

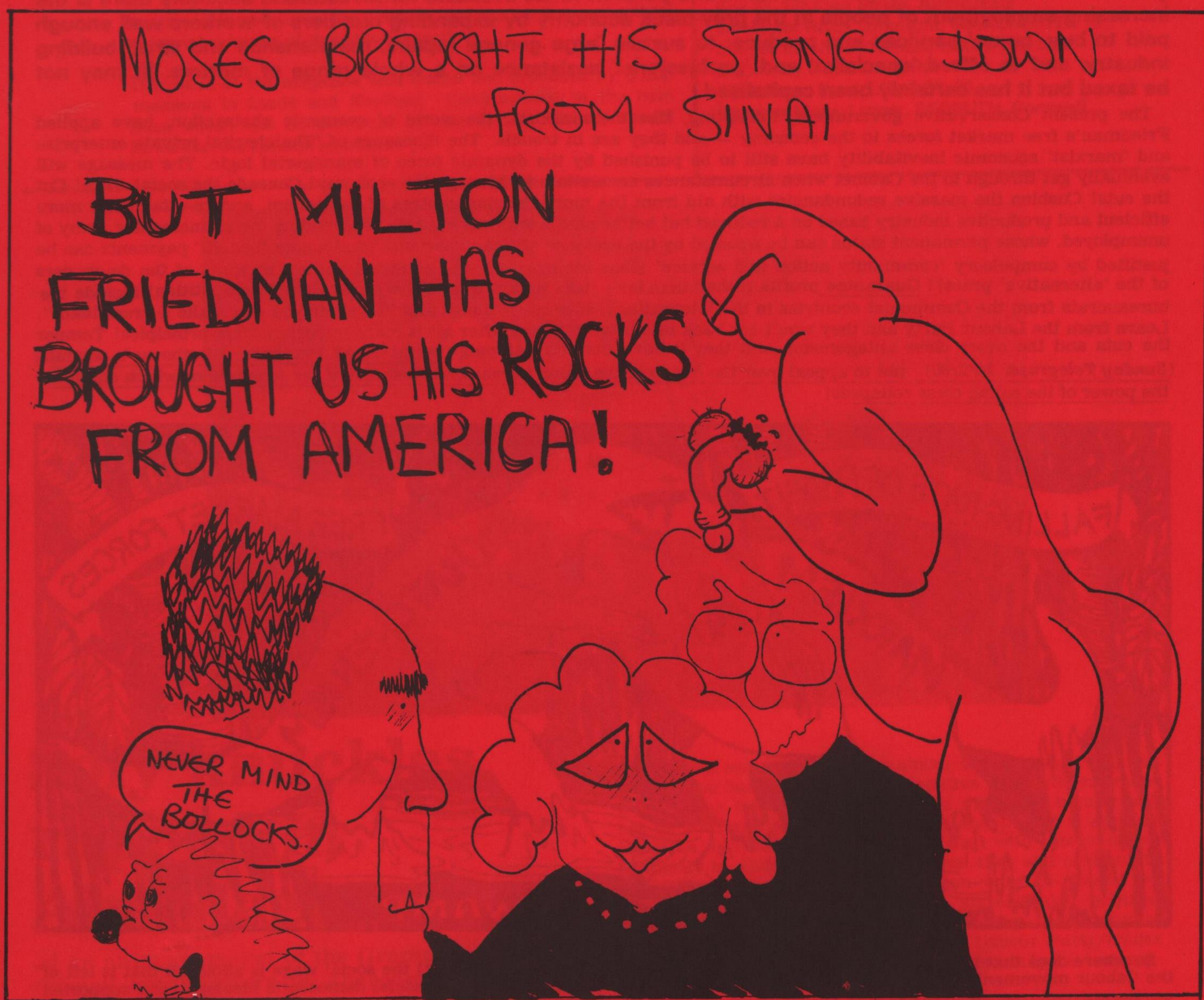
# solidarity

FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION

No. 12

MAY - JULY 1980

20p



**INSIDE: STEEL, ABORTION,  
MANAGING UNEMPLOYED YOUTH,  
UNION OFFICIAL INTERVIEWED**

## Editorial 1

# Questioning the Cuts

Blinkered by their theory of automatic economic crisis, traditional marxists see the UK's problems anchored in an abstract mechanism in capitalism rather than stemming from difficulties in restructuring industrial production and technology. Both Labour and Tory Parties want to rationalise by removing the inefficient and unproductive elements in the economy. While they may disagree over the method, neither, despite the outpourings of council and left communists, and other marxists, require war as a means of reinstating profitable productivity. For those who insist that there is a 'falling rate of profit', caused in large part by workers winning wage rises which are then unrealisable as surplus for investment by capitalism, the following examples make that view sound like a rave from the (Highgate) grave. Firstly there is the massive growth of workers' bank deposit accounts and pension funds available for investment; secondly there is the increasing employment of people in the grey-black economy by expanding numbers of workers well enough paid to buy 'home' services and produce; to sustain large general repairs, maintenance and small building industry; and to afford 'specialist' and 'professional' assistance on a whole range of matters. (It may not be taxed but it has certainly been capitalised.)

The present Conservative government, inhabiting, like the marxists, the world of economic abstraction, have applied Friedman's free market forces to the economy — and they are in trouble. The dinosaurs of 'Thatcherite' private enterprise and 'marxist' economic inevitability have still to be punished by the dynamic force of managerial logic. The message will eventually get through to the Cabinet when circumstances necessitate it. Manage the economy! Concede the social wage! Cut the cuts! Cushion the massive redundancies with aid from the more thriving centres of capitalism, and re-establish a more efficient and productive industry based on a reduced but better-paid workforce capable of providing for an increasing army of unemployed, whose permanent status can be masked by the pretence of 'job experience' and whose 'benefit' payments can be justified by compulsory 'community action and service' (thus recuperating the confused politics of some of the do-gooders of the 'alternative' press)! Guarantee profits rather than take risks maximising them by irrational competition! Include the bureaucrats from the Communist countries in the international scheme of things and "together you can make a great team". Learn from the Labour Party and they won't get back into power! Power after all is more important than principles! Temper the cuts and the overt class antagonisms and they'll have little to campaign with! Heed Peregrine Worthington's warning (*Sunday Telegraph* 24/2/80) not to appeal over the heads of the union bureaucrats lest one of the foundations which stabilises the power of the ruling class collapses!



So where does that leave the fight against the cuts? Holding on to (and extending) the social wage is about all that is left of the 'labour movements' notion of class struggle. Catatonic for years in the grip of social-democratic ideology; and supported by sundry leninists, trotskysts and communists! not wanting to 'rock the boat' or 'show disunity in the face of the class enemy'; it is more afraid than ever of the 'adventurists' and the imaginative. This is all the 'labour movement' has to show, as government and employers appeal to workers over the heads of the union activists, leaving these claims of 'unity' sounding very hollow indeed. It is no use the left hypocritically complaining about the 'conservative' side of the working class, when their own condescending attitude and manipulative political practice is embedded in this view (i.e. that workers are the passive troops at the behest of the revolutionary leadership.) A healthy revolt against union management, whether it is the national executive or a dictatorial shop-stewards committee or insensitive individuals like Derek Robinson, is not necessarily a vote for company management. Although their short-term but realistic attitudes to economic circumstances may make it appear so. The next stage could be an attack on the authority of company bosses especially when leninist groups attempting to impose their democratic centralist authority on workers are ignored. And considerable numbers are telling the unions to accept the redundancy money (and the trad left to get lost) knowing that state-aided replenishment of out-of-date and less-than-efficient industries is unrealistic. "Take my job, but not my wage," has more potential than the rigid "No redundancies"

# GETTING IT RIGHT

'If capitalism had been conducted all along as if the theory of private enterprise were a matter of principle ... we should have had civil war long ago.' — **Harold Macmillan**

(*Sunday Times*, 10/2/1980)

'What the 20th-century British working class has done is to adopt the abandoned social values of the 18th-century English upper class. Their attitudes to work, to money-making, to ambition, are essentially aristocratic, even quixotically so, to the point of self-destruction. Honour, loyalty, conformity with the old customs, even love of a particular home — all these mean more than enrichment. Better to let the old estate crumble into ruin than sell to the highest bidder.

As for strikes and picketing, are these not to be preferred — the modern equivalent perhaps of hunting and shooting — to the degradation of productive work?... The Tory Party, judged historically, cannot escape its responsibility for prolonging a form of society which enshrined the anti-industrial values that so many trade unionists now embody, even down to the neo-feudal deference shown by the shop floor to the shop stewards. "Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die." In the old days, workers were commended for their sheep-like obedience. They were not supposed to have minds of their own. Now, of course, the Tory Party is all for seeing more shop-floor independence. But who taught the working class to look up to their superiors for protection; who created the reverence for hierarchy which the trade union barons now exploit?

(**Peregrine Worsthorne** in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 10/2/1980)

*Mr Heseltine says: "At the moment no one knows the answers. The Left is not interested. They have just moved from private capitalism to state capitalism without ever questioning the management of manpower. I obviously prefer private capitalism. But if Socialists ever started examining the problems we are looking at, they could change society. Luckily they never do."*

(*The Guardian*, 7/12/79)

'It was in these inter-war years that successive Governments, from Lloyd George's through to Neville Chamberlain's, successfully tempted the trade unions into a partnership in running the economy, rightly recognising that this was the safest way for Britain to avoid violent insurrection. (Russia's Bolshevik experience in those days seemed a dreadful warning.) Political and economic concessions to the growing power of organised labour seemed a small price for parliamentary democracy to pay for social stability during these times of slump.'

'One would like to think that workers were showing themselves more respectful of the aims of a duly elected democratic Government. In fact, of course, they are merely responding to the big stick of unemployment. They are bowing to market forces, with more resignation than reverence. This is not so much consent as acquiescence.'

'Encouraging shop-floor rebellion against trade union authority is a dangerous game, since the authority of management, temporarily re-exerted on a basis of fear of unemployment, cannot be regarded as very firmly based. Nor can the authority of parliamentary government, re-exerted on the same shaky foundations. History cannot be brushed aside. Like it or not, in this country, as a result of our particular experience over 50 years, trade unions have become the focus of working-class loyalty, the source of working-class discipline — a State within a State. If market forces are encouraged to erode that loyalty or undermine that discipline, are we quite certain that there is anything solid to take its place? During the last great slump, as I say, Governments of every party came to rely on trade union authority to buttress their own. Mrs. Thatcher's, however, seems determined to claim working-class loyalty in its own right, over the heads of trade union leaders.'

'To destroy the only shelter that exists to mitigate these chill winds is asking for violent trouble, the prospect of which is none the less real for being disguised at the moment by an appearance of deceptive passivity.'

(**Peregrine Worsthorne** in the *'Sunday Telegraph'*. 24/ 2/ 1980)

## The Cuts — continued

slogan. There has been small response from the unemployed, while scabs, private steel bosses and small employers have loudly responded to the SWP slogan 'Fight for the Right to Work'. How ironic that the tactics of leninists in demanding jobs of an economy which they believe cannot create them is used against them as 'work ethic' ideology to promote capitalist expansion.

How then do those who are not part of the 'left consensus' apply themselves to the cuts issue? Those who refuse to be lemmings sacrificed for the Labour Party's return to power. Obviously the cuts would be better applied to the bureaucrats' sinecures instead of further restricting the services already diminished by successive Labour and Tory administrations. The historical evidence is that support for campaigns, however critical, like 'Fights Against Cuts', will be directed to resuscitating the Labour Party. Strengthened by the blood sucked from the idealism and the revolutionary hopes, the vampire will return to the parliamentary graveyard. Yet not a few libertarians and anarchists who oppose the Communist societies which operate by releasing a 'social wage' from state-capitalist accumulation, are coat-tailing the 'Fight Against Cuts' in the 'social wage' in Britain. This inconsistency will not expose the opportunism of the marxists. Always inferred in arguments by the trad left in defence of the social wage is a criticism of the private use of the 'paid' wage. Not surprising, since increasing the social wage enhances the authority of, and dependency on, the state, which they favour, and is seen as a step towards the 'socialist' goal. Defence or extension of the 'social wage' is not simply protecting standards of living (which can be excused although not particularly revolutionary); it is also aiding and justifying the process of state accumulation of capital and control as well as encouraging the trad left's aspirations to power (which is counter-productive and downright reactionary).

The revolutionary dissident has to point out the shortsightedness of taking sides in the argument over the 'virtues' of 'state' against 'private corporation' accumulation, (since they are inseparable from overall bureaucratic planning) or siding with 'social' against 'paid' wages (since they are both gained by wage labour). If the abolition of all wage labour is one of the dissidents' objectives, distinctions should not be made favouring 'social wages' against the 'private' use of paid wages, as if the former was a step towards 'socialism'. Relative standards of living may be of supreme political relevance to the trad left. They are not a central issue for us. Removing property and production from private ownership and bureaucratic sanction, whether it is the individual, the family, the corporation, the state, the union, the workers co-operative or the 'alternative socialist' commune, is the basis for restructuring society. This will require periods of insurrection, instead of the TUC's 'days of action. But it presupposes the responsibility and the necessity of collective management of social life and physical survival to ensure the benefits of a rational existence. A culture derived from self-management rather than being managed, has creative possibilities compared to today's existence, where, after needs are manufactured and desires seduced, anxieties have to be tranquilised and boredom amused.

