

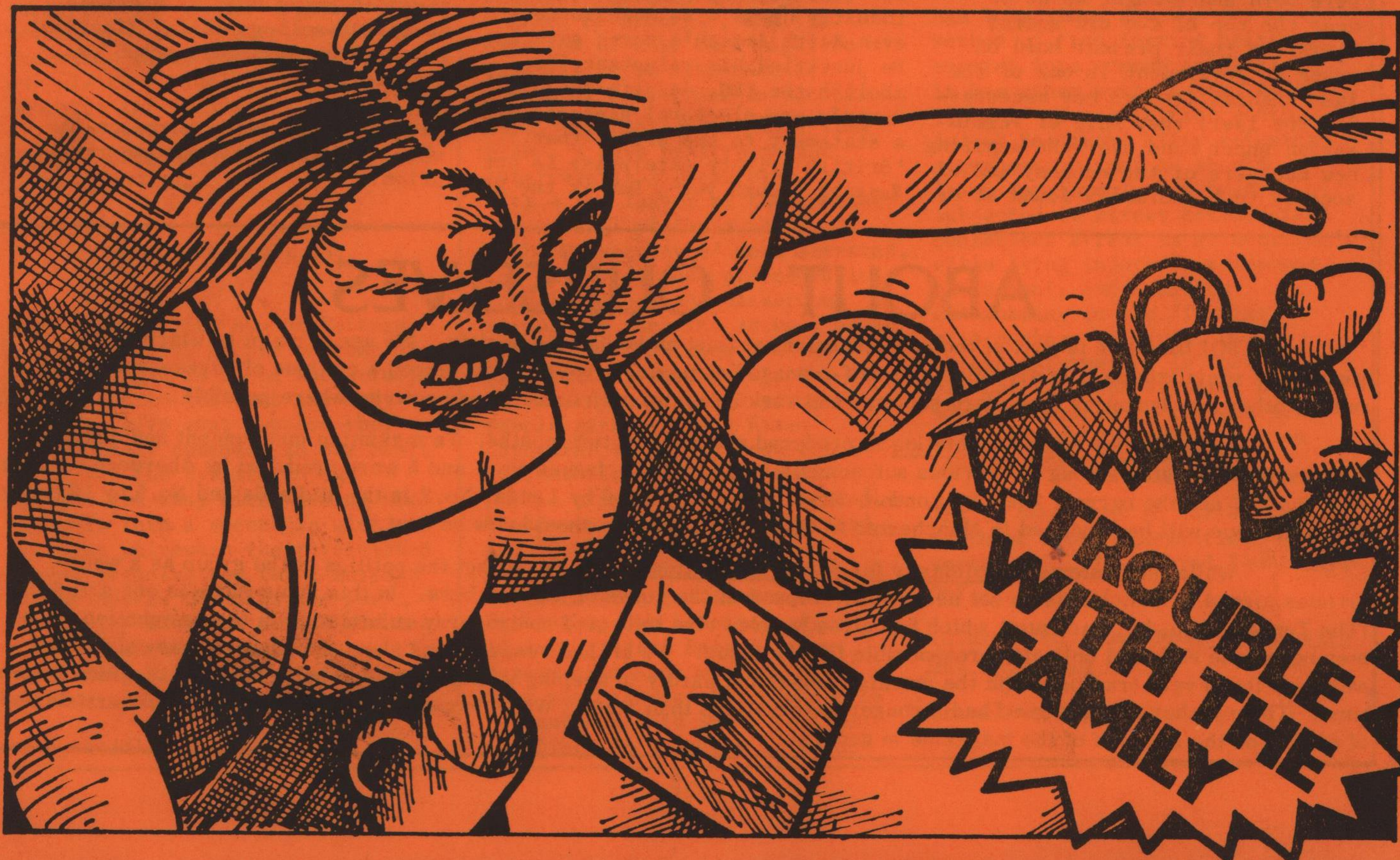
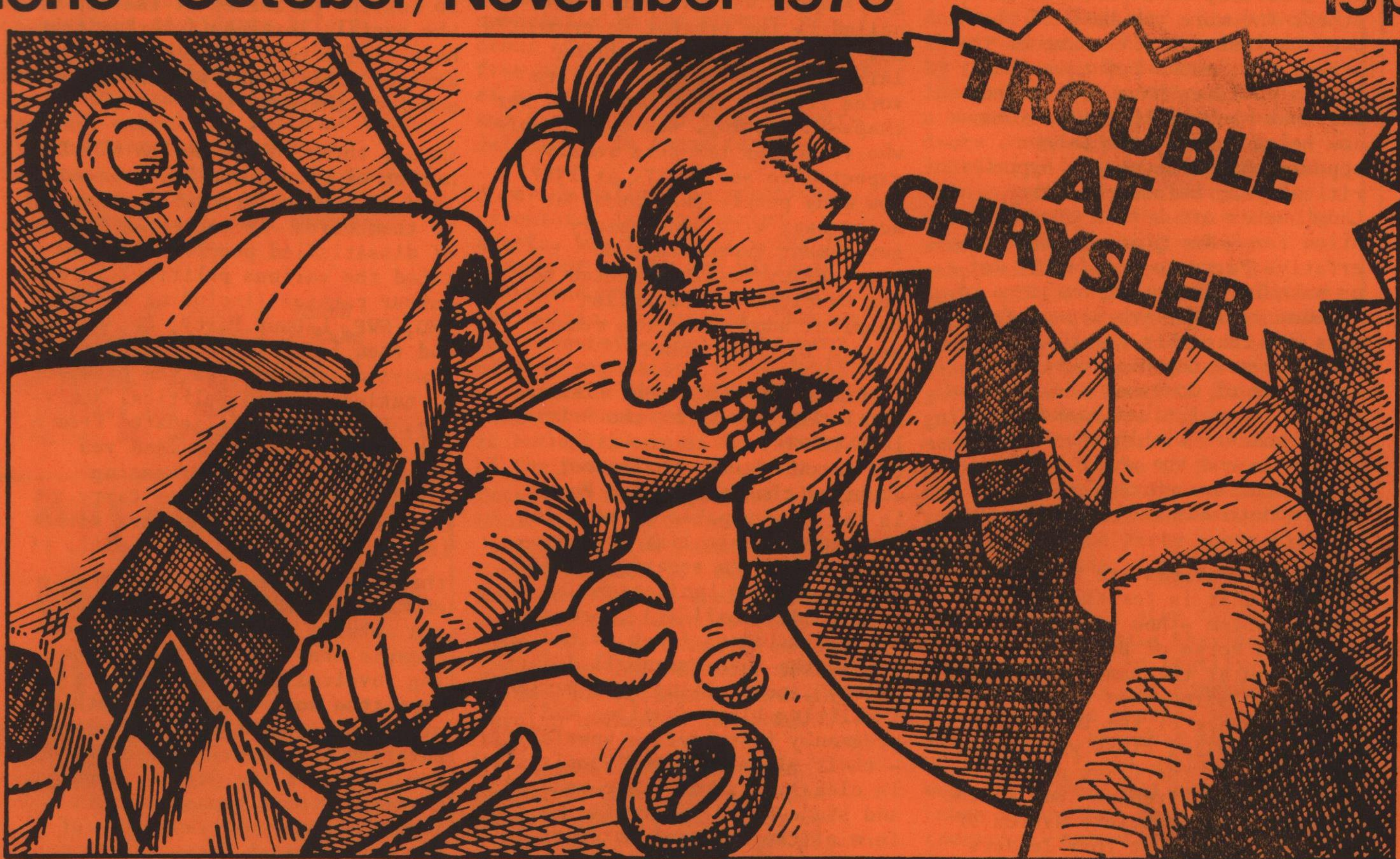
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FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

No.10 October/November 1979

15p



Editorial

1. TORY DREAMS AND SOCIALIST REALITY

On two points at least this group would agree with Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph. The first point is that bureaucracy and freedom are inversely related to each other. The more you have of the one the less you will have of the other. The second point is that Labour policies have not worked and that many of the criticisms now being made by the Labour opposition are downright hypocritical. But before the 'Iron Lady' sends off a load of application forms for joining the Conservative Party to Solidarity let us make it clear that our idea of freedom is light-years away from hers and that this group is determined to see the destruction of the House of Commons, the House of Lords, the political hacks who feign concern within these shameful walls and the whole rotten infrastructure which feeds off this monotonous radio show.

The Conservatives are trying to resolve what is for them an insoluble problem - how to regenerate the dead horse of British enterprise and at the same time recuperate and strengthen the power and influence of the increasingly obsolete ruling class who killed the horse in the first place. They talk of 'freedom' but in the context of an obsolete system of values. Since most Tory leaders were born and brought up at or near the top of the old social hierarchy their present hold on power in government is one of the last chances (though not necessarily the last) they have of regaining an upper hand over the aspiring new managers of the economy and of society to be normally found at or

near the top of the social-democratic hierarchy.

The discontent of British workers with Labour and Conservative governments was skilfully channelled by the present Government's new found 'detergent-selling' laissez-faire radicalism into votes for the 'Iron Lady' and her chaps-in-waiting. How many people who voted for tax cuts really expected to see V.A.T. at 15%? How many people who voted for doing away with unnecessary government expenditure on bureaucracy really expected to see hospitals close whilst hospital administrators remain secure in their jobs?

At times like these the traditional tendency among the British left is to rush to the aid of the Labour Party. Whilst not doubting that the Labour Party is far more capable of managing the modern capitalist economy - their record as regards reducing real wages (or 'inflation' as they preferred to call it), prosecuting dissidents (such as the ABC trial, the Agee/Hosenball deportation), controlling immigration (splitting black families and pregnancy tests were a speciality) - their claim to being 'socialists' is clearly absurd. State-managed and state-aided enterprise in the form of the National Enterprise Board is clearly what British industry needs - so much so that even Keith Joseph's nerve gave way. He justified his reluctance to abolish the NEB, despite the Party's pre-electoral pledges, with a statement to the effect that 'British private enterprise is not buoyant enough yet'. But is the NEB

what we need? Is the mythical regeneration of British private enterprise what the British working class needs? And with the advent of micro-chip technology, can we afford to let the parasites at the top of the social hierarchy (whether they have always been there or have just arrived) decide who will be discarded and from where?

On all three counts we say NO! The number of people who have already said NO but, unfortunately, keep it to themselves is enormous. The mass of dissatisfied people who have tried the various political forced-labour parties (including the WRP, IMG, SWP, Labour Party, CP, etc...) and then left are not, however, always alienated from the prospect of taking part in political activity. But they are alienated from a set of policies which lead you round and round in decreasing circles; from the Labour Party, because they know that the 'vital' issues being argued about will, if

they are resolved, result in a change of leadership of the Party and nothing else; from the Unions because they are tired of becoming involved in time-consuming committee work which does nothing other than assist in the implementation of the policies of the Government of the day in, perhaps, a slightly more humane manner; and from the numerous 'vanguards of the proletariat' because they are tired of being used as uncritical newspaper-sellers whilst dissident group after dissident group is expelled.

Are we really being unreasonable when we demand libertarian revolution?

ABOUT OURSELVES

SOLIDARITY is part of the new movement against authoritarian society. We see our aim as clarifying the meaning of socialism as it is articulated in self-managed struggles. We have developed a critique of bureaucratisation and the other key dynamics of modern society, and seek to assist each other in our activity where possible.

Solidarity for Social Revolution is produced about every two months. To maximise involvement and democracy the production rotates among the various autonomous local groups. Issues No.1 and 5 were produced by Aberdeen/Dundee, Nos. 2, 4, 7 and the current issue by London, No.3 by Oxford, No.6 by Leeds, No.8 in the Midlands and No.9 by Glasgow. The next issue will be produced in Manchester to whom contributions should now be sent.

While the contents of Solidarity for Social Revolution generally reflect the politics of the group as a whole, articles signed by individuals do not necessarily represent the views of all members. In this issue there is one article (The Tender Trap, by 'Luciente') which has already given rise to heated controversy culminating in the resignation of one member of the editorial collective responsible for the issue. We all had reservations about the author's view of history - which we found very traditional (in the marxist sense) and hardly in keeping with advances in anthropology ... since Engels' time. The member who resigned had stronger reservations than most. We welcome further comments on this article and of course on the contents of the magazine in general.

Editorial

2. PUTTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

People have been getting us wrong. Because recent issues of SFSR have contained a number of articles expressing misgivings about some aspects of the contemporary women's movement, the idea seems to be getting about that we are hostile to that movement as a whole. This is not and has never been the case, as a brief look at our past record and publications will show.

One of the things which differentiate Solidarity from the traditional left has always been, in fact, our insistence on taking seriously the question of people's lives outside the industrial arena. Before there was any bandwagon rolling, we engaged in discussion on abortion, sexuality, conditioning and other "personal" matters, perceived as an integral part of our politics. Struggles on these issues were not dismissed as "marginal"; the validity of striving for self-liberation was assumed, and it was realised that women experienced specific forms of oppression necessitating resistance specifically by women.

The record of the Social Revolution group shows similar trends, perhaps more strongly, since it owed its emergence partly to the active involvement of members in women's groups and other spheres of activity which traditionalists denounced as marginal, divisive and/or reformist. Insistence on the

importance of the issues at stake generated the SR organisation and its publications wherein the multifarious interests of members could be aired.

Since the fusion into Solidarity for Social Revolution, the joint organisation has developed in a way reasonably consistent with the past of its component parts. Our definition of areas of basic agreement, As We See It, now includes a specific statement of opposition to sexism, which we do not regard as being mere lip-service.

Of course we do not claim that reference to our archives will show a policy line of undeviating perfection. We didn't and don't know it all, and there was certainly much to be learnt from the women's movement as it developed. At least we were, for the most part, willing to learn.

What we have not been willing to do is to suspend our critical faculties and reel with admiration at any and every idea that came to the surface, simply because it emanated from women. To do so would have been a serious mistake on several counts. It would have been to accept the "us" and "them" definitions of the separatists of both sexes - sexism in the real meaning of the term. We might have regarded the whole thing with olympian detachment, not expecting that women on their

own should do it (politics) well, but marvelling that they could do it at all. We might have laughed it off, including particular aberrations as merely enriching the joke, and women who shared our politics could have been left to sink or swim. But as long as our politics include a belief in the possibility of general social revolution and the free association of equals, we have to confront ideas wherever they arise.

So we don't view the women's movement with benevolent or amused detachment or patronising condescension. Neither do we intend to write it off in its entirety, even in our most critical moments, on account of what we see as disturbing trends within it. No doubt we may have been at fault in failing to spell out a position of basic solidarity (a basic Solidarity position) on each and every occasion, and in thinking we had made ourselves clear enough in the past not to be thoroughly misunderstood in the present. We can make no apologies, however, for pursuing the debate and providing a forum for divergent views, with contributors to the paper often feeling strongly one way or the other. We are not homogeneous, although we assume certain areas of agreement - and within these areas, recent modifications have tended more to re-affirm than to deny our opposition to sexism.

ABOUT OURSELVES (continued)

Increased costs of paper and printing have forced us to raise our prices. From the next issue the price of a copy of Solidarity for Social Revolution will be 20p. Recent increases in postal costs force us to raise the cost of subs too. At the same time we would like to point out that any prisoners who wish to receive our magazine may do so free of charge. So if you find the price too steep you have a choice: get yourself busted and it's yours for free!

A new edition of The Kronstadt Commune by Ida Mett (with an introduction by Murray Bookchin, a map and up to date bibliography) has been produced by the London group and is available from them (£1 + postage). The new edition of Kollontai's The Workers' Opposition (75p + postage) is also available.

If you want further information, please contact your nearest group: Aberdeen/Dundee: c/o 167 King Street, Aberdeen.

Coventry: c/o 124 Hollis Street - London: c/o 123 Lathom Rd., E6

Manchester: c/o 109 Oxford Rd. - Oxford: c/o 34 Cowley Road.

For other towns contact the National Secretary, c/o Manchester group. International correspondence and correspondence concerning orders and subscriptions to Publications Secretary, c/o London group.

LETTER

In 'Feminism or Moral Indignation (SSR6) it was not my intention to judge people's sexual inclinations or preferences but to point out that the image of sexual 'success' can, when it suits the requirements of sex consumerism, be applied to gays as well as heterosexual relationships. (Who cares, when there's money to be made?) The sale of the 'unattainable' fantasy object, in either type of sexual activity, is the source of unsatisfactory and unfulfilled sexual experience. Pornography, with its constant appeal 'that it is better than the "real" thing', feeds on the endless frustration of expectations. As the gay market increases it will objectify persons in these relationships, as it does women now, in 'straight' porn.

G.W. (Prick-person), Leeds.

LETTERS

Dear Solidarity,

Exactly whom does 'G.W.' think he is talking about when he attacks 'feminists' and 'feminism' in his article 'Feminism or Moral Indignation' (May/June issue)?

The Women's movement has always been rooted in small autonomous groups and as a result it is not a homogeneous political bloc, but rather includes a wide range of differently thinking women (which is one of its strengths and reflects the fact that women allow each other the freedom to hold differing opinions).

While I think his criticisms are largely unfair as directed against any part of the women's movement, it is extraordinary that he should call for a political analysis in which 'the concepts of objectification, property and hierarchy' would be 'investigated in all relations in society, and not isolated to those between ill-defined (!!) 'men' and 'women'.' Such an analysis is precisely the basis of both radical and anarcha-feminism.

Radical and anarcha-feminists see the unequal power relationships between the sexes as the primary model for all relationships within society where one group oppresses another, be it a case of one class dominating another, whites dominating blacks or parents dominating children.

Such an analysis demands a sexual revolution which will bring to an end the possibility for all unequal power relationships. It implies that, ultimately, the sexes do not have 'sectional and separatist interests' as, sadly, G.W. seems to think they have.

When radical and anarcha-feminists group women as a class in virtue of our biological function, this leads to an attempt to analyse the existing class structure of society, not, as G.W. would have it, to pretend that this is unimportant. He cannot have spent very much time with feminists if he has not regularly heard the phrase, 'no social revolution without women's liberation, no women's liberation without social revolution.'

Finally, I fail to understand why G.W. thinks there is a parallel between what he calls the middle class espousal of radical causes in the form of

its espousal of the Labour party, and the fact that the majority of women in the Women's Movement are middle class. For a middle class woman, just as much as for a working class woman, the sexual revolution is her own radical cause (i.e. not that of her social 'inferiors' whom she chooses to patronise) against an oppression which she experiences as affecting ultimately both her and everyone around her. As a radical/anarcha-feminist the question of your social class becomes unimportant because you yourself are oppressed and you see that the roots of your oppression are fundamentally the same as the roots of the oppression of all women, and of all men.

Radical/anarcha-feminism is not limited by the narrow sights of the traditional left with its demands for workers' revolution. We want a revolution in all aspects of the everyday existence of all people. As Peggy Kornegger says, feminists are unconscious anarchists.

I am disgusted to find that such a reactionary article should be given two pages in what calls itself a libertarian newspaper.

Teresa Thornhill

LETTERS

Dear Solidarity,

As sick jokes go, the editorial in Number 9 is super (so far as its faint print is legible). Let me explain. I don't for a moment doubt that the 'alternative' movements which you bracket as 'the swamp' - communarians, co-op. workshops, etc. - include many people obsessed with personal problems; and in any case if alternative societies could become a sizeable threat to the market system, Big Brother would take stern action.

But please take a dose of your own medicine - crude, no doubt, in the capsule of a letter, but hardly as crude as yours. Why are the people you call the swamp so introspective, and why so vulnerable to suppression if they multiplied? Because they are unheeded and unsupported by the very class, your precious 'working class', which, with few exceptions, has more and more lost what revolutionary consciousness it may once have displayed. You claim that 'everyday resistance to capital' is 'implicitly socialist and potentially revolutionary'. The hell it is! Capital can confer no 'right to work'; and in a competitive society based on scarcity value, a just wage, like 'a just price', is simply the best you can get,

and always at the expense of others with weaker muscle (sacred 'differentials', huh?). Do we really need Cardan or Marcuse (in their different ways) to show us that the class struggle is essentially within the system and, indeed, a part of its mechanism?

In 1968 the production workers of France downed tools and - what do you think? Did they do what the students and intellectual rebels against 'the consumer society' could not do unaided - seize the means of production and turn them to socialist uses?

No! With few exceptions, they sat in their factories and brought in Pop musicians. Ah, but Massu's Rhine army would have shot or coerced them? Perhaps - perhaps not. But they were 'betrayed' by the 'Communist' union bosses? You cannot betray a consciousness that isn't there. They wanted a holiday, just like the Torness workers in your own report (p. 7) who hoped the anti-nuke occupation would temporarily damage the machinery. Could 'embourgeoisement' go farther?

Now Marx, if alive today, might say again 'No social order ever disappears before ...' etc., but adding 'Capitalism shows more longevity than Engels and I anticipated. But just you wait!' So 'the swamp' must go on waiting for Godot? I suggest that today's state power, in its weapons and police and recuperations, and especially with its increasingly expendable workforce, can divide and rule and if necessary liquidate all the minority who have socialist consciousness.

