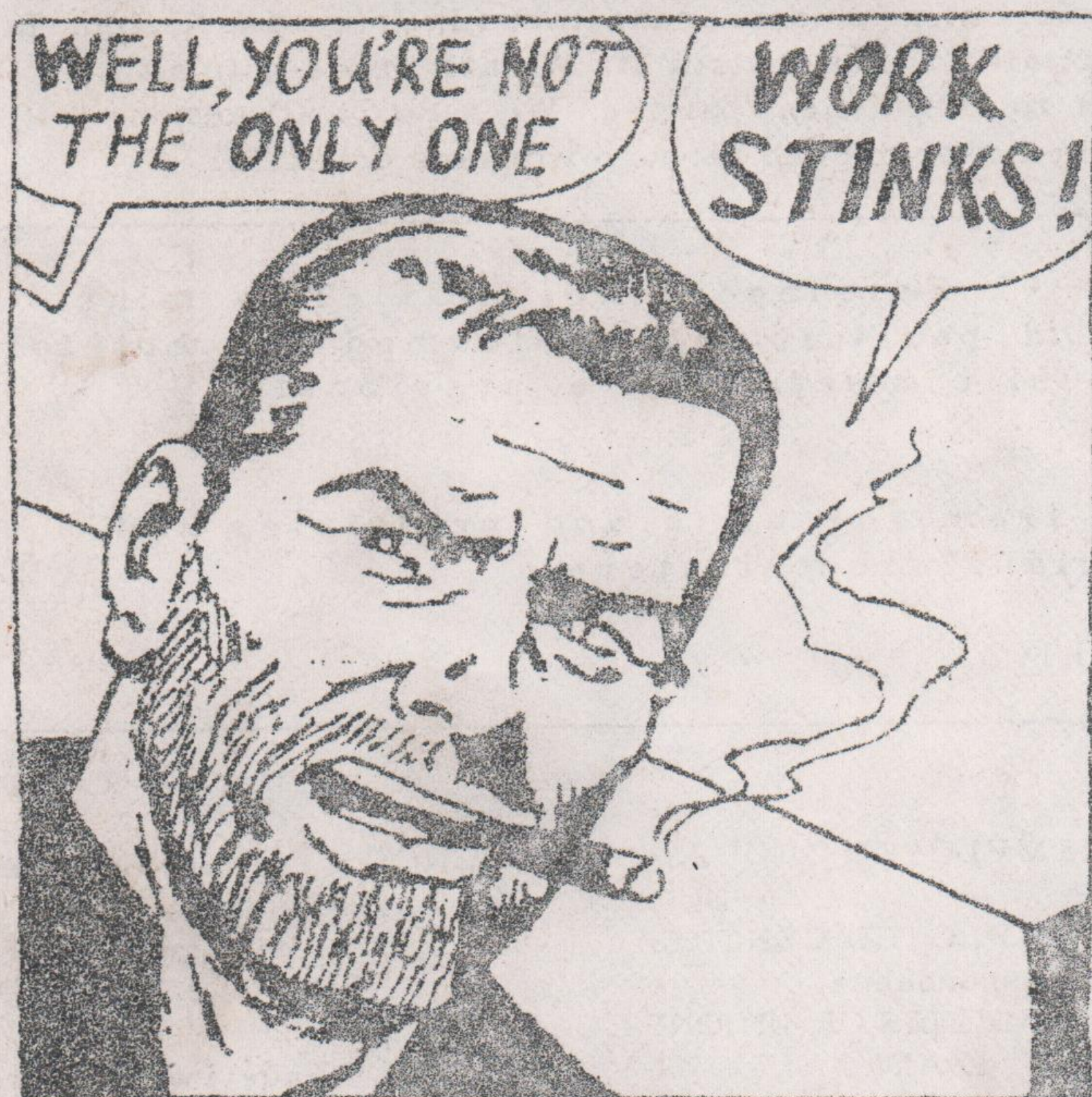


# DID YOU EVER WANT TO KILL YOUR BOSS



Office Technology/BBC Publications Strike/Rail Strike Call/Unemployed Groups and Centres/Riots/Assemblies/(Riotous Assemblies ?)/Job Reports/Poland/Workers Autonomy/Hard to Read Microscopic Print/It Must Be.....



## LONDON WORKERS GROUP - AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

The London Workers Group is an organisation of non-party militants working in the London area. Our aim is to establish and encourage communication between workers in all industries, in order to :

1. learn from each others experience and increase our understanding of industry and trades unions within capitalist society.
2. seek out and maintain links with other anti-capitalists and anti-authoritarians. While recognising the importance of organised struggle in all areas of life, we choose to concentrate on the workplace struggle. We believe that the formation of autonomous workers groups within each industry is vital. The function of these groups is to spread revolutionary ideas and create solidarity among fellow workers. We would also encourage the formation of local workers groups all over London, to complement the industrial organisations.
3. devise and produce effective propaganda including a bulletin covering industrial news, workplace reports, analyses and theoretical articles.
4. and provide support where asked for.

Our aim is the establishment of a non-governmental, classless society of producers/consumers in free association. It is clear that unions and left-wing parties serve to perpetuate capitalism, not destroy it. We are opposed to all hierarchical organisation and political dogma, hence our opposition to all political parties. We support all actions that tend towards complete workers control and autonomy as has been experienced through workers councils.

The LWG meets weekly at the Metropolitan Pub, 95 Farringdon Rd, EC1. (Two mins. from Farringdon tube). All meetings are open and participation welcomed (except for party recruiters). Every 4-6 weeks we hold a public meeting on a previously advertised subject. Meetings at 8.15 pm.

The bulletin is open to all contributions. Apart from the aims and principles and unless otherwise stated views are those of individual contributors.

CONTACT US C/O: 11 LEYDEN ST. E.1 (Post Only).

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For the first time ever we had too much material for this issue, and some things had to be left out. One of these was a draft Liberation Policy produced by the Liberation Network of People with Disabilities, which campaigns around the problems faced by people with disabilities. They can be contacted c/o Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1. Our cover was taken from an old Fifth Estate (who in turn took it from Social Warfare/Wildcat who in turn I'm told lifted part of it from Point Blank - is this what they mean by proletarian internationalism ).

We welcome correspondence, articles, cartoons etc. PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW POSTAL ADDRESS ABOVE.

This is the first issue done completely on photostencils (it shows) and on our duplicator. Anyone wanting any duplicating done (other than fascist or reactionary material needless to say) contact us.

Lastly - we've never charged for the bulletin and have no intention of starting to. However we're not millionaires and any contributions would be gratefully recieved. It costs us about 12p a copy to produce and its only cost preventing us appearing more regularly.



WE NEARLY HAD NOTHING ABOUT RIOTS IN THIS ISSUE! CALL OURSELVES  
REVOLUTIONARIES? SO WE GOT E.D TO WRITE UP OUR LAST PUBLIC  
MEETING WHICH WE'D CALLED

## GLASS WAR - HAVE WE GOT THE BOTTLE?!

Our most recent public meeting centered on the state of the class struggle in Britain. The past months spate of rioting provided an obvious focus for the discussion, making the meeting livelier and more relevant than any in the recent past (some would say in living memory). Some present had themselves been involved in the riots, whilst others had much to say about the reactions to the riots which they had experienced at work.

Three main areas of discussion emerged from the presentations given at the start of the meeting:

- 1) The apparant division in the working class produced by the development of the crisis.
- 2) The reaction against 'welfarism' in the depressed inner-cities.
- 3) The revolutionary potential of the riots - where do we go from here?

DIVISIONS It was pointed out that although in the riot areas large sections of the local population were involved in rioting or riot-related activity, the reaction of most "respectable" employed workers has been hostile to say the least. One or two present said that their fellow workers generally took the view that the government and the police had been far too soft on the rioters. Broadly speaking, employed workers in what they consider fairly stable employment felt that their "privileges" were under attack, and expressed their fear through racism and authoritarianism, calling for conscription etc. One member of the International Communist Current sympathised with these sentiments, saying people had an understandable fear for the safety of their children and property. However it was generally felt that growing police repression was a far greater menace to workers, and that whilst there were inevitably many negative aspects to them, the riots were principally aimed, in an increasingly coherent fashion, against police and commodities, not against the working class community.

"CRIME" To highlight the "negative aspects" of the riots is to echo the lies of the media. We cannot claim that riots eliminate all the evils of everyday life. But the evidence indicates that in the course of a riot there is far less incidence of rape, mugging and other anti-social behaviour. On the other hand, it's likely that other "crimes" (as defined by the state) - for example theft - will increase as a result of the riots, reflecting peoples growing confidence that the police can be beaten.

The division that exists within the working class is there because as yet only a minority have been radically affected by the crisis. Most workers are still desperately holding on to the illusions bred by thirty years of relative

prosperity. As the crisis deepens, presumably this will change, but for the moment, the more cherished illusions come under attack, the more severe the reaction will be.

INNER CITY LIFE The riots have had as their focus depressed inner city areas, the areas left behind in capitals project of dividing up the working class, breaking down communities and shoving people out to the new towns and suburbs. In these areas long term unemployment has meant that a "criminal" or at least extra-legal subculture has grown up as a necessity for survival. Its equally based in legal activities which are an alternative for those who cannot afford the 'blessings' of the consumer society, and thus implicitly opposed to it. It has been the attempts of the police to break down this subculture and prevent it from developing which have engendered the riots as much as racism, or repression.

WELFARISM One of the aspects of inner-city life is that generally it is the Left which runs the councils: although all sections of the media tried to disguise the fact, far from instigating or encouraging rioting Leftist welfarism was as much under attack as the police. The meeting perhaps should have developed this aspect further: rioting occurred in areas where people have had a foretaste of the Left's general plans for dealing with resistance. People grew increasingly angry at two-faced "community leaders" twisting their demands and cooperating with the police they were pretending to criticise.

REVOLUTIONARY ? The most vociferous arguments centered on the question of the "revolutionary potential" of the riots. Much of the discussion concerned



RESERVE ARMY AND      The riots have mainly  
FRONT LINE            been the doing of those  
                             outside the workplace,  
although within the structure of work : they are  
those onto whom the main impact of the crisis  
has been pushed. Many still do capitalism's  
unpaid labour (reproduction of the workforce,  
housework etc. ) whilst providing a reminder to  
those in paid labour that they could be a lot

DEFEAT      Claims that "brutalisation" will follow defeat are facile : the fact is that under capitalism the working class already exists in defeat ; that is the brutal fact of counter-revolution. Stalinism, fascism and "democracy" are all expressions of that defeat. The form in which that defeat expresses itself varies according to circumstance. The appeal of fascist ideology to many white youths in the cities expresses the fact that their defeat has been largely administered by the leftists who run inner-city welfarism. Rioting is a challenge to perpetual defeat ; "brutalisation" is the return to capitalist normality.

RIOT ON The riots certainly can deepen class consciousness. This is partly achieved by the hardening of attitudes within urban sub-cultures. The scope of the riots has as yet prevented the question of control of the means of production from being raised. But, despite the efforts of the Left to disguise the fact, there has been no demand expressed for the right to be allowed back into the production process. Having been victims of capitalism, people are rejecting the illusion that it can be any better with more "democratic control" : the means of production and distribution have to be suppressed, not merely controlled.

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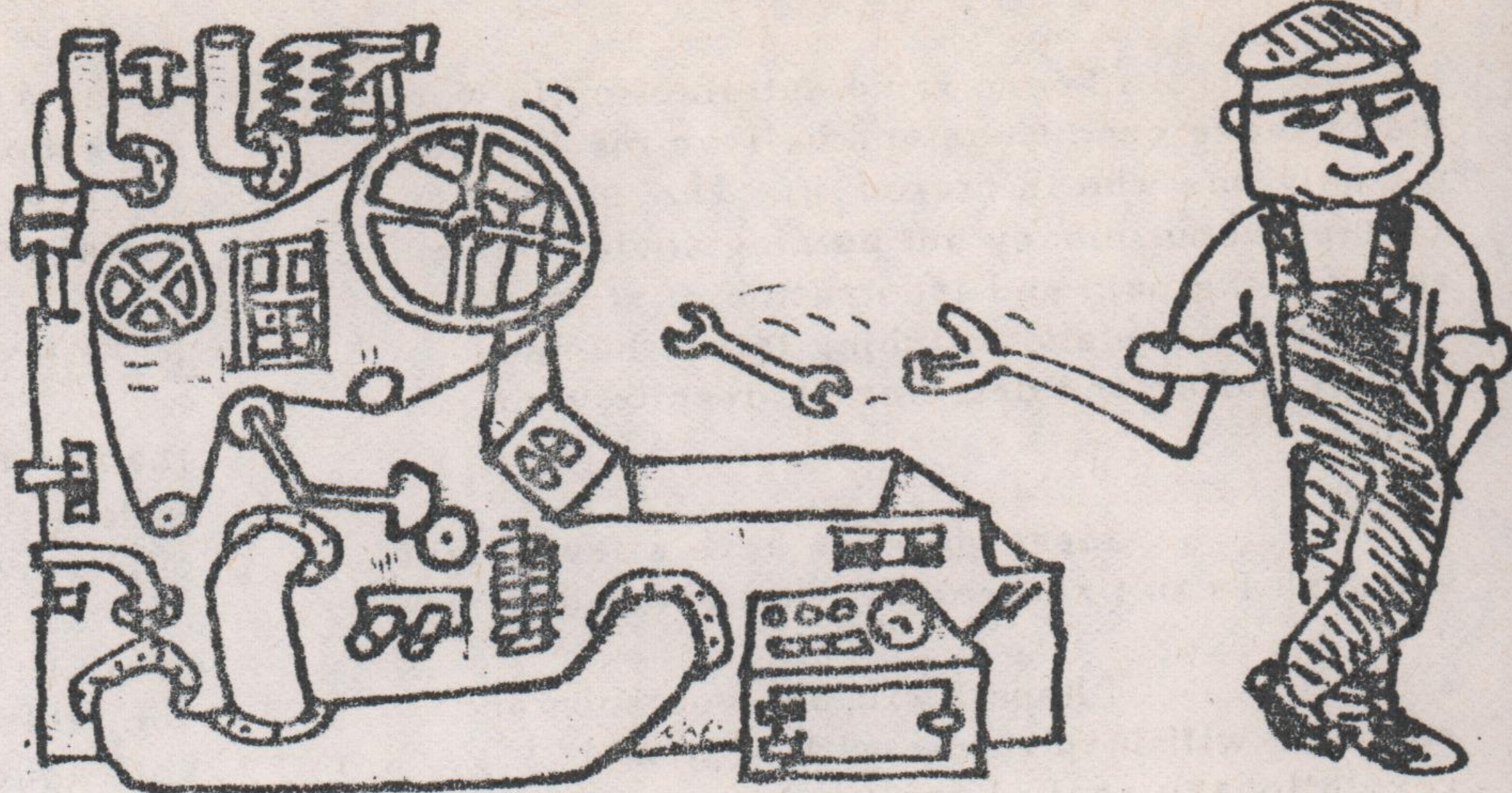
As you will know, the police have been involved in a lot of violence in London recently. Today however, I want to talk about the riots. Some say that riots are the work of persecuted minorities. To that I say nonsense. My men only act when it is necessary to restore order. I believe, on the contrary that we can see signs of an organised campaign of hatred against the police. For example, the liberals and do-gooders who blame all the trouble on racial prejudice within the police. What rubbish! Policemen are not racially prejudiced. Black or white or brown. Man or woman. Young or old. We train them to hate everybody. Still I welcome the calls for a public enquiry. I hope it won't be long before we have all the public assisting in our enquiries. It must be said again and again, there can be no justification for illegal violence. That is why I am calling for all the new powers we will need. Finally there is one thing I want everyone to be clear about. I will not tolerate No Go areas in London. So if you don't want trouble you'd better keep off the streets. Thats all for now. Dont call us - we'll call on you.



## Commissioner McNee



# WORK REPORTS



## CORRESPONDENCE / NURSING

Dear London Workers,

thanks for the latest bulletin. I am so often meaning to come and not making it due to working or being too tired or just forgetting.

Things are pretty dreadful on the workfront at present. I have just staggered home from looking after about 17 patients on my ward with 1 auxiliary to help me in the morning. 2 nurses come on at midday and are now there alone until the night nurses take over. We have 10 patients who are elderly ( I mean over 80 years old) and very dependent needing 2 hourly turning and lifting out of bed or onto the bed pan + 3 other patients who are stuck in bed on traction 3 people need feeding and about 4 are incontinent. In other words there is no way 2 nurses can wash and sit them up between 8 & 12 noon let alone care for them properly - cleaning teeth, combing hair, making beds, taking observations ( Temperatures etc. ), giving drinks, chatting, giving medicines and going round with doctors to see what we should do next.

So last week we had a message from our head administrator to attend meetings where we were told we were over-staffed and would have to cut down on nurses. The next 10 or so that leave will not be replaced. Usually at a weekend we would have had agency nurses to help out on the ward but these have been stopped. The nurses at the meeting I was at were very angry. We feel we are only just coping and not caring properly for our patients at the moment but have been hoping things would get better - now it is official that they will get worse. We are being asked to cooperate - i.e. change wards whenever our numbers are less tragic than someone else's and squash resentment etc. The lack of money is being presented

as an act of God and our arguments fobbed off with - Well thats a political decision, as if we nurses would have nothing to do with politics. What they are going to do when the numbers of nurses are down to what we are funded for is ask for beds to be closed.

This is obviously not the answer for our old ladies with broken hips. Meanwhile 2 small hospitals are closing both of which take some of our convalescent patients making room for acute admissions on what is meant to be an acute ward. All the wards are getting clogged up with old people who are 'better' but not well enough to go home and live alone. They are also shutting a ward in this hospital which takes a lot of the 'social problems' before they get stuck on acute wards.

The nurses are agreed things are bad but very divided about action. Some see closing beds to maintain standards of care as the answer not appreciating that beds all over the country are closing and the National Health Service is being eroded into nothing. Mostly we are too worn out to do more than crawl home into bed.

Our nursing officer ( next step "up" from sister ) tells me that it is caused by everyone abusing the Health Service and the Senior Nursing Officer is away on holiday.

Tomorrow the two nurses on this evening will be there in the morning and myself and my colleague will have the afternoon & evening to contend with. Our old ladies have got sore, raw bottoms and black blisters on their heels due to pressure caused by lying in bed or sitting still too long. All we have to do to prevent it is move or lift them regularly and we don't have time. They will take longer to get better due to this and may be scarred for life ( what is left of it ).