Georges Seguy, Communist Secretary-general of the French Confederation General du Travail, interviewed in *Le Figaro*, 25/10/1979.

'I read the article in which you accused us of being "irresponsible". What do you want? If we were to adjust our position in conformity with such an absurd argument, the workers would no longer recognize us as the trade union in which they can place their confidence because we defend their interests, and they would look to all manner of irresponsible people. And France would become the stage for a whole range of wild, anarchic and violent actions, leading to a situation in which you would be the first to suffer and which you would regret bitterly. It is in the interests of all of us that the authority of the trade-union movement, that the authority of the leading union body, which has always given proof of its sense of responsibility not only with regard to the workers, but also with regard to the country's economic interests and even with regard to its economic and political independence, it is in all our interests that that trade union upholds its authority and continues to play its part. And so it will, on condition that our opposite numbers recognize our authority and our independence...'

'What we want for the workers is their participation in the management of the firms they work for, effective participation with appropriate rights and powers. That is how we define our commitment to the ideas of self-management which have long been current in the international labour movement ... I think it is possible to imagine workers' control without necessarily having to go through great political, economic, and social upheavals, particularly since the level of consciousness required for a truly self-managed socialism will not be achieved from one day to the next: I do not believe in miracles; on the contrary I believe that it will come about through the progressive extension of democracy. If you want to call that reformism, although the term is an exceedingly derogatory one, I wouldn't quarrel with it. Given the times we live in, I think that is the only logical and possible revolutionary path for France. I am a realist.'

#### UNIONS PLEA

Government should give TUC two years to show it can control unions and if it fails, only then introduce legislation, Sidney Weighell, NUR general secretary told Cambridge University Students.

(*Yorkshire Evening Post*, 19/1/1980)

# Editorial 2

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in support of the coup d'état led by its puppet Babrak Karmal, head of the pro-Moscow Parcham Party, has aroused a chorus of indignation from the West. The compelling force of this rhetoric can be seen in the determination of numerous Olympic Committees to go to Moscow whatever their governments might have to say. The latest regime to lend its support and add some tone to the Western camp is the military junta in Chile, while since its coup in 1973 has rivalled the Kremlin in suppressing working-class dissent.

The threats to the Olympics being made by the Western powers are of course nothing more than an exercise in political bluster. To understand the true nature of British concern, one has only to look at this country's long history of counter-insurgency in Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus, Aden, Ulster, ad nauseam. When the workers of East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia rose in revolt against Stalinist bureaucracy, only morons believed that the Western ruling class would come to their aid. And while reactionaries and authoritarians like Solzhenitsyn and Bukovsky have been feted as heroes, the attempts by Soviet workers to form free trade unions and the violent suppression of strikes such as that in Novocheerkassk in 1962, where 80 workers were shot down, have been ignored.

Thatcher, Carter, et al care for the people of Afghanistan just as much as they care for the workers of their own countries. What really worries them is that Soviet expansionism and its setting-up of client regimes in Africa and the Middle East (notably in Ethiopia and South Yemen) threatens their vital supplies of oil and their markets and trade routes. Likewise, Soviet domination of Afghanistan not only secures its borders against hostile neighbours in Iran and China, but also brings it that much closer to India and to the naval facilities it needs to transform the Indian Ocean into a Soviet-dominated pond. Despite their rhetoric about socialism and democracy, the rulers of East and West are first and foremost concerned with securing and maintaining power. The staging of the Olympics in Moscow and the threat of a boycott are just further moves in the lethal marathon or power politics.

A war, or the threat of a war, is always a good way of diverting attention away from the state of affairs at home. In rattling the Cold War sabres and ranting about a Red menace, Thatcher is merely emulating the example of her Soviet counterparts, who use the threat of Western imperialism as their excuse for the dismal living standards and lack of human rights 'enjoyed' by the working class in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The left in Britain has reacted in its usual manner by playing the role of loyal opposition to the Soviet ruling class. Typical of this line of subservient double-think is the article which appeared in the WRP daily *News Line* on 8 February, under the heading **The Moscow Olympics must go on**. 'Despite our opposition to the invasion of Afghanistan,' whines the article, 'we stand four-square behind the defence of the USSR against imperialism. (Yippee!) Part of that defence involves the right of the Soviet Union to host the Olympic games this year.' The laddies in the Kremlin will no doubt reward their staunch supporters in Clapham by gunning down a few more workers in the Ukraine.

The traditional left is blind to the fact that the USSR is one of the strongest epicentres of capitalism. They do not see the Soviet Union as a principal contestant in the game, preferring to imagine that imperialism is a Western and not a Russian crime. Yet the strength of Soviet military power comes from the expropriation of a massive economic surplus produced by the bureaucratic coercion of its own and its satellites' populations, who are conceded a social wage far short of what is achieved in the West.

Despite this, the left continues to believe that the USSR is purely reactive to 'the' epicentre of world capitalism in the USA. They show their qualified sympathy by limiting criticisms of the USSR to polite protests about the quality of boiled maggots served in Siberian labour camps. That is why there are no left-instigated demonstrations outside the Soviet embassy.

This makes it all the more necessary to publicize the struggle of the Soviet working class and to undertake the defence of those who have been victimized for their participation in that struggle, but not by pressurizing Labour MPs and union bureaucrats, or by muting criticisms of the Soviet elite in the belief that the USSR is some kind of workers' state.

The resistance to the bureaucracy which is class-based has to be separated from the activities of those claiming to represent ethnic and national minorities, religious groups, and intellectual elites, to whom bias and favour is shown in the West. This means highlighting the repression of strikes, shop-floor resistance, and attempts to form autonomous workers organizations. And for the sake of clarity, explicit opposition has to be shown to such ragbag reactionaries as the Young Tories, Muslim fanatics, and right-wing emigres who recently demonstrated in Trafalgar Square.

# SEQUELAE OF A LEAFLET: SPARE RIB CENSORS SOLIDARITY

In the December issue of the feminist magazine *Spare Rib*, the following attack appeared on the London Solidarity leaflet, "ABORTION; THE INSIDE STORY", 2000 copies of which were distributed on the TUC's march against the Corrie Bill.

## A WARNING

The present political climate – including the Corrie Bill – has made it increasingly important for women to think about taking the law into our own hands. Women in other countries have been learning to do abortions themselves as an important part of their feminist practice. But leaflets distributed on the march by groups such as 'Solidarity' contain dangerously inaccurate advice and information about self-help abortion. We would not advise any women to follow this advice. While it is important for feminists here to be considering and learning about self-help methods, it should be a slow, careful and considered group learning process – following misleading instructions can be fatal.

In a fashion typical of the national press when dealing with political opponents, the leaflet was discredited without the readers being given a chance to judge the contents; showing contempt for them in the manner of the press machine, by deciding what is best for them.

A letter (reprinted below) from a member of Solidarity to *Spare Rib* in reply to their 'warning' has not been published.

An article entitled "ABORTION: THE RIGHT TO KNOW" in the Oxford community newspaper *Back Street Bugle*, before the censorship of the Solidarity reply, examined *Spare Rib's* suppression of the contents of the leaflet and the motivation behind it. We know *Spare Rib* were angered by this article, but their later refusal to print the reply, justifies the attack on them in retrospect. Perhaps they do not like being confronted with the assertions about their motives. We quote from *Back Street Bugle* "Perhaps the "official" feminist movement wants to keep the monopoly of knowledge on menstrual extraction, so that women will be dependent on them if legal abortion is ever seriously restricted."

**sequel**, n. What follows after, continuation or resumption of a story etc. after a pause or provisional ending, (*in the s.*, later on) after effects, upshot. **sequela** n. (med; pl. -lae), disease etc. consequential on another. (*second*)

Elsewhere *Peace News* (25/1/80) printed a letter attacking the leaflet without investigating the allegations. They later printed a letter of protest from Manchester Solidarity.

The *Leveller* with a bit of slack reporting managed to mislead people into confusing our leaflet with a highly dangerous one from a source described only as *Common Knowledge*. So far the *Leveller* has failed to clarify the issue.

Pieces in the *Newham Recorder* (21/2/80) and *Guardian* (13/2/80) referred to the method described in the leaflet as a practice people would resort to, if the law changed. To this we say; 'Yes! Probably they will.' If the slogan "Not the Church, Not the State, Women must decide their fate", is to mean anything, then the habit of making demands of the state and its agencies must be challenged and changed.

While attempts are made to point to the vast differences between the *Solidarity* and *Common Knowledge* leaflets lax reporting in the above papers (and in the case of the *Scottish Sunday Mail* (9/3/80) deliberate use of 'shock-horror') lumps both leaflets together. The *Sunday Mail* refused to print a reply from Scottish Solidarity. We include below our own condemnation of the *Common Knowledge* publication. However the *Sunday Mail* piece did give us the quote of the debate from Corrie himself. "I think this has probably come about because of a misconception....."

## NAC

Assuming that the National Abortion Campaign are correctly reported by the press and condemning both leaflets equally; are they incapable of differentiating between our leaflet on menstrual extraction and a document advocating and giving detailed instructions on a dangerous 'back-street' method of abortion?

## WCSW

Perhaps the most unfortunate action was undertaken by a group of women in Leeds calling themselves 'Women Concerned for the Safety of Women' (WCSW) who appear to have circulated a letter to most left/radical bookshops suggesting the removal of the leaflet from the last issue of our journal. A face-to-face with these women might help, if they choose to confront us. (We guarantee their individual anonymity, although they did not consider ours in their circular.)

The debate continues with an article in this issue dealing with the problems and dangers of menstrual extraction, as well as some of the reasons for discussing it.

Monopoly of information is a cornerstone of a sectional and privileged society, to be attacked (in this case) whether it is the practice of mystique by the medical profession, or of censorship by a small group of women who want to keep the facts about the method to themselves or under their control.

As many women as possible must be made aware of the method to enable them to debate its possibilities and its difficulties and then consider its practice.

### KARMAN

Given the tormented bitterness colouring the perception of a section of the womens movement towards all men, it cannot help being observed that even if Harvey Karman had been a 'good guy' he was still a man. There is some evidence accompanying the WCSW letter on Karman's dubious activities, but there is no denunciation of the method he pioneered. Is it because this technique is felt to be still the most suitable?

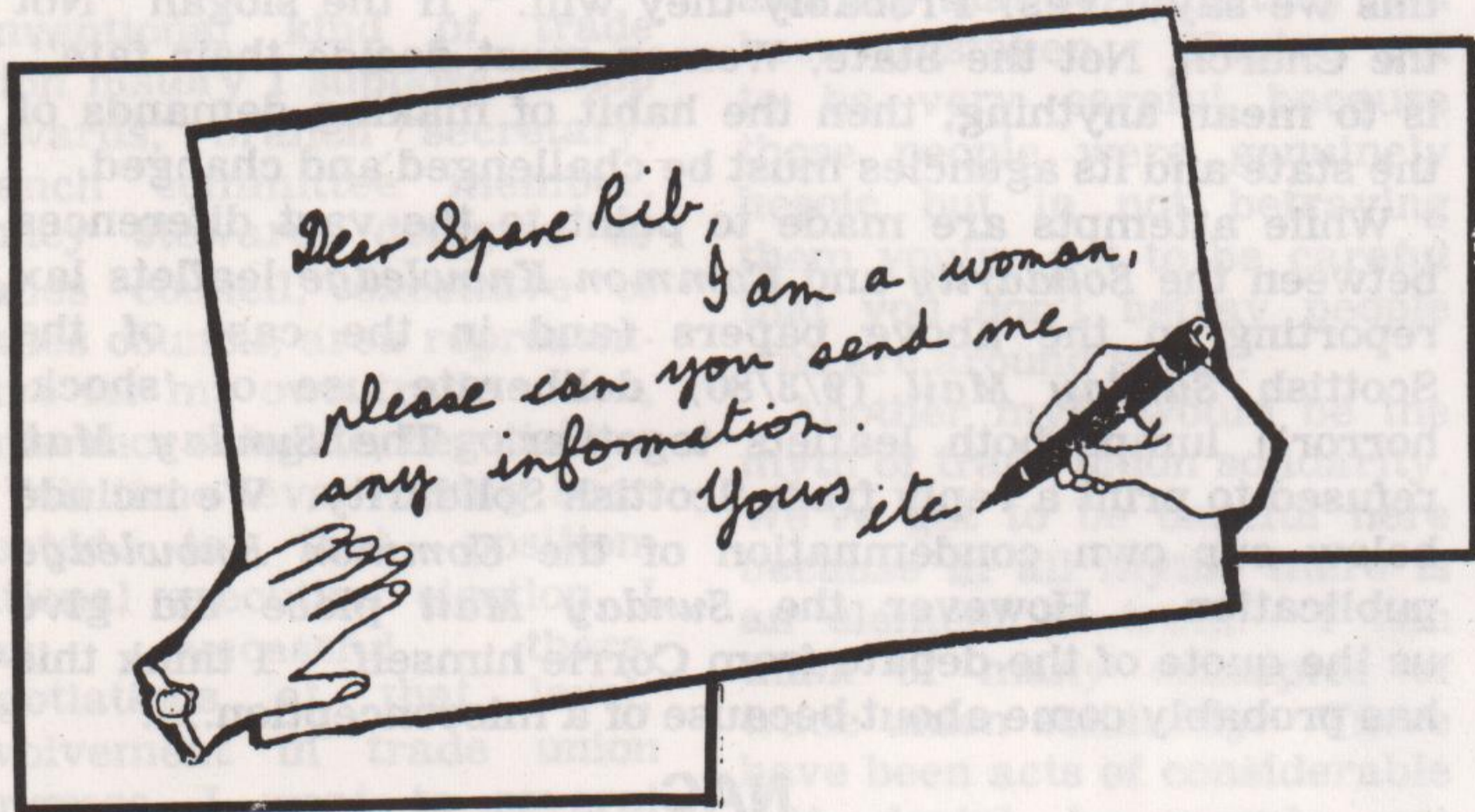
Is part of the hostility to the leaflet really due to the fact that it was produced by what they see as a 'male-dominated' group? Is that what prompts the remark in the WCSW circular; "They (Solidarity-EDS) have no more the interests of women at heart than had Harvey Karman."?

