

# solidarity

for workers' power

TRAWL DIARY

BUS STRIKE

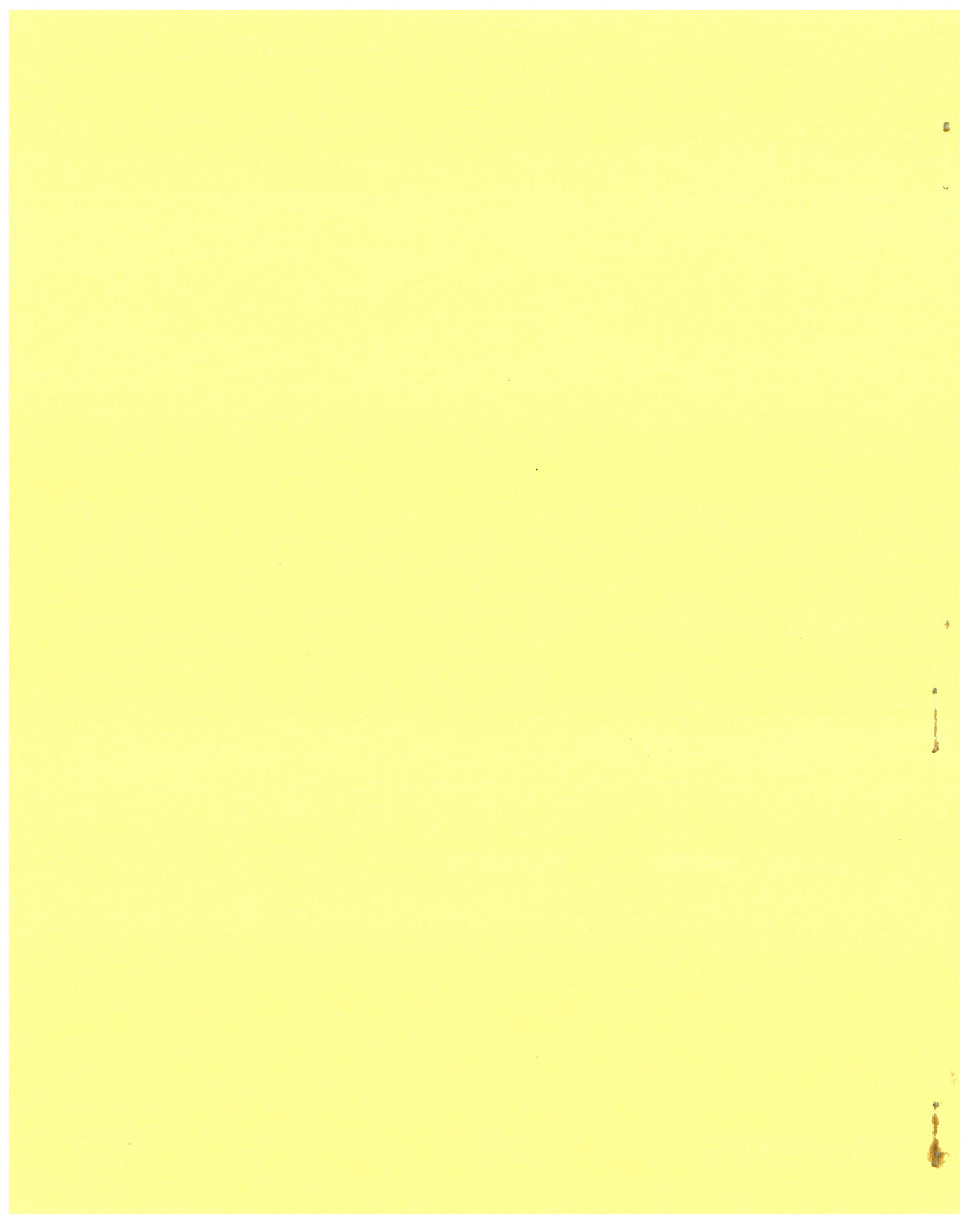
CONSUMER SOCIETY

HOTEL WORK : TENANTS

aberdeen

no.6

6d



THE MAGAZINE.

This being the sixth issue of Solidarity (Aberdeen), it is a convenient point at which to evaluate the successes and failures of the magazine so far.

Over the last year since the first issue appeared, the magazine has become the main, if not the sole political activity of the Aberdeen group. This has meant that leafletting has almost ceased, and that a large amount of the time at meetings is occupied with magazine affairs. On the other hand the group performs a collective activity in writing, producing and selling the magazine which develops the ability of its members. For the group itself, the magazine has been a qualified success, and if there is more discussion on articles before they are printed, and the 'slighter' articles revert to leaflet form, we can overcome the disadvantages.

