

# INTTERROOMS

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*in progress*





GAYS AND THE LEFT

"The ultimate success of all forms of oppression is our self-oppression. Self-oppression is achieved when the gay person has adopted an internalised straight peoples' definition of what is good and bad."

So began the section on self-oppression contained in the London Gay Liberation Front manifesto. For many it summed up all that was new and important in gay liberation - the realisation that inasmuch as we are agents of our own oppression, so we have the power to overcome it. With this in mind the Gay Liberation Front and gay left were born. Its formation was an optimistic response to its pessimistic analysis of the position and importance of homosexuality on the extreme and revolutionary left. Until its formation, it had been a feature of gay liberationists to support other causes as open homosexuals in the hope of gaining support in return. The result of this policy of "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine" tended to leave gay backs obstinately itching. By the mid-'70s the spirit and enthusiasm of gay pride had evaporated leaving behind the self-oppressive assumption that our participation would only discredit a 'serious' cause. With this in mind, it is clear that while optimistic in theory, the foundation of the GLF was in itself a recognition of the defeat of the gay liberationist movement, and an attempt to rally its more radical elements to stem this tide and to realistically assess what had gone wrong. This assessment led to a challenging conclusion and took the following form:

The 'sexual revolution' of the late 60s had given rise to the belief that capitalist society could really be shocked into total acceptance of homosexual equality, but the worsening economic ~~crisis~~ crisis of the early 70s and its social repercussions had proved this to be a false hope.

Those with the energy left to commit themselves saw social liberation as the road to sexual (gay) liberation, and channeled their energies towards socialism and the revolutionary or 'hard' left and in particular the far left parties. This too proved a futile exercise. The case of the International Socialists (S.W.P.) Gay Group between 1972-75 provides a good example as gay members were shunned by their 'comrades' in response to the Central Committee's instructions and were themselves instructed to cease work with the GLF on the grounds that they were placing their sexuality above the interests of the "...political organisation of which they are nominal members."

The position of gays was unlike that of any other minority. The issues of black and womens liberation was being taken seriously and support for them interpreted as necessary to break down intra-class divisions, while homosexuality, if not being seen as a bourgeois deviation arising from the social idiosyncrasies of capitalism was a matter of self-indulgent lifestylism that diverted from the revolutionary struggle. In line with this interpretation was a hostility to gay participation in political action - far from representing the opinion of an oppressed group, they discredited political action by trivialising its importance i.e. using serious political issues as an opportunity to flaunt their indulgent character.

The increasing importance of black and womens issues on the far left provided another example of the contempt for gay liberation. There was no sudden realisation that women and blacks were oppressed, they always had been. But once they began organising for themselves they presented a challenge to the recruitment plans of the parties. This alternative focal point for militants had to be recuperated by the parties, and their cynical adoption of black and womens issues was a calculated attempt to destroy the challenge and boost their own membership. Despite the growth of the gay movement (parallel to and gaining inspiration from the womens movement) the parties still did not want to soil their hands with sexualist politics. What liberal attitudes of tolerance and sympathy for the sexually 'deviant' that did exist succeeded only in crushing the spirit of gay socialists and increasing their isolation from each other and the revolutionary movement.

The faith of gay militants in socialism was undoubtedly shaken. The success of social revolution could in no way be seen as a guarantee of gay liberation, if the attitude of straight 'comrades' was anything to go by, but since capitalism could never offer an alternative, socialism came to be seen less as a salvation than a prerequisite for liberation. Thus the GLF was to see itself as a kind of 'pressure group' to keep homosexuality on the revolutionary agenda. It was also to provide the only real alternative for revolutionary gays to the patronage and cynicism of the left milieu. Its premise was defiant. The emergence of the gay movement independent of the 'socialist' organisations (where many gay revolutionaries were as frightened of 'coming out' as they might be at work) was of great importance because it would break down the guilt and fear

that results from isolation and enable gays to confidently and firmly reject the sympathy offered by 'comrades' and demand solidarity with the struggle against gay oppression.

By the early 80s, in line with the general down turn in class confidence and militancy, the last real remnant of the gay left effectively died. The GLF had played an important role in making homosexuality an issue revolutionaries could not ignore, but despite recent efforts to revitalise regional socialist gay organisations, nothing has arisen to take its place as the focal point of gay revolutionary activism. Its loss is now being felt. As the crisis of capitalism deepens so the revolutionary movement concentrates more and more on the factories and workplaces. At a time when reaction against gays is growing, they once again find themselves becoming a peripheral issue largely irrelevant to the struggle. Without the focus of the GLF, and the gay left the movement has retreated through fear and isolation into its conservative introspective ghetto.

I do not believe that the social revolution guarantees my liberation, or even makes it that much more likely. There will of course be an explosion of social attitudes during its course, but this shake up need not necessarily include an understanding or acceptance of gay liberation. I do however believe that socialism offers the only real hope for my liberation, but I do not believe I should suspend my struggle until capitalism is overthrown.

Traditionally, the anarchist/libertarian movements have been more responsive to minority issues than the far left has been, but now in line with the far left, the current trend is to concentrate on the workplace and economic issues. There is also a tendency to see those who do not follow this trend as engaging in diversory or single issue campaigns that are peripheral or irrelevant to the main struggle. Thus not only are gays once again being dropped by the revolutionary movement, but should any autonomous regrouping of gay revolutionaries take place, it is likely to be greeted with the same disdain and negativity that is currently reserved for groups like the Animal Liberation Front. Have all the gains of the GLF been lost? Will gays at some stage in the future have to fight from scratch all over again for recognition independent of comradesly tolerance and sympathy? If you let it, yes! Gays on the left are no longer strong enough to keep reminding you that we exist.

However much the crisis worsens, the revolutionary movement must not lose sight of the importance of sexual politics in the course of its support of workers resistance against capitalism. People do more than just work in factories and go on strike! Some workers are gay too! If we are ever to see a social revolution then we must as a movement be prepared to argue openly, to write about and to talk about issues such as homosexuality and gay liberation. They are neither peripheral or irrelevant, and a recognition of their validity is vital if we are going to combat the prejudices that have so far successfully prevented the essential unity of the working class.

A.F. (Stoke)

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Wolverine - Gay voices of Hostility. March 1984

includes :  
Gays and the Labour Party, Social Workers, Police, Gays & Working Class.  
Generally a Come Out Fighting Approach.  
20p from Box 17, C1 Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E1.

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Towards A Gay Communism - Mario Meili. Pirate Productions

40p plus 17p postage. Unpopular Books, C1 Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall  
London E1.

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Capitalism has entered a new epoch of crisis, characterised from the viewpoint of the macro-economic data as a substantial stagnation, while on the plain of social organisation intense dysfunctionality is manifest. Given this situation, a few "comrades" are at the point of celebrating the funeral orations of a dying capitalism. For them the crisis is the proof that capital itself is the limit, a barrier to its own development, but these catastrophist visions have their own limits in their under-valuing of those intense processes of transformation which characterise this phase of general stagnation; processes which could lead to a fresh renewal of the dynamics of the development, accumulation, and valorization of capital.

Today we are facing a powerful restructuring of the technical and social division of labour, that is to say of all the social and productive areas of the capitalist system. From the strictly productive viewpoint there is a reorganisation of big productive units which get dismantled and informa-computerised, and this especially in the big imperialist metropolises. Consequently there is a diffusion of small and medium sized companies, on the one hand there is a destruction of living labour by the robotised line, and on the other the expansion of the underground economy of superexploitation. The result is the decomposition and stratification of the proletariat and its organisational weakening, all with the purpose of reimposing the political and social control of capital over the productive and reproductive process. On the capitalist side this tendency is called the new industrial revolution, where "revolution" means the computerisation of social life, the application of new technology within the relations of production and at the same time the expulsion from the labour process of massive amounts of labour power.

In any case it's clear that the tendency of capital in this particular phase is the attempt to reconstruct that which in economics is called the "Phillips Curve", that is; when unemployment rises, wages fall and the quota of profit goes up. Following what the new economists of the Reaganian school suggest, the logic is that a certain level of unemployment is necessary and that only by manoeuvring it can the stability of prices be obtained and competitiveness within the international economic system be recovered. This demonstrates how vain and illusory are the discourses about full employment from all The Left. To fight today for the right to work means to develop mechanisms of selection and division within the class, mechanisms of the counterposition of waged and unwaged. This Labourist and productivist ideology plays the same game as capital, especially now.

What we are facing is a return to the primary capitalist values; restoration of the principle of competitiveness, of hierarchy, of the self-made man, For the re-

affirmation of individualism, in other words, for capital it matters to redefine the mode, the cycle, and the relations of production, paying attention at the same time to redefining human beings and their approach to reality. On the level of social relations the reactionary attack qualifies itself through the ideological bombardment in favour of the return to traditional values, in England "Victorian Values", in America the culture of the "Frontier", to be precise, the culture of the resurrection of the market. The new man that the technological revolution will produce is one who will fight and compete with others to ensure for himself the dignity of a job. Man subsumed by the computer: what dignity? All this is crowned by the principle of faith imposed in the most vulgar and stupid manner: faith in the future, in man, in providence, and.....in the big economic recovery.

The impression is that from the end of the seventies we are witnessing the definitive failure of Keynesian economic policies based on public intervention, indeed an attack on public spending is clearly visible in the new trends in economic policy suggested by Reagan. So in the name of "laissez faire" and supply side economics there will be no more finance for welfare and social security, and at the same time less tax for industry with the function of increasing the incentive for investment, particularly in the small company sector. In Britain, for instance, the present govt. has introduced a series of measures which go in this direction, one of which is the "Government Guaranteed Loan Scheme" introduced in 1980. "This project has been the most successful financial facility introduced by the govt., £400m has been lent to more than 12,000 companies through the agency of some 30 banks. The govt. provides the banks dealing with the scheme with a guarantee of over 80% of the loans provided -up to £75,000- and charges a 3% premium for so doing. With this guarantee the 30 banks administering the scheme have managed to lend the bulk- £400m- of the £600m which is earmarked as

the scheme's budget until next June." (Banking World, Jan. '84). Evidently this is a sign of the success that the teachings of Reagan and of the IMF are having on the Thatcher govt. ; in America the dismantling of public spending regarding social security has caused cuts in Welfare, Health, Education, Housing, leaving 13m unemployed as at the time of the Great Depression.

The attack on public spending demonstrates itself to be an attack on all the forms of subsidy for consumption, there is an evident desire by Capital to shift the composition of demand from consumption to investment, this is because it is now clear that the crisis in which capital finds itself is the product of the excessive expansion of social demand by the proletariat, a demand that capital cannot control any more.

For this reason one speaks of the crisis of the Keynesian system, which translated means: the breaking of the pact of social productivity caused by the increasing ability of the workers to refuse to collaborate, by transferring resources from capital to themselves they impede the possibility for capital to invest in the productive and reproductive spheres. The requirement for capital is nothing other than the need to reimpose control over working class demand and over productivity, and don't try to tell us that the crisis is purely economic ! Bollocks to Labourites and to whoever else wants to believe it! This crisis is one of pure capitalist incapacity to run and contain the class struggle within the confines of its development.

Therefore, in approaching the problem of the crisis in terms of the class it's clear that capital is continually forced into the position of defence against the irreducible contradiction represented by class antagonism, that is the antagonism of proletarian needs against capitalist development. So it was in the thirties when the growth of workers power obliged capital to accept the conditions imposed by the class struggle: that is, permanently increasing real wages, full employment and unemployment benefits. At that time the problem for capital was that real wages and other forms of income for consumption did not fall sufficiently to restore profits, thus rendering investment impossible. The Keynesian solution, or the "demand oriented" solution, demonstrated itself to be a boomerang for capital because the increasing strength of the workers obliged the govt. not only to support incomes with new social programs, but also to support wage demands: therefore it was true that demand was increasing but demand itself was the origin of the crisis for capital! In the Keynesian vision the central element was the recognition that

the central element was the recognition that wages and profits could increase at the same time as productivity and product grew, here is the knot of the contradiction that even Keynes could not resolve: the contradiction between labour and capital. Thus power is divided between command and resistance, and social relations are organised/broken by work and the struggle against work, and production is not purely a neutral dynamic "economy", but the site of continuous conflict between two hostile powers. In fact once we see capitalist society not any more as ~~the~~ a place where capitalist interests have indisputable command but as the terrain of combat: the clash between work and its refusal; once it is recognised that, as struggle, one organises those same resources that are the substance of the development of capital and that proletarian needs have an autonomy from the command over work, the problem immediately becomes one of the deconstruction, disarticulation and destruction of the capitalist relation.

The conclusions that can be drawn are:

- a) The valorization and accumulation of capital is by now strictly connected with the restructuration of the labour processes both in the terrain of computer science and information technology.
- b) The Marxist hypothesis is still true according to which the processes of organisational transformation imply an increasingly real subordination of labour to capital, with a continuous expropriation of workers and the periodic creation of vast industrial reserve armies which pressurise the employed work force.
- c) The increasing complexity of the system is evident, a complexity that is peculiar to capital, but which unfortunately cannot and will not contain the thousands of variables of the class struggle. The time of the capitalist state always runs behind that of the class! The hourly unit of measurement has entered into crisis! We have plenty of time.....

Lia

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AT THE 'INTERCOM' CONFERENCE 28/29th JAN 1984  
SATURDAY SESSION

1. The first issue that required resolving, especially in view of the attendance at the conference of LO and DB from 'Anarchist Arguments' publishers of a recently produced pacifist pamphlet arguing the case for entrism into CND, was the amendment to point 5 in 'Intercoms' minimum political basis.

This amendment, which read;

" Opposition to all capitalist and nationalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. Opposition to all joint work with these organisations, including participation in front organisations such as CND."

was put forward by the 'Wildcat' group and included as a recommendation in their reply to Tampa Workers Affinity Group (see Intercom 4)

After some discussion involving much criticism of CND, pacifism, the concept of unilateralism and entryism all of those present with the exception of LO and DB approved the amendment, upon which LO and DB left the conference.

2. The groups present reported on their recent activities summarising reports already included in 'Intercom' 4, bringing them up to date and adding their feelings about problems facing them now and in the near future.

Comrades from London apologised for the late production of 'Intercom' 4 and explained some of their difficulties. In particular there was a problem in that the few individuals involved in 'Intercom' were not in one group but came from a variety of social/political groups. Only 4 out of the five regular participants in 'Workers Playtime' were committed to Intercom, so it was not possible for that group to take collective responsibility for 'Intercom' as had been suggested. Various criticisms were made of the London comrades lack of organisation, particularly by members of 'Wildcat'. It was agreed that London comrades needed to give this matter further serious consideration.

3. There was a discussion on whether revolutionaries individually and/or collectively have any role to play in proposing concrete goals which could help develop the class struggle. (see discussion paper from L'Insecurite Sociale in 'Intercom' 4)

Everyone seemed to reject the idea of a 'programme of demands' presented to the class as a whole by the revolutionary group/party, in the form of a minimum reform programme or transitional demands on the trotskyist model. We also agreed that it was ridiculous to enter the marketplace of political party competition each trying to outdo the other with the most militant demand, viz. 'for a 20 rise' instead of the union demand for a &10 rise etc. After some further discussion a degree of agreement seemed to emerge on the need for revolutionaries to put forward ideas and goals for developing, extending and uniting struggles in practice and not just theory. For instance suggesting joint action by groups of workers facing similar problems, arguing for direct deputations of workers on strike to other workplaces, independent strike committees etc. In general it was felt that the workers involved in a particular struggle would make up their own demands in the circumstances prevailing at the time, and that there was little that revolutionaries could usefully contribute as revolutionaries. Some comrades however, thought that where revolutionaries had a real influence they might put forward certain demands aimed at unifying a struggle (perhaps posing 'no job losses from closure of GLC' against the leftist 'save the GLC'). Others considered that any demands as such, which were put forward could only act to fix the struggle at a particular point. The matter was left unresolved.

'INTERCOM' CONFERENCE SATURDAY SESSION CONTINUED.....

4. Another discussion took place on whether 'Intercom' had a role to play in developing a national organisation of revolutionaries.

'Wildcat' members generally argued that it had and that further more it should assist in 'centralising' our political development and activity.

There was some debate along the usual lines of 'centralism' v 'federalism'. It was pointed out that the process of working class struggle was a centralising one as the most recent experience of Poland showed quite clearly. Why did we think revolutionary organisation should be any different? It was also stressed that it was political centralisation as a process and not its technical form, which would vary according to the level of class struggle, number of revolutionaries and their distribution etc., that mattered - ie. collective responsibility, collective commitment to develop our politics, not simply letting everyone go their own way.

It was also argued that national organisation could only be based on strong functioning local groups - no one was in favour of creating national and international organisations by proclamation, which would be mere empty shells.

However, even if a national organisation did eventually emerge through 'Intercom', there would still, almost certainly be several different political groups within the same 'milieu' and still a need for a joint discussion bulletin such as 'Intercom'.  
MB Manchester)

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Communist Bulletin No. 6 - March 1984

- includes: Central Scotland, Henry Robb, Scott Lithgow, GCHQ, Warrington, Nalgo, Riots against IMF austerity, No to both blocs, East & West (by Tampa Workers Affinity Group), On Class Consciousness, ICC/CWO debate, Middle East.

50p inc. postage. (subs £2.00 -4 issues) Box 85, 43 Candlemakers Row, Edinburgh.

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Workers Playtime No. 7 - March/April 1984

- includes : GCHQ, Miners, Talbot, Central America.

20p plus large sae (subs £2.00 - 6 issues) Box WP, C1 Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E1.

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Ford Workers Bulletin No.4. March 1984.

"We stand for international solidarity and understanding in the struggle against Ford. We're for democratic unions in which the rank and file have the power - not the bureaucrats in their comfortable offices. That's the only way we'll rebuild the trade unions. And we're against racism and discrimination against women - and all other measures that divide us as workers."

94pp of accounts of the restructuring at Fords and the militant response. Not sure of the price - available from Ford Workers Group, Room 265, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

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INTERCOM CONFERENCE MINUTES - Sun. 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. 1984

The Sunday afternoon session of the conference of the conference dealt with the two remaining items on the agenda —

- 1) The possibilities of publishing old texts and other publishing projects.
- 2) The continuation of the vexed question of the organisation of Intercom.

There was a proposal by the Wildcat comrades to reprint a text from "Solidarity" (the newspaper of the Antiparliamentary Communist Federation) which dealt with the role of unions and shop stewards during the 2nd. World War in a Glasgow Royal Ordnance factory. The text, which contains an extremely good critique of the role played by the unions during the strike (when indeed, strikes were outlawed by Order 1305), would appear as a pamphlet with a critical introduction which would concentrate on the illusions that the comrades of the APCF had about the possibilities of recuperating the Stewards movement. There was a further proposal from Fabian (London) that texts written by .... Berneri regarding the Italian CP and unions role in the 1943 strike wave in Italy should also be considered for republication. The comrades generally were extremely sympathetic to this proposal but the general feeling was that the project would become too long and the work involved become too demanding for the resources available.

The discussion went on to talk about the possibility of a pamphlet on war which would develop an integral appreciation of the bourgeoisie's war plans, focusing specifically on NATO and American military strategy. A section on CND was envisaged. It was generally decided to look into these possibilities but no definite provisions were made for this pamphlet. Regarding the APCF pamphlet, close contact with Glasgow was thought to be a necessity and MB (Manchester) urged all the comrades to "prod" Manchester who are co-ordinating the production of this pamphlet. Facsimiles of the text are to be sent to all the groups.

The Organisation of Intercom

The London Comrades were asked if they could see the possibility of creating an Intercom group which would merge with the other groups and create a national network. The London comrades proposed that they would (as individuals) participate to produce to the next issue of Intercom. H (Manchester) intervened to say that this was the same situation that had prevailed until now, that it was not a move forward but backward, that what was being proposed was an individual commitment to intercom work when what Wildcat were looking for was the move towards group participation and the creation of a national group.

R. (M'chester) replied to the above by saying that what the London comrades were proposing was a realistic assessment of where they all stood at this point in time, that this for the moment was all that all the individuals could offer.

A (Manchester) intervened to make political distinctions regarding individual and group commitment. He emphasised the point that INTERCOM could not continue on its present basis and that what happened to Solidarity for Social Revolution would happen to INTERCOM.

A (Stoke) intervened to say that surely groups became more politicised through over participation in joint projects.

MS (Manchester) made the point that none of the groups in London would commit themselves to Intercom and in this case an individual commitment was useless and in fact the groups and the individuals were not realising what Intercom was created for.

A (Manchester) attached himself to this question of some individuals being for the project and others not by saying that the individuals should fight politically in their group for their participation in Intercom.

MB(Manchester) said "There's a possibility that perhaps two groups in the London area or individuals from those groups could participate. For example, there's the LWG. What is their position?"

D(LWG) The LWG is not really a group at the moment but a forum of discussion but there's a possibility of solidifying the LWG. The creation of an Intercom group could be an impetus to this.

MB(Manchester) intervened to ask to broaden the discussion away from London's problems and he asked the Glasgow group (Practical Anarchy) for their political position on the Intercom project.

K(Practical Anarchy) "We've had even less discussion than the London group. I'm preparing a report of this conference and on that basis we'll have a discussion and gauge the reaction to the proposals."

