

# COMMUNIST HEADACHE



NOTES FOR WORKING AND LIVING : Vol 2.

# COMMUNIST HEADACHE

## NOTES FOR WORKING AND LIVING VOL. 1

AUTUMN 1995.

### CONTENTS:

1. Drifting with Communist Headache...page 1
2. Our Contribution to the Animals Debate...page 5
3. All Power to the Council Workers?...page 13
4. 'The Illusion'...page 15
5. Militancy, Anti-politics and the Adrenalin Rush...page 19

Our notes for working and living represent our efforts to develop a radical methodology for examining this society, and our own observations and recommendations when we apply this methodology to various aspects of the capitalist system.

We are only a small group, and have put out these first three volumes in a hope to engage in some critical debate and to further the revolutionary cause. Communist Headache does not exist as some formal organisation. If we manage to stir some revolutionaries from their various slumbers then we will consider this initial stage as successful. Needless to say we offer no blueprints and our analyses are far from flawless.

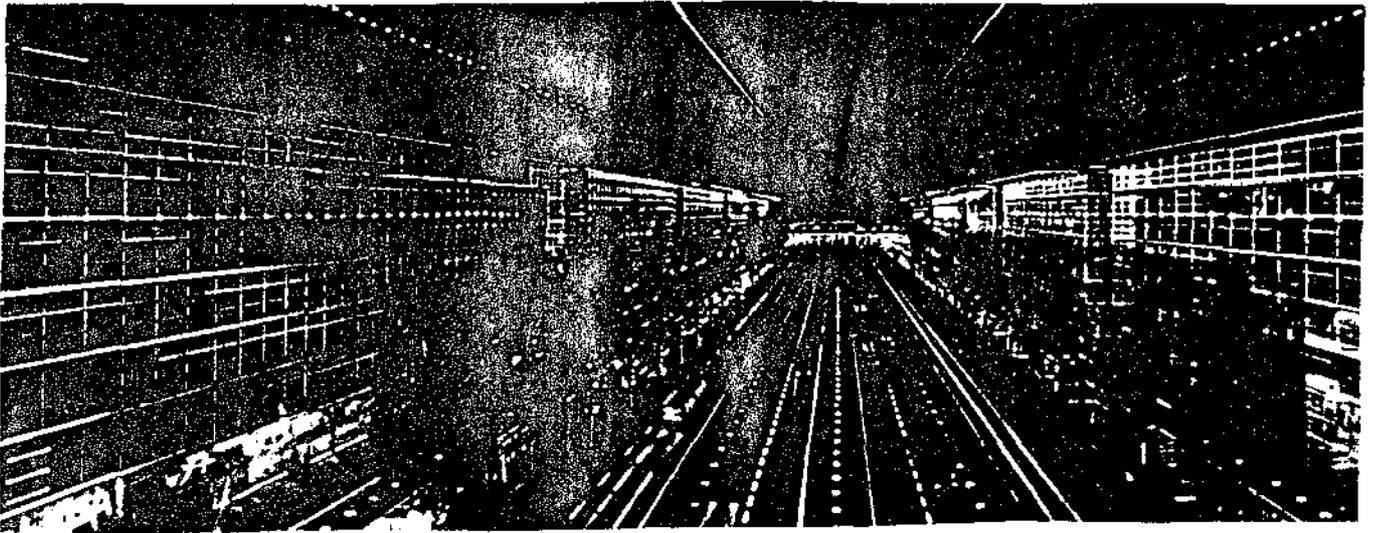
Contact us as follows:

C.H.  
c/o Black Star  
PO Box 446  
Sheffield  
S1 1NY.

In volume 1 :

New struggles in an Old Framework  
Some Questions for the Anarchist Movement  
Workplace Struggle vs Community Struggle

# Drifting with Communist Headache



**"We are now revolutionary because we can no longer stand our relationship to our work, our friends, our environment, namely to everything from our next door neighbour to our favourite cat or radio station - such is the situation of capital invading and dominating our lives"**

Barrot's quote signalled the intensification of the process of recuperation that is integral in capitalism maintaining its systematic separation, alienation and domination. The militant rant is now an artform, a developed skill, designed to entertain through a mixture of titillating those 'in the know' or shock-tacticing those who should know better. The lure of the university chair drew into its web a variety of radical theorists who used the uprisings of 1968 to put the finishing touches to their cv's... this indeed is the true reversal of perspective. Once established within they quickly rose to the task of perpetually shapeshifting their radical critiques (for instance consider the vast output of Castoriadis and his work since his discovery of the order gives order takers theories) until they eventually reached their terminus with the birth of postmodernism.

Their discovery of postmodernism also brought them back in touch with us ordinary proles, but by now they had firmly fixed themselves on the other side. The last 25 years have been immense in development and change of capitalism, in terms of how it attempts to, and achieves, attacking us proles. The organisation of work has moved along the lines of Fordist development, giving rise to both further atomisation and a whole new sector based on information handling. However, this development of information technology (and the com-

munication technology to move the information around) has been equally contributed to (and used by) the systems designed to dominate us. Capitalism's obsession with categorisation into 'lifestyle', and its need to perform surveillance, and to eventually turn this surveillance into entertainment is insatiable. The circle is completed as we are further dominated by capitalists using their instruments of domination to transmit the images of us being dominated to say that this domination is normal behaviour.

We interpret what we see around us by referring to the ideas that are grouped and labelled in our minds. This is known as the cognitive reference frame. Postmodernism can only tell us that our cognitive reference frames are now so saturated with images, ideas and information that they are totally screwed up. Postmodernism tells us that we no longer have a hunger to understand why and to ask the questions that would shake the foundations of capitalism... we just accept what we are told/shown and file it away with the rest of the crap (indeed our mental filing cabinets have only one label, we are told, that is 'crap'). There once was a belief that our cognitive reference frames were so ordered that when we received data that contradicted the groups and labels of information in our minds we throw it out, only accomodating anything new after a critical rearrangement of the

ideas we hold... postmodernism tells us that we are long past this stage. We do not doubt that the systems of domination are powerful and sophisticated (in fact, it is bad to encourage critical thinking because capitalists dont like to do it themselves, preferring to exercise a blind loyalty to profit, thus we have capitalism embracing its own optical illusion, or incommensurabilities, with the marriage of ecology and capitalism). But we do not take pleasure in, or make a comfortable living from, poking fun at how stupid we are or predicting how stupid we are likely to become. The fatalism that accompanies postmodernism has made the fast talking ranter the latest tv celebrity, and the passionate wordsmith the anchor journalist in the Sunday paper colour supplements... Jack Dee as the new Nietzsche, You've Been Framed as the revolution of everyday life, etc etc. We cannot shirk away from the fact that our minds are being heavily fucked over, and personally I am very sceptical of subversive potentials within the systems of domination.

It is no coincidence that the idea of class has been blasted into oblivion - indeed it is the existence of the class system that offers the sharpest vision of capitalism in all its horrific glory. We see class struggle as the destruction of capitalism and the creation of communism, however we cant wish an awareness of class upon our world. Neither can we pretend that capital-

ism is solely about 'realizing its cycle' and accumulating value. We need to tackle the domination that allows this to happen, a domination that tells us everything is ok, that shows us ourselves being dominated as part of its proof of our non-domination, that tells us that everything is just fine.

### 12 Months Disinterest

"It is no easy task to radically criticise this world while living in it at the same time, to conceive of the possibility of another life which has no model one can attach oneself to and at times no words to express it"

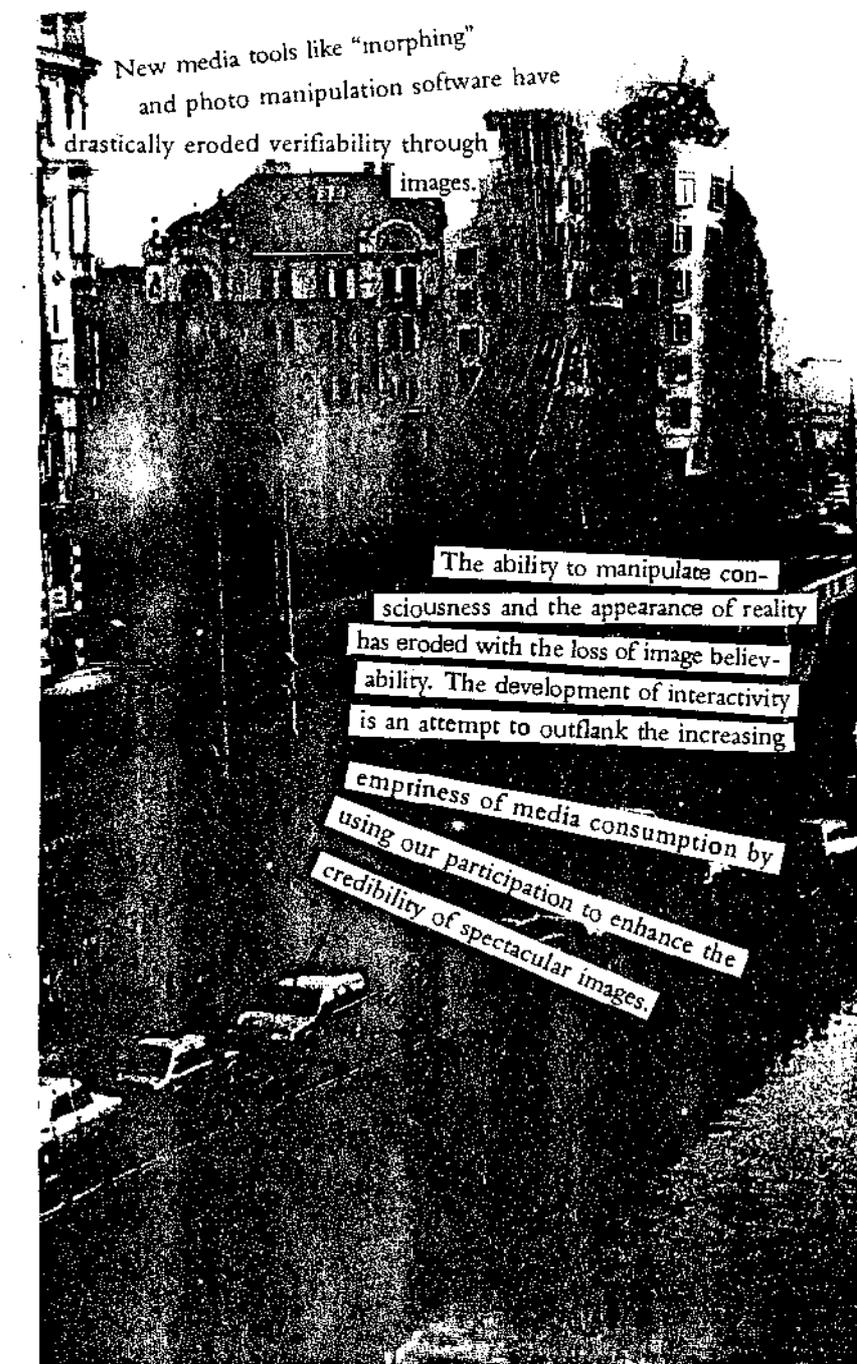
(from Petite analyse de la difference.)

Our perceptiveness is dulled to such an extent that what contributes background noise (ie sound input that isn't registered as idea stimulation in the mind) can be quite incredible. The drone of industry, the whirring of the internal combustion engine, etc. If you concentrate hard enough you can normally hear an alarm sounding in the distance, sometimes a burglar alarm on some premises, but more often than not a car alarm.

Car culture is a big issue at the moment - our comrades at Aufheben have made a start at unravelling the complex 'spaghetti junction' arguments involved - but car alarms are a constant pain. When walking to a friends house I often pass a car that has an alarm that activates itself when you pass close by. It almost sounds apologetic when an all american Robocop voice booms out "Back away! Alarm will sound in 10 seconds". We could talk about cars developing their own personal space, but where on earth would this lead us... only to contribute towards another act in the postmodern circus.

A neighbour has a particularly flashy car that is alarmed with a system so sensitive and shrill that you know when the Autumn months are here... it is activated by the falling leaves, the swirling winds, and the excited kids hurrying about sensing the encroaching darker nights. If this comes across as a joke then all I can do is apologise.

