

THE BASIS FOR LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST INTERVENTION

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THE BASIS FOR LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST INTERVENTION

Our forces in any area of political activity are very small. This gives us two simple choices - firstly to limit ourselves to propaganda activity - leaflets, publishing, etc. because we are not able to initiate or sustain campaigning activity; secondly to work with other groups on the left and/or within broader movements.

Since this is so we must look at the ways in which such collaborations/tactical turns can be accomplished and what dangers lie in them. We must also consider them in terms of our principles, our development of a strategy, and their usefulness tactically.

1. TRADITIONAL FORMS OF JOINT WORK ON THE LEFT

"A United Front from below"

A tactic really applicable when revolutionary forces already have some strength. The idea is to create unity with the rank and file of reformist (ie. Labour) working class organisations and unions around particular issues and campaigns. The result of this is designed to be a rift created between the base and leadership of these organisations. eg. WRP's 'Jobs for Youth', and SWP's 'Right to Work' campaigns.

"A United Front from above and below"

An agreement with other working class organisations on common action in the face of common problems eg. the advance of fascism in Germany 1931-33 could have been fought in this way. This is based on a limited, common platform and leaves those involved free to criticise each other and carry on their independent work. Summarised by Napoleon's maxim "March separately, strike together."

"Popular Front"

Invented out of the Comintern's terror of fascism and the USSR's fear of war in the mid 30's. The basis from which today's Peaceful Road to Socialism has been developed (see the new draft CP programme). This is usually expressed as "uniting all the progressive forces against fascism (or war, or the big monopolies etc. depending upon the period). It means a non-aggression pact between those concerned. This is bad enough in itself but, because it aligns with reformists, liberals and "small capital" it actually liquidates the essential feature of revolutionary politics - the independence of the working class, tying it to a whole string of newly discovered 'progressives' (French and British capitalists when being anti-German was the key, today it means a subordination to the Jones and Scanlons, and to 'patriotic' Tories who happen to be anti-Common Market.)

We see this line working throughout the Broad Lefts in the trades unions and student unions.

SUMMARY

1. United Fronts are united class fronts. Popular Fronts are a betrayal of independent working class politics.
2. A united front requires a clear, agreed, and limited, common platform and the freedom of criticism and debate. It is not "an agreement to differ" on an unclear basis like a lot of IMG sponsored work.

2. THE UNITED FRONT AND LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST POLITICS

Principle

The working class power we strive for is a pluralist workers democracy. The class exercising power for and by itself requires our historic struggle against the substitution of the vanguards. However the soviets/councils/collectives cannot be "non-political". They will in reality reflect all the groups, ideas, and currents within the revolutionary class movement. Our task is to ensure that this unity and diversity is maintained because it is

the safeguard for the building of a communist order.

The workers council in the revolutionary period is the highest form of the united front. Therefore in this sense the united front is a principle for libertarian communists.

Strategy

There has been no large sized and long lasting revolutionary experience in the British working class development since the Chartists. Libertarian experiences are even more rare and short lived. It is a matter of historical fact that the political culture of the British working class has been dominated by social democratic reformism for 50 years. What is different from other European working class communities for which the same is true is that there is very little revolutionary culture and tradition beneath this (eg. despite the dominance of Labour and CP brands of reformism the French working class has very strong memories of the Commune, Syndicalism etc. and is a far more political class. Italy is similar, there are parallels in Germany and so on....) This is due largely to Britain's favoured position as the first capitalist and first imperialist power in the world - making it possible for craft distinctions to create an aristocracy of labour - itself of key importance for the development and continuing ~~importance~~ strength of social democracy in the form of the Labour Party.

Thus although we face the disintegration of labourism's hold on the working class, its largest result is mass apathy and confusion, with fascist and populist minorities at least as significant in the current period as those groups taking up revolutionary politics. Even with the most favourable circumstances for the development of revolutionary consciousness, confused and diverse movements are going to be the hallmark of working class developments in the foreseeable future (eg. the 'differentials' struggles which contain as many dangers as possibilities). A United Front of revolutionaries will be the only means that the small forces of the left can effect these movements, helping them to come to advanced solutions and further understanding of the circumstances of their struggle - to bring them forward to the point where the distinctions between the revolutionary groupuscules become immediate questions.

Tactics

- a). Our forces are small. By ourselves we find it difficult to do more than make propaganda. A United Front enables us to take part in wider work in a period when this is essential.
- b). This wider work is absolutely necessary for our development. It isn't to comment on the beauties of libertarian communism and tack this onto articles and leaflets produced and parachuted into struggles or issued after them. We can only develop our political understanding and thence our effectiveness through applying what we think we know in activity that will test.

WITH WHOM IS FRONT WORK POSSIBLE?

1. In particular campaigns Chile, Ireland etc. there is no question of choosing who to work with. It is necessary to work with those already active on the lines and demands agreed by ~~the~~ our organisation and further necessary to try and involve people simply on the basis of these, wherever they come from.
2. A United Front operates on a broader area than these campaigns and therefore provides both the absolute necessity for a clearly defined basis of cooperation and the necessity for us to be able and ready to carry out both the cooperation on a practical level that will create a front and the critical/confrontation role within it that will enable us to (a) produce an effect on the other people with whom we are working in terms of positively effecting their politics (b) strengthen the organisation politically.
3. Examples of current activities that take on various of the characteristics of a united front include the Socialist Teachers Alliance, Socialist

Students Alliance, Working Womens' Charter, Nalgo Action, and to a lesser extent (which we must set out to correct) the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement.

