

NEW REALIST UNITY?

The Nottingham based Union of Democratic Mineworkers has announced its intention to form an "alternative TUC" to be called the "National Federation of Employees", and is calling on other unions to unite under its scab banner.

TUC SPLIT

A split by "new realist" unions from the TUC has been on the cards for some time, but the UDM move puts the final nail in the coffin of Norman Willis' attempts to "maintain unity at any price". TUC bosses have tried to delay indefinitely moves to discipline or expel

Eric Hammond's EETPU, for its role in the Wapping dispute, and Bill Jordan's AEU for its signing of single union no strike

deals. Both Hammond and Jordan have made it clear that if they aren't expelled, they'll probably be leaving anyway.

GETTING IN FIRST

The UDM has almost certainly made its announcement now to 'get in first' before such a split happens. The

UDM are famous locally for their incredible arrogance - they frequently make 'pronouncements' that bear no

relation to their size or influence. But whether or not the EETPU and the AEU join the National Federation of Employees, or invite the UDM to join them, it's clear that all three of them will end up in the same scab outfit. And that others will join them.

PROMISES

The UDM promises that the NFE will be a "moderate, umbrella organisation" offering "all the benefits associated with trade unionism, like convalescence facilities." In a bid for membership the UDM is, among others, approaching vicars and parish priests (yes, really) who it feels are currently denied a trade union voice...

COMPANY UNIONS

Of course Willis and his cronies in the TUC are the enemies of working people. As anarchist communists we don't defend them, just because scabs are setting up a rival outfit. And we place no faith in 'reforming the union structure' any more than in 'building left wing leadership within it'. But the emergence of a co-ordinated alliance of 'company unions' is a straightforward attack on our class. It must be stopped, and smashed.

Statement from Anarchist Women in Belfast

On the 1987 International Women's Day picket of Maghaberry Gaol a young woman recently released after ten years imprisonment spoke out against the injustices suffered by women, especially the practice of strip-searching. Therefore it was with great sadness that, one year later, in the midst of the joy of our celebrations for International Women's Day 1988 and our protests in support of all women, we heard of the murder of Mairead Farrell, the women who spoke at last year's picket.

As we stood in peaceful protest outside the gates of Maghaberry prison, Mairead and her two comrades Danny McCann and Sean Savage were assassinated by state forces in the streets of the British colony of Gibraltar.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families, friends and comrades of Mairead, Danny and Sean.

"You have touched a woman
You have struck a rock
You will be crushed."

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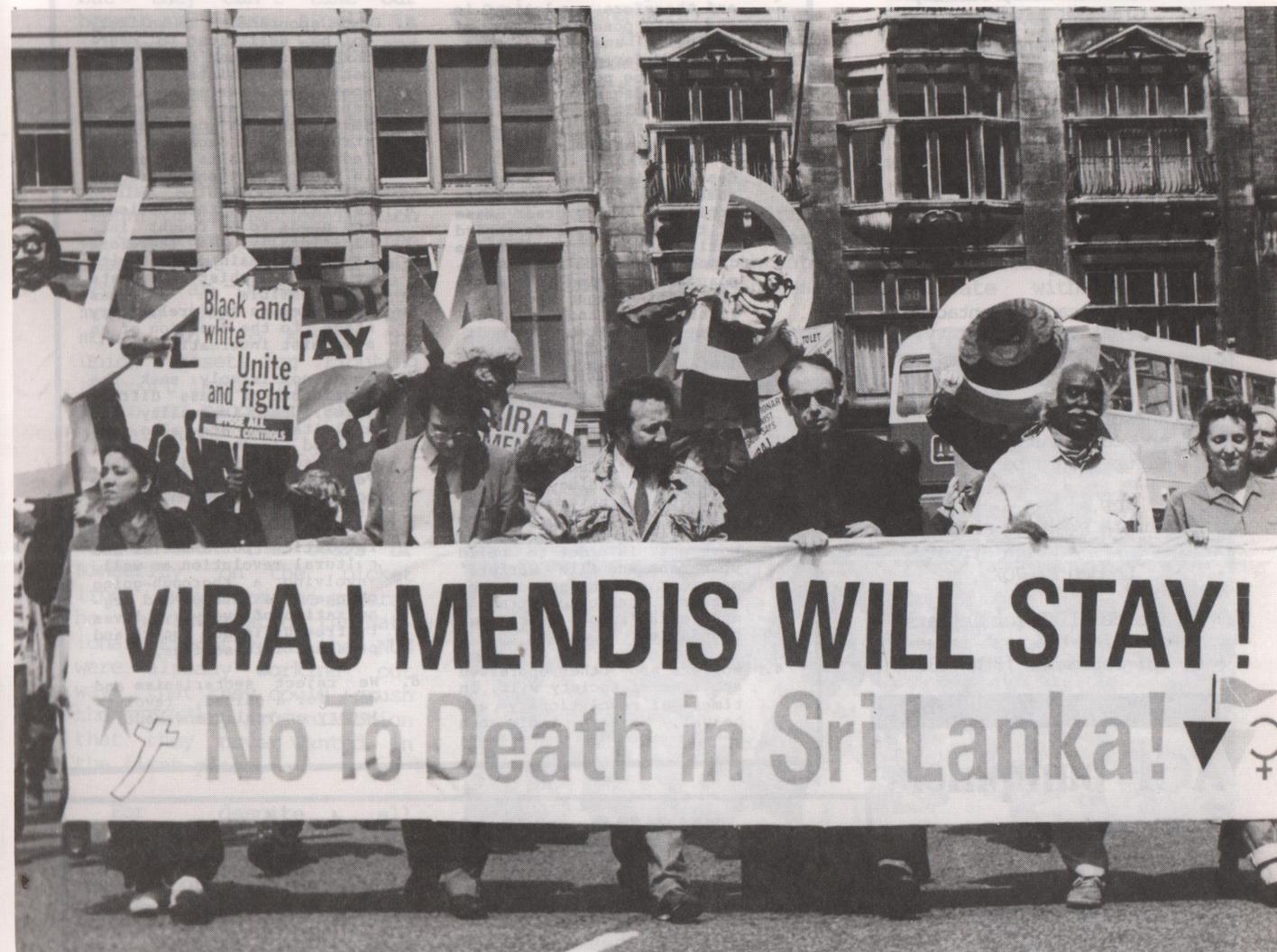


VIRUS

No 13

30p

for Class struggle Anarchism



contents: SEAFARERS, ROTATION

ACF

BEYOND ABORTION RIGHTS,
ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS,
PRODUCTIVISM... and more!

Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

Anarchist Communist Federation

The Anarchist Communist Federation is a network of class struggle anarchists.

The organisation is based upon groups and individual members. At present there are groups and individuals in:

the Cambridge area, Canterbury, Coventry, Chesterfield, Durham, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Medway, Newcastle, Northampton, Nottingham, Oxford, Rugby, Sheffield, Solihull, St. Albans & Tonbridge.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain.

The ACF can be contacted at: National Secretary, PO Box 125, Coventry CV3 5QT.

Subscriptions (1.50pa) and contributions to Virus should be sent to

ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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Where We Stand

1. Capitalism and other social systems in which wealth and power are the property of a ruling class/elite, must be destroyed.
2. Reformist and statist solutions will necessarily fail and therefore revolution is the only possible means of achieving anarchist-communism. How far such a revolution will be peaceful depends upon the degree to which the ruling class clings onto power through violence and state repression.
3. Genuine liberation can only come about through the self-activity of the great mass of the population. We regard parliament, representative democracy and political vanguardism as being obstacles to a self-managed society. Institutions and organisations which attempt to mediate in the fight against domination cannot succeed. Trade unionism as it is presently constituted, plays an important part in maintaining class exploitation, insofar as it regulates and justifies it through collective bargaining and bureaucratic structures. Nevertheless it is important to work within the trade union movement in order to build up a rank and file workers' movement which encourages workers' control of struggle and cuts across sectional boundaries.
4. Workers and other oppressed sections of society will, in times of revolutionary upheaval, create their own democratic institutions, whether they be based on the workplace or the community. To this end we encourage the creation of organs of struggle based on the rank and file, independent of the political parties.
5. Pure spontaneity is unlikely to be sufficient to overthrow entrenched class domination. Anarchists must indicate the libertarian alternative to class societies, participate as anarchists in struggle and organise on a federative basis to assist in the revolutionary process
6. Capitalism is international and needs to be fought internationally. We therefore try to maintain contact with as many anarchist-communists as possible in overseas countries as the preliminary stage to the creation of an anarchist international.
7. We do not simply seek the abolition of class differences, for inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, age, sexuality and gender. Personal relationships are now often based on domination and submission. We seek not only an economic revolution but a social and cultural revolution as well, involving a thorough-going change in attitudes and organisation of everyday lives to free us in our social and personal interactions.
8. We reject sectarianism and work for a united, revolutionary anarchist movement.

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AT SEA

"They can take away our buildings, they can take away our cars, but they can't take our hearts and minds. A union is its members, not bricks and mortar. If we have to run this dispute from a tent on Clapham Common -then so be it."

That's how Sam McCluskie, leader of the National Union of Seafarers, addressed the mass picket of sacked NUS members at Dover, on the morning the sequestrators moved in to seize the union's assets for flouting a court injunction ordering it to end secondary picketing at other ports.

SINCERE TEARS?

But while McCluskie waved his fists in defiance and fought back the tears of sincerity on the picket line, away from the cameras he and the rest of the National Executive of the NUS were already working out ways that they could crush the secondary action. Action that they never wanted in the first place.

For despite all McCluskie's fighting talk, from the very first days of the dispute with P&O European Ferries, NUS leaders have attempted to limit and contain the seafarers' anger. Their real concern has not been to fight for their members' jobs, to throw out P&O's new 'working practices', or to protect passenger safety. Their real concern has been to protect the negotiating position of the NUS and its officials as the ferry industry strips itself down to face competition from the Channel Tunnel. Their role has been clear from the start.

ERUPTION

When P&O announced in

early February that it wanted around 400 redundancies at Dover, and massively increased working shifts (up to 24 hours and more), seafarers were in uproar. Mass strike action was on the cards. P&O's timing was particularly inflammatory. There had already been strike action at British ports by NUS members only days before in solidarity with the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company crews threatened with redundancies.

their members faced 400 redundancies and dangerously increased workloads, but that the union had not been consulted over this.

McCluskie publicly told P&O boss Geoffrey Sterling that if the job cuts were phased in over 3 years, with union consultation, they'd accept that.

Unsurprisingly P&O management felt no need to negotiate with McCluskie.



COURTING THE SYSTEM

So how did the NUS Executive greet these new threats thrown at them by P&O? First they killed the IoM dispute by accepting 161 'voluntary' job cuts. Then, McCluskie went on television to say that, yes, the NUS accepted P&O's economic arguments. Yes, there did have to be job losses at Dover. Yes, working practices did have to be 'reviewed'. What they objected to was not that

Fifty seafarers had been sacked by Belfast Freight Ferries for their 'unlawful secondary action'. They sat tight as striking seafarers brought Dover sailings to a halt. Then they acted. They issued dismissal notices to all strikers, "derecognised" the union, and prepared to begin sailing again from Rotterdam with scab crews.

The ports erupted. Flying pickets from Dover brought

Folkstone crews out. Over 150 seafarers struck at Hull. Crews walked out at Belfast Freight Ferries. Two ships were stranded at Liverpool. Felixstowe was at a standstill. The story was the same up and down the country. By the Mayday weekend, only 200 seafarers out of a workforce of 5000 were working normally.

NUS leaders were caught on the hop, surprised at the extent of the action, and the speed at which it spread. They had done nothing to initiate it, and now were rapidly being isolated by militant rank and file action. They did the only thing they could. They moved in after the event, to 'support' it, and give it the 'backing' of the Executive - hoping that this would reassert their control over

the dispute.