A(Wildcat) "We discussed the proposals for the future of Intercom in the last Wildcat meeting and we feel that the project could fill a valuable role. Intercom could act as a liaison between groups. We see it as a joint effort between groups, but more particularly as the beginning of a national grouping. What is needed is definite channels of communication between issues of Intercom. We very much want to see an increase in the political commitment of the groups involved. In the next issue it's vital that we see all the groups writing to say exactly where their politics are at."

MS(Wildcat) "I'm committed to groups of revolutionaries discussing with each other to find out our differences."

MB(Wildcat) intervened to say that what the London comrades have said and where they stand reflected what was real. It wouldn't be a problem if the groups already committed to Intercom constituted something real and tangible. Because the Glasgow group and Milton Keynes (Black Star Collective) are not yet committed and given the provisional commitment of London the problems arise. One conference is limping along to the next. This is not a situation that can go on indefinitely. As it stood the Manchester comrades would have to go back to the group and discuss the Intercom project in the light of this conference. The reality is that there is essentially no commitment. Wildcat's commitment hinged on a commitment to a national project. Personally, he felt, that if there was definite commitment from Glasgow and London, Intercom could carry on.

A(Careless Talk) intervened to say that he would like to see Intercom carry on even in the old format.

S(Careless Talk) intervened to say how disappointing the lack of commitment was and that it would be a bad move if no commitment was made to carry on the project.

A(Wildcat) contrasted the dichotomy between the principles of centralisation needed for workers to transcend national frontiers which he said everybody at the conference espoused and the reality of the inability to get a commitment for even national co-ordination. It showed up the shocking state of affairs and he thought it might be best to recognise this state of affairs and to go away and think about it.

MB(Wildcat) suggested that the conference should attach itself to those groups and individuals who were committed to the project.

A(Careless Talk) "Will there be another conference in 3 months?"

MS(Wildcat) "If the Intercom project is to be relaunched it will need not just technical production but discussion in Intercom."

K(Practical Anarchy) intervened to say that he thought it important to bring out the next issue and to see what happened from there.

F(London) intervened to say that it was political input and not technical production which was important.

## CONCLUSION

The conference more or less came to a stalemate regarding this issue. The general feeling was that the groups and individuals should go away and reflect on their perspectives. It was decided that another issue of Intercom be produced by the London comrades with a better political co-ordination and technical production; that groups

should write on their political perspectives for the next issue. It was also decided that the group in Milton Keynes should be written to and that close contact should be maintained with the group in Glasgow.

On this basis a new conference for Intercom was proposed to be held in Keele on the 28th/29th April 1984 and that Intercom be brought out by the beginning of April (Deadline March 16th). with the relevant texts.

L(London)

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### THE FUTURE OF INTERCOM

I feel it is necessary to respond to Wildcat's prognosis for Intercom - that if some "properly constituted groups" don't emerge to become some sort of backbone for Intercom, it should be discontinued. Such a backbone, they hope, would constitute the basis for some sort of "national organisation". I completely reject the thinking behind this. While I sympathise with the impatience felt by the comrades in Wildcat I see patience or lack of it as a subjective and immediate basis for activity. We should address ourselves to the question is there a need for Intercom.? (This should be answered both subjectively and objectively).

My answer is that there is. There are various groups around the country (and abroad) anxious to find others that share their rejection of capitalist society. Contact amongst us helps us to overcome our individual isolation and also strengthens our ability to struggle against class society and to understand how it functions, how it can be overthrown and to develop our viewpoint of communism. Intercom is a response to this need. It is unique in Britain as an attempt to create an open discussion bulletin around some minimal points. It can help to open up a movement which is still closeted in ideological cubbyholes.

Amongst us there are various differences - political differences, differences in terms of experience, differences in terms of emphasis. These differences interact. I would hate to see Intercom reduced to a "debating journal" i. e. an arena where we witness the defence of entrenched ideological positions in some sort of "battle of ideas". This would merely bring together rigid tendencies under the headline of one publication. For those who desire such a debate, it would be better accomplished by different tendencies putting out their own magazines.

Such a debate, under the pretence of resolving political differences, underlines differences in levels of experience. Some of us have spent several years in the revolutionary milieu. We have developed our ability to manipulate concepts, to speak at meetings, to write. This advance in sophistication cannot be simply translated as an advance in class consciousness. Undoubtedly the growth of class consciousness does involve an increase in sophistication, but we cannot let this sophistication be substituted for it. The result of such a debate can often be the dominance of more experienced comrades and the inhibition of less experienced comrades. The inter-relation amongst more experienced comrades becomes the central activity complemented by the passivity of the others.

This can lead to a block - i. e. the need to overcome political differences and the need to overcome differences in experience mutually impede each other. The application of various artificial procedures such as libertarians continually come up with do not resolve this problem but institutionalise it. The point is that "a static critique and in particular one that doesn't learn lessons from its own practice, is only a mere caricature of a living critique". (A Communist Effort, p1). Through the inclusion of leaflets, reports of activities alongside theoretical pieces, reprints, Intercom can be useful in helping our general understanding of our own activity and how that activity can be extended. The two needs must become complementary. As our ideas become clearer and take on a more concrete form new-comers will be more readily drawn into participation in ongoing discussions.

This means rejecting any anti-intellectual pose or the avoidance of using abstract concepts. But we should be clear as to how and why a discussion has to be taken to an abstract level - i. e. usually to make a connection between things which at first glance seem unconnected.

The third difference - that of emphasis - can help in this process. It is useless to try to pick out one section of the working class (or even one aspect of their lives) as particularly revolutionary. Revolution will only happen when the working class converges from its separate categories as organised by capital (i. e. separate trades, separate regions/nations, unemployed/employed, black/white, male/female etc. etc.) Class unity is yet to be achieved - i. e. at present it is still an abstract concept. It is not going to be achieved by the continual repetition of the concept tagged onto the end of leaflets, or adopted as a substitute for analysis. It will come about through the radicalisation and subversion of social relations within and across separate categories. If revolutionaries restrict themselves to the most universal and abstract clarion calls for class unity, they are not only withdrawing from the real process of developing such unity - they are also withdrawing from the practical tasks of seizing control of their own life.

It is through our attitude to our own life that as individuals we contribute to the revolutionary movement. It is through our individual will to determine our own lives that the need for revolution is most clearly underlined - immediately we realise that the individual as such is weak, that individualist outbursts are readily treated by the state (the prisons and mental hospitals are filled with proletarians who made such individualist protests... and the cemeteries.)

Our individual circumstances thus give each of us our own emphasis in our fight against capitalist society. For some the workplace may constitute the major area of their life, for others it may be street culture, child-rearing. Cutting across these and intermingling with them are questions of gender and sexual determination by capitalist social relations. The development within and subversion of any of these categories starts to breakdown the categories themselves, as their inter-relationships become clearer.

But capitalism integrates the separate categories through the mediation of its specialists in representation: in the workplace the unions, in street culture various stars and trendsetters, amongst racial groups the "community leaders" etc. etc. These people and institutions have to be challenged and defeated.

Finally, our participation in a "political movement" which seeks to pose itself as revolutionary must challenge its limitation to a separate category of political discussion. Theory and practice have to be brought together in a class consciousness which is also a self-consciousness as regards our own activity. The movement must move. We don't want to be a stagnant fish pond where leftist-"communists" come fishing for their party fodder, or for matter anarcho-"communists" recruiting for their clandestine networks.

Richard Essex

## THE ORGANIZATION OF INTERCOM

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At the Intercom conference in January Wildcat argued strongly that there was no point in carrying on with producing the bulletin if there was a lack of commitment by anyone except ourselves and Careless Talk. The reasons for this are obvious - it would require from us a great deal of energy and time producing a bulletin whose aim was to provide a forum for different groups to elaborate and confront their political ideas within the agreed boundaries. If there was only two groups involved, what would be the point?? Our limited resources would be best used elsewhere putting our ideas out.

At the conference Wildcat was also adamant that the people in London who were interested in producing Intercom ( and thereby providing the means for it to continue ) must form themselves into a group to do this. This is because Intercom production is more than turning a duplicator handle every 3, 6 or 9 months with some friends: you happen to meet at work / down the pub / at an LWG meeting.

Regardless of the possible national unification of revolutionaries via the Intercom Project, there must be a political commitment to production of the bulletin by groups involved. Participation is a sign of agreement with 'Point 10': "Support for principled cooperation among revolutionaries and opposition to sectarianism". The ability to produce a serious discussion bulletin with the involvement of various groups; comes from the political commitment to debate and clarification of revolutionary communist positions, and dialogue with similar groups, ie the agreement that our aim of communist revolution is best served today by as much communication between revolutionaries as possible with regard to political discussions and developments. Also, particularly given our minute numbers, by some pooling of our resources, eg joint leaflets, swapping ideas etc.

### With regard to 'Intercom 4':

Not only was the physical production incredibly delayed to the confusion of others involved, including Wildcat, who didn't even know who to contact to find out why it hadn't reached Manchester, But some articles within it have no place in a bulletin concerned with the work - practical and theoretical - of revolutionary communists today when the working class is facing so many attacks, (or hopefully no place in print at all). 'Meditations on the Question of Organization' and the Historical Reprint concerned with "the Oberdada" are sickening in their frivolity, irrelevance and incomprehensibility. Their inclusion showed that the London production group failed to understand what Intercom is for. Hopefully this has now been remedied.

However, 'Intercom 4' did contain some useful material which would otherwise not have been published. Much of the debates were by groups not involved in the production of Intercom. It would be a positive development if participating groups took commitment to political discussion as seriously as for example, the Tampa Workers Affinity Group.

How should the Intercom discussion bulletin be organized and what should be included?

Wildcat has argued the need for the unification of revolutionaries elsewhere, my aim here is simply to answer the above questions.

Intercom should be produced quarterly so that groups involved must be willing to devote their resources to it, to meet this time schedule. This regularity is vital for a bulletin involving the exchange of ideas and information - otherwise discussions will take years, literally, and participants will become demoralised. If a group for some reason cannot reach the deadline, production should be handed over to another participating group.

Given the political commitment previously discussed, the criteria for including articles should be obvious, and so any repetitions of 'Oberdada'- type stuff avoided. It is assumed that groups will read and discuss Intercom and both reply to and raise new discussions whether producing a particular issue or not. (Wildcat realises that we have not done this enough in past issues). Also groups should include their recent propoganda and information on their activities in the class struggle.

Further, one of the main values of the bulletin is for each group to work out their political stance and present it in Intercom, so that differences between groups are honestly confronted and discussed openly. By this means it will become obvious whether a single organization based on clear political agreement of the Intercom groups, is possible or not.

It is also important to encourage more groups to join the project.

Formal communication between groups is desirable outside Intercom for exchanging information. And some projects require more immediate action, such as joint propoganda leaflets. Some tasks are best shared or distributed eg. the translation of foreign material is a specialist task.

The bulletin needs improved production. We are all obviously limited in our resources, but our aim is to spread our ideas, and so material should be accessible in its appearance and lay-out, aswell as content. A messy, badly typed and copied magazine which falls apart, will hardly give the impression of serious and organized people working for a social revolution. Some groups have access to printing facilities and it would be of great value to other groups to have access to these, both for Intercom production and other work. Finding out what can be done and where, should be a priority.

While political organization remains at its present level, responsibility to produce each issue rotating round participating groups seems the best practical method of actually getting the bulletin out. There is no problem in this method provided groups are actually politically committed to the task.

The value of a 'New Improved Intercom' as I've set out, would be immense in overcoming the lack of clarification and cooperation between groups and interested individuals, which has unfortunately characterized our movement. Our aim is to spread revolutionary communist ideas as widely as possible, and to increase our numbers. We must organize as efficiently as possible to do this, or else our commitment to social revolution is questionable. "The movement in itself and unrelated to the final purpose, the movement as an end in itself, is nothing; the final objective is everything." (Rosa Luxemburg, 'Reform or Revolution').

Hilary (Wildcat)

PEACE IN THE 80's ? SOME IDEAS FROM THE U. S. A.INTRODUCTION:

For the benefit of the groups involved with INTERCOM and readers alike we reproduce two interesting, and recently produced discussion documents sent to us by one of our American contacts - Red & Black Action, who hail from San Diego. RBA are a group of independent communists and anarchists seeking to build "an independent left based on mass-working class action and anarchist-marxism." These documents are aimed at the American peace movement in view of the forthcoming presidential elections. The main theme of the documents is "Worker-managed economic conversion." More familiar terminology would be alternative production to the armaments industry. In this country similar plans have been put forward by workers at Vickers and Lucas Aerospace. Although the chief exponents of such plans rarely, whilst advocating alternative peaceful production, seriously challenge the political/economic structure of capital. Sections of the peace movement in this country also adopt such a line, Campaign Against Arms Trade being the most noteworthy. (A reformist and pacifist grouping whose research into the arms industry and military expenditure provides an invaluable source of information). RBA attempt to go one step further, and for this reason we feel it is worthwhile reproducing their texts for further discussion in INTERCOM; whilst firmly believing ourselves, that the movement for peace must take on a class-struggle and anti-capitalist form if it is to be a serious oppositional force to the warfare state. And in addition to its anti-nuclear stance, war in general and militarism must be added to the agenda. The only way to abolish warfare etc. is to oppose and abolish the system which creates such evils. ie. world capitalism.

Document 1 is entitled "A New Peace Movement ? Liberal Disarmament Vs Radical Disarmament." Document 2, written by Peter Crespie of Red & Black Action, entitled, "What is Worker-Managed Economic Conversion ? Beyond 'Economism' and 'Legalism'.", enlarges on the subject.

BLACK STAR COLLECTIVE1. A NEW PEACE MOVEMENT ? LIBERAL DISARMAMENT VS RADICAL DISARMAMENT. A DISCUSSION PAPER BY RED & BLACK ACTION:

(This paper was written for the purpose of developing discussion. Originally addressed to the anti-nuclear disarmament movement, the paper touches upon the subject of building an anti-war movement for the 1980's that draws together the currently separate anti-nuclear, economic-conversion, anti-draft, anti-interventionist and anti-imperialist movements into a new peace movement.)

The disarmament movement, as it ~~now~~ stands now, is a liberal political force incapable of affecting the radical changes we must take up as our tasks for the remainder of the 1980's. What the movement means by "disarmament" is nuclear disarmament, and bilateral nuclear disarmament at that. Occasionally, and almost as an afterthought, the movement will talk about "economic conversion" and "non-intervention". But because the movement lacks a comprehensive and radical understanding of the issue of disarmament, it cannot integrate such concerns into its efforts, let alone grasp that "economic conversion" and "non-intervention" are not sufficient. The movement has the opportunity, before the 1984 elections, to take the first steps towards creating a radical disarmament movement, those steps being the initiation of unilateral disarmament and the linking of conventional war to nuclear war.

Why is the current nuclear disarmament movement liberal ? First, because of its own myopia, its incapacity to define a radical perspective for the issues it so ably champions. If the freeze was the movement's first step, then a "No First Strike" - with its failure to demand even the elimination of America's first strike weaponry and capabilities - is a pathetic second step. Second, because only 15% of the military budget goes for nuclear war. The rest goes for conventional war, in particular for paying and arming our proxies in Central America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia to fight in regional wars or against Third World self-determination struggles on behalf of the United States and its interests.

The first part of the document discusses the general principles of the project. It outlines the objectives and the scope of the work. The second part describes the methodology used in the study. This includes the selection of participants, the procedures followed, and the data collection methods. The third part presents the results of the study. These are discussed in the context of the research objectives and previous findings. The final part of the document provides a conclusion and discusses the implications of the study for future research and practice.

The results of the study indicate that there is a significant relationship between the variables studied. This finding is consistent with the theoretical framework proposed at the beginning of the document. The implications of these findings are discussed in detail in the following section.

The study has several limitations, which are discussed in the following section. These include the sample size, the duration of the study, and the potential for bias. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the phenomenon being investigated. The findings suggest that there is a need for further research in this area. This research could help to clarify the underlying mechanisms and provide more definitive answers to the research questions. The study also has practical implications for the field of study. The findings can be used to inform policy and practice, and to guide future research. The study is a contribution to the knowledge of the field and provides a foundation for further exploration.



The nuclear disarmament movement, in the next year and a half before the 1984 election, has an excellent opportunity to go beyond the Democrats, beyond liberal disarmament to a radical disarmament movement capable of confronting the militarism of both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. The above illustrates just the first two steps in creating such a movement. A radical disarmament movement, in turn, would be the beginning of a comprehensive anti-war movement. A new peace movement for the 1980's.

## 2. WHAT IS WORKER-MANAGED ECONOMIC CONVERSION ? BEYOND "ECONOMISM" AND "LEGALISM".

The term "economic conversion" is becoming popular in the progressive movement. It means, in its broadest definition, the conversion of military facilities, programs and personnel ( and those "private sector" industries and research facilities dependent upon the military through contracts and subsidies) to peaceful economic purposes by a "just" social process ultimately to create more socially constructive jobs. Worker Managed economic conversion simply insists that the workers themselves manage the process of economic conversion directly in order to insure that economic conversion is indeed carried through to peaceful ends. Before we develop why workers management is necessary to guarantee the success of economic conversion to peaceful purposes (in the face of the movements "economism" and "legalism"), a few things need to be said about the character of worker managed economic conversion.

Worker-managed economic conversion will arise, not out of the ossified and corrupt trade union structure, but out of labors rebellious rank-and-file. Despite the IAM and its president Winpensinger, the trade union movement under the AFL-CIO is staunchly anti-conversion and pro-military. This out-of-touch union leadership, in turn, has lost much of its remaining credibility with the trade union rank-and-file because of recent giveback policies to corporations in the face of the current economic crisis. The consequence of both economic crisis and ineffective union leadership is a growing rebellion amongst rank-and-file workers, which can succeed only if it develops rank-and-file workers councils within the present union structure capable of fighting their employers and their union leadership in order to eventually supercede both. As this rebellion develops in the 1980's we must be able to interject the issue of worker-managed economic conversion of the military/industrial/research sector for peace.

Worker-managed economic conversion will arise not out of a liberal communitarianism, but out of a radical movement for community control. All current perspectives on economic conversion assume that labor, "consumers", management, industry and government have the right to manage economic conversion jointly. This is nothing more than a soft-core corporativism (1), what one writer has called a "friendly fascism." It will surely kill economic conversion, for unless workers as a class dominate in the management of economic conversion, its peaceful ends will be subverted by labors "partners" in management, in particular capital, management and government. Workers, as the class at the point of production, have both the right and the power to manage economic conversion as a class. And when "community" or "social" needs are to be assessed, it is the needs and interests of the community's and society's working class majority that are put paramount under worker-managed economic conversion.

Immediately the issue of workers management will be attacked as "extremist" and "utopian!" On the contrary, economic conversion must be worker managed in order for it to succeed and cannot be considered "extremist" or "utopian" at all. The weaknesses of the current economic conversion movement - its "economism" and "legalism" - bears this out.

Currently, the conversion movement has an "economist" wing and a "legalist" wing. The "economist" wing claims that only economic issues (salaries, wages, job security, seniority) should be the focus of conversion work and they hope to guarantee economic conversion proposals by appealing solely to the bellies of workers through union contract secured by collective bargaining. The "economist" wing never questions the conversion of a highly exploitative, capital-dominated military and militarized sector of the economy into an equally exploitative, capital dominated "peace" economy. A ball-bearing factory is a ball-bearing factory under capitalism, (continued)

whether it produces for peace or for war, and "economism" fails to grasp that the workers themselves don't want things "the same as usual, only for peace". The "economist" wing totally fails to grasp that union contracts have never secured anything for working people that management, capital and government have not been able to whittle away or destroy. The power of the working class, as defined through its organization and consciousness, is what is required to insure any gains, including the success of economic conversion. And the power of the working class can achieve more than mere "bread-and-butter" successes.

The "legalist" wing is a little better. The "legalist" wing claims that federally passed laws are necessary first to ensure that military budget cuts are automatically subject to economic conversion and second so that the process of economic conversion can be made legislatively uniform and "just". This wing ignores that conversion of a military/ industrial/ research sector of the economy into a purely capitalist "peace economy" can neither be productive of justice nor peace, as capitalism is nothing less than a constant state of economic warfare that now and then militarizes. And the legalist wing fails to see that government regulation is inevitably circumvented, ignored, manipulated, or struck down for the sake of profit. Only when workers succeed in placing their interests above the interests of profit will economic conversion have a chance.

Neither the "economist" nor the "legalist" wings have adequate programs for economic conversion. Economic conversion must transform the highly exploitative, capital-dominated sector of the economy that I have labeled the military/industrial/research sector into a non-exploitative, labour dominated peace economy. Only worker-managed economic conversion can hope to accomplish this. Economic conversion must guarantee that the process of conversion is managed for the need and benefit of the community's and society's working class majority. Only worker-managed economic conversion can hope to achieve this. And economic conversion must avoid the pitfalls of "trade unionism", liberal communitarianism, "economism", and "legalism" for the strengths of rank-and-file rebellion, radical community control and fundamental social change. Only worker managed economic conversion can hope to grasp this.

In conclusion, it is understood that worker-managed economic conversion is a cornerstone to a revolutionary socialist movement for the U.S. Socialism, in which the working class as a class directly holds all social power through its worker councils, is the only system under which peace, let alone justice will flourish.

