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Solidarity Federation
PO Box 29, South West DO, Manchester, M15 5HW.
07 984 675 281
manchestersf@manchestersf.org.uk
www.solfed.org.uk

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ANARCHISM, SEX AND FREE LOVE



THE FIGHT AGAINST CAPITALISM, PATRIARCHY
AND REPRESSIVE RELIGIOUS MORALITY

SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

If there is one subject that radicals and revolutionaries alike evade, mouth platitudes over, or casually brush aside, it is that of sexual politics. Issues like industrial disputes, global warming and poverty are after all, far less intimate, personal and controversial. Sexual politics are often perceived as carrying distinctly secondary importance. Yet in spite of our continued economic and political disempowerment, our sexuality remains the one area of our lives over which we still exercise a high degree of personal expression and control. It is also one of the few subjects of universal interest, affecting literally all of us.

Part of the reason that sex and sexuality are so rarely discussed, even in political forums, is because we have been so conditioned by those in power to suppress this most basic, but often complex facet of our personality. Over the course of history, the state as guardian of our morality has consistently dictated where, when and how we express our sexuality. The established religions still propagate the idea of sex other than for procreation and outside of wedlock as sinful. Little surprise then, that for many the idea of sex has become synonymous with repression and guilt. But religion is not the only culprit.

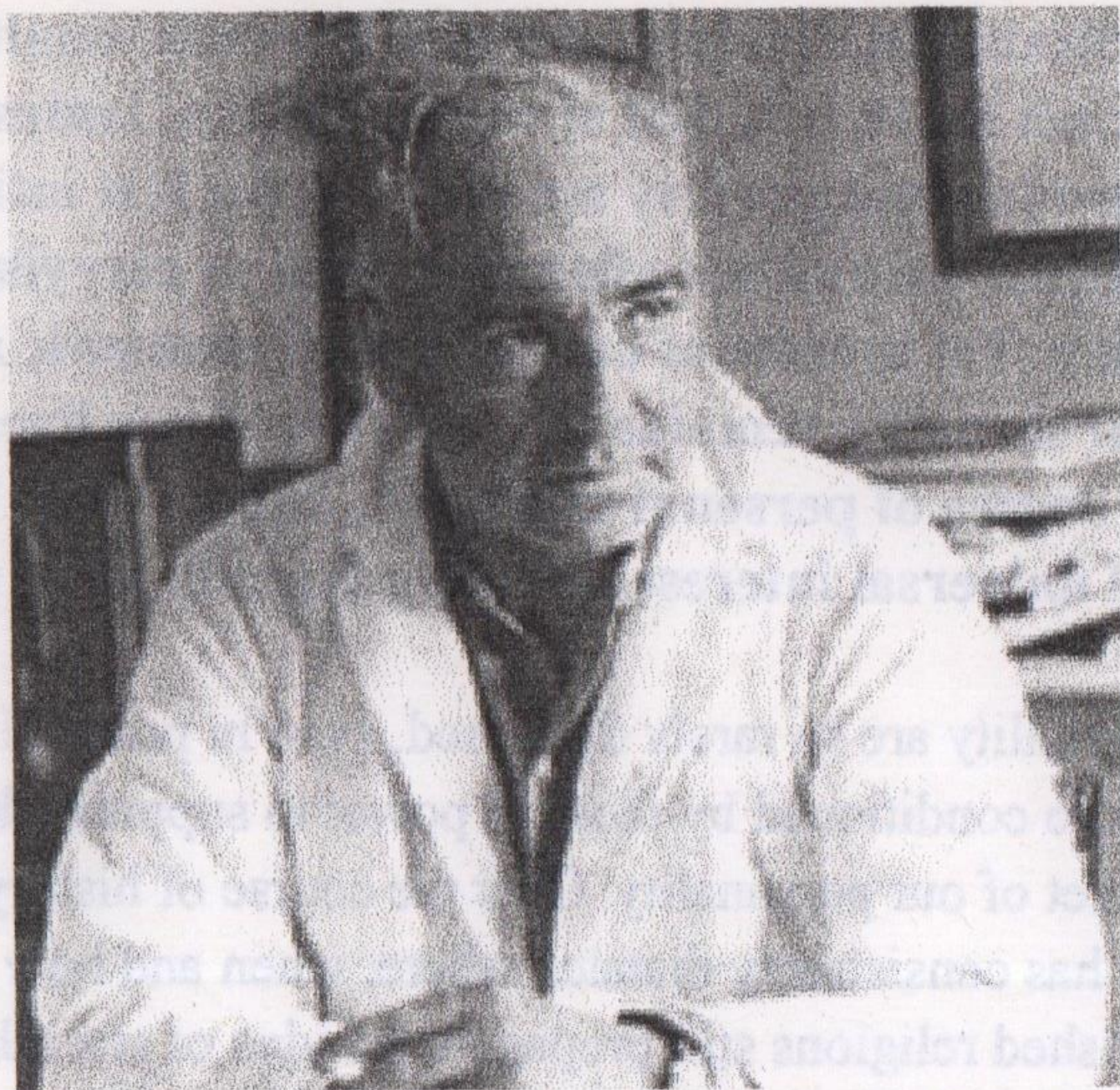
Political regimes (both left and right wing), the nuclear family, education, media, psychiatry and various other institutions have all distinguished themselves in reinforcing the authoritarian morality where personal relationships are concerned. In doing so, they have collectively exercised a profound form of social control.