It can be seen that in this context we are working with 'the revolutionary left'.

4. This does not exclude us from working with other people and groups.

IF there was a possibility for any programmatic and practical base for the Libertarian Industrial and Students networks then obviously they should also be an important area of work. Since our role in these is limited to arguing (a) for politics, and then, (b) for revolutionary politics, we have to do it but it certainly isn't any use making either of them the focus of a lot of effort. That in many cases joint work is not possible with 'libertarians' is not a reflection of any choice on our part but simply evidence that the bulk of libertarians are unable to break from propagandism. We must seek to draw the other libertarians into united work to (a) produce changes in their development and to (b) reduce our isolation within the revolutionary left.

5. A turn into broader movements should not be seen as an 'easy way' out of isolation. Most of the libertarian groups find life a lot easier hiding in their ghettos. To be politically effective it requires us to think clearly about what we are doing and what is possible from the given situation and to fight hard for it.

Section Two THE PROGRAMME

The first requirement of taking up United Front work is then to be as clear in our views as we can be. Our programme is the basis of this and its development is the yardstick of our learning, of our progress, within the changing experience of the working class movement.

It can be seen that the argument for our acceptance of united work is linked with that which we have been carrying on for months about the development of our politics. It is sufficient therefore to summarise the arguments and any new conclusions.

1. Political development is a collective question. The shared analysis of shared experience. This is the basis of a political organisation that seeks to change things. (Acceptance of the way people think now and organising around that is quite simply a conservative approach and rapidly produces the appropriate politics, or lack of them.)

2. We have said that "propagandism" is not enough. Its twin is 'activism', rushing about and doing "anything that happens". Revolutionary work is applying specific knowledge in defined situations in a way that's intended to test the limits of the situation and the ideas we hold.

3. On the general level the dialectical argument that the working class is in absolute conflict with capitalism, is true. However, as in other cases, general truths are not guides to the analysis of particular situation, except in method. If we operated as if this were the main truth governing revolutionary politics, then we'd expect spontaneous revolutions and adapt ourselves to every one of the defensive solutions of working class individuals - the 'lump', doing the meters, petty theft, alcoholism etc. etc. So revolutionary politics is not adapting to the particular attitudes or habits of any section of the class, it is fighting for collective solutions, advanced demands and methods of struggle in opposition to the ideas and actions of the working class in a non-revolutionary period.

This opposition is reflected by our political programme being much more than a compilation of demands already acceptable within the working class movement. Our arguments, our actions, our demands must pose the next questions, problems, conflicts, to be faced. Revolutionary politics is based on 'being good trade unionists', must must go far beyond this.

Motions

1. AWA recognises that the struggles facing the British working class in the near future can only be served by united front activities between the groups on the revolutionary left. AWA will play its part in the development of these united front activities after judging the particular problems of each. AWA will participate in such action wherever possible by fighting for a clear and agreed basis for cooperation which guarantees the right of criticism of all groups involved.
2. AWA gives priority to activity in united front work, such as the Socialist Teachers Alliance, Socialist Students Alliance, Working Womens' Charter, and the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement. We will continue to participate in libertarian talk shops such as LIN, and LSN, but principally in terms of drawing the best people involved with these into joint activity with us to create a libertarian presence in united front work.
3. The AWA commits itself to working for a public sector alliance. The elements of ~~the~~ the programme we will fight for in establishing such an alliance will include:-
 - * REVERSE THE CUTS - we will fight for the groups set up to oppose cuts to pose the question of the necessary and possible levels of services.
 - * NO REDUNDANCIES, WORKSHARING ON FULL PAYX (A SLIDING SCALE OF HOURS)
 - * A SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES
 - * OPEN THE BOOKS OF L.E.A.'s, A.H.A.'s etc. TO TRADE UNION INSPECTION
 - * A SLIDING SCALE OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE
 - to maintain the level of services at their real money value whilst leaving us free to fight for improvement and extension
 - * TOTAL BAN ON OUTSIDE CONTRACTS
 - * FOR PERMANENT, DELEGATE, LIASON BODIES TO COORDINATE ALL PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS
 - ✧ we will fight to make these as democratic as possible and to link ~~them~~ to them community organisations.
 - * FOR UNITED STRIKE ACTION AGAINST THE CUTS
 - we will expose the token nature of the 'opposition' from the TU leaderships. To this end we will support any work in this direction by Nalge Action and other democratic rank and file bodies.

WHAT HAS AWA ACCOMPLISHED IN RECENT MONTHS?

Individuals and groups have been active and have gained from discussions in AWA. But what has the organisation done as a whole; either in increasing commitment or educating or giving direction to the membership; or in co-ordinating intervention in the class struggle? How much would have been accomplished anyway as individuals on the rev. left co-operating with other groups?