We can consider the make and model of a car as a 'status' symbol, but what status it symbolises is difficult to assess... how much one is duped into believing the consumer dream, how much suffering and misery at work



one is determined to redeem? The critique of the car alarm really boils down to a good nights sleep. I hate the bastards because they wake me or my baby up (who then wakes me up), and I need all the sleep I can get because I have to be up at 7.00 and ready to face work. The neighbour is paranoid about car crime because that is what is broadcast by the media, and they are convinced that their car is a dream come true for themselves, and so it follows it is a potential dream come true for the car thief. They cant get a good nights sleep until they have fitted the most effective alarm, and they need the sleep because they have to get the money to pay the car off. Acid observations about the working

class community are ten a penny. Why theyve even resurrected the ghost of punk rock with a new name (The New Wave of the New Wave!) where good looking public schoolboys with the right balance of anger and boredom can harp on about "Parklife" and the sweet cruddiness of all things working class. But then again, such is the nature of commercial music, so we should be looking for no excuses here.

Returning from visiting some friends I found myself stuck on a cross London commuter train in the busy period. I never realised how much the restructuring of work had been forced upon us, but I seemed to be awake in some nightmare. It is easy to joke about the concept of multi-tasking and

new work regimes (personal = corporate responsibility) meaning you must shave while you're stuck in a tailback clockwise on the orbital, but the reality was unfolding in front of me. At least 5 people were tapping away on laptops and many others had sheets and reports spread out in front of them, sharp suits with harassed looks were striding up and down the gangway holding their mobile phones trying to get an interference free connection. From this I often wonder whether it is possible to develop a critique of technology without stripping away the years and years of development. Do we strive for smooth trains for the sake of comfort or are they developed solely to extend our time in the office. It is almost enough to make us pine for the rickety trains of old with the side corridors and large dusty compartments, but the more we pine the more we stoke the flames of the nostalgia industry (television commercials of doting newly weds on a romantic train ride - yuppie free - sharing their last role).

Both these incidents tell the same story - that of the domination of our lives by work. Technology has not meant that we can take our work home with us, this implies some kind of deal, technology means that our work can now haunt us all the way home. The communities where we live can often be seen as nothing more than a place to recharge our batteries for the next days work and to gather our new commodities that work allows us to buy...

An original driving force behind our decision to start our investigations and commnuiques was the lack of a communist critique of workerism. This critique of workerism soon developed into a critique of productionism, enabling us to discuss not just the trots but the currents of orthodox marxism and the idealism of some anarchist groups. A possible way out of this dilemma is to re-examine the ideas of workplace struggles and community struggles. The insistence on emphasising the workplace as the point of struggle because it is the means of production is insufficient on its own, but equally so we cannot switch to an emphasis on community struggles like some anarchists do in reaction to the failure of workplace struggles. Our first publication involved a discussion of the current moves towards community struggle, and how we can reunite both the workplace and the com-

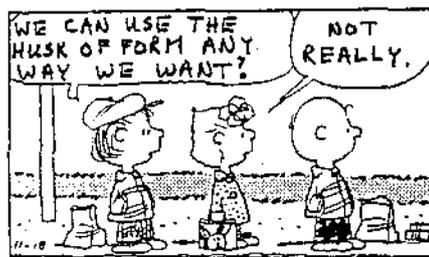
munity. This involves the re-examination of what we mean by community, and what is subversive about such a struggle. Thus our communities could be seen as a chance to re-affirm our desires outside of capitalism, whilst our workplace struggles must involve the refusal of work outside of reformism. The linking of these 2 struggles can only be achieved through an understanding of the class system.

### Anarchy in the UK

"We are not the first nor we will be the last revolutionaries to mysteriously lapse into more or less cynical dabbings with culture, preoccupation with survival, or the most trivialized or false personal relations : you have to keep running to avoid the clutches of the old world"

(from Remarks on Contradiction)

On its last home visit by the doctor the patient was diagnosed as terminally ill, what has been going wrong? I can only comment on what I have gathered through my own experiences. There seems to be a rise in 'off-the-peg' identikit politics where



it is a necessity to hook up to radical animal rights groups and ultra violent anti fascist organisations, and all this seems to bolster a holier than thou attitude. I was wandering around the weekend event in Sheffield organised as a think tank session against the Criminal Justice Act and, whilst acknowledging it wasnt an anarchist event, I was appalled at what I heard. Speakers from Liberty talking unchallenged about how our most useful allies against the CJA would be the coppers who didnt like busting raves (but obviously enjoyed punching pickets) and the probation officers who didnt fancy the extra work and loss of union rights. A discussion on prisons where the main worry was how to get vegan soap and an assumption that you would be discriminated against because you were choosing

to be different (this meant a number of things (i) it discriminated against the 'proper' prisoners by assuming theyd be discriminatory (ii) it didnt question the idea of prisons for non anti-CJA protesters (iii) it suggested that these proper prisoners deserved to stay there because they werent fuzzy felt wearing vegans).

Last year I also had some brief contact with the formative East Midlands Anarchist Network. My doubts were confirmed when I received their news bulletins where a variety of oddball anarchist arguments were presented : the need for a money system to help control exchange, the need for exchange itself, the championing of LETS as a way forward, a big cheer for Lucas engineering and the GLC for showing the way to anarchism, and finally a recall for Bookchins municipal libertarianism!

An article in an anarchist magazine discusses the important issue of advertising, a chance to develop a radical crique of how this society both practices domination and preaches domination as a religion if ever there was. A point for conclusion is that advertising is a waste of money! Well judging by the success of lifestyle programming I would suggest that

advertising is capitalist money very well spent. And I would also assume that money in the anarchist society would not exist? Perhaps they are indicating that advertising is a waste of human activity, but again I would see a need to communicate and share the diversity of goods that are produced and are freely available in the communist society.

At the other end of the spectrum the trotskyists must be seeing something that doesnt exist, as they are visibly worried about the rise of anarchism and anarchist ideas. What they are probably seeing is a rise in the number of ravers politicised not via their workplaces but via the attacks on their hedonistic pursuits via the Criminal Justice Act. This non-workplace politicisation they assume must be swelling the anarchist ranks. So we

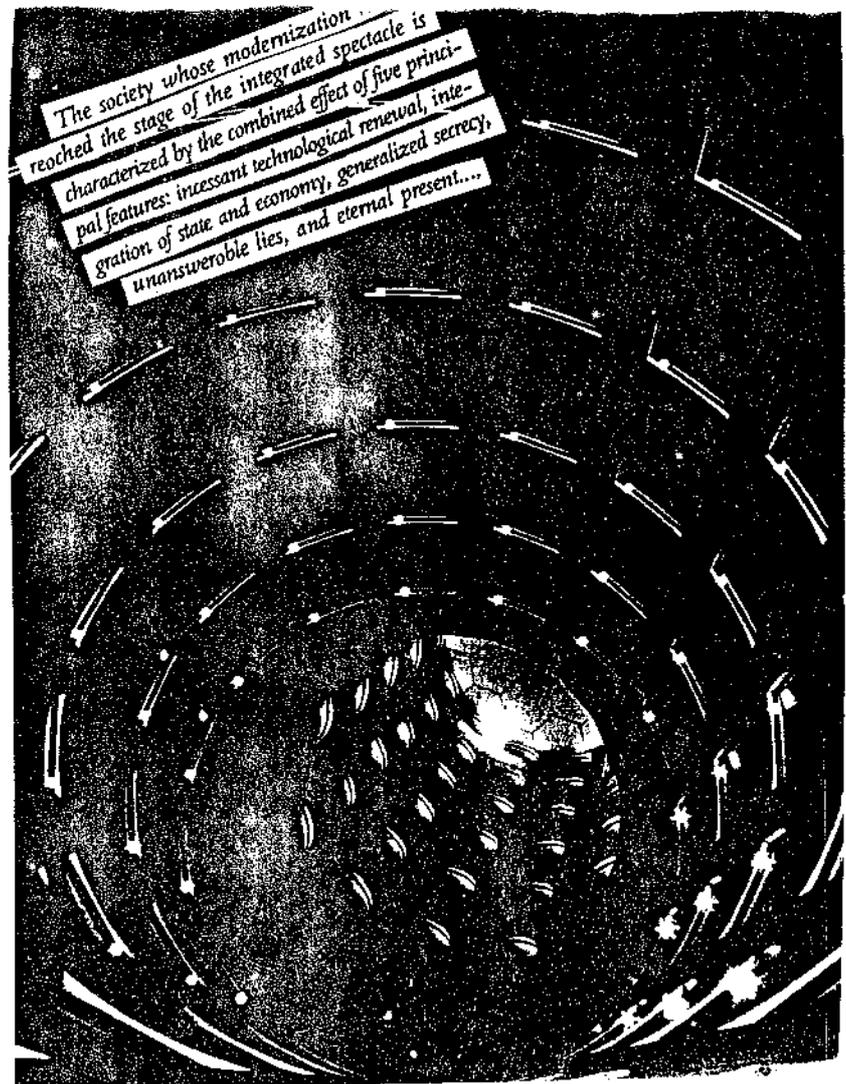
see the incredible articles in magazines like 'Revolution' (the youth paper of Workers Power) called 'Marxism or Anarchism' where they stress the important difference as being the necessity of a state to enable the proletariat to defend their new found powers against those old capitalists who are now the re-oppressed and to keep the economy ticking over. Now correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm sure there was more to marxism than stressing the necessity of keeping the same old system but changing the bosses?

### Beyond the Valley of the Ultra-leftists

In reviewing a book (balance sheet) of the autonomist method Wildcat conclude with some honesty about the current state of things. In their words, for the working class, "decomposition is the order of the day". Whilst the autonomist method can be readily applied to situations where struggle is never far away, the present era in the UK sees little activity - whether as an obvious expression as class struggle or susceptible to the autonomist analysis. This has led to some writers, such as those based around the Green Anarchist magazine, to position countries such as Britain - with its spectacle-heavy society - as being on the revolutionary periphery. From this perspective it is quite easy to convince yourself about the irrelevance of class and to develop a loathing for 'stupid proletarians' (witness this attitude amongst some of the animal rights militia).

We need to move away from all of these perspectives... it is little use in applying an autonomism that is ill defined just because the rigid theories of class struggle are definably ill. It takes a degree of courage in recognising that the system we live in - even though it has capitalism at its heart - is immensely complicated and is the pinnacle of layers of dominating, manipulating, brutal earlier systems. To appreciate the task at hand is a useful first principle, even if such an approach comes with a free sachet of pessimism (see the article 'Catching Fish in Chaotic Waters' in a recent 5th Estate for such an attempt). We cant go on cleverly 'discovering' and announcing how bad life is, and proclaiming that each new pearl we are offered is an 'obvious' fake etc - this is really to easy.

The question of class must be at the



heart of our discussions. Ken Smith in his recent book 'Survival of the Weakest' provides perhaps the clearest documentation of our current plight and our journey here. However his book may present some confusion amongst revolutionaries due to its early announcement that class struggle is past its sell by date. Towards the end of the book he begins to unravel the problems of class in our society, particularly in relation to the jobs we have. Communist Headache wish to continue these discussions with an aim to better understanding the class system, and intensifying our class struggle. Ken Smith seems happy to, from a communist perspective, assign about 70% of current work as pointless in the future communist society. While you cannot disagree with such a viewpoint you cannot simply assume that such a revelation will break the back of capitalism by informing us all of its stupid bureaucracy. The work we do in our 'meaningless' jobs is crucial to capitalism because it shapes both our own mentality and the mentality of others.. whether indirectly by simply perpetuating the

miserable way of life, or directly by keeping us all on a tight leash (education, media, state..). We cannot apply a class principle to those of us employed in useful production and be unsure about the rest of us, we need to understand the power systems that operate and to make demands on the proletarians who are the cogs in these power systems.

The movement towards a better life is now mutating as it crawls out from under the lid screwed down by the last decade. As the belts in space fill to bursting point with satellites to entertain and observe us, the new age is spiralling into a massive 'padded cell'. On its fringes wait the cults of the 1990's : ravers, branch davidians, travellers, nerve gas on the Tokyo underground, survivalists, road protesters, suicide pacts in the Alps.

To bring together those working to leave this society under the communist vision is a task that is slowly slipping beyond our grasp. It is on this difficult terrain that we choose to work. If you share a similar committment then we urge you to get in touch with us.



## Our Contribution to the Animals Debate.

Our society is characterised by the intensity of capitalist development. Everything is bought and sold, every tiny action from the words we use to the way we dress says something about us. Images are transmitted and received at a frantic pace. The codes for our alienated survival seem beyond grasping as the smallest shifts in spectacular aesthetics are impacted upon us with a tremendous force. The system is asphyxiating. It presents itself as the totality... the only totality.

As this intensity is increased it is obvious that contradictions will occur. The contradiction of the whole system, that is the class system, will always be the last to emerge if capitalism has its way. This is the final rupture... the class struggle will always be there. The process that brings about the finality is ours to discuss. The economic crisis has been the standard answer, and struggles are returning to the workplace. New strategies need to be developed.