There is no satisfaction in working in these conditions and believe me I'm not the only one who is pissed off. The unions are arguing about money but nothing could compensate for the pain and frustration of struggling the way we are and watching fellow human beings suffer and deteriorate despite your efforts.

Meanwhile we have a few laughs although I can't remember what about just now.

I hope I will see you soon and someone will inspire me with hope and revolutionary zeal. I can't help remembering the nurse whose contribution to our discussion was - they ought to put the stamps up.

lots of love
Z.

POST OFFICE : POST MORTEM

In Nov. 1974 I went down the Labour Exchange to get information about London Transport. They had none (!) so I got a job with the North London G. P. O. instead. I left October 1980, after six glorious years. It was a very important time in my life (early twenties) and I learned a lot.

I worked in a small sorting office - 70 workers, all men except canteen staff. Due to victimisation my 'probation' period of a year lasted eighteen months and I was forced to do different work and shifts every week. I was victimised because I was honest and individualistic. I learned to become more cunning (lying to supervisors) and organised (joined the anarchist movement). My take-home pay began at £33 per week. It was about £65 when I left. As I began my squatting career (refusing to pay rent since Jan 1975), and as I don't smoke, drink, or have others to support, the money was always adequate for me. But not for most of my colleagues, and there was always competition for and strong feelings about overtime, which is now being gradually cut back.

The work generally wasn't as bad as some wage slaves have to put up with. Most of it was done collectively, without the noise or rhythms of machines (until the eighties). The morning work involved a disgusting, six-day, 6.00. a.m. start, but had the attraction of being out on the streets and so without Authority standing over you, and by working at our own speed we you, and finishing around 1.00. p.m. I worked a five day week, 12.00-8.00. p.m., and by working at our own speed we managed to get about three hours of breaks during that time, to

sit around in the canteen, visit revolutionary bookshops, go to the pub, etc. I did night work ('graveyard' as they call it in America) once, for a week. Never again.

'STARRY-EYED' At first I was starry-eyed about the Union, which rather than being an organ of unity and resistance was in fact the tool of the branch secretary, and only rarely did more than a fifth of us go to meetings. I got actively involved, getting on the Committee (everyone at the AGM got elected to something). Gradually I realised that most colleagues were not only alienated from the Union but also from each other and the necessary solidarity didn't exist.

I became quite notorious and disliked in the office because of my strong anti-authoritarian views, although after a while I became part of the wallpaper, just another 'character' and I began to build up friendships. A sort of ad-hoc radical/satirical/bloody minded clique sort of developed, of mostly young, generally anti authority (and bored) dissidents.

Around this time the roof fell in. Being a brand new building, it was badly designed and built, and had to close for seven weeks when rain poured in through the roof. So we moved to the main North London, Islington, Sorting Office. That was a laugh. More supervisors than workers but no-one took much notice. The screws have been tightened a lot lately, with the imposition of mechanisation.

ALMOST A STRIKE Back at our place again, forty of us attended a meeting one Xmas to discuss opposition to 'Christmas Arrangements' (cut in over-time, same amount of work). The Secretary spoke for 45 minutes opposing action, and then the vote for a strike was unanimous! However, the decision to get it 'made official' meant it never took place. That was a rare occasion. Over the six years, GPO cost cutting and discipline got progressively tighter.

Talking of discipline, I seemed to be getting a lot of official stick, and one supervisor particularly seemed determined to make it his life work to get me sacked. I built up an impressive file and began to fight all 'offences' (of the most ludicrous kind) on technicalities, becoming an expert on the rule book. A sort of jailhouse lawyer.

When a guy I lived with got nicked in Euston Station, playing drunkenly with mail bags, I was questioned by the Post Office Investigation Branch (with Special Branch links) and accused of operating an 'anarchist mail robbery gang'!



They never charged me but he got six months suspended. Earlier I'd got my name in the News of the World, nicked for graffitti - and was hauled up for 'bringing the GPO into disrepute'. They never noticed me in the Sunday Mirror - a nude picture taken at a free festival!

Back in 1977, a few of us around London doing various types of work, created the LWG. This helped to reduce my isolation at work. I collected money for a building site strike, (the only NF member in the office, a nice bloke more into Rock'n'Roll than politics, was the first to donate), invited a striking fireman to talk to us, and gradually our 'clique' had a sort of educational presence and almost started an office mag. Some of us started a Rock Group which practised in the First Aid room!

But as for collective resistance to the GPO, times was 'ard. In 1979, in desperation, me and another rebel were elected Secretary and Chair of the Branch. Three months later, just before the General Election voting cards were due to be sent out door to door, guerilla stoppages under shop floor control spread to nearly all offices in London, opposing a GPO/Union deal to bring in 'efficiency' (i. e. repression) measures. Mail seized up around the country and it looked like getting really out of hand. 4,000 P.O.W's (Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Work or Post Office Workers) demonstrated outside Union H. Q. An SWP-dominated Rank and File meeting brought 70 P.O.W's from all over the country. We won hands down but the lower levels of the Union saved face and discouraged or prevented further resistance except through Union channels. Next year, the same measures were brought in without opposition.

RESIGNATION I had seen amazing changes in the attitudes of my fellow workers during that exciting action. And since, any 'loyalty' has been replaced by fear. I was sent to the Union conference a month later and saw how the Union machinery of 'representation' was a millstone around our necks. A couple of months after, me and the chair resigned at a poorly attended meeting as we refused to become dictators or bureaucrats. When a new bloke took over, the Union room was again locked and placed out of bounds to members, and meetings became rubber-stamp farces. However, in or out of the Union structure, resistance was frustratingly low with that one amazing exception.

I began to take as much time off sick as possible and applied for twelve months release for Adult Education (usually routine decision). I'd been accepted at Harlech Adult College. I

was refused and asked if I was going to leave. I said "No". But I did.

REVOLUTIONARY Ironically, after 3 or 4 years of helping to create a leftist Rank and File presence in London and beyond (we did five issues of Post Office Worker, about 500 of each), I had just begun to create a specifically revolutionary network to spread ideas attacking Union structures, calling for autonomous forms of organisation and action, for seizure of all workplaces and for the abolition of money, employers and Authority in all its forms. This necessary project was unfortunately still-born. Although I wouldn't mind returning to the struggle inside the GPO, I doubt if I could get back in. I quite miss the people there. But of course, resistance continues wherever we are - in industry, at home, on the street or in prison.

\*\* Remember the disciplinary hearings I mentioned? Well, despite more than a dozen alleged offences, arguments and insults galore, they proved fuck-all, and my reference on leaving states (through clenched teeth?) that I am "honest, hard-working and sober". In fact, I am fighting for the day when the GPO along with all institutions, is abolished and society transformed.

D. Livery.

## P.A. POUNDSTRETCHER

After some six months of negotiations, the 1981 Press Association (PA) house agreement with Natsopa (clerical) was finally set in June at a £15 flat rate increase on the basic wage. Considering the present average going rates, this was not a bad deal for lower paid members - about 18½% on the basic in my case. Or so it seemed at first glance.

This years negotiations followed the breaking up of the British News Agencies (BNA) employers negotiating body of Reuters, Exchange Telegraph and the PA. The PA has always shelled out the lowest wages in the BNA, and it struck me at the time that the BNA's dissolution would mean that the relatively docile PA workforce would be lined up for an even bigger clobbering. In fact Reuters and Exchange Telegraph have succeeded in fixing the minimum basic above £100 this year.

A mandatory chapel meeting was called in May, with the managements offer standing at



£11.35 plus pro rata increments on overtime payments and consolidation.

The union branch secretary addressed the meeting, arguing at length that the offer was an insult to the chapel, that it would put us even further back in relation to the other news agencies, and that it was high time we made our feelings known to the management by taking a firm stand.

This said, a couple of workers pointed out that on the last two occasions that the chapel had made its feelings known to the management the union had stripped the F.O.C's of office, and on one occasion had demanded an explanation from every member who had failed to report for work, and attempted to impose disciplinary fines! However, the branch secretary assured us that all that was in the past and under different circumstances. He said that he would ensure branch backing in rejecting the offer, stating that we should accept nothing less than a £15 increase on the basic.

The meeting was recalled a week later, and presented with the branch secretary's new improved deal. The magic figure of £15 was dangled before us, but the price of acceptance we discovered, was a delay in the implementation of pro rata overtime increases, of eleven months! It was stressed that it was the basic rate which mattered most, since it would boost future settlements. Perhaps so, but anyone averaging five hours per week overtime would lose out by the deal (currently average overtime is just over fourteen hours per month). So

give or take a few quid, the new deal was little more than playing around with the figures. Moreover, the relative fall in overtime pay provides an incentive for management to delay the replacement of staff leaving or returning.

Money matters apart, the whole charade was politically detrimental. The militant posturing of the branch official convinced many workers that the union was a faithful buddy after all, when attitudes to the union had been fairly hostile (generally in a passive sense, though union dues were withheld for several months after one of the unions recent outrages). Although a few voices were raised to point out that the improvement on the offer was negligible, the unions authority seemed pretty well restored when the recommendation of acceptance received a favourable vote of 60 to 6.

The National Graphical Association has been negotiating concurrently (but of course separately). Naturally no reference was made to the fact that NGA members were also dissatisfied with the progress of these negotiations, or to the effectiveness that a joint response by all PA workers would bring. As it is, the NGA chapel has given two weeks notice of strike action (against branch instructions, apparently) following ballot rejection of the firm's 12% offer. Now that NATSOPA has already settled, its members are generally expressing their disgust against the 'greed' of the much higher paid NGA membership, plus the attitude "they've never helped us - why should we help them" etc. etc.

E. D.

## STRIKE REPORT - BBC PUBLICATIONS

On Thursday 28th May, the National Union of Journalists BBC Publications chapel voted to come out on indefinite strike. The BBC publications chapel has as its members journalists working on the Radio Times, the Listener, the staff newspaper Ariel and BBC books and pamphlets. Within the BBC, the publications journalists are certainly the lowest paid, and a recent 're-grading' exercise did nothing to change the situation. Last summer, the NUJ and ABS (Association of Broadcasting Staff) filed a re-grading claim on our behalf, calling for parity with newsroom journalists. The BBC said they would consider it, and it promptly sank without trace. Around November, the chapel began to get a little restive, and threatened to stall the

Christmas issue of Radio Times. After a few days go-slow, the BBC took the issue to ACAS, where they reluctantly agreed that we were journalists, and as such, were poorly paid. They agreed to consider our claim, and to do something about it by the end of February.

Come March, there was still no answer from the BBC, and the chapel began to pass a series of motions urging the BBC to get moving. After several hasty high-level committee meetings, the issue came to a 'National Conference' meeting - the last stage of the BBC's disputes procedure, which we had invoked earlier in the month. A representative from each section of

contd ->



the chapel went to this meeting, once again to point out to the BBC why we considered ourselves badly paid, but the BBC were obviously not interested. They proposed that the majority of the chapel should receive no increase at all, while the others should be awarded very minor increases. Our officials went away from the meeting to get official backing for a strike.

The chapel went into mandatory session on 28th May, a meeting which culminated in the overwhelming strike-vote, which was much applauded by our officials. Our big advantage in striking at this particular point was that we could halt production of the Royal Wedding issue, but if the BBC settled within two or three weeks, we could still save it.

THE STRIKE The strike itself was of no great interest to revolutionary voyeurs for three reasons.

1. It was not an innovative strike. We were striking to increase the wages of the lower-paid members of the chapel (programme subs, art assistants, picture researchers) but whether this was to be achieved by reducing differentials or simply upping everyone's pay was not clearly thought out. We were not striking to do away with differentials altogether. (although there is a growing body of opinion which says that this should be our next objective) it was more a matter of raising and consolidating our status within the BBC. Our own pay horizons had been firmly nixed by the BBC, and our objectives were grades and pay already pre-determined within the BBC.

2. It was a very naive strike. Very few members of the chapel had any experience of strike action, and we therefore placed great trust in our officials. We had very little idea of what the outcome would be, and rather let our own moral indignation bear us along. Our chapel is also very young, in terms of both its members and its own existence. Many are fairly new to the BBC, and its mysterious ways.

3. It was not a strike with 'street credibility'. Journalists are not famed for their unbiased viewpoints as realised through their work, as one taxi driver who crossed our picket line made clear. Many of us felt for the first time the middle class guilt-pangs of already earning more than the workers in the canteens, and being out on the streets for still more. Also, the Radio Times has as its grass-roots readership people like 'Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells', people who are far more interested in a possible rise in the licence fee than in poorly-paid workers.

The strike itself progressed quite happily - we held jumble-sales, maintained the picket lines, met other chapels to receive their support and their money, distributed leaflets and demonstrated outside Broadcasting House and Television Centre. Meanwhile the BBC, the NUJ and the ABS were at ACAS (our officials having stupidly contacted ACAS on the first afternoon of the strike) attempting to persuade the BBC to change their minds.

The chapel held daily meetings, the nastiest of which being called at the behest of the negotiators - they wanted us to regrade ourselves as we would wish to be re-graded, so that they could put a new 'seven-grade' plan to the BBC. We gave them the formula we had eventually arrived at, only to find, a few days later, that they had taken upon themselves to 'improve' it. The original trustfulness was past crumbling. After just under two weeks, our negotiators came back from ACAS with an offer which, they said, they had to recommend. This offer was very similar to the one which we (and they) had originally rejected, and it was obviously an exercise in paying off Radio Times staff at the expense of the others. Picture researchers (the worst paid) got nothing while assistant editors on Radio Times, who had not wanted any more, got a substantial increase. Some people actually lost money as they could no longer claim overtime. But we had to accept this offer, said our negotiators, or it would be a very long strike, and the BBC had made it clear that they would withdraw this offer and probably not come up with anything to match it. Our negotiators also told us that the BBC were not unwilling to lose the Listener altogether, and that the Radio Times could easily be sold off to commercial interests, despite making a yearly profit of £3 million for the BBC. Eventually, the chapel voted to accept this offer, although with nearly as many abstentions as votes in favour.

SUMMING UP What we learnt from the strike will probably turn out to be far more important than what we gained financially. In terms of what we have learnt about ourselves and each other, as a chapel and as individuals, the strike was a vital experience. We all feel the need for education. Few of us knew anything about ACAS and its processes. We did not know that we were being committed to a course of action by our negotiators; a course of action which really made a mockery of our efforts. ACAS is in the business of compromise, whereas strikes are (or should be) about non-compromise. The processes of ACAS, and its eventual demands upon our negotiators, were a secret known only to a select few. Ordinary members of the chapel



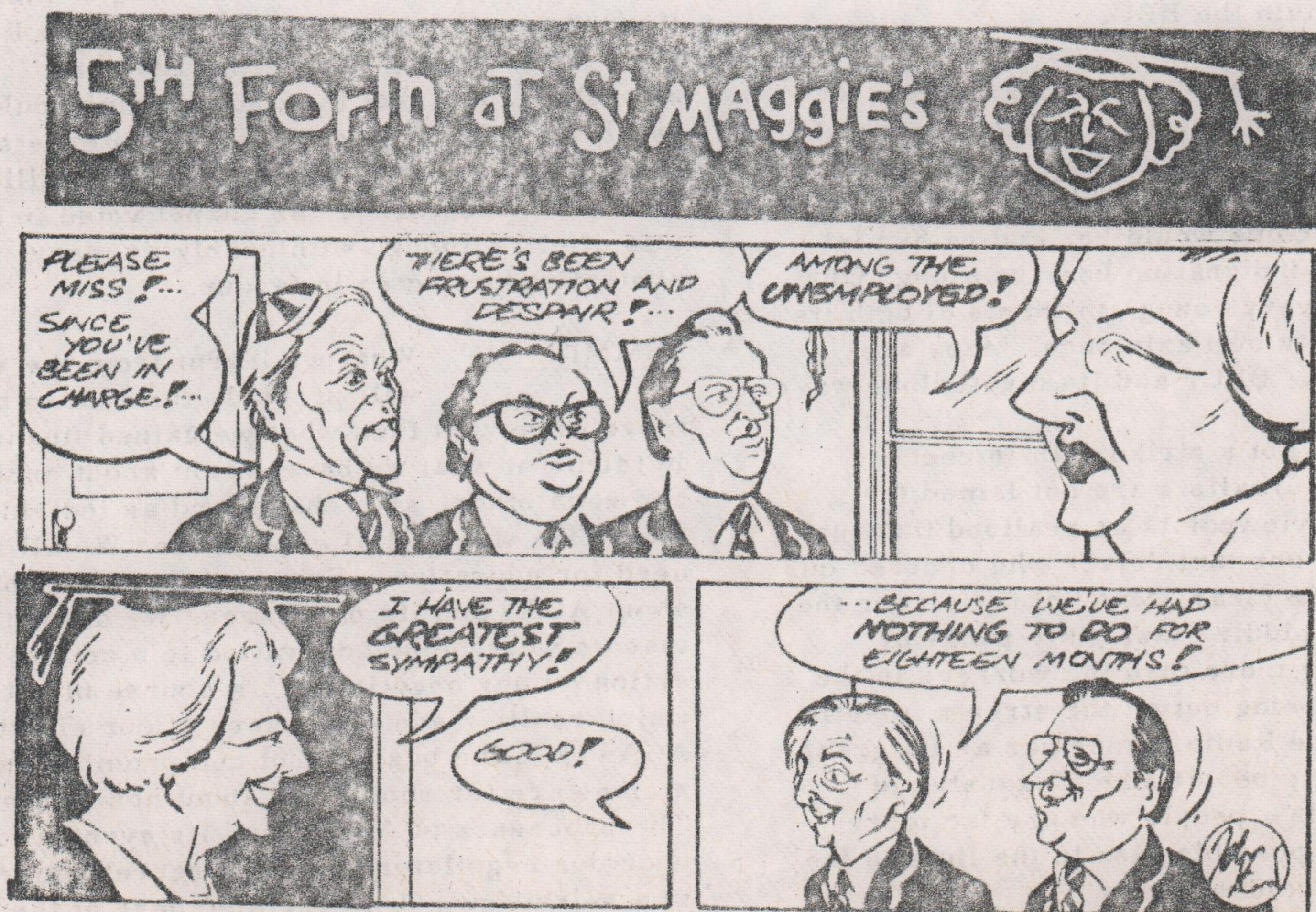
should be let in on that secret, and wherever possible, invited to attend high-level NUJ/BBC meetings.