Back to the 'swamp'. Though their ego-problems may be great (and often comic), they hold one great truth which the urbanised proletariat have largely lost - that they and their children have a human RIGHT to clean air, clean food in clean soil, co-operation with Nature rather than its ravishment. That this is a mirage in the total swamp of mass insentience is not their fault. For that insentience is the far greater swamp - in the blind alley of 'class struggle' for more of the piss and poison of Capital's wages and 'welfare'.

There used to be something called 'la trahison des clerks'. Worse still is la trahison des ouvriers, for it betrays us all.

Yours swampily
Basil Druitt

THE TENDER TRAP?

We can't really talk about the modern nuclear family (1) without first looking at its historical development. Firstly the family in history has never been static. It has been influenced by the changing economic structures of society and in return, as part of that social structure, has had its influence on the economy. We can be fairly sure that the primitive tribal family was matriarchal, if not in organisation, at least in hereditary lineage. Because of the tribe's primitive economy, the survival of the whole tribe, rather than individuals within it, made coupling and the conjugal family unthinkable. In such a society female fecundity (prolific breeding) was of paramount importance. Only a few healthy males were necessary to the survival of the species, the rest were expendable on hunting parties and inter-tribal wars. Wars that were fought not only over territory, but also over access to women, as a means of tribal survival. Obviously this 'primitive communism' as Engels called it, wasn't very attractive, despite the cloak of romanticism some writers have attempted to endow it with. No way would we want to resurrect any of that.

This tribal family type soon disappeared, with the development of agriculture and surpluses, which prompted the acquisition of private property. This permitted the overthrow of mother-right through the alienation of female reproductive power by men and instituted the patriarchal family. Since the rise of private property all economic change has led to a variation on the patriarchal family theme. I don't intend to go into all its adaptations through the centuries all over the world; suffice it to say, by the turn of the 18th century, 4 main types of patriarchal family existed in Europe. The aristocratic and peasant type were on the decline, especially in Britain, while the bourgeois and working class type were on the increase. The latter two types are of importance to us today. The bourgeois family was closely identified with the separation of the home from the workplace. Man got the 'world' and woman the home, not much of a bargain. The bourgeois ideology soon developed an excuse for this and the concepts of

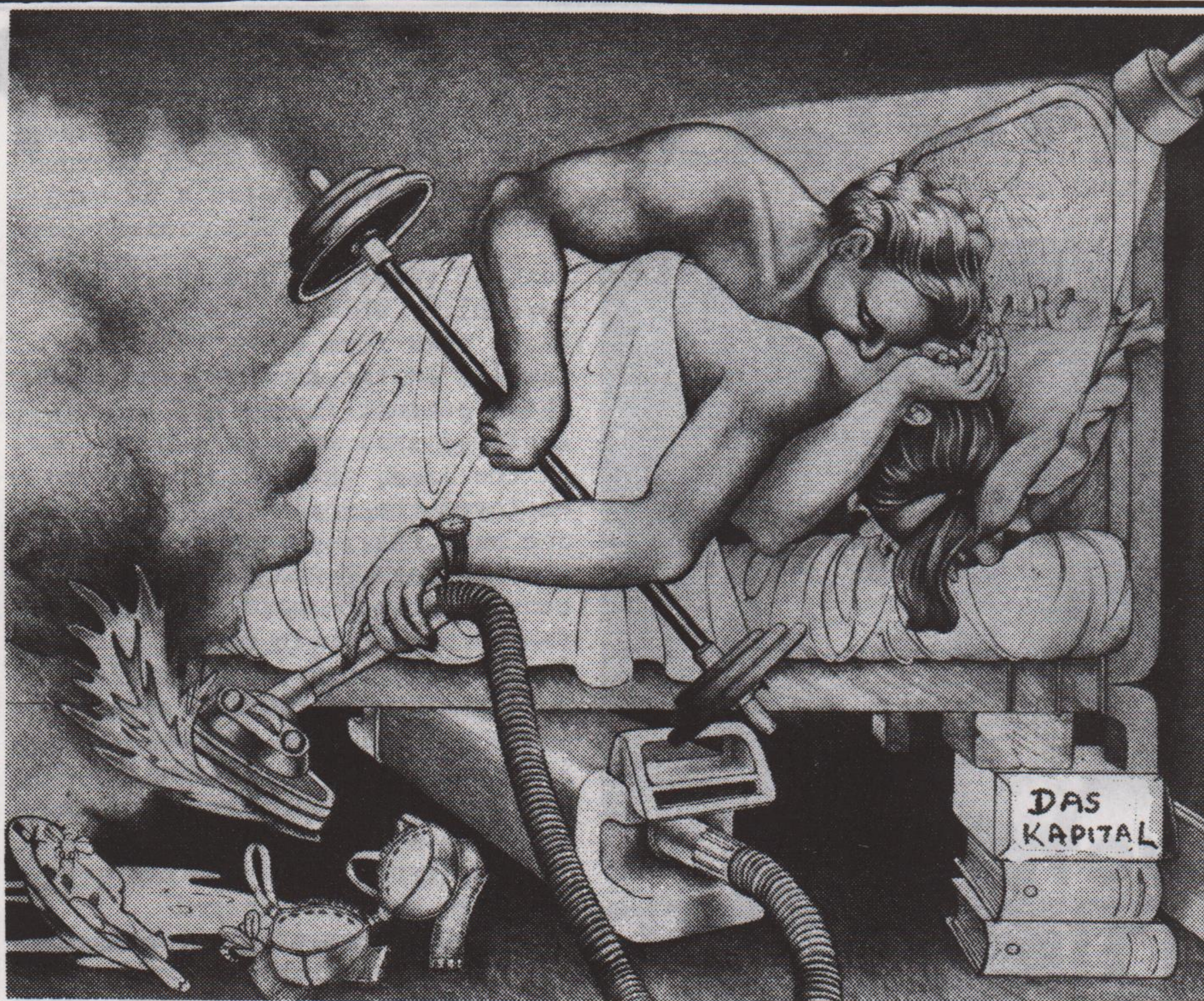


Poster for French elections, 1936/N.Y. Public Library

motherhood and childhood were born, concepts we are still suffering from today. Yet aristocratic women never dreamed of suckling their own offspring, the modern concept of material deprivation was as alien to them as were men on the moon. Children came out of petticoats at 5 and were treated as small adults. The bourgeois family was the most oppressive of all family types for all its members, but especially women and children, though generally men also lived by the strict code of morality they imposed on their family. (2) Female and child sexuality ceased to exist, 'romantic love' and so-called 'free' marriage contracts took its place. Once the contract was signed the freedom ended, women became their husbands' chattels, which required such a high level of self-denial that it today almost defeats comprehension, unless we remember the part religion played (and still does) in pre-scientific societies.

Freud's identification of the neurotic psyche rooted in the bourgeois family was so accurate and still has bearing on the modern nuclear family, which I'll come to later. First I want to say something about the working class family. This type was quite distinct during the first half of the 19th century, especially in the areas where industrial capitalism had its roots: the cotton and wool

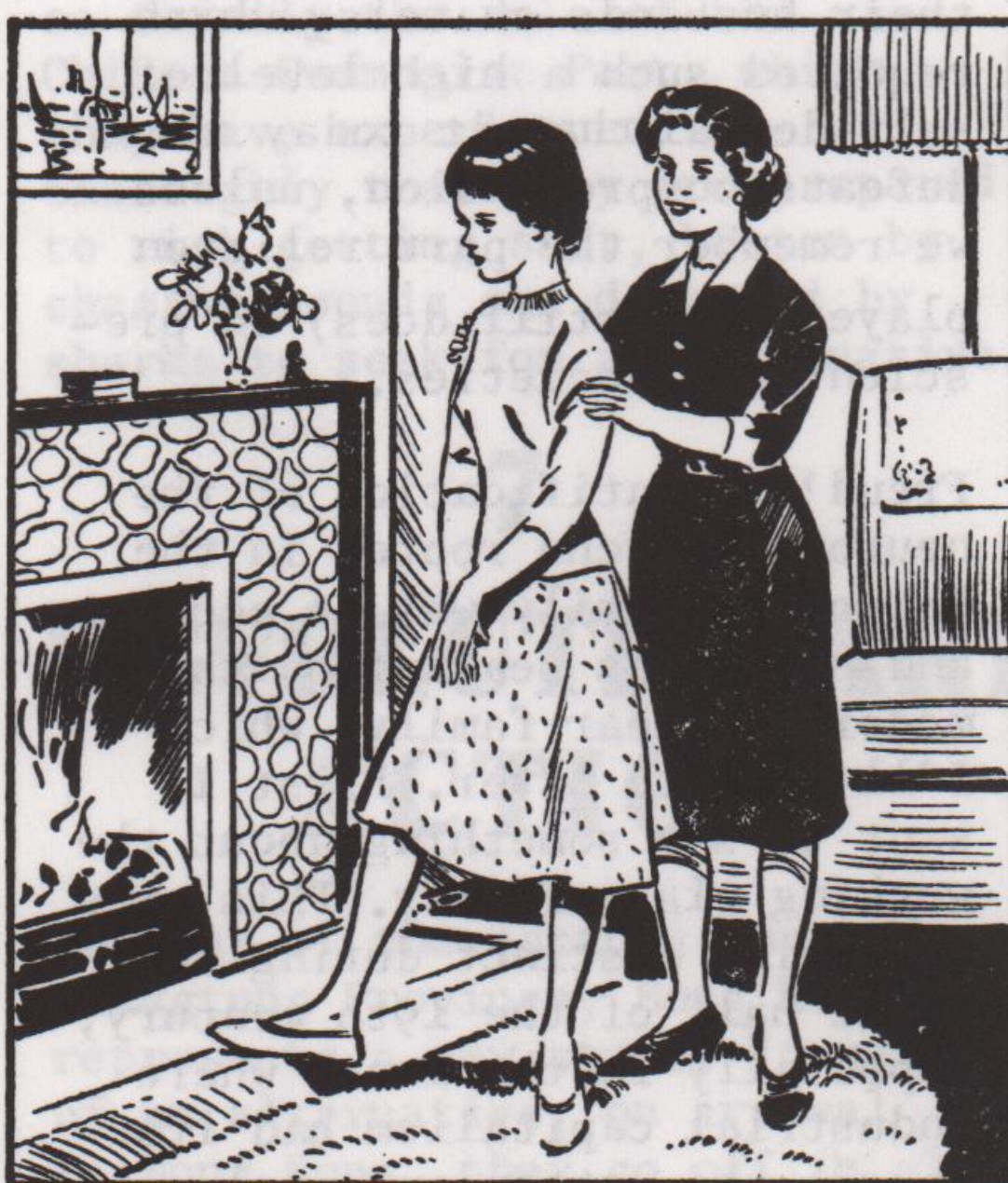
textile towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Whilst it lasted it was a weak form of patriarchal family. In the same way that the whole peasant family had been employed as a unit of labour on the land, the early factories employed the whole family for one wage. As industry grew, this pattern broke down. Men continued to be paid a breadline family wage, while women received $\frac{1}{2}$ and children $\frac{1}{4}$ of the man's. For the first time this gave women and children economic independence from the family unit. Not surprisingly, legalised marriage lost popularity as did the established church. Children were considered mostly in terms of their economic use-value to parents and were frequently beaten. The only alternative to a short brutal life at the hands of your parents, was a short brutal life at the hands of the factory master, but at least you could spend your own wage; consequently family life was virtually non-existent. Both the brutality and independence of working class women's and children's lives, worried the bourgeoisie and aristocrats alike, albeit from different economic stand-points. The main cause of the great parliamentary reformers, was to 'save' the working class from 'immorality' by imbuing them with the bourgeois ideology of family life. It was not by accident that this aim was promoted by developments in the industrial capitalist economy. The Factory and Mine Acts barring children under 9 from employment plus compulsory schooling, allowed the bourgeoisie to control the socialisation of working class children. Children couldn't be kept at school all day, that was not only too expensive for the bourgeoisie to swallow, it was also in complete contradiction to their ideology of self-help, so the only answer was to put working class women into the home. This ideology was of course fraught with contradictions for the bourgeoisie when they came to apply it to the working class. But rapid industrialisation in the second half of the 19th century, came to their assistance, as it necessitated a more literate workforce and so helped to compensate for the loss of cheap female and child labour. So education developed a sex-role orientation.



THE TENDER TRAP

By the end of the 19th century, the working class family was thoroughly imbued with the bourgeois ideology. The great majority of married working class women stayed at home and it became a matter of the man's self-respect that he could support his family on his own wage. But even the bourgeois family could not withstand the strain of 2 world wars, which gave the necessary impetus to the advance of modern western capitalism and the growth of state power. These factors undermined the patriarchal bourgeois family structure, forcing working class women and encouraging middle class women to seek work outside the home. Bourgeois morality was further undermined by the 'permissive' 60's and the decline of religion. Yet despite these factors, the trend has been towards child centred nuclear families, which has reinforced one concept of the bourgeois ideology of the family. The post war Spock generation were the first to survive the modern child centred family, with its contradictions between bourgeois authority and liberalism. Parents fought wars and tightened their belts for future generations. They sacrificed their own lives to live vicariously through their children's; they believed they had a right to have expectations for their children. Parents who internalise such beliefs are considered 'good' parents. At

the same time children were encouraged to think for themselves, to see themselves as the centre of the universe. Conflict and rebellion was inevitable, but where are those rebels now? Safely conforming inside nuclear families of their own no doubt. Sacrifice is the guilt-trip parents lay on their children in order to get them to conform. Children also learn to play the guilt-trip game on their parents: 'I didn't ask to be born'. It is generally played unconsciously, but conscious manipulation of the other can be readily observed in most families. Both sides believe that they owe the other, but also that the other owes them



in return, e.g. children owe it to their parents 'to get on' as a repayment for the sacrifices their parents made in order to give them 'a good start in life'. The guilt that belief engenders in both parties reinforces conformity to social 'norms'. (See Freud in nutshell below).

The trend towards state capitalism undermined most of the traditional patriarchal family's functions. The dominant class was better able to control the development of the working class through the state. The family today no longer has any economic importance to the continued advancement of capitalism. It is because of this that the new style liberal nuclear family has evolved. The patriarchal nuclear family is finally on the wane. Authority is becoming more equally shared between the parents, though child care is still seen as women's work. The wife is no longer seen as the property of the husband; instead, but no better, each is possessed by the other. Divorce is continually on the increase, but so is remarriage; serial monogamy has become the common practice of coupling. Despite the predictions (including those of anarchists, see Anarchy 20), the family shows no sign of disappearing, because the family has more than merely economic importance to capitalist society. To reduce everyone to autonomous units of consumption may appear to be an advantage to capitalism. But such a view totally ignores the psychological value the family performs, even more important than its function of reproducing and servicing labour, which is important enough. No police are as effective as the police in the mind. The family teaches better than any state institutions could hope to, the concepts of authority, correct social behaviour, self-sacrifice and dependence, to know and accept your place in society. It still does this virtually in the same way that Freud identified in the bourgeois family, through the development of the ego and super ego.

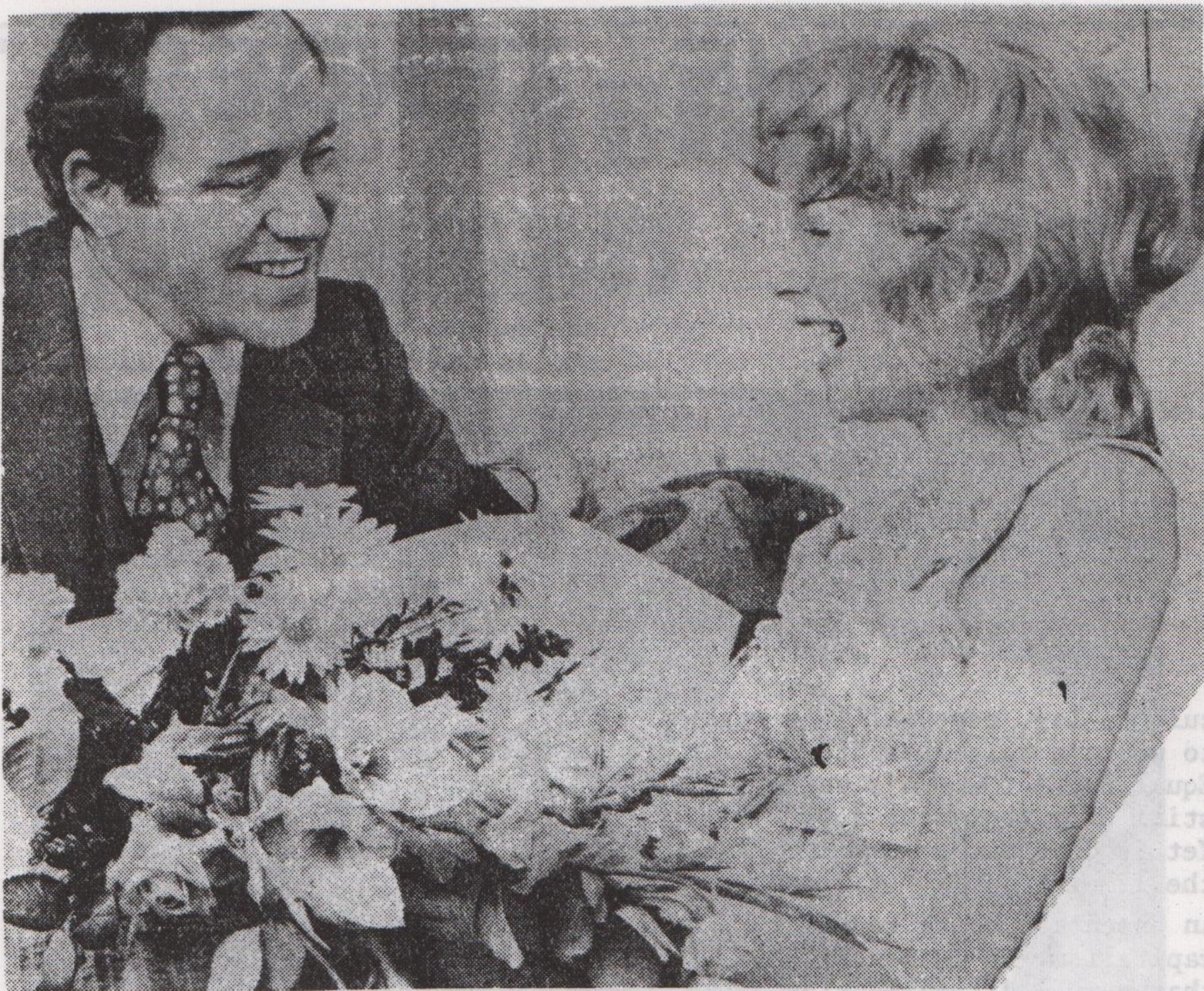
Freud's View

From a baby's birth it identifies pleasure in itself. Through its oral and anal stages, it finds its own body is pleasurable, but at the same time it identifies pleasure externally, firstly through its mother's love. As it grows it soon learns that self-love and parental love are often in conflict, because its

parents live by a learnt social code which is totally alien to it. It is frequently forced to choose between self-love and parental love. The child's awareness of its biological dependence on retaining parental love makes it choose self-denial. In order to keep its parent's love, it attempts to emulate their social behaviour; so it internalises its parents judgement of itself in its own psyche, in what Freud called the super-ego. Since self pleasure is associated with evil, any thoughts of lust or sexual abandonment, divorced as they must be from the concept of romantic love, are quickly punished by feelings of guilt and self-disgust. (3) The situationist slogan of 'taking your desires for reality' is truly revolutionary and hence incredibly difficult in practice. If the working class were able to eradicate guilt from their minds, they would certainly not choose self-sacrifice in either factory, office, shop or home.

Recreating The Family

Just as the child needed its parents' approval, adults seek the approval of alternative authorities, as well as from their peers. So we make ourselves dependent on other people's love. The chances are we end up giving a repeat performance of our own parents' behaviour on our own families. Both internal and external pressures are operating to push people into coupling and family life, which are very hard to resist. It is deeply rooted in our psyche through socialisation both within the family and through state institutions, e.g. school, church, housing policy, taxation and other legislation. Despite the high turn-over rate of marriage, people don't see the fault in the family structure itself, but see it in terms of personal failure, on their own, or spouses behalf and so tend to rush into the next encounter with the same groundless belief that this is the love of their lives. But what is meant by love? Love is often confused with lust; it is this emotion that is usually experienced 'at first sight', but in conventional morality is stigmatised as bad. Lust is an emotion people are capable of experiencing in any circumstances and with numerous other people; immunity to lust is only achieved through self-



THE TENDER TRAP

repression, which though effective is not perfect. The dominant religious morality based on privatised relationships prevents complete sexual freedom, therefore, it is perhaps not suprising that serial monogamy has become so popular. People no longer expect one relationship to satisfy all their needs for life, but neither are they capable of breaking free of their conditioning. People's desires concentrate on love and sex, because the rest of their lives are mentally and sensually barren; but this focus only encourages expectations of these emotions which cannot be fulfilled or sustained. This is especially true in the case of monogamous relationships. As reality falls short of expectations the result is disillusionment, boredom and frustration. In the past, when marriage was for life, people accepted this result; in fact their expectations were lower due to the cultural limitations of marriage. This is no longer tolerated by the modern trend in liberalising sexuality, but this trend in no way attacks or undermines the nuclear family. Trendy magazines, like Cosmopolitan, promote sexual licence as a means of reinvigorating the couple relationship which is seen as the primary (private) relationship. Prolongation and the reinforcement of the primary relationship is of paramount importance. Even

the methodist church has recently recognised and condoned sexual liberalisation. 'It is because they set a high value on relationships within marriage that christians might also argue that stable, permanent relationships can be an appropriate way of expressing a homosexual orientation'. (Guardian 20/4/79, my emphasis). They have also recognised serial monogamy as acceptable on the same basis. The couple relationship is totally a private one and exclusive of all others. They possess each other, jealousy plays an important part in such a relationship, they cannot be independent or free. Agony columnists are always advising their problem people that marriage has to be worked at, if it is to be successful. A successful marriage is one in which both partners practise self-sacrifice and give up willingly their self-determination. When one partner tires of crippling their individuality, or gives in to feelings of lust for another, then the end is usually messy. How can this be love? Love flourishes with freedom and lust is exciting: they aren't exclusive emotions. Why should friends reject each other's love simply because they feel love or lust for others? It's absurd. If we pursue this line we can effectively challenge the nuclear family.

