

Libertarian STRUGGLE

for Workers' Power



When the mass movement against the Industrial Relations Bill was under way, the Labour leadership's response was to stress the need to obey capitalist law

NATIONALISATION no answer for workers

Healey's recent budget and its attacks on living standards is just one aspect of the overall offensive against working people. The bosses are in trouble, with inflation, over-production and forced scarcity of materials.

Many firms have gone or are going bankrupt. In order to get over their problems, employers lay off thousands of workers and put thousands of others on short time.

They hope to keep workers under control with the help of their mates in the social-democrat parties — like Labour in this country — and the union leaderships. The Social Contract is one way of making sure that workers lie still while they are being kicked in the ribs.

When workers faced with rising prices, fares, etc, demand better wages, like for instance railwaymen, they are threatened with redundancy. 20,000 workers are threatened with lay-offs by the British Steel Corporation alone.

**NATIONALISATION
SOLVES NOTHING**

The left wing of the capitalists attempt to

solve to problem with the setting up of a solve the problem with the setting up of a corporate state, where the unions and the business enterprises are under the direction of the State.

Nationalisation is no answer for workers — it's merely another way of keeping us in line. Wedgewood-Benn & Co only keep the myth going that the Labour Party is 'socialist' with the false idea that nationalisation = control by workers.

Illusions about the Labour Party have to be thrown on the rubbish heap. They can't give workers a better life — they only act as another way of tricking and mystifying.

WORLDWIDE CRISIS

The bosses face crises all over the world. Portugal is of tremendous importance for the development of the social revolution. The workers and peasants are slowly moving

towards a realisation of the need to take power.

They are kept back by the wheelings and dealings of the 'Communists' and their cronies in the Armed Forces Movement. The Portuguese situation, and the possible overthrow of the regime in Spain, pave the way for fundamental changes throughout Western Europe.

- 1 International links must be built with other workers.
- 2 It is essential that the Labour Party's hold over the working class is broken.
- 3 The union leaders' sell-outs must be fought by a strong rank and file.
- 4 Short-time working must be fought with a slow-down in production.
- 5 Redundancies have to be faced with mass occupations of workplaces. The machinery must not be allowed to be moved out by the bosses.
- 6 We must demand full pay, work or no work.
- 7 Build local delegate rank and file committees.

EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

-IN THIS ISSUE-

The Big Vote

PORTUGAL

Indo-China

the struggle continues

ON THE LINE-

VAUXHALLS

Strikers

Claim

ABORTION

CAMPAIGN

There can be no doubt that the military coup which overthrew the old fascist regime in Portugal has moved forward the chances of social revolution, not only in Portugal, but also in Southern Africa.

The coup itself was the result of a long and bitter colonial war which has ruined the economy of Portugal and radicalised a whole generation of young workers and peasants conscripted into the armed forces.

The leaders of the coup were men like Spínola who were dismayed at the vast deficit in the Portuguese balance of payments and the crippling strain put on the capitalist economy by the long drawn out and unprofitable war.

The real force behind these men, however, were the radical middle rank officers of the Armed Forces Movement (AFM).

The leaders of the AFM came mainly from the professional and middle classes. Forced into a career in the Army they, like other groups, became radicalised by the hopelessness of the colonial wars.

As a class, these people identified with the 'executives' of the capitalist system, not the capitalist ruling class itself.

This executive role — people who maintain the relationship of the means of production by exercising authority over workers from their positions as capitalist appointees and who are sustained by economic and social privileges 'bestowed' on them by their capitalist masters — is reflected in the role played by the junior and middle rank officers.

The bankruptcy of Portuguese capitalism coupled with the radicalisation of politics led the most advanced sections of the 'middle class' to seek to maintain their privileged positions by ousting the capitalists from power, by 'socialising' the means of production and forging a state-run economy with themselves in control.

PARTY GAMES

In the aftermath of the coup, with freedom of speech and association for the first time in two generations, exiled or imprisoned Socialist and Communist Party leaders came back on the scene.

The fact that the social democratic parties gained the majority of votes in the general election is an indication of how much political work still has to be done in Portugal, particularly among the backward out-lying peasantry.

It should be remembered, however, that those who voted for moderate parties are a large part of the masses by whom the social revolution must be built. As the situation develops, more and more people will come over to the social revolution.

Backward peasants, once aroused, can become the most advanced section of a revolution — *Makhno's Ukraine 1919-1921*.

The Communist Party (Moscow oriented) have had a powerful influence on the industrial workers over the past few months. They have displayed their usual resourcefulness and organisational ability to the full.

The machinations of the Communist Party, their relations with the socialist parties, their manipulation of the Portuguese Trade Unions, etc., all demonstrate their search for a short cut to state power.

The constant evocation of revolutionary words and slogans by the Communist Party is meaningless. They are only trying to seize power for the party — a social revolution (where they would become irrelevant) is the last thing the Communist Party wants.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE AFM

The close alliance between the Portuguese Communist Party and the Armed Forces Movement is no political accident or simple act of expediency. Though the two movements came into being in very different ways the present situation in Portugal means that they are moving towards very similar aims.

The leadership of the Communist Party represents the most determined section of those working people who through their attachment to the full-time politics of the social democrats, and their Leninist left wing, and their belief that they must take control of the economy on behalf of the working class, have lost their solidarity with the class and whose interests no longer coincide with it.

The AFM leaders come from a very different background, but both sections are clearly moving in the same direction — creating, by means of political manipulation, a corporate state capitalist economy in Portugal.

It is insufficient to dismiss the AFM officers as 'Bonapartists' moving toward the



Armed Forces Movement representatives march with unarmed Portuguese workers on Lisbon's May Day celebrations.

creation of a military 'junta' which will stabilise society and enable capitalism to continue. It is equally simplistic to say that the Communist Party leaders are dangerous manipulators selling out the working class without making an attempt to analyse what they mean in terms of a social movement.

Both groups must be seen as tendencies of a new ruling caste that has developed from within capitalism, and is now struggling to emerge from it.

THE WAY FORWARD

The working class in Portugal is faced with two powerful enemies — the bourgeois ruling class, and the new ruling caste of state bureaucrats which is at present struggling to gain control of the economy, to which end they took the guts out of the old Portuguese capitalism by nationalising the banks.

The manoeuvres of the AFM and their Communist Party allies, whose success depends upon keeping the working class weak, lays Portugal open to the possibility of a right-wing counter-revolution.

If the working class attempts to gain control of its own destiny and is seen to become too anarchistic by the AFM and the politicians, they may well abandon plans for state capitalism and work to facilitate the return of bourgeois capitalist rule.

The only way for the social revolution to move forward is for the workers and peasants to organise themselves in mass participatory workers and peasants councils (a movement already begun), and to seize control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Councils must elect their own delegates to forge links across society and to co-ordinate the struggle for them.

Reliance on political parties to seize state power and make the revolution for them can only lead to defeat and mass disillusionment.

The Armed Forces must be put under the control of the working class as a first step towards integrating the soldiers sailors and airmen back into the working class. The workers and peasants councils must form their own militia, to defend the society and form the armed force of the revolution.

The leaders of the old fascist regime, together with their secret police servants, should be executed immediately as has been demanded by the people.

Victory to the Portuguese working class!
Forward to the Social Revolution!

Tony Devlin

PORTUGAL-

LETTERS

Dear comrades,

I liked Marian Evans' article on *Media Distortion* in the latest issue of *Libertarian Struggle*. The subtle class propaganda put out by the bourgeois media is often under-estimated.

