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Solidarity

FOR WORKERS' POWER

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 6

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CONFRONTATION at LSE

Recent events at the London School of Economics will leave a deep imprint on those who have lived them. They will influence students politics in this country for years to come. Provided the pressure is renewed, they may even succeed in denting the bureaucratic educational structure at LSE and in achieving some reforms.

Smouldering discontent with many aspects of life at LSE suddenly erupted into a demonstration of militant, sustained and self-disciplined solidarity in defence of 2 elected representatives victimised by the Administration, the like of which British students have never shown before. Others will analyze the basic causes of this discontent. We here want to stress certain aspects of what has happened, which are deeply related to our whole attitude to politics.

Throughout the major part of their lives the vast majority of people are objects, passively accepting the little niches allocated to them in various great bureaucratic pyramids (industry, education, politics, etc.) and easily coerced or manipulated by those in authority. Some may be aware of this status and dissatisfied with it but see no way out. They are trapped in a power structure whose rules, priorities, values and ends are not of their making. This structure appears omnipotent. Those it oppresses can usually see no clear or realistic alternative.

In the last fortnight of March 1967 hundreds of LSE students suddenly discovered that there was in fact an alternative. Instead of being the objects of history they could become its subjects, actively making it, not only for themselves but for thousands of others. They discovered how fragile were the (largely self-imposed) bonds that bound them and how brittle the writ of the 'Pedagogic Gerontocracy' that had been lording it over them, choosing future Directors without as much as a sign that student opinion even existed and then - when this awareness belatedly dawned on them - victimizing elected students representatives for their audacity in challenging these arbitrary decisions.

The explosive discovery by LSE students of their own collective power triggered the mass sit-down in the foyer, the packed mass meetings and the spontaneous surge of sympathy from students all over the country. At first the exercise of this new power centred on a purely defensive issue: resistance to a flagrant injustice. But it soon extended to other issues such as students' rights. With the growth of student power there grew an awareness of the purposes to which such power might be put. Visions of a 'free university', of a genuinely free academic community, ceased to be utopian dreams.

Consciousness matured at an astounding rate. At first only a minority had a clear conception of what was what. Their analyses sounded 'way out' and 'extreme' to the 'moderate' majority. But action

not only changes external reality. Provided it is collective action, it also changes those who participate in it. As the mass pressure built up, in the third week of March, layer after layer of new students were dragged into the movement. Monday's moderates were Wednesday's radicals. By the weekend they were advocating actions with revolutionary implications. The rapid growth of the more militant section of student opinion itself insured the rapid growth of consciousness among the new participants.

The students' struggle gave guts to some of the staff, emboldening them to speak out against the Administration. Minor concessions were obtained - and seen to be obtained - on matters which had been decreed, but a few days earlier, to be non-negotiable. This further enhanced direct mass action as a meaningful concept and further strengthened student resolve. Their thoughts became practice and some at least sought to make of this practice a further instrument of theoretical critique. If we may be excused a dirty word, this is the dialectic of real struggle.

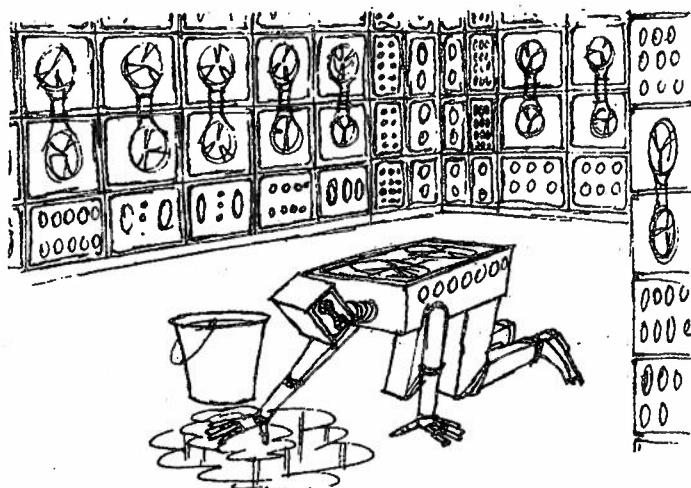
The whole process was systematically propelled by the repeated ineptitude of the Administration. Every time Caine or Kidd opened their mouths, they put their foot in it. Every 'conciliatory' gesture came too late, when it could easily be seen for what it was: a concession to mass pressure. Every attempted reassertion of their dwindling authority came, in contrast, to be seen as a direct provocation. All this of course is no accident, no temporary 'clogging up' of the channels of communication with the rust of routine. On the contrary, it is an essential feature of conflict in a bureaucratic society. Those who manage the affairs of others from the outside (and this is the common denominator of all bureaucracies) will inevitably and systematically be fed misinformation from the intermediate layers of the hierarchy (who have their position to justify). A diet of systematic misinformation can only lead to a systematically asinine practice.

The confrontation at LSE showed the tremendous self-discipline of which direct mass democracy is capable. What we have jointly lived through these last 2 weeks both challenges and refutes the bourgeois and bureaucratic vision of masses in action as an incoherent, destructive and inarticulate rabble. Night after night, the main entrance in Houghton Street was physically occupied by the sleep-in. Attempts by the Administration to check passes of those entering the St.Clement building were shown to be meaningless in the absence of means of enforcement. Posters were made and leaflets turned out in rooms designed for very different purposes. Students' power extended virtually unchallenged, throughout the buildings. Yet no damage of any kind was done, except to the image of the Administration.

For the time being the power of the Administration remains intact. At least on the surface. Bloom and Adelstein remain suspended. In this sense the movement has failed (in its first onslaught) to achieve its central objective. But the ground has been well prepared

for the next stage! Night after night some 800 people of different and at times widely conflicting views gathered in the Old Theatre, in long continuous sessions sometimes lasting till the small hours of the morning. Yet despite the urgency of what they were discussing, despite the days of tension and the nights without sleep, they remained surprisingly tolerant of one another's viewpoints. There was no stampeding, no manoeuvering, no shouting down. People were having fun while being desperately serious. The mass meetings showed an incredible combination of warmth, humour and purpose. They were action and spectacle, conflict and solution. Whatever the outcome of this particular struggle, hundreds have had a small taste of what the free society might be like. And seen that it can work.