If *Solidarity* is 'making capital' as they state, by addressing itself to the question; couldn't the 'womens movement' be similarly accused? Is the 'womens movement' the self-appointed spokeswomen on abortion for all women? (Acting like Leninists who claim to speak for the 'working-class'). The TUC bureaucrats aren't the only ones who want to crush dissent.

Mightn't the women in *Solidarity*, some of whom are 'feminists' (in the tolerable sense of the word) and perhaps even the men, have a worthwhile contribution to make? The debate on menstrual extraction spreads far beyond the 'womens movement'. *Spare Rib* and WCSW must stop stifling it.

Revolutions start to rumble when people ignore self-appointed leadership. This applies as much to elite cliques of feminists as it does to Leninist vanguards.

'Prickly-person' (Leeds)



### Postscript

Patrick Jenkin, Social Services Secretary, in a parliamentary answer on 11th March, said the *Solidarity* and *Common Knowledge* publications were being referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Widely reported in the press, some papers, deliberately or not, used the amalgam technique to confuse them in the minds of the public. A letter appeared in the *Guardian* (27/3/80) to clarify the issue, from a Jean Raison. We quote from it; "Patrick Jenkin and your reporter are both wrong about this leaflet. It doesn't hide its origin, but is openly published by the Solidarity group in London. It doesn't recommend do-it-yourself abortion, but clearly warns against such a step. It doesn't advocate breaking the 1967 Abortion Act, but clearly warns against such a risk. It doesn't describe a method used by backstreet abortionists before the 1969 Act, but the Karman technique developed in the United States during the 1970's and successfully used in several countries, including Britain. It doesn't give false assurances about safety, but quite rightly says that this method is acceptably safe when properly used by trained people."

# LETTER

## TO.... *Spare Rib*

Dear 'Spare Rib',

Your warning to readers (Dec. 1979) about the leaflet on 'Menstrual Extraction' produced by the London Solidarity group for the October 28 Abortion demo. contrived to repeat points made in the leaflet itself while telling everyone to disregard it completely. We agree it is important for women to consider this topic — that's why we did the leaflet. We agree that there are risks involved — that's why the leaflet was headed with a warning not to use it as an instruction manual. We do not agree with the unsubstantiated slur about 'dangerously inaccurate advice and information'. If that was what you thought, it would surely have been more responsible to say exactly what the inaccuracies were; but we are given no single instance, and no scrap of accurate information to put in its place. In fact, we gave no 'advice', except in the form of repeated cautions. But perhaps our error was in raising the matter at all?

For years the only printed references in circulation about this technique of safer, earlier abortions have been apparently knowing allusions which gave the uninitiated no idea of what it would be like either to undergo the procedure or to be one of a group practising it. There was a demand for more details from women not among the fortunate few already in the know. Starting from scratch, some of us began to research the topic thoroughly, using articles published in medical journals (references available on request). After comparing and collating many accounts, we based our description of the procedure on two articles written by Harvey Karman in 1972, plus additional data where necessary, to illustrate the point that paramedics under medical supervision had done it successfully. I suppose Karman's account could be all lies and distortions; but if so, why was it not denounced along with all the other denunciations of Karman when he came into conflict with women's groups in the States? In any case, the leaflet was not intended to cover every detail of the technique. It was supposed to tell interested women a bit more than they knew already, and to suggest possible lines of further enquiry in case they might decide to take their interest further. A modest contribution — but more, as far as I know, than other groups have yet been prepared to publish openly.

I would endorse the warning that no woman should try this in isolation or untrained, and agree that a 'slow, careful, considered, group learning process' is required; we said as much and more, emphasising that contact should first be made with people already experienced in the technique, and training undertaken thoroughly and systematically.

I should like to hear from anyone who can document the alleged inaccuracies (e.g. the time of aspiration given seems very short, but it must be remembered that this only means the time taken to draw a few millilitres of fluid into a syringe, and does not include insertion of the cannula or any other part of the procedure).

I should also like to know — given that you acknowledge this to be a legitimate area of concern for women at this time — how on earth we are supposed to make a start if any attempt to discuss it is to be put down with purely negative criticism and even smear tactics. Or is *Spare Rib* only concerned with small elite groups of the right sort of sisters?

Best Wishes,

Liz

c/o Solidarity  
123 Lathom Road  
London E6  
14.12.79

# MORE ON MENSTRUAL EXTRACTION

**WHOSE ARE THE RIGHT HANDS?** In France and the USA, one result of women's self-help health groups practising early vacuum abortions was a change in the laws, making legal abortions easier. In Britain, one result of producing a leaflet describing the technique of very early vacuum abortion has been that opponents of the Corrie Bill, designed to make legal abortions more difficult, have pointed to it as an awful warning; this, they say, is the sort of thing that desperate women will be driven to if Corrie becomes law.

We don't object — on the contrary — to strengthening the case against any restriction on our already imperfect control over our own bodies and lives. But the argument sometimes tends to miss the point of what we are saying and why it fits in with our politics.

Even with the legal situation at its most favourable, women are obliged to seek out sympathetic doctors, to plead their case, and then to put themselves into the hands of the specialist. From a libertarian point of view, this is not ideal. Nor is it absolutely inevitable. A procedure which can be performed by groups of women, not medically qualified perhaps, but having made themselves experts because of commitment to what they are doing, not only tends to increase the individual's control and power to take decisions; it also has a high chance of being safer and less traumatic than abortions carried out in impersonal clinical conditions, often later than necessary because of red tape, and possibly by overworked, alienated or indifferent staff.

Our attack on the monopoly of expertise does not mean, however, that we deny the importance of intensive study and systematic training. Indeed, any group setting up unofficially and illegally to perform such procedures would have to be ultra-scrupulous, more so than some professionals. Not in order to enhance the mysteries of the craft by making it seem more difficult, but because the responsibility is very real and serious.

To emphasise this point, and to correct any impression that we have intended to endorse the views of one particular 'expert' (see SSR '11), I shall summarise a few of the complexities and differences of opinion encountered on going into this in depth. Some of it might be off-putting, which would be a pity if it led any woman to incur worse risks, such as physical or psychological damage from later abortion, or a lifetime of alienated motherhood. But in general decisions should be made on the basis of maximum knowledge rather than shutting one's eyes and hoping for the best ( and it will be no bad thing if it gives pause to those no doubt well-meaning people who say we should go and get done as soon as we're a week overdue — on that basis, some of us would have set up amazing world records for repeat procedures).

## PATIENT SELECTION

It will be apparent that the technique of 'menstrual extraction' has limited application, and that unofficial, illegal groups would be well advised to err on the side of caution. The optimum time for undergoing it is about 6-7 weeks after the first day of the last menstrual period, i.e. when 10-18 days overdue. If it's done too early, there is a high chance that the patient may not be pregnant, and if she is, the conceptus is so small that it may be missed. If it's too late, the risk of complications increases, and the technique may not be adequate to complete the abortion. It is known that m.e. has been performed routinely on non-pregnant women, e.g. on and by groups of trainees; therapeutically, e.g. to avoid painful periods; and for convenience, e.g. on women athletes. But when it is incurring legal as well as even slight medical risks, I suggest it should be limited to cases of necessity, using the usual pregnancy test. This is not 100% reliable, especially if negative (it has a built-in bias against false positives) but can be re-done if a woman thinks she is really pregnant.

Preliminary interviews and examination\*\* should be designed to make sure the procedure is suitable for each patient, excluding those with evidence or history of relevant health problems or abnormalities and making sure that the size of the uterus indicates pregnancy is not too far advanced.\*\*

## PREPARATION

Anaesthesia and sedation are unlikely to be practicable for informal groups. Most practitioners don't use sedation anyway; some use local anaesthetics, rarely general, but quite often none at all. Careful and constant counselling and involvement of the patient, and attention to how she feels, go a long way.

Personal antisepsis is usually applied, internally and externally. The vagina is sometimes described as self-cleansing, and it may be thought that swabbing about inside could do more harm than good; doubt has also been cast on whether the application of antiseptic solutions makes a significant difference to the infection rate. On the other hand, since infections can occur, groups might choose to do everything possible to prevent them. This question, and others, will not be resolved here.

The highest standards of hygiene must, of course, be applied both to personnel involved and to the surroundings.

## EQUIPMENT

Kits consisting of a self-locking syringe and flexible plastic cannula are more or less commercially available. Cannulae are pre-packed and gas-sterilised, and are intended to be disposable. If they are re-used, and effective sterilising medium is needed. Boiling won't do, since they are heat-sensitive; iodine can also damage the plastic, and formalin

can be an irritant; benzalkonium chloride, recommended for this purpose by a world conference of 'experts' (and suggested in our leaflet) is one of a group of antiseptics heavily criticised as ineffective by medical opinion. Alternatives presented in a more recent research are: minimum 10 minutes soaking in a solution of 'Cidex' or 95% ethanol (unfortunately the same researchers give iodine as another possibility). Other items of equipment used must be sterilized too. Whether anything other than the basics are required, and what size of cannula to use, will vary between patients.\*\* Cannulae have to be closely examined for signs of damage, since there have been cases of the tip breaking off.

Various improvisations have been used to substitute for packaged kits. Syringes (50ml.) can be modified, as long as the vital self-locking principle is borne in mind (to guard against highly dangerous air embolism); in the case of hand-pumps, one-way valves are used. The idea of modified bicycle-pumps, and the insides of biro's (for cannulae), sounds horrific, and certainly would require considerable skill — an extra dimension of risk, to be avoided if at all possible, in favour of purpose-designed instruments. The latter, however, may not be perfect either.

### TIME TAKEN

Estimates of under a minute for complete aspiration seem to be on the low side, but 2 or 3 minutes is often given, in the context of 5 or 10 minutes for the whole procedure. Duration is affected by the reactions of the patient, who experiences cramps, and apparently can take hours when done by very sensitive practitioners. Completion of the evacuation is not indicated by timing, nor by the volume of tissue removed, but by a characteristic sensation felt by the operator.\*\* Patients are usually ready to leave after resting for half an hour or so.

### COMPLICATIONS

Patients need not expect the worst, but practitioners should be prepared for it, just in case, although the complication rate is low, and those which do occur are most often not serious. At the time of the operation, a patient may experience pain above an acceptable level. It may be difficult to insert the cannula through the cervical os, especially in patients who have not borne children. Such

women may also have a strong psychological reaction against the process. The operator may decide that it is inadvisable to carry on.\*\* Blood loss may exceed the capacity of the syringe; if it looks like filling up (over 30 ml.) it can be detached, emptied and replaced or exchanged in situ.\*\*

The most common complications are incomplete evacuation of the uterus, sometimes continuing pregnancy, and pelvic infection, the symptoms being heavy bleeding and cramps for the former, fever for the latter. Usual treatments are repeat procedures and antibiotics respectively. It is always possible that things can go more seriously wrong, and groups would need to be aware of all the dangers, including rare conditions such as ectopic pregnancy. But it would be unnecessarily alarmist to list them all here.

To put it into perspective, my impression is that, when done competently, m.e. would be more comparable with the minimal discomfort and inconvenience of having an I.U.D. inserted (competently) than with, for example, a later spontaneous abortion, induced by other means or childbirth, normal or otherwise. Which is not to say that it would be a pleasant experience or a way of solving all our problems instantly.

### DECISION

In fact, I still can't be absolutely sure which way I would decide, given the preconditions for becoming a patient (I'm sure I would not, personally, want to be a practitioner). But I know that I would want to have the choice.

### TO STATE THE OBVIOUS....

The choice for or against abortion at any stage must be that of the woman concerned, and hers alone. Even if two people co-responsible have worked out a common attitude in advance, the fact of conception, or even the likelihood, can alter the decision either way. And then it has to be how the woman feels that counts. This is simply the obverse of the built-in biological unfairness whereby women can get pregnant but men can't. We're stuck with that, but we don't have to let it determine our lives.

UNA.

\*\*Denotes points at which skill, knowledge and experience are particularly indispensable.

## COMMON KNOWLEDGE OR COMMON (DANGEROUS) NONSENSE?

*Spare Rib's* warning mentioned *Solidarity*; *The Leveller* mentioned a leaflet on the 'soap-and-water' method, and commended *Spare Rib* for issuing the warning, thus inadvertently confounding our leaflet with a completely different one. In view of this, we must point out that we have no connection with the 10 duplicated pages under the imprint of "COMMON KNOWLEDGE", which described in detail how an abortion may be induced at 12 — 14 weeks by introducing an allegedly benign sterile liquid into the pregnant uterus. (See article in *The Leveller*).