Their 'support' marked the beginning of the end of effective action.

For while rank and file seafarers were occupying ships and despatching flying pickets, NUS leaders were hiring lawyers to take P&O to court to charge them with "derecognising the union" without giving fair warning.

And as solidarity action on P&O subsidiaries spread as far as New Zealand, Sam McCluskie was locked in talks with his new found ally James Sherwood, boss of Sealink.. They tried to hatch a deal involving temporary jobs for sacked crews, in return for the NUS calling the pickets off Sealink ships. McCluskie seemed so relieved to find someone to negotiate with, that he was

prepared to ignore the fact that Sherwood has already sacked 3000 of his workers since 1984, and has promised more sackings once the P&O dispute is over.

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SECONDARY ACTION

On the day the court ordered the sequestration of the union's 2.8 million assets, secondary action was still solid and spreading. The lorry blockade at Dover and Calais began to bite within the following week. The time was perfect to escalate the action; first by trying to bring out dockers and administrative staff, to shut the ports completely, and then by spreading the action beyond them. There wasn't a proper ferry service running from any British port - seafarers were in a really strong position.

But within days of McCluskie's promises to "run the union in the streets" came the inevitable stab in the back; the call to end all secondary action and completely isolate the sacked men and women at Dover.

BODY BLOW

It was a body blow. And the union's backing for a 'commercial war' between P&O and Sealink, and its backing of the absurd 'boycott' campaign, only served as salt in the wound.

Having wrecked the secondary action, NUS leaders went back cap in hand to the High Court to plead for their assets to be returned. The Judge - well aware how much the union was on the run - decided that the continuing pickets at Dover were 'intimidating' and that until the union reduces the picket line to six people it won't have its assets returned. The union leaders promised that they would try to get their members to comply.

Despite appeals from the union's solicitor, the pickets at Dover will have none of it. They are continuing their 24 hour picket, organising marches, demonstrations and rallies themselves, and are working hand

in hand with the many seafarers support groups to keep them and their families going.

Isolated and attacked, they need as much financial and practical support as we can give them, as do the dozens of seafarers sacked for taking secondary action - the union has of course abandoned them too. They now face an added threat from the General Council of British Shipping - who are saying that the continuing strike has lost the seafarers the right to be re-employed *anywhere* in the industry, through the Merchant Navy establishment (a kind of closed shop Employment Agency jointly recognised by the union and the bosses).

SEA FARERS FIGHT ON

The Dover seafarers determination to fight on alone is inspiring. They have not let the attacks of the bosses, the courts or the union grind them down. And they have begun to strike out on their own. The Dover Port Committee - part of the NUS officialdom - which had until recently run things down at Dover, is finding itself increasingly isolated by rank and file initiatives.

Dover seafarers, and all the London support groups recently organised a joint picket of P&O offices in London, without the consent or support of the union. Aberdeen seafarers re-occupied offices seized by the sequestrators. Such independent, autonomous action is excellent. But it is clear that unless they are able fully to escalate the action once more, and appeal directly for mass solidarity strike action in other ports, and from other workers, they will go down to defeat.

FOOTNOTE

The strikers desperately need money to keep up their fight, and all donations are welcome. But DO NOT send money to the "NUS Hardship Fund". This fund goes straight to the union to help pay off their fines, not to Dover seafarers. Please rush all donations to one of the many Kent Seafarers Support Groups who are in daily contact with the strikers: Deal Support Group, Magness House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent or

Aylsham Support Group, 61 Castle Drive, Whitfield, Dover, Kent.



SEAFARERS STRUGGLE ON WHILE THE UNION ATTACKS THEIR FIGHT

BEYOND ABORTION RIGHTS

The defeat of David Alton's Anti-Abortion bill in the commons in early may put an end to this latest attack on abortion provision. But this is only a short term victory.

The eventual aim of people like Alton is to erode away abortion rights completely, and organisations like 'LIFE' and the 'Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child' (SPUC) are already planning their next round of attacks on women.

existing legislation (the 1967 Abortion Act) has been successfully defended is no real cause for celebration. It is still as hard as ever for women to get a termination, and our 'freedom to choose' depends upon dealing with unsympathetic doctors, husbands, families, etc and an underfunded Health Service.

FIGHTING ATTACKS ON ABORTION.

We must continue the fight for a society where women

will be free to choose whether to have children or not, and we must work in the

short term to provide ourselves with the services we need (for example pregnancy testing, abortion and contraception advice).

The freedoms that we have are very limited, and as women we are continually being forced to fend off attacks on these freedoms. Organisations like the National Abortion Campaign are committed to fighting for

But the fact that the

free abortions on demand. But there are so many attacks on the minimal provisions that we have, that most energy has to go on purely defensive tactics like the 'Fight the Alton Bill' campaign. All this is vital, but it diverts us from the fact that substantial change can only come through mass activity and not through Parliamentary legislation.

A CLASS ISSUE

Women's liberation is a class issue. By restricting women's access to abortion, working class women are imprisoned in the home and in relationships with men they might not have chosen. Then they have less freedom to work towards a change in their living and working environment and their economic situation.

Patriarchy (the dominance of male culture) is evident in every aspect of capitalism, and women will not be free until capitalism is utterly destroyed. Similarly, unless capitalism is destroyed, any gains made to make women more 'equal' with men, will only mean equal as slaves to the ruling class.

An example of the type of initiative we would take is the women's health clinics set up in Italy.

In 1976 in Turin, a group of local feminists set up a well-woman clinic on their estate. They couldn't carry out abortions because these were illegal and they were scared of getting closed down. After a few months they realised that the clinic was being used almost exclusively by middle class feminists from other areas of the town. They leafleted the estate and publicised the contraceptive advice they were giving, but local women still didn't come.

They realised that whilst no-one locally was actually against them, they were viewed as do-gooders and fairly useless because they didn't do abortions, which was what women really needed. Terminations were hard to come by, expensive and dangerous, and, if the centre couldn't provide safe ones, local women had no need of it. Some Italian women had 3 or 4 abortions in a lifetime, so they really needed somewhere free and

safe, whether legal or not.