When we come to the content of the magazine we meet with other problems. We have tended to rush issue out round a central important industrial article; this has helped to ensure that we have remained centred almost exclusively on industry. In this field our achievements have been considerable, covering fishermen (issues 1, 2 and 6) engineers (issues 3 and 4), paper-mill workers (issues 1, 2 and 5) as well as bus-workers (issue 6). These articles have combined a degree of accurate reportage with attempts to analyse the events in question. And on the basis of our industrial work, our ideas on workers management of industry, with our critique of modern capitalist production and the trades unions have met with a good response. At three or four large factories in the city we sell large numbers of every issue of the magazine, whether it contains material on that factory or not.

We have not remained solely concerned with industry and have produced some important material on foreign struggles, on tenants groups, and on students and pupils. But the magazine has shown a marked lack of any theoretical material. Due to our concern with local industry and our predominantly industrial readership (about 60%), we have tended to stick to safe subjects. We would like to see more articles of a 'traditional' theoretical nature, eg on economics, history, bureaucracy etc, as well as debates on those topics which are beginning to become important in modern society: - consumption (see page 9), technology, ecology etc. These topics are not esoteric, but related to our task of a total critique of modern society, its ideas and institutions.

2.

Although industry is still the area in which the majority of people spend most of their lives, the percentage of both is decreasing; new areas of struggle are opening up, not only among new layers of society, but also over new issues.

Another failing of the magazine has been in establishing links between people in struggle, in acting as an unofficial means of communication in opposition to the bourgeois press. People have been willing to give us information by word of mouth, or in interviews, but few of the articles in the magazine are written by non-solidarists involved in struggles. A greater balance is needed, if the magazine is to survive, between analyses of struggles from the outside, and reportage of struggles from the inside.

The magazine, then, has been a success insofar as it has provided a continuing collective group activity which has developed the potential of the members, and in its detailed coverage of the industrial front in Aberdeen, which has built up a steady readership on the basis of political content.

On the debit side there has been a minimum of feedback from the industrial readership, and we have failed to apply our critique of society and ideas on self-management to fields other than the industrial to a significant degree. The continuing validity of the magazine in the coming months depends on our ability to tackle these problems in future issues.

12.4.70.

ads.

G.M.W.U.-SCAB UNION:

How bureaucratic can a union be? This pamphlet provides the answer. A detailed account of the history, structure and industrial record of the G.M.W.U. (General and Municipal Workers Union). Invaluable reading for industrial militants, and for those who cherish any illusions about 'reforming' the trades unions. Available at 10d post paid from Solidarity (North London) c/o H. Russel, 53A, Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent or from the Aberdeen group address.

BUILDING WORKERS PAY DEAL.

An account of the recent pay deal, signed without the approval of the workers involved. Detailed account of what the deal involves for building workers. Available from Solidarity (North West) c/o Janet Harris, 96 Dovel's Road, Salford, or from Aberdeen group. 10d post paid.

# scots bus strike & the aberdeen crews

The Scottish Bus Strike highlighted some aspects of the present stage of the class-struggle. Until fairly recently 'Wildcat' strikes were waged passively, and the employers and trades union officials were often successful when they combined to smash this threat to industrial peace.

But recently we have seen unofficial strikes being waged very actively, and the emergence of strike committees controlled by the workers in dispute. This has necessitated a change in tactics by the management and unions; the unions have more and more been declaring large scale strikes official, in the interests of emasculating the strike committees. This was seen in the Fords' and Port Talbot strikes last year, and nearer home in the Trawl Strike last summer. In this article we will deal with some aspects of the recent strike, and the failure of the Aberdeen crews to join it.

## BACKGROUND

The striking busmen were employed by the various companies (S.M.T., Alexanders, Eastern Scottish and Highland) which belong to the nationalised Scottish Bus Group. This employs about 12,000 workers, and made £3.4 millions profit in 1968, about £190 per worker per year, compared with a comparable £150 in England and Wales.

Like most Scottish busworkers, the men belong to the T. & G.W. Union, whose busmen's section has the infamous record of sabotage of the bus strikes in London in 1958, Glasgow in 1964, and Liverpool in 1968.

The strike began in Kircaldy in February, and was initially official. The main demands were for an £18 a week basic wage, and equal pay for drivers and conductresses. But when the T & G.W.U. accepted a much lower offer, this was rejected by the men who then carried on the strike unofficially.

