

# The Newsletter

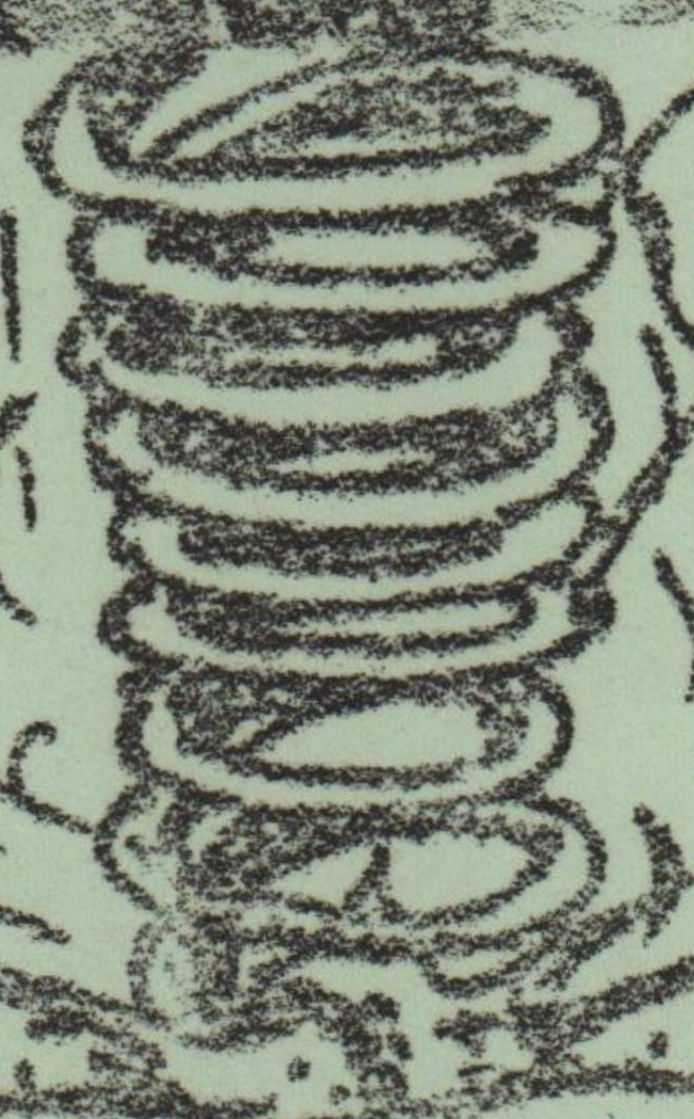
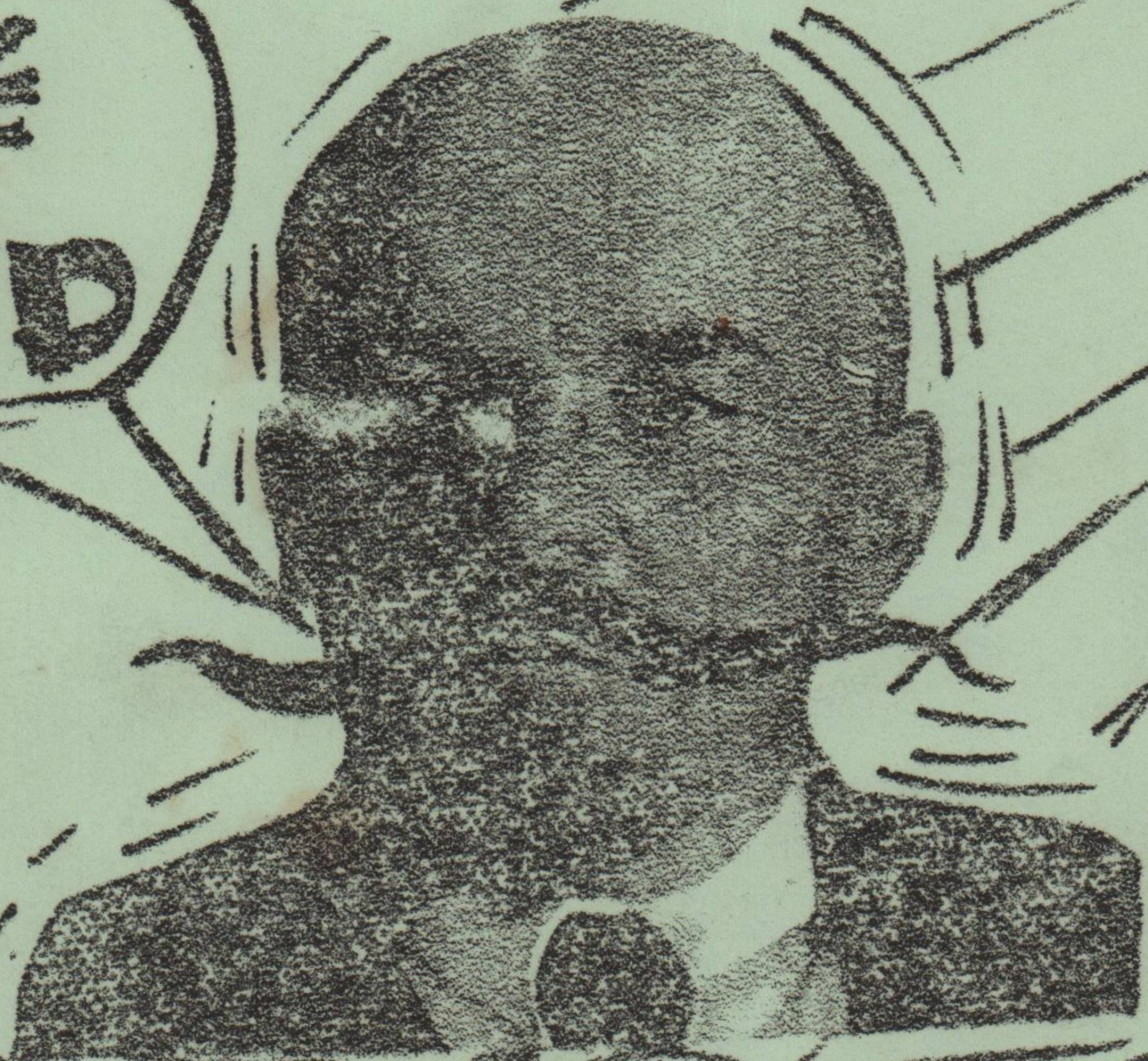
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TIME  
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"Revolutionary children! — Beware of the revolutionary parent."

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7½p



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What follows is a discussion with a French comrade about the present situation in France, with special emphasis on redundancies and unemployment. July 1971  
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Qu) One of the most pressing problems facing the movement in UK today is unemployment, how it occurs, where and why, and particularly how it can be fought. Is it also a problem that you face in France.

An) You can say that in France the problem occurs in two ways. At the present moment French capitalism is planning the destruction of the old French industrial regions. This means essentially the north and the East of France. These old regions are in many respects similar to the older industrial regions in UK. They are based on the mines: the coal mines in the North, and the coal and iron mines in the East. And round the mines you also have the textile industry. At this moment, French capitalism, supported of course by the State, is introducing what they call 'measures of recession' in the mines. Which means the progressive closure of these mines even in cases where these mines could still be profitably exploited, at least for a certain length of time. And at the same time, the closure of a certain number of textile factories - because they are outdated unprofitable etc. They intend to relocate industry in new regions, particularly regions based on new forms of energy.

Now, for the working class in the North and East of France, a section of the class with a very great tradition of militancy, this process has certain very simple conclusions. For a mine worker, for example, who has been thrown out of the mines, there is absolutely no hope of getting himself 'reconverted' as they say. Despite all the government propaganda about this reversion into new skills and new industries, most of them suffer from silicosis or other occupational diseases, and when the mines close they are refused work by employers in other industries. Too old, too sick etc.

This, then, means recession and unemployment for tens of thousands of miners, and similar numbers in the textile industry. Now, the struggle against unemployment has begun. The place where it is most developed is in the East. Around Falquemont, for instance. The miners have occupied the mines the offices, and organised a sort of self-defence. Whats more, these struggles have only gone against the bosses of the mines, but also against their representatives, the politicians who have come down to speak there. There was one, who had made all sorts of false promises to the miners about their future employment prospects. He appeared on a balcony to speak at a mass meeting, and the miners climbed up and began to jostle him off the platform. His car was overturned, and he was forced to leave. I think you can say that the violence of this process of planned and deliberate unemployment is being met by equal violence on the part of the workers in those regions.

Now of course the unions are on the scene, and they have adopted a tactic which is pretty subtle - the tactic of 'enlarge and defuse'. They have realised that in such a situation they are not strong enough to break the strikes that are taking place. They can't say 'Stop this for a while so that we can negotiate', because the movement is so strong and violent that they'd be overthrown. So, what they do is try to expand and enlarge the strike; organise their own, bureaucratic, pickets; put out a number of slogans that they never explain, and persuade the other mines in the North to come out in solidarity with Falquemont, without saying a word about whats really happening at Falquemont. In effect they impose a strike in a bureaucratic manner, while at the same time maintaining their own police control of information so that people never know whats really going on. The only slogans they put out are 'Solidarity with Falquemont', and not a word about the way the miners are occupying mines and locking up management in their offices. And at the same time, when the other mines are not very willing to follow the bureaucratic ploys of the unions, the unions can turn to the miners at Falquemont and say 'Look, you see, they're not supporting you. You'd better get back to work'.