So the centre was forced to defy the authorities and employ a midwife. They used the Karman method, where a tube is inserted into the womb and the contents sucked out. Because the centre was now relevant to local women, they began to use it and run it, and to use it to examine other issues affecting them, like rape and incest. The centre was operating completely illegally. Although the files were kept off the premises, every woman going there was running a risk.

COMMUNITY ACTION.

However, the authorities kept their distance and never raided the centre out of fear of the certain reaction from the local community. This is an ideal example of ordinary people ignoring what is legal and not spending all their time and energy trying to change an unchangeable Parliament, but taking action for themselves what they needed for their health and happiness. If the authorities had tried to close it

down, the resistance would have taken a more direct form than simply appealing to the Turin Council to let them stay.

Currently in Dublin, women's clinics are facing severe problems from the authorities because of the abortion advice they are giving women. Even giving women a timetable of the ferries to Liverpool in order to help them get an abortion in England isn't allowed. The Clinics Campaign receives less and less support from political organisations (even those claiming to be pro-choice) because they are afraid of offending the courts. 67% of Irish women believe that they should have free access to information on abortion, but this remains illegal. The only bodies who can legally counsel on the subject are the Church and anti-woman organ-

isations like SPUC. Even so, the Campaign continues because the issue is too important to let the Irish government and the Church dictate on.

DEFIANCE OF PARLIAMENT.

It is this kind of direct activity, in defiance of what Parliament tells us is best, that is most threatening to the politicians and bureaucrats. We can't just concentrate on fending off repressive legislation, or introducing positive legislation. We have to organise to take what we need, whether the ruling class wants us to have it or not.

Under capitalism (and Labour Party policies are as equally supportive of capitalism as those of the Tories) any 'rights' which Parliament deigns to grant us

in order to make us feel 'equal' to men, simply mean equality in degradation and the equal right to be exploited.

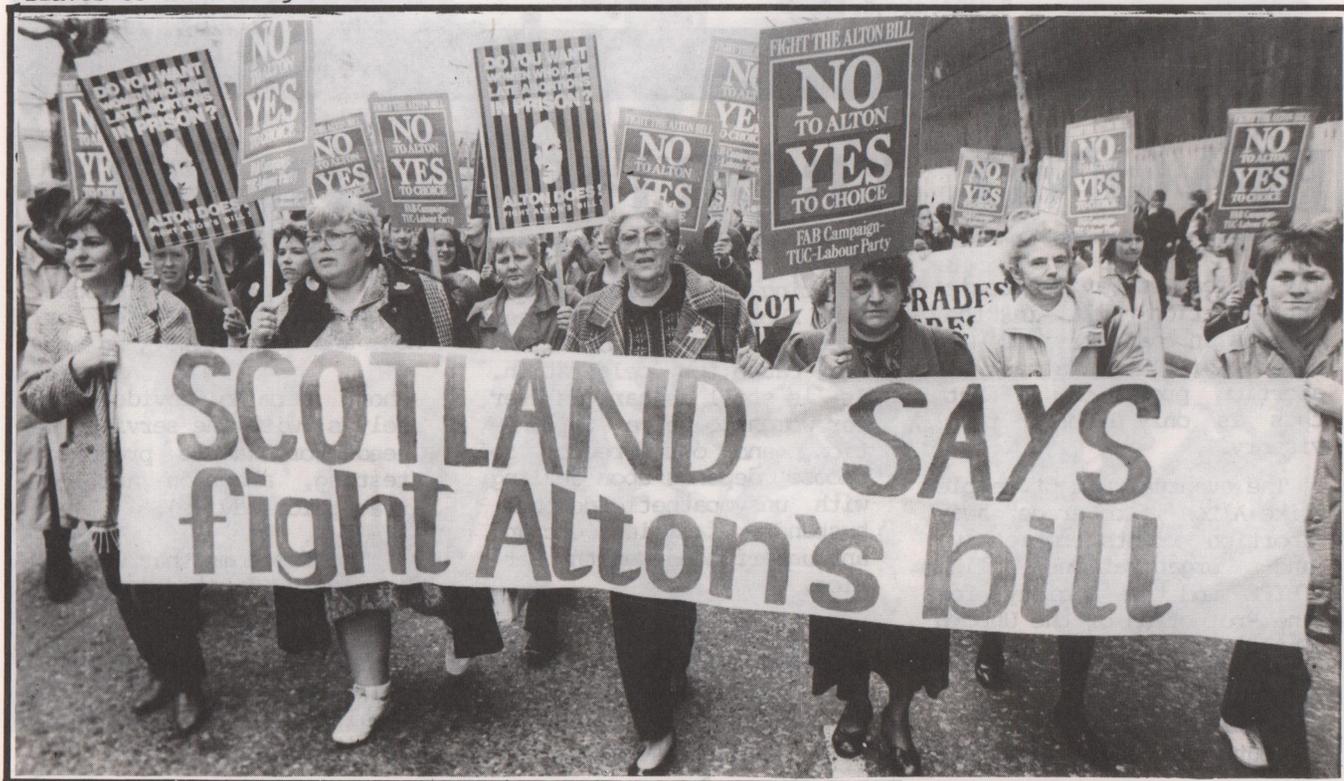
Ultimately our initiatives have to aim towards completely changing the structure of society. Not only do we have to act in defiance of the State whenever we need to, but we have to overthrow it completely in order to create a society without a ruling elite.

Women can't achieve liberation while we have representatives running our lives for us. No one can be free unless they directly play a part in the structuring of society, and until society is not run in the interests of a ruling class, organised by and for the communities of which it is comprised.



PACKING AWAY THE PLACARDS FOR THE ALTON CAMPAIGN

BUT NOW HE'S BEEN DEFEATED, WHAT NEXT?