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SCHOOL AND FACTORY

COMMENT

"TO encourage and lead a sustained attack on the obstacles to efficiency, whether on the part of management or of workers, and to strive for the adoption of more rigorous standards of performance at all levels."

This is the first part of section 10 of the Joint Statement of Intent on Productivity, Prices and Incomes. How far the statement of intent may be realised in action, only time will show. Meanwhile, we might usefully do something to help it along.

It is no good expecting children suddenly and spontaneously to adopt rigorous standards of performance at school leaving age. We are constantly told, by employers, that the schools are not preparing children adequately for work. Their plaints concern simple things which lie within our competence to remedy.

In industry and commerce, good timekeeping matters, and regular attendance at work. Obedience matters; both safety and efficiency require that instructions be obeyed. Will to work is paramount; accuracy is essential; perseverance is desirable.

The development of necessary industrial qualities is our job. It is too late when youngsters enter work. It is too late when children move to secondary schools. A lifetime of work-habits has to be instilled whilst children are of primary school age.

Rigorous standards of performance in industry cannot be founded on easygoing standards—either of work or work-habits—in primary schools.

This editorial comment was published in the January 1965 issue of 'Teachers World' — an issue devoted to the subject of primary education. It states explicitly the real function of education in the present social system. We hear more than enough liberal waffle about how we need more and 'better' schools, and how society can be changed piecemeal by tinkering with education. A.S.Neill and Homer Lane are the prophets of this new Jerusalem. In the 'Teachers World' editorial we hear the real voice of those who control education and are shown its function in a class society.

In a free society the education of the young will be deeply integrated with the life of the community. It will take forms in which the concept of the school as an educational factory (with masters, examinations, etc.) will find no place.

Many people conceive of socialism as being very similar in many ways to the society we have now. They see it as a society with the same kind of factories, prisons, schools, etc., differing only in terms of the decision-taking personnel. But socialism implies a complete change in society in every field, in every institution, and not only in their structure, but in the basic reason for their existence.

Many institutions that are today regarded as essential (and are in fact essential to the maintenance of the present social order) will cease to exist. Others, unheard of today, will come into being. This is one of the reasons why we are revolutionaries, why we challenge everything. We don't believe in tinkering reforms, since, in the long run, they usually contribute towards the continued existence of a rotten system. This is why we think that everything that perpetuates the hold of our rulers on our lives and on our thinking must constantly be challenged.

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ROBERTS-ARUNDEL

While student unrest suddenly erupts at LSE provoking comment far and wide, the day to day grind continues for those whose struggle is seldom news. In this article John Sullivan describes what has been happening recently in a small Cheshire factory.

The strike at the Roberts-Arundel engineering factory at Stockport, near Manchester, now in its 16th week has a much greater importance than one might suppose from the fact that only 145 men are involved. Rarely has the class nature of the police and of other state agencies been demonstrated so clearly.

The factory was part of the Arundel-Coulthard company (a long-established firm making textile machinery) until 1965, when it was taken over by the American Roberts company. The new owners began rationalisation by introducing a more modern product and by closing down other factories belonging to the group and concentrating production at the Stockport works. During the time when extensive alterations to the factory took place the workers put up with the discomfort involved, which was further aggravated by the management's inefficiency.

But the main difference between the old and the new management lay in the latter's refusal to recognise that the workers had any right to be consulted about what went on in the factory. For instance, the new management decided to install tea-vending machines, and to abolish the morning tea-break. The workers refused to agree to this, but while they were on holiday last year their kettle and mugs for making tea were smashed, although some of them belonged to the men themselves, not to the firm.

The firm unilaterally imposed changes in working conditions. Soon after making 51 men redundant they announced that they were going to employ women to do similar work - at lower wages, of course. The workers had no objection to the employment of women. But they did object to the management's absolute right to make decisions without consulting them. On November 28, 1966, when the management brought in women to do the same work as the men who had been made redundant, the workers came out on strike.

On Friday, December 2, there was a meeting between the management and union officials to discuss terms for a resumption of work. But on the following Monday all union members received a letter terminating their employment. It was dated December 2! While the management were pretending to negotiate they were preparing to smash trade union organisation.

On December 6 an advertisement appeared in the local press appealing for people who would like to work in a "free atmosphere" rather than in the bureaucratic and restrictive atmosphere of a union shop. They were successful in recruiting a number of scabs. The union declared the strike official and the company's products were "blacked".

Most militants in the area paid little attention to the strike at first. It was unusual only in being official. But the main burden of the struggle fell on the strikers themselves. With the exception of Brother John Tochen, district secretary of the A E U, the officials did little more than authorise strike pay.

The strikers were hampered by police intimidation in their efforts to man the picket line, and to trace the destination of the "black" goods. When pickets followed lorries leaving the factories in their own cars the lorries stopped at police stations; the police then told the pickets that they were acting illegally in intimidating the scabs. Other pickets following one of the "black" lorries were forced off the road by an accompanying car. This contrasts with the attitude of the police and the Ministry of Labour to American technicians who were working at the factory without labour permits, training the scabs. The police finally informed the firm that this was illegal . . . but only just as the technicians were about to leave!

The workers have maintained a constant picket throughout the strike. This has been reinforced by occasional mass pickets of sympathisers, called without warning so as not to alert the police. On the morning of February 21 the police made several arrests during a mass picket. On the following afternoon workers from a neighbouring factory stopped work and held a demonstration outside Roberts-Arundel. During the demonstration windows were smashed. There were scuffles with the police. The notoriously reactionary Chief Constable had his arm broken during an attempt to get into the factory.

There was considerable resentment at the way in which the police were being used as strike breakers. The tenants of the neighbouring houses were extremely sympathetic: an old lady was handing the demonstrators pieces of brick from her garden for use as missiles.

At the height of the demonstration, when several policemen had already been sent to hospital, no arrests had been made. The police then persuaded one of the organizers to get the men to withdraw under threat of ordering a baton charge. Half the men left. The police then became more aggressive and made several arrests. This development will not surprise anyone who has witnessed political demonstrations.