We are witnessing the emergence of a new type of nuclear family. However it still suffers from

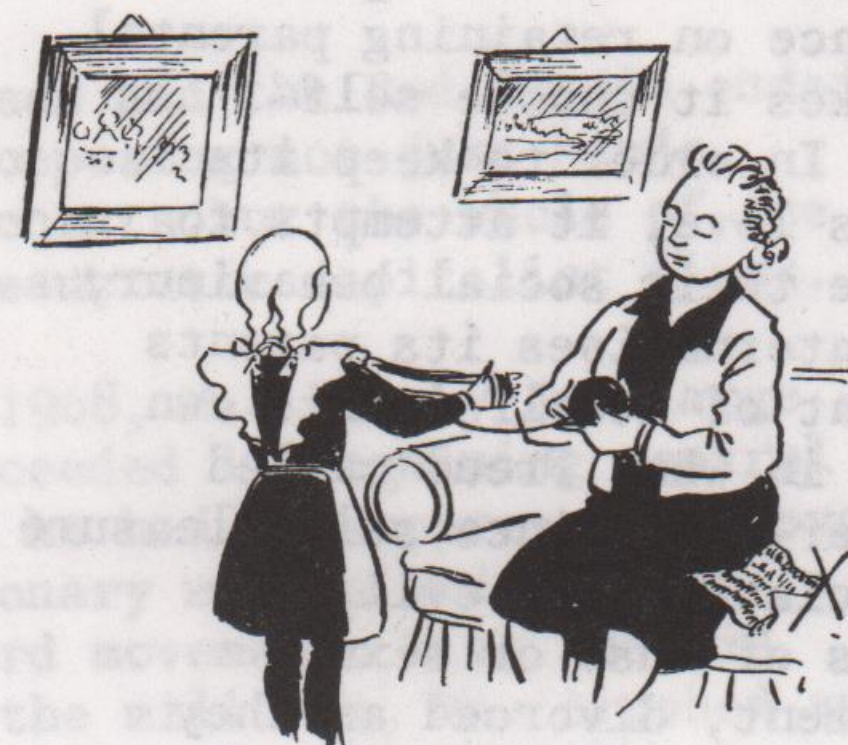
THE TENDER TRAP



culture lag, especially in regard to women's role. Despite the Equal Pay Act women's wages still only represent $\frac{2}{3}$ of men's. Yet it does not disappear because the liberal family still has an essential value to modern capitalism. It is conceivable that sexual discrimination could be overcome, especially if a new economic boom was to take-off that increased the demand for labour. However it seems more realistic that since the invention of the silicon chip, that isn't very likely. On the contrary that invention strikes hardest at traditionally women's work. Can women be forced yet again into making a career out of family and home? I would like to think not, and hope that this conflict will push working class women into the revolutionary van, but may be regarded as a cynic for viewing the new Penguin special 'Who Cares?' with deep suspicion. It is made all the more respectable by being written by a woman psychologist, Dr. Penelope Leach, a sister! 'Women who insist on being treated just like men, while insisting on having babies as and when they please, put themselves in an untenable position and they deny the rights of their children.' She cunningly contrives to blame the state and trade unions for maternal deprivation: you know, all those exciting equal opportunities and wages, and all those nursery and child care provisions, what mother could resist! Despite the liberalisation of the family, the dominant/passive authoritarian relationship remains, only now less sexual, but generational. This can't be broken unless economic dependence of children upon parents can be broken and parents cease to see their conjugal offspring as their own private property. However advanced capitalism, could it tolerate that? I think not. Private property is integral to capitalist ideology; there is no evidence that it is any less so

to state capitalism. The state, far from encouraging economic independence of children, upholds the bourgeois ideological concept of childhood and even reinforces it every time it raises the school leaving age.

As anarchists we aim at abolishing all private property relationships and all authority. In this desire the family can be no exception. The question we are continually forced to consider is how far we can proceed with changing our own lives and the way we relate personally within capitalism. Some of us have been criticised for living in heterosexual couples. Women in the W.L.M., are often criticised by lesbians for living with men, though frequently they themselves live in privatised couple relationships. Those of us who have experimented with communal living have equally strong reservations. Communes are often based on economic necessity and on closer examination, behind the facade is the reality of separate nuclear families. On the other hand so-called 'multiple' relationships, seem to involve hours of agonising self-examination often ending in the conviction that it's impossible, or at best too much like hard work. Yet most little children manage to share love without too much difficulty. If we are not to live schizophrenic lives we must be prepared to practise what we preach. No matter how agonising, in the long run it has to be worthwhile. The only way we can hope to achieve the revolution we desire, in all areas of life, is if we push our capabilities to change our consciousness and our own everyday lives to the extreme. We can start this by the exorcism of possessiveness and jealousy from our own psyche. Men must also seriously discuss giving up father-right. The future society we desire, will most probably result in men being deprived of father-right as a direct result of women's liberation. When women are finally free of economic, psychological and physical dependency on men, those who choose to have children where paternity is obscured by a number of lovers, will increase rapidly. Many men and women only discover interest in children when they have 'one of their own'. Men will have to give up this property relationship, whilst mothers will continue to have a special relationship with their



offspring. (4) If men's attitudes remain unchanged, this may result in many men losing interest in children, although I would think this unlikely as revolution by necessity must be the consequence of some fairly fundamental changes in attitudes. If we believe that the means help determine the end and that 'day one of the revolution' is merely a convenient theoretical device, then we must be prepared to start now on changing our own relationships no matter how hard. After all we don't expect revolution to be easy.

Luciente

Footnotes:

(1) I define the nuclear family here not simply in a numerical way, but according to the sets of internal relationship which are characteristic of it. What is important is the fundamental relationship between the man and the woman (the primary couple) and their conjugal children; but the children need not be conjugal, or the couple strictly monogamous.

(2) See 'The Worm in the Bud' by Ronald Pearsall. For those of us who reached puberty before the 'swinging 60's' an understanding of Victorian morality is still relevant in understanding our own attitudes to sexuality.

(3) For a good, though jargonistic explanation see 'Critical Theory of the Family' by Mark Poster, Pluto Press 1978, priced at £3.95.

(4) For the best yet exposition of how an anarchist-feminist society could be organised read 'Woman at the Edge of Time' by Marge Piercy. She suggests it may be necessary, in order to achieve a truly equal society, for women to give up mother-right as well, and babies to become the products of test tubes. As an American import it's difficult to get hold of a copy; try Compendium.

CHINA: THE REBELLION OF THE EDUCATED YOUTH

I. EYEWITNESS REPORT

A number of processions, rallies and demonstrations occurred in Shanghai in February this year. They were organised by educated youths who had been forcibly sent down to the countryside over the past ten years to work in the fields and who had returned to Shanghai for the Chinese New Year. (1) The youths organised themselves spontaneously and their activities lasted for many days. They gathered in front of the municipal revolutionary committee office and cut off the electricity for the trams; stopped the trains and the traffic; attacked government buildings and party officials.

On 1st. February, it was a sunny day in Shanghai and the snow on the roofs and the roadside was beginning to melt. As always, the Nanking road was full of people and many were also at the People's Square reading the big character posters. There was an atmosphere of expectation. On the walls of the buildings by the People's Square were numerous big character posters - with new ones on top of the old ones - on many themes. The longer and more serious ones were discussions on 'democracy and the rule of law', 'human rights', 'the social foundation of bureaucratism' etc. Aside from these, pasted on the walls were pages of several duplicated stencilled magazines like 'The Voice of the People', and 'The Spring Sparrow'. Reading them required strenuous efforts but most people were reading very patiently, page by page.

At about eleven o'clock in the morning, a few banners could be seen by the walls of Tibet Road, then signs of provinces were displayed, under which different groups were to assemble. About 1,000 people, mostly youths, began to gather in small groups discussing the question of educated youth who had been sent to work in the countryside. Then a young man could be seen climbing up a small house with a flat roof, announcing the beginning of the rally. Using a



SHANGHAI - FEB. 1979 YOUNG PEOPLE SCUFFLE WITH A POLICEMAN

folded paper cone as a loud-hailer he explained the purpose of the rally, talking about educated youths being sent to the countryside when they were very young, and, now they had grown older, wanting to fight for their rights and return to work in the cities and live with their families. He announced that the educated youths in other provinces had also mobilised to make similar demands. He then read aloud 'An Open Letter to the Compatriots in Shanghai', asking for support from the people of Shanghai, and asked the participants to be aware of any interference from the 'bad elements'.

The number of people in the gathering had by now reached about 2,000 when the march began. Those organising the rally raised the banners and there were stewards wearing armbands. The people watching were asked to join the march. At the beginning, some were rather hesitant but a few young women took the lead and as the march proceeded, almost all gradually joined.

The demonstration blocked the already crowded Nanking Road almost totally. The people of Shanghai had experienced many political turmoils and were not exactly shocked. Many stopped by the roadside, watching the procession pass through. Many simply followed. There were continuous shouts of 'return our youth; return our human rights; return our rights of residence', 'implement the Central Committee policy of rectifying every wrong'. The road was full of marchers and the trams were able to move a short distance only now and then. The demonstration had grown to 5,000 when it arrived at the Shanghai Municipal Revolutionary Committee Building.

The entrance to the building became the centre of the crowd. A few organisers were leading slogan shouting and they sang 'The Internationale' and 'Unity is Strength'. The gathering grew even bigger and faster. The crowd included adolescents as well as people in their forties and fifties, workers or intellect-

CHINA:

THE REVOLT OF THE EDUCATED YOUTH

uals. Yet it could be clearly observed still that most were youths. The female participants were as enthusiastic as the men.

The doors of the Municipal Committee were firmly locked and yet the two People's Liberation Army guards were standing alert outside the doors, sunk in a sea of people, like a pair of statues. Behind the windows on the 1st floor were obviously a number of party cadres watching the activities of the masses silently. Glaring into the windows of the ground floor from the outside, one could see several cadres sitting together reading the newspapers. They seemed to be low level party cadres waiting for instructions from above.

The crowd swelled in all directions and must have reached seven to eight thousand. As people were trying to move to the centre, for a little while they were pushing against one another until the organisers asked the participants to sit down. Almost one thousand did so. As slogans were shouted and songs were sung, people began to demand that Peng Chung, a leading cadre of the Municipal Committee, receive the masses. Waiting for Peng Chung became the immediate aim. Once someone appeared at the balcony of the first floor and the whole crowd became thrilled and excited, thinking that Peng Chung had appeared. Nevertheless, it turned out to be just an ordinary cadre who went out of sight quickly, and the people were greatly disappointed. By about three in the afternoon, news spread that Peng had sneaked out from the side door and into a small automobile by the side of the building. Almost immediately, the little car was swarmed. Only after much explanation and persuasion by the driver would the people allow it through. But still a small group of people maintained a vigil outside the side door.

At about 3.30, at one side of the Nanking Road appeared a procession of four to five hundred people, raising banners and shouting slogans and marching towards the Municipal Revolutionary Committee Building. The procession was made up by the graduates of 1968 and '69 from the middle special training schools. Nominally, they were young workers of Shanghai factories but

ever since their graduation, they had been sent to the countryside and had yet to be transferred back to their original units. Their demands were also very similar to the larger group and so on arriving at the Municipal Building, the group simply merged with the rest who were already there.

At about 4pm, the Nanking Road was again blocked. A group of six or seven hundred rehabilitated soldiers marched in unison and uniform towards the Municipal Building. On the way they raised their demands for proper work arrangements by the authorities. They attracted a lot of attention and joined the sit-in.

The winter sun set early at 6pm and as the street lights began to light up the sit-in came to an end and people marched away. Throughout the day, no one from the Municipal Revolutionary Committee had received or talked to any representatives of the demonstrators.

2. ELSEWHERE

Meanwhile in the state-owned farms in Yunan, many educated youths from Shanghai, numbering fifty thousand, held protest strikes and set up their own institutions in confrontation with the party cadres in December 1978. Some were still continuing their strikes in late January 1979. They demanded (among other things) labour insurance, improvement in their living conditions, the sacking of certain officials and the release of the persecuted.

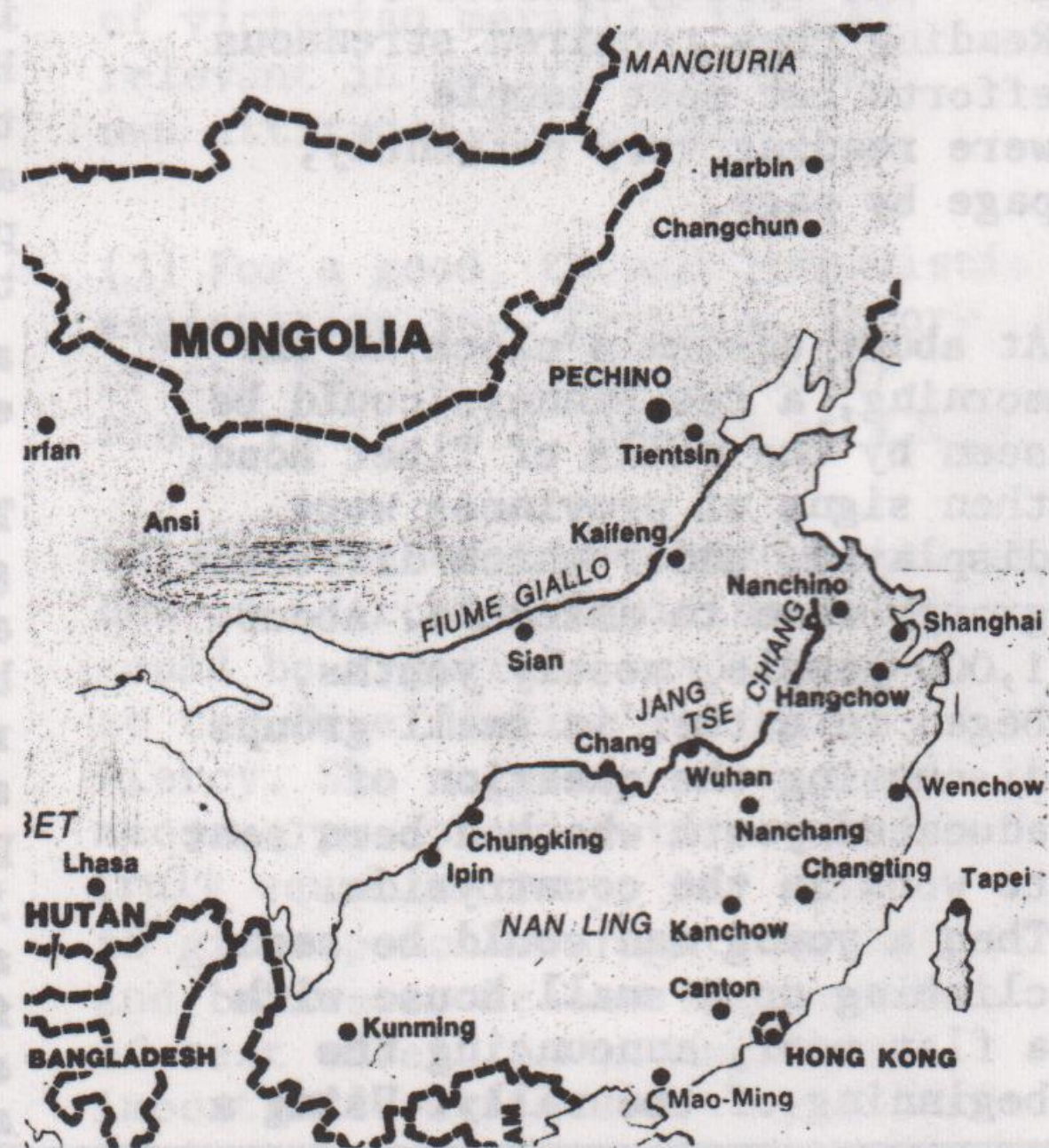
3. ORIGINS OF THE PROBLEM

Mao Tse-tung initiated the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966. It was a power struggle between the two factions in existence within the ruling bureaucratic capitalist class and also an attempt to cast the Chinese people and their thoughts in Mao's mould. Mao sought to use the masses to call for rebellion enthusiastically. The young people formed themselves into bands of Red Guards and attacked the party structure and government bureaucracy controlled by Mao's opponents. Nevertheless, the

masses and the Red Guards ended up opposing not just Mao's opponents but the whole of the bureaucratic capitalist class.

By 1968, Mao had by and large succeeded in regaining control and he had to suppress the revolutionary masses and the Red Guard movement. With the aid of the military, Mao crushed any form of militant resistance and he sent workers' propaganda teams supported by the military to take control of all the universities and high schools in the country. Mao then announced the famous directive, 'that it is quite necessary for the educated youth to go to the countryside so that they would be re-educated by the poor and middle peasants.' The propaganda machine endlessly put over the policy of sending the young educated to the countryside to help development of agriculture and at the same time to be educated by the peasants. They would be trained to be the successors of the revolution. In reality, Mao found this to be the best way to scatter the young revolutionaries and the more revolutionary they were the further he sent them away from the cities and the capital. Temporarily too (i.e. for the past ten years), China was able to discard any surplus labour which arose as a result of high school students graduating and not being absorbed into the urban work force, by dumping them into the countryside.

And so as a result of one directive by Mao Tse-tung, within a few months, thousands of educated youths were sent to the countryside. Until last year, all high school graduates were unable



to enter university directly on graduation without first going to the countryside. Over the ten year period to 1978, it has been estimated (conservatively) that at least seventeen million young people had been affected by this, condemning them to a long period of agony, pain, and extreme dissatisfaction.

4. THE AGONIES OF THE YOUTHS; THEIR FAMILIES AND THE PEASANTS

Life in the countryside for the seven billion peasants in China is, except in a few richer regions, exceedingly harsh. Most peasants work 15 to 16 hours a day, with insufficient food, clothes and daily necessities. Under such general conditions those educated youth sent to state farms (who, however, represent only the minority) are considered relatively better off, as they were state employees and paid a fixed wage of about 30 yuans a month, which can fetch about 100 packets of middle quality cigarettes in China. Nevertheless, life in these state farms is often militarised, with a hierarchical organisation modelled after the army. People sent to the farms have to carry out studies of Mao's thought everyday and are isolated very much from the rest of society - one is allowed to visit one's family for half a month every two years. Food is not always adequate - working for eleven hours a day with two meals of rice mixed with salt only sometimes.

Those not sent to the state farms would be sent in groups of three, five, or ten to twenty to settle with the production teams of the rural communes. During the first year, for each rusticated youth, the state gives 200 yuans for the purpose of constructing his dwelling, and the purchase of farming tools, the rest (about 90 yuans) to cover the person's living expenses for the whole year. After the first year, the youth would be allocated a return in accordance with the

work points earned as a member of a production team. In the Chinese countryside where little mechanization has developed, the law of diminishing returns is operative and the peasants find that the rusticated youth are 'sharing their food, their land and their fields' in such a way that they have become worse off.

The inexperienced youth know little about farming, and are generally awarded fewer points than the ordinary peasants who, partly because of their hostility towards intruders, and partly in the belief that the rusticated youth are single and able to obtain support from family members in the cities insist that the rusticated youths get less work points. As a result, these youths obtain a reward just slightly more than half of that of an ordinary peasant. The same applies for food. Therefore despite a whole year's hard work, many are unable to earn their own means of subsistence and are dependent on the parents in the cities to send a monthly remittance for their support. And in this way, many families, involving up to one billion people are affected: finding their rusticated children a real financial burden.

Furthermore, not used to the living conditions in the countryside, and owing to the lack of medical facilities, many suffer from ill health and diseases. They are seldom allowed to voice their opinions about the affairs of the production team. They are not allowed to join the medical co-operatives, nor the militia. They are sometimes required to work without pay on holidays. The female youth are sometimes taken advantage of sexually or raped by the party cadres who are the bosses in the countryside. Sometimes the rusticated youths resent their discrimination overtly and this generates further hostilities. Fights occur between them and the peasants and the rusticated youths are often beaten up.