One thing, however, which cde. Evans failed to mention was the ideological role of records — in fact all music — under this system. Most workers listen to records on the radio at some time of the day. They are even subjected to them in their workplace, shopworkers and housewives at home. Nearly all these songs reinforce the oppressive roles people play under capitalism.

Homosexuals are excluded from the contents of songs, except as objects of ridicule in a few comedy ones. Look at any Top 20, and all the love songs (which comprise the majority) deal with heterosexual relationships.

Women are reduced to the objects of 'love', sex-objects, sweet, passive and pleasing. Or else they are represented as bitches. A glance at Rolling Stones records, especially the earlier ones, would be pretty representative. It's no coincidence that songs such as John Lennon's 'Woman is the Nigger of the World' and Helen Reddy's 'I am a Woman' have not become very well known — despite the artists being 'international stars', and the songs being musically good in their own right (in my opinion!).

Records whose contents challenge ruling class values disappear into rare collections. Nearly everyone has heard Lennon & Co's 'Strawberry Fields'. But when he produced the LP 'Sometime in New York City', it was hardly ever played, advertised or reviewed in the bourgeois media. This was because it contained songs about Bloody Sunday in Derry, women's oppression, and so on. It sold relatively few copies round the world. If anyone has a copy he or she can lend me I'd be very happy.

Pop songs drug people, nearly always being concerned with bourgeois 'love', into taking their minds away from reality, i.e. the struggle to live under capitalism. The fact that many people do not consciously take in the words of much music does not lessen the

indoctrination that exists.

Everyone subconsciously lets the words, and values, into their heads if they hear them several times. Often, I've found myself singing obnoxious words for a while without having realised. The nature of the media is summed up for me in the Beatles' song, 'Revolution'. It attacks revolutionaries and what they represent. One line goes something like, 'If you talk about destruction, then you can count me out'. Paul, George and Ringo's voices sing this without qualms, but on one recording, John Lennon hisses 'in' instead of out. But you have to listen very hard to hear him.

Ruling class values push into the background those of the revolution. The only time when a free and fully creative culture will emerge, is after a successful working class revolution. Until then, it is up to us to combat repressive values wherever they rear their diseased heads.

fraternally,

R.Lester

Dear AWA,

It was good to see *Libertarian Struggle* coming out again this month. I hope it can now come out again regularly each month. Of course the only way this can be done is by readers' financial support. So, enclosed is a small donation. I would give more, but what with the recent rent increase, Healey's capitalist budget, etc.. Well... perhaps 50p will bring libertarian communism just that little bit closer.

I particularly liked the front page article on the fight against unemployment. It was encouraging to see some concrete anarchist proposals for working class action against the employers offensive, eg demands for full pay work or no work, and occupations. I'm sure that only by propaganda and agitation which relates to working class lives will anarchism become a real force. Looking forward to the June issue.

Libertarian Socialist greetings,

A.Clarke

a woman's right to choose

Although 1975 is supposedly International Womens Year, 'women's rights' means virtually nothing for most working class people. The Labour Government's much publicised legislation, the Women's Equal Pay Act, is full of loopholes, such as employers calling the same job by a different name when women are doing it.

Massive discrimination remains at work, in the home and in leisure facilities. Most fundamental of all, few people have challenged the idea of women as 'child-bearers and home-keepers'.

The right of women to control their own bodies is a crucial start in the fight back against these ideas. Free contraception and abortion on demand are therefore basic demands.

Abortion has been seen by a lot of people as an issue that 'cuts across party lines'. This results, of course, in the claim that abortion is a matter of conscience; an emotional question which defies logical argument.

'BABIES FOR BURNING' — SHOWN TO BE LIES

These arguments are flamed by SPUC, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child. Their campaign has used blatant lies, such as those in the book, 'Babies for Burning', in an attempt to hide the real issues of abortion under a barrage of 'moral' hysteria. Working together with such groups as the 'Festival of Light', they try to impose their morality of the rest of the country.

In fact, the issue of abortion is quite clear. Whether or not you would have an abortion yourself, or suggest that someone else should or should not have one, women should have the right to choose. Neither SPUC nor the Government have that right.

White's amendment to the Abortion Act, if passed, means that a woman's ability to have an abortion will be severely restricted. It will mean that we return to the situation that existed when abortion was illegal; back street abortionists charging huge sums of money for potentially lethal operations.

Only the rich will be able to afford to buy themselves a safe abortion, whilst working class women risk death or are forced to have a child they didn't want, or couldn't afford.

A WOMAN'S PLACE...

But the issue of abortion only starts there. It is obvious that women would rather have safe and effective contraception than go through the emotional and physical traumas of an abortion. The campaign to keep abortion has stressed this repeatedly.

Abortion should be seen as a last resort to stop a woman having an unwanted child, not as a method of contraception. We must see very clearly that it is in the interests of capitalism to keep women in their traditional

place: the housewife looking after the home and the children.

When women are able to take jobs free from the risks of unwanted pregnancy and with nursery facilities available, they will be in a much stronger position to fight big business, and this will cost the employers much more. A vast reservoir of cheap, unorganised labour will dry up.

CONTINUING THE STRUGGLE

The right of women to choose whether or not to have an abortion is much, much more than an emotional issue, debating whether a child has a soul on conception, and so on.

It is first and foremost a political issue and should be seen clearly as such. The whole question of sexism should be taken up in the workers' movement at rank and file level, rather than only in the women's movement.

It is not enough just to demand more nurseries, and equal pay, but more fundamental questions need to be raised about the morals and interests of the ruling class. The



role of the family in continuing to produce the idea of child-bearers tied to the home, with men as the main 'earners', is typical.

Womens' groups should make a break with their present isolationist approach, and organise effective campaigns directed at employers and sexism, with rank and file trade union groups, tenants associations and claimants unions.

P.A.

In Bristol, after a recent lock-out at Rolls-Royce, where a Claims Committee was formed, the address of the Claimants Union was circulated to all AUEW convenors in the city. Information on the nature of Claims Committees and Claimants Unions should be in the hands of every union militant. The Strike Claims Committee is an important point of contact between workers and claimants, the Trade Unions and Claimants Unions.

STRIKERS AND CLAIMING

Strikes and lock-outs, as most workers know, bring heavy financial burdens upon the workers involved. How many strikes have been broken because the strikers could not afford to stay out longer; literally starved back to work?

It's always at strike time that union funds seem to be lowest, or just not available, due to the connivance of union bureaucrats.

At some time, most strikers and their families have to rely on Social Security. The role of this government department must be seen for what it is — a strikebreaker!

This is what most trade unionists discover too late. The Social Security make it as tough as possible for anyone to claim benefit, often resorting to lying about strikers rights to benefit. This is hardly surprising since the Social Security is an organ of the state, the agency of those who control our lives, the ruling class.

NEVER GO ALONE

The only way to deal with the Social Security is to apply the same tactics as we use to deal with the employers. This means collective action. The most important thing to remember is never to deal with them alone!

Wherever possible, strikers must try to form a Strike Claims Committee before the start of the dispute. The first few days, or first week even, may be too late for many people — the Social Security don't backdate payments.

This claims committee, elected on the same basis as a strike committee, should get in contact with the nearest claimants union straight away. The claimants unions are the only people who have the information necessary for a successful fight against the Social Security.

The claimants union should be asked to work in an advisory capacity to the Strike Claims Committee, to help the workers sort out how much they should be getting, and how to go about getting it.

This has the advantage that the important information gets across to those needing it, while control of the whole affair remains with the elected Claims Committee.