Following this disturbance the police banned meetings and marches in the vicinity of the factory. They allowed only a dozen pickets and threatened even these when they tried to speak to the scabs. All that the pickets were allowed to do was to stand quietly on the other side of the road. The labour movement's acquiescence in this kind of thing has been a big mistake. Scabs are now entering the factory with less hindrance than at any time during the strike.

This strike has shown both the strength and the weaknesses of the labour movement in the area. There is no mistaking the resentment among working people at this attack on rights which have been established through generations of struggle. The pacifism and constitutionalism which is usually apparent is shown to be merely skin-deep. There is a determination that this strike must be won.

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And yet the factory is still working. The firm has been able to recruit about 120 blacklegs. They are able to obtain supplies from a number of small firms. A 100% blacking of the firm's product would force them to yield, but as most of the market for textile machinery is abroad this is extremely difficult. There have been approaches to the international union organisations but their creaking machinery is geared towards periodic junketing, not to helping workers in struggles. This stresses the need for international links, at rank and file level. At home, the trade unions leaders are unlikely to do more than authorise strike pay, and appeal to the Ministry of Labour.

The strike certainly cannot be won by the strikers alone. The company has ample finance and can afford to wait until the workers are forced to abandon the picket line. Only mass supporting action by the whole of the labour movement can ensure victory. But the shop stewards who are the only ones who could mobilise this support are still inclined to leave the initiative to the union officials. A direct action committee has been formed, but not till the strike had lasted nine weeks. If the committee allows itself to be bound by the narrow constitutional methods favoured by the officials the strike will probably be defeated.

Of course the trade union officials want to win the strike. But years of collaboration with employers in disciplining workers have resulted in an incapacity to fight even for basic trade union recognition. They are so unused to calling an official strike that when an employer tears up the rule book they don't know how to retaliate. They have done very little to boycott the firms which are supplying the factory, or to prevent them from getting their materials transported.

The Roberts-Arundel management are not typical of present-day industry. Modern managements accept trade unionism while collaborating with the union leaders in disciplining the rank and file. But other firms in the area will be following the progress of the dispute with interest. If union organisation can be broken in one factory it will be a valuable bargaining counter elsewhere. All workers should therefore realise that this struggle is very much their own.

The strikers urgently need financial support. All contributions should be sent to the strike committee, 125 Wellington Road, Stockport, Cheshire. And, if you would like to express your disapproval to the management, ring Stockport 8151 and tell them what you think of them.

Dept. of Utter Confusion (Far Eastern Section):

On March 8, 1967, The Cherwell (an Oxford magazine) published an account of Tariq Ali's recent visit to Vietnam. This included the following: 'In South Vietnam there is no personality cult, whereas in Hanoi and Haiphong there are busts and posters of Dien Bien Phu everywhere, and streets named after him.'

MUSICAL CHAIRMAN

Undaunted by previous controversies, we return to the theme of music, marxist-leninist music this time. The January 2, 1967 issue of the

Peking Review

reports (no kidding) that: 'A new revolutionary song movement is in full swing throughout the country. More and more people are singing scores of new songs made up of texts from Chairman Mao's quotations set to music...'

There is a public demand for Chairman Mao's instructions to be set to music so that they can be sung every day and at any time, the better to imprint them on one's mind.'

领导我们事业的核心力量

LING DAO WO MEN SHI YE DE HE XIN LI LIANG

The musical score consists of five staves of music. The lyrics are as follows:

领导我們事業的核心力量是
ling dao wo men shi ye de he xin li liang shi

中正乾坤万岁 指导我們
zhong guang qian kung wan sui zhi dan wo men

思想的理想基础是馬克思
xiang de bi lun jiu shi ma ke si

列宁主义 共产党万岁！毛主席万岁！
le ning zhu yi gong chan dang wan sui mao zhu xi wan sui

共产党万岁！毛主席万岁！万岁！万岁！万岁！
gong chan dang wan sui mao zhu xi wan sui wan sui wan sui wan sui

English translation of the quotation:

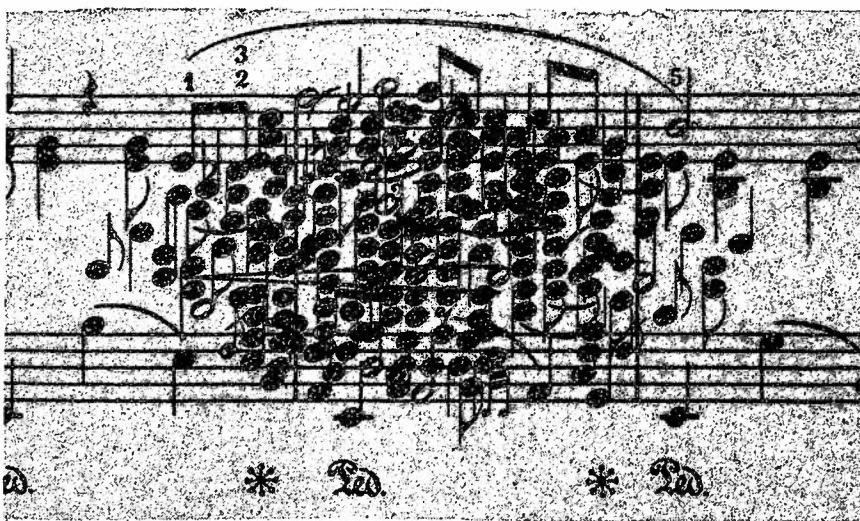
The force at the core leading our cause forward is the Chinese

Communist Party.

The theoretical basis guiding our thinking is Marxism-Leninism.

Is this new art form inspired by Mao's tuneful lyrics just a passing fad? We doubt it. There are still rich, un-tapped sources in the 4 volumes of his collected works.

PROGRAMME OF THE
OPPOSITION? →



beyond coition

('Further thoughts on the man question')

Recent statistics show that some 50% of the human race are female. The specific content of female emancipation is largely neglected by the traditional left. 'Progressive' propaganda is largely confined to campaigns for equal pay and to demands for bigger maternity benefits or for better creches. The very 'radical' may even agitate for legal abortion. In this article Louise Crawley tries to look a little further.

The rediscovery, by this current generation of radical youth, that revolution must be sexual-social as well as economic-political is a healthy development, long overdue. It isn't, as many of them seem to think, a new idea; but it's been badly neglected.