*This publication embodies many faults we tried very hard to avoid, and we would not advise anyone to do what it says. Without going into all the risks involved, we would point out:*

1. Injection of any dangerous substance by an unqualified person into the uterus is a dangerous as well as an illegal procedure;
2. Induction of an abortion at 12 — 14 weeks by an unqualified person is a dangerous as well as an illegal procedure;
3. Induction of an abortion by an unqualified person with no-one else present except the patient is a dangerous as well as an illegal procedure.

*Reading the "Common Knowledge" instructions makes it even more understandable that there should be women concerned for the safety of women deeply worried about how such things are produced and distributed. But it is no excuse for reacting against the *Solidarity* leaflet in the same way, tarring it with the same brush, and rejecting and suppressing it wholesale without considering what it really said.*





# LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

## Dear Solidarity,

I am writing in response to John Q.'s letter in SSR No 11 about the discussion that has been going on in its pages, among men, about "what to do with" the Women's Liberation Movement".

I was encouraged to read on by the beginning of the letter. There has been so much bitter hatred and incomprehension among some "libertarian" men, and I hoped this would not go the same way. Yes, maybe he has grasped the connexion between his personal hurt and fear, and how this society's sexual hierarchy sets up a perpetual tension in all relationships among women and men. Perhaps this is a man who has begun to understand the contradictions that I (and many of my sisters) feel in trying to build up new ways of relating with men creatively, equally, constructively and freely, while we are still unequal in this society.

But my hopes were soon dashed. I was angered by his having read WIRES and having the gall to refer to it, and again by his suggestions about what to "do" with the WLM — does he mean how to patronise it? or how to undermine it? I wish to say something about each of these.

First, then, the issue of WIRES. This is the internal newsletter of the Women's Liberation Movement, and is for women only. This is written prominently on every issue, and cannot have escaped John Q.'s notice. So it must have been self-consciously that he read it. Now I am perfectly aware of the problems posed by wanting to limit the circulation of information and ideas in any way; the KGB, CIA and British Government do it all the time and there are good reasons to read on principle that which is forbidden. But I also thought that libertarians recognised that right of oppressed groups to organise autonomously around our own oppression. Indeed, that this was one of the important similarities between the feminist and libertarian movements which had drawn me to both of them. If this was an illusion, I was not the only one to be taken in; I didn't notice any barrage of criticism of Lynne Segal, for instance, when she drew parallels in *Beyond the Fragments*. But it seems that John Q. does not respect this right, and in denying it he places himself in opposition to libertarian as well as to feminist politics.

WIRES is written on the understanding that it won't be read by men, for whatever reasons. The WLM only grew up when women realised that our identity and needs would continue to be suppressed unless we made some space for ourselves which was without men. WIRES is a part of this space. In undermining it, John Q. (and any other man who reads it) takes his stand as aggressor and declared enemy. Actions speak louder than any words he may choose to use. How can he then claim to be surprised/hurt/angered at being treated as the

enemy? He makes me very mistrustful of his motives. He's not acting as though he does want sexual equality, but as if he wants to hang on to his power and privilege as a man.



And his suggestions about "what to do with" the WLM reinforce my mistrust. He seems to want to co-opt into an anti-feminist "anarchism" (if it still is anarchism) whatever elements in the feminist movement prove to be susceptible and to destroy the rest.

Further, he has completely misunderstood the nature of the WLM if he thinks it consists entirely of "debates" and "factions". Sure, there are lots of differences among feminists — I'm all too aware of that! I don't agree with all my sister feminists, though I strongly defend their right to organise themselves autonomously. But there's also a lot that can't be understood purely through reading books and magazines to "locate" the "debate", but which is at an emotional level. I don't speak for the movement, but I do think that one of its most important aspects is the development of political understanding directly with our emotions. Our politics are rooted in understanding and coming to terms with the latter, all the rest follows. So they can't be properly grasped only through reading or theorising. This is one reason why responses to the movement are also so emotionally charged.

Like I said, at the start of John's letter, I had hoped to find that he had caught on to this, but it's clear he hasn't worked it through at all. I would like to suggest that if he really does want to do his bit towards building a sexually equal society, as well as liberating himself from some of the psychological fetters he recognised that we all have, he should continue to confront his emotional responses to different situations he lives. This is very difficult to do beyond a certain level, and I'm sure he'll need the support of other men to do it. With them to talk and work out the politics of it all, and then to be helped by them (and help them) to draw conclusions and to act them out in life. I'm not underestimating how painfully difficult this may be, nor how slow a

process, and it will take much courage and honesty. But the anti-feminist shrapnel that has been flying around in "libertarian" spheres recently make me feel increasingly certain that there's a lot of dishonesty around. The protagonists must confront themselves and each other and work out whether they really do want equality with women, and really do want to help push society towards more freedom and equality, and therefore respect what the WLM is trying to do. Or do they really hate women, deep down, but fear to say so openly, lest it undermine their trendy libertarian/socialist credentials? Do they want to defend their present advantages and only be libertarians and socialists when it suits them? In which case, they are among my political enemies.

I can't tell what conclusions they would come to, what direction this process would push them in. But it seems necessary. And along the way they may learn better to relate to other men and better to listen to and understand their own emotions. They may find they have less need of women and are better able to relate as equals with those with whom they do come into contact. I hope so. But in the meantime, there's a lot else to be done that we might be able to do together. I hope this is possible, though sometimes I really wonder.

Linda M., Oxford



## Dear Solidarity,

As I recently read 'The Slow-Burning Fuse' I was wondering what had happened to John Quail's head. My questions have now been answered by the man himself, who publically admits, in a letter in Number 11 of Solidarity, that he has lost part of it. I can now tell him of the whereabouts of this missing portion of his mental faculties. When reading more of the execrable 11th issue I discovered that it is now calling itself Dimitri and lives in Manchester.

Yours,  
Brian Damage.

# GALVANISING THE STEEL STRIKE

The advance publicity given to the steel strike promised us yet another confrontation between the government and the trade unions. It was a confrontation which the unions were determined to avoid, and the government equally determined to provoke. With its obsolete political ideology, the Thatcher faction has convinced itself that the unions are unnecessary for the integration of the working class into the system of exploitation. The left, unwilling to surrender the prize for senility without a struggle, descended on the picket lines to call for the defence of already discredited unions. This was the dual strategy of capitalism: where blue serge failed, blue denim stood ready to move in.

Both before and during the strike, union leaders emerged from their 'patient negotiations' to sound warnings against the social unrest and economic chaos which would result from monetarist intransigence. Again and again they insisted that their aim was not to confront the Tories, but to collaborate in ensuring the viability of the steel industry. With considerable pride they pointed to their record of aiding in the restructuring of the industry while averting industrial action.

Since 1965 the number of workers in BSC plants has dwindled from 317,000 to 184,000 last year, largely due to the introduction of new technology in the form of electric arc furnaces. These have not only brought a dramatic increase in productive capacity, but have also made the steel industry less dependent on coal, no doubt in preparation for the Bennite nuclear future. In short, the unions were willing to implement redundancies in exchange for state investment, while Labour governments were willing to invest in the knowledge that a steel industry in private hands did not have the financial resources to maintain production in periods of recession and so guarantee the supply of steel if and when markets expanded once more. Despite this touching faith in the future survival of capitalism, the Labour Party was unable to prevent stiffer competition from countries such as Korea, Japan, and Brazil. The result was that the BSC faced massive interest charges (currently running at £208 million a year), a redevelopment programme that was only half complete (and required a further 52,000 redundancies), a declining share of the world market, and a new government that was ideologically opposed to nationalised industries.

In insisting that the BSC should force the pace of plant closures and redundancies, the Tories were merely accelerating a process which had previously been masterminded by the Labour left. However, a confidential report submitted to a Tory policy group in 1978 had suggested that a future Conservative administration would be able to withstand a lengthy strike in the steel industry. Recent statements by Joseph have confirmed that a combination of plant closures and asset-stripping is to re-establish the profitability of the industry (while rewarding the private sector with an increased share of the market). As long as supplies of steel were readily available — and this was guaranteed when the unions dithered for six months before calling a

strike — then industrial action by BSC workers could only serve to hasten the restructuring process. Confident that it had nothing to lose from the strike, the government imposed its cash limits and withdrew to await developments.

Despite anguished pleas from union negotiators, the BSC went ahead with the rundown at Corby, insisted on a further 52,000 redundancies at least, and finally made its two percent pay offer. While the unions and the left squabbled about production statistics in an apparent attempt to prove that British steelworkers are more docile than any others, the BSC management carried out job reduction exercises and identified 2,300 'non-core' jobs in the profitable Sheffield steelworks group alone. This points to a sustained campaign of informal resistance which has successfully lowered output and imposed manning levels decided on by the workers themselves. Others chose to opt for voluntary redundancy, a timely rejection of fraudulent appeals for 'unity' from careerist shop stewards with an eye to the supposed dignity of labour.

The secret talks in which the ISTC saw its last hope of reasoning with management and hoodwinking the steelworkers foundered on demands for unconditional surrender. Not even the ISTC could find any enthusiasm for the dismemberment of entire plants, particularly in view of its conviction that managerial ineptitude (the crisis of leadership!) was forcing the industry into irreversible decline. This has led the union leaderships, far-sighted in matters of preserving capitalism, to see themselves as its saviours until the return of a Labour government. Dismayed by the overt class hostility of the Tories, who are more interested in demonstrating their ability to rule like latter-day colonialists than in pandering to uppity workers or bailing out the nationalised steel industry, the unions moved in to rescue the situation. Their problem was how to do this without losing the already uncertain allegiance of their members, which they still need if they are to have a plausible claim to share in the functions of guiding and managing the economy as a whole.

Anxiety about the state of the economy turned to aggression as the bureaucrats found themselves squeezed between the intransigence of the government and the mounting anger of the steelworkers. Speaking at a TUC demonstration, Murray reasserted the unions' claim to be the 'authentic voice' of the working class and issued a raucous threat: 'We are here to demonstrate our unity, and anyone or any organisation which in any way, whether by utterance, action or by seeking disruption, destroys that unity will have to answer to the working class of Britain.' The belligerence of this statement was in marked contrast to the plaintive warnings about social unrest. With the mass pickets outside Hadfields and elsewhere taking on the character of workers' assemblies, decisive action was necessary to re-establish control of the strike.

It was soon to become evident that the strike would have to pass beyond the control of the unions and into the hands of the steelworkers if it was to achieve more than the accelerated restructuring of the industry. In the first week the ISTC issued instructions that the private sector was not to be interfered with, and throughout the strike the various unions (notably the NUM, TGWU, AEUW, and NUR) took it in turns to order normal working.

The local strike committees, although sporadically more militant than headquarters, also demonstrated their concern

for normality. Little more than juntas of shop stewards determined to maintain their managerial prerogatives, they issued orders and shunted pickets around the country with as little effort to consult and inform as they had shown previously when taking decisions behind the workers' backs or negotiating redundancy agreements. The effect of this was to leave token pickets scattered about the country in isolated groups of three or four. Individual workers were able to discover what was happening only by courtesy of the media, as was shown by the ISTC's use of newspaper advertisements to urge rejection of BSC pay offers.

Even so, the pickets took to using their own initiative when deciding which goods should or should not be allowed through. This deplorable disruption was ended either by withdrawing pickets entirely, as at the British Leyland plant at Bathgate, or by issuing specific instructions that only consignments of steel were to be turned back.

Where direct instructions failed, or where mass pickets converged, the unions made militant noises and sent vague appeals for solidarity through their bureaucratic channels. When it looked as if the strike might spread to miners in South Wales (whose jobs are also threatened), Murray stepped in to cool the situation and promised a day of taken protest on 14 May, converting the threat of direct action into an ineffectual march against Tory policies. As one steelworker put it, 'Len Murray and the TUC are only talking in support of us. That's no good, we don't need budgies, we need help on the picket line.' Time and again the unions had to ward off justified suspicions that they were dragging their feet. Faced with a demand for action from Yorkshire miners, Scargill was able to post himself at the head of a flying column and march on the police line outside Hadfields, where he was able to exchange pleasantries with his uniformed colleagues. There was little else to do, since the day shift had already started work a couple of hours before.

The hostility and cynicism aroused by the unions made it all the easier for managements to address appeals to the workers over the heads of union leaders. As at British Leyland, the workers were faced with an unenviable choice between two gangs of unresponsive rogues who were clearly in collusion with each other. When Sirs sat down to secret talks with the chairman of Hadfields and agreed that the firm should be given immunity because of its financial problems (as if the workers had none!), this merely reinforced the climate of anxiety and suspicion. ISTC officials at Firth Brown, another Sheffield firm, were later reprimanded by the managing director when they suggested that the company would collapse if there was not an immediate return to work.

This was only one of a series of comic-opera reversals during the strike. We saw the 'right to work' slogan being brandished by both sides, one eager to cash in on the

opportunity afforded by the strike, the other seeking support for meaningless and mystifying slogans, both convinced that an obedient involvement in unremitting production (and occasional reproduction) is the only right and proper activity for the working class. Flying pickets were dispatched to ISTC headquarters in London and Scargill's command centre in Barnsley — at the request of Hadfields' bosses. The BSC made reformist demands for more democracy in the unions and held its ballot about a ballot, the pinstripe (or should that be poloneck?) equivalent of the campaign being mounted by the Liaison Committee for Constitutional Reform(!), a ginger group within the ISTC. This time it was the government, not the unions, that was denounced for wrecking the economy, and Hadfields Chairman, Norton pranced and capered like any hysterical shop steward.