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(1) Corporativism was what Mussolini called his form of fascism.

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#### AFTERWORD:

These documents raise a few interesting points. They also give us an incite into the state of the American peace movement. (which to be quite honest we know little about). A lot of the proposals and suggestions offered by Red & Black Action are not strictly in keeping with the INTERCOM 'position'. But in saying this, RBA, in their correspondence with us, stress that they see the value of developing fraternal links with other communists and invite further discussion and debate. We feel that wider discussion, constructive criticism and observations through the pages of INTERCOM can serve this purpose. Thus helping RBA develop a clearer revolutionary position.

Such questions as "community provided and socially useful alternatives to military employment for unemployed youth." - job creation schemes? The role of the trade union movement needs further clarification from RBA comrades. Working "within the present union structure" - surely the anti-working class nature, structure and relationship with capital of the unions demands that working class struggle must be independent of, and fought outside of the trade union movement.

"Third world self-determination struggles", has a distinct odour of nationalism/national liberation movement about it. Is the true course toward the emancipation of the worlds toilers not one of internationalism - international class-struggle and solidarity? (continued)



moral refusal to participate in what is seen as a generalised insanity, and a strategic denial of the NATO worldview, where the USSR is regarded as a malevolent force waiting for its chance to dominate western Europe and then the world.

This latter aspect of the rejection reintroduces the basis of deterrence theory on another level though: just as deterrence theory relies on the construction of a nullity out of the opposing military arsenals of the super-powers, the rejection of deterrence theory carries out an equivalencing of the super-powers social systems, and wishes that they would just trust one another. Outside of putting certain policies into action obviously nothing can be proven, but certain traits would seem to show real differences relevant to a discussion of deterrence:

As far as the developed capitalist countries are concerned, the social system of the USSR is generalisable only by physical force, relying as it does on the ideological erasure of some aspects of capital (the market) and the denial of the continued existence of capitalism. This leaves in question whether or not this system is compelled by its internal developments (or even lack of them) to pursue expansionist policies.

The social system of the USA on the other hand can be generalised in a far easier way, even to the opposite camp as part of the 'Vodka-Cola' trade and the entire spectacle of imagery (from Hollywood stars to its more subtle components), and continues to operate in the cultural area more or less without disfunction, despite economic crises (which of course also affect the satellite states of the USSR).

(Where the third world countries are concerned the above conditions would seem to almost be reversed. However in these countries where conflicts indirectly involving the super-powers occur, what seems to occur is that the development of capital requires the removal of landowner elements and mass proletarianisation. Given the ideology of the free market and the seeming identity of landowner capital and capital, this process can fail to take place without coercive intervention, often that of a military elite which will complete the process under some leninist development ideology.)

Heller and Feher point out that it is important to bear in mind that, despite the existence of tyrannies offensive to the liberal consciousness in the camps of both super-powers, those of the USSR (or China) are the "only generalisable tyrannies".

The system of deterrence is not one that can be eternalised: it has its limits, some of these being the likely inability of the USSR to keep up with western technological developments in the long or even the medium term, given its almost complete lack of post-industrial equipment like computers), and the demonisation of the USSR in the popular consciousness in the USA. This latter, while having been produced or encouraged by the California Arms lobby, rapidly gains a momentum of its own in the receptive soil of the American religious groups, to the extent that it can unhinged and perhaps even outweigh any 'rational' decision making, on which the system depends. It was the perception in Europe of just this irrationality, more than the unratified SALT2 treaty, the NATO rearmament, the SS20s, or the invasion of Afghanistan, which led to the rebirth of the western peace movements.

The space in which we have the possibility of acting may then be ultimately bound up with the continuation of the system of deterrence, but we can note that, in the event of some revolutionary success in any part of the world, both super-powers would view it as a cancer to be cut out by any means including even radiotherapy!

Having invoked a representation of the world scenario within which we act, what possibilities can be seen in anti-nuclear movements?

Our non-participation, or lukewarm support, in this movement is due to the self-limiting act of the coalition, by which it prioritizes and stops at the unrealistic demand for the removal of the threat of nuclear annihilation (forgetting the existence of other military weaponry which could do the job, but biologically - like a soap powder!); from there it is no great step to the advocacy of the panacea of a Labour government - and this from a (..... missing line.....).

Adorno noted that "No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb, it ends in the total menace that organised mankind poses to organised man." (Negative Dialectics pg320). We cannot view nuclear weaponry as some kind of unhealthy growth in an otherwise healthy body (just as we cannot view Auschwitz in that way); a eulogy to the high points of Western culture that would be destroyed along with the race should the bomb be used is insufficient (as if any cultural production had any meaning outside of a specific human culture): the bomb cannot be un-invented nor can it be neutralised outside of a generalised neutralisation of precisely those aspects of the culture which leads to its creation, in the supercession of that culture.

The unfortunate irony appears, where the only realistic demands possible are those "unrealistic" demands for another society. The question expressed by the SI (Situationist International) towards the end of the last wave of the anti-nuclear movement when they talked of "life reduced to survival" then re-emerges. The question of how we want to live is one which is almost entirely missing from the existing movement (outside the feminist ideology). We have no use for slogans like "nothing is worth dying for", reducing life to zoology in an empty democratic (or demographic) humanism which stands (or kneels) opposite any kind of real human autonomy.

In this and other aspects of the moral opposition there are aspects of Christianity, which emphasise the supposed morality while downgrading theoretical and practical clarity in the movement: turning the other cheek, (in unilateralism), the bearing witness (in peace camps), the carrying of crosses to Aldermaston at Easter for the sake of an unheeding humanity, the die-in. In these actions, and in others like the jostling of hands around targets (out, demons out in another time) or along roads between bases, the symbolic nature of the demonstrations takes precedence: what matters is how they are represented by the media (and of course misrepresented), not the creation of new relations between the participants and with their environment, nor the transgression of the initial bounds of the event, which is merely to fulfill (or not) a planned effect. The game of counting heads reaches new heights when it simultaneously covers those heads with brown paper bags.

The blurred distinction within the movement between a peace movement, which may emphasise the above tactics, and the anti-nuclear movement is also of importance. This latter is more likely to express itself in public meetings where counter-experts in defence strategy (or even brigadiers against the bomb) will attempt to put over a corrective rationality to that actually being followed by NATO. As this kind of activity assumes greater importance, the movement becomes nothing other than an artificial negativity of the system, a partially re-opened public sphere where bureaucratic decisions can be questioned (similar to the periodic renewals in Eastern Europe), something which will again be closed off when it is no longer needed unless its conditions are transgressed.

To the extent that any such tendency gains ground we can say that the movement is in danger of imminent decline, but on the other hand, in the rest of the movement, there is an implicit challenge to the legitimacy of the whole political system, and even to representation itself. It is because of this that it is important to define the extent that even the idea of "direct action", never accepted by the old CND (but already accepted to some extent by 1977 - you read it first in GPP!!), is debased when it becomes just another symbolic event for media consumption.

We can notice the way in which an originally tactical idea like that of the nuclear free zone, in its original conception a "rational egoism" (Feher and Heller) of stepping aside from potential conflict on a continental level (but not stepping outside and erasing the system), has been detoured into a Labour local govt. publicity measure with absolutely no serious content. These councils adopt a publicity stunt like Strathclyde News or the CND symbols

(continued on page 35)

At the Intercom conference in January 1984, no.4 of the ten criteria for participation was amended to include opposition to participation in front organisations such as CND. Consequently the author and publisher of the 'Anarchist Argument' pamphlet The Peace Revolution withdrew/were excluded from the conference. What follows is a reply to the article by Laurens Otter, 'The case for Ultra-Left "entrism" within the "peace" movement' which appeared in Intercom 3. Since the January conference the Wildcat group has received another text from LO on 'Entrism'. This is also published below, with some further critical comments added.

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In Intercom 3 AW argued that "a Peace Movement which has no analysis of the causes of war (that is, no anti-capitalist perspective) plays an important role on behalf of capital by preventing the development of any real movement against war" while LL pointed out that "CND's politics is not about "peace" as such, not about "non-violence" as such, but is rather about promoting a particular (non-nuclear) type of state violence, while opposing any anti-state violence" (see 'Dissident Expelled From CND Shock Expose' in Intercom 3). This much should be beyond dispute among the groups which participate in Intercom, and, indeed, does not seem to be at issue in what LO has written. Furthermore LO himself admits that CND is a "reformist organisation", that it and similar organisations are "controlled by Labour politicians more concerned in getting power for themselves than they are with the aims of the organisations", and that any group working within CND faces the danger of being "co-opted into an unofficial extra arm of the Labour Party".

Thus many of the arguments used to oppose any attitude towards CND other than outright hostility seem to be acknowledged by LO. What then is his case for "ultra-left entrism"? As far as I understand it --and LO's text in Intercom 3 was hardly the most lucid piece of writing I've ever come across--his argument is as follows..."Spontaneous resistance" and "radical growth" spring from points in society where the "professed ethics" of the system most obviously contradict its social and economic reality. The most obvious such contradiction today is between professions of internationalism, democracy &/or ~~socialism~~ socialism on the one hand, and on the other the reality of racism, sexism, militarism, neo-colonialism and ecological destruction. The whole of this reality is symbolised in The Bomb, since its construction, purpose, possession and use epitomise bureaucratic secrecy, militarism, neo-colonialism and racism. Resistance to The Bomb is thus a spontaneous revolt against the reality of capitalist society. (The same argument is put forward in The Peace Revolution: "The peace movement is not a single issue campaign" because "Cruise brings into question the whole military industrial complex", The Bomb is "a symbol of the oppression that working people in a capitalist society face" etc). LO goes on to argue that this spontaneous revolt against capitalism is potentially revolutionary because the demand around which it centres--disarmament--cannot be achieved within the existing system. Thus CND provides a "milieu where the aims (of the ultra left are in line with the movement's aspirations, and support can easily be won".

In reply to this I would argue that LO's case rests on a misconception of the causes and process of revolution, and of what constitutes the only revolutionary force in society today.

Spontaneous resistance, to use LO's phrase, certainly springs from contradictions in society, and a perception of these contradictions, but not principally from the contradiction between a society's professed ethics and its actual reality. A society's professed ethics (ie the ideology of its ruling class) never corresponds exactly with reality anyway, because it is precisely the nature and function of the dominant ideology that it doesn't correspond with reality--that it serves to

mystify, and tries to thwart any attempts to get to grips with reality. Many workers are well aware that what the ruling class and its ideologues say is a pack of lies, but this mainly leads to cynicism or the view that politicians are hypocrites, rather than to "spontaneous resistance" or "radical growth".

The contradiction in capitalist society from which a revolutionary movement will emerge is one far more mundane than LO seems to imagine: namely, the working class's demand for the basic necessities of life and the capitalist system's increasingly manifest inability to satisfy those needs. This contradiction is even more intimately bound up with the question of war and revolution than the one LO isolates. The economic crisis which forces the capitalists to make attacks on workers' basic living standards is the same economic crisis which forces the capitalists to arm themselves in preparation for war. Thus the struggle of workers for basic human needs and the struggle against war are one and the same thing, and both can only achieve lasting success through revolution. The questions of war and revolution, barbarism and communism, are inseparable; the revolutionary workers' movement is the only real anti-war movement. This is crucial in determining where and how we should concentrate our propaganda and energies.

The issue of The Bomb--like any other single issue or problem which cannot be easily recuperated or solved within the existing system--can certainly be unravelled so that its root--capitalism--is eventually revealed. As revolutionaries one of our tasks is to make such connections and to show how the particular problems facing the working class can only be solved from a revolutionary perspective. But in the case of The Bomb there is a long way to go from worrying about war to reaching the conclusion that the system which produces The Bomb must be abolished. Insofar as there is any deeper analysis of The Bomb in the 'peace' movement, it tends not to go beyond racism, sexism, ecology etc to the root of such phenomena (as LO suggests) but rather sticks at the level of these 'secondary ideologies' by taking such things as explanations in themselves rather than as phenomena which in turn need to be explained by reference to some deeper cause.

Nevertheless, certain struggles which may start out as 'partial' struggles do contain a potential to strike at the heart of capitalism more quickly than others. In general connections between a particular problem and its root cause (capitalism) are not made in campaigns against war, racism, sexism etc by atomised constituencies of the working class so much as in the collective struggles of the working class as such. It's in this area of struggle that the essence of capitalism--class divisions, wage labour, commodity production etc--and its negation--socialism--can most easily be grasped. Furthermore, such struggles are not just revolutionary in the realm of ideas, but also, simultaneously, in the sense that communism as a living reality can begin to emerge from such struggles in a way that it can never do in the struggles involving atomised individuals campaigning over single issues.

In the final analysis it is LO's concentration on the realm of ideas and his neglect of any practical dimension to revolution which, as I see it, leads him to advocate entrism. If revolution was simply a two-stage act involving firstly a cerebral comprehension of capitalism and socialism followed by the transformation of the one into the other, then there might be a case for revolutionaries entering all sorts of organisations in order to 'make converts' who will then overthrow the system. But this is not how revolution occurs. Rather, revolution is a process in which consciousness, organisation and action continually feed off each other and grow together. This process takes place today in the collective workplace struggles of the working class, where recognition of itself as a class leads it to act as such, and vice-

versa. This is why as revolutionaries we should not waste our time and energies by campaigning to 'win converts' in CND, but instead should be concentrating on encouraging, supporting and attempting to extend the struggles of the working class as such.

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Entrism - Laurens Otter.

By definition an entrism position within a larger movement is not an uncritical adherence to it. Still less is it a "tactical approach to an organisation". (Note: this is a reference to RW's introduction to the translation of material from L'Eveil Internationaliste and L'Insecurite Sociale on the war in Chad, Intercom 4 - MS).

"Entrism" is the policy of a revolutionary group entering a reformist one in order the better to be able to publicise its revolutionary position. Obviously it always carries dangers - one only has to look at the various Leninist entrists within the Labour Party to see the illustrations of these. It is therefore necessary to understand broad principles as to when this is consistent with revolutionism.

There will of course be those who hold it is never consistent; fair enough, a logical case, but I hope that their ranks do not include any who would call themselves anarcho-syndicalists, or who respect anarcho-syndicalism, for syndicalism, both in France, the CGT, and in the USA, the IWW, was largely the product of anarchist and Left-Marxist entrism within leftward-moving reformist unions.

Being myself an anarcho-syndicalist, I hold that that example from the beginning of the century was a revolutionary example, and one from which anarchists can learn. Indeed I would say that by and large it sets the pattern for what is and is not permissible in the way of entrism for anarchists and other ultra-leftists.

The necessities are:-

1. that at no time is it necessary for the entrism group to disguise its beliefs in order to enter;
2. that the fundamental beliefs of the movement entered are such that they cannot be fulfilled by the methods advocated by the leadership;
3. that those fundamental beliefs can only be achieved by revolutionary social change;
4. that a significant section of the rank and file are turning to forms of action that go outside constitutional politics, and challenge the authority of the state;
5. that a significant section of the rank and file already challenges its leadership on issues such as democracy, the duty of the leadership to abide by conference decisions;
6. that while there is all sorts of debate between Leninist and other such factions within the rank and file nowadays - obviously in 1905 ~~the~~ the debate was not between Leninists, but the various Blanquist and quasi-Marxist groups fulfilled the same role - there is a large body of the rank and file that appreciates that to achieve the ostensible limited aim, capitalism needs to be abolished; albeit that that large body has no clear idea of a revolutionary road, it is seeking means that lead in such a direction.

(There may well be more)

These characteristics were true of the Bourses de Travail, the early CGT and the American Labor Union. I hold them to be equally true of the present CND. Thus I can find nothing, explicit or implicit, in L'Eveil Internationaliste's leaflet that contradicts the proposal for ultra-left entrism within CND. (Indeed I think the leaflet in question



is a little reformist, as is so much of the same sort of material I have seen over the last 25 years handed out by the SPGB and others as a reason for not being in CND, and I would expect any "ultra-left entrism" group in CND to put a much clearer case than it does).

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LO's text concerns itself with defining criteria for judging the circumstances under which entrism can be "consistent with revolutionism". Having spent a quite enough time already rejecting entrism outright I am obviously not inclined to be drawn back into a debate whose parameters are defined by assumptions which I have rejected. However, I will just say that even on its own terms LO's case seems weak, because it is debatable whether all six of his criteria apply to CND. The case of Peter Moore (reported in Intercom 3) who was expelled from CND for making relatively mild criticisms of its aims and strategy, calls into question whether the first of LO's criteria is fulfilled by CND. On point 4, I would disagree that "a significant section of the rank and file" of CND "challenge the authority of the state". They are merely disagreeing with some decisions made by the state in a limited area of policy, and are not calling into question the authority, legitimacy and existence of the capitalist state as such. These two things are quite different and to confuse them can only lead to the sort of naive optimism about CND's potential which LO displays in abundance. Finally LO asserts that "a large body of the rank and file" of CND "appreciates...that capitalism needs to be abolished". Again this is manifestly wishful thinking. It is far more plausible to believe that membership of CND in itself is a sure sign of a failure to appreciate that capitalism must be abolished.

By way of an aside, LO's use of examples from the history of anarcho-syndicalism do not necessarily carry any weight with us, because we are not 'anarcho-syndicalists'. In the course of an upsurge in the class struggle the working class will create its own organisations, and going by past experience these can be expected to take the form of councils of revocable delegates elected by mass meetings in the workplace. Outside such periods, any permanent mass organisation of the working class, such as anarcho-syndicalists have sought to create, can only tend to be reformist, if not in intent, then certainly in practice.

While we are on the subject of labels, we would <sup>also</sup> be adamant in rejecting the idea that we are part of the so-called "revolutionary left" described by David Barnsdale in The Peace Revolution i.e. the RCP, SWP, Big Flame etc. What this "revolutionary (sic) left" may or may not wish to achieve by working within CND is of little direct concern to us since it has nothing whatsoever to do with communism. We might also take exception to the term "ultra left" which LO uses. (Intercom's original title--the New Ultra-Left Review--was intended to be a joke and of course has since been ditched). We do not stand at the extreme end of a spectrum extending from the Labour Party leftwards. The Labour Party, Trotskyists, and the rest have shown themselves to be bourgeois in their actions and ideas, hence our politics differs from theirs not in its 'extremity' but in its class content. Today the labels 'left' and 'right' merely connote different ~~xxxx~~ strategies for running the same capitalist system, whereas our politics is about abolishing this ~~xxxx~~ system.

Mark Shipway (Manchester).

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The following article was sent in from the new magazine "A Communist Effort". The first issue is out now. It costs 40p, (with SAE A4 size). It is available from Box ACE, C1A Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E1

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THE PROGRESSION OF THE MOVEMENT

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What can we know now about the communist mode of production in the future ? This question -- amongst others -- was touched on in 3 of the articles in Intercom 4 : in "Socialism and money" by LR and in "Meditations on the question of organisation" and "Why I am not a socialist" (!??) by RE.

All of these to some extent offered valid critiques of various lies, for example : S. AND M. XX -- critique of the lie that there can be socialism plus commodities; Meditations... -- critique of the lie that post-capitalist relations could exist within capitalism ; Why I ... -- critique of the social-democratic nature of an attempted "democratisation" of commodities.

First I want to address the differences between LR's articles and RE's critiques of it. LR comes straight out with a tentative suggestion for a model of possible production and distribution mechanisms in a fully-fledged communism; RE does not attempt to be as "precise", considers any voucher system to be based on value and to lead to a blackmarket, and would prefer lotteries to decide on the distribution of extremely rare goods. In the second part of this text I shall try to deal with the misconceptions of all 3 of these texts regarding the communist mode of production (and in particular the evasion of mention of severable foreseeable pitfalls), but in the first part I shall say something about the progression of the movement beginning now (when its practical manifestations are still only negative), and about the part revolutionary minorities can play now.

1) TOWARDS CIVIL WAR.

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It is true that the dynamic definition of communism, as long as capitalism remains unchallenged by even the beginnings of insurrections on a global scale, remains negative --- this is its motive force ... = the destruction of all forms of capitalist domination, which themselves can be analysed as far as present possibilities allow us to gather information, think about them and discuss them, etc. Positive descriptions remain imprecise or abstract, such as the realisation of (in the dialectical sense of becoming real and gaining consciousness of) all our passions and desires, of our very being, or the supersession of art and philosophy (which has never been a definition, but only one way of describing communism). Particularities are hard to pin down, if one leaves aside the rubbish of pseudo-revolutionaries who would have us believe that a "new society" means "cheap fares" or "small is beautiful" or "a Bolshevik party in power implementing its 'historical' program". But if there is no revolution in the next month, and even more so if there is, I am still in favour of talking about precisely what we mean by communism, what each of us thinks certain aspects of it will be like. All communist revolutionaries have some ideas about it -- to deny this would be a perfect example of overly pretentious objectivism, or even "followism" in the mould "Waiting is the only important thing we can do".