Today's young people come at the question under tremendous handicaps. The boys are, of course, boys. This is like saying, in regard to Negroes, that Whites are white: they just don't know, they can't know, the most they can do is imagine. And imagination has been so stunted in this generation that the kids use consciousness-expanders. (Consciousness-expanders. Good grief. When our consciousness is constantly at the breaking-point, without any help at all.) And the girls - the girls have grown up in the era of the feminine mystique and the sexual sell, warped to Madison Avenue's self-seeking sex-image of them, and looking for freedom in a change of cages.

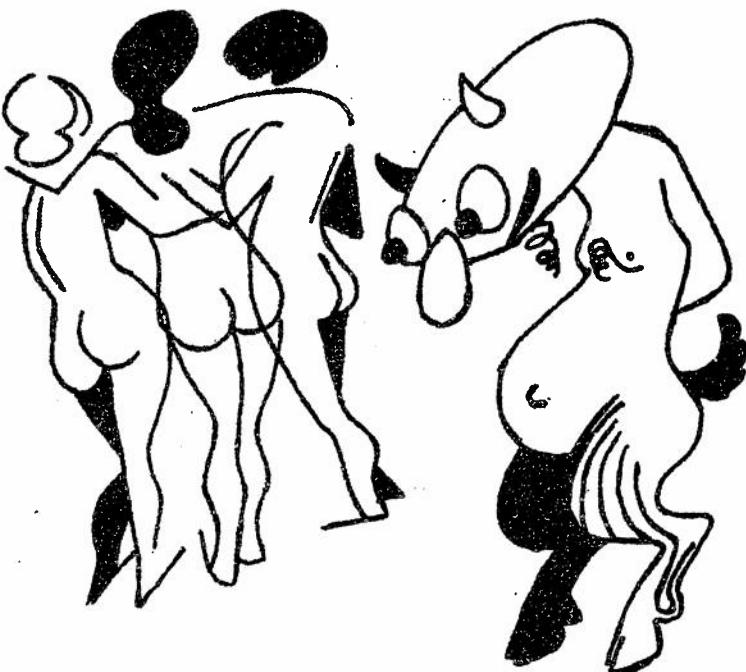
But they have one great, material advantage.. Previously, when feminists and their radical allies thought of liberating women, the only real alternative to dependence they could offer was competition with men in the industrial rat-race. That's not freedom - even with social provision for maternity, it would only be equity in bondage. Whether or not women put the shallowness of that kind of "emancipation" into words or not, they rejected it in the main. They chose to retain their relative freedom from timeclocks, even at the cost of remaining the second (read second-class) sex. Now cybernation holds out the prospect of freeing all people from unwanted labour. In the society now within sight, women can break with their traditional dependence without giving up as much as they would gain. It has become possible to think in terms of equity in freedom.

So now we have to define that.

The earlier feminists were absolutely correct in their recognition that their first task was removal of all legal and social inequities. Equality before the law has now largely been achieved, though in the area just beyond it - legal recognition of women's special needs, e.g. re. abortion, etc. - our laws remain obdurate. Social inequity is but slightly lessened. Women of all social classes do lead more active lives nowadays than in the past. They dress with somewhat less torture to their bodies, with a consequent improvement in health. Few fields of endeavour remain utterly closed to them, but many are still difficult of entry and discriminatory in remuneration, upgrading, and prestige.

The lack of confidence from which most women suffer is a valid response to the discrimination and danger they face, in a still man-dominated culture. Their too-often-characteristic servility merely reflects that culture's prejudiced concept of them as but sex-gratifiers and homemakers, troublesome when they assert their own wills. And in the area beyond that, we're still Victorian: one of several stupid dissents currently splitting our local peace movement concerns whether the movement's young mothers "should" nurse their babies "in public"!

Modern apologists for the feminine mystique make much of the real and imagined differences between the sexes. They seek to define a satisfactory role for each. They are supported by clinical studies aimed at discovering, in a culture-free laboratory environment, what actual behavioural differences do exist in animals that can be subjected to such observation. This approach can sound very scientific. But it's fraught with pitfalls for a generation lacking in historical perspective. The human species functions only in society, therefore society itself must be our lab.



Only in a society that allows free play to the varied inclinations of its individuals can the true natures of men and women emerge. To compress persons of either sex into a pre-determined role simply invalidates the experiment. And this is what all known societies have done, in greater or lesser degree, through all known time. (The subculture of today's radical youth, for all its self-conscious sexuality, is no exception.)

Of course there are differences. The only important thing about them (other than procreation) is that they should be a source of pleasure to both sexes, not grounds for domination by either. The objective basis for making them so now exists in push-button production, tampons, and effective, aesthetically inoffensive birth-control

methods. Except for the widely variable mop-up still to be done on their own inhibitions and the disapproval of some prudes whose opinions scarcely

matter, modern girls are free to fuck. The real question now is, are they equally free not to? And to retain their individual identities, as human beings as well as women, both in and out of the sexual relationship?

Or do the young men with whom they mate merely find in increased sexual accessibility an excuse for further narrowing their one-sided valuation? The proliferation of disparaging slang terms for women suggests it, and certainly I see no lessening, in these young males, of the prejudices I've suffered for forty years. I don't see any great number of young women being attracted to the revolutionary movement, over-all, as they would be if parity of personal esteem and intellectual scope were to be found there along with the fucks.

The prime and central fact is that woman, as such, is simply the female of the human species. Yet all the attributes of that species upon which its hitherto dominant males place a high valuation they have claimed as "masculine" virtues: courage, honour, intellectual excellence, etc. Those of which they are ashamed, or which they fear, they have relegated to women: e.g. inertia, guile, timidity, and those mysteriously subtle mental processes called intuition. By a neat linguistic trick, then any affront to their egos disparages not their humanity, but their "manhood". And any exercise by a woman of the common human characteristics they value diminishes her "femininity", and makes her "mannish" - which by a further juggling of language then becomes, inconsistently, a term of contempt.