Elsewhere other things happen... the single issue is generally the contradiction of consensus, the bolt of lightning between the eyes. It is not simply a case of explaining that what appears to be wrong is only a symptom of what is actually wrong. The difficulty of this task tends to lead to the dismissal of the single issue. What is problematical is that the contradiction of consensus can often ask questions beyond what is wrong with the system. Intensity and alienation can create strange paths to their illusory negation. This is the case with animal rights. It doesn't just pose an aspect of what appears to be wrong with capitalism which revolutionaries can then fit into their general blueprint for the class struggle. It makes demands on both a perceived revolutionary process and a perceived revolutionary destination. It is here where it can collide with the well groomed class struggle revolutionary.

Our contribution to the debate is included here. It consists of a discussion document on the concept of speciesism, and a short review of an animals rights critique. Other material can be found : Green Anarchist have a healthy relationship with the extreme factions of the milieu, Subversion have recently opened up their pages for their communist perspective. Aufheben, who have covered most of everything that moves (the anti-roads, the anti CJB) refuse to be drawn on the debate. I can only assume that this is because they live too close to Shoreham and are sick of the sight of protesting celebrities like Carla Lane. We will continue our contribution with a discussion on middle class struggle in our next volume.

## ON SPECIESISM

### 1. INTRODUCTION & TERMINOLOGY

The problems of discussing this difficult subject are perpetuated in the actual terminology 'speciesism' in that such a term has some kind of equality with racism, sexism, etc - that is the unquestioned right to assume a hierarchy based on a difference. Those who are unwilling to question the domination of humans over other species would thus find the term useless in anything other than a simple description of a set of ideas and processes that are purely natural - whereas racism, sexism, etc would apply to domination of humans over humans and be a case for argument.

The decision to carry out a thorough understanding of speciesism is not without its problems. Whereas it will help us to gain a further understanding of how capitalism works and how it exploits and dominates working class people, it also brings with it arguments that seem irresolvable and can attract infinitesimal hair-splitting of "what if"s and "but surely"s. Parallels can be drawn to the US anarchist milieu and their immersion into the child-adult sex debate, which is littered with people offering death threats at every ideological twist and turn of the argument. Healthy debate or a purile search for anarchist purism?

If anything, a discussion of speciesism is a chance to discuss the problems of the animal rights movement, a movement that is enjoying a degree of expansion at the present time, and so inflicting a degree of panic upon the leftist milieus. To me this is the easy part... problems emerge when discussing the future society and our relationship to other species - particularly in terms of diet and domestication - and I am willing but sceptical to open debate on these areas.

### 2. ANIMAL RIGHTS - WHATS WRONG

#### (i) Capitalism and Cruelty

This society is based on an economic system called capitalism. In this system one class dominates and exploits the other class. The domi-

nated and exploited class takes its part in producing the material goods (commodities) that link the two classes together. The dominated and exploited class are paid a wage for their labour and have to buy back these commodities to both satisfy their minimal needs for survival and satisfy some subset of the whole spectrum of manufactured needs (obviously manufactured by the capitalists). The dominating and exploiting class, whilst never going short of the material goods produced by our class, lives equally to continue dominating and exploiting. Whilst some members of this class may specialise in either of these activities, we should be clear that each enforces the other. To further exploit us capitalists invest their surplus value profits from particular industries into other industries that they predict will be booming - and so enabling them to grab a slice of the surplus value in this industry. To keep this system running the capitalists must manufacture needs, and this manufacturing of needs can only be effected upon a dominated class. This is the nature of fashion, lifestyleism, etc and the general fetishizing of hierarchy (ie domination) amongst the dominated and exploited class itself. This is the world we must leave, and this world is based upon the class system.

Capitalists will do anything to increase the profit available to themselves. So as well as capitalism being cruel to us, the exploited and dominated class, by its very nature, it is also cruel to other species by this very same nature. This means that the commodities we produce and consume are 9/10 made directly from animals, tested for safety or new variety on other species, or involve the destruction of environments and so other species.

#### (ii) Exposing Cruelty or Exposing Exploitation

Because of the nature of our domination we are kept in total darkness about the production process and all it entails. If this were not the case then we would be exposed to our own exploitation and be in a better position to 'seize the means of production' and put them into effect. Indeed, an integral part of class struggle is to both develop a critical awareness of how we can begin to assess

our real desires, and to understand the mechanics of the production process to enable us to satisfy these desires.

Some animal rights activists use this process of exposure to their own advantage. Thus we are presented with an endless stream of images of animals in an extreme state of distress or dead in an orgy of abuse. We are presented with these images not to encourage us to understand how we are totally alienated from what we produce (though whether such a tactic would work is doubtful) but to somehow make us feel guilty because we are responsible for all of this. This minor criticism encompasses many of the wider problems that can exist in the animal rights milieu. For instance, the pettiness and self-righteousness that can exist amongst some vegans in their search for the ultimate exploitation free lifestyle (in that the more commodities are exposed as including an element of animal cruelty the more they can be used as a criticism against people who still use them - and not as a criticism of the commodity system). Secondly, the selective use for exposure of certain types of animals that embody a certain innocence (fluffy white rabbits) preys upon an idea that we should fight for animal rights because animals are some ideal organism that means no harm and has no voice to express this view. This tactic is based upon an assumed natural condition of domestication. Whereas, to me, the starting point of challenging speciesism should be an attempt to eradicate domestication, the animal rights movement often appeals to us to speak for animals as domesticated cuddly toys incapable of aggression rather than as other species that we have no right to interfere with.

#### (iii) Cruelty and its Manipulation

Thus, I have outlined how capitalism is cruel and how this cruelty extends to other species. Various approaches exist to struggle against this system:

A - To fight for the emancipation of our class without considering the fight against its cruelty to other species.

B - To fight for the emancipation of our class and to see the fight against animal cruelty as part of this struggle.

C - To fight against cruelty to other species as an end in itself.

The two obvious problems this entails are as follows : Arguments amongst elements of group A and group B on how they see the class struggle, arguments amongst elements of group B and group C on how they see the struggle against cruelty to other species.

#### (iv) Against Capitalism or Against Cruelty?

That the animal rights movement is made up of those struggling against capitalism and those oblivious to capitalism is no big revelation. This occurs at both ends of the spectrum of militancy - with middle class dogooders calling out to their fellow exploiters and dominators to stop this cruelty or forever suffer the pangs of eternal guilt, and the hardcore activists pushing self-sacrifice and ideology to the limit. However, the class struggle activists involved in animal rights tend to be congregated at the sharper end of this spectrum of militancy, and this is not without its problems. Those taking up a militant struggle against animal cruelty as an end in itself have to face up to certain inevitabilities, and the facing up to these inevitabilities can foster some dangerous opinions. Thus they have to decide whether a certain campaign can be considered a success when the understanding of how animals are exploited is rapidly expanding. I mention this point because of the almost total destruction of the fur trade in this country due to intense campaigning and the tactic of consumer boycotting. A selective consumer boycott is not the same as the refusal of exchange and the money system, though whether the former inspires the confidence amongst our class to try to build the latter is a point that could be considered. However, many militant animal rights activists see the destruction of the fur trade as a minor success faced with their increasing awareness of how this society uses and abuses other species in every possible way. It is here that we can consider the problems of the animal rights movement.

The discovery of how capitalism universally exploits other species, and of how every commodity involves an amount of cruelty to another species, can affect the militant animal rights activist in two ways. For those who struggle against cruelty to other spe-

cies as part of the struggle against the cruel system of capitalism then this awakening can cause confusion in that the activist sees the necessity of crushing capitalism as becoming the only way of ending our domination over other species... and this only serves to increase the problems as identified in the previous section between group A and B. But those who struggle against animal cruelty as an end in itself become more angered and vocal in their stance against cruelty, and so end up being the official voice of the militant animal rights movement - speaking also for those who are trying to piece together the difficult task of uniting class struggle and the anti-cruelty struggle. What happens when the nature of our system is exposed to show the full horror of how we exploit other species? There is often a degree of self-righteousness and evangelical veganism that can emerge, and this can sprout into a general ideology of human hating. Thus some activists dismiss the credentials of other activists solely on the fact that they haven't achieved a personal level of abstaining from involvement in animal cruelty, when in fact it is an impossible task to totally achieve this full abstention. And when this impossibility is eventually realized some activists choose to simply blame humans as evil bastards who are cruel to animals and so deserve all they get - not all activists adopt such a twisted viewpoint, but a vocal proportion do.

In a similar fashion we see the embrace of vegan capitalism as a victory. Thus it is better to see factory produced vegan commodities complete with an exploited and dominated workforce, than it is to see organically raised meat on a co-operatively run farm ( and no - this isn't an argument for self-managed capitalism but an illustration of an absence of anti-capitalism). What should be obvious is that capitalists from some industries will join in the chorus of disgust when the climate means it is commercially viable to do so. The real brains behind capitalism can even manufacture cruelty free consumerism as a new choice, and it is this distinguishable choice that allows its equating to fashion and lifestyle. Thus the poverty of appearance gained by attempting to live a cruelty free life is now a marketable image, and the purchase of products like Ecover

cleansing agents can now become important for what it signifies allowing reality to go unnoticed (in this case that the people who pull the strings for Ecover also have interests in Group4 security who are tendering to do the police dirty work in the opportunity laden arena of the CJA).

### 3. ANIMAL RIGHTS - WHATS PROBLEMATIC

It is here that we can enter the realm of hair-splitting arguments, and we have to choose whether we have a difference (ie for or against the fight against cruelty) within a unity (against capitalism) or we have a unity within a difference. I will discuss diet and domestication, though both of these boil down to the same argument : that is that some people involved in class struggle and animal rights refuse to see how someone can be involved in class struggle without envisaging a world free of cruelty to other species. This equates to seeing the anarchist/communist society as being incompatible with meat eating and domestication.

#### (i) Domestication

Domesticated animals exist as both pets at our general beck and call, and as farm stock reared for the purpose of eating and some taskwork. We can never get back to a situation where we would be if domestication had never happened, because capitalists have been in control of environments and other species for a long time. Those who argue against domestication need to also argue about how it can be reversed. To me it would seem that we should not allow domesticated animals to breed any further, as each time a pet or captive animal produces offspring then the animal produced will be brought up by parents who know no other life than domestication. To ensure no further reproduction we would have to further exercise our current domination over other species by taking away their rights to reproduce - a tactic that some animal rightists may disagree with.

However this procedure may not be as smooth a passage as originally considered. Firstly, capitalists have dominated most of our environment and have converted all our land to the service of capitalism. Other spe-

cies learn to adopt to this and so change their patterns of life to a state of semi-domestication. Whereas any future society must respect environmental and ecological concerns we cannot hope for a consensus on the total dismantling of all cities, and expect everyone to never venture into what would have been the wilderness. Secondly, we cannot hope to achieve the reversal of the domestication of all animals, especially the semi-domesticated ones that scratch out a living by adopting to our conditions without submitting to total domestication - ie pigeons will still live in cities and feed off the scraps we leave behind, we cant banish them to live in the designated natural countryside! Finally it is worth considering if some animals would ever actually achieve an existence beyond their domesticated state, being domesticated for so long that they are beyond the point of no return when it comes to the possibility of wilderness living.

The hairsplitting can start on any of these points. Many gardening methods use other species to increase yields eg planting bright flowers to encourage bees to pollinate other plants... should we consider this as entrapment. On a more realistic note is the problem of pest control. I know many vegans who grow vegetables and refuse to kill slugs. This argument is based on compassion, which we have to respect but cannot expect everyone to extend a compassion out to slugs (personally I use beer traps which means the slugs die pissed and happy). Continuing on the gardening theme, would it be unreasonable to use a horse for ploughing and general transportation around an orchard or farm? Or would it be unreasonable to refuse someone to keep a pet animal? To many this argument is not worth having, but to others it can create big problems, particularly around diet...

## (ii) Diet

The most common arguments arise when we consider diets and the related areas of animal based drugs, clothes and utilities. In the society of the future it is assumed that an alienation from production could not occur, however some animal rights anarchists argue that unless those able to sustain a meat/dairy free diet (ie

this excludes eskimoese) do so adopt such a diet then no such society can be truly anarchist. What they then mean by this I have never truly managed to fathom - will they just walk round with long faces or will they continue waging a war based on what you eat?

I have heard the following arguments against (for instance) someone catching a fish and eating it as a pleasant meal

> Firstly it is not nutritionally necessary as non animal based alternatives will be available

> Well the person may well like the taste of the fish?

