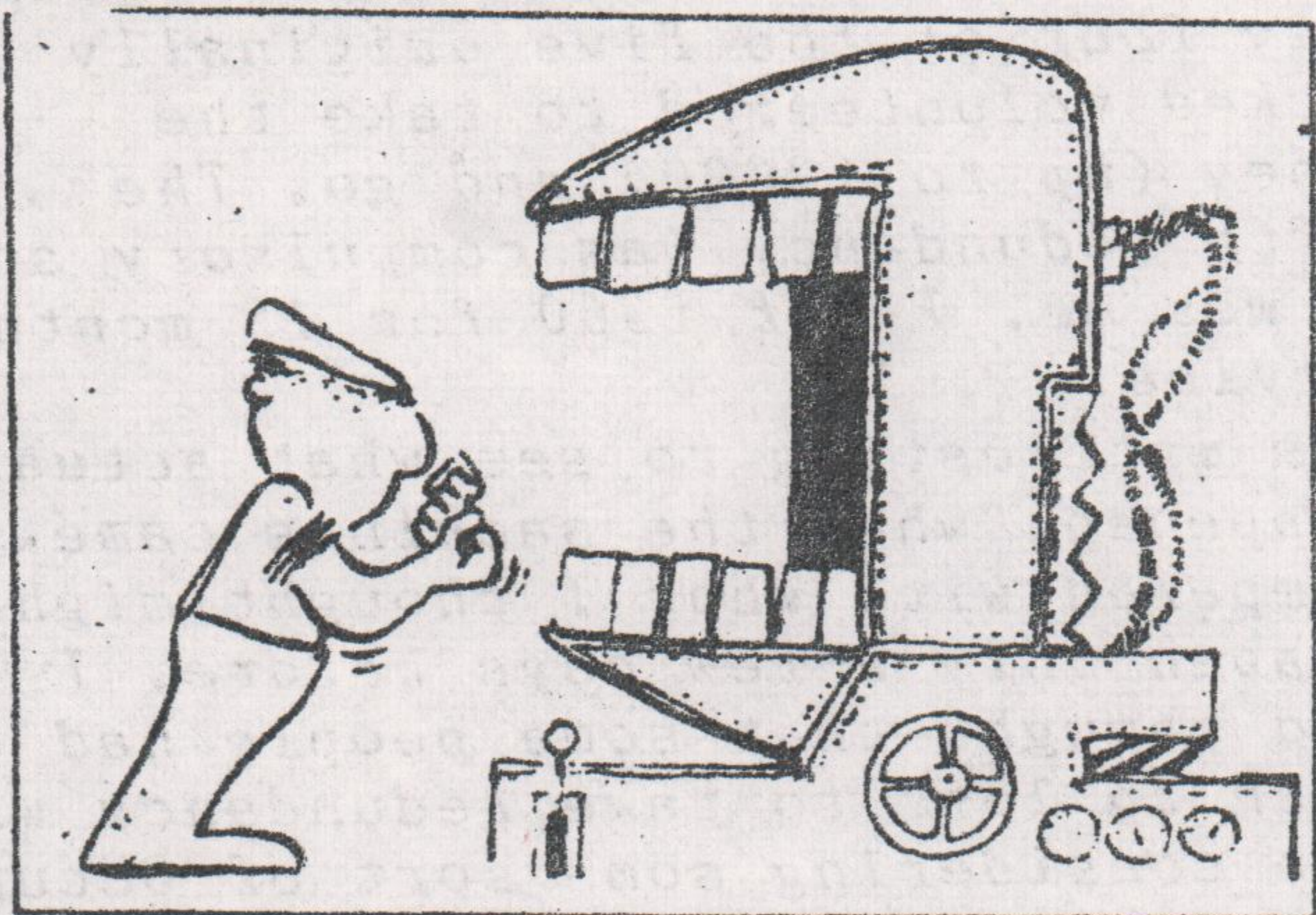
Its interesting to see what actually happened, when the sackings came, compared with what I thought might happen only a few days before. I had thought that some people had too much to lose to take redundancy without considering some sort of occupation, strike or sabotage. At first this seemed to be true. The printers unanimously decided that we should oppose the sackings--or at least the manner of them--by any means necessary, even if it meant closing the factory down and losing eight jobs instead of three or four or five. This decision was taken quite independently of the union, and we agreed that we would have to discuss this with workers in other departments, even though they would be likely to oppose industrial action. At that point, most people were saying that they simply couldn't afford to lose their jobs.

VICTIMISATION

Later, however, when the redundancy terms improved, only one of the original 5--a woman with six dependant kids to look after on her own--decided to stay, even though (like the others) she was afraid that she might be victimised as a result. Now I hear she regrets staying, and is so frigh-

tened of being sacked without compensation on some pretext or another that she's looking for another job.

The others? One or two of them will be up shit creek in a month or two if they don't find more work. They may be vaguely aware of this, but the attractions of the redundancy money, together with the fear of victimisation, and above all the prospect of getting out of that factory, was enough to persuade them to go. Having made that decision, they were very pleased about it. It was like a weight being lifted of our shoulders; not because it averted the threat of compulsory sackings, but because some of us would be giving up work for the first time in several years. You can imagine how good that would feel. By contrast, the three condemned to stay were utterly miserable.



SOME CONCLUSIONS

Firstly : printing, according to sociologists, is supposed to be one of the least alienating of the manual trades. But not a single person wanted to keep their job for its own sake. Nobody could have been less loyal to the company than they were, and the most treacherous were those who'd been there longest.

Second : perhaps conditions in the trade are not quite bad enough to force the kind of confrontations we have seen in other industries faced with closures, such as engineering and textile manufacture, where there have been several desperate occupations in recent months. Although there is wide-scale unemployment in print, the unions have regualted and managed it so efficiently that printers are unlikely to be on the dole for more than three months at a stretch. There is no such thing--yet--as permanent unemployment.

Third : the issue is not lack of jobs but lack of money. This was the attitude of everyone in the factory. Had the original redundancy terms stood, or had there been a worse prospect of geeting a wage in the near future, then there would certainly have been more of a fight. And remember there was one person who wanted to keep the job at all costs, even though she hated it. As she said herself, five years ago she would have walked out quite happily. But the notion that its important to preserve jobs per se, an idea that is put about by almost all the socialist parties, was never even discussed. We aren't that stupid.

Fourth : our instinct was to decide independently of the union how we were going to handle the sackings. When considering what action to take, we decided to ignore factory demarcation and inter-union rivalries and discuss the matter as widely as possible. This would have brought us into direct conflict with our own union, the NGA, which wanted to instruct us on industrial action, and which instructed us that anyone giving NGA negotiating secrets away to SOGAT members in the warehouse would be disciplined. Several people chose to ignore this divisive order. Strict union and departmental demarcation suits the company and suits the union officials. It does not suit the workers and in this case we were aware of it. Again, in the event enough people were prepared to go to prevent this conflict being taken to its practical conclusion (a call for autonomous action by all the workers in the factory, including organised sabotage.)

Fifth : The union officials acted predictably. A lot of bravado, a lot of shouting in the Managing Director's office, but a readiness from the beginning to accept the sackings and to be 'realistic', whether we were prepared to accept them or not. Only the terms had to be worked out. The union salvaged more of its credibility than it deserved to in this case, because the crunch never came.

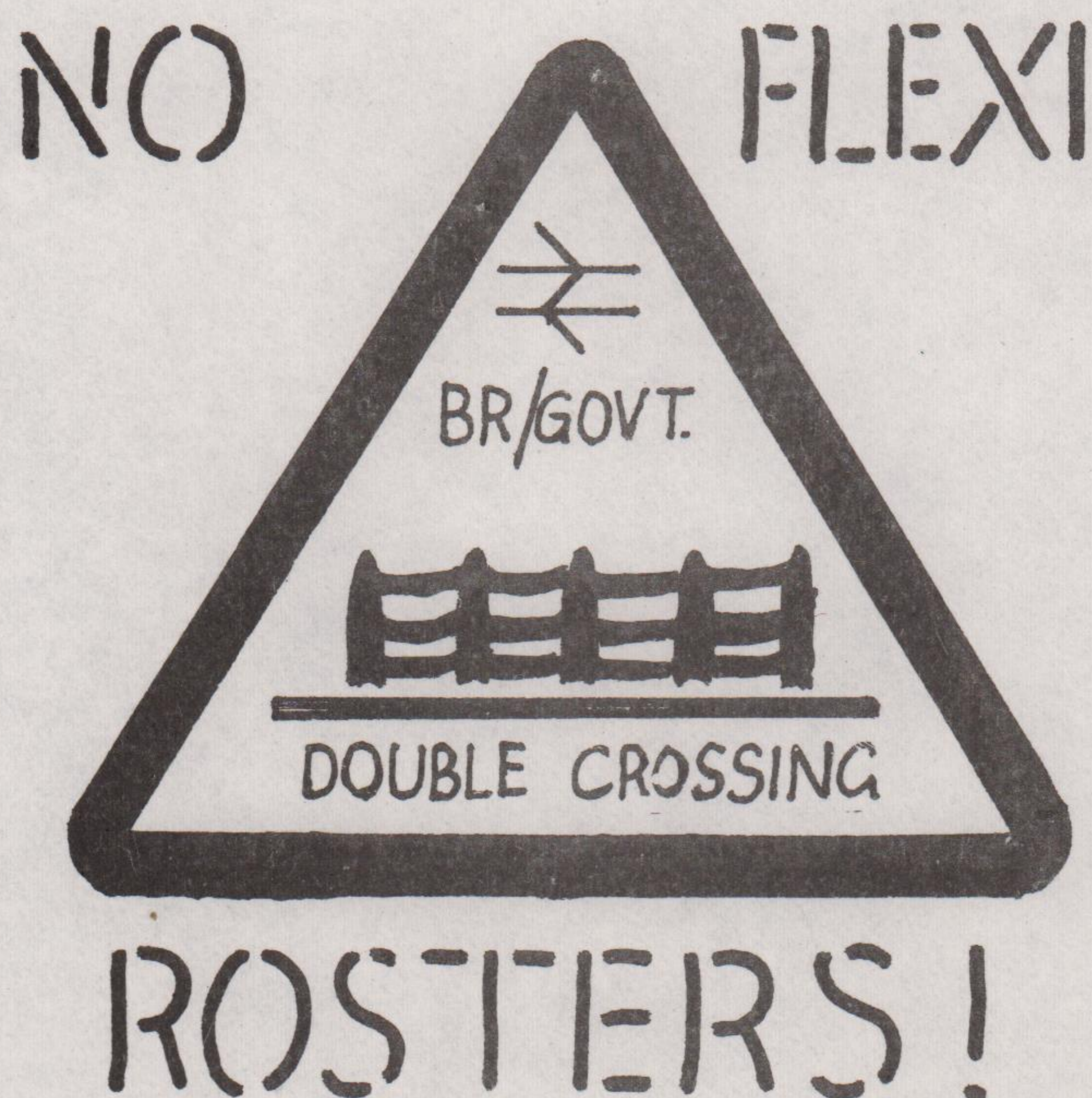
SIXTH : It's no good waiting for capitalism to go bankrupt before we discuss autonomous organisation and revolutionary ideas. We


RAIL WAR
SIGNALS
CLASS WAR!
SUPPORT RAIL WORKERS.



WAR DECLARED:
THE TRAIN DRIVER
STRIKING OUTSIDE
PLATFORM 6 NEEDS
YOUR SOLIDARITY.

SUPPORT RAIL WORKERS.



DAILY GRIND £ AND YOUR LIFE!
COSTS ONLY YOUR BRAINS.....
GOVT. SABOTAGES ALL
PUBLIC TRANSPORT.
WAR 
DECLARED!
RAIL WORKERS CALL FOR WORKING CLASS
SOLIDARITY AND MAY UNITE WITH HEALTH,
MINE, PORT, STEELWORKERS + OTHERS FOR A
GENERAL STRIKE...

**SUPPORT
TRANSPORT
STRIKES
-STAY INBED.**
IF THERE'S A SCAB -PICKET!



have to talk about what the revolution is going to do with the means of production, like printing plant, and this means deciding what we want it for. It may sound utopian to some people, but its real enough when you see capitalist production disintegrating before your eyes.

SCUMBONI

B.R Report:

WE MUST NOT GIVE IN

Now Lord Macarthy and his tribunal have considered their findings in the dispute between BR and ASLEF the drivers union, over the proposed introduction of flexible ('variable day') rostering, we must ask ourselves the question, what is the union for?

MEDIATION Macarthy has fulfilled his function as mediator between the bosses and the workers by sweetening slightly the medicine the management has in store for us. In January and February this year ASLEF conducted a six week 3 day-a-week stoppage. Officially it was called to get BR to pay up the 3% agreed on top of 8% won from the 1981 pay deal. But it was made quite clear from the start that ASLEF were not prepared to give up the precious guaranteed 8 hr. day and start doing Flexi-rosters, although we were prepared to 'talk about it'. (Flexi-rosters are a particularly vicious and insidious enchrachment on the lives and working conditions of traincrew workers, who are already expected to start work any minute of the 24 hr. day. They replace the 8 hr. day with a 39 hr. week, with a variation of 7-9 hrs. a day - and that is just for starters).



'SAFEGUARDS' Up to December last year business as usual prevailed between BR and ASLEF as they sorted out ways of making the workers more efficient. But BR's attempt to foist flexi-rosters on the drivers, as they were able to on (Sir?) Sidney Weighell's NUR guards, met with a gut reaction that quickly developed into fairly intense class struggle. Eventually the strike was called off as Macarthy told BR to pay up. Another tribunal was set up and now its findings are out as Railway Staffs National Tribunal decision 77, and they suggest that

ASLEF should accept flexi-rostering with safeguards. As Lord Macarthy has commanded not a little respect from ASLEF members, this report is quite a blow to ASLEF. The leadership has already rejected it - which is a good thing - but the membership is likely to split into militants and weakhearts, especially if it comes to BR offering a large pay rise (opinions of what it might take vary between 25%-40% increase).

DEFENCE The Socialist minded person should remember that a union is for defending the interests of the worker - not just for the employer to stay in business. So no way can ASLEF allow a deterioration of the working conditions of its members. ASLEF's annual assembly of delegates met this May and instructed the executive to keep fighting to preserve the 8 hr. day. Unfortunately we are already overdue to start negotiating this years pay and with poverty and debt already hanging round our necks from our last skirmish, a firm stand obviously becomes more difficult if BR starts making generous offers.

FIGHT But for the anarchist/communist minded person, money is an inconvenience, revolution is all, and any opportunity to escalate class war, especially in this time of nationalist war, cannot be turned away, whether British Railways thrive or die.

Casey Jones

Unions
unite in
drinking
BOVRIL

IN POLAND - Summer 1981

Whilst living in Europe last summer, I decided to take the opportunity to spend three weeks of August in Poland. I managed to meet and live with a loose-knit libertarian opposition grouping based in Lublin, some of whom worked as printers/designers in the Solidarnosc building. The room they worked in served as a sort of base/focus/meeting place for people interested in discussions and illegal literature, as well as official Solidarnosc publications. I wrote some pieces for translation and publication, about ideas and opposition in Western Europe, aiming to balance the extremely distorted view most people there have.

In the middle of the second week, all print factories in Poland were occupied to demand union access to the media, and the ending of lies and censorship. So effective was this that there were no Govt. papers in Lublin, except a four page A4 load of tripe which looked as if it was made up by a drunk, but was in fact written by the Party, and produced by the Police! This was in contrast to the well-produced (printed on the seized presses!), and widely distributed strike bulletin of the Lublin print factory.

We, (the group & I), produced a support leaflet for each day of the strike, working through the night, under the banner of one of the Solidarnosc unions (a complex relationship), and handed out 5,000 of each one in the street outside. Virtually everyone took a copy or two, clearly delighted at such public defiance and solidarity. On the second day of the strike I kept asking to visit the factory. I'd helped to deliver mattresses there the day before, and I instinctively feel that any occupied workplace in the world belongs to me and all of us. I arrived there at midday and was taken to a room being used by the strike committee. People were helpful despite the fact that no-one could speak English, and my five or six words of Polish hardly led to profound debate and analysis. As an Anarchist I also sensed that the committee had some sort of constituted authority and control over the action, so I preferred to mix with the other occupiers. A friend translated a little and I was made to feel quite at home. Someone had gone to get a friend who worked nearby to act as interpreter, and I was then shown around the whole place.

More than four hundred people worked there as production (not publishing) workers, most of whom were in Solidarnosc, and two hundred of whom, men and women, were physically occupying night and day. The presses were the old and decrepit letterpress type, and one bloke laughed ironically when I explained the Fleet St. struggle against new technology.

After a meal in the canteen, donated by workers from a nearby car factory, I sat in the large hall as it gradually filled up for a general meeting. 250 of the workers were there to discuss whether to continue the occupation. Discussion and argument went on for over four hours, with a proposed list of seven major decisions to make. Although it was difficult

How to fight the regime

(2 or 3 days after takeover)

THIS is the text of a circular put out in Silesia by Solidarity and reproduced and circulated by a branch of Solidarity in Warsaw

Today we find ourselves faced with a choice between opposition and capitulation. For those who choose the first road we offer the following advice:

1) If there is a strike, remain with the workers; don't create a strike committee; there must not be a leader.

2) In your relations with the forces of law and order, act dumb; you don't know anything, you are disorientated.

3) Solidarity must remain in every workplace. Don't get yourself eliminated by foolhardy acts of bravado.

4) Don't take vengeance on those nearest to you — your enemy is the militia, the over-zealous employee, the collaborator.

5) Work slowly; criticise the disorder and inefficiency of the management; leave all decisions to the military commanders and collaborators; flood them with questions; share your doubts with them; don't think for them; make out you're dumb.

6) Do not aid the decisions of the militia and the collaborators with a servile attitude. It's up to them to do the dirty work. You must create a vacuum around the bastards and in this way, drowning them with questions on minor problems, you will provoke a disintegration of the military and policy machinery.

7) Follow to the letter the most idiotic instructions. Do not seek to resolve any problems — leave these to the military and collaborators. The stupidity of the rules is your most certain ally.

Remember at the same time to help your workmate or neighbour without worrying about breaking the rules.

8) If some wretch gives you an order which is outside the rules, demand it in writing; try to prolong the whole thing and sooner or later the military commander will want peace; thus will begin the ending of the dictatorship.

9) Take as many days off sick or to look after your children as possible.

10) In your private relations openly avoid all collaborators and scabs.

11) Help the families of all the arrested and wounded and all the victims.

12) Set up in your place of work a social aid fund.

13) Participate in the diffusion of propaganda by word of mouth; communicate all information on the current situation and acts of resistance.

14) Paint slogans on the walls; stick up posters, distribute leaflets — but remember to take the necessary precautions.

15) In your activity guard closely two basic principles: I do not need to know more than is necessary, and the most important thing is to continue the fight for national liberation, the ending of the state of emergency and respect for civil and trade union rights.

(with translation) for me to follow, I could watch the structure of the meeting, and feel the emotions. I felt like jumping up and speaking myself! In fact, it was in some ways, very much like a traditional workplace union meeting in Britain, with the elected committee sitting on the platform at the front controlling the discussion. At one heated point, one bloke shouted out 'do we control the committee, or does the committee control us?' However most seemed to feel that this was the proper way to organise a discussion.

I could feel the sense of power in the room and

many people, both men and women, spoke strongly. Some urged an indefinite occupation. Others wished to know what was happening in the print factories elsewhere first. A rumour also went round about increased police and army activity nearby, and that they might be planning to invade. It was a very complex situation and discussion, and a break was agreed amidst high tensions and arguments. Later it was agreed to end the occupation, but maintain a strike alert. I left with gifts of papers and badges, and a warm feeling of mutual respect, and an interest in my observations about the meeting, and the situation in Poland in general.