We have learnt important lessons from our full-time officials. No doubt they worked as hard as they could, but perhaps their work was not always in our interests. After the strike, there was a residue of resentment for the fact that they were the ones taking the decisions, while we were the ones with jobs on the line. They should not have contacted ACAS as soon, they should have told us more fully about the progress of negotiations, they should not have re-adjusted our own re-grading scheme. They would say that they are the only ones who can talk to the BBC - they talk their language. Maybe the BBC needs to be taught another language. One official, after the strike, tried to tell me that a negotiator has to win his (a definite masculine) 'spurs' before he can enter the elitist arena of industrial relations. The negotiators easy acceptance of the BBC's 'right to manage' needs to be questioned and exposed. Only when unions within the BBC begin to attack this right to manage and to decide will union members start to realise their own power and potential.

The strike showed up our own industrial impotence both within and without the BBC. The Radio Times is essentially useless ; a tree-conservationists nightmare. It is the information service of a establishment organisation. Within the BBC, the Radio Times has little industrial muscle - the Listener and Ariel has even less. And outside the BBC ? The only reader's letters recieved during the strike were complaints about the 'new format' necessary when the magazine is being produced by only 3 people.

But perhaps the most vital questions raised by the strike were those to do with present wage structures. I found it difficult to convince people I wanted a higher wage when I don't believe in a monied wage system. Chapel members are now beginning to think about how they would feel about a system of complete parity within publications, and all the implications that that entails. We must not accept the BBC's pay structure and industrial organisation as a limitation to our activities ; rather we must decide our own organisation and define our own limits of activity - there are horizons far wider than those the BBC would have us accept.

SUB-VERTER





# rail workers resist

In June the government announced that it will partially grant British Rail the cash it wants to electrify more routes. Providing of course that staffing is reduced by a further 38,000 or so. This means that BR management and the rail unions ASLEF, NUR and TSSA will be hard at work producing schemes to soften the blow of mass redundancies through natural wastage, early retirement, a block on recruitment - which means inevitable chronic staff shortage, low wages and high overtime in a period of high unemployment.

It's funny though, how when these management economists talk about more productivity/efficiency they really mean getting more work out of us poor sods rather than sharing the benefits of technology with us to make life easier.

While sectors of BR are being sold off to private enterprise, and some, like collect and deliver parcels are being done away with altogether, attempts to cut services have met with considerable resistance from union membership.

A threat from local management on Southern Region to suspend the guaranteed 40 hour week in response to a threatened 3 day unofficial stoppage by combined grades of rail workers over service cuts, was called off when the unions called for an official one day strike.

In April, action by refusing to take fares for one week was sanctioned by the NUR in protest over the planned closure of the Manchester-Sheffield trans-Pennine line. This won a reprieve from BR to put off the closure from 1st June to 20th July, and a public enquiry called from the unions. It also shows that 'striking' does not always have to mean withdrawal of public service and stopping work but can actually keep workers and community united, & hit the bosses directly by not taking fares as has happened in Italy and Rotterdam in recent times.

Resistance to cuts in services on Southern and Eastern regions, through unofficial stoppages.

Resistance, through unofficial stoppages, to cuts in services on Southern and Eastern regions which were to be introduced in the new timetables this June, ostensibly because it would mean less overtime, forced BR to reintroduce the cut-out trains as "specials".

While planned cuts in services have not been too severe this year, and no actual lines axed as yet, redundancy continues to creep up, and distrust of the union executives spreads amongst

the membership. The union leaders are now even talking quite seriously about forming a rail union "federation", to concert "united" action from the top down. While wealthy socialist BR chairman Parker negotiates a massive pay rise for himself he is seen by the establishment as the right man to deal with the potentially very powerful railway trade unions.

Now, in August, following the arbitration decision of the Railway Staff National Tribunal, the unions acceptance of it and the BRB's refusal to implement the whole award, ASLEF and NUR have called for industrial action from Monday 31st August. The BRB, who originally offered a 7% pay increase, accepted the tribunals award of an 8% increase backdated to April but refuse to pay the extra 3% recommended which was to be paid from August 3rd, without a commitment from the unions to allow the introduction of cost cutting measures, assaults on workers basic conditions and redundancy measures which will lead to lay-offs. There is no doubt among the workers that acceptance of any "productivity proposals" will pave the way towards super exploitation, and that it would be better to accept 8% on our terms rather than 11% on theirs.

Nevertheless, strike action has been called by the executives and preparations are being made. (It is recognised by the leadership that active picketing will have to be organised and they are calling for the formation of strike committees).

Most railworkers hate the management for their patronising and stingy attitude and are quite happy to strike against them. Of course there are those who get taken in by the media con but there is no substitute for actually working for BR, and understanding amongst the workers that the job is done by us despite the management. A breeding ground for workers councils?

Trade Union organisation is weak precisely because it tries to function as a democratic hierarchy. This does allow for unofficial horizontal style organisation, but this is undeveloped and hampered by leftist sectarianism. But now, with the strike still going ahead, the general level of workers combativity begins to rise, and should pass the point where the unions will be afraid to call the action off lest they lose any semblance of control over the workers, as we decide to call the strike anyway.

The BRB may concede defeat, and we will have won a small victory, but if they do want to fight to the end we must spread the strike. So get prepared. Start linking up. Show the bosses we intend to rise from slavery, not get further into it.

Stepney Hack.



# NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY - FOR WHAT?

"The computerised control of work has become so pervasive in Bell Telephone's clerical sector that management now has the capacity to measure how many times a phone rings before it is answered, how long a customer is put on hold, how long it takes a clerk to complete a call... Each morning, workers receive computer print-outs listing their break and lunch times based on the anticipated traffic patterns of the day... Before computerisation, a worker's morning break normally came about two hours after the beginning of the shift; now, it can come as early as fifteen minutes into the working day. Workers cannot go to the bathroom unless they find someone to take their place. "If you close your terminal, right away the computer starts clacking away and starts ringing a bell." "

- from 'Brave New Workplace' by Robert Howard. Working Papers For A New Society Nov/Dec 1980.

Between the lines of the publicity for the "office of the future" we can catch glimpses of the treatment in store for office workers. Bell Telephone may be the furthest along in automating office work, but this "future" is in store for hundreds of thousands of clerical workers as new technology gets installed.

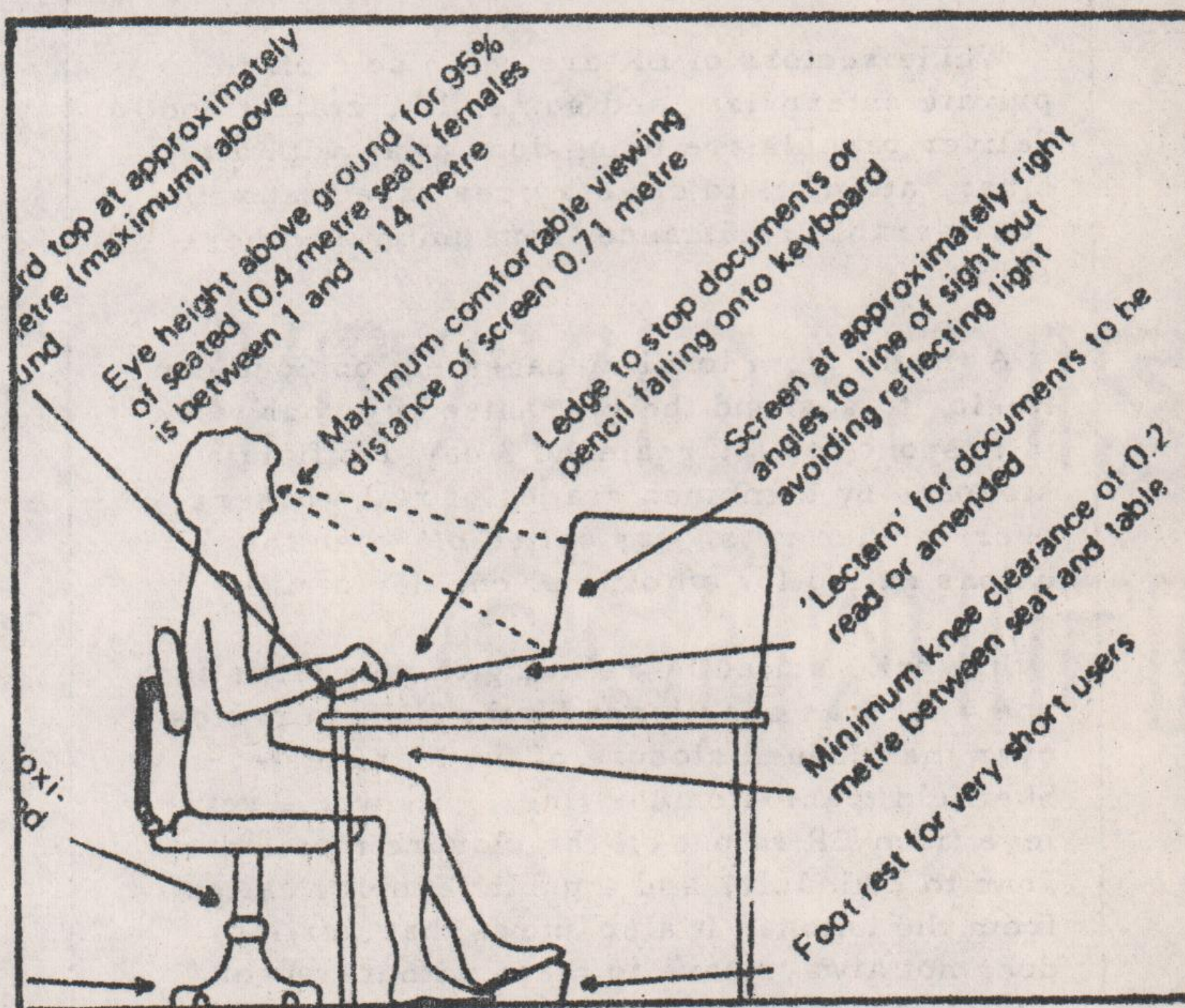
In manufacturing, automation is already well advanced, though nothing like what's coming when the new robot technology gets installed. This makes blue collar workers a lot more "productive" than office workers. As the salesmen from Xerox and IBM never tire of telling corporate managers, the average industrial worker is backed by \$25,000 worth of equipment, compared to only \$3,000 for the average secretary and next to nothing for low-to-middle level managers.

With modern word processing equipment, one typist can do the work that previously took three. And in today's increasingly internationalised and conglomerated world, there is a lot of information to be handled. Everyday, millions of economic transactions are tracked by the corporations and the banks, and with each one comes the interminable complexities of a world choked by MONEY and its logic: billing, accounting, insuring, financing, advertising, researching what people can be made to buy. No wonder there has been a tremendous increase in the number of office workers. It is they who file, sort, type, track, process, duplicate

and triplicate the ever expanding mass of "information" necessary to operate the global corporate economy.

As office employment has increased so has the cost of pushing around the continually growing body of bureaucratic detail. It has become high priority for management to reduce costs at the office by eliminating as many clerical jobs as possible, and to gain as much control as possible over the ones that remain.

In the office of the future, even middle managers and computer programmers will become unthinking drones. Since they make their living by pushing information, they are prime candidates for "job redesign" — in other words, job elimination for many, tighter control and more boredom and repetitiveness for those that remain.



## YOU CAN'T LAY OFF MACHINES, BUT...

As markets stagnate around the world, international competition sharpens. Faced with soaring prices for energy and raw materials, businesses of every variety are struggling to cut costs in order to maintain or expand their slice of a shrinking pie.

Between 1976 and 1980 companies that wanted to step up production were likely to hire more workers rather than buy more equipment. They were afraid to invest in new machines because they didn't want to be caught with excess production capacity in a time of economic slowdown. Unlike new plants and equipment, workers can always be fired, or, better still, they can be



hired as temps.

Meanwhile, the cost of electronic control and data processing technology has been steadily dropping. Today they are "economical" on a larger scale than ever before and intensified competition gives wavering firms the necessary push towards automation. If your company doesn't use the new technologies it will be driven under by one that does, and if your country doesn't use them, perhaps because of union pressure to preserve jobs, it will be blown out of the market by Japan — or whoever else does.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT, AUTO — MATION, REVOLT

Some computer industry mouth-pieces still

persist in proclaiming that the new systems will "create" as many jobs as they destroy. But this is a self-serving lie. The "business machine" and automation industries are rare islands of prosperity in an otherwise crisis-ridden economic picture, and they are, if anything, more automated than other sectors. In reality, large-scale unemployment unlike anything we've known since the last depression is just around the corner.

Automation isn't new, and neither is the unemployment it creates. During the fifties, workers in auto, steel and mining waged bitter fights against the mechanical "job killers". But the unions bargained away jobs and skills for improved wages and benefits. The result was a permanent pool of between twelve and fourteen million skill-less, jobless people, culturally, geographically and often racially segregated from the employed population.

Through the last two decades, this segregated "underclass" has provided management with a ready answer to unskilled and semi-skilled workers who resist speedups and takeaways. If you won't do twice as much work for half the real wage there's always someone out there hungry enough to do it instead of you. Added to this threat and the other well known classic, the runaway shop, the new automation gives management a blackmail "triple whammy". Once powerful and militant groups of employees are bullied into accepting brutal cuts in wages, benefits and conditions, with their unions lending a hand. The current plight of auto and steel workers is example enough.

As unemployment grows and real wages fall distrust and competitiveness between employed and unemployed may prevail. But there are other possibilities. People who thought of themselves as "middle class" may realise that they can be dispensed with just as easily as the janitor, the busboy or the nurse's aide who live "on the other side of the tracks". The newly

unemployed, who have been taught to expect opportunities for career and salary advancement that the system can no longer provide, may not passively accept being thrown aside like garbage.

During the last depression, unemployed people joined employed ones on the picket lines, while the employed helped the unemployed fight for better relief or against evictions. The new wave of unemployment may help recreate such unity by minimising differences of sex, race, skill and culture.

#### HOLDING ACTIONS

There are various ways to try to counteract the impact of the new technology and the economic forces behind it. Unions and workers' support organisations have proposed reduction of the work week with no cut in pay, demanded better working conditions and more control over the work process, and resisted management-imposed job redesign. The methods of unions, however, are limited to the traditional end-of-contract strikes, interminable grievance procedures, or lobbying government for better labour legislation.

Successful actions on any of these issues are always subject to renewed attacks by management. While workers in a given office or factory may prevent implementation of a particularly loathsome technology, the pressures of survival will eventually force the company to take a harder stand. Even if massive social unrest succeeded in winning a four-day work week the wage gains would rapidly be taken back by inflation. Though it is certainly desirable to reduce time on the job and improve working conditions, no amount of "job humanisation" will change the basically wasteful and useless nature of most work.

As long as the existing set-up endures there will be no end to the problems created by automation. In the short run, successful actions on particular issues will gain some breathing space and provide people with concrete experience in overcoming their separation and passivity. But in the long run the system itself will have to be challenged. A world where technological progress doesn't mean ever more suffering and loss of freedom will never be created by a system so paralysed by its need for fast profit and centralised control.

#### COMPUTERS, WHAT ARE THEY GOOD FOR ?

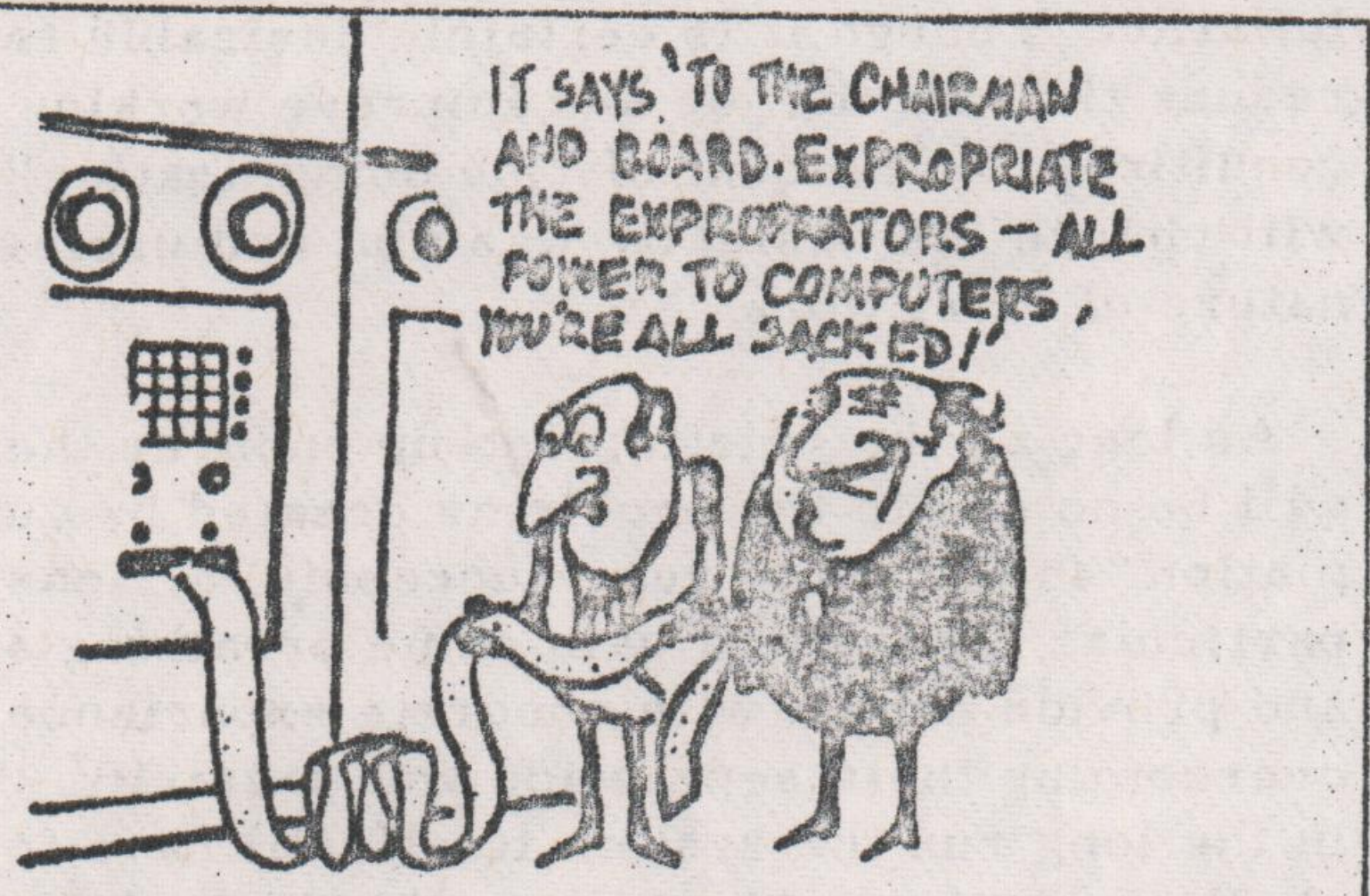
Though automation threatens livelihoods by eliminating and degrading jobs, there is nothing inherently bad about computer technology. In a different society, it could be used to improve our lives in all kinds of ways.