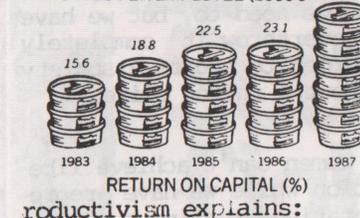


PRODUCTIVISM

The following text was agreed at a meeting of the Co-ordination Communiste Libertaire in France at the beginning of the year. The CCL is made up of organisations and collectives around magazines, like the Tribune Anarchiste Communiste, the Union des Travailleurs Communistes Libertaires, and the magazine "Noir et Rouge".

Capitalist society essentially rests on the increase in production with the aim of profit. It is its specific trait if compared with other systems. It contains, in consequence, the seeds of a productivist ideology which considers the development of production as an end in itself, as the goal of society, bringing automatic social progress.

The word is recent: its presence in encyclopedias and dictionaries dates from the last few decades. This shows not that the thing is new, but that up to now reality dared not to be revealed, that it had to be camouflaged. That deception is now impossible is a distinctive sign of the present stage of capitalism.



productivism explains:

1. the speeding up of restructuring, the use of technical progress and technological mutations that are hostile to people, leading to the breaking-up of work into many small tasks, short-term work contracts,

sackings and massive unemployment, and the inability to provide training for new jobs.

2. the existence of a new social category; the unemployed and those in short-term work leading to a further polarisation of society.

3. the development of the spirit of competition between nations (economic war), between businesses and with it the further development of individualism (relying on oneself).

4. the destruction of the environment, putting in question the survival of the planet.

5. the reduction of Third World populations to the most terrible poverty.

6. the needs of capitalism determining what is produced. The rule of poverty and wastage. Populations encouraged to accept useless products - through the media and advertising, but also through education and the family.

A sinister image is appearing on the horizon, that of a humanity directed by a small elite not just confined to the Third World but in the West between groups integrated into production and services and those reduced to simple consumers given the minimum recognition necessary for integration into the system.

DISASTROUS REALITY

This disastrous reality does not lead us to condemn scientific progress and its technological application which is not intrinsically bad. Their effects depend on the social system using them and its ideology. On the other hand, productivism should not be confused with productivity which could be production for need.

Production for the needs of humanity, subordinating technical progress and the application of science to the human factor. Nostalgia

for the past, all attempts to return to the past only lead to ideological dead ends.

This has to be in relation to what exists now on the technical, social, economic and political levels. It is difficult, if not impossible, to fix in advance a list of desirable and undesirable scientific and technical researches. However there do exist areas where there are obvious dangers - the use of atomic energy by fission, to point to the most obvious.

The elimination of technologies that are uncontrollable and dangerous for the future of humanity are only safeguards. What needs to be done is to define the basis for a politics of development, where the accumulation of knowledge and the applying of scientific discoveries will be the servant of a society based on the satisfaction of collective and individual needs and desires - where need determines production and not the opposite.

NEW SOLUTIONS

All the institutions up to the present have been shown to be inadequate, whether representative democracy ("socialist" or non-"socialist" parliamentarianism) or the "dictatorship of the proletariat", the "workers state" planning decided by a central body and monopoly of the party. These models of society have been questioned from the beginning of the workers movement by the anti-authoritarians. What needs to be done is to create new solutions, which do not exist in any sacred text and which are based on the reality of this period of time. To give a context to the ideas of self-managed democracy, not limited to the workplace but concerning the whole of society, without forgetting the organisation of struggles themselves.

OBITUARY: Daniel Guerin

Daniel Guerin, member of the 'Union des Travailleurs Communistes Libertaires' (UTCL) of France since 1980, died on the night of 14th April at the age of 83.

The revolutionary movement has lost a militant of exceptional value whose actions and thoughts had an important influence on several generations of militants.

As a historian he provided some deep insights on the French Revolution. As a theoretician and committed militant his thoughts on Libertarian Communism inspired many and continues to have its effect on the revolutionary movement throughout the world.

Reading Marx, Proudhon, Sorel, Lenin and Trotsky in 1930, he broke with his bourgeois upbringing and began to be active on the left. Later, as he says in his own words, "The reading of Bakunin, in the six-volume edition of Max Nettlau and James Guillaume to any type of authoritarian socialism, whether it called itself jacobin, marxist, leninist or trotskyist. Under the effect of the commotion provoked by this reading, I was led to fundamentally revise the sentiments of admiration that the revolutionary strategy of Lenin had inspired in me ... I concluded ... that socialism must rid itself of the fake notion of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in order to rediscover its libertarian authenticity. This led me when I revised my historic work on the French Revolution to substitute 'revolutionary constraints' for 'dictatorship of the proletariat'."

In 1936 Daniel had been active with Marceau Pinert in the left wing of the SFIO (forerunner of the the Socialist Party). By successive stages he moved in a liber-

tarian direction. One of these stages was the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. He first of all took up "what I call classic anarchism, which I explained in 'The Youth of Libertarian Socialism' (1959), then 'Anarchism' (1965), and simultaneously 'Neither God Nor Master', an anthology of anarchism, where at the side of Bakunin space was given to Stirner, Proudhon, Kropotkin and many others. Then, distancing myself a little from classical anarchism and not turning my back so much on my previous marxist readings, I published 'For a Libertarian Marxism', whose title, I admit, leant itself to confusion, and shocked my new libertarian friends."

After the 1968 events, in which he took an active part, marching at the side of Daniel Cohn-Bendit on many demonstrations, he helped set up the 'Mouvement Communiste Libertaire' with Georges Fontenis. Following the collapse of the MCL, he was active in the 'Organisation Communiste Libertaire' (OCL) and then the 'Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste' (ORA) and then finally the UTCL.

"For nearly a quarter of a century I attached myself to libertarian socialism or libertarian communism (the word 'anarchism' appeared too restrictive to me, and I only adopted it if it was completed by the word 'communist')."

