

# solidarity

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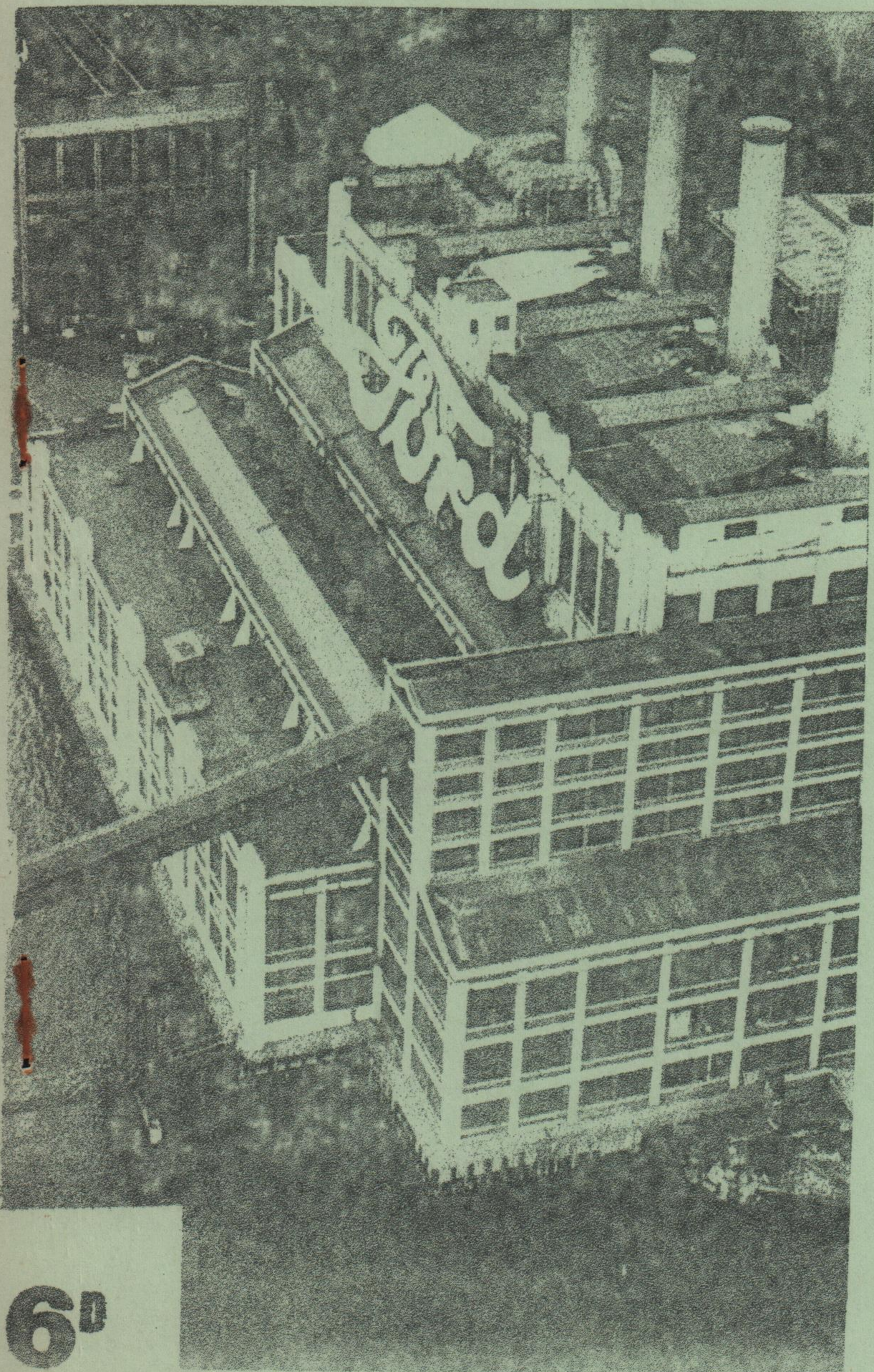
## FORDS: the implications

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# FORDS: THE IMPLICATIONS

The current struggle at Fords has been inevitable ever since 1962, when the Company - in alliance with the trade union leaders - inflicted a heavy defeat on job organization at Dagenham. During 1962, 415,000 man-hours had been lost due to disputes. In 1963 the figure had plummeted to 34,000. In 1964, it was 60,000.

The 1962 defeat virtually destroyed job organization within many Ford plants. Hundreds left the unions in disgust. The size of the Communist Party branch at Dagenham fell from 120 to under 60. Within the factories the management were able to engage in wholesale speed-up. According to figures given to the Jack Court of Enquiry (in February 1963) they had been able to increase production by 33%. In the Body Group where, before the defeat, the men had been able to exercise control of the speed of the line, the maximum speed was increased from 40 to 60 cars per hour. All this has been combined with the gradual whittling away of work timings, the net result of which has been that the number of men manning the lines has been progressively decreasing.

The new relation of forces was confirmed by a series of agreements which removed from the area of shop floor negotiation all such issues as the speed of the line, transfer of workers and the introduction of new machines, now considered 'managerial prerogatives'. Other agreements made it a condition of employment to work shift work and overtime as the Company decided.

## THE GRADING AGREEMENTS

The situation was made even worse by the infamous 'Grading Agreements' of September 1967. These established job evaluation throughout the Ford empire. In return for a pittance the Ford management were given absolute control over the transfer of workers. They brought in a system of grading based on weighting known only to management and to their consultants (Urwick and Orr and Partners). In other words the grading of work (and consequently payment) would be determined by factors unknown to the men or even to 'their' trade unions. This unique system was endorsed by the Jack Scamp Court of Enquiry, in August 1968.

During the autumn of 1968 the unions belatedly realised the full consequences of the agreement they had signed. They began to push for the disclosure of the weighting and points values relating to the new wage structure. On November 29, 1968, the Company generously stated that 'it was prepared to disclose the weighting factor in about 3 months' time, which would allow further period for the outstanding grading grievances to be finalised'. (NJNC Notice published by Ford Employee Information on November 29, 1969). In other words the Company would give the information after it had become virtually valueless. If anything exposes the claim of the unions (even within their own terms of reference) to be effective bargaining forces, this episode does.



In view of the present conflict it is worth noting that the Grading Agreement of 1967 was signed individually by all members of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC), including no less a personage than Hugh Scanlon, President of the AEU.

While working conditions inside the factories had steadily and drastically deteriorated, the wages of Ford workers declined to the lowest in the motor industry. This is shown by the following figures, published by the Ford Joint Shop Stewards Committee in October 1968:

| <u>Payment by results earnings</u><br>(average for basic 40 hrs) |            | <u>Hourly rates</u>   |                  |
|--|------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| BLMC, Cowley   | £30 to £33 | BLMC, Crofton Hackett | 13/- (£26.0.0.)  |
| ROOTES, Ryton  | £30.18.0   | ROOTES, Linwood       | 11/2½ (£22.10.0) |
| BLMC, Longbridge   | £28.0.0.   | VAUXHALL, Ellesmere   | 10/6 (£21.0.0.)  |
| ROVER, Birmingham  | £26.0.0.   | VAUXHALL, Luton       | 9/9 (£19.10.0)   |
|  |            | FORD                  | 8/9½ (£17.11.0)  |

Although it would be perhaps a mistake to make too direct a comparison between these figures (fringe benefits vary and the range of work covered might not be quite similar), the pattern is nevertheless quite clear: Ford paid the lowest wage rates in the industry. And the tempo of exploitation was probably among the highest.

## EARLY SIGNS OF REVOLT

By 1968, Ford workers had had enough. The pot began to boil over. In June, 200 women sewing machinists went on strike against their grading and were supported by a further

200 at Halewood. The dispute lasted 3 weeks and led to 5000 assembly workers being laid off and to the total halting of production. A unique feature of this dispute was that for the first time ever at Fords a strike was declared official by the AEF and the NUVB. The fact that the unions could declare an official strike against an agreement which they had signed shows that they recognized the pressure that was building up within the firm and felt the need to control it. There were a number of other minor struggles against the Grading Agreement, for example that of the door hangers in the Body Group.

In September 1968 production at Fords was further disrupted by a series of struggles at Girling's and Ford assembly workers were laid off for a further 14 days. When the men returned to work they quite spontaneously declared a ban on all overtime in the assembly areas at both Halewood and Dagenham. They were demanding fall-back pay to cover the period they had been laid off. At present men can be (and are) laid off without any notice and without any payment at all, solely at the whim of management. Their position is virtually that of casual workers.

This overtime ban was not only opposed by the management and by the union officials. It was also opposed by the Joint Works Committees of the various plants and in some cases by the Shop Stewards Committees as well.



Yet in spite of this the ban continued for over 2 months and resulted in a colossal loss of production which probably equalled the loss of a complete shut down for 2 weeks. Such is the dependence of Fords on massive and regular overtime.