> To this we hear that would it be ok if a person fancied a bit of sex with another person would they be permitted to just help themselves if they were somehow able to dominate that other person (physically, intellectually, etc)

> Perhaps it is best to end the argument here as it is descending into the realms of ridicule, if not only to note that it would therefore be classed as domination over another species if you gave preference to a fellow human being who was suffering whenever another member from another species was suffering.

Another argument runs along the lines that if we are intelligent enough to create the opportunity for choice and then make that choice when it comes to killing another animal for food, then we must take that choice away from ourselves by always refusing to make the kill. Similarly I am asked whether it is ok to eat another human, and then when a negative reply is given, asked whether it is ok to eat a chimpanzee. This line of attack is based the fact that we base our distinction for eating on some degree of 'non human-ness' which can only be measured scientifically by estimating a gene similarity. And so the logical extension of this argument is that we would find it ok to eat the handicapped if we find it ok to eat meat.!

## 4. DOMINATION

### (i) Guilty

Whereas I do not eat meat I cannot refuse to acknowledge someone as my comrade because they choose to do this. I do not even think that they

should only be allowed to eat meat if they catch or kill the animal - if they are incapable of this feat, or if they are too squeamish to perform the kill, then that is their problem and I cannot deny them their enjoyment of the food. Similarly I would not keep a domesticated pet but then I wouldnt refuse someone from doing so.

Thus, in both of these cases I am found guilty of exercising domination and I do not question that verdict... it is the punishment I worry about!

### (ii) Against Domination

The anarchist/communist society will be a world of knowledge to share. The cult of the specialist and the expert will be swept aside along with the crippling grip of alienation. All decisions will be based on our shared knowledge and experience, with the motivating factor being a life of pleasure for all, a life that is always within our grasp. The 'logic' of capitalism is based on its never ending quest to realize its cycle and to accumulate value. This logic is borne out in the cruel ways that capitalists use to maximise value in the immediate, and in ways that capitalists continually dominate us to prevent us from seeing through this cruelty. Thus the horrendous spectacle of calves being transported in tight cages for their slaughter is a result of the logic of capitalism, not some incurable fault of human beings.

Part of class struggle is the struggle against domination. This includes understanding how we are dominated and understanding how we are taught to fetishize domination and so dominate each other within our class. Domination can be countered by compassion, however this compassion needs to be rediscovered as part of a class struggle in which people are coming together in the human community. We cannot expect capitalists to show compassion. As this compassion is rediscovered then more and more people will extend this compassion towards other species. It is a fruitless task to start quantifying levels of cruelty and envisage some 5 year plan of what will be abolished and when. Thus, common sense, openness and the general need to understand how society is constructed will create the situation where what is cruel will be abolished

and what is deemed cruel by some will be debated until agreement is made. Whereas I could see some people castigated by others because they are deemed cruel by the individuals doing the castigating, I cannot see an open war taking place between the judged cruel and the judges of the cruel. And anyway, in an anarchist society there will be no locks, so what will the militants have to glue up? And perhaps, more importantly, what will they make their glue out of to respect non-domination?

## 5. CONCLUSION ON THE MOVEMENTS AND THEIR CURRENT ANTAGONISMS

The struggle against cruelty to other species is without doubt an important struggle, and so animal rights activists deserve recognition. However, this recognition will never surface until certain facts are acknowledged:

- (i) That the struggle against cruelty to other species can be took up by members of the dominating and exploiting class who are unwilling to challenge the not so obvious cruelty (not so obvious to them that is) that comes from their exploitation and domination over our class
- (ii) That not every person involved in the class struggle will place such an emphasis on the struggle against cruelty to other species.

It is this second point that creates the tension amongst revolutionaries, particularly as those struggling against cruelty to other species unearth the full extent of the capitalists domination over these species. Thus they become filled with both a horror and an expertise at the levels of exploitation, and this horror and expertise, when used in combination, can present itself as a weapon to be used against the members of our class who emphasize the importance of class struggle outside of the animal rights movement.

The shit that the animal rights movement receives from the trotskyist etc 'proper voice of class struggle' is just the sound of these groups crapping themselves as their potential membership recruitment pool shrinks up. That these groups are first and foremost expansionist in nature means they will either try to twist the current media overkill of animal rights in

to their own ideology, or they will slag it off with total vehemence. Furthermore, the tactic they will use will be the age old accusation that the animal rights movement is a cross class swamp - which we knew anyway but which some animal rights activists hopefully will try to redress through exercising their commitment to class struggle. The real irony behind the truth of these antagonisms is seldom revealed, not least because it means the trotskyists etc would be taught a lesson as severe as the lesson they like to think that the animal rights activists deserve. This stems from the fact that animal rights activists successfully (but perhaps unknowingly?) unearth the facts that show us how alienated we are from both understanding the workplace as it now is, and from understanding our true desires beyond capitalism. Thus the animal rights activists make redundant the workerist approach and stifle the unheard cries to 'seize the means of production' in the global workplace as it currently exists. Understanding the restructuring of production and consumption processes in our society is a task of monumental proportion - it should be done as part of the revolutionary process and not exist as some promise to be kept until after the revolution because party building is considered oh so important.

Thus, as is the case with many so called reformist struggles, the single issue of animal rights can enrich the class struggle theoretically. However, by drawing parallels to other single issues, we can see the differences when it comes to enriching the class struggle by adding to its sheer numerical force. We can consider the fights against sexism, racism, homophobia as reformist issues because the ideological apparatus of capitalism makes these protests part of democracy in an effort to counter class awareness. But should we dismiss these struggles? Firstly, most people will feel specific oppression and horror before they conceptualize class oppression. What must be done is to force these issues into a framework of class struggle, allowing the growth of the communist consciousness class and forcing those 'oppressed' and 'horrified' middle class citizens to realize that their feelings are part of the guilt that goes with the middle class consciousness. But

what is equally important is to take on board the nature of the oppression and enrich our theoretical understanding of class oppression and struggle - ie it would be ridiculous to try to convince homosexuals that the oppression they feel should be considered as a class oppression whilst holding homophobic views. It is here that the numerical force of the class struggle is enriched - eg a commitment to understand and combat homophobia would contribute to both shattering the cross-class nature of those in the vanguard of the single issue struggle against homophobia and then the bypassing of this vanguard for those members of our class who feel this oppression. It is here where the case of animal rights presents difficult problems, and this is based mainly on the fact that what is considered as being specifically oppressed (other species) cannot contribute numerically to the class struggle. Thus while we would not tolerate anyone involved in class struggle to hold homophobic views we could not expect them to practice bisexuality. How does veganism fit into this equation? What could be expected is respect for people who choose to pursue a cruelty free lifestyle, but for many involved in animal rights such respect is not enough. Militant activists are bringing these problems to light. Whilst attacks on big businesses who pursuit animal exploitation can be seen as attacks on big businesses per se, the development of human hating ideologies and letter bomb tactics is a serious problem. People do not want cruelty - 10 years ago action and agitation ended the fur trade - today the blood sports fraternity are about to be abolished - tomorrow may see the dismantling of the 'nastier' aspects of the meat trade. But communism is no nearer and the animal rights movement is in danger of disassociating itself from class struggle with hostile concepts and understandings have been raised in a hothouse environment. That these activists hold a key to the complexities of our miserable civilization is seldom realised, and the horror and expertise seems to drive activists into more extreme positions which further creates more fuel for attack from the trotskyist groups. In the current climate there seems little chance to move from this stalemate, hopefully this article will provide some of the inspiration to begin this move.

# Headless Chickens, Vegan Fruitcakes and the Class War

The struggle against this wretched society can manifest itself in many forms. A popular pulling point is the ability to form a community based on the anti-community, a symptom of collapsing the misery caused by capitalism into the misery caused by people in general. It is much easier to see people (or significant groups of people) as necessarily evil, rather than examining the complexities of a society structured for capitalism and the position of our class. It is here that fascism may find fertile ground, not just in that it offers a simple critique of a miserable life, but in that it also offers a 'true' community striving for a 'worthwhile' existence (1).

It is also here that the politics of animal rights can often find themselves. The rise of the animal rights movement has corresponded with an unveiling of the horrors that us people are prepared to put animals through - this unveiling often being the primary task of many animal rights groups (particularly those maintaining a legal status).

The 1990's sees this effect to continue its snowballing, and as I write there are various human blockades at ports and airports preventing the transportation of calves for veal processing on the continent(2). Demonstrators have been padlocking themselves to rear axles in an effort to stop the lorries while less courageous sympathizers have been crying out to the caged animals from the roadside.

Put simply, militant animal rights, as an ideology, has now cast its roots in the hypothesis that people are basically evil bastards. That the victims of our cruel behaviour both do not have a voice and also epitomise a lovable fluffiness that us humans could never achieve makes it all the easier for us to unquestioningly take their side and speak for them (3). The

common argument against animal rights is that it doesn't offer any critique of capitalism, and further that it just confuses the whole issue of attacking capitalism. A recent publication, "Animal Rights - Devastate to Liberate or devastatingly Liberal?" (4), takes up this argument and attempts to avoid some of the pitfalls of previous critiques of militant animal rights.

A common theme amongst many of these tracts is to launch into a broadside against animal rights based on what it doesn't do (ie successfully attack capitalism) and then conveniently forget to mention what it does set out to do. This introduces the ideas of things like compassion, which is a problem never easily resolved, even in the current climate of marxist rejections of progress and civilization. The critique of progress from a marxist perspective and the critique of progress from an anti-human (as in that all humans are evil bastards) perspective are theoretical miles apart - even though they may appear to share the same evidence to support their arguments. The resolution of this problem is too difficult to discuss in this short review (especially since there isn't a clear 'line' on the marxist rejection of progress).

Before considering the ideas of the pamphlet it is worth considering recent ideas about militant animal rights activity. There is no doubt that the trotskysts are getting worried about things - a recent meeting has been called by the SWP here in Sheffield asking the usual question 'Do Animals have rights' (it is never 'Do humans have rights to show compassion') and a letter in Workers Power (No185 1/95) is printed such that it seems they can drag the same old letter out every time they need to... only this time they go a bit mad with their license to print drive! claiming that the "extraordinary coalition" of animal righters is made

up of elements of neo-fascists (5). Perhaps their real despair is hinted at later on when they mourn the passing opportunity of a "squandering of bravery and ingenuity that could be used to fight for a thousand more just and urgent causes". Whether this bravery and ingenuity can be summoned forth at will is a case in point, and to assume it can is to assume that the animal righters are not acting in some blind rage (which the Trotskyists DO assume) - however, it does not take either bravery nor ingenuity to street sell papers outside factories in the early morning or to lobby the TUC. What this statement does reflect is the Trotskyists' dismay at their flailing ability to recruit people when competing against the buckaneering identity brigade and instant self-righteousness of many in the animal rights movement.

Without being accused of soliciting such disinformation it is worth considering this quote from a recent issue of Green Anarchist, part of a contribution towards a discussion on class (issue 33): "Against all of this (ie class politics) we can see that when a slaughterhouse burns down, this is something else apart from waiting for the working class to revolt: something else apart from making gestures... This is a different model of politics". Indeed it is, a communist perspective is the destruction of politics and certainly not their rebirth from some warped perspective of human-hating.

The pamphlet under review is pretty well put together in terms of the descriptions and the acidic wit it uses (the author had been long involved in animal rights), though the vehemence and humour are at times in danger of taking over what the pamphlet is trying to say. The author even writes their own criticism that s/he expects will come from the milieu (theses 92). The pamphlet highlights two fundamental problems in the animal rights

ideology - firstly that capitalism is by necessity cruel to all of us, not just the animals - secondly that eliminating cruelty to animals is impossible because it is deeply ingrained in capitalism. These two problems are discussed to their maximum potential by indicating the whole picture of our cruel society and by presenting the communist argument that animal abuse creating profit will not be given up when the motive is profit (and that the point of our attack should be profit). The flipside of this is seen when capitalists decide it is viable to float some cruelty free products on the market place and they need to join in the chorus of anti-cruelty and guilt appeal as part of their new profit drive. The other main point of attack is the mentality and actions of the militant animal liberationists, criticising their heroism, self righteousness and other such attributes.