CONSTRUCTING AND ENFORCING 'NORMALITY'

The choice of friend or partner(s) is a fundamental right which we all take for granted. Relationships open the door to intimacy, companionship, love, affection, self-esteem, emotional fulfilment and belonging. Having a wide range of relationships provides opportunities for personal and social enrichment. Nevertheless, the society we live in judges some types of consensual relationship as preferable to others.

Under capitalism, relationships are founded upon inequalities of social, economic and political power; maintained and enforced by the institutions of the state. These inequalities and the values which underpin them, infest all areas of social life, from the bedroom to the workplace. We are systematically conditioned, (often unconsciously) from an early age to conform to an artificially constructed reality designed to serve the interests of the ruling classes, rather than our own.

Constructing and upholding a particular view of 'normality' has always been a primary control tactic of ruling elites. This contrived normality exists to



Wilhelm Reich

encourage both social conformity and sell products on the premise of aesthetic perfection: A perverse form of body fascism is reflected throughout the modern mass media precisely because of the latter. Normality is further represented and reproduced in the nuclear family. Husband, wife and 2.4 kids, the perfect social unit of production and consumption. However, the nuclear family operates as a powerful curtailer of our natural sexual expression according to the radical psychoanalysts. As an institution,

institution, it supports capitalist society by reproducing power relationships following the perceived norm. Synergising Marx and Freud, Wilhelm Reich and the 1930's Sex Pol movement articulated how the internalised repression of our developing (childhood and adolescent) sexuality by our parents generates a kind of mass intellectual prison. Reich later used this analogy to explain how workers became receptive to ideologies such as fascism, even though rationality would suggest strongly that this acted contrary to their economic interests. The authoritarian family, Reich concluded, in repressing our natural sexual development, thereby creates a subconscious dependency on powerful figures within the adult psyche.¹

The family's rigidly defined gender roles, which are further reinforced by the education system and other media, serve the economy by providing a clear cut division of labour between the sexes. From an early age we are conditioned to adopt distinct behavioural attributes according to our gender. But cross-cultural studies show that far from being genetically determined, these roles are socially ascribed. Although in these more progressive times we bear witness to an increasing blurring of the traditional stereotypes, they are still very much with us. Single-parent families, same sex relationships, and other deviations from the perceived norm are all subject to social stigmatisation to a greater or lesser degree.

Homosexuality, despite being prevalent throughout the animal kingdom, is portrayed by political and religious zealots alike as being contrary to the laws of

nature. Being gay is also still routinely punished by death in 9 countries of the world, and legally prohibited in 70.² It was not so long ago that the Tory government passed Clause 28, prohibiting the 'promotion' of homosexuality within the education system. The fact that gay villages exist in some UK cities reflects that gays have felt it necessary to create safety in numbers in an often hostile society: A society in which only recently same-sex partnerships have been legally recognised and sanctified.

