

SOLIDARITY

FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT

NATIONAL GROUP PAPER

No. 5

In this issue!

COWLEY BOVVER GRUNWICK
ILLUMINATUS SEXPOL

15p

AS WE SEE IT

During the past century the living standards of working people have improved. But neither these improved living standards, nor the nationalisation of the means of production, nor the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class have basically

altered the status of the worker as worker. Nor have they given the bulk of kind much freedom outside of production. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work and manipulated in consumption and leisure. Propaganda and

policemen, prisons and schools, traditional values and traditional morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or coerce the many into acceptance of a brutal, degrading and irrational system. The 'Communist' world is not communist and the 'Free' world is not free.

If your goal is Socialism? wreck this train!

AVOID ITS DRIVERS - PAST, ... PRESENT & FUTURE!

Socialism cannot be equated with the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class'. Political power is a fraud if working people do not take over and retain power in production.

The Party's power may grow out of the barrel of a gun. The power of the working class grows out of its management of the economy and of society as a whole.

(To be continued.)

'state
capitalism'

FUELLED FROM THE
'DUSTBINS OF
HISTORY'

WE DRIVE...
YOU PROVIDE
THE STEAM...

WE'LL
MAKE THE
GOING EASY -
AND THERE'LL
BE NO COMING
BACK!

LET OUR
TRAIN TAKE
THE STRAIN?

Finland STATION. RESERVATIONS DEPARTS: 19.17

CAR No.

A. Assorted vanguards

B. Third World Elites

C. V. Lenin's Party (sealed coach)

D. Party of Doctor Marx

E. Assorted Social Democrats, Centrists & Conservatives

F. Ideological Baggage

SHORTS BIJOU NEWSETTES

BACK IN THE USSR

Here is a belated but interesting item of news about resistance to the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

Tartu is a city in Estonia - one of the Baltic states grabbed by Stalin after the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. On December 3rd 1976, the authorities banned a concert at the Agricultural Academy Student Club there because they disliked the political overtones of the music. The students staged a protest demonstration, and when the police tried to break it up, drove them off with bottles and bricks. Gathering reinforcements from the student hostels, the protestors marched into the city centre, shouting slogans like 'Open up the Borders', 'Freedom of Assembly' and 'Live up to the Constitution'. When they passed the KGB headquarters, they raised a cry of 'Out. Out.'.

Finally the pigs succeeded in breaking up the march. Students were beaten and dragged into vans. The majority of those arrested were released before morning....after signing statements. During the following week all student were required to give a written explanation of what they had been doing that night. (This account is based on an article in the Sept/Oct issue of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, a bulletin which contains a lot of valuable info. on events in the state-capitalist countries - written from a trad. left but anti-Stalinist position. It is available from : Bottom Flat, 116 Cazenove Road, London N16).

Velvet Touch!

BULGARIAN ANARCHIST

Christo Kolev is a 66-year old Bulgarian who is spending his retirement in his quiet native village of Balvan. Trouble is, he would rather be in Sofia and other hot-spots spreading the gospel of Revolutionary Anarchism

Kolev was banished to Balvan 3 years ago by the Bulgarian Stalinist regime after making an inflammatory speech at the funeral of a comrade. Since the end of the Second World War, he has spent a total of 11 years in prison and labour camps for anarchist agitation and for heavy involvement in "illegal" strikes and other workers' struggles.

Letters of solidarity to Christo Kolev, Balvan (Velik Trnovo), Bulgaria.

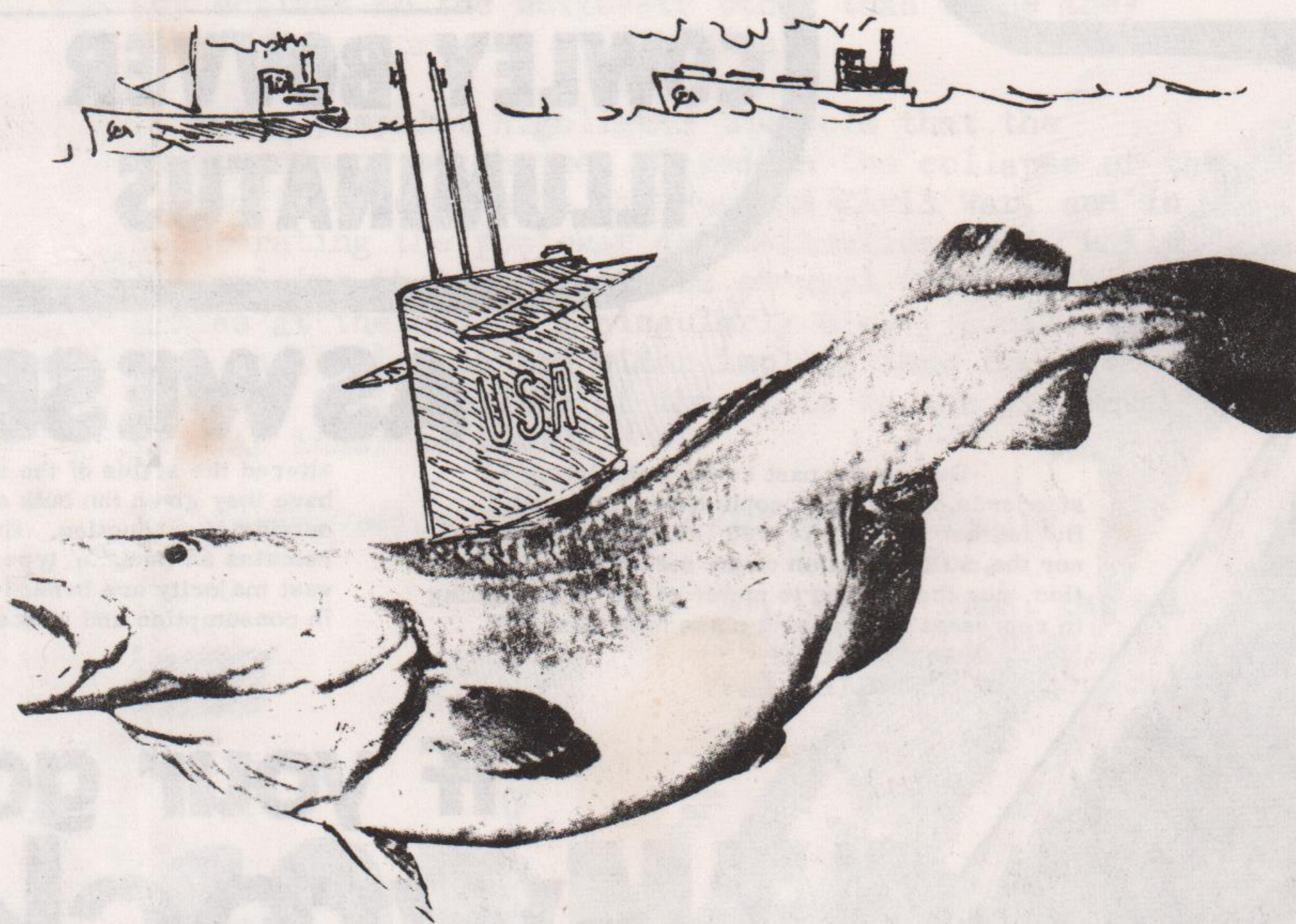
A group of libertarian students were imprisoned in 1969 for distributing a pamphlet attacking the regime. More recently, dissidents have been arrested for distributing copies of the Czechoslovak Charter '77.

On the weekend of September 10th and 11th two pickets were held in London to protest against the maltreatment of Bulgarian libertarians. The picket on Saturday was held outside the offices of the Bulgarian Tourist Board in Regent Street, the one on Sunday outside the Bulgarian Embassy near Gloucester Road.

More info on an international campaign of support for Bulgarian Anarchists from Terry Liddle, 83, Gregory Crescent, London SE9 5RZ.

SEAGULLS IN COLDWAR SHOCK

One of the major weaknesses of nuclear submarines is communications. No matter how advanced they become, they must still raise an antenna to the surface in order to receive messages. Obviously, this increases the chances of detection. Recently a U.S. submarine was patrolling around and under a Russian fishing fleet, supposedly undetected. This sub had an antenna floating on the surface. What the U.S. Captain didn't know was that a flock of seagulls had calmly perched on the floating antenna, being dragged by the submerged sub - revealing the sub's every move to the amused Russian fishermen!



NAFF

The National Association For Freedom is, as we all know, called NAFF for short. Now this abbreviation has a familiar ring. The word 'naff' I distinctly remember being used for describing something that was wet and weedy and boring. But I have now discovered the origins of the word 'naff'. It was a piece of gay slang and was an abbreviation of 'Not a Fuck' as a description of someone. How much more apt it is for the National Association For Freedom: most definitely not a fuck.

BLACK WORKSHOP

A group of young blacks recently squatted a disused barracks at Brasenose Driftway, Oxford. For more than two years youth workers and young blacks have been discussing ways of setting up a craft workshop for unemployed youth. Eventually seeing through the bullshit they'd been covered in, the youths then took action to put this into effect. Broken glass was cleared up, rooms swept out, old refrigerators cleared out and wooden boards put over gaping windows.

But after years of lying empty the city council now claims the old barracks building is to be demolished and are trying to evict the squatters.

The squatters, meanwhile, have other ideas. They're using the place to learn more about black culture and crafts and are demanding that if they are evicted the council gives them alternative premises.

NF

The National Front have claimed that a member of the Thames Valley Police has joined their ranks. Police Officers are totally mystified over the claim. We thought most members of the Thames Valley Police were in the NF.

MAN OF PRINCIPLE

Merlyn Rees, the Home Secretary and well-known toe-rag was questioned recently in parliament over the Agee/Hosenball expulsions. He was asked how many protests he had received over the affair and where they had come from. He announced that he had received somewhere over Seven hundred from trade unions, Labour Party constituencies and political groups. He had however received none 'from the general public'. So evidently he was quite prepared to snap his fingers at the movement he allegedly represents in favour of secret whispers from MI6. We suggest everybody writes to their MP's and raises the question in their union branch.....



IF YOU WANT TO DO SOME TIME -ASK A POLICEMAN

The following story was first published by Longsight News (a Manchester community paper) in June 1975 :-

"An incident has been reported to us concerning a 14-year old boy suspected by the police of breaking a window.

The person whose window had been broken, who is also a friend of the lad's family, saw him being literally dragged past her front door. She called out to the police that he was only 14 but they took no notice but dragged him right past his mother's door, to a police car and took him down to the police station.

At the station he was not only questioned but also beaten about, by a P.C. Kelly. Eventually the case came up in court and he was found not guilty".

The article went on to cite similar examples, and to advise parents that they had a right to be present when police questioned their children.

Months later, a letter was received from the solicitors acting for the Greater Manchester Police, demanding that the paper state that "the P.C. Kelly mentioned in the article is not the P.C. Kelly of Longsight Police Station" (!). The paper refused to retract the story, but offered P.C. Kelly space to put his side of the story. Then in March '76, the solicitors wrote again, threatening a libel action; the paper repeated its offer.

Nothing more was heard of the matter until December '76, when P.C. Kelly served a writ for libel on the author of the original article. Note that throughout the proceedings, the police have not denied that the incident took place. The case is due to be heard this autumn, and Longsight News have asked that as many papers as possible should reprint the original article, and send copies to P.C. Kelly, Longsight

Police Station, Stockport Road, Manchester 13. If you can help in this or any other way, please contact the defence group, c/o 109, Oxford Road, Manchester 1.

BORED GAME

You can now resolve yet another revolution from the comfort of your very own armchair. South Africa : Vestige of Colonialism is a simulation of a possible revolt of that nation's black majority against the white South African government, and of the government's reactions to such a revolt. But will the racist regime be replaced by proletarian self-management or will the Cubans help impose a 'Soviet' solution ? Why not play it on the way to the next demo ? £2.25 from SPI.

PUNK 'N' WORK

It would be good to see a libertarian version of 'Temporary Hoarding' the paper of the Rock Against Racism campaign. The paper is OK if you can ignore the Trad. Left attitudes which seep through. Johnny Rotten's view of the dole is condemned as 'hippy drivell':

"I know it's tough on the dole but it's not that bad. When I was on it, I was getting paid for doing nothing. I thought it was fucking great. Fuck up the system the best way."

Attempts to drum up support for the Right to Work campaign miss the point: listen to the Maniacs 'I don't wanna work' and the Clash's 'Career Opportunities'. The revolt is against shitty work itself: no one wants the 'Right to Work' under capitalism.