Some of us may have hang-ups about the left of capital, including a fear of changing into programmists or bureaucrats, or ..., but doesn't our very activity, our intervention NOW, have any relation to our views on how the movement will progress, on what will be "generalisation" and what will be "setbacks", on what will be "radicalisation", etc.? Doesn't any kind of analysis of present manifestations of the movement rest on an understanding of what it will become, on possible futures for it, on the characteristics which are still deficient and on those which are possible gateways to escalation ? More globally, oughtn't we to be confronting our ideas on possible futures for the movement on a planetary level which would be part of what some comrades have called "an analysis of the period" ? As revolutionaries, that is as people who want the generalisation of all the proletarian assaults on capital in every way and area, and as people who fundamentally feel the necessity for something which has a name (communism), why should we shy away from thinking about what some aspects of the progression of the movement towards it will be like ?

The conditions where this becomes more and more possible will be and are being created by the movement itself and are the same as the conditions for victory. Note that I am certainly not saying that the minority of the proletariat which is presently revolutionary (subjectively) has only to think out everything in its head and all will be portentous of imminent victory. But the movement, the Old Mole, has already created a specifically and consciously communist milieu -- which has never been totally empty in the last 150-odd years -- and it has created possibilities for us to have a certain practical weight. (Those who want to misinterpret this remark will do so.)

It is surprising how little is spoken of what each of us thinks about how the movement will progress, namely about what is a gateway and what is a dead-end. It is not enough to say for example "negotiation is a dead-end" and "anti-union workers' assemblies are a gateway" -- TRUE, certainly, and also NECESSARY, but not enough.

Let's imagine a situation of a wildcat general strike which has been set in motion by masses of proletarians in progressively more lucid opposition to their enemies and their enemies' lackeys (unions,...) and which is developing towards insurrection and civil war by means of :--

- +++ occupations which unemployed proletarians as well as wage-slaves are beginning to rally to;
- +++ attacks on the strategico-ideologico-military centres of enemy power such as police-stations, barracks, party-halls, etc.;
- +++ requisition and subversive use of
  - (1) present products, such as arms to fight troops, big meeting-rooms for discussion, communications networks for a global call-to-arms and rapid link-up, etc.;
  - and (2) the productive forces themselves, in order to produce such products (notably food and arms) as are required by the power of the nascent Workers' Councils.

(That is, imagine that a movement goes just beyond what were the highest highest point of class struggle in the last decade-and-a-half.)

If this came to pass, proletarians at this time would have to make some pretty crucial organisational decisions, including how to link up, how those who have not been delegated to conferences of delegates from their own base assemblies could be in possession of all information regarding these conferences preferably while they were in ~~progress~~ progress, how the armed side of class war can be won when all the proletarian side's strategies in the military sense would probably be easily known to the enemy, .....

The immediate stop to the functioning of the official commodity economy -- wage-labour, buying from shopkeepers, etc. -- would be a fairly automatic result of the seizure of an area. But the problems would still exist of how to prevent an "unofficial" commodity economy -- black market, wide boys -- from thriving, and of how to develop the first stages of a property-less, money-less, commodity-less society given that its enemies would still exist, would be armed, and would be trying to drown it in blood. Similarly, partisans of self-managed wage-slavery would still be trying to pervert the movement into committing suicide by means of introducing another official commodity economy through sundry bureaucrats. LR does not touch on these problems from this angle, and the "host of other questions to do with production and distribution in a socialist society" are legion, in particular -- but not only -- concerning the beginnings of communist society, which will occur when the military problems faced in class war will make themselves faced at every level.

As I see it, it is useful to have a look at these problems, insofar as they can be partially seen now. LR and RE, who both do this partially (all analysis, this included, is partial -- I refer to the unchallenged gaps), do not talk of the concrete nature of what will be "the mightiest civil war humanity has ever seen" (Rosa Luxemburg), despite RE's mention of wreckage and rubble.

Whether we know it or not, our views on the content of intervention and on theoretical analysis of class struggles are INEXTRICABLY BOUND UP with how we think they might progress, on what we think are their weak points which might lead to defeats, and what we think are their strong points which might lead to intensification of struggle (radicalisation, arming itself, spreading,...).

The moments of self-organisation of struggle, especially in the form of standing general assemblies which have appeared intermittently in embryo form in dozens of areas (Spain, Poland,...) are the highest moments of class struggle in recent years. Revolutionaries should declare themselves in support of these, even if their surmountable shortcomings must be criticised, and should openly declare that the generalisation of this form, the Workers' Council, in all senses, is part of the gateway to victory in civil war and revolution.

## ORGANISATION

The text "Meditations on the question of Organisation" is very confused in slamming all organisation whatsoever as "only able to be stretched out in terms of the functional relationships which hold the semi-equilibrium which we like to call capitalism in place" and as "at heart, capitalist". I would agree absolutely if this meant that (1) all effective revolutionary self-organisation of the proletariat en masse, as long as capitalism exists, can only be at war with it; and (2) those revolutionaries who attempt to organise an intervention must aim for the dissolution of this organisation into the revolutionary richness of a mass movement. In other words, any organisation which aims to establish itself within this society, is at heart reactionary, just like substitutionist (Leninist, syndicalist,...) or reformist organisations. But if RE holds that all organisation is "at heart, capitalist", then what about the peripatetic armed workers' bands in Poland? What about the First International? What about Intercom ??? What about all the authentic workers' councils in history, even if they have not always recognised their own significance and have often been less than critical ~~toward~~ about their own caricatures? For example, take the armed workers of the Ruhr in 1920 -- was it because they took on the task of ~~organising~~ organising themselves that they were defeated? Or was it rather because they didn't grasp the significance of what ~~xxx~~ they themselves had already done in the way of this organisation?

RE rightly attacks the partyist and crypto-partyist conceptions handed down from the counterrevolution, but does not seem to distinguish between :

- +++ (1) outright partyist/elitist/substitutionist pseudo-revolution in the form of Bolshevism, anarchosyndicalism,...;
- +++ (2) the formalisation (read: conscious and structured) of self-organisation of proletarians en masse;
- +++ (3) the organisation of theoretico-practical tasks by those ~~xxx~~ revolutionaries who want to intervene in mass struggles NOT as "bringers of consciousness" (!), but as those who are not afraid to say that they want all proletarians' struggles on Earth to progress, unify and radicalise and come to victory, and who try to combat their own image in the spectacle and do not shy away from certain assertions because of a patronising and defeatist "we might be misunderstood" or a psychologically screwed-up and equally defeatist "we might become bureaucrats against our will" (!!!)
- +++ (4) various misconceptions on all of these by those revolutionaries who were mistaken on some points (or indeed even misled by counterrevolution to a degree) but who cannot be classified as "at heart, capitalist". Examples: AAUD, AAUD-E, KAPD,... (But obviously the ideological defence of the weakness of these must be fought).

RE then goes on to say :

"We all wish that the Bolsheviks had been truly revolutionary, that the Russian and world revolution had been successful, and that we were now reaping its benefits. This does not get round the fact that we're not  
(cont.)

and that political parties will generate bureaucracies even if they are called national organisations, or organisations of revolutionaries."

On the face of it, this is true of course, but it implies that all "organisations of revolutionaries" are closet parties, which is not true. I would agree however with his denunciation not only of parties but also of the confusionists and bureaucrats called anarchists or in his nomenclature "ultra-left" if this is taken to include Cardanists, "new-style" anarchists, Bordigists, left-Leninists like "CW"O or I"C"C, spontaneo-Leninists claiming falsely to be partisans of proletarian autonomy, those who glorify Lenin but call themselves non-Leninists (GCI in Belgium, CBG, ...), etc. etc. I do not agree if it lumps together with these all those wanting an organised intervention explicitly aiming for its own dissolution into a mass proletarian insurrectionary movement. As for the KAPD and Gorter, the AAUD, the AAUD-E and Ruhle, who were all mistaken in some ways on the organisation question but who were far more lucid and advanced on other points and on this point than their contemporaries, surely they deserve to be distinguished from Bolshevik state capitalism and the "Third International" ! The former lot, especially in decline, were wrong concerning "spiritual directors" because class consciousness is not something which starts with "spiritual directors" and ends up in the masses' heads, but dynamically exists with individual proletarians collectively facing up to the task of their self-liberation. If this at first only means a minority, they cannot aspire to be spiritual (or other) directors of the rest, but have tasks such as self-clarification and intervention even if they are isolated.

## (2) AFTER CIVIL WAR .

Social relations under capitalism, from wage-labour to the social lie, hinge on the fact that everything is alien to the vastest part of the world's population, the proletariat. Most proletarians are herded into forced labour where they are allowed to touch, use and reproduce the productive forces (including their own existence and in a wider sense present social relations, as well as machines, etc.) according to the needs of whichever capital it is which accumulates the surplus value that the exploitation of their labour-power sets in motion, i.e. brings into existence for future realisation or reinvestment if possible. Other proletarians are forced into the same thing but purely in the terrain of reproduction of the physical existence of that major productive force -- the proletariat itself. Domestic unwaged labourers come into this category, as do nurses, roadsweepers, etc. Still others are not even allowed near the productive forces, but are maintained at whatever subsistence level the "period" of capitalism prefers, given the bank-balance of whichever State it is, or whether there is any ~~poss~~ possibility that they will be herded into wage-labour at a later date (less and less likely), politico-economic considerations, etc.

This poses the question -- the concrete historical question -- of what is the opposite to alienation ? What can we know about it now, even in descriptive terms ? Isn't it true that we will feel qualitatively different emotions in communism ? Isn't communism more than just a quantitative variation on capitalism ?

Insofar as we can know anything about it now, the following will be true :

(1) +++ People will have a better, more fluid, more conscious idea of what they need, what they desire -- one of the reasons being the profoundly dialectical one that there will be no unnatural barriers to them actually getting it !

(2) +++ The new social relations will be able to be described, as they already have been, in ways such as :

\*\*\* a society where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

\*\*\* the free construction of situations in all aspects of life.

\*\*\* a society where

"the eye has become a human eye, just as its object has become a social, human object, made by man for man" and where "the senses have therefore become theoreticians in their immediate praxis."

(1844 Manuscripts).

- (3) +++ People will have to be able to organise material production and distribution according to their needs (which is not simple but will need a lot of thought) and according to their conscious negation of markets and private property, which will obviously be consigned to prehistory where they belong.

RE is right to stress that in a future revolutionary society you wouldn't have to lock up your house, and if someone took something from it then you would know that they had an urgent need and your inconvenience would be made up for by people around you. But this is in no contradiction with the necessity for people to work out structured ways of producing and distributing. This should not mean of course that people ~~to~~ decide to materially produce always in the same place -- I would prefer it if I could make bread one day, cooperate in making iron, say, the next, and play chess the next, for example. Communism will be the real supersession of the separation between material production and the production of all other aspects of life, even if no precise models can be made at this point. If it is understood that here (i.e. this sentence) I am speaking abstractly about after the armed victory of the revolution (which itself could only come about given a high level of conscious self-organisation, which proletarians will be forced to undertake, one of the reasons being to avoid being massacred), then the new production mechanisms would NOT be as a safeguard against selfish greed at the expense of others, because this would not exist, but simply to ensure (1) an egalitarian way of living against the ~~effect~~ counter-effects of natural phenomena such as droughts, geographical isolation, etc.; and (2) to ensure that, in the material "sector", people are sure that they are producing what someone needs/desires, and in the right quantity.

The material "sector" would not be separate from the production of other aspects of life simply because people's relations to things will be totally and utterly defined by their relationships with themselves and with other people -- this is the meaning of Marx's remarks concerning the continuous production and transformation of a human world, sensuous activity, the sensuous appropriation of the human essence which should not be understood only in the sense ~~of~~ direct one-sided consumption, of possession, of having, but as man's appropriation of his ~~relations~~ integral essence in an integral way, as a total man, where "all his human relations to the world -- seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, contemplating, sensing, wanting, acting, loving -- in short, all the organs of his individuality, like the organs which are directly communal in form, are in their objective approach or in their approach to the object the appropriation of that object, where the appropriation of human reality is the confirmation of human reality." (1844 Manuscripts,)

Just because people will determine their relationship to (read: production of, and use of) material things according to their realisation of their desires and the interplay of these with other people's desires, this does not mean that they will not have to know what they are doing regarding their organisation of material production! "Communism dissolves production relations and combines them with social relations" (Barrot).

In order that people will know what they are producing in the way of material things, they will have to employ a system of bookkeeping. Communism does not mean self-managed or decentralised capitalism in the classical anarchist vein (Proudhon, autogestion, ..., or syndicalism ...) where isolated groups would consume what they needed out of what they produced and would barter the rest on a sort of anarchic market for a certain defined quantity of something else -- this would clearly not go beyond the capitalist value relation. In communism, everyone will be a collective controller of the productive forces, although this will obviously pose numerous problems some of which are hard to envisage and will probably be hard to solve. A "democratised" private property relation is basically an enemy of communism, though, because I feel that I am as entitled to a share of, say, wood from "Siberia" (assuming I don't live there) as anyone ~~to~~ else. Shocked? But I add that of course it should not be a matter of everything being decided globally, for example whether or not I paint my local library purple. However there are some things which would best be

decided globally (i.e. by all the base assemblies together), ~~xx~~ the alternative being a reversion to private property. Also, the proletariat as a whole, during the ~~xx~~ period of civil war, will not come to victory unless it decides certain questions to do with its military struggle globally -- one of the reasons being that our enemy will in important ways be coordinated globally (politico-UN-militarily). The role of the UN, past, present and future, in assuring counter-subversive collaboration between national capitals, cannot be pointed out too clearly. Witness Korea, Palestine, Congo, and perhaps soon -- if Benn's wing of the bourgeoisie had its way -- Ireland. (This does exclude the fact that UN troops have also been used in the struggles of big national capitals against little ones.) There have been numerous occasions already where national capitals at war with each other have united against a proletarian revolution to a varying degrees. Examples: Brest-Litovsk, Warsaw 1945, or, during the Cold War, Czechoslovakia 1968, where the US tacitly supported the Russian invasion and would also have supported Dubcek's fraction of the native capitalist class if it had won.

The only individual distribution-problem mentioned by LR and RE concerns scarcity. LR suggests a voucher system where items are given a value in points. RE suggests a lottery. We would probably all agree that these items would rarely be scarce, because obviously, if for example there were fewer pots of green paint than people wanted, then more would be made, or else, if for some reason more couldn't be made, then people would ~~nd~~ decide to even out the inconvenience and each have slightly less than they initially wanted. If this happened with something which could not be evened out (e.g. if 2 people or groups of people wanted to use the only available aeroplane at 2 o'clock), and if this problem then reoccurred with something else (say the use of a building at 6 o'clock), then I would see nothing wrong with an agreement along the lines of "You have the aeroplane at 2 o'clock and we'll have the building at 6 o'clock".

This would entail a comparison of use-values, because the use of the aeroplane would be assumed to be "equal" to the use of the building. (I feel pressures on me not to talk this way because it could be likened by those who do not even want to think about a communist way of existing to scrabbling for commodities, or to a neo-market.) But if it is stressed that this kind of thing would not happen very often (food, housing and most other things, when controlled by everybody, will fulfil everybody's needs amply, and scarcities would always be able to be either evened out immediately or compensated for by an increased production of the item in question, and thirdly people on most occasions would be able to decide whose need was greatest), then I would see no objection to a "point system" for these extremely rare items. However I don't think that LR realises that items for which this would be necessary would be very rare -- if people still wanted record-players (and I don't think they will), then the needed number would be made.

I feel that RE suggests a lottery for the right reason -- to ensure an equal chance of winning! -- but he suggests a means of effecting this which is inadequate, for what would happen if someone kept winning the lottery? (This is not a trivial objection.) Would other unspoken rules then come into force? RE seems to cover over the fact that even in a communist society there will still be natural (deliberate usage!) disasters and barriers to an INFINITE pleasure. He gets over this real, undesired problem by hoping that people will desire to replace it with an artificial one, namely a lottery! Why won't people be able to rationaly solve or circumvent these future problems which will still be met without recourse to artificial randomness? Is it a fact that he sees no difference between (1) those who think that communism will in some things use bookkeeping, and (2) those idiots who think that communism is only a quantitative variation on capitalism -- "democratisation" of capitalist social relations?

This criticism of RE should certainly not be seen as an uncritical defence of LR's model, because he (LR) says nothing of people being different in the future revolutionary society, and of the world as a whole (social relations, games, things,...) being a product totally of people's conscious desires, in a veritable WORLD HUMAN COMMUNITY which will not need safeguards against wickedness because

people will essentially not want to be wicked to each other. In fact, LR in his text does not bother to defend himself against being seen as an advocate of a self-managed or even party-managed "democratisation" of capitalism. Examples: "People could be issued with vouchers". ?? Doesn't he mean "People could issue vouchers to themselves"? Why doesn't he refer to people as the actual doers of anything which will be done on the scale of society? Why always use the passive mood: "Vouchers could be issued"; "Scarce products could not be accumulated" (!!) ; "It could also be determined";...? Isn't it important to be clear (especially in Intercom, where texts by decentralo-selfmanagement-anarcho-capitalists have appeared in the past) that communist society is the opposite of various misconceptions which are had about it by advocates of self-managed wage-labour and self-managed markets? Similarly, LR's remark near the end of his text that "The choice as to whether or not to operate such a system could ~~be~~ quite safely be left to local communes or collectives to make" puts him too in the direction of this mistaken terrain. Firstly, "the choice could be left open" -- by whom?? Secondly, the remark as a whole is clearly advocating a localised private property of groups over the productive forces. If his model has not been a suggested model for one aspect of communism on a world scale, but nevertheless presents itself as a possible overview, then does LR think that relations between his "groups" should be anarchic? Does he even think that it is possible to "construct the new society within the shell of the old", a view of anarchist bureaucrats which is similar to Leninism (the former says: "revolutionary" "collectives", organised no doubt ~~in~~ according to the notorious ~~idea~~ federalism, gather everybody around them according to their ideology, and lead to a sort of fourth-worldist self-managed alienation; the latter says: a "revolutionary" Bolshevik party, at first small, takes over the running of the capitalist State, and becomes a "mass party")? Hopefully not. Does he believe that there is no need for people in the future communist society to establish a WORLD human community which will certainly be nothing other than the result of people confronting their ideas and consciously working out a communitarian (read: communist) way of living, but in which people will communicate on a qualitatively and QUANTITATIVELY higher level than humans have ever done before in the history of the planet?

LR also implies -- as does RE -- that some surmountable barriers to this massive jump in communication should remain unchallenged -- this is evident in his suggested safeguards against wickedness and implied lack of attempted solutions to some of the problems posed by geographical distance on a world level.

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Specifically regarding Intercom, the articles by LR and RE sidestep the problem of what is the immediate practical significance, if any, of the ideas of revolutionaries about the present conditions and the future progression of the movement in a period where it is experiencing some difficulties in expressing itself and where, as always, no minority can create a raging civil war just by clicking its fingers. On this point, the Tampa comrades seem to believe that the proletariat can organise itself to a certain degree, but a party is necessary to point out the military problems and "to advocate measures which overturn the mode of capitalist production and exchange". Thus they dare to add "ifs and buts" to what is a very simple assertion: that the proletariat can emancipate itself.

For those of us who are not substitutionists or partyists but who wish for an organised, coherent communist intervention which is neither "above" nor "below" the movement as a whole, this problem is present now -- because we are not objective observers, detached from the rest of the class in a lofty superiority or the nothingness of ideological musing divorced from events and opposed to their radicalisation.

The fraction of the proletariat which has already realised the necessity for communism is part of one side in a real war. It must attempt to analyse present manifestations of the movement in rupture with the old world, must be critical of all the weaknesses of those manifestations, and must aim for a clarifying confrontation of ideas about the movement; all three of these are bound up with a revolutionary intervention which is not afraid to define itself (revolutionary positions, = anti-programme) relative to the rest of the movement.



CORRESPONDANCE with the COMMUNIST BULLETIN GROUP  
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## WHERE DOES WILDCAT STAND ON THE QUESTION OF ORGANISATION ?

Introduction

The background to this correspondance is as follows - Since leaving the International Communist Current (ICC), I have kept up an occasional correspondance with other members of the ICC, some of whom formed the Communist Bulletin Group (CBG). During the excitement of the split, which took place amidst a great deal of ill-feeling, many of us did things which we should now regret. The ICC claims that these actions of confused and (at the time) demoralised individuals were "crimes" against itself and therefore (with typical megalomania) crimes against the working class. They use these "crimes" as an excuse to behave with the utmost sectarianism towards the CBG and other ex-members, whom it can never forgive for continuing their political activity outside of the ICC. ("Outside the ICC... is the void", we were told at the time of the split). This sectarian frenzy has reached new heights in the International Review no. 36, where having called for co-operation among revolutionaries in their Address to Proletarian Groups, the ICC replies to the CBG's positive response with a stream of insults, which will make any unbiased reader want to vomit. The CBG for its part, spends an excessive amount of time defending itself against the ICC's accusations, to the extent that it is unable to develop a genuine political activity of its own. I wrote to the CBG, suggesting among other things that it would be a good idea to ignore the ICC until they show themselves prepared to discuss politically. Their reply follows.

A.H.

Box 85  
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Scotland.  
16th February 1984

Dear Andy (and other Wildcats),

Herewith a very late reply to your letters of last year - see accompanying personal note for a cringing explanation of the delay.