I learned a great deal while in Poland, trying to understand the ideas and movements, the culture and political situation. It was the first time I had been involved in such widespread opposition, and I was encouraged to question and develop many of my previous ideas. Although this is not the place for an in-depth analysis, some of my conclusions are :

- a) There isn't a conscious desire for fundamental social revolution, but people want enough of the basics of life, (without the insulting queues), more freedom (to read, to meet, etc.), common sense as the basis of the economy instead of Party ideology, and some real choice in how to live, what to wear etc.
- b) There is universal hatred for Marxist dogmatism and totalitarianism, and a desire for a human morality and community (exploited by the Catholic Church). In the same way hatred of Soviet rule and propaganda, (including its hypocritical claptrap about 'class struggle' and 'revolution' and 'communism' leads to support for nationalism in the form of a populist Polish state, (or even Western capitalism). Enforced isolation from other opposition movements and struggles in Eastern and Western Europe hinders truly internationalist feelings and ideas.
- c) 'Solidarnosc' is a very complex social movement, based on the power in the workplaces, yet not really a Trade Union as we would define it. Its bureaucracy is growing, yet without any real power to control the members if they refuse to support it. The system is still undecided whether to confront or integrate this opposition.
- d) There are no specifically libertarian or anarch-

ist groups (all such literature has been suppressed for 40 years) although libertarian principles and direct action are widely supported. Some younger people with contacts in W.Europe are interested in a revolution of everyday life - music, living relationships, ecological questions etc. I found everywhere an open and responsible interest in anarchist ideas when presented in terms of everyday living, analysis, strategy and as a global alternative.

Since 1968 there has been continuous resistance to oppression in workplaces and colleges, despite mass arrests, massacres (in 1970) and the threat of military invasion. Now they have achieved the highest level yet of self-organisation, discussion, involvement and unity. Working class people in Britain have much to learn from their sisters and brothers in Poland.

JANUARY 1981: In a letter I received from Lublin in October, one of my friends there wondered 'when the "holidays" would be over and the good old days return'. Military rule is nothing new in Poland - in fact total censorship, meeting and strike bans etc. is normal. It is under these conditions that the workplace and social opposition and organisation had grown, and will continue. What the 18 months of open activity achieved was a widespread and active solidarity amongst working people - (in industry, homes, colleges and on the land), continuous face to face discussion, and increased self-confidence.

Like most people everywhere, they aimed not for revolutionary change or an ideal, but for practical and realisable immediate changes within the system to the limit of what they thought possible. The clearest aims seemed to be to break the Communist Party's monopoly of communication and organisation, and to replace the atmosphere of discipline, suspicion and fear, with one of mutual respect, informed common sense and confidence. Now, in every corner of Poland, people will be discussing their 'holidays', and whether allowing union officials and the church to speak for them and negotiate with the state was the right thing. I do not think they will be demoralised by military rule. I aim to return this summer to find out, and to maintain direct communication.

The Lone Ranger

MEANWHILE IN TOXTETH...

KNICKED FROM AN ISSUE OF THE GLASGOW ANARCHIST WHICH GOT ITS STREET DISTRIBUTORS KNICKED



COUNTRY CORNER

(Our rural correspondent writes...)
So, what's it like living and working in the far-flung recesses of the North of England? Whitewashed cottages with honeysuckle round the door? Sitting eating Kellogg's Country Store next to your pine dresser? Strolling up the garden in a balmy summer's evening for a glass of Bristol Cream? Before all you would-be ruralists start salivating let me tell you that it just isn't like that.

When I was young, I lived on a small family farm - the sort that Undercurrents readers often dream about. My family had lived on small family farms since the year dot and nearly all my (numerous) relatives lived on small family farms. However, I soon came to agree with Thoreau that the only person less free than a slave is a farmer. On top of the boredom of milking 50 cows twice a day and 365 days in a year, they get raw swollen hands (and no sleep) every lambing time, slipped discs from too much mucking-out and lifting heavy sacks, Farmer's lung (something like pneumo-conio whasit that miners get) from mouldy hay, tractors turning over on them, etc. etc... So, no farming life for me.

When I ask my family or neighbours why they stay in farming the answer is that they know nothing else, or that they like being their own boss, or that as a farmer they are a somebody in the parish, as an ex-farmer they would be a nobody.

I didn't stay in farming but I didn't get very far away from it. In fact, I still do a bit of casual farm work but most of the time I do forestry work or stone-walling and paving. I work on a self-employed basis and try to average about 30 hours a week - but there is one major problem. The weather. We are blessed here in the North with the highest area of rainfall in these islands. For instance, in the past three (admittedly unusually stormy) weeks, I have worked one day. The first week off is OK, by the second I'm feeling a bit uneasy. And now I'm thinking the unthinkable, lugging a bloody great chain-saw about in the pissing wet, slipping about and soaked to the

skin. Maybe next week.

LEGALISE IT?

When you have no boss to drive you, you end up driving yourself. Either you need the money or you can't quite shake off the work ethic which most of us are brought up with. Work unwillingly done is still a pain even if you are working for yourself. Often I work alone, but sometimes I work with others. This is better; like nearly everyone else I prefer other people's company to my own. The problem is that usually all they want is a few weeks work, either to supplement the dole or to pay for something extra, I get left with organising the contracts and doing all the skilled jobs. Sometimes I think - why not set up a properly constituted collective - the whole legal bit? It just

isn't worth it: for a start my accounts (or lack of them) don't bear examination but I manage to scrape by - there would be no chance if I were registered. If you can't trust each other then it's a waste of time working together. Under a flexible set-up we can agree to work on a particular job without further commitment. However, if we worked together more often we could share skills and responsibility more equally.

Sometimes people ask for work and to be paid by the day instead of sharing a whole job. Although I can usually find plenty of work I always refused this arrangement until this year when a woman in the village asked me to find work for her son - he'd been paid off and was going crackers sitting about and he couldn't pay the HP or buy fuel for his motorbike. So I said he could work with me. Never again! It didn't work out. He worked because he felt obliged to and I soon got sick of telling him what to do next, so we ended up sitting around drinking tea and swapping jokes and gossip till he got enough money together. It's a problem because there are so many unemployed in the area and I usually have too much work. Not much comfort when all you can say is 'Destroy the Capitalist System'.

NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE

A major problem of living in a rural area, and also a minor advantage, is that there are just not enough people living here. Few

and, I don't look after kids. I can get up when I want, go wherever and with whoever I like etc. - apart from signing on every 2 weeks, my time is my own. Or is it? Well of course the system cannot allow any of us to be free. The workplace hierarchy is replaced in the community with the hierarchy of design (shops, roads, offices, private houses etc.) which do not allow people to gather and talk or act. Guv'nors are replaced by new authority-figures - owners and police. At the same time, the lack of money restricts what you can do. But having said that, the advantages are great, and the struggle to survive, to resist, to live, takes on new forms.

First it is necessary to be free of the 'unemployed' identity which both the system and the left would thrust upon people. As I queued up to sign on, I began to feel as if I was in a category of 3 million unfortunates, which 'something should be done about'. I rejected this crap, which leads to depression and passivity. For a start it forgets that :

- a) 30 million people do not do waged work in Britain
- b) Most of the 20 million waged workers hate going to work.

Also it suggests that non-waged workers can't do anything. Well, we can. First of all, much work is unpaid, is useful and can be shared. Looking after kids, cooking, making things, doing repairs etc. Also there is a great need to help abolish this system - to that end, we should create discussion groups, papers, leaflets, resources, action groups etc. The basic problem is one of isolation - the fact that there is almost nowhere suitable to meet during the day. Then its up to us to create such places where possible (or use existing cafes, libraries, etc.) We can squat them.

And we can begin to demand & take free (or reduced) travel, cinema, food etc. In these ways, and more, we can use our time well to express ourselves, support each other, and confront the system... Don't let the bastards grind us down !

DAVE DOLITTLE

So, you might ask, why do I stay here? One answer is that I have tried living in a city and it was worse, much worse. Another reason is that I like the natural environment around here. I like to be involved with it, to be a part of it. The tourists see it through their rose-tinted spectacles as merely scenic and one-dimensional; but to be involved with it, eyeball-to-eyeball so to speak, is endlessly fascinating.

But the main reason is that here people have known me since I was born, they cannot ignore me or dismiss me as they can a stranger.

LANTY



NO-JOB REPORT

For the first time in my life I am not doing wage-labour or school

IS WORKERS SELF-MANAGEMENT JUST SELF-ABUSE ? (Part One)

Self-Management One :

'This conference exhorts large companies, financial institutions and the CBI to help the growth of employee ownership as one way of reducing the Us and Them syndrome in British industry'
Accepted Motion, 1981 CBI conference.

"I cannot see the traditional management pyramid continuing to be an effective form of organisation. Its hierarchical levels make it slow to react and they stifle creativity."

"I would expect the move towards participation at work to be strengthened. If we are to have smaller, more coherent business units run by management teams, there will be more opportunity for workpeople to become involved in the way such enterprises are run. They will certainly wish to exercise greater influence over the decisions which directly affect them at their place of work and will probably want to have more influence on companies as well."

Sir Adrian Cadbury (Guardian Business Agenda Dec.9th 1981).

Self-Management and workers' participation are no longer merely the preserve of leftist and other groups on the fringes of capitalist politics. In Britain, the Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance may serve as a vehicle for self-management ideology in the effort to revive flagging interest in reformist politics. In other countries, self-management has already been put at the centre of the state's strategy. Yugoslavia, and to a lesser extent Hungary, have already introduced wide programmes of self-management. In 1978-9 the Turkish government adopted a policy under which self-management would gradually be introduced into public enterprises. Self-management is central to Algeria's 'developmental' ideology. So we are looking at a global phenomenon in capitals restructuring appearing in 'industrialised' and 'third world', in 'communist' and 'free world' states.

IDEOLOGY The ideological role of self-management is equally important. Islands of self-management such as Mondragon in the Basque country are held up by Trade Union leaders and liberals as demonstrating the utopia that could lie ahead if only there was "goodwill" on "both sides of industry". In Poland, the promise of self-management frequently helped to subvert workers' resistance. The biggest regional strike since the founding of Solidarity in Zielona Province, was brought to an end in Nov. 1981 as Solidarity negotiated for future talks on self-management, including a "social council" for participation in overall economic planning. The consequences of these diversions are well known.

REFORMISM Meanwhile, whole libraries could be filled with the outpourings of sundry leftists on the subject. But we are not interested in their tedious squabbles about what is real progress to socialism, and what is just a dastardly capitalist con trick. They are all reformist, attacking capital on a purely formal basis; but capitalism is not defined by its system of management, which varies according to circumstance. The question of who manages and how

is not unimportant because it obviously affects our day-to-day existence and the daily struggle. But behind this stand the basic economic categories which define capitalism as a specific mode of production : wage labour, commodity production etc. These persist to dominate our lives whatever form capitalism takes. On a day-to-day basis of course it helps if you can determine when you work and under what conditions, even to a limited extent. But these advantages, where they exist, are only "concessions" within the slow suffocation we have to endure : they are part of the wage or "net income" which any wage labour offers. This also generally applies to practises which some have worshipped because they are strictly speaking "illegal" : pilfering, going AWOL etc. This is usually tolerated and hushed up because workers who think they are getting something for nothing are psychologically less likely to revolt.

MILITANTISM At the other end of the leftist spectrum, there are those who prefer a traditional oppositional militancy, and reject self-management. This species is exemplified by Arthur Scargill. This is an extract from an interview with him in Marxism Today, April 1981 :

"The only time we can really have workers control is under a socialist system of society. I reject the argument that you can have some kind of workers control within capitalism. What you can have is class collaboration within capitalism. Once we've put workers on the boards they become bureaucrats"

Even if we allow for the fact that Scargill is himself a fat bureaucrat living off the misery of the toiling masses, we must still tackle the arguments themselves. In spite of the free use of the terms "capitalist system" and "socialism" there is no reference to the content of these systems. The problem is reduced to the question of where and how power is wielded. Scargill might, for example, argue that all would be fine with a "workers state" and "democratic ownership" ; a councilist would insist on the need for workers councils, an anarchist on the need for anarchy. In all cases, capitalism is defined by its decision-making apparatus, and "revolution" is merely a question of substituting an alternative system of social discipline.

INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY The Institute for Workers Control says in response to Arthur Scargill :

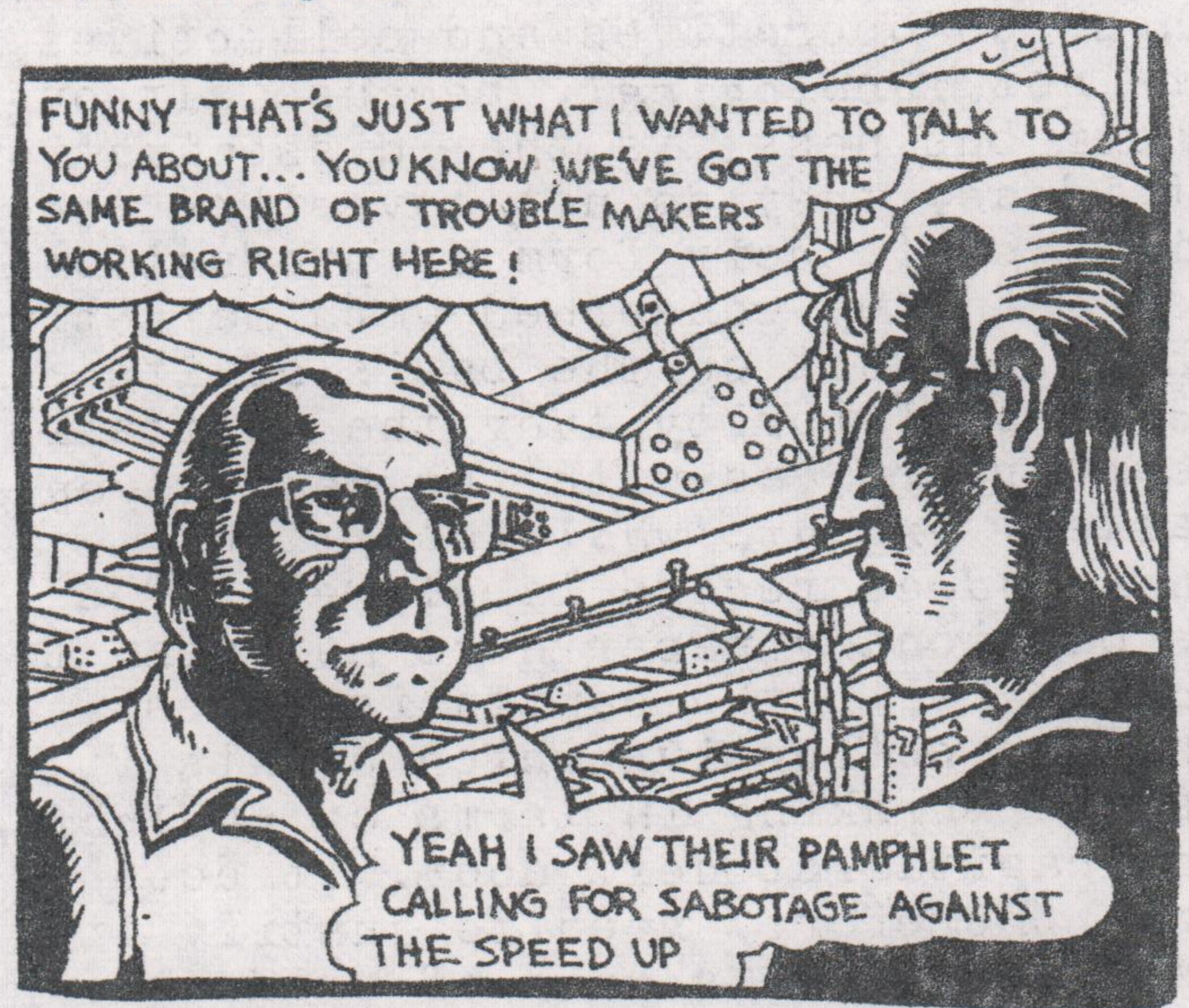
"What Arthur does. Is to drop the baby out with the bathwater "Do we want miners' representatives to become management accomplices in the prosecution of disciplinary cases ? No, certainly not. Do we, instead, want the NUM to exercise full and complete control over hiring and firing ? Yes, of course we do. That will not amount to industrial democracy, but it will be a good step forward in a long march." (IWC Pamphlet)

A very long march. This is the kind of idiocy that can only be expected when capitalism is defined in terms of good and bad management.

ent. The logic of capitalism will always impose itself whether management structures are democratic or dictatorial, oppressive or libertarian :

"The enterprise tries to valorise itself and accepts no leadership but that which allows it to reach its aim (this is why capitalists are only the officials of capital). The enterprise manages its managers. The elimination of the limits of the enterprise, the destruction of the commodity relation, which compels every individual to regard and treat all others as means to earn his living are the only conditions for self-organisation". (Barrot - Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement).

'RESPONSIBILITY' Apart from its usefulness as an ideological weapon self-management can bring more immediate concrete benefits to capital. As enterprises merge, becoming larger and more centralised so that a larger mass of surplus value compensates falling rates of profit, there is a need felt to cut back on unproductive overheads. Where workers can be persuaded to self-manage "responsibly", lower levels of management can be substantially reduced. Used in this way, self-management can also be exploited to impose a sense of (capitalist) "realism" on workers. Workers are educated into identifying their success as human beings with the success of "their" enterprises. Capital attempts to reconstruct the old producers' consciousness which its movement has destroyed by stripping labour of all quality and reducing workers to mere appendages to machines. But as capital's crisis deepens, constraints on the individual enterprise must increasingly reduce self-management to straightforward self-discipline.



WORKERS POWER? The desire for self-management and workers' ownership seem (in retrospect) to have been more appropriate when capital had seized control of the means of production, but the skilled worker was at the centre of the labour process. The capitalist appeared as a simple parasite, organising the means of production merely by virtue of property rights and reaping the benefits. Moreover, the existence of an as yet limited market, and therefore limited interdependence of enterprises meant that the capitalist could withdraw from a given

production fairly easily if this was deemed advantageous. Given this parasitic, socially irresponsible organisation of production, it is hardly surprising that "expropriating the expropriators" became the watchword of the labour movement. The relatively low level of capitalist development was also reflected in the political programmes of the labour movement, even in its more advanced expressions. In particular, it should be born in mind that before the World Wars vast populations survived which were generally outside the sphere of capitalist relations. Organisational mediations between the class and the social revolution (social democratic parties, syndicalist unions etc.) regarded themselves as gradually marshalling the growing forces of the proletariat for a revolutionary showdown, followed by a period of workers' power in which the foundations of communism could be laid.

MYTHOLOGY Supporters of self-management and councilism continue to think in these programmatical-gradualist terms, even though the material basis for such a workerist consciousness has disappeared. The "worker" in the qualitative sense is disappearing, as the productive process is increasingly dominated by more and more complex machinery and technical organisation. And the expansion of markets and complex interlocking dependence of enterprises has eliminated the old bloated capitalist everywhere except in the mythology of the left. What is left is a vast army of managers and technicians accountable only to capital. Amidst all this drudgery, the "maximum programme" is just the alibi for the imposition of schemes such as self-management, workers' control, collective ownership etc. which in reality serve no purpose but the continuing restructuring of capital and wage slavery through reforms. These schemes only serve to push back into infinity the challenge to actual capitalist relations : the abolition of the production of exchange values based on abstract labour power by competing enterprises.