5. THE CONSEQUENCES

In order to prevent their children being sent to the countryside, parents try to send them for special training in music, playing the violin, piano or painting. Nevertheless, only parents of certain importance in the party or government can afford to do this.

The sons and daughters of the party and government officials, particularly those belonging to the higher echelons, are able to avoid being sent to the countryside. Some are assured good jobs in the cities. Some are put into the army and some just move around a little and then get into the universities.

Many parents simply spend a lot of their time 'going through the back door' - seeking help from powerful relatives or bribing the party cadres or government officials one way or the other so that their sons and daughters would not have to go. Parents would pay for the expenses of the party cadres who come to the cities for holidays from communes where their sons and daughters have been sent so that they would not maltreat the youths. Even some minor officials are able to make the lives of their sons and daughters in the countryside better by allotting extra resources in goods in short supply, agricultural machinery or electrical appliances to the communes.

In the case where the youth refuses to be sent to the countryside and the family is extremely reluctant, the office responsible for rustication of youth would seek to enforce it by running 'study Mao Tse-tung thought sessions' which the youth or the family members would have to attend regularly for thought education. The wages of the parents might be stopped until the youth agreed to go. At the beginning, every high school graduate had to go to the countryside but subsequently, a slightly more lenient policy was implemented - one child in the family is allowed to stay with the parents to take care of them if they are old and if it is necessary. But then too, the fate of many is sealed even if they are very small or may still be in primary school because if a child's brother or sister is staying in the cities, then s/he must go to the countryside. Many a student felt that it was useless to study and became disinterested in any form of learning in school.

So many parents are prepared to spend money on the various levels of party cadres in the countryside (of the production team, production brigade, the commune and the county) and those in the cities (the police/security office, the street office, the regional security office etc) or those in charge of medical services, allocation of jobs etc. in order

to secure the necessary permits for their children to return to the cities. The cost was very often several hundred or more than a thousand yuans a month. The figure is a colossal one. Nevertheless the prevalence of such practices has made a whole nation of corrupt officials.

In the end, even those who could not pay would return to the cities illegally. Without permission to stay or work, these returned educated youth simply idle around. Still many parents find this less costly and cumbersome than sending money or foodstuffs or daily essentials to the villages regularly. In 1972, there were estimated to be 700,000, 300,000 and more than 100,000 rusticated youths who had returned illegally to Shanghai, Peking and Canton respectively.

Obviously the numbers have grown tremendously over the years. With so many people deprived of the means of livelihood and officially being non-persons with no rights whatsoever (including the right of residence), it is not surprising that in many cities, the problem of crime has become increasingly serious. Prostitution is found increasingly in Canton, Nanking, Shanghai and other big cities. Suicide too has occurred in large numbers - often committed collectively by two, three or more.

6. FLEEING TO HONG KONG

While more than one hundred thousand rusticated youths had returned to Canton in 1972, many were in the countryside still and many had returned to the smaller cities in the Kwangtung Province. Kwangtung Province is the Chinese province neighbouring Hong Kong and Macau, the former being a British colony and the latter a Portuguese one. Born within the helplessness among the educated youth in the Kwangtung Province is the practice of their mass exodus to Hong Kong and Macau. A massive number was involved, from practically every part and every family of the province. And this mass exodus has continued up to the present day.

The escapees left through the coastal counties of the Province.

Those in the other counties use the coastal counties as their stepping stones. By 1973, it was estimated that 80% of the educated youth in the counties of Pao An, Tung Koon and Wei Yang had attempted to flee to Hong Kong or Macau. In a good number of the communes in these counties, virtually every educated youth had left. In the end, not just the rusticated youths were leaving. The young workers, students and teachers in Canton, as well as a sizable number of peasants joined the exodus.

According to the statistics of the Hong Kong government, from 1968 to November 1974, the Hong Kong police arrested more than 28,000 illegal immigrants from China. Given that the Hong Kong government estimated that out of four illegal immigrants from China, only one was arrested, then the total number of illegal immigrants from China during that period amounted to 112,000.

According to the figures released by the Hong Kong Government, in January this year, the number of illegal immigrants from China caught was 1,800, in February it was 2,500, and in March it increased to 6,400. In April, the figure reached an all time high - 8,300. Again, assuming the Hong Kong Government estimate that only one in four is caught, then within the first four months of 1979, about 80,000 people illegally entered Hong Kong from China.

In the summer months, one would expect more arrivals in Hong Kong.

Why have they left? Most of them are young people brought up after 1949 and should not have any illusions about the old capitalist system of Hong Kong. Yet they have finally rejected so totally the rule of the Chinese Communist Party which they have experienced so thoroughly that they are prepared to risk getting shot, bitten by chasing hounds and devoured by sharks to seek for an alternative.

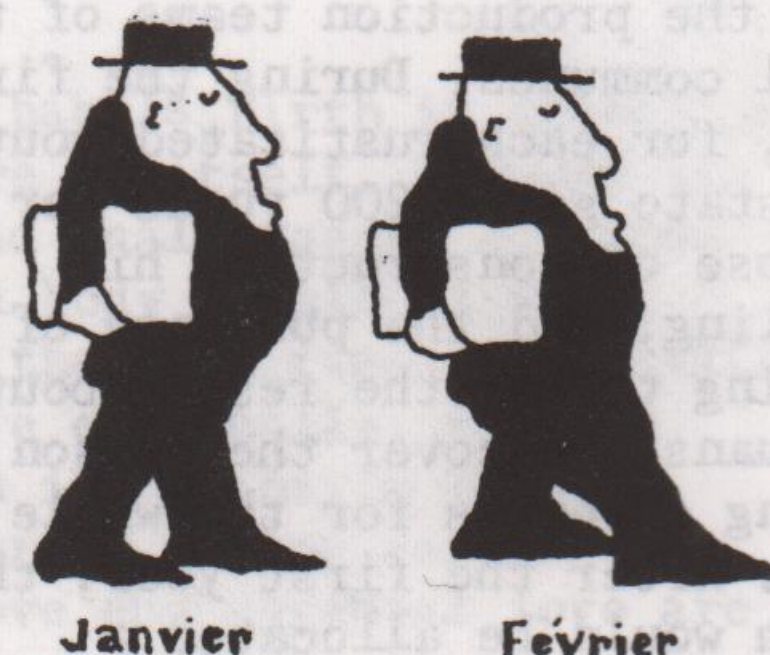
7. REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

To many of the escaped youth from Kwangtung Province, Hong Kong represents a new start. In search of an alternative, on arrival in Hong Kong, they go off in all

directions. Some have been totally integrated in the capitalist way of life - setting money-making and pleasure-seeking as their main goals. Most try to do it legally against great odds. Some have tried to do it illegally - with a militaristic upbringing and much experience in "military" actions during the Cultural Revolution, a few gangs have pulled off sensational robberies and are threatening local gangs' control of the drug, prostitution and other protection rackets in Hong Kong. Some turn over to support the Kuomintang. Some seek to go to the United States with their refugee status. Yet many are still concerned with the fate and development of China. A notable group is Huang He; this group together with other individuals like Wu Man and Yu Shuet have written much and contributed a great deal to the understanding of realities in China. They have also helped the libertarian movement in Hong Kong to articulate a libertarian analysis of modern day China. Yet gathered under the banner of human rights they desire and work for changes in China - some are reformist and some are revolutionary. Many are being exposed to new things and new ideas which they had not met or come across during their years in China. Now, while they are still developing, confronting them with revolutionary and libertarian ideas is essential.

The same may be said about the millions of discontented educated youths in China. They must be recognised as an important source of opposition to the present regime. Collectively they represent a powder keg, the explosion of which would turn China upside down. Perhaps, we are already witnessing the ignition of the fuse. While it can be hoped that through their own struggles, the educated youths shall arrive at libertarian solutions to their own problems and those of Chinese society, it is nevertheless essential for revolutionaries overseas to understand what is going on and to intervene whenever and wherever is appropriate and possible.

Lee Yu See



REVIEW

BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS : FEMINISM AND THE MAKING OF SOCIALISM

By Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal
and Hilary Wainwright. £1.25

Sheila Rowbotham has contributed in the major part of this book, a critique of left group organisation and practice, particularly as it has been expressed in the dominant Leninist ideology. Her critique is written from a feminist and libertarian perspective, informed both by her comprehensive knowledge of British socialist and labour history and her own practical experience of left and feminist groups. It is a valuable work which will be of interest not only to committed opponents of Leninism, but also to the growing number of radicals who are critical of both traditional left politics and the reformist and separatist tendencies in feminism.

Her main concern is to show both the strengths and weaknesses of movements against particular oppressions and the need to 'link up' and 'go beyond' these partial struggles and critiques. At the same time she exposes the absurd claims of Leninism to have transcended these partial movements. She documents the way in which most left groups have in the past resisted acknowledging and absorbing the insights of feminism for instance, by extracting only the most conservative features of the feminist movement and by constructing '...oversimplified caricatures of 'bourgeois feminism' which concentraed several kinds of feminism into one grotesque creature'. As she says 'Social-democrats, communists, anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists all had their own versions of these caricatures'.

In denying the Leninists' assertion of an ideal transcendence Sheila makes it clear that 'this does not imply that we should deny that people can become stuck in their own grievances and not see the wood for the trees...'. The argument is about how to overcome this. We need a form of organisation which can at once allow for the open expression of conflict between different groups and develop the particular understandings which all these differences bring to socialism'. Sheila doesn't provide any blue-prints for such an organisation or organisations, although Hilary talks about '...some sort of federal structure which provides a framework for united actions following from fundamental principles on which revolutionaries could agree, for collective discussion of our differing experiences and traditions, and autonomy to take initiatives where tactical differences keep us apart'. Practical examples of this are few and far between, but all three authors seem quite keen on the idea of 'socialist centres' like the one in Newcastle.

There is still of course the small problem of agreeing 'the fundamental principles'. Clearly all the left social-democrats and Leninists HAVE got much in common but equally clearly they have very little in common with groups like ourselves. This brings me to what is a worrying feature of the book, namely the inability of its authors to go beyond an essentially organisational and personal criticism of Leninism and 'leftism' in general. It leaves me thinking that the

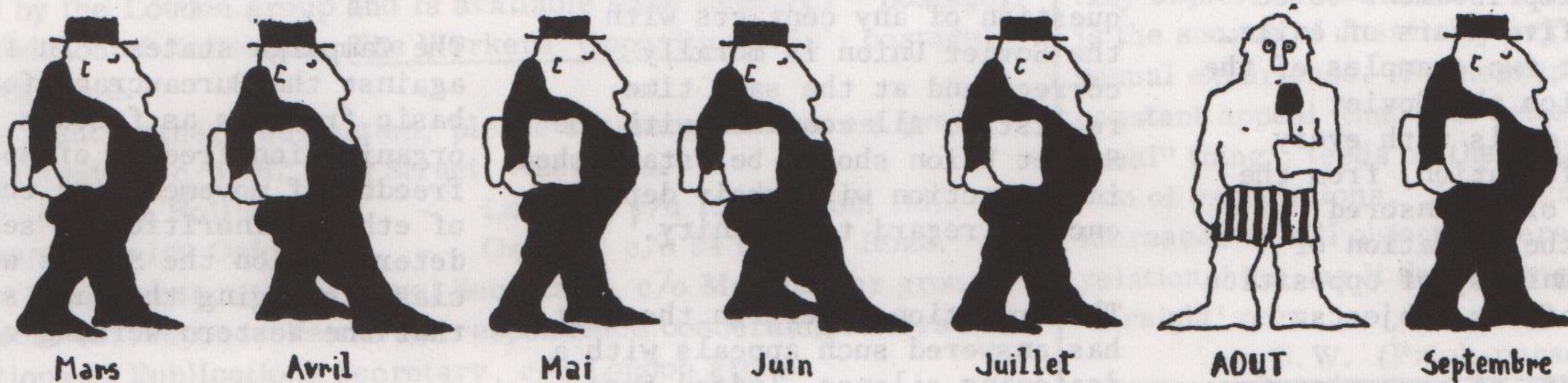
authors' libertarianism is NOT a libertarian communism as we would understand it, but rather a 'libertarian' version of the left's state capitalist programme!

Never-the-less, this book is especially relevant at this time when there appears to be a re-emerging polarity between public and personal politics. As Lynne says 'some people say that many libertarians have overstressed the prefigurative life-style element. And this has led them to retreat from public political activity and class politics into rustic bliss, or mysticism, or whole foods or ghettoised co-ops.

Some parts of the Women's Movement have shown the same tendency'. Several articles in 'Solidarity' have made precisely this point, but we have perhaps ourselves been guilty of over-reacting to this tendency in much the same way as the left groups we normally criticise. It is true that 'having realised the importance of including a struggle around personal relations within the struggle for socialism ... the idea that the personal is political did begin to lose its original meaning. The slogan was confusing. It did not originally mean that whatever you do, it is political'. It would however be disastrous if we were to lose sight of the original contribution to revolutionary politics of a recognition that much of what capitalism categorises as 'personal' is of major social and political significance.

There is much else of interest in this book. Sheila in particular makes some very acute observations about the relationship of left groups and men's groups, about leadership formation, the manipulative use of guilt in left groups, the benefits and limitations of 'consciousness raising' groups and so on. Rather than reproduce a list of quotations I suggest you all rush out and buy a copy yourself before it sells out.

Mike Ballard



Ceremonies and spectacles, especially spectacles which enable a social system to demonstrate its supposed superiority over its rivals, are an integral part of the paraphernalia of totalitarianism. For the Nazis it was the Nuremburg Party rallies and the 1936 Berlin Olympics which provided the occasion for such spectacles. For the Soviet Communists it is May Day, the anniversaries of the Bolshevik Revolution, and now the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Preparations for the games have already begun - sportsmen and women are in training and the K.G.B. (secret police) are rounding up dissidents to prevent them making contact with Westerners during the games. Many of the arrested dissidents have been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and internal exile. In the Ukraine, for example, Lev Lukyanenko, who had previously been sentenced to death (commuted to 15 years imprisonment) for organising a Workers' and Peasants' Union in opposition to the bureauc-

the Games has also gone ahead. These souvenirs are being made by the forced labour of political prisoners!

Amongst the prisoners in the camps are a number of Libertarians who have been sent there for possessing anti-Soviet propaganda i.e. books by Bakunin and Kropotkin! One of them, whose name as yet we do not know, is a worker who was born in the town of Slavyansk in the Donetsk oblast of Ukraine in 1930. Having already served one sentence, he is currently serving a 10 year sentence for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. His earliest date of release is 1984, a date the significance of which should not escape Solidarity readers!

A group of exiled Soviet socialists and human rights campaigners including the cybernetics expert Leonid Plyushch and the Red Army veteran Peter Grigorenko, both of whom have suffered the horrors of internment in the so-called psychiatric hospitals, has

Communists and Trotskyists who cling leech-like to the illusion that the U.S.S.R. is in some way Socialist or a 'workers' state' have made it known that they are bitterly opposed to the idea of a boycott. Thus once again they cast themselves in the role of a loyal opposition to Stalinism!

However, a group of Libertarians including members of Solidarity and the Anarchist Communist Association, have resolved to make a more positive response to these appeals by organising a campaign of direct action for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics and for solidarity with the Soviet working class and the organisations such as the independent trade union headed by the Ukrainian miner Klebanov and the Leningrad Left Opposition which it has created in the course of its struggle against the bureaucracy. The campaign will also fight for the release of all political prisoners in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe.

This campaign is not confined to the British Isles but is part of

THE SPECTACLE OF TYRANNY — MOSCOW 1980

racy, was recently ruled an 'especially dangerous recidivist' and sentenced to 10 years in special-regime labour camps to be followed by 5 years of exile. His only crime was his membership of the unofficial Ukrainian committee set up to monitor the implementation of the agreements on human rights made by the leaders of the super-powers at Helsinki. In Lithuania, Victoras Petkus, a founding member of the Lithuanian Helsinki group who has already served 8 years in the labour camps, was brought to court to face charges of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, belonging to an anti-Soviet organisation and sodomy. Petkus was also ruled an 'especially dangerous recidivist' and sentenced to 17 years imprisonment to be followed by five years of exile. These are but two examples of the manner in which the Soviet ruling elite deals with every and any manifestation, from the distribution of uncensored journals to the formation of independent unions, of opposition on the part of its subjects.

The manufacture of souvenirs for

recently issued an appeal to socialists in the West calling on them to organise a boycott of the U.S.S.R. A similar appeal, for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics, has also been made by the recently released Jewish political prisoner Eduard Kuznetsov and endorsed by 12 political prisoners in the most severe-regime camps in the U.S.S.R. at a press conference held in London on May 22 Kuznetsov stated: '...the essence of this appeal was a call to transform the Olympic Stadium into a Tribunal, in which there would sound forth a demand for the observance of human rights, the freeing of all political prisoners and a liberalisation of emigration policy. I consider that such an approach to the question of any contacts with the Soviet Union is morally correct and at the same time realistic. All contacts with the Soviet Union should be established in connection with their dependence in regard to humanity.'

The traditional left in the West has answered such appeals with a deafening silence. Indeed Euro-

an on-going campaign being undertaken by comrades in Europe, North America and elsewhere.

The Campaign wishes to make it explicit that the solidarity it is demonstrating is solidarity with the Soviet working class and that it therefore disassociates itself with those on the right, such as the N.A.F.F., who seek to recuperate the struggle of dissidents in the East for their own ends, and those on the left who regard Eastern European countries as in some way socialist. Such an attitude, the Campaign feels, can only serve to demoralise and mystify the working class and make ineffective a genuine campaign of solidarity with Soviet workers.

The Campaign states: 'In fighting against the Bureaucracy for such basic freedoms as freedom of organisation, freedom of speech, freedom of movement and the right of ethnic minorities to self-determination the Soviet working class is waging the same struggle that the Western working class

(continued opposite)

THE CASE OF THE LENINGRAD 'LEFTISTS'

Since October 1978 a 'leftist' hunt has been going on in Leningrad, with the victims being arrested, tried, beaten up and intimidated. We've heard about dissidents before, but an interesting point about these is that their average age is 20, and many have not yet left school. In spite of this, and the fact that they base their ideas on the same theoretical foundation as that of their rulers, the state sees them as a dangerous enemy.

The revolt of educated youth in the U.S.S.R. tends to take the form of referring back to the founders of 'scientific socialism' and their original promises and prognostications.

Boycott The 1980 Moscow Olympics

The Campaign for Solidarity with the Soviet Working Class is organising a campaign of direct action for a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics and for solidarity with the struggles of Soviet workers. Your active support is needed now. All enquiries and donations (make cheques and P.O.s payable to T.Liddle) to: Campaign for Solidarity with the Soviet Working Class, c/o 83, Gregory Crescent, Eltham, London, SE9 5RZ

(continued from p. 14)

wages against its own exploiters and oppressors. If the outcome of this struggle is to be successful, Socialists in the West are duty-bound to give what support they can to their comrades in the East." Don't let the tyrants in the Kremlin get away with turning the Olympics into a spectacle with which to whitewash their tarnished image! Organise now for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics and for solidarity with the Soviet working class! Give the Campaign for Solidarity with the Soviet working class your active support!

Terry Liddle.

Young people throw themselves into struggle for restoration of the 'sacred ideals', so far removed from the absurdity and horror they see around them, especially in the absence of other ideals and doctrines in free circulation. Hence the rise of a 'left-oppositional' tendency, and the Leningrad youth's self-definition in these terms.

A review called 'Perspectives', circulated in typewritten sheets, was the focal point for dozens of youths and girls in Leningrad and other towns of the Baltic, Belorussia, Ukraine and elsewhere. Their statement of aims emphasises their 'will to save the country from an imminent catastrophe and get it out of the terrible situation of the past 60 years... The future of the peoples of the whole world', they concluded, 'depends on the future of the Soviet peoples...' Whatever our differences with their general outlook, they were at least trying to open a debate which could have led further; needless to say, it was not allowed to develop unchecked for long.

A 'commune' was started in Leningrad where young people lived together, and which was a centre for meetings and discussion. Violence was rejected as a means of struggle, and the question of what else might be done was to be discussed at a general conference in October 1978. The conference never took place. A wave of arrests and interrogations broke over the city - the leader of the commune and several of those involved with 'Perspectives' were arrested, and interrogations proceeded in school offices and classrooms throughout the city as well as at KGB HQ. But intimidation was not entirely successful. On December 5 nearly 200 young people gathered near Kazan Cathedral on Nevsky Prospect to demonstrate in favour of public trials of those arrested. The demonstration was dispersed and 20 arrests made.

Of those arrested in October one, Pavlenkov, was released after 10 days. Andrei Bessov, from Moscow, was sent without trial to a psychiatric clinic where he was subjected to shock treatment and drugged; 3 months later he

was sent back home, under police and psychiatric surveillance, on condition that he report daily for 'treatment'. Alexander Skobov, a history student, was dealt with 'legally', diagnosed as a 'schizophrenic psychopath' by the notorious Serbsky Institute, and sentenced at a summary hearing behind closed doors on 19 April 1979 to an indefinite term in a psychiatric clinic, which means several years. Arcady Tsourkov, a physics student who was held solely responsible, was tried on 3-6 April 1979 in the usual conditions - public not admitted, practically no defence (some of his friends were arrested for trying to get in). He refused to plead guilty and recant, and was sentenced to 5 years in a camp plus 2 years exile in Siberia for the crimes of writing an article in 'Perspectives' and verbally criticising the Party among his student friends.