Daniel took a position against fascism from the start, and his 'Fascism and Big Business' is still read to this day. He took a leading part in the struggle against French colonialism - he protested against the situation in Algeria from the '30's right up until the '60's. In the last few years of his life he was active in the fight against French occupation of New Caledonia (Kanaky). He was a convinced and active anti-militarist,

and as a working journalist was active in the CGT union. He was not afraid to proclaim his homosexuality from the beginning of the gay liberation movement. His memoirs are remarkably honest on his sexual preferences.

I only met Daniel once whilst attending a conference of the ORA as an observer from the 'Anarchist Workers Association' in 1975. He had a fluent command of English, developed during his exile in the Second World War, and had an acute interest in the situation in Britain. Nestor Makhno, in his 'ABC of the Revolutionary Anarchist', wrote that nine out of ten intellectuals would not rally to the cause of the oppressed or would attempt to fool them. One out of ten would be



their friend and fight with them against the mystification of the others. Daniel Guerin was that one in ten, a singular person, the intellectual devoted to the cause of libertarian communism. In his own words, "Libertarian communism is not an approximation and not a dogma without variation ... it should not be rooted in the past, but should be a point of departure for the future. The only conviction that animates me is that the future social revolution will be neither Muscovite despotism nor social democratic chloroforming, that it will not be authoritarian but libertarian and self-managed, or if you like councillorist."

Nick Heath

ISRAEL & THE

Israelis like to present their nation as a liberal-democratic system of the Western type. There is a free press, proportional representation and a rich cultural life. Yet despite all of these factors the commitment to "civilised" methods of behaviour is very slight, as the response to the Palestinian uprising has shown. There is a world of difference between crowd control Israeli-style and, say, the British Army's response to unrest in the North of Ireland (the latter is far from blameless but British soldiers do not, generally speaking, fire on unarmed demonstrators). In order to understand the current situation in Israel it is necessary to examine its philosophic basis, namely Zionism.

ZIONISM

Zionism presents itself to the world in a variety of guises, as an historic birthright of Jews everywhere, as a determined nationalism of the underdog state against external aggression and as a socialist utopia via the kibbutzim. The reality is that Zionism has always been based upon European racist imperialism. When Herzl published his pamphlet "The Jewish State" at the end of the nineteenth century in which he claimed the land of Palestine for the Jews he "forgot" to mention that people already lived there. Somewhat later when British imperialism offered Uganda as a possible Jewish homeland, the debate on the issue ignored the fact that there too lived a people who would have to be disposed of.

Zionism from its earliest days allied itself with the imperialist ruling

classes of Europe and America. This policy finally paid off in the Balfour declaration of 1917 in which the British government promised Palestine to the Jews.

RACISM

A fundamental feature of Zionism is its racism. As Jews settled in Palestine, they bought up land from absentee landlords and expelled Arab peasants. Herzl advocated that all Palestinian land purchased should never be returned to Arabs, to guarantee perpetual creeping colonisation. This was the plan implemented to this day. Under no circumstances should land ever be relinquished by Jews. Zionist racism is applied not only to Arabs but also to non-European Jews. For example the Falashas, a black-skinned group of Jews from Ethiopia are forced to give up their African culture and language and adopt that which was introduced by Europeans. Equally in Israel, North African and Oriental Jews are subject to racial discrimination, particularly in jobs.

LEFT-WING

Left-wing Zionism has been able to draw support from the left in European and other countries' socialist parties. The Labour Party in Britain for example encourages Poale Zion. The Militant tendency is hounded because of its foreign associations and separate organisation, yet the group Poale Zion is encouraged and supported by the Labour leadership. Part of the reason for this socialist support is the existence of the kibbutzim - utopian communities based upon socialism. The kibbut-



"Our politics are alright - it's just a matter of presentation"

zim however were originally egalitarian, not out of a commitment to human emancipation but out of necessity. As colonisers in a foreign land strong bonds of social solidarity were required in the face of day to day indigenous opposition. Such socialism as has been created has been carried out on a racist basis. It is a socialism for Jews in a Jewish land.

Similarly with the trade union federation, the Histradut, the original aim was to protect and support Jewish workers. As settlers arrived in increasing numbers in the inter-wars years it was obliged to create jobs for the immigrants. Consequently the Histradut, which is supposed to be a union organisation, is Israel's single largest employer. In alliance with the Zionist state, the Histradut has helped create a virtual corporate state.

MILITARISM

A strong feature of Israeli society is its militarism. The Zionists have won every war against the Arabs whose corrupt regimes have proved ineffectual. In 1948 a large part of the indigenous Arab population was expelled and an Arab

PALESTINIANS

counter-attack repelled. In 1956, in alliance with British and French imperialists Israel seized territory, a process repeated in 1967. Then a Pax Israel was imposed in Lebanon. With such a string of victories, the Israeli army seems invulnerable, and holds enormous prestige. Unfortunately arrogance based upon military victory is a brutalising agent. The current leaders encourage violence against opposition, after all they seized Palestine through the implementation of a policy of terror. Front line Zionist settlers are armed to the teeth and are not slow to use their weapons against unruly Arabs. Meanwhile the authorities turn a blind eye. Israeli opposition to the uprising has brought out for all the world to see the true nature of the Zionist state - a mixture of racism, imperialism and militarism.

THE P.L.O.

Until the ordinary Palestinians went out onto the streets, it was the Palestine Liberation Organisation which was the most audible voice for Palestinian opposition to Israel. There has been little criticism on the left of the PLO but it has several objectionable features. The various factions which make up this organisation are vanguardist and elitist. Many of them espouse marxist-leninism and are organised on a centralised and hierarchical basis. Their military organisation, though capable of spectacular "one-off" efforts (eg the hang glider attack into Israel), is pretty ineffectual and continued political and military frustration has made them prone to terrorist activity. The stone-throwing of thousands of Palestinians within the Israeli state has posed a much greater threat to

Zionist aims over a few months than the macho posing of Fatah guerillas and the like.

In their desperation to defeat Zionism some Palestinian organisations have flirted with anti-semitism. Not only have various leftist groups been trained in Palestinian camps but also openly Nazi organisations have been supplied with military assistance. The obscuring of lines between anti-semitism and anti-Zionism is a dangerous development and can have no long term benefits to the Palestinians.