ILLUSIONS The dynamics of capitalism must always tend towards bureaucracy and hierarchy, even if this is given a democratic expression. Capitalist production is production under constraint : the constraint of competition, which implies the need to minimise cost and maximise sales at the expense of others. This necessity implies leadership, implies that some dominate whilst others are excluded from real "management" of their own lives. Self-management is in reality an illusion, an impossibility, but the existence of that illusion presents a real obstacle which we have to confront.



IS WORKERS SELF-MANAGEMENT JUST SELF-ABUSE ? (PART 2)

The idea of Workers Self-Management (as distinct from the revolutionary principle of generalised self-management) has received a lot of publicity when it has been sponsored by well-known politicians, trade union leaders and populist governments. They usually explain it as a democratic reform leading to better industrial relations and productivity. Workers Self-Management is becoming a more and more important option in ruling class politics.

It does not follow that the different Radical and revolutionary currents have managed to keep clear of the narrow version of Self-Management, which is, in the long run, reactionary.

Anyone who is committed to overthrowing the class system must also be committed to overthrowing the regime of Work, which in class society is not just productive labour, nor merely a mode of exploitation. Work is discipline. The division and organisation of labour under capitalism not only creates poverty at the point of production, it also preserves the general conditions of shortage from which the earliest kinds of systematic exploitation arose. Wage-labour and production for profit are the best guarantees that the world will never have what it needs, let alone what we want.

For this reason, avoiding Work in its most acute forms is necessary to developing the revolutionary struggle in every other area of daily life. The general strike is as much an end in itself as a tactical weapon against bosses. Of course, this refusal of Work goes on all the time, and for class-conscious revolutionaries it is often more than merely a way of getting a living with the least possible effort. It is a practical application of the principle that the ruling class owes us a living, since it will not allow us to recreate the world for our own benefit and our own pleasure. Life on the dole, squatting and thieving,

can sometimes allow individuals to live a kind of black-market existence where material sufficiency and the ordinary liberties of the Consumer are exchanged for self-managed time.

Some people have adopted a completely different strategy for avoiding the more degrading and painful aspects of Work. Having decided that their jobs were too boring, too harmful, too menial or too disciplined, they have gone and set up co-ops, small businesses in unprofitable sectors of the economy, involving skilled but intensive labour. In all but the most successful co-ops, the wages are low.

Many co-operatives came into being simply because ordinary businesses would not or could not handle revolutionary custom. These are almost all concerned with publishing, printing and distributing books, papers, posters and pamphlets of the revolutionary movement. They do not exist simply in order to improve the working lives of the people in them--in fact, most of the work is boring, very badly paid, or not paid at all. These co-operatives and collectives are not ideological, because although their business is the dissemination of ideas, they do not advertise the virtues of their form of production, nor are they concerned with marketing their product on the basis of its moral superiority over the capitalist counterpart (as with the hand-woven basket, organic/wholefood, the independent record label, etc.) The revolutionary paper does not mean to compete with the capitalist press, and the collective which prints it is not thinking in terms of replacing the capitalist next door. It does not, therefore, need to justify its existence or its mode of production in terms of an ideology of 'Workers Control'.

Between the Bennite Workers Co-ops and the revolutionary collectives, however, there is a political current which advocates the setting-up of co-ops as a revolutionary strategy in itself. This current often identifies itself as anarchist,

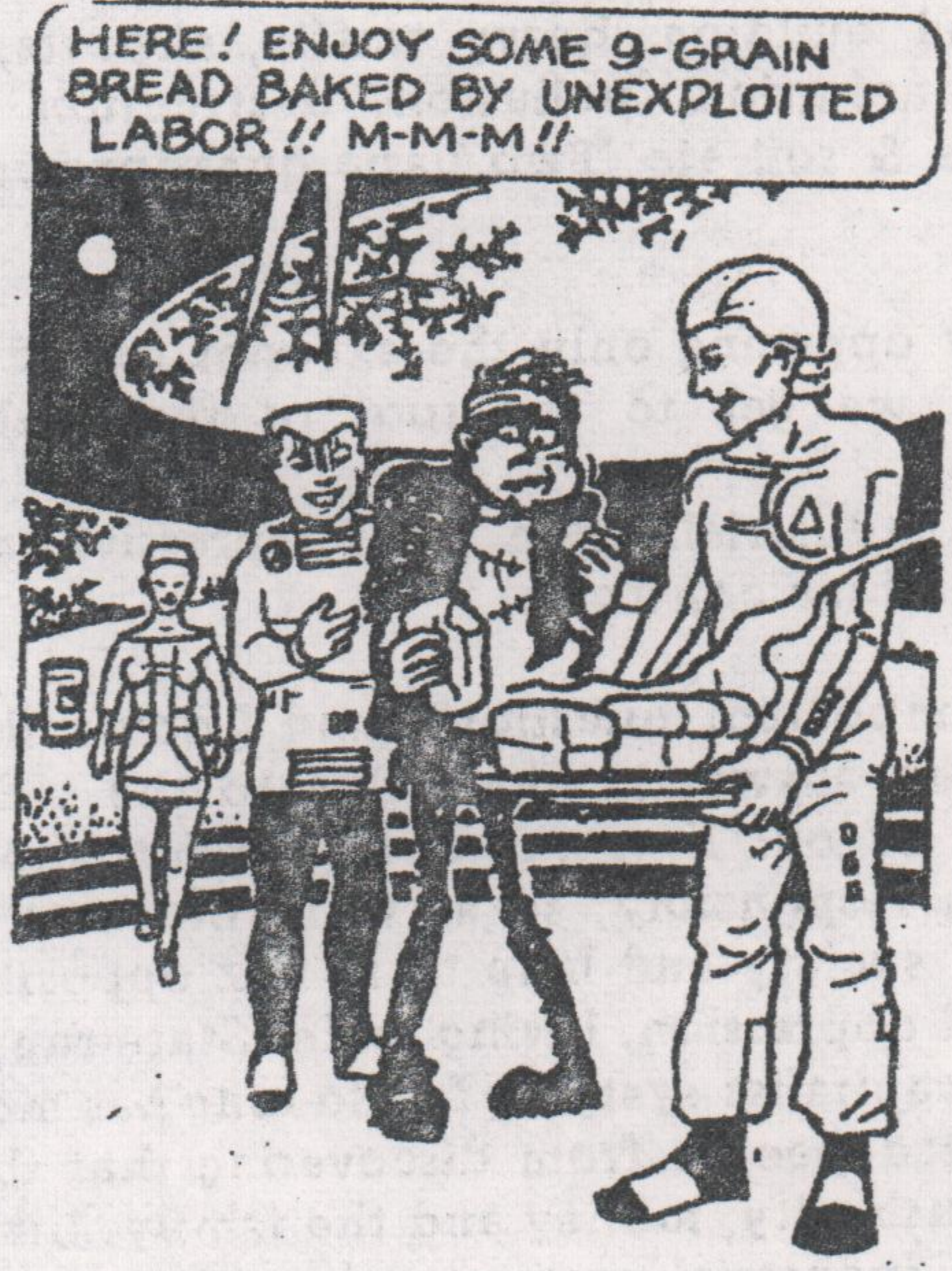
an identification which I would criticise. It would be possible to repudiate this philosophy on tactical grounds alone, as an economic movement with no chance of beating capitalism at the buying-and-selling game.

As I have already suggested, autonomous co-ops might succeed in creating their own market for certain useful products which ordinary capitalists wouldn't bother trying to make, and even compete with large companies in labour-intensive industries like house-building. But it is this very labour-intensiveness which limits co-ops both in the capitalist market, and in their appeal as the basis of a revolutionary Utopia. A co-op simply cannot generate a large enough trading surplus to enable them to compete with highly technological industries. At the moment, most of them can't even pay decent wages.

We all recognise that most capitalist technology is either wasteful or repressive. But the ideology of co-operative labour is anti-technology as such--implicitly, and often explicitly. A society based on small units of productive labour would be unable to develop complex technologies. Such a society, even if it could develop under the very economic base of class exploitation, would be unable to liberate us from Work, let alone enable us to go beyond this struggle simply to stay alive.

The link between those in the 'mainstream' labour movement advocating participation by workers in factory planning, and those on the political fringes who are promoting co-ops as a revolutionary strategy, is the common origin of their ideas in the growth of radical politics in the 60s. The notion that workers might be left to manage their own degradation with the minimum of day-to-day supervision did not just appear in the heads of people like Benn one day around 1974. It was being revived by liberal extremists long before Meriden and the Alternative Economic Strategy.

In the late sixties, many people thought that co-operative farms, shops and workshops would serve as a radical catalyst, by whose example the masses would turn away from their polluted and alienated lives and set up 'alternatives' on a mass scale. Fifteen years later, the parasites of the British mainstream left are supporting the offer of 'workers participation' as an integral part of a more streamlined corporate state, by which they hope to be able to cease buzzing around in the political swamp.



Co-operatives may be a way of getting certain jobs done, and they may also be a more tolerable way of passing a working day, but they are not a solution to the problems of the working class. Those working in co-ops for purely ideological reasons are simply saving the DHSS money and keeping out of trouble. We must make an equally clear distinction between our collective effort to spread revolutionary ideas and activity, with the aim of bringing about a classless society, and the attempts which are now being made to promote self-managed work simply as a means of cutting down on overheads, under the ideological guise of Industrial Democracy, but with the aim of perpetuating our status as a class of wage-slaves.

SCUMBONI

INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY — WOULD WE BE BETTER OFF WITH LESS OF IT, OR EVEN WITHOUT IT?

In the last bulletin, an article described the oppressive use of modern office technology (VDU's, computers etc), but argued that a free society would be able to use such systems for everyone's benefit. Many people might say that industrial, synthetic and computer technology generally will benefit us "when its under our control, not that of the ruling class", and they may even say that such technologies, developed to their maximum could be the basis of our freedom from work, hardship etc.

These ideas, that technology = progress, continually trotted out by the media for the techno-bureaucracy which runs industrial capitalism, are almost a new religion that seems above questioning.

In the last few years there has been increasing anger and resistance to industrial development - nuclear power, road building, heavy traffic, airports, workplace mechanisation, pollution, destruction of the countryside & soil etc. Two basic questions come to my mind:

a) by opposing only the excesses of industrialisation, do we get to the root of the problem?

b) is industrialisation itself repressive, or is it the System which controls it?

These are important questions (and I don't claim to know all the answers), which due to the industrial domination of our lives and environment, should be looked into responsibly, so as to further our understanding of society and help us in our opposition to all forms of oppression. Living under State-run, patriarchal and capitalist systems for so long has moulded and prevented people from discovering that they do not need Authority, money and the family. Likewise, the modern industrial system and culture convinces us that we need it.

It is useful to look at the results of industrial technology on our lives that would be true for any System controlling it, bearing in mind that we are seeking to create a free society without money or power structures, where people live and work as they wish, individually and together, sharing and caring for each other in a healthy and creative environment.

THERE'S A BIG NEW WONDERFUL TOMORROW FULL OF MONUMENTAL ACHIEVEMENTS!! UNHEARD OF VISTAS OF PROGRESS AWAIT! BETTER WORLDS ARE BEING BUILT! EVERYONE WILL HAVE ALL OF EVERYTHING! LET'S LOOK AT SOME OF THE THINGS WE'RE GOING TO GET IN THE YEARS TO COME!

RESULTS OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY

(I use 'industrial' to mean institutional work, processes and

structures dominating personal and social autonomy and rhythms.)

Most people look at the end product as the only result of a process. But the means to create that end are as important. Whilst industrial production can sometimes provide efficiency and sophistication, speed and quantity, it also imposes an industrial order. Due to the complexity, high energy usage, and interdependence of units of production, amongst other things, industrialism also means:

- specialisation, administration and hierarchy (& therefore a class structure)
- stability, dependance & centralisation
- routine labour
- social disruption (work v play, workplace v home or playspace, city v country)
- pollution, waste, dangerous processes (physically or psychologically)
- mass culture, alienation, cheapening of life.
- natural and human rhythms of life dominated by industrial ones

The greater the industrial domination over society, the more these characteristics will control us.

Although all aspects of living interweave, it helps to look at a few examples of how industrial technology affects us.

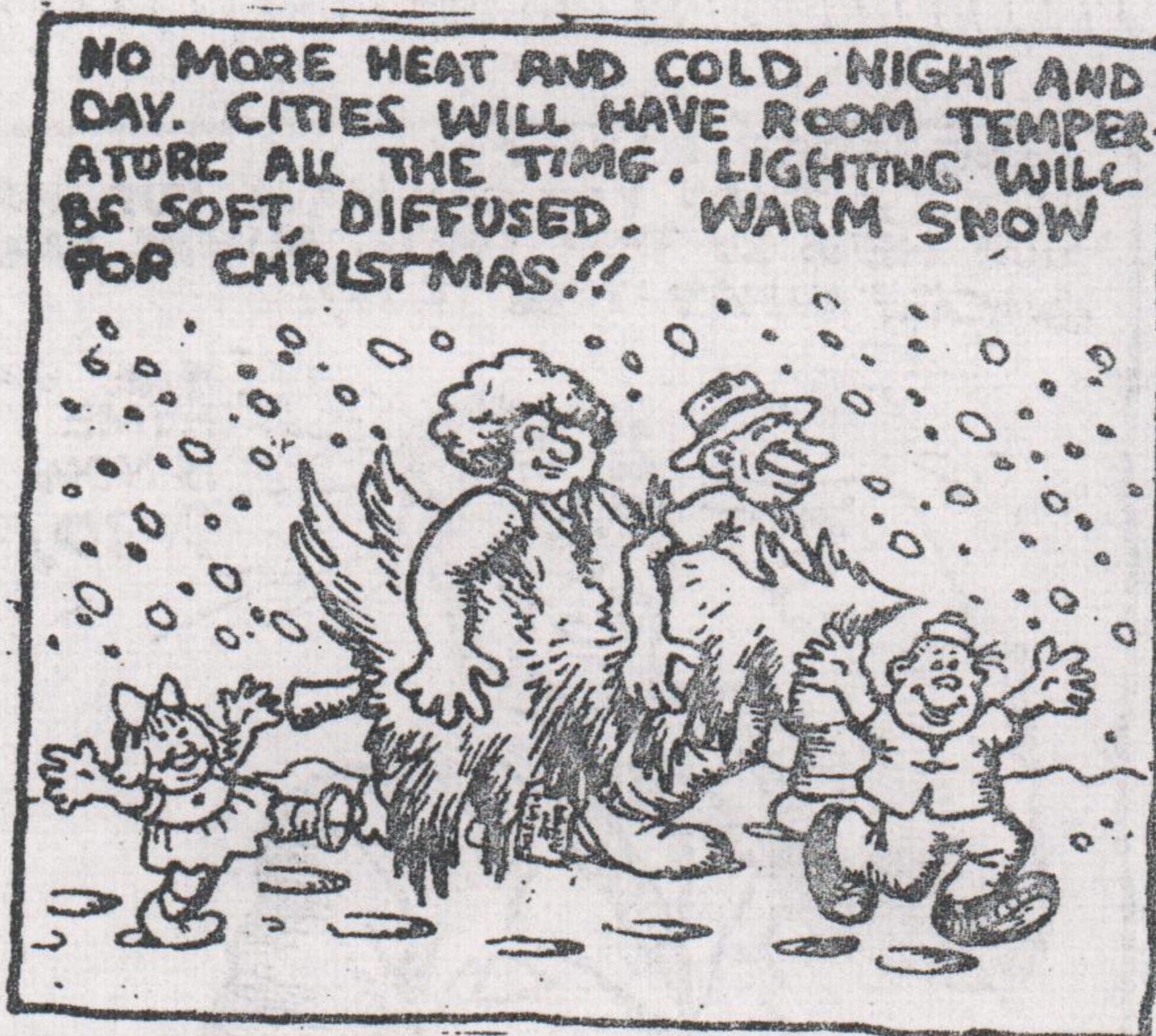
1. TRAVELLING Cars are a good example of the terrorism of industrial technology. 10's of 1,000's of people are killed by cars in the world each year, millions more injured, 100's of millions are terrorised and their movements restricted. Children are imprisoned (home, school etc), until they learn to obey the rule of the traffic system. Even those inside a car are imprisoned.

(Typists comment: That's the last time I give this bloke a lift in my motor)

Other results are the disruption of the environment, and of community, pollution (air, noise etc), destruction of nature and the need for mining, industrial labour, servicing and waste. Some of the other problems also result, on a smaller scale, from buses,

YOU WON'T HAVE TO SHIT ANYMORE! BOWELS WILL BE REMOVED AT BIRTH AND A SANITIZING DISPOSAL UNIT INSTALLED. NEEDS EMPTYING ONLY ONCE A MONTH. NO MORE WORRY ABOUT SMELLY EXCREMENT! GOOD-BYE TOILET!!





trains & planes.

In a society where we are not dominated by the clock and property, where people can relax, communicate & share, there is no need for the obsession with individual speed. Walking, bicycles (maybe with small motors for those unable or unwilling to cycle unaided), even horses, could provide for personal needs whilst some rail & lorries could move goods when necessary. Obviously ships or planes are needed to cross water.

2. ENTERTAINMENT This is fast coming to mean something that people consume, watch, have - not do together ('enter' means 'between'). TV, radio, records, films have the result of creating passive, mass culture & hierarchical relationships between performers & producers, and consumers. Spontaneity, involvement, direct communication are impossible. There are also the drawbacks from the industrial manufacturing of the equipment.

I'm not saying that these forms of expression cannot be stimulating. But when they dominate our culture, they dominate our lives so that we are not creative. Rather than consume a series of fixed technological (non-)events, entertainment means the way we fantasize and play together, sing, make music, sport, act, joke about etc. as well as more organised communal events.