However, although they have been playing this fairly subtly, happily its not gone the way the unions wanted. Because there were other groups that intervened in the strikes, explained what the real situation was, and explained why the miners at Falquemont needed solidarity. The strike went quite out of control of the unions, because the miners saw through what they were doing. This was precisely the risk that the unions were taking in their policy of enlarging the movement, and it went against them. The movement in the mines has been not only against recession and unemployment, but also, now, against the unions. And in this they have had the support of some of the local small traders, whose trading livelihoods are equally threatened by the closure of the mines.

So, you have a movement which is fast developing among the miners, and which is tending to break down the divisions imposed by the unions. At the same time, the main campaign slogans that have emerged from this movement have been for the right to work and for security of work. This last demand has been very important, because there are always a great number of accidents in the mines, and the struggle against these - the deliberate negligence on the part of the management - has involved a lot of people.

Qu) Are there new investments in the North and East that could absorb at least the younger workers that are being thrown out of the mines?

An) There's been a lot of talk about these new investments. But as far as I can see, they just don't exist. There are a few German companies with plans for factories in the East, But there's not a hope that they could absorb the present miners unemployed. The location of new industries in these regions is absolutely negligible.

Qu) Could you tell us a bit about the social security that's available to the unemployed?

An) Well, it exists. It's paid on a monthly basis. But when you consider the rise in prices that's been taking place in France over the last couple of years, its virtually worthless. At the same time there have been attempts to organise around the question of these social welfare payments, but it's very difficult. Because while there's no doubt that there is at the moment a great surge in unemployment, you find that it's spread over a wide range of industries....it's very diffuse....and the only real point of convergence of all these different people is at the unemployment office.

This is very difficult, because you don't have a situation like, say, Germany after the first world war, where the unemployed were a vast mass, out in the streets and so on. Here the unemployment is much more dispersed much more hidden in some ways. It's a sort of endemic unemployment.

For instance, There's the situation of young workers. The French government has adopted a new slogan: 'formation professionnelle' - skilled training for young workers, so that they can get themselves all sorts of skilled diplomas etc. and 'insert themselves into work in a modern society'. But it's a myth...a huge farce. Not only is this area of training being taken more and more into the hands of private capital, with the development of company training schemes, but what's more, when these young people come out of their colleges of advanced education, with all their so-called skills, all they're offered is jobs as semi-skilled workers on production lines, or labouring jobs. The pattern of the labour market in France at this moment is precisely that there is a reduction in the number of skilled jobs available, and an increase in demand for semi-skilled workers and labourers, a demand which in large part is being filled by immigrant workers. This then is the problem. More and more young people are facing situations of unemployment. But the position is far from clear, because what you have is large numbers of young people reaching the status of skilled workers...and of course, for a little while they will be prepared to work as semi-skilled workers. Which means working in jobs below the level of their qualifications.



For example the struggle at Ferodo, in the West (at Caen) led to a very successful lock-in. Now what you have here is a region where the capitalist thinks he will find the going easy, but this turns out not to be the case at all, because you have an interlocking of the struggles of the small peasantry and the workers in the factories. In many cases you find peasants coming to actively support a strike by bringing food to the factory, and this sometimes develops in very important ways - as was the case with the town of Nantes in 1968, and with the recent strike at Batignolles. This new solidarity between French workers and peasants is something very important in the French context, because up till the point where the peasants began to be destroyed as such, they had always represented one of the most reactionary forces in French political life.

Qu) What sorts of options are open to French capitalism to manoeuvre and break up the work-force - for instance could you talk about mobility of the work-force within France?

An) Well, one very important factor is the attempt being made by capital and the State to disperse the Parisian working class - move them out. This is a very complex process that works on the one hand at the level of rising rents and anti-working class housing policies, and on the other with the decentralisation of factories to regions outside Paris. This is a move that is being very carefully planned. Because Paris has what they call the Red Belt - highly industrialised suburbs, with a very militant working class. These workers had originally been moved out of the centre of Paris many years back, and now they're trying to move them all over the place. The main places to which industry is being decentralised are, as I said, the West, but also towards the South - the region around Grenoble. And the workers are expected to follow this movement, because the capitalists no longer like the idea of tightly packed situations where you have a lot of industry and a militant working class that lives in a tight community round about.

What then is supposed to happen to Paris is that it should turn into an administrative centre, including scientific and technical industries - and the white collar workers that go with that. They aim to make the centre of Paris the administrative centre for the State - which it virtually is already - and to make the suburbs the administrative centre for French industry.

Now this situation has led to a certain measure of crisis. Because for many years this industrial suburb has been virtually run by the French Communist Party. Many of the mayors in the working class areas are in fact communists. This means that the CP has a real power in these areas. They are responsible for carrying out the plan. Often as not they are involved in housing companies, as well as in the development and planning of new housing estates etc. This means that they are part and parcel of this project of dispersing and defusing the Paris working class, the Paris Bomb.

Now, in order to persuade the workers to leave and to replace them with the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois population, they are willing to do anything. On the one hand they fight against the shanty-towns, the 'bidonvilles' in which the immigrant workers are concentrated in the most terrible conditions all round the periphery of Paris. This is not because they want to improve the conditions of these workers. Quite on the contrary. The slogan of the 'communists' is 'Why do they always come to us? Why can't they go somewhere else?' In short, they just want to get rid of them, so that they can 'improve' their 'civic amenities'. And in order to shift these immigrants they will even go as far as direct action with the police, and whenever any actions develop with a view to stopping this expulsion, you find members of the 'Communist' Party there as shock-troops to assist the police. So, on the one hand the Communists are organising the expulsion of the working class, both native and immigrant, from the suburbs of Paris so that they can build high-rent accommodation at rates no worker could afford, and on



So, what we have at the moment is not a sort of brutal, open unemployment. It's unemployment manifested through under employment, non-utilisation of available skills, irregular work, two or three months between jobs. The only places where there is a real wave of unemployment is in the old industrial regions. For the rest of the country I would say that we are in a period of pre-crisis as regards unemployment.

Qu) Now, in Belgium you have exactly this phenomenon of the running down of certain sectors of industry - notably the mines and steel industry. But to a certain extent, at least in Flanders, reconversion seems to have been taking place. The native workers are moved out of the mines into other industries, and their place is taken by immigrant workers. In some mines the percentage of immigrant workers is as high as 50%. Is there a similar move in France?

An) No. French capitalism uses immigrant labour in a much more centralised way...concentrating them in the heavy metal engineering industries, cars etc. Then in building and construction. And also in seasonal agricultural work. But in the mines you have very few, because the working class around the mines has no possibility of finding employment elsewhere.

Qu) What about the textile industry? Because in Britain it seems that a large percentage of the labour force in textiles is immigrant.

An) No, for the most part immigrant workers don't work in the textile industry. The main problem there is for the women. Because, particularly in the North, you have a very large number of women working in textiles, working in terrible conditions. The wages are low, and many of them live at considerable distances from their work, because they tend to live near the place where their husbands work, and are forced to commute. Some women spend hours going to and from work - and in addition have the housework to do when they're not working in the factory...while of course the work that they're expected to do in the factory is always being pushed to the limit.

There have been, since Summer '69 some very hard struggles by the women in the textile factories of the north. They've refused to accept speed-up, they've sabotaged the production, they've fought against job-reorganisation etc. They've come up against all the definitions of what women can and can't do but they've continued fighting, and have not only organised strikes of their own, but also organised the occupation of certain factories. They've had to struggle right down the line against the frankly reactionary positions taken up by their husbands and by the men they work with regarding the women's role in the struggle, but they have managed to overcome that and create a sense of their own position, their own rights and their own demands.

Qu) So far we've talked about the struggles in areas of industry that are virtually being destroyed, where the struggle is against unemployment, and against the way in which the employer can use this unemployment as blackmail to drive for higher productivity. Could we now talk about the areas into which French capital is moving, and the struggles that have been developing there?

An) Well, as I say, you have two main developments within French capitalism. On the one hand you have the old regions which are in crisis. And on the other you have the new developments in areas like the West of France, where you see a modern industrial region. In a lot of ways the capitalists like to locate here, because to a certain extent they can disperse their plant, and at the same time, the type of worker that is most common is the worker who is also a small-holder - an ex-peasant with a little land. To a large extent the industries that you have here are those which have followed the government's policy of decentralisation from Paris. But what has happened is that precisely in these regions that some of the most advanced struggles have appeared, including among other things the big wave of sequestrations (lock-ins of management) and a very close link-up with the struggle of the peasants - who at this moment are fighting a very bitter struggle against the plans of French capitalism to destroy them utterly.



the other hand, at the present time they have the nerve to organise a campaign against racism in France. That's the French Communist Party for you!

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(At this point the conversation went onto another tack. Now the following are two articles about the reorganisation within the steel industry, the effects it has on one region in the Lorraine, and the struggle that developed in one sector that was to be affected - the railways)

### 1) KNUTANGE NATURAL WASTAGE = DISGUISED SACKINGS

If you exclude Sollac and Sacilor, the number one problem in the Lorraine steel industry is the question of jobs. The De Wendel trust, one of the big steel-producers, has a very simple plan. They are going to abandon their plant in the Lorraine region, and relocate their production in a new plant on the South coast of France - at Fos, near Marseilles.