One other little point: I wonder how the decision was made to give £68 raised from the Roundhouse R.A.R. gig to the Right to Work campaign 'to help in their fight against the dole'?





BRUM BUSES

Direct action against public transport fare increases is a form of struggle potentially involving massive numbers of people, but in Britain it has yet to take off. Probably the most imaginative and best organised campaign in Britain, Fare Fight, based on the use of 'deferred payment' slips, seems to have fizzled out with little resistance to the latest tube fare increases. Elsewhere, in Glasgow (see Solidarity No.4), Leeds, Sheffield and Liverpool there has been patchy and uncoordinated action by passenger groups and bus workers. Tactics have included spraying slogans on buses, producing spoof posters and bus-workers refusing to collect fares.

**Union acts
to halt
busmen's
rebellion**

**Revolt
at bus
fare
rises**

In the West Midlands, which up until recently has had a relatively cheap and efficient bus service, the Tory council has decided to speed up the former Labour council's policy of wrecking public transport by removing the subsidy to the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive (saving a few pence on the weekly rates bill and adding the same to each bus journey). The left put its energy into collecting a hefty petition of 23,000 signatures which predictably had no effect: the W.M.P.T.E. put the increases into effect less than a week after they were approved by the Traffic Commissioners.

The local libertarian group belatedly put out a leaflet suggesting forms of action that had been tried elsewhere and got a favourable response from people at bus stops and drivers at the depots. But plans to join the ticket issuing machines (most W.M.P.T.E. buses are one person operated) never got beyond the pub in which they were thought up.

Meanwhile a plan by Walsall crews not to collect the increased fares, which at one time looked as if it might spread throughout the West Midlands, was nipped in the bud by full time union chiefs with the usual 'it is not in the best interests of our members'. An effort by some lefts to push through a motion in a South Birmingham Garage was similarly stamped on by Union bosses.

In the event there was a shortlived revolt by passengers refusing to pay the increases on the day they came into effect. Still there's always the next round in a few months.....

CHECKOUT CON

If you read Marvel comics, or use certain other American products, you may have wondered why they carry a bar code, rather like a modern library ticket. In fact, these codes (which uniquely identify the product) are designed for use with automatic checkouts in supermarkets, and the UK grocery industry is now committed to the introduction of similar article numbering.

At the checkout, the codes can be read with a light pencil, which relays the information to a system which in turn automatically adds the current price of the item to your bill. This is supposed to avoid the risk of mis-charging, and can be used to produce a bill with the name of each article against

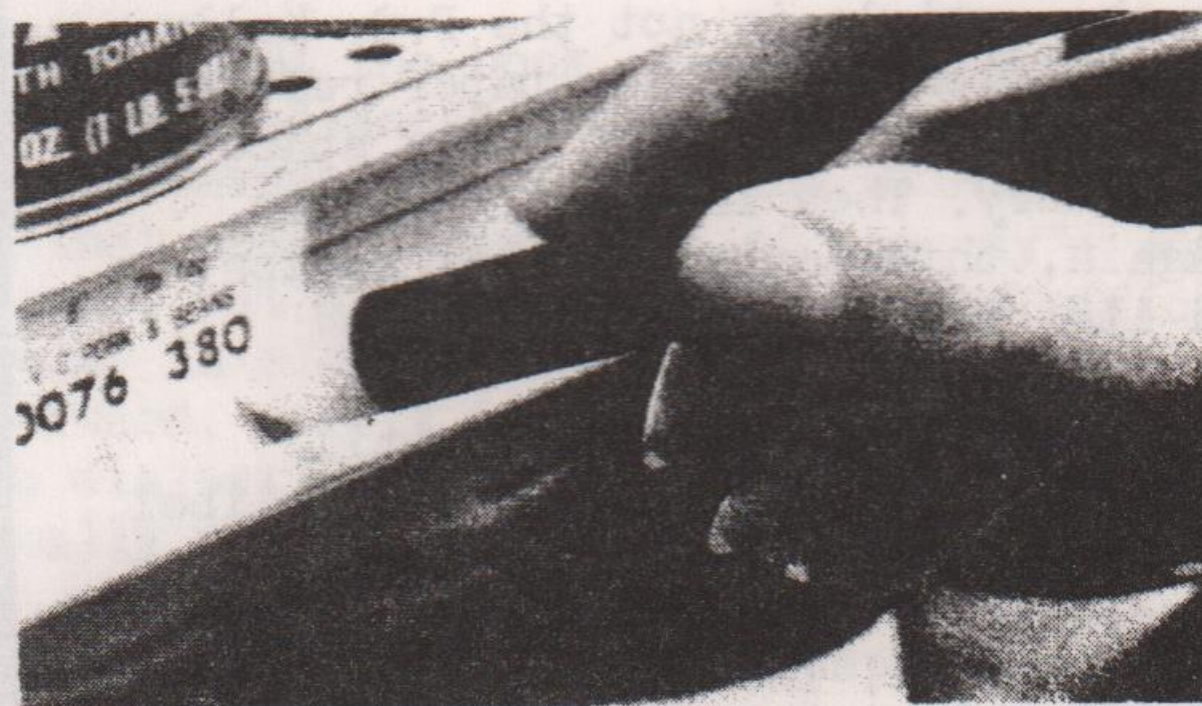


How product codes are read from the product label ...

the price. In addition, the system pools information from the checkouts, handling stock-taking and re-ordering of goods, which should help prevent items becoming out-of-stock.

This obviously helps everyone by monitoring the distribution of goods, and quite clearly the idea has great potential. But of course in the society we live in there has to be a catch. One of these little subtleties becomes immediately apparent from the following statement issued by Wegman's Food Markets (Rochester, N.J.): "Price marking on individual packages has been gradually removed from selected items without any customer dissatisfaction". Since the computer knows the current price of every product, there's no need to mark them; all you may get in future is a price label on the shelf, which may or may not be telling the truth.

Moreover, a feasibility study in the States predicts that the number of checkouts needed may be cut by a third, with staff being 'able' to work for longer stretches without a break. (The results of installing scanning checkouts in over 150 American stores tend to support this view). When you consider in addition the potential replacement of labelling and clerical functions, it adds up to a sizeable loss of jobs. At present there is only one such system in operation in Europe (in Copenhagen), but you can expect to see it in your own High Street within the next couple of years.



... and how they are read from the shelf

EX-NAZI SUICIDE

West German Police are working on the assumption that top industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer committed suicide to discredit the notorious Baader-Meinhof gang.

We are reliably informed that Herr Schleyer planned his suicide weeks in advance, arranging a fake kidnapping, locking himself in the boot of a car and releasing film of himself looking harassed and unshaven.

The telephone used to inform the West German authorities was found in a secret recess in the car boot, together with the suicide weapon. He then shot himself in the back of the head.
Reuters.

P.S. The politics of the Baader-Meinhof group are not those of Solidarity.

GRUNWICK

On Monday 18 October the grunwick show returned to the west end of London. The cast remained much the same but this time there was a change of director. A.P.E.X. had always been unhappy about mass picketing and had firmly opposed all calls to reopen the picket. So it was left to the strikers themselves to organise their own mass picket.

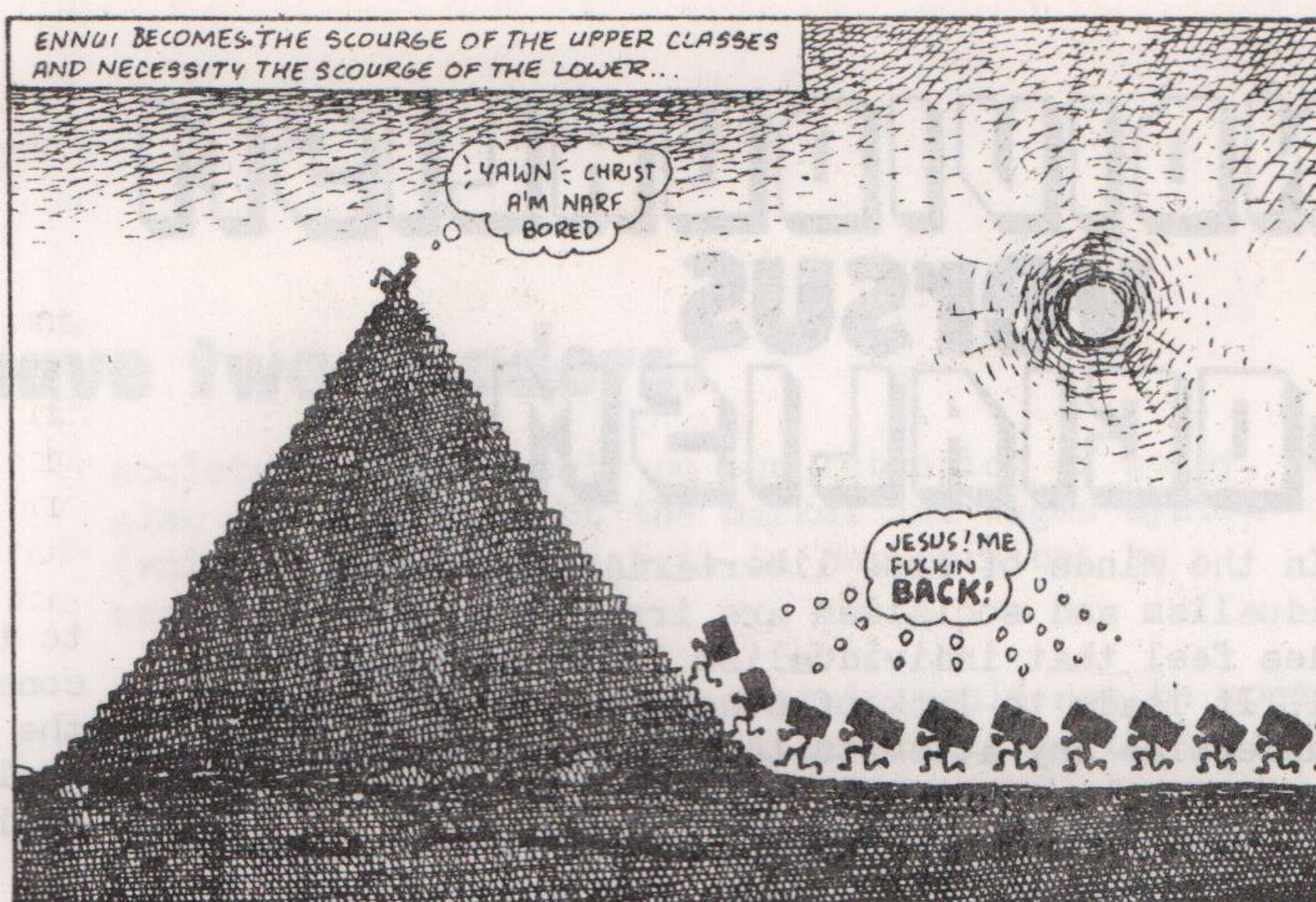
This in itself was hardly surprising. Cases of groups of workers disobeying union 'advice' and taking actions on their own account are happening more and more as the unions seek to establish for themselves an image of respectability and a seat on the board. However in the case of Grunwicks there was an unusual twist.

The main claim of the Grunwick strikers has always been presented as union recognition for A.P.E.X. Yet the strikers bypassed and defied this very union when they called the mass picket. Their actions were clearly contradictory. It was as if they were demanding something which they knew very well was worthless. Whilst one of the very first acts of the strikers had been to join a union they had eventually found it necessary to go beyond the union if they were to stand any chance of success.

The A.P.E.X. leaders have continually showed themselves to be prepared to put all their hopes on a victory in the courts. They were backed in this decision by the vast majority of the trade unions and by the Labour Party and its press. The Daily Mirror argued in an editorial that, "Mass picketing at Grunwick is causing untold damage to the reputation of the trade union movement. Violent clashes ... do not harm Grunwick boss George Ward. They strengthen his case."

With such backing behind him Roy Grantham of A.P.E.X. has become increasingly confident that his legal wrangles are the only way to deal with the Grunwick 'problem'. The day before the mass picket resumed Grantham and other trade union leaders appeared on television and advised people not to attend the picket. He argued that the dispute could be won through the courts. He even went so far as to claim that when the House of Lords backed the union's claim for recognition George Ward would see sense and reinstate the strikers.

The strikers knew better. They knew that no court in the land could force Ward to take them back and they knew too that he would never do so unless he was forced to. Ward himself had made this crystal clear. Either Grantham and A.P.E.X. were living in a fool's paradise or they had decided to ditch the strikers and settle for union recognition.