AIMS WE SET OURSELVES

We have various policies on fighting sexism, on child care, on anti-fascism and -racism, on Ireland and international solidarity, on community issues, on TUs, on fighting cuts and unemployment, etc. The commissions were an attempt to improve the situation where the policies were only patchily implemented, mostly restricted to propaganda local intervention and pressure on united fronts. There is a wide variety of positions and priorities within AWA. Some commissions have established good internal communications but have clarified differences rather than reaching conclusions. We have at best only a handful of cdes in any one area of work; thus when agreement is reached only a few people can do anything about anything except the biggest demos. While we may fractionally influence the size of an event we have little influence as an organisation ON its nature. This is also due to our inability to agree on the relative importance of activities with a high degree of self organisation but less overt politics, or more conventional labour movement activities - eg self help health groups or fighting the cuts, 'fight to live' or 'right to work'. Even when we recognise the importance of (relatively) large campaigns we still have the problem of whether to remain big fish in small ponds or become small fish in a large pond.

The former would (if we have a co-ordinated commitment) allow us to test our policies in practice - but betrays a cynical attitude to the class struggle. Up to now we have only developed theory and practice by reaching one position, then either continuing to argue on paper, or examining the effects of implementation of comparable (but in the long run quite different) policies by groups large enough to have a noticeable impact. None the less the structural principle of commissions is the best way to turn a set of individuals within an organisation into an intervention capable of actually stimulating and influencing the class struggle in a particular area; winning positions in united fronts (see documents on UFs and Programme) and being able to learn ourselves from this. It requires however a commitment to collective practice and to an understanding of the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, between the vanguard and the class - not a localised, empirical approach.

INTERNATIONALISM

We have held our own in retaining links with sympathetic organisations and a cde in Ireland is a gain, but essentially a few cdes have done a lot of translating and written articles for AW and there has been little further use apart from occasional propaganda. On a wider scale individuals are active in the MDC, TOM, Anti-Apartheid etc; IMRO was our star turn but has been put aside for lack of time. We are no nearer a Libertarian Communist International, no nearer a critical assessment of the class struggle in other countries which can be made relevant to the class here.

TU WORK

Again as isolated militants. The OMC (Ordinary members charter) is an original development but what do we do with it? It can be used in leaflets by AWA members, but AT MOST this could lead to raising it in a dozen or so branches - and how many would fight actively for it (a propaganda leaflet by itself won't lead to anything being taken up anywhere where we don't have a presence). The only future would be in

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united fronts - RankandFile groups, STA, CDLM etc. - and it would be much modified. Propaganda alone is not enough anyway.

AW

The best educational and agitational toll we have. Its rare appearance severely limits this, and is partly due to small size. The main problem now seems to be production - it sells when people bother to try, articles come in OK, but some cdes who are in a position to do some shit work, or make constructive criticism restrict themselves to saying that they don't like it and it doesn't appeal to their sort of audience so they won't contribute - how do they think it should be changed then - by telekinesis?

The effect is that people are interested and find it useful when it comes out (as shown by personal comments, letters etc) but lose interest before the next one and drift away.

~~EDUCATION AND THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT~~

~~Following~~

RECRUITMENT

Since last conference we have lost more than we have gained. We have milked the anarchist movement dry and more or less exhausted our personal contacts, but those approaching from other directions tend to love us and leave us for more effective groups or for solely 'drinking in company'.

EDUCATION AND THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

Following papers on marxism and anarchism and contributions in IBs on Anarchism and Marxism and etc we have a greater if not an original understanding of class society and communism. The problem of deriving practice remains.

The most significant development is the decision to adopt a programme, to use transitional demands to relate to and require action on immediate problems of the w/c but also call wider aspects of capitalism into question, stimulate self-organisation and pose the question of overall control of society. We have not been able as yet to decide on the programme we need even as a temporary measure, as we have a very limited range of experience to draw on, but programmatic demands, particularly the Sliding Scale are at present being raised and adopted by AWA members among others in U/Fs. However a section of AWA has retreated so far that they no longer think the organisation should unite around any demands transitional or not other than the most utopian - begging the question of what the hell is the point of an organisation at all.

IGs document on Programme and the perspectives for U/F work in this IB are the basis for the next step in our development - the understanding of the implications of a programmatic approach and within U/Fs, as defined by the present state of class struggle. Analyses of that are contained in commissioned documents and TAP, but should be enlarged on; future education should include acquiring the ability to identify the forces at work.

AR, in consultation with other tendency members.

the fact that the Government has been unable to secure the necessary funds to carry out its policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of China.

level.

of reformers. In doing so, he raised two significant questions relating to the present debate around civil liberties:

- (a) What should our attitude be towards the 'T's'?
- (b) How do we make it and how do we use it?

overturn to my own attitude to the right of the issue.

in the proletarian class war and revolution in the third world. The institution, as, confers to the proletariat the right to the workers within the framework of the proletarian revolution, and the daily struggle for the liberation of the proletariat. The transformation of the existing state, and the revolution, the proletarian democracy is against the bourgeoisie. The proletariat is the only class that can win this war, wrote Luxemburg, "in this view".

Quite some time ago, P.E.N. (of Colchester) responded with a letter to the appearance of 'Towards A Programme'. Most comrades have already seen this, but I take the liberty of appending here the most relevant section (in my estimation) as a point of departure for this document.

"But it is not so much the terminology of 'Towards A Programme' that I object to so much as the 'programme' itself. In a recent controversy on anarchism in the 'Socialist Standard', the editors of that journal suggested that most anarchists were merely reformists. One writer, who admitted that among some contributors to 'Freedom' there were 'liberals' and reformists, hotly denied that anarchists were in fact reformists. Nevertheless the 'Tendency' does bear out some of the 'Socialist Standard' accusations: it pours forth reform after reform! We get demands that the incomes of 'managers, directors and shareholders be reduced to that(of) the of the lower paid producers' (shades of Lenin!); 'a wealth tax on individual company profits to feed a national investment fund'. And so on ... This is not just reformism; it is social 'democracy'.