The Claims Committee should try to sort out how much each striker should get, which office s/he claims at, and most important, organise appointments so that everyone goes down to the Social Security office together, or at least in large groups.

It may be worthwhile for married men on strike to ask their wives to claim in their own right. If successful — again attempted on a basis of collective action — this can result in more money than if a man claimed for his wife as a dependent.

During the last miners' strike, the miners' wives and children did just this, refusing to leave the office until they were paid... they were paid!

As trade unionists on strike struggle to obtain a pittance from the Social Security,

it is their brothers and sisters in the CPSA who actually have to deal with their claim. It is vitally important that CPSA militants are also aware of the activities of the claimants unions and of Strike Claimants Committees.

The rank and file workers in the Social Security offices must not allow themselves to be used as the tools of the Social Security's repression of claimants and workers.

FIND OUT NOW!

We haven't given any details of the amounts that can be obtained, or the pitfalls that will be encountered. This information can be obtained from the claimants unions; we have only given a brief idea of organisation and tactics which have shown to be successful.

Now's the time for every trade union militant to get to know the whereabouts of the nearest claimants union, so they can be contacted before any strike actually begins!

R.H.

now available!

Claimants Newspaper No 4

on
Appeals

can be obtained from your nearest Claimants Union, price 15p+7p p7p. For the address of the nearest C.U., and a list of C.U. publications send an S.A.E. to:-

Claimants Union Publications Library,
19 Carlyle Road, Birmingham, B20.

RADICAL AMERICA

describes itself as a 'bi-monthly magazine published by independent socialists. In-depth articles on history and politics of working class militancy, community organising, black and women's liberation, popular culture and class struggle in Western Europe and the Americas'.

Vol 8 No 6 contains, amongst other things, an excellently researched article entitled **Soviets and Factory Committees in the Russian Revolution** by Peter Rachleff, which analyses how an autonomous working class was crushed and eventually strangled by the Bolshevik State.

There are several photographs contained within the article, all of which are credited except the first which is of the anarchists who were released from prison for one day to attend Kropotkin's funeral which was attended by 100,000 people, the last open anarchist demonstration in Russia. Could this 'omission' have anything to do with the fact that there are members and sympathisers of the American International Socialists on the editorial board?

RADICAL AMERICA is available at £2.10 (IMO) for 6 issues from P.O.Box 82, Cambridge MASS, 02140, USA. Copies are on sale at Compendium, 240 Camden High Street, London NW1.

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO KNOW OUR RIGHT TO INFORM

Women workers in the media are holding a public meeting around the fight against White's Abortion Amendment Bill.

If the Amendment is passed, it will be illegal to publicise information on abortion for all but a few selected bodies. This clearly restricts the freedom of all workers in the media.

Public meeting is to be held at the St Bride Institute, Bride Lane, E.C.4. on June 18th at 6.30 pm.

We must fight for our rights as women and as workers.

Copy date for the next issue: June 6th.
Send articles, letters, illustrations, etc. to:-

LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE,
13 Coltman Street,
Hull - Humberside.

National Demonstration in support of Abortion

June 21st — 2.30pm

Assemble at Charing X Embankment, leaving for a Rally at Speakers Corner.

Urge all comrades and trade unionists to attend

Islington Trades Council invites you to

Women in Islington

an evening of talk and entertainment around the demands of the Working Women's Charter.

Speakers include Audrey Wise, M.P. and women from the recent Crosfields occupation.

Sketches and songs by Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre and Combine.

Wednesday June 18th, 7.30p.m.,
Co-op Hall, Seven Sisters Road.

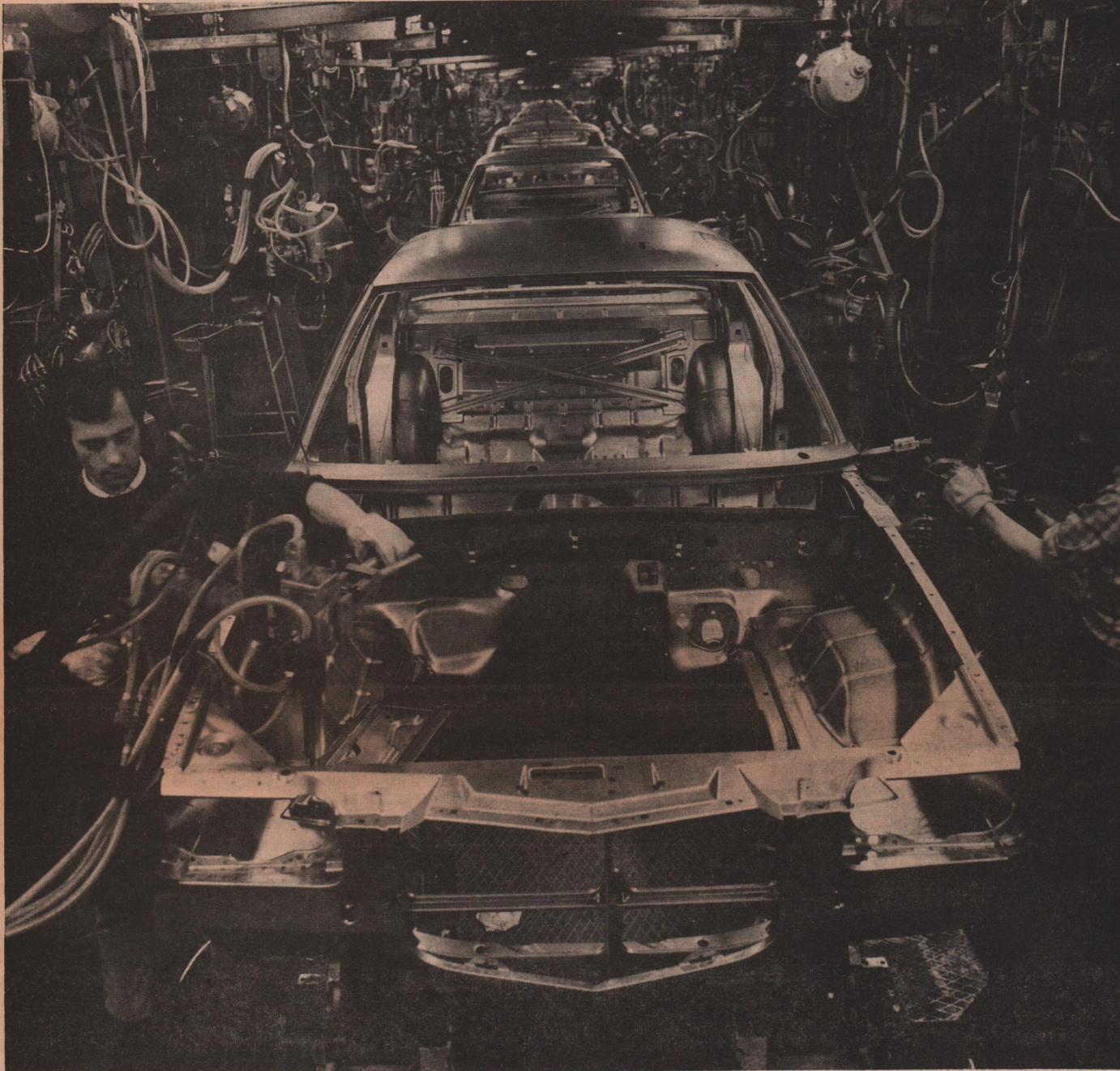
ALL WELCOME - ADMISSION FREE



I SPEAK FOR THE PEOPLE
WHEN I SAY, "LET THE
PEOPLE SPEAK FOR THEM-
SELVES!"