First of all, yes, feel free to reprint any of our leaflets or articles in Intercom or elsewhere - the wider the audience for our material the better. If you are still going ahead with the Guy Aldred pamphlet we will furnish you with what material we have. Most of M's holdings were published internally in WR (and you will already have these). I have a collected volume of texts by Aldred and others titled Essays in Revolt vol. one - it isn't very useful, but if you can track down later volumes in the series (if there were any) then you might discover some printable texts.

In your letters you chastise the CBG for over concentration on the ICC and CWO in the pages of the Bulletin, and you propose we "boycott" the ICC. We agree that on balance these two organisations have taken up too much space in our journal. We were correct to detail, analyse, and draw political conclusions from the splits in World Revolution (note: British section of the ICC), and that task is now complete. We are not going to let the ICC drag us back into a continuing "who did what to whom" debate. Given that the ICC exclude us from the proletarian movement our relations with them have reached an impass, as vividly demonstrated by the farce of their "Address to the Proletarian Movement".

Our relations with the CWO are heading towards a similar blockage—they consider us to be a "Pseudo-Group", and as such won't mention us in their press or write joint leaflets with us. In future we will shift some of our attention towards other groups, a task we have already begun. However this does not mean that we will banish all mention of the ICC from our press as you appear to suggest. A large proportion of our magazine goes overseas, and in international discussions the positions of the ICC remain a vital reference point. Undeniably the Platform of the ICC is a tremendous achievement, and although the organisation has been theoretically stagnant for several years, its past contributions on the Party, consciousness, decadence etc cannot be minimised and must be developed.

You are right to say that we have tended to ignore the more libertarian end of the movement. Our failings here are mirrored by the hostile attitude of these groups towards us. As you know many of them would hold in utter contempt anyone who described themselves as a marxist seeking the creation of a centralised international communist party. Wildcat does not have this irrational attitude, but it is an approach which is deeply embedded in many of the Intercom groups. For example we read in Intercom 2 p23:

"There comes a time when the kind of views being peddled by groups like the Bulletin ... become a source of potential despair and destruction of revolutionary enthusiasm ..."

We have publically condemned the sectarian and contemptuous attitude of the ICC and CWO towards Wildcat, but sectarianism isn't the preserve of these two organisations. In Intercom 3 p10 we are told that

"If you've got a strong stomach or are totally unable to think of anything better to do, you can contact ... the Fraction Communiste Internationaliste."

We must all combat our own sectarianism, and not just criticise it in other people. This means that we must be prepared to calmly listen to what other groups in the milieu have to say, and not just dismiss it out of hand.

We broadly share the Tampa comrades critique of Intercom. You attack them (and the CBG) for calling you localists. What we were criticising through the use of this term was the conception that

"It is ridiculous to try to set up a unified organisation now ... Our task is primarily one of ... creating local groups." (Intercom 2 p 26)

The CBG declined to become involved in the Intercom project precisely because it was set up as a crutch for localism and federalism. As we wrote at the time:

"We would not be unhappy about the notion of a bulletin which was envisaged as a moment in the regroupment of revolutionary forces ... The bulletin would only be a means to an end, the end being the rebuilding of an international centralised party, drawing its sustenance not only from the immediate struggle of the working class, but also from the legacy of the revolutionary period, as found in the revolutionary Third International and the parties associated with it." (Bulletin 2 p3)

Clearly the first few issues of Intercom did not fit into this framework. There was no substantive debate, merely vain attempts by Wildcat and Stoke to fend off the idiocies of hopelessly confused people like Simon Leefe and Subversive Graffiti, and anarcho-leftists like the St Helens Anarchists and the author of ...

"The Case for Ultra-Left Entrism into the Peace Movement."

We have heard, albeit 2nd or 3rd hand, that you are currently reconsidering the premise of Intercom, and you now feel it may be time to start working towards a national regroupment in Britain. We would like to reiterate that we would like to be part of such activity. If, for example, Wildcat, Stoke, part of the LWG, and other healthy elements changed Intercom into a vehicle for work towards national regroupment, then the CBG would want to join the project. Perhaps you could clarify exactly where you now stand on the question of national regroupment? Do you still adhere to the perspective in the pilot issue of the Ultra-Left Revue:

"We don't want to see Wildcat growing nationally, but would promote the idea of similar collectives around the country." ?

As always your comments on the Bulletin are solicited, as are any proposals for joint work. A consignment of issue six of the Bulletin will reach you in a fortnight - you will be glad to hear that it gives plenty of coverage to your buddies in the ICC and CWO.

Yours fraternally,

Rowntree for the Communist Bulletin Group

\* \* \*

The last Wildcat meeting before the deadline for Intercom read out and considered the following text. We did not have sufficient time to pore over every detail as we usually do, but felt in general agreement with what it says.

Manchester, 15.3.84

Dear Comrades,

Thank you for your letter. Bulletin 6 arrived yesterday (after the meeting referred to above) and I think it is generally very good indeed, a continuation of the improvement already shown by issue no 5. To a large extent this disproves my criticism of the CBG in the Introduction to your letter printed above, which has already been typed I'm afraid.

We agree with some of your criticisms of Intercom - particularly with the point that it has not been properly used as a vehicle for debate between the groups involved. Wildcat is as much to blame for this as anyone else. The future of Intercom is now frankly in doubt; but if it continues, as we hope it will, it will be on a clearer organisational and political basis than before. You will be able to read about this in Intercom 5 which is due out at the end of March, so I won't go into details here.

You ask us to clarify where Wildcat stands on the question of national regroupment. We have recently published a statement of our "Basic Principles", of which a copy is enclosed. You will see from the text "What Distinguishes Wildcat" that we stand for the "unification of our movement at a national and international level."

The question is: how is this unification to be achieved? We approach this problem from an assessment of the present state of our movement. We have a broad definition of the political movement we feel ourselves

to be part of. Groups as diverse as the CWO, SPGB, Tampa and many of the anarchist groups are, we feel, basically on the same side as us, even though some of their positions may be (in our view) extremely mistaken or even reactionary. Clearly a 'regroupment' involving all these groups, or even a majority of them, with their widely differing and often opposed views, is not foreseeable in the immediate future. For the time being, all national or international groupings which arise will involve only a minority of the revolutionary movement.

We are working towards the creation of an international revolutionary political organisation which we can be part of. At the same time we want to continue to collaborate as much as possible with organisations which for one reason or another we could not envisage joining together with. Experience of future developments of the class struggle should help to clarify issues which at present separate us from other organisations. When this happens, further 'regroupments' should be possible, provided that we have kept up good relations with these groups in the meantime.

On the question of the form of organisation we should adopt, we favour centralisation, but with the following qualifications:

- 1) One should not be dogmatic about the precise form of centralisation. There are several possible alternatives - eg. rotation of production of a paper between different local groups could be appropriate within a centralised organisation.
- 2) No form of organisation as a guarantee of genuine political unity, unless there is also an active and enthusiastic commitment to it within all sections (and among all individual members) of the organisation. This is why the first priority for all groups should be to maintain an active intervention, particularly towards workplace struggles, for it is this above all which teaches us the need for political unity. It is possible to become so obsessed with trying to create a centralised organisation that one forgets what such an organisation is supposed to be for.
- 3) In our relations with other groups, we take an essentially pragmatic attitude. Provided we do not have to hide or compromise our political principles we are prepared to work with anyone, including groups with widely differing views on the question of organisation. We are prepared to compromise on our view of organisation if we judge the overall results of collaboration with another group or groups will be positive. This could include permanent or long-term collaboration with them on a non-centralised basis.
- 4) On a more theoretical level, there is no evidence that working class political organisations have ever, or will ever, be very stable. This is because, like the class we represent, we are excluded from political life under capitalism. The only exception was during the period c1870-1914 when the working class in Western Europe was able to have a permanent representation within capitalism, and this was reflected in the stability of its political organisations at that time. Of course we should try to organise ourselves in a more stable way than the working class is able to do as a class. But all the evidence suggests that the working class political movement is condemned to a turbulent existence.

Experience shows that we cannot artificially abolish this problem by giving ourselves extremely rigid organisational structures. We think that probably the best approach is to combine a principled and consistent attitude towards basic political positions (the

"class lines") with a certain amount of flexibility towards organisational forms, which are likely to be varied by such factors as :

- whether our movement is expanding or contracting
- our degree of influence within the working class, and particularly in the workplace
- degrees of legality and illegality
- the opinions and prejudices of other sections of our political movement.

All the above should not be taken as our "last word" on the question. We welcome your comments.

We will argue the need for a national organisation in Intercom, and hope that such an organisation will emerge as the result of debates between the participants. But whatever happens, we feel there will still be a role for Intercom, or a publication like it, as a vehicle for discussion between revolutionary groups. In fact if a national organisation is formed, there might well be an even greater need for Intercom, since it is at this point that the danger of isolation from groups will be greatest. So we feel that the criteria for participation in Intercom should not be a commitment to national regroupment, but should remain as follows --

- 1) commitment to the "minimum points" (which are open to amendment, and in fact were amended at the last conference).
- 2) commitment to physical participation in its production.
- 3) political commitment to use Intercom for the aims it was intended for, particularly as a vehicle for debate and clarification.

You are very welcome, as are all groups, to participate in Intercom on this basis, and of course to use Intercom to argue your position on organisation. We suggest that in any case, you should try to send someone to the next conference (Provisionally April 28th-29th in Stoke). Even if you don't want to participate fully you are naturally welcome to submit texts for publication, which if they are not too long will automatically be printed provided they do not contradict the "minimum points" (which I'm sure they will not!)

Fraternally,  
Andy, for Wildcat .

continued from pg. 119. —

-on the side of council vehicles in Central Scotland, an opposition which would crumble in any real crisis.

Indeed it is likely that the whole CND movement would crumble in the event of such a crisis, unable to maintain the coalition between the peace and antinuclear movements. There would probably be a silent stasis in the organisation, rather than, for example, a principled exclusion of the latter forces. The likelihood of this was partially borne out during the Falklands crisis.

The positive aspects of the movement then seem to be the potential bringing of the systems rationality into question and, as we aren't suggesting that the movement in this country is purely reactionary, (the old favourite:) any increase in people's self-confidence which acting together in that movement would bring about.

=====  
 Translation of Letter Received by 'Wildcat' from 'Le Frondeur'  
 =====

Paris, 30th October 1983

Hello,

First we want to tell you something about your translation of our article "Claus Barbie" (in Intercom 3) which is full of errors. The quotation at the end of your translation, is an introduction to another article, "Invitation". Please could you point this out in a future issue of Intercom.

2) Situationism signifies in France the death of situationist theory. Also we can only be non-situationist, the negation of the Situationist International being its transcendence (depassement)/possible realisation. We advise you in this matter to try to read and not to be afraid of the terminology which is used (the "obscure situationist jargon" you refer to), which is the provisional, tactical recapture (? French: reprise) of a language which has yet to be invented. The fact that you cannot see beyond the form betrays in you the secondary symptoms of market alienation, where the buyer prefers the appearance, the brand name, the fashion, the ideology of the product, to its real content.

3) On the other hand we would have preferred that you translated the whole article "Avanti", or the information contained in the article "Le jeu de role ...", articles which give a better reflection of our present evolution. The article "Claus Barbie", written in a hurry, is a limited expression of our thoughts on this phenomenon, which no longer satisfies us. This article is the result of a desire to preserve a written record of an informal discussion of this problem. In case you would like to translate some articles from this issue, we would advise you to choose the one by J. Zerzan of which there is an English version. Or choose the one by Valmont about schools, or the one by Holbach about the crisis, which is enclosed with this letter.

Revolutionary greetings,

For the French section of 'Le Frondeur',

Valmont, Holbach

Addresses: French section: Le Frondeur, BP 105, 94402 VITRY, Cedex,  
 FRANCE

Greek section: Vassilis Markis, 15 rue ioy, ATHENS 11251  
 GREECE

Note by Translator: Apologies to 'Le Frondeur' for the delay in publishing this letter. We are trying to get hold of the article in English they refer to, and will consider for publication in a future issue of Intercom. Readers interested in the article should contact 'Wildcat', and we will tell you how to get hold of a copy. Unfortunately we have almost no resources at the moment to translate the large volume of material in French which we receive. As to the question of language, our aim is, or should be, to communicate our ideas. If someone writes in a language which is difficult to understand, as 'Le Frondeur' does, this betrays an elitism which is the exact opposite to the spirit of communist revolution. - Andy ('Wildcat')

The following is the text of a freely distributed broadsheet from Milton Keynes, called Concrete Cow. ( A name taken from an artistic monstrosity comprising of three life-size concrete cows who live quite peacefully in an open field somewhere in Milton Keynes! ). This broadsheet is hoped to be the first of many. It is produced by members of the Black Star Collective who hope to create some kind of workers group around it. No.1 was produced in the wake of the news that British Rail Engineering Limited were planning to axe 3,500 jobs in the Engineering Division. The local Wolverton works was on the hit list, a works which over the last few years has been hit with redundancies on numerous occasions. The union hopes " for further talks with management" and of coming to " an amicable arrangement." The workers reaction to the redundancies and the position of the union, although angry, is one of pessimism and apathy. Although in saying this, not one worker spoken to at the works entrance had any trust or faith in their unions and agreed it would be a far more ideal situation if workers did control their own struggles. But added, that if the degree of militancy became "political" they would then be open to victimisation and sacking and ultimately black-listing in the broader employment field. A sentiment widely expressed was that of having mortgages and H.P. commitments and families to keep, and the hope that they would'nt be the individuals selected for redundancy. Approximately 200 Cow's were distributed over a two day period to co-incide with the changing shifts. Although we did sense a degree of hostility from some of the workers as they saw us as 'outsiders' and 'commies', response on the whole was favourable, the bright spot being the young worker who stopped and read the broadsheet and then took a handful into work to distribute himself.

#### CONCRETE COW

As you are all no doubt aware it has been announced that BREL are to shed up to 3,500 jobs in the engineering division, with nearly 100 to go locally.

The task ahead facing workers must be that of fighting these redundancies. But what needs looking at is method and tactics.

To simply fight for the jobs at stake is not enough, as the story will repeat itself again and again. Provision must be made for the near and distant future. This struggle needs to be broadened and escalated within the rail industry and into other sectors of industry as our class is being picked off daily by the bosses and the state. By broadening the struggle into other sectors solidarity can be achieved with these workers. Workers who are subject to the same conditions of exploitation. Remember, your struggle is their struggle.

The defensive struggle in question - redundancies - can also be escalated into a struggle for higher wages, better conditions, shorter hours, etc. By doing this the bosses can be hit in such a way they don't know which way to turn.

In as far as tactical procedure goes, we feel that we must now be looking beyond the traditionally accepted mode of dispute, i.e., the withdrawal of labour, which is becoming increasingly ineffectual. Such tactics as the occupation (if nothing else the bosses machinery is held to ransom), the go-slow, sympathy action and the blacking of related parts/components etc., and the wholesale usage of industrial sabotage need to be explored and adopted.

However, the struggle against respective employers and government must be viewed with broader perspective and not be seen as a victory in itself if demands are successfully met. Such struggles must be seen for what they are - demand struggles, defensive and limited reforms. The struggle must continue against the system which creates such economic and political conditions, i.e., World Capitalism.

The role we need to play as workers is to place ourselves in such a position, whereby, we are able to fight off and forge ahead amid all the attacks we are likely to face. We must be in a state of perpetual readiness - on a war footing - class war of course!

We feel that the creation of councils of action can serve this purpose. Councils of freely elected delegates who will be subject to immediate recall. These councils must be created by the masses of workers involved in whatever industry, with no outside agencies, individuals or groups having any say or influence whatsoever.

If successful, these councils could serve a dual role. Firstly, that of co-ordinating the ongoing defensive struggles of our class. And secondly, the creation of a framework necessary for the seizure of the means of production and distribution come the spontaneous revolt of our class, and the transition from capitalist society to a new social order based on common ownership - need and not profit.

( CONTINUED OVERLEAF )

This brings us around to the question you may be asking yourselves - What of the Trade Unions and the TUC? Let it be said, we reject and oppose the role of the Trade Union Movement! We lay down the charge of anti-working class and that of being nothing more than the wage negotiators of  $\phi$  capital - a mediating body between workforce and management. The voice of reform and compromise. The Trade Union Movement is an integral part of the capitalist system. It is guaranteed that in any union led dispute the workers always end up sold-out. Unofficial action, or that without TUC blessing, is either made official as soon as possible (the kiss of death) or, as in the case of Warrington, ignored and betrayed.

However, in saying this, we are not attacking individual unionists and shop floor militants as the agents of capitalism! In most cases workers are sucked into the union vacuum out of the mistaken belief that the unions serve the interests of the working class. We attack the unions themselves as capitalist institutions and the role they play. We attack the leadership of these institutions who, more often than not, wilfully lead workers up blind alleyways. Whose only concerns are their own self-seeking interests and prestige. A leadership which is opportunist and careerist.

We call most earnestly upon all workers to reject all self-seeking leaders, political parties and unions and start organising their own struggles - genuine class struggle!

The only way to rid ourselves of the miseries of the present set up is to struggle against, and the ultimate overthrow of, the capitalist system and all its various trappings.

THE EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING CLASS MUST BE THE TASK OF THE WORKING CLASS ITSELF!

The above text was accompanied by a C.C. logo, a heading proclaiming - "No Compromise & No Quarter!" and an anti-union cartoon. Plus a column introducing ourselves and the aims of C.C.

BLACK STAR : WORKERS JOURNAL FOR A FREE / COMMUNIST SOCIETY

BLACK STAR No.1 Vol.2 : Articles on, Communist Society, the Labour Party, and the Rise of Parliamentarism. A tribute to Guy Aldred on the anniversary of his death, giving a background to the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, and an article written by him. Price 50p. Inc. p & p.

Black Star No.2 Vol.2 ; Articles on the Kronstadt uprising of 1921. A reproduction of an essay by Jenny Patrick entitled - "The Masters Interest." Readers letters, including a controversial challenge to the anarchists - "Is Anarchism the Answer?" Price 50p. Inc. p & p.

From: Black Star, PO Box 153, Wolverton, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire.

## REPORT OF THE INTERCOM CONFERENCE

Impressions and Conclusions - KM (Glasgow)

I attended the Sat. Afternoon and Sunday sessions of the conference in Brixton. Around 25 people attended, approximately 10 of which came from "Wildcat" in Manchester & "Careless Talk" in Stoke/Keele. The remainder were individuals in the London Workers Group, and its offshoot "Workers Playtime", and individual autonomists some of whom were associated with "Class War". "Black Star" in Milton Keynes were unable to attend at the last moment. 2 Anarcho-Christian pacifists were "expelled" in the morning session before I arrived in that they held political positions removed from the 10 points outlined in Intercom as the basis for agreement.



The main issue discussed in Sat. afternoon was the question of revolutionaries articulating DEMANDS during periods of working class struggle. Some people including most Manchester comrades had the view that it was inadequate for "intervention" to be limited to publicising struggles, providing information or "resources" (ie. printing facilities etc). They were joined principally by a LWG member who was largely at odds with his local comrades. The practical examples most cited were:-

bread riots and raising demands contesting price increases etc  
the rearguard action against redundancies in Shipyards etc.

Some comrades from London (& Stoke) were inclined to the view that by making DEMANDS, it was difficult for workers to separate the position of libertarian communists from that of the "transitional" demand series of packages used by Trot groups as part of their manipulation/disillusionment strategy. However, there was complete agreement that, whether or not the politicisation/generalisation of a struggle would best be achieved by the articulating of demands, that propaganda had to contain the class goal of communism & opposition to all attempts to de-rail the struggles into Union and "representative channels".

In the Warrington dispute, both Manchester and London distributed the leaflet calling for the struggle to intensify in Fleet Street & sold W. Playtime.

After this there was a discussion on ORGANISATION which also displayed differences in "method" and more crucially, the participation of revolutionaries in struggles & their degree of (initial) separation from mainstream class reality. An ex-World Revolution member from Liverpool, together with significant backing argued that the situation needed a response from revolutionaries in terms of a centralised organisation ie. meaning more than a collection of groups linked on a federal basis. Examples of the Steel strike in Britain and N. France were cited to demonstrate how a co-ordinated response to rapidly developing events could be made with mandated delegates, newspaper delegates taking up roles within the organisation. Others, chiefly W. Playtime comrades were skeptical of "partyism" and the class separation and "professionalisation" involved. I also joined in here arguing that an effective local impact was not dependent (as a Stoke activist) had argued) on the creation of a libertarian (party of) communists, but depended to a large extent on the commitment, resources and clarity of the local group (such co-ordination proceeding from the "bottom up"). The conclusion was that, theory apart, the intercom group could only hope to improve using the present federalism - although some saw this as a temporary measure, & not even as a means to an end.

To conclude, individuals gave an account of what was happening in their local areas (I have brought some of the publications back with me). There was a degree of surprise when I gave an account of our activities, even although I was trying to qualify this. The other groups are clearly impressed with the level of activities sustained (although not whole-hearted on the content) and they are united in requesting that we seriously consider greater commitment to liason & co-ordination - INTER COMMUNICATION !