Realising the obvious criticism, the writers then suggest that it is an answer which goes beyond the vagueness of 'have a revolution' - as if revolutionary anarchists and communists have ever used such a phrase. And sinking even further into the 'muck and mire' a 'Towards A programme' continues: 'Advocation of such a series ... should not obscure our commitment to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by the working class and the reorganisation of production around workers' and community councils. It should be presented as the line of defence of workers' interests we advocate precisely because we realise that the working class does not possess a 'revolutionary consciousness' etc What a contradiction. We advocate revolution; yet, as the workers, as yet, do not possess a 'revolutionary consciousness', we also advocate a number of 'immediate demands' and reforms! So we are supposed to work for the termination of capitalism as well as its reformation at one and the same time. Just because revolution is 'vague' and the workers are not class conscious. This is just what all the various reformists - social democrats, Trotskyists, Stalinists et al advocate; the 'transitional programme'. It has absolutely nothing in common with revolutionary anarchism, libertarian communism, or even council communism. It merely demonstrates despair of the ability of workers to understand their class interests and the necessity of communism/socialism. It is basically elitist. Rosa Luxemburg once wrote a pamphlet; it was called 'Reform Or Revolution'. And there is not other way. The AWA is - or should be organised to assist the workers in organising for their self-emancipation; should be organised not for making the rich poorer or the poor richer, but for the abolition of the wages system, the destruction of the State, and the organisation of society on the basis of production solely for need, based on grassroots democracy and, where practical, federal and decentralised administration, all on an international level."

P.E.N. takes the attitude that 'towards a Programme' represents an advocacy of reformism. In doing so he raises two significant questions relating to the present debate around our politics:

- a) what should our attitude be to 'struggles for reforms'?
- b) how do we understand and come to propose the demands in 'TAP'?

a) In his letter, P.E.N. refers to a pamphlet by Rosa Luxemburg, called 'Reform Or Revolution'. I had not read this until directed towards it by his reference, but when I did so I found immediately cause for surprise that he should mention it in the context that he does. Immediately, because the very first paragraph of the 'authors introduction' may I hope, serve me well as a lucid overture to my own attitude to the first point at issue.

"At first view", wrote Luxemburg "the title of this work may be found surprising. Can the Social Democracy be against reforms? Can we counterpose the social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, our first goal, to social reforms? Certainly not. The daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the condition of the workers within the framework of the existing social order., and for democratic institutions, offers to the Social democracy the only means of engaging in the proletarian class war and working in the direction of the final goal -

the conquest of political power and the suppression of wage labour. Between social reforms and revolution there exists for the social democracy an indissoluble tie. The struggle for social reforms is its means: the social revolution is its aim."

Our own "Role of the AWA" refers to "the contradiction between organisation as a tendency within the class and its being in ideological advance of it". When, in the "TAP" we wrote that "the process of revolutionary politics ... becomes one of re-discovering historical objectives as they appear at various levels of contemporary struggle and development etc., we were attempting to come to grips with this contradiction as it appears in the present period.

The basis of this attempt was an understanding of the class struggle as being contained in forms other than that of the revolutionary struggle alone. Conflicts between the working class and the exploiting class have appeared and continue to appear in a multitude of different forms, the majority of which neither contain nor relate to an awareness, on the part of the workers concerned, of the desirability of general ~~xxx~~ social change nor place this as an immediate perspective. Instead of calling such conflicts reformist in themselves, however, I prefer to call them, 'partial struggles' - their aim being immediate amelioration or defence of workers' social and industrial conditions independent of the question of social power. My reason for this preference is that I think the term 'reformist' is best used to define a political attitude, and that reformists and revolutionaries are ~~essentially~~ differentiated not by their willingness to fight such partial struggles, but rather by their understanding of the role such struggles can play with respect to the development of socialism. (It is true of course that the different understandings do in practice affect the respective willingness to fight of reformists and revolutionaries).

Reformists strategy envisages that capitalism can transform itself into socialism by allowing, on the one hand, increasing democratising of the state, its increasing social competence and the implementation of social reforms; and on the other, progressively increased trade union influence over the regulation of production. It can accept, in theory, partial struggles as contributing to, or even motivating and energising this process, because it does not see them as ever emerging as manifestations of a fundamental division of interest in capitalism, but always as 'growing pains' - creative forces stimulating metamorphoses; or an excessive truculence at a minor setback, according to circumstances. Reformists have consequently always found themselves capitulating to, or collaborating with the bourgeoisie, especially in situations where the reality of capitalism demands the worsening of workers' living standards, the containing and weakening of their organisations etc. The preservation of capitalism becomes for them the sole guarantee against barbarism - so they develop the concept of 'temporary' working class sacrifice in the name of gradual ^{social} progress. Their credibility relates entirely to the ability of the advanced imperialist states to concede to certain partial struggles in times of economic peaking, and to the relative general advance of social wealth these states can produce. They experience political crisis particularly when they must in general join the bourgeoisie in resisting such partial struggles as emerge when the working class attempts to defend itself in a period of capitalist crisis.