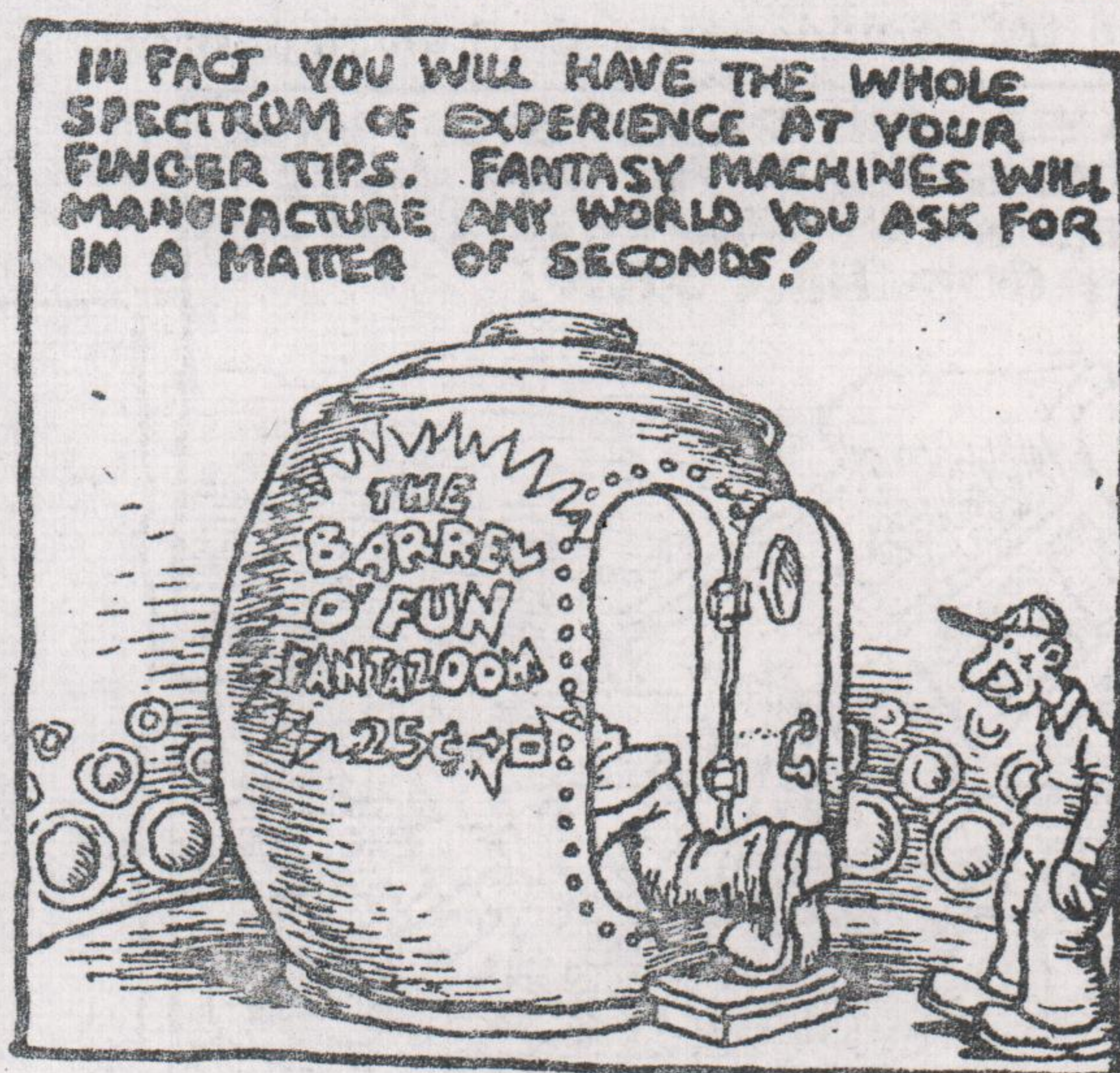
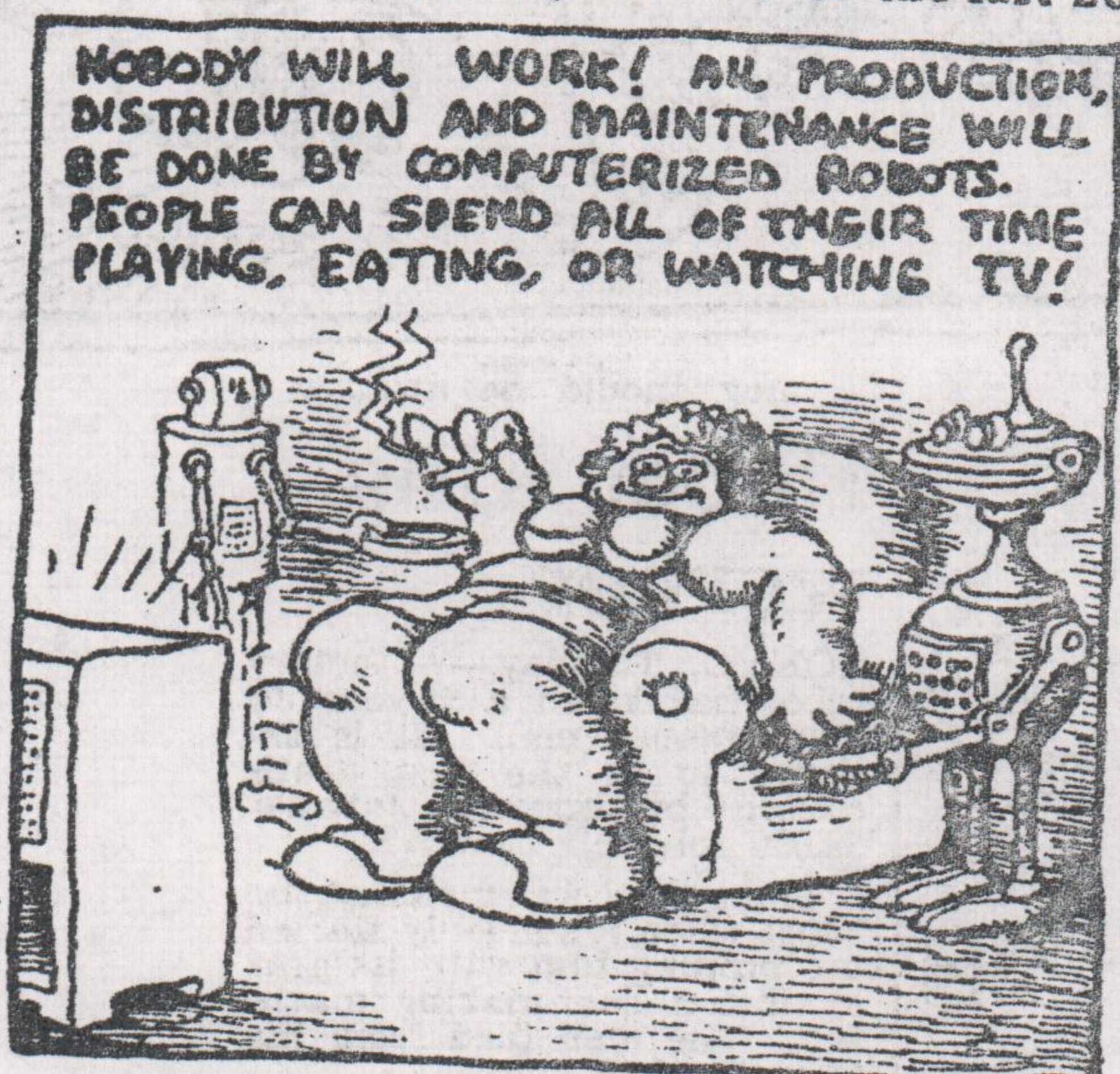
3. PRODUCTION Industrial production has developed by force over the last 200

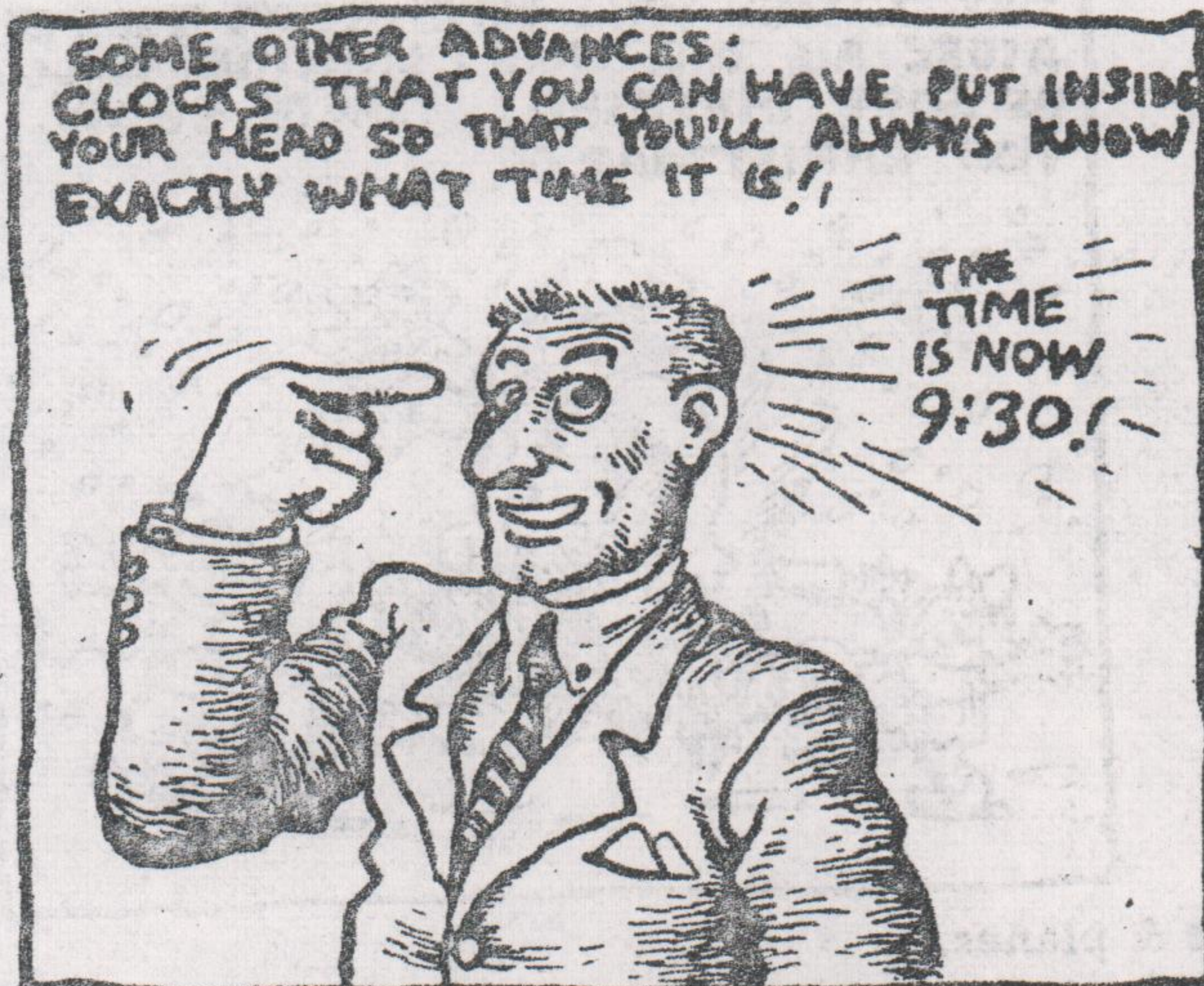
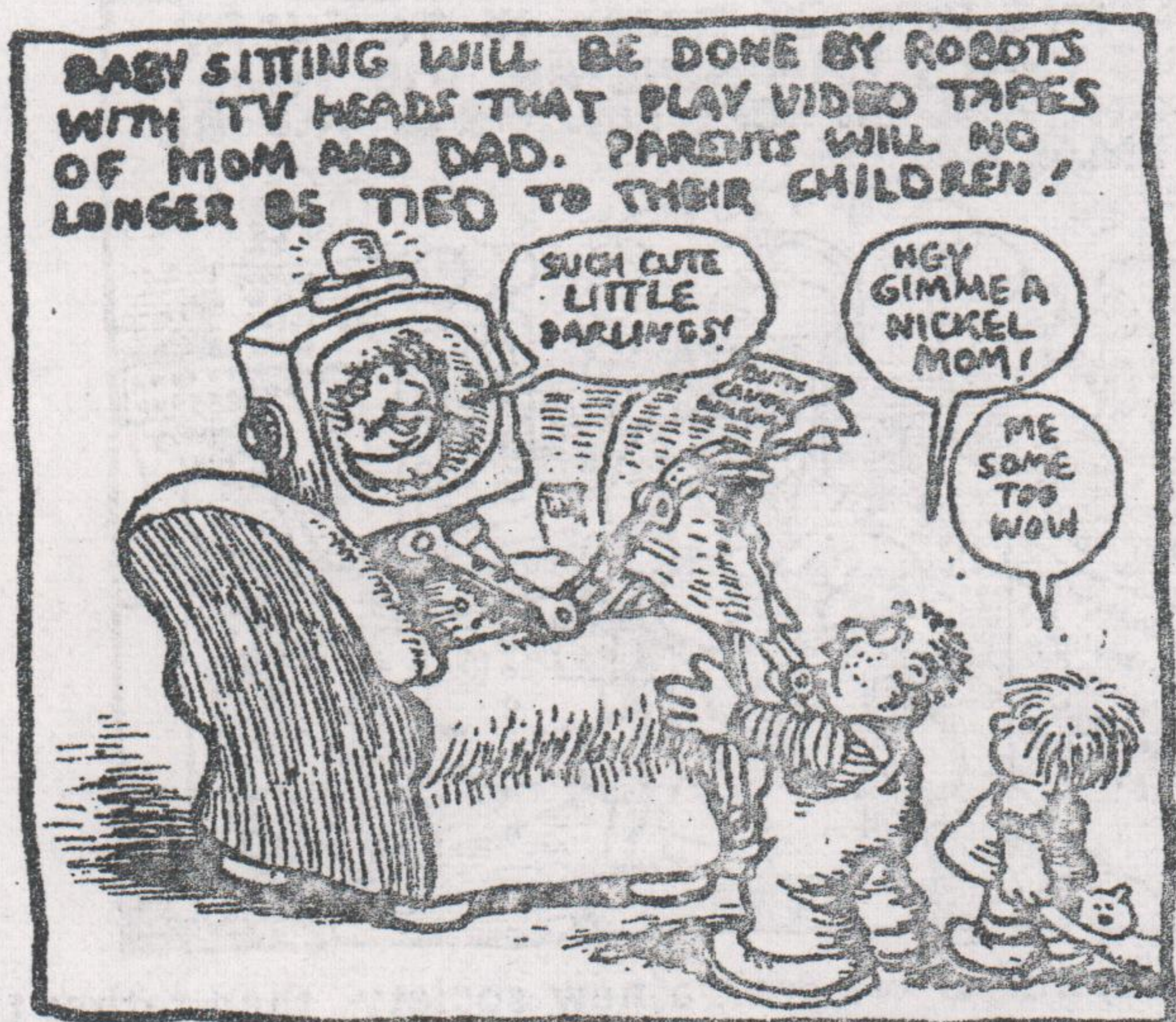
years, and if we seek a new society, then rather than simply aim to take over society as it is, we should aim to create libertarian social relationships and environments as we reject and break up all the means of our oppression - not only the political machinery of the State and patriarchal social relationships, but also the industrial hierarchy, order and rhythms.

Not only are the majority of workplaces producing unnecessary or questionable products, with oppressive working methods and environments, but a whole fragile superstructure of administration, communication, control and dependency is imposed on the whole society.

Therefore it is not just a question of seizure, collectivisation and administration through unions or workers councils of shop-floor delegates. Even with the abolition of money and the State, the environmental order and routine of daily life would continue with a reformed political structure of a technobureaucratic class (delegates or not) controlling society through the institutionalised control of production.

You may say that the workers councils or associations could abolish unnecessary, wasteful, dangerous and oppressive industries and methods. But this is back to front - no institution wishes to or is able to attack or abolish itself. Even if the focus for decision making lies in community associations, the basic question is whether to continue the industrial base & order of society, or create a new social life based





around workshop, agricultural and craft production and technology. with necessary industrial back-up as long as it ceases to monopolise.

4. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY As for information technology (VDU's etc), these only become necessary or even 'our saviours' when social revolution is mistakenly seen as the further development and 'rationalisation' of this industrial society, rather than the creation of as free and as human a community as possible.

This could involve breaking down the city/country polarisation, decentralising communities and production, developing renewable energy sources, sharing skills and projects, collectivising (into libraries) tools, resources and knowledge, recycling materials, as much local self-sufficiency in food as possible, etc and at all times developing the spirit of community, individuality & creativity.

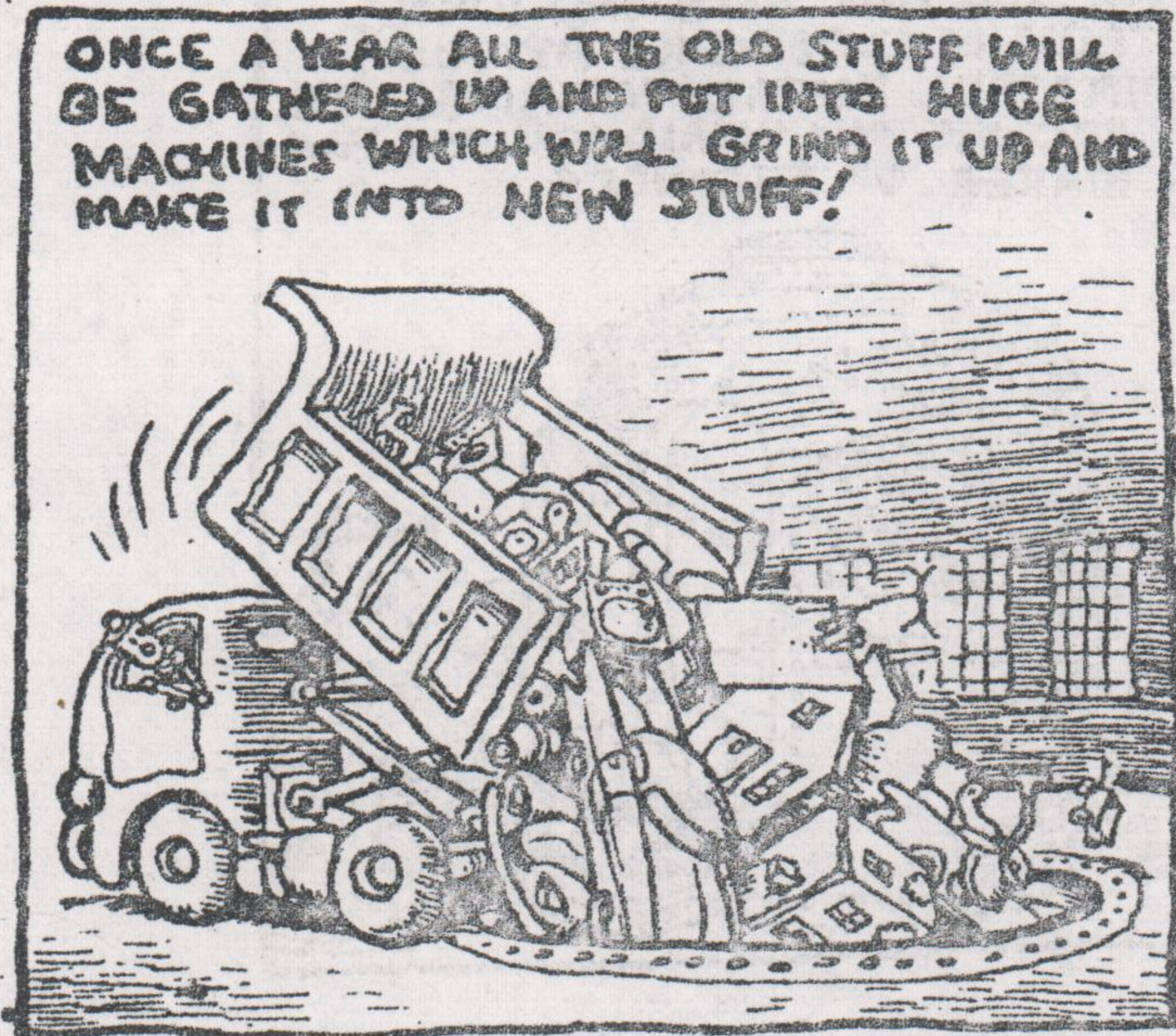
VDU technology is marginal to such a society.

I'm not trying to make a blue print for a free society, which only leads to dogma and insensitivity to the very wide range of peoples desires and imagination, as well as the diversity of practical conditions in every region of the world. I am trying to encourage people to question the propaganda of industrial technologists, and also to try to understand the human desires

expressed around us - both in opposition to modern industrialisation (anti-airports, traffic, mechanisation movements etc, as well as refusal of industrial work itself) and also peoples desires for craftwork, allotments, and non-industrial culture, production and environment generally.

There is no past 'golden age' to look back to, just a vital need to look at the present and possible future, with a wealth of experience and knowledge to share and learn from. I feel that the LWG bulletin is an excellent place for a wide and non-dogmatic discussion on the sort of society we wish to live in, and how it could come about.

Dave.



Robot kills worker

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TOKYO, Tuesday.—A factory robot has killed a 37-year-old maintenance man. It is believed to be the first death caused by one of Japan's 70,000 robots.