The hunt did not stop there. On April 19, Alexis Khavine, who had refused to testify against friends and comrades whose views he shared, was arrested and searched thoroughly. Nothing was found until he was made to undress and his clothes taken to another room where (surprise) narcotics were discovered in them. The KGB has long since adopted the method of transforming political enemies into common criminals; it has other methods too. Another 'leader' of the leftist youth, Andrei Reznikov, after refusing a suggestion that he should leave for Israel, has been subjected to street attacks (and consequent arrest as a 'hooligan' while lying injured), telephone harassment, and searches culminating in the 'finding' of a package of drugs. Our latest information is that he has not yet been arrested and might be helped by the energetic intervention of public opinion (see Moscow Olympics item).

'It is dangerous in the U.S.S.R. to think about "authentic socialism"...' - Konrad Ioubarsky, May 1975.

Information from 'Front Libertaire des Luites de Classe' 18-6-79.

Translated and edited by L.W.

PERSONS UNKNOWN...

'a group of idealists' v. 'british justice'

At last. The "Persons Unknown" case - by now well-known - comes to court at the Old Bailey in the near future. The trial is now set to open on September 17.

"Persons Unknown" - Ronan Bennett, Stewart Carr, Trevor Dalton, Dafydd Ladd, Iris Mills and Vince Stevenson - are six anarchists who face charges of conspiracy to rob. This trial, along with others in recent years (Angry Brigade/BWINIC 14/ Agee and Hosenball/Aubrey, Berry, Campbell/Astrid Proll) can be seen as part of an increasingly severe state repression of political dissidents.

A recent and disturbing feature of this case however is the widespread jury vetting involved. The jury is to be vetted through Special Branch, the Criminal Records Office and - for the first time ever in this country - through local C.I.D. files.

This is the first case of jury vetting to become public since the Aubrey, Berry, Campbell trial last year when it became known that the jury had been vetted through the Criminal Records Office and Special Branch. This provoked a deal of comment and criticism at the time, in response to which a statement was issued by the Attorney General concerning the factors which govern checks on potential jurors. This made the point that although the general principle and conduct of the law in Britain includes the principle of juries being selected at random, exceptions can be and are made when it is felt that this will not "ensure the proper administration of justice." A nicely vague turn of phrase.

It became known that since guidelines concerning jury vetting were introduced in 1975 exceptions had been made in 24 cases prior to the Aubrey/Berry/Campbell trial in 1978. Cases involving serious offences by a gang of professional criminals, offences under the Official Secrets Act or serious offences with a strongly political motivation can be the root of exceptions to the rule of "random" jurors. A "random" juror with "extreme political connections" might not "fairly judge" a case of this nature. (This statement could be interpreted in many

ways of course. Choose your own connotations!)

The decision to allow the vetting of the jury in the "Persons Unknown" case was taken at the Old Bailey by Judge Brian Gibben after a preliminary hearing in chambers. It has already provoked a response. The N.C.C.L. is raising the matter with M.P.s and Jo Richardson M.P. has tabled three questions for the next parliamentary session on the implications of this decision for "British Justice" in the future.

One noteworthy - perhaps surprising - recent development in the case is the granting of bail to Ronan Bennett, the only one of the six who has been in continuous detention since his arrest - under the Prevention of Terrorism Act - on 24 May 1978. The original charge - conspiracy to cause explosions - was dropped in November 1978 and the less serious charge of conspiracy to rob substituted. Nonetheless, whereas the other five defendants were granted bail Ronan's bail applications were consistently refused basically on the grounds that he is Irish and has "Irish connections". As Ronan's Q.C. pointed out at one bail application hearing this raises serious implications for any Irishman charged with a serious offence in an English court. Amnesty International, no doubt busy wringing their hands over Russian dissidents, turned down a request for help regarding Ronan's case. However, having

languished on remand in Brixton for many months - he has been in continuous detention for well over a year - Ronan is now out on bail on sureties totalling £20,000.

As we might expect much prosecution "evidence" in a trial of this nature (based around the notoriously vague yet immensely powerful "conspiracy" laws) concerns what the accused are, rather than what they might be proved to have done. Since the initial arrests and throughout the proceedings so far much has been made of the six being "a group of self-confessed anarchists", "a group of idealists who would take positive steps to overthrow society", etc.

But then no actual crime need be committed. The vague yet all-embracing character of the conspiracy laws. Laws that could be applied to virtually anyone and everyone. The penalty for breaking them could be a sentence as stiff as that handed out if one was found guilty of committing the crime one could be accused of conspiring to commit.

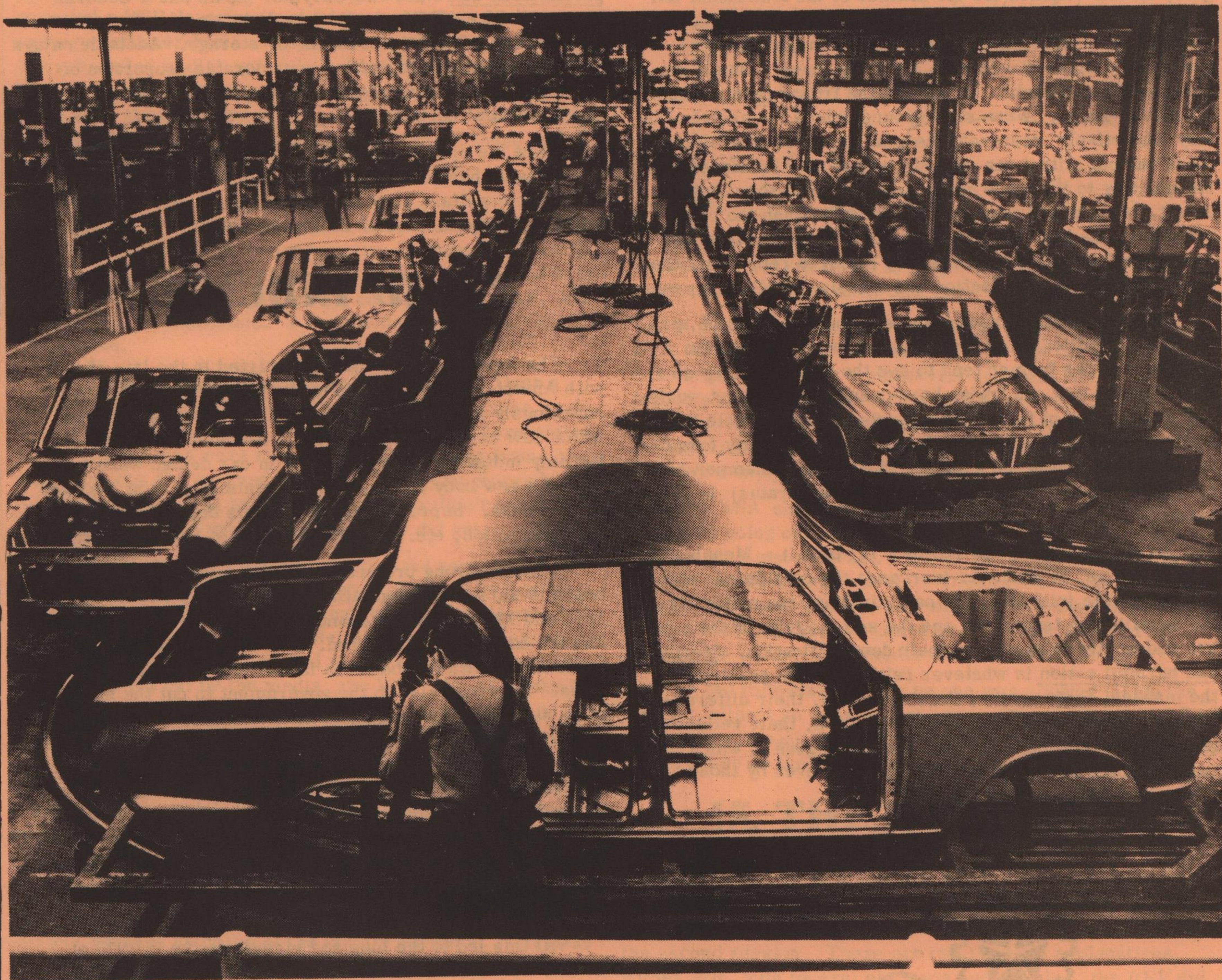
The Persons Unknown Defence Group are planning to produce a pamphlet on the case and organising a demonstration to take place at the start of the trial. They can be contacted c/o Rising Free, 182, Upper Street, London, N.1

Charlie Bloggs (Court Reporter)



"We think you may be able to assist us with our inquiries."

ANATOMY OF AN INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE



INTRODUCTION

This article by Garry Hill, a worker at the Tonsley Park Chrysler plant near Adelaide in Australia, describes a series of struggles in which he was actively involved.

The text tells of the conflict inside the factory, the rough and tumble of mass meetings, workers' resistance to production, the tactics of management and the role of the trade union - in this case the notorious Vehicle Builders' Union. It documents the union's collusion with the bosses

and its links with South Australia's Labour government. It is interesting how in describing a single struggle the author has laid bare the whole rotten system of capitalism.

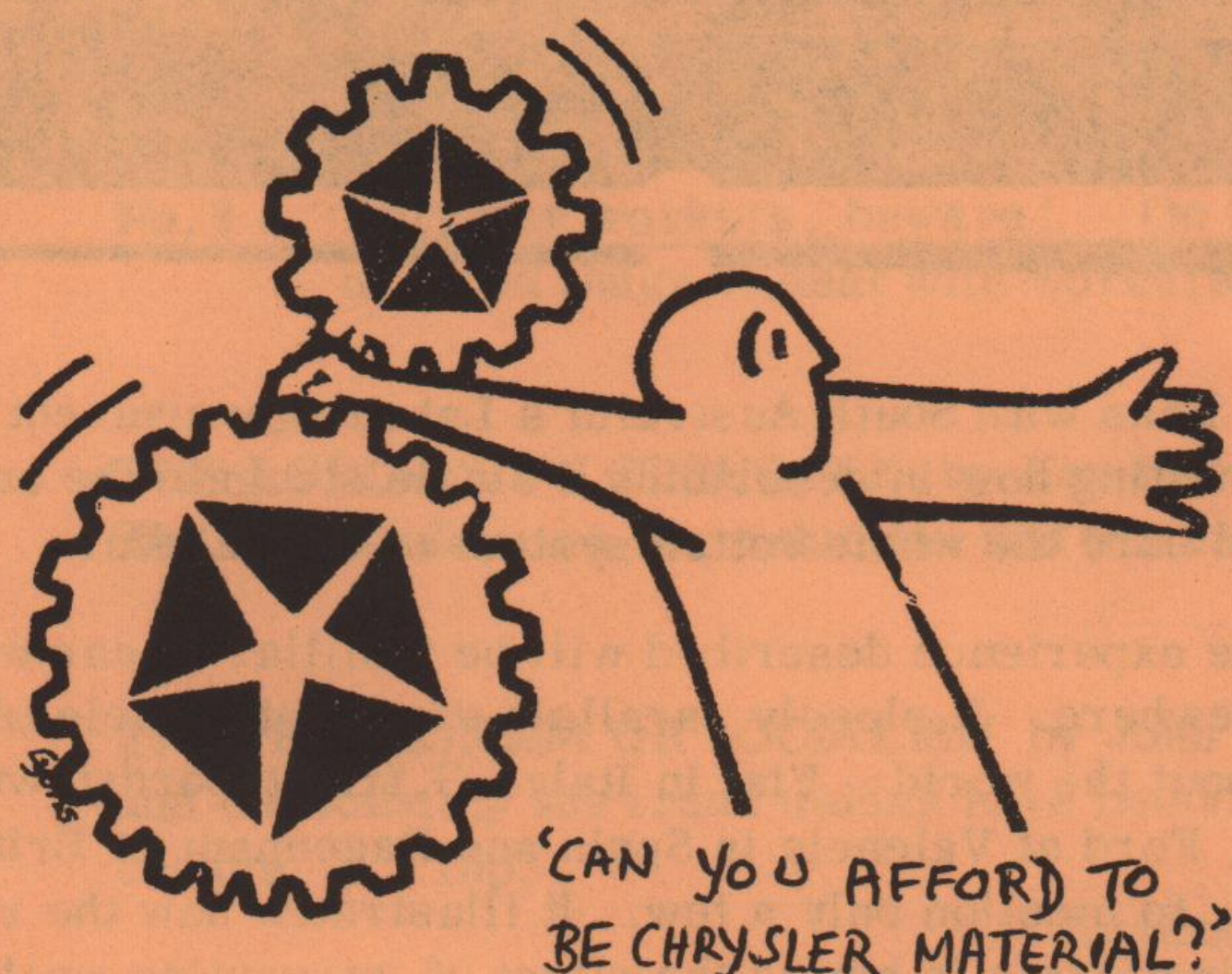
The experience described will be familiar to car workers elsewhere. It closely parallels events at vehicle plants throughout the world: Fiat in Italy, G.M. at Lordstown in the US, Ford at Valencia in Spain and Dagenham in Britain, Cowley, to mention only a few. It illustrates how the rise of multinationals is having the effect of integrating workers' struggles internationally and how, in spite of all problems, the fight on the factory floor goes on, day in day out.

The fact that the firm involved is Chrysler is no coincidence. This ailing company which, for years, has tried to solve its problems at the expense of its workers (see for example Solidarity Motor Bulletin No.2 for struggles at the US plants at Jefferson and Mark Avenues in Detroit, and Bulletin No.4 which deals with the conflict at the Chrysler Dodge Truck plant), finally had to sell off its European operations to Peugeot (see Solidarity Motor Bulletin No.8 which deals with the Peugeot takeover). All this was to no avail. Chrysler is now negotiating with the US Federal Government for massive state aid. All this provides the background for the Tonsley Park events.

An important aspect of the account is its frank description and discussion of the problems facing rank-and-file organisation. There is an enormous of sloppy thinking in this area. The term 'rank and file', with its military origins, speaks volumes for the attitude of the traditional left to the working class. It can be used to describe a whole range of quite different animals. It can mean a genuine grass roots mass movement. Or it can mean a small ginger group of militants. Or simply the front organisation of a political group. When such groups delude themselves that they 'objectively' represent the real interests of workers these 'radical elites' can come to behave in a fundamentally similar way to the trade union bureaucracies they claim to detest. As a result, over and over again when the chips are down, one has seen the isolation of these 'radical bureaucracies' from the workers they claim to represent, the weakening of job organisation and massive disillusionment.

The text finally stresses the enormous gulf which separates the traditional left from revolutionary libertarian socialists. The former tend to see the working class as a hybrid milch cow and trojan horse, and to see direct workers' domination of their own struggles as a tactic, to be advocated while in opposition but to be conveniently forgotten once they are in the saddle. They all see themselves as a sort of government (or trade union apparatus) in exile.

As our statement 'AS WE SEE IT' puts it: Meaningful action, for us, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even by those allegedly acting on their behalf.



ANATOMY OF AN INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

1. THE CITY

Adelaide, with a population of over 700,000, is the capital of South Australia and the fourth largest city in the country. It is also the biggest port and manufacturing centre between Perth and Melbourne. Its greatest single industry is the manufacture of cars. This employs about 13,000 people.

The suburbs of Salisbury and Elizabeth are almost entirely based on the car industry. In the whole Adelaide metropolitan area there are two Chrysler plants and a General Motors Holden (GMH) plant, as well as smaller factories specialising in parts, research, or storage. Adelaide enjoys a high living standard, with a considerable proportion of home owners and a reputation as Australia's cultural centre and a beautiful capital city.

Since his election in 1970 the Labour State Premier Don Dunstan has set out to make South Australia a social democratic welfare state on the Swedish model. He has so far been fairly successful in this task.

2. THE INDUSTRY

The Australian car industry started in the late 1940's with American backing. Up to the late 1960's it expanded enormously aided by increasing affluence and an outlook which saw cars more and more as necessities. However, the only indigenous developments in car design were peripheral - new body styles, radios, gimmicky paint jobs and accessories. Improvements in chassis design, motors, rust protection, etc., came from Europe, Japan and the USA.

Without strong protective tariffs, foreign competition began to shrink the Australian share of the market. Between 1971 and 1973 the world economic recession hit Australia and the car industry suffered. The car companies tried to combat this with cut-backs in labour and speed-ups of the lines. They appealed to the government to cut the massive 27½% sales tax, and sought to introduce 'increased labour efficiency programmes'. These were designed to get maximum production from the workers while reducing their opportunities to discuss shop floor problems. The usual methods included staggered and shortened tea- and lunch-breaks, more supervision, treating discontented workers as mentally disturbed, rotating jobs so that people did not know their workmates, and giving workers so much to do that they had no time to talk.

All this led to the long and vicious strike in 1973 at GMH's Broadmeadows factory in Melbourne, where the struggle reached such a pitch that lines of mounted police battled strikers armed with bricks. A compromise solution eventually prevented further escalation of the conflict.

3. THE FACTORY

Chrysler's, Tonsley Park, was established in the early 1960's. The workforce numbers about 3000. There is a high turnover rate, partly because of the company's policy of hiring and firing according to economic fluctuations. About 14% of the labour force are women, and between a

half and a third are migrants, mainly from Britain, Holland, Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia. Work conditions vary from department to department: some are good, others like a Siberian labour camp. This inequality of conditions, harassment by foremen, noise and the speed of work were consistent causes of conflict.

4. THE UNION

With the exception of staff and some tradesmen, car workers are members of the Vehicle Builders' Union. Formed more than a hundred years ago, it is one of Australia's best-established and most powerful unions. Its bureaucracy is dominated by the Australian Labour Party (ALP), but is also a target for the Communist Party and the various left groups. The current leadership has a reputation for being 'militantly left-wing'. This means that at times it talks of nationalising the industry, calls the companies 'bloodsuckers', and occasionally calls a strike or a meeting to discuss a stoppage. It also indulges in such radical-tinged activities as changing 'chairman' to 'chairperson', ensuring that a token woman is occasionally elected to a union position, giving small donations to various left-wing causes, passing resolutions condemning the secret use of Australian officers in Northern Ireland, etc.

This is a mere veneer. The real aims of the VBU leadership are: (1) to preserve the bureaucrats' privileged positions; (2) to uphold the current system of unionism on which the bureaucracy is based; (3) to make the union and the ALP more powerful forces in existing society than they already are.

That people should control their own lives, that workers should run factories without bosses or bureaucracy, that work hours, production and distribution could be arranged to ensure a libertarian society - such ideas are scorned by the ALP and the union bureaucracy. And no wonder. If this type of society were ever achieved they would be as superfluous as any capitalist.

The leadership of the VBU is deeply involved in state politics. The South Australian State Union Secretary, Dominic Foreman, is well known for his political ambitions, while his predecessor, J. Abbot is now in the State Parliament. Len Hatch, the current S. A. Industrial Officer, is also awaiting his entry into parliamentary politics.