The obvious difference of the revolutionary position is that it understands the development of capitalist ~~xxxxx~~ production as being incapable of gradually ~~xxx~~ escaping subjection to those market forces and imperatives of capital accumulation which its class base maintains. Whilst the latter are not done away with, the condition of the working class remains determined by them as they are mediated through the bourgeoisie. Its condition under capitalism even in times of boom thus remains such that inequality, exploitation, alienation and oppression are components of social organisation, which can only be removed by the abolition of capitalist production relations. Crisis, as it were, is merely a particular formulation of this general situation - one which rams home the insecurity even of what gains the workers may have secured, their lack of control over the economy, and the fundamental division of interest on which it is based. Partial struggles, according to this orientation, are expressions of continuing and general class struggle which lies at the heart of capitalist society. They assume their particular forms according to the contours of this latter. In the present period in Britain, for instance, we understand partial struggles as developing out of the

attack on the workers as a class, which characterises the contemporary crisis.

A particular instance is given by the recent Keyland toolmakers stoppage. This was certainly a partial struggle which neither contained nor related to an awareness on the part of the workers involved of the desirability of general social change. Its underlying motive force, however, remained inescapably the fall in workers' standards of living which is one of the manifestations of the present crisis, and it could be interpreted in this way as a particular manifestation of the general clash of interests between capital and labour. Despite Fraser's protestations that the toolmakers were not opposed to the social contract, their struggle took them inescapably to a position of challenging this and the entire class-collaborative apparatus of which it is a manifestation. The toolmakers were rapidly brought into conflict not just with their employer, but also with the state and the union bureaucracy. Their struggle had potential with regards to the entire balance of class forces. Had they not rapidly compromised after the threat of mass sackings there was a growing wave of solidarity action mounting in their support, which as it did pressure the employers and their allies, and which in the absence of a settlement bore promise of a serious confrontation beyond the bounds of a single plant or industry. Though the above is bad shorthand, the essential point remains that fully understanding and responding to the origins and development of such a dispute repeatedly poses the necessity of integrating its unique features with features of the general social formation, and hence with our understanding and response to these features.

Revolutionaries should not seek to divorce partial struggles from the class struggle as a general phenomenon. We should see them as ^{expressions of the} contemporary experiences of the realities of capitalist development. Although advanced capitalist establishments may absorb them to a degree under certain circumstances, they nevertheless remain manifestations of 'growing pains' in capitalism only insofar as its own essential contradictions stimulate it to further development. They are nevertheless in themselves (that is, as lacking an awareness of an objective of social change) still partial (that is, not a strategy for social change). Unless they develop into a conscious class-wide struggle against capitalism as a whole they fail to eradicate the basic conditions which produced them and therefore either 1) end in failure 2) end in sectional gains made at the expense of other sections of workers, or 3) end in accommodations which represent a favourable change in the balance of class forces rather than a successful resolution of the class struggle.

Partial struggles thus present an element of ambiguity if seen statically, (their dialectical core?) which is - that despite their limitations, they nevertheless, as manifestations of the class struggle, are also part of its overall development which contains the potential of social revolution. The working class as a self-conscious social force is not created overnight by capitalism: nor does its consciousness grow exponentially. It is rather an uneven and retrogressable process of becoming, through the interrelation of ^{history merging with ideological factors,} many factors, and with immediate experience of the general realities of capitalist development through experience of partial struggles.

Sections of the working class engage in partial struggle even when such cannot get to the roots of their problems because the working class does not exist in capitalism as a unified self-conscious force with general social objectives, but rather has an uneven history of a tendency to become such. (Even advanced sections of the class are hence restricted by this overall development). Partial struggles represent at once the lowest register and the basic experience of this history, within which - or in relation to which - class consciousness germinates, in particular insofar as these partial struggles have contributed to a corpus of class-based history and interpretation, and to the laying down of traditions of collective, class-based activity.

Partial struggles do not, of course, produce automatically revolutionary commitments in the working class, - their existence provides rather the potential for such to develop, either as part of a vast social movement, or in the less advanced form of the emergence of left individuals. It is not inevitable that the partial

will develop into revolutionary struggle, or even produce layers of revolutionary consciousness, or even advance parts of the class towards this. The matter should be defined from a rather different standpoint: - that where such developments do occur, it is not independent of struggle experience. Even where revolutionary and other consciousness is preserved in some social nooks and crannies as the heritage of a history which has revolutionary and other passages, it rapidly loses its meaning if it cannot be interpreted through the continuing immediate experiences, of individuals and of workers as a class, of life in a capitalist society.

To summarise my position: partial struggles are not themselves to be dismissed as reformist. They are on the contrary a vital and significant aspect of social development. Because they appear as part of the class struggle, they have the potential of growing towards revolutionary struggle. Even when this does bear full fruit, partial struggles represent the most fertile and active fermentation of the class struggle - the layers with regards to which the subjective factors of socialist consciousness and understanding, the traditions of working class organisation, and the balance of class forces in a particular social formation, can be developed and sustained. As ^{the} a real contemporary manifestation of how the class struggle is in a non-revolutionary period, they pose the task to revolutionaries of stimulating their development potential towards the most desirable consequences. Because it is the development of the working class as a whole which is the living link between now and the social revolution, the activity of the revolutionary movement can only have meaning as part of that development.