The worker was mending the robot when it suddenly started up, pinning him with its arm against a gear-making machine. The man died from his injuries. (AP.)

in blast

THESES ON COUNCIL COMMUNISM TODAY

Denmark, March 1980.

I. Capitalism, Crisis, Revolution, Communism.

- 1) It is capital that causes the crisis of capitalism.

Capitalist production is not a form of production determined by human needs. It is production determined by the necessity for capital to accumulate. This – and not overproduction, underconsumption, bureaucratic state etc. – is the reason for the crisis of capitalism. Why ? Because for capital to accumulate, exploitation has to be increased. And the more capitalists have already increased exploitation, the more they need further exploitation, whilst it is less possible to extract more surplus value. The class antagonism intensifies on a social scale and at the same time the solutions available to the capitalist class disappear : the only solution to the crisis is workers' revolution.

- 2) The working class is the heart (and the brain) of the revolution. 0095- SEE PAGE 21 COLUMN TWO.

- 3) The revolutionary movement is a spontaneous movement.

Anti-capitalist actions erupt spontaneously. They are forced upon the workers by capitalism. This action is not called forth by conscious intention, it arises spontaneously and irresistably. In such spontaneous action people reveal to themselves and to each other what they can do, they surprise themselves. The collective action at the single factory and between factories is a reflection of the way in which the crisis develops on a social scale. The organisation of spontaneous struggles is the result of capitalism.

- 4) The revolutionary movement is a council movement.

The capitalist crisis stems from the contradiction between workers and capital at the individual factory. This is the core and the common denominator of the crisis. The working class's response to the crisis is mass strike and occupation of the factories. The result of the revolution is the autonomous assumption of power and production for human needs. Thus the workers' council is the basic element of the anti-capitalist struggle, of the dictatorship of the working-class and of the future communist society.

- 5) The proletarian revolution means a radical change of all aspects of social life.

Capitalist production and circulation has directly or indirectly left its mark on every aspect of social life. Therefore the proletarian revolution is not just an economic revolution. Through the workers' conquest of economic power it becomes possible to change every aspect of society, but this does not follow automatically from the assumption of control of the means of production. The goal is collective autonomy and the realisation of man in an all embracing process of the production of material and spiritual life.

- 6) From economic to political revolution.

The basis of the revolution is the economic power of the councils organised at individual factories — but when the workers' action has become so powerful that the very organs of government have become paralysed, the councils must undertake the political functions too. Now workers have to

take care of public order and safety, they must see to it that social life can go on; the council is the instrument for this purpose. Decisions made in the councils are carried out by the workers. In this way the councils will develop into the instrument of social revolution.

- 7) The basis of communist society : production of use value.

Decisive for the political economy of communism is that the principle of abstract work is abolished : the law of exchange* value no longer rules the production of use value. The political economy of communism is utterly simple, the two basic elements are concrete working time and statistics. The production process is no longer determined by the hunt for profits but by the production of use values. And distribution is no longer determined by purchasing power but by need.

II. The capitalist workers' organisations.

- 8) Social democracy is a counter revolutionary movement.

The basis of social democracy is the immediate consciousness of the masses. The capitalist mode of production appears as if it were natural. It appears as if it were only determined by technological development. This means that the goal of social democracy is complete, overall coordination of production and of the distribution of products. The means to this goal is a centralised state apparatus with maximum control over all aspects of social life. This means that the social democratic workers' movement will consider the conquest of the means of production by the revolutionary workers' movement as being a threat to the welfare of the community. It will thus confront it with all kinds of resistance, from propaganda to violence.

- 9) The trade union is a capitalist workers organisation.

The task of the trade union is to take a larger or smaller part of surplus value from capital. Not to abolish production based on surplus value. This means that meeting the real interests of its members, i.e. . successfully raising wages, presupposes a favourable economic situation, with rising capitalist profits. Workers' councils will, on the contrary, not soften exploitation, but abolish it — or remove the remaining obstacles for the abolition of exploitation. The difference between the two kinds of organisation is therefore not one of degree but of nature. The trade unions are opposed to the revolutionary workers' councils.

- 10) The 'communist' vanguard party is anti-communist.

The Russian peasant revolution could only be victorious because the masses were led by a well disciplined and united vanguard party. But a revolution in highly developed countries is not a peasant revolution. The goal of the proletarian revolution is that the workers themselves will be the masters of production. Only then will capitalism really be abolished. This is in absolute contrast to the Leninist party whose aim is the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the organisation of production through a state bureaucracy, i.e. the establishment of a new ruling class.

III. The present situation.

- 11) West European capitalism is in a pre-revolutionary phase.

The present crisis of the highly developed capitalist countries makes it reasonable to assume that we are in a

pre-revolutionary situation. The situation is not yet revolutionary because of objective circumstances : because the reproduction of capital has not yet been thrown into a crisis which totally changes all social life. And because of the objective circumstances, it is apparent that the immediate needs of the working class are not for such a revolutionary overthrow.

- 12) The interventionist state is developing a preventative counter-revolutionary strategy.

In many of the depressed western countries the social democratic state is on its way to taking up a preventative counter-revolutionary strategy. Perhaps West Germany and Sweden are the most obvious examples. This trend is particularly serious because the left-wing movements do not yet constitute a strong anti-capitalist tendency. The means include more rigorous pro-capitalist legislation, centralisation of decision making, Berufsverbot, promotion of the fear of living and unveiled violence.

- 13) Social democracy in crisis.

Social democracy fights for two (**) interests : firstly, the maintenance and expansion of 'the common source of riches', secondly for the interests of wage earners. In booms both interests can be satisfied, in periods of depression the last yields to the first (which is equivalent to capitalist profits). Furthermore, in a period of depression social democracy regards left-wing movements which attack the very basis of capitalist production as opponents who must be fought by all possible means (cf. thesis 8.) The proletarian workers' movement must therefore fight social democracy without any illusions about social democracy serving working class interests.

- 14) The struggle against the Social Democratic Party is the struggle against social democracy.

The struggle against the Social Democratic Party is a struggle to abolish its mass basis : the widespread social democratic illusions prevalent in the working class. This is done through agitation against social democracy and through the struggle against parliamentary illusions. But first of all it is done practically in the struggle for immediate needs and in collective self-determination, as opposed to social democratic state intervention. The independent groups and movements based on the principles of council organisation are in themselves the best arguments against social democracy.

- 15) The justification for, and limits of, trade unions.

Trade unions are necessary in the struggle for the improvement of the wage labourer's living conditions. It is not the task of anti-capitalist groups to fight against this function. As the capitalist crisis develops the trade unions cannot and will not (out of consideration for capitalism's need for profits) fulfill this task. Through this the proletariat realises the impossibility of changing things given the conditions under which it lives, i.e. the proletariat realises the difference between the capitalist and the proletarian workers' movements. It is the task of the anti-capitalist groups to maintain and develop discussion of this understanding of the usefulness and limitations of trade unions - for instance through strike committees.***

- 16) The struggle against trade unions : the struggle to control strikes.

There is no continuity between the trade union struggle and the revolutionary struggle. Anti-capitalist groups must fight any illusions about this. The conflict between the trade union and the body preparing to organise the council manifests itself because, whereas for the trade unions the strike is the last argument for the most advantageous compromise, to the revolutionary workers' movement it is the first step in anti-capitalist action. A crucial point will therefore be the control of strikes. If, in the workers' eyes the trade unions fail to fulfill their capitalist functions satisfactorily, it is the task of anti-capitalist groups to fight for the producers' autonomous assumption of control of the strikes, wildcat strikes.

- 17) The anti-capitalist groups must criticise left-wing movements.

The reformism originating in social democracy hides behind many left-wing masks today. And social democracy - whatever name it goes under - is the most serious hindrance for the revolution and the last hope of the bourgeoisie. Anti-capitalist groups must therefore consistently criticise left wing reformism and opportunism and may not - out of a misunderstood loyalty to the movement - pretend to be more stupid than it is. These groups cannot - especially at the present level of class struggle - go in for a broad leftist unity movement nor at all for a 'leftist leadership'.



- 18) The struggle against the Leninist workers' organisations involves a critique of state capitalism.

Nobody who has anything to lose apart from his chains (and probably not even these) will ever fight for a new socialist society if it is only a correction of the established system. This is an essential argument against Leninist workers organisations. The point is that their function will be the same as that of the Social Democratic Party : to get a group of leaders into power who by using government will make plans for production. This necessitates a critique of the Russian system - here the bureaucracy - the new ruling class - has complete control of production and so control of surplus value too. On the other hand the workers only get their wages and so they are an exploited class. So it must be constantly emphasised that a revolution led by any Leninist party cannot go beyond a radical reform of capitalism and

that Leninist groups must be fought since they threaten the independence of self-organised movements.

19) The radicalising effect of concrete struggle.

In a schematic outline it can be said that the wage labourer exists in three different forms in bourgeois society. Firstly, the wage labourer exists – for example in the polling booth – as a citizen, i.e. a neutral individual, responsible to bourgeois society. Secondly, the wage labourer exists as a social partner, i.e. as a producer who receives part of the production surplus as wages; this is the basis of trade unionist consciousness. And thirdly, in the spontaneous and autonomous action as a class individual; in its concrete consequence the self-organised struggle as wage-labourer, includes the possibility of going beyond the common role as social partner: for example, the concrete circumstances of the strike struggle may necessitate a factory occupation. Here the worker 'surprises himself'.

20) The function of anti-capitalist workers' groups is to maintain the workers standpoint.

Autonomous action entails the possibility of creating a workers' standpoint. However, this standpoint exists in opposition to state educational institutions (schools, radio, TV), the bourgeois press, social democracy, trade unions, etc. It is the function of the anti-capitalist workers' groups to maintain the radicalised workers' standpoint beyond the isolated action, to make it collective and generalised.**** Anti-capitalist workers' groups can and must retain the results of movements, they must be a forum in which experiences from social struggles can be exchanged. They must nurture understanding of the necessity for collective actions against capitalism and they must support and criticise radicalising social struggles. The seeds of the movement preparing for workers' councils are to be found, e.g. in the strike committees. Only through such organisations will workers themselves be able, collectively and individually, to act, make decisions and thus educate themselves, creating their own independent opinion. Only in this way can a genuine self-organisation of the proletarian class be built up, from which can develop the workers' councils.

21) The proletarian workers' movement struggles for collective self-determination.

The slogan about direct and all-embracing democracy is the most important slogan of all. Democracy within capitalism is nothing but a formal political equality. This form of democracy is incompatible with the principles of council organisation. If a 20th century utopia exists it is the concrete utopia of the councils. This utopia becomes of interest at the moment when the bureaucratic state apparatus and the capitalist workers' organisations are no longer able to represent the elementary interests of large sections of the population. The goal of the council communist workers' movement is collective autonomy and the realisation of man in an all-embracing process of production of material and spiritual life. The slogan concerning communist democracy is meaningless without the maintenance of self-organisation at the base; without a democratic practise a radical critique of bourgeois pseudo-democracy is impossible.

The capitalist production process constitutes the basis of bourgeois society. The capitalist crisis stems from the capitalist production process and so is expressed, fundamentally, in the class struggle between producers and exploiters.

Therefore capitalism must and will be overthrown at the point of production, i.e. in the workers' autonomous struggle for command of the individual factory. Workers are the direct and practical masters of the machinery. They have the most important economic function in capitalism. Bourgeois society is based on their labour. Therefore it is the autonomous strike and the mass strike, followed by the workers' occupation of the factories which is the decisive form of action towards the formation of a council-communist movement.

No democracy without socialism –

No socialism without direct democracy !

Four corrections of the translations from Danish to English were made :

* exchange. This word was not in the original, its addition makes sense of the relationship intended.

** The word superior was omitted here. One interest can be superior to another, but there is no explicit or understood comparison with the 'two interests' in the text. Therefore 'two superior interests' appears as meaningless, at least in English.

*** 'The impossibility of -----proletarian workers' movements.' The meaning of the original text was very unclear here so we have guessed at the intended sense.

**** respectable. The word respectable has connotations in English which make it unsuitable in this context – it's usually taken to mean acceptable to the establishment, i.e. bourgeois. The word generalised has been substituted as better conveying the sense of 'broadly accepted' which we think was intended.

JT and FW. London, August 1981.

2) The working class is the heart (and the brain) of the Revolution.

The capitalist production process constitutes the basis of bourgeois society. The capitalist crisis stems from the capitalist production process and so is expressed, fundamentally, in the class struggle between producers and exploiters. Therefore capitalism must and will be overthrown at the point of production, i.e. in the workers' autonomous struggle for command of the individual factory. Workers are the direct and practical masters of the machinery. They have the most important economic function in capitalism. Bourgeois society is based on their labour. Therefore it is the autonomous strike and the mass strike, followed by the workers' occupation of the factories which is the decisive form of action towards the formation of a council-communist movement.

These theses were produced by the Danish Council Communist group [c/o Anders Cruger, Hans Tausensgade 9 th, 5000 Odense , Denmark.] Before they split up and started beating one another up, the ICC printed an obsequious 6 page critique of these theses in their International Review. Typically, they didn't bother to print the text itself – so much for Internationalism (and for World Revolution, Revolution International etc. etc.)

As a contrast to these theses we print overleaf a short article from Le Frondeur which is critical of this sort of councillism.

IN THE COURSE OF TIME

- 1) According to the Ultra-Left viewpoint, the workers' council is the organisational form which has to be finally reached before the proletariat can show its revolutionary essence. This position hides the fact that this current sees the essential reasons for the successive defeats of the proletarian movements in the manipulations, violations and pressures which the "bureaucrats" carry out against the class - and which are supposedly held in check by the councils, general assemblies, workers' autonomy and elected-and-instantly-revocable-delegates.
- 2) Instead of putting into context the influence and power of the "bureaucracy" - that is, instead of looking to the limits and weaknesses of the real movement in order to find a favourable terrain for its re-emergence, the "bureaucracy" is designated as an evil which hinders an intrinsically revolutionary proletariat from acting in a revolutionary way.
- 3) This explains the Ultra-Lefts search for organisational guarantees which they imagine will avoid the situation where the proletariat allows itself to be diverted from its path. To take an example from history; it wasn't thanks to any machiavellian astuteness that the Bolsheviks managed to impose themselves on the soviets and then on the totality of Russian society, but essentially because the proletariat - as much on the Russian level as on the world level - was unable to open up a process of communication which would then perhaps have created "the situation of no return".
- 4) Instead of understanding the upsurge of the council form and its contents as the product of a precise social and historic reality where capital no longer dominated the whole of the social fabric so much quantitatively as qualitatively, they make a perverse apology, which sees the councils as the universal cure-all despite their obvious historic failure. Here a purely ideological attitude is adopted, which risks not only placing those who cultivate it outside of any eventual subversive movement, but also and more importantly risks becoming a shackle on it.
- 5) To see in the revolutionary movement an essentially organisational problem (hence the false debate: Party or Council) is to be trapped in a problematic which is in fact imposed by capital. Everything ends up being reduced to a question of organisation. Obviously it's not the point to reject this whole question, but quite simply to put it in its proper place. Rather than to pointlessly debate around the question of party or councils, it is clearly more useful to base our reflections on the tasks which a possible subversive movement could undertake. These tasks are radically different from those which faced the proletarian movement more than half a

century ago and which quite rightly were the origin of the emergence of the workers' councils. Just as consciousness is the consciousness of the possibilities at a given moment in history, so organisation is the practise at that moment.

- 6) Another point put forward by the Ultra-Left that calls for criticism is the demand for "real democracy" with all that it implies :

"the election of delegates, revocable at all times by the general assemblies of proletarians".

Straightaway we would say that a subversive movement which has clear objectives does not allow any manipulation. Such a movement goes forward, and without any hesitation eliminates the obstacles blocking its progress. That is to say that it is fundamentally undemocratic and certainly doesn't get underway thanks to general assemblies which are always precisely the place where all the monkey business is possible. When proletarians unleash a radical movement, it is never because it has been democratically decided, but more prosaically because they feel the necessity for it in a vital way. This in no way means that a movement of this nature is never preceded by discussions. But this appears as the situation demands it, that is, the situation in which the proletarians find the content and material of their activity. Thus the decision to act could be taken by a minority (which is always the case at the beginning of a radical movement). At this moment the opposition between minority and majority loses all meaning as the minority only convey the existing situation to a greater number of people.

- 7) Consequently if a movement which is "autonomous" from the start, that is, it develops outside of or even against the unions, ends up by being recuperated by them, this is quite properly because its dynamic doesn't have a revolutionary basis. A distinction must not be introduced between the outcome and the real nature of a movement. There is no separation between that which recuperates and that which is recuperated. So to talk of manipulation, the cunning of the unions etc. is to have a non-materialist conception of class movements.

To conclude, we quote a passage from "Class Struggle in France" by Marx which summarises in a concise way the materialist position on all modern radical movements:

"The class that concentrates within it the revolutionary interests of society and which rises up. finds the content and material of its activity immediately in its own situation: crushing its enemies, taking measures imposed by the struggle and it is the consequences of its own action which pushes it further. It does not give itself over to any theoretical or consultative search for its own tasks."

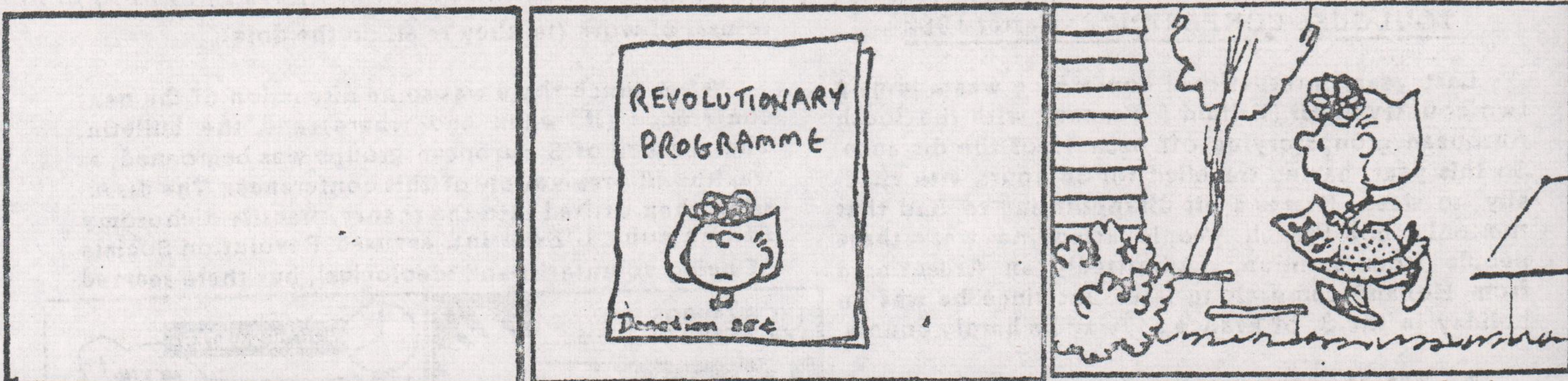
translated from Le Frondeur No. 7 Spring 1981

INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION BULLETIN.

Some of you will be aware of the conferences organised by the groups participating in the International Discussion Bulletin. For those who don't, the IDB is an irregular journal for discussion between different Ultra-Left and communist groups, mostly in Britain and France. It appears in English and French and the groups participating have organised a number of conferences to continue the discussions in it. The English edition is co-ordinated by Wildcat in Manchester and Authority in London. It's distributed through A Distribution, though copies

can also be obtained through us if there's any difficulty. The last conference was held in London in April 1981 Several LWG types went along - only one was able to stand it for more than a few hours. That conference agreed the following statement as the basis of participation in Bulletin and at conferences :

"Our common basis is our participation in the struggle for a stateless, communist society on a world level, where wage-



labour, money and exchange, national boundaries, the family have all disappeared.