Aspiring state capitalists of the left persuasion would do well to note that their plans for 'workers' control' are by no means assured of success, now that the shop stewards who are to control the workers have lost their monopoly of populist militancy and appear more and more in the guise of boilersuited bosses.

With the traditional labour movement reduced to muttering in dark corridors, it might appear that its authority is irretrievably lost and that the way is now open for the emergence of self-activity and self-organisation on the part of the workers themselves. But the appeals to outdated loyalties will continue, along with the oafish conduct that seeks to contain spontaneous activity within bureaucratic constraints. These pretensions will be enthusiastically supported by a left which has for years refused to recognise the elementary truth that the unions have become the major enemy of the working class.

In the meantime, the unions face an additional complication in the impending laws on secondary picketing which will flush them even further into the open. Prior's Employment Bill proposes to penalize those unions which fail in their attempts to curb effective industrial action. If it becomes law, it will mean more rigorous controls on local initiatives and spontaneous resistance, or overt collaboration with the police in removing troublesome pickets. Either way, the unions will not be able to avoid still more disaffection in the future, with a corresponding shift towards autonomous activity as traditional loyalties continue to disintegrate. And when workers come to confront these obstacles to their own emancipation, their actions will have to assume the character of a revolt if they are not to remain the victims of a luckless past.

We may leave the final word to Prior himself: 'You can pass all the laws you like, but if you cannot get the consent of the people you cannot enforce these laws'.

P.S. (Sheffield)



# MANAGING UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Anyone in any doubt of the extent of control in everyday life should look closely at the unemployment business — not just at what is exchanged over (and under) the counter, but at the window-dressing too. Even this distinction may be a misleading one because, as this article shows, the managers increase confusion and helplessness among the people (products) they deal with, while purporting to do the opposite.



The Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) has been going for over two years now. There are four types of scheme:

- Project work: usually painting and decorating old people's homes;
- Workshops (carpentry and metalwork): seen mainly as a dumping ground for the less able;
- Work Experience on Employers Premises (WEPP): with its high success rate, this is the 'piece de resistance' in the eyes of Manpower Services, who fund all these schemes. Success means getting a young person employed by the firm which took them on as a trainee on a scheme. In other words it is a very convenient piece of machinery for the firm, in terms of selection. Also it costs nothing;
- Community Service: the mopping-up operation. Trainees on this scheme are involved in a 'caring' role. There is a lower staff/trainee ratio than on WEPP so that young people 'with problems' can gain more attention. Staff are expected to provide a number of services — education, social work, careers advice, etc.

Although they are funded by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), most schemes have another employing body called the sponsors. In addition they may have one or more advisory bodies. This means that anyone working on the scheme has at least three tiers of management to deal with, including the manager of the particular scheme. At all levels of management, from MSC through to sponsors and team staff, there are various and rapidly varying shades of opinion. The following questions may give an idea of the area of debate. They are taken from a work-sheet which was issued at a conference organised by the National Council for Social Service (NCSS) for those working on Community Service schemes. There was no trade-union

representation at this conference, a surprising omission since union officials with their managerial expertise are usually welcomed. However, it does reflect the politics of the organising body and of the projected members of the conference.

**'Does Community Service actually provide tangible marketable skills? Is it too much person-centred?'**

The fact that the questions are posed in these terms at all, of course, means that the answer to the second one is 'yes'. Here is yet another turn of the screw of guilt for those in the business who are already guilt-ridden because they are employed on the basis of others' unemployment. Now we must examine their tender consciences and see if they are being good at the job as they should be. It is worth noting the combination of different types of jargon in this quotation. The raw commercialist 'marketable' is tempered by the sociological-sounding 'skills' so that you hardly notice its weight. The faintly contemptuous, American 'person-centred' lightens this part of the question too. As for 'tangible', it serves to reinforce the tenor of the argument (paraphrased as 'We want measurable results from performance') while being nonsensical — skills are not tangible.

**'Do supervisors need to be trained in handling daily social education or is it all common sense?'**

Again the sociological element comes in — 'trained', 'social education' — and is set against an (implied) more realistic one. The previous quote had the business world as its point of reference. This one has a relatively old-fashioned 'plain man's' approach — 'common sense'.

**'Is it a function of the Youth Opportunities Programme to encourage trainees to question the purpose of routine, badly paid jobs or to encourage the "work ethic"?''**

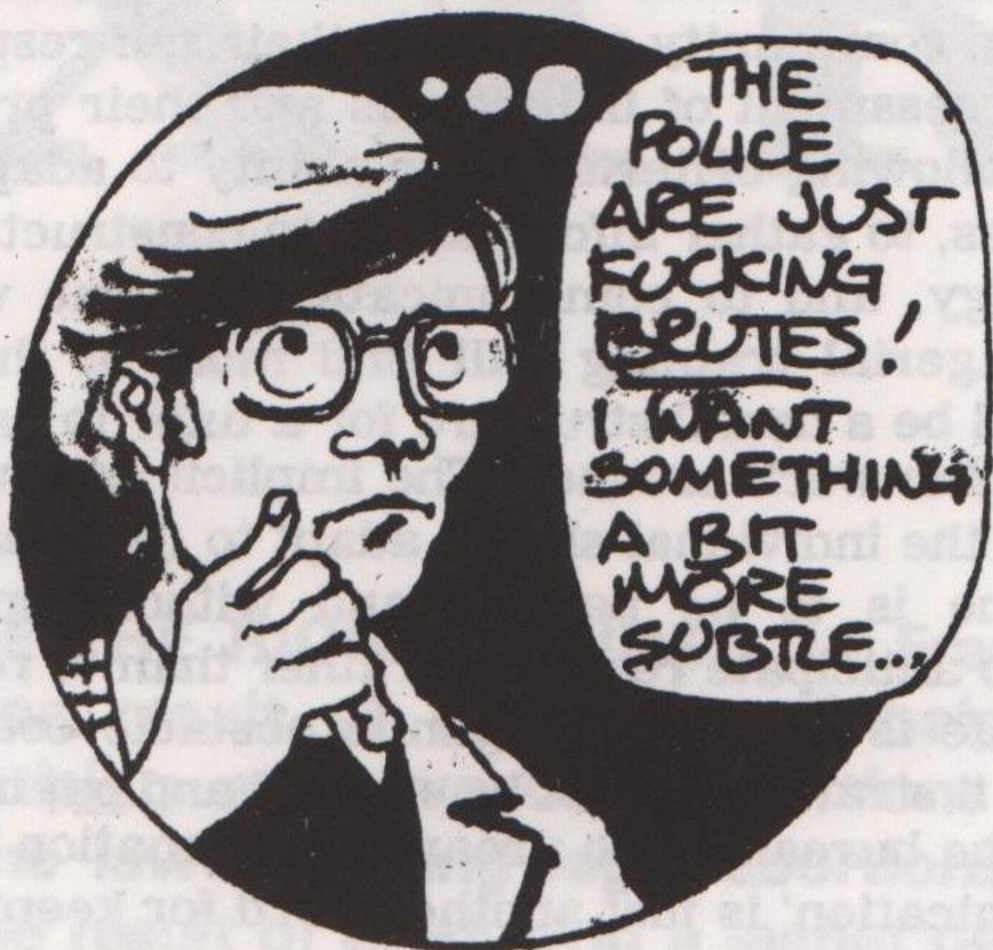
Here a seemingly liberal attitude is counterposed to a rigid, Victorian one. These two outlooks and the attitudes suggested in the other quotations reflect the types of people with university degrees, or older ex-armed forces and skilled craftsmen. The latter are more favoured at present (Thatcher-fashion), but may well fail eventually because they lack the communication skills of the former group.

The two groups could be labelled 'soft-liners' and 'hard-liners', but this is useful only as a rule of thumb. Cross-fertilisations occur, the puritan work ethic is rife and can be discovered in the most curious hybrids. The fanatical, strict time-keeping feminist, for instance, is not an unknown breed.



The equivalent of the old-boy network exists, perhaps not surprising in what is after all, for all its pretensions to be different, just an offshoot of the civil service. Once your face is known and fits, you go drinking in the right places at the right time with the right people, engage in the right kind of cool, obscure conversation, wear the right, trendy uniform... you can move sideways in the same sphere or even become more influential.

Style is everything, whichever school you belong to: getting work done in a minimum amount of time or filling the required time up by making work; doing deals in the pub or working through your lunch-break; laid-back artist or hysterical trade-unionist. Childcare and other sorts of 'care' and 'support' are sacrosanct and provide good excuses for absence. You must have an excuse, however, and the more capable of eliciting sympathy from co-workers, the better. But the truth is inexcusable and almost as bad is the unimaginative story. Never, in any circumstances, get 'heavy' (i.e. serious).



The lowest level of management is thus effectively set against itself by the difference in attitudes to and styles of work. The argument is diverted away from the actual work and its worth into gossip, complaints and intrigue. It is a looking-glass world in which the boss is not the boss, but a friend; there is no demarcation between the different jobs or for that matter between business and pleasure. Dealings are in half-truths which cannot be condemned as lies, but nor can they be relied and acted upon. Apathy, paranoia and paralysis result. No one is accountable to anyone, but one is accountable to everyone, especially to the person one least expected and who has least to do with the situation. The power of the boss resides in absence rather than presence, as with all good bureaucrats. There are no contacts nor even many verbal assurances. There is endless game-playing (trade-union shops provide yet another forum for that), withholding information, giving it at a strategic time, putting different slants on information given to different people at different times. Hints are all that is needed. The unspoken word is all-powerful.

So much for relations between staff. Attitudes to trainees and relations between staff and trainees indicate quite clearly into which camp the member of staff falls, especially in matters of discipline. Among soft-liners, conselling is advocated.

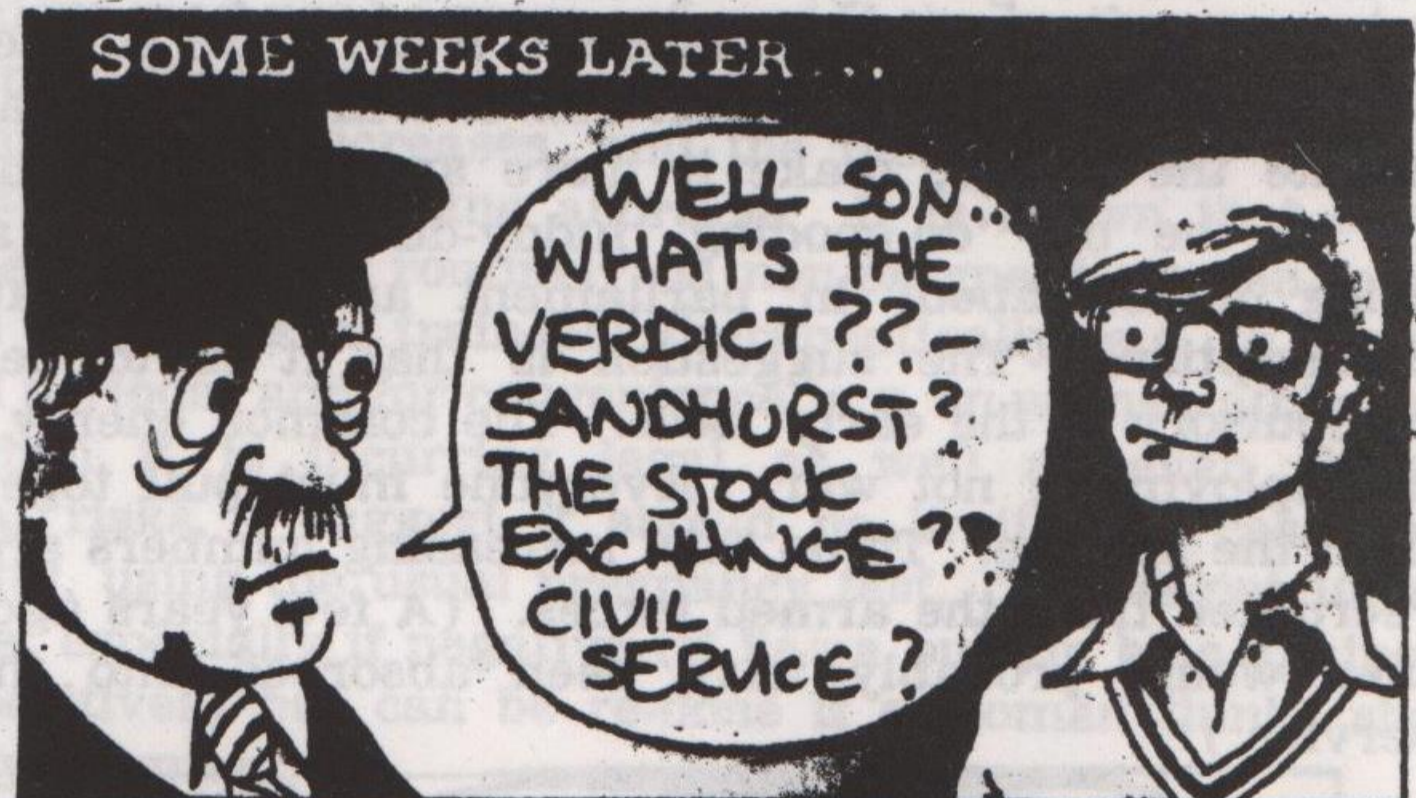


One does not treat the crime but rather the 'whole person'. Shock treatment is suggested — doing what the young person least expects — for which it is advisable to know them pretty well, of course, so that 'conselling' pays off. 'Being responsible for oneself', 'self-discipline' and 'self-management' are all ideas which find favour with the soft-liners and which they preach to trainees. What people who take this line fail to realize is that 'self-management' presupposes a relatively privileged position in the first place, and a certain amount of choice. It is rather like the Victorian, liberal

argument against state support for the poor: 'God helps those who help themselves'. Time and again Victorian attitudes come up, more or less thinly disguised as political/economic/sociological argument. Another quotation from an NCSS conference-paper illustrates this:

'It is fashionable to argue that new technology will make employment for all an impossible dream and that people must be trained to enjoy their leisure. At the same time the public services are crying out for greater manpower. Increased leisure will be a blessing for all so long as it is accompanied by a reasonable income and the opportunity to make a contribution to the work of the society in which we live. If high and rising unemployment is the precursor of new technology it will appear as a curse rather than a blessing and its introduction will be no guarantee that all will share its benefits.'