At their factory at Knutange they plan to do away with 3,000 out of the present 6,000 jobs by 1972. At Hagondage there are also 6,000 workers. De Wendel plan to shut down two furnaces by July and two more by the end of the year.

De Wendel have a simple way of reducing their work-force: they organise 'naturalwastage'. For immigrants working on a contract they simply terminate the contract and bid them goodbye. For the others they use constant harassment: they make life as unpleasant as they can in the hopes that the workers will leave of their own accord. They also make vague promises about the possibilities of re-employment at Sollac or Sacilor.

At Knutange there have been a couple of strikes, and a union planned occupation of the factory. On May 14th there was a meeting of 800 workers, mostly immigrants, at the gates of the plant. De Wendel was forced to call in the Flying Squad to protect himself: 160 of them came and squatted in the companies offices until the danger was over.

from J'Accuse May 17th '71

### 2) THIONVILLE - THE ORGANISATION OF NIGHT COMMANDO GROUPS

(In June of this year there was a very important rail strike in France, which began spontaneously at the Avignon depot, in protest about the unacceptable shift working that has followed on the reorganisation of the railways, against intolerable workloads, and for a wage rise. The strike spread to other depots all over France, and was crushed, after 11 days, by a series of manoeuvres by the unions, who had not succeeded in winning a single thing for their members...)

Here at Thionville there's a particular local problem, in addition to the demands being put at the national level. The steel industry in the North of the Lorraine is being wiped out. De Wendel are not making profits here, so they've decided to move out. And the SNCF (French Railways) is doing the same. They have decided to discontinue, starting in July, the services from Thionville to Hargarten, to Auden-le-Roman and Apach. These were the lines that served the De Wendel works. And what this means for the workers that used to use the line is that they're going to have to take the bus. Which means getting up one hour earlier, and getting home one hour later.

On Friday June 11th, amid general enthusiasm, All the 800 workers at Thionville station decided to strike; A strike committee was immediately set up, composed both of members and of non-members of the union. This was to be the general assembly of all the workers on strike, where they would collectively produce leaflets and information.

Another committee was also set up. A committee for the 'defence of the lines' composed of local worthies. The strikers were hoping that the mayor of each of the boroughs that would be affected by the closures would undertake to inform the population, and would provide some financial support. But all they got was fine words.



Right from the word go, the strikers occupied the station. The next day the occupation spread to the station yard, and then to the main telegraph office. Two hours later the police arrived and besieged the office. The strikers leave the telegraph office and the police take their place in the building.

The response of the railwaymen to this intervention? During the whole of Saturday they stopped all traffic on the lines by sitting in front of the trains, while some of their number handed out leaflets to the passengers on the train and addressed them through a loudhailer:

'Ladies and Gentleman, users of the railways! We must take a stand against the central power of the State, which has not hesitated to use the forces of repression that you see here in the station, against workers who are very justly on strike. The strike committee of Thionville station thanks you for your attention.'

ON THE FOLLOWING DAYS

-Passenger trains are stopped in the station. Their air valves are opened and all the alarm cords are pulled. Since there's no air, they don't make a sound. When the driver re-connects the air supply so that he can leave, all the alarm signals begin to whistle. He has to climb down and disconnect all the alarm signals before he can set off again...and that takes time.

-On three occasions the Trans-EUROPE Express - a very luxurious train! - was stopped. The first time it was in the station. The strikers had dragged out a long table onto the lines, and they set it up in front of the train, and had the buffet-waiter serve them beer as they sat there. The second time it was stopped in the middle of the country by small explosive charges placed on the lines. The strikers who were hiding in the bushes by the line jumped onto the train and opened all the air valves: a 20 minute stoppage. On the third occasion the TEE was stopped for three hours while the little train from Hargarten (one of the lines to be closed) came by, with its passengers hanging out of the windows applauding the strikers, much to the disgust of the people on the express.

-In the goods yards goods trains were put out of action by unhitching goods wagons. The Coblenz-Paris train had to wait three hours because the lines were blocked by a series of wagons that had been unhitched. It finally got underway, but didn't dare stop at Thionville.

-On Thursday June 17th the police decided to intervene again: they say that strikers will no longer be allowed onto the platforms. When they heard, small numbers of people began to organise themselves into night time commando groups. They went into the countryside and stopped trains by waving red lanterns. Then they'd get up onto the train and pull all the alarm cords, and disappear again with the assistance of friends who were waiting with cars to help them get away. One railwayman managed to block ten trains in one night, all by himself.

IN THE MEANTIME the unions and the committee for the defence of the railways had done nothing but spout hot air. They broke up a demonstration organised by the station workers in the market square, and on the following Monday the workers were greeted by an official union leaflet saying that the strike was officially over, and that they were to report back to work. There was a great deal of anger, after the action of the last few days, that the union had done this: "The unions are always deciding these things from the top. They never consult us, the workers, down here." But at the same time, the feeling still remains...

from J'Accuse/Cause du Peuple June 28th

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## THE RACE PROBLEM

Anarchists have often neglected the 'race issue': perhaps this has something to do with the apparent total absence of black anarchists. But it is one of the fundamental problems of existing capitalist society.

Earl Price's article in Solidarity vol.6 no.7 represents a useful point of departure by its radical critique of white support of black separatist movements, suggesting that this support is a form of ingratiation built on guilt. There is an element of 'sob', of 'in the early days I did my best for you; why should you shit on me?' My first reaction was to focus on this and use it to blow the whole argument wide open. I am having second thoughts.

If O.R.A. is to represent a distinctive analysis in the libertarian movement, I think it is a class analysis. But, just as it is simplistic to demand separatism, so it is also simplistic to say that whites and blacks are both members of the working class. It represents part of the analysis, but not all of it.

Fanon demanded that the Third World reject the European road of violence, exploitation, dehumanisation et al. The Third World has manifestly failed to follow his advice. Even if it had, we cannot apply it to a Western industrialist society with an immigrant population. Black and white are interdependent, and necessarily must remain like this. In this country even the alternative of separate black (counties)? isn't feasible.

The basic Black Panther philosophy (I am not discussing their Leninist organisation which is a different issue) states that the problem of the American black is both a class one and a colonial one. The 'colonial' concept has been too often rejected with too little analysis.

Unlike the Black in America, the Black British are not the descendants of slaves. But this does not alter the basic colonial relationship of the two races. White British still regard Blacks as inferior and continue to be racially exclusive. Black British are aware of this, and particular West Indians often, as Carmichael points out, have introduced this assessment. Even where they haven't, they are forced to smart under successive patterns of rejection from the 'host community'. With the impotence brought about by the fact that they are a minority in a land whose population refuses to acknowledge them as indigenous British even when they are. Many West Indians came filled with illusions about the hospitality of the 'mother country'; they no longer remain.

The Black bourgeoisie may with varying degrees of success detach itself; often it doesn't bother. The Pakistani bourgeoisie is the most obvious example of this. The pattern of rejection means that the black proletarian is more likely to identify even with a black landlord than with a white worker.

Two alternatives are open. Either we dispose of the race problem by repatriating coloured immigrants. Or we recognise that somehow we have to produce a solidarity between black and white workers.

Cleaver proposed, for the States, specifically black and specifically white revolutionary organisations campaigning in their own communities and then forming inter-racial coalitions. The fact these organisations would be based on a class analysis would, he thought, mean that such a coalition would succeed.

The polarisation of racial groups is not a danger, but a reality. And this breakdown is not simply a division of white and black, but into specifically ethnic groups - White, West Indian, African, Pakistani, Indian and Chinese. We need to recognise this as a fact of life and proceed from that



If this analysis is valid, then Cleaver is right to propose ethnic power groups and coalitions across these. But this presents a danger of not merely accepting ethnic pluralism but also of reinforcing it.

Is it in fact a danger? If anarchists affirm the uniqueness and sovereignty of the individual, then they should also affirm the right to exist of a sub-culture - which includes ethnic sub-cultures.

There is a danger though. A rigid adherence to ethnic socialist groups and coalitions of same can be taken to invalidate groups which are themselves coalitions. Again from a libertarian perspective, the group is per se a coalition of individuals in any case. In this context I mean coalitions of races.

Black caucases in trade unions may be o.k.; but independent black unions are not.

An Anarchist analysis based on the situation as it is, rather than the situation as many would like it, therefore demands two things - the creation of ~~xxxxx~~ cross-ethnic ~~gr~~ coalitions for united action and the creation of ethnic group organisations for relevant crises; and as a vital qualification, the readiness to create inter-racial groups where the situation demands these.

I noted that ethnic pluralism is looked upon by many and perhaps most anarchists as undesirable. But we should remember the essentially authoritarian nature of assimilation, whether it be the obvious of making all blacks attitudinally white, or producing the 'coffee cream' race aimed at by radical integrationists. Assimilation is a desire for a form of purity, of homogeneity.

It is perfectly compatible with the variety of socialism that would - as conservative critics point out - reduce us to an undifferentiated mass. It is incompatible as an aim with a ~~xxxx~~ way of thinking that has as its basis the declaration of the differentness of each of us.