In some respects the author fails to connect the criticism of the individuals involved and the actual ideology of animal rights. This could be rooted in the first paragraph, which correctly states that the world is cruel and then goes on to state that "the lure of the animal rights movements lies exactly in that it appears that you can do something about it". I would suggest the case is that the world is cruel, that animal cruelty appears to be a main prop in this cruelty, and that you can do something about cruelty to animals. Thus the animal liberationists toil under the illusion that they can prevent animal cruelty which would appear to prevent general cruelty. When the truth of the matter emerges - ie that you cannot prevent animal cruelty - then this creates the irrational behaviour that is slagged off in the pamphlet. Thus something such as veganism turns into a weapon of self-righteousness or a big game or test (6). As the animal liberationist who is rightly concerned about animal cruelty continues their assault on this cruelty so their perspective gets more fucked up as they refuse to see the existence of capitalism and - thus we get round to human hating as the natural development of this one dimensional viewpoint. Even though

the original perspective stated by the author is eventually vindicated, I think it is important to distinguish between attacking cruelty by attacking animal cruelty, and attacking animal cruelty as an end in itself only to find yourself faced with the general cruelty of capitalism. This in the past has been used as a convenient smokescreen to attack animal rights without considering the more difficult questions based on compassion etc. Some revolutionaries even like to speak of all cruelties disappearing over night when capitalism is put to bed and we all wake up non-violent vegans etc (7).

The pamphlet doesn't completely hide behind the need to attack capitalism to avoid dealing with the difficult question of compassion to animals, but setting out its line of attack from the beginning makes it a bit easier to skip over difficult questions. The praise of well meaningness is scattered throughout the pamphlet, but it tends to lose its impact amidst the acid comments and character assassinations of the lunatic fringe. At the start of the pamphlet the author praises those people changing their diets, lifestyles and politics through this awareness of animal abuse, but immediately balances this with the "farce of consumer dissent". The tone of the argument is that it is impossible to effect change from a starting point of making a stance against animal abuse - and that this impossibility is the fault of the official animal rights movement. From this it is easy to assume that we should abandon all attention paid to animal abuse and somehow start again. However, the economy is a strong fighter, and even direct attacks on the economy such as our class developing mutual aid and skill sharing can be recuperated (8).

What is more important is using the springboard of an outbreak of compassion and rescuing it from the ideology of human-hating by turning it into an attack on exchange and the economy. However, rescuing compassion is no easy task, and it certainly isn't helped when those sympathetic are bombarded with even more images of increasing gruesome-

ness depicting animal torture. The pamphlet goes somewhat towards achieving this by considering the domination we exercise over animals as part of the domination of the middle class over our class and of the fetishizing of domination in general. What is meaningless is challenging this domination as a single issue, which can even end up with absurdities such as the vegan police turning anti-domination into authoritarianism!

I'm not sure who this pamphlet is aimed at, but it is probably going to bounce straight back off the animal liberationists who seem a lost cause. As for forging compassion in to a revolutionary critique we are left no wiser. To conclude, sniping at these targets might be entertaining for a short while, but it is nothing more than spearing fish in a barrel(9).

#### NOTES

- (1) See Camattes 'Echo of Time'
- (2) A (failed) ploy to divert attention to bloodthirsty 'foreigners'?
- (3) Animals are depicted as being incapable of cruelty, unlike say other 'just' causes such as refugees who don't always make the perfect victim. Thus we see minks gladly set free to raise hell in the countryside.
- (4) From Pelagian Press, BCM Signpost, London, WC1N 3XX (price £1.50)
- (5) The fascists I knew always seemed keen to lump the animal libbers with the gays etc as valid targets for ATTACK, not recruitment!
- (6) Everyone has their own story to tell. The impossibility of veganism should not be used as a clever game of power and self-righteousness ("Did you know that THAT cider is made from wasps?" "You can't go out with him, he wears leather shoes" etc). It can serve to indicate how we are totally alienated from what we produce and how we fit in the overall production process, which is a fundamental plank in preventing us from escalating our struggle. Cruelty free meat and organic produce may be non-vegan, but catering for the vegan diet is part of the mass production process. In the same way, we can regard the animal conservationists as being more radical than the hunt sabs in the fact that conservationists at-

tempt to create and satisfy a genuine need in studying and preserving the welfare of other species, whereby some hunt sabs go out solely to protect the fox. Defining and satisfying our own needs is the first part of struggle, though capitalism can usually accomodate most conservationist/ecological threats through exercising its sheer domination. The pamphlet makes some useful points about sabbing.. as well as taking the piss out of the dairy free leather free sabs vans it also talks about the inherent sexism and the dismay felt at the Brixton sabs going out solely to have a crack at the class enemy. This use of the hunt as a class confrontation is an interesting phenomenon. It would appear to support the Class War type argument that the class enemy is the society of hooray henrys who are characterised by their outright evilness partaking in such past-times as roasting proletarians on an open spit and covering their childrens faces with the kill of the hunt. Those who ride in the main pack of hunt are just the bloodthirsty el-

ements of the middle class - particularly, though not necessarily, elements from the upper elite of this class. That the class enemy is this baby eating elite is a dangerous illusion, but it has helped feed the populism that keeps Class War such a popular paper. It has also spawned a new genre of horror films such as the excellent 'Society' by Brian Yuzna and John Carpenter's 'They Live'. Crucial viewing for all revolutionaries.

(7) The Camatte pamphlet also has an interesting section on vegetarianism, linking it to a discussion of capitalist crisis. Camatte postulates a possible enforced vegetarianism due to the intense production costs of meat rearing. Reading this text 10 years on from its publication indicates the intensive growth of capitalism in areas such as biotechnology. Here developments enable us to keep eating 'meat' without putting capitalism into economic crisis. This is brought about by factory farming and hormone development, where the animal is effectively hot-housed like a plant. The critique of

biotechnology is often neglected by revolutionaries, and so much of its development is kept secret knowledge. That you couldn't base a movement on plants rights is maybe a pointer for using such a critique as a basis for an attack on capitalism?

(8) See Communist Headache pamphlet on LETS systems for a full explanation.

(9) This is meant as a joke. The reality is that I have seen objections made on a vegan basis against the 'revolutionary' phrase "today's pig... tomorrow's bacon". Perhaps we should counter it with the phrase "today's vegan police, tomorrow's somix". As for today's pig and what will become of it I am not sure. The pig is a wonderful creature who has a natural lifespan of 15 years (compared to 5-6 months in the factory) as shown in the table below.

Incidentally, it is somewhat ironic that the media can now recuperate the force of the primitive communist argument before this force has actually been developed into a radical critique. Postmodernism sucks.

Name	Natural lifespan	Factory-farmed lifespan	Natural diet	Farmed diet	Natural habitat	Unnatural habitat	Natural behaviour	Confined behaviour
 Dairy cows	20 years	5-6 years, by which time most are exhausted from the baly and milk drain. Only 25 per cent get to seven, when their milk would be at its ritchest	Grass and natural herbs	Grass, silage, cemented grass, manure, racyoid cattle faeces, contaminated sheep offal.	Grassy fields	Dut in summer, but concrete cubicles with slatted floors in winter	Grazing, sleeping, ruminating	Distressed at not being able to ruminate, they take to bar kiting. Suffer mastitis, and are lame. Unable to suckle young because already being milked for humans
 Male calf (for veal)	20 years	3 to 16 weeks	Grass and natural herbs	Fed exclusively on milk (indian women and parakeets) and potatoes. Deprived of essential vitamins and fibre	Grassy fields	A confined, concrete cubicle with slatted floors. They are kept in a dark, noisy, and smelly environment. They are often kept in a dark, noisy, and smelly environment. They are often kept in a dark, noisy, and smelly environment.	Feeding, sleeping, ruminating	Try to move but can't. Desperate for solids, they lick wooden crates and beatow their own hair
 Sheep	12 years	Three months for lambs	Grass and natural herbs	Same when out in the open. Pelleted feeds when indoors	High ground	We allow them their high ground because it's cost-effective (the grass is poor)	Grazing	Drugs used to squeeze in three lamings, every two years. Sex hormones used to synchronise births. Lambs should be born in spring, but now born out of season and many freeze to death
 Chickens	Seven years	One day for male chicks of egg-producing hens. They are crushed to death because we don't like taste. Six weeks for broiler chickens	Mixed grains, grubs and worms	High-fat prepared feeds, antibiotics and hormones to quicken fattening process	Semi-wild areas where can peck food	Broilers live in sheds in perpetuity of twilight. In shade equivalent to stuffing budgie into a jam jar	Pecking for food, freedom to move around, dust bathing	Broilers can't stretch wings, no room to make a nest, can't peck for food. Stressed, they peck each other's feathers out and resort to cannibalism, so are de-beaked to protect farmer's stock
 Pigs	15 years	5-6 months	Omnivorous: tubers and roots using snouts	Pellets of processed feed	Border of woodland. Pigs build 1-metre high nest to give kirth.	Most pigs never see trees, let alone grass. They give birth in a farrowing crate in which they can't turn round and keep hitting the metal bars.	Rooting for food, keen on cleanliness.	Depressed, they become unclean, frustrated at being unable to root for feed and exercise they bite off tails and resort to cannibalism.
 Humans	We'd love to know	73 Male 78.5 Female	Semi-wild hunter/gatherer eating mainly off roots and tubers and some meat	Processed beef, animal veal, drugged eggs to give us artificially yellow yolk, chocolate, Coke	Border of woodland	City centres, offices, M25	Warm, gregarious, loving, with a heart of gold and a survival instinct	Aggressive, ('road rage', kicking photocopiers in office etc), terse, vengeful, depressed, nihilistic, introverted

## All Power to the Council Workers?

Like the prophet of the new revolution who was busy enjoying another cheap holiday in other peoples misery when the real threat of carnival was breaking out in his own city, we have to hold our hands up for failing to react to circumstances that presented themselves as a question to our existence as Communist Headache. When we talk about forging the link between community and workplace, about demolishing the productionist mentality, about struggling in a world that has created alienation and so perfected this alienation to further its own ends like parasite that effectively kills its host beyond the function of providing 'living' flesh to feed on, then we may as well talk with a corpse in our mouths.

A comrade from the ACF called me to ask for a report on the recent library strike in Sheffield that had ended with a victory of sorts. This was based on the fact that I was a library worker and interested in rambling on about the revolutionary potential of libraries. I couldnt supply the report because I hadnt been involved, not even in a critical manner. Circumstances had prevented me, but you dont want to hear excuses. We stand accused as fakes for the immediate moment.

Eisewhere we talk about the possible future scenario of strike action, and about the need to develop ideas and actions that cut across established boundaries. So what have we been doing? Regarding the (threat of) journalists strike that reared its head earlier this year, we had no quibble with grasping the 'dialectic process' - our cards were on the table for all to see. Our leaflet regarding possible activities of striking journalists is included in this article as 'The Illusion'. This was circulated at an NUJ and general union support rally in Sheffield. We didnt receive any replies, and the said strike never materialised. Our comrade at Proletarian Gob also has other things to say about journalists,

We have yet to settle our accounts with the education industry. Teachers and lecturers are at the top of the striking league when it comes to days lost at work (isnt every day at work a day lost?). Unfortunately this would seem not to correspond directly with the states new offensive into turning education into mere brutalisation. At our college a few students rioted and beat up some members of staff. Though this wasnt simply a case of a reaction to a diminishing education (a complicated matter we will deal with in the future) there is undoubtedly a succession of joke courses that exist solely to keep the school leavers off the streets and eventually off the unemployment stats. A friend of mine is on an old YTS scheme where he works 36 hours a week on the checkout at a local supermarket for a princely sum of £50. However this is now classed as a GNVQ in business, alledgedly an educational process. So this is the process of education laid bare! But the long and short of it all is that as the heat is turned on the teachers from the school kids and school leavers then it would appear that they will turn this into a method to reinforce their demands for better pay. What do they want if this fails... riot shields and CS gas? As it seems that most revolutionary groups are populated with school teachers and lecturers we are sure that a few groups would be interested in a discussion on education and industrial action... Class War dont hang around and have backed up their anti-teacher theory with another anti-teacher rant in their magazine.

Instead of moping around with our tail between our legs I will discuss three points as follows ; (i) the actual dynamics of the library strike (ii) the wider context of the striking state (iii) the wider concept of the library as a revolutionary 'form'.

### The Strike.

Being a library worker I can assure you that most library work is pathetically paid. Well, the work is pretty easy and is very 'pleasant' as such, but it involves a certain degree of application and concentration that makes its pay laughable. The library bosses are the ones who tend to create an illusion that library work is not just very importantant, but also very difficult. That it is a specialism. Most of them spend their time in meetings discussing how hard it all is. Technology, the internet, etc.. make our job easier but adds to the illusion of our specialism. All this is irrelevant beyond the fact that I can get it off my chest and also situate the bulk of the Sheffield City Council library workers as low paid employees.