In the Sun. session, this was pursued in arriving at where INTERCOM went in the future. The Manchester comrades, having done most of the groundwork needed a lot of convincing that other groups (especially London) were sufficiently serious in their intention and as such constituted a group (as opposed to individuals with affinities in other groups). I stated that I would report to the "Clydeside group" and argue for a group/or collective of individuals to step our involvement. Possessing the the physical resources we could easily:

produce issues of Intercom  
host a conference  
assist other groups in sharing resources

However pending this, and requests to "Black Star" in Milton Keynes and other potential participants, an attempt would be made to 'speed up' involvement by producing another Intercom (by London) & a conference in the last weekend in April in Keele.

In general the participants were united in their critique of the non-class

orientation of most anarchist groups, in pre-occupation with 'single issue' politics. Internationalism is also a high priority. In my view not enough stress is made of class struggle outside the factory or contesting the VALUES of the system. There is also, undeniably, differences between left communism, identifying a crucial role for those in the "vanguard" of the class, and a more autonomist position, critical of the danger of groups becoming GANGS whose interest is seen above the class. This is a question of degree and all are critical of the "substitutionism" of the marxist groups (CWO, ICC).

If we participate, do we profit?      On the whole, I would say yes.

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## REPORT FROM ITALY

by our "INTERCOM" correspondent.

16th March, 1984 Veneto Italy

Short strikes are continuing to break out all over Italy in opposition to the government's attempt to reduce all workers' real wages. Graxi & co. are implementing a further cut in the 'Scala Mobile', which partially protects wages from inflation by automatic increases every 3 months. These rises are related to, but less than, the inflation rate. The government's move is a step towards the ruling class' aim to get rid of the Scala Mobile altogether.

Workers' resistance has involved local one day general strikes, effective wildcat railway strikes and blockades of railway lines, roads and motorways. However it's not yet clear if the strikes can develop further to pose a real challenge to the government's austerity plans - or if the Communist Party Union leaders will succeed in channelling the discontent into ineffectual gestures of protest, as a prelude to a compromise sell-out.

Two of the three trade unions support the government and totally oppose the strikes. The Communist Party leaders of the biggest Union, the CGIL, 'support' the strikes, while issuing orders to try to limit their effectiveness. The strikes have largely been called and organised through workplace assemblies and factory councils, on which sit workers elected by members of all the unions at their workplace. An ambiguous form of organisation. Certainly not an expression of the proletariat organising as a class, free from union restrictions and divisions. But certainly not (yet anyway) totally integrated into the official Union structure.

Autonomists and anarchists here are advocating a general strike to increase real wages and to reduce working hours without loss of pay. And, through the dynamic of such a massive struggle, to overcome divisions such as employed/unwaged, and thus to bring nearer the possibility of the overthrow of power and liberation from all bosses.

Rome, March 24th will see a huge national demonstration against the wage cuts. Six days later there's to be a national assembly of Factory Council delegates. On the agenda - the question of a national general strike.

(There will also be a conference in Padova on April 7/8. This will particularly concern itself to the repressive measures being extended by various states, i.e. the use of police etc. to militarise certain areas, dispensing with the old democratic structures which used to mediate conflict, the construction of a consensus around the struggle against terrorism, against crime, against drugs and the overall construction of a society far more constrictive than at present. These discussions will also take account of the struggles at Comiso and Voghera. Seeing the obvious parallels with this country - the policing operations mounted in response to the miners flying pickets, the legitimising of the police's strong arm tactics through the Police Bill, we hope to get some information back from this conference.)

Box LAG  
82 Lark Lane  
Liverpool L17  
14 March

Dear Friends,

I hope things are alright with you.

I've seen some literature of yours and I find it good, although my awareness isn't really on the same level. Could you please tell me what you would describe yourselves as, and why yourselves and anarcho-communists disagree with anarcho-syndicalism. Also I'm confused by the terms "left-communists" and "council communists". In your reply would you keep your answers plain and down to earth.

In reading Intercom's aims and principles which I agree with, I come across aim No. 4, why are you against shop stewards, and rank and file movements? Principle No. 7 must mean you're against national liberation struggles. I don't know where I'm up to on that issue. Could you please clear me up on that one please?

Also, what's the difference between socialism and communism?

I'm also writing to inform you that Liverpool anarchist group, which is just a broad group of anarchists (i.e. class struggle and pacifists) a means for getting in touch and a discussion group now meets fortnightly. The reason being that the meetings were every week, were boring, empty, disappointing turnouts, and simply weren't going anywhere. A couple of class struggle anarchists decided we wanted a separate group concentrating on class struggle ideas. The group called Liverpool Direct Action Group, which is not the DAM, also has the LAG address and a set of aims and principles.

These are needed to have a common understanding, agreement, and a basis for us to work/organise around for collective participation. What do you think? We are also thinking of getting a paper together with local, national, and international news and information. But we need advice on how to go about it.

Well, there you have it. Looking forward to your reply.

Love and Solidarity  
Gerard

Hello again,

In writing to explain the rearrangement of LAG and the new group LDAG, I forgot to give you our short list of aims which can be described as principles. So I've given you the leaflet with them on.

Also, maybe you could give us some suggestions on how to intervene in class struggles. Such as when there are strikes, etc. We are not experienced and not all that aware of things.

I'm also very confused about supporting action against redundancies in the nuke power stations if there are any. Or support for screws in prisons for better pay, the police, army, the GCHC spy centre etc. In fact, any state institution that is cruel and harmful to people, but were there are fightbacks by those workers to defend their "jobs". What do you think, maybe you could bring those questions forward, in the next issue of Intercom.

I hope that's everything. with all the interest and curiosity.

Gerard

LAG (cont'd)

Our aims are:

1. to support, seek solidarity for, and be involved in struggles for the needs of the vast majority of people, against the ruling class of capitalists politicians and bureaucrats. This includes activities at the workplace, by the unemployed, by tenants, and against all forms of discrimination on grounds of colour, country of origin, age, appearance, sex or choses sexuality.

2. To urge that all such struggles be directly controlled by ALL those involved. We are opposed to all political parties and trade union bureaucracies.

3. To aim at the overthrow of the state, capitalism, and wage slavery in all their forms by a world-wide social revolution in which the vast majority of people, who at present are just expected to follow orders, all play an equal part- and the creation of a free and classless society. We want a world without relationships of domination and submission, where all people have an equal say in how things are run, and where production is for human need not profit.

We are not pacifists but neither are we advocates of mindless violence- although violence is always undesirable we recognise that in some situations of self-defense it is unfortunately inevitable. The class war is as much a struggle against the internal forms of oppression as it is against the ruling class\_ we recognise that to bring about revolution we need to change our thoughts, feelings and attitudes not only towards government and capitalism, but towards each other and ourselves.

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WORKERS COUNCILS - Anton Pannekoek. Vol 1. The Task.

60pp booklet first of a planned series of four which will reprint the whole of this text for the first time since the Australian edition in 1950. The last part will also contain some comments on the book and a biography of Pannekoek.

Vol. 1 available now - 50p (inc. postage) (1/3 discount bulk orders)  
Echanges et Mouvement, BM Box 91, London WC 1V 6XX.  
Assistance with distribution welcomed.

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1956 - The Hungarian Revolution. Council Communist Pamphlet No. 1.

Excellent short account of events. First of planned series of pamphlets - forthcoming no. 2 Russian Factory Committees 1917-21 no. 3 Council Communism and Workers Councils. No 1 - 40p (inc. post) 5 or more 30p each. Scorch Publications, Box 56, 108 Bookshop, 108 Salisbury Road, Cardiff. (Make cheques payable to R. M. Jones).

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Our Organisation. Interesting translation of a text produced by delegates from a mass assembly of Barcelona Dockers in 1979, as a summary of their experiences and analysis of contemporary struggles in Spain. Reccomended. Forthcoming from same address : 'Get Fucked!' Vol 1. - will include an analysis of some aspects of the class struggle here over the past 12 years or so, as well as the class struggle in other areas of the world. out in May 40p. From : BM Combustion, London WC1N 3XX.

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Received from France :

Des Travailleurs Face au Syndicalisme - L'Insecurite Sociale 5F.

"The texts collected in this pamphlet have a common basis. They've arisen from the reflections of workers confronted by unionism since 1969. Produced in different circumstances their emphases are different but complement one another, all have their weaknesses. So don't be surprised to find contradictions amongst them. These are evident just as the differences between those who publish them are, and the various elements which figure in them. They do not represent a 'political line', but an attempt at reflection by some workers amongst others struggling for their self-emancipation."

George Orwell "La politique et la langue Anglaise" L'Insecurite Sociale 10F. translation of 1946 article on misuse of english by political writers.

Un Bilan Des Dernieres Greves Dans Les Centres De Tri ('Taking stock of the recent strikes at the Tris centres') L'Insecurite Sociale (nouvelle serie) No. 1. 5F.

"The Mexandau plan is the origin of the strikes in the postal tris in September and October 1983. But these struggles cannot be summed up as a simple struggle against the implementation of this plan. This is their interest."

These and other publications (in French) available from :

B. P. 243, 75564 Paris Cedex 12, France.

(We also recieved leaflets on 1984, and two opposing an 'anti-racist' perspective signed by Des Partisans de la Communaute Humaine from the same address.)

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Le Principe Autonome - Marc P. Saligue

Critique Du Marxisme

Two booklets by les cahiers Marx envers et contre Marx.

From Diffusion Alternative 36 rue des Bourdonnais 75001 Paris.

No indication of price.

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Also received Communism. an english language review put out by the GCI. Some evil dog has walked off with it unfortunately - hopefully We can locate their address and put it on the next stencil!

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CNT - Organising An Anarchist Syndicalist Trade Union. Published by Spanish Information Network. c/o 5 Hollin Hill, Burnley Lancs. 30p (also produce 'Sinews' newsletter - 35p)

The Bankruptcy of Syndicalism and Anarchism - Workers for Proletarian Autonomy and Social Revolution. BM Blob. London WC1N 3XX.

These texts complement one another well. The first gives an account of the CNT's structure and how congresses are organised. There's no flesh, in terms of an account of what this structure does, on the bare bones given. At the end of it you're left wondering who this pamphlet is addressed to - and why. The second text is a bad tempered assemblyist text written in Spain in 1979. It denounces the CNT for four pages, a critique which doesn't go beyond abusive attacks on what it refers to throughout as 'burocracy'. "The experience of the assembly movement over the last few years - "the real movement abolishing existing conditions"- has made enough of an impression on the consciousness of the proletariat that it is able to withstand "ideology" in the sense of ideas that serve leaders." Oh yeah? This triumphalist nonsense must have given Spanish workers a few laughs when it was written. The humour is likely to escape proletarians in Britain five years later.

The case for and against Syndicalism is advanced not a step, though the first pamphlet contains a few facts. File under Obscurity.

From L'Eveil Internationaliste :

Subversion No. 5 - Feb. 1984 includes articles on North/South dialogue, Talbot, 1984. (0.50F)

Subversion (discussion journal) No. 2 - March 1984. (including Critique of Historical Materialism, Why the Movement of the proletariat is communist, and correspondence with the L'Insecurite Sociale). (10F).

Supplement to Subversion No. 5 - translations of english language material (LWG, Careless Talk, Authority, Intercom, The Alarm/Focus (US), and Subversion (Berlin).

B.P 221 - 44604 Saint Nazaire Cedex, France.

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La Revolution Communiste No. 3 Jan. 84. Theoretical organ of the Fraction Communiste (internationaliste). A collection of six Fundamental texts of the (Italian) Left communists including such favourites as Party and Class (1921) Party and Class Action (1921) The Historical Invariance of Marxism (1952) etc. B.P 99, Bruxelles 6, B-1060 Bruxelles, Belgium.

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Groupe Communiste Internationaliste address : BP 54, Bruxelles 31, 1060 Bruxelles, Belgium - do not mention group on envelope. (see previous page).

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How to be a Pirate. A do-it-yourself guide to pirate radio - just in time for the IBA/Home Office crack down... 30p & sae BM box Hurricane London WC1.

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Strike (vol 3 No.8) Feb. 84 including : Uranium mines, Central America, Prisons, Law N Order, Working Class Women in Early Capitalism, Industrial News, Russian Thinkers. (50 cents Subs 6 dollars) Po Box 284, Main Station, St Catherines, Ontario Canada L2R 6T7. (For single copies try Freedom Bookshop , 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

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Otta Control Feb 1984 No.42. includes : Supergrasses, Heroin and Working Class response in Dublin, News from Northern Ireland. (5p) 7 Winetavern St Belfast BT1 1JQ.

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Synthesis No. 15 (January 84) - now wholly devoted to Social Ecology. PO Box 1858, San Pedro, CA 90733 USA.

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L'Insecurite Sociale : As we go to press we have recieved some texts from L'insecu as a foretaste of a number of pamphlets they intend to produce in May/June this year about their conception of communism. These texts are intended to give interested groups and individuals an idea of L'insecurite Sociales thinking, and to provoke dialogue on this subject. Available from BP 243 75564 Paris CEDEX 12 (France).

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Smile No. 2 : Organ of the generation positive (secular arm of the church of logical positivism) Poetry and Manifesto's by Stuart Home. Contributions from various certified Poets and Avant-Garde Performance Artists. "For Positive Plagiarism". (40p inc post.) from 31 Norfolk Farm Road, Pyrford, Woking, GU22 8LH.

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# Wildcat

MANCHESTER AREA BULLETIN ★★ ★

## THE 'WILDCAT' GROUP

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activity. We encourage anyone who is interested to attend these meetings with a view to joining the group.



**OUR FREEDOM LIES IN OUR OWN HANDS!**

## Conditions of Membership

1 Members of WILDCAT are in agreement with the political viewpoint of the group as expressed in  
(i) the Basic Principles  
(ii) the text "What Distinguishes Wildcat"  
(iii) other published material.

2 Members put forward the political viewpoint of Wildcat, and act accordingly, in all their political activity, whether or not this is undertaken in the name of Wildcat.

3 Members commit themselves to participating in the ongoing work of political discussion and clarification.

So far as their personal circumstances allow, members of Wildcat

4 Attend meetings regularly

5 Take part in group interventions and activity

6 Contribute financially to the work of the group.

## Basic Principles

1 Opposition to capitalist society which exists in every country in the world; both in the form of "private capitalism" and the "mixed economy" as in the American bloc, and in the form of "state capitalism" as in the Russian bloc, China, and much of the "third world".

2 Commitment to the communist objective - abolition of nation states and the money/market/wages system, and its replacement by a classless society, common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources.

3 Rejection of nationalisation and other state capitalist economic measures as any solution to working class problems, or to the world crisis caused by capitalism.

4 Rejection of all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" organisations, such as the IRA, PLO, etc. For the internationalisation of class struggle.

5 Opposition to all capitalist and nationalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. Opposition to all joint work with these organisations, including participation in front organisations such as the CND.

6 Support and encouragement for independent working class struggle, outside the control of the trade unions (including shop stewards and "rank and file" movements), and all political parties.

7 Rejection of the use of parliament. For the active participation of the whole working class in its own emancipation through social revolution which overthrows all governments, bosses, and leaders.

8 Active opposition to all forms of sexism, racism, cultural and institutionalized barriers to working class solidarity.

9 Opposition to religion, pacifism and all other ideological mystifications.

10 Support for principled co-operation among revolutionaries, and opposition to sectarianism.

## Address

'WILDCAT'  
c/o THE AUTONOMY CENTRE  
8-10 GREAT ANCOATS STREET  
MANCHESTER 4, U.K.

# What Distinguishes Wildcat

The WILDCAT group is a small local organisation of revolutionaries who originally came together to produce a bulletin of class struggle in the Manchester area. We are now involved in a number of other projects and have made contact with similar groups elsewhere in this country and abroad.

The political tradition to which Wildcat belongs is generally known as "left communist", "libertarian communist", "council-communist" or "anarchist-communist", and attempts to combine the best elements of anarchism and Marxism. At present this movement is unfortunately very fragmented. Whilst not underestimating the difficulties involved, we stand for the unification of our movement at a national and international level.

We are opposed to all capitalist and nationalist parties, and this includes the Labour Party which has always defended a capitalist programme and served capitalist interests. Unlike the Leftist groups we don't promote the lie that the Labour Party is any less capitalist, chauvinist, or anti-working class than the Tories. The barbarism of capitalism, the spread of starvation in the "third world", of poverty in the developed world, the ever-growing threat of world war, means that it is futile to choose between left and right-wing capitalist rulers. Capitalism in all its forms must be destroyed.

As for trade unions, we have no illusions that they could be turned into organisations which defend working class interests simply by a change in leadership or tactics. To attempt to do so is a futile exercise. The very structure of the trade unions has developed in accordance with their role in society today, which is to divide, isolate and defeat workers' struggles. We believe that our struggles can only be won through independent working class action, organised and controlled by the people taking part. But all gains won in struggle today can only be temporary, until capitalism is finally overthrown and replaced by a communist society.

The society we envisage is not one where a party takes power and acts as a government, but one in which all people participate in decision making. This society will not follow a transitional period of state control but will be achieved in the process itself of overthrowing capitalism. In order to make this possible, workers must organise their own struggles now, operating through democratic mass meetings and the election of revocable delegates, outside the control of political parties or trade unions.

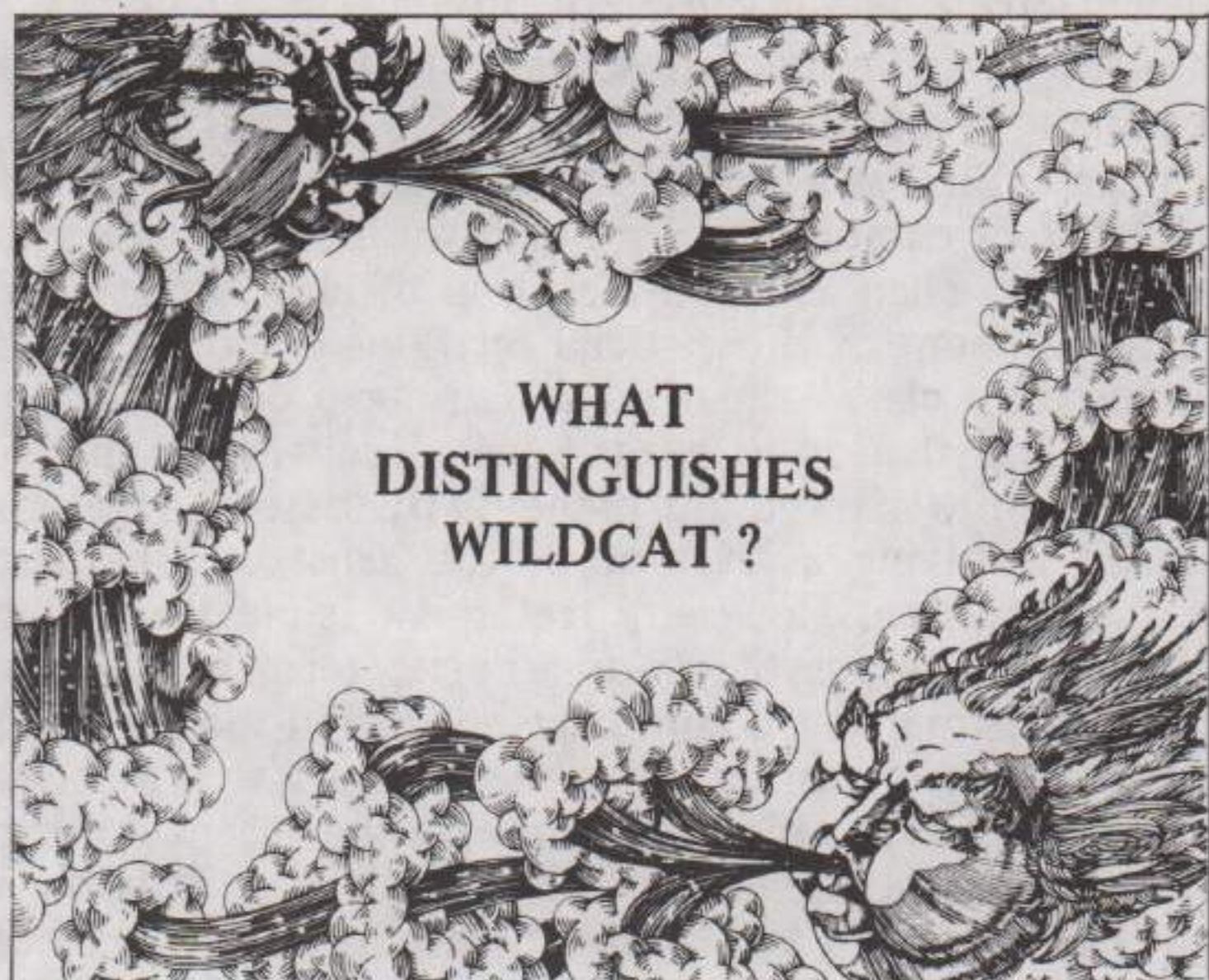
The role of revolutionaries must be to encourage, support and attempt to widen workers struggles. We do this not as a party-building tactic, but because we believe that through the experience of today's struggles workers will learn the necessity for communism - and how these defensive struggles can be transformed into the struggle for communist revolution.

For we have complete confidence in the ability of the working class to emancipate itself. We see communism as the real underlying trend of working class struggle for human needs under capitalism. In the final success of this struggle, communist society will emerge, with the total abolition of nation states and the money/market/wages system, and its replacement by the common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources, for production to directly satisfy people's needs.