As in an earlier quotation, this piece capitalizes on its common-sense approach. This time, however, common-sense has been elevated to the heights of 'reason' ('reasonable', 'rational men'), which is reminiscent of the 18th and 19th centuries. What with its generally high moral tone and biblical resonances, it could almost be declaimed from a pulpit. One is almost blinded to the way in which the author has carefully selected his comments — the reason for the lack of manpower in public services is low wages. In the same article the author says that there should be a commitment to full employment from all political parties and trade unions because it is 'the young, black, unskilled, deprived and handicapped who suffer most'. In America studies have been undertaken to show the links between unemployment and — among other things — 'mortality'. Hence unemployment has been labelled a 'terminal disease' (strange that no one has ever publicized the studies of work and death. The life-enhancing properties of wage labour are so obvious). Thus any real discussion about the issues of unemployment gets lost in a mixture of sociological verbiage and Victorian patronage.



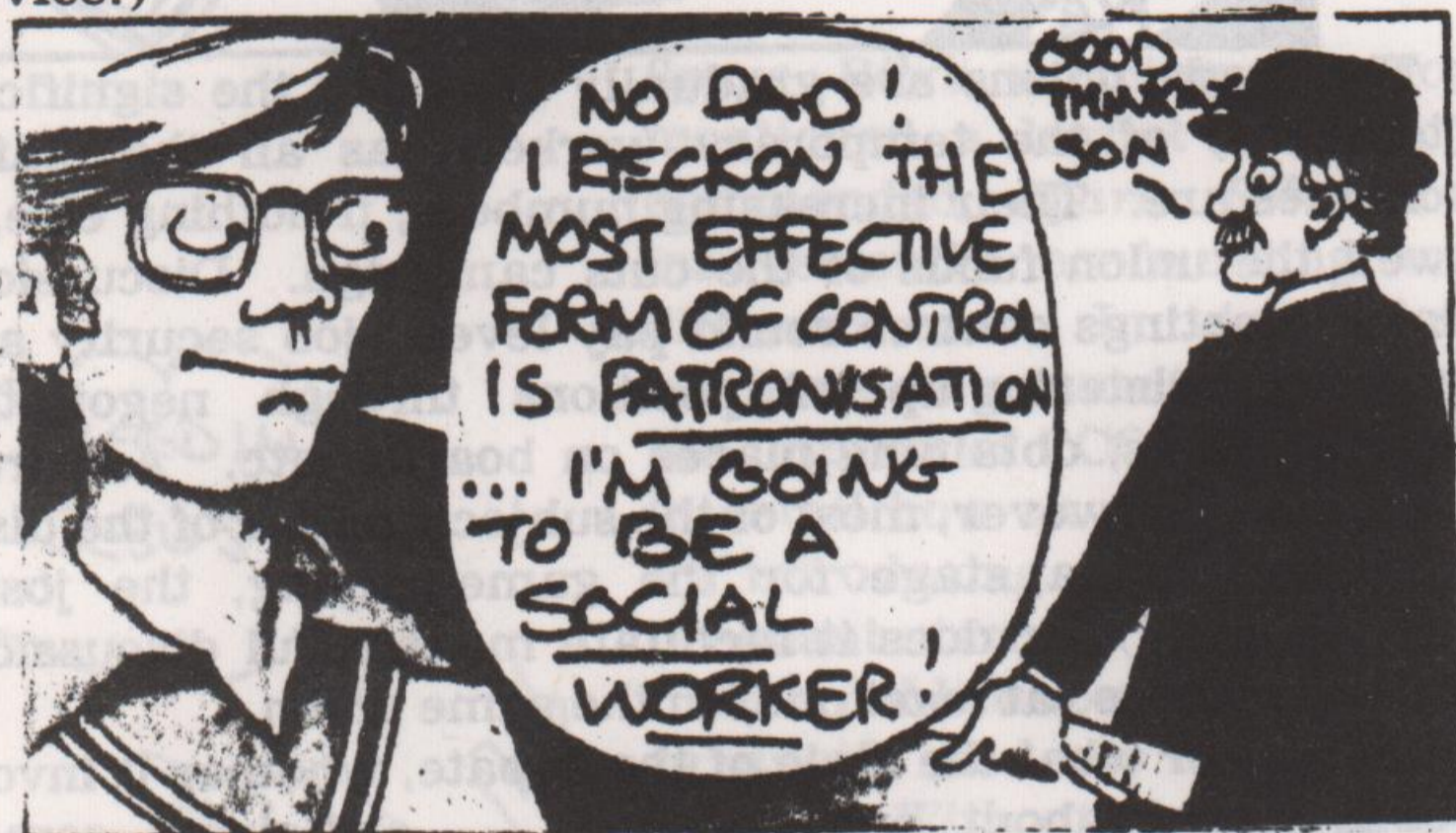
The trade unions are gradually realizing the significance (to them) of the temporary workers, as all the staff on schemes are. Their increasing numbers, if nothing else, can swell the union funds of the cuts campaign. Discussion at union meetings centres round pay levels, job security and a general bolstering-up of positions through negotiations, qualifications, obtaining places on boards, etc. As already mentioned, however, most of the subject-matter of the discussion provides a stage for the game-playing, the jostling for position. Nor does it facilitate meaningful discussion to have your boss (at least one) in the same union.

No matter what the style of the debate, whether it involves being 'open' about one's feelings — criticizing someone publicly, bursting into tears — or whatever, underlying it all is the question of job security. Even the hard-liners at the top cannot afford to cut YOP completely in case they find themselves out of a job. But in order to justify, retain or consolidate their jobs there has to be rationalization of schemes. It is called 'Integration'. It means less staff, more bureaucracy, a higher staff/trainee ratio and an increase in duties for the same low pay. It would supposedly provide more variety of opportunity for the young person — and incidentally more chance, if not of controlling, then at least of influencing life outside work (if any should still exist). The idea is to have a 'Central Resource Unit' providing a base for:

- education/training; vocational guidance (all the jobs you could do, if they did but exist);
- information/advice;
- social education; leisure and recreational facilities;
- central administration.

In the description of this great new concept in managing the unemployed such words as 'sharing' and 'co-operation' come up. Read sharing as in job-sharing (two for the price of one) and coercion for co-operation, and a more accurate picture may be obtained, especially since 'low-cost' comes into it too (affecting those involved in organizing the schemes). For the young person it will have all the advantages of Butlins, making services more 'easily available', putting the services within a 'generic context' and within 'an environment more acceptable to the unemployed person'. It all suggests a highly sophisticated experiment. Control all variables. Behaviour modification on a grand scale.

The 1970's saw a great expansion in the behavioural sciences. The language and philosophy — materialist and determinist — was ironically inspired by Marx and has filtered through into MSC literature via American sociological thought. In the mid-70's there was still the soft-gloved touch — the importance of catering for individual needs — a good way of selling the whole Programme. Now there is a much more blatant approach: numbers, money, turnover and control are stressed quite openly. Results are needed to justify the MSC's existence. In the beginning MSC also supported the suggestion that young people should be involved in running the project. Now it seems even more attractive, in a way. (They would not have to pay staff wages.) According to Colin Ball, the man who advocates such an approach, all that stops this possibility from becoming a glorious reality are the 'vested interests' of 'minister, MSC, trade unions, employers, educationists and youth organizers'. He suggests shifting work experience from 16/18-year-olds to 13/16-year-olds and letting the former group set up their own service and manufacturing enterprises, giving them a chance to 'recycle the cash they earn rather than claw it back'. Very Alternative Socialist this sounds. He says that young people should be allowed to 'compete and tender for contracts' and provide 'alternative public services ... social work to garbage disposal'. A nice potential strike-breaking source of cheap labour. Even more sinister, it is said that Community Action (as it will soon be called — update the image, make it more appealing to youth, get rid of the old 'do-gooding' fuddy-duddy one) is already being talked about in parliament as an alternative to conscription. The suggestion is that it is to be made compulsory in the early 1980s. The common enemy now is unemployment, not war. Everyone must pull together to fight the spectre. To do this, increasing numbers are being recruited from the armed forces. (A few years ago, these men would probably have been absorbed into the civil service.)



The suggestion that YOP is to become a structured environment for mass control of youth might seem too far-fetched were it not for the fact that most of the elements are already here. There are integrated schemes in existence, while others show similar tendencies.

The 'Social and Life Skills Course', and in fact all the stress on 'social Education' (read conditioning), means that every detail of behaviour is examined and laid open to correction. The whole ethos of 'social and life skills' is that of behavioural training. Programmes based on individual assessment are evolved by the course tutor. (They may be designed in consultation with the student. Grow your own strait-jacket.) Social skills are not only about talking to the boss and going for an interview, but also about chatting to neighbours and putting forward one's views. Life skills 'help us to get the best out of ourselves and out of life': getting information, handling money, getting a job, 'using' our spare time.

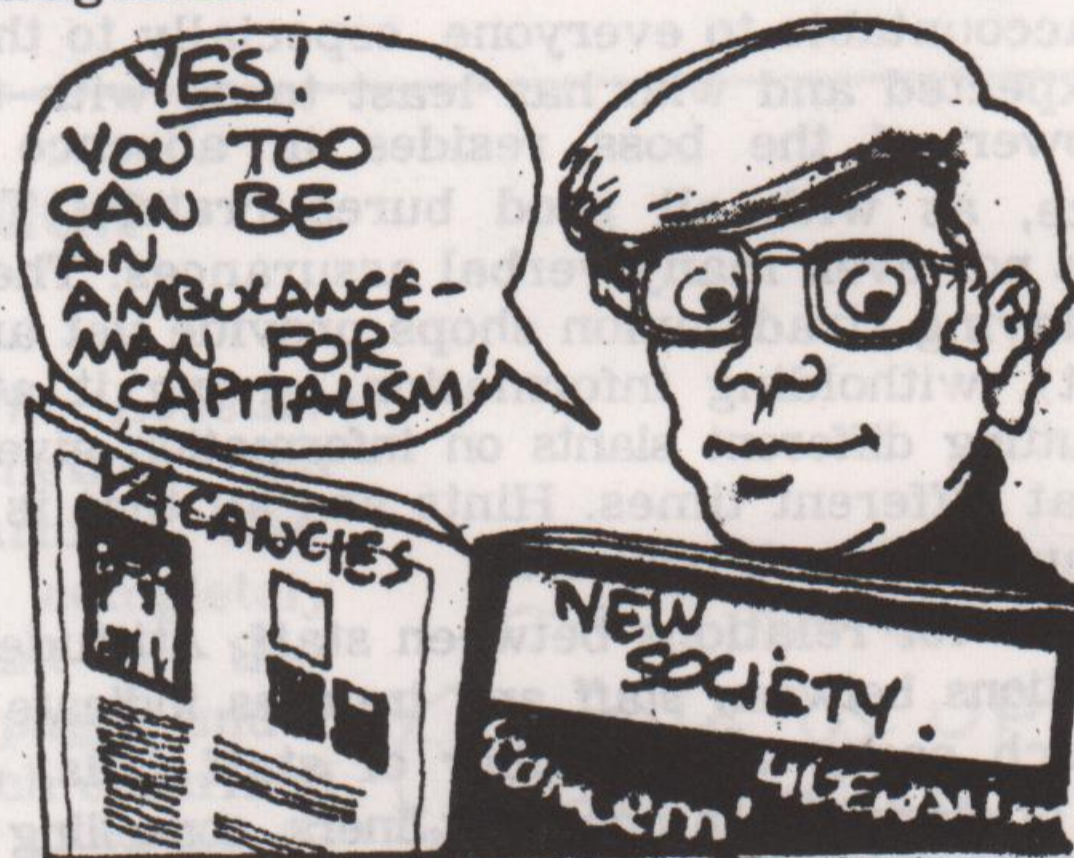
While people generally gain such skills in the normal process of living, they may lack 'opportunities for developing a sufficient range of skills'. It is at times of change that people find themselves 'ill-equipped to cope' ... 'they have been deprived of experiences'. Here the booklet quoted (from *Teaching Social and Life Skills*, published by the national extension College in collaboration with the Association for Liberal Education) goes on to list people who may fall into this category. Workers made redundant are lumped together with immigrants, those with a physical or mental handicap, mothers returning to or starting work, and 'people new to work — among these is the group most at risk, those young people with little prospect of work'. The contributory factors are listed as: 1) an unstable economy — changes in the level and type of employment, 2) changes in technology, 3) changes in country of residence, 4) the change from school to work, from domestic to paid employment, in short from one cage to another.