5. THE POLITICAL PARTIES

With the exception of a few trotskyist sects, all of Australia's left groups had branches in Adelaide at the time of the Chrysler dispute. The events proved an acid test for the left on several basic questions facing socialists:

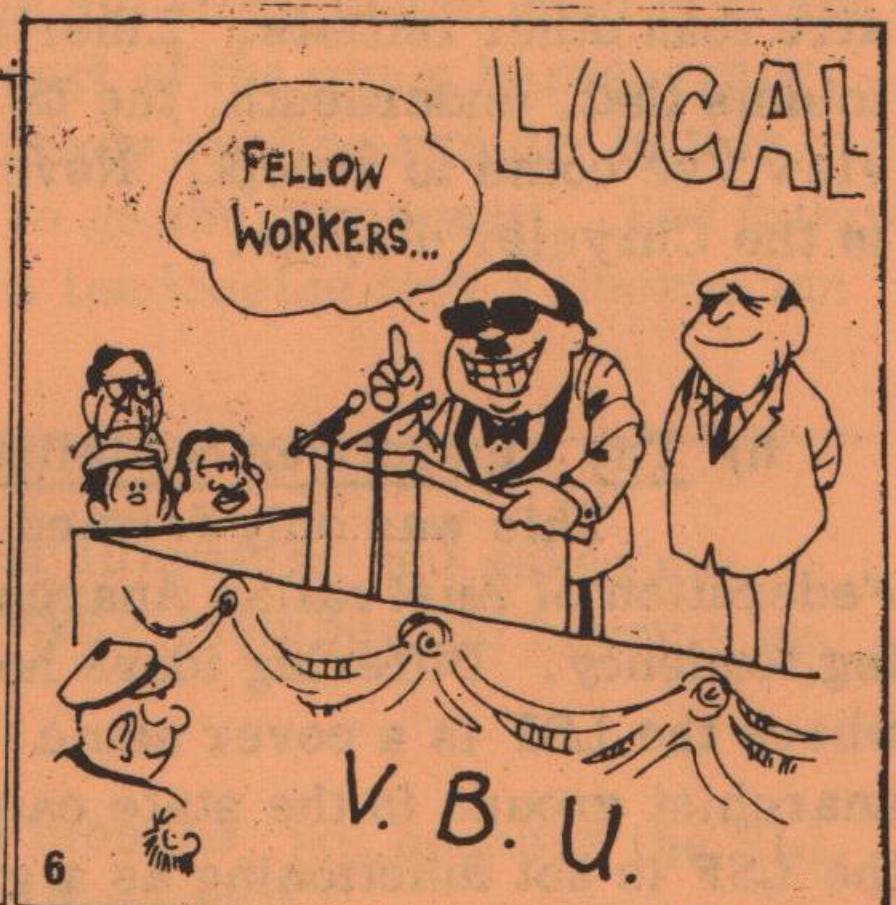
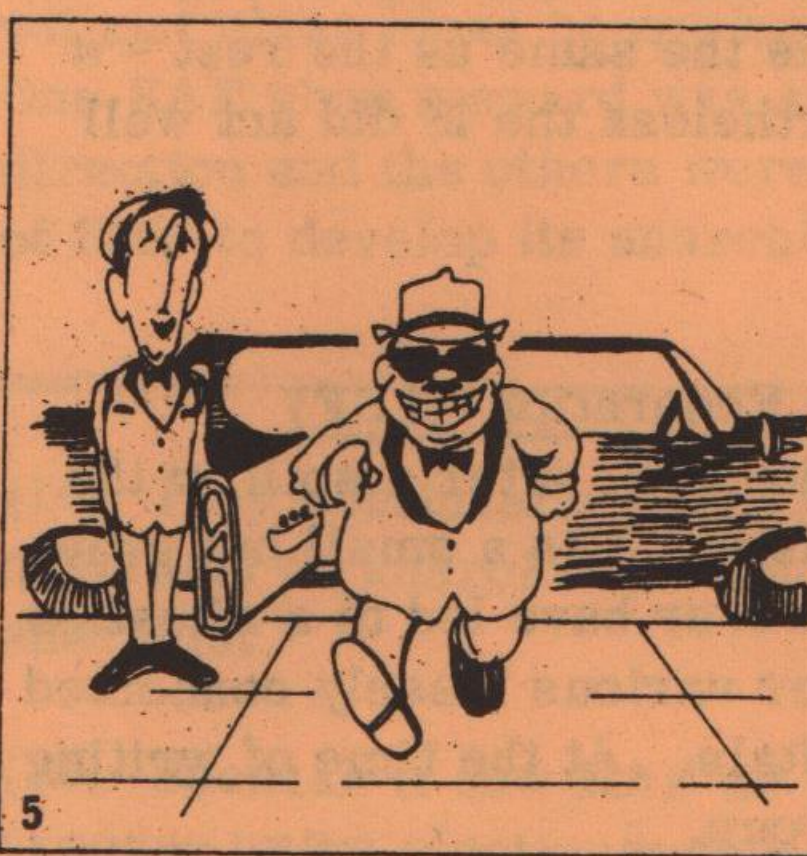
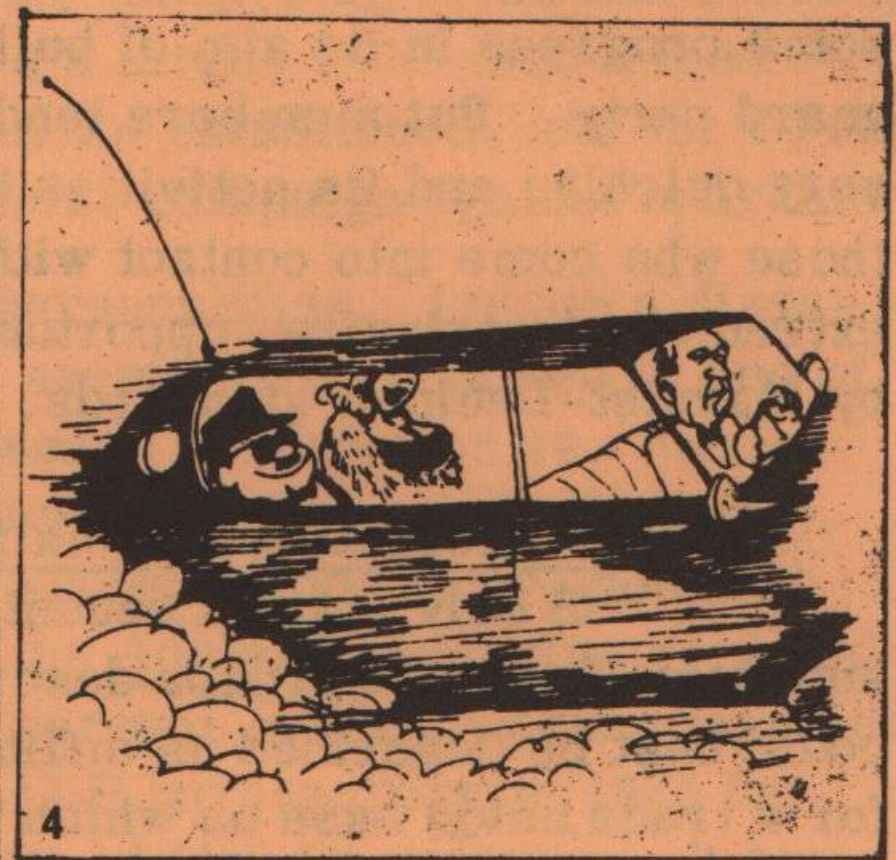
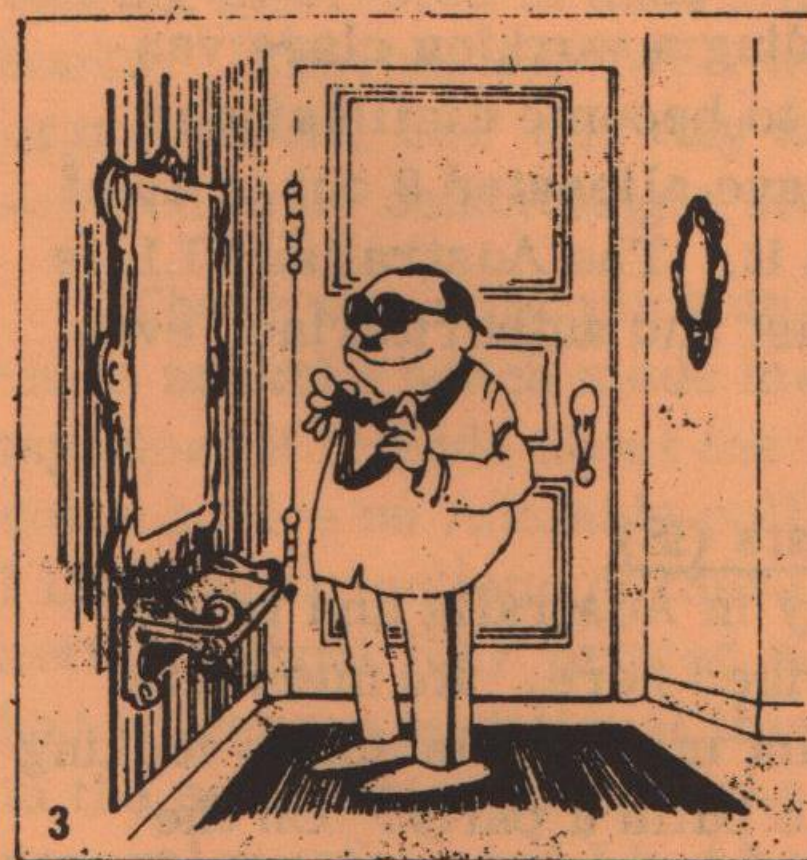
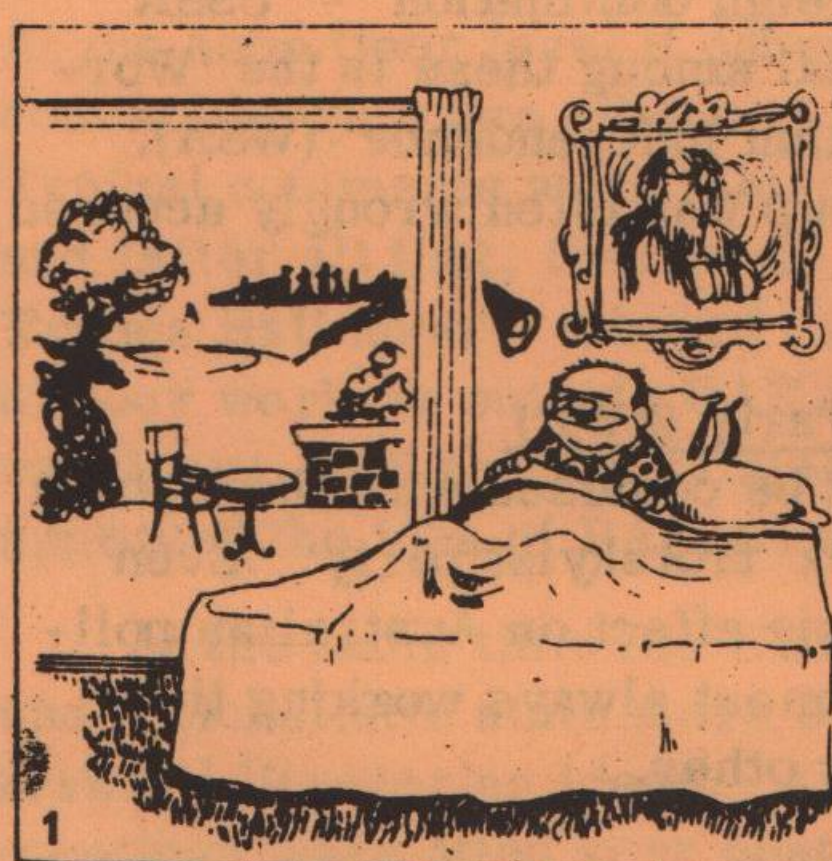
- 1) Should workers use violence in strikes?
- 2) Who should decide union policy: the workers or the officials?
- 3) What is 'ultra-leftism'?
- 4) Should an isolated group of militant workers pursue a revolutionary course of action when there is no chance of victory? Or should they always keep in mind the level of the activities acceptable to the mass of workers?
- 5) What should be the relationship between organised (but external) political groups and factories where the workforce is involved in a struggle?

All these problems were posed in the Chrysler dispute. And all the left groups provided their own answers, either explicitly or by their actions. The parties involved were:

a) The Australian Labour Party (ALP)

Formed as a result of the great strikes of 1891, but not properly organised until 1908, the ALP is closely modelled on the British Labour Party. Its political record is, if possible, even worse. The ALP in power has always brought in a few reforms, but usually to the benefit of the capitalist system. Its main function has been to act as the servant of capitalism when the system needed the help of the working class. A look at its record shows that it was returned to office in September 1914, October 1929, October 1941 and December 1972 (when unemployment had risen by 100,000 in fourteen months - it had been less than 20,000 in 1971 - and when the issue of conscription for Vietnam was prominent).

Labour's record between 1972 and 1975 was typical of its politics: aid to right-wing juntas, propping up capitalism at the expense of democratic rights and living standards, disregarding questions of ecology for company profits, strengthening the state apparatus, strike-breaking, and ultimately doing as much as possible to stifle and isolate its own militants. It is perhaps no coincidence that Labour's four electoral victories all occurred at the time of major crises: two wars and two major depressions.



Since the 1975 election debacle the ALP has sunk into an introspective trough. The majority of its members have become disgruntled and inactive. Its power base is an uneasy alliance between trade unionists, unemployed workers, middle class trendies and members of various left groups, holding dual membership.

b) The Communist Party of Australia (CPA)

The present CPA is the survivor of the 1971 split when the Moscow hard-liners left. It is not so much a party as a collection of leftist factions. It tends to jump from one left bandwagon to another, rather than resolve internal differences. Recent attempts to produce a cohesive theory found the CPA taking up a militant social-democratic stance and aligning itself with the Euro-communist movement.

c) The Socialist Party of Australia

This group is a product of the 1971 split in the CPA. It was formed because the CPA no longer unquestioningly followed Moscow's directives. Although small (about 350 members) the SPA is quite powerful, being backed by Russian funds. (1) It controls nearly all the maritime unions.

d) The Maoist groups

The Maoist tendencies have had increasing success in Australia - mainly in Melbourne and Adelaide. Support is however not so much for the hardcore 'official' maoist Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) - the CPAML - as for a horde of front groups which push the line of 'Independence for Australia from foreign domination - USSR stay out, USA get out'. Principal among these is the 'Worker Student Alliance for Australian Independence' (WSA). The Chrysler Rank and File group was often wrongly accused of being a front for the WSA.

e) The Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

This group should not be confused with the British SWP. It is Australia's 'orthodox' trotskyist party. Even smaller than the SPA, it has little effect on Australian politics, though its members are almost always working their guts out to achieve something or other.

f) The Socialist Labour League (SLL)

The Healyite tendency is quite active and has made some progress in its aim of building a working class vanguard party. But members tend to become disillusioned very quickly, and its activities have alienated 9 out of 10 of those who come into contact with it. The Australian SLL is extremely doctrinaire, opportunist and authoritarian, even by Marxist-Leninist standards.

g) The International Socialists (IS)

IS only started recently in Australia and is the smallest of the left groups described here. Its members could best be described as militant marxist-leninists looking for a trade union base on which to build a party. On the surface they tend to be more open-minded and less doctrinaire than other leftists. Libertarians in other areas have told us that, underneath, the IS is the same as the rest - a view I've come to accept. Nevertheless the IS did act well in the Chrysler dispute.

h) The Libertarian Socialist Federation (LSF)

This was only formed in 1976, after a split in the Federation of Australian Anarchists. It is a small but growing tendency. Differing ideas however have led to a situation where the LSF is a cover name for various loosely connected anarchist groups in the state capitals. At the time of writing the LSF is not functioning as a group.

6. THE RANK AND FILE GROUP (RAF)

The Rank and File Group was formed in late 1973 by VBU members dissatisfied with the union. Among the original founders were at least one hardcore maoist and a Yugoslav anarchist. The bulk of the membership seems to have consisted of factory militants of no political affiliation. By the time I joined (in July 1976) there were only one or two original members around. The early history of the group was hazy or confused by political bias. (2)

I came into contact with the RAF a few weeks after I started work at Chrysler's. There were rumours that the group was a maoist front, so I was cautious about joining. Of the 12 or 15 committed members about half had no political affiliation. Of the rest, 4 or 5 were WSA members. Only one of these could be described as a hardcore maoist, although some of the others were on the way to becoming such.

The only position in the group was that of chairman at meetings. This was rotated, together with the work involved in writing and printing newsletters. Meetings were run with almost complete impartiality. Several times WSA members took my side against other WSA members on various issues. Attempts to make the RAF toe the maoist line were rebuffed as much by WSA members as anyone else. Despite their nationalistic outlook the WSA people realised the importance of involving migrants in campaigns, and our weekly give-away sheet had translations in Greek and Italian. There was also a series of lectures at RAF meetings on the problems facing migrants in the workforce. RAF's other good points were that it encouraged the workers to fight their own battles rather than rely on officials and organisations. It wasn't a vanguard but a creation of the workers.

However, it had its weaknesses. The most obvious was a strong dose of workerism. This took the form of seeing only workers as being oppressed by capitalism; of considering views as being right or wrong according to the class background of those advocating them; of sexism or elitism being OK if practiced by workers. The RAF newsletter was at times simplistic in style. But this was because its writers weren't journalists or academics. They usually got to the core of the problem. We never had any complaints from people that they couldn't understand articles.

Not so obvious was the lack of a long-term perspective. The different viewpoints within the group made a coherent policy impossible. There were three opposing tendencies. The WSA members saw our struggles as Australian workers fighting foreign multinationals. Their solution was an independent Australia where, presumably, independent Australian businessmen would own the car factories - until the eventual triumph of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Against this, I argued for a more internationalist libertarian viewpoint,

(1) This became apparent when a Soviet cheque for the SPA was misdirected to the SLL bookshop in Adelaide.

(2) Throughout this text I deal only with events I have personally witnessed. The sources for other issues are often extremely biased, confused and contradictory. Several individuals in the RAF were much more prominent in the events described. For obvious reasons I haven't named them: they appear as 'an RAFer' or 'a workmate'.

expropriation of the means of production with all decisions to be taken by democratic workers' assemblies. The third tendency was for ignoring future questions and concentrating on day-to-day issues.

This failure to develop a long-term strategy may have been unavoidable. But, in mid-1977, it helped lead to disaster.

7. 1976: THE UNION'S CAMPAIGN

Australian VBU members had a series of claims before arbitration in August 1976. By this time it had become obvious to nearly everyone that our living standards were dropping. The recession had also affected safety and work conditions, and cutbacks were imminent. The mood amongst most of the workforce was militant.

Even before the struggle began, we all knew that the VBU would not fight. What I didn't expect was that they would spearhead the struggle against us. I laughed when other workers told me this would happen, but they were right.

In August 1976, mass meetings were held in car factories all over Australia. Everywhere car workers voted overwhelmingly to reject the company's token offer of a \$2.00 wage rise and a few improvements in conditions. Our demands included wage rises, better safety precautions, shorter hours, job security, a superannuation scheme and various work amenities. The company stated that its offer had to be accepted immediately, without argument. They were tempting us with small bait for a large reward: industrial peace. They were also giving the VBU Executive a weapon to fight with in inter-union battles. Without these 'gains' the union would have looked even weaker than it was, and the militants would have had the support of 90% of the workers.

Speaking at the rowdy Tonsley Park rally, Federal Secretary Len Townsend had sense enough not to present the offers as anything great. Instead, he argued that this was all we were likely to get - the economy was in bad shape and the bosses couldn't give us more. What we should be trying to do was to kick out the rotten Fraser government and bring back the ALP, to 'get the economy going again'. Townsend delivered this last point as if he expected the 2000-strong audience to burst into wild cheers. If so, he was disappointed. About a dozen bureaucrats applauded. Their cheers sounded very hollow in the sullen silence. Nearly everyone I could see was either bored or contemptuous.

Other union officials ranted about the communist menace, troublemakers, migrants who wouldn't learn English and should go back to where they came from, women workers who

were taking jobs from family breadwinners, university students trying to stir up the poor misled workers, bludgers (3) who were leading the country down the drain by not giving a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, and youngsters who didn't know anything. A good deal of the meeting was taken up by these attempts to sidetrack people into seeking scapegoats for their insecurity.

The VBU officials outsmarted themselves in all this, because after listening to this snide baiting the vast majority of those under attack voted against whatever the VBU wanted. Time and again, the officials made this mistake, and RAF motions received much of their support from these alienated sections. We always demonstrated how the VBU tried to keep the workforce divided and ineffective. This gained us much support, which left the union with the middle-aged workerist conservatives, the Uncle Toms among the minority groups,(4) and right-wingers. In car factories all over Australia the mood of the workers was for fighting.

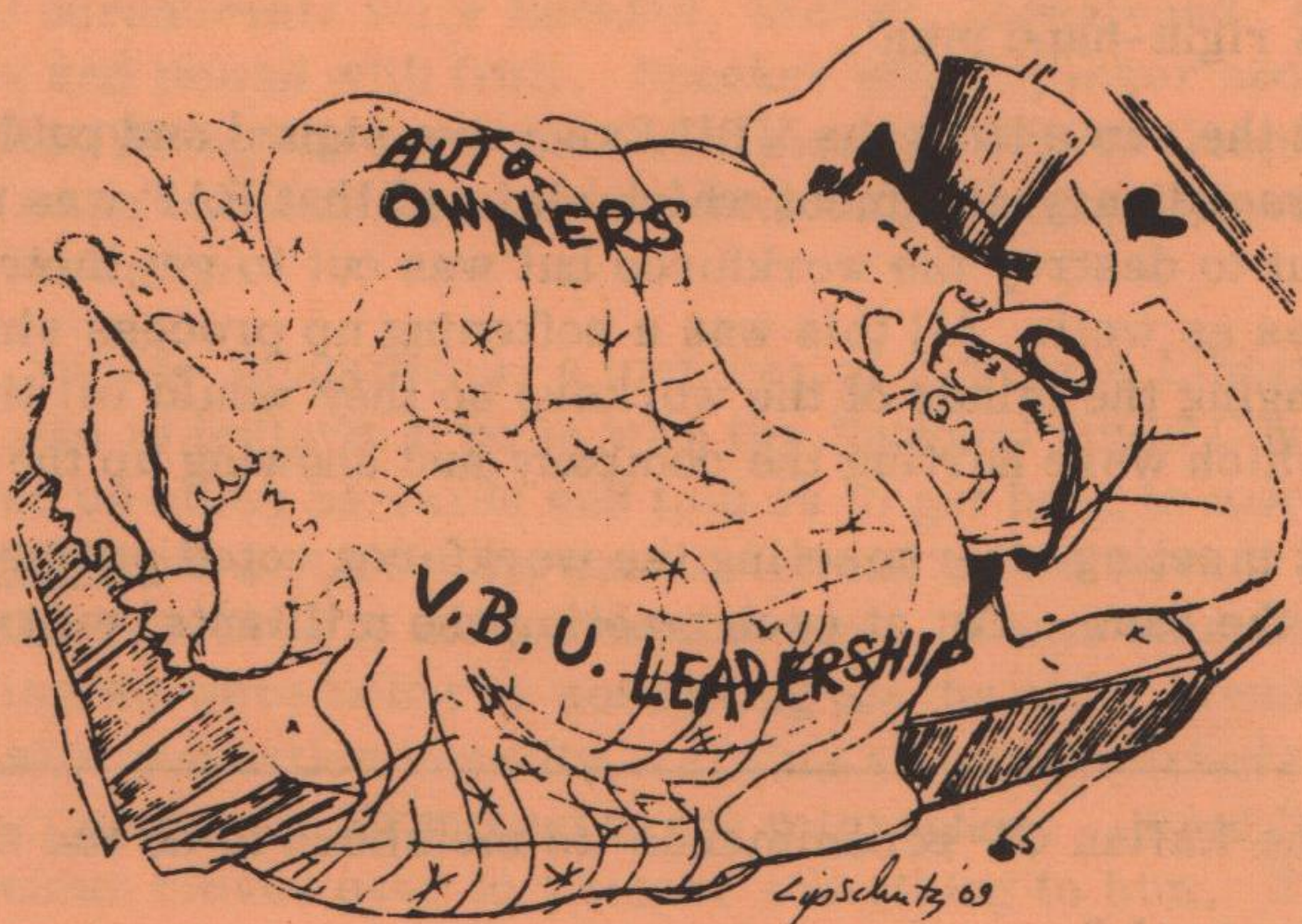
Gradually, however, the VBU began to wear down the militancy by a barrage of pessimistic verbiage combined with a campaign of slander and ridicule against militants. One factory after another gave up the struggle for the claims. Militants in Melbourne factories were told that Adelaide had given up, and that it was only sensible to surrender rather than fight on alone. Two of the Melbourne plants gave up. Then Adelaide factories were told that as Melbourne had given up Adelaide couldn't fight on alone.