Consider how hard it is for blind people to live independently. Microprocessor-based technology can ease their isolation considerably by simulating the lost sense of sight. Already there is a reading machine built on a voice synthesiser and a powerful microcomputer which can read any clearly printed text at a rapid clip. The problem is that it costs \$30,000 - the only individual who owns one is singer Stevie Wonder.

"Vision" systems are also in development. They work by converting a TV image produced by a small camera worn on the side of the head into a pattern of tiny painless needle pricks on the back. With a little practice, a blind person can learn to "see" that pattern well enough to walk around in crowds and manipulate small objects. These devices could be made available to millions for only part of the cost of the MX missile system, or for the equivalent of Exxon's annual advertising budget.

**FUTURE FEATURES** It is easy to question the warped priorities of modern society, but harder to see the deeper reasons for them. At root is what is most taken for granted - that in order to have things we must buy them; that in fact they are made only to be sold; that we can get things we need and enjoy only if we have money; that "advances" in technology are governed by competition for profit, markets and credits; that decisions about how we spend our time and use our talents are dominated by concerns for "making a living"; that only officially sanctioned authorities have the power and capacity to make important decisions that affect our lives. In



this system - which rules in the "socialist" countries just as it does here, though in a mutant, state-run form - everything counts first and foremost as a quantity of money, including our skills and time.

The result is that resources are allocated and products distributed according to power and wealth, rather than according to human need or desire. The fragmentation of the world into rival businesses, nations, social groups and individuals creates permanent irrationality - war, starvation, catastrophic wastes

of time, energy and materials, misery of every description.

Suppose, though, that all sorts of people throughout the world decided to stop following the rules and priorities that govern society today. Their first actions would probably take the form of massive strikes and occupations something like what has been going on in Poland, or among squatters in Europe.

But suppose people went beyond this and organised themselves into groups according to what they thought needed changing, and according to their skills and willingness to make those changes. These groups could begin to supply themselves and each other by direct communication about their needs for goods and resources. When they needed something they could contact the people who had information about it, or who worked in factories that produced it. Suppose, too, that the workers at these factories had enough information to make informed decisions about where to send their products. Life would turn more and more on the conscious decisions of groups of people, the market would be circumvented, and money would become superfluous as a means of exchange.

Suppose this activity spread throughout society. Suppose the vicious forces deployed against it were successfully defeated, and the military, governmental, and corporate structures that control our lives were thoroughly dismantled. From now on, people would work, study, create, travel and share their lives because they wanted to, for themselves and for others.

A movement capable of transforming society in this way would have immense problems to tackle. Two thirds of the world population is seriously malnourished or starving. Hundreds of millions are without decent housing, clothing, sanitation, medical care. Most are illiterate. Cities are desperately overcrowded, while huge tracts of land are rapidly becoming deserts. Water, air and soil are badly polluted.

Some of the work necessary to set things right will be dangerous, and some tedious. When the glaring problems are solved, new ones will arise. If people were free to do what they wanted and not forced to work, how would everything get done. ?

Part of the answer is that a great deal of work that is today required to keep the system going could be immediately done away with. Whole sectors like banking, insurance and marketing - the three largest clerical employers - would be unnecessary. Jobs designed merely to super-



wise and control the population would be eliminated. Millions would be freed to learn and share other tasks, along with the formerly unemployed.

Products would be made to last instead of to fall apart in a few years so that the owner has to buy a new one. Very quickly, this would reduce the amount of work that has to be done. Meanwhile, as many jobs as possible would be transformed to make them interesting, pleasant and safe. The unpleasant work that remained would be shared around, so that before long no-one would have to do them more than a few hours a month.

But how would all this be organised? Who would decide how much time and resources should be spent on a particular project, and how scarce resources should be allocated? How can the rise of a new structure of power and hierarchy be prevented?

Obviously we can't foresee all the problems that might arise, nor propose definite solutions. However, it's reasonable to assume that the more people participate in decision making, the less chance there is of power concentrating in the hands of any particular group or groups.

This is where the new information technologies come in. At present, at least a third of all computer time in the U. S. is used for military and "national security" purposes - monitoring telephone, radio and TV signals, tracking U. S. and foreign military forces, industries and raw materials, planning for present and future wars. Much of the rest is used in the electronic transfer of funds from one corporate account to another. And all this information is tightly guarded, placed under coded "locks", and made accessible only through an elaborate hierarchy of classifications and clearances.

However, in the context of a growing movement such as the one described above, operators and programmers could begin sorting through the immense computerised files. A lot of information, like cash flow accounts and secret dossiers, could be simply wiped. The computers used for spying can be put to other uses or dismantled. Inventories of actual goods, equipment and raw materials, along with any other useful or interesting data, could be kept, made public, and reorganised. With the design of the proper systems and the installation of easy-to-use terminals in accessible places, work groups, communities and individuals could continually update, index and tap into the growing pool of information.

Most production would be planned at the local level. Work groups could organise their tasks as they see fit. The amount of milk or bread needed in a region could be produced locally right there, eliminating fancy packaging and

long transportation efforts.

But for other purposes elaborate plans would be required. Many projects would have to be co-ordinated at an inter-regional level. Computers can help here because they can digest enormous amounts of data into summaries that enable participating communities to set up the broad outlines of a plan: what products they need and how much, and what resources and skills they have available. Computers could match needs to resources and pinpoint potential surpluses and shortfalls.

Once plans were agreed upon, communications systems could facilitate their smooth follow through. When conflicts and shortages arise many of those affected could be brought together "on line" to discuss strategies for their resolution. Potential suppliers could respond to shortages with information about available stocks and perhaps negotiate to expand production. Final discussions could be handled by phone or in person.

Of course, it's not the computers that are actually doing the planning, it's people. And no-one really wants to spend a lot of time in front of a Visual Display Unit or sitting through dreary meetings. So "planning committees" would probably be designated by communities to make analyses and suggestions that they would bring back for approval. The "planners" could be delegated on a rotating and recallable basis to ensure both that they do a good job and that their temporary responsibilities don't "go to their heads".

Decision making would be decentralised to the maximum extent, and everyone would have a chance to participate. Gradually every area and community in the world that wants to join in could be linked together. The right mix of autonomy and interdependence could be approached in the context of a massive public discussion about the best ways of doing things.

In such a world automation, like computers in general, would mean something entirely different than they do today. Instead of being used to throw millions out of their jobs and squeeze more and more work out of the rest, it would be applied to eliminating necessary but repetitive and boring tasks, and to reduce the amount of less-than-enjoyable activity required of everyone. The time freed could be spent learning, playing, socialising, travelling....

#### PROTOTYPES : NON-HIERARCHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS

These may seem like totally unrealisable fantasies but they are as much part of the potential of the new information technology as the unemployment and degradation it engenders today. There have already been several





attempts to demonstrate the hidden social potential of information technology by creating system systems that take some first halting steps towards public access and community control.

One such system, named Cybersyn, was being developed in Chile until the 1973 (U.S. - backed) coup put the present military dictatorship into power. The idea of Cybersyn was simple : to install a computerised information gathering system that could be used to observe the Chilean economy in process, and to help predict the effects of various decisions upon it. Cybersyn was to be capable of producing detailed output, or of boiling down large masses of data into easily comprehended graphs and tables. In experiments done just before the 1973 coup, it was found that workers were able to use the system as easily as professional managers.

Cybersyn is not presented here as a model to be adopted. On the contrary, this system was built on request by a central government and was implemented in the context of a national economy intricately bound up in the world market, which functions on the basis of profit, wage-labour and military force. In its very conception, therefore, it was meant to accommodate centralised power and the money economy. These institutions (which eventually put a bloody end to the Chilean experiment) are precisely what must be abolished for any attempts to change society to succeed. Cybersyn does, however, demonstrate the simple logistical feasibility of the widespread installation of easy-to-use computer communications facilities.

Today in the Bay area of San Francisco, a related kind of system is being developed. "Community Memory" is being designed to facilitate the decentralised, non-hierarchical sharing of information, needs, skills and resources, or anything else that can be typed into a keyboard : philosophical or political opinions,

recipes, personal advertisements. According to a Community Memory publication,

"Community Memory is an open channel for community communications and information exchange, and a way for people with common interests to find each other. It is a tool for collective thinking, planning, organising, fantasizing and decision-making.



"By being open and interactive, Community Memory seeks to present an alternative to broadcast media such as TV. It makes room for the exchange of people-to-people information, recognising and legitimising the ability of people to decide for themselves what information they want.

"The projected incarnation of Community Memory is a broad dispersion of computer terminals in public places, such as community centres, libraries, stores and bus stations....

"The designers of Community Memory would like to see a world not broken up into nation-states, but one built upon many overlapping regions of concern : from household to neighborhood to interest group to work group, from geographical region to globe, where decisions are made by all those affected. This would be a world where power is distributed and governance is the process of collectively trying to determine the best action to be taken, via general discussion and complete dissemination of information. With this vision, the Community Memory system has been designed to be a communications tool for a working community."

WHAT KIND OF WORLD DO YOU WANT TO LIVE IN ?

In a world where everything and everyone is treated as an object to be bought and sold, the new technologies - and most of the old ones for that



matter - will inevitably create hardship and human misery. Whether it's the office workers at Bell Telephone or the women in Malaysia going blind assembling the integrated circuits for our new, self-tuning, giant screen, stereo colour TV's, someone always pays.

The new information machines are bringing changes that call for more than simple opposition. We must have some idea of what we want to do, and not sink completely into the politics of unemployment and workplace drudgery. The ease with which computers are used as instruments of social control cannot be allowed to obscure their liberatory potential.

Tom Athanasiou

reprinted from Processed World No. 1. Spring 1981.



PERIODICAL REVIEW:

PROCESSED WORLD

A new quarterly put out by San Francisco clerical workers, Processed World, is one of the few encouraging items to have come out of the USA so far this year. PW hopes to "provide a contact point for office workers who are dissatisfied with their lot in life and are seeking something better. The current situation of most clerical workers, secretaries and 'processors' of various sorts is our starting point; meaningless work with little material reward in a deteriorating and destructive social system". Issue 1 includes a personal account of office "life", a critical analysis of a strike by Blue Shield insurance workers which "runs up against institutional and strategic constraints", and ends with a review of the movie "9 to 5", Hollywood's idea of secretarial subversion.

The most useful and/or fun articles for me were "San Francisco 1987, Would You Believe It" and "New Info. Technology, For What?" In their different ways, both articles addressed the question of what power and impact office workers can have in bringing about a revolutionary transformation. The Trad. left has always emphasised "industry" as the key area to act in, dismissing the clerical and service sectors as peripheral to the real class struggle. I would also say that traditional councillist - as well as syndicalist - strategies have not been particularly relevant to struggle in offices, due to the non-productive and thoroughly alienating nature of most office work. Obviously, who gives a shit for self-managed insurance companies and ad-agencies? (Its rumoured that a certain Leninoid sect on the West Coast once put forward the slogan "Onward to Socialist Life Insurance!")

"S. F. 1987" is an entertaining short story describing the events leading to a popular insurrection in San Francisco. The action is sparked off by the occupation of the Bank of America World Headquarters by the workers inside, who take the executive staff hostage. They erase, transcribe or transmit all the records in the central computer banks; and set up communication with other workers and the general populace. Some engineers and programmers set up a short wave radio transmitter on the 22nd floor. Says one occupier by the name of Jenny:

"One of the best things we could do is destroy a big chunk of the records held in the bank. If we eliminate all those "vital" numbers that provide the illusion of a real basis for the status quo, it will be a lot harder for anyone to re-take power based on this system. We have to figure out a way to directly challenge the money/wage labor society, beyond our rather limited efforts to acquire free goods, housing and transportation".

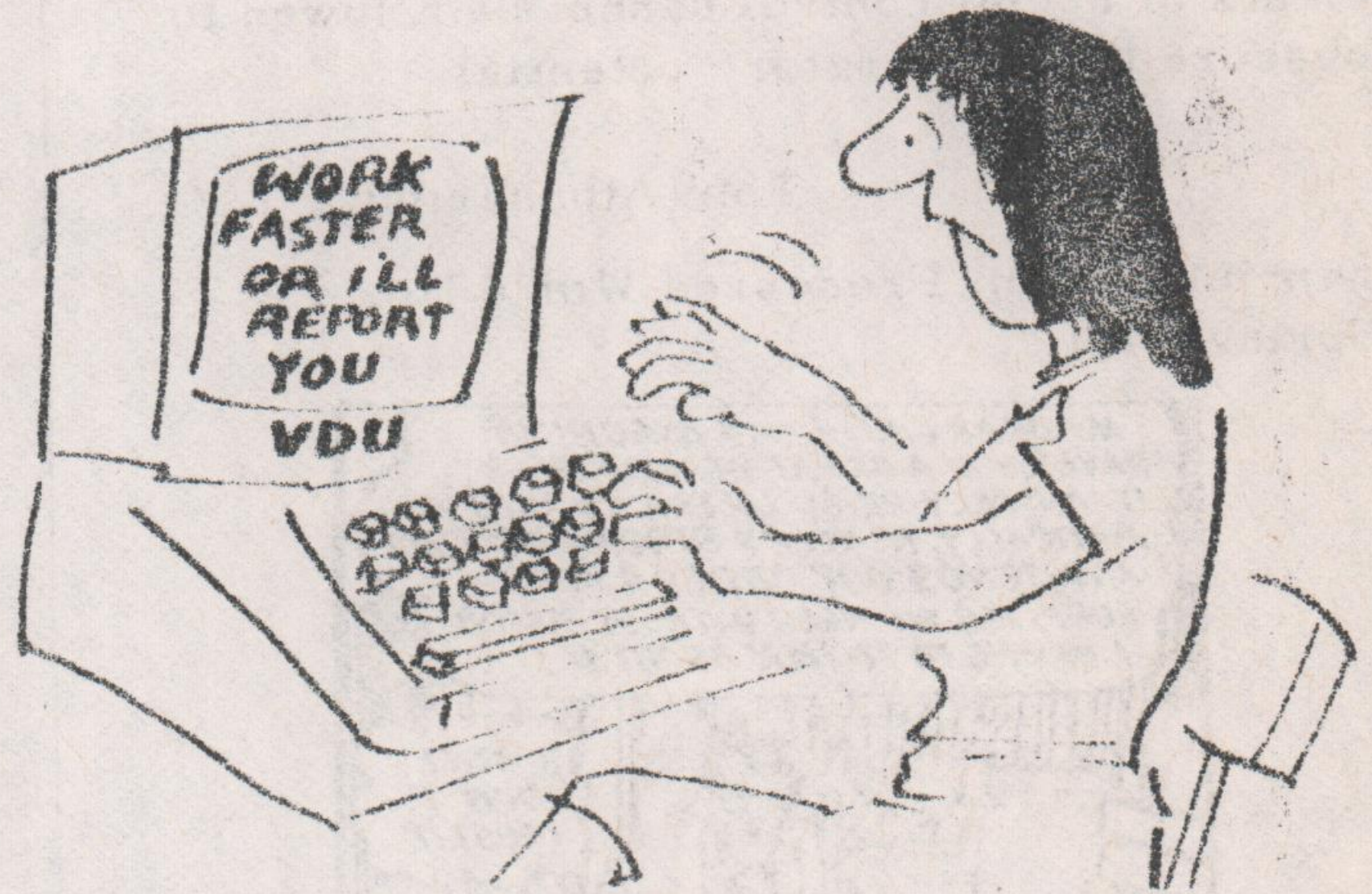
The events surrounding the Bank of America occupation snowball into occupations and walk-outs by workers in all other sectors. Employed and unemployed take to the streets, the National Guard comes in - leading to rioting and street confrontations.

The story is speculation on a fairly optimistic level, but makes important points. Office workers in the circulation and bureaucratic sectors can disrupt the present set of social relations through 1. Sabotage 2. Appropriating useful communications resources and information, and 3. Ultimately taking to the streets. (Significantly the Bank of America rebels abandon the building to join in the more general struggle of the city as the insurrection progresses).



"Info. Technology - for what?", reprinted in this issue of the LWG bulletin, tackles the question of how we actually can appropriate these information and communications devices and put them to use in a free/communist/anarchist/whatever you care to call it society.

opportunities which are rapidly shrinking, and becoming non-existent. Or in other cases, people who prefer temp. jobs might just be anti-work and doing just enough to get by (my goosh - shoot the lazy buggers!) The rather tarnished reputation of San Francisco as a centre and haven for discontented youth still has some hold in the US, though this cultural factor shouldn't be overemphasised as an "exceptional circumstance". Naive youngsters from Iowa or harried Brooklynners often find that the



California dream amounts to nothing more than straining their eyes in front of a VDU all day, five days a week. A situation can develop in which the secretary punching the keys might wish it was the boss(es) s/he was punching instead. (Right on! - LWG typist)

The PW crew is not content to let their "product" moulder in lefty bookstores, the publication is 'agitational' in the best sense of the word. Written clearly - but without condescending over-simplification - PW is definitely not an 'in-house' item for those well-versed in the intricacies of ultra-left/anarchist/revolutionary politics. The writers discuss concrete situations with revolutionary insight and go on to make revolutionary goals seem real and possible - all done with feeling, wit and good graphics. As the editorial points out "In a world where so much of our time is wasted on boring tasks or ridden with anxieties, it is important we experiment with ideas and activities that are in themselves enjoyable". PW people have met with good response selling the magazine in the streets during the financial district lunch hour rush, seperating themselves from the usual run of political paper pushers by disguising themselves as VDU units. According to friends in S. F., PW has sparked off a number of lively discussions around the water cooler, which in at least one workplace has resulted in the formation of that regrettably rare species, an Autonomous Workers Group!