Fortunately the strikers have shown no inclination to allow themselves to be ditched. They have gone over the heads of the union and taken their own initiative. They have decided that the only way to force Ward's hand is to rely on mass pressure. Unfortunately this mass pressure is itself doomed to failure because of the reluctance of the pickets to overstep the legal limits of picketing.

It has become increasingly obvious to those who have attended the pickets that they will never succeed in closing Grunwick's with their present tactics. Each Monday the pickets and police line up for a ritualised battle. They shove each other backwards and forwards for a few minutes and then the bus carrying those still working at Grunwick's gets through the gates. Almost always the police have been there in sufficient numbers to hold back the pickets and get the bus through.

Only once have the pickets stopped the bus. That was on the 11 July when around 12,000 people packed the area around Dollis Hill tube station. But to close down Grunwick's a picket of this size would be needed every day, all day, for several weeks and that is just not possible to organise given the present strength of the left.

The alternative is for those pickets who are there to overstep the limits of the law. Sabotage of the Grunwick factory would be one possibility as would attacks on the worker's bus long before it reached the gates. In addition the pickets on the gates would have to be much less reticent about launching more violent attacks on the bus and would have to make attempts to get inside the factory itself. In short 2,000 peaceful pickets can easily be controlled whereas 2,000 pickets prepared to break the law are much harder to deal with.

The strikers have learnt through long experience that they need to bypass their union if they are to stand any chance of winning the strike. What is now required is for the strikers and the pickets to agree that it has now reached a stage where it is necessary to bypass the law - or give in.



INDIVIDUALISM versus SOCIALISM?

In the minds of some libertarian socialists individualism and socialism are irreconcilable. These comrades feel that individualism is necessarily anti-social. It leads to lack of concern for others and will undermine any attempts to create a libertarian society.

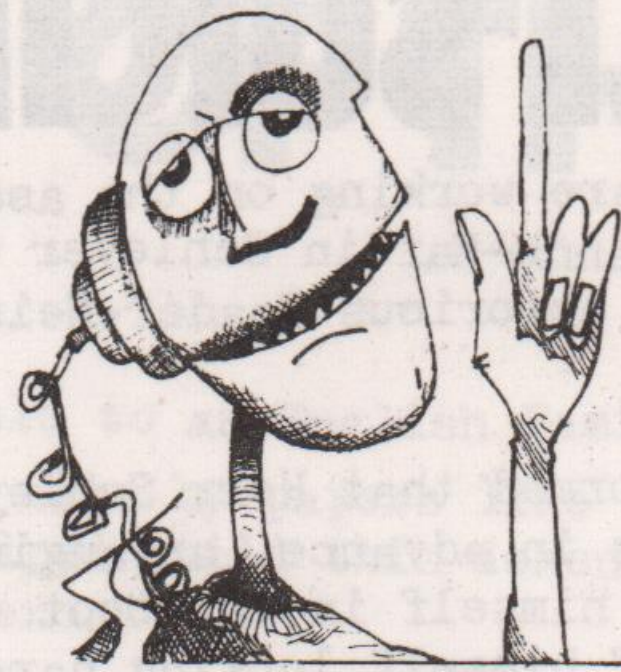
Individualists, it is said, ask the question "What do I get out of this?" Will it have advantages for me?" Rather we should ask if a decision is in the interests of the group as a whole.

This seems to be a simplistic analysis of the complex process of decision making. People, even seemingly selfish people, will often take decisions that appear to be of no advantage to themselves, and may even be harmful. Few people are ruled solely by selfishness, other feelings such as loyalty, friendship, love, etc. influence the way we look at things.

It may be said against this that to be influenced by feelings of friendship, etc. is itself based on selfishness, because our desire not to be alone, for example, (itself a self-centred desire) is only outweighing another selfish desire. In this sense all decisions are selfish. For whatever reason we make a decision it must be the one that we consider at the time to be the best one for ourselves. How many of us, for instance, would be libertarian socialists if we did not think that we would gain by the changes we hope to see in the way other people run their lives. Thus selfish motives can lead to seemingly unselfish actions, and individualism is not necessarily incompatible with socialism.

What is needed here is a less blanket use of an expression and a closer look at what that expression can mean. The term 'individualism' is undoubtedly ambiguous and can be interpreted in two very different ways. Individualism can be anti-social, manifesting itself as 'selfish' self-interest, it can also be an 'enlightened' self-interest, which taking the self as the centre (as we all necessarily do) looks beyond these confines to the wider implications of actions and thoughts. (The drawing of these two distinctions is hardly original and goes back at least to the 'philosophes' of the eighteenth century).

That our actions are all at base self-centred is, I think, undeniable. In evolving a moral code people move from this original self-centred position to a universal position. Kant, writing in the eighteenth century, realised that this 'Universalizability' of self-centred desires leads to the development of a moral code. Universalizability merely means that we must be fully prepared to accept the consequences of a society where everyone is allowed to do the things that we ourselves want to do. Thus if I wish to be free to kill anyone I choose I must grant the principle that anyone is free to kill me if they so choose. The notion of looking beyond selfish desires



to the wider implications of actions is what constitutes enlightened self-interest and it is the basis of our desire for a libertarian socialist society. So, far from being incompatible with socialism, individualism is necessarily its basis.

This does not of course mean that 'selfish' self-interest is not a problem. It is something that will always be with us. We are not (I hope) expecting people after the revolution to be perfect human beings who make no mistakes. This means, incidentally, that I do not believe as some of my comrades do that self-management is a sufficient condition for socialism. This would rule out the possibility that an individual or group of individuals could have purely selfish thoughts. Selfishness will still be with us when people fail to look at the wider implications of their actions.

Individualism is not necessarily anti-social, it is necessarily the basis of our actions and hence of any form of society. When it manifests itself in the form of enlightened self-interest, it is capable of creating the kind of society we would like to see.

J.W.



ALL ARTICLES REFLECT

THE OPINIONS OF INDIVIDUALS

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WORKERS' PLAYTIME

Solidarity, throughout its history, has tried to lay emphasis on what ordinary workers are thinking and doing, rather than on what 'their' organisations are doing. In no area has the conflict between workers and unions shown itself more clearly than in the struggle over working conditions and attitudes to the work process.

In advanced industrial countries the pattern has repeated itself over and over again. The unions negotiate wage increases, retirement benefits etc. Employers make concessions on the wages front seeking in return 'no-strike' pledges or other guarantees of 'peace' in their plants. The unions do not take up questions of speed-up, manning and the assignment and layout of work, considering these issues to be management prerogatives. But it is precisely in these areas (which are central to the real working life of working people) that meaningful challenges to capitalist production are developing on an increasing scale. No wonder the workers come into bitter conflict with 'their' unions. Recently on the Princess line at British Leyland's Cowley complex there was an outbreak of sabotage which was hysterically denounced in the local and national press (see the Oxford Mail August 15th, and the Sun August 19th). We asked one of the line workers what actually happened :

Sol: "How did the outbreak of sabotage start ?"

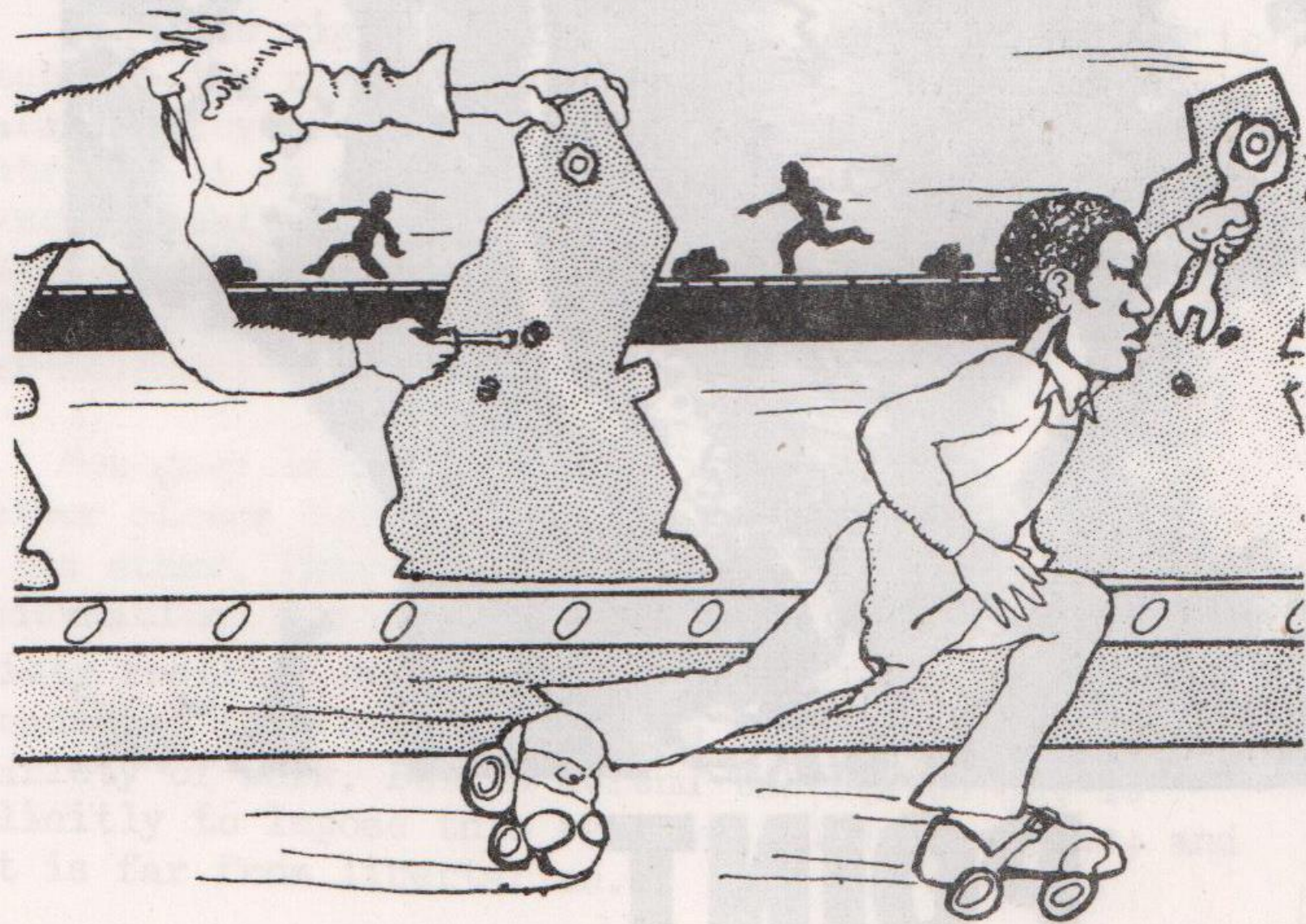
AM : "The line I was working on was originally just a subsidiary line for waxing which is not designed for main assembly work. Then about a year ago it became part of the assembly line manned by men brought in from the main plant. The line speed started at 8 cars an hour but was then increased slowly until in the spring it was increased from 20 to 25. Several times over this period the tracks jammed either by objects accidentally falling into the works or by deliberate action. In either case the line would jump forward a couple of feet and car bodies would come off the line at all angles. Then in August the line jumped two feet when a safety device snapped after the line was extended by provision for another 13 cars. We felt that the line was overloaded and at a mass meeting one Friday morning we refused to work on the line until an independent factory inspector had had a look at it. The management however tried to divide us by coming round to everyone on the line individually and saying that their own safety officer had looked at the track and saying that anyone who didn't return to work would have his name taken. Meanwhile a safety plate had been put over the line in order to protect us a little bit more and at a lunchtime meeting only 18 of us voted to stay out. The management then said however that they had taken the names of the 18 who voted to stay out and were stopping three hours pay. Everyone on the line voted to stay out until we got our three hours money back and we were locked out at 3p.m. on the Friday".

Sol: "What action did you take then ?"

AM : "On the Monday we had another meeting and decided not to put the matter to procedure as that was considered diversionary. The steward, however, persuaded us to put our case to procedure and we were told that we could expect a reply by the end of the week. Last week however (October 14th) we still hadn't heard anything and when we asked the steward what had happened we learnt that the report still hadn't been signed by Parsons, the Senior Steward, and we still haven't got our money back".

Sol: "What is the general attitude to deliberate sabotage on the line ?"

AM : "Some people reckon it's very dangerous and threaten to shop anyone who does it, but most people are pleased with having a break from the monotony".



Sol: "Is there still a lot of sabotage/resistance going on ?"

AM : "Even now there are a few stoppages but it's much less open and most people don't know it's happening."

Sol: "Were you surprised by the press reaction ?"