The first response to this situation by Fords was typical. Rather than deal with the real problems, they threw a sop to the National trade unions. On November 5, they not only agreed to grant the unions card check facilities (on the Company's premises and in the Company's time - something quite new at Fords), but they offered (without any request from the unions) to deduct union dues from the wage packets. In America, in the '30s, Henry Ford justified his proposal for a union dues check-off on the basis that it would place the company in the position of banker to the UAW, and therefore put it in a position to exercise pressure by threats to withdraw the facilities. Henry Ford also suggested that such a procedure would tend to insulate the national unions still further from shop floor pressure. This reasoning applies just as much to Britain today.

The total effect of the 1968 upheaval was considerable: £30 million worth of lost production, something like 1/8 of the total. According to a Company spokesman, the Company had only been free from the threat of industrial action for 23 days during the whole year. Over 1,100,000 man-hours had been lost through industrial action inside Fords (compared with 276,000 lost in 1967).\* A further 500,000 man-hours were lost through disputes in other companies. It is an ironic quirk of fate that Ford is now paying with compound interest for its victimisation of militants in 1962.

## THE CURRENT DISPUTE

At this stage the Company decided to buy off further trouble. It offered its new package deal. This contained a  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to 10% wage increase (which still left the men's wages well

below the average in the motor industry), equal pay for women (provided they worked night shifts and overtime), certain fringe benefits (such as a limited amount of fall-back pay), and an increase in holiday payments. In return the Company insisted on penalty clauses which had the aim of further weakening job organization by making the fall-back and holiday pay dependent on there being no 'unconstitutional' action (which would include overtime bans as well as strike action). Typically the deal introduced a strengthened NJNC structure with a permanent Secretariat and local task forces of full-time officials to nip any 'trouble' in the bud. The new agreement will further weaken job organization and consequently the future bargaining power of Ford workers. At the same time it will strengthen the power of the trade union officials within the factory.

The convenors at the main Ford factories met and decided to call for strike action on February 24.

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\* These figures do not include a number of work-to-rules, for example in the Body Group press shop. This reduced production there by about 60%.



The NJNC accepted the Agreement by simple majority vote. There are 15 union representatives on the NJNC. Each union has one vote, irrespective of whether it represents over 15,000 Ford members (like the TGWU or the AEU) or a few score (like the National Society of Metal Mechanics). The majority of unions on the NJNC are craft unions, representing at best only a few hundred workers. The vast mass of production workers are in the four large unions (TGWU, AEU, NUGMW and NUVB). It is therefore obvious that the interests of the mass of Ford workers can be consistently outvoted ... even if the Big Four unions ever 'represented' them, which is hardly likely. This comfortable situation has always been a good excuse for inertia. The large unions say 'we were outvoted'. And the small fry can say they are 'overpowered' by the big battalions. Since ordinary Ford workers are kept in the dark as to what goes on at the NJNC, nearly everyone is kept nicely confused.

With tension at Fords growing and with the Company deduction of union dues in the offing, it is obvious that whichever of the four big unions makes the most headway now will be in a very strong position in the future. It is in this light that we should see the sudden, if confused and belated, militancy of the AEU, TGWU and NUVB. One doesn't have to be a prophet to forecast that the settlement that these new friends of the Ford workers will achieve will not be anywhere near what is required. With friends like these, Ford workers don't need any enemies.

The convenors held a national meeting and the 'unofficial' strike was called for February 24. The call was attacked by the General Secretary of the AEF. The initial response was very ragged. The Halewood men came out solid, but at Dagenham a large number of men reported for work. Why was this so?

There is unfortunately a deep crisis of confidence between workers and convenors in the assembly areas at Dagenham. This has been due to a number of factors. The divide-and-rule policy pursued by the Company ensures that different groups of Ford workers don't see their interests as coinciding. At Dagenham, for instance, there are 5 separate plants, each with a separate management and a separate shop stewards' organization. Workers in one plant have little knowledge of what is going on in the others. But even within a given plant (say the Body Group) there will be wide divisions between various categories of workers. For example maintenance workers, assembly workers and the Press shop have entirely different work patterns and very little contact. Even contact between shifts in the same shop is weak. An illustration of division within the same plant was seen during both the overtime ban and the lay-offs of the assembly workers last year. During this time many other workers were working massive overtime.

Another cause for the loss of confidence in the shop stewards' organization at Dagenham has been the long tradition of manipulation of the men by the convenors through misinformation and manoeuvres. The Communist Party must carry some of the blame for this. Some convenors have even justified opposing the will of the men by saying that they were responsible only to the Joint Works Committee.



## WHAT NEXT?

Ford is over the barrel. The cumulative effect of the struggles of last year, combined with increased demand (due to the time of year, the effect of devaluation, and the introduction of the Capri) have made the Company abnormally vulnerable. The fact that the closure of the British factories has substantially affected production at the continental factories which turn out common models (such as Genk and Cologne) has further improved the situation. It is therefore crucial, if Ford workers are to make substantial advances, that they keep up the pressure. It is also essential that full control of this struggle should be taken into their own hands. It must be made clear that no settlement can be accepted that does not have the full agreement of the men. If the officials are allowed to dominate the struggle, it is doomed. The whole history of Fords is an object lesson of this fact.

The present situation is an opportunity to change the whole balance of power within the Ford empire. The current dispute must be looked at as only the first round. Now is the time to consider how the situation should be developed, and how speed-up and arbitrary transfers can be ended. The men should consider forms of struggle which take place inside the factory, such as occupations, sit-ins or work-to-rule. These methods are not only effective, but also far less expensive for the men. It's about time militants did a little homework about 'cost-effectiveness' and 'critical path analysis' - as applied to their own struggles.

On a longer term basis it is essential that communication between militants at Fords be drastically improved. At present it is virtually non-existent. In so far as some shop stewards committees and Joint Works Committees have ceased to act as organs of struggle, information and solidarity, they must be by-passed or replaced. A militant Ford workers' paper is an obvious requirement. The only real solution to the problems of Ford workers is the drastic strengthening of shop floor organization. For this an agitational paper is necessary, to counter the lies of boss and union bureaucrats.

International links have to be strengthened so that the fiasco of the strike at Genk (Belgium) cannot be repeated. With the standardisation of models and the centralisation of the production of some components, Ford of Europe has in some ways become very vulnerable. It would pay militants to make solid contact with their opposite numbers in Europe, so that they could select areas of action. They must seek out Ford's Achilles' heel.

Mark Fore.

For the full story of the 1962 Ford struggle, see 'WHAT HAPPENED AT FORDS' by Ernie Stanton and Ken Weller, 'Solidarity' pamphlet No.26, 1/6 post free. This pamphlet also contains a list of all our previously published material on Fords.



# STUDENT REVOLT IN SEARCH OF POSITIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

'Student revolt' is now a feature of political life in many advanced industrial countries. In this issue of 'Solidarity' we wish to initiate a discussion on the significance, objectives, methods, internal dynamic and limitations of this movement. We invite readers to contribute.

The Revolutionary Festival called by libertarian militants at Essex University on February 10-12 created a situation unique in the short history of the student revolt. The uniqueness resulted from the refusal of the University authorities to become involved in any kind of confrontation. There was virtually no opposition to anything the militants did. No police, no wardens, no hostile statements, nothing. The adversary remained invisible and intangible.

The absence of any direct, open opposition left the militants baffled and frustrated. For the first time in its history the movement could no longer assert its identity and demands in a purely negative sense. It was forced to define itself positively, by stating its objectives. What authority relationships in society did it want to establish in place of the existing ones?

The new situation came as a shock to some militants. The atmosphere of a non-event, of unfulfilled expectations, still haunts the minds of those unable to recognize the various student revolts in modern, industrialized, societies as a unified, integral process, with its own motivation and dynamic. Unless one realizes that all these revolts reflect a new, and permanent, pattern of human behaviour, a struggle for control over one's life (rather than livelihood), a struggle which heralds a new type of social conflict in history, one is bound to zigzag between purposeless activism and mental frustration.

The attempts of some militants to interpret their motives and aims by means of concepts, theories, and a terminology shaped to suit battles of the past only added confusion to frustration. All the talk about "the



productive activity carried out by the students", "the profit system in the university", "our grants are just our wages", "we too, like the workers, want higher wages", etc., failed to contribute enthusiasm, drive, or clarity to the movement.

After a brief period of hankering for a spectacle (a result of the pervading commodity-consumption culture) some militants attempted to conjure up a substitute adversary. They dragged an old car into the square, and having acquired an audience set fire to it. This symbolic destruction of consumer society (a symbolism of negation) failed to trigger off the desired initiative and activity amongst the participants. It symbolised, in fact, that the movement still requires an adversary in the form of police, iron gates, Board of Governors, old cars, to set it in motion. As long as the movement remains unconscious of its aim it cannot move under its own initiative; it is condemned to depend on the adversary for its own drive.

The first step towards a clear formulation of the aim of the movement is a fundamental critique of all mental abstractions which legitimize the existing authority relationships in one's own mind. Abstractions like "ownership", "profit", "nationalization", "political", etc. (which are actually rationalizations of specific social relations), must be thoroughly re-examined. Categories should be no more eternal than the social relations which they rationalize. They are historic and transitory products and must be seen as such. One cannot struggle against existing authority relations by means of abstractions which rationalize these relations.