The council is in a mess. Sheffield was regarded as the local state par excellence with its 5p bus fares, free swimming, cheap arts, etc. Most of this vanished with the polltax and a couple of sharp blasts from the government. In the ensuing chaos the private development corporations moved in and the watchword was regeneration. This involved private capital and some dodgy deals with the council to redevelop industrial wastelands. This culminated in the massively expensive World Student Games where huge stadiums were built, the city was declared a city of sport, and a particularly obnoxious local councillor got a free ride to the house of commons. Most people saw through all the high gloss and realised that they would be paying for it for years to come. The showpiece 'olympic' swimming pool was built underneath a poverty stricken high rise estate taking the place of a smaller, free swimming pool. Only this new pool didnt give its users much change from a fiver... The council has been slashing budgets left, right and centre. For instance

in libraries the book budget was non-existent. It was only a matter of time before staff were targeted.

The council proposed to end enhanced weekend pay for library workers and the response was immediate. All city libraries shut down and were picketed (with the exception of one that used non-union staff and housed a local labour mps surgery). The union UNISON managed to keep a tight grip on things and a stand-off followed with solid support. The council seemed unperturbed - well, they were saving plenty of money! What caused the council to back down was the threat of support from leisure workers who were being bullied into similar contracts - and so a victory was secured a week before the schools broke up (highly significant). The SWP were quick on the scene, making themselves visible on all pickets but equally doing a lot of the donkey work. It is rumoured that they tried to grab a big piece of control just as the victory was sensed so they could claim some kind of revolutionary coup... though I haven't seen their literature since the strike. However my neighbour is an SWP member and so I experienced a bit of it first hand. Whilst she is a tolerable enough individual, some of the party hacks that knock about her premises can really get the blood boiling. They are all pompous teachers and social workers - this is no exaggeration. One of them collared me one day to explain all about the wonderful victory and the need to protect low-paid workers. This had me reaching for the sick bag as I couldn't stand such patronising drivel from someone I knew earned over £20k as a senior social worker, and had a partner with the same job and salary. They talked of low-paid workers as some kind of loveable but endangered species. For a fuller account of SWP behaviour in a recent strike of the state apparatus see 'Occupational Therapy : On the UCH strikes/occupations 1992/3/4'

### The State.

But what can we do to make such actions such as the library strike more effective. The local state and the welfare state are all under attack and are all liable to strike. It is not a question of supporting them or ignoring them, but of igniting the blue touchpaper that prevents us from analysing how these workers and their work contribute to our everyday lives. This question must be posed both to the striking workers and the proletariat that the strikers are attempting to draw support from. Recent radical writing on the state can be found in *Aufheben* #2 where they review 2 recent marxist books on the state and class struggle. Whilst they admit that these books can offer us nothing much new in the creation of communism, they also fail to live up to their swift rhetoric that introduces the article. Under a heading of "The school, the police, social workers, the DSS, the prisons... the proletarian rebel knows full well that the state is her enemy" they then go on to discuss the need to drive a path between a simple gut reaction to the state and a relapsing into liberal campaigns that seek to reform. We would second this motion, but would wish for some clearer analysis beyond the debates around which reading of *Capital* best fits the bill regarding the state. *Aufheben* are also shrewd enough to mention both the facts that the state touches the lives of all proletarians and that the states are liable to industrial action. The case of the library workers is perhaps a little futile because libraries are considered as a pleasant 'touchstone', but what about when it comes to the social workers, prison workers, teachers...? A similar case occurred with the World Student Games when some people argued that the council dismantling its leisure facilities would put the emphasis on communities to organise their own entertainment. But what they didn't grasp was that it was the wider aspects of the state that is responsible for both creating and maintaining a miserable life on such estates. Whatever, there is some immediate concerns to be addressed here.

### The Library.

What can we say about the revolutionary potential of the library? In another article we outline fully the 'content' of the library in a critical light. This involves the development of the information society and the attempts of library bosses to stake a claim in this new big cake. This also helps fuel the myth of the library specialism.

Some critical work exists. Chris Atton who edits 'Information for Social Change' attempts to give a voice in the highbrow library publications. We intend to continue with our efforts to this effect. But at the bottom of it all I am interested in the 'form' of the library, in its role in creating new social conditions and in destroying and recreating 'material' conditions. This introduces the possibility to attack alienation head on by both demanding new social conditions and by destroying the capitalist ploy of faddism and spectacular society. It is a quiet return to the reaffirmation of our productive ability! This ties in with the rise of 'free' shops for unmediated exchange and support. I suggested such an 'anti-commodity' form to a comrade, possibly even extending by introducing shop-lifting libraries / free shops. However, this was dismissed as a mere 'recipe' for revolution, open to incoherence and recuperation... maybe it didn't fit in with a relevant reading of *Capital*.

# THE ILLUSION

"THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT EXIST"

## Welcome to the 90's

That the system we find ourselves in is heading for crisis comes as little surprise. Most well versed marxists will tell you the one about the falling rate of profit and about the capitalists holding themselves up by their bootlaces. But we don't believe that the economics that determines our society can be analysed and extrapolated in the cold light of some environmentally controlled experiment. The closest readers of Marx have been those with a vested interest in maintaining the capitalist system. Seeing the impossibility of keeping a system of exploitation running using a whip hand they have dug themselves new trenches and attacked on new fronts.

However, we are rapidly approaching a time when the life that is promoted as being worth slaving for is turning to shit before our eyes. Spectacular consumption and lifestyle chasing is tottering at the brink of disappearing up its own arsehole. We can only laugh at the desperation of car adverts tempting us to feel free on the open roads in a car that is so quiet it doesn't make a horse shit itself... our road system is a nightmare of traffic jams and stale air, hot and bothered commuters who can't even hear themselves think. We are shown images of free-living surfers and intrepid mountain adventurers in the hope that we buy the t-shirt, buy the aftershave, buy the catchwords, and BUY THE DREAM... most people know that our coast is saturated with industrial pollution from the quick-buck factories, and that our countryside is being ripped up and fenced off to keep the dream alive. And we always have the alternative of holding our-

selves up every saturday night and waiting for the 'bonus ball'.

The crisis that capitalism is facing will always be an economic crisis, but it will appear as a crisis in the way that capitalism presents its dream. It now appears as nothing less than a crisis of realities. We are beginning to reject the pearls that the system offers us, or even seeing the system as a total mockery and taking on the task of creating our own pleasures. Either way, the official reality is in serious trouble.

## The Working Class?

Those well versed marxists who put their faith in economic crisis theory are also pretty clear about the working class. Why, it is everyone who doesn't own the means of production where they labour. This shows either a submission to simplicity or devious scheming. It is wrong. Good old journalists, they don't own the means of production so they must be working class, and so now that they threaten to strike to defend their rights and salaries we must jump to their support. After all, they are only lap dogs like me or you, choking at the leash held by a Murdoch or a Grade. This is bollocks. To factorise the whole of society into a relationship based around the means of production is to fall into the leftist trap. Yes, our society is based on exploitation, but it is also based on domination and mystification. The dominated are better exploited, the mystified are better dominated, etc. It is these systems that allow capitalism to keep up its stuttering cycle, and it is here where the media finds its function.

### The means of production vs the production of meanings.

What is actually produced through this certain means of production is a newspaper or television programme full of words and images to either detract us from our struggles or destroy our struggles. If it isn't doing that then it is providing a means of communication for the capitalist class. To explain our circumstances consider the common headline material of war-torn areas and famine-stricken lands. We are made to feel helpless about it all, shit-scared to step out of line, and in some cases grateful for living in such a "wonderful" western democracy. The truth of the matter is that capitalism creates the economic rivalries that cause wars, and that war is good for business, similarly famines are but a natural occurrence to a world economic system. What about the struggles in our daily lives? While ever we are being exploited (and dominated, and lied to) we cannot exist without pushing against this exploitation. Life leaves a bad taste in the mouth, where even the most pleasurable acts that we try to partake in outside of and against capitalism still sting us from the misery that permeates our class like a fog. Does it follow that the news we see on tele and read in the paper, when it communicates back our everyday lives, is 9 parts misery and 1 part joyous destruction of capitalism? No, we get the glamour of spectacular acts confirming our whacky and wonderful society, we get the total censorship of all our struggles. Blend it all together with the desperate pushing of whatever the latest commodities are and you have the perfect product - the information superhighway where the road (communication) is one-way, and the traffic (information) is 100% bullshit. Journalists might not own the means of production, but they are certainly responsible for the production of meanings. Meanings which are the actual cages of our class.

### **MEDIA MANAGEMENT**

I am writing to put straight a story that the media jumped upon last summer. It was at the Otterbourne Festival where someone set fire to a disused Council Incinerator plant which they reported caused £1 million worth of damage.

The only reason why there were people near the out-house was because police refused to allow them on site and funnelled them onto a field next to the building.

After the fire started, the fire brigade arrived but the police refused to allow them on site saying it wasn't safe for them. But they did allow the media in. It was half an hour before the police allowed the fire brigade on to the site; half an hour for the fire to burn and half an hour for the media to photograph it. When asked about the delay they said that they had needed time to gather together a police escort for the firemen... None of this was reported in the press. Yours,

Mike (traveller)

Letter to squatters magazine Squall  
2 St. Pauls Rd, London N1

### Recent strikes, the left, and all that...

That the left is attracted to the media like flies round shit comes as nothing new. The media portrays strikers as either near extinct animals or as fodder for outside agitators selling lefty papers. The left scheme of the transitional demand means for us to rally support from the official labour movement leaders and then to watch it all fail - thus after banging our heads against a brick wall and seeing the wall stand strong we are really ready for the Trot leadership. This is why we see the SWP placards raised to the fore proclaiming the TUC general strike at every big demo or strike (eg the recent Timex strike). Playing this game of transitional demands is a tricky business, and so the big failure is forever put off as the left try to get more and more of us on the train ride to oblivion. For this, the media is needed, and the left are always willing to trade off good publicity for their cause with

the portrayal of our struggles for a better life as simple struggles for a better system of exploitation. The SWP were quick to proclaim a victory at the strike and occupation of University College Hospital in London, and in turn the media couldnt wait to get hold of a few of their spokespeople to give the 'good news' that bit of extra substance.

**Bringing Home the Truth**

The products of the media, our newspapers and television programmes, are divided across a means of production. But that doesnt mean we should class a printer with a journalist. It was the media that allowed the state to get away with the atrocities at Wapping. The media product is created by journalists. They are created to lie to us, trick us, and deny us our struggles. While

we slave under capitalism so does our class struggle exist, a struggle to both destroy the old and create the new. Reports of these struggles, written by those directly involved, occur in freely circulated sheets such as Counter Information and Contraflow. These reports, and the vehement and exhilarating attacks on capitalism they recount, may well as not exist as far as the media is concerned. The official media exists to submerge such material in a sea of lies and bullshit, where you can swim in the left or right channels.

The media doesnt like the all out attack on capitalism, it would rather opt for no news in these circumstances. At a push it will report our struggles as bad news, portraying us as cranks, anti-social scum, lunatics or whatever particular menace to society and good living fits the agenda. It will al-

**EIGHT FACES ON**

**People Picture Exchange**

**If you**



**WANTED WANTED WANTED**

**By JEFF EDWARDS**

**THESE** are the eight men on the Most Wanted list of police having the highest bounty and turned a peaceful poll for protest into the bloody battle of Trafalgar Square six weeks ago.

**Give us a call NOW**

Call 070 3000 000 or 070 3000 001



**WANTED**

**SCOTLAND YARD'S 'MOST WANTED' LIST**

**know 'em, SHOP 'EM**



**WANTED WANTED**

**Name rioters in our rogues' gallery shots**



**WANTED**



**WANTED**

ways report the content of our struggles as the fight for fairer exploitation, or as the fight for demands that are completely in contradiction with the values we are preached in the articles either side of our allotted column or programme space. When the push comes to shove it will show its true colours - remember the troublemakers parades plastered in the papers and on the tv screens following the glorious eruption of violence at the Trafalgar Square anti poll tax demonstration. Remember the famous tv editing of the 'battle of Orgreave' during the miners strike - the BBC filmed the pigs charging the pickets and the pickets responding to this provocation only for us to be shown the switched footing of the pickets provoking the police. Common sense increasingly tells us to mask up at all demos and never ever trust anyone who is busy snapping photographs.

#### This pamphlet does not exist

And now the journalists are threatening us with a strike. Good news for the class struggle! We are not celebrating the sudden 'proletarianisation' of these scumbags, but the chance for us to create the mayhem of real life free from the imprisoning and interpreting official media.