These tactics were used effectively until only Fisherman's Bend (Victoria), Ford Cheltenham (South Australia) and Chrysler Tonsley Park were left. Significantly these three factories all had RAF groups. The factories which had no RAF went down first. Fisherman's Bend and Ford Cheltenham, where RAF groups were embryonic, were survived by Tonsley Park where RAF was established and experienced.

8. RANK AND FILE RESISTANCE

From the first meeting in early August overtime bans and a work-to-rule had been imposed, against the wishes of the VBU Executive. The bans hit the company hard, as it needed overtime to bring out the year's new model. With the union's aid, it tried to get round the bans by bringing in a new afternoon shift. The paint rectification section spontaneously walked off the job in protest, and were told that they would lose their annual leave as a punishment. A secondary strike eventually defeated this threat. In other sections the struggle over the claims took different forms: some sections walked off the job as soon as the daily production quota was reached, others sporadically carried out an RAF-originated 'work without enthusiasm, work-to-rule, obey orders literally' policy. This was only successful in a few departments but showed the extent to which a factory needs a compliant, cooperative workforce. Where the policy was successfully carried out the result was chaos.

Far more effective, however, was the spontaneous sabotage which spread throughout nearly all departments

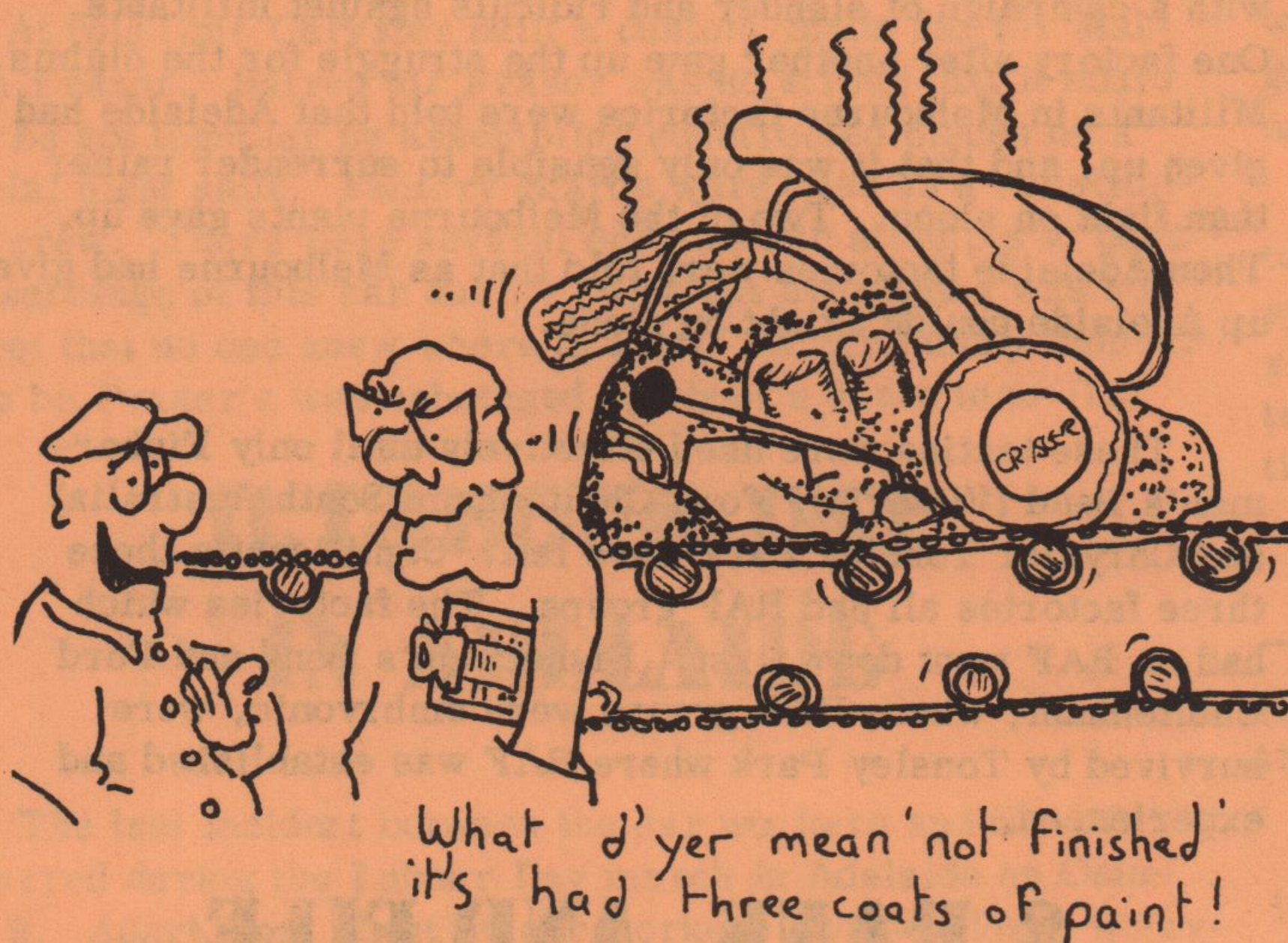


(3) Slang for 'idle scrounger'.

(4) One of whom was a former Lebanese Phalangist who amused himself during lunch-breaks by recounting his murders.

where there was discontent. There were always a few habitual saboteurs who gleefully boasted that not a single car passed them without being 'initiated'. These workers were usually working on parts of the vehicles where sabotage was easily concealed. I was working with finished cars. During times of conflict signs of sabotage could easily be seen - slashed upholstery, stolen car keys, deflated tyres, paint or other liquids smeared over cars. When stricter toilet breaks were introduced cars were smeared with human excrement.

The two methods which drove the bosses into screaming fits were the carving of slogans into finished paintwork, and using wrong-sized rivets in construction. This could only be detected when the cars were being test-driven and fell to pieces. Slogans were often political, aimed at politicians, bureaucrats and bosses. They also included remarks about football or TV shows, one-line elephant jokes, or sexist comments. I suppose I saw two dozen slogans during my 12 months at Chrysler. The most intelligent were 'Sabotage must be stopped', and 'This paint job is perfect. Buy this car'.



Other methods included stealing or mislaying tools and that perennial favourite: stopping the line. This could be done by pressing the emergency button. Chrysler countered this by posting foremen in front of stop buttons. The saboteurs replied by buckling the conveyor belt, and producing mysterious electrical failures. On a normal day there might be as many as twenty stoppages (some, of course, genuine). Some would last as long as two hours. Five or ten minutes was the average, a welcome breather which made this a universally popular method.

RAF's enemies claimed that we were behind the sabotage. This was not so. No RAF bulletin ever encouraged it. We discussed it at one meeting, where it was decided that RAF would neither condemn or support it. I argued that as many saboteurs did not know that they were facing long gaol sentences if caught, it was at least our duty to warn them. Others disagreed, believing that this would sound like discouragement, not only of sabotage but of the struggle in general, and that the company or the VBU would probably let the workers know the penalties. However we spread the word around about possible gaol sentences without sounding too discouraging.

The company brought in four full-time detectives in early 1977. Not one saboteur was ever caught. This reflected the unity and intelligence of the workers, and also the fact that many of the saboteurs were the last people that either the bosses of RAF would have thought to be 'gremlins'. I

remember seeing one worker, who seemed to be the factory's most servile Uncle Tom, talking in his usual fawning way to a bullying foreman while he worked on the back of a car. As soon as the foreman had gone, his expression changed to one of foxy, defiant mischief. His eyes darted around and, when sure that no one was watching, he cut some electrical wires, scratched the paint job below the bumper with a screwdriver, and punctured a tyre. He then lapsed back into servility again. Later I saw him do the same with other cars. When asked about the damage he self-righteously denounced the 'ratbag car-wreckers'.

So much for the silent majority. The VBU's denunciation of sabotage was as strong as the company's. The factory shop steward, Harry Davies, went as far as to keep an eye open for saboteurs. He denounced 'slackers' to the bosses.⁽⁵⁾ The traditional left weren't much better. While the IS tended to see sabotage as part of the struggle, and the SWP as an attempt at militancy gone wrong, they usually described it as 'childish', 'ultra-leftist', 'mindless'. The strangest criticisms came from the SLL. They referred to 'the complete treachery of the maoist-dominated Rank and File' which encouraged sabotage and other 'student radical dead-end methods'.

The SLL's attitude is not accidental. It stems from their hatred of anything they cannot control. Strikes are ordered, directed, called on, called off, negotiated upon; sabotage isn't. It is also a weapon which can be used against any ruling class, even one based on a marxist party or a trade union bureaucracy.

There is however a lot of truth in the criticism that sabotage is childish, just letting off steam, and likely to hurt the consumer who is often a worker (like the saboteur him/herself). On the other hand sabotage shows contempt for the values of capitalism and is deliberate rejection of the ultimate capitalist status symbol: the car.

9. THE UNION FIGHTS THE OVERTIME BAN

In its efforts to get the overtime bans lifted the VBU tried a series of tricks. First was a silly slander campaign against RAF. It was claimed that we were connected with the IRA, because one Rank and File member was an Irish migrant. Then it was pointed out that the initials RAF also stood for Red Army Fraction, and that anarchists were in sympathy with both groups.⁽⁶⁾ At the same time the right-wing were producing ridiculous fake RAF bulletins. Fortunately these were so obviously fake and condescending that no one took them seriously. A slander sheet was distributed alleging that RAF took its orders from 'Chinese agents'. Various individuals in different factories were named as communists or their dupes. One was labelled 'Mao Tse Tung's right-hand man'.

At the same time the VBU Executive signed and published an extraordinary document which claimed that RAF was not only out to destroy the workforce but was out to get their families as well. All this was a softening up process aimed at changing the minds of the workers so they would lift the bans which were hurting the company and showing up the VBU.

At meeting after meeting the workforce voted against lifting the bans. But at each meeting the militants' majority

(5) The Italian CP recommends its members to do the same.

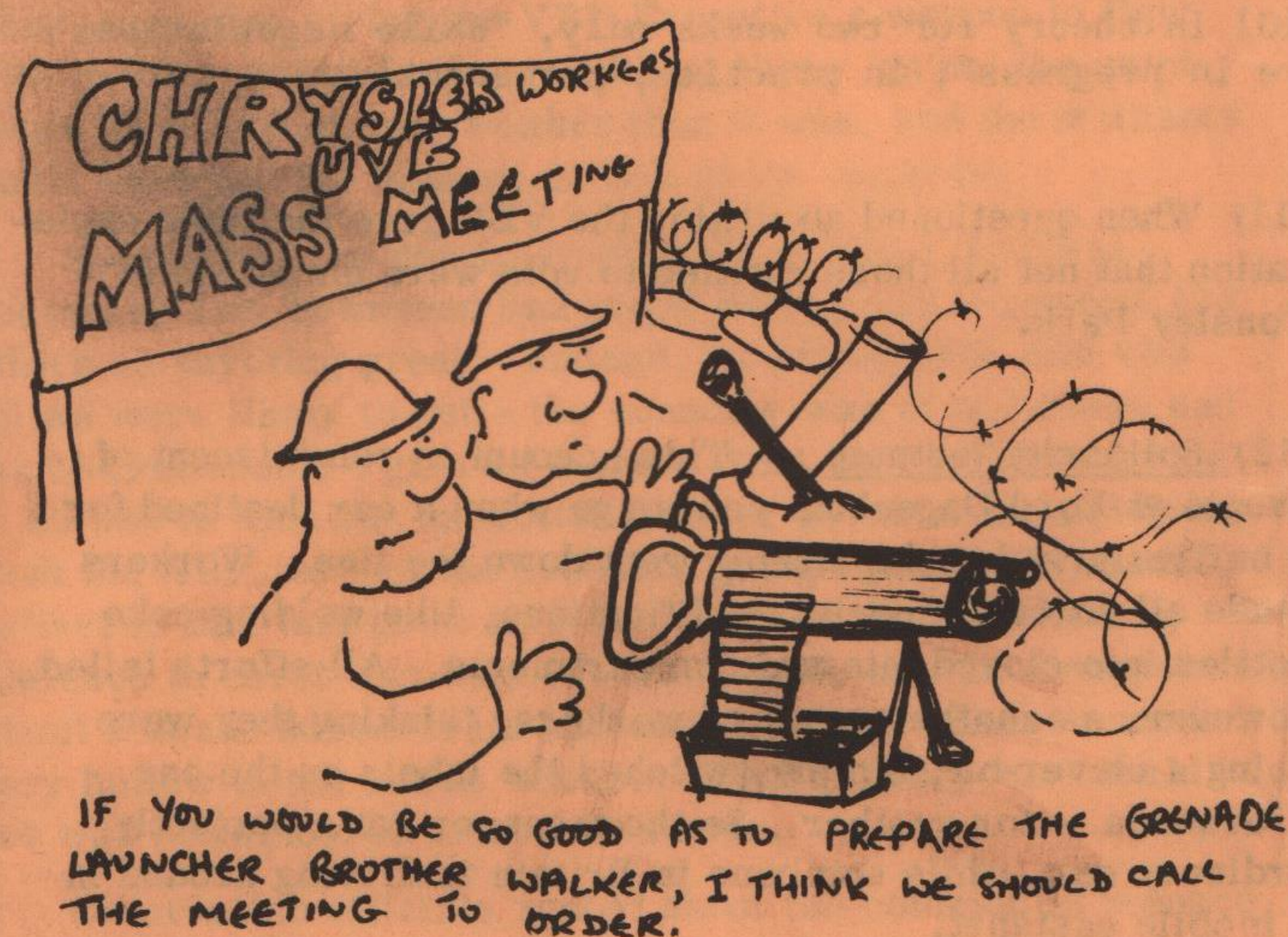
(6) Oh, yeah?

was being reduced. After appeals from the VBU to think of our unemployed mates who needed a job, the ban on new labour was lifted. The new people were put onto new shifts to overcome the overtime ban. But Chrysler was still in trouble. Sympathetic shop stewards told us of the VBU's and company's latest strategy - a superannuation scheme that would only be introduced when the bans were completely lifted. The meeting to lift the ban would not be held until all fifty shop stewards had talked to the men in their own sections, and talked the militants round. It was hoped that each section would then have a majority in favour of the scheme.

At the same time the media stepped up their 'militant-bashing' campaign. RAF members started really copping it. One RAfer was punched by a foreman for no reason, and a sympathiser was badly bashed by two guards. In my section there were two of us in RAF. The other member was set up by his shop steward on a theft charge - tools were put in his bag and the guards grabbed him at the gate. His workmates were with him and unanimously defended him, explaining the tools as a joke. He was let off with a severe reprimand, although the VBU wanted him prosecuted and gaoled. (7) A few days after this incident, I had my coat, wallet and bank-book stolen, and had to borrow money to get home. When I arrived I found the place broken into, but nothing had been touched except my political papers which were scattered all over the place.

The meeting to lift the bans was scheduled for September 9, 1976 and everyone, including RAF, thought the bans would be lifted.

10. THE MEETING



From the start the meeting was tense and stormy. The VBU bureaucrats were heckled, shoved, threatened, shouted down and pelted with fruit. Speaker after speaker spoke against lifting the bans and rubbished the VBU. Despite chairman Meehan's encouragement only three people spoke for the union.

Natalie Richardson, a member of Fraser's Liberal Party and who is believed to be in with the National Civic Council, (8) called us union bastards and told us to get back to work; the others were a right-wing extremist and a new worker who wanted overtime to make more money. It was stressed how selfish we were being by not letting all the older members get the superannuation benefits. At this an older workers not known as a militant moved to the microphone. State Secretary Foreman moved over to whisper something to him. The worker spoke. 'Dominic Foreman just told me that if I spoke



for keeping the bans I'd be out of a job'. Foreman made a few contradictory statements that sounded like denials if you weren't wise to bureaucrats' word-spinning. Then the riot started.

Tables were overturned. A dozen men tried to get Foreman. The stage was pelted and the militants closed in so that the bureaucrats couldn't escape. Shaking with fright, Meehan called for the vote. Even VBU supporters put their support at only a third of those present, and it was obvious the bans would stay. So Meehan refused to take the vote. RAF tried to organise it, but half of those present had left in disgust, or just milled about. Some tried to storm the stage. Those officials who didn't escape were jostled, spat on and abused by dozens of workers. Only the threat of police involvement saved the officials from the hiding they deserved.

Back at the factory we found the entrance littered with discarded union cards. That night I got home late from the RAF meeting to watch the late-night news about the death of Mao. The second item was about the Tonsley Park riot. Dominic Foreman regretted that because of left-wing terrorism a union meeting couldn't be held at Tonsley Park. As union democracy had been overthrown, the union Executive would have to make the decision on the bans itself. (9) Next day at work about 800 men had decided to throw in their union cards. RAF was divided on this. Without union cards, Chrysler could sack the men and we would probably lose the best militants in the factory. The VBU would win. The RAF Newsletter outlined this danger without upholding trade unionism as such.

(7) The company didn't want a court case, because he was a hard worker, very honest and popular.

(8) A right-wing group which attempts to take over unions and is backed by the CIA.

(9) Statement repeated in Adelaide Advertiser, Sept. 10, 1976 on the front page.

Faced with this, the union preferred a 'secret' ballot. In several sections each union member had to walk through VBU cohorts and fill out the ballot paper in front of a hostile Harry Davies. The company won, and the bans were lifted. (10) Hundreds more votes were cast than there were members eligible to vote. (11)

The union elections held soon afterwards returned Foreman and Co. But they were declared fraudulent by the courts. It was implied that the electoral officer was responsible. The same man had been involved in the secret ballot about the bans.

This marked the end of the struggle over the claims. The promised superannuation scheme (which had been the bait for lifting the bans) vanished into thin air. Sabotage was back to normal levels by October. And RAF was back to fighting day to day issues - foreman harassment, safety and pay questions - putting out propaganda and uncovering new links between the company and the VBU. Dominic Foreman was given the new model car free. And the VBU got several thousand dollars as a 'gift' from Chrysler.

At this time Chrysler built a custom-made car for Malcolm Fraser. Hatred for Fraser was so strong that it could only be got together by assembling constructed pieces on a special night shift. Factory guards were used as a construction crew. There were several enthusiastic attempts at bans and sabotage of this car and its parts but everything was so secret that no one knew where to start. A car falsely rumoured to be Fraser's was sabotaged by about a dozen men. (12)

11. LABOUR DAY IN ADELAIDE

The last incident between the car workers and the VBU occurred during the Labour Day march in Adelaide on October 9. Apart from about 30 car workers and two dozen water-side workers, hardly a person was there who wasn't holding a union position. A few radicals and a lot of officials made up the march. It was typical of the bureaucrats that they could afford decorated trucks, banners and placards, but couldn't get people to man them. The march was led by Don Dunstan, shadow treasurer, Chris Hurford ('Labour must get the free enterprise system working again'), and the guest of honour, Bob Hawke, President of the ALP, leader of the Council of Trade Unions, board member of the Reserve Bank, and one of Australia's leading Zionists.