AM : "Well we all think the Press overplayed it and it seems that Leyland workers are just a very popular bogey. We just think of it as people trying to find new ways to break the boring monotony".

Sol: "What's the attitude of the union to it ?"

AM : "The steward says he'll shop anyone he catches but of course no one is ever caught".

Sol: "What's the situation at the moment ?"

AM : "The main talking point at the moment is the new corporate bargaining package. None of us have seen it and we're all being kept in the dark as to its real contents. We hear rumours of some of the clauses such as parity only being paid from profits but no one knows much for definite. It's all rather typical of how we're always the last to know what's happening to us".

For more details of the background to this dispute see 'What happened at Cowley' in Solidarity (London) Vol. 8 No. 1.

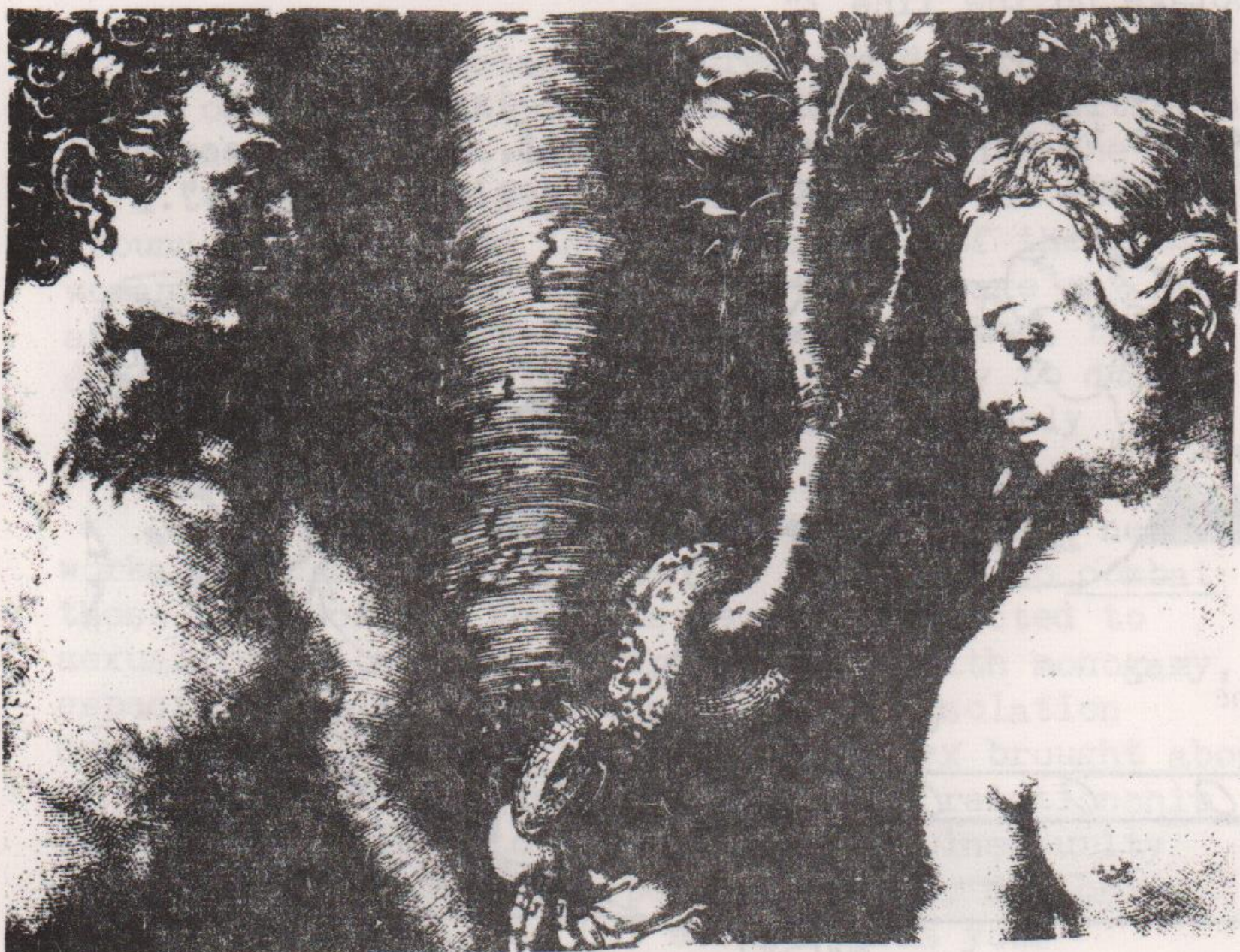
READ SOLIDARITY MOTOR BULLETINS

- No. 1 : Ford Struggles 1973
- No. 2 : UAW - Scab Union.
- No. 3 : Datsun - Hell's Battlefield.
- No. 4 : Wildcat at Dodge Truck
- No. 5 : Struggles at SEAT (Barcelona)
- No. 6 : Ford (UK) 1976-1977.
- No. 7 : Struggles at GM Strasbourg and St Therese.

Struggles at two General Motors plants. Although separated by thousands of miles, these struggles had many features in common. For example the role of the trade union bureaucracy and the management's use of the worldwide downturn of 1974-5 to go over to the offensive and the methods used by workers to resist.

Available from Solidarity (London), c/o 123 Lathom Road London E6. Price 10p each plus postage.

FREE RELATIONSHIPS



POINT

"Lenina Crowne ?" said Henry Foster, echoing the Assistant Predestinator's question as he zipped up his trousers. "Oh, she's a splendid girl. Wonderfully pneumatic. I'm surprised you haven't had her".

"I can't think how it is I haven't", said the Assistant Predestinator. "I certainly will. At the first opportunity".

Mothers, and fathers, brothers and sisters. But there were also husbands, wives, lovers. There were also monogamy and romance.

"Though you probably don't know what those are", said Mustapha Mond. They shook their heads.

Family, monogamy, romance. Everywhere exclusiveness, everywhere a focusing of interest, a narrow channeling of impulse and energy.

"But everyone belongs to everyone else", he concluded, citing the hypnotic proverb. The students nodded emphatically....

Huxley, Brave New World

It is surprising how close Huxley's Brave New World comes to the aspirations of many libertarians. A good example is two articles in Solidarity No. 2: M.O.'s on Free Relationships and Dick A's on Chained Males. Both authors find something universally repressive about monogamous relationships. Overcoming them is an essential step on the road to liberation. It follows that revolutionaries who cling to monogamous relationships should feel guilty, or inadequate, since having recognised the path to true liberation they are not tough enough to take the first step.

For this reason it is necessary to demand from the exponents of Free Relationships, arguments and proofs which are much more convincing than hitherto presented.

Dick A's assertion that 'it is unlikely that many people can be happy in lifelong holy deadlock with one individual - although they pretend to be' presumes a fantastic insight into human relationships. No doubt he has carried out numerous investigations into private lives in order to obtain this standpoint of superiority. So, perhaps, we can ignore his question-begging use of phrases like 'holy deadlock', which merely presupposes that the whole institution is repressive.

M.O., on the other hand, begins with the assumption that monogamous relationships are essentially property relationships; that 'my' signifies possession. In some cases it does. 'I will make my wife do it', in the appropriate context, can sound like 'I will make my servant/slave/dog do it'. But the meaning depends on the context. Often the pronoun 'my' signifies respect and obligation. 'This is my friend/wife/husband/comrade and I will give him/her my support! It often takes the plural form, as in

'my group' or 'my commune'. And 'my boss/headmaster/enemy' never suggests that I possess them. My point is that the personal pronoun, in many monogamous relationships, signifies loyalty, respect and trust. 'I would never turn my wife/husband over to the police'. 'My family comes before my job'.

Sometimes this society of ours (do we possess it ?) can smash such relationships. Sometimes they survive in spite of social pressures. And sometimes in the struggle to change society, many strong and genuine monogamous relationships are forged.

Apparently this obvious fact is lost on M.O., who tells us that : 'it does not matter whether you are legally married or merely living together; the chances are that you suffer from the same basic mystification; that one person is the property of another'. This is part of the sales talk. None of us want to be mystified, do we ? Talk of 'basic mystification' suggests that a panacea is about to emerge. This time it is free relationships. Unless you share it about you are still mystified. Fuck your way to revolutionary consciousness !

'But we don't want to sleep around !' We just want to be left alone ! Free from all the coercive elements, including those who want to interfere with our psyche'. 'Ah', says the revolutionary sex-pert, 'my consciousness is greater than thine. You are mystified, a hapless victim of social conditioning. We, who have insight into the reality of things, will teach you to be free. And if your loved one takes off after listening to us, we will cure your jealousy !' After all, as M.O. says, 'Jealousy isn't a fundamental human characteristic unless you teach people to feel it. Children are taught not to feel jealous of each other in the family. They have to share love. Why not adults ?'

So M.O. recognises that families have a beneficial role; that of ridding children of jealousy. But aren't families, products of bourgeois mystification, the very source of the jealousy and chauvinism that M.O. complains about ?

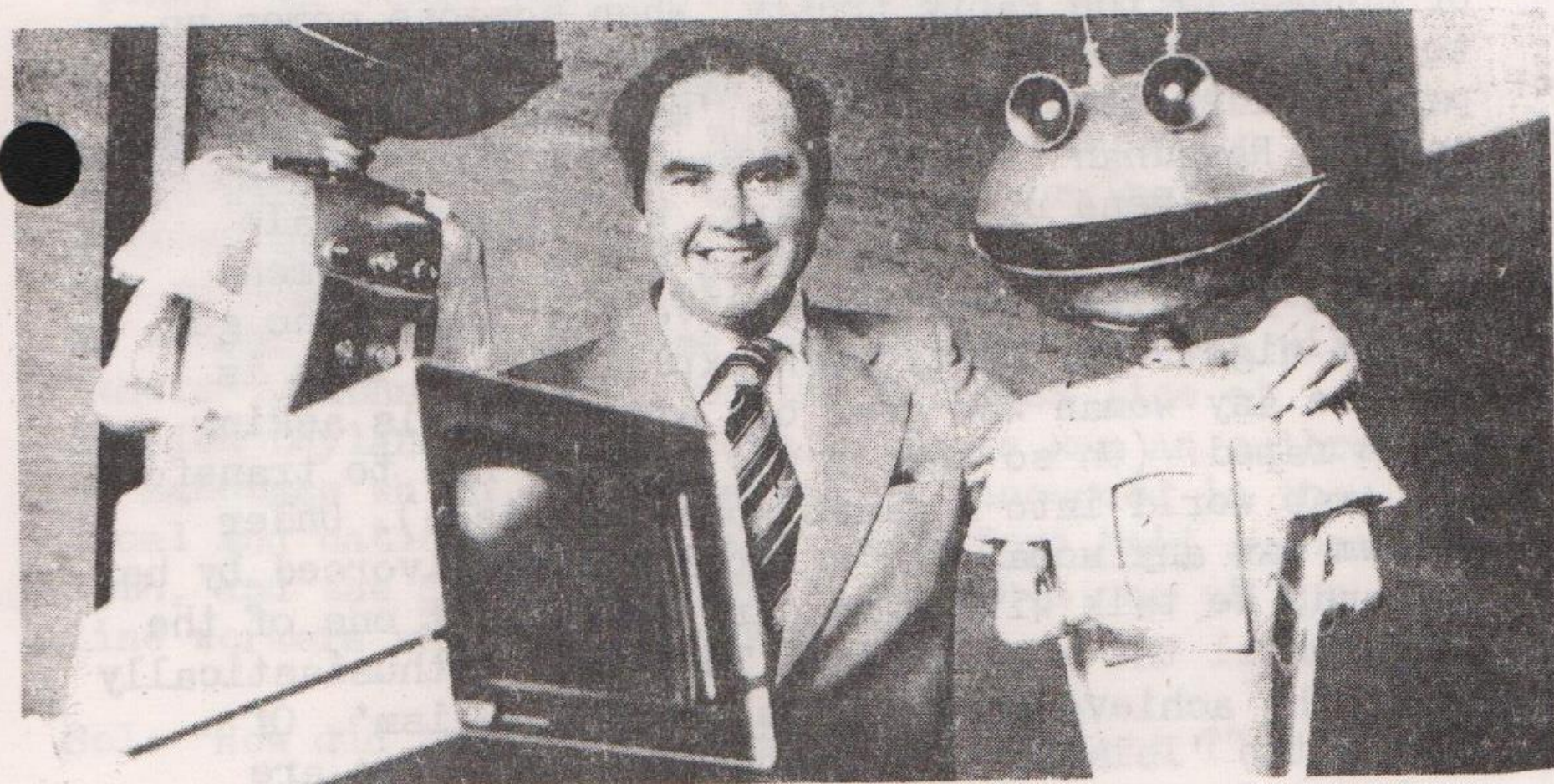
What is revealing here is not that M.O. acknowledges the benefits of family life when it suits the argument, or that the love which children quarrel about is not identical to that found in adult relationships, but that an authoritarian relationship between parent and offspring is invoked as a paradigm for free relationships between adults. This might be necessary with children: 'they have to share love', says M.O. But what is the force behind the 'have to' with adults ? And who is the teacher ? The revolutionary vanguard perhaps ?