BODY SHOP

614



This article was written by a former member of the Social Revolution group who worked at Vauxhall Motors, Ellesmere Port, until he got caught up in the latest round of redundancies. Whilst at Vauxhall's, he put out a rank and file bulletin, Prison News, until confronted by five convenors!

So, you are wondering if work on a production line is as bad as it is rumoured? Well if it is anything like Vauxhall Motors, then the answer is no — it is even worse.

When hired, the job I got was one that most new starters begin their career with, and of course, one of the worst in the plant. I reported for work to the Body Shop 614 Branch and on arriving on the gate line was completely astounded by the noise and flashing lights caused by sparks from welding guns that each man had every couple of yards the length of the two hundred yard long line.

In the body shop, the parts of the body came together and were attached to the car by means of these spot welds. It was just like putting together one of those toy plastic models, but the process of assembly involved only one piece, a lot of sweat, and pain.

The first job I was put on involved five stages:-

- 1 Climbing up the back of a car with a piece of metal which clipped onto the car;
- 2 Climbing down, holding the spot-welding gun in hand and placing it around this and the car;
- 3 Pressing a button five times;
- 4 Getting hold of another spot-welding gun

further down the line; and
5 When the car was opposite, dragging it inside and spot-welding the same piece of metal in another place.

WAKE UP! IT'S TREADMILL TIME

The whole job was officially timed at one minute forty-five seconds, but if you worked fast enough you could cut this time by fifteen seconds. As each car came past at a rate of one every two minutes, that meant I could sit down for thirty seconds before the next one arrived.

I worked this job all day or night with a three-quarters of an hour dinner break and two ten minute breaks for three months before being moved to another job.

The jobs were all very similar, nearly all involving the use of one of the guns and a section of the car (Vivas). You either climbed under the car or over it. Special gloves were doled out every so often to stop you ripping your hand on the sharp edges of the car, but it was almost impossible not to cut them every few weeks.

The worst thing I found was getting persistently burnt in the face as the sparks shot away from the gun in all directions.

Most of the time, your clothes would protect you, but sometimes you would be driven into a state of annoyance, when you would burn a hole in the car and it was hard to keep your temper from boiling over.

And on top of that, there were the smoke fumes from the burning oily metal getting up your nostrils, sometimes making your throat burn with pain. Fumes, oil and dirt everywhere, getting into your skin, clothes and food.

After a few days of this monotony you are racked with torturing thoughts; over and over again, your body repeats the same process, but each time the way you do the job, and the feelings you get from it changes.

Vauxhall Motors, however hard they may try, will never convert the mind of a person into a repetitive machine, and so long as that mind is in control of the body will that person struggle to overcome the physical conditioning which is part of the process of production line working.

FRIDAY NIGHT IS MUSIC NIGHT

It is through the job itself that you channel your energy, and this energy turns often to sabotage.

It did not take long to realise the contempt which other workers had for their job, and soon I began to feel this too. The activities which went on around our particular line included setting fire to safety gloves and

putting them into the cars to be sent around the track pouring off smoke; turning the heating on other people's guns off so that they are using the guns but not actually welding the cars.

Occasionally, one side of the track would start throwing gloves at the other side, and while a full-scale war was going on, the track would stop (or be stopped) until the foreman arrived.

In the hard trim, organised 'sabo squads' would set to work to do anything to stop the track and give them a rest (a blow). The favourite practice was to have a few men armed with a few small nuts and throw them at the fire (and nut!) sensitive device which caused a downpour from the sprinklers. The whole track would thus be flooded out for a few hours making work impossible.

With the help of scab workers, and without any resistance from the union hierarchy, these squads were eventually disbanded, and those involved were sent to work on other tracks, or even suspended.

TIME FOR REAL TIME

Other acts of counter-planning included stopping or breaking the clocks when coming onto or off the job. These were really restrictive. Some jobs in the plant could be finished hours before clocking-off time, but as *our* time was *their* time, men had to sit around and wait for the bell.

Some of those on our line who had to work continuously up to the bell would often try to imitate it's sound: sometimes, someone would sound so close to the real bell that if the track stopped everyone would leave their stations and dash for the clock.

PROFIT BEFORE PEOPLE

Despite their claims to be a humane company, looking after you from the moment you step into the factory until the moment you die, Vauxhall Motors has but one motive — Profit First!

They even go to the trouble of providing a full-time medical staff, and run a host of other benefits for the employees. If you have a machine, you will usually want it to run efficiently for the longest possible time. While they have a staff of medical experts watch over you, they have much more control over the workforce, and save in a number of ways such as reducing the amount of money they have to pay out from injury caused on the job, and in tax returns.

Although technology is sufficiently advanced to make entire automation of factories possible, the process is not possible within capitalist society. A capitalist will not invest his capital if he can get a higher rate of profit elsewhere.

Only the working class would benefit from a factory run in such a way that those working there enjoy their labour. And only an autonomous working class controlling through an international network of councils at the places of work and in the community can achieve this.

Not a utopia, but a reality with no production lines, nobody spending hours and hours doing the same job like a machine without a mind.



The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the Anarchist Workers Association. In particular, sabotage can affect safety and even cause death. In general an attitude of destroying or radically transforming the means of production must be integrally linked with the struggle to establish independent organs of workers self-management.

This will involve raising the status of counter-planning to a serious and revolutionary level. Actions of workers must move from a gut reaction to the drudgery of life under capitalism, to a conscious understanding of it and all its weak points.

The first priority is to move from 'spontaneous' individual actions to mass actions and working class power.

Editorial Collective

Opening The Books



'Open the Books' is a trade-union demand whose popularity shows no sign of waning. But how much is it worth? The recent experience of workers at Penguin Books may suggest some answers.

The Penguin management's 1974 Christmas box for its staff was the announcement that 54 jobs (40 currently occupied) were to be done away with because of a 'cash-flow crisis'.

A mass meeting of the three unions in the company, NUJ, SOGAT, and ASTMS, was called by the shop-stewards committee. It voted to fight all redundancies, demand the opening of the books and call for a government enquiry into the affairs of Penguin Books and its parent company, the multi-million pound Pearson Longman. The unions then launched a publicity campaign to put over the workers' point of view and make clear that the publishing cuts involved would threaten Penguin's traditional contribution to culture and education.

Meanwhile within the company there was intense discussion of all its policies and activities: it seemed clear that to fight effectively the workers must thoroughly understand the nature and origin of the situation. There was also some feeling that the unions should produce some counter-proposals to show that their opposition was 'responsible'. But no consensus emerged. Inevitably the underlying question of who should run the company began to surface more and more, producing deeper doubts

and disagreement.

ARBITRATION

The management had recoiled at the workers' first onslaught, and bits of financial information had begun to trickle through. But it still refused to produce the current accounts and the Corporate Plan for the future. The unions decided expert advice was needed to interpret the information and hired an accountant, demanding that he be allowed to see all relevant material. When the management again refused, pleading 'confidentiality', Stock Exchange Rules and so on, another mass meeting was called.

Against the advice of the stewards, a confused and nervous meeting decided to take the issue to the government Conciliation and Arbitration Service (CAS). Only if the management refused this, or if it sent out notices before negotiations were complete, would there be industrial action. The issue of notices was then thought to be imminent, but the management wisely did nothing and agreed to go to CAS.