'Life and Social Skills' is seen as necessary so that 'people may continue to help themselves, contribute to the life of the community and retain their self-respect'.

The assessment of individuals and their progress is based on the following criteria: their ability to adapt, to anticipate responses, to gather information, to construct and implement a strategy, and to communicate. Anyone who has looked at managerial training will find most of this familiar. It may well be a useful structure for a tutor to base observations on and plan work around. The implicit assumptions however are that the individual should adapt to (not change) the status quo, s/he is to be passive and without spontaneity, s/he learns to anticipate responses rather than to respond him/herself. Life is seen as a gigantic obstacle course, and to get through it strategies must be evolved and put into effect.

It is the bureaucratic dream. Information is collected and communication' is just another word for keeping the machine running smoothly. A pre-planned, pre-packaged, pre-lived existence. Not quite, but nearly.

Trainees are already receiving 'support' and counselling about problems hardly connected with their employment (or lack of it). While on the scheme they are carefully 'matched' to the kind of 'opportunity' they undertake and once there are being constantly assessed. Absenteeism and bad time-keeping are seen as 'problems' which the young person has but which s/he can overcome with a lot of help and encouragement.



The confused, caring socialists who are so concerned about unemployment are staring up the integration process very nicely by taking the initiative to hold meetings of all organizations involved with the unemployed; upholding the right to work, saying how they'd hate not to work, asking with great intensity about your job satisfaction.

This article shows the many ways in which people in the Unemployment Industry manage to avoid looking at the real issues. Each scheme may appear to be fairly autonomous (because of the 'loose' management structure) and to have a distinctive character. This is the window-dressing, designed to allay the suspicions of managers and managed, workers and unemployed, about the purpose and value of the work they do. So in addition to obscuring the issues, the prevailing populist ideology also helps them to conceal their own insecurities.

Mary Turner (Birmingham)



## LETTER

Dear Solidarity,

In your editorial last issue you said "... there is no question of there being any historic reversal in the trend towards increasing state involvement in the economy and society in general, towards what we describe as state capitalism." (Your emphases)

And in the same paragraph you refer to the "World-wide trend towards state capitalism" (again your emphasis).

Other, less succinctly argued parts of the same editorial imply to my mind that all the class struggle can achieve (if you can call it "achievement") is state capitalism. A bit like, all the working class can achieve is a trade union consciousness?

Is this really what you mean? If so it would suggest that the only thing for us to do is join the Labour Party and hasten the process. A five year plan to "state-capitalise" Britain might be worth considering — though we could run into problems over "state-capitalism is one country". Then, with everything under state control we could start thinking about what we really want.

If this isn't what you mean, I suggest you make your editorials clearer — for an organisation that claims to demystify, it was a pretty mystifying piece of writing.

Anyway, your last paragraph stuck out like a sore thumb. From what had already been written in the editorial it was not at all "clear" that the "twin dangers of bureaucratic slavery and capitalist competition can only be avoided through the complete abolition of commodity production, wage-labour and the state, and the insitution of generalised self-management". (Sorry to repeat myself, but the emphases again are yours).

Love,  
Gordon W. (Leeds).

## REVIEW

### WILDCAT SPAIN ENCOUNTERS

#### DEMOCRACY 1976-78

As with any other country in a stage of social and political upheaval Spain after the death of Franco became a target for every kind of left group or brand of 'trade unionism' seeking to justify its existence and prove its theoretical and practical basis. This was true not only of the 'traditional leftists, trotskyists, communists, euro-communists etc, but also true of those, who peering at the world through red and black tinted sunglasses saw the rebirth of anarcho-syndicalism in the CNT and the resurgence of Spanish anarchism. This book, though not without its own weaknesses, is something of a useful antidote.



It's the negation of the verdammt negation!

Foreword to *Communist Manifesto*... work of fiction... all classes described in this book are purely imaginary and do not refer to actual classes... The authors accept no responsibility for lost chains or for injuries due to uniting... For permission to adapt as musical comedy, apply K. Marx, Highgate Cemetery, NG.

'Wildcat Spain..' is a collection of texts by sub/quasi situationist groups such as 'Los Incontrolados' (The Uncontrollables) or 'Workers for Proletarian Autonomy' as well as first hand accounts of specific worker's struggles for example in the railways or at the Ascon shipyard in Galicia. In the latter sense it is a catalogue of behaviour that will be all too familiar to readers of Solidarity, of the development of autonomous workers struggles and organisations against employers, bureaucrats and the machinery of the state, not only without the support of the supposed 'workers' organisations' but despite them, in the face of their manoeuvrings, 'interventions', 'assistance', their physical opposition and their collusion with the state. The descriptive accounts of such struggles and confrontations are probably the most valuable aspects of this book and certainly a valuable contribution to our knowledge and understanding of post-Franco Spain as well as yet another (if one were needed) illustration of the international character of workers' autonomy — and its enemies in the traditional left, including some supposed 'libertarians'.

But 'Wildcat Spain ...' also attempts to be something more than a description and attempts theoretical analysis from a sub-situationist view point. As such it bears both the best and worst marks of such writings. In turn racy, often poetic, infuriatingly obscruantist, witty, incisive. Cutting through its unexplained jargon the reader does get to some real perception: 'One Rewritten false history was anarchism, disinterred everywhere as an anti-historical and tranquilising explanation of the modern contestation of the state, and reduced to the eternal belief in the return of revolt. It was the one which for obvious reason was most suitable in Spain then anywhere else since it had once been a massive reality here, the local ideological form of the general alienation of the old workers' movement that in other places originated from marxism or the CNT, resurrected alongside the present proletarian movement as the jack of all trades unions for the lumpen bourgeoisie in search of ideological certainties, this is the historical dustbin, collecting naturally the ecologists and their problems of waste.

But there are flaws — the tendency to situationist jargon, a near glorification of the 'proletariat' (a term never once defined) and soundingly suspiciously workerist), and a near fetishisation of assemblies as the form of working class organisation — 'the assembly movement ... is the true representative of the proletariat because it is proletarian'(?). Yet 'wildcat Spain..' is a book worth reading if only to be selectively digested.

P.G. Glasgow)

In keeping with the current situatioist trend in anonymity the book is available from BM bis London WC1V 6XX.

# TU OFFICIAL SHOPS UNIONS

**How did you start in the Trade Union? As a shop steward?**

I was recruited into the Union as an apprentice. I think it was natural. My father had always been active inside the trade union. He'd been a committed socialist of the type particular to his generation and I had natural sympathies there. I ended up becoming a shop steward. From there I went further in to all sorts of trade union activities. I've got a conventional kind of trade union history I suppose. Shop stewards, branch secretary, branch committee member, money steward, delegate to trades council, executive of trades council, area representative for my own trade union, conference delegate, negotiations at full time level having been elected to that position, national executive election, I was successful there, negotiations at that level, involvement in trade union congress, I went to several TUC's, I was involved in inter-union relationships — in fact I had a special responsibility for inter-union relationships, nothing spectacular, nothing special at all, just typical of what someone might do.

But even when I became a full time official in the 1960's I had no illusions about the trade union movement. I've got a saying — I hope it comes out clearly on the tape because it's an original — the trade union movement represents not the organised unity of the working class but its organised division. Mine has been a slow process of acquiring that knowledge. And once you've acquired it you see that there are lots of myths surrounding the trade union movement. Some of them have been necessary to sustain the movement. You've got to believe things that aren't necessarily true to get you through. Take for example the way trade unions — and not just trade

unions — tend to celebrate defeats. The way, for example, in which the miners strike of 1926 is seen as a great heroic struggle, and it was. No-one can detract from that — but they lost. It's always around the defeats, the sacrifices of thousands of ordinary working class people that you build a kind of loyalty. And when it's been a case of people having been prepared even to die for these ideas it's a little different for people to come along later and say that perhaps they had been mistaken. You've got to be very careful because those people were genuinely heroic but in not betraying them you've got to be careful that you don't betray people who are around today.

Another myth would be the myth of trade union solidarity. We've got to be careful here because in all myths there is an element of truth. I can think of many examples of trade union solidarity. There have been acts of considerable self denial by people not directly involved which have made a marvellous contribution to the outcome of someone else's dispute. In the majority of cases there is a marked lack of fraternal support. The number of inter-union disputes which result in strikes and so on is a sad reflection of the divisions within the working class rather than its solidarity.

The way trade unions formally offer support to each other is largely for comfort at the official level, rather than at any effective level among members involved in a strike.

I have quite a number of files on inter-union disputes and most of them are about failure to support each other. For example we had a long and bitter dispute — 13 weeks. The membership of other unions — NALGO and NUPE — they worked on quite happily. In fact it ended up with members of NALGO

actively breaking the strike. There was a Labour controlled council at the time and you got the chairmen of committees actively involved in strike breaking activities. And they were members of trade unions, in fact some of them were full time officials of other trade unions!



**What about the function of the myths which legitimises the assorted bastards who we won't name here who have made their careers as full time officials.**

Well being a trade union official...

**Yes I know, you've seen them at close quarters, much closer than I have.**

Well they actually hate the working class, those that I know well. I want you to understand that it is the ones I know well. I also know some full time trade union officials who are great guys. One fellow who's a full time official of my union works seven days a week for the class. He's got some funny ideas but his whole body and heart and spirit and soul is in it. It's terrible to see that man being ground down. The workers he represents and does his best for still don't like him. No matter how hard

he works he still represents that full time body which they apparently have got to accept, and all the deals and the formal procedure that they have to go through. But these people that I knew at a high level inside the organisations that I am familiar with, they actually did bitterly resent the rank and file occasionally taking unto themselves actions to defend what they felt was their own interests, and doing it without as much as by your leave to the full time officials. And of course that is irksome. There's not a lot of point in having full time officials making decisions for you if you're going to usurp that. If you've got a full time officials grouping, call it an Executive, of a union that sits down and works out the policy of the union and some silly sods in a pub somewhere decide that up with this they will not put and they do something about it, well it's very annoying to those fellers who are working at it full time, and are being paid these good salaries. They're the professionals. They really get all uptight about it, John. (Chuckle chuckle) I'm not joking. In fact I've actually heard it said, joking or not, you can make your own mind up about it, but I've actually heard it said in my own union "We could run a marvellous union if it wasn't for this bloody membership." This was in respect of one dispute. They really were driving the full time officials potty. They just couldn't see it from the rank and file lads point of view.

As a full time official I can understand why as well. I sit in my four star hotel in front of the mirror on the dressing table having pressed the button for the waiter to come up with coffee and biscuits — I don't drink when I'm working much, I'm always careful not to, — and I sit there looking in the mi-



thinking "Who the hell is this guy sitting in a four star hotel having coffee and biscuits brought for him in Blackpool or Brighton or wherever it might be. Just a few years ago you were just a scruffy worker." You can see how the process of separation goes on.

I don't think it matters how much you are determined to stay with the rank and file once you start to inhabit that official trade union area... Its difficult to explain it. You have a secretary and there's an office and a routine and there are people who work under you and you're involved in major decision making. You ride on high speed trains and you're in the company of fast talking, smooth talking business men and personnel officers. The rapport between trade unions and personnel officers is very good. What they say is "We're all on the same side really. What we want is industrial peace..." You end up thinking, Christ is this really so? And if you're not careful...



"I object to the way we mislead our membership. And we, on occasions, seriously mislead our membership. And to satisfy themselves that they were doing the honourable thing they have what amounts to a collective think-in to this new situation, to this re-write of history and they rehearse it over and over again until they're convinced that they're telling each other the truth and then they go out and face the membership, and tell a total distortion of reality. And they

do it well and the membership says "Christ is it really like that?" They lose track themselves of what had gone on. I mean I've been to meetings of our organisation, I've sat there and listened to things being said on behalf of our official leadership — and I was part of it — that simply weren't true.

Or they're so misleading as to be seriously damaging. And I've sat there quiet and thought "Christ, what sort of a man are you?" So I go back and do the conventional thing, the thing you were supposed to do, and I write a letter to the body of which I myself am a member pointing out that we could be said to be misleading our membership. And for my very innocuous action I get all sorts of hot coals heaped on my head. An expression of dissent can't be tolerated.