From the very beginning capitalism has assaulted human relationships. The monogamous relationship has survived, not merely as a product of bourgeois society (in its caricature of middle-class privatisation) but in defiance of attempts to assimilate personal loyalties to those of production. In spite of the efforts of industrial psychologists many workers still put their families before their jobs. Huxley's Brave New

World, quoted above, depicts such a society where monogamy is sacrificed for productivity. Bureaucratic society is no exception. The article in Solidarity 2 on Bureaucratic Birth makes some telling points about the hospital bureaucracy's attempt to come between husband and wife. M.O. and Dick A.'s attempt to do away with the relationship between husband and wife would find considerable support amongst the hospital bureaucracy.

Drawing grandiose comparisons between the Hungarian freedom fighters with four freedom fuckers, M.O. sees a Russian tank behind every monogamous relationship. The family might be an anachronism. Some genuinely feel the need to form different relationships. But those who would found the free society on the abolition of the family might consider how they unwittingly support the bureaucracy by removing those loyalties which have so far resisted the intrusion of the firm into human relationships. In Huxley's Brave New World, and the Israeli Kibbutzim, monogamy has been replaced with loyalty to the state. And that is recuperation with a vengeance !

Dave Lamb



COUNTERPOINT

Since I'm involved in the production of this issue of Solidarity, perhaps I'm taking an unfair advantage in replying directly to Dave Lamb's article. All the same, I feel that since his conservative attitudes on this subject are not universally held within the group, it would be misleading to publish his contribution without comment.

Social change under capitalism is often rapid, and very complex, owing to the conflicting influences of economic growth and centralisation, and the different aspirations of classes and sexes. Social restrictions and possibilities are in a state of flux; what is satisfying today may not be tomorrow. Yesterday's values may be discarded, not because they're wrong in some abstract or moral sense, but because they are less useful in solving today's problems.

Monogamy has of course been widely accepted in the past, even by radicals. It's hardly surprising that people who've established satisfying relationships feel threatened by assertive advocates of new lifestyles. Sometimes we can be insensitive towards them, instead of cherishing their happiness. We should surely aim to offer others the chance of a better life, rather than ramming our ideas down their throats.

That said, I'm forced to admit that an impassioned defence of monogamy strikes me as a bizarre obsession for a libertarian, to say the least. We are social animals, and our freedoms such as they are are a social phenomenon. It's not simply a question of personal choice. Particularly in hierarchical society,

where powerful forces are exerted on social behaviour in the interests of the few, those aspiring to unorthodox social freedoms are in a sense oppressed by the monolithic behaviour of others. It becomes necessary to try and influence other people, which in turn requires some sort of social theory. Very often, we mere mortals are only able to generalise from personal experience. To brand people as 'sex-perts' for advancing their views on sex smacks to me of the worst kind of academic elitism.

Like the right to scab, to be heterosexual, or to watch TV, the right to be monogamous is more or less guaranteed by the existing order of things. In contrast, it is extremely difficult to enter into several simultaneously satisfying emotional/sexual relationships when most other people are either paired off, or would like to be. The alternatives are usually near-celibacy or a return to monogamy.

Monogamy is a restriction of emotional life, whether chosen voluntarily, or forced on one partner by the other. This does not in itself constitute a condemnation; for example, one might in an ideal society restrict oneself to a single job, while recognising that others might be more satisfied by a variety of work. But to defend the status quo is implicitly to impose this restriction on everyone; and that is far from libertarian.

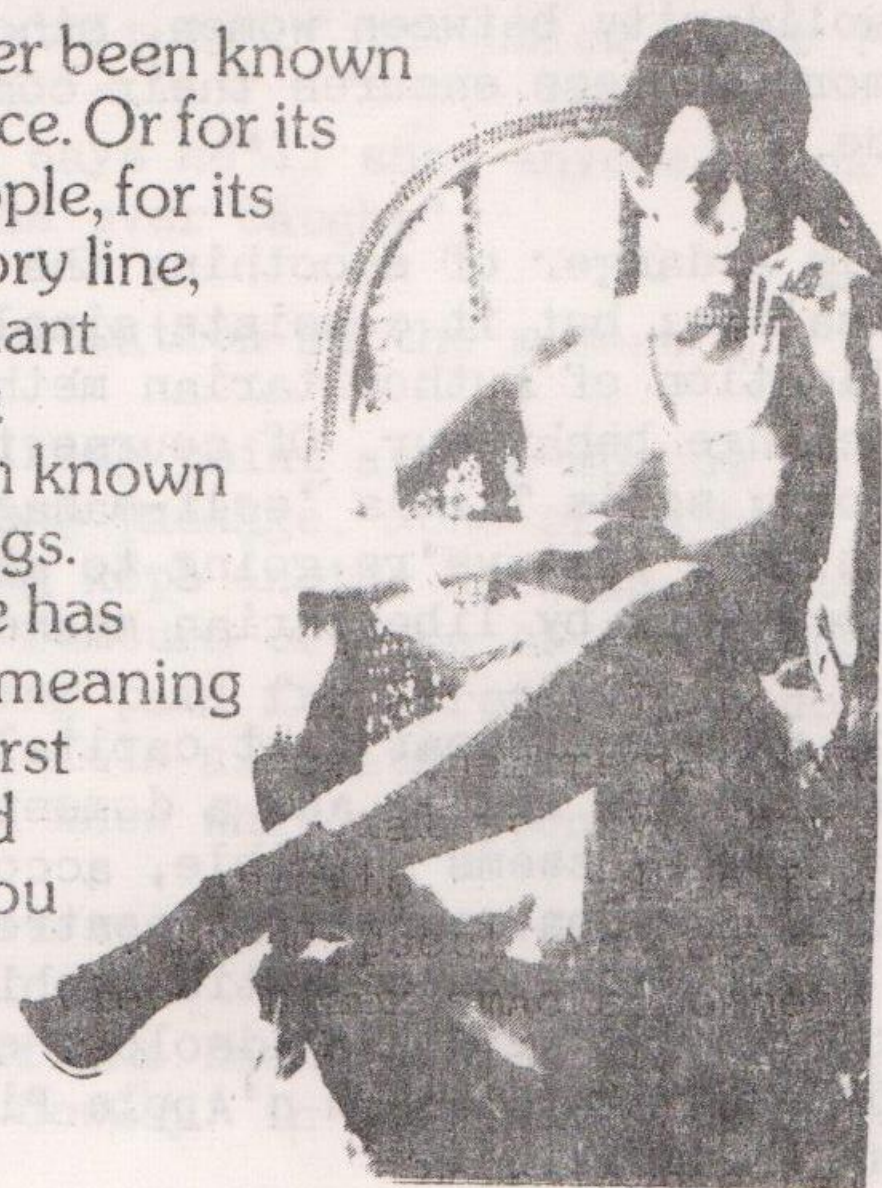
Interestingly, although M.O. went to considerable trouble to point out that he was not merely advocating 'sleeping around', Dave Lamb assumes throughout that the only alternative to monogamy is promiscuous sex, involving a minimum of lasting tenderness and emotional commitment. This assumption is a cornerstone of orthodox male thinking; other women are good for a quick screw, but you have a relationship with your wife. If we once admit that we are capable of sharing our affection and support with several other people, most of his arguments seem pretty irrelevant.

X was never like this.

X has never been known for its elegance. Or for its beautiful people, for its intelligent story line, or for its brilliant photography.

X has been known for other things.

This movie has changed the meaning of X. It's the first film of its kind that makes you feel good without feeling bad.



Emmanuelle^x

French Dialogue - English Subtitles

His opening quotation, for example, is odious simply because it is sexist. To treat women as objects to be 'had' regardless of their views of the matter is repulsive. But this is not what M.O. or anyone else was suggesting; rather, it strikes me that it is a projection of Dave Lamb's own sexist attitudes onto the possibility of multi-relationships.

The second quotation is revealing; does Dave Lamb really mourn the passing of romanticism? What does romance mean, beyond the cloaking of reality with illusions? Romantic ideas seem to me (after a slow, painful awakening) to be no more than a self-justification of male paternalism, and a means of persuading women to accept it. As for everyone

'belonging' to everyone else, again this is precisely the reverse of what M.O. was saying. The whole tactic of 'guilt by association' with Brave New World is rather shabby; just for the record, we do not endorse subordinating people to production, through genetic engineering or any other means.

Certainly, social pressures are destroying many forms of relationship. The collapse of communities and the general retreat into private life under the weight of a top-heavy society, the need/ability to move around for work, and the unwillingness of the 'little woman' to be treated as part of the baggage any more, all play a part. However you interpret them, recent divorce figures surely suggest a tendency to domestic claustrophobia not wholly unadjacent to 'holy deadlock'.

But what we're talking about is creating new, workable forms of relationship, precisely to combat these tendencies - and this is not restricted to sexual relations. The central problem with monogamy, especially under conditions of social isolation coupled with the possibility of freer sex brought about by the Pill, is its insecurity; if the relationship fails, you're left to cope alone. This insecurity intensifies jealousy and possessiveness, not only towards sexual rivals, but even towards your

partner's friends. So monogamy can be seen as a net destruction of social solidarity.

Casual sex might have been thought to be the answer during the 60's, when we were only beginning to explore the possibilities. But for many of us, it didn't take long to see that this could be even more alienating than what had gone before. An object of more mature multiple relationships could be to remove the insecurity of monogamy, and to introduce the possibility of sharing different needs with different people. This extends to the care of children; a trip to any supermarket should be enough to convince you that the modern harrassed parent is not very good at communicating positive social values to the kids. Particularly important is the development of social solidarity between women, since monogamous isolation more or less ensures their continued subservience.

There is a danger of smoothing the path of bureaucratisation; but it consists simply and solely in the application of authoritarian methods in the attempt to change behaviour. Of course the Kibbutzim are a wash-out; so is Tito's 'self-management', but that doesn't mean that we're going to abandon the fight for socialism by libertarian means.

It's by no means clear that capital is overwhelmingly hostile to the family and a domestic role for women; its attitude seems flexible, according to the dictates of production and social control at the time. Prevailing attitudes during wartime mobilisation, for example, are at odds with the ideology of 19th century liberals, pre-war Nazism, Mom n' Apple Pie and the rulers of modern Russia.

All the same, it does appear that bureaucratic currents have become extremely powerful in the women's movement, which to date has been the most dynamic force for change in the pattern of sexual relations. One is reminded by the example of the Suffragettes (who largely ended up as an ultra-sexist mobilisation force for the slaughter in the trenches) that feminism divorced from class politics can be very useful to our rulers.

But as long as we lend every possible support to sisters who are trying to reaffirm the libertarian current of feminism, and more generally attempt to build lasting relationships with others, shaking off unnecessary restrictions and insecurities, I don't see how we will be helping anyone but ourselves.

Bob H.

CONFESSIONS OF A REVOLUTIONARY TOURIST

The bus pulls up besides a newsstand, which sells ridiculous romantic postcards that are the Arab world's answer to pornography. Batna is a small, scruffy town in the Aures Mountains, on the edge of the Algerian Sahara. The local Party Official gets on and directs us to the school where we're to be staying. Built about 1880 it reminds me of a French hospital during the First World War. Certainly the toilets don't look as though they've been cleaned since they were built. A few of us go for a walk, but chaperoned of course by the Party trusty. When someone comes up to us and tries to discuss politics/sex/football, our party guides denounce them as 'mad' and usher us away. As it's Ramadhan (the Moslem month of fasting) the town only livens up after dark. Well for the male population at least. Most cafes don't serve women and the Algerians look aggressively at women who go out at night. Our Party hack explains that this is because any woman who goes out after dark is asking to be raped. (Oh so that's why they've had to transform the Arab world into a giant women's prison). Under Moslem law any woman who's raped can be divorced by her husband. We talk with some card players at one of the cafes until the small hours. They tell enthusiastically about the achievements of 'Islamic Socialism'. Of course the 'Islamic' bit means that the women are excluded from the 'benefits' but one mustn't let a little thing like that cloud one's judgement. We stagger back to the school getting lost because under the Arabisation campaign (when things get shitty just divert the masses into bashing the fringe areas of cultural imperialism) they obliterated all European roadsigns.