The strike spread throughout Central Scotland, and by mid-march there were 10,000 workers involved in the struggle.

### WAGING THE STRUGGLE

This struggle was actively waged by the workers involved, who, independent of the Union:-

- : organized mass demonstrations throughout central scotland.
- : convened a meeting in Leith attended by over 400 workers from all the strike-bound areas to discuss strategy.
- : arranged trips to Perth which brought crews there into the strike, and prevented Aberdeen buses entering Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- : offered to run buses to hospitals and factories at certain times; this offer was blocked by the management and ignored by the press.

The strike committee maintained a hostile attitude towards both the management and the union officials, and helped in the distribution of a Clydeside "Solidarity" leaflet attacking them both.

The final settlement, after 11 weeks of strike, gave the men £17:10s a week and the promise of equal pay for conductresses with 3 years service, and for all conductresses by 1972. A comparison of the struggle in central scotland with what happened in Aberdeen shows that the problems facing workers vary not only from industry to industry, but even in different localities of the same industry.

### THE ABERDEEN CREWS.

An obvious question to be asked is why the workers in Aberdeen, employed by Alexanders and numbering 200, didn't join the strike, although their sympathy for the strikers was obvious.

The first thing to point out is that the country bus-workers in Aberdeen number amongst themselves a large proportion of workers from non-industrial rural areas; which is not the case in central scotland. The Aberdeen workers thus have less of a tradition of militancy. In addition the majority of the drivers are older men who are pessimistic about the value of struggling. The conductresses tend to work with the company only a few months, and do not form a real base for militant action. An additional factor is that in Alexanders the drivers are under individual contracts, and strike action is in breach of these. The men believe that the management would use a strike to draw up new contracts, meaning the rapid introduction of one-man buses on most routes.

## ONE-MAN BUSES.

The introduction of these is planned in any case as a gradual measure. The first one-man buses out of Aberdeen should begin to operate soon. The management say that none of the present conductresses will be sacked, but that one-man operation will be introduced through 'natural wastage', that is when a 'clippie' leaves or retires, she will not be replaced, and gradually most routes will be on one-man operation. The Union is co-operating all the way with this scheme, which will mean greatly increased profits for the management, a poorer service for passengers and much extra work for little extra pay for the drivers. No wonder the management are granting equal pay by 1972, there will be practically no conductresses then.

There will be difficulties of change at the stops for drivers, who will also have to act as parcel and newspaper agents, causing delays etc. In addition there is the complicated system of fares to manage. For example, on the Banchory route (18 miles) there are 28 stages, and the driver will continually have to check fares.

## DIVIDE AND RULE: CONDITIONS

The management have also carefully fostered divisions amongst the workers over a long period. There is an "aristocracy" of drivers who make big money in the summer, on the bus trips into the country round Aberdeen for the tourists, and who do not wish to jeopardise this. With the low wages, overtime is necessary, and some of the workers find themselves able to work a 55-60 hour week.

On the other hand the majority of the drivers can only get a few hours overtime if any at all. And the now drivers often find themselves with 'spiffers', split shifts which mean that you may be away from town 12 hours, but only work 7 and get paid a mere extra hours wages for the split shift.

Conditions are not good; buses being often run without proper heating in winter. Wages before the strike were low at 6/10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> the hour; much lower than lorry drivers, cleansing drivers etc. And the 5-day week has only just been agreed upon in Aberdeen, previously the men worked 6 days.

Discipline is also strict; and workers can be suspended for three days for various offenses. A driver may lose half his wages by being suspended for having his jacket unbuttoned on duty, and receive reprimands for long hair, untidiness etc.

6.

Conductresses are reprimanded for jumping off buses and can be suspended for not wearing their hats in warm weather. Before being employed by Alexanders a man is checked to see if he has a police record, and before starting work must undergo at his own expense (£4:4) a medical exam.

These conditions, some of which are specific to Aberdeen, help to explain the lack of militancy among the crews, and their fear of taking action. Previous attempts by the younger workers at stirring things up have failed; on one occasion a decision to strike was sabotaged when the first crews to report for work were intimidated into taking out their buses, the rest then followed suit.

In the present struggle demands were made for a meeting to discuss the strike. Signatures were collected and posted up in the garage demanding a meeting. This was convened for March the 21st. at midnight, and the crews decided to join in the struggle by imposing an overtime ban and work to rule against the advice of the Union official at the meeting. In the event, the decision had little effect, since the strike ended a few days later.