The psychological ramifications of such semantic sleight-of-hand are incalculable. And where language fails to denigrate women, it ignores them. The singular pronomial substantive for "human being" is "he". The general term for the species is "man". People can't even communicate without reinforcing the prevalent bias. Yet, generation after generation, anyone who broaches the need for reforming this aspect of language is dismissed, even in the "left", as a blithering crackpot. Without such reform neither freedom nor equity can come about, for the relationship between language and thought is reciprocal. Language reflects existing thoughtpatterns, then reinforces them and conveys them to new young speakers, ensuring their extension and perpetuation. Thus elimination of any prejudice demands a conscious attack on its verbal expression, however habitual or devoid of ill-will in any given speaker.

Your readers might be amused by the following which appeared in a recent issue of 'Marxism Today', theoretical organ of the C.P.

'The Scouts, while being an excellent movement which turns out boys with an all-round character, initiative, and its participants used to being in an organization, subtly ignores the basic causes of the poverty, hunger, disease and crime which exist in the world today. Although Boy Scouts are nudged towards Queen and Country and their training leaves them politically in mid-air, they represent a potential who could play a very useful role in the future of Britain given the correct leadership'.

Ever since industrialization revolutionized the economic base of society, men have resisted women's entry into those jobs and occupations which, because of better pay or other relatively desirable features, they early staked out for themselves. They did so with reason, for there were never enough of these jobs to go around, and besides, someone had to darn their socks. As new forms of labour developed they were assigned, usually on the basis of relative ease, interest, or remuneration (and on the size of the available labour pool) to one or the other sex. Men rationalized women's exclusion from the more desirable jobs by finding the requirements of those jobs incompatible with their concept of the feminine nature, or particularly suited to their image of themselves. The common humanity of both sexes remained lost in the shuffle.

It was this common humanity that the feminists sought; and if in the search some sacrificed the specifically sexual aspects of their lives, their willingness to make that sacrifice testifies to the urgency of their need for recognition as people. Only prejudice could scorn this as a "negation of femininity". In truth, it was a magnificent assertion of the primacy of being human. But all that the blindly male-centric men could see in it was that it removed those women from the pool of conveniently available lays.

I suspect that extension of that pool is the chief interest today's young men have in the current sexual revolution. It's a valid interest, and I'm not knocking it. The question of men-women relationships has been opened again, for whatever reason; that's good. But this time let's not close it prematurely by settling for coition the way our grandmothers settled for the vote!

LOUISE CRAWLEY

This article first appeared, in a longer and rather different form, in Bulletin No. 18 of the Seattle Group (an 'anarchö-socialist' group, for those who prefer labels to attempts at understanding). The group produces a duplicated bulletin which has discussed a number of interesting topics not usually discussed on the left. For further information, write to 1815 18th Avenue, Seattle, Washington, USA.

The editorial in our last issue produced several letters but - more important to us - several serious offers of help. 23 people attended the meeting on March 19, at which Ken Weller reviewed our work over the last 6 years. The following text was presented as a preliminary statement of our aims and is submitted to readers for comment. We could say a lot more - but at the expense of saying a lot less - as we feel any statement should fit onto the two sides of a quarto size leaflet. Your suggestions are welcome.

In our next issue we will describe certain organizational proposals.

AS WE SEE IT

1. Throughout the world, the vast majority of people have no control whatsoever over the decisions that most deeply and directly affect their lives. They sell their labour power while others who own or control the means of production, accumulate wealth, make the laws and use the whole machinery of the State to perpetuate and reinforce their privileged positions.

2. During the past century the living standards of working people have improved. But neither these improved living standards, nor the nationalization of the means of production, nor the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class have basically altered the status of the worker as worker. Nor have they given the bulk of mankind much freedom outside of production. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work, and manipulated in consumption and leisure. Propaganda and policemen, prisons and schools, traditional values and traditional morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or coerce the many into acceptance of a brutal, degrading and irrational system. The 'Communist' world is not communist and the 'Free' world is not free.

3. The trade unions and the traditional parties of the left started in business to change all this. But they have come to terms with the existing patterns of exploitation. In fact they are now essential if exploiting society is to continue working smoothly. The unions act as middlemen in the labour market. The political parties use the struggles and aspirations of the working class for their own ends. The degeneration of working class organizations, itself the result of the failure of the revolutionary movement, has been a major factor in creating working class apathy, which in turn has led to the further degeneration of both parties and unions.

4. The trade unions and political parties cannot be reformed, 'captured', or converted into instruments of working class emancipation. We don't call however for the proclamation of new unions, which in the conditions of today would suffer a similar fate to the old ones. Nor do we call for militants to tear up their union cards. Our aims are simply that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles and that the control and organization of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The forms which this self-activity of the working class may take will vary considerably from country to country and from industry to industry. Its basic content will not.

5. Socialism is not just the common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution. It means equality, real freedom, reciprocal recognition and a radical transformation in all human relations. It is 'man's positive self-consciousness'. It is man's understanding of his environment and of himself, his domination over his work and over such social institutions as he may need to

create. These are not secondary aspects, which will automatically follow the expropriation of the old ruling class. On the contrary they are essential parts of the whole process of social transformation, for without them no genuine social transformation will have taken place.

6. A socialist society can therefore only be built from below. Decisions concerning production and work will be taken by workers' councils composed of elected and revocable delegates. Decisions in other areas will be taken on the basis of the widest possible discussion and consultation among the people as a whole. This democratisation of society down to its very roots is what we mean by 'workers' power'.

7. Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even by those allegedly acting on their behalf.

8. No ruling class in history has ever relinquished its power without a struggle and our present rulers are unlikely to be an exception. Power will only be taken from them through the conscious, autonomous action of the vast majority of the people themselves. The building of socialism will require mass understanding and mass participation. By their rigid hierarchical structure, by their ideas and by their activities, both social-democratic and bolshevik types of organizations discourage this kind of understanding and prevent this kind of participation. The idea that socialism can somehow be achieved by an elite party (however 'revolutionary'), acting 'on behalf of' the working class is both absurd and reactionary.

9. We do not accept the view that by itself the working class can only achieve a trade union consciousness. On the contrary we believe that its conditions of life and its experiences in production constantly drive the working class to adopt priorities and values and to find methods of organization which challenge the established social order and established pattern of thought. These responses are implicitly socialist. On the other hand, the working class is fragmented, dispossessed of the means of communication, and its various sections are at different levels of awareness and consciousness. The task of the revolutionary organization is to help give proletarian consciousness an explicitly socialist content, to give practical assistance to workers in struggle and to help those in different areas to exchange experiences and link up with one another.