After a period of undecidedness, the militants drifted into a lecture theatre. Despite the lack of any prearranged agenda, chairman, speaker, or subject, they became involved in a discussion. This discussion itself expressed, unconsciously, the motives and aims of the movement. It was obvious, though no one mentioned it, that everybody opposed the standard Lecturer-Audience situation, which is built-in into the seating arrangement itself. The participants ignored both the architecture and the procedure which belongs to that situation. Some might imagine that without a chairman, agenda, list of subjects, speakers, and time limits, no civilized discussion would be possible. Actually the discussion flowed smoothly, without interruptions, and remained throughout at a high level. Another revealing incident was the fact that although various participants had proposed a whole number of subjects to be discussed in small "workshop" groups ("Nixon's visit", "Vietnam", "Workers' Control", "Women's problems" etc.), most of the participants stayed to discuss a subject which no student had even proposed: namely, the motives and aims of the student revolt itself.

During this discussion two things became clear. Firstly, that the students' revolt had not yet discovered its positive aim, nor the relation of this aim to the rest of society (especially to the working class). It hadn't sensed the links between the challenge to authority relations in the educational system and the challenge to authority relations in other social and political institutions (for example - authority relations within trade unions, political parties, etc.). The second point to emerge was that without a clear view of the aim of the struggle there could be no clear idea about strategy or tactics, nor about the organizational structure of the revolutionary movement itself. All these obviously depend on what is being aimed at.



Three incidents underlined the significance of a positive self-consciousness (i.e. a definition of objectives):

- (a) Some militant students went to discuss with the many construction workers on the campus site. The dialogue produced no results. Most of the militants attempted to appeal to the workers' sense of solidarity by purely economic arguments. To "we are struggling so that you too get higher wages" the workers answered: "Thanks mate, but I've got my Union to take care of my wages. And anyway, you're living on a grant paid from my taxes".
- (b) The main body of the students remained unaffected by the Festival. They proceeded with their studies. There was no point in antagonizing that body. The problem was clearly posed: how could these students be won over?
- (c) A group of "Rockers" from the nearby town prowled around the campus, vaguely sensing some affinity with the students' challenge of authority. However, no student approached them. To most students their presence seemed an irrelevance.

All these events merely indicate that the slogans, arguments, categories, and abstractions, of a proletarian revolt directed against specified property relations under conditions of economic misery, cannot serve the needs of a student revolt directed against authority relations and taking place under conditions of relative affluence. It was Marx (1) who observed that:

"The tradition of all dead generations weighs, like a nightmare, on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis (men) anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes, in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise, and in this borrowed language."

In the past such a mentality might have provided some impetus to action; today it threatens to stifle anything really revolutionary.

The participants in the Essex debates experienced the inadequacy of existing revolutionary theory which lacks tools to cope with an entirely new struggle. Similarly, they recognized the need for a new type of revolutionary movement whose structure is not a mere repetition of the hierarchical pattern found in every contemporary social organization.

Some militants were frustrated by their experiences at the Festival. The writer was not. It all depends on the theoretical framework within which one embeds reality, thus endowing isolated events with meaning, and apparent irrelevance with significance. A living revolutionary struggle constantly creates new elements, both of social reality and in the realm of ideas. It should not be constrained by a theoretical framework based on the experiences of a distant past. Revolutionaries must realize that any theory is a tool, an invention of the human brain, and that like any other tool it must be shaped, and used, in full awareness of its purpose. If a revolutionary theory hampers the revolutionary struggle for a new society, it must be replaced by another whose value is proved by its ability to propel people into the battle.

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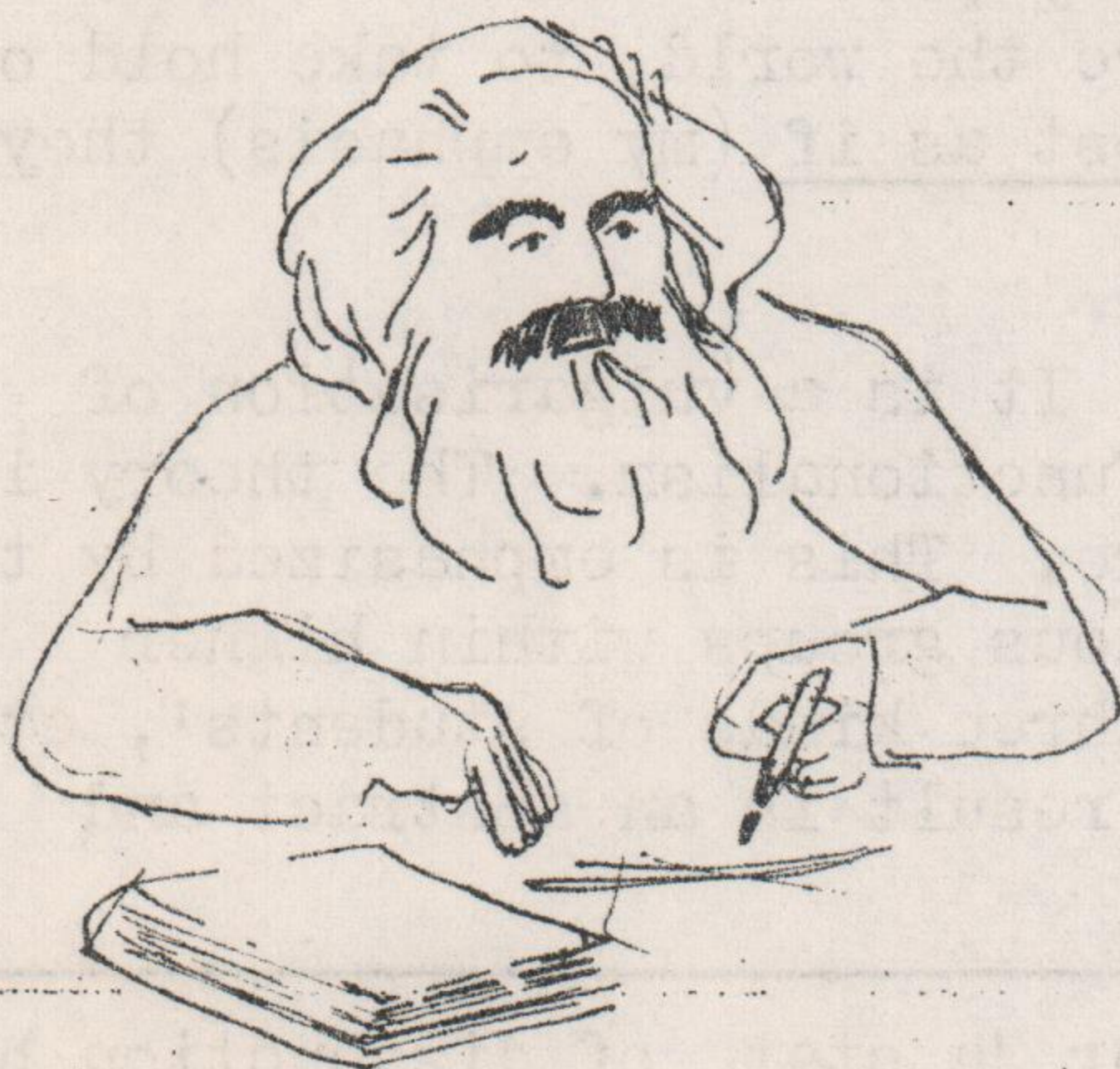
(1) 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', Part I.



The student struggle is the struggle for students/staff control over higher education. There is no reason why the chairman of the Financial Times should control the L.S.E., instead of the students and staff. Once the aim of the struggle is understood to be the control over one's social life, many other sectors of the population, especially younger workers, will join it. It is not an accident that the "Rockers", those working class rebels against authority, prowled around the Essex campus sensing some affinity with what was going on. It is not an accident that as long as the struggle's aim is couched in purely economic terms, it fails to gain the active support both of the rest of the student body and of the workers. It is imperative for the aim to be stated clearly as: "the creation of a society based on self-management in every branch of social activity".

This demand, which corresponds to the deepest aspirations of man, will evoke an echo - not only among other students - but among the rest of society, whose active involvement is essential for what lies ahead: the profoundest revolution ever.

#### Foreign Scum.



'The system of mutual concessions and half-measures (only supported to maintain appearances) and the need to share with all those asses the absurdity of the Party, all that is henceforth well and truly over for us...'

Letter from Marx to  
Engels, February 11, 1851

'How could people like us who avoid all official positions like the plague, find ourselves at home in a Party?

Letter from Engels to  
Marx, February 13, 1851.



# REVIEWS

EDUCATION, CAPITALISM AND THE STUDENT REVOLT, by Chris Harman and others,  
International Socialism, 4/-.