This move was probably the turning-point to failure. Eight hours at CAS produced an agreement that a joint investigation would be conducted by the union's accountant and one appointed by CAS. They would report to both unions and manage-

ment. The unions had meant to use an accountant to get information which would help their struggle.

Now he and the CAS man were in effect arbiters of the dispute, with the CAS brief to decide whether management plans were 'necessary to ensure the financial stability of the company'. ('Necessary' changed mysteriously to 'realistic' in their final report.)

LOW SPIRITS

There was now a month's wait for their findings, during which no action was possible and even the publicity had to be damped down so as not to 'compromise' the situation. People got increasingly demoralised. Workers threatened with the axe who had been happy in their jobs before the crisis began wanting to leave, even knowing they'd find it hard to get new work.

When the accountants' report finally came it was, as many had foreseen, disastrous. It confirmed the management's view of the financial situation and stressed its right to manage. Nowhere were any union rights mentioned. The accountants saw 'financial stability' as paramount, so to them union and management 'long-term interests' were identical! They agreed that publishing cut-backs were necessary, from which it 'unfortunately' followed that there would have to be redundancies.

From this point defeat was only a few negotiating-meetings away. A few jobs were saved and no one left with less than a year's money (the fruit of earlier battles), but in all essentials the management had won hands down. Penguin workers, once foremost in building union strength in the publishing industry, were dangerously weakened.

LESSONS

There are several lessons to be learned from this defeat. It's obvious workers need to know the financial state of their companies, but this does not in itself solve any problems, and it may pose new ones.

To demand that the books be opened is to challenge the management's right to manage. Workers and stewards must be ready to face

and think through the political issues this raises. Basic trade-union militancy is not enough at this point. The ideas of workers' control and nationalisation must be fully considered in formulating demands which remain valid when the company turns out to be in bad financial shape.

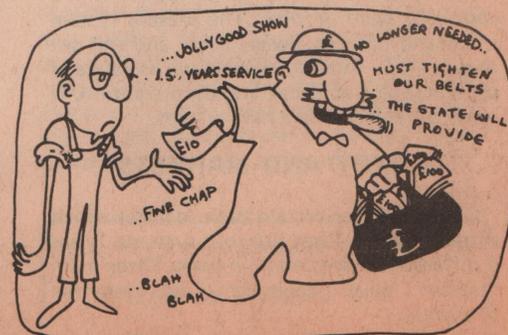
Unions must keep control of any financial investigation: capitalist accountants can help you understand technical data, but if put in a position to make judgements they will obviously make capitalist judgements.

Opening the books raises the most acute problems in a crisis. Workers must demand job-security agreements which ensure that they always have full financial and planning information, given at regular meetings with management. In this way, potential redundancy situations can be foreseen; strategy and organisation can be ready to combat them before they become critical.

If a redundancy crisis already exists, getting the books opened can only help if the workers are in a strong position, certainly ready to take action and preferably already occupying. Part of this strength must be channelled into ideas.

The struggle will lead into areas where the cry for 'The Right to Work' is just not enough. Penguin workers would not strike to get the books opened because they saw no answer to the questions: 'How can there be no sackings if the company is that hard up?' and 'Who is to manage if not the management?' They now have to rebuild their strength and look for those answers.

Jennie Bass' (NUJ)



Members of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) are constantly being told they belong to a democratic union, so can come as something of a shock to a profoundly reactionary leadership when some members actually believe this.

Lord Allen, General Secretary, has been a loyal servant to the ruling class for many years now and it was with monotonous regularity that he pushed all the policies necessary for the salvation of capitalism at the Annual Delegate Meeting at Eastbourne on April 27-29th.

The leadership was able to manipulate the proceedings most of the time, although they did come unstuck when Allen tried to get more time than the delegates to rally support for the bosses Common Market. He was forced to accept ten minutes plus five to wind up in moving his resolution, the same time as his opponents.

Allen and the Executive in the end lost the Common Market battle, and a motion calling for a campaign on a NO vote for the June 5th referendum was adopted. It should be said, from the anarchist point of view, the typical 'socialist' view of 'loss of sovereignty' and the implicit demands for a state capitalist Europe are in no way a step forward for the international working class.

Other decisions adopted reflect the strength of the right wing in the union. Resolutions in favour of the social contract and a totally inadequate wage demand of £35 for a 35 hour week were carried.

In contrast, a resolution condemning the social contract as 'nothing but a policy for wage cutting' and a comprehensive resolution urging a £40 a week minimum, a sliding scale of wages to combat redundancies and sliding scale of wages to automatically compensate for price rises, were rejected.

What emerged from this year's Conference was a growing unwillingness to accept the dictates of the leadership. Executive privilege was challenged time and again. Next year the orthodox 'left' will undoubtedly attempt to channel rank and file dissatisfaction to their own bureaucratic ends.

This must be resisted, and an autonomous shopfloor movement must develop.

USDAW member

after the 'big vote' . . .

By the time most readers see this article, the result of the EEC Referendum will be known.

We urge those who do read it before the 'big vote' to show their rejection of the bourgeois Government and their 'solution' to the ailing capitalist system.

If the result is 'No', then this would be a big victory for the working class over the Labour Government's policy of bailing out the employers at our expense. Either way, we must be prepared to fight the machinations of the ugly alliance of politicians and bosses in the coming months.

If the vote goes the 'No' way, then workers should not expect Wilson, the Tories, Liberals and capital to readily accept such a threatening shot at their policies, for it is absolutely vital for them to stay in the Common Market.

It was set up to maintain and stabilise the international capitalist system (see May issue of *Libertarian Struggle*), and the reasons remain essentially the same today for 'our' leaders and employers. With British imperialist influence greatly diminished by the beginning of the 1970's, the EEC offered a last chance to domestic capital to maintain a degree of independence in the world market.

The Common Market lifeboat which we were forced to climb into in the first place, was not simply a larger market for British products. It was needed to take part in an overall process of European capitalist integration.

The 'Third World' offered no escape for British capital, as it was already dominated by the USA. Thus it is only for themselves that the CBI, etc., have wanted to stay in the EEC — certainly not to attain the goal of a 'dignified and peaceful European People'.

EUROPEAN 'NATIONALISM'

Staying inside would not, in fact, achieve the breaking down of national chauvinist barriers between workers. Instead, it would strengthen international capitalism without

altering nationalist ideology in the international working class, and it would be a further move towards a strong European super-state.

No state apparatus can be neutral, and this one is in the hands of capitalist politicians, acting in their own interests. The flexibility of cheap labour between member countries can only strengthen the bosses vis-a-vis 'their' workers.

Just as NATO forces have been used in the past against anti-imperialist movements, so a large EEC would also facilitate working class repression: the armies of member countries can be used, under the Treaty of Rome, elsewhere in the Common Market.

It is for these reasons — all stemming from the fact that it is the capitalists' own institution — that at the time of going to press, we urge a resounding 'No' to the CBI and their state magician friends.

We have no truck with the fascists, Powellites and all other national chauvinists who have been arguing for EEC withdrawal in order that we 'regain our national sovereignty', and rebuild links with our 'natural cousins' in the Commonwealth.

In or out of the EEC, employers will attempt to foist unemployment and rising prices on people.

Our natural brothers and sisters are to be found in the working class of all countries — from Australia to Belgium.

'X' MARKS THE SPOT

Those socialists, however, who have fought shy of agitating for a 'No' vote, for fear of being linked in voters' eyes with the National Front, etc., have only made it all the more easy for the right to spread their racist puke among workers. They have left the battlefield that bit much more open for the forces of reaction.