Such a programme necessarily puts the anarchist at a disadvantage, since the situation remains predominantly that the anarchist movement is one of the off-shoots of white bourgeoisie youth radicalism. Anarchism as such is not necessarily bourgeoisie - that has to be emphasised. In fact the developing rejection of vanguard groups by the working class is a development of an authentic proletarian libertarian consciousness. But we have to remember that it has, as a self-defining group, become bourgeoisie. Necessarily such a group is going to be riddled with bourgeoisie ideology. (Proudhon represents the most obvious founder of this tradition; Tolstoy is also part of it).

Part of such an ideology is integrationism. How many of us were not once liberals?

O.R.A. represents a significant break with this position and the liberal anarchism of 'permanent protest' and the revisionists. It starts from a class analysis. But that too can lead to a crude, simplistic interpretation of the current situation.

The Black worker is not only a worker; he is also Black.

Tony Flening.



Northern Ireland (AKH)

It is suprising that, in view of its importance to ourselves as well as the state, the present situation has prompted very little action from the Left apart from theoretical analysis. So here is some more theoretical analysis with a view to action.

Firstly, the struggle is of great importance objectively because it is a major example of the breakdown of the repressive-tolerant society (more repressive and less tolerant latterly) on its own ground. Struggles which formerly could be kept at arm's length, by sheer distance, by who was involved (British boys against bloody niggers) and hence by the media (how much does the hypothetical man in the street know about Dofar and Oman) are now in all respects very close. There are obvious repercussions in Britain, eg the alienation of the Irish Catholics here, the government attempts to draft young unemployed into the Army the considerable strain on a weak economy which subsidizing Ulster involves. And of course there is the close relationship between the general run-down in this country and the fighting in Ulster provided by the unemployment rate; eg 40% of the Bogside is jobless.

Secondly, it is very important to the anarchist movement. The radicalization of America and England, such as it is, is largely a result of the moral and economic effects of the Vietnam war; and Ulster is nearer than Vietnam. Already there is a general feeling that we should get out; this negative reaction can potentially be turned into an increased understanding of the state's exploitive processes. There are obvious links and parallels between what the government (especially the present 'true blue' Tories) do to the workers on the shop floor, or off it, and what they do to Irishmen. It is suprising that the Left in Britain has done relatively little about this; they have tended to treat Ireland as an affair separate from the situation here- which is just what the capitalist press claims. In my opinion, the anarchist movement fulfils no useful purpose unless it can utilize such an occasion, and will be discredited unless it does. Thirdly, our aims. "Bring the boys home" is, on its own, a pointless stance because it leaves the so-called solution in the hands of the state, and does nothing to alter the fundamentally reactionary attitude of the British working class to Ireland.

What about the Protestants? We must accept that this is a sectarian conflict as well as a potentially revolutionary one, and that a Paisleyite or Stormont victory is the last thing we want. Our goal is a classless secular 32 counties but the Protestants will not enter such an Ireland voluntarily, any more than the colons accepted Algerian independence. Whereas we must institute proportional local control, it must be in the context of the whole of Ireland, and this will involve destroying the Protestant grass roots organizations, from the Orange Order to the Slawhill Citizens Defence Committee. The IRA will not institute a program against the Protestants, but the Protestants may descend on the Ardoyne or the Short Strand, and we must be ready to fight this.

Do we support the IRA? As far as I can see they are the only possible instrument of socialist change in Ulster. If we again compare the situation with Vietnam in 1959 the French had to be expelled before N Vietnam could proceed to socialism (how and if this went wrong is another matter, though of importance). It is essential that the military revolution contains the seeds of the social revolution, and both Officials and Provisionals have to some extent attempted this. I do not see the point of championing one against the other, mainly because both have good and bad elements. Rather, we should support them as an interim measure. I suggest our campaign is for

- (1) A united workers Ireland
- (2) Support for armed struggle North and South of the border.
- (3) No negotiations with or recognition of Stormont, Westminster or Dublin.
- (4) Workers' occupation of factories, community control of areas, etc, with an end view of Soviet's control of Ireland, again North and South.

What can we do? The conference should have sufficient experience of previous campaigns to have some idea, and therefore I leave this open for suggestion. Perhaps a starting point would be the relative merits and fail ures of the Vietnam campaign, both here and in America.



# THE O.R.A. PRESS FUND

Help is needed to publish an anarchist monthly newspaper this year. The style and graphical layout will be of the Red Mole/Black Dwarf type, but with a very different content. A large amount of money is required to purchase basic equipment and pay for the printing of the first six issues. About £300 is the target figure.

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The following is not intended to be a fully thought out analysis, but we have tried to pose the kind of questions we feel need to be answered. If such an analysis is to be made. Hoping to stimulate further discussion we have suggested possible answers to some of the questions. Where we feel the argument is particularly weak, we have followed it by a question mark. Whilst it is on these points that we would particularly like comments, we would welcome criticism on any of the points raised.

1) It is a basic tenet of revolutionary theory that the present forms of exploitation, repression and separation of every minority group (workers, blacks, women) is a result of the economic-and-social system of Capitalism. Thus we should be able to explain how the 'woman's role' has developed under Capitalism; where the origins of that role existed before the Industrial Revolution; and why it is that women as a group cannot be liberated under capitalism now.

2) It was the development of Capitalism from the possibilities opened up by the Industrial Revolution which brought to society the 'division of labour'. Previously women has a subordinate role- probably due to their being unreliable as workers because of being continually pregnant. (No contraception).(?). The Capitalist system further defined their role as the extended family and village communities were broken up as towns developed. The campaign against child labour meant that women were decisively forced into the single role of child-minder-house-wife. (?). (\*go to point 3)

3) The nuclear family restricts a woman to a role of isolated-from-other-people: isolated-within-herself:- shopper, house cleaner, baby watcher and cleaner, cook, sexual object, consumer and commodity. Her job is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 52 weeks a year. She is house and family centred mentally and physically; a bored and boring person, because of little private time for other interests. She may also have to get an outside job, to help out with the money.

It is not only the woman who is restricted in the nuclear family. Children are restricted because they have only one-and-a-half adult relationships, (if the relationship with the father in the evenings and at the weekend can be called a whole half- and if the relationship with a limited mother can be called a whole); the only other relationships being institutionalized at school. The father is also restricted; as his attitude and relationship with his wife is already laid down; and he has little time because of a 'job', to make a wider and more stimulating/demanding relationships.

4) It is not economically possible for the present Capitalist system to allow women equal wages. If it ever were possible, this would still not lead to a situation of personal liberation, because women would be substituting the limitation and exploitation of the home for the limitations and exploitation which their men are now suffering from. Women must realize that to end their exploitation, and to liberate themselves, they must simultaneously change society - by integrating their experiences and needs with others who are challenging Capitalism against different restrictions and roles ie blacks, old people, worker workers, men etc.

5) The questions about why a women's liberation movement should be separate but within the main revolutionary movement are raised in the article on Women's Lib in Newsletter III.

6) Perspectives:- the immediate demands of the women's lib movement have been discussed in the Newsletter. At present there have been very few attempts to relate these demands to any cohesive idea of the future. As anarchists we have a utopian picture of work for needs; equal pay for all, and commune families. (We feel that a libertarian society should aim to give the children the maximum security of personal relationships (up to about their teens?). While expanding their relationships with more adults, and at the same time ensuring that no one adult has full-time responsibility for them. Small self-organized extended families, though with the people not necessarily being related, should prove to be more flexible and more personally rewarding for all concerned, than State Nurseries or Kibbutzim are at present. They should involve men as well as women in looking after children. One possibility would be to encourage old people to become members of the parent group.) This picture should not be lost, however removed from this realities may seem now.

The following are some of the demands which we feel link up with facets of what we are trying to achieve:-



- a) free contraception, and abortion on demand for when contraception fails- frees women from animal status, guilt and fear of sex etc.
- b) equal pay- prevents women being used as cheap labour to undermine the position of men at work.
- c) equal educational opportunities, equal educational opportunities (?).
- d) 24 hour nurseries (?).
- e) abolishing single-sexed schools.
- f) campaign for women to be legally accepted as able to enter into contracts such as house mortgage etc.- so that women can hold real responsibilities.
- g) an 8-hour day for women at home- men encouraged to enjoy children and share housework in the evenings and at weekends.
- h) campaign against constantly changing fashion, and against falsity of eg false eyelashes etc, makeup (?).
- i) campaign against women's magazines- because of their content. Public burnings (?).
- j) contraception to be taught in all schools to girls and boys- organization of alternative sex education if this is not taught in the school, or is taught in a moralistic way.

Thoughts Arising from the Papers:

'Why the women's liberation movement'

and

'Towards a Statement on Women's Liberation' (AV)

I think perhaps anarchists should be careful to differentiate themselves from the bureaucratic neo-Marxists (I don't know which groups would come under this heading- certainly the Stalinists) in the emphasis on capitalism as the great enemy of women's freedom: in fact, as Engels points out in 'The Origin of the Family, the State and Private Property', long before modern capitalism came into being, the first classoppression was the oppression of women at the very beginning of civilization, as a result of class divisions based on some people grabbing the surplus over bare subsistence which was produced when people first developed agriculture. Agriculture led to the erosion of the tribal cooperative way of living: it made it possible for some people to dominate others. Where the work and food are shared by everyone in the community there is no question of women being oppressed, and the domestic chores and the care of young children is regarded as socially necessary work. But domestic chores and child rearing do not actually produce the raw materials for food, clothing and shelter. The division of labour between men and women gives men the opportunity to dominate women as soon as these products of hunting, agriculture or whatever, become private property of the man who hunts or ploughs or owns the land and cattle and the tools.