#### CONCLUSION.

The rationalisation of the buses, both rural and municipal to produce greater profits at the workers expense will undoubtedly provoke struggles in the future; the method by which these are to be waged should be discussed now. There are various necessities;

1. Improved liason between workers at rank and file level and the development of the workers own means of communication, to combat the lies of the press and union officials.

2. Consideration should be given to running the buses without collecting the fares, a direct attack on the bosses which does not inconvenience other workers. Also effective would be a series of one-day rotating lightning strikes between the various depots, a maximum inconvenience to the bosses, which limits the mens loss of earnings. A particular need in Aberdeen is for pickets to be out in force to ensure that the fiasco of the last attempted strike is not repeated. It is important that the lessons of the past are learned and remembered.

I.M.

For an account of a successful attempt at running the buses without collecting fares, see the article in Solidarity (Aberdeen). No4 "The Class Struggle in Portugal".



# HOTEL WORK

I work in a hotel of fairly average size, with about 57 rooms and employing a staff of about 24, excluding those employed for functions, etc.

## THE WORK

Hotel work can be exceedingly boring, just as other forms of work in today's society are. My particular job involves making about 17 beds a day (that is in the summer season, it is less in winter) cleaning out sinks with abrasive cleansers (no gloves are supplied), and hoovering rooms, all for the princely sum of £6 a week, 36 hours in all.

The management, having decided to economise, have got rid of one of the four housemaids and expect the remaining three to do the work just the same without a penny extra pay.

Also in this economy drive one of the three porters has been sacked (conveniently) and no replacement is to be taken on, which means that when the remaining porters have time off, the waitresses from the dining hall will have to do the porters' work, carrying luggage up three flights of stairs; neither the porters or the waitresses will receive any increase in pay. The porters earn £10 for a 44-hour week and the waitresses 3/9d. the hour.

The cleaners who clean out all the toilets, male and female, get a measly 10/- dirty money bringing their pay up to a total of £6:10s for a 36-hour week, still well below the standard rate for cleaners of this type. In most hotels the only people paid to scale are the chef and the cook, as a walk-out by these people could paralyse the hotel.

## ADVANTAGES?

The so-called advantages of this type of work is that it is reasonably warm and clean work compared with some forms of industrial work. This is one of the reasons why we are paid such ridiculously low wages.

There is also the 'personal relationship' between management and staff, but this is obviously more of an advantage to the management. When any dispute or complaint arises, the manager can usually brush it aside

as a result of this personal relationship. Another so-called advantage is tips; the method used where I work is not the commonly used pooled system, but a 10% charge onto the bills of weddings, functions etc., which is distributed among the staff once a month, the amount of this can vary from £1 to £5. Other tips you get in the rooms of the guests etc. are your own. This causes a lot of strife amongst the staff (a feeling of competition) who try to outdo each other boasting of the tips they get.

### CONCLUSION.

There are many factors against the unity of workers in such a small and close establishment. It is hard to get people to forget their differences and decide to act in solidarity. Considering the actions of hotel workers in Paris, May 1968, who took over their hotels and ran them themselves, we can conclude that actions by these sections of workers is most likely to occur when general unrest is rampant throughout the working-class.

P.M.

## german pamphlet

The most ambitious project yet of the Aberdeen group is nearing completion. Our pamphlet on the German Communist Party during the German Revolution entitled "SPARTAKISM TO NATIONAL BOLSHEVISM; the K.P.D. 1918-24" should appear about two weeks after this issue of the magazine.

Production on the pamphlet has begun; it will be 30 pages in length, complete with chronology, a document, map and photographs, and is priced at 1/10 (post paid). The pamphlet deals with the foundation of the Party, and its degeneration into a tool of Russian interests, with material on the independent activity of the German workers in this period.

The pamphlet is a continuing part of our work in destroying the 'centralist' concept of organization, and in giving the working-class back its own history. Because the German revolution has been particularly neglected, and because it was an advanced industrial country in 1918, which saw the widespread appearance of Workers Councils, we think that study of the period is doubly important.

Subscribers to Solidarity (North London) will receive the pamphlet automatically. We welcome other individual and bulk orders from regular readers.

# CONSUMER SOCIETY

## INTRODUCTION.

The driving force of the economic system under which we live is the accumulation of capital; this necessitates continuous production and consumption. Without continuous production and consumption, capital accumulation would be impossible, and the system would not be able to operate. The system is kept going by the small group of people who buy labour and sell goods at a profit to enable them to buy more labour and raw materials to produce more goods.