**I would like you to make comments on the issue of careerism in the unions, and the kind of observations other people have made on the integration of the managerial type whether it be in a corporation, in a nationalised industry, in a state bureaucracy — or in a trade union. For example trade unions have been referred to as the personnel department of capitalism.**

I think they are, sadly, the personnel department of capitalism and certainly that is true of the majority of the trade union officials. There is a reservation there, some of them are not that way at all. I think the trade union is at its best among the rank and file. They are often ignorant of the wider concerns that have to be taken into account and sometimes that's not a bad thing. They're not concerned with overall policy, what they're most concerned with, generally, is what affects them. Now I think a trade union organisation is absolutely and I want to underline that, **absolutely essential** in a period of Capitalism. There isn't really any alternative at all. But that trade union organisation has got to belong to the people it represents. And I think full time officials, certainly in the way that they are increasingly organised today are no longer part of that section of the working class

that they are supposed to represent. The way to prevent that is not too easy. But one way is to ensure if you can that all full time officials are elected. There are far too many officials who are appointed. And those elections should be for no more than five years. And those full time officials have got to live in economic circumstances not far removed from those that their membership live in. I'm not saying that they have to walk around in overalls all over the place, But economic realities do determine lifestyle substantially. They've also got to be insulated in some way from this way that capitalism has of subverting people. I mean its so nice. You're sitting in some hotel to discuss the latest wage claim, you break for lunch and the employers buys you your lunch, he buys everybody their lunch I mean, a glass of sherry before you start, bottle of Beaujolais, four or five courses and all that kind of erosion of the realities of the working class. Now there's no one likes eating more than I do — and I love Beaujolais — but I think there's a time and a place for things. So somehow the rank and file must, if it isn't too late (I suppose its never too late but it must be getting close to it) must reassert some control over their own trade unions.

There's no doubt that formal structures such as trade unions do inhibit any radical solutions to working people's problems. Trades unions being a product of capitalism are certainly not a means for its overthrow. The whole rationale of trades unionism is the continuance of capitalism. I think that whatever structure there was inside a trade union it would inevitably serve the interests of capitalism. but you could improve the structure of the trade unions so that the section of the working class it represented had its interest better defended and hopefully even advanced. Its a bit ambitious but at least you could defend them a bit better.

**What further can be done to make the unions responsive to the needs of working class people?**



While the election of officials at all levels would go some way towards changing the formal structures so as to get people involved who are committed to rank and file needs there is obviously more than that as well. I think the way that any trade union is structured evolved through its need at an early stage. What's happened is that you've had in these last ten or twenty years imposed on that a sort of professionalism, the 'personnel department of capitalism' people with their ideas on how trade unions should be run in the interests of efficiency, in the interests of more rational decision making. Since they have been superimposed on what were evolutionary social forms they need to be removed. Evolutionary processes are not enough. As these efficient structures were imposed on the trade unions the only way you can remove them is by conscious decision. By knowing what it is you want to achieve. Now given that in a capitalist society trade unions are absolutely essential I think the first thing the trade union movement has got to do is to sit down and talk about it. How that can be done, how the actual can be done, how the actual thinking can be done is not too easy for any one person to say. Each sectional need, each sectional requirement tends to determine the patterns of thinking.

I would suggest that inside my own trade union and unions of a similar kind the opportunity to start to think

## MAY 14th. ALL OUT! of your minds.

Hi there! This is your friendly DJ Lenny — the world's sure lookin' good through ma rose-tinted shades — inviting you to tune in on the Murray hours — the too good to hurry hours. Yoor Trades Union Council is asking yoor union executive to ask yoor regional committee to ask yoor area committee to ask yoor district committee to ask yoor shop stewards to ask yooo to take time off between 11 and 3 — pub opening time cats — on that big cool day of action on May 14th. Maybe Jim'll fix it as a national holiday next year. Yeh! This is Lenny talking soft to all you revolutionaries out there signing off with a Peter, Paul and Mary number .....

about what it is you are involved in will not arise automatically. So it means, inevitably, that a small group who themselves have a concern for the future have got to lead it. They've got no automatic right to do so but then neither has the Daily Mail which seems to have some effect on the way trade unions are run. So some small group of rank and filers are inevitably going to have to do this because I can't think of any other way. Having done it they are going to be involved with other groups of rank and filers who are involved in similar tasks to try and get those structural changes implemented. What you've got to see is what kind of structure would affect your immediate workplace so that women and men who are working together can do things which are in their own immediate interest and hopefully in their long term interest to have some immediate effect.

If you can do that in your immediate set of working circumstances it follows usually that you can extend that and make permanent the advances that you've made. So the rules of your organisation need to be changed. And that will mean, in my view, that you will move from the workshop, the factory, the supermarket — whatever it is — to some kind of regional structure where people for the same category of employment and with similar interests would organise the rules of their organisation to make sure that the decision making and policies make for an immediate response to their needs. Its some kind of devolution of power that I'm concerned to see back to rank and file activists. I say activist with deliberation. Its not thought much of in the popular press but as its only the activists who do anything thats the group you've got to concern yourself with.

Now the rank and file... the active people is what you would normally have in mind. What is normally excluded is the enormous uncaring mass but they are none the less rank and file. And there have been cries for rank and file control of the unions coming from the *Daily Mail* and the *Express* and the *Sun*.



**In the faith that this rank and file would be conservative?**

Yes after they have moulded their opinion and would then rely on them to vote in certain ways. The rank and file that you are concerned about and that I am concerned about is that section of the rank and file that actually concern themselves with the trade unions. The rank and file who actually work for the trade union movement for nothing. Nothing at all. They go out every night, sometimes, to meetings and swear and toil and for their free labour they get nothing but abuse. And I think its true, the Mail's got an argument and the Sun's got an argument. The rank and file voice is not heard. Dead right! They're too bleeding idle. Whether they

deserve to be heard is highly questionable. That idle apathetic rank and file voice is nevertheless highly important. Their very presence in the trade unions gives the unions great potential power. If you've got 80% of you membership which doesn't come to meetings, doesn't vote, nevertheless by their contributions and their membership they make the union what it is in terms of power. And I think that without the great mass of apathetic membership they would be very sadly weakened. And there's another thing as well, if there was no active militant minority there wouldn't be a trade union movement at all, because you couldn't rely on that apathetic lot to do anything.

**If you divide the trade unions into three sections; the largely careerist (but not universally so) officials, the active minority and the passive mass, which of those three sections does the structure best serve? My answer would be the professional careerist.**

Yeah. I don't think there's much doubt about it. I think my union is the for-runner in some respects. We've got university graduates who are officials in our union. They've never been shop stewards, they have no comprehension of what its really like to be involved in a struggle. Now you'll understand when I say this that I don't mean that these lads don't have a right to live or anything. Its just that they really don't have an appreciation of it. And to see someone in a full time trade union position without a scar or a mark on them, its a little difficult to accept that they could really understand what it feels like to come home early and have the wife say to you, "What are you doing home at this time?" And you say, "We're on strike." Oh Christ. Go down to newsagents and

cancel newspapers. Prepare yourself for a long struggle. And have to go through the humiliating process of going down the social security. There's nothing glorious about bloody strike action, I'm not saying that at all but to see these lads we've got in our union now who've gone straight from school to university into full time positions, well, they just can't understand. They may have sympathy, otherwise they wouldn't be there, yes they're sympathetic people but there's no real empathy.



**One might presume they took these jobs not because of the good prospects they offered but because they were left wing.**

Yeah... They've got some feeling about it, they've got some feeling for the working class. They may in fact be of a very radical frame of mind though I'd hasten to add that those I've come across haven't shown much radical thought, certainly nothing in their actions — a gutless lot.

## GOLD FOR ROBBO



## ABOUT OURSELVES

Habitual readers of this magazine will have noted the considerable diversity of views expressed in recent issues. While this must be frustrating for those who like to receive their opinions gift-wrapped, we shall continue to refuse any commitment to a party line or dogmatic global ideology, nor do we recognize the constraints of party discipline which have shakey political thought and action for generations.

The disagreements which have been aired in these pages reflect the debates and divergent tendencies within Solidarity. It would be foolish to pretend that this lack of unanimity has not created problems for the group (or that the silence of other groups on such matters means that they have no internal dissensions). But there are many problems which have still to discover their solutions, not least because many of those solutions can only be practical ones, and to abandon our commitment to critical (and self-critical) thinking would signify the stagnation of our politics.

From the letters and comments we receive it is apparent that some articles have given rise to misunderstandings, while others would like to make all of us responsible for the opinions of each. Once again therefore: we are neither marxists nor anarchists. We have no need of the kind of acceptability to be gained by attaching labels to ourselves, or by tailoring our ideas to conform to the prejudices of others.

If we are not to recount the entirety of our political experience in every issue, it is inescapable that this magazine will be composed largely of fragments, the public formulation of a dialogue through which we give shape and substance to our lives. The least of our expectations is that a few of these articles, creatively applied, may be of service as we try to make sense of a bewildered world. While the contents of this magazine generally reflect the politics of the group, articles signed by individuals don't necessarily represent the views of all members.

The national secretary can be contacted via the Manchester address and the international secretary by writing to 83 Gregory Crescent, London SE9 5RZ. The remainder of our unwieldy bureaucracy will remain enshrouded in organisational secrecy by decree of the editorial section.

This issue of the magazine was edited and produced by group members in Leeds and Sheffield. Contributions to the next issue which will be produced by the London Group, should be sent to the London address.

## Solidarity contact List

Box 23, 167 King Street, ABERDEEN  
8A Hector Road, Longsight, MANCHESTER 13  
LCP, 30 Blenheim Terrace, LEEDS LS2 9HD  
34 Cowley Road, OXFORD  
123 Lathom Road, LONDON E6  
9 Lanner Moor, Lanner, REDRUTH, Cornwall



## Soly knuckles rapped in Aberdeen

At an anti-cuts picket of the Grampian Regional Council headquarters in Aberdeen, the Labour Party and trade union banners were overshadowed by a giant banner wielded by Solidarity members, which proclaimed:

**1974-79 LABOUR CHOP PUBLIC SERVICES**  
**1979-80 TORIES CHOP PUBLIC SERVICES**  
**NO TO TORY AND LABOUR — BOTH WIELD THE**  
**AXE FOR CAPITALISM**  
**YES TO INDEPENDENT WORKERS CLASS STRUGGLE**

This caused some consternation among local Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats — the executive of Aberdeen Trades Council has told Solidarity that the offending banner will not be welcome on future marches, and that if it appears stewards will have instructions to 'deal with' the situation. Solidarity in Aberdeen has replied that they will continue to put forward the view that cuts can only be fought by direct action and by opposition to all capitalist political parties, using various means — including the taking of banners on demonstrations. The next Labour Party/trades council organized stroll through Aberdeen may be less soporific than usual.

At the same time, the rather tame picket was somewhat enlivened by the activities of 'persons unknown' who, the night before, covered the Council building with such slogans as **CHOP POLITICIANS NOT SERVICES** and **PEOPLES NEED NOT BOSSES GREEDS**. Solidarity readers will be alarmed to hear that this appalling act, which was featured prominently in the local press and TV, was roundly condemned by the Labour party and Trades Council, while the local NALGO branch secretary announced that if any his members were responsible, they would immediately be expelled and then handed over to the police!

# REVIEW

## "The Right to be Lazy" — New Movement or Old Cliche.

The Struggle against the work ethic has always been central to Solidarity's politics. The recent publication of "THE REFUSAL OF WORK" is therefore very welcome. Published by Echanges et Mouvement (or should that be Echanges et Mart) it is the introduction to a long-overdue debate on the refusal of work but as it is written by several different contributors it suffers from being very patchy in quality and it is often difficult to follow the strands of argument.

The issue itself was the subject of an international get-together held Boulogne in April 1974 and attended by several members of Solidarity. Out of that conference emerged the "New Movement" pamphlet, subsequently reprinted by Solidarity (London) and the present pamphlet extends the

previous work and takes up some of the criticisms it brought forth. The central issue in the pamphlet is what role militants have in relation to everyday struggles and whether a revolutionary organisation is needed to facilitate workers' daily struggles and intervene in the class struggle. Echanges argue that "the organisation of the revolutionary struggle will rise from the struggle itself, according to its necessities." The pamphlet examines various tendencies among the workforce that reflect the new attitude to work — absenteeism, sabotage, 'lump' labour, etc — and see in them actions motivated by personal interest but which end up as a collective activity. There is much criticism voiced in the pamphlet by those who don't see this in such apocalyptic terms but merely as outbreaks sparked off by personal interest without any collective organisation or political meaning — for instance taking time off to watch an important football match as workers at Cowley did during the three day week.

Charles Reeve, writing in the French review 'Spartacus' and reprinted here, sees absenteeism as a harmful trend leaving workers isolated from their

workmates in their neighbourhoods and with little chance of 'capturing the forces of production'. Solidarity, however, has long seen in 'absenteeism', 'refusal to work' and 'sabotage' the seeds of a movement in which people take their own lives into their own hands and certainly don't see it as limited to the workplace. The attitude of 'wrecking' goes beyond this. It manifests itself in communities resisting planners and consumers shoplifting on an organised scale (as in Italy). The pamphlet is full of examples of resistance of this kind, including many in Great Britain that have not been widely commented on in the libertarian press.

The one major criticism I have of the pamphlet is that it does not take into account mass unemployment and the changing attitudes this has brought. This is clearly an area for further discussion. But buy it. It's only 70p and is a welcome addition to a long neglected area.

*Available for 70p plus postage from  
Echange et Mouvement,  
BM Box 91,  
London WC1V 6XX*

**JIM LORNE**  
(Oxford)



**BACKING UP THE FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER  
DURING THE BRISTOL RIOT**



'Sir Ian Gilmour makes a claim that monetarism is not enough ... "It would be foolish to forget this, to think that we can ignore the social and political consequences of what we do. Of course, the world economic crisis, the need to reverse years of relative decline, Labour's economic legacy and Russia's growing strength will make it difficult to meet people's expectations and ambitions in the next few years. But the size of our task suggests that we should be even more mindful than usual of political considerations. We must not make the same mistake as Marx and give economic considerations primacy over political ones."'

*(Sunday Times, 10/2/1980)*