In a bureaucratic collectivist state, Russia for example, the means of production are the property of the State. Theoretically everyone shares in the work of production and receives what they need out of it (ignoring the wage differentials for the moment). But large scale industries and centralized government are necessarily controlled by men; because children cannot be produced in large batches under centralized control- no doubt if they could be the Stalinists would have found a way of doing it. In fact they could probably be grown in tanks and the whole process of development could be controlled by bureaucrats with our present knowledge and techniques- but if we get to this stage we shall no longer be humans, but a new sort of species like the social insects.

As things are now, children need mothers, or mother substitutes and they need to be brought up in fairly small batches: as in primitive tribes, or the 'extended family' system which I understand prevails in all underdeveloped parts of the world. The small monogamous, self-contained family consists of husband, wife and children is a product of modern capitalism, and does lead to particularly harmful (though veiled) subjection of women. It also leads to subjection of children either to mother or father, or both; without any alleviating affection or escape provided by grandparents, aunts or uncles or children in a primitive community or extended family.

But the superseding of capitalism by some other form of centralized society where production is carried on in large units, even if these were under workers' control (although I don't see how a large industrial unit can be democratically



controlled) would leave women subordinate to and less free than men, because the family and productive processes are still separated and the women have to be in the homes or other places where the children are being reared; and especially the women with very young children. I do not think 24-hour day nurseries would be satisfactory; they sound to me like a step in the direction of turning us into the social insects. I think anarchists should have a very different objective from the mass industrial state of the neo-Marxists. I think perhaps I differ from the view expressed in 'Towards a Statement on Women's Liberation' in how immediate needs of women could be linked with a movement towards achieving them.

the actual demands a to j listed in this leaflet are based on the attitudes and ideas conditioned into women by our society and their rebellion therefore is a reaction against their bad situation within the framework of the general outlook of our society. They are looking for a solution partly by demanding things to be done by the State, through legislation, changes in the educational system in regard to sex-education and co-ed. schools, change in law about mortgages, equal educational opportunities. (I think it is true that girls are discriminated against and prevented in various ways from studying certain subjects and encouraged to study things that will fit them for their role as wife and mother. I think most of the demands should be encouraged; but I don't think this is where the main work of anarchists in connection with women's lib should be concentrated.) I think abortion should be free on demand; but I am dubious about the kinds of contraception likely to be provided by the health service- whether the old-fashioned type or the pill. I would like to explore other methods such as were practiced by primitive tribes, and believe there are herbal remedies for restoring menstruation. But I think our job should be to encourage cooperation among women- sharing looking after children, cooking meals and so on, leading up to the beginnings of sharing communities. Women with young children are lonely and overburdened, and those without cars can hardly move far from home if they have more than one child to lug around (I know, because I've tried it.) I think anarchists should try to get to know such women living near them and start small local groups for mutual aid. When I was living in Hampstead I used to go along to meetings of the local Stalinist front women's thing- the National Assembly of Women -they collected stuff for jumble sales and every time we met we would pick out things we needed for ourselves for a penny or two. Perhaps one could combine this with a playgroup for young children- actually we started one and were given a room by the local welfare clinic. It did not work well though because there was no one around who really had any ideas about real cooperation and mutual aid which could have acted as a kind of ferment- the mums who came along tended to be cliquish and objected to anyone outside the clique minding their kids etc. In those days I was a Trotskyist and still had very authoritarian ideas in some ways, also I had no perspective of it as a step towards a different sort of society except in so far as it would give me time for political work in other fields.

#### Danger of making women separate from men

I don't think this would be altered one way or the other by having separate meetings- it is really due to aggressive, sado-masochistic characters of people in our society: men feel their virility depends on their domination over their families, and women feel their own integrity threatened by the dominant males etc. One has to show by practical demonstration that one can be firm and refuse to submit to injustice without at the same time being aggressive. I think men ought to be encouraged to come along to the sort of cooperative things they could share in and enjoy- I used to go to a parents' group of the Progressive League that had meetings at weekends for men and women, and a sort of playgroup being organized in another room or in the garden for the children. The PL was not much good, but anarchists could do this kind of thing on a much more revolutionary scale. Squatting for instance; organization of cooperative transport (of the white bicycle idea of the provos in Holland.) Cars ought not to be private property- it would cut down an awful lot of wasted labour and fumes and congestion if they were treated as public property, as in fact they are by many young people who just pinch one and leave it parked near their destination. Apparently they get away with it, so there must be too much car stealing going on for the police to cope with. One might even extend the principle to buses and trains (eg on branchlines closed by Beecham in remote districts with hardly any buses.)



### "Demand for Equal Pay"

is just a pious aspiration- resolutions to the Executive Council on this subject have been coming in for years from union branches- at least when I was in the AEU during and after World War II it was constantly in our thoughts, but never was much action taken. I think instead of demanding it we should just go into factories and other places where women work and start organizing action. This is the only way. Especially anarchists- who know that it can't be done by governments of bureaucrats -ought to be organizing at factory level, shop level office level or whatever. But as our forces are small at present it will be quite a job. I think it could be linked up with local group work among women- many housewives go out to work, some part-time, some full-time; the struggle for equal pay would be an aspect of the wider movement for a better life for women. But it must be noted that the whole business about constantly needing more and more money is an integral part of the brainwashing technique for keeping everyone so occupied with the rat race that they have no time and energy to construct an alternative way of living. The brainwashing process is closely linked with the family system- this written Rammanohar Lohia (former head of the Indian Socialist Party) expresses an important insight from someone brought up outside the Western culture:

"All active and ruling peoples of this civilization are infatuated with this idea of idea of an increasing national output and a rising standard of living. In the innermost recesses of the heart, what drives a person who belongs to this civilization and gives meaning to life is the desire for a decent home and all that goes with it, wife or husband and children. The family may in past civilizations have been a refuge for peace and social cohesiveness but it could not have played the dynamic role that it does today. It propels the modern man to economic exertion, to secure a nice home for wife and children, so that the collective aim of improving living standards is ultimately bound up with the desire for family. The emotional basis for a revolutionary technology (he is not speaking of social revolution AV) derives in the ultimate instance from desire for home. The American and the Russian are without doubt similarly motivated in their emotional attitudes. No matter that the system of property rights in the two societies are so dissimilar, the inside of an American and a Russian is moved by the desire for a comfortable home and an increasing living standard upon which the entire social edifice of a national rising output rests. No previous human civilization has known the equivalent of the modern man with this emotional complex and, in this distinguishing trait of modern civilization, the capitalist American and the communist Russian are twins." (The Wheel of History pg 93: Navahind Publications, Hyderabad 1955.)

### Class Analysis and Revolutionary Organization (KN)

#### 'Class struggle'- usage up to now

For liberals the basis of their ideas is some abstract principle- 'freedom', 'culture' etc. To which they dream of society approximating. The principle is a consolation for the nastiness of everyday conditions of life. This in a real sense (not scoring debating points) their politics are basically escapist. For individualists the basis is their own security (a minority like Sid Parker) or insecurity (....."I am a sovereign individual- look at me, take some notice!") Politics- the action of people on their conditions -doesn't enter into it because they accept what is as natural (ie they aren't interested in the conditions which created them- they sprang from the womb full grown). There is also the school of thought which tends to make 'the working class' an abstraction every bit as unreal as 'freedom', 'the individual', to whom class struggle is a magic phrase which confers salvation. The first two spend many harmless and useless hours in demolishing the idol which the third worships.

\* \* \* \* \*

Class struggle isn't an Aunt Sally or a tablet of stone, it is a method of looking at society and trying to understand its inner workings and its general movement.

The liberal is content to work with the surface appearance of things- it is this surface that he bewails or sees visions in.

The individualist doesn't accept the words and categories being used as meaningful.



However, for the revolutionary such an analytical tool is indispensable- for if the beast isn't understood it can't be dealt with and changed. Class struggle is the antagonism of interests between groups with markedly different economic power, and views of the world which result from their differing material conditions. The statement that the basis of these is economic inequality (Marx) is in danger of becoming a platitude (and an easy target for iconoclasts) unless (like Marx) one looks at society as a composite made up of continually moving parts- so that things aren't simple progressions, unchangingly so- a to b to c -but a complex pattern of progressions and transformations continually acting on each other. (A lump of iron isn't just a solid mass but a moving multitude of atoms whose general tendency is to retain the same overall shape). One 'disadvantage' (poor education) doesn't necessarily lead to another (boring job); but they are related, and the sum total of every 'problem' is to keep conditions such as the recreate the problem. (In changing forms perhaps- "we're all educated now" -but the relationships between the classes are stable in a general sense- a pay rise of 10% means profits rose a sight more).