Conventional Psychiatry has also traditionally served as a powerful agent of social control. It has been well documented that political dictatorships have made extensive use of Psychiatric treatments and incarceration to silence their critics. But let it not be forgotten that up until quite recently, aggressive and unpleasant aversion techniques were routinely employed to 'treat' homosexuality in the UK. Further, there are still people in health and social care services today who were admitted to Psychiatric facilities years ago for such heinous acts as sexual promiscuity or having a child out of wedlock.

Censorship is another tool used by the powerful in preserving their manufactured 'normality'. Viewing more porn than the rest of us, the censors cast themselves as our moral police, filtering out any material they consider too offensive for us to cast our impressionable eyes upon.

But it is with a great sense of irony how frequently we find those lauding chastity and the sanctity of marriage most loudly - the politicians and priests - revealed as the most sexually deviant and abusive.

There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that most gay-bashers are repressed gays, and that many rapists derive from sexually abusive or repressed backgrounds. The bizarre ambivalence of modern-day capitalist morality is



amply demonstrated by the corporate gutter press which on the one hand delights in exposing the infidelity and aberrations of its subjects: On the other, its pages abound with adverts and imagery designed to titillate and sell sex.

SEXISM, SEXUAL ABUSE AND Class

The atrocious repression and exploitation of female sexuality still reigns supreme across the world. A recent case was highlighted in Islamic Saudi Arabia where a woman was sentenced to 200 lashes after being gang-raped by 7 men. In some African and Asian countries, women are still subject to routine genital mutilation. Amnesty International estimate that some 2 million girls and women a year suffer this vile and barbaric act.³ Honour killings are also widespread, wherein females are murdered by



their own families for supposedly bringing shame by the perceived misuse of their sexuality. Even in more 'liberated' western cultures, women fare little better. The sex industry is characterised by the trafficking of females into lives of virtual sex slavery. (The figure for girls and women trafficked into Western Europe alone is estimated at 120,000 a year).³ Most pornography in western society reduces sex to a mechanical

act devoid of feeling, rendering women's role to that of subservient sex objects: Commodities to be bought and sold for men's pleasure. The feminist argument that porn = theory and rape = practice has some conviction. But this viewpoint must also be interpreted within the context of a society where institutional sexism and exploitive relationships are ingrained. Women are far more likely than their male counterparts to be victims of rape and domestic abuse. They are harangued outside abortion clinics for having the temerity to exercise control over their own bodies. They are statistically paid 17% less than men,⁴ less likely to be promoted and tend to work in industries which are traditionally devalued, both financially and socially. But in the cut-throat modern age, some women have proved themselves to be as ruthless as their male counterparts in commandeering positions of power. In looking at oppressive (economic and sexual) relationships, we need also to consider those based on age. Paedophilia -

the sexualised exercise of adult power over children - is understandably a highly charged and emotive subject. Abuse is usually committed by an adult that the victim knows and often trusts, rather than a total stranger. Although awareness on recognising and responding to abuse is increasing, it is not routinely taught as part of the school curriculum. To make matters worse, institutional child abuse has been actively covered up by institutions such as the Catholic church in Ireland, which operated an unwritten policy of relocating rather than 'outing' paedophile priests. Money also plays a big part in abuse. Compelling evidence of repeated abuse against the multi-millionaire singer Michael Jackson did not result in a single prosecution. But the story of rich exploiting the poor goes far wider. According to the United Nations, there are estimated to be 100 million children worldwide living or working on the streets, with 1.2 million girls under 18 trafficked into prostitution each year.³ Sex tourism has become big business, with rich western males travelling to countries such as Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Philippines to systematically abuse children.

FREE LOVE

The idea of 'free love' has been expressed since time immemorial, but rarely tolerated publicly for any great length of time (Free love in this sense refers to that which is freely given and received, without recourse to religious or state sanctification). In the 1960's an era of greater sexual freedom coincided with the arrival of mass contraception. It allowed adults to express and explore their sexuality without risking unwanted pregnancy. For some it was a liberatory experience, which still finds expression in more contemporary forums. Although our sexual tastes may be distorted by commercialisation and the dominant power relationships we are all exposed to, they still reflect our uniqueness and individuality. Some choose monogamy, others polygamy, some bisexuality, some transgenderism and so on. Our tastes, identity and orientation can change over time, and most of us will choose to experiment at some point in our lives. Some will have many partners, others only one. For some experimentation is a lifelong experience.