England, unlike France and Germany, the U.S.A. and Japan, has yet to experience an articulate student movement. One product of this is a distinct lack of theoretical literature in this country on the nature of the student situation. In this context this 70-odd page work from student members of International Socialism is very welcome. It includes, for the first time, a mass of extremely useful and interesting educational statistics in a condensed form. Theoretically, however, we must express considerable reservations.

I.S. was almost the last revolutionary group in Britain to recognise that the struggle within the universities could bear useful fruit. Harman's booklet reflects this. Instead of having an historical account of the role of education and students in a capitalist society, less than ten sides is devoted to the origins of those relationships and to the history of students as a group. Instead we are presented with a confused, unreflected theory expressed through a fixed and outmoded set of ideas.

Harman uses what is basically an 'anomie' (1) theory. The specific cause of the student revolt is postulated as being the social disintegration of the university arising from its inability to transform itself in the face of an undergraduate population explosion. This population explosion is itself seen as the primary manifestation of the new role assigned to universities by capitalism. The old methods used by the university authorities to maintain social integration break down, creating for the militants a prism through which the university's true function can be perceived. Militancy is a way of almost spiritually solidifying groups of students. They provoke confrontations so that they may grasp 'the opportunity to explore the world, to take hold of reality in theory and practise . . . it is almost as if (my emphasis) they want to sit-in and are looking for an excuse'.(2).

This is not a vulgarisation of Marx. It is a vulgarisation of Durkheim, the French conservative theorist of functionalism. The theory is above all characterised by its mechanical nature. This is emphasized by the inflexible roles assigned by Harman to the various groups within higher education. In these descriptions ('there are three kinds of students', etc.) categories are held to determine history. The result is an abstract and

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- (1) Anomie: 'absence of law or organisation' or 'a state of disjunction between cultural values and the socially available means of attaining them'.  
(2) Education, Capitalism and the Student Revolt, p. 55.



inadequate understanding of history. 'It is almost as if . . .'. What the hell is this supposed to mean? 'It is almost as if' students were denied consciousness until history produces a sit-in, whereupon they magically attain it. The sit-in becomes a sort of metaphysical symbol rather as the 'revolutionary situation' is in other I.S. literature (1). But one cannot stipulate in advance the exact forms revolutions will take, either historically or in the universities now. And it follows that one must reject the idea that revolution is the sole prerogative of one particular group. Harman's incomprehension of these points has led him to use over-rigid models.

A final weakness of the pamphlet is its lack of any analysis of the relationships between the student movement and the working-class. Substituted for such an analysis is another mechanical formula: more struggles = more militants = more potential I.S. members = a facilitation of the revolution. Thus within Education, Capitalism and the Student Revolt the contradictions of orthodoxy are shown up: the fusion of a mechanical view of causality with an unthinking voluntarism. The notion of the university as a 'red base' remains undiscussed. And yet it must be through the development of this admittedly ambiguous idea that a dialectical discussion of student-worker unity should be focused. An intelligent assessment of the student movement in England remains to be written. Unfortunately (for I.S. contains some of those best equipped to do this) the present effort is just not good enough.

Pete Gibbon.

DAMNED! (An adjudication on the Press Council) by Andy Anderson. 43 pages. 3/- post free from 'Solidarity' (South London), 40 Tudor Close, Dartford, Kent.

Readers of 'Solidarity' will remember the prolonged and ultimately victorious struggle waged in 1966 and 1967 by the homeless families of King Hill Hostel against the Kent County Council, a struggle in which they were assisted by the 'Friends of King Hill'\*. The campaign was waged by direct action methods aimed at smashing the KCC ruling preventing husbands from living in and the Council's practice of evicting people from the Hostel after a period of 3 months, thereby breaking up families and forcing children 'into care'.

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(1) See 'France: The Struggle Goes on' by T.Cliff and I.Birchall, pp.56-75.

\* See 'Solidarity' vol.III, No.11 ('Hands off the Homeless'); vol.III, No.12 ('The King Hill Story'); vol.IV, No.1 ('You can beat County Hall') and vol.IV, No.4 ('Victory at King Hill'). The whole campaign is reviewed in 'Kent County Council versus the Homeless', 1/6 post free from Heather Russell, 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

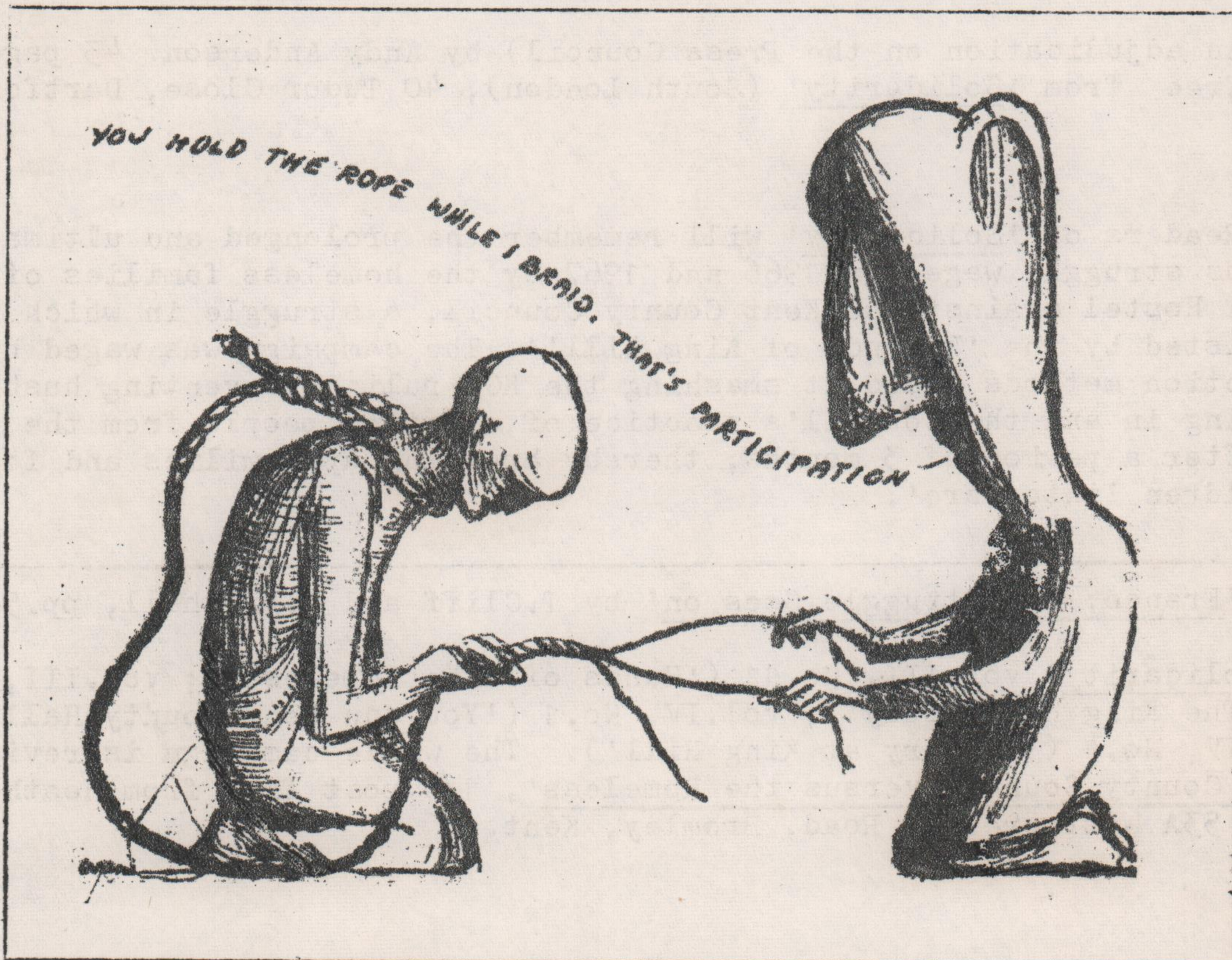


On January 2, 1966 - at the height of this campaign - a national Sunday newspaper ('The People') published a vicious, vindictive and slanderous attack on Mr. Roy Mills, one of the husbands most active in the agitation, calling him a 'phoney martyr'. The purpose of the article was to stem the support for the King Hill campaigners developing throughout Kent and even nationally. The paper had correctly gambled on the financial inability of an unemployed working man to seek (let alone obtain) redress through the courts.

Early in 1967 the 'Friends of King Hill' lodged detailed complaints about this scurrilous article with the Press Council. A long correspondence - and eventual adjudication dismissing the complaints - ensued. The Friends had approached the Press Council not because they had any faith in this whitewashing outfit (composed overwhelmingly of nominees of the Newspapers Owners themselves) but because they wished to expose it. They wished to document how precisely it would wriggle in its attempts to explain that what 'The People' had published was 'in accordance with the highest professional and commercial standards of the British Press'.

Andy Anderson's pamphlet (the first to be published by the newly constituted South London Solidarity Group) does this most skilfully. It not only provides interesting background information concerning the composition and terms of reference of the Press Council, but mercilessly records its evasions, prevarication and double talk on behalf of those who own and control the 'free' press. The whole pamphlet is a living illustration of how so-called 'democratic safeguards' in class society turn out to be built-in stabilisers of the system itself.