\* \* \* \* \*

### "Consciousness"

Left at this (above) "class struggle" may be accurately descriptive but it is not analytical. The next step is that the 'conflicts of interests' are the motive force keeping the whole moving and developing- they are not just the effects but the causes too. This is an equally complex picture because there is not in fact a tiny group of top-hatted gents who meet every Tuesday to consciously plot the misery of the working class, BUT, BUT, there is a definite ruling class, who, because of their material conditions (by which is meant their birth, their wealth, their education etc), have a view of the world, a consciousness, which gives them to understand that it is 'natural' they should rule, 'best' they should, inconceivable they shouldn't.

This consciousness is expressed through all the communication and 'normal' relationships in society- through all the media; implicitly in 'education' (the way it's defined as well as the way it works); 'work' (ditto), and above all in 'common sense'.

This question of consciousness is the key to revolution. people's view of the world has to change so much that they can no longer act and think in the old ways. Now, a revolutionary consciousness isn't the sudden dawning of an appreciation for 'culture', 'freedom', individuality etc (though they may be aspects of it). It isn't the adoption of a nice set of ideas, but a radically different way of relating to the world, developed through experience, thinking about experience, and bringing this to bear on future actions.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are three main groups of views about the development of 'working class consciousness' each of which has organizational implications.

The Leninist view is that, by themselves, the working class can never develop more than 'a trade union level of consciousness', that revolutionary ideas are brought to the working class by the professionals'. For the Leninists the problem is in creating the 'invincible cadre of leaders' (G Healy) and in getting people to obey them ("the crisis of mankind is the crisis of revolutionary leadership" LD Trotsky in the Transitional Programme).

Strangely (?) enough this is the view of the liberals (and social democrats - "elected representatives doing what you're too stupid to do for yourselves"). And individualism easily slips into elitism (it's all going to collapse and us few who can see it all will be OK). The common factor is that to all of them the masses of people are a lump which is acted upon. Perhaps this is why individualists often attack anarcho-communists and syndicalists as pseudo-bolshevik- they are projecting their own views on us.

### Expansion

Syndicalism has always had the problem of not knowing whether the syndicalist organization was the working class (in a substitution akin to Lenin's and sometimes compounded with the Vanguard idea- see the European syndicalist papers) or whether it is an agitational-cum-propagandist group.

Following from this one tendency has been the natural evolution, forced by dealing with day-to-day 'bread and butter' issues which a 'union' must deal with (since, even if its leaders are revolutionary, its masses will have immediate economic demands they want pushed), into a reformist union with a verbal



attachment to 'syndicalism'- this is the fate of the only remaining union of any importance which calls itself syndicalist- the Swedish SVERIGES ARBETAREN CENTRAL.

The only known method of dealing with this is the CNT-FAI formula: regular purge of the members, development of a ruling elite who keep the organization on the straight and narrow. Personally I think it compounds the problem rather than solves it: the FAI elite ended up in total control at a time when it was far to the right of its membership, who were nonetheless attached enough to be demoralized by the treachery of their leaders.

Unfortunately the attraction of this monolith idea is still strong- the main tendency of syndicalism is towards this end. Each small group wants to become a CNT. The SWF, during its active existence, had a much better view- it saw itself as a group acting within a much wider context than its own garden. It never saw progress in terms of a mass SWF but in changes in the working class movement which might create a mass organization. Changes which it wanted to detect, help, and take part in creating. I can't emphasize too much the naivety of people sloganizing like Trotskyists and hoping for the 'movement' to emerge. It's already happening, the point is to be part of and change it.

Anarcho-communist organization must accept the basic premises of syndicalism- the class struggle, the organization of revolutionary mass movements (Laurens outlines this well in pamphlets 2 and 5), whilst being broader in view, subtler in analysis, and with greater scope in work.

The organization is neither vanguard- the repository of all wisdom, nor is it the mass organizations (or 'going to be the mass organization'). It is a servicing group- for its own members and for things that are useful (and it needs to be able to decide which are); a library for past experience, an interpreter of interpreter of ideas and events- always putting things in context (we want to make a revolution grow- not be social workers); it needs to be able to help people in the organization learn and be open to impressions and events (not so sure they've got the truth they miss everything)- but it must have a sense of history as well (continuity without inflexibility): the organization is nothing more than the contact between individuals but it answers collective needs because people collectively are different from people individually- as I've said before, a lone individual cannot remain a revolutionary, so the organization by its existence will develop and change the people (which is only another way of saying that people interact and so it's not a question of group vs individual). Finally, in different situations we are after different ends. The general aim is the creation of long-term, broad-based, mass movements with a high level of self-consciousness. In some situations (factories, housing etc) the ends and means are identical. In others (universities) the possibilities of long term movements are dubious and we are out to make individuals become revolutionaries as much as to radicalize and aid mass movements.

The second view is the crude 'bourgeois' (workeritis for people who aren't ex-politics students) position held by many 'class struggle' libertarians. This view is that the working class has a revolutionary consciousness born in it, or administered with its mother's milk. That any action or thought of the working class is right (eg that pilfering, as a reaction to exploitation at work, is a 'revolutionary' response). This is a pretty hopeless formulation in practice; it boils down to saying that 'what is to be will be' and hoping for the best-soon.

The balanced view is naturally more complex. That by its life situation the working class has the potential of revolutionary consciousness in a way that is not generally true of other classes (obviously all classes can make revolutions to different ends and at different periods in history and Tom Nairn's development of the 'educational surplus value' theory in the Beginning of the End suggests new possibilities).

The source of many of the ideas we hold is the 'norm'. So many of the ideas the working class hold are reactionary- they are supposed to be. Not because of any overt plot but because the working class is subjected to the crudest, least disguised, values of our society. (The intellectual, with his mind on high things, just doesn't have the same life experience. His ideas may be just as poisonous and conformist but in a more palatable way.)

The distinction is that the working class also by its life situation has both more regular conflict, in undisguised form, with authority and is forced to develop a solidarity and help which is foreign to the middle classes where the forces work in the opposite direction.



The source of revolutionary consciousness is everyday experience- the solidarity of a well-organized shop or site, natural human reactions to inhuman demands on feelings and effort- but it doesn't have to develop, or if it does it doesn't of necessity last. It is always potentially present and it is the task of the revolutionary to help it, protect it and nourish it.

From this view of what we're here for develops an idea of how we should work. The main task of the revolutionary is to generalize the things that have occurred to a small group of people in a particular place, so that they can see the origins of their situation and how it relates to other people in other situations, to pass on information so that things can be learnt, to be neither a source outside people's experience, nor to follow along tamely applauding any time anything happens, but to be a part of what is happening.

### NOTES ON Leadership (TF)

This is an attempt to throw out some ideas towards the developement of a consistent anarchist position on the vexed problem of leadership, and to try and bring some concepts somewhere in the realm of integration.

The spectrum of views on leadership among anarchists range from the leninism of some comrades to the anti-organization position of the individualists. It is debatable whether we can call any one of them specifically anarchist.

But if CRA is to be the seed of the new society within the shell of the old, it is not enough to postpone the issue until after the revolution.

Socialist Current views a vanguard as necessary in the pre-revolutionary phase, superfluous afterwards. In this they seem to fit in basically with the example of the FAI in the mass movement 'syndicalist' CNT. In fact of course the view that Lenin's vanguard theory owed more to Bakunin than Marx is now something of a cliché. The FAI's position in the CNT does represent a reality which as anarchists we have to recognize as a possibility, the concept of "an elite of devout militants controlling a public mass organization of partially converted workers".

White Panthers UK (a group hitherto ignored by anarchists, but with an ideology with distinctly libertarian connotations and perceptions) provides an alternative model. That the party is a catalyst, that it initiates action but does not control it, allowing it to develop in its own way once it has got off the ground. Solidarity with their view that "a socialist society can only be built from the bottom" and that "meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the solidarity, the egalitarian tendencies and the self activity of the masses and whatever ~~exists~~ their de-mystification" come much closer to a pure libertarian position.

The Socialist Current position seems to, in fact, specifically reject the IWW organizational concept by its clear distinction between the need for a vanguard before the revolution and its superfluity afterwards. But historically, with the classic example of Bolshevik vanguardism leading necessarily to Party conflict with the factory councils and workers' management, we can hardly claim this is a distinction to make. And if this criticism is valid for them, it is equally applicable to the FAI's role in the CNT. But this leads to a crucial point. The specific reason for the creation of the FAI, and its takeover of the CNT, was the increasing reformism of the 'syndicalist' union leadership.

And in a sense these militants were only doing what the founders of the CNT had done in the first place- formed a committed minority among the uncommitted. The White Panthers practice of their role as a catalyst (to be fair I'm thinking of one specific action) has meant initiating a squat that, allowed to develop in terms of the dynamics of the squatters, was nothing more than a crowd of heads, as broad-orientated as any capitalist. In other words, it is not enough to set off a chain of events. It is necessary therefore to stay involved in anything one initiates.