The whole social system is run for the benefit of this minority who use the weight of the Army, police force and legal system to maintain their privilege to make a profit. This minority neither produce nor consume significantly, and therefore, in order to maintain and increase their profits, the capitalists must persuade the vast majority not only to produce and increase their production, but to consume and increase their consumption.

## CONSUMER SOCIETY:

It is obvious that the system would collapse if the vast majority of the people ceased either to produce or consume. To an extent, the consumption problem is solved by people's constant need for food and shelter, the necessities of life. However, this does not solve the problem, the production of necessities would not create a big enough demand for labour to perpetuate the system. A demand has therefore to be created for non-essential goods.

This demand is created by advertising, which itself provides non-productive employment for consumers. The advertisers use all the means of communication to bombard the producers with pressure to consume. One of the features of modern capitalism is that it can turn its own weaknesses to advantage. People are promised the solution to many of the problems which the system imposes on them if they consume certain goods. The consumers are promised, in fact, what the society cannot give, and therefore the apparent need to consume is never satisfied. Certain cigarettes, cosmetics and clothes will give you a more satisfying sex life; films television and magazines increase 'enjoyment' of leisure

time, certain types of furniture, domestic appliances etc. will beautify your domestic life--these are the unfulfilled promises. Even advertising at this level is insufficient, as eventually people would have bought all the non-essential goods and would cease to consume. The demand must be maintained.

### BUY AGAIN.

The demand is maintained by selling people the same products again and again. There are two methods of doing this; by physically shortening the life of a product, and by making people want another style of the same product.

The first method, known and accepted as 'planned obsolescence' involves making goods out of materials which will not last. Examples of this occur in the production of light-bulbs, where the manufacturers create only a partial vacuum within the bulb, thus significantly reducing the life of the bulb. The bodywork of cars is made of sheet metal so thin that it soon decays, and in the production of television sets the use of certain materials has shortened the life of a set from about 20 years to 5. All this is physical obsolescence, but the desire to buy again is created in other ways.

The manufacturers of such things as cars, televisions, washing machines introduce nearly every year some minor modification in style or function to their products. These 'innovations', while scarcely changing the usefulness of the product, have the effect of dating it, and when combined with large-scale advertising create the idea that last years model has disadvantages over the latest version. This technique is used extensively in the field of clothing, where fashion is dictated by the manufacturer, and constantly changed. A recent example of blatant manipulation of fashion was the "Old Furniture Must Go" campaign, in which we were urged to discard old furniture and, implicitly, buy new.

An interesting feature of recent advertising has been the pseudo-reaction against large advertising and planned obsolescence. In the first case, the manufacturers of "Surf" declared that instead of spending vast sums on advertising their product, they were going to include 18% more powder in each packet--it sold. In the second, Parkers, the pen manufacturers, produced an advertisement for their pens showing a man wearing a suit and holding one of their pens. The copy said that the pen would still work in 50 years, whereas the mans clothes would have disintegrated.

# community action

II.

What is the potential of community action? This article, written by someone involved in the events described, and not by a Solidarity member, puts forward an opinion. We feel the article raises important points, and welcome comments. -Eds.

## HOLLAND-HUTCHEON STREET TENANTS' ASSOCIATION

Holland Street., Hutcheon Street and Gerrard Street form a working class in Central Aberdeen which is almost a slum. In 1969 the tenants began to take action against their landlady, Mrs Grant, who can pull in £5000 a year from the workers in this area because her claims to their homes is supported by the police, law and the state. Why pay rent? Nine tenants applied together to the rents tribunal, some went on a rent strike and some went on protest demos with students. (Solidarity Aberdeen No 1 for details) "as individuals, they were powerless.. now there was a total new feeling of security... it was possible now to feel no longer a victim of circumstances but able to affect these circumstances" by collective action (Tenants Assoc. Leaflet)

## INSIDE THE COMMUNITY

The rents conflict established something common to all those in the area, it increased mixing among the tenants and initially defined the community but it was internally weak since splits opened when tenants began finding out about their neighbours' financial embarrassments etc., People also have to strengthen a community by internal action : by developing its own abilities. The Tenants Assoc. has changed to this but the majority of local tenants do not actively participate in it.