M.B.





# FURNITURE WORKERS' STRUGGLE: a follow up

Since the recent wage struggle\* of the non-skilled workers at the Wembley 'Sheffield Cabinet Co. Ltd.', control of the shop floor has become a dominant issue. During January significant gains were made, only to be lost to the management a month later. It is worth looking at the relationship between the union (NUFTO), management, skilled and non-skilled labour during this period.

## POINTS IN DISPUTE

Last December the management appeared to be making little effort to maintain the level of the non-skilled labour force. They were in fact running a newspaper ad. specifically phrased to scare away potential recruits. Hindsight suggests they were anticipating the Interchangeability clause in the January '69 Wages and Conditions deal ratified by the Standing Committee of the Joint Industrial Council for the Furniture Trade.\*\* Although hedged with safeguards ad nauseam: 'The practical application is by discussion at shop floor level...', etc., this deal is rightly regarded by the rank and file as a sell-out.\*\*\* Management is handed complete mobility of labour in exchange for 2d. per hour rise.

Even before this deal management and union took the mobility of unskilled union labour for granted. In January non-skilled labourers at the 'Sheffield' fought back on two fronts for an adequate labour force. The movement of men from one shop to another was resisted. For three weeks no packer worked in the dispatch area and the management lacked the confidence to force the issue. Several foremen and chargehands were threatened that their continued working at labourers' jobs would lead to a walk-out, since under these circumstances there was little pressure on the management to guarantee the necessary unskilled force.

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\* See 'Solidarity', vol. V, No. 6.

\*\* Leader in NUFTO Record, January 1969.

\*\*\* Letter entitled Buying a Rise in the opinion column of NUFTO Record, February 1969.



## ATTITUDES OF THE SKILLED WORKERS

The support inherited from the October wage struggle was quickly lost on an issue like shop floor control. Hardly ever on the receiving end, the skilled workers regarded resistance to the management as 'trouble making'. Popular retorts: 'As long as you don't lose any money, why object to being moved around?'. 'You can't do more than one day's work', or the more theoretical 'If I'm asked to sweep the floor/shovel crap, I've got(?) to do it'. The Shop Committee and Shop Secretary must share the responsibility for this ingrained defeatism. They have repeatedly ducked this issue, fighting only on economic points and leaving militants to resist unaided.

Labourer officials are repeatedly accused of splitting the shop. They are classified as 'trouble makers' by the shop secretary. The cry is all too readily repeated by the skilled workers, many of whom (being on individual time bonus) find it convenient to have a foreman at hand to feed their machines and plug the inadequate labour gaps.

### SHOP FLOOR OFFICIALS : 'UNITY IS STRENGTH'

Indignation directed at the management could lead to a real unity of skilled and unskilled, and real strength. Instead it is turned against the labourers and significantly undermines the effort to achieve an adequate labour force. The shop secretary accuses the labourers of splitting the shop and reducing its strength. The shop has failed to understand that this convenient device prevents any examination of the actual strength of shop floor organization in relation to management. In fact it is alarmingly weak.

The shop secretary has been pointedly apathetic on the question of foremen standing in as labourers. Yet to have left the militants to their own devices would have given them too much power. Instead 'martial law' was declared in the interests of 'shop strength'. Persuasively presented with a choice between 'anarchy' (read direct action strength) and 'order' (read stagnation), the shop predictably chose the latter.

All meetings not called by the shop secretary were banned (unsuccessfully). The labourer shop steward was suspended (unsuccessfully) until the arrival of the area organizer. Direct action was condemned (unsuccessfully). Inevitably this aggravated a situation where the unskilled already felt that the shop committee was little more than a management peace-keeping force. The feeling was reinforced when production was halted for 2½ hours (Friday, February 7th) while unskilled workers questioned the shop committee's idea of what constitutes 'democratic' procedure.\* They felt they were being carved up! A mass sacking took place (later withdrawn) and the 'trespassers' were threatened with the police. The committee and shop secretary aligned themselves with the management.

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\* In a factory-circulated leaflet 'Abuse of Power - Some Information', printed by 'Solidarity'.



THE AREA ORGANIZER: 'UNITY IS STRENGTH'

He pleaded for unity on the shop floor (read: do as you're told by the union) and threw in some snide remarks about the building workers (they don't do as they are told). He was less interested in shop floor unity than he was in smashing the threat to the union's shop floor hierarchy.

A hatchet job on 'Solidarity' went off half-cocked. Wrongly assuming that they were altogether ignorant, he denounced it as 'gutter press' (?) to the assembled shop, while confiding in the shop secretary that he thought it was some 'Trot publication'. (The area organizer is a member of the Communist Party.)

Finally a premature and embarrassing vote of confidence in the shop secretary made a mockery of the isolated ringleader thesis, so enthusiastically dwelt on with so little information. Faith was reaffirmed in the shop secretary by a ten vote margin with heavy abstentions from the 90 strong audience. The meeting collapsed into a verbal free for all. The non-skilled labour aired their views about the union at shop floor and higher levels.

But the damage had been done. With the backing of the area organizer and the knowledge of a split shop the management waded in on the control issue with hardline tactics.

POST - MORTEM

Apart from some monetary gains and the confirmed militancy of a considerable sector of the shop, the control issue has been temporarily lost. A labourer shop steward has been elbowed out of office, and a labourer militant has been provocatively sacked. The sacking of the militant gives credence to the rumour that the management would like to get the labourers out on strike and then replace them with a more 'disciplined' work force.

Three days after the area organizer helped destroy labourer resistance to interchangeability, the management gave details of the first instalment of their three-year 'painless' modernization scheme (a coincidence?). From these details it appears that the skilled workers stand to lose much more than the unskilled if they still fail to recognize the importance of control on the shop floor.

It is to be hoped that in the coming fight to protect and extend workers' control on the shop floor against inevitable attempts at management encroachment, the skilled workers will recognize their common interests with the unskilled. This would seem an essential prerequisite for the emergence of a really strong and united shop.

Pete Olstead.



# DOCUMENT

'The newest school buildings are indistinguishable from the newest prisons or the newest industrial complexes'

Beyond the family structure imposed on us, the school is generally the first instrument of social repression a child meets in life. To the school is assigned the task of breaking the will to individuation, of "channeling the mind", of incapacitating the child with the rules that hold this society together. "This is the way things will be because this is the way they are." The class-room serves to impress through the medium of daily routine that life is essentially following orders, that the choices are always among the given, that control of your life is, and always will be, somewhere else. Passivity is the rule, and all 'activity' is planned (except for the frills, the extra-curricular, and then some). It is not accidental that the newest school buildings are indistinguishable from the newest prisons or the newest industrial complexes.

All the talk around the New York City "school crisis" misses this altogether. And this too is not accidental.

Beyond a few speeches aimed at capturing a constituency, it has not been a question of the standard of teaching, which is bad, or of the type of school which initiates into this "life". "Control" has been the central issue. All the protagonists would like to see the schools operating. It is a minor question as to who will administer (control) district classrooms which, with or without racism, function to introduce human beings into a world, a "life" that moves further beyond anyone's control every day. Yet the mere raising of the question of control is dangerous. It is always possible that once people get an inkling that they can handle part of their lives, they might feel that they can handle the whole thing. People might realize that power is them, as individuals.

It is significant that the one voice that has not been heard in the great debate about control is that of the students. But after all, they cannot be expected to understand, because they are only children, partially educated beings, partially moulded to the system. And workers are dumb. And prisoners are unreformed criminals. Or so say the fictions that surround life. In the minds of the Mayor, of the Teachers' Union, of the State Commissioner, of those who would use the issue "community control" for their own ends (in fact in the minds of all those who seek to maintain this education as an entrance into this system) there is the fear that if and when the student voice is heard it will say dangerous things. Dangerous, that is, to those people and the system they maintain.

The system - as it is so often called in reference to the overall prevailing organization of life - is caught in an irreversible decay. But a system that decays does not necessarily pass. All of its solutions are attempts to arrest decay, freeze relations, make the system permanent. "Decentralizing"



schools is one such solution. Building suburbs is another. The fascination with the synthetic - from transistorized hearts to glass-bubble cities - is no accident. The synthetic is so much more easily manipulated and controlled.

As long as the struggle is to maintain variations on what is, the solution to changing life is obscured, and obstructed. But those who feel it is meaningful to fight over this or that, must do so. (And we don't mean those desiring to use an 'issue': the politicians, manipulators, those out to build constituencies.) The assault required to change one part is an assault from all sides, on the whole. People activate themselves, engage in protest, because of how it makes them feel. And we will all feel best when the control over all facets, all aspects of our lives resides in us alone.

September 22, 1968.

COUNCIL FOR THE LIBERATION OF DAILY LIFE  
Box 666, Stuyvesant Sta., N.Y. 10009.