10. We do not see ourselves as yet another leadership, but merely as an instrument of working class action. The function of Solidarity is to help all those who are in conflict with the present authoritarian social structure, both in industry and in society at large, to generalize their experience, to make a total critique of their condition and of its causes, and to develop the mass revolutionary consciousness necessary if society is to be totally transformed.

'Participation': a trap

Everyone today is taking up the slogan of 'workers' participation' in industry... as if the participation of workers was not essential to keep production going anyway. As some militants are being taken in by this demand, it is worth looking at the real consequences of its introduction.

Trade union leaders, the government, Liberals, Tories, Labour Lefts, Communists and Trotskyists - all praise the virtues of 'workers' participation'. What none of them want is actual workers' power, the right of the workers themselves directly to manage the factories. This unity of attitude is quite interesting. It stems from a common acceptance of the fact that with the ever greater complexity of production, the worker must 'participate' in it to some extent, if anything is ever to be produced at all. Of course the worker must also remain an obedient appendage to the machine. This is an insoluble contradiction. 'Workers' participation' is essential for the continued and increased exploitation of workers, just as 'victims' participation' was essential for the smooth, efficient working of the concentration camps, and for very similar reasons.

It is worth looking at what has actually happened in factories where various forms of 'workers' participation' have already been introduced. What is their effect on working conditions and job organization? How do they affect the control of the workers over their life at work?

An illustration of what the future can hold is contained in an article in the February 1966 issue of 'Industrial Society'. The article is by a Mr J.S. Walton, Industrial Relations Manager at the Firestone Tyre and Rubber Company. It describes the disciplinary procedure in use at their factory at Brentford which employs 2,400 workers.

The Firestone plant at Brentford has a closed shop agreement with the TGWU. (This was the result of a bitter struggle in 1935, led by Communists, which gained the union its first foothold in the plant) In the early 1940s a Misconduct Committee was set up to consider cases of 'bad workmanship, insubordination, smoking in forbidden areas, clocking offences, fighting, etc.'

Three of the six members of this Committee are union representatives, elected every two years from amongst the 12 members of the Works Committee. One of these 3 union representatives is always the secretary of the factory branch of the TGWU. The three union representatives 'perform continuous duty on the Committee during their two years in office'.

Penalties that can be imposed by the Committee can vary from 'cautions, final warnings, demotions, suspensions for up to three days without pay, to immediate dismissal'.

The article points out that 'an employee who is found to be producing poor quality work is likely to be warned about it at least once by his foreman or manager - in the presence of the departmental union representative (my emphasis, K.W.) ...all departmental warnings are recorded on the employee's record card and are likely to be quoted in a misconduct hearing'.

There is no need to ask who benefits most from this kind of set-up. No wonder the employers boast that 'the procedure provides a reasoned, logical and carefully weighed approach to the question of discipline', that it 'contributes in no small measure to a disciplined industrial group', and that 'through responsible activity by members of the Misconduct Committee we are able to keep our house in order'.

Mr Walton continues: 'The procedure has the full support of the union representatives in the factory. These men are prepared to share a sometimes unpleasant duty in the knowledge that disciplinary controls must exist ... they take a highly responsible attitude towards the cases they hear, nearly always recognising where pressures for leniency are justified or where they should stand firm with management in supporting stern penalties'.

The working of this Committee leaves a lot to be desired, even within the terms of capitalist justice. A lawyer to whom the article was shown put the opinion that decisions of the committee would not stand up in a court of law because 'contrary to natural justice'. For instance the disciplined worker is asked to leave when the Committee discusses his case. Moreover his 'representatives' are also his judges. Once a decision is reached it cannot be challenged. All that the victim can do is to contact the District Officer of the TGWU and ask him if he will agree to request that the case be reheard. In recent years there have only been two such 'retrials'. In both cases the second 'trial' reached the same verdict as the first. This was scarcely surprising. The judges were the same, only the 'Chairman' (by definition 'a member of the Industrial Relations Department of the firm') was different.

What would happen at such a tribunal to a 'trouble maker' who had stirred things up for both the management and the union ?

The union representatives on the Misconduct Committee have become simply another layer of management. This integration of lower trade union strata into management is becoming an increasingly important feature in modern industry. A similar example was the Management Advisory Committee at Vauxhall, now happily much weakened by rank-and-file action (see Truth About Vauxhall, Solidarity Pamphlet No.12). It is essential that militants should recognize this danger and resist the creation of a layer of full-time trade union bureaucrats inside the factory. These would represent their workers about as much as Quisling represented the people of Norway.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

JOINT CONSULTATION AND INDUSTRIAL MISCONDUCT:

MINUTES OF MISCONDUCT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 MAY, 1964

215/19001 - B. BROWN

It was reported that the above employee was found by the works police asleep in the engineers drawing office on Wednesday morning, 27 instant, at 1.07 am. He had previously been seen in the engineers wash room at 12.20 am.

He was asked what he was doing in the drawing office, and he said that while waiting for the polish to dry in the other offices he had done, he went into the drawing office to clean some telephones, sat down, and then dozed off. He was asked why he had put the lights out, and he said he had no answer to give to this, but he may have forgotten to leave them on.

At the misconduct hearing, Brown said he was very sorry; he mentioned the fact that he had ear trouble, and on the previous night he had attended the works hospital for treatment.

The chairman also asked why he had locked the door. Brown said he did not realize he had. He was also asked if he was trying to defend his actions by saying he was sick and, if he was, why had he not attended the works hospital, to which he replied that he had, after he had been found asleep.

The chairman told Brown that the management could not tolerate such behaviour and the committee decided that he should be released from the company's employ.

Signed on behalf of the management (Chairman)

Signed on behalf of the employees (Plant Secretary).

LETTERS

Many thanks to Ken Weller for his friendly review (Solidarity, Vol IV, No 3) of our book, Incomes Policy, Legislation and Shop Stewards, and to the comrades around Solidarity who have helped to sell it. I wonder though if I could make a few comments on the second part of the review article, in which Ken discusses the way ahead. (There's not much point in taking up the question of our analysis of modern capitalism, as Ken doesn't specify what he finds unsatisfactory, beyond calling it 'rather traditional'.)