Are we supposed to clasp our fellow proletarians in our arms and cry our hearts out for democracy, conveniently forgetting all that these 'comrades' have done to nullify the class struggle? Can we celebrate the victory of securing their work conditions and salaries and then waving them bye-bye as they go about their business as usual? I hope the heat doesn't get turned up on the demonstrations and picket lines or we'll be faced with the spectacle of demonstrators photographing themselves in action and lying about themselves in the following days newspapers. These words are directed at both the passionate and the professional in today's class struggle, and particularly at

these new proletarians called journalists. Do us all a favour and burn your 'factories' down, life would be so much better without the product from your 'means of production'. But then again, you may well treat these confused words as you treat most contributions to the class struggle, by pretending they don't exist.

#### A word from your sponsors...

These problems have been brought to your attention by the confused souls at Communist Headache. We thought that the threat of a strike by journalists was a good opportunity to examine the principles and processes of the established 'support all struggles at the point of production' stance. To put it another way, would it be classed as scabbing for us to produce literature for and about any industrial action taken by the media. Because we all know what scabbing is...

All talk of dissolving the barriers between work and play can pale into insignificance when the actual result is an individualist hedonism and a fear of developing what could be a way out of capitalism. This is where our concerns lie.

That said, our comrades who involve themselves actively in the class struggle and make an effort to communicate these struggles freely within our class won't be aligning themselves around the National Union of Journalists. Producing such material is both an immense strain and immense pleasure - no boundaries are dissolved. Enthusiasm and support should be traded, contact them..

CONTRAFLOW, 56a infoshop, 56 Crampton Street, London, SE17.

COUNTER INFORMATION, Pigeonhole CI, 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh, EH1.

We can be contacted as follows:

CH c/o Black Star, PO Box 446, Sheffield, S1 1NY.

## Militancy, Anti-Politics and the Adrenalin Rush.

### A Recap and an Introduction.

Ken R. Smith presents a powerful argument against taking class struggle for granted in his recent work 'Survival of the Weakest'. There also exists a tendency to dogmatically jump at anybody who gives his ideas the slightest bit of consideration. What we at Communist Headache are interested in is the abandonment of a blinkered taking things for granted when it comes to class struggle. However, this doesn't mean waving goodbye to class struggle but an unravelling of the difficulties in how class is defined and regimented, an examination of how different groups of people operate and are operated on within the class system, and of how these groups are likely to struggle. With this enquiry it is possible to best structure our theory and practice to escalate the attack on capitalist exchange and economics.

Elsewhere we attempt to cover new ground with our work on middle class struggle, and of the distinctions between workplace and community struggle. This work needs further development. We have also touched upon the difficulty of assuming a simplistic autonomist approach (simplistic in that it automatically fits itself into a framework of class struggle). Two corollaries of this approach are:

(i) A re-examination of the productionist ideology that permeates much of the left thought - the problem here is that capitalist wealth (ie what capitalism exists for) is to be challenged in the workplace, but by fetishizing production and the struggle over the means of production we are fetishizing a definition of wealth that is antithetical to communism, and that a new understanding of wealth can only come about through our lived experiences and direct communication (and not by IMPOSING an IDEOLOGY of primitivism).

(ii) This follows from (i). It is easy to be lulled into a false sense of 'combativity' when we take our desires for reality, such is the immense structure of the systems of domination, consensus,... or spectacle, for the want of a better word.

It is an appealing and fruitless task to unite our class through the common bond of misery fostered by domination and exploitation, made even more hopeless when left and right are taking on board hedonism because of capitalist relations and also mediated by these same relations.

The concept of militancy presents less of an obstacle in understanding, but still presents a great problem in overcoming. The militant adopts the political lifestyle and eventually the drive of doing something is overtaken by the drive to do something simply to be seen doing the correct something. The caucus of the militants enforces the militancy, where each militant sees themselves measured up by another militant in comparison to another militant - a grotesque parody of Hegels bad infinity of exchange. Whereas militancy appears to be confined to the lapdogs of leftism, the problem of resolving hedonism and phoney autonomism is more widespread in the current political climate. We discuss the animal rights movement within these pages, and it would be tempting to ally to it the concept of militancy to hammer the nails in the coffin lid. But there appears to be a more complicated picture at work, as not all animal rights militants are motivated to do things just for the pleasure of being seen to be doing something (although the symbolic imagery of the liberator doesn't help matters!). People are drawn to the movement to fulfill their desires of realising and expanding a natural compassion. People are also drawn to the movement because it offers the chance to get involved in some adrenalin raising activities. This channel for hedonistic release can sometimes create its own version of militancy, perhaps best considered as political danger sports. Herein, dressing in the right clothes, saying the right things, and picking the correct commodities can give the person involved the satisfaction of appearing to others (both inside and outside the movement) as some sort of activist. This concept is used by the spectacle with its obsession of marketing the imagery of adrenalin sports like surfing, mountain biking, white water this and that, etc. Thus the terrorist is often a politicised bungee jumper. At the end of the day the result is the same, whether an activity has its roots in a political capacity or a hedonistic capacity, it creates the situation whereby people get involved with an activity (either directly or through an 'image') solely to be seen to be involved in that activity.

For the meantime we must surrender to this militancy, as such militancy can only be toppled when the spectacle is fully exposed and destroyed. It is the hedonistic pursuits that

I want to discuss, particularly in relation to the current rise in militant anti-fascism. This article discusses the 'fearful symmetry' of fascism / anti-fascism beyond the communist critique of democracy, and attempts to understand how groups like Anti Fascist Action (AFA) can find themselves in a bizarre marketing and promoting war with the British Nationalist Party (BNP), grasping for peoples propensity to violence as a form of hedonism over politics.

### **Dial 'B' for Bonehead.**

Anti-fascism is still a fascination within leftist politics. This is not to be unexpected when racist attacks frequently occur, and so it is obvious that something needs to be addressed and developed somewhere. The freezing of anti-fascism into a single issue is also no great surprise - however it is interesting to tackle it from the angle of militancy and adrenalin politics rather than from the classical anti-democracy arguments developed elsewhere (see Jean Barrot's "Fascism / Anti-fascism, its review in *Aufheben* #1, also "Bomber Harris joins AFA" in *Wildcat* #16 which caused a stir, and almost anything by the ICG - notably in their magazine *Communism*).

Here and Now extended the analysis in a good and readable article called "Fearful Symmetry" (issue 14) that has a central theory that is very relevant to this essay - that is that fascism and anti-fascism both need each other beyond the obvious meanings. The actual studying of the politics of the extreme right is little discussed today, partly because they don't have any, though conscientious readers are asked to check out "the new ideology of the National Front" in *Virus* #2 (available from the ACF).

I don't think I will upset many people by stating that the BNP appear to be losing interest in politics, however by dealing with such a sticky field as fascism I'd better cover my tracks. Here goes... fascism (as in organised thugs directing violence against minorities) and racism both present problems. Tackling the problems of fascism will be discussed later, but dealing with racism is more important. Racism is an important part of the state, it is peddled by the popular media and passed around the working class as normal discourse. It has an opposite in anti-racism that can be equally pro-capitalist (see "Racism and Spacism" in *Here and Now* #14 and "Whats wrong with Anti-racism" in *Subversion* #15). Racism is a strategy that keeps a lid on the pressure cooker of everyday proletarianisation by dividing the proletariat into the pissed off and the ones to blame. It offers the simple 'solution' to a miserable existence under the class system without even understanding or challenging the class system. Some leftists even believe that the ugliness of racism can be nullified by throwing a spanner in our everyday discourse called political correctness... alas capitalism goes on unoffended.

Racism's trick goes something like this...us hard working blue eyed whites are feeling the pinch because either (i) there are a load of loafing blacks enjoying the good life on our social system or (ii) a load of penny pinching asians who charge us the earth for taxi-rides and loaves of bread in the corner shop or (iii) the lefties and liberals on the councils are wasting barrowloads of cash on schemes for their lesbian, gay, black, etc friends.

Now BNP fascism is something different, but what is the difference? We suggest that the bridge between racism and fascism is not a question of increasing the degree of 'racism' until something clicks and a person becomes a fascist. The degree of racism inherent in society is maximised all the time. The bridge between racism and fascism is crossed by a combination of suffering a certain level of immiseration and being prepared to use a certain level of violence. There is no politicisation process as such in BNP fascism, the politics of the BNP is just the usual racism with violent overtones.

So the perpetration of racist attitudes is the root of the problem, however when those members of society who have a certain predilection to violence are touched by racism in such a way that it relates to their miserable existence then we have the more obvious problem of organised fascism like the BNP. It is here where AFA have made their intervention when they gleaned the truth that many oppressed people in society are likely to relate to violent behaviour and swaggering adrenalin rushes and so join the BNP because that is precisely what is on offer. Thus the fascist analysis that is peddled and supported can lack all credibility, it doesn't matter... what is important is the violence. AFA get criticised because they don't confront the BNP politically. Well the BNP have no politics only violent racism, and to tackle racism involves engaging in the class struggle which can often seem a long hard road especially when black kids and asians are getting killed on the

streets. AFA are obviously keen to stop these attacks, but to do this through the class struggle and put forward the communist perspective seems unimportant when they can reach out to the violent aspects of our society before the BNP get to them. As the fascists changed their perspective from '(part of) the problem is the immigrant population and the solution is violence' to 'violence is our objective and the immigrant population is the justification for this violence' then AFA effectively depoliticised the BNP by putting themselves at the top of the fascists hit lists.

### The New Reciprocity.

AFA put the communist argument against anti-fascism, ie that it is pro-democracy, to shame by posing themselves as the violent minority of committed activists capable of confronting fascists knuckle to knuckle on the streets of our cities. Thus while they quell the potential bloodletting capability of fascist activists (hurray) they also provide an alternative channel for violent bastards. Here the political agenda identified by Barrot is superceded with one big step of the doc martin boot - the agenda is switched purely to vilence.

Consider the build up to the weekend of protest in Leeds last November. Fascist activity had been centred on attacking anti-fascists and so a battle was called. While the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) etc marched through the town doing their bit for democracy the real business of violence had been fermenting for weeks. There were rumours of Combat 18 promising 30 (no more, no less) hospitalisations of anti-fascists, there were calls for a "show of strength" on both sides. While it would be stupid to mock this a some kind of Big Daddy Tag Wrestling Team charade, it is important to consider how much these two groups need each other as mutual supporters of agro, and of how the success of AFA (in terms of winning the battle) creates a beacon for potential violent bastards, which thus means AFA need to continue. Consider...

1. People attracted to BNP because it is violent.
2. Violence directed at Asians, Blacks etc.
3. AFA initially set up to combat this situation.
4. AFA (inadvertantly) open up a new channel for violence.
5. Which means...
  - (i) They enter into competition with the BNP in the marketplace for violence.
  - (ii) they bond themselves to the BNP because they set themselves up as the new enemy.
6. The battle becomes anti-anti-fascist vs. anti-fascist.
7. Condition 1 is recreated.
8. AFA must win the battle for violent elements and the battle for violence.

Continuing our analysis of the Leeds weekend we shift our view to an article appearing in the Guardian newspaper (25/11/94), the day before the confrontation. AFA spokesperson Danny tells it as it is

"Its political violence. The fascists use it because they think it works and if they think it works, you cant do any better than doing it on them, only a lot harder... Our attitude has been that most people arent fascists or anti-fascists, they're in the middle (?) - and are sometimes open to persuasion from both. With football it tends to come from the right... You get people ready made. If they come from football they understand the psychology of the other mob."

From this it would seem that AFA appeal to the football hooligan because there is some age old code that connects - the understanding of violence, of your psychology and the psychology of the opponent. For the connoisseur of violence they can open new horizons...

for instance if you join Man Utd anti-fascists then you can get double pleasure from a run-in with Leeds Utd fascists, the usual pleasure of doing the business with Leeds Utd non-affiliated (politically) hooligans, and the added bonus of run-ins with Man Utd fascists for those home games at Old Trafford. In a similar vein to this it is worth noting that most football fans know the solution to random football violence outside and inside grounds is the establishment of certain sections of the grounds designed for mixed fans who fancy a scrap.

But this football analogy leads us into our next enquiry. The fact that scrapping pens at football grounds would remain, on the whole, pretty empty, suggests that many people partake in violent activities because of the adrenalin rush that it affords.

### **Adrenalin Addiction.**

This is less to do with our BNP / AFA analysis and more to do with revolutionary politics in general. Indeed, in understanding violence as a wider issue we need to differentiate between the propensity to adrenalin and the propensity to violence, even though both may take their fulfillment in the same activity. For one, getting lucky means escaping a beating as narrowly and excitingly as possible, for the other it means administering a beating whilst (sometimes) minimising damage to yourself.