## ABOUT OURSELVES

Since our last issue a number of comrades have formed an autonomous group ('Solidarity' - South London) which will shortly be producing its own paper and pamphlets (the first of which is reviewed on p.11). Those interested in subscribing should contact A. Mann, 79 Balfour Street, S.E.17.

Our objective is the creation of as many such viable, autonomous Solidarity groups in as many areas (or fields of work) as possible. By joint agreement we will, for the time being, continue dealing with the national and international correspondence.

Sales over the last period have been good but there are still a large number of unsettled debts. If you have not received a bill and know you owe money, what are you waiting for?

We have recently purchased an electric stapler (£32). All contributions welcome. We have also acquired some 'recruiting leaflets'. These can be had for 30/- per thousand from H. Russell, 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.

Modern Capitalism and Revolution should be ready very soon now. Be patient a little longer.

We would like to stress once again our need for contact with our readers. Please send us news, comments, cartoons, cuttings or articles, all of which will help us produce a better paper. We are also keen to increase the number of individual subscribers (10/- for 12 issues from H. Russell) and of those prepared to take bulk orders on a sale or return basis.



# links and chains

That the emancipation of the working class must be the task of the working class itself is one of the most fundamental contentions of Solidarists. Neither the manoeuvres of a disciplined party, 'leading' the working class, nor the activities of a mass party whose political struggles are substituted for the economic struggles of the workers, nor yet the heroic activities of isolated individuals can lead to a free society where men are finally in control of their own fate. Only the conscious organization of the workers at the point of production for the expropriation of the ruling class can achieve this.

However, there are some sections of the working class whose function and conditions of work make it impossible for them to liberate themselves. Their ideological backwardness and organizational weakness are not merely part of the general picture which can be influenced by the actions of revolutionaries or the course of events. They are deeper, almost permanent.

I am becoming more convinced that certain sections of the working class (who constitute the overwhelming majority) will have to liberate their fellow-workers: the uneven development of the proletariat is an indisputable fact which we must take into account. It is no use, I think we are all agreed, concentrating our activities upon milkmen, posties, shopworkers and barmen. Our resources are limited and we should use them to maximum advantage in areas where they can bear fruit.

A very illustrative case in point is the Links and Parks Department of Aberdeen Corporation, where I work. I may be over-pessimistic, but I believe that this particular job conforms to the above analysis.

## the job

About 150 people work with the Department, rising to about 400 from May to September. They are split up into groups of 10-15 around the town, and allocated to the various parks or housing schemes.

I work with nine others maintaining the shrubberies and expanses of grass in one of the big housing schemes. There are six who continually mow the grass through the summer months, the gaffer, and finally three labourers who pull up the weeds, turn over the earth and clean rubbish out of flower-beds and shrubberies (it's amazing the things you find in shrubberies: basins, prams, bread-bins and negligees for instance). The work is quite varied and not too oppressive.



Wages are quite good; and very good for Aberdeen. We are paid £13.13.4d. for a 40-hour week, which is about £4 a week higher than most labourers' wages in Aberdeen. The men on the mowers get 1½d. an hour more than the labourers (i.e. 5/- a week more, and there is great competition for this 'privilege'). We have two 10-minute tea-breaks in the day, and half-an-hour for dinner.

We are stationed in a stockade-place, in which are various tool sheds and our bothy. Here you could make various minor complaints: 10 men have to take their dinner in an 8'x 6' space, which is not very comfortable. One tap of cold water and a tiny bit of soap is inadequate for 10 men, whose work is very dirty and often involves inadvertant handling of dubious substances in the bushes and flower-beds. However, these are minor points about which no real complaints are usually made.

## the union

Even by normal union standards, the union (NUGMW) is pathetic. It has always openly championed naked class collaboration, and has had little opposition from its scattered membership. Today it proudly claims that about half of the so-called 'productivity' deals in operation in the country involve the NUGMW.

When you join the 'Links and Parks' you are handed a slip of paper informing you that you must join the trade union 'appropriate to your work'. This arrangement illustrates a certain type of situation where the closed-shop is reactionary, for here union-management collaboration is complete.

For a start our shop steward (i.e. the collector of dues and delegate to union meetings) is appointed, not elected. He happens to be none other than the gaffer! This proletarian militant regularly delivers little speeches about the necessity for hard work and the wickedness of strikes.

When I joined the union the gaffer a) didn't tell me which union I was joining, just took my name and said he'd enroll me; b) didn't tell me where meetings were held and never attempted to sell union literature; and c) issued me with no union card. I asked one lad who'd been with the Parks for years when I'd get a card. 'I don't know' he said, 'I've never had one'. Soon, however, there will be a great technological leap forward and dues will be deducted from out pay by a computer.

It is not only the union that works a fiddle. It is common knowledge that all the implements supplied to Corporation Departments are provided by firms in which the Councillors have financial interests. In the Parks these can be quite expensive. A tractor costs about £1000, a mower £200, etc.



# some problems

There are various factors in the job which severely limit consciousness. To simplify the issue to a vulgar determinism would be ridiculous, but the difficulties of agitation are really overwhelming. For example the job is the only one I've ever heard of where all the workers really believe that they should work hard. Even when unsupervised, they don't take longer tea-breaks or dinner-hours than the 'official' ones. Here are some of the problems:

1) There is the small number of workers working in any one place. Although there is no simple relationship between size of work force and militancy, it tends to be a highly critical factor. Larger units produce greater class-identity and feelings of strength.

2) Then there is the 'rural' nature of the work. It seems to be nearer the Magic Roundabout than the class struggle at times. There is also the large number (at least 60%) of workers from the country who work seasonally with the Department, and who find this work paradise compared with the farms. In addition, although fine lads, they tend to be servile and are mostly Tories.

3) The absence of the management from the units of work means that any anger which develops tends to be directed towards the gaffer, and to end in the cul-de-sac of a petty feud. This is very depressing.

4) The relatively benevolent nature of the management compared with others in the City also limits the development of consciousness. Even when standing under a dripping tree as the only shelter in a thunderstorm, drenched to the skin, you are still aware that you are getting a lot more money than any other labourer in town.

5) Finally, some sense of power, a feeling that what you do will have some effect, must be present before workers will take militant action. But if we went on strike what would happen? The grass would grow a few inches. Rubbish would accumulate in the shrubs. But this would hardly strike terror into the hearts of the bourgeoisie. No production would be disrupted. No profits would be lost. And we couldn't possibly win a dispute.

Even though work such as this tends to have certain consolations (in terms of being quite pleasant and not too harsh), my advice to fellow revolutionaries in similar jobs would be - get out. Go to some place where you can have some influence on your fellow-workers and play some part in the struggles which occur.

Ian R. Mitchell.

## C O R R E C T I O N

The unsigned article 'Bread or Freedom' in our last issue was not an editorial comment. It should have been signed J.S.



## CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM : A REJOINDER

'I never read a book before reviewing it. It prejudices one so.' (Sydney Smith)

'They were standing under a tree, each with an arm around the other's neck. Alice knew which was which in a moment, because one of them had 'DUM' embroidered on his collar, and the other 'DEE'. 'I suppose they've each got 'TWEEDLE' round at the back of the collar' she said to herself...'

Lewis Carroll (Through the Looking Glass)

In vol.V, No.6 'Solidarity' published a theoretical article 'Capitalism and Socialism' (by M.B.) which tried to break new ground. It sought to differentiate the kind of critique libertarian socialists should be making of capitalism from the purely economic (and therefore restrictive) critique made by the 'traditional left'. The article also sought to link this more total critique with a complementary (more total) vision of a free society, a society in which man would not only be free at the level of production but also free in all other areas where he is at present oppressed or alienated.

Under the title 'Bread or Freedom' the following issue of 'Solidarity' (vol.V, No.7) carried an attack on this article by J.S., roundly denouncing it as 'rancid puritanism', 'monasticism', 'soggy humanitarianism' and 'an argument against socialism'.

Arguments are about ideas, and ideas cannot be wished away by appending labels to them, however derogatory. They have to be discussed on their own merit. This, J.S.'s article fails to do. Instead, like a man stung in a sensitive spot, he flings himself upon his horse and rides off madly in all directions. Two main ingredients of my original article seem to stick in J.S.'s throat. One is what he calls my 'method', the basic weapon of which is 'the amalgam'. The other is my attack on the notion that 'the conflicts and evils of society flow from a particular pattern of ownership of the means of production'. According to J.S. 'those who hold this view are correct in doing so'. In my view this assessment of the roots of the conflict in modern society is both inadequate and incomplete.

### ON AMALGAMS

The word 'amalgam' implies the 'lumping together' for the purposes of denunciation (or administrative action, such as liquidation)

of people holding fundamentally dissimilar political viewpoints, but whose conjunctural objectives may superficially appear to coincide. J.S. points out that 'Stalin could show that fascists, trotskyists and anarchists were opposed to his regime. Fascists planned to invade the Soviet Union. Therefore trotskyists were part of a fascist-trotskyist conspiracy to carry out this invasion'.\*

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\* The example chosen is (?significantly) rather a late variant of the technique. For Solidarists, more interesting historical antecedents would be Pravda's denunciation (March 3, 1921) of the Kronstadt insurrection as 'a White Guard plot ... expected and undoubtedly prepared by the French counter-revolution', or Lenin's assertion (Selected Works, vol.IX, p.98) that 'White Guard generals ... played a great role in this (the Kronstadt uprising). This is fully proved'. Khrushchev later 'proved' that the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was an American plot.