Despite their proclaimed marxism the various Palestinian groups are deeply nationalistic. Though this is understandable, given the liquidation of the Palestinian homeland, such attitudes are bound to appear threatening to those few Israelis who wish to bring about harmony with their Arab neighbours.

STATISM

From an anarchist viewpoint the statism of the PLO is highly objectionable. Yassir Arafat is a president in waiting, he is treated like a national statesman by the rest of the Arab world and the communist camp. The PLO has set up a number of plush pseudo-embassies, like the one in London with its luxurious fittings - a far cry from the Palestinian reality in Nablus. The PLO has a parliamentary structure, bureaucracy and military machine. All this would-be state needs now is territory. Related to its statism and the failure of the military option the PLO sees its greatest hope in secret diplomacy between heads of state. It must walk a fine line so as not to offend its various Muslim backers who are at war with each other and so it is continually compromised. The radicalism of the

Palestinian militants has to be squared with the conservatism of regimes like Saudi Arabia.

In the context of the Middle East as a whole the Palestinian question must be seen as a major factor in the incredible political instability of the region. So long as the Palestinian problem remains there cannot be peace for the inhabitants of Israel or for that matter the Lebanon. The Palestinian question has drawn in other countries too, notably Syria, who have all had their fingers burnt. Given the immense natural wealth and human talent that Israel and the rest of the Middle East possesses it is a tragedy for all sides that peace and mutual understanding does not exist among its peoples. Limited autonomy for the Palestinians between Israel and Jordan is not a fair or acceptable solution, nor is the continued existence of the Zionist state. The only lasting solution is the creation of a Middle-Eastern federation of peoples without nationalism or national borders. The states of the fertile crescent are recent and highly artificial creations which must be swept away once and for all. Everyone will then benefit.

CONTRADICTIONS

Israeli society is full of racial, national, religious and class contradictions which can only be held together through the existence of an external threat. These contradictions are now reaching a dangerous level. Similarly in Arab lands, desperately poor peasants and workers are ground down by fiercely autocratic rulers. Now as never before, the agenda is being set for international revolt and perhaps revolution. Exciting and dangerous times are ahead.

IS ROTATION

Thinking it over...

IS ROTATION REALISTIC?

This article follows on from the one by Don Fitz in Virus no.11 which dealt with the limited value of a 'right' to recall delegates. For those of you who didn't see his article, the main ideas in it were that delegates almost never get recalled (even when members of an organisation have the right to do so), largely because this would involve an unpleasant confrontation with the delegate concerned - something which people prefer to avoid.

As a more practical alternative to recall Don suggested a system under which a proportion of any committee is automatically rotated at regular intervals, so that people could effectively be recalled by the less brutal process of not being re-elected.

I would say that we, as anarchists, should make rotation one of our most important proposals, as it is a simple and concrete way of increasing the amount of participation in any organisation... and if the main word people associated with 'anarchist' was 'participation' (rather than 'destruction') then things would really be looking up.

However, to admit the need for rotation is to admit the delusion behind thinking that the end goal of anarchism is the complete absence of authority. In fact it just isn't possible for a group of people to organise themselves in such a way that someone chosen to carry out a function has no more influence than the person whose turn it is to clean up the office. If it was we wouldn't need to rotate delegates in the first place. As it is (if only because of the work involved in communicating information between individuals), anyone who is asked to carry out a decision will have a degree of influence over how it's done - even when they are given the strictest possible mandate.

So, we need to use all the techniques at our disposal (mandation of delegates, rotation, the right of ordinary members to attend committee meetings as observers, etc) to minimise the amount of authority that any person in a position of responsibility has - either as a result of their evil desire to control people, or just because of laziness and habit.

CULTURE IS CRUCIAL...

Rotation has the advantage over 'mandation' of not involving a series of complex and abstract ideas, eg. 'Did s/he really contradict what we decided on March 7th, 1986, or has s/he simply responded to consequences which we didn't appreciate were involved in the original mandate?' This kind of abstract theorising is alien to working class culture, and therefore not a very good basis on which to build a workers' organisation. Personally I'm glad it isn't, because I'd hate to think that a successful revolution would mean I had to spend the rest of my life haggling over resolutions contained in endless volumes of committee minutes.

Resolutions, mandates, etc, obviously have their uses, but I think there's a lot more mileage in the ideas of 'rotation' and 'observation' if we're talking about a working class struggle. In some ways this is the real reason why I couldn't get involved in Green Party politics. At grassroots level their parliamentary delusions are fairly irrelevant and they have a lot of the right ideas, but

REALISTIC ?

the culture which they have developed for themselves is so sensible and abstract that it just turns me off. As class conscious anarchists we have much richer, more human, traditions to start from.

...BUT NOT ENOUGH.

Even when an egalitarian, democratic cultural does establish itself, the structures which could go with it, eg rotation of delegates, are often not properly developed. In most cases, although Don's point (that recall of delegates doesn't occur in practice) is true, it's equally true that his proposed solution - systematic rotation of delegates - hasn't been popular either.

Even the Co-ordinadora (C-O) which organises 85% of Spain's dockers and is easily the best example of anarchy in action that we can point to these days, is run by basically the same people year after year.

In some ways this hasn't reduced the dockers' effectiveness as a rank-and-file organisation because, for one thing, if there is a clique organising the C-O it's a pretty big clique (maybe 2% of the total membership).

Mainly though they are saved by their culture. Everyone who is involved in organising the C-O is also a docker who works full time on the docks, so their basic outlook has been moulded by working with other dockers for years. In some ways they have already been given a mandate as to what the people who don't stand for election want - through the innumerable conversations and varied experiences, at work or in bars, which make up this shared culture.

SHARED CULTURE

In my opinion the C-O has mainly been successful because of these cultural strengths and, like most other mass organisations which have anarchist forms, can't tell us as much as we might expect about some of the more 'structural' possibilities (such as systematic rotation) which could be developed from basic anti-authoritarian ideas.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE.