An addiction to adrenalin is not much of a problem, and no matter how much we synthesise its relationship to capital, it wont go away. The problems of violence are more important to analyse, and these do have a close relationship to capitalism and the state. This analysis is to be left for another day. What I want to write about is how the adrenalin addict hooks themselves into revolutionary politics and the cycles of violence that occur within.

This complex arrangement has seen the emergence of militant pacifism as a new political attractor, which complicates matters even further...

### **We're Fluffy, not Hard.**

The return of militant pacifism took a few people by surprise. Groups such as Class War can often have a very blinkered approach to where and how they see the class struggle, and when they shifted their focus onto the radical environmentalist / anti-road movement milieu they were horrified at some of the pacifist principles still preached. Things came to a head when the fight against the criminal justice bill became both the main focus of a number of class struggle groups and trotskyist sects, and also the natural focus of these environmental / anti-road groups. Thus the rebirth of militant pacifism was witnessed, and it was christened fluffysm.

The fight against the CJB was a peculiarity in itself. For a start what was highlighted was the attack on marginal cultures (sabs, ravers, travellers) and you could sense some excitement amongst the ranks at the possible unity. Somehow the pacifist ideology was placed at the front of the campaign and groups like Liberty were posited as some kind of vanguard for ideas. Along with calls to 'keep it fluffy' people started championing their disappearing rights and convincing themselves that coppers were basically okay. In a Liberty leaflet it was suggested that the Bill would force coppers into confrontations they didnt want to enter... does this mean that coppers are really nice people just because they buy 'Now thats what I call rave' CDs. Does this also mean that there are confrontations that coppers should get into to protect our rights, eg naughty miners hit squads vandalising NCB and NUM property and attacking their own right to work? In the final analysis it was possible to take a step back and see these people protesting for their right to protest, and so by keeping it non-violent was in effect begging with a pretty please on top. Propaganda by (the promise of) non-deed!

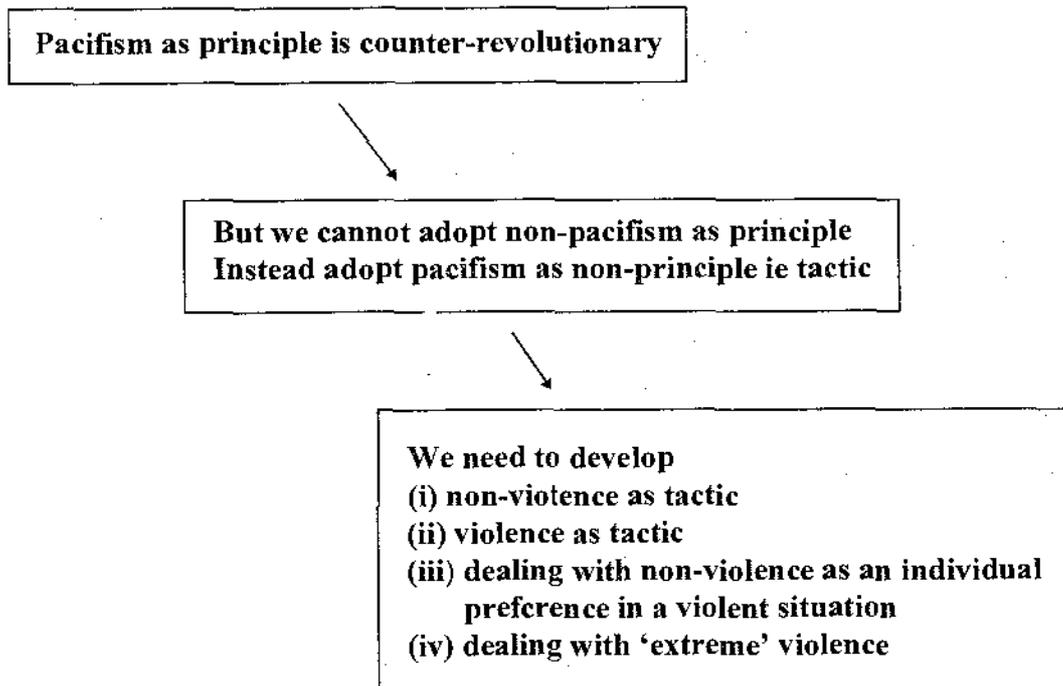
Anyone opposing this was not just argued against but (non-violently) dealt with, as the total collapsing into a violent / anti-violent divide got well beyond a joke when the idea of spraying violent agitators with paint for later recognition (by the 'proper' police or the 'fluffy' police?) was introduced. If the same principle had been applied by Militant at Trafalgar Square then the shares in Crown paints would have rocketed!

The verbal tirade against the fluffies began in earnest after the October 94 demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill (see Organise 36, Class War 65, Contraflow 10) and at least a partial analysis was offered. It was acknowledged that non-violence was a useful

tactic to employ when conditions dictate (eg heavy surveillance, uneven balance of forces) but the execution of violence as a tactic in a demonstration situation is seldom discussed. What we are saying is that people prepared to use violence can easily adopt a non-violent tactic when necessary, but the opposite cannot be taken to be true (here we are talking about people who refuse to administer violence through a personal choice, or are disadvantaged in confrontational situations through age, disability, health, or whatever). What we do not consider is the pacifism of the type that preaches we can all lie down in front of the police every time they provoke us and somehow convince them of the error of their ways through a (painless) bolt of consciousness... though it is this attitude that festers away in the current debate.

What is needed is a discussion of tactics between both groups to clarify what is the class struggle and to understand the appreciation that some people see the society they want taking form in the practices that will take them there : this is the complicated part of challenging the pacifist principle. We can then begin to clarify how the immediate confrontation could develop in ways such that the violent extremists could work alongside the pacifist groups (eg supply of aid, helping to hide people).

This is just for the scenario of a demonstration breaking into a confrontation, which has been the case recently. There has been a tendency to dismiss mass demonstrations as pointless exercises but the actions of the anti poll tax demo cannot be ignored - and it is on these situations that proletarians make the decision whether to put the boot in (either directly or by supporting those doing it directly). More discussion and understanding between pacifists and non-pacifists would lessen the situations where pacifist proletarians were physically attacked first, a problem that tends to support the spread of pacifism from a personal choice to a principle for everyone else to obey.

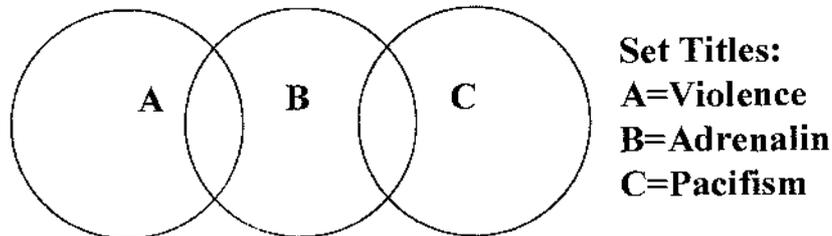


## Identi-kit Revolutionaries?

The pacifism / violence debate was stuck in a seemingly unresolvable rut for some time, and it has recently been brought back to life by the spread of AFA violence and militant 'fluffyism'. We also must differentiate between a pacifism that refuses violence on a personal level (and understand the different reasons for this), a pacifism that refuses the violence of others and the worst of all, a pacifism that presents itself as the only principle. It is easy to see that the 'warring' factions will never reach a truce until this process is initiated. In the meantime we wont pretend that a communist society will be the society of pacifist angels, however, we cant simplify this argument by making ludicrous claims for the support of boxing to show how 'hard' we are as is the case with some groups (boxing is all about money and little about the art of fighting). The question of violence is also entered into in our discussion on anti-social crimes, another revolutionary hot potato.

What we hope to have made clear is the recruitment of people into revolutionary political struggle through some differing tendencies. As well as the distinct spheres of violence and non-violence, we also recognised the wider sphere of adrenalin addiction. A simplification can be considered as below:

### **Revolutionary Attractors.**



**Set members a=psycho, b=thrillseeker, c=fluffy**

If we consider the thrillseeker first we should realise that an addiction to adrenalin can sometimes override any possible consideration of violence / non-violence. Such a consideration can be formed later. It would be dangerous to consider adrenalin addiction as a recruiting factor into political activity as the need for adrenalin often overwhelms the capability of making rational decisions and of seeing other people as anything other than fellow thrillseekers or tools for your own adrenalin. Such a dodgy situation underlines the concept of militancy. To answer the question of how much should revolutionary political activity be adrenalin addiction is to repose the questions of politics/struggle being a case of personal enjoyment. To live our lives in ways that show the struggle and the new forms of doing things is a necessity, but to do so in the current climate also presents a degree of excitement, whether this be through the refusal of legality (squatting, shoplifting, etc) or autonomous organisation. Sometimes this excitement comes from the fear that the old order is ever powerful and always trying to crush our efforts, we cannot escape this.

However, people are recruited into pseudo-revolutionary activities via a fix for adrenalin addiction. On the violent extreme (set A meets set B) we have the ALF hardcore animal rights brigades and the 'justice for mother Earth' elves, and on the pacifist extreme (set C meets set B) we have the NVDA road protests, the glossy Greenpeaceers, etc. The recruitment through an aversion to outright violence also occurs, and hopefully the quotes from AFA illustrate this clearly from the 'other' side. Class War have also operated within this area, but the situation isnt helped when the state deliberately raises the stakes by drafting in their own boneheads like Group 4 to do the polices 'dirty' work.

The recruitment through a perversion to pacifism is even more difficult to untangle, especially to this writer who suspects a multitude of hidden agendas in the 'new men' groups and their like. But as the violence increases so does the non-violence,

We would love to finish with a neat line tying up all of these problems, offering a vision of a true communist revolutionary (!) utilising a toolkit of 'pacifism / violence', and seeing through the aversion to excitement generated through alienated activity and the society of the spectacle for a true need for excitement in the communist way of living (and struggling in some cases). If we have made you rethink the issues discussed (issues that are prevalent to some degree in the revolutionary milieu) and to think how these interrelate, then maybe a better contribution to the class struggle can be made.

What we can stress is how we could fight against fascist activity on the streets. On the surface it would seem that fascists are now more interested in anti-fascists, but this is only a temporary diversion whilever the long struggle against racism goes on. Fascists and anti-fascists seem to have gotten themselves into a time loop! The defence of communities from fascists should be organised by the communities themselves, and should coordinate those both willing and able to use violence with those either unwilling or unable to use violence. The administration of violence should be swift and effective, and the dangers of gloating on victories or swaggering your fighting potential should be discouraged. This applies to the 'no job too small' AFA activists and the self organised community defence groups - elements of Asian youth (for example) are no less drawn to violence and its symbolism than elements of our typical white, male, revolutionaries. Similarly the coordination of community links (or a national organisation?) should be considered carefully. It is the anti-fascist handling of violence and their desire to bring this approach to the forefront of a national organisation that has led to the current scenarios of recruiting violence addicts ('ready made') from football matches and supplying them with ready made punchbags.





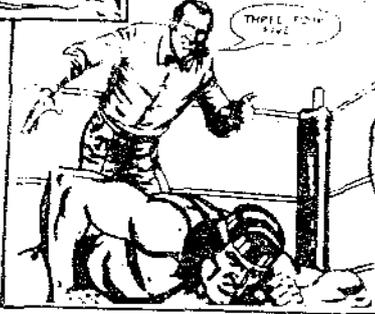
The modern world offers a severely degraded texture of life.



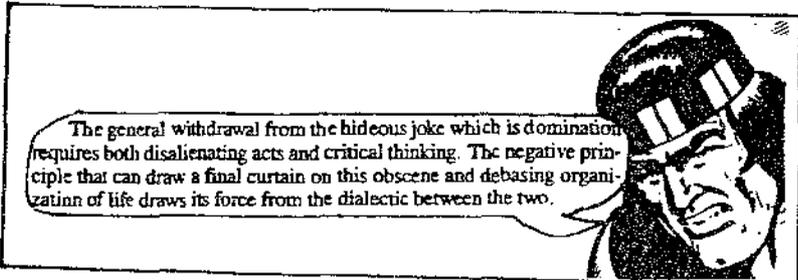
Without new compensations to make it other than intolerable.



A dying capitalism with nothing in its ideological pocket, nothing up its sleeve, seems mainly to want to take us with it into....



As illusions die, we are reminded that the real moment of triumph will occur as everyone sees through this global and bereft society.



The general withdrawal from the hideous joke which is domination requires both disalienating acts and critical thinking. The negative principle that can draw a final curtain on this obscene and debasing organization of life draws its force from the dialectic between the two.