A final point is the observation that precisely because the class struggle is not always manifest as conscious revolutionary struggle it repeatedly places those desirous of overall social change in a personally contradictory position. This is not simply wherein we find ourselves participating in conflicts which we may feel to be a certain extent futile ~~in~~ insofar as they fail to raise the fundamental issues of social power. It also involves us being faced with the question as to whether or not we should be engaged as active and contributing agents in the development and encouragement of such struggles. Some comrades for instance may, (though I don't remember anyone explicitly doing so) wish to draw the line between the support and defence of a 'partial' movement, and the actual attempt to get such off the ground. If they do, however, what can we say but that they wish to reap the crop without first sowing the seed? In 'TAP' we spoke of the 'historic programme' achieving its fullest possible implantation within the myriad conflicts and activities of the working class. Part of this process is played by partial struggles playing a progressive role in the development of workers' class-consciousness etc. Are we really to seriously consider therefore, ^{aiming} ~~abstracting~~ from the task of encouraging engagement in such struggles? We are as P.E.N. put it 'organised to assist workers in organising for their self-emancipation'. Let us understand this as involving somewhat more than the establishment of a revolutionary advisory service. Let us understand it as involving us in an active and initiatory contribution to engagement in the class struggle at whatever levels are rendered possible by contemporary conditions. We must develop the ability of ourselves and of our organisation to see ourselves and our actions as having relevance in all aspects in the total process of social development. Those who speak solely of revolution in a non-revolutionary period are hardly speaking at all.

b) Section A) has attempted to define an approach to understanding participation in the class struggle (with particular relation to 'partial struggles') which, in conclusions, if not in detail, I imagine to be acceptable to the vast majority of AWA comrades. If this is not the case, then we would indeed be justified in being surprised that we have a paper that does little else but cover such partial struggles! As it is the 'Revolutionary Anarchist Tendency' also, for instance speak favourably about 'raising issues and demands which are not revolutionary in content in an historical period which itself is not revolutionary' (NB). Nevertheless, I hope that section a) will be of use:

- i) as a response to P.E.N. and comrades sharing his outlook
- ii) to make explicit the particular understanding I use when dealing with objectives such as those suggested in TAP

As I approach the substance of section b) I am brought to realize that it

would have been helpful if the opponents of TAP had gone into a little more detail as to their objections, either with regard to its method, or to the specific proposals made. It is, to say the least discouraging to find material to which one has devoted time and effort dismissed as 'clutching at straws' without any attempt at reference to the arguments and conjectures raised therein, much as these do undoubtedly bear marks of inadequacy.

In the rest of this document I wish to concentrate on the lacunæ and confusions which I feel exist in the section of 'TAP' pages 7-10 (first printing run).

To begin with a more accurate presentation of our current approach than the one given in 'TAP' would I think, go as follows. Admittedly I'm not going by any stated formulation of strategy - I doubt if we have one. The model is the impression given to me by our paper, leaflets and general attitudes. (It is also for simplicity's sake, and also because our position is by no means as clear, leaves out the interaction with the specific struggles of the working class of the libertarian trajectories of discrete or modulated oppressions (eg that of Women)).

- 1) We advocate resistance to the crisis on the basis of no working class responsibility: this entails opposing redundancies, speed-ups, reduced manning levels, falling 'real' wages, cuts in social services etc: we expect comrades to participate in and encourage this resistance.
- 2) We engage in polemical struggle against the politics of class-collaboration and national chauvinism.
- 3) we attempt to ensure working class preparedness for the possibility that the present ruling class offensive might fail and necessitate something more vigorous on their part: although this is in part covered by 1) and 2), it also involves specific tasks, such as resistance to a criminal trespass law exposing and smashing fascists etc.
- 4) we encourage the emergence of a 'genuine rank and file' which will develop in particular in interaction with the struggles envisaged in 1) & 3) (drawing them together and developing support for local resistances): this genuine rank and file will be the emergence in action of a united class-struggle tendency, and will form the basis of the social revolution.

The crucial focus of 'TAP' should clearly have been on the 4th part of this model. The strategy as a whole, correctly, from my point of view places partial struggles within the context of the desirability of their development into a wider movement. It leads us moreover, also to the observation that such a perspective for the development of a movement within the working class, capable of operating according to constructs wider than those of the local struggle is of pressing urgency because the working class cannot resist the attacks of the ruling class in a crisis situation without placing the struggle for social power on the agenda, albeit often in an inchoate form. In a sense, all partial struggles do this in an indirect or long term basis insofar as they are manifestations of the class struggle. Going back to the differences between reformists and revolutionaries, our particular orientation should always be to participate in and intervene in partial struggles from the point of understanding them as containing this potential and necessity of moving towards a clearer class-interest-based opposition to capitalism.

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NB It is feasible that the RAT see partial demands in a different light from mine. Thus they speak unfavourably of 'the concept of moving the working class to a revolutionary position,' as if they disapprove of interventions which bear this possibility in mind as a desirable outcome. It would be interesting to know why they raise demands 'not revolutionary in content' if they do not think that such will form part of the process of the working class developing revolutionary praxis - forsooth a conscious intervention by themselves in this process!

Because the class struggle is one which poses ultimately the victory or defeat of the working class our attitude to all its manifestations must bear in mind this consideration.