But if those socialists were gravely mistaken, the referendum campaign showed the Labour Party 'left' to be bankrupt.

Wedgewood-Benn, Foot, Heffer and other 'darlings of the left' totally failed to put forward a real socialist alternative to the EEC — concentrating on the hoary old

myths of loss of democratic rights inside as if we had any real rights outside anyway!

Some anti-market Labour MP's, like Michael English for instance, even went as far as to speak on the same platform as far right politicians.

Most pro-withdrawal Government Ministers tamely bowed to Wilson's command not to oppose him in Parliament. They failed to link up the EEC issue with his other anti-working class policies, such as the *Social Con-Trick*. They simply went through with a farcical special Labour Party conference which overwhelmingly 'wanted out' of the bosses club.

Typically, in a totally non-socialist and undemocratic way, despite this decision by the membership, the party's resources were not pitched into a full campaign against the EEC.

Whatever the result of the referendum, Wilson, Thatcher, Campbell-Adamson & Co will try to go their own way. Thatcher declared that the vote could not be binding; Wilson declared: 'Nothing that the Conference (of the Labour Party) decided could settle the issue'. A thinly veiled threat to us all.

STRUGGLING BACK

In or out of the Market, the employers' offensive against the working class is going to gain momentum after June 5th. The shape of things to come was contained in the recent threats by Sir Monty Finnieston, Chairman of the British Steel Corporation, to sack 20,000 workers in the near future.

An anti-EEC vote would be a rejection of the whole set of anti-working class measures produced by this Government. If the vote goes the other way, we must be prepared to struggle all the more against a class of smiling politicians and bosses — with blood on their teeth, hungry for more.

We cannot extract those vampire fangs with just votes. We must smash them with united and independent rank and file self-organisation, resisting all efforts to 'solve' the capitalist crisis at the expense of the working class.

R. Williams

ASPECTS OF ANARCHISM.

The first clause of our Aims and Principles states that 'Capitalism is a class society'. What do we mean by 'capitalism'? And what is a 'class society'?

Human beings have always lived in *societies*. And in such societies they have dealings with each other on a day-to-day basis. In a phrase, they relate.

The sum total of their relations comprise the *system* under which they live or exist. It is the *social system*. During humanity's existence on this planet, there have been a number of *different systems*. By both evolutionary and by revolutionary means, social systems supplant each other.

For hundreds of thousands of years, humanity did not know private property. The land and means of existence were, to use a phrase *held in common*. Such a system of society has been called 'Primitive Communism'. This is not the place to detail the development of society from Primitive Communism, through the early slave societies of Egypt, Greece and Rome, to Feudalism, and on to the present form of society which we generally define as capitalism.

Suffice it to say that human society is in a *continual state of flux*. The present system of society has not always been, and will not always be. Indeed, capitalism is already showing signs of decay and disintegration. It must be replaced by a new system.

MONEY AND MARKETS

Capitalism has certain basic features which differentiate it from previous systems. It has a different *socio-economic basis*. Three main features give capitalism its essential character:-

1 Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a

few people — the *capitalists* who, in this and most other countries, comprise less than five percent of the adult population — who own most of the land and almost all the *means of production and distribution*, that is raw materials, factories, machines, and wealth in money form.

2 Wealth is largely produced by property-less wage-workers, to be sold on the market. In fact, *the vast majority of the people have no other means of getting a living except by selling their mental and physical energies to a capitalist* — an employer, private or State — for wages or salaries. And in the modern world, these people comprise not only so-called blue-collar workers, but also white-collar employees (such as teachers, civil engineers or even most doctors).

3 Virtually all production under capitalism is not for personal use, but for *exchange*, on the market, with a view to profit. Goods produced for exchange are called *commodities*. Economically speaking, therefore, capitalism is a system of *commodity production*. Wealth presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities.

Capitalism, as its name implies, is a *society based upon wage-labour and capital*. What, then, is capital?

John Eaton, in his *Political Economy*, says that the word 'capital' is commonly used with three types of meaning:-

1 as the store of means of production, tools, machines, houses, factories, mines, worked-upon land, stocks of food and raw materials, goods partly worked up, and

local councils and committees in the town and countryside.

The ardent desire to collectivise the land must be carried out by the people, and not be a 'State collectivisation' imposed by the NLF leadership.

From 1946-54, 'when local People's Committees made their own revolutionary policy, the VietMinh (Indochinese Communist Party resistance group) Central Committee intervened, doing its best to temper them'. (Ellen Hammer, 'The Struggle for Indochina', pp141-2)

This must not happen again. The Hanoi bureaucracy must be countered with the formation of organs of popular power, which unlike the NLF leadership, will not be sympathetic to capitalists thriving in Indo-China. To quote from the NLF programme: 'The State will adopt a policy of granting loans at low interest rates to encourage production, and will prohibit usury.'



TA THU THAU. Vietnamese Trotskyist

Whether or not this revolutionary development can take place, taking into consideration a people worn out by years of war and deprivation, and realising the strength and wiliness of the Hanoi bureaucrats, remains to be seen. Certainly, any revolutionary gains can only be consolidated by the spreading of the struggle in Southeast Asia, as this must not be confined within national boundaries.

For workers in the West, ultimately, the only practical way we can help is to step up agitation and organisation for the revolutionary overthrow of the bosses.

Nick Heath

finished products etc. — all the various assets that help to further the production of what the community needs;

2 as a substantial sum of money that may be used to buy instruments of production, to pay wages, or purchase raw materials; in short the 'wherewithal' to set up business;

3 as State securities, stocks and shares in companies, etc., which may or may not represent real instruments of production, or money subscribed as shares or loans. (p79)

None of these are strictly accurate, he says. They describe aspects, but not the *essence* of things. He sums up his definition thus:-

'Capital, then, is not just a sum of money, or instruments of production, or stocks and shares; it is all these things, but under certain very definite historical and social conditions. These conditions are that the means of production are owned by a small group of people — the capitalists — opposite to whom stand the propertyless workers compelled by economic and social necessity, because they have no means of working for themselves, to work for the capitalists, and so produce surplus value. Capital therefore takes the material form of means of production, etc., but it is not capital by virtue of its material properties, but by virtue of the social relation between the owners of the means of production and the workers.' (p81)

Capital, then, is value which produces additional — surplus — value.

CLASS DIVISIONS

In his book, *The Status Seekers*, Vance Packard observes that 'until recent years, even sociologists had shrunk away from a candid exploration of social classes in America. Social classes, they realised, were not supposed to exist. Furthermore, Karl Marx had made class a dirty word.' (p6)

Some people have much the same attitude this side of the Atlantic also! And very few, even when forced to admit that we live in a 'class society', define the word accurately. This includes Vance Packard himself, who largely equates class with status.

Webster's dictionary defines class and status as 'position, rank, standing'. And Odham's defines class as 'a category;... a division of things according to some common characteristic;... an economic and social division of society;...'

A class is a socio-economic category. But it is more than that. It is a group of people who, within capitalist society (and other societies in the past), have certain specific functions and relations. These are differentiated by the way they get their living, and by the way they stand in relation to the means of production.

A class society is a society that is, generally speaking, divided into owners and non-owners of the land and the means of production and distribution.

In, say, Ancient Egypt, society was largely made up of slaves and slave-owners who, incidentally, also owned the land and other means of life; in Feudal society, there were the great landowners, the Church, the monarch and, as time went by, the burghers on the one hand and the peasants and sometimes a few slaves on the other.