Issue 2, due out shortly, will contain an article on the growth of clerical work and the increased importance of circulation in capitalism, poetry, and a photo-novel of a job interview entitled "Gidget goes Univac". Distribution in the U. K is being arranged and hopefully both issues will be available soon.

Much of the discussion in PW has some relevance to us here in London, a centre of international finance capital employing many clerical workers, in addition to those in the public sector. While office work does not dominate the job market to the extent it does in San Francisco its still an area in which many of us have to struggle.

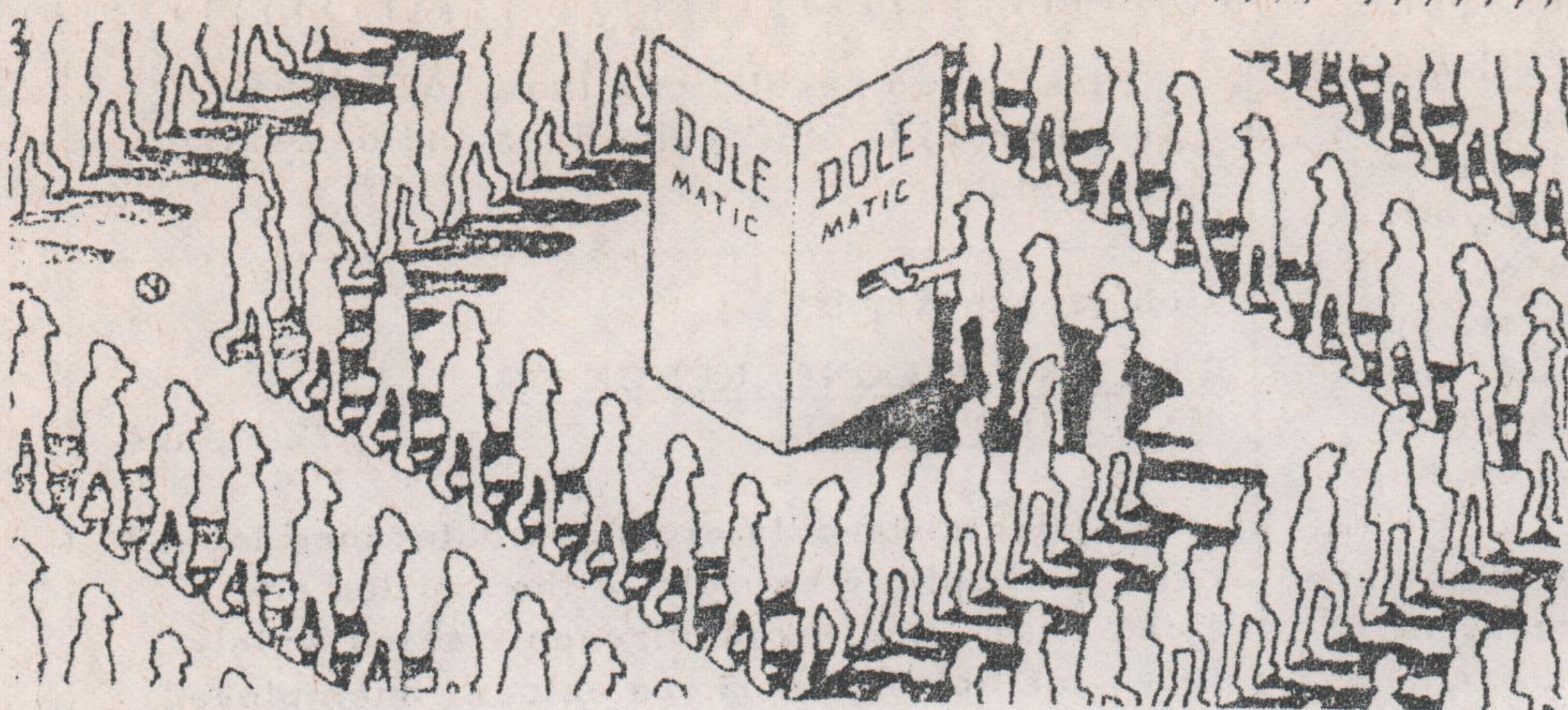
Kelly Girl.

Issue two is in fact now out. Processed World is available from 55 Sutter St., Suite 829, San Francisco, CA 94104, USA. Price \$1 plus post. Its hoped it will soon be available here through A. Distribution.

San Francisco may be a particularly fertile ground for rebellion among office workers. As a national center for finance capital and the location of many corporate headquarters, the S. F. financial district provides a large portion of jobs in the area. Temporary agencies now occupy 30% of the clerical work market and that percentage is increasing. The benefits of temporary labour to the employer is obvious - the employer avoids the expenses related to benefits, sick pay, vacation pay etc. Redundancy is built into the job - no bother about properly firing an employee once the work is completed. Labour requirements are easily adjusted to fluctuations in the market and technological changes.

At the same time, many temp. workers choose to do temp. work because they don't want to be tied to a job. Temporary clerical workers tend to be young and (in the U. S. ) may sometimes be university graduates. In many cases, temporary clerical workers may be awaiting "professional" opportunities:





# autonomous unemployed groups.

## Conference Report :

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST FEDERATION OF  
UNEMPLOYED, CLAIMANTS AND UNWAGED  
GROUPS CONFERENCE June 20/21 1981

**GENERAL COMMENTS** This conference arose directly from the previous one on April 5th (see LWG Bulletin 10), and in many ways it went beyond the limitations of that one. Its general motivation was a desire to develop some sort of coordination to help the struggle of the unemployed go forward.

The LWG amongst others has called for the emergence of autonomous workers groups - however it appears that it is amongst the unemployed that autonomous groups are emerging - with all the ambiguities which go with the word autonomous. However these groups are not arising from a desire to put into practise certain political doctrines, but because effective struggle necessitates autonomy from the union apparatus and amongst the unemployed the union apparatus is particularly weak.


The people involved in the conference come from a mixed political background - virtually no trotskysts or other extreme leftists - a few people in the C. P (but apparantly with reservations) quite a few Labour Party supporters, trade unionists and just plain unemployed workers. The conference had its moments of tension, but at the end a certain degree of friendliness had been built up.

Saturday started with the groups introducing themselves. After this Mick Connelly, a union official of 15 years standing, with special responsibility in the S. E. Region TUC spoke. He saw the question of the day as the implementation of the Alternative Economic Strategy, and a "return to the fifties" ! At a recent special TUC conference 3 questions arose. National Unemployed Workers Union :- this was rejected and it was planned to keep unemployed in existing unions. As for active recruitment amongst the unemployed, NUPE was proposing to do this, but the TGWU by contrast were divided. In the S. E (region 1) the unemployed

weren't accepted, but on Merseyside they were. Finally there was the question of unemployed centres. (Mick Connelly is on the management committee of the one being set up in Tower Hamlets). Connelly was in fact apologetic about the TUC guidelines for centres.

Briefly, these guidelines suddenly appeared at an unemployed conference in Newcastle last year. The unemployed groups present generally condemned them and have started to organise against them. These guidelines originally proposed management committees consisting of 50% local councillors, 50% appointees from Regional TUC. In addition to this representatives of ethnic communities, women, educational interests, youth and, surprise surprise, the unemployed themselves were put forward as observers ! The resolution passed by this conference from Islington A.G.O.U. summed up the major problems with these guidelines. In addition, it should be pointed out that as part of the M. S. C programme it was envisaged that the centres would help people into such things as Y. O. P !

Connelly was rather evasive about the TUC guidelines. He did make a commitment to the fact that these guidelines were only operational when MSC money was involved in setting up the centres, but this still left the relation between the TUC and MSC unclear. (In fact the TUC has 3 members on the board of the MSC at national level, and is represented at regional level). There was no direct confrontation of the way and the extent to which the TUC is collaborating in/with the MSC.

On the Saturday evening, a group of people went away to draft the constitution, which  formed the basis of the one accepted subsequently. Of particular interest was the discussion of clauses 2, 3 and 4. In clause 2, an amendment to define the area covered by the

## GLOSSARY

MSC = Manpower Services Commission  
IGAOU = Islington Action Group On Unemployment  
YOP = Youth Opportunities Programme



federation as that of the S. E. Region TUC was rejected, keeping the federation flexible. In clause 3 an amendment was accepted to make sure that there was a 'controlling majority of unemployed' in member groups, thereby excluding any management committees set up under the TUC guidelines. With clause 4, there was quite a bit of discussion, and this matter will probably be the cause of future argument.

On the one hand, some unions keep unemployed members in the branches they are already in, in which case there are no unemployed branches. But the situation with the NGA arose - they have an unemployed branch. The NGA, through pre-entry closed shop, has maintained some influence over the printers labour market, through limiting the number of members. This means that their unemployed branch only accepts members who are already in the NGA but have become unemployed. An out of work printer cannot simply sign up. Two questions were raised - the difference between craft unions and general and industrial unions, and the whole question of who controls the branch - its members or the officials.

Finally two resolutions from IAGOU were passed on TUC/MSG guidelines and on Sexism and Racism.

#### Conference Report :

#### LEICESTER CONFERENCE ON UNEMPLOYMENT.

27th June

Coming a week later, this conference lacked even the positive aspects of the London one. For a start, the people present varied widely ; local unemployed workers unions, unemployed branches of the TGWU, Trades Council representatives with a special interest in unemployment, Claimants Unions, unemployed action groups.

The diversity in some ways reflected the different roles of unions from place to place. For instance in London, the unions are not as implanted in working class life, as in single industry towns where the corporative approach of the unions makes some sense on a localist, reformist basis. And in London where Local Govt. is often the largest employer, unemployed

#### UNEMPLOYMENT

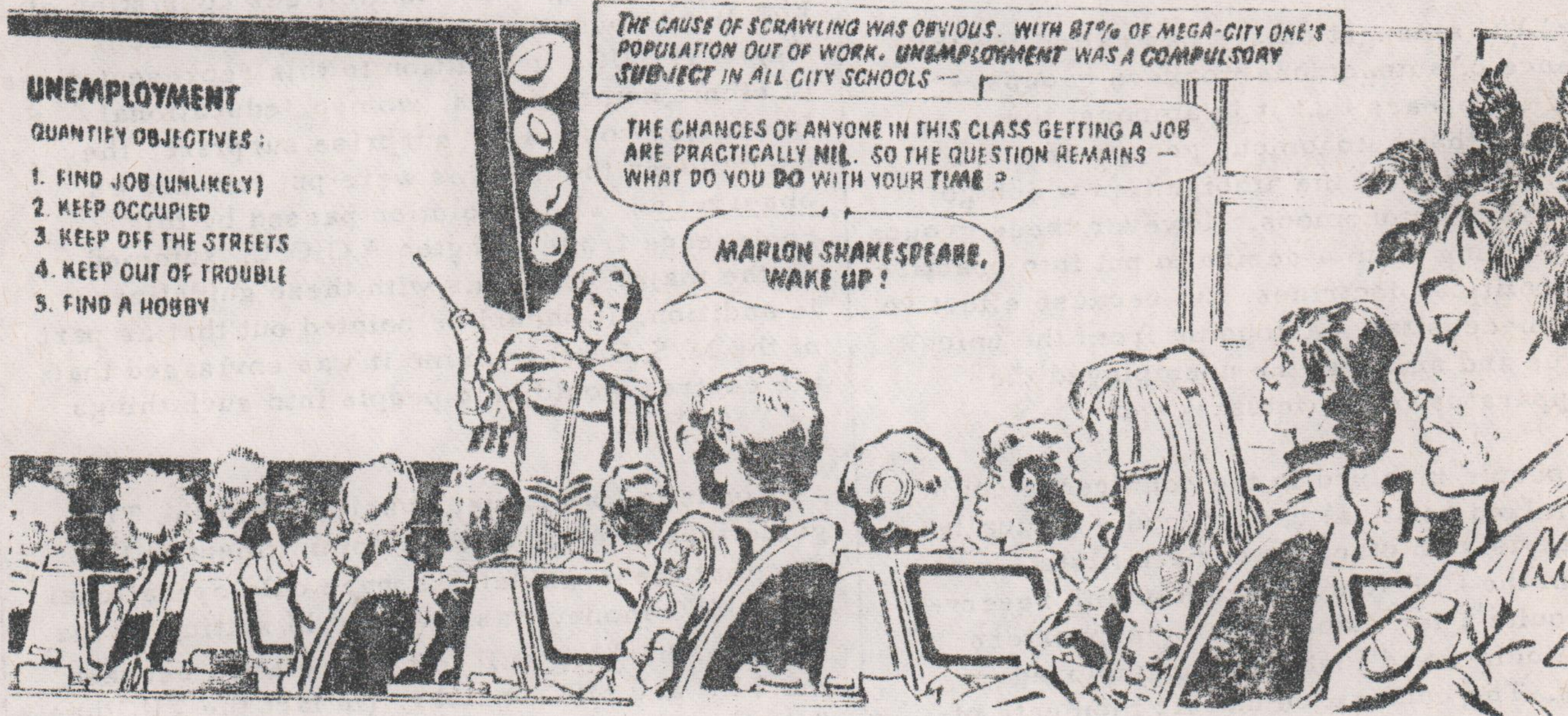
##### QUANTIFY OBJECTIVES :

1. FIND JOB (UNLIKELY)
2. KEEP OCCUPIED
3. KEEP OFF THE STREETS
4. KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE
5. FIND A HOBBY

THE CAUSE OF SCRAWLING WAS OBVIOUS. WITH 87% OF MEGA-CITY ONE'S POPULATION OUT OF WORK. UNEMPLOYMENT WAS A COMPULSORY SUBJECT IN ALL CITY SCHOOLS -

THE CHANCES OF ANYONE IN THIS CLASS GETTING A JOB ARE PRACTICALLY NIL. SO THE QUESTION REMAINS - WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR TIME ?

MARION SHAKESPEARE, WAKE UP !



After the constitution had been worked out, as a provisional basis for setting up the federation, discussion then continued on areas of activity :

Transport  
Sexism/Racism  
Homelessness/Evictions  
FreeFuel/No Cut Offs  
TUC/MSG Guidelines  
YOPS/National Service  
PressCoverage of Unemployed  
Newsletter

No firm arrangements were made to deal with these in any priority, but there were some arrangements made to set up work groups on these topics.

groups have had to keep their distance from local councils (labour or otherwise). So in London action groups have been set up. But in towns which are dependent on one or two major industries the local council is much more likely to seek to protect the towns economy by backing campaigns to save jobs (campaigns as opposed to autonomous action). As a result, the workers have greater respect for the Labour party and the unions. Hence all the rubbish about the "Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire", which "Red Lambeth" cannot match.

There was plenty of sloganising, but nothing really concrete emerged. The TUC was denounced but aside from building a "National Unemployed Workers Union" nothing was put forward to



oppose the TUC with. Repeatedly delegates reiterated the need to work with the TUC, to critically accept the guidelines on unemployed centres and change them from within.

The Youth Opportunities Programme was denounced, but without any discussion of why the TUC promoted it.

# UNEMPLOYED WORKERS UNION

The main strategy for the unemployed presented was that

of an Unemployed Workers Union which was supposedly to gain mass membership from the unemployed so that the TUC cannot exclude it (if say it had a million members). This was accepted uncritically, although it is completely impractical. Briefly, in a factory it is easy for a union to collect dues, as the workers are gathered together and receive their wages at the same time. (Nowadays employers often deduct at source). The unemployed are socially fragmented, and the only way to collect dues is at meetings - i.e. the only people who will join are activists. This cuts down the real potential membership to several thousand, and the TUC will therefore dismiss the so-called union. But by trying to set up the mass union, building the organisation will gain prominence over any actual activity. Just as the Leftist groups have lived parasitically off workers struggles in their search for recruits, so would such a union. Slogans are substituted for analysis, campaigns are substituted for action, and leftism is substituted for class struggle.

The best that came out of the conference is nothing, the worst that can come out of it is a co-ordination of Trades Councils, which will hold back autonomous initiatives of unemployed groups with the idea that it is necessary to force the TUC to take over leadership of the struggle.

FOR A BOY LIKE MARLON SHAKESPEARE, THE PROSPECTS WERE BLEAK -

DO YOUR SLEEPING AT HOME, MARLON! PAY ATTENTION! WE'RE TALKING ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT HERE - YOUR FUTURE!



## UNEMPLOYED CENTRES

The TUC is slowly building up their campaign around unemployment. In the workplace, the strategy is to negotiate redundancies, short time working, reducing work put out to contractors, i.e. essentially telling workers they must help "manage" unemployment. As for those already out of work, their attitude isn't very different. They propose:

"Local centres where unemployed people could meet each other and get advice - for example on Social Security and Job Hunting." (Unemployment and the fight for TUC alternatives) Also, as TUC policy is to call on the government to "further expand the Youth Opportunities Programme", it is no surprise to learn that the centres will be promoting YOP schemes. The role of the centres is limited to managing unemployment, and occasionally wheeling people out for demonstrations and campaigns basically geared to getting the Labour Party back in power.

In line with this the centres are to be set up with management committees comprising 50% local councillors, 50% Regional TUC appointees, with observers from "community groups" (eg. the chamber of commerce). The MSC is to supply financial backing. In this way, the TUC's collaboration in the higher echelons of the MSC is backed up by joint control with the Labour Party of what will be the local base of the MSC. By making themselves indispensable to the running of the MSC, they hope to be able to offer a future Labour govt. another lever of social control.

In line with the corporatist politics of the Alternative Economic Strategy, the MSC would provide the basis of a "Labour Front" similar to that set up by the Nazi's in the thirties. Corporatism requires a national coordination of the labour market to ensure that workers with the right skills or lack of them, are available for exploitation at the right place.

The leftists, such as the Trotskyist group "Workers Power", merely demand that this should be called socialist planning, that it should resolve the contradictions of capitalism, that the workers should get paid lots of money and enjoy being exploited.

However, aside from this, there are more realistic proposals afoot, which seek to ensure that unemployment centres are run by a controlling majority of unemployed people. But if this remains merely a 'democratisation' of the centres all it can do is to incorporate an element of self-management while leaving the nature of the centres intact.



The point of the unemployed gaining control of the centres is so that they can use them to respond to their own needs. Although local councils may make grants and provide premises initially, it has to be understood that these will soon be withdrawn if the centres get involved in stopping councils laying people off, evicting tenants etc.

The role the centres can fulfill is to provide a base for a local action group/claimants union. Firstly, information and support is needed for claimants. Beyond this, the centres can be used to coordinate resistance to evictions, to contact workers in public utilities to press for no cut-offs of gas and electricity, to prevent scabbing and back up employed workers in struggle.