It is clear that the so-called "socialist" regimes in Russia, China etc. are nothing more than the perpetuation of the domination of capital over the working class and all human activity. Socialism in one country is impossible and "national liberation struggles" whether associated with this objective or not are counter-revolutionary.

Both parties and vanguards, as organisations for the seizure of state power, and unions, as organisations for determining the price of labour power, can only be obstacles to the struggle for communism.

The working class expresses itself through autonomous forms of struggle (which tend to push aside the separation of leaders and led, of theory and practise, of political and economic struggle), such as anti-union mass assemblies and strike committees or at a higher level workers' councils. The destruction of capitalism is immediately the affirmation of communism. There can be no transitional society between capitalism and communism."

With the exception of the reference to "mass assemblies" there's not much here to disagree with. (We think this should be changed to "general assemblies" since "mass assemblies" in English normally refers to union mass meetings which are not what is intended.) However, the work of the IDB to date (despite the hard work of the few comrades involved in translating and producing it) has been of little consequence. Conference reports, particularly, have been extremely abbreviated, often resembling a string of apparently unrelated and occasionally unintelligible aphorisms, delivered in a pretty mystifying Ultra-Left-speak.

And though the other materials which have been translated have provided interesting insights into what other groups are thinking about, the nature of the bulletin itself has prevented a comprehensive picture emerging of what are often very different (and unfamiliar) bodies of revolutionary thought. This is partly the fact that the bulletin is necessarily oriented around discussion of common ground, as opposed to differences, but it's equally the structure of the bulletin, which presupposes familiarity with previous issues, and by appearing so irregularly makes any continuity of debate (or even attention) very difficult.

This isn't helped by the incomprehension which seems to have dominated discussion, particularly between the British and French groups. Though groups like the now defunct PIC are relatively easy to understand in terms of their political roots (in the case of the PIC in councillism and the 'German Left') even if these are little known here, in the case of those groups which draw on political traditions which are completely unknown here (Guerre Sociale is a good example, deriving in part from the work of the "Italian Left", among other sources) confusion has reigned. (Notably at the last conference). [For an introduction to the "Italian Left" see the account in the Unpopular Books Review mentioned elsewhere in this issue] It is to be hoped these problems can be overcome. The pretty desperate situation most revolutionary groups are facing could very easily lead to further disintegration and isolation, leaving the field of "revolutionary" ideas to the various decaying horrors from the revolutionary waxworks, which groups like the LWG and most of the groups constituting the IDB network are attempting to supercede. Anyhow on the next page is an account of this years conference which was held at Toulouse.



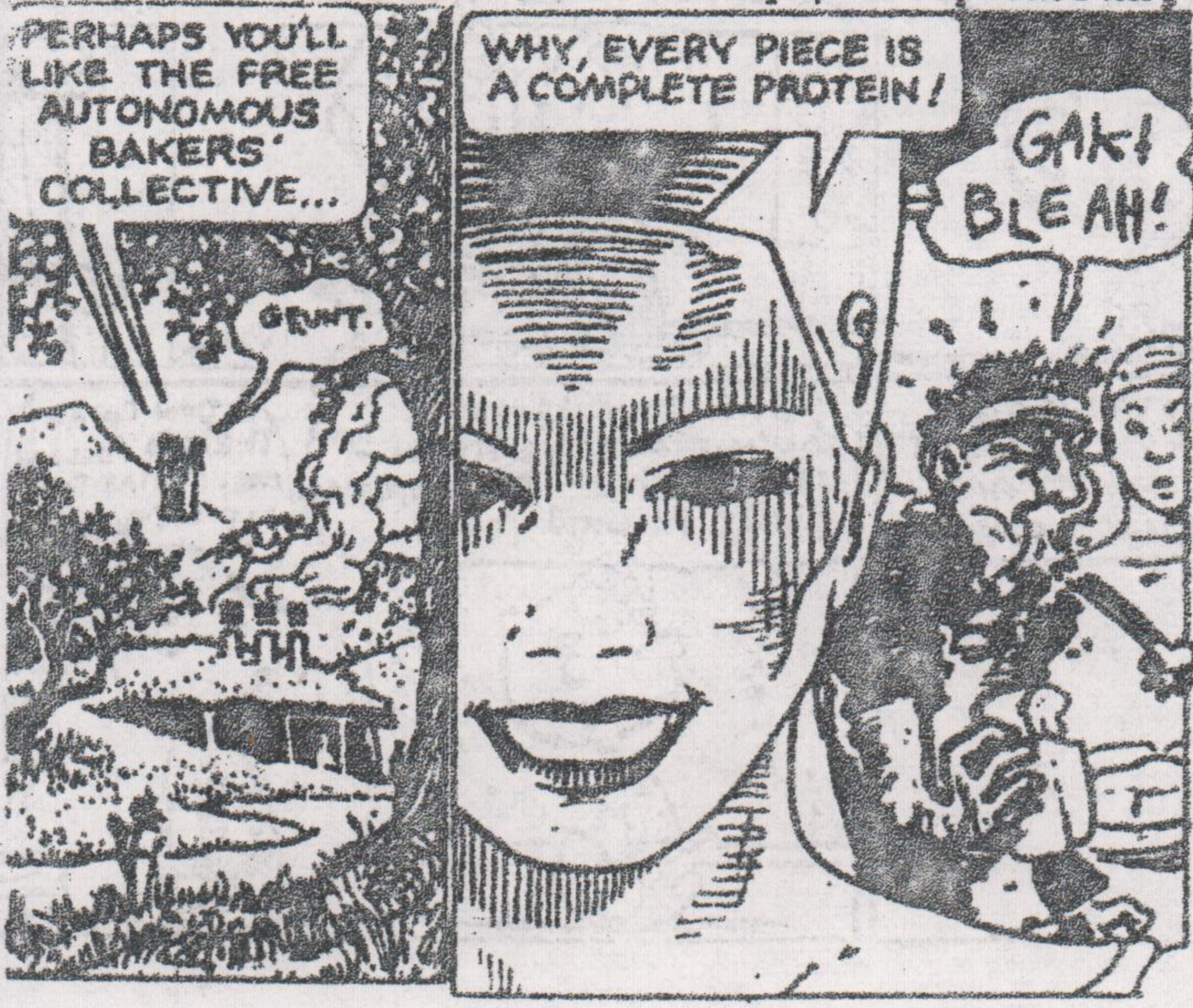
TOULOUSE CONFERENCE - Easter 1982

Last years international conference was a largely two country affair (Britain & France), with the South European groups crying off because of the distance. So this year, having travelled for 36 hours with virtually no sleep, it was a bit disappointing to find that the only non-French people attending were three people from London. Admittedly an Argentinian from Holland came along later but since he was on holiday in the S. of France anyway he hardly counts.

We got to Toulouse about 9 am. Saturday and with barely time to pause for coffee and croissants, the conference began. Groups present were - LWG, Authority, L'Eveil Internationaliste, Guerre Sociale, Revolution Sociale (a splinter from the now defunct PIC), Lutte de Classe, plus a few individuals, with the aforementioned guy from Subversief (Holland) coming in later on.

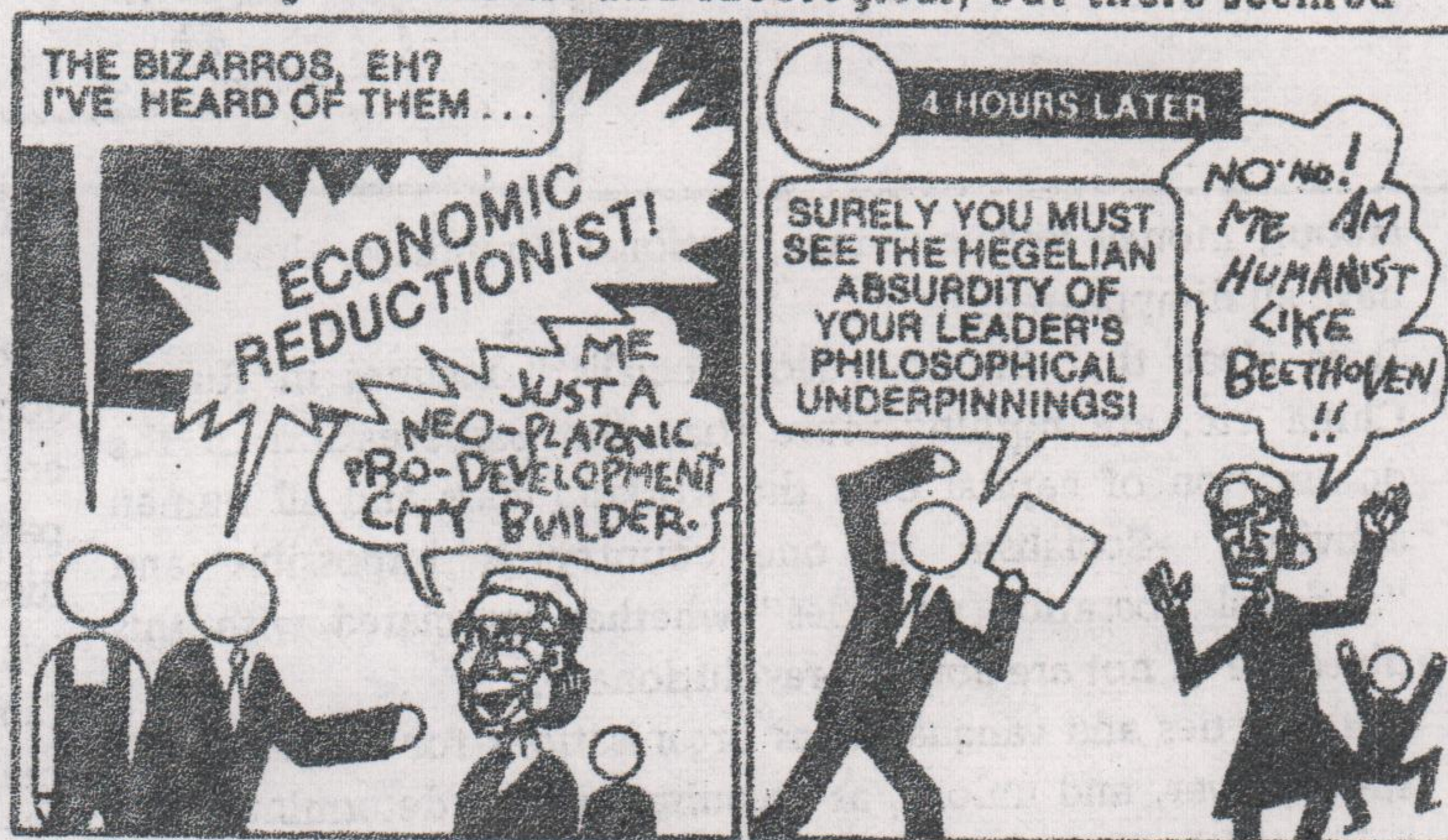
The morning was taken up by groups and individuals new to the "I.D.B Scene" introducing themselves. Nothing very startling. L'Eveil Internationaliste rabbitted on a bit and Revolution Sociale took up a fairly ideological line. I can't remember what their line was off-hand, but it was fairly ideological. After lunch our translator wandered off to do his own thing so we slept outside on the grass for a bit, then came back for beer and sarnies, and rejoined the debate. Poland reared its ugly head yet again, with various people finding reasons to believe its all positive and wonderful, despite the fact that workers are kissing bishops' arses in the streets. L'Eveil Internationaliste pointed out that the working class in Poland had reached a stage where it appeared that the 'economy' can be stripped from the bourgeoisie and taken over by the workers. In other words it's the attempt to isolate the economy from politics/life in general that makes the workers demands counter-revolutionary.

Sunday morning began with a discussion of intervention. This was somewhat limited by the fact that for small groups of revolutionaries, intervention tends to be restricted to handing out leaflets. L'Eveil Int. seem to be doing similar things to the LWG - holding public meetings on particular topics etc. and talked about their involvement in the St Nazaire dockyard strike. Subversief talked about self-management in Amsterdam (ie. Bakery etc. co-ops) and promoting



refusal of work (ie. they're all on the dole).

After lunch there was some discussion of the next conference (if, when and where) and the bulletin. The absence of S.European groups was bemoaned, as was the ill-preparation of this conference. The discussion then drifted into the theory/practise dichotomy. At one point L'Eveil Int. accused Revolution Sociale of being voluntarist and ideological, but there seemed



to be a lot of belligerent undertones which weren't coming across in the translation, and after this the whole meeting just degenerated into an inconsequential ramble around all the topics discussed at every revolutionary conference.

That evening the meeting was reconvened after a couple of beers and an excellent cassoulet (for those not familiar with French cuisine, cassoulet is fatty goose and pork in baked beans), to discuss whether we could possibly justify holding another conference. Again, much verbiage with little consequence. Finally got to bed at something after 1 am. and rose, refreshed and ready for the trek homewards.

Conclusion : Bits of it were interesting, little of it was enlightening. I think L'Eveil Int. had it about right when they said we're all groping in the dark because the social movement is in such an embryonic stage. Still two days of good food, good wine and sunshine can't be all bad. Put me down for next year.

Those of you with strong constitutions will recall that in the last two issues of the bulletin we published some correspondence about the assembly movement in Spain 1976-77. Believe it or not this was the only part of the bulletin to attract further correspondence. The article overleaf is about this movement. It's translated from "Illusions Politiques et Lutte de Classe" by Henri Simon and Cajo Brendel.

As only a section from a book it presupposes familiarity with the names and history of some of the political organisations that were around at the time. However this isn't so important and what is meant should be clear. It explains the contradictory nature of the assemblies - and thus raises a lot of questions about what workers autonomy and autonomous struggle are. The translation is still a little rough - our sincere thanks to the comrade from Authority who let us use both this and the piece from Le Frondeur, translated for a projected work on autonomous struggle. *

THE DIALECTIC OF THE "ASSEMBLY MOVEMENT" :
ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES

"The assembly movement is the first workers' council in the history of the second Spanish revolution. In contrast to other previous forms of struggle of the modern workers' movement which had to dissolve themselves to avoid being recuperated by the unions or similar groups (for example the representative commissions at Vitoria) the assembly movement knows how to be permanent and indissoluble, because it is not recuperable."

(from a pamphlet of unknown origin)

These lines, written in 1977, well illustrate the illusions that revolutionary groups wanted to find in the Spanish situation we are going to describe. Closer to the truth, but perhaps just as far from it in another way, the following quote gives a better description of what the assembly movement meant for the workers:

"Most are concerned with definite demands; a decent wage, a real and effective social security, retirement. They dreamed of having their share of happiness. They wanted to leave their cramped homes and lie on the beaches. All those trying to get involved in economic progress seemed dangerous to them. Socialism for these new men was more justice and more happiness."

(Michel del Castille ; "Le Sortilege Espagnole" p293)

What is called the "assembly movement" appears after its demise to be just as much an expression of a spontaneous autonomous current as the manipulation of this current by all the union forces united to implant themselves as firmly as possible in the capitalist apparatus. Organisations and parties want to conquer power within the system, a power recognised and conceded by the system itself to the extent that they can show that they have power over the workers. As regards the struggles of this period it could be written :

"In these struggles, as much at Vitoria as at Roca, the self-organisation of the workers can be seen as an embryonic form of workers' power, direct democracy through the assemblies and also the careful limitation of the delegates elected directly by all the workers in struggle, and at all times revocable."

EVERY OTHER HOUR
DURING THE DAY
EVERYONE ALL OVER
THE EARTH TUNES IN
TO DECIDE ON IM-
PORTANT MATTERS!



THAT'S 65 BILLION
FOLKS MAKING DIRECT-
DEMOCRACY WORK!!

This was true in periods of intense struggle, but wasn't sought as such: the revolutionaries understood it in a completely different way from the workers. The organisations and parties saw it in yet another way. Although it wasn't always apparent, there was already at this time a contradiction between the autonomous movement at the base, and the organisation of permanent structures arising from this movement. The passage to modern forms of the domination of labour can only be made by sweeping away the old forms. But in Spain in 75-6 a part of capital still clung to them. The political and union organisations couldn't guarantee this passage on their own - they had to use the social movement, and through such manipulation set up organs necessary to this struggle, whose temporary nature guaranteed their autonomous character, but whose survival and permanence after the struggle had finished guaranteed the stranglehold of the bureaucracy and a structure which benefited capital. The situation was very different from the thirties: The workers' struggle is unambiguous and develops in the way that suits it - capitalist structures are attached to this struggle to control and limit it. To that end the PCE (Spanish Communist Party) had several strings to its bow : its infiltration of the Francoist unions could possibly give it the framework for a single union in a state capitalist society; its aborted conquest of the Workers Commissions had given it only a base in the workshops. Having failed to realise its goals by either route, the PCE, with the help of other union blocs, tried to construct, (or allowed the construction of), rank and file organs whose permanence could strengthen the framework of the unitary union of which they dreamed. (1)

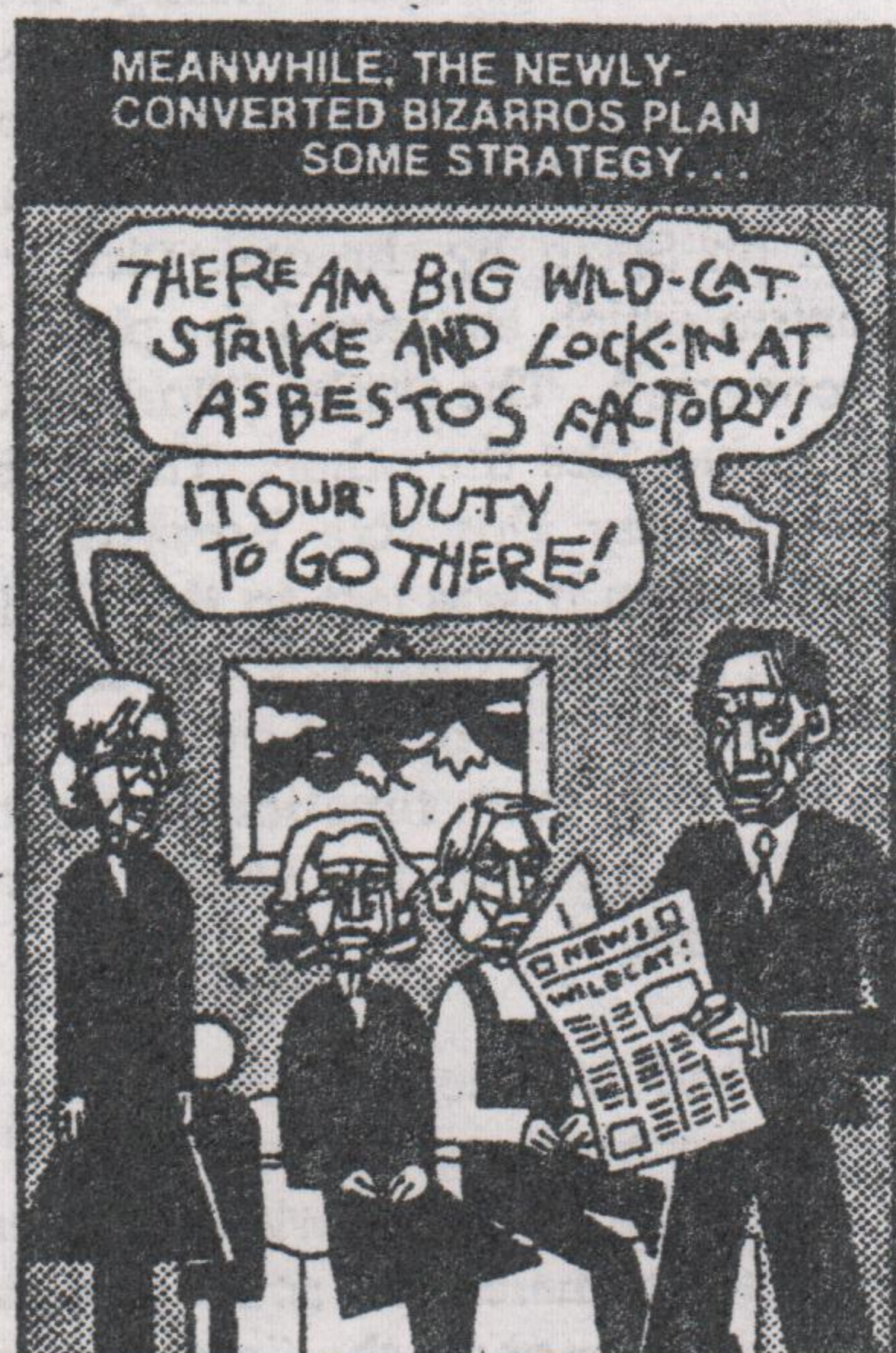
However the situation in Spain wasn't catastrophic enough, or the workers pressure "revolutionary" enough to require an organic unity of unions.(2) The rest had been done by the pressure of Western capitalism: the European "democratic" model imposed on Spain by the capitalist groups was based on plural unionism which expressed the plurality of the economic interests concerned. The CCOO (Workers Commissions) would be a union just like the others. The PCE and the CCOO wouldn't get to play this role however. Varying according to sector or region it was left to the UGT and the socialists, the USO and the left catholics, or in the Basque lands the regionalist political groups and unions. These different groups all aspire to the same function in capitalist society, and they have the same need for workers struggles in order to impose this function.