We must also understand^{what}/the function of our position of 'no working class responsibility for the crisis' - manifest at the moment as partial struggles round wages, protest strike action of a moderate extent etc; - can play in the development of a movement towards the conquest of social power. Present AWA politics correctly recognise that an important factor in such a strategy is the emergence of a class struggle tendency which can develop from and relate to partial struggle resistance to the crisis at a local level. The fundamental criticism raised by 'TAP' can perhaps be reformulated as saying that we at present tend to give the impression of regarding this emergence of this tendency, the 'genuine rank and file' as a predominantly organisational or structural problem. The main tasks are thus presented as being the 'drawing together' of struggles, the dissemination of solidarity action etc.

It seems to me that this sort of approach fails to give a complete picture of the difficulties facing the development of a class struggle tendency. I do not think that the genuine rank and file will emerge simply as an 'organic' and inevitable expression of a mounting tide of local resistance. I think that it will emerge only as the result of a partial struggle to provide a generalised response to the crisis, a political struggle manifesting itself initially as a positive programmatic pole.

I hope I can extend this position by again taking up the issue of consciousness. One of the ways in which consciousness manifests itself is through the ~~formulation~~^{formulation} or adoption of social objectives. It is evident that from a standpoint within the continuum of social existence, struggle itself does not occur independent of such a formulation or adoption: (so rather than say that it 'leads to consciousness' as a static abstraction we should say that it is the vital and dominant agent in the motivation of the formation and transformation of objectives). In opposition to the 'Left Tendency', I regard the collective proposition of social objectives to be a prime task of a political organisation. On the one hand it is a means of communication in the context of believing firstly, that generalisations can be made concerning the social events which involve us, and secondly, that we can do something about them. On the other, it is a contribution to the development of ^{the} working class understanding itself as a class - that is, precisely in terms of accurate generalisations and specific social objectives.

In arguing for encouragement of a 'genuine rank and file' we are faced with the necessity of giving it a rationale. We must provide an explanation of the ends towards which it is desirable. At present we do not wholly ignore this consideration insofar as we say that the task of the 'genuine rank and file' is to fight the crisis on a 'no responsibility' basis. But what should it be fighting for? What objectives can we propose as a state of affairs to be won rather than ^{as} simply an explanation of our activity?

The proposal of some such objectives is essential as the other face of the encouragement of resistance. It is moreover imperative that they relate to the needs and interests of the working class but also to its overall state of development as is manifest in the extent and nature of this resistance. Hence although we recognise theoretically that 'no working class responsibility for the crisis' cannot be ultimately comprehended independently of the struggle for social power, we are forced to regard this latter as a thing developing through total social experience (not through left wing exhortation), and to recognise an immediate situation where the working class has yet to develop such an understanding to the point where it is apparent as a possibility in action or even as a desirability in theory (the two going together). It was hoped that under these circumstances the objectives presented in 'TAP' would be seen as providing a means of intervention which had the potential of actively stimulating working class development as it is now in the direction of greater unity and self awareness upon a class struggle basis.

The 'RAT' appear to suggest that an objective like the 'sliding scale' is intended to 'dupe' the working class into creating a revolutionary struggle-situation, insofar as it could be adopted by workers who would fail to realise the challenge being thus posed by themselves to the very existence of capitalism. ~~It is~~ (on account of their negative consciousness). Such an objection is substantially, however, little more than a restatement of the 'all or nothing' point of view. If the demand were simply a call to struggle based on 'negative consciousness' it would still serve the generally progressive function of stimulating partial struggle upon an important class

front, much as we would realise the limitations of such given that it would contain the struggle for social power as an inherent rather than an explicit element. I have argued above that it would be incorrect for us not to support and wage such resistance ~~ina-st-~~ in a situation where the working class has not emerged as a unified self-conscious force with general social objectives. The important consideration behind the 'sliding scale' and the other contentious objectives we suggest is, however, precisely that they attempt to play an influential role in the transformation of negative resistance into positive endeavour. Central to our idea of a 'programme' of objectives, to be understood as an interrelated whole, is the conviction that an intervention can and must be made into the present crisis which not merely raises the 'negative consciousness' standard of resistance, but which also directly begins to pose essential questions of social control (in terms of the distribution of resources).

I stress the word begins. Revolutionary struggle - that is, conscious struggle for social power as a whole - is not at the moment a comprehensible possibility or desideratum, even so far as many workers already resisting the social contract are concerned. Its necessity can however be practically drawn out of the very circumstances of the crisis, if this is done in terms of activity as well as pedagogically. By this I mean that it needs to be expressed according to the particular terms of reference of the needs and interests of the workers in struggle. Our demands attempt not only to didactically delineate the contours of social ~~struggle~~ ^{conflict} - they also propose a route into the exploration and opening up in practice. Consciousness is not only a question of what can be understood - it is predominantly a question of what can be done.

Looking just at some of the demands in isolation we find that the 'sliding scale' demand, for instance, emphasises, the 'no responsibility' position through its insistence that wages, having been brought to pre-inflation equivalents, be explicitly protected from the effects of further inflation - that is from further attempts to reduce their real value whilst making out that they are the root of the problem. Simultaneously it proposes ~~that~~ a positive development of class-based surveillance and competence in organising to ensure that the principle involved is effectively applied. The active vehicle by which the demand can be won remains strike action. Again, the objectives of 'work-sharing on full pay' and 'full trade union rights for the unemployed' pose the development of ~~shop-floor~~ increased shop-floor control over the details of production again in the perspective of the threat of strike action. Instead of speed-ups and redundancies, work-sharing, shorter hours and new workers brought off the dole queue through the union branch!