“Drawing up a programme of principle, however, (instead of postponing this until such time as it has been prepared for by a considerable period of common activity), means erecting a milestone for all the world to see, by which the progress of the party will be measured.”

(Marx to Bracke, 5th May 1875)



In this text we would like to raise a number of questions about the theoretical and political direction adopted by Wildcat. These questions raised themselves in the initial draft of this text in relation to Wildcat's contributions to 'Intercom' and recent pamphlets. They have hardened into final written form in response to Wildcat's publication of their basic principles and 'What Distinguishes Wildcat' — reprinted as a leaflet in this issue of 'Intercom'.

Let's start at a point of agreement :

*“The role of revolutionaries must be to support and attempt to widen workers' struggles. We do this not as a party-building tactic, but because we believe that through the experience of today's struggles workers will learn the necessity for communism — and how these defensive struggles can be transformed into the struggle for communist revolution.”* ('What Distinguishes Wildcat').

The only problem we see with this form of words, as we understand them, is the use of the term 'workers'. In the pilot issue of the Ultra Left Review (aka 'Intercom'), Wildcat stated :

*“... our conception of the working class would include not just factory and farm workers ... but also most students, unemployed, housewives, office and service workers etc., in fact the majority of people in the modern industrialised areas of the world. It would exclude only the capitalist class itself, petty traders, middle-layer bureaucrats etc., and on a world scale other groups such as peasants and tribespeople.”*

(ULR — Pilot Issue, p5.)

While agreeing broadly with this conception, we believe that talking of 'workers' in this sort of sense is liable to cause confusion — not least when one wishes to specifically discuss that part of the 'working class(-es)' that is employed in waged work. More importantly, we think it important to distinguish between the working class as it is today (“in itself”), and the united revolutionary class which will overthrow capitalism — a class united against capital, which will only discover itself (“for itself”) in the task of abolishing the conditions of existence of class society.

We think that this broader conception of 'the working class' has to be distinguished from the 'normal', 'everyday'

senses of the term 'working class'. To that end we prefer the term Proletariat — which has the merit of at least making clear that something requires explanation, and also helps distinguish the fact that we are talking about something that in practise doesn't yet exist, except in tendency.

In the piece in ULR 1 we quoted from, Wildcat went on to stress the importance of their conception of the working class, as against notions of the primary importance of “the producers of goods”. This is due :

*“to the extent to which capitalism has socialised production — not so much by physically drawing people together as workers in one place, but by integrating the social activities of many different and physically dispersed groups of people in the pursuit of surplus value. Capitalist wealth is not simply the product of particular factory workers, but the social creation of agricultural workers, miners, teachers, scientists, housewives, hospital workers, transport workers etc. This is an important, if difficult, point which communists need to get over to our fellow workers”.* (ULR 1 p5)

By capitalist wealth in this context we presume Wildcat mean not merely surplus value, but also use values under capitalism. Again the Proletariat (in the sense we mean above) is not, of course, defined by its place within the capitalist division of labour, which can only come into being on the basis that a class is created which has only its labour power to sell (if it can). This is the class of the dispossessed. Wildcat go on to suggest, correctly in our view, that the most important thing is that :

*“... no one section of workers ... could make a communist revolution without the conscious and active involvement of the majority of the rest”* (ULR 1 p5).

However the important problem with the passage we quote lies elsewhere, in the conception of 'socialisation' by capitalism which is presented. As it stands, Wildcat appear to be close to suggesting that capitalism directly creates more than the conditions of its destruction ; not merely the 'material' but also the *productive* and *social* bases of communism. A reading reinforced by the suggestion that *“the struggle for greater control over our lives is fundamental to the class struggle.”* (ULR 1, p5), (though they do raise the question of *“the extent to which capitalist technology can be transformed for use in communist society”* (*ibid.* p6).

Is Wildcat suggesting that communist revolution implies merely seizing control of our lives and activities as they exist under capitalism, by overthrowing the exploitation and control *“now exercised by capitalism”* (*ibid.* p5/6) — as against seizing the potential for a society of 'abundance', through *overthrowing* capitalist social relations — which are the form of our lives and activities under capitalism?

The problem with the conception of 'socialisation' as here expressed, is that it could quite happily be used to justify perspectives (for example, councillist or syndicalist) which aim not at abolishing capitalist social relations, but at seizing and managing society/the 'productive base'. Most relevant in this context, this was the majority position of the international 'ultra-left' after 1917, as against Leninism, first in and then against the Third International. To state/party/bureaucratic control of production/society was opposed 'control' by the workers themselves (in one organisational form or another). The failure of both Leninism and the ultra-left was to emphasise form as opposed to content. What became essential to them became the form of organisation, the form of management of society, and after 1917 for the Bolsheviks, and in the thirties for the Dutch left, the form (in wholly mistaken terms) of

'communist economy'. To the extent that they went no further than this, 'THE workers councils' remained merely the other side of the coin to 'THE Party'. That the ultra-left never really detached itself from the terms of reference of Leninism has become all too clear as its traditions have been taken up in recent years : non-party councillist organisations, councillist parties, organisations of partyists, non-party parties — there is no permutation of the organisational themes of the twenties which has not been tried or theorised.

The problem is not the form of organisation, but its content. Communist organisation is merely the organisation of tasks on the basis of an orientation towards the future communist society.

Wildcat clearly situate themselves within the ultra-left tradition. "*The political tradition to which Wildcat belongs is generally known as 'left communist', 'libertarian communist', 'council communist' or 'anarchist communist', and attempts to combine the best elements of anarchism and Marxism.*" Equally clearly, they have not shaken off its limitations.

This is evident in their characterisations of communist society.

"*The society we envisage is not one where a party takes power and acts as a government, but one in which all people participate in decision making.*" (*What Distinguishes Wildcat*).

The following criticisms of councillism are relevant to the ultra-left tradition as a whole :

"*Councillism also contributed to a vision of communism as a great democratic reorganisation, in which first a minority (however numerous) of workers would participate, and then the whole of society in 'communism realised'. Now, if the demand that each and all should take control of life is a communist aspiration and can give rise to the most subversive acts, it merely coagulates if it remains on the terrain of administration and decision. The cult of democracy isn't anti-communist because communism will be dictatorial, but because it turns discussion, which is often fruitless and paralysing, into a privileged moment and an essential preliminary to action.*

*In councillism, the system of councils is conceived as a generalisation of parliamentarism. The council is the parliament of the working class. So the dividing line between reform and revolution in this false perspective is made in the following way : reformists (stalinists, leninists etc.) want to transform the existing decision-making organs, democratising them little by little, injecting them with stronger and stronger doses of participation by the masses. The councillists, on the other hand, want to create new organs, setting up a true democracy immediately, a real structure for discussion and decision.*

*Some want to work on the inside, others want to work on the outside, but the error is identical. All revere the moment of decision, and class the revolution as the creation of a new decision-making process. Councillists want to transfer this process from statist organs to the factories and local communities. Because they have not extricated themselves from the political illusion, they can speak of the 'abolition of wage-labour', and of the commodity market, without making any more of it than a slogan which is never made clear. They do not understand the revolution as a process generating new forms of activity." (*The Question of the State — Guerre Sociale, 1978*).*

We questioned above Wildcat's expression of the concept of 'socialisation by capitalism'. What is missing from their formulation is that capitalism does not merely exploit and control us — it also divides and alienates us ; that the 'socialisation' of the

means of production and reproduction goes hand-in-hand with the progressive destruction and domination of 'social life'. The task of the communist revolution is not merely that of seizing control of our productive activity on the basis of the social relations and identities which capitalism establishes. It is a question of doing so through destroying our social alienation, and building a new community ('human community'). This is not a 'superstructural' question which will somehow follow from the seizure of the means of production. The social dynamic of the communist movement is the self-discovery by proletarians of community in the course of struggle against capitalism. First as a proletarian self-consciousness shaped by the attacks of capital, and by our revolutionary class struggle to destroy it. Then as the destruction of class society itself — the establishment of those social relations based on fraternity as opposed to class solidarity, which make possible a society where the satisfaction of needs takes place without the mediation of law, the market and money. (By 'based on fraternity', we mean involving a level of mutual trust unstructured by mutual oppression. However, 'fraternity' is clearly not an adequate word — suggestions for a better term welcome.) Nor are we suggesting that communist revolution means an end to argument or even conflict — on the contrary it is a society in which these can take place fruitfully, in the absence of capitalist scarcity, social alienation and class division. It is the proletariat's discovery of this dynamic within itself, as part of the process of achieving class consciousness through its struggle, which makes the communist revolution — the process of communisation — appear possible.

Those conceptions of the 'inevitable tendencies' within capitalism which will bring about the 'death crisis' of capitalism, together with the soft 'libertarian' equivalent that "the only choice is between communism and barbarism/war", all rest on the failure to understand that communist revolution is the end of capitalist politics as well as capitalist economics. Necessarily so, since they cannot be separated. They are expressions of the consequent 'need' to find a 'materialist'-sounding explanation of how communist social relations can come about. Either by some 'mystical' 'force of history' or by a form of 'seige mentality' — the solidarity of the 'blitz' writ large.

The most urgent questions raised by 'What Distinguishes Wildcat' relate to their definition of communist society :

"*In the final success of this struggle, communist society will emerge, with the total abolition of nation states and the money/market/wages system, and its replacement by the common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources, for production to directly satisfy peoples' needs.*"\*

\*In relation to the last phrase about direct satisfaction of needs, it's important to bear in mind that :

"Abundance, or communism, is not infantile affluence — the replication of products for the immediate gratification of desiring subjects — since it dissolves formal subjects and the contingency of desire. Nor is it an empirical rationalisation of resources away from destruction and waste. Its possibility is directly structured into productive capacities, which are therefore not means to be disposed of according to external ends. In other words, abundance cannot be achieved through a plan which seeks to reconcile means to ends, since such a plan would retain the formal separation of needs and capacities. The planned rationalisation of capitalist production through formal reason is no alternative. Nor is it practical : for so long as needs are formally separated from capacities, the law of value overwhelms all efforts at rationalisation, and, as recent events, East, West and South, make clear, subverts even the possibility of infantile affluence. Abundance lies beyond the 'narrow horizon of right', where the forms of private property no longer exist and the human capacity to labour is not a commodity. The social labour necessary for the provision of subsistence retains an element of formality (planning) to allocate means to ends ; but the terms on which the social product is made available are dissociated from this, and nothing stands between individuals and their conditions of life. At the same time this remnant of formality is compressed by the vast growth of productive capacities — the development of automatic production — which reduces necessary labour to a minimum. Non-necessary labour is no longer embodied in a surplus product, but becomes free activity. Free activity is need and capacity simultaneously — the immediate unity of labour." (G. Kay and J.Mott — "Political Order and the Law of Labour" p.28)

We believe this is a wholly unacceptable formulation of the goals of communist society. When the formula "Common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources" was first raised in the ten points regulating participation in 'Intercom', we felt (and it was said at the initial conference) that it was inadequate. We then assumed that it was intended as a formulation which would allow the maximum number of people within the political spectrum defined by the Intercom project to participate in it. An impression which has been reinforced by the relaxed attitude to the ten criteria displayed in the first issue of 'Intercom'. (It was not until issue three after all, that an accurate version of the criteria as agreed at the initial conference appeared in 'Intercom'!) On this basis, debate about this formulation remained important, but seemed relatively less urgent. We were, then, astonished to see Wildcat adopt it as a group position.

As was said in a paper distributed at the first conference (not reprinted in 'Intercom') :

*" 'Common ownership and democratic control' could be happily seen as an expression of their ambitions by a wide variety of leftists. I believe on the contrary that democracy has nothing to do with communist revolution — it is a form of political mediation in a society fractured by capitalist social relations, where people are alienated from their productive activity, from themselves and one another, from life itself. The communist revolution is precisely the suppression of these social relations and of politics as a separate, privileged sphere. (...) As for common ownership — how far is this phrase used differently than in Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution?" ('Beyond the Waxworks. The Ultra-Left Review' — copies available from us.)*

This argument against democracy (inadequately verbalised) met largely with incomprehension at the conference. (As it had done at the London International Discussion Bulletin conference in 1981). One response was that it was a pointless debate over semantics. We believe on the contrary that it is an integral and crucial aspect of communist theory.

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Capitalist society is political society. Social relations in Capitalism are structured by the needs of a system of private property, articulated politically in a system of law. Law doesn't merely arise superstructurally on the economic basis of capitalism. (Emergent capitalism modifies to its ends the legal structure it finds, but equally its ability to do this is a precondition for that emergence.) Through law, the political relations of society are guaranteed by the authority invested by society, first in kings, later in the political state. It is the guaranteeing of money by the state that makes it possible for it to act as the "universal medium of exchange", rather than a quantity of precious metal. The state constitutes its citizens' status as legal subjects, and on the other hand the status of all elements of the natural world as potential objects of property. Let us convey our point here by a lengthy quote :

*"In modern society where the conditions of life are private property needs are separated from capacities. A state of abundance would alter this. Needs and capacities would come together, and close off the space between them. In modern society, this space is filled by the dense structures of private property — political order and the law of labour : in a state of abundance they would have no place. If the productive capacities already deployed were oriented towards need, necessary labour would be reduced to a minimum, so that nothing would stand between men and what they need to live."* (G. Kay and J. Mott 'Political Order and the Law of Labour' p1)

*"Where private property is the universal mode of appropriation, the legal form persona-res is the sinew that binds society together. The need for such a specially-developed bond only arises when the elements linked by it are denied the possibility of establishing a direct unity in themselves. The very existence of a legal bond between persons and things presupposes their real separation. In fact, private property presupposes not just one but a whole series of separations of which this is the first : namely, the material conditions of life are legal things over which no person can exercise a direct claim. Nothing in capitalist society can be acquired through simple possession or natural right, since there are no direct relations between men and the world about them. Thus the first separation implied by private property as a condition of its existence, and a condition continually reproduced by its existence, is a categorical split between persons and things, which far from being overcome by their refinement into legal subjects and objects, is reinforced by it. This primary separation is complemented by a second — the division of subject from subject and object from object — through which property is made to work as a system.*

The distinctive feature of modern property that sets it apart from the earlier and less developed forms of classical antiquity and feudalism, is that these two separations, which result in a world of individual subjects on the one side and discrete objects on the other, become absolute by combining to form a third : the separation of the right to property from all objects. In capitalist society the legal capacities that stamp an individual as an owner of property are not derived from direct possession. Where property is absolute in this sense a wedge is driven between the right of ownership and all objects, creating a gulf between subjects and objects and opening a space which is immediately filled by the state. The sequence is logical, not temporal : the separation of subjectivity from objects does not happen first in time creating a space that the state subsequently occupies, the events occur simultaneously. The space is filled at the very moment of its creation, since it is in the nature of this space that it can only exist as occupied space. The founding of absolute property and the establishment of the state are reciprocal moments of the same process." (ibid p 2/3)

*"Both natural law and German classical philosophy in their different ways grasped the fact that private property could only become the general form of appropriation (absolute property) on condition of the existence of the state. Both traditions understood that exchange takes place on terms that are established outside its immediate sphere.*

*On the side of objectivity so much is explicit in the fact that modern exchange is transacted through a universal object (money), which though it originates in exchange as an object like all others, only begins to develop its universality when it stands apart and becomes a political object. The political nature of money is evident in its appearance — it always bears the head of the prince, or some other emblem of state. On the side of subjectivity the same applies : just as money is immediately exchangeable as a universal object whose credentials do not have to be checked, so every individual is accepted at face value as a persona bona fide. Money is accepted because it is a universal object on account of its being political : the individual is universally recognised because he is a political subject — a citizen.*

*(...) Since social relations in political society are conducted on grounds of reciprocity, they cannot have political content as they did in feudal society. Hence it follows that the locus of power and authority in political society must be thrust outside the sphere of social relations and stand apart from it as a sovereign, giving rise to the division of the state from civil*

society that took shape in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

*It is the hallmark of the state that it stands apart from society and exercises power on it from a distance. And it is this very distance from society, which on the one hand makes it universal (i.e. the same for all members of society), and on the other allows it to impose universality back on society. Liberal theory has conflated this universality with an all-embracing theory of democracy.*" (ibid p 6/7)

The important point here is that democracy is the form of mediated social relations bonding individuals in a society where they are alienated from one another through the formal (political) structures established by the development of the system of private property. A process of alienation which is continually extended as capitalism comes to dominate and structure ever more areas of social existence.

It's important that this discussion doesn't remain at the level of an abstract debate. To put it very simply and crudely in terms of just one of its implications: today we approach one another within the context of a series of institutionalised settings dominated by capitalism (if you like, a society of 'little boxes'). Our social identities, for ourselves and for others, are established (sedimented is perhaps a better word) in relation to our existence within these institutions; family, neighbourhood, school, college, work, the 'leisure' institutions — the settings in which, through language and culture, we come to and express our social identity. We encounter one another as 'educated' or 'uneducated', 'rough' or 'sophisticated', 'working class' or 'middle class', 'deviant' or 'conformist' — the terms of bourgeois sociology, designed as working tools in the process of capitalist domination, which to this extent reflect the realities of life in capitalist society.

The attempt to form lasting social relations between people which go beyond these surface appearances requires continual effort and mutual commitment. (The fact that such relationships are possible mustn't be mystified — it is not possible to prefigure the relationships which will exist once capitalist social relations are overthrown. In any case, no member of the working class will ever have the time and energy to commit themselves wholeheartedly to more than a few 'key' relationships, out of the many they are obliged to engage in. And though communists must be prepared to actively confront and challenge the effects of capitalist alienation within themselves and upon their relations with others, communism certainly won't be achieved by everyone 'becoming aware of themselves' and 'acting responsibly' towards other people. It requires the overthrow of capitalist society — the destruction of the state, defeat of the capitalist class and seizure of the means of creating communist society.)

Relations between alienated individuals (that's all of us — not just the few individuals most obviously damaged by this process) which don't go beyond the surface identities shaped by our lives under capitalism, remain democratic in form. They operate at a level of formality ('politeness/courtesy') which is the form of social *representation* of themselves adopted by the alienated participants. As with the discussion of democracy at all levels, the point here is not the form taken by these democratised personal relations. Politeness or courtesy will be necessary in any form of society we can conceive — it is hardly likely that a society will ever exist where everyone likes everyone else, or will be able to avoid working with people they don't like. The point is the way in which the democratic form acts to perpetuate the alienated content of those relations, as 'politeness' acts to conceal feelings (a by-product of the 'war between each and all' in competition over status or material benefits, which is shared by 'combatants' and 'non-combatants' alike), or acts to avoid the necessity for eling at all.

This everyday practice of democracy becomes critical in relation to the development of class unity, at the point that the lessons are applied to relations across the fundamental class divisions within society. For example, in relations between workers and bosses. Over many years, we've seen the development of management strategies which rest on the creation of a spurious 'bonhomie' between workers and bosses (open plan offices, democratised canteen facilities, bosses 'dressing down', bosses and workers addressing one another by their first names, for example). This represents a move away from traditional paternalism and deference as masks for fundamental antagonisms. It marks the extension of the traditional 'cordial' relations cultivated between bosses' and workers' representatives, towards dealing directly with the workforce. Theorised largely in terms of office work, it is most noticeable as an industrial tendency in the 'Sunrise Industries' based on new technologies set up on 'green field' sites, where the possibility of establishing such relations from the word 'go' are a crucial element in advance planning. To sum up: it is precisely the increasing sophistication of the use of democratic forms in relationships where one has some degree of choice not to (in 'personal' life), which makes possible this developing sophistication in situations of class division.

Our use of the term 'democracy' in this sort of context may well be confusing to some accustomed only to its use to describe the systems of government in the 'capitalist' West, in opposition to the Eastern bloc 'communist' dictatorships. Revolutionaries of all kinds recognise, of course, that just as "*capitalist society ... exists in every country in the world*" (Wildcat, *Basic Principles*), 'democracy' in this sense is as totalitarian as its 'dictatorial' counterpart.

*"Both dictatorship and democracy propose to strengthen the State, the former as a matter of principle, the latter in order to protect us — ending up in the same result. Both are working towards the same goal: totalitarianism. In both cases it is a matter of making everyone participate in society: 'from the top down' for the dictators, 'from the bottom up' for the democrats.*

*As regards dictatorship and democracy, can we speak of a struggle between two sociologically differentiated fractions of Capital? Rather, we are dealing with two different methods of regimenting the proletariat, either by integrating it forcibly, or by bringing it together through the mediation of its 'own' organisations. Capital opts for one or the other of these solutions according to the needs of the moment."*

(J. Barrot 'Fascism/Antifascism' p 10/11)

The problem arises in the delusion that capitalist 'democracy' is a mere mockery of 'real' democracy — in the same way that Soviet 'communism' is nothing to do with real communism. Specifically within the ultra-left tradition, this related to its origins within pre-World War 1 social democracy, with its conception that Socialism would "*realise the truly radical aspirations of the rising bourgeoisie*". Today's ultra-left generally remain the faithful heirs of the bourgeois conceptions (economic as well as political) that haunted the thinking of those revolutionaries who broke with the Second International's opportunism, together with the justifications produced (honest or not) for their past participation in it. Justifications which typically took the form of a defence of 'real' Marxism from revisionism, or an equally uncritical rejection of it — a failure in both cases to separate what is valuable in Marx's critique of capitalist economy (and is usefully suggestive in his undeveloped ideas about capitalist politics), from his opportunist and non-communist political practice.