From the start the WSA contingent was pushed to the rear of the march. They countered this by putting three people carrying their banners at the top of the march. When the politicians tried to block from view a banner another car worker and I were carrying, we marched in front of the three leaders, obscuring their faces from the crowds with 'Demand

the 35-hour week'. Hurford charged in screaming and hitting the other car-worker, while trying to rip up the banner at the same time. I discouraged him by hitting him several times with the flagpole and kicking him in the shins. Hurford found himself stumbling about half wrapped up in a banner. He was so mentally distracted he couldn't get free. And this is the man who claims he can manage Australia's economy.

This was the start of a rumble between WSA members and car workers on one side, and union officials and politicians on the other. The police stood by, laughing, until Dunstan walked over and furiously told them to arrest the troublemakers. They politely asked us to quieten down and keep on marching. This reduced things to a shouting match, with the glaring, dishevelled ALPers in their crumpled suits looking like they wanted to be somewhere else.

Bob Hawke, on the platform, announced that he wouldn't speak, owing to the danger of violence from terrorists. The union and party men then retired to the Trades Hall bar, where Hawke gave a short speech denouncing 'people who think they are part of the workforce but aren't' (13) and who were 'a nest of traitors'. He and Dunstan then stood exchanging praises until even their own followers began to feel nauseated. So ended Labour Day 1976.

An interesting side-effect was that the SWP complained to me that their paper sales among ALP-SPA members and sympathisers had dropped to zero because the Labour Day riot had been credited to 'trotskyists and maoists'. The SWP tends to judge all political activities by the way they affect their paper sales.

(10) In theory for two weeks only, "While negotiations are in progress"; in practice, permanently.

(11) When questioned about this the VBU gave the tame explanation that not all those entitled to vote were employed at Tonsley Park.

(12) Solidarity footnote : This account is reminiscent of events at Ford Dagenham years ago when a car destined for a particularly hated manager went down the line. Workers made all sorts of special modifications, like welding coke bottles into closed internal compartments. All efforts failed, however, as another group of workers, thinking they were doing a clever bit, simply switched the labels on the car - a Granada - for another. So the manager got a perfectly ordinary car, while someone in Britain is driving around in a mobile castanet.

(13) Hawke has never held a working job in his life.



12. MORE CONFLICTS: FEBRUARY 1977

Early in February 1977 two minor issues came up which developed into larger struggles. Doorhanger Mark Gillet was sacked by a foreman, for allegedly swearing at him. Mark refused his sacking and was defended by shop stewards and fellow workers. He was reinstated by the company. The CEDA union, which controls the foremen, staged a walkout which meant that for two days the factory was without foremen.

On the whole the factory ran just as well without foremen, some areas actually increased production and the vast majority of men were more happy to work without supervision. Yet the company said the plant could no longer work without supervision and that unless foremen were back the workforce would be stood down indefinitely.

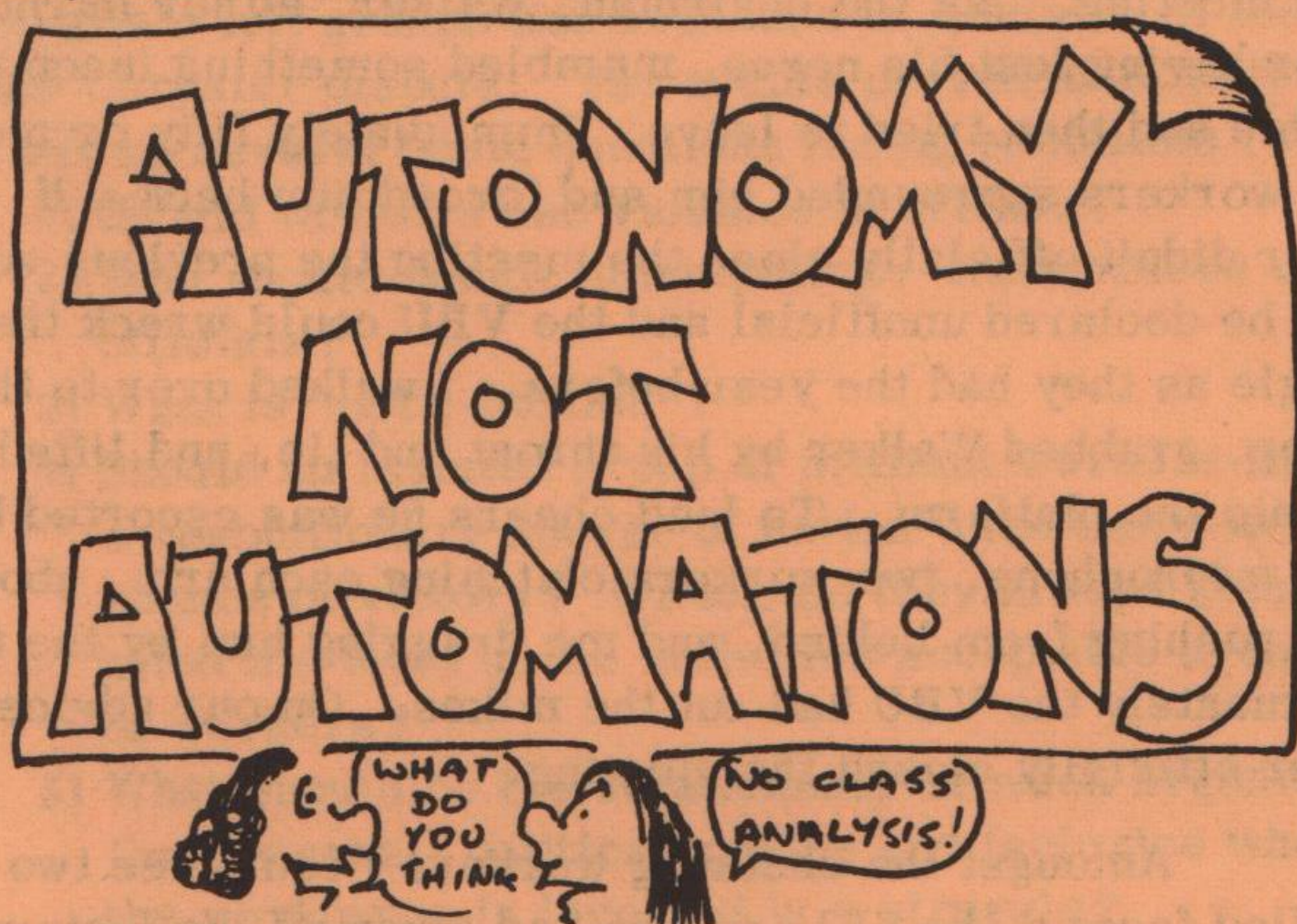
The workers decided to stage an occupation. The VBU had to go along with the militant course. Their sell-outs over the 1976 log of claims had destroyed their credibility with everyone. Somehow they had to appear militant so they supported the militant course.

The company avoided the confrontation by lifting the stand down clause (signed by the same VBU officials without the permission of the union members late in 1976). Work went on without the foremen for two more days. Then the arbitration court suspended both Mark Gillett and Payne on full pay.

Mark Gillett was eventually reinstated, but so was Payne the foreman, who was transferred to another area. During the conflict the VBU ran a slander campaign against Mark, claiming that he was mentally retarded (he speaks very slowly). When he disproved this, they tried another approach - saying that he was homosexual.

The second dispute started when a migrant worker turned to RAF for help with a compensation case because the VBU wasn't doing much. When RAF began to help the VBU stepped in and told him that he should stay away from RAF who were 'just a bunch of university students, communists and trouble-makers'. The worker replied to the effect that 'if RAF are communists then I am too'. From then on the union tried to get him out of the factory. Because of a work injury he requested lighter work but was given a hard job despite workmates' protests. When he complained he was told there was no place for malingerers on the shop-floor. Despite the seriousness of his injury and his good work record over 14 years, the company and the union agreed that his problem was psychological.

His workmates didn't. A meeting was called by a RAF shop steward and one section of 50 men walked off the job. The VBU told Chrysler that next time it happened they should sack the lot. Despite everything that RAF and his workmates could do, this worker lost his job.



In my own section Harry Davies broke up one strike over safety issues. When we complained to our shop steward that he never did anything he replied, in ominous tones : 'Well, I'll get something done alright'. The next day he insisted a militant worker be sacked for not obeying safety regulations. 'See, I got something done', was his only comment. Soon after he resigned from the union and was given tests by the company to check his foreman potential. He had once been a militant and a supporter of RAF, but had fallen for the bait of trade unionism and had accepted a shop steward position.

13. RAF AND THE UNION ELECTIONS

At this time RAF made a serious mistake. It put candidates up for union elections. We had two shop stewards who were useful in that they could get inside information, but union office was something different. Even though the jobs weren't full time, they were part of the bureaucracy. This was a step backwards towards traditional unionism. At RAF meetings I was usually alone in opposing this move. There was almost no discussion unless I introduced it, and then the replies were half-hearted. I got the strong impression that the idea came from outsiders, from the CPAML. I knew that nearly all the WSA members were in trouble with their organisation for ultra-leftism and anarchist tendencies. (14)

The effects of our contesting elections were noticeable. At the shop floor level it caused at best doubts, but more commonly cynicism, distrust and feelings of being hoodwinked. Typical comments were 'Just out for power like all the rest', and 'After all that, they're no different; they'll be off to Trades Hall soon'. I heard this dozens of times. Only three or four workers outside RAF made comments supporting our candidacy. All the left groups except LSF and the SLL (15) approved the idea of RAF going in for electioneering.

At the same time the WSA began to push their vanguardist and nationalistic aims more strongly. I responded by putting forward libertarian ideas. As a result, from early 1977, RAF meetings were often very heated. In 1976 several of the non-affiliated members and all but one or two WSAers were becoming interested in anarchism, discussing ideas and reading books. Unfortunately WSA was a large, well-established organisation, LSF was tiny and not established, and the CPAML seemed to be conducting a slander campaign against anarchism.

There was a focusing on personalities. I made a disastrous mistake which made me seem naive. I talked to one of my closest friends about the issues at Chrysler as I needed some advice on Adelaide politics (which I knew little about). I later read sections of these conversations in two hostile articles about RAF printed in the Adelaide Advertiser. I had had no reason to distrust this person; we had worked together in the same union against the ALP bureaucracy in 1975 for several months, and I had believed him trustworthy. It became obvious that here was the old story of the good militant without clear ideas becoming part of the union bureaucracy. One RAF shop steward was already heading rapidly in this direction and the others were to go the same way. The failure of RAF to develop its anarchist tendencies into a libertarian

(14) They continually asked for literature and asked me questions on anarchism. One WSA member did become an anarchist.

(15) Because it saw RAF as a menace, not because the SLL opposes union electioneering. It doesn't.



Len Townsend V.B.U. National Secretary
(in dark glasses and leather coat).

Shady Lane (V.B.U. Organiser)
dark glasses and arms folded.

V.B.U. Chairman Robert Walker centre.

socialist approach made this inevitable. I found myself undemocratically dominating meetings, arguing for this course without support and finally without hope of success. Still I remained out of loyalty to the group and to those people who trusted RAF.

Before we were sacked in July 1977 I had decided that alliances between libertarians and any type of vanguardists were a waste of time. Some of the ideas put forward within Chrysler by the WSA made many people feel like vomiting: they defended Stalin, kept silent on China until the Gang of Four were ousted and it was obvious Hua was going to win, and defended Idi Amin as an anti-imperialist and 'historically progressive' Ugandan nationalist. In a way I was glad to be sacked. It meant I would no longer have to work with people with views like this. By the end of the year I had no more contacts with any marxist-leninist groups.

14. THE CLIMAX

From about Easter there were strong rumours of cut-backs, and in late June this became a certainty. The VBU 'prepared' for sackings by increasing union dues (to make up for those who would be sacked). A RAF meeting of 200 men voted unanimously for a 35-hour week with no loss of pay and no sackings. The union suggested to Chrysler that they be sacked, since the meeting wasn't official. Another version stated that the VBU had angrily demanded to know why Chrysler hadn't already sacked these men.

Chrysler gave us a choice, like swallowing cyanide or arsenic. We could have 350 sackings and a four-day week (with four days' wages), or 850 sackings and a five-day week. The VBU ducked this one, letting the workers make the 'choice'.

The only attempts at opposing all sackings came from RAF. Within the group, only two of us wanted an occupation. During the last week, I went round during the breaks, seeing what people thought and who was prepared to fight. The mood was either fatalistic, or one of confused anger. I approached over 70 people. Only three were definitely willing to be in an occupation, a dozen others said 'maybe', or 'if everyone else is in it'. The rest were negative. A factory complex of the size of Chrysler would have needed 500 people to occupy it, at least - we had nowhere that kind of support. The SLL would later call us cowards and traitors, and imply that we were in with the union bureaucrats because we didn't lead an occupation. But like most doctrinaires they had little contact with reality. Occupations need to be carried out by large numbers, and workers don't always act militantly. They must decide themselves what they will do; we can only put forward ideas and suggestions, and fight as individual workers. We can't give orders. The SLL approach was that Chrysler's was a workers' army where, through some accident, the RAF was the general staff. If we gave the right orders the workers would win; if we didn't we were traitors and would be replaced by a better general staff - 'the party of the class', i.e. themselves.

The SLL spread slander sheets at the factory gates, alleging that RAF was in with the VBU (!), that it was a maoist front and out to betray the workers, and that if the workers turned up at SLL meetings they'd learn how to save their jobs. Two of us in RAF turned up, together with one other car worker, who left after five minutes saying as he went that he had come to hear about saving jobs, not about joining the SLL. We left together later, after a lecture on how to be a working class militant given by a university lecturer who used to be an official in the Liberal Party before he discovered how to be a better 'leader'.

The VBU reluctantly called a meeting for Tuesday, July 12, 1977. Sackings were scheduled for the Friday. Right from the start the meeting was stormy. VBU bureaucrat Bill Johns was to have spoken first, but his appearance on stage caused five minutes of uproar. He was pelted with whatever workers had in hand - cans, cigarette packets, clumps of grass. Despite union attempts to block him an RAFer managed to get a motion passed rejecting any sackings and re-imposing the overtime bans. He spoke very eloquently and was wildly applauded. Speaker after speaker supported him, while the bureaucrats had to stand by and take the abuse every speaker hurled at them.

Tension was increasing. First scuffles, then outright fights broke out. The stage was pelted. A bolt meant for Dominic Foreman's head hospitalised a worker standing behind him. When the officials delayed putting the motion several dozen workers tried, and nearly succeeded in overturning the flat-top trailer that was being used as a stage. An RAF steward put the motion which was overwhelmingly supported. It was agreed to form an action committee there at the meeting. But the chairman, Walker, either intentionally or having lost his nerve, mumbled something incomprehensible and then tried to leave. Immediately fifty or more noisy workers surrounded him and forced him back. If Walker didn't officially close the meeting the previous vote would be declared unofficial and the VBU could wreck the struggle as they had the year before. I walked over to the flat-top, grabbed Walker by his throat and tie, and lifted him onto the platform. To loud cheers he was escorted back to the microphone, two workers clutching each arm, about a dozen pushing from behind, and me dragging him by the tie. Unfortunately the VBU had cut the mikes. On our advice Walker officially closed the meeting.

Amongst the cheering workers I could see two horrified faces: the SLLers who had given us the lecture on

how to be militants. After all their blood and thunder stuff they took no part, nor did they support what we had done.

Behind us Walker was groaning about his broken glasses and threatening to sue. The fighting ended with the destruction of some television equipment. Bureaucrats and reporters got together to compare injuries and make up stories. A few people went to the medical centre, and two to hospital.

News of the riot interrupted a Federal cabinet meeting in Canberra. Fraser, in an obvious attempt to calm the situation, promised tax cuts and restrictions on foreign imports. Chrysler stated that talks were under way, and that sackings might not happen if we behaved ourselves. Coupled with this, a hysterical media campaign against RAF, WSA and the car workers was launched, until it seemed we had all gone berserk for no reason. Several times I heard the phrase 'the mad dogs of Tonsley Park'. The Advertiser repeated a VBU description of RAF as 'faceless fanatics, underground anarchists and saboteurs'.⁽¹⁶⁾ The media cleverly failed to distinguish between RAF and WSA, and harped on the 'students in the factory' theme. Actually, there were three ex-university students in RAF, all of whom had been there for two years or more. Two of these had only been at university for a few weeks anyway.

'Anarchist'-bashing was another favourite theme. There had been one anarchist comrade active in Chrysler in early 1977, but he had left in March. Another WSAer turned anarchist left in June, and one person, on the edge of RAF, was sympathetic to anarchism. I was the only conscious anarchist there.

The VBU charged eleven of us with assault. Over a hundred had been involved, but to prosecute everyone would have destroyed the 'student radical' image they were promoting. The charges were muddled and there were frame-ups. Some RAFers not involved in the fighting were charged, and we were charged with assaulting people we didn't touch. And we weren't charged with getting those we did get.

The last two and a half days before the sackings were taken up by a special meeting of those charged, by our regular riotous monthly union meeting, with the production of a special edition of the RAF newsletter, with implementing the bans agreed at the meeting, and with countering the anti-RAF propaganda put out by the media, the VBU, the ALP, the SPA and the SLL. The WSA, the IS and the LSF helped us as much as outside groups could. The CPA adopted a neutral, abstentionist position. The SWP supported the struggle but opposed the violence as alienating and undemocratic, a strange attitude for a group which still supports Lenin's violence against socialists in soviet Russia. In the last few days, sabotage reached incredible proportions, even getting media coverage.

The sackings came on Friday afternoon. One list was based on seniority, the other on militancy.⁽¹⁷⁾ Between 80 and 100 workers gathered at the factory entrance. Cars and trestles were overturned. Parts, tools and equipment were also damaged, and two particularly obnoxious foremen got the treatment.

When we assembled, I tried to put into practice a plan I had thought up. There were enough of us to occupy the staff offices and the cafeteria building. This would cause almost as much havoc as a factory occupation. Food and heating were already supplied. Because of air conditioning there were few windows, and the doors could easily be defended. We would have easy access to company files and equipment, and would be in a strong position to bargain for our jobs. The doors were made of thick glass. Some tried to kick them in, but without success. I suggested we go back and get a trestle to use as a battering ram. As we



walked off, a WSAer said to forget it, we'd form a picket at the entrance and get them that way.

I pointed out that once outside the gate we wouldn't get back in. The bulk of this was missed. All the WSA members began to call for a picket line and went off. The others milled about, confused, then went after them. Too few of us were left to organise an occupation. The reception room, the only unlocked room in the complex, was smashed up. We too, then, joined the picket line.

The WSA claimed that the picket prevented a large shipment going out, which cost Chrysler nearly a million dollars on a lost contract. But we were outside the factory. The solidarity usually shown at Tonsley Park was missing. Apart from those sacked, only members of the WSA and a few unaffiliated radicals joined us. Not one worker took part in the picket. The media had done their job well.

On the following Monday no one was allowed inside the factory without an employment pass. There was a brief RAF rally which meant little. Inside the factory there was chaos everywhere as the workforce was dislocated.

15. THE EPILOGUE

We were taken to court on the assault charges, but the case was dismissed when the prosecutor failed to appear for the second session. There are two possible explanations. Either that, with federal elections approaching, the ALP did not want to be seen jailing workers. Or that the prosecutor had only got his job because he was an ALP party machine hack, and had been known to miss cases before because too drunk to appear in court.

(16) July 13, 1977

(17) It came out in court that the second list was compiled with the help of the VBU, and that some names were there on the VBU's insistence.

Crucial for the media campaign against Chrysler workers was the support of Don Dunstan. Dunstan upheld the VBU bureaucrats as honest men, and obligingly spread the lies already being circulated by the Murdoch media. Because of his intellectual gifts Dunstan has been able to build up a considerable following in Australia who will blindly believe anything he says.

What his followers didn't know was that Dunstan was a close friend of Robert Murdoch. Wherever in Adelaide, Murdoch makes a point of seeing Dunstan. Until the Salisbury affair (see below) the Murdoch media gave Dunstan a very favourable image, unlike that dished out to other Labour leaders.

Dunstan's support for the VBU didn't go unnoticed. His popularity dropped and his image became somewhat tarnished. Many people in Salisbury began to see him as just another politician. In early 1978 he became entangled in the Salisbury affair, a messy case involving political spying, and by the end of 1978 his popularity sagged. In February 1979 he resigned due to ill-health.

In Tonsley Park there were massive cut-backs in 1978. Chrysler then introduced a dozen sackings each pay-day - no awkward headlines that way. There are rumours that the place is closing down, or being taken over by the Japanese. No new RAF has sprung up, as we had hoped might happen.

In retrospect, it would have been almost impossible for RAF to win at Chrysler in 1977. Opposing us were the entire media, both parliamentary political parties, the forces of the state, Chrysler, the union bureaucracy and two trad left groups: the SPA and the SLL. On our side were sections of a divided workforce, and three left groups: WSA, IS and LSF. However, RAF could have got further if the unaffiliated members had seen the importance of a clear political strategy, if WSAers had not mixed their vanguardism with their excellent shop-floor record, and if the libertarians and their sympathisers had had more political experience and acumen. But with all its limitations, RAF stands out as something to be remembered and emulated by workers fed up with reformist trade unionism.

Garry Hill

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