With the development of industrial capitalism, the burghers or *bourgeoisie* began to gain the ascendancy while the landowners and aristocracy tended to die out or become part of the *capitalist class*. For some time in many countries, a *petit-bourgeoisie* continued to exist alongside the big capitalists and the army of *propertyless workers* who had been recruited from the ranks of the *dispossessed peasantry*.

Thus, though there still remains, in many countries, the remnants of a *petit-bourgeoisie* modern capitalism has largely simplified society into two basic classes — the capitalist class and the working class, those who own the means of living, and those who do not.

Capitalism, therefore, is fairly clearly divided into two socio-economic classes; though its *power-structure* is, like feudal society before it, still basically *hierarchical* or *pyramidal*. This is particularly evident in the so-called 'communist' (ie *anti-capitalist* countries of Eastern Europe).

Peter E. Newell

INDO-CHINA the struggle continues

The defeat of US imperialist forces in Indo-China will be a great source of encouragement for revolutionary movements in the 'Third World'.

At the same time it will weaken the capitalist bloc in the West, and provide encouragement to revolutionary workers' movements there.

This does not mean support for Chinese or Russian imperialism, who limited the flow of arms to Vietnam in line with their increasing collaboration with Western capitalism, wining and dining with Nixon when the fighting in Indo-China was at its height.

It does not mean support for the Stalinist regime of North Vietnam, either. This regime under Ho Chi Minh liquidated nearly all political opposition, including all political opposition, including independent trade unionists, anarchists, and the Trotskyists led by Ta Thu Thau, and Tran Van Thach.

Yet the Trotskyist press in this country (with the exception of the Workers Socialist League) totally ignore these facts and choose to offer little criticism of the Indo-Chinese situation.

LONG WAR

The workers and peasants of Southeast Asia have been involved in a long struggle against the Americans and their stooges. There is a strong feeling for land reform among the peasants, and a movement of even more radical nature among the urban workers. The Thieu regime was overthrown *despite*, not because of, Russia and China and their detente with the West.

The struggle cannot stop at the borders of Vietnam and Cambodia. The fight has to be spread to Laos, Thailand and Burma, and must be supported by the workers and peasants in Vietnam and Cambodia.

The workers and peasants who are armed must not allow their arms to be taken away from them. In fact, they must help in the creation of militia units under the control of

THE PRESS FUND.

It's not cheap or easy bringing out a revolutionary anarchist paper every month. We need donations, large and small, to help LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE survive and boost its circulation and size. It is vitally important that the paper gets over to larger sections of workers. The Budget, rising prices and rents, lay-offs, short-time work and redundancies affect all working people. The bosses are trying to make us pay for their crisis.

A revolutionary working class movement, at workplace and neighbourhood level, has to be built to fight these attacks. It's crucial that ideas of self-organisation and self-management are spread, and that more militants identify with libertarian communism and the end of wage-slavery. So, if you like the ideas in the paper, dig into your pockets and send those donations to:-

LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE, 13 Coltman Street, Hull, Humberside

'Anarchism is generally humanitarian only in the sense that the ideas of the masses tend to improve the lives of all men, and that the fate of today's or tomorrow's humanity is inseparable from that of exploited labour. If the working masses are victorious, all humanity will be reborn; if they are not, violence, exploitation, slavery and oppression will reign as before in the world.'

The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists.

The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists was written by a group of anarchists who had participated in the Russian Revolution and the ensuing civil war. They attempted to communicate their experiences and what they had learnt to the international anarchist movement. They stressed the essential need for disciplined anarchist organisation, built on and relating to the working class.

The Platform was severely attacked by the anarchist 'celebrities' almost without exception, who saw the formation of a structured anarchist organisation as a threat to the inalienable rights of the individual.

This historical document has been rediscovered, and has been instrumental in the development of organised class anarchism in the 1970's.

Send a cheque/P.O. for 20p + 6p p&p to:
AWA, 13 Coltman Street, Hull, Humberside.

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

- 1 Capitalism is a class society.
- 2 The basic irreconcilable contradiction within it is between the class which owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, the bourgeoisie, and the class who produce the agricultural and industrial wealth, the working class.
- 3 The social enslavement and exploitation of the working class forms the basis on which modern capitalism stands, without which capitalism could not exist.
- 4 The state is the instrument of the ruling class. To destroy the power of the bourgeoisie, we must destroy the power of the state.
- 5 Russia and China are class societies in each of which a ruling class of administrators collectively owns and controls the means of production, distribution and exchange, and in which a working class, the sole producer of all wealth, is exploited by that class. These states we define as corporate state capitalist in that the ruling class is totally integrated with the state, as is the trade union structure.
- 6 The class nature of society is reflected in all the dominant philosophies: class, race, sexual, social and personal relationships. The class relationships are expressed through all social relationships and generate attitudes such as sexism and racism.
- 7 The conflict of interest between the two classes generates the class struggle. In the history of society, the class struggle has been the primary factor in the determination of the form and structure of society.
- 8 The day to day struggles of the working class reflect the class struggle. The position of the working class as the collective producer of society's wealth makes it the only force capable of replacing capitalism by a classless society. The existing defensive organisations thrown up by the working class, such as trade unions, whose bureaucracy is increasingly incorporated into capitalism, are not adequate for the smashing of the capitalist system, and the building of a free, classless society. However, the working class rank and file organisations such as democratically controlled shop steward committees, factory committees, strike committees, are developing through the place of work. These organisations are the forerunners of workers councils which are the expression of working class power. Outside of work, the working class has developed other forms of organisation that are potentially revolutionary, such as tenants action committees, rent strike committees, and tenant-worker joint action committees.
- 9 Dual power exists before the power of the bourgeoisie is smashed. If the working class are successful, then the organisation of the needs of society will be firmly based in working class hands. This is the collective working class in power, in which the working class destroys all remnants of bourgeois society, such as racial hatred, the family and hierarchies. This is the period of transition between capitalism and libertarian communism.
- 10 From our analysis we reach the inevitable conclusion that capitalism cannot be reformed in any fundamental way and that the only meaningful transformation of society is through the development of working class organisations and by means of a violent social revolution. Violence becomes inevitable for the working class to defend themselves against the onslaughts of the dispossessed ruling class.

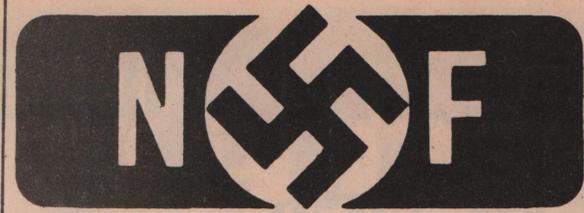
The role of the AWA

- 1 The task of the AWA is to aid the preparation of the working class for their seizure of power. The establishment of an anarchist society is something that has to be consciously fought for by the working class. The AWA is a conscious organised expression of libertarian communist ideas. Through the shared experience, information and knowledge of the class struggle, AWA must be able to analyse and disseminate the nature of the problems facing the working class, and apply these lessons in the class struggle.
- 2 The AWA aims to offer a lead within the working class movement by example and explanation; and to build into the movement a high level of political consciousness so that it is capable of defeating capitalism and fighting the creation of a new ruling class. Fundamental to this is the contradiction between the organisation as a tendency within the class and its being in ideological advance of it. This contradiction can only be resolved with the establishment of a libertarian communist society. During the period of transition, the potential basis for the emergence of a new ruling class is progressively removed so that the need for a separately organised libertarianism will decrease.
- 3 The AWA seeks to develop and support working class organisations which are the forerunners of workers councils and to develop in them revolutionary consciousness. The AWA does not seek independent power for itself but seeks to work through the working class organisations.
- 4 The AWA seeks to establish international links with libertarian revolutionary organisations and groups with an aim of establishing an international libertarian communist movement.
- 5 The AWA seeks to combat attitudes of sexism, racism and national chauvinism as attitudes that help maintain class society.