## SELF-EXPRESSION : ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS

In June, 1969, members of the Assoc. discussed improvement of the area by the community itself. Three tenants visited adventure playgrounds and street parties in England. The other tenants were enthusiastic about such projects but they had to find a site for an adventure playground. The council had tried to keep people quiet when they fenced off a small sanded area in Gerrard Street. Children voted against this playground by not going there but they could now build their own playground with help from local tenants, students and school pupils. The children (5-13 years), all joined into help as much as they could to build the huts, fort swings etc., and gave a few opinions as to

how it should look. They don't have the strength to knock in the big posts etc., but since they participated to their fullest and keenly watched and tested every development, it was their past that was built into their playground. They are absolutely daft on experimenting and learning with wood, tools, tyres, ropes etc., there are few accidents - they can become confident in themselves by entering and learning new worlds of experience. This is self-expression - the children are beginning to control and modify their environment instead of it controlling them. They work or play with helpers in a new equal relationship they are free to do as they like in their playground and, for once, with the approval of adults.

### EDUCATION

Compare this Libertarian form of education with formal state education where authority asserts itself over the children by the rigid environment - rooms, teachers and the tag etc., Here education is repression by these elements of society which drums obedience into your heads and excludes from you the freedom of self-expression as a group or individually, by stuffing your head with irrelevancies. No wonder children rebel at school, or students sit-in or workers strike

### INDOOR PLAYGROUPS AND PUBLICITY

The scope of action by a community isn't limited. Parents are now holding indoor playgroups on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday evenings at nearby St. Katherine's Hall and using the nearby Lad's Club premises. The children have a great chance of a gym, 5-a-side football, netball etc., there is also informal dancing, drama and singing groups. About 70 children have come along; 31 played at the new Ann Street adventure playground only ten days after it was started. All together about 135 children are saying "YES!". The Assoc brings out "Tenants News" and "Action" to spread information about its activities.

### PARTICIPATION OF THE COMMUNITY

Extra helpers came from colleges and Grammar schools; tenants may feel this association doesn't make the projects theirs, but about ten to twelve working class tenants are regularly involved. This indicates a weak community since everybody's activities are needed to develop the community as a whole. However there was an enthusiastic response to two bonfire parties held in late 1969 when about thirty parents came along for a chat, with their children. The older children are even old enough to run the indoor playgroup themselves. Three ex-students who have been tenement neighbours for 1 to 3 years act as a resource for advice, Working

people have drawn on isolated resources to tie them together for grass roots action e.g. education, parks departments, waste land, free timber, church halls etc.,

### NEW TENANTS GROUP

Some tenants in the Assoc. have formed another autonomous group called Central Aberdeen Regeneration Enterprise. They would like to help and expand the community by helping other tenants, increase mixing of tenants by whist drives. C.A.R.E. also aims to set up another under 12s playgroup, but they are against the freedom of the children at the club, less enthusiastic about adventure playgrounds and in favour of helpers having authority over the children "instead of us telling the kids what to do, they are telling us what to do". C.A.R.E. is autonomous action by working people (and Grammar school helpers) but it seems it will be a help agency apart from the other tenants. The six on the "Executive" would advise, not the groups. This is not democratic action by all tenants, the Community.

### WORKERS SELF MANAGEMENT

People cannot form themselves into a community just by united action against outsiders; both the fight against Capitalism and the internal construction of a community are needed. The tenants Assoc. is a small group acting for a large number of tenants who have no say in the Assoc. since they are not involved, but action involving all tenants may bring it within their control - a few council tenants, formerly in the Assoc., have formed a tenants Assoc. in Froghall council estate; both have co-operated to hand over a joint petition to their councillors as a first step towards forcing the council to repair their homes.

### CONSUMER SOCIETY( cont from page 10) PRODUCTION FOR WASTE

From planned obsolescence the logical step was to the principle of disposability-use once and throw away. Clothes, cutlery, handkerchiefs and containers: all can now be disposable resulting in constant consumption, constant production and constant waste. However in this constant waste there lies a problem; a plastic container after it has served its function is virtually indestructible. Our environment is being rapidly changed by the outpourings of a system geared to consumption and more consumption. While some technologists are becoming worried by the dangers of pollution, the powerful capitalists are seeking new ways to produce consumable waste.

N.R.

# trawlerman's diary

The following article was written as a follow-up to those in SOLIDARITY (Aberdeen) Nos 1 and 2, on the long Trawl Strike of last summer. The intention is to show the effects that the settlement has had on conditions at sea.

The author, a young trawlerman, meant to write an account of a full fishing trip, but as can be seen, the story tails off after six days of the ten day trip. The reason for this is simple; after a certain period at sea, fatigue makes any activity outside work and sleep virtually impossible. We decided to let the article stand as it is rather than have the author add to it from memory, since we believe that even as it stands, it gives a vivid picture of a trawlerman's working life.