Learning nothing and forgetting nothing, the most ludicrous partisans of ultra-left Leninism today can be found asserting

that the working class have made no 'economic' gains whatever since 1914, while at the same time putting forward 'proletarian' democracy (either in the form of approved instances of working class struggle, or approved forms of 'revolutionary' organisation) as 'political' gains made by the class.

Communist theory and struggle are a critique of economy and politics. Conceptions of communism which do not grasp the need to overcome the political relations produced by capitalist society — or to put it more adequately, do not fully understand the nature of capitalist social relations — cannot fundamentally challenge capitalist economic relations. Unless the conditions of existence of the market (separated customers and sellers ; separate productive enterprises etc.) are done away with, the best that can be achieved is some form of planned capitalism. That separation is not abolished by filling the gap with 'proletarian' political relations. In some form or other, under new names, the conditions of existence of capitalist society will be re-established. (The sort of verbal contortions we are familiar with in Stalinist claims that the market doesn't exist in Russia, or right-wing claims that the state isn't necessary to the pure workings of the market.)

This means that part of the task of communists is the critique of democracy. This cannot be done by arguing for 'real' or 'workers' or 'proletarian' or 'socialist' democracy. The alternative to capitalism isn't any form of democracy. It is communism.

*"True, communism is the movement of the vast majority, and workers must control their action themselves. To that extent, communism is 'democratic'. What is wrong is to uphold democracy as a principle. The only subversive position consists of putting forward first the content of the movement, and then its forms. Bosses and union leaders take advantage of minority and majority actions when it suits them; so does the proletariat. Workers' struggles very often start from minority action. Communism is neither the rule of a minority, nor of a majority. Either democracy works as a normal process, without being organised or even proposed; or it becomes an institution, which acts in a conservative way like all other institutions. What is basically wrong is to emphasise the moment and mechanism of decision-making. This separation is typical of capital. A radical initiative includes decisions — its own decisions — without any formal decision-making. The workers must decide for themselves; but what is a decision? It always depends on what has already happened. Whenever a revolutionary decision is reached democratically, it has been prepared previously. Whoever asks the question determines the answer; whoever organises the vote carries the decision. This is no abstraction, since this problem is present in every struggle. The revolutionary does not propose a different form of organisation, but a different solution from that of capital and the unions." (Barrot & Martin, 'Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement').*

The hesitation of many revolutionaries to use the word 'communism' at all, or without some hyphenated qualification, is understandable given what is normally understood by the word. But whatever name is used to replace it, the need to stand in opposition to democracy remains. Not because we wish to set up a dictatorship of any kind (the use of the phrase 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in a broken-winded attempt to appear politically hard-headed is entirely counter-productive, even where its meaning is not wholly counter-revolutionary), but because we do not want to set up a society of 'free' equally alienated individuals either (quite impossible in any case.)

To return to the problems we see in Wildcat's political direction. It's not simply a matter of their using the word 'democracy', or a dispute about how to describe the communist society of the future. It is a matter of how they talk about and relate to class struggle today. Consider the following :

*"The society we envisage is not one where a party takes power and acts as a government, but one in which all people participate in decision-making. (...) In order to make this possible, workers must organise their own struggles now, operating through democratic mass-meetings and the election of revocable delegates, outside the control of political parties or trade unions." ('What Distinguishes Wildcat')*

An even more dubious form of this last sentence appears in their pamphlet on the Socialist Workers Party :

*"Revolutionaries ... don't stand for office in the unions, but call for democratic mass-meetings of all workers outside of union divisions, to elect revocable strike committees to run strikes outside of and against the unions." ('How Socialist is the Socialist Workers Party?')*

In the previous paragraph of 'What Distinguishes Wildcat', they write *"We believe that our struggles can only be won through independent working class action, organised and controlled by the people taking part."* The perspective being put forward as to how workers should conduct their struggles is thus to be judged against this standard. It is, we believe, totally inadequate. Our objections to calls for 'democratic' mass-meetings should be obvious by now. What is missing from this formula, particularly as employed in their SWP pamphlet, is any clear statement that workers "organisation and control" of their struggles goes beyond electing delegates to "run the strike". It is not made clear whether workers are electing their own negotiating body as opposed to the unions', or mandating delegates to co-ordinate the struggle. Whether they are electing a body of revocable representatives who are to determine demands and their own tasks on behalf of their electorate, or a group of fellow workers to execute the decisions taken about these questions made by all of the strikers themselves. What we are presented with are mass-meetings — useless except in small workplaces for anything beyond *taking decisions* for or against demands, and the tasks to be performed to achieve these demands, *which have been formulated elsewhere*. There is no reference to the need to develop any level of discussion within departments or offices in order to formulate demands and tasks (one would have thought this was particularly relevant in the context of criticising the SWP's perspectives of capturing shop stewardships), or to anticipate what in reality will be divisions over these questions. Are these things supposed to take care of themselves spontaneously, without any level of prior discussion and activity amongst workers? Or is the idea that the need in struggles is for workers to achieve and exercise a level of democratic practise (from which they are excluded in the parliamentary charade) as a foretaste of what it could be like to make decisions in the Workers Councils during and after some revolution? And does this democracy merely confine itself to electing delegates, then?

We do not actually think this last question represents Wildcat's views. However, the photograph of women holding up their hands, captioned : 'Our freedom lies in our own hands !', (in their basic statement of Wildcat's views), scarcely makes this clear to anyone not otherwise familiar with their writing. If they don't see the need to criticise democracy, do they see no need to distinguish what they mean from what the 57 varieties of leftists mean by their constant appeals to it?

These are hardly minor questions given the primary import-

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ance that Wildcat assigns to workplace struggle in practice, despite their statement that "Our task is not to declare one section of workers more important than another ..."  
(ULR 1, p5). This is made quite clear in the response to articles by Laurens Otter, published in this issue, and in the supplement to ULR 1. In the latter, we can read :

*"However, of all these various forms of struggle, the 'traditional' form of workplace-based struggle — the strike — has, until now, afforded the greatest opportunities for the unification of large numbers of workers around common demands, and for the development of democratic forms of organisation such as mass assemblies, and, ultimately, Workers Councils."* (Supplement to ULR 1, p9).

In the response to Laurens Otter : "In general, connections between a particular problem and its root cause (capitalism), are not made in campaigns against war, racism, sexism etc. by atomised constituencies of the working class, so much as in the collective struggles of the working class as such. It's in this area of struggle that the essence of capitalism — class divisions, wage labour, commodity production etc. — and its negation — socialism — can most easily be grasped. Furthermore, but also, simultaneously, in the sense that communism as a living reality can begin to emerge from such struggles in a way that it can never do in the struggles involving atomised individuals campaigning over single issues." (This issue of 'Intercom').

This last quote appears to suggest that the working class "as such" are waged workers, in contradiction to Wildcat's earlier position. It appears to be saying that capitalism is "essentially" limited to its economic aspects. We are presumably to understand that workers in workplaces are not atomised, in some undefined sense, while other sorts of workers are. Is atomisation purely a matter of geographical separation, then? What is the difference between socialism and communism? If it is claimed that there is none, then why suggest there is, by using two words needlessly? Crucially, if the essence of capitalism is easier to grasp in workplaces, why isn't it happening? Or, if the author is claiming it is, then what do they understand by the 'essence of capitalism'?

We would suggest that Wildcat, having aligned themselves with the tradition of revolutionary opposition to capitalism maintained by the international ultra-left after World War 1, have not subjected this tradition to adequate criticism ; and further, have adopted political formulations and expressions from that tradition which obscure what they are in fact arguing for. Our disquiet at the theoretical implications of this is most clearly focussed by Wildcat's reply to the Communist Bulletin Group, in this issue. This is prefaced by a disclaimer, to the effect that the group had not had time to discuss every point in it. But what are we to make of :

*"... like the class we represent, we are excluded from political life under capitalism. The only exception was during the period c.1870—1914, when the working class in western Europe was able to have a permanent representation within capitalism, and this was reflected in the stability of its political organisations at that time."*

How do we 'represent' the class? In what sense are we 'excluded from political life under capitalism'? In what possible sense did the working class in Western Europe have a permanent representation c.1870—1914? In all Western Europe? What stable political organisations did it have? Your

time-period excludes Internationals as such — do you mean parties? Then which? Or do you mean trade unions? What connection is there between these organisations and 'ours'?

What are we to make of this :

*"No form of organisation is a guarantee of genuine political unity, unless there is also an active and enthusiastic commitment to it within all sections (and among individual members) of the organisation. This is why the first priority for all groups should be to maintain an active intervention, particularly towards workplace struggles, for it is this above all which teaches us the need for political unity. It is possible to become so obsessed with trying to create a centralised organisation that one forgets what such an organisation is supposed to be for."*

I suspect we will not be alone in seeing this as a familiar expression of libertarianism attempting to justify itself in relation to what it sees as more rigorous organisational or political perspectives — in this case, left communism. More significantly, as far as we are concerned, it's a clear expression of what Barrot defines as the Militant attitude :

*"... It is not only important to understand the historical movement and to act accordingly, but also to be something different from the attitudes and values of the society the revolutionary wants to destroy. The militant attitude is indeed counter-revolutionary, in so far as it splits the individual into two, separating his needs, his real individual and social needs, the reasons why he cannot stand the present world, from his action, his attempt to change this world. The militant refuses to admit that he is in fact revolutionary because he needs to change his own life as well as society in general. He represses the impulse which made him turn against society. He submits to revolutionary action as if it were external to him : it is fairly easy to see the moral character of this attitude. This was already wrong and conservative in the past ; today it becomes increasingly reactionary."*  
(*Eclipse and Re-emergence*, p7).

We look forward to learning the result of Wildcat's detailed deliberations on this text.

It will be obvious that we believe there is cause to question Wildcat's theoretical development. We do not believe, nor are we prepared to accept that it is 'just a matter of words'. Nor do we believe it's a matter of abstract debate. It appears likely that the forthcoming Intercom conference, and a good deal of the space in any (if any) further issues of 'Intercom', will be taken up with debate over the need to centralise and unify the revolutionary movement. We believe that the form of revolutionary organisation is determined by its purpose, but in any case is secondary to its content. Above all, unification can only take place on the basis of a clearly defined mutual commitment to the communist goal and communist practice. This text is intended as a contribution to the purpose of Intercom in establishing whether such a basis exists. In the interim, we endorse Wildcat's rejection of sectarianism :

*"In our relations with other groups we take an essentially pragmatic attitude. Provided we do not have to hide or compromise our political principles, we are prepared to work with anyone ..."*

Workers Playtime

March 1984



Two meetings were to take place in this area tonight: featuring at Keele University, that notorious right-winger, Harvey Proctor; and at Stoke Town Hall, Michael Meacher, failed deputy leadership candidate of the Labour left. But, due to pressure Proctor's meeting was cancelled.

You might think these two have nothing in common. After all their parties come from either end of the political spectrum. But, can you really tell the difference between either brand? While you wait, we challenge you to take our quiz. The first correct answer we open will receive a special prize.

### TEST YOUR SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES . . . .

#### WHO SAID:

- 1) The plain fact is that a socialist party cannot hope to make a success of administering the capitalist system because it does not believe in it.
  - a) Militant Editorial Board, 1982
  - b) Clement Attlee, 1937
  - c) SWP editorial, 1983
- 2) Never has any previous Government done so much in so short a time to make modern capitalism work.
  - a) Edward Heath, Prime Minister, 1973
  - b) Douglas Houghton, Labour cabinet Minister and member of the TUC General Council, 1967
  - c) Harold MacMillan, Prime Minister, 1960
- 3) No social transformation which is necessary is repugnant to me. Hence I accept the famous worker's supervision of factories and equally their cooperative social management; I only ask that there should be a clear conscience and technical capacity and that production be increased. If this is guaranteed by the Trade Unions, instead of the employers, I have no hesitation in saying that the former have the right to take the latter's place.
  - a) Leon Trotsky
  - b) Mussolini
  - c) Tony Benn
- 4) I want industry to be profitable. It is in your interest that Industry should be profitable.
  - a) Margaret Thatcher
  - b) James Callaghan
  - c) Tony Benn
- 5) We must show that we have positive policies which are based upon the implacable requirement that the interests of the British people must predominate.
  - a) Winston Churchill
  - b) Neil Kinnock
  - c) Martin Webster
- 6) We demand therefore: abolition of incomes unearned by work. Abolition of the thralldom of interest... The ruthless confiscation of all war profits. We demand the nationalisation of all businesses which have been amalgamated. We demand that there should be profit-sharing in the great industries.
  - a) A Militant editorial
  - b) Socialist Worker
  - c) Programme of the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NAZIs)





This 'Superstar' deserves a good kicking too. She got £2 million for promoting a hair care product. She can only get such money because millions of people try to escape from the powerlessness of their own lives by watching the lives of the powerful on TV. Whether it's the royal family (the family we hate as much as our own narrowness) or such surrogates as the "Dallas" clan, they all try to divert us from the essential question: How do we make something out of our lives? How do we make our lives our own?



Box 17, C1 Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E1



**Victoria stands on her Principals**

SEE PAGE 3

## Coal Board boss knocked down by miners



FACE TO FACE: A miner grabs hold of Coal Board chairman Ian MacGregor's coat.

Picture: TOM BUIST

# The fist of fury

## Workers Power

MacGregor just got a fore taste of what is to come. Up and down the country, right across the world workers are deciding that they're not just going to sit back while the likes of Mac-

Gregor or Thatcher, the likes of Reagan or the Moscow clique kick them around. It may have been MacGregor who got it yesterday (he got off lightly), some other bureaucrat or politician will get it tomorrow or next week. If the lefties and union officials try to step in between us they'll get it along with the other cops. We've no need of professionals to negotiate our anger away. No, we need to turn that anger into working class power on the streets, and throughout society.

At one point Mr MacGregor agreed to meet union officials and pit delegates.

But the demonstrators turned down the offer and demanded a mass confrontation.

One demonstrator shouted: "We will hear what he has to say, then we will tear his head off".

excerpts from Practical Anarchy  
 THE LOW DOWN ON THE LOW OF YDE.  
 feb & march

**no future?**

IS THERE A REAL FUTURE for Shipbuilding on the Clyde?

The answer, quite frankly, is NO. Thousands of ships are already lying idle, from Aberdeen to Athens. In the short term, some get-rich-quick merchants might make a packet selling a few Oil Rigs. But in the longer term things look bleak. ALL THE MORE REASON TO FIGHT NOW! Anarchists have nothing but scorn for the demand of the 'right to work' - the slave's demand.

But compulsory redundancies, and the devastating of entire towns by agencies outside of our control must be fiercely fought against.

However we have to be clear what to fight FOR.

Certainly not the old con of 'Nationalisation' - which as British Shipbuilders show, just means the same old bosses... handing out redundancy cards.

ALL of the nationalised companies were out of date industries, that needed to be 'modernised' to suit Capitalism. This the state did: with hundreds of thousands of redundancies in Shipbuilding, Mining, Railways and Steel-making.

The Transport System in Chicago is owned by the State. Does this make Chicago a bastion of Socialism?

One thing's sure: Nationalisation just means Rationalisation, and has absolutely nothing to do with genuine social change.

This hoary old myth is one of the ideas that must be discarded in the battle - from scratch - to seize control of our own lives. A battle to be fought against both the privateers of the Tory Party and the Nationalised bureaucrats of the Labour Party.

**class anger!**

THE MASS WALK-OUT at Scott Lithgow on Thursday 9th February demonstrates more than just 'spontaneous' anger over the deal being hatched between the Government and their cronies in Trafalgar House.

It directly coincided with their Union representatives being huddled together in conference, to revise their strategy for controlling the workers anger, and presenting a public face.

The next day, a Mass Meeting was scheduled and the Shop Stewards Committee seized their chance to reassert their 'leadership', pull forth again the threat of a 'disciplined' occupation, and in doing so recapture the confidence of workers torn between the effective expression of their anger and class solidarity; and between their position as pawns in the complicated chess game played by Trafalgar House, Howard Doris, Bechtel, the Government, British Shipbuilders and 'their' Unions.



redundancy over the past few years is beginning to come home to roost. The more you comply with what the bosses want, the more they kick you in the teeth.

**ANGER**

Labour only softens you up, for the Tories to put the boot in. The T.U.C. - ever anxious to get their foothold back into the corridors of power - does everything to weaken the solidarity of workers, and everything to waste anger through token 1 day stoppages and 'leave it to us' to negotiate (for youse, whose dues keep us in booze).

It has to start somewhere, where workers take independent action to occupy their yard and secure the assets, refuse all 'mediators' develop their own links with their fellows in other yards and industries, to agitate in the community to wrest control from all the leeches who keep us in our place, from money lenders to Council bureaucrats.

Meanwhile, the workers at Henry Robb in Leith are sacrificed, just like Caledon in Dundee and dozens of other workforces. Worker competes against worker for an ever diminishing share of a market that only the Bosses (throughout the world) benefit from.

**OCCUPATION ?**

The situation at Scott Lithgow demonstrates the dilemma of workers in a contracting industry, faced with the logic of the capitalist profit motive.

At a mass meeting over a week ago, the sentiments of the workforce were clearly evident. Support for the Unions, especially the 'leaders' most removed from the situation is extremely lukewarm.

Instead of taking the struggle forward, through an occupation, the Unions resorted to an endless stream of ballots designed to exhaust the anger and resolve of the workers.

Not that this is, of course, lost on the great majority, whose enthusiasm for ordinary workers expressing their anger (as well as their fears) was in stark contrast to that given to Shop Stewards Convenor McNeill and his henchmen.

**'FRIENDS'**

Next came the public meeting starring David Steel, Roy Hattersley and other schemers. This was timed to start 2 hours BEFORE the workers were due to leave the factory gates. They were taking no chances that awkward questions would be raised as to the motives behind such false 'friends'.

Further back, the last few years have seen the loyalty of the Union representatives to the Union and keeping things 'under wraps' far exceeds that of their solidarity with their class.

Witness their conduct during the 'Crossword' strike, their denunciations of certain workers in the press, and their attempt to brand or (in the case of the platers) isolate them.

Now the situation has to go from cross-words to cross swords. The first concern of workers is naturally to protect their livelihood. The experience of thousands of workers accepting

**IT'S THE SAME THE WHOLE WORLD OVER...**

'When I see a worker being hit over the head by a policeman, I know whose side I'm on'. GEORGE ORWELL, Homage to Catalonia.

CLASHES between police and strikers took place recently in the Shipbuilding town of Gijon, in Northern Spain.

Barricades were erected, banks, shops and restaurants closed and hundreds of windows were smashed.

It was the angry reaction of workers to plans to 'rationalise' the local shipyards... this time by a 'Socialist' government.

And in France, a similar bunch of 'left-wing' chancers are trying exactly the same tactics to help the Bosses.

**SHARP SHORTS**

DOWN IN GREENOCK, THEY ARE CALLING THE LATEST GOVERNMENT SCAM 'THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE'...

It's the Tories reward to their faithful friends in Big Business.

The scheme involves:

- Dirt cheap Oil-Rig building at a privatised Scott Lithgow
- An 'Oil Boom' off the coast of Arran, and
- Privatisation of the oil-fired Hunterston Power Station, on the Ayrshire coast.

The government's attempting to ditch half the Greenock workforce, in the name of 'rationalisation' They're talking with the Union bureaucrats on how to run a streamlined yard... only the determination of the workers themselves stands in their way.

**OIL BE DAMNED**

Thatcher's worried about social unrest when North Sea Oil - which pays the Unemployment Benefit bill - runs out. So she's only too anxious to find an alternative source of revenue in a Clyde Oil-field... and she's launched an attack on the unemployed just in

**THE GREAT**

**'OIL RIG - UP'**

case it's a dud. And anyone who thinks a few picture postcard views would stand in the way of any Oil Company can't be living in the 20th Century.

The Tories are committed to privatising the Electricity Supply industry. They also need some ready cash to pay for the massive flop of Torness Nuclear Power Station.

All in all, it's a scenario that involves the pauperisation of thousands of people, the destruction of the environment, and the excuse for the Russians to stick a couple extra megaton on to the massive nuclear 'payload' they already have aimed at the West of Scotland.

A mass movement of protest - that doesn't rely on Labour MPs or the 57 varieties of bureaucrat - is long overdue on the Clyde.

Out in April, CLYDESIDE ANARCHIST, a magazine of ideas, 15p from Box 3, 488 Gt. Western Rd., G.12. \*

**GLASGOW SMILES BITTER!**

● SEASICK... IN GOVAN! UNREPORTED in the press is the story of the crew of a merchant ship, the M.V. Tarry, sailing under a flag of convenience.

The owners went bankrupt and the crew - cheap labour from Peru, the Philippines and India - were left high and dry.

That was 3 MONTHS AGO, and still the sailors have not been allowed to step foot on dry land, being kept prisoner on their ship by the Govan polis.

It's enough to make you run away to sea...