The form our organisation takes is a realisation of libertarian perspectives in the current situation. We recognise that it is not a social model of a free society and must itself develop in interaction with the developing liberation of society.

- [1] We are a membership organisation.
- [2] Membership is open to those who agree with our analysis of society and its transformation, and who work towards this end.
- [3] The main policy making body will be the National Conference. Between National Conferences there will be held bi-monthly Delegate Conferences to co-ordinate and carry out National Conference decisions, to decide interim policy and to initiate activity. Delegates are mandatable and rotated. Delegate Conference decisions can be revoked by National Conference.
- [4] We seek to establish AWA groups in all areas, not only geographical but also industrial, educational, etc. Groups interpret National and Delegate Conference decisions to relate tactics to their local experience.

As agreed at the National Conference in London, 31st August - 1st September 1974.



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Leicester Libertarian Circle

meets Thursdays at 8pm

at Black Flag Bookshop, 1 Wilne Street,
(off St Peters Road) Leicester

Southampton Libertarian Circle

meets 1st Thursday of every month at 8pm

at The Anchor, East Street,
(behind Debenhams) Soton

Anarchist Discussion Group

forming Tuesday 17th June, 7.30pm

meeting at Peoples Aid & Action Centre,
8 Falcon Road, Battersea, SW11

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Anarchist Workers Association held its annual National Conference in Leicester on May 3rd/4th.

It marked a new upturn in AWA's activity and theoretical level. Militants from various industries and colleges were present to collectively decide on organisational policies ranging from the implications of the EEC Referendum, the fight against sexism, to the Portuguese Revolution.

What was most encouraging about the two-day conference was the increasing membership and the degree of theoretical and practical unity existing amongst it.

We are now determined to consolidate and build from our present position; so that a real revolutionary anarchist influence can be created within the working class.

With the re-appearance of a regular agitational paper, *Libertarian Struggle*, and the publication of the *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*, we are confident that if we continue to grow steadily and with determined effort, we can achieve this.

The success of the AWA National Conference was a step in this direction.

AWA National Secretary

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Moves have been initiated by the *Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste* of France to call a European Conference of libertarian communist groups with the view of creating an international of struggle.

Organisations in Italy, Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland are corresponding and AWA feels the need to actively assist in international work.

The bosses operate internationally; workers have to fight them in the same way. It is important to share information and experiences, and to connect struggles of workers in the same sort of industries in different countries, especially workers in the multi-national combines such as Fords.

It is important, also, to be able to produce multi-lingual publications on theory and developing events. Socialism will be created internationally, or it will not be created at all.



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THE MINERS' NEXT STEP.....1912

Trade Union history tends to overlook the rank and file, its activity and its organisation. Partly, this is of course, due quite simply to lack of information and records, yet it can often be attributed to the political perspectives of the writer.



Though frequently overlooked, *The Miners' Next Step*, published originally in Tonypany in the Rhondda Valley in early 1912, is one of the most significant documents of the British workers' movement.

It is useful, at a time when the dominant groups on the left howl for various forms of nationalisation and 'firm leadership', to look

at rank and file ideas in a period when such 'sacred cows' had been rejected by important groups of workers.

The documents and campaign around it, were a direct response to the increasing bureaucratisation of the South Wales Miners Federation. Since 1903, the union leaders had sat on a Conciliation Board with the owners.

In April 1910, they signed a five-year agreement which openly ignored the feelings and problems of rank and file workers. It would have meant a savage cutback in living standards.

In November 1910, Churchill sent in troops to put down miners' protests, leading to the murder of militants in Tonypany. The whole of the Cambrian Combine was out on strike until August 1911.

The forming of the Unofficial Reform Committee, in 1911, brought militants together, based primarily on the Rhondda. It was clearly recognised that an effective fight had to be mounted by rank and file workers to turn the union into an instrument of class war.

The Miners' Next Step was the product of this. It is worth quoting several sections to illustrate the importance of the ideas put forward. Most significantly of all, nationalisation was rejected in favour of self-management.

ON LEADERSHIP

1 Leadership implies power held by the leader. Without power the leader is inept. The possession of power inevitably leads to corruption. All leaders become corrupt, in spite of their own good intentions. No man was ever good enough, brave enough, or strong enough, to have such power at his disposal, as real leadership implies.

2 Consider what it means
The power of initiative, this sense of responsibility, the self respect which comes from expressed manhood, is taken from the men, and consolidated in the leader. The sum of their initiative, their responsibility, their self respect, becomes his.

3 The order and system he maintains, is based upon the suppression of the men, from being independent thinkers into being 'the men' or 'the mob'. Every argument which could be advanced to justify leadership on this score, would apply equally well to the Czar of all Russias and his policy of repression. In order to be effective, the leader *must* keep the men in order, or he forfeits the respect of the the employers and 'the public', and thus becomes ineffective as a leader.

4 He corrupts the aspirants to public usefulness

He is compelled in order to maintain his power, to see to it that only those, who are willing to act as his drill sergeants or coercive agents shall enjoy his patronage. In a word, he is compelled to become an autocrat and a foe to democracy.

5 He prevents solidarity

Sheep cannot be said to have solidarity. In obedience to a shepherd, they will go up or

down, backwards or forwards as they are driven by him and his dogs. But they have no solidarity, for that means unity and loyalty. Unity and loyalty, not to an individual, or the policy of an individual, but to an interest and a policy which is understood and worked for by all.

6 Finally he prevents the legislative power of the workers

An industrial vote will affect the lives and happiness of workmen far more than a political vote. The power to vote whether there shall or not be a strike, or upon an industrial policy to be pursued by his union, will affect far more important issues to the workman's life, than the political vote will ever touch. Hence it should be more sought after, and its privileges jealously guarded. Think of the tremendous power going to waste because of leadership, of the inevitable stop-block he becomes on progress, because quite naturally, leaders examine every new proposal, and ask first how it will affect their position and power. It prevents large and comprehensive policies being initiated and carried out, which depend on the understanding and watchfulness of the great majority. National strikes and policies, can only be carried out, when the bulk of the people see their necessity, and themselves prepare and arrange them.

ON NATIONALISATION

Nationalisation simply makes a National Trust, with all of the force of the Government behind it, whose one concern will be, to see that industry is run in such a way, as to pay the interest on the bonds, with which the coal owners are paid out, and to extract as much more profit as possible, in order to relieve the taxation of other landlords and capitalists.

Our only concern is to see to it, that those who create the value receive it. And if by the force of a more perfect organisation and more militant policy, we reduce profits, we shall at the same time tend to eliminate the shareholders who own the coalfield. As they feel the increasing pressure we shall be bringing on their profits, they will cry loudly for nationalisation. We shall and must strenuously oppose this in our interests, and in the interests of our objective.

CONCLUSION

These words clearly have important lessons for present struggles. The notion of *autonomous rank and file organisation*, as put forward in the document, is of key significance. We still face the same problem.

E.A.

If you are interested in the ideas in *Libertarian Struggle*, then you may be interested in further reading:-

<i>The Spanish Collectives</i> - Sam Dolgoff	2.00
<i>Marx's Capital</i> - A readable introduction to Vol 140
<i>Unknown Revolution</i> - Voline	1.90
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