Such proposals gain in immediate active feasibility insofar as they can, to a certain extent, be won at shop-floor level, and remain based on the traditional defensive vehicle of strike action. They offer a perspective at local level which can be engaged on independent of a co-ordinated national movement, at the same time as they in no way fail to pose the necessity for this movement as a working class objective. In practice, the fight for shop-floor acceptance cannot be divorced from the fight for the programme in the Labour Movement as a whole. (Hence the point is really that the programme would provide militants with a standpoint which could serve to encourage and direct local struggles and at the same time place these within the context of the fight within the Labour Movement itself for a united working class response to the crisis. It can thus incorporate and accommodate the unevenness of working class struggle - development, whilst attempting to level it up).

Given the normal boundaries of any revolutionary intervention - that it always risks being put on the scrap-heap by sudden surges of working-class activity - the writers of 'TAP' still felt that the encouragement of a rank and file class struggle tendency built not only around the support and consideration of local resistance but also around the political struggle in the working class for a programme won as we advanced would prove the most successful contribution revolutionaries could make in the present situation. Apart, moreover, from the advantages of comprehensiveness, comprehensibility and social power orientation which we felt such a programme can have in terms of its appeal, attractiveness and relevance, there are a couple of further observations to be made with regards to the effect such a programme can have upon the internal constitution of a class struggle tendency developing in relation to it.

The first of these considerations is that of stability. A movement basing itself partly upon co-ordination, along with the encouragement of vague or negative struggle objectives risks defining outbreaks of struggles against aspects of a situation as representing a thoroughgoing ~~relative~~ opposition. Under circumstances where, for instance, degrees of resistance to the social contract can oscillate violently without the manifestation of any consolidated fracture, the programme can form a distinct vessel for the consolidation at the same time as the degree and nature of its implementation provides a more sophisticated witness to the development of the class struggle tendency than the potentially misleading first impressions of conflict, accepting, of course, that implementation of the programme will still itself be subject to an amount of oscillation according to shifts in the balance of class forces,...

The second consideration is that of internal flexibility and democracy. A movement dependent primarily on exhortation and co-ordination ~~for~~ has little except struggle and resistance to offer as a unifying force. It is instructive in this context to look for a moment at the SWP. Our present intervention is in fact remarkably similar to theirs. The main differences are i) that they are in a much better position to precipitate resistance movements such as the 'Right to Work' campaign and ii) whereas we present the 'genuine rank and file' as being an organic structural development meeting the need of greater organisation of the class struggle, the SWP have a rather more self-assertive attitude towards the question of building this latter. The SWP urges very basic struggle objectives - fight for the right to work, stop the cuts, fight racism, etc; it then builds prestige for itself or for the organisations it dominates primarily upon their ability to initiate industrial, protest or propaganda actions around these. (Eg their defence of the 'Right to Work' candidate in the recent T&G elections against other rank and file candidates was that his election address and campaign were 'far more powerful' ie better funded). The outcome is that premium is placed upon the existence of fighting, alternative organisations (such as the 'Right to Work'). The development of such organisations can become a substitute for the firm rooting of the germination of the social alternative in shop-floor activity. Advocation of a programme does not in itself eliminate the danger of substitutionism. Its absence does however make the prospect more immediate insofar as it assists the creation of the conditions for concentration upon organisational priorities.

WE WOULD LIKE ALL AWA COMRADES TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THE ATTITUDE WE ARE ADOPTING TOWARDS THE POSITIONS WHICH WE INTEND TO SUPPORT AT NATCONF.

These amount to retention of all the policies passed at the last Nat Conf (save the one on the IB), the retention of all policies of the last DC and the securing of our specific notions to this NC.

Our first consideration is that a conference which resulted in the above would give us ~~positions~~ perspectives defining the only guidelines within which we believe a libertarian communist organisation can begin to exist as a credible political force in the present period. Only an intervention which contains a programmatic basis (such as we have attempted to describe) and which is willing to operate where possible in united class struggle fronts relating to this can provide us with a serious and profitable orientation towards the further development of the workers movement.

The re-assessment of the history of the working class's development in general and of the revolutionary movement in particular are certainly priorities as far as we are concerned and we hope to continue such a re-assessment towards the strengthening of libertarian communism. Nevertheless as individuals and as a tendency we can no longer sacrifice the needs of immediate policy to an organisation based only on the vague promise of this re-assessment which has yet to provide significant results. In fact the strain put on the AWA over the last six months by the debate on immediate strategy has positively hindered this other essential task, except insofar as it has brought to the surface and clarified the extreme methodological divergences which lay behind our inability to secure a united organisational praxis.

Our second consideration is that, whilst not nearly as much material as might have been hoped for has been produced on the questions raised by the authors of 'Towards a Programme', we feel that National Conference must resolve our strategic fragmentation one way or the other. If we find ourselves in a minority on any of the issues we consider to be of crucial importance, we will be forced to withdraw from the organisation. We feel that it is best to state this outright rather than get enmeshed in the politics of rumour. We don't see such a position as amounting to an ultimatum - it is merely an indication of how deep we feel to be the division of political understanding in AWA and how unworkable we think the organisation will become if these divisions are not finally resolved. Hopefully we may achieve a real political unity - if not, we think the consequences of our attitude will benefit all those concerned with the struggle for workers power, getting us off attacking each other's throats and back to throttling the bosses!

'TOWARDS A PROGRAMME' TENDENCY