Parallel to this, and on the surface with a different perspective (generally described as "revolutionary", which includes the leninist partisans of totalitarian state capitalism as much as "councillists" or anarchists) some groups tried to make a place for themselves amongst the "vanguard workers" who had abandoned the PCE and given the struggle a "revolutionary vigour and consciousness" which they considered to be lacking amongst workers preoccupied with immediate demands. These groups proliferated in Spain in 76-77 but what role did they play in the struggles of this period? What part did they play in the momentum of the assembly movement? Certainly the situation in Spain favoured an intervention of this type. On the one hand there were no modern legal structures to oppose initiatives from the rank and file (the Francoist unions could not perform this role and the other unions were still clandestine and couldn't perform it openly). On the other

hand the struggles left to themselves, had to organise in such a way that the clandestine groups, more familiar with techniques of action, could easily propose forms of organisation and take key positions. Finally, as in all countries with a large and recently industrialised peasant base (France, Italy, Spain etc.) state-capitalist ideology could be strongly implanted as it responded as much to the needs of capital as to certain needs of the struggle (co-ordination in conditions of fragmented production for example).

However it would be a misunderstanding of the class struggle to attribute the depth and momentum of the "assembly movement" to "militants" whether in groups or parties or those who, as is always the case, emerge spontaneously in the struggle itself, as they are freed from the constraints of daily life and the real features of exploitation are revealed. A minority often appears which is more combative and more prepared to fight to the finish than the other workers. It is those who emerge spontaneously from the struggle who give life to the forms of organisation which are proposed to them, or on the contrary, who destroy them by completely rejecting them.

This destruction of structures in the struggle was the fate of the Francoist unions as in most of the struggles the rank and file assemblies elected their delegates (revocable if they weren't satisfactory), tried to impose themselves as an intermediary for direct negotiations, and intended to keep total control over all decisions. This destruction of vertical unions was little short of total (except as we have seen, in certain cases for the PCE and the CCOO) (3). But to avoid being destroyed in their turn, the clandestine organisations had been obliged to go further into the assembly movement in the way we analysed above. This was resolved to the benefit of the apparatuses to the extent that no "revolutionary" perspective emerged from the struggle.



It was soon clear that the assembly movement did not have such a perspective although attempts were made to place it in such a perspective notably outside Spain. In actual fact the most original feature of the autonomy of the movement is that the workers (no matter on whose initiative) came together very quickly in assemblies to put their united power forward against the (francoist) apparatuses which were trying to fix the price of their labour power behind their backs and without their knowledge. These assemblies only worked "democratically" on a local and limited level. This explains how the strike at Roca could go so far in the affirmation of the power of

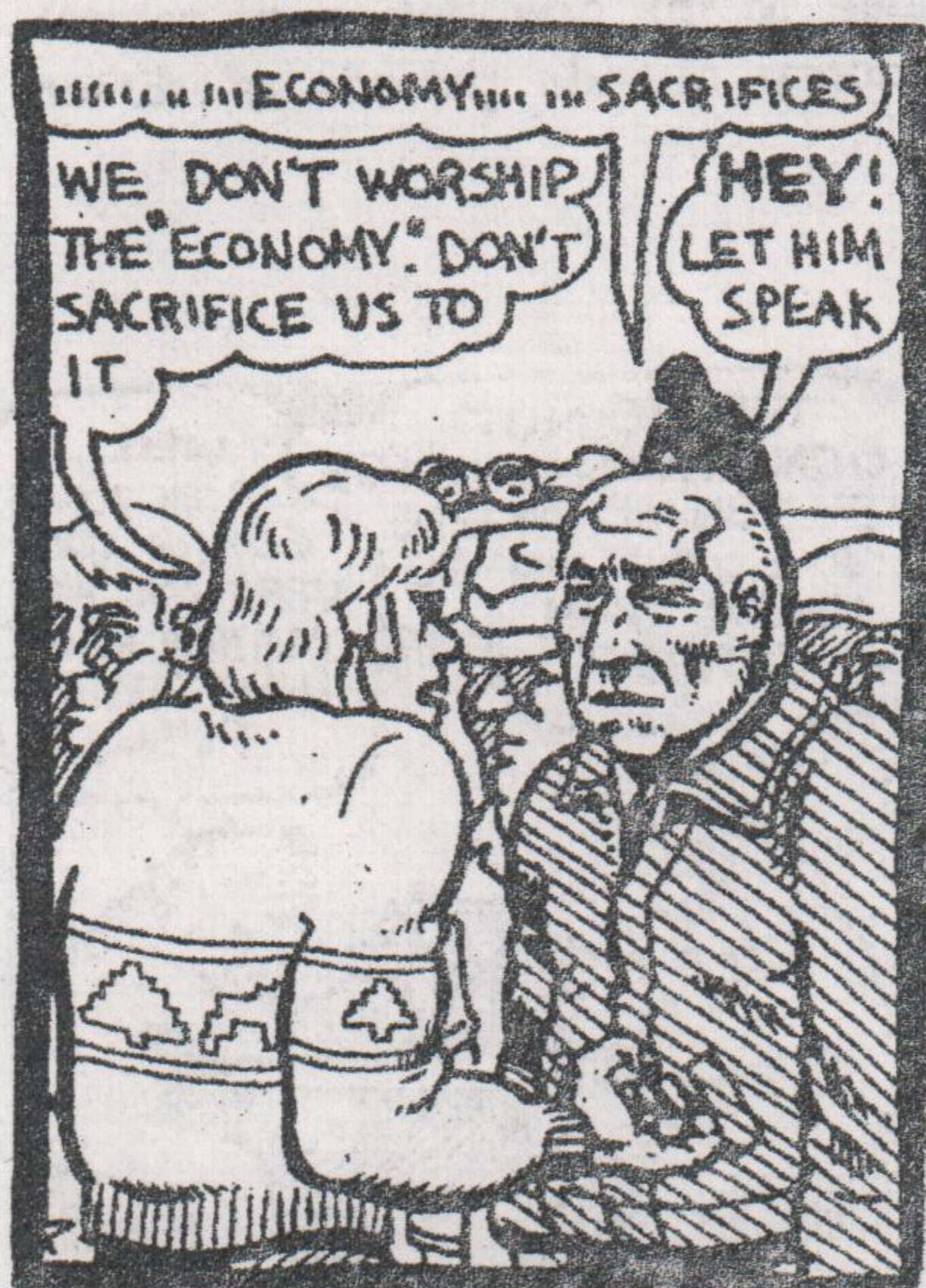
workers' assemblies and the control of delegates. Everyone knew everyone else and so manipulations were more difficult to carry out and manoeuvres were easily avoided. When the strike spread at local level, the "co-ordinations" were only possible as mini-assemblies of delegates or committees elected at a second remove from the rank and file. The vanguard which had been able to emerge in the first delegations became much narrower with the second, and as criteria of being a "good speaker" or efficient determined the choices the parties were all the more able to secure places for their men. These capitalist criteria immediately restored the hierarchies and the distance from the rank and file; they prefigured the eventual emergence of the unions. From this point of view it is of little



importance whether they declared themselves to be revolutionary or reformist. The strikes at Sabadell and Vitoria give examples of this situation. It turned out the same in the large industrial units where direct democracy could have existed at the level of the workshop or department but would have become difficult at the level of the factory. A typical example is that of SEAT in Barcelona. Here during 77-78, even before the union elections, the assembly system ended with the constitution of a vertical apparatus in the factory which was firmly in the hands of the unions which were being legalised, thus shutting the door for the present to all autonomous initiatives.

It is interesting to compare the different sorts of assemblies, their systems of delegation and how they worked during the course of 76-77. The first example is that of Fords at Valencia as it functioned during the strikes of January and May 1977. The heart of the system was the co-ordination of delegates composed of 72 delegates from various "labour commissions". These delegates were elected by assemblies of divisions (motor, bodywork, assembly, painting and central services) and by joint assemblies of sections and departments within these divisions. But during the struggle another organisation was substituted for this, an organisation which derived from the very structure of the factory. The co-ordination of delegates was the intermediary between the general assembly (at this scale, if all the workers were present, it was no longer a meeting where things could be discussed, only accepted or rejected) and area assemblies (six geographical zones not based on type of work). It can be seen how manipulations were possible, and that the system didn't function as well, since after these struggles "All Power to the General Assembly" was demanded alongside "Continue the Co-ordination of Delegates". Coming out of a desire to "prolong the struggle" this question of permanence greatly helped the installation of union structures.

Vitoria is another, but somewhat different example. Here it wasn't a case of a single factory but of a large number of large and small companies. The factory assemblies elected committees which were in principle revocable and which dealt with the arrangement and co-ordination of the struggle (analysis, resistance funds, leaflet production, perspectives). These committees themselves came together locally in assemblies of delegates called representative commissions which overall made sure of the centralisation of the struggle, the unification of demands and the generalisation of the struggle to students, the neighborhoods and other sectors of the population. This "organisation" and the vocabulary used gives an impression as much of a spontaneous organisation as of a party or union structure. In the last analysis it all depends on the relation between the base assemblies and the delegations: repression could swing them towards bureaucracy, if the assemblies could no longer meet or towards workers democracy if the leaders were arrested. Just as with the organisations in the big factories, the permanence of these apparatuses helped their conquest by the parties and groups.



The metalworkers strike at Sabadell gives another example of the self-organisation of the "assembly system". We would stress that here, even more than at Vitoria, a large number of factories set up a real democracy of the rank and file which required organs for co-ordination. In 12 zones of the town local assemblies were held every morning and a general assembly was held every evening at the church of Can Orian. This assembly decided from day to day how the movement would continue. The figures given for the general assembly refer to about 7-8,000 participants out of 15-20,000 strikers. Above all, it was the militants of the CCOO who tried to manipulate the movement - it was essential for them to "stay calm" at that moment in the hope of getting legal recognition for the unions. The twin action of the unions and the police came at the end of the workers action which remained limited to Sabadell. The party-mongers were experts at manoeuvres. They based themselves amongst the less active people to denounce the adventurist character of those who understood that a movement gets bogged down if it doesn't go forward. They sowed confusion in the assemblies at the same time as police action upset the workings of the edifice of assemblies and delegations. So we come across the habitual repressive form of the western democracies where repression is combined with the actions of the unions to break all inclinations to autonomy. But rather than repression, it was more a feeling amongst the workers that a certain level of struggle could not be reached which created the limits of the strike, its encirclement and its end.

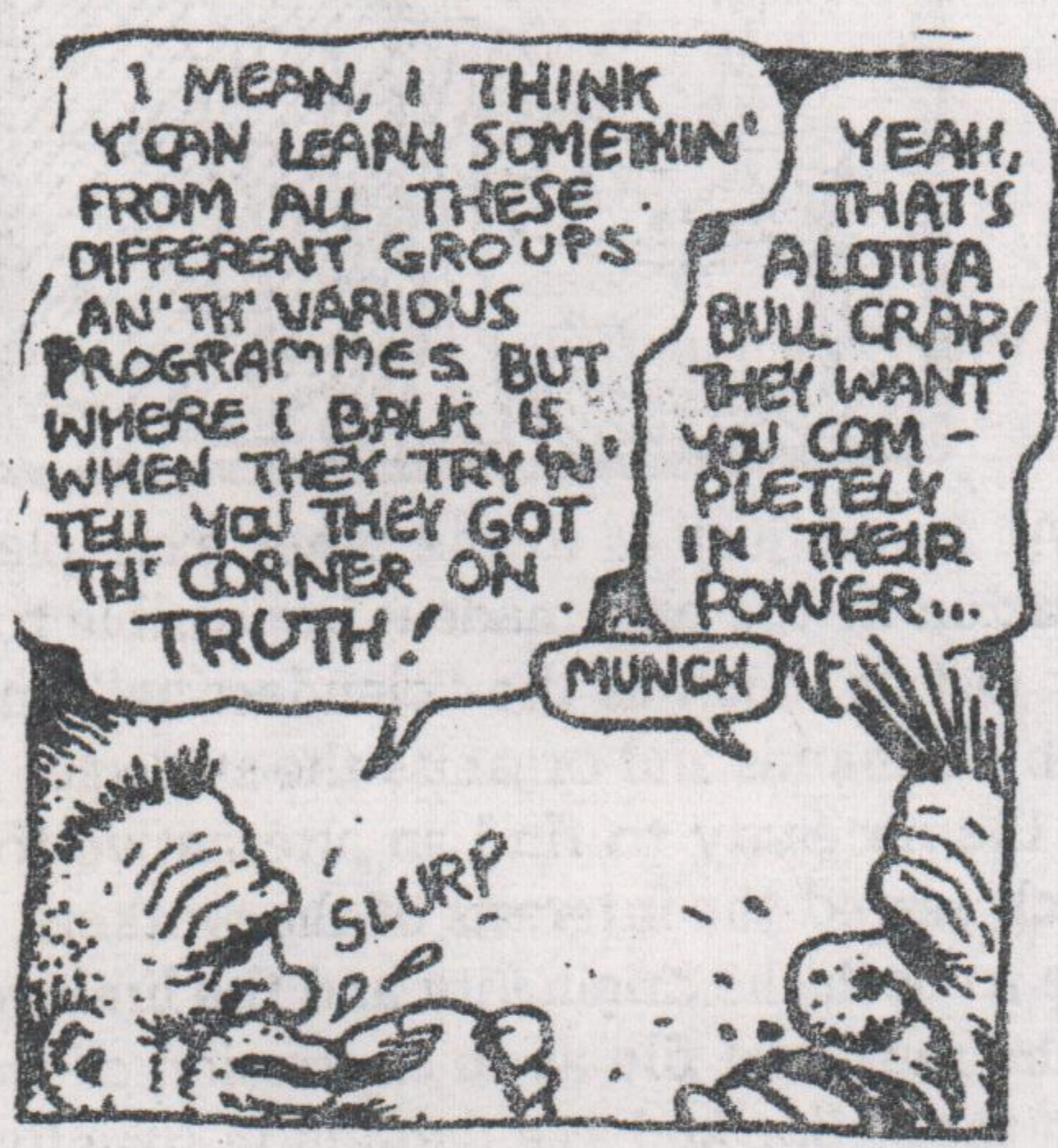


At Roca, just as in the other examples mentioned, the organisation at the base made it impossible to use the vertical unions just as much as the "clandestine" unions in order to defend the demands and organise the struggle. The problem that arose, the necessity to find an alternative form of organisation which served the interests of the workers, simultaneously gave rise to both the originality and the limits of this organisation of the rank and file as an expression of workers autonomy during the strike, and as a neo-union structure underlying the course of the strike, which after the strike strove to become permanent. It is interesting that this autonomous structure came up against the unions which tried to find an "entry" into the strike to use it and control it through the structure being made official. But the description of this structure by the strikers themselves as "the construction of a unitary union section" in which at all moments tendencies could validly express themselves, shows that in the very form of the assembly system, the majority tendency of the workers was the construction of a "union". Certainly an idealised union, but with the functions that it assumed under capital so determined that once the struggle was over it revealed its true characteristics. In this case we can't speak of the influence of clandestine unions. In contrast to Sabadell and Vitoria, at Roca these organisations were outside the strike and condemned its practises. It was less important seeing that the assembly system worked perfectly (at Roca we find the system of mini-assemblies, representative commissions [assemblies of delegates] already described which apparently assured workers' democracy right from the beginning of the strike to its end).



The pressure of the bosses obliged them in the course of the struggle and in order to perform the bargaining, to accept a mixed formula with union delegates as such and delegates from the strike committee. In reality the debate throughout the strike was essentially with the "other" union organisations as to who was going to "represent" the workers in the discussions. In a veiled way, because of the vertical union system which was still in existence, we find here an opposition which exists universally under Western capitalism: that between organs of the rank and file - workers assemblies (sometimes a directly elected strike committee) - and the apparatuses which have an essential function in capital.

The autonomous character of the struggle did not appear so much in the autonomous forms already analysed which were already ambiguous during the struggle and even more so afterwards, but in the frequent moments in Spain during 76-77 where the needs of the economic struggle carried the struggle off the terrain of the factory and into a more global framework than this economic struggle. We will only take the three examples cited above; Sabadell, Vitoria and Roca, to stress that the struggle quickly took over the streets following the intervention of the police, that it swept up the whole population in the neighborhood committees, that women were able to play a direct role in the struggle and finally that it moved beyond politics (in terms of parties) through the collective action of confrontation or the self-organisation of all the activities needed to pursue the struggle. It is no longer the form of this self-organisation that is essential, but the tasks it undertakes and the goals it strives for. On this terrain there was no possible recuperation because it all stopped with the struggle itself and by returning to the everyday forms of resistance to the domination of capital - the only refuge for autonomy outside periods of direct and open struggle.



It could appear as we have said, that during 1976 the workings of the assemblies and elected delegates in a multitude of struggles opened the way to an autonomous development of the struggles - some wouldn't hesitate to call it "revolutionary". The collapse has been all the more brutal for them as the recognised unions, including the CNT, were installed, and the legal system of delegation and contractual discussions resumed the role which had temporarily been taken up by the assembly system. And that this happened without major conflicts (in every way no different than in other Western industrialised countries). It could be said that for the majority of workers active in the assemblies, the passage from spontaneity to an institution has been "normal" just as, to the extent that capital dominates them, it is true that it is the very mechanisms of the system which appear the most appropriate to carry out an essential function: the discussion of the price of labour power. Disillusionment comes from an inability to understand this fact and the illusion that a class organisation which draws its real life from a period of determined struggle can be permanently maintained.



Authors Footnotes.