As regards financing, it is no good relying on the MSC, local council, or even the local Trades Councils. It is appeals to workers which in the long term have the firmest basis, and in practise these appeals will normally be made through shop stewards. But rather than just have such items appear on branch meeting agendas, it is better for a group of unemployed people to go into the workplace and have a meeting with the workers their. The deeper the level of contact, the greater the scope for practical solidarity should open conflict develop.

Finally it is necessary to break down the division of the unwaged between those "looking for work", and those doing unpaid domestic work. As such centres wont attract housewives and those with responsibilities for kids, it is up to the action groups to go out towards these people, not so much through leafletting laundrettes and parents picking up kids from schools, but more importantly through parent and toddler groups, 1 o'clock clubs etc. , which are a direct expression of a move to collectivise childcare without relying on the state, or taking on an immediately alienated form, with the employment of nursery workers.

DIOGENES

THIS MONTHS COMPETITION

TEST YOUR "THEORETICAL CLARITY" QUOTIENT.  
READ THIS EXTRACT CAREFULLY -

The real opposite of Capitalism, as it is the opposite of Communism, is  
Under our system, control of the means of production, distribution and exchange will be vested, not in one or a few committees of bosses, but in the hands of the producers, distributors and exchangers.

the workers themselves. Production in each industry will lie in the hands, not of one or a few giant monopolies, but of large numbers of small one-man and family businesses and workers' co-operatives competing in a genuine environment of free enterprise, subject to the overriding national interest in matters such as pollution control, safety and quality standards. Since they control and own the enterprise in which they work, the workers set their own pay and conditions and share the profits, instead of seeing them pocketed by parasitic plutocrats or bureaucrats. This provides them with a decent working environment and an incentive to work hard. As well as providing the country with a happy, productive workforce and, by the process of free enterprise, it will guarantee the consumer a decent quality product at a fair price. That is the real alternative, the true opposite of Capitalist slump and Communist tyranny, of the rule, under whatever name, of the Bosses. This is the only real Revolution, a system which guarantees genuine workers' control, genuine free enterprise, social justice and a reward for individual initiative, prosperity and freedom. And that is the only viable future, the only way that will work, for the British economy of tomorrow.

What revolutionary, anti-capitalist periodical is this taken from ? Is it :-

- a) Direct Action
- b) Xtra
- c) International Discussion Bulletin
- d) Freedom
- e) Other (Specify)

What is the missing alternative to capitalism and communism ? Is it :-

- a) Syndicalism
- b) Socialism
- c) Anarchism
- d) Proletarian Autonomy
- e) Other (Specify)

FOR ANSWERS TURN TO PAGE 28

Song of the Worms by Margaret Atwood

We know what a boot looks like  
When seen from underneath,  
We know the philosophy of boots...

Soon we will invade like weeds,  
Everywhere but slowly;  
The captive plants will rebel  
With us, fences will topple,  
Brick walls ripple and fall,

There will be no more boots.  
Meanwhile we eat dirt  
And sleep; we are waiting  
Under your feet.

When we say attack  
You will hear nothing  
At first.



Correspondence :

(The following article was received in response to an article in our last bulletin - after it the author of that article replies to some of the points made.)

UNEMPLOYED ORGANISING : AUTONOMY OR SECTARIANISM ?

The report by "Scrounger", in the May issue of the "London Workers' Bulletin", of the recent London and Southern regional conference of unemployed, claimants and unwaged was both over-pessimistic and riddled with factual inaccuracies.

The bringing together of groups with such a vastly different range of experiences and opinions was in itself a major achievement, an achievement which involved a considerable amount of hard work on the part of the Greenwich Action Group On Unemployment (GAGOU) and the Mary Ward unemployed group. The formation of a Federation might, to the ultra-revolutionary, seem of little importance, but to those of us who over the last year have struggled to help unemployed people overcome their apathy and submissiveness to the status quo and begin to organise to fight back it is a great step forward. Despite the fact that some people had come to bang their own sectarian drum, the exchange of opinions and experiences was useful and enabled us to get to know brothers and sisters in other groups who've been organising in other parts of London and beyond. The organisation of the Federation is going ahead, and by the time you read this a further conference will have been held to work out the Federation's aims and objects and plan its activities. One idea is for a campaign for free travel on trains and buses for all unwaged people. Nor do we aim to stop at London and the South, we are out to organise a mass, militant national unemployed movement. With a potential membership of over three million, the formation of such a movement, which can only be organised on a non-sectarian, non-bureaucratic, non-hierarchical basis, is the most effective answer we can give to the TUC bureaucracy and the conspiratorial Leninoid vanguardists. GAGOU feels that such a movement can only be part of the more general working class movement for fundamental social change.

GAGOU sees the local groups within this movement organising themselves in line with their own needs. GAGOU is a non-party political organisation and does not want to be dominated by or tied to (or manipulated by) any particular political philosophy. Within GAGOU there are Labour Party people, libertarians and feminists (we even had a SWP-er) but the majority belong to no group or party and have never heard of Marx or Lenin or for that matter Bakunin or Cardan. If we are not to be mere slogan-mongers and are serious about helping ordinary people organise, it is from this level we must begin our activities. This means a lot of hard, unglamorous work, leafletting the labour exchange, giving advice about benefits, organising social activities, but if the movement is to be a mass movement then it has to be done. You can have the most perfect theories, but until they take

hold of peoples' minds and become practise they're not worth very much.

Some people in GAGOU share "Scroungers" view of the SWP-dominated Right to Work Campaign and didn't want to invite them to the conference. However, they were asked as it was felt we might be able to learn something from them, even if such lessons were mainly negative. In Greenwich their attitude to us has varied tremendously, mostly they've ignored us, once they attacked us in "Socialist Review" and once they organised a joint meeting with us. At the conference they opposed the Federation, preferring to wait and see what the TUC may or may not do. Therefore, they may not be at the next one, but if they do try any manipulative tricks we're quite capable of telling them to piss off. GAGOU wants the unity of all unemployed and all workers, we don't want to be anybody's front !

We feel that the right to work as a slogan is inadequate. Even if the system could give us jobs this would still be wage slavery. Our problem is not lack of work but lack of income, therefore we tend to support the Claimants Unions' call for a guaranteed income, but then the questions arise what is this income to be and who will administer its distribution. The problem of work and alternatives to work isn't an easily solved one and the Federation will have to do some serious thinking about it.

GAGOU feels that unemployed people should join existing trade unions, not to propose resolutions, but to forge the unity of employed and unemployed ; there are, like it or not, ten million workers in trade unions. They can't be ignored or written off as class traitors. It is for this reason, not because of any mis-placed faith in the bureaucracy, that we feel the unemployed movement should affiliate to the trade union movement at all levels. However, as we've found out joining a union is easier said than done, to allow unemployed people to join many would have to change their constitutions and we can't just wait passively for this. This is one reason why GAGOU feels the unemployed must organise for themselves. We enjoy a good relationship with the Trades Council and local union branches and seek to maintain this, but not at the price of our autonomy. This is why we oppose the TUC guidelines which would subordinate unemployed groups and centres to appointees of regional TUC's and local authorities, such centres must be run by and for the unemployed themselves. We also oppose asking for MSC funding. We do not want full time paid officials, and our attempt to get an urban aid grant has taught us the futility of asking for govt. handouts. On the credit side, the initiative taken by GAGOU Womens' group has led the TUC to modify its guidelines to include the necessity for creche facilities and for both men and women to be responsible for the involvement of women in unemployed centres.

GAGOU has an autonomous Womens' Group not out of commitment to autonomist or feminist theorising, but because that is what the women in the group wanted. Members of the Womens' Group



always attend the main group's activities and men from the main group run the creche at womens' group meetings. At the conference the debate was not between autonomists and "left patriachs". It was about how best to involve women in unemployed groups. The main opponents of women organising autonomously are the Leicester Unemployed Workers' Union which has a majority of female members and activists. They feel that such organising will reinforce the existing divisions between men and women. Just how women are to be involved is something groups will have to thrash out for themselves.

The article "Some Thoughts on Autonomy" was far more constructive and its concept of organising and of the function of the Federation is one which GAGOU would broadly support. Much of what we have done has been on a "trial and error" basis, and we've made mistakes along the way. GAGOU wants to see a mass unemployed movement which will be by, for and of the unemployed, not an appendage of Congress House or of any political vanguard. On the other hand in seeking to avoid this we must not alienate workers who are rank and file trade unionists by mouthing meaningless "ultra-left" slogans, we must not avoid the trap of hopeless reformism only to fall into the trap of hopeless sectarianism as "Scrounger" seems to do. It is not going to be easy, but unless we're going to sit round and wait for capitalism to solve the "unemployment problem" by means of a world war then it has got to be done.

Terry Liddle,  
Secretary,  
GAGOU.

reply :

Fallen into a trap ? Admittedly I was looking into the autonomous distance for some of the time but I was still watching the ground in front of me. More to the point, was the conference really watching where it was going.

The tone of the report was not meant to be pessimistic, rather critical. (Just as I am of accusations of factual inaccuracies in an article which contains no 'facts'). It is important to point out that the conference failed to discuss local experiences to the full potential or to formulate action based on tactics and strategy (however tentative) and instead resorted to inaction based on sloganising. OK, so the action might come later, I hope it does, but the tendency as I saw it at the conference and first coordinating meeting was to get bogged down in constitutions, aims, objectives, procedure, getting T. U & Labour Party support etc. The "Some Thoughts on Autonomy" paper presented at the conference could have provided stimulus for individuals to argue points while at the same time discussing action. But that was not to be and at subsequent meetings the idea seems to have been lost (or conveniently forgotten).

There is a clear distinction between the approach and strategy to unemployment, how the unemployed should percieve themselves i.e. not as competing with the employed for jobs, taken in the "Some Thoughts..." article and T. L's attitude of an

unemployed movement "with a potential membership of over 3 million" which in itself excludes all non-waged non registered individuals. This is simply a perpetuation of traditional notions of "the unemployed", not very much different from the 'right to work' that he criticises. Accusations of sectarianism ? Or an attempt to make differences and attitudes clear ? And why is it an either/or question : either autonomy or sectarianism ?

The point regarding women was not that some of them argued against organising seperately but that the debate was dominated by men saying what should be done. This observation is hardly sectarian. As to relations between unemployment groups and Trade Unions, it seems that the reason for joining, or joining with, Trade Unions is for the 'effect' of solidarity rather than effectiveness. While local Trades Councils or union branches can be helpful they are not going to facilitate autonomous organising. This is not to write off trade unionists, but the way to link with them is not by affiliation but by taking action.

L. W. G. GRACE.

## MEDICAL CORNER.

Dear Dr. Hypocrisy,

My boyfriend just got over a "dose" of Trotskyism. He says he is "safe" to begin relations again, but I'm worried. What do you think?

Livonia Libertarian

Dear L. L.

*I get lots of letters like this and it never ceases to amaze me how ignorant many people are of the dangers of social diseases.*

*Unlike Stalinism, where no recovery is expected anyway, the particular danger of Trotskyism is that very often the initial symptoms (slavish devotion to the theories of corpses, messianic delusions, etc.) will disappear spontaneously, leading its victims to believe they've suffered only a brief, mild infection.*

*With the separation (usually in disgust) from the Trotskyist organization which normally marks the culmination of the disease's primary stage, it's not at all rare to hear the victims assert, as your boyfriend has done, that they're completely cured and that there's no sign of the infection left in their systems. The ugly truth, though, is that the bacteria has only entered the dormant secondary stage during which it will lie inert for periods of up to several years, causing no apparent symptomatic disruptions.*

*But when the tertiary stage rolls around, look out. For reasons which are not yet completely understood, at some point the bacteria will become reactivated and begin to attack the central nervous system. In short order, victims will begin displaying all the symptoms of classical degenerative brain disease, reduced to literal babbling idiots, they'll be found asserting the need for everything from mass vanguards without the vanguard party to non-authoritarian organizations. And at this point the decline is irreversible - once it enters your bloodstream it's all over, you might as well kiss your mushy brainbox goodbye.*

*One final note: How insane the victim becomes depends largely on how virulent a strain it is. If it's a mild, ineffectual variety, like the SWP, some limited recovery is possible, but if you're infected with one of the newer strains like the Spartacist League-- it's drool city for you.*



(New Readers Start Here : Two issues ago we published an article on Poland by E. D. In the last issue we printed a letter by A. M criticising a reference to Spain in E. D's article, and also a reply to A. M's letter by C. O. Jones. Below we publish A. M's response to C. O. Jones and C. O. Jones response to A. M's response to etc. etc.)

The long effusion by "C. O. Jones" (whether meant seriously or not - "cojones" (= balls, in spanish), tee-hee) purports to answer my complaint that an article about Poland contains an irrelevant and false aside on Spain. I don't want to be side-tracked on to Poland, nor on any discussion the LWG may have had on Assemblyism. I quite understand that it is possible to argue theoretically that a sort of libertarian maoism might in hypothetical circumstances exist, with mass meetings deciding policy yet conceivably, or not, managing to avoid repression of individuals and minorities. Whether or not it can exist practically is not a question I dealt with : what I said was that the pretence that it existed in an unknown revolution, that rejected trade unions and by-the-by industrial unionism, and that it all came about after Franco's death, is false.

The scenario is being built up out of disjointed bits and pieces. According to the aside, tossing off as a fact the science-fiction in "Wildcat Spain Encounters Democracy" and elsewhere, "assemblies" sprang up in Spain "spontaneously" (that lovely word, that enables one to have one's cake and eat it, be inactive yet "potentially" active, and always have a cop-out for the police). This derives from the Militant Tendency here which originally said it was representing the UGT of Spain (Socialist T. U) and collected funds in its name - and then, when the UGT got round to reconstructing spoke of "asambleas" which included small businessmen and housewives who joined in the factory "assemblies". But where did this happen outside Dreamland ? In the original comment the "asambleas" excluded all unions - including those which had not yet been formed ! - and it went out of its way to say "including the CNT" which has to this day opposed the whole electoral process which is unknown both to the original writer and to "cojones".

It is not my "devotion" to the CNT which makes me reject a scenario of something that simply didn't happen. For the record, I have been in the opposition to the line of the official CNT for some 30/40 years. The rebuilding of the CNT as it was before 1936 is another matter again. But it is simply that something is being said happened that did not, and to some extent could not, have happened historically.

Under Franco the assemblies of workers in industry (that is to say, the meetings ; though one could under Franco, it is true, glorify them with the name "assemblies") were on the corporate system. Unions were abolished. Each workplace elected its committees. These were occasionally addressed by the "educated vanguard" of the Falange or JONS to put them on the right lines. They met with the employers' representatives to decide policy.

After Franco there was a strong demand to rebuild the unions. "Cojones" wants to say that they were rejected utterly but this simply wasn't so. The C. P. had already re-built its Comisiones Obreras within the fascist unions ; it wanted the fascist unions to continue as it would have captured them lock, stock and barrel. Many in the TUC wanted this but the UGT protested through its international socialist contacts. Furthermore when British and American T. U delegates went to Spain, dozens of unions had been formed reflecting many political tendencies. They had, therefore, to accept and to recommend that unions be allowed to reconstruct. Even the reformists did not wait for legalisation.

The new system is therefore fascism-modified. Each workplace elects its committee (that is to say, it elects them from political-parties wearing their union hats). These committees have signed the Pact of Moncloa to say they agree with the "wage freeze" and "social contract". They are addressed by their own politicians. They meet with employers representatives.

The CNT has opposed elections and representation on the committees. (It is one of the insults flung at each other by the schism in the CNT that the "others" are "preparing" to do so, but at all events it hasn't happened yet).

It may be argued by some people in the LWG that they disagree with the whole conception of unionism. If they do, however, what do they do ? In G. B. ? Contract out like Plymouth Brethren ? In Spain ? Act as non-unionists ? This would mean they were represented on the committees which allow for this (but can't allow for unionists who refuse to be represented because they have a base themselves). What do they do while waiting for "mass assemblies" ? Join reformist unions when there is a choice not to ?

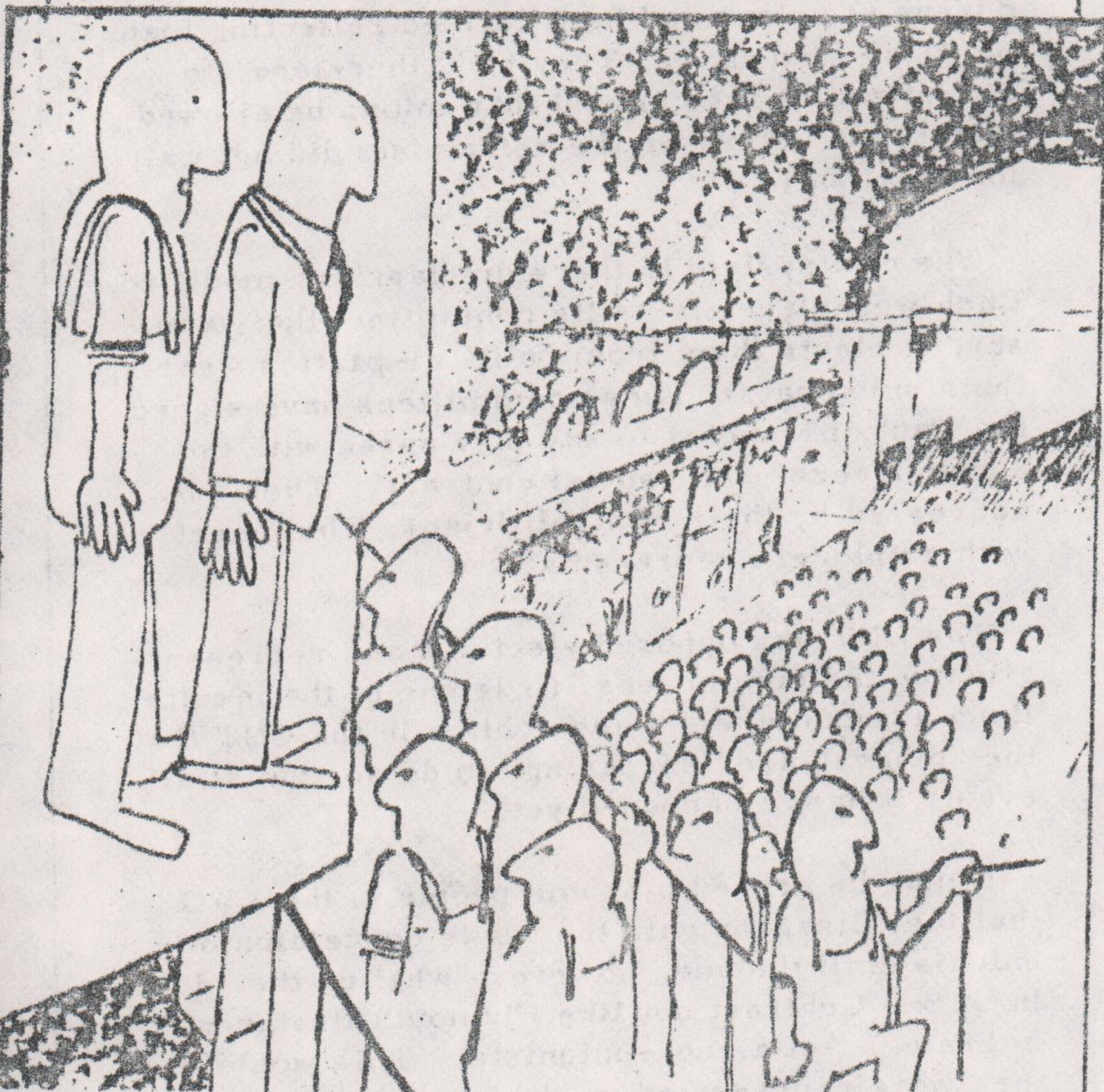
The story that whole masses of factories rose up "spontaneously" and rejected trade unionism altogether forming mass assemblies just didn't happen. On the contrary ; disillusion has now set in with the Spanish trade unions, the number of those who don't vote in union elections swamping those who do (I'm not so naive as to count this as a total victory for the CNT ; but it totally contradicts the scenario presented for us in the Bulletin). People now feel the situation is no different from Franco's unionism. When Franco died, however, there was almost total euphoria.