Batna Textile Mill is the biggest employer in the area. There have been several strikes in the industry recently but don't ask the manager about that or he'll make you go the way of Ben Bella. The manager is very keen to show off his new Bulgarian machinery (it must be bad if even they're trying to get rid of it). Of course safety devices come a very low priority for a 'socialist' government. The manager's quote of 4 accidents a year did seem a bit stretched when a shop-floor worker told me it was more like 200. Then comes a classic meeting with the 'Workers' Commission'.

Christ, I mean Allah, they make the Ryder Committee at Leylands look like the CNT. The Trade Union hacks are sorted out by the Party sieve and are well groomed for the part. A discussion on the factory becomes a monologue in which questions are deliberately misunderstood and in which we are subjected to such gems as 'Socialism in Algeria means Marx plus Allah'. (Well it's a dandy way of explaining why women earn half as much as men.)

Afterwards, all I can do is walk into the scrubland surrounding the town and talk to the kids herding the goats and camels. I spend all afternoon trying to master a sling. Still perhaps these kids will use them in earnest one day on the barricades.

J.L.



LETTERS

The Page that proves that we have two readers!

THE MURRAYS

Most anarchists and/or libertarians would presumably agree that the Murrays should not be hanged or imprisoned even if they did kill the policeman and even if they were not anarchists. The problem is how far and how long to go in campaigning for their reprieve and/or release, and here we must all make up our own minds. But those who are not convinced by either side in the debate about present tactics will be disturbed by arguments either that alleged terrorists should not be defended in "the absence of strong evidence of their innocence" (B.H., *Solidarity* 3), or that "killing an off-duty policeman" is "not everyone's idea of terrorism" (Jerry Westall, *Solidarity* 4). Few of us want to get involved in a debate where one side makes solidarity dependent on unreal conditions and the other side rejects any conditions at all. Anarchism and/or libertarianism surely lies somewhere between these two extremes.

Nicolas Walter

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Dear comrades,

there have now been two articles in *Solidarity* No.'s 3 and 4, dealing with the question of 'money', that have complimented discussions amongst *Solidarity* and *Social Revolution* members on the nature of a future free society.

The first article was rather superficial, and reasoned very illogically, that since money functioned as a means of rationing in capitalism, and since rationing would still be needed in the early stages of a libertarian socialist society, that therefore money would still exist in such a society. It completely ignored the main function of money as an abstract unit of measuring 'value' and the medium of exchanging private property - the commodity 'par excellence'.

This omission has been partly rectified in the second article, which recognises many of the problems which would arise if a libertarian socialist society tried to retain the money system. However, the author still concludes that the immediate aim must NOT be communism/socialism as we both appear to understand these terms, but rather some form of transitional

society based not only on the retention of money, but also the retention of the market and wages system (which admittedly cannot, in our opinion, be separated in practice).

It is true of course that it would not be possible to introduce 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need' overnight. Rationing would be needed. But this doesn't necessarily mean a SINGLE method of allocation and rationing, but probably different methods according to the type of goods and services, and the area of rationing, eg. local community, regional or world level. The principle of rationing consumer goods should still be 'need', but that need could not, in the early stages, be largely determined by the individual, but would be severely restrained within certain democratically defined 'social norms'. The link between 'work done' and access to consumer goods (the wages system), however, must be broken from the beginning.

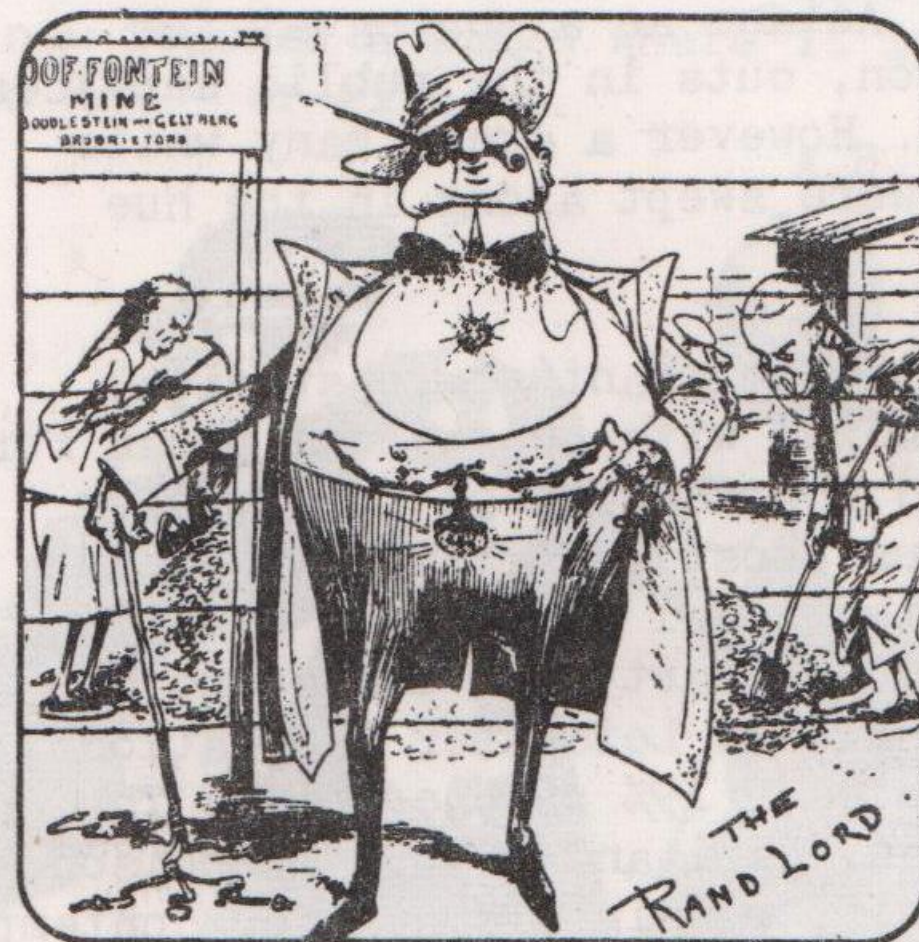
The second article makes the elimination of money dependant on the gradual development of production to provide 'free access', but it doesn't seem to realise that the very retention of the wages system, money and the market, is a deterrent to achieving that development ('because it would determine priorities and waste resources'). Of course the growth of a large libertarian socialist movement might result in many changes towards greater equality, including the breaking down of differentials, within capitalism.

The destruction of the market economy, wages system etc. could not be achieved overnight, but the revolution must attack them right from the start, and will not in our opinion have established the material security of the new society until they are destroyed (along with the state and capitalist control of production) across the entire globe.

We want the new society to be ONE HUMAN COMMUNITY. Coal miners would not own 'their' coal and exchange it for agricultural workers' oranges, rather both coal and oranges would belong to the whole community who would allocate them amongst themselves. This 'human community' would hopefully develop PARTIALLY along with the development of greater unity amongst the world's working class, but it will only fully blossom when the restraints of capitalism are completely broken.

Mike Ballard

SOCIAL REVOLUTION (HULL)



THE BIGGEST GANG OF THUGS IN LONDON...



During the long, hot summer of 1976, the growth of racial violence and fascism in Britain presented a menacing picture. For weeks, the gutter press worked up an hysterical atmosphere of racial tension. 260 Asians who had been forced out of their homes in Malawi by the local dictator, Hastings Banda (a black racist), arrived in Britain as refugees, to be faced with howls of synthetic outrage from white racist hacks in Fleet Street. An 'invasion' was taking place! Britain just couldn't take any more immigrants! When it was found that two refugee families had been given temporary accommodation in a four-star hotel, the right wing journalists really started foaming at the mouth. Everyone knows that only rich people have a right to stay in these hotels! If homeless, destitute families are allowed there, where will it end? The 'Daily Mail', 'Express' and 'Sun' all complained bitterly about government 'handouts' to the Asian refugees - that is, food and a roof over their heads. Perhaps they should have been left to die of exposure and starvation?

This press outcry was soon widened into a campaign against coloured immigrants in general. Again and again the call was made for tighter restrictions on immigration. Enoch Powell made another speech, which as usual received a blaze of publicity.

Cynics suggested that the whole thing was very convenient for the government and the bosses; that it set up the blacks and Asians as a scapegoat for unemployment, inflation, cuts in the public services, and other discontents. However a great many white working class people were swept along in the hue and cry.

The stream of anti-immigrant scare stories (Hypocritically intermixed with occasional pleas for 'good race relations') churned out by the popular press, gave an enormous boost to Britain's Nazis. As an indication: in the local government elections of 6 May 1976 the National Party won two council seats in Blackburn, while in Leicester the National Front gained 43,385 votes - 19% of the total. The former Ku Klux Klansman, Nazi and writer of poison pen letters, Robert Relf, was imprisoned for contempt of court. He refused to obey an order from the Race Relations Board, telling him to remove the sign he had put up, as a deliberate provocation, advertising

his house 'For Sale to an English Family'. Sympathetic treatment of his case by papers like the 'Sun' and the 'Express' helped build this demented brute into a sort of folk hero.

Not surprisingly, many white toughs came to see Asians and black people as a legitimate target. Intimidation and violence against racial minorities increased frighteningly. The attack took many forms. Hoax telephone calls causing Asian families to receive unexpected visits from the police or fire brigade. Unfounded accusations of harbouring 'illegal' immigrants, leading to visits from Home Office investigation. Gardens vandalised, windows smashed. Parcels of shit, and burning papers, stuffed through letter boxes. Beatings-up on the street. Women's saris set on fire. Sexual assaults against women. Stabbings and shootings.

There were at least four killings. On May 23 1976, two students, Dinesh Choudhuri and Riphi Alhadidi were stabbed to death by white youths outside their hostel in the South Woodford area of London. 18 year old Gurdip Singh Chaggar was killed by stabbing in Southall on 4 June. Most horrific of all was the murder of Mohan Devi Gautam, a 76 year old woman who was burned to death in Leamington on 23 September, when two masked thugs broke into her home, dragged her out to a garden shed and set fire to her sari.

Fortunately, though, the racials didn't have it all their own way. Asians and blacks, especially the young people, showed that they were prepared to defend themselves vigorously. In trouble spots in Blackburn, Bradford and parts of London, defence groups organised night patrols of the streets in order to prevent racial attacks.

The growth of organised fascist groups like the National Front has been hampered by the growing numbers of people who are determined to obstruct and harass them whenever they try to hold a meeting or a march.

The press, radio and T.V., which denounce militant opposition to the fascists as 'hooliganism' or 'red fascism', usually present it as the work of some Leninist group, most often the Socialist Workers' Party. Groups like the S.W.P., for their part, are only too pleased to be publicised as 'leading' the anti-fascist struggle. In fact, while the S.W.P. may account for the largest single contingent on any given anti-fascist demo, they will normally be a minority of all those taking part. Women's groups, gay groups, racial minority organisations, independent socialists and libertarians make an important contribution. But increasingly, over the last eighteen months, the main strength of each demonstration has been people from the local community - largely but not exclusively from the threatened racial minorities - who are not otherwise involved in radical politics. The fascists are finding it more and more difficult to march through the streets, even with police protection.

In April 1976, when the N.F. arranged a demonstration through Manningham, the main immigrant area of Bradford, a hastily convened local defence committee arranged a sit down in the road, blocking off their route. Fighting broke out as mounted police moved in to clear a way for the Front; the police and the fascists were pelted with stones and bottles, and two police cars were overturned. Local youths, especially blacks and Asians, took the initiative.

In June '76, when the Front demonstrated in Birmingham in support of the imprisoned Robert Relf, hundreds of local Asians and West Indians took to the streets to stop them from marching. Once again, this involved a violent clash with the police, who used horses and truncheons in defence of the fascist march.

Between 1000 and 2000 N.F. members (with a police escort of 1000) marched through Haringey - an area where many blacks and Cypriots live - on 23 April 1977. They were jeered and harassed every step of the way by 3000 counter-demonstrators, and pelted with smoke bombs, water bombs, bags of flour, rotten fruit and eggs. (see Solidarity no.3).