The one real exception to this lopsided development which I know of is the CNT-U's union branch at Michelin in Vitoria, the capital of the Basque Country.

In December 1986 they won 5 seats on their Works Committee which do not come up for re-election until December 1990. A system of rotation was implemented under which the five seats were shared out between the original 32 people on the CNT-U's election slate, with two teams of 16 each covering 2 of the 4 years involved.

Of the first 16 (who are due to retire in December '88) 2 are 'regulars' (fijos) who keep their seats for the full 2 years. The other 14 share the remaining 3 seats amongst themselves with delegates being changed every 3 months. This same system will be repeated with the other team of 16 for the second 2 year period.

WILLINGNESS TO STAND

In 1990 a different group of people can be put up on the CNT-U's slate, and I'm sure Don's point will apply - that more ordinary people will be willing to stand then, because it will have been shown that they won't be letting themselves in for an open ended commitment. As a result there may even be more than 32 delegates next time.

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The Michelin system goes some way towards resolving this because it has more stability built into it, though at the same time it tends to blur individuals into a team. It also has the disadvantage of a complete lack of continuity every 2 years, so it's a question of 'swings and roundabouts'. Further enquiries after December '88 will hopefully give us a better picture of how these competing priorities get worked out in practice.

The branch's slogan 'Everyone important, no-one indispensable.' seems to be a reality. For example, all those who were 'leading militants' at Michelin when the CNT reformed around the time of Franco's death have since left the company for one reason or another, but the branch continues to function effectively.

A possible advantage of 'the Michelin system' over the simpler form of rotation put forward by Don's article is that it contains clear 'firebreaks' every 2 years. One problem which could have arisen if they had adopted his system (for example, if 2 of the 5 delegates had been rotated every 6 months) is that it would have been difficult to separate out the contribution of each delegate from that of the people who came before or after them. This would make it harder for members of the organisation to decide whether to re-elect them at some later date.

The existence of 2 regulars seems, to me, undesirable as the 16 people in any period will presumably come to be known as "Jose and Carlos' team". Maybe this was a necessary compromise if only 4 of the 32 had much experience of union organisation and a different system will be developed for 1990-94.

A GROUP PERSONALITY?

On the other hand, the existence of regulars may also reflect what seems to be a standard phenomenon in mass organisations - the development of a certain individual (or in this case two) who give the group a 'personality'.

(*) I think the number 2 was hit upon as a minimum which would avoid the idea of a leader and provide an element of 'checks and balances', but at the same time keep the core group as small as possible so more people could be rotated.

For example, in the County Durham Miners' Support Groups (an assembly of about 100 ordinary workers which met every week for over 18 months), the strengths and weaknesses of the group (eg. warm and open-minded, but not very good at giving criticism) mapped perfectly on to the personality of its leading light. I've known other organisations which have had similar links between them and a key figure with a different kind of

personality, so I don't think what happened in the Support Group can be explained by suggesting that most of its members shared these basic attitudes before they got together.

Although this is not the place to go into the complex emotional factors which effect how a group works (see 'The Future in the Present', published by L.O.S., for more detailed ideas), it does seem that a group's cohesion is improved if some individual can be found to provide it with a personality it can take on as its own.

If this is what we, as the products of our particular society, are going to be like for the foreseeable future, then a core group which is only in office for a fixed period may be a good compromise between the mathematical ideal (in terms of rotation) and the demands of 'human nature' in its present form.

Alternatively, someone could come to represent the group's personality without being given any executive responsibility (as happens in some tribal societies) though even this figure would surely acquire certain forms of power within the group through their role as figurehead.

The need for someone to provide a group personality could also go some way towards explaining why (even in groups which see themselves as being opposed to authority) there is such a strong resistance to the actual implementation of regular rotation.

LONG TERM EFFICIENCY.

Another major reason why people lack enthusiasm for rotation of delegates is probably the fear of inefficiency. In fact a system of rotation is more efficient than being ruled

by a clique, but perhaps this only becomes apparent in the long term - always supposing that it's the overall level of human happiness, rather than just the number of shoes produced, which is the measure of efficiency.

Obviously, for the boss classes what matters is just the number of shoes produced, but workers have also resisted the idea of rotation because of the time and energy needed to maintain it, and because a system of fixed delegates is more stable in the short term.

However, in the long term, a system of fixed representatives will be a disaster. History is littered with unions which started out full of grassroots activism and have now become corporate monoliths because an activist class within the organisation fossilised into permanent leaders.

Perhaps the only way to fight this kind of short term complacency is by pointing out some of these historical examples to people who are reassured by the fact that, even if there is a limited group of people running the organisation, it doesn't really matter because "we've all known them for years and they're OK."

To sum up: Recall of delegates has never really been a very useful idea, though we might as well hang on to it for the rare occasions when it may get used. Systematic rotation is a far better way to promote genuine democracy, so it's very important that we try to understand why so few radical organisations have ever put it into practice.

Mick Larkin.

80% of that committee to be re-elected.

This needn't get too complicated as most of the time the original vote would probably re-elect less than 80% anyway, with the mechanism described above only coming into play if it didn't. Also, the great beauty of Don's system (the ability to gradually adopt rotation) could apply to this system as well, with the number being reduced when possible from 80% to 75%, etc, down to some figure such as 50%



POSTSCRIPT:

Although we do need to have clear 'firebreaks' between different groups of delegates (so that specific individuals can still be held responsible for their actions) this would not be difficult to maintain while gradually adopting a system of rotation.

Let's assume that instead of the continual rotation of a proportion of any committee (which is what Don suggests) there was a re-election of the whole committee every year or two. It would then be a simple matter of not allowing more than, say,

In effect, all of the ex-committee members would be able to stand for re-election, but if more than 80% of them actually were elected only the first 80% 'past the post' would be eligible to take up their positions.

They could then simply take up their positions along with the 20% of new delegates who got the most votes, or a new election could be held on the understanding that only these first 80% were allowed to stand from the delegates on the old committee.

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