This kind of smearing by 'amalgam' is widely practiced in all parts of the political spectrum. It assumes a low level of political sophistication among those at whom it is addressed. Fascist politicians - or the more reactionary employers - denounce all their opponents as 'reds' (without worrying unduly as to their doctrinal differences). Establishment Liberals call the Young Liberals 'anarcho-syndicalists'. Labour leaders appeal to the loyalty of their supporters, denouncing dissidence as 'Tory-inspired'. Trade union leaders, threatened with a rank and file challenge to their authority, can only think in terms of 'anarchist conspiracy'. 'Left' critiques of the Communist Party are all, of course, initiated by the Economic League, and opposition to the General Secretary in Clapham High Street must of necessity originate in Scotland Yard.

But is the conceptual category of a 'trad left' an 'amalgam'? In politics one should not accept people at their own self-assessment, but seek objectively to evaluate their ideas and actions. Has the 'trad left' - despite its squabbles - more in common than it realises? Has it a common denominator of values, ideas, priorities, methods of action and methods of argument? Do its component parts share (whether explicitly or not) certain basic assumptions? Is the very heat engendered by its internal disputations the living proof that its publicists share common premises? The article 'Capitalism and Socialism' asserted that there were such common premises and that this explained both the nature (and limitations) of the trad left's critique of capitalism and the narrowness of its vision of what socialism might be like. There is nothing accidental in this phenomenon. The poisoned ideological fount is none other than the persistence of class society, of its values and of its ideology. The longer bourgeois or bureaucratic societies survive, the more deeply will bourgeois (or bureaucratic) ideology permeate the thinking of those who originally set out to destroy these societies. That 'the dominant ideas of each epoch are the ideas of its ruling class' has now become true in a much deeper sense than Marx could ever have foreseen.

At this stage it is worth disposing of one objection voiced in 'Bread or Freedom', namely that one cannot jointly label as trad socialists 'those who wish to establish a society modelled on Soviet Russia and those who believe Russia is state capitalist;\* bureaucrats like Kosygin and Gomulka and revolutionary socialists like Kuron and Modzelewski;\*\* our present government and those who are trying to fight back against its anti-working class policies'.\*\*\*

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\* I carefully refrained from mentioning this political species. I am nevertheless accused of attacking them. Mark Twain once said: 'Get your facts first, then you can distort them as much as you like'.

\*\* I didn't mention these comrades either, most of whose criticism of the Polish bureaucracy I would accept. Their critique, incidentally, closely parallels the arguments developed in issues 19, 20 and 21 of 'Socialisme ou Barbarie', all of which were widely distributed in Poland in 1956 and early 1957. We were in fact the first to publish sections of the Polish text in English (vol.IV, 2, 3 and 4). J.S. isn't just apathetic to facts, but actively hostile to them!

\*\*\* Here the imputation is partly correct. Only I would word it rather differently: 'our present government and those (Communist Party, Trotskyist 'entrists' of every kind) who helped put it there'.



Leaving aside the fanciful examples chosen, the implication of this kind of argument is that political controversy - in particular heated controversy - necessarily implies a difference over fundamentals. This just isn't true. When the Stalinists in Russia eliminated their Trotskyist opponents by methods of physical terror it was no proof that they stood for anything basically different. Both accepted the inability of the working class to transcend a trade union consciousness. Both endorsed the primacy of the Party. Both participated in the slander and suppression of their 'left' opponents, both outside the Party (Kronstadt) and within it (the Workers Opposition and other groups).<sup>\*</sup> The argument that because people fight against one another they cannot share wide common premises is too simple by half. Torquemada had various Catholic theologians burned at the stake. Is one resorting to an 'amalgam' if one proclaims the common mystification of both executioner and victim, manifested in their common belief in God, the Catholic Church, and the necessity for a 'correct' interpretation of Papal writ? Has J.S. never heard of 'false consciousness'? Is the Left, by some miracle, immune from it? At a **cruder** level, is a violent settlement of scores between gangsters necessarily an affirmation of deep ideological differentiation?

## SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRADITIONAL LEFT

One of the charges in J.S.'s article is that I 'refuse to specify the characteristics of the traditional Left'. If by 'refuse' he means 'omit', his claim is true. The article, however, was about

something specific: the attitude of the trad Left to what was wrong with capitalism. If J.S. seeks to widen the terms of the debate, I am quite willing. Here goes (briefly for shortage of space prevents full treatment of each proposition):

a) Among the identifying features of the trad Left (whether Fabian or Bolshevik) are an ingrained belief in man's incapacity to manage his own affairs without an elite or leadership of some kind (themselves!). In this, both reflect the typically bourgeois concept of 'masters and men'.

b) The trad Left places the question of formal ownership (as distinct from control)\*\* at the centre of its preoccupations. It believes that solving society's economic problems by planning and the increase in the productivity of labour will necessarily result in society's other problems being solved.

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\* When, in 1927, Stalin arrested those responsible for the Trotskyist underground printing press (headed by Mrachkovsky) he was able to refute their objections without much difficulty, remarking: 'They say such things are unknown in the history of the Party. This is not true. What about the Myasnikov group? And the Workers' Truth group? Does not everyone know that Comrades Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev themselves supported the arrest of the members of these groups?'. 'The Great Terror', Robert Conquest (Macmillan, 1968), p.130.

\*\* As will be shown, J.S. shares this confusion between 'property relations' (ownership) and 'relations of production' (which are essentially authority relations).



c) Wilson, Gollan, Healy (and both Stalin and Trotsky in their lifetime) would all assert that Russia (economically speaking) was a 'fundamentally different' kind of society from that existing in the West. Libertarian socialists would not. It all depends on what one considers 'fundamental'. The yardstick of the former ('amalgam' again?) would be the presence or degree of 'competition', 'planning', 'nationalisation', etc. The yardstick of the latter: human freedom as expressed in workers' self-management.

d) Many in the 'marxist' section of the trad Left believe in a revolutionary theory based on allegedly objective laws. But they also hold that they alone can 'correctly' interpret this theory (hence the multiplicity of mutually hostile 'marxist' organizations). Under appropriate conditions these beliefs lead them to assume what Trotsky called the Party's 'historical birthright'. In defence of this birthright the Party is prepared to manipulate (and if necessary shoot) workers in the interests of a higher, 'historically determined' purpose, which IT has grasped, even if the masses haven't.

At the more mundane level the trad Left can be recognized by its deeply ingrained conservatism and its ideological sterility. It is the living embodiment of Bagehot's aphorism that 'one of the greatest pains to human nature is the pain of a new idea'. At a time when everything is being revolutionised more deeply and rapidly than in any other period of history, only their 'revolutionary' ideology seems to remain static. A 'frantic' search for novelty\* should be the prime preoccupation of those slowly sinking in an ante-diluvian morass of half-truths and outmoded concepts. But for them, as for all conservatives, 'novelty' is a term of opprobrium.

Those who seem frightened of new ideas might at least rearrange their prejudices once in a while. But even this seems to be asking too much. In argument, they defend their errors as if they were defending their inheritance. All buttoned up in impeccable little coats of complacency, they are like a man who will not look at the new moon out of deference for the old one. They react to ideological stimuli like Pavlovian dogs in an early stage of conditioning with a non-discriminatory and purely salivatory response. When for instance I claim that those who only see man as a consumer see him in 'much less than his full stature', I am accused a drawing 'a sharp distinction between man as consumer and man's urge to fulfil himself'. When I claim the 'essential identity of relations of domination, whether they manifest themselves in the capitalist factory, in the patriarchal family or in the authoritarian upbringing of children' and suggest that the 'socialist revolution will have to take all these fields within its compass, and immediately', I am arraigned for describing fields 'neatly fenced off from each other' and 'not organically connected'\*\*. The mind boggles at such feats of logic! J.S. even ends up by stating that 'Capitalism and Socialism' 'insinuates that society's ills are not due to the existence of the capitalist system'.\*\*\* How much further can polemical creativity go? In more senses than one J.S.'s article epitomizes the response of a traditional marxist when confronted with a new idea: noise, fog, distortion, invention, childish imputation of reactionary motives, etc, etc.

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\* 'Bread or Freedom', p.26; \*\* *ibid.*, pp.24 and 26; \*\*\* *ibid.*, p.22.



## ON THE NATURE OF CAPITALISM

J.S. defines the capitalist system as 'a particular pattern of ownership (my emphasis) of the means of production'.\* To avoid being misunderstood, he defends the trad socialists in their vision of the evils of society as 'flowing from a particular pattern of ownership of the means of production'.