It would be wrong to suggest that we should advocate mass orgiastic indulgences any more than we should decry the monogamy of heterosexual married life. Even some of the most fervent champions of free love (such as the anarcho-feminist Emma Goldman) have confessed to pangs of jealousy and possessiveness on occasions. What suits one person does not suit another, and we must forever guard against the tyranny of public opinion.

THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND SEXUAL REVOLUTION

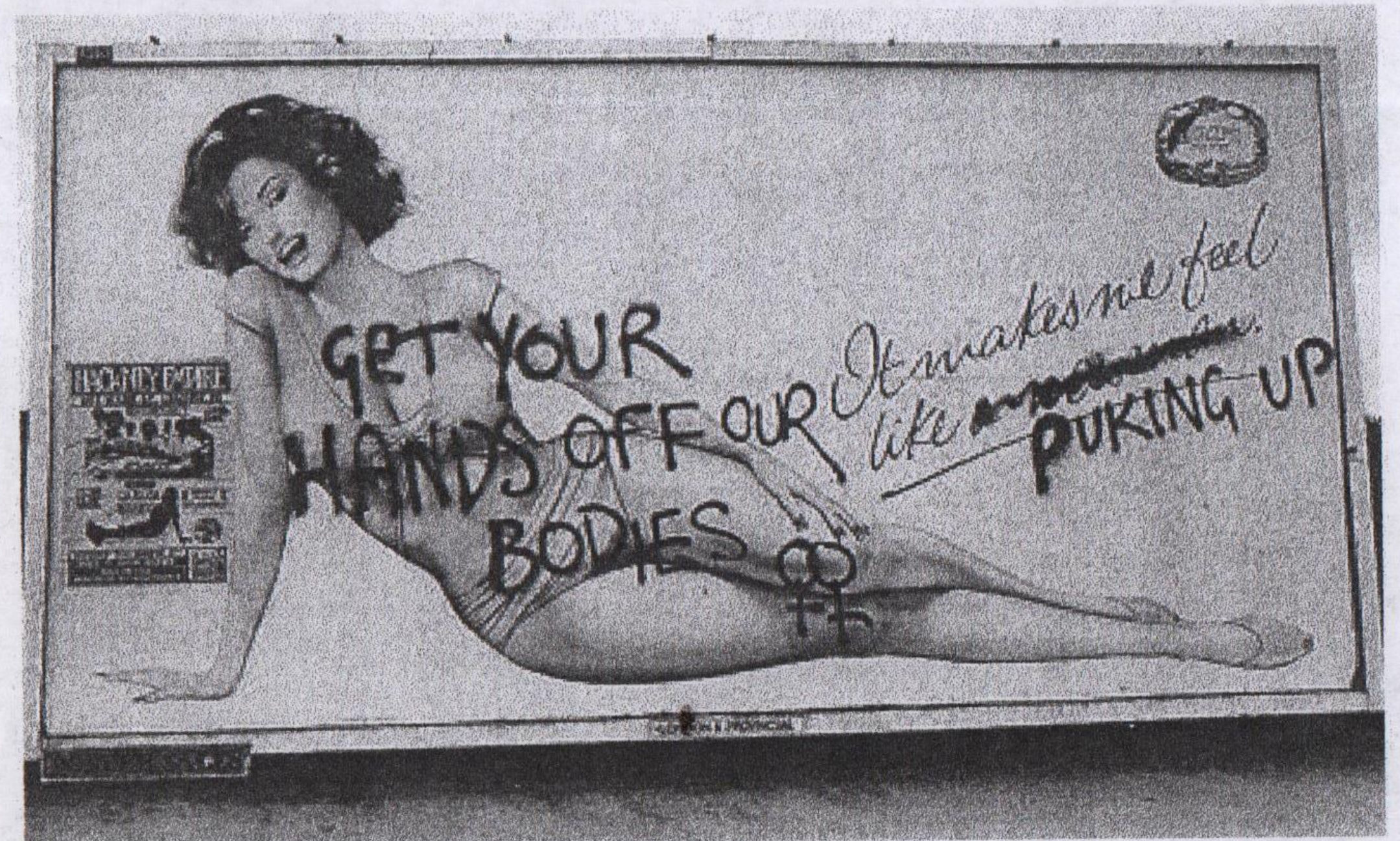
As we have seen, a hierarchical society maintains itself by manipulating and controlling our gender, morals and sexuality. Economically capitalism exploits men, women and children on the basis of social class. Although legislation now prohibits discrimination on the grounds of age, gender and sexual orientation, no such legal frameworks exist to deter maltreatment on the basis of social class. The reason for this is obvious. Class provides the overriding abusive power relationship in capitalist society. Although it would be over-simplistic to argue that all power relationships are subsumed by economic ones (patriarchy and religion predated capitalism, after all), economic and political hierarchies sustain all others. The whole sex industry is underpinned by market forces. Sex workers, whether child or adult, rarely choose their profession: Many work the streets, bars, brothels and massage parlours to escape poverty, or simply just to get by. For some, there is simply no other option. Businesses which sell sex, and the trafficking rackets which supply them, are motivated in the final analysis by profit. Sex is big business. The US currently spends as much on pornography as it does on foreign aid.