## MONDAY

The boat was due to leave at 9.30 this morning, and we were all down on time, since the last trip two deckies had been put on short pay for being twenty minutes late. There was a lot of bad feeling about this since an official warning is supposed to be sent before this happens and they did not get one. The owners, however, say they did send warnings and there's no doubt who the Union/Management disciplinary committee would believe. The end result was that the men had their pay taken down from £3 a day to £2.13/- a day, for a week, and the whole crew was on time this morning: another feather in the owners' cap.

One of the annoying things about this is that I've never yet known a boat sail on time, and this morning was no exception since we had to hang about waiting for provisions and then the harbour was closed to outgoing traffic until 11.45.

On top of all this there was some more trouble before we sailed. One of the deckies refused to sail because of personal differences between him and the mate. He finally ended up going ashore and the skipper phoned for the owner who in turn called in the police. This is typical of the fishing industry; the owners have the law and the police on their side while the fishermen have fuck-all. After a while the police brought the deckie back and he came back on board after being told by the owner that it was either that or face a fine of up to £100 under the Mercantile Sea Act. Seeing one of your mates dragged back by the police and more or less being forced to sail isn't very pleasant; in fact its kind of



reminiscent of the press-gangs of a couple of centuries ago. Finally we sailed at 11.45 and from 1.20-6.20p.m. I did my five hour stint on watch.

## TUESDAY

This morning we were called out at 3.45a.m. and were on deck until 5.15a.m. after which I was on watch with the second fisherman until 7.30a.m. followed by a stint hauling and shooting the nets and gutting fish until breakfast at 8.45. At breakfast everybody was complaining about the gear they had got, most of which was substandard as usual. Any orders for gear such as oil-skins, rubber boots etc, are given to the ship's runner who gets them from the store in Aberdeen and the cost is then deducted from our pay (In Hull such gear is provided free). I've been pretty lucky this trip since both my boots are the same size; the only thing is that the left one is made by Dunlop and the other by Pirelli.

One thing that really gets me down is that we have to provide our own bedding and I've even seen deckies sleeping on life-jackets. These are never kept in the same place but are rammed into any spare locker at the start of the trip and indeed all life-saving gear tends to be pretty haphazard on the trawlers.

After breakfast we were called out again at 10.45 and hauled, mended and shot the nets by 11.45. We got five minutes for tea and then gutted what fish there was until 12.15. Dinner was from 1p.m. till 1.30 and during that time conversation swung round to the Hull strike.

Apparently the trawlermen down there are asking a £20 basic wage all the year round and 100% union membership as a condition of employment—just as it is in the merchant navy. The employers have offered a new basic of £19.4/- for deckhands while they are sea and have rejected absolutely the demand for what would be a closed shop. All the men felt sympathetic towards these demands and yet there was no strong feeling of support. Many of us had felt a bit let down when the Hull and Grimsby trawlermen failed to come out in sympathy during last year's Aberdeen strike.

Personally though, I'm completely in support of their demands especially the one for shop stewards aboard each boat. One of the main purposes of having stewards would be to allow the crews' views to be put to the skipper at sea without fear of penalty under the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, which makes any misbehaviour or disobedience at sea, however trivial, punishable by imprisonment, including representatives on behalf of the crew, who could be treated as members of a conspiracy. There was a suggestion by the

union that the 2nd fisherman on each boat represent the men while at sea which seems bloody stupid, since the 2nd could be a skipper's boy who did not give a fuck about the men. What we really need is a shop steward elected directly by the men on each boat.

After dinner we were called out at 2.30p.m. and hauled, shot and gutted until 4.5. We were called at 5.30 and did the same until 6.25, when we had tea and a couple of hours kip till 8.45. One man slept in but most of the crew aren't showing signs of being knackered yet. Most of the fish caught were thrown back this time and we came off deck at 9.45p.m.

One of the deckies has just been having an argument with the 2nd engineer and no-one seems very sure how it all blew up. I suppose it's understandable that the engineers are bad tempered bastards at times, as since the new agreement after the strike they've lost their third engineer and are doing 5 hours on and 5 hours off which in the heat and noise down below would get anyone down: I don't suppose working hours like that can do much for the boat's safety either.