For their next major march - Lewisham on August 13 - the National Front were able to mobilise fewer than 1000 people. The earlier anti-fascist demos had clearly had a salutary effect! 5000 people turned out to oppose them. On this occasion, the confrontation with the police was very violent. Many people in the anti-fascist ranks were throwing bricks. The police claimed that demonstrators carried knives and spiked clubs - and in some cases this is almost

But why should we seek to disrupt the N.F.'s marches? Wouldn't it be better simply to argue against their ideas? It may be necessary for us to use force in self-defence against direct attacks, but don't they have the right to hold meetings and marches, to put forward their views, disgusting though they may be?

Many libertarians express this opinion. I don't agree - I think that the National Front must be smashed.

As libertarian socialists, we cannot countenance using force to prevent other people organising politically or publicising their ideas, just because those ideas are obnoxious to us. If we are to seek to limit free speech to those whose views we find acceptable, then 'libertarianism' would mean nothing. In my view, this should apply to racists, just as much as Tories and Trotskyists, Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims and Maoists and all the other ideologies we oppose.

What distinguishes a fascist organisation, however, from one that is simply racist and right-wing, is that it is, quite literally, a fighting organisation. It is a street army which begins by physically attacking minority groups like immigrants and gays, and when it has grown strong enough, sets out to smash violently the self-activity and organisation of the working class as a whole. The N.F. deliberately recruits men with a record of violent crime for purposes of political violence and intimidation. Men like Graham Young and Brian Hosie, who are now doing life sentences for murder. Ken Hampton, the Front's organiser in Wandsworth, was quoted in the 'News of the World': "My branch is the biggest gang of thugs in London. We've got safebreakers. We've got one guy who's done 18 months for nicking new cars. I've got numerous cases of burglars and I think there's even a couple of cases of armed robbery."

Already the Nazi thugs beat up blacks and Asians, vandalise radical bookshops and attack left-wing meetings and demos. If they grow in numbers, we can expect them to start attacking picket lines and workplace occupations. That is why, I believe, it is right to try to stop them from organising, to obstruct their marches and disrupt their meetings.

Fear of a repetition of the street fighting seen at Lewisham caused the authorities to ban the planned N.F. march in the Tameside area of Manchester on 8 October. Deputy-fuehrer Martin Webster marched along part of the route all alone ... except for 3000 cops! Meanwhile by a secret arrangement with the police, the Front marched through the back streets of Levenshulme; but this time they numbered less than 600. This was undoubtedly a great humiliation for

the fascists, but there is an obvious danger that the police will use this ban as a precedent for banning, say, mass pickets, on the ground that they fear a breach of the peace.

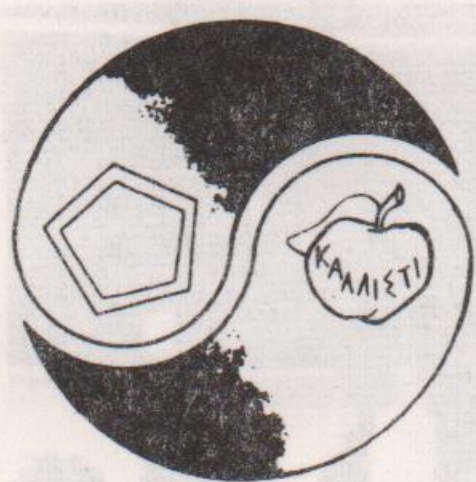
Unable to hold big showpiece rallies, the Nazis are turning more and more to hit-and-run violence. The S.W.P. headquarters has been firebombed and one of their paper sellers has been severely injured by stabbing. Many radical and black community bookshops have been smashed up, and one, the Unity bookshop in north-west London, has been petrol-bombed. This sort of thing is clearly a serious threat, which calls for self-defence arrangements to be made at local level; however, it is also a sign of desperation on the part of the fascists, which shows that the campaign against them is having some effect.

Dick A.



certainly true. The police, counter-attacking, were given the opportunity to test out their new riot gear. Riot shields were used for the first time ever in Britain.

Although it is certainly understandable that black kids in places like Lewisham should wish to retaliate for the constant bullying that they suffer from the police, my own view is that taking weapons of any kind on anti-fascist demonstrations is rash, unnecessary and counter-productive (that is, in present circumstances - obviously a situation like Germany in 1932 would be a different matter). Direct assaults on fascist marches - which in practice mean attacks on the police - are only going to lead to unnecessary injuries and arrests. It is quite possible to oppose these marches effectively without resorting to kamikaze tactics. The N.F. can be surrounded by a jeering hostile crowd (as at Haringey) or their route can be blocked off by a large number of people (as at Manningham). This, in itself, is enough to spoil the effect of the march. If enough people take part, it should eventually become possible to stop the fascists completely, by sheer force of numbers.



ILLUMINATUS!



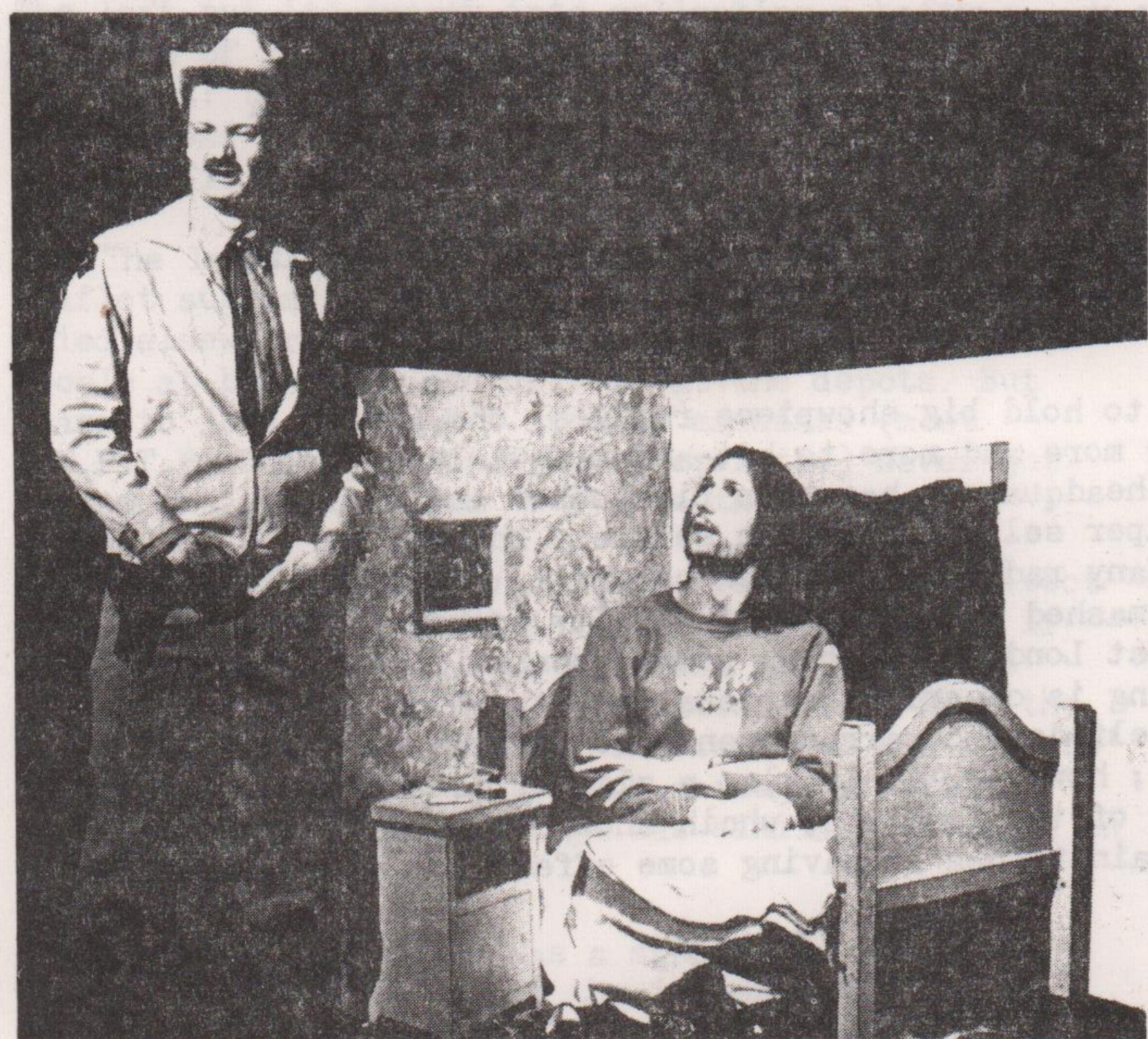
Illuminatus! by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson.
(Sphere, 3 books, 75p each)

What is the sinister connection between the Kennedy assassinations and the Mafia? Was George Washington an imposter? Why is the U.S. Defence department housed in a Pentagon? Does the number 23 have a magical significance? What is the horrible secret of a seemingly tranquil Swiss lake? Where do the dolphins fit into the picture?

Some people will see Illuminatus! as little more than a tapestry of the fads and fantasies of the sixties 'underground' - strictly for nostalgia buffs. Some will put it down as a cult book - it has already been compared with Dune and Lord of the Rings, although the only real points of similarity are its length, and its ability to capture the imagination. Others will see it as a masterpiece of anarchist fiction, or else as a profound religious statement. It's certainly a good laugh, and once you get used to the flashes in space and time, the writing develops a near-hallucinogenic power.

The cover illustrations suggest an SF adventure, while the blurb points to a Hard Boiled Dick thriller in the Chandler tradition. Like everything else in the book, both are true in a sense. Essentially it's an investigation of conspiracies, mysteries, and problems of interpretation generally, posing fairly convincingly as a novel about the Illuminati, a secret society of obscure origins and purpose. There is a plot of sorts, involving an extraordinary spectrum of characters, from self-made millionaires through gangsters to anarchist revolutionaries. Our heroes/heroines are faced with looming all-out thermonuclear/biological war, and have to handle the Lost Legion of the S.S. before the final cataclysmic confrontation with the ancient sea-monster Leviathan - what more could you want?

The book opens with the assumption that the Illuminati (who, incidentally, the John Birch Society believe in implicitly) are a political conspiracy. In poking fun at the conspiracy theories fashionable



amongst hippies, the novel touches on many of the contradictions of bureaucratic society. In particular the relation of information to order and chaos is considered, leading to the principal that "communication is only possible between equals". The conclusion seems to be that theories which attempt to link apparently hostile political forces (as the Nazis link Bolshevism and Wall Street) are only credible because all political hierarchies share the same fundamental authoritarianism. Thus although the conspiracies do not exist in organisational terms, the theories are nevertheless true in a sense.

This leads on to an exploration of libertarian themes, from the Wobblies to Pacifism via the Chicago Democratic Convention. Two alternatives are advanced: 'left' or cooperative anarchism, involving common property and collective effort, and 'right' anarchism, a competitive market society where everyone starts with the same capital assets.

Unfortunately, things don't turn out to be that simple, as the pursuit of the Illuminati leads us on to the realm of religion and magic. (I'm sure many more conventional radicals will baulk at this point, which is a pity, because it might lead them to consider to what extent their demonstrations etc. fulfil a purely 'magical' function). In the main, we have a continuation of the parody of associative thinking, in particular the attempt to attribute mystical significance to the rather mundane numbers 5 and 23. (Adding to their efforts, we may note that the authors have two and three names respectively; Wilson begins with W, the twenty-third letter of the alphabet, and so on).

However, there is a recognition that mystical belief cannot simply be dismissed out of hand. For one thing, if enough people believe in something, it becomes true in a sense. And certain religions, Zen for example, are a long way ahead of Christian flannel in their coherence and wisdom, even if we may not choose the path that they ask us to follow. The authors seem to take the Jungian theory of synchronicity fairly seriously, while recognising that the apparent correlation of events beyond the bounds of coincidence is essentially due to the highly selective way in which we interpret them. In addition, when we have been taken through successively higher levels of mystical insight, we are told in at least one case that all that really remains is the world and what we make of it - leaving us back where we started.

Throughout the book, more or less convincing theories are advanced one by one, only to crumble under the savage wit of Shea and Wilson. They make the point that their explanation of Kennedy's assassination is absurd, but no more absurd than the official findings. An elegant five-stage theory of history is put forward, merely to demonstrate that the Marx-Engels dialectical scheme is either equally valid or equally ridiculous, depending on how you look at it.

All in all the book is an impressive achievement. The point that there is no absolute 'truth' about life, merely various interpretations of greater or lesser coherence and value, is convincingly hammered home, and yet the union of this philosophical discussion

with the format and plot of the novel rarely seems forced.