The Solidarity position seems to assume continued involvement. But in practice they seem to be split. They identified with the view that one should not put a hard revolutionary perspective in community action, and that the 'locals' should control their own action. But they were obviously very disapproving of the squatters for their allowing the families to evict non-payers of rent: equally they were, some years ago, pretty cynical about the Factories for Peace, because workers often had pretty right-wing prejudices. In other words, there is ambiguity. And it is important because it is an ambiguity that is shared by



revolutionary militants, and that it is vital that we solve. One solution is control by the revolutionaries, the other by those involved. Is there not, in fact, a third way? If an organization is the seed of the new society, then part of its purpose should surely be that those not totally committed to an anarchist position should learn what an anarchist life-style is all about. This implies that it should have an irreversible libertarian structure. A libertarian organization, in the original category, could be transformed by leninists. I am saying this should not be possible. In a very real sense, the Panther position and the Socialist Current position are essentially the same. The latter sees the revolution as the point where revolutionaries surrender their leadership. The former see the initiation itself as that point. It is relevant that while the history of the SC position is Bolshevism to Stalinism, the Panthers have been successful in withdrawing. I am suggesting that the point is more complex than that. I am saying, in the beginning committed revolutionaries would ensure their election, using this period to ensure that the less committed attain a libertarian perspective (in a broad sense, not a "we-are-the-only-anarchists" sense). Thus anarchists should be willing, and ready, to become shop stewards, tenants' association reps et al, and should use their power to transform those organizations into organs of proletarian democracy. ASA has argued for syndicalist unions. Such a strategy just isn't feasible at the present time. They should use their power to introduce structural reforms, as the right of recall, decentralized power etc as well as to present a revolutionary perspective to the outside world. Where an organization is launched by libertarians, clearly right of recall is going to be part of the structure. But again the organization has to be launched in terms of a libertarian perspective. To some extent the downfall of the squatters was that their sole inherent function was to put families in empty houses: this was not seen as necessarily involving a commitment to the value of solidarity and the repudiation of the concept of rent. Leadership has two connotations. One is the ideological one, the other the 'specialist' one. China has periodically provided, within a totalitarian system, a classic example of the organizational conflict between the two. And the example is significant, because red vs expert was in fact the collision of the political elite with the managerial elite, involving the uncomfortable (for them) fact that the managerial elite had never been anything but bourgeois. And this provides the key. Research with groups appears to indicate that 'leadership' is not a 'personality structure', but situation-specific: and is most effective as the latter. Which ties in with common sense. When you want to repair a television you don't go to a plumber. The Northern Eskimos provide a cultural example of this: people turn to the older men for advice, but there is no coercion forcing them to accept it. Situation-specific leadership is about problem-solving, however, and not about ideological positions. And it seems to me necessary to accept that, until the average participant has attained at least something of a libertarian commitment, then it is invalid to make him a representative. Frequently, it has to be faced, actions that militants become involved in are local enough not to involve delegates. Which is all too the good and a line of development anarchists are clearly committed to. Here it is pure example and 'strength of personality' that the militant has to rely on. In delegation, I should insist, I am not saying that only militants have the right to become delegates. What I am saying is that non-militants should not be encouraged to become delegates. And, unpleasant as it may seem, at that level during the early stages the militant uses the traditional conditioning to submission, while at the same time demolishing it and replacing it with a self-assertion clearly tied to a libertarian perspective. These are, I repeat, simply some ideas thrown out towards developing a concept of leadership- which involves the view that anarchist organization is not about the form of the new society within the old, but forms having within them the probability of being liberative. Which in turn involves the view that the revolutionary can never simply be a catalyst. As he is intent on transforming history, so the reality of historical development must transform him in a dialectic interaction. I also recognize many comrades will feel my position has no right to claim the title of 'libertarianism'. This may be a valid criticism in itself: we should beware though of hurling the phrase 'leninist' to avoid constructively answering positions in a constructive form which can be validated.



## QUESTIONS OF COMMUNITY ACTION

'Politics of Community Action' (Solidarity Vol.6, no.9) points out certain lessons for the revolutionary that are of fundamental importance. The most basic is the characterisation of community activists as bourgeois radicals who move into an area and attempt to change it. Such activists perpetuate the tradition of the middle class solutions to working class problems. "The sympathetic activist... is a new type of expert." As stated elsewhere, I reject his conclusion that presenting a total revolutionary perspective is a passport to failure.

At the same time I proposed an ideal model for a revolutionary commune - one that combines raising revolutionary consciousness and presenting a different way of relating. Jim Peter regarded this as "a fog of fantasy." (Newsletter 3)

Fairly obviously I don't agree. But perhaps I should explain why. If "the commune which tries to reject the conventions of capitalist morality" is hardly experimenting with the alternative society", I'd love to know what is. I suspect Jim feels that worker-controlled factories within capitalism are more realistic - his involvement in and contributions to the Sheffield Communal Factory Bulletins suggest as much. The logic of this thesis is a Yugoslav-style economy. I for one don't see this as revolutionary.

Invalidating Jim's alternative does not necessarily justify my position. I am still required to answer his rejection.

The basic position I adhere to is class-focused. Therefore to claim that standing up for a revolutionary perspective in community action is valid doesn't mean a declaration for Utopia, but an identification with the developing working-class movement for control of all areas of life. The example of John Maclean on the Clydeside (to take one) in the 1916-20 period shows that revolution and even wage increases can be linked as long as such a link is continually affirmed. Raising revolutionary consciousness is a simple way of saying this: the task of the revolutionary is to stimulate the demand for increasing self-management.

This by itself is inadequate, because capitalist attitudes will adapt it to fit the concept of competition. The experience of China (e.g. Report from a Chinese village) shows that there is no necessary step from 'each according to contribution' to 'each according to need'. If we are to construct a society based on mutual aid, then we need to create the consciousness of this as a possibility, and this means structures in which people can function on this principle successfully.

The commune of the Community Craft Centre variety (Newsletter 2) falls into the pitfall I suspect Tom Woolley is talking about when he invalidates total revolutionism. It has manifestly failed to have a radical effect in its eighteen months of existence because it is detached from bread and butter issues like rents, income, etc., which can be related to questions of community control. The idea of the community workshop does offer people a real alternative because it means a drop in people's living standards if, as is desired, people choose it rather than straight jobs. The factory a man works at belongs to him; that is what he should take over. A factory producing according to need at a subsistence level is ultimately as irrelevant, even if more revolutionary, than a competitive workers' controlled factory.

The commune that fails to link community control with a mutualist perspective is equally non-revolutionary, though certainly more effective, because it does not link the present demand with a future



vision. Nevertheless, its effectiveness gives it a potential the purist alternative doesn't have.

Community action does not involve work - that is a problem for industrial struggle. It does involve such basic struggles as the tenants' association and the claimants' union. It involves, for those areas which have Allotments, the possibility of the creation of Allotment Co-operatives which can be specifically structured to relate to needs.

In this article I want to focus on the role of the revolutionary within a tenants' association and the problem of claimants' unions. The typical TA is a rent-orientated group. The radical TA is orientated to community control. This means the involvement of local people in planning for their area, in redevelopment, even to the point of associations having their own architects (c.f. Roadrunner 30 - inadequate but useful). It means also rent struggles consistently linked with the concept of people's control over their own lives and the solidarity of tenants against landlords. The vision that the landlord has no right to exist.

It also means self-help organisations, like pre-school playgroups run by mothers in the area. It means community centres controlled, and managed by the community. It means care groups for the old people. And even wholesale bulk-buying co-operatives. And claimants' unions. But CU's by definition involve the pre-assumption of unemployment and the welfare state. They are thus essentially where trade unions are now by definition. At the same time they perpetuate the capitalist ethic of grabbing as much as possible - an ethic which is incompatible with one based on mutual aid.

Nevertheless the unemployed need them to have enough to live. Is it possible to develop, even within that context, a revolutionary perspective? Only by seeing them as a means of survival and regarding the SS or dole as an enemy, much like the boss - and handouts as crumbs and not legal rights; the same as wages. Therefore a demand for a living income and control of that income by the claimants. This is a revolutionary demand again because it talks of workers' management; it is also revolutionary because it is impossible within capitalism.

The question of the ethic of competition versus that of mutual aid is a crucial one, not least because the incompatibility of the two provides the rationale for a purist position that constructs alternative systems and does not relate to current needs or situations. As stated, it is incompatible. But the demand for more wages/less rents becomes revolutionary if it is a statement that the wage/low rent is a right; that wages themselves as well as rents are forms of exploitation - again a link with the demand for people's management that solves the incompatibility of exploiter and exploited by disposing of the former. That a man has a right to have his needs met and a right to manage his own life.

The demand for community control is often in fact reformist. By nature. To demand that the TA has its own planners, its own architect, even where he is no more than an advisor, is parallel to the Panther demand for community control of the police. But where it is seen as simply a step in the drive for a self-managing autonomous commune (in the Paris 1871 sense) it becomes potentially, though not essentially, revolutionary. It is one step beyond community control of police but it does not make the resident a planner, which is the ultimate objective. In the end we need to remember, there will still, even in an anarchist society, be some people more informed than others. As long as these remain advisors and have no authority-role this is not contrary to libertarianism. In a nutshell, the community activist is effectively revolutionary when he links immediate problems and their solution with revolution; a revolution aiming not only at community management but also a solidarity that involves interdependence based on mutual and individual need and not ability.

TONY FLEMING.



23rd September.

Dear Comrades,

Thanks for the Newsletter, it was very interesting. There are various comments I've got to make, the first on terminology, the rest on rather more important but related questions.