- (1) This situation could be compared to that created in May 1968 in France when Seguy proposed to Pompidou that the CGT (the CP controlled union) be "recognised" as the only union confederation in return for the promise of a speedy return to work in the occupied factories, a proposal that collapsed in the face of the opposition of the other confederations.
- (2) Even in Italy things starting to evolve in this way in the seventies had not been taken to the limit, except in the crucial sector of metallurgy.
- (3) CCOO - a union controlled by the PCE and formed by the fusion of Workers Commissions captured during the sixties.



(AES cont. from page three).

would be put together by a new tripartite (TUC/CBI/Govt.) national planning body. And having estimated the size of the cake in advance negotiators will "have a more reliable guide to the likely movement of costs prices and earnings in other sectors and this would undoubtedly provide a better and more consistent basis for collective bargaining." In other words by 'opening the books' and giving the TUC a share in the task of setting wage norms the unions will have the ammunition they need to sell low wage settlements to the workforce.

Just as with the Social Contract the price of union cooperation in wage restraint is a political trade off. The repeal of Tory union legislation and more power for the unions with the establishment of the new tripartite National Enterprise Board, National Planning Body, National Investment Bank and involvement in planning through local and sectoral planning



agencies. The TUC will also be given a number of reforms to help sell support for a Labour govt. The most important from the unions point of view are the Workers Participation schemes, designed to increase union control over the shop floor as we've demonstrated in previous bulletins, and a massive package of state investment in public works. The Labour leadership are being carefully vague about their plans for such an expansion of public spending, but the TUC's plan The Reconstruction of Britain gives an idea of the sort of thing we can expect. Increased spending on the inner cities, NHS, education, social security and pensions, a massive house building and renovation programme, a new sewerage system, more motorways, rail electrification, completion of the System X telephone exchange network, a public insulation programme, more power stations etc. etc. This together with a cut in VAT, some kind of import controls and a manpower education and training strategy is the TUC's plan for recovery. Like all the alternative plans recently put forward, it has been "tested on the Treasury's model of the

economy". This model - available for use by anyone who wants to - has become the battleground for infighting between the various factions jostling for power or influence. It consists of 600 equations and once fed with a large number of assumptions about variable factors it offers predictions about the likely outcome of different policies. Though "the 'policies' tested are never likely to be followed in practise and the models are highly artificial representations of reality" (Cambridge Economic Policy Group), it offers politicians a sophisticated version of wargaming. Its attractions to those anxious to get their hands onto control of the economy will be obvious. Over the last year the Guardian has been filled with simulation and counter-simulation.

The point of interest for workers in this war of econometric horoscopes, is that the basic argument has become the need for wages policy. The TUC refuse to contemplate this (they know they can't sell it to their member unions since free collective bargaining is a major source of their power over their members), so the Labour leadership tied to the unions financially and politically (the block vote) equally limit themselves to vague talk of a 'new social contract'. (For the same reason leadership candidates like Benn also refuse to contemplate it.) However the best results produced on the Treasury model all involve either severe wage restraint or even cuts. (Hence Howe's recent pronouncements on the need for even lower pay rises.) And while the leadership refuses to talk about it, others less hampered by the need to be careful provide a clear insight into what's in store. Take for example the writings of Micheal Meacher, usually described as a 'prominent Bennite' - and remember this is the radical version (!)

According to him on coming to power Labour strategy would be to devalue the pound by 35% or so "which would create a million or so jobs" as British goods become more internationally competitive and so an export drive can commence. This of course assumes that other countries don't retaliate by doing likewise. Equally it means that "the unions and professional and managerial associations accept a firm policy on incomes so that the huge job creating potential of this exercise is not dissipated in a pay spiral to protect real living standards. This will require a genuine and substantial quid pro quo, not just another rhetorical social contract to dress up naked wage restraint". Is this a quid pro quo with the workers - no, as we learn two sentences later "In power terms the obverse of planning of incomes is planning of production, investment and trade, and joint control at company and plant level between local management and TU/worker representatives over all those decisions now unilaterally determined by management outside the current scope of collective bargaining is a key part of the AES via planning agreements". In other

words the standard left demand to trade "living" standards for participation by our representatives in the system which determines them. Meacher continues "realistically a money sacrifice would, no doubt, still require a specifically monetary compensation. This could be either government repayment, after say 3 to 5 years, of a proportion of workers' income tax as index linked savings according to the degree of pay restraint, or better still, once planning agreements were in place, a right to share in the firms capital appreciation tomorrow to match pay restraint today." In other words workers should invest their labour power and current so called living standards into future capitalist recovery and the hope of a slightly improved standard of alienated life in the future. If you believe that presumably you'll not only vote for Benn, but you still hang stockings up at xmas. This of course isn't the end of the good news - devaluation will increase the prices of imported goods, and Meachers policy means no domestic reflation for 18 months "lest the export drive is deflected into satisfying home demand". Once the maximum number of jobs have been created by the export drive then "modest" reflation can take place via. Govt. investment accompanied by import controls - in other words the introduction of the AES proper. 18 months of working our arses off for nothing. In reality of course it will almost certainly take a Labour govt. a couple of years to impose effective pay restraint after an initial round of high wage claims. And at least that long to establish the sort of participation in planning that will be needed to police it at local level. The Cambridge Economic Policy Group - instrumental in developing the AES and much respected in socialist economic circles have become increasingly gloomy about the ability of the AES to reduce unemployment below two million in the life of a single govt. (The Labour party promise to reduce it below a million on the basis of a less radical package than Meachers). Still given that the AES is likely to fail in its attempts to speedily set capitalism on its feet, Meacher still exposes the reality of it for workers. (All the quotes are from an article entitled Models not Rhetoric in the New Statesman 14/8/81). In May this year he made it even clearer "the anti-inflation thrust of the alternative policy involves the proviso that the growth of earnings will not exceed the movement of the retail price index by more than 1 to 3 per cent. It cannot be stressed too strongly however that this is not a traditional incomes policy when the latter has always hitherto involved a cut in wages, and that is not planned here." Presumably this is not a traditional incomes policy in the sense that its intended it should last for more than a year or two before breaking down. (quoted from a Guardian article).

The truth behind the AES becomes clearly

visible. Its the programme of a section of the bourgeoisie for shifting the balance of power in their direction. To implement such a strategy would require the cooperation of workers - thus rhetorical inducements are held out - an "end" to unemployment, a rise in the standard of welfare state benefits (lucky us!) and in the future the chance to develop ourselves with the opportunity to purchase more commodities and more alienated leisure. Of course three or four years of austerity measures before any tangible material gains are seen, will be necessary as a result of the "depth of the crisis" that "thatcherism" and/or the "British economic crisis" have brought us to. There will however be an immediate reduction in unemployment - not among workers however but among the new generation of planners and policy makers who will staff the new corporatist institutions the AES calls for. Not that material gain is the sole aim. The opportunity to participate in running capitalism will be payment enough for many. Its been the dream of a section of the meritocracy ever since the experience of govt. regulation and state direction during the last war.

As the prospects of an early election to cash in on the Falklands factor (dressed up as a showdown with wreckers and troublemakers, as industrial discontent starts up again after three years of quiescence) are discussed, the chances of seeing the AES applied recede with Labours prospects. Workers thus face not only a further attack on their living standards such as they are, but equally the use of the AES as an ideological barrier to effective opposition.

Clearly only autonomous working class action will resist this attack. But equally clearly, beyond such temporary gains, none of these problems can be solved within capitalism whatever schemes for remodelling it are put forward. The AES has nothing to offer workers and if they dont want to be crushed by the impending corporatist barbarism alternative economic strategy must be kicked off the agenda and an autonomous revolutionary strategy put on it.

In the next issue of the bulletin I hope to complete this look at the AES by examining its other face as ideology within the new left consensus.



FANCY THAT

They've nationalised the trades union movement
It may be queer but it's true
Sir Bill and a board of directors
Sit in offices
Representing
Me, us and you.

The thing now
Is to make
Shop stewards
Productive

And help out
The king private sector

By efficient
Official
Strike action

And swift arbitration
Next day.

Sir Bill says
Professional trades unions
See to it
That nothing explodes.

We're serving Britain
the public
our members
And as to demands
We've loads.

But we'll manage the lot
And end any
Disputes
With machinery
For settling grievance
And getting the rate
For the job.

But the one thing
The government
Consumers
The board
Wo'nt stand for
And
that
is
a mob;

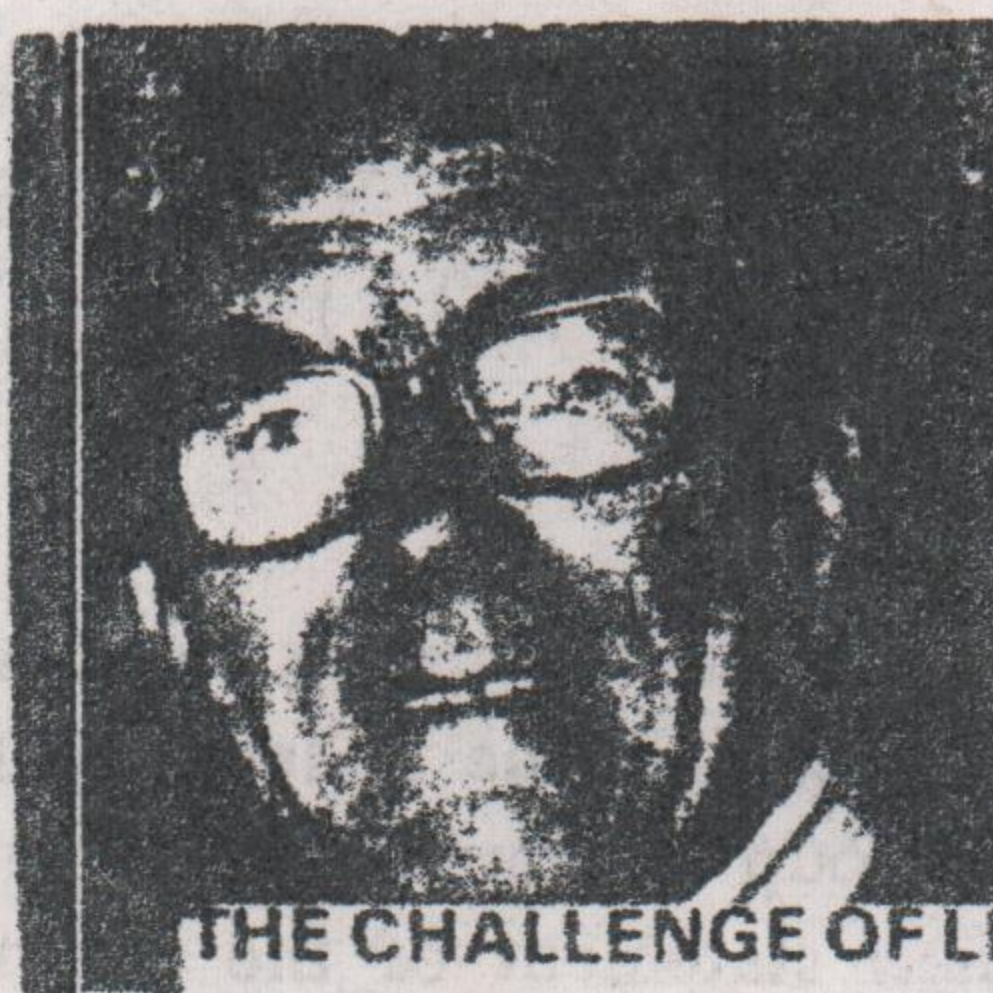
T.Belbin.

Just before Xmas the LWG spent some time discussing the Aims and Principles which have been printed in the bulletin, with only minor changes, ever since the group was formed nearly five years ago. The upshot was a new statement of the groups function (see inside front cover). After much argument the old statement of aims (agreed to be inadequate by everyone) was scrapped and not (as yet) replaced. Partly because it was felt the new statement of function reflected the basis of the groups politics, in the idea that organisation is organisation of tasks and not 'around' a platform, and partly because no new satisfactory statement of aims was produced. Below we print the rejected draft, produced by three members. Any comments on it (bearing in mind that it has been rejected as a statement of group aims) would be very welcome.

The human race has long had the potential to create a society based on peoples needs and desires. The main obstacles to the realisation of such a society are the capitalist system of commodity production, based on wage labour and the competitive struggle for profit; and the existing network of power relations rooted in alienation, division and hierarchy. The social relations, institutions, and ideology of capitalism pervade all aspects of social life, therefore we recognise the importance of organised struggle in all areas. As a group we concentrate on the workplace, not because we define class struggle purely in terms of production, but because the workplace is a key centre of class confrontation.

In fully integrated capitalist societies workers are all those, waged or unwaged, employed or unemployed, who are exploited and oppressed by capitalism, and who have neither control over their own productive activity, nor over the productive activity of others. Revolution involves peoples struggle to liberate their productive activity and thus cease to be "workers" - people whose activity and value are defined by capitalism. This struggle is the task of the entire working class : the importance of industrial and waged workers is that their position within capitalism gives them a lever to undermine it. Revolution means seizing not the existing means of production, but their potential for a better society. It has nothing to do with self-managing or democratising aspects of existing society. Reforms can offer no lasting benefit to the working class. All reform is now aimed at the desperate attempt of capital to regenerate itself at the expense of the working class. The ideology of reformism, as expressed by unions and left-wing parties only serves to perpetuate capitalism. That is the real function of these groups.

We are opposed to all hierarchy and dogma and believe that the emancipation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves. Hence our opposition to all political parties. Our aim for the achievement of a free society is based on our needs and desires, not on any subservience to ideology. We support all actions that tend towards workers autonomy as has been briefly experienced by revolutionary workers councils. Against the background of capitalisms inherent instability, such actions can call into question its ability to survive, and demonstrate the potential for a worldwide classless, stateless society.



EDITORIAL

by Sir John Boyd CBE
General Secretary

AUEW Journal

December, 1981



THE UNION THAT FIGHTS

THE CHALLENGE OF LEADERSHIP

Never since the days when I played my part in the now famous uprising of Clydeside apprentices in 1937, which, spreading nationwide, became an historical landmark establishing Union negotiating rights and decent wages then, for apprentices, have I ever been able, because of my nature, convictions, intelligence and experience to recognise the Trade Union leadership role as being other than serving the members as distinct from being a servant of the members. A servant is one who has no right to think for himself, but has to do as he is told, whereas an appointed or elected Trade Union Official exists to serve his members by applying all his knowledge, experience and vision to whatever problem confronts his members, form a view, and thereafter seek to have his members accept his judgement.

If they don't, they don't, and that's that. To act otherwise reduces one's role to that of a postman, and causes you to lose personality, dignity, and respect, and you must become a "nothing" in life.

BRITISH LEYLAND (CARS)

With this background testimony, I trust our 1¼ million members will bear with me when I utilise this last 1981 Editorial to comment on the recent BL crisis, in which I played a not unimportant role preventing it being a national catastrophe.

My views may help members, Shop Stewards, local and national Officials, in similar though not so widely publicised circumstances during 1982, onwards.

Whatever the causes, and they were numerous, including both Management and Trade Union inadequacies, this Company was bankrupt—finished, until Michael Edwardes, having been appointed by Tony Benn to the NEB, was thereafter transferred by Eric Varley to BL, to try to save it.

It thus became a nationalised industry, with a Board appointed on behalf of the Nation to be stewards of our first publicly owned group of car plants.

To save it not only required major surgery, which the workers voted for, but

phenomenal continuing public investment, paid for by our 50 million tax payers, and not just the 58,000 tax payers employed in BL.

Thus, unlike most other car companies, until its corporate plan is fulfilled, it will continue to remain on National Assistance for a few more years yet.

The Government claims that assets (yours and mine) invested in BL, total one billion, 700 million pounds—more than the Government's annual budget for the whole of British Industry.

THE SETTLEMENT

The final settlement established the following rates for a thirty-nine hour week:—

Grade	39-Hour Grade Rate
1	£108.60
2	£99.55
3	£97.60
4	£89.70
5	£81.60

Plus bonus at present averaging £11.50 per week, a guaranteed bonus of £3.75 each week, and negotiations aimed at consolidating this by November 1, 1982, and approximately £1 more in the premium bearing rates, covering overtime, shifts, and night shift.

With all the re-tooling and new lay-out, bonus earning capacity should go off like a 'bomb' over the next six months; already many are earnings £20 per week bonus.

But equally important is the Company's recognition that workers' representatives must play a more positive role in the strategy decision processes, including a new procedure agreement to facilitate this.

I strongly urged Sir Michael Edwardes to be more repentant and pragmatically gracious regarding the offensive letter his Board issued over his signature, but he wasn't; nevertheless, having regard to all circumstances and the resoluteness of the Government not to interfere by feeding in more money for wages—their intention being to let the Company be dismantled if

needs be—I decided on balance to recommend the workers to accept, which I did—clearly and unequivocally.

I am glad they did accept, 'But . . . !!'

THE 'GRAND OLD DUKE OF YORK' STRATEGY

My 'But . . . ' refers to three issues. First, the policy of the British Trade Union Movement is that there must be no interference by any government, in free wage bargaining, hence I did not agree with the politicians who raised the issue in the 'Commons' asking the Government to step in.

Secondly, when we reached the end of the road, I thought it was weak and vacillating for a small majority of the General Secretaries present to refrain from giving leadership by deciding to refer the proposals to the membership without a recommendation.

This is not Leadership.

THE WAY FORWARD

And this is the third issue relating to my 'But . . . ' Whatever happens in BL (Cars) makes national and international news. Many powerful people and institutions, both here and abroad, would like to see it fail.

Sir Michael Edwardes and his Board don't. The organised British Working Classes can't afford to let BL (Cars) fail.

Thus the new opportunities which the agreement gives to have Shop Stewards participate fully in strategic planning, together with a new procedure agreement, must be fully exploited now, and a new relationship forged between the stewards of the Nation's assets (the Board), and the Trade Union Stewards, under the guidance and control of their Union Executives.

If, for any ideological reason, individual representatives from either do not wish to participate, then they must be cast aside. This great experiment in this important section of industry cannot be allowed to be retarded by anyone, whatever their position.

Time is not on our side.

THE SUNDAY TIMES,
31 JANUARY 1982

Busting union power

MANAGEMENT can now manage, is—a refrain echoing through West Midlands industry. This is what a director of one Birmingham engineering company had to say about what amounts to a revolution in relations with the shop floor.

"The initiative has switched.

Before, union power had to be seen to be believed. The shop stewards had petrified the previous management into signing agreements that there would be no visits to the shopfloor by management without prior notice. When I arrived it was near anarchy. When I went down to the shopfloor, three shop stewards pressed round me wanting to know what I wanted. The power of the unions was so great that there was total confrontation all the time—even in the most mundane activity. Now we get total co-operation in spite of what we have done to them through the tremendous cut-backs we have had to make.

"The T&GWU and the

AUEW had enormous power here on the shopfloor. We were in the same lodge as Robinson (Red Robbo) and when he went, a helluva lot of militancy went out of the gates. Edwardes did a damn good job there.

"Will the new mood endure? Well, you still get union leaders saying 'you wait, our day will come,' but the redundancies have got rid of the trouble-makers who came to power in the 1960s. We've taken out 30 of them who were like a cancer. Even if you were bankrupt and the liquidator was locking the gates, they'd still have had a go at you. But the more thoughtful ones realise that what has happened has

been for the good. They are more sensible. If we have become tougher, we have matched the shopfloor redundancies. The board's been halved, the lavish directors' dining room has gone and so has their waitress. We've tackled all the sensible visible things.

"Communications have improved a lot. Before we told the shop stewards and they told the men what they wanted them to hear. Now we're introducing a piece-rate system to control wage drift. And at the invitation of the shop stewards, we are meeting them and the men in groups of 40 to explain it. We've got a lot of confidence in our future now."