There are weaknesses. In particular, there is a tendency to lay too much stress on the power of ideas, and almost to go as far as saying that we can believe what we like, and anything we believe is true. There seem to me to be severe constraints to what it is possible to believe. Behind the layer of impressions we have of it, the physical world has some dynamics of its own, and it certainly doesn't always behave as we expect it to. If this were not so, it would be hard to explain why ideas develop and evolve. There again, belief systems tend to be appropriate to the social, cultural and economic systems in which they arise.

This is amply demonstrated by the book itself. It's hard to imagine such a book being written in any other society than post-Watergate America. Apart from its dependance on freak culture as the target of its humour, its concern with the relativity of truth is symptomatic of the traumatic realisation that almost everything Americans used to believe about their society is bullshit. In a wider sense, the search for a non-dogmatic approach to life is strongly conditioned by this era of high material security and low ideological credulity, as a result of the flood of propaganda from fascists, liberals and state-capitalists alike.

Indeed the novel is so specific to a single, transitory sub-culture, that one wonders if it will be intelligible at all in fifty years time. No doubt some people would like to think that the names of Bobby Seale and Bucky Fuller will live forever, but personally I doubt it. This is rather sad because what the book has to say is probably of more lasting value.

It's certainly interesting that some emphasis is placed on the importance of information flow in the functioning of society; especially as those pundits who used to speak of 'post-industrial' society are beginning to talk about the 'information society' with rather more conviction. Unfortunately, following in the footsteps of Moorcock, there is a hopeless confusion of order with hierarchy, and order and chaos are presented as real forces in a crudely idealist way. Worst still, there is a good deal of populist bullshit about entropy and the second law of thermodynamics as they might apply to social organisation - even though such theories have been completely discredited ever since Schrodinger thought that he had found the secret of life therein.

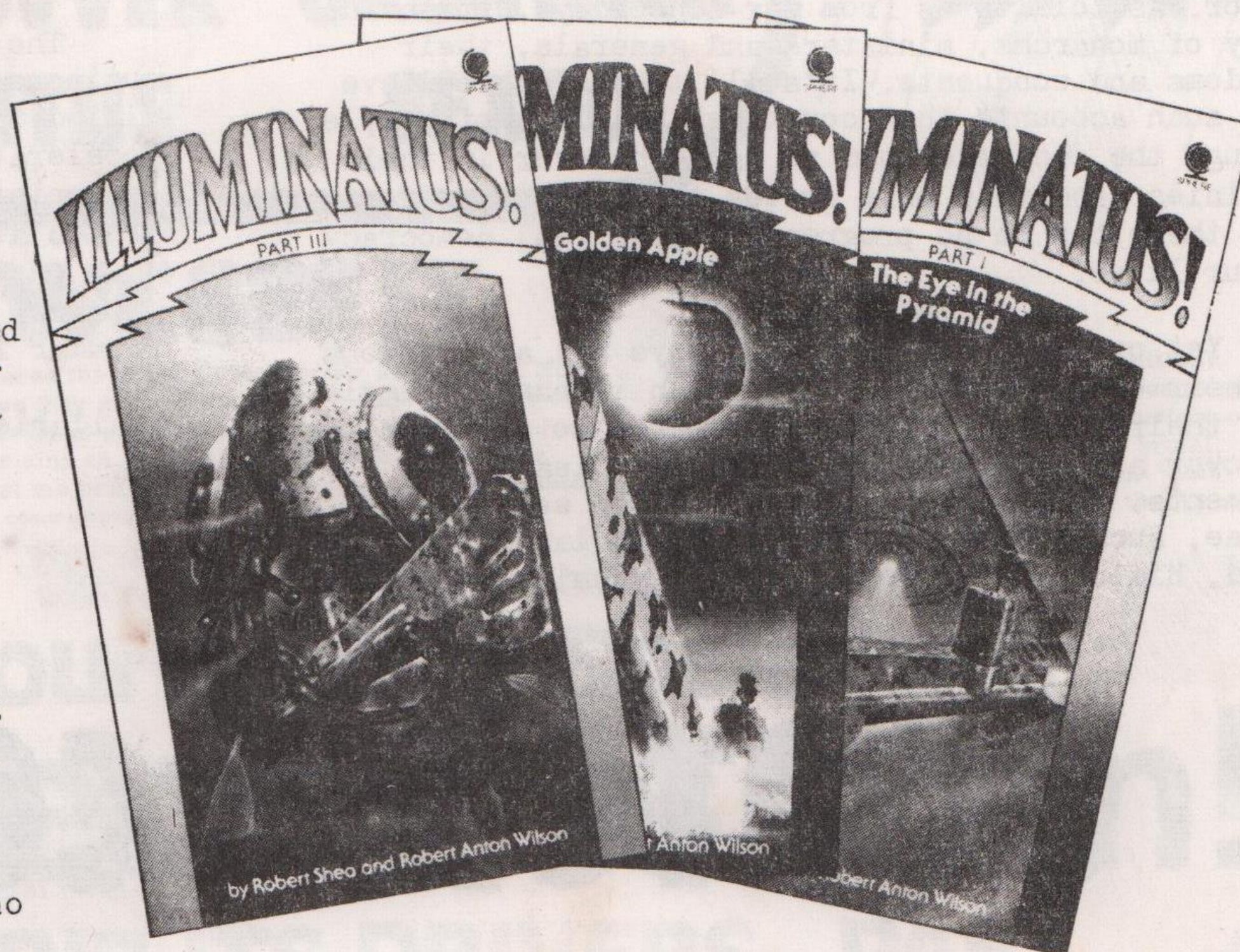
The book is deeply concerned with sex, especially in its mystical aspect, and with symbolism of the 'Earth Mother' variety. It falls down very badly here, having no feeling at all for the better aspects of modern attitudes to sexuality, especially those advanced by feminism. If one accepts that magic and mysticism are largely a product of social insecurity coupled with the desire of exploiting groups to cover their tracks, the very idea that sex is 'mysterious' in the first place is a profoundly chauvinistic outlook. And in the magical application of sex, what is merely a tendency in patriarchal society as a whole is developed to its logical conclusion; women are used as nothing more than a ritual object, and even the male orgasm is only incidental to the affirmation of male power. Stylistically, the passages dealing with sex are in the central tradition of American semi-pornographic writing. Even the concern with the Earth Mother figure is very much a male visualisation of the 'power' of women; it explicitly denies women an independent, self-conceived vision of their sexuality and social importance. And in so doing it loses any erotic force it might have otherwise had.

The authors demonstrate a considerable affection for what they term 'right-wing anarchism', a characteristically American obsession. It's really no more than a yearning for a romanticised version of the

old pioneer days, in reaction to modern corporatism. And of course the main argument against the viability of an equalitarian laissez-faire system is precisely that an approximation to that society gave birth to the American nightmare in the first place. But here again the authors have been blinded to the power of social and economic forces by the apparent omnipotence of 'ideas'.

Yet ultimately, perhaps, these criticisms themselves demonstrate the power of the novel's central thesis; to some people, it will be deeply liberating, to others profoundly reactionary. But it makes yer laff 'n it makes yer think. Which can't be bad.

Bob H.



COWGIRL BLUES

Even Cowgirls Get The Blues by Tom Robbins

Sissy Hankshaw has the biggest thumb in the world. She is also the world's greatest hitch-hiker (the only person ever to teach a parakeet to hitch). She earns a living as a model, being photographed for advertisements selling vaginal deodorants. She works for the Countess, a male gay misogynist tycoon who has made a fortune by exploiting women's sexual anxieties. Until one day Sissy visits the Rubber Rose Ranch in Dakota, which the Countess runs as a health farm for his rich clients. There she becomes involved in a very unusual workplace occupation. Inspired by the militant cowgirl Bonanza Jellybean, the female ranch hands evict the Countess and his cronies (making use of extremely novel tactics) and set up the first self-managed feminist goat ranch in the West. But, as it happens, the nearby Siwash Lake is where America's only surviving flock of whooping cranes drop off on their annual migration from Texas to Canada. Are these rare and beautiful birds to remain in the care of the cowgirls, or of the state? The US government tackles the issue with the same delicate approach and humane concern that it showed in South East Asia. The cowgirls find themselves in bloody confrontation with a force of deputies and FBI men, armed to the teeth.

This is a delightful book; funny, moving and subversive. It contains a beautiful erotic passage about lesbian love, and some fine satire that tears American capitalist values to shreds. Some of the hippy-trippy philosophising needs to be taken with a large pinch of salt, however.

D.A.



Mutinies : 1917-1920 by Dave Lamb

History, it is said, is the propaganda of the victor. As told to us from our schooldays, it is the story of monarchs, ministers and generals, their kingdoms and conquests. It's all too easy to believe from such accounts that countless millions of people through the centuries had no hand whatever in their destinies. And this only serves to convince us further that there can be no progress towards real democracy in our lives.

Yet ordinary people have always had aspirations of their own, sometimes engaging in intense struggle with their rulers. If we are prepared to look, we may discover a rich tradition of popular, leaderless movements, making their own demands on society. Of course, such events are 'untidy', and largely unrecorded. Historians prefer to ignore them; politicians

and generals attempt to cover them up as far as possible. And of all forms of struggle, perhaps the greatest official silence surrounds the question of mutiny in the armed forces.

From 1917 onwards, mutiny was rife amongst almost all the European armies. And yet most people in Britain today are completely unaware of the upheavals which occurred within the British and Commonwealth forces. Dave Lamb's pamphlet sets out to redress the balance. From the mutiny at Etaples camp in the summer of 1917 to the burning of Luton Town Hall in 1919, a wealth of evidence is presented on the rebellious spirit of the troops, without, however, attributing any motives to the mutineers other than those they themselves expressed at the time.

The pamphlet highlights the role that the mutinous mood of the men played in the collapse of the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War, and in accelerating the post-war demobilisation. And, while recognising that the mutinies occurred within conscript armies at the end of a singularly bloody conflict, it goes on to discuss the wider implications for the apparent invincibility of the state in the face of popular insurrection.

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c/o EOA Books,
34, Cowley Road, Oxford
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123 Lathom Road London E6

SCOTCH CORNER

Aberdeen in the General Strike by Liz Kibblewhite and Andy Rigby. Aberdeen People's Press, May 1977. 40p each inc. postage. 32 pp.

A well-produced little pamphlet with several photos, it has two introductory chapters on the Aberdonian background and the General Strike itself, leading on to the recollections of five individuals involved in the 1926 events. It can be seen as part of the movement which is trying to bring history back to the people who helped to make it and who live out its consequences, instead of leaving it as the exclusive preserve of academics. Of course, the "vox pop." approach is not without its pitfalls; it is interesting to note how the accounts of the five men interviewed here diverge, and how the discrepancies may link up with their political affiliations or lack of them. But the subjective impression can sometimes tell us more about what was going on than pages of statistics, as well as being easier to read. There are Bibliographical Notes at the end providing signposts to more formal study.

Scottish Women's Liberation Journal Vol.1, No.1, Spring 1977. 25p + postage.

"Feminist, non-sectarian journal" which the editorial collective hope will be approximately bi-monthly. Articles on Women, the British Economy and Scottish Politics; Women in Rural Scotland; Feminism and Socialism; Abortion; Reviews, Poems, News, etc. Non-feminist libertarians may find points of disagreement with individual contributors, but articles are well-considered and literate, without the self-conscious scrappiness of some women's liberation productions. Looks as if it could fulfil its intention of providing a much-needed forum for debate for the women's movement in Scotland. (Subscription £1 for 4 issues, 50p p&p from Sally Henry, 23 Marchmont Crescent, Edinburgh).



The Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts : Report from Scotland by Margaret Marshall and Chris Aldred. Aberdeen People's Press (163 King Street, Aberdeen) 45p + 15p postage (bulk orders of ten or more post free).

Like the Oil Report from the same publishers, this is a highly competent and useful piece of research. It is limited, in the sense that it does no more than it sets out to do, focusing on an examination of how the Acts have operated in Scotland; there is no critique of the work ethic, and little consideration of the social factors preventing many women from entering the labour market on equal terms, sometimes from entering it at all (incompatibility of full-time employment with responsibility for the care of children). Nor is there discussion of how we regard the law as such, or any lingering qualms libertarians might have about invoking it. The view of the pamphlet - perhaps too obvious to be spelt out - seems to be that women at work need to use this weapon, defective as it is, to the best effect against the unfair treatment that they encounter, and Appendix 1 gives advice on how to go about it. The authors amply demonstrate the emptiness of the anti-feminist argument "You've got equal pay now", showing the extent to which "Women are the low-paid workers of this country" and detailing case histories which point up the "Catch 22 of the system which rates their jobs and skills of less value, simply because they are done by women".

L.W.