In exploiting our insecurities and selling sex, and unattainable ideals of 'perfection' as commodities, capitalism distorts and alienates our desires beyond all recognition.

But the Establishment has not been seriously threatened by allowing gays and women to populate its positions of power - quite the opposite. There now appears to be a growing dichotomy between traditional (misogynistic and homophobic) religious morality and that of secularised capitalism, which cares little if the boss is male, female, gay or straight; so long as they keep the rich, wealthy and the poor subservient.

We believe that adults should be free to express their gender and sexuality unhindered and without recourse to judgement, so long as this is done in a consenting and non-oppressive way. We believe that sex and relationships should be explored, debated and discussed in a healthy, open and honest manner; without the age-old taboos and hang-ups. Education should be delivered in a factual, non-stuffy way which properly informs children about all manner of relationship-related issues; bodily functions, STD's, contraception, love, forming relationships, acting on abuse, and so on. (One of the reasons that the UK has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Europe is because it fails so miserably on this score).³ This mature informed approach, combined with improved access to clinics, contraception and healthcare resources, will lead to more healthy and rounded adults, better able to exercise real choice and control. And rather than pontificating about some far-off revolution, we can all recognise, and respond to the ways in which we have been manipulated, conditioned and controlled in

the here and now. Whilst pushing to rid the world of the ruling elites, we must never to challenge the policemen, patriarchs and priests in our own heads. Che Guevara's adage that the revolutionary is motivated by great feelings of love may sound sentimental, but is essentially correct. Whilst humankind continues to be enslaved by capitalism, patriarchy, the authoritarian morality and other forms of oppression, we can never be truly free. Recognition of our common humanity, and the forces which inflict suffering, sows the seed of lasting revolutionary change. Meaningful and fulfilling relationships are founded upon us realising our common needs, wants and desires: voluntarily as equals, without interference. We need to assume control not only of our workplaces and communities, but also our hearts, bodies and minds.



References

1. See "The Irrational in Politics", M. Brinton (1993)
2. Referenced in "50 Facts that Should Change the World", J. Williams (2004)
3. Referenced in "The Gruesome Acts of Capitalism", D. Lester (2005)
4. Equal Pay Unit (2007)

Aims of the Solidarity Federation

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of workers which seeks to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills people, and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisation based on the same principles – revolutionary unions. These are not Trades Unions only concerned with 'bread and butter' issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues – both in the workplace and outside – which arise from our oppression. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Unless we organise in this way, politicians – some claiming to be revolutionary – will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of locals which support the formation of future revolutionary unions and are centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on direct action – action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians or union officials – our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome all working people who agree with our aims and principles, and who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions. We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide, and are affiliated to the International Workers Association, whose 'Principles of Revolutionary Unionism' we share.