This is putting the clock back nearly a decade. It is a tragedy that after 8 years of the existence of 'Solidarity' and after the publication of such sophisticated texts as 'The Meaning of Socialism', 'Socialism or Barbarism' and 'Modern Capitalism and Revolution' there should persist such confusion between 'property relations' and the much more fundamental 'relations of production'. This confusion can even lead J.S. to assert that the article 'Capitalism and Socialism' is in 'complete contradiction with 'Solidarity' practice'. The contrary is in fact the case.

Since the first issues of 'Solidarity' we have stressed that the crisis of contemporary society is a manifold one which cannot be fully understood solely in terms of the 'private ownership of the means of production'. This wider awareness has helped comrades who accept 'Solidarity' ideas to intervene meaningfully in disputes such as King Hill, the anti-bomb movement, the student upsurge and in industrial disputes in which questions of job control were paramount. It enabled us to be the first to respond to events like the revolt at Berkeley (in 1964) and to recent developments in France (which had very little to do with 'property relations' but a great deal to do with relations of another kind). It is a deep awareness of the totality of the crisis of all capitalist values and all capitalist institutions that explains our own survival in an initially hostile political environment and the recent wide response evoked by ideas similar to our own. If we had spoken exclusively of 'property relations' or of 'contradictions within the economy', we would have been condemned to the role of a sect, because we would only have been dealing with one aspect of social reality, blowing it up to the exclusion of all others.

But 'double think' can go still further. J.S. proves that it is possible both to believe that the crisis stems from the pattern of ownership and to claim that for trad socialists 'the relations of production determine the other social relationships'. Confusion not only reigns... it pours! The trad socialists (Labour Party lefts, Communists, orthodox Trotskyists, Maoists, etc.) believe that 'property relations' are paramount. The more sophisticated among them will claim that the juridical superstructure ('property relations') necessarily corresponds with the 'relations of production'. In fact as Marx (and later many others) have shown\*\* the 'property relations' may serve to mask the reality of the relations of production. If trad socialists ever came to acknowledge that the 'relations of production' were fundamental, they would have to accept the relevance of our deepest critique of Leninism and Trotskyism, with their imposition of authoritarian relations in production from the earliest weeks in 1918. Sooner or later they would have to envisage the logical link between Leninism and Stalinism. This they are clearly not yet prepared to do. Neither, apparently, is J.S.

M.B.

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\* Ibid., p.22;    \*\* See, for instance, 'Russia: a marxist analysis' by T. Cliff, or earlier texts in 'Socialisme ou Barbarie'.



# TEACHERS LEARN THE HARD WAY

Many must recently have been surprised to see on their television screens pictures of teachers occupying their union executives' committee room and demonstrating in the street outside the special NUT salaries conference. What had come over those reactionary, sarcastic authoritarians we all remember from our school days? This article attempts to explain the background to this change in teachers' attitudes and behaviour.

As technology develops, its need for highly trained technicians increases. More importantly, the level of education required to get almost any job goes up.(1) The educational system of a few years ago was quite incapable of churning out legions of young people with more than a basic training in English, Maths and knowing their place. If people were to be trained to a higher basic level, then the amount of expenditure on schools would have to be greatly increased and the quality of teaching improved.

Although some 25% of teachers have degrees the majority are teacher trained non-graduates. The pattern for most young people wanting to become teachers is to stay at school until they have their 'A' levels, and then go to college for three years. Young teachers start work with several years of full-time training behind them. They will be at least 21 years old. Having managed on a grant of £350 a year they are, at first, not too worried by a salary of £800 p.a. (or about £12 a week take-home pay). But after a few months they realise that others of their age and training are earning one hell of a sight more, and all they can look forward to is dropping even further behind as time passes.

Teachers' salaries are determined nationally by the Burnham Committee. The teachers' side is made up of negotiators from the various teachers' unions. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) is by far the biggest single union (240,000 out of 300,000 school teachers). It has a majority on the Teachers' Panel and hence can decide what any teachers' claim should be.

In 1968 members of the NUT were asked to vote on whether they should affiliate to the TUC. The document circulated with the voting form contained an interesting statement: "... Whilst some of the activities of the Union might well be regarded as the activities of a

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(1) In All their Future - Ronald G Cave quotes an American educationist as saying that, in his country, those who left school at sixteen were now regarded as virtually unemployable for life (my emphasis).



Trade Union, the consensus of opinion has been that, on the basis of its rules, the NUT is not a Trade Union" (my emphasis). The NUT executive is completely dominated by head teachers (who are not teachers at all but ex-teachers who have become full-time administrators). In short, the NUT is the largest organised body of teachers in the country. But its prime concern is not "the regulation of the conditions of employment of its members", and it has an executive dominated by the educational equivalent of foremen and shop managers.

The NUT has a long and sustained tradition of feebleness. In 1961 the Executive had put in a claim which would have cost the Government £110 million. Selwyn Lloyd then imposed his famous freeze. After several retreats the Executive finally accepted, against tremendous rank-and-file opposition, a deal worth only £42 million. Many teachers left the NUT. The membership was down by 10% in 1962. Some joined the National Association of Schoolmasters (NAS) and some adopted a completely cynical attitude towards union activity. Unfortunately the widespread disillusionment with the Executive did not lead to the creation of any rank-and-file organisations. The Communist Party, once an effective force, was utterly discredited by its attitude to the Executive's sell out.

The Government has recently been looking round for ways of cutting expenditure. Education was an obvious choice. (They controlled the purse strings directly and the opposition could easily be out-manoeuvred.) Their calculations proved correct: opposition to the cuts never really got off the ground, despite the fact that teachers just out of training college were finding it difficult to get jobs and that conditions in schools would actually get worse over the next few years. Lack of rank-and-file pressure and organisation contributed to the ease with which the Government cut back on educational spending.

In October 1968 the Teachers' Panel submitted a new pay claim to the Burnham Committee. This was for a basic scale going from £900-£1700 over a period of ten years. (The old scale was from £800-£1500 over a period of fourteen years.) The "Salaries Campaign Briefing" issued by the NUT reveals the priorities and attitudes of the union hierarchy very clearly. On the first page there is a section headed "Alerting our own Members". Of its 18 lines, 5 stress the need for the members to support the Union, and the remainder warn the membership of the divisive tactics of the NAS. (We hold no particular brief for the NAS, which is a curious all-male mixture of reactionaries and militants.) The document then lists the people upon whom pressure should be brought. Firstly parents. Then "... the so-called 'opinion leaders' in each locality - the leading officials of local organisations, prominent councillors, the M.P., the editors and education specialists of local and provincial newspapers, and well-known local personalities who are likely to have an interest in education". Such people were "to be approached individually by personal visit or be written to". No nonsense here about trying to build links with other trade unionists. The whole concept is that by friendly chats with "opinion leaders" the demands will be achieved.



The Burnham negotiations dragged on. On January 17, 1969, the NAS representatives walked out saying that the NUT was now submitting a new claim that was substantially lower than the original one. (2) The NUT rules do not allow the Executive to change policy except by a three-quarters majority in the Executive, and this has then to be endorsed by a special conference. The Executive had broken the first rule since the majority in favour of the new claim was only two-thirds (3). If it had not been for the NAS walk-out, teachers would not even have known that the NUT Executive had submitted a new claim. They would have thought that their Executive had eventually accepted the Management's highest offer.

When the Executive next met at Hamilton House on January 31st to hear a progress report on the negotiations, they found the conference room occupied by about 150 young teachers. The President made an appeal for us to leave "in the best interests of all of us". This was met with groans and scholarly, genteel suggestions of "get stuffed". With a great creaking of joints the Executive then hobbled out. The 'occupiers' settled down to a meeting of their own. They set up an ad-hoc Salaries Committee. When the Executive members had fled from the hall they had left certain revealing documents behind. A previous NUT conference had decided that a two-thirds majority of members voting was necessary for a strike to be official. After passing through an executive sub-committee this had become two-thirds of the total membership. Not much hope of strike action on that basis!

This article has stressed the salaries issue, not because this is the only field of struggle in education, but because it shows the role of the NUT hierarchy and the need for rank-and-file organisation.

What courses of action are open to teachers? One possibility is working within the NUT for a change in leadership, a course which will only involve a very small percentage of teachers. This is saying that given the correct leadership the struggle is all but won. A more meaningful action would be to challenge the whole idea of hierarchy by the militants involving themselves, with the pupils, in the struggles for democratisation of schools, against corporal punishment and streaming, etc. Tens of thousands of teachers would be drawn in and a basic challenge to the hierarchy of order-givers and order-takers would be developed. One side result of a successful campaign would be a complete change in the structure and function of the Union. A struggle based on mass action will result in more profound changes in both teachers and the educational system than any amount of "changing the leadership".

Don Kirkley.

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(2) The final agreement was for a scale from £860 to £1615. Simply to maintain their living standard the teachers needed a scale from £872 to £1635.

(3) Two "militant" members of the Executive, Max Morris and Jack Jones have both stated this in public.