#### WEDNESDAY

I was called out on watch last night at 11.45p.m. and was on the bridge till 4.45a.m. then I managed a couple of hours sleep until 7.10 when we were called on deck, and by this time most of the crew were knackered. We were on deck till 8a.m., and then were called out from 10.20a.m. till 12.30p.m., from 3p.m. till 4p.m., from 6.45 till 7.55p.m. and from 9.40 till 10.55p.m. Most of the time we were soaking wet and bloody freezing. The thing is that although the deckies have a guaranteed day rate, the skipper and mate are paid purely on results so its to their advantage to push us as hard as they can. This is what causes the big division between officers and crew.

#### THURSDAY

We were called out on deck at 1.20a.m. this morning and were off deck at 2a.m.; this was followed at 5.15 with another spell until 7.20a.m. and then I was on watch with the 2nd fisherman until 10.30 After this we mended the nets and gutted fish until 12.30 Just before going below for dinner one of the deckies got his head split open by a steel door but he's been bandaged up and the cut doesn't seem too bad. About four trips ago one of the deckie-learners got bashed in the guts by one of these steel doors and ended up in hospital in the Faroes. I met him last spell ashore and he still hasn't got any money from the penny-a-day insurance scheme since he didn't fill in the relevant forms, which is hardly

surprising seeing he was stretched out on his back in hospital at the time. Many trawlermen are ignorant of the intricacies of red-tape, so when anything happens to them they are left without anything. This bloke didn't even get anything from the owners.

We had dinner at 1p.m. and then 40 minutes sleep before going on deck from 2.10 till 4.20. After tea, we hauled, shot and gutted from 5.30 till 7.15p.m. and from 9 till 10p.m. I've just been sitting thinking about all the hours we put in on each trip; even parliament has recommended fishermen work less days, and yet during last year's strike, one of the owners stated that for him the ideal situation would be when his boats could stay out all the time and be served by supply ships. In other words they would never see port at all except for repairs. It seems almost traditional that trawlermen be treated like dirt by the owners. One of the big Sunday newspapers recently quoted a Hull owner describing the Hull trawlermen as 'gutter rats and bums.'

#### FRIDAY

We were called out this morning at midnight until 1.30 followed by a couple of hours sleep and then another stint from 4 till 5.45a.m., then after another few hours sleep we were back on deck from 7.30 till 9.45 and I had to continue on watch till 11.20. We finally got below at 12.20. After dinner we were called out at 2.40 and mended nets till 4.45p.m. by which time we were really bloody freezing. After tea we were up on deck at 7.25, hauled the gear, set the watch and steamed to new grounds.

By now I'm finding it very difficult to concentrate on what I'm writing and the boys have just finished telling me I'm mad for writing what they call 'commie propaganda' instead of getting some sleep. One of the most frustrating things for a militant trawlerman out to improve conditions is that many of his mates seem proud of the fact that their job is one of the toughest and most dangerous on the go, and although they often grumble they seem reluctant to improve their situation or 'stir the shit' as they call it. Anyone who does show signs of militancy is branded as a 'commie.' One example of this characteristic is the scorn which many trawlermen heap on the fishmarket porters who get cold money in the winter. Some of the men believe that to demand this would be somehow an insult to their manhood, and yet God knows we deserve it as the cold on deck is almost unbearable at times.

#### SATURDAY

We were called out at 4.50a.m. until 5.50 this morning then I was on watch with the 2nd fisherman until 8.45 and

18.

finally got below at 10.40a.m. After some sleep we were on deck from 12.30 to 1.30 followed by dinner and then bed. After this we were working again from 3.45 till 5.15p.m. and then from 7.30 till 9.45 we have been mending the nets and gutting etc.....

DECKIE.

SOLIDARITY GROUPS & CONTACTS

Aberdeen	c/o N.Roy 138 Walker Road Aberdeen.
London (North)	c/o H.Russell 53A Westmoreland Rd. Bromley Kent.
London (West)	c/o M.Duncan 15 Taylor's Green London W.3.
London (South)	c/o J.Shreeve 44 Sturgeon Rd. London S.E.17.
Ronford	c/o T.Reed 26 Seamore Gdns. Ilford Essex.
North West	c/o P.Cockcroft 102 Carter St. Moss Side Manchester.
Clydeside	c/o D.Kane 43 Valeview Terrace Dumbarton.
Dundee	c/o F.Browne 444 Perth Road Dundee.

---

COMING SHORTLY!!

The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control - 1917-1921.

This book at present under production in the SOLIDARITY (North London) group, should be available fairly soon at 5/-. At 120 pages it is the longest work undertaken by any SOLIDARITY group, and contains much information from original sources not readily available.

---