First, I agree with Ken completely that the campaign against Incomes Policy and Trade Union Legislation (and now against Wage Freeze) has so far been unsatisfactory, in that it has been limited to 'pressure on the government' and to 'lobbies and meetings'. I think in fact that this criticism could be taken further, by looking at the way these lobbies (in particular the lobbies) have been conducted, for they have generally involved people in travelling long distances to do no more than go to see their M.P.s - never a particularly fruitful way of spending one's time! What has been missing from these occasions has been any real attempt to develop further forms of mass activity out of them.

But, more important, I should like to express my reservations about Ken's alternative proposals. He suggests that "a much better insurance against all attacks on job organisation ... would be to place

the whole emphasis on building up the autonomy (both organisational and political) of job organisation". I don't of course disagree with the sentiment, but the phrasing ("the whole emphasis") leaves a large gap. For if the whole emphasis is placed on this - even reading "job organisation" to include the further development of combine committees etc., - that link different factories together - there is a real danger of maintaining the current fragmentation of the movement as a whole.

Ken complains that there is very little in the book about "life, work and struggle inside the factory", about "methods of struggle or even 'unofficial' forms of job organisation" and about "new methods of exploitation and manipulation within the modern factory". To some extent, the point is well made - and we must plead simple considerations of space in the book. Future publications of the Defence Committee, I hope, will help to remedy this, by providing more detailed matter, rather than broad general statements.

But there is a danger in emphasising only this part of the struggle. The current attacks on the movement, particularly from the Government of course, are general attacks, not limited to one factory or one industry. Particular union officials, and particular employers, will play their particular parts in this attack. But the fact that the attack is general, that it is on workers as workers and not simply as

(say) Coventry car-workers, or London engineers, creates the possibility of a general response. We can easily miss the possibilities in the present situation if we emphasise the parts rather than the whole.

Strengthening job organisation, making it more self-conscious, insisting on the central importance of workers' self-mobilisation and self-organisation at this level are of enormous importance. But they are only a part of the struggle that the libertarian left (in which I for one should like to be included) has to wage. We have the further problem of uniting the various sections of the movement into a class movement, that continues to stress at the national level the features of factory organisation that revolutionaries stress - the self-reliance of workers, organisation from below and not from the top, independence from officials, and so on. In other words

we need a general political response (political in the revolutionary sense, and not in the sense meant by the many varieties of reformists and bureaucrats).

In short, we cannot solve our problems - which are problems concerning the whole organisation of our society - simply by stressing particular, local struggles. Without these, there can be no talk of general political responses, of course, but by themselves particular local struggles can only maintain the fragmentation and narrowness of the movement at present. There have been encouraging signs in the last year or so that faltering steps towards national unity - on a really revolutionary basis - are being made. I don't doubt that Ken Weller will welcome this, but it does need stressing.

Colin Barker
Manchester



Many of your readers will know of the repeated threats by the management at E N V, Willesden, to close down the factory.

This particular factory was a very near neighbour of our A S S factory at Park Royal, the story of which I told in a previous issue (Solidarity, vol IV, no 3). Close and cordial relations existed between our two workshop organisations. Indeed, it is probable that the largest financial assistance, in proportion to workers employed, was donated to our strike fund by the E N V factory.

The chairman of shop stewards at E N V, who seems to be playing an active part in the present clash with an American 'take-over' company was the first man to come personally and offer help in our own struggle.

It is very interesting to note that the management concerned appears to be threatening to close down the works for the same reason as those given by the new management when the Aircraft Steel Structures factory was taken over. At the time of which I am speaking the Willesden E N V factory was already well known as a factory with a strong workshop organisation, somewhat similar to our own, and consequently with a relatively high rate of pay.

This factory was certainly making a good rate of profit then. It's potentiality must also have been very great if over £6 million was paid by the American 'take-over' tycoons

It is, therefore, difficult to accept the new management's talk of near bankruptcy, three years later! Even if one accepted the usual press headlines about a £27 a week wage (this is not excessive by current engineering rates at say Coventry or Luton) - this would not explain the sudden descent into penury which the directors say has taken place in the last three years.

The workers were well organised and had won themselves good rates when this "lot" took over. No! As in our case (and on a larger scale) they want to get a free hand to eliminate existing militancy together with the advanced agreements that militancy has already won. The £27 a week is probably only earned regularly by 50% of the workers, but again it seems to me highly significant that if one compared this rate with similar wages paid in America then it is common knowledge that the American rate would be much higher.

One begins to suspect that American employers bringing their capital to Britain are much more concerned to keep wages down here than they are in America. In short, they seem to be expecting a higher yield on their investments in Britain. Is not this a new form of economic colonialism right here in the heart of the old ex-British Empire?

Dudley Edwards
Saltdean
Sussex

* * *

more on vietnam

Widely different attitudes to the war in Vietnam are to be found in the Socialist movement. Underlying these attitudes are profound differences concerning the meaning of socialism, the class nature of Chinese and Russian societies and what is meaningful political activity (i.e. what revolutionaries can fruitfully say and do) in a country of modern capitalism such as Britain.

The articles on Vietnam in the last 2 issues of SOLIDARITY have provoked a number of letters and several further articles. Here are 2 of these, prototypes in a way of patterns of thinking and methods of argument which are widespread on the left. SOLIDARITY readers are doubtless politically mature enough to dispense with point by point commentaries. Other viewpoints will be put - and forcibly - in subsequent issues.

I. ALAN ESTERSON WRITES

Bob Potter's article on Vietnam in Solidarity (Vol IV, No 5) was, I believe, unsatisfactory, for several reasons.

A great deal has been published concerning the history of the Vietnam War but very little on the internal situation in North Vietnam. Yet the article implied that the "Ho regime" was typically Communist in its relations with the people, without quoting any sources of information.

I don't believe it is naive to accept that the North Vietnamese government is widely popular, notwithstanding any excesses which may have occurred. The fact that it may not be particularly democratic is probably inevitable at this stage of its development. Certainly there is not even a possibility of a more genuine democratic structure emerging until the war is over. To advocate support for the "North Vietnamese against the Ho regime" would, therefore, appear to be meaningless, and quite out of tune with reality.