The terminological point. It seems to me that 'State Capitalism' is inadequate as a characterisation of the Russian system. It seems necessary to me to make a distinction between state capitalism and state socialism. The former is roughly the system in the U.S. and here, the latter is the system in Russia and the other communist countries. The distinction is made quite clearly by George Lichtheim, one of the most intelligent of Marxists, in his 'Short History of Socialism' (George Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1970):-

State socialism may be regarded as a perversion of authentic social ownership. State capitalism differs from it principally in that it retains private ownership of the means of production: typically in the form of corporate monopoly. Unlike private capitalism it acts systematically to promote employment, if necessary through the wholesale waste of public funds ~~and~~ on armaments and other unproductive forms of expenditure which (unlike public housing) have the advantage of not competing with the private sector. (p.320)

In state socialism, then, complete economic power is in the hands of the political bureaucracy; in state capitalism, for all the government's ability to manipulate the economy, many decisions are still taken by private individuals. I am not suggesting that state socialism is any way preferable to state capitalism, merely that they are different; though obviously not as different as the apologists for either system would like us to believe.

Terminology of course is not that important, but the fact that the Russian system should be designated state capitalism seems to me interesting. It seems to me that it is symptomatic of a tendency on the Left to insist on using the terms 'capitalist' and 'capitalism' for any aspect of social reality that one opposes on the assumption that there couldn't possibly be anything non-capitalist that needs opposing. The assumption of course comes from Marxism but it seems to be shared by many who are hardly Marxists.

There are many groups on the Left who have perceptive criticisms of particular aspects of society which owe little or nothing to Marxism. Once such groups require an overall framework for the discussion of social and political questions, however, they tend far too readily to take over wholesale the Marxist categories. This, I think, applies very much to groups such as the OZ-type sexual revolutionaries, but it also applies to an extent to anarchists.

To return now to the Newsletter, it seemed to me that the statement in 'Debate on libertarian organisation' that ORA has a 'class analysis of society' and 'views the State as being the reflection of the class divisions within society' was very much like the sort of simplistic use of Marxist categories that I refer to above. Obviously it is not possible to discuss here all the issues relating to the concept of class, and anyway I don't feel qualified to say anything very dogmatic on the subject, but there are one or two points I would tentatively make.

Firstly it is true surely that the term 'class', as used by Marx, was defined in terms of the economics of a free market. I wonder then just how meaningful the term is in a situation where the market is increasingly manipulated by vast firms and by the state. Furthermore



even if one can still meaningfully talk of 'class' isn't it true that in the vast hierarchial structures of modern firms there are many who belong to no particular class, who are neither really bosses or workers as these terms are usually used.

Secondly, it seems to me that even if talk of 'class' and 'class struggle' is meaningful, it is questionable just how relevant it is to an anarchist critique of society. While one hopes that workers will adopt libertarian ideals, it is just not the case, as far as I can see, that what class struggle there is has any kind of libertarian content. I would think it is true in fact that a libertarian outlook is rather more common among the middle class than among the working class. Furthermore it is surely the case that anarchists are interested in rather more than the abolition of the class struggle of capitalist society. Anarchism is surely the critique of all authority not just that which is a reflection of class struggles. It seems to me that acceptance of the proposition that the state is 'the reflection of class divisions within society' leads logically to the view that one simply has to abolish capitalism ~~to~~ for all coercive authority to disappear, a view which is surely untenable in 1971. Only if one uses the terms 'capitalism' and 'class' in a much broader sense than they were used by Marx does this not follow. But in that case, one is trying to discuss social phenomena with a paucity of terminology which is a sure way to promote confusion rather than understanding.

It seems to me that if an anarchist critique requires a clearly identifiable enemy, it might be more meaningful to talk of the technocracy, as defined for instance in Theodore Roszak's 'The Making of a Counter-culture', than of capitalism or the bourgeoisie. This perhaps seems like a mere terminological quibble, but there are, I think, substantive as well as terminological issues here. Whether one talks of capitalism or technocracy as the enemy, however, one should beware of developing a manichean picture of society as composed of obvious goodies and obvious baddies. It is surely the case that there aren't too many obvious goodies and obvious baddies. What there is is a mass of people with a kind of psychological investment in the established authoritarian society. It is the task of anarchists to break the hold that established institutions and ways of doing things have over people. How this is to be done, of course, is another question.

I should make it clear perhaps that in the above remarks I am not attacking Marxism and the use of Marxist categories in discussing society and the state, what I am attacking is the crude use of such categories. I think in fact that the Marxist categories can provide insight into many areas of the current scene. For example they shed considerable light on the sources ~~xxx~~ of American foreign ~~xx~~ policy. I am thinking here of studies such as Harry Magdoff's 'The Age of Imperialism'.

Reading through what I have written I am aware that I have perhaps not made points as clearly as I might, a thing in part due to the fact that I am not entirely clear in my own mind on some of the issues. My main point is really that terms such as 'class' and 'capitalism' should be used with care if they are to facilitate ~~xxx~~ rather than hinder an understanding of contemporary society and politics.

Yours,  
Bob Borsley.



## COMMUNES - CERTAINLY AN ALTERNATEVE

### AN ANSWER TO JIM PETTER

Jim Petter's scathing dismissal of ~~xxxx~~ communal living ideas in Newsletter no.5 came as rather a shock to me since I have been closely involved in it for nearly two years; the last year operating as secretary for the commune movement. There are certainly a lot of questions to ask about just what commune living does alter or effect, but Jim does not raise these. He merely makes generalised and rather meaningless statements about what he thinks various communes do and don't do and therefore according to him it follows that we need not go any further into the topic.

Just what does he mean by "the conventions of capitalist morality"? Having made no obvious explanation of this general statement, he dismisses a commune based on the rejection of that concept with the words "is hardly experimenting with the alternative society". Why not? He follows this with an even worse generalisation. The criticism of communards living off supplementary benefits is much more worth attention but I would like to remark that in many communes, those people taking advantage of state benefit are usually women with children and since this task is of vital importance to the continuance of society I see little against them being paid for a full-time and difficult job. But to go back to the capitalist morality phrase, if he means something along the lines of the exploitation of an often unwilling majority by a comfortable minority; the manipulation of people by money and therefore usually power; the deliberate limiting of the freedom of the people to take a purposeful and controlling part in the creation of their life-style then perhaps we could look closely at the components of capitalism and see if there is anything we could reorganise and tackle piecemeal. These blanket criticisms of Jim's mainly serve to mystify the whole subject and make it large and unreachable. Living communally is an attempt to break down subject of society into its components, examining, struggling, transforming within one's own experience. Dealing with interpersonal relationships, domestic problems, and the economics of organising a community can act as a good kicking board for wider fields of activity and influence. It is true that many communes tend to get as self-centred ~~xx~~ and inward-looking as the nuclear family, but often there are enough internal schisms to keep the turnover of people going and this then brings in fresh blood that might well develop into a further political consciousness. But this alone is not enough. I find many of the ORA pamphlets so far have been concerned with past theoretical perspectives and little of the here and now practise. Communes are an attempt to put theories into practice.

As an individual in the large machinery of industry, education, and



social services etc.; it isn't easy to exert pressure for change unless backed by threats of strikes. And then issues seem to get generalised and selfish and of course the whole mass-media scene does its best to emasculate protest by over-exposure. I find it impossible to shoulder the mass problem of say 'capitalist society' and alter it. Only in our small cooperative ways, extending networks to invade all angles of society in its many dimensions, with all individuals involved, able to realise their potentials and capabilities so that they no longer accept the leadership doctrines and come to running the show themselves will it be a truly and deeply felt revolution. And living communally is a fight on one front only, to realise our capabilities, to build our environment with our own hands and imaginations in mutual cooperation and communication with the needs and desires of as many of our fellows as want to join us. It's something learned at gut level, because we want to do it not because we are told by other politically self-righteous segments of the population.

Letter from SARAH ENO, Sec. Commune Movement.

Apologies for the alteration in conference time but the administration have decided on a complete shut down over easter. This means of course losing the extra day. Comrades who cannot make the Lowther by 11pm closing time should write to Terry and we'll make separate arrangements. York is a small town and the Lowther is by the river should be easy to find. For those arriving on Saturday the 9A (not the 9) and the 17 bus will take you right to the University.

There were supposed to be three Newsletters before the conference but material was not forthcoming. the address will be changed for the next production at the conference however if you continue to send material to 65 Vine st York. I will forward it to the new editor.

Finally a word about the supplement. We have been trying to organise a meeting in the town with Labour, CP, Pacifists and left groups on campus, we hope you'll be able to use it when Widgery makes his excuses.

Fraternally

Neil Hunt.



# ORA CONFERENCE POSTPONED

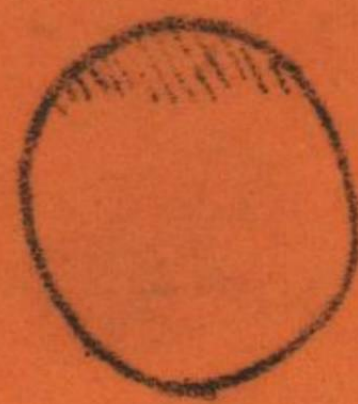
THE CONFERENCE WILL  
TAKE PLACE ON 7TH 8TH & 9TH APRIL

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AT ALCUIN COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF YORK  
HESLINGTON  
YORK.

MEET AT THE LOWTHER HOTEL  
KINGS STAITH  
YORK  
ON FRIDAY EVENING





ITANCEY  
PIT FRC



HOTEL

CANADA