When reading stories from Spain and trying to interpret them one must not jump to facile ideas. e. g. that in rejecting "workers' committees" anarcho-syndicalists are rejecting the idea of "workers' committees" as expressed by say the German council communists. What they are rejecting are the representative committees inherited from Franco here described. In many posters and leaflets one reads : THE COMMITTEES ARE USELESS. ONE NEEDS A UNION. That (in G. B. ) would be a reactionary policy : on the contrary, the unions here are useless. one needs workers committees ! It does not follow that one



experience is necessarily valid in other circumstances. Nor has it any bearings on what discussions the LWG may have had about what it chooses to call "assemblyism". However let us stamp out at the beginning any new fantasy scenario, such as that rigged up by the trots over their "participation" in the events of 1936, or at the death of Franco (even they don't claim to have been active in between).

Albert Meltzer.



".....Look, sir, we're doing our best on the Works Committee, but they keep saying that they're all delegates."

C. O. Jones replies :

A. M correctly chides me for the length of my last effusion. So as briefly as possible...

1) A. M rightly objects that I didn't directly deal with his original complaint. Let me do so now. I agree entirely that no unknown maoist anti-union revolution took place in Spain - nor was it my purpose to defend this reading of ED's "aside". A. M's account of the corporatist works committees is quite correct. I wasn't in fact unaware of them. I was dealing with something else : the forms of self-organisation adopted during the 1976-7 strike wave in Spain. I certainly didn't "want to say" the unions were rejected utterly - on the contrary it was on the basis of the workers militant struggles that the non-C. P unions were able to establish themselves, aided by the foreign and leftist assistance A. M refers to. The strikes were anti-union only in the sense that they were held against union wishes, displayed a remarkable degree of self-activity and direction, and thus challenged the union's way of 'struggle'. This didn't stop the unions being the only beneficiary of the 'democratised' form of assembly, the corporatist works committees, exactly as occurred in Italy after the 'autonomous' struggles of the hot autumn

of 1969, or as appears to be happening at the moment to some extent in Poland. Thus ED's parallel between Spain then and Poland now wasn't "irrelevant" even if his account of events in Spain was greatly distorted.

2) A. M (not for the first time) accuses us of being unable to distinguish between 'works committees' and 'workers councils', and of being deceived by Trotskyist propaganda. Taking these accusations in order -

We're quite capable of distinguishing between them. Indeed I feel the accusation is more than a little unjust given the verbal labyrinth A. M presents us with. of workers committees that aren't workers committees, unions (trade) that aren't unions (anarcho-syndicalist) and assemblies which don't exist and in any case are fascist. To be more serious, the distinction he draws between corporatist works committees and "workers committees" "as expressed by say the German council communists.", isn't very helpful given that within the German councillists (excluding for arguments sake the social democrats, moscow line bolsheviks and anarcho-syndicalists who were also around at the time) one faction saw the councils as the expression of workers self-management, while another saw them as the building blocks of a Council-State Socialism on what they imagined were Russian lines, and a majority saw them as some variable permutation of the two. In reality, by 1920 most of the workers councils had become legalised corporatist "workers parliaments", advancing the workers interests within the existing managerial structures. The other 'revolutionary' factory councils committed to direct proletarian democracy and mass insurrection, in the spartacist tradition, were crushed or reduced to a rump of militants. In practise wherever councils have appeared - Russia or Italy, Spain or Hungary - they have contained contradictory aspects, one of which has prevailed once the initial demands have been won, or the momentum of struggle has flagged, or the movement been checked. They've ultimately collapsed into reformism, or else have been smashed. While capitalism survives no other choice exists. The question of how revolutionaries organise outside periods of intense class struggle is a different one - it can't be reduced to the difference between workers committees and workers councils. Except in such periods of struggle 'revolutionary' forms of organisation have no practical basis in the needs of 'everyday' resistance and subversion. That doesn't mean workers musn't organise to defend themselves in a 'reformist' way - on the contrary. For revolutionaries however the priority must always be forms of organisation that won't hinder a future revolution by becoming a layer of the state within the working class, in the way trade unionism is today. As an article in Black Flag put it "Not only are the unions not so powerful as claimed - except in their utility value to the state and large employers - it is even doubtful whether in the true meaning of the term, the trade union movement exists at all except in



name." But this is not just because large industry and the State have incorporated trades unions, it also reflects the changes in the capitalist organisation of work and life itself. In the factories the movement of capitalism from merely controlling the purse strings, to controlling the work process down to the finest detail. And simultaneously the movement of capitalism out of the factories into every aspect of life - what's sometimes described as the movement from formal to real domination by capital. Those changes have undermined the basis on which both syndicalism and the 'workers control' sort of councillism organised 'within' capitalism, which rested on the degree of control workers retained over their work (the other side of which was a commitment to their own skills as workers).

As for trot. influence - well, personally I've never read anything by the Militant tendency, which perhaps explains my ignorance of their pernicious hold on me. Mea culpa, I did once buy a pamphlet on Spain by the Libertarian Communist Group (sic.). However since I don't think I've raped history, blaming pornography is beside the point. My statements about Spain didn't come from trot, sources. They came from the (libertarian councillist) Root and Branch article (based in its turn on Spanish accounts, most importantly a book by journalists 'apparently close to the USO' - an ex-catholic 'independent' socialist/self-managementist union not unlike the CFDT in France which Castoriadis ("Paul Cardan") the Solidarity (UK) guru belongs to). This account I checked, through conversations with a french-speaking comrade about Henri Simon and Cajo Brendel's book on this period in Spain - again written from a libertarian councillist perspective. A. M.'s by all means entitled to damn their politics - he might at least distinguish them.

3) Having dealt with the H. M. V of my thought brings us to the historical record. I'm satisfied the events described in the chunk of Root and Branch we reprinted last issue took place as reported. We're not talking about either a revolution nor a general strike, but a strike wave (in the sense of, if not like, the winter of discontent in this country). A wave of strikes across a number of workplaces and industries which spark one another into being something more than just a lot of 'trades disputes' happening at the same time. I don't pretend that any massive permanent material gains were made (rather the contrary), and the lasting organisational "gains" - the unions and corporatised (in every sense in-corporated) 'assemblies' - have as A. M. points out, proved a salutary and disillusioning lesson. (In talking of Spanish unions I'm happy to distinguish the CNT from the rest. Even so, A. M. surely isn't suggesting that the 'schism within it' (as he rather blandly describes it) has been caused by jubilation at being proved right about 'works committees'?) What few wage gains were made, were swiftly wiped out. Why the fuss then? Isn't it just another lot of strikes? The fact is that setting aside the political

implications of the strikes within the overall context of Spanish 'democratisation', the strikes displayed a notable level of self-organisation and direction (unlike the winter of discontent in most cases, apart from the lorry drivers whose example sparked it off). This self-organisation and direction, expressed in the General Assemblies and anti-union strike committees set up and largely controlled by the workers themselves was the reason I wrote at all. That behind the abstract idealisation and equally abstract denunciation of Assemblies, lay a real situation of some interest. Equally while I've no wish to advocate an 'assemblyism' any more than councillism or syndicalism, I think that the concept of 'assembly', as applied to that sort of self organisation of struggle, that has been developed esp. in Italy, France and Spain, is an interesting and useful concept - though the phenomena it describes is hardly new. It may be that in calling for "workers committees" in this country A. M. is agreeing with me - but since he isn't more specific about what he means it's impossible to tell. The fact that every new term coined to describe forms of organisation that are revolutionary or have revolutionary implications is promptly stood on its head by leftists and liberals (e.g. - communism, anarchism, self-management, syndicalism, workers control, workers councils, etc. etc.) and applied to revamped versions of the same old wage-slavery, is no reason to adopt the 'we know what we mean' attitude of some syndicalist groups.

This is illustrated by A. M.'s own 'asides' about LWC attitudes to unions. These raise so many problems - about what he means for a start - that a proper reply is impossible. The real question about unions is why A. M. should persist in describing what he will be the first to insist, are two quite different things, by the word union. How can this be anything but confusing? The same thing can be seen in the Black Flag article I quoted earlier: "When one looks at what a real union is (alas, was) one realises the gap between that and what we have." (B. Flag Feb. 1977) Repressing the only partly facetious question why, if real unions were so great, we finished up where we are today, what is the sense in this sort of usage? Workers find themselves messed about by unions that are only too real. To talk of 'real' unions ignores the fact that the concept of union hasn't just been debased by the activities of the bureaucracies, but also by all the 'loyal' oppositions - stalinist, socialist, trotskyist - who all have their own 'real' unionisms. If what we want to see doesn't exist and has no relation to what does why not make clear we're talking about something different. Is it really keeping faith with the revolutionary traditions of the working class to do otherwise?

To reply as best as possible to A. M.'s asides - then: Anti-unionism isn't the same as non-unionism of a moral sort (as practised by the Plymouth Brethren), any more than anti-parliamentarianism is the same as non-parliamentarianism (as advocated by most anarchists). A. M. doesn't call for revolutionary unionism in

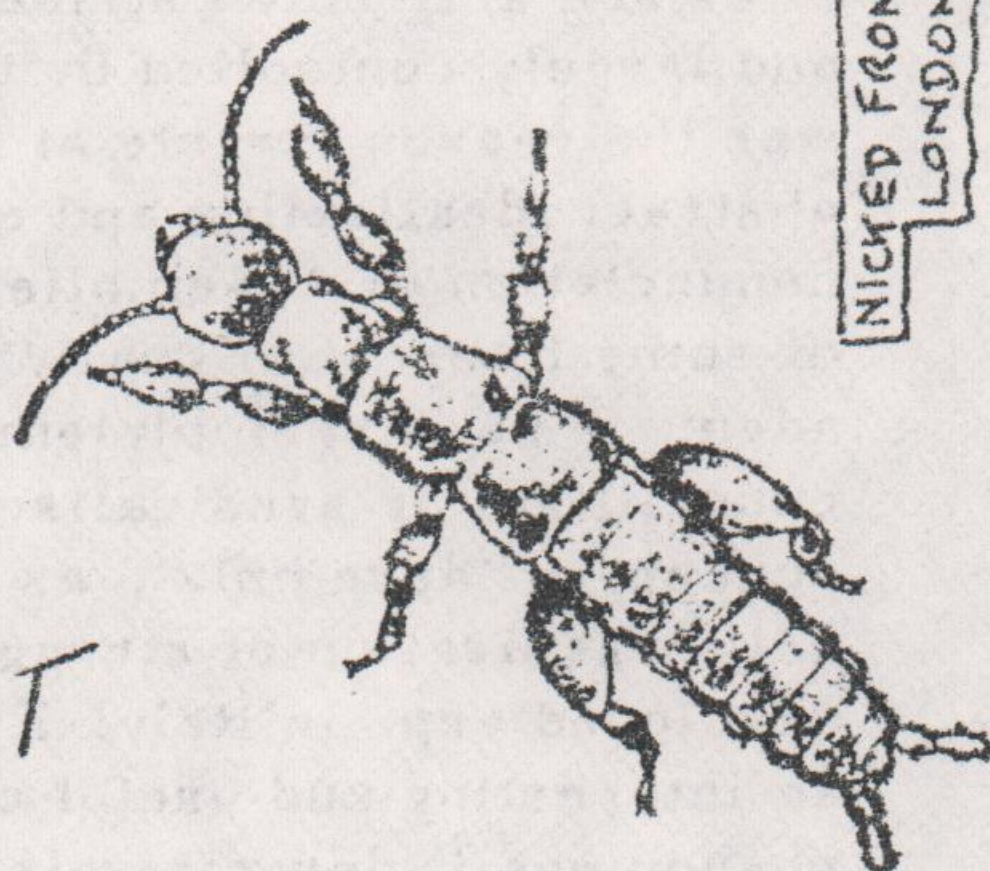


# NATURE NOTES: UNION BUREAUCRATS.

## Web-spinners ▶

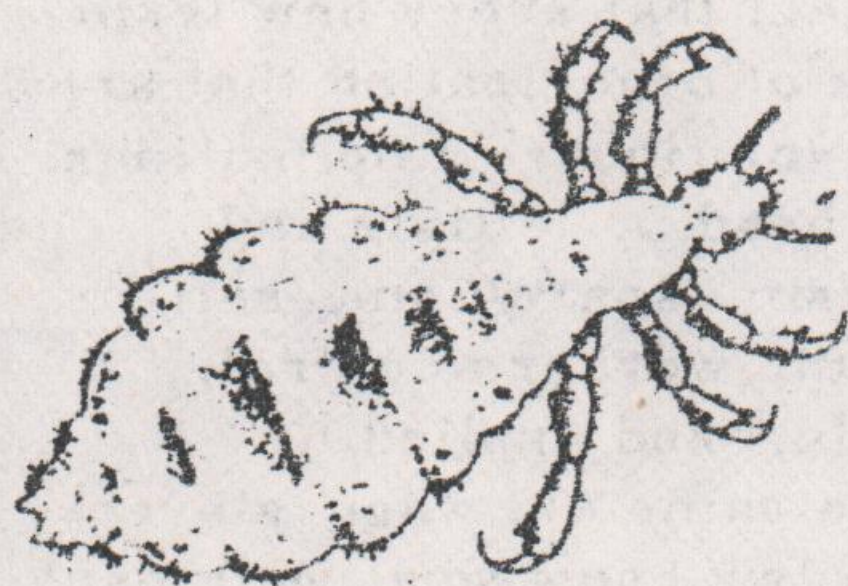
Live in webs under stones and bark, feeding on waste matter. No wings.

## a) LEFT-WING BUREAUCRAT



NICKED FROM SOUTH LONDON STRESS

## b) RIGHT-WING BUREAUCRAT



### ◀ Sucking Lice

These tiny insects live by sucking blood. Different species live on different animals including people. Average length is 2 mm.

this country but 'workers committees'. Presumably this isn't merely the call to form organisations instead of for organised struggle it seems - what then is involved? What do people do while waiting for mass assemblies, A. M. asks. Presumably not just rhetorically but in order to provoke - since if I was clear about anything (and this is one of the few things the LWG agree about) it was in attacking the idea of mass assemblies, as beloved of aspiring revolutionary vanguards. A. M. makes a valid point in this context in speaking of "a libertarian maoism". I've certainly no illusions about the problems of group decision making and democracy and I've no wish to gloss over them with some magical organisational formula (and that includes 'revolutionary unionism' and 'workers committees'). But here again A. M.'s point doesn't really address what I was talking about. "Maoist" forms of organisation refer to organs of self-management during and after a revolution - (the rank and file institutions of a particularly nasty sort of State Capitalist revolution in reality.) By contrast I was talking about workers organisation during periods of intense class struggle within capitalism.

On organisation I agree with Joe Jacobs "To think we can establish, even in general terms, a set of objectives/principles which will be a basis for a real "revolutionary organisation" is an illusion. We can and do combine for the realisation of specific immediate projects, and we are obliged to do so. We can and do have ideas/visions concerning the long-term future; these change

according to the results of current and resulting actions and so on. (...) It follows that organisations cannot be established and frozen for very long. They change split or liquidate. As we try to create effective organisation, we wonder why "organisation" is always on the agenda. .... "

As for "what do(people) do" - they struggle, immediately to resist the effects of capitalism and the hierarchical structural forms it adopts. Revolutionaries also look ahead to revolution. Resistance means fighting the daily "reformist" class struggle. Effective resistance today means autonomous direct action. People acting directly for themselves and autonomously of the 'official channels'. In other words with regard to their own needs not capitals. Revolutionaries play their full part in this, but equally look to the possibility of transforming or superceeding mere resistance, creating the conditions for a revolution that seizes the means of production in order to create a better world. That sounds abstract and "theoretical" but I've no intention of apologising. Until class struggle breaks from the merely economic and becomes more clearly autonomous, we can do little but theorise and resist. What happens after that will be decided not by revolutionaries with their schemes of organisation and planned transitions (like the old nonsense of the General Strike) but by the actions of the working class as a whole.

Phew! Well, that wasn't very brief, but I hope it's gone some way towards meeting (or should I say asambleas) A. M.'s criticisms. I'd be genuinely interested to know what A. M. means by saying here in Britain "one needs workers committees". If its any inducement to him to explain I promise not to reply! If that isn't generous then my name isn't

C. O. Jones.

The text printed **OVER** is a translation of a leaflet recieved from the French group Pour une Intervention Communiste (For a Communist Intervention). We recieved with it the following letter:

Dear Comrades,

6/4/81

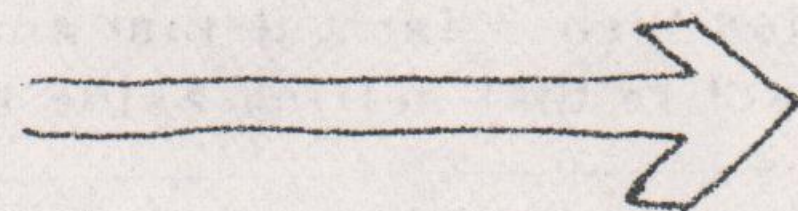
Because of the Poland situation which is exceptional on all points of view (the duration and dynamic of the polish movement, the numbers of workers involved) the PIC suggests:

(Paragraph relating to April conference on proletarian autonomy deleted.) ...