Moreover, where is the evidence that "State bureaucrats in Hanoi control the Vietcong", or that Moscow would welcome a "Korea-type carve-up"?

What is perhaps most disturbing is the tone adapted towards those who call for "Peace in Vietnam". Why must we "especially" oppose this call? And why refer to it as a "pacifist" position? (though, of course, it is supported by pacifists.) Bob Potter's opposition to this demand is apparently on the grounds that an immediate agreement would maintain the status quo. There are three fundamental objections to this attitude, none of which are in themselves necessarily pacifist.

One is that a continuation of the bloodshed and suffering is hardly likely to lead to an atmosphere conducive to the development of a democratic movement.

The second is that the present and foreseeable death and destruction, and the bitterness engendered, are evils at least equal to any that are likely to arise from a negotiated political settlement.

The third is the very real danger that the war will drift into a confrontation between the U.S. and either China or Russia. Does any reader of Solidarity understand human beings so little as to believe "it will never happen", or "no one would be so mad" as to plunge the world into full scale war?

What, then, are the alternatives? As the article states, there is not much we can do. But we could at least start by getting our attitudes clearly thought out (including any consequences).

To begin with, it is essential to try to understand what the opposing sides think and feel about the war. I don't believe analysis in the form of the jargon used in the article does much to illuminate the situation. Rather does it obscure understanding by oversimplification. Whatever one may believe to be the real motives of the participants, their actual beliefs (however misguided or false) are very relevant to the situation. This is an important aspect of any analysis, but would require a great deal of thought and space.

I believe it is essential to consider the war first and foremost from a humanitarian point of view (that is, with concern for the individual human lives involved).

At the moment large numbers of human beings, predominantly Vietnamese (but also Americans and other nationalities) are suffering and dying. The first question should be, how can this be stopped, with reasonable terms for a settlement? By "reasonable", I mean not what I think is right, nor what you think is right, nor what Ho Chi Minh or the N.L.F. think is right (though I think they have a good case), but what is feasible, in the present situation. This may mean certain (possibly painful) concessions by the Vietnamese. I believe these would be only temporary, and that eventually Vietnam will be re-united. But even if this is only a long term aim, it would be better than the present ghastly destruction, without a chance of either side giving way.

The right of "liberals" to advocate concessions by the Vietnamese has been questioned. I would say that anyone has the right to advocate policies which he believes are the best in a given situation, as long as he has made a real effort to understand the situation in its totality (i.e. not only from his own limited viewpoint).

To say that the only just solution is for the Americans to go home may be true, but it is irrelevant, because obviously it will not happen. To stand firm on this means effectively to accept the continuation of the war, with all its consequences. [That many Vietnamese hold this position does not alter the argument, because it is extremely difficult for people who have suffered as they have to view the situation with sufficient detachment to make the most rational judgement.]

The article asserts that the demand for peace is effectively "a utopian and reactionary demand". On the contrary, the utopian attitude is clearly present in suggestions that at the present stage in Vietnam a self-governing movement of the type envisaged in the pages of Solidarity can develop in the near future. The idea is also utopian that such a movement in Britain can develop sufficiently rapidly to have some influence on British and World policies. Both Vietnam and the nuclear arms race are too immediately serious to await the many decades (at least) before this is even a possibility.

The alternative, on which so much scorn is poured, is not to rely on politicians, but to try to modify or change the policies of Governments. I don't need to be told that this is almost an impossible task, but it is at least a feasible line of action.

2. R. ARCHBOLD WRITES

In Bob Potter's article on Vietnam in your last issue not one word is used in condemnation of U.S. imperialist aggression in Vietnam, which is the main issue for the people of Vietnam, and for socialists.

In claiming that the South is increasingly dependent for aid on the North the author is, by implication, giving credence to a U.S. lie. This is that Vietnam is two countries, and not one, artificially divided by the U.S. aggressors when they constructed the military demarcation line, established by the Geneva Conference of 1954, into a political frontier and a territorial boundary.

To refer to a "Ho regime" in the South following defeat of U.S. aggression is to deny the right of the Vietnamese to re-unify their country on an independent basis. The whole of Vietnam, both North and South, was recognised by the Geneva Conference to be an independent state. The U.S. prevented re-unification elections in 1956. Vietnam is one country.

What a "socialist" solution in Vietnam is the author carefully avoids saying, though he denies the ability of the people of Vietnam to achieve one. The reference to the "Ho regime" being "more capitalist" because of "industrialisation" is either illiteracy or duplicity, but it is certainly not rational, scientific or factual. It is, in fact, disruptive. The same observation applies to the superciliously condescending remark about recognising a "Vietcong" victory as "progressive" (?), but only in "one" sense.

To talk about "U.S. intervention" and not what it really is - aggression - gives credence to the idea that a South Vietnam "Government" is an entity and not a fiction created by U.S. imperialism.

To support the South Vietnamese against the "old feudal regime", and the North Vietnamese against the "Ho regime" (support for this "regime" is evident from the war effort of the people) together with talk of defeat of U.S. "intervention", is a proposition worthy only of Alice in Wonderland, were it not for its insidiousness. It equates with support for U.S. aggression in Vietnam.

To refer to "the enslaved people" in North and South undermines international support for the Vietnamese people, disguises the crime of U.S. aggression, and makes it appear as if U.S. imperialism had a liberating mission in Vietnam - apart from the "liberation" of death it is inflicting in Vietnam.

Just as the pacifist call for "peace" in Vietnam (on grounds of bourgeois humanitarianism) is a service to U.S. imperialism, so is the author's rejection of peace through military victory for the Vietnamese over U.S. imperialism (on concocted excuses of "enslavement" of the Vietnamese). This is not the conduct of people who call themselves "socialist".

TALKED enough about Vietnam?

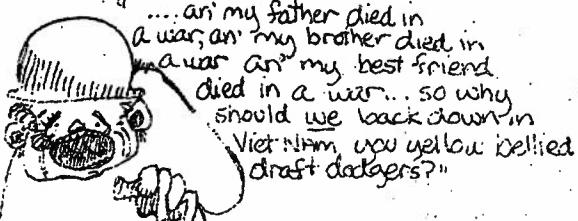
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