2. to exchange short texts, contributions to the analysis of the Poland movement aiming at the elaboration of a joint leaflet, in order to intervene jointly as widely as possible (at an international scale).

We're sending our contribution in the form of a leaflet dated 22/3/81

Hoping to read you soon.





# POLAND : WHAT SPRING ?

"We want the government to be strong and we must not hinder it from working. It takes time to change the decor and to clear out the old furniture (...). Now it is up to us to work, for we want to live better and that depends on us".

Extract from Lech Walesa's discourse to the strikers of Radom.

The festival is not over The spectacular phase of the summer of '80 has been succeeded by an apparant, but by all accounts chaotic, return to calm. An impression accentuated by the polarisation of the mass media on the spokes put in Solidarity's wheel to hold up its legalisation, and on Walesa's interventions.

But the tension which has marked the movement has not so much diminished, it has simply taken a more underground character. The resistance to normalisation is undeniable and this in spite of the diverse attacks by the state, the constant and pressing appeals to moderation by the leaders of Solidarity and the menace of Russian intervention.

The festival is not over. Just at present the workers have not retreated an inch in their determination. The numerous strikes which have erupted during the winter up to the recent confrontation between the members of Solidarity and the militia are there to prove it.

SOLIDARITY : an instrument of struggle or a new prison ? Born in a context of struggle led by thousands of workers, the new "independent" union has benefited from a particularly favourable impression on its launching. Added to this is the popularity of Walesa and the fact that a good number of the leaders were exposed to the repression of the state hierarchy (even if some are former apparatchiks, victims of faction struggles and not entirely virgins either). This is a question of a reality which is all too often neglected by all those who deny the revolutionary potentialities and the dynamic of the polish movement, only wanting to see in it an aspiration to win the "liberties" of our good western democracies.

Look at the bottom of the wall to see its builder. From the start, Solidarity has had to assume the two roles of all unions :

vis a vis the workers : to become recognised as their privileged spokesperson.

vis a vis the authorities : to be "representative", that is to say to prove that it is capable of controlling the base, nay, of "bringing it to heel".

One can realise from this that the task of the new bureaucrats is not easy, but they have no choice considering the urgency of the situation. Thus they now run from strikes to threat of strikes : "... we travel around, we calm things down, we explain..." that it is unnecessary to strike, or "... we asked them to show us the demands of the strike, and we corrected them..." ! This was also the case these last weeks when Walesa, interrupting his travels to see the Pope or Kania, had to go in person to smouldering Radom, and when he had to cancel his trip to France to try to restore social peace.

In fact, since the creation of Solidarity, the declarations of its leaders have not ceased in wishing for a return to calm, a strong government, and an arrest of "all actions which could aggravate the situation in Poland" ; and recently in affirming that although "this is not the task of a union" Solidarity could participate in a new government, if the one in power at present did not manage to confront the problems at hand. Little by little, last summers talk has given way to the new "realism". The cosmetics have worn off : Walesa and Solidarity now appear for what they are : defenders of a renovated State Capitalism, with an "acceptable face".

The essential task of Solidarity - to control the movement - appears more and more difficult. The opposition groups to Walesa inside the hierarchy itself and at the base are expressing themselves in increasing numbers, even if they remain minorities.

Solidarity is not as yet a structured union, but already a new bureacracy trying to stifle a mass movement which at present continues to support it. But for how long ?

Polish Capital in an impasse. More than six months after the Gdansk accords concluded in Sept. 1980, it is evident that the conflict is not on course to resolving itself. Far from it ! The fraction of the bureaucracy presently in power is at once

- strangled by a catastrophic economic situation which neither the aid of the western states (notably by the report of the repayment of loans and the concession of new loans) nor that of the muscovite tsars has been able to rub out, and which the strikes only aggravate...

- constrained by the exigencies of the Russian "big brother" and the pressure of the "hardliners" of the party ;

- confronted by the intransigence of the workers and by the demands of the peasants and students.

The Polish state thus could not, even if it wanted to, respond to the demands of the working class.

Faced with these insoluble problems, only one course has succeeded up to now : to play for time, postponing payment deadlines, sacrificing certain more compromised apparatchiks.... !

It is in this light that one must interpret the three months truce called for by the new head of government to put into operation a "plan for economic recovery"... and allow time for Solidarity (the govts. new partner since the official unions are now mere shadows) to build itself up and to convince the proletariat to tighten its belt once again, to prove its good will indispensable to put the polish economy "back on its feet".

The illusory "gains" of Gdansk are thus not about to materialise. On the contrary, for we are witnessing their being put in question again and being slowly nibbled away - for example in the case of the "free Saturdays".

The perspectives of the workers movement in Poland. In examining Poland one thing is obvious from the start : the workers movement, born last July, lives on ! Besides, would Brezhnev need to thump the table if the movement



no longer existed ? With all due deference to the sceptics and contemplatives.

In spite of its limits and its illusions (the weight of nationalism, the influence of the church replaced today by that of the new unions) its dynamic persists. Notably, it is demonstrated by the unity against statist repression and the as yet fragmentary questioning of the new trade union order even before this order is fully implanted.

These are essential points on the road to workers autonomy. For Polands workers as elsewhere, the day of reckoning approaches and the alternative boils down to giving way to the requirements of national capital or confronting directly the state and its supporters.

How to contribute to the struggle begun by the Polish workers. - By criticising the illusions and limits of the movement but also and above all by emphasising its dynamic and positive aspects

- By showing that at the moment of capital's world crisis, the struggle no longer proceeds by the conquest of "liberties" which only mask exploitations, and that those who, in Poland as in France (unions, principally the CFDT) put forward these well-worn themes, only lock the proletariat in an impasse.

AGAINST CAPITAL, STATIST OR LIBERAL
AGAINST THE UNIONS, GUARDIANS OF SOCIAL ORDER
FOR THE ABOLITION OF WAGE LABOUR AND THE MARKET ECONOMY
FOR WORKERS AUTONOMY

Pour une Intervention Communiste
(Jeune Taupe) 22 March 1981

An LWG members response to the PIC letter.

With regard to your suggestion 2. : -

- the idea of a joint leaflet seems unsuitable on a practical level. We produce leaflets aimed at specific targets (trade union marches etc.) on specific occasions (the recent Peoples March for Jobs for example) and it seems pointless to have leaflets "in store" because they have the questionable extra merit of being signed by groups with a similar perspective. The leaflet produced jointly by PIC and (an)other group(s) "From Mao to Hua Kuo Feng : 30 years of capitalist exploitation in China " was probably valid in October 1979 when Hua visited France, but to what end is it still being handed out ? (Typists note : a copy arrives with every new issue of Jeune Taupe the PIC's journal). Added to which there are problems of translation, the amount of correspondence that would be necessary etc.

- as to the value of the exercise, I do not see the advantage of identical leaflets for the sake of being able to affix a long list of signatures. Our positions may be fundamentally similar (eg. on Poland, see my article in LWG bulletin no. 9), but having both our signatures on a joint leaflet does not represent a "joint intervention on an international scale". The idea that joint declarations represent, no matter how grandly phrased, a material intervention harks back to the inflated pronouncements of the Second International (and we all know now how

vacuous they turned out to be !). If we conceive the proletariat as being indivisible by national boundries, an effective proletarian response in one country is (at least the beginning of) an effective response internationally. The question which faces revolutionaries is how to hasten that response. Exchanges of experiences, ideas on tactics etc. may contribute to our understanding of the situation confronting us, but I cannot see that joint leaflets are any more than an empty gesture to solidarity

E. D.

COMPETITION ANSWERS
Its from Nationalism Today, the theoretical journal of the National Front. (The article's by Steve Brady of the League of St. George)
The missing alternative is 'radical racial nationalism'.

Publications Of Interest.

Issue 4. of SOUTH LONDON STRESS, the paper of Lambeth NALGO dissidents, has been out a while now - still excellent. (Contains Brixton Account). 15p plus post. (not 35p as in our last issue) from 121 Bookshop, 121 Railton Rd. SW 9. (Who would also value your patronage). Also available through A. Dist. A. Distribution. c/o Freedom 84b Whitechapel High St. E. 1.
Issue 5. of Angry, paper of the Hull Anarchist Group (and a superior local @ product) now available from 5 De Grey St. Beverley Rd. Hull. Free but donations welcome.
Work and Pay is a new paper from San Fransisco. Two issues so far - no. 2 contains articles on Subversion at work, the revolt against money, shoplifting, the taming of feminism and the selling of punk. Shows Promise. Free (but donations probably welcome). Contact c/o Haight Ashbury Switchboard, 1338 Haight St. San Fransisco, CA. 94117, U. S. A.
Also from San Fransisco The Alarm, this is the bulletin of the U. S section of the F. O. R., a left communist group based in France and Spain. Back in the '40's were the extreme left wing of the 4th international. Today call for autonomous workers struggle and the establishment of 'revolutionary factory committees'. Also see need for party - but this not reflected in their paper. Reccomended to collectors of left communist esoterica but of much wider interest. The Alarm is 50 cents plus post from Box 26481, Custom House, SF CA, 94216, U. S. A.
For collectors of British Left Communist Esoterica News of War and Revolution. (5p) from some London left bookshops or 70 High St. Leicester (plus post). They're a split from the I. C. C. and seem to have junked all the boring 'theoretical' aspects to concentrate on basic communist propaganda. Worth 5p.
Anarchy 32 out shortly. (4op) Strong issue. Ireland, kids, Sex - The Debate. Excellent Back Cover.



LONDON AND SOUTH EAST FEDERATION OF  
UNEMPLOYED CLAIMANTS AND UNWAGED GROUPS

CONSTITUTION

1. The name of the organisation shall be the London and South East Federation of Unemployed, Claimants and Unwaged groups.
2. Membership of the federation shall be open to all such groups in the London and South East area which agree with the aims and objectives of the federation.
3. A group shall normally consist of at least 10 people, although it is appreciated that numbers will fluctuate, and of which the controlling majority consists of unemployed, claimants and unwaged.
4. Each active unemployed branch of a trades union, which meets the criteria in clause 3 shall be eligible for membership of the federation.
5. There shall be a co-ordinating committee which shall meet at least monthly.
6. Each member group shall send a delegate to each co-ordinating committee meeting.
7. The co-ordinating committee may invite relevant trades' union or other representatives to any committee meeting but without the power to vote.
8. New active groups may be admitted to the federation on a provisional basis by the co-ordinating committee subject to ratification by the next conference.
9. A conference of member groups shall be held not less than six months, but the co-ordinating committee may call conference together more frequently if necessary.
10. The co-ordinating committee shall be empowered to seek finances for its work from member groups and from outside sources.
11. Voting at conference shall be on the basis of one vote per group present.
12. All positions and appointments shall be honorary.
13. The co-ordinating committee shall appoint a treasurer and secretary to serve the federation until the next conference.

(CONT. NEXT COLUMN)

14. The treasurer shall keep proper accounts of the funds of the federation and report in writing to each conference.
15. This constitution may only be altered at conference.

Unemployed Groups (London & S. E.)

Battersea and Wandsworth, 177 Lavender Hill Rd, SW 11.  
Bexley, c/o 30 Maiden Erlegh Ave, Bexley, Kent.  
Canterbury, c/o All St. 's Church, Military Rd, Cantab.  
Central London, Mary Ward Centre, Tavistock Pl, WC 1.  
Croydon, c/o Croydon Trades Council, 3 Helena Close, Wallington, Surrey.  
Greenwich, c/o Plumstead Community Law Centre, 105 Plumstead High St. London SE 18.  
Hackney, c/o Hackney Trades Council, 6 Belleston Rd. E 5.  
Hammersmith, c/o Hamm. & Kensington Trades Council Employment Comm. 17c Lancaster Rd. W 11  
Haringey & Islington, c/o Crouch Hill Recreation Centre, Hill Rise Rd. N 19.  
Islington (LAGOU), c/o 309 Upper St. N 1.  
Lambeth, c/o Vassall Neighborhood Centre, 147 Brixton Rd, SW 9  
Lewisham, 179 Deptford High St. SE 8.  
Milton Keynes Unemployed Workers Union, 27a Ramstall Ave. Careburrow, Milton Keynes.  
Richmond, c/o Richmond Adult College, Parkshot, Richmond, Surrey,  
Southwark Unemployed Peoples Action, 6 Peckham High St. SE 15.  
Tower Hamlets Unemployed Centres Management Comm. c/o 341 Commercial Rd. E 1.  
National Unemployed Workers Union, 504 London Rd. South, Lowestoft Suffolk.  
Nat. Unemployed Workers Assoc. 16 The Payons, East Heath Rd. NW 3.  
Lambeth, 23 Herowtown Rd. SW 9. (diff. grp. to above)  
Harlow, 144 Churchfields Harlow.



COVER

The leaflet on the back<sup>A</sup> was circulated as part of a poster/leaflet by the French groups P. I. C (see pages 26-8 of this bulletin), and the Group Travailleurs pour l'Autonomie Ouvriere (GTAO) - a group mostly of Paris bank workers who stayed together after a strike in 1979, much as the sort of group the leaflet argues for. (For their own account of themselves see International Discussion Bulletin No. 5).

We're reprinting it as a basic statement of what these groups argue for - it is in many ways close to the thinking of the LWG. It's also an illustration of the differences within the "Workers Autonomy" currents on the continent - the approach of this leaflet is very different to the better known Italian "Workers Autonomy" groups.

As far as possible we've gone for meaning rather than a literal translation. (And the refs. to Meriden were to LIP in original)



# WORKERS AUTONOMY

► Is WORKERS AUTONOMY the struggle for higher wages and a shorter working week ?

It's natural to fight, to struggle for a better life. But we don't have to fool ourselves any more that wage rises and shorter hours will enable us to live better. Why ?

Firstly, because even higher wages and shorter hours won't stop us from being exploited. We'll still be forced to sell our labour power to survive. We wouldn't stop being wage slaves - in other words commodities, which are used and then tossed aside when no longer needed. So life would still be dominated by objects, not lived by human beings.

Equally, those people who think that being paid better or working shorter hours is a "solution", don't take into account how increased wages are rapidly eaten away through price increases - that capital snatches back with one hand what it's given with the other.

As we all know, it's possible these days to strike for a month, two months, even longer . . . . and still not win any wage increase. And as for reductions in working hours, they're always accompanied by increases in the intensity and speed of work.

For these reasons we have to go beyond the realm of simple demands, and by generalising and coordinating our struggles, put the problem of destroying the capitalist system on the agenda. This system can only offer us the slow death of waged labour - and with the transformation of economic war into real war, a rapid death on the battlefield.

► Is WORKERS AUTONOMY the struggle for nationalisation and workers control ?

Are workers in nationalised industries less exploited than those in private industry ? No !

Are workers in countries where the state is the boss less exploited than us ? No !

To make the State the boss, by nationalising production, is to struggle for state capitalism - leaving our position as wage slaves unchallenged.

As for Workers Control, it's control by workers of the production of commodities, and therefore self-exploitation through cooperatives. . . . At Meriden, in order to remain in business, they lowered wages, sped the work up, and laid people off. . . . which only goes to show that Workers Control doesn't change anything !

► Is WORKERS AUTONOMY struggling alongside the Unions, Left parties and leftists ?

What do these organisations want and do ? They want to initiate struggles for nationalisation and workers control - in other words for capitalism, and for strengthening the State. It's not even possible for the workers to take over capitalism and run it - but these organisations only want to take over management in place of the Right - nothing will change !

They restrict us to phoney strikes and dead ends, so that workers waste their energies. When they organise strikes they always take care that they control every move, ensuring that strikes remain isolated workplace by workplace in order to demoralise us. So that the only "hope" left us are the elections where we're meant to vote them into office.

► So, what's necessary to achieve WORKERS AUTONOMY ?

It's necessary for us to organise - to organise for ourselves ! That means we must refuse to let the Unions and parties use us and our struggles, the better to trample all over us. To do this we must do what our comrades in Italy and Spain have done :

- set up general assemblies so that the struggle is conducted under the control of the workers themselves, so that delegates are elected and instantly revocable, and that the anti-union strike committees are always under the control of general assemblies of strikers.

- seek solidarity outside the particular factory, office etc. , breaking down the isolation and localism which the Unions keep us cooped up in.

Self-organisation also means :

- all our efforts must aim towards the coordination of workplaces in struggle, breaking out of the traditional limitations - phoney demonstrations, delegations, petitions and negotiations - which only lead us towards resuming work with "order and dignity" as the Unions put it.

- we must unite our struggles, generalising them in full knowledge of the need to destroy the State (the principal defender of capital) and commodity production (which leads to overproduction, underconsumption, massive unemployment and war) ; and to abolish wage labour which chains us in forced drudgery.

Uniting our struggles, and generalising them through self-organisation, is the only way towards the autonomous forms of workers power : Workers Councils.

► But what can be done immediately ?

Outside of those types of organisation which arise during the course of struggles (general assemblies, anti-union strike committees, workers councils) there are other forms of workers organisation. These are groups of workers who ensure that militancy and discussion continue after struggles. Such groups have been seen in Italy and Spain.

As we all get more and more sick of capitalism, workers who agree with this leaflet should :

- \* try to organise activities in the workplace as well as outside ( meetings , information, propaganda, interventions )

- \* get together in the workplace on the basis of radical political positions (rejection of unions, parliament, the left, the right, and for the abolition of wage labour and the State. )

- \* create autonomous and political groups of workers in no way dependent on any outside organisation, and which don't aim to represent the entire proletariat.

It's this sort of permanent activity - the development of both practical and theoretical understanding through the creation, development and coordination of such groups - which allows us during periods of quiet to strengthen the movement towards autonomous workers struggles. Even though such groups are tiny, they act to counter bourgeois influences within the workers (Union branches and party cells)

No God ! No Master !

No Party ! No Union !

WORKERS AUTONOMY

The emancipation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves.