solidarity

FOR WORKERS' POWER

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MAY DAY 1969

Aberdeen Paperworkers

VAUXHALL: militants beware!

Students challenge bourgeois education

6D

MAY DAY 1969

May Day this year could be really significant. No, we are not referring to the meaningless processions through the empty streets of the West End now being planned by those elderly twins: the Communist Party and the Socialist Labour League, for Sunday, May 4. We are referring to the independent, rank and file demonstration called by the London Workers May Day Committee for Thursday, May 1st (a working day).

This year, thousands will be taking a day off on May 1st. Without anyone's permission. And whether asked to by their union or not. A 'solid act of defiance' the Committee leaflet calls it, and that's just what it should be.

Some will have a lie-in. Some will do nothing. Some will do the missus. Some will be demonstrating. But all will be saying NO to harassment, speed-up, long hours, low wages, poor conditions, rising rents, a disorganised family life, productivity deals, penal clauses, time and motion study, managerial snooping, sackings, transfers, and generally being treated like dirt.

All will be telling the government (including the 'lefts' like Barbara Castle) to get stuffed with their anti-working class legislation. Tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands will be showing what they think of Westminster, of parliamentary double-talk, of the fraud of 'voting Labour', of Commissions, of White Papers, and of traditional politics in general.

We think this could be the beginning of a new movement, with a new vision of a just and free society, and a new dedication to struggle for its achievement. Something new is happening, which only dyed-in-the-wool 'realists' will be blind to. New layers of people are on the move, for new objectives.

Of all sections of society, working people have, throughout history, always had to pay the highest price as capitalism solved crisis after crisis at their expense. It is no different today. The working class must form the backbone of any movement aimed at destroying the industrial prison. If it doesn't, our dream of freedom will forever remain a dream. But today the movement could have a wider basis. There are other gates to be smashed down. More and more layers of society, also submitted to coercion and manipulation, are beginning to resist. Students and those still at school are part of this awakening. They should see its purpose as similar to that of the wider movement: to dominate the conditions under which men live. We don't have endlessly to submit to meaningless 'education', to be destroyed piecemeal by meaningless work, to be manipulated in leisure, or to live the absurdities and emptiness of everyday life.

Traditional patterns of authority are crumbling everywhere. The anti-authoritarian mood is spreading. Priests proclaim the main task of Christians to be 'a total critique of the Church as institutionalised religion'. Women are demanding genuine (i.e. not only economic) equality. The student paper 'Wyvern' dismisses a Parliamentary Select Committee visiting Essex as 'superannuated buffoons'. In Belfast, thirteen year-olds stone the Riot (sic!) Police, and sixteen year-olds charge them with Molotov cocktails. More and more workers see the political parties as completely irrelevant and as indistinguishable from one another. All this suggests a deep process taking place in modern society, contesting some of its basic assumptions and most hallowed institutions.

We have travelled a long way since May Day 1967 (see 'Solidarity' vol.4, No.7) and even since May Day 1968 (see 'Solidarity', vol.5, No.1), when weekday demonstrations (numbering 300 and 3000 respectively) were held, at the call of the London Workers May Day Committee. They were organised amid general apathy, in the face of obstruction of every kind from the traditional left (even I.S. opposed the 1967 demo) and despite knowing comments - unfortunately even within our own ranks - to the effect that workers 'would never be prepared to lose a day's wages'. But the idea has caught on. Support is now snowballing, triggered by a Labour Government's attack on the working class. If there are any lessons to learn it is that, for a revolutionary, every action is in a sense 'premature' or 'voluntarist', and that one of the main characteristics of established 'leaderships' is to tail-end events.

We should not kid ourselves, however, about some of the support now coming our way. Some of the 'opposition' to the new anti-working class legislation is half-hearted to say the least - or has ulterior motives. Union officials, who over a long period have paved the way for what is now happening, are belatedly showing 'concern' and jumping on the band-waggon by the dozen. But their concern is less with the fate of their members than with the need to maintain control. Rank-and-file workers are becoming increasingly 'unmanageable' in the eyes of both management and union 'bosses'. The pressure has been building up. Direct action (unofficial stoppages, working to rule, overtime bans, withdrawal of good will, etc.) is felt more and more to be the only meaningful way to resist and retaliate against being pushed about. (The union official is then the last person that militants want to see around.) The proposed legislation ('In Place of Strife') in fact strengthens the position of these officials at the expense of the shop floor. 'Left' gestures by these people once a year (on May Day) are suspect. They cost little. The apparatus-men could easily jump the other way tomorrow. Or seek to lay hands on a genuinely autonomous movement with a view to steering it back into orthodox channels: resolution-mongering, petitions, lobbies to Parliament, etc. In fact just such a process has already begun.

It was begun by the Communist Party (so popular that in Czechoslovakia this year they're scared stiff to hold any May Day demonstrations at all). For months the May Day Committee has been campaigning for a demonstration to leave Tower Hill at 11.30 am on May 1st, and to proceed

to Victoria Park (Bethnal Green). The message was getting through and the idea of making it a strike-cum-festival was proving a winner. Then, on April 23, a sinister notice (see opposite) appeared on the front page of the 'Morning Star'. The timing and destination speak for themselves. The hatchet-men at King Street had taken fright. They had decided to take over the demonstration with a view to marching it off to lobby Parliament, the very place from which all the vicious anti-working class legislation was being churned out. Rather like leading the sheep to the slaughter-house to protest against an increase in the price of meat! This is nothing new in the history of stalinism but deserves to be widely exposed.

'Morning Star', Wednesday, April 23

'Decisions taken by representatives of London trade unionists yesterday mean that the capital this year will have an impressive demonstration on May Day itself, as well as on Sunday, May 4.

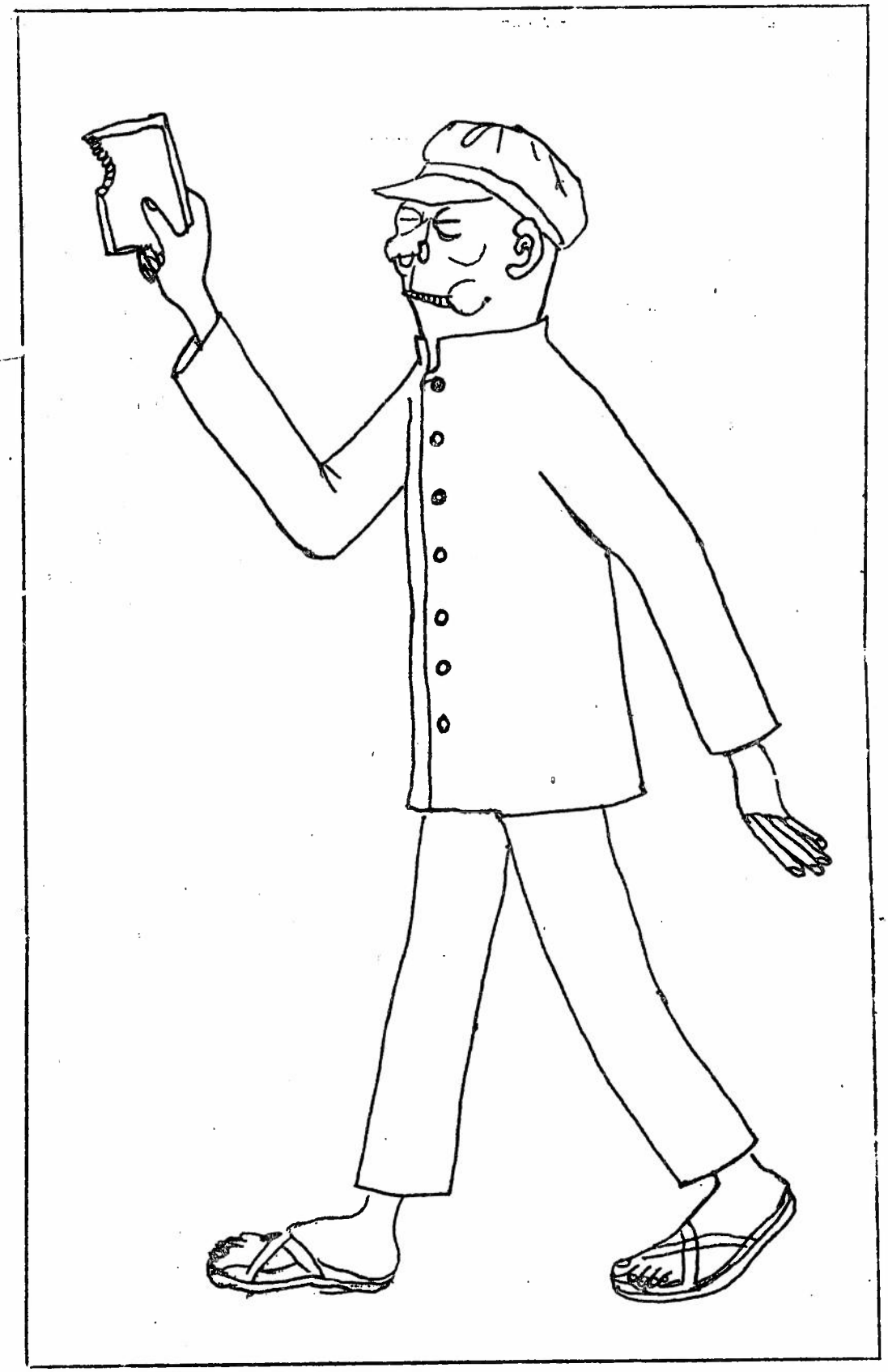
Engineers, printers, stevedores, dockers and building workers announced after a meeting that they are to unite their May 1st demonstration against the Government's anti-trade union Bill.

They will assemble at Tower Hill, London, at 10 am, May 1st, and will march to Montague Place, where a mass meeting with prominent speakers will be held with a lobby of Parliament in the afternoon.'

When George Matthews, editor of the Morning Star, was phoned on Wednesday, April 23 by the Chairman of the London Workers May Day Committee for information as to which 'engineers, printers, stevedores, dockers and building workers' had decided to 'unite their demonstration' and as to where the alleged meeting had been held which had taken these decisions, he hummed and hawed and refused to give the information requested. He also refused to accept a correction in the Morning Star on behalf of the May Day Committee. And on Sunday, April 27, a large delegation from the May Day Committee were refused a hearing and made to leave a meeting of the (stalinist-dominated) London Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, which they had attended with a view to resolving the differences, if possible, and ensuring a single May Day march of all workers on strike. With 'comrades' like this, the movement scarcely needs enemies.

We are not in principle opposed to a march on Westminster. The question is one of aim. We would support thousands going to Parliament if it was to present something more inflammatory than a petition, or to commit some act more meaningful than a ritual lobby. Those who decide to march with the Communist Party, despite its proclaimed objectives, and despite the slimy tactics by which it has sought to 'take over' the demo planned by the May Day Committee (under the misguided impression that the Communist Party somehow 'represents' the working class) should ask themselves what they are doing. We will not be marching in that direction, or under that banner.

THOUGHT FOR FOOD



ABERDEEN PAPERWORKERS FOLLOW-UP

The months since our last article on the paper mills (Solidarity, Vol. V, No.6) have seen the mill-workers apprehensive and uncertain, while the employers have been planning large-scale reorganisations at plant and national level. These reorganisations are particular examples of the general rationalisation of British capitalism. But they are in some ways new to Aberdeen, which until now has been something of an industrial 'backwater'.

THE GIANTS RATIONALISE.

This article will concentrate on developments at two of the local mills over the last months: Stoneywood (1800 workers) and Donside (800 workers). These belong to the two biggest paper producing groups in Britain, the former to Wiggins Teape and the latter to Bowater-Reed. We will also deal with some aspects of life at Culter mills which may be of interest to other militants.

An idea of the size of Wiggins and Bowater will serve as a background to the events.

Company	Workers	Papers produced	Profits 1967	1968
Wiggins Teape	20,000	mainly industrial	(millions) 6½	9
Bowater	about 15,000	coated and tissue	15	17

DONSIDE

This is one of the most modern mills in Europe, being almost entirely rebuilt since 1966. There are two paper-making machines. Ever since the opening of the mill however, Inveresk (its previous owners) had been faced with troubles in their efforts to capture a share of the coated-paper market: breakdowns on machinery, a serious fire and technical difficulties all led to increasing losses culminating in a colossal £668,000 last year (or £18 per worker, per week).

Donside was a mill which workers in the older-established mills spoke of favourably when comparing conditions to their own. 'I've heard Donside is a good place to work' a lad once said to me, as of the Promised Land, while up to his oxters in china clay. It's true you could make a good bonus there, but the only time it was a 'good' place to work was when the coffee machine went berserk and dished out enough for the entire mill for six pence.

It is worth mentioning a particular instance of the viciousness of the Donside management. This was in connection with the pay-off of 60 workers last September (the story was told in our last article). One worker, a labourer with 4½ years' service, was refused the redundancy money which he was due. He took the issue to court. Here the personnel manager and gaffer both swore that he'd been offered another job inside, which was untrue. His appeal failed. As he was approaching sixty, he could not find another job. He went to social security and was offered five shillings (to keep his wife and himself).

THE TAKE-OVER.

Then at the beginning of February it was announced that the mill had been bought by Bowater-Reed, helped by a two-million pounds loan from the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation. The deal gave Bowater 40% of the Birtish coated-paper market, and it was hoped that their experience would help solve the problems which had swamped Inveresk. Sir Christopher Chancellor confidently announced in the Bowater Report: 'we can make the Donside Mill into a profitable enterprise'.

In a leaflet published a few days after the take-over, Solidarity warned what the cost of this step would be: worsening working conditions, speed-ups, pay-offs, etc. The bosses hastily issued a statement in the Evening Express, saying that there would be 'no wholesale replacement of staff at Donside'. But in the Donside Newsletter (a bulletin distributed by the management) they spoke ominously of 'the need for hard work in the months ahead'.

Then it started. Without consultation people were paid off (as 'redundant'), sacked (for 'misconduct') or moved into different departments or even different shifts. Many were offered the choice of accepting a lower bonus or being paid off. The manning on certain machines was whittled down. There was some confusion among the men as to what was actually going on. A further leaflet was distributed to help counteract this. Events at Donside raised the question of job control. Under capitalism a fundamental issue such as the number of workers employed in a factory is decided by the bosses, and a struggle over redundancies poses the question: who manages production?. And it also indicates the socialist solution to the crisis: workers' management.

STONEYWOOD.

This is the largest mill in Britain. It has seven paper-making machines. Changes in internal structure have been slow since it was taken over by Wiggins in the 50's, but have accelerated over the last months. In the last year electronic check-points have been installed at the entrance, where there is a uniformed security guard. In the bank-note paper section, when it was rumoured that paper for American dollars was being made, passport-style security passes were introduced and employees had to wear a name

and number tab. All this has been linked with the introduction of more security checks, giving the mill an increasingly prison-like atmosphere, and showing the lengths to which management must go in order to protect its factories from its own workers.

In the Beater-House 90 men work in three shifts in what are almost the worst conditions in the mill. Their bothy is not fit for pigs. The floor of the beater-house is constantly wet and slippery. Lighting is inadequate and has been the cause of accidents. Suggestions by the men for improvements have been ignored. When the safety officer visits the beater-house he has eyes only for the pin-ups and not for the dangerous conditions. The beater-house is the hub of the mill, and production could be completely halted if workers there decided to rebel against these primitive conditions.

JOB EVALUATION.

Late last year a document entitled 'Stoneywood Wage Structure' was distributed to the workers. This announced that the present wage system 'acts as a restraint rather than as an incentive to increased production'. It announced that Job Evaluation (1) would take place throughout the mill, to be carried out by two evaluators, one appointed by Wiggings and another appointed by S.O.G.A.T., in other words, by two bosses' men. The workers were asked 'to work like the clappers' when being evaluated. In modern industry, when the workers are sold into slavery by the union bureaucrats, there is normally some haggling over the price. This document must be unique in admitting beforehand that there would be no general wage increase.

On page 3 of the 'Stoneywood Wage Structure' document one reads: 'It may be that the rates for some jobs may increase, and that the rates for other jobs might decrease'. In return for this the workers were to ensure that each machine reached its target performance each week, and to give assurances that they would help increase productivity over the years.

The object of Job Evaluation is to increase the rate of exploitation (2) and to drive wedges between different sections of workers by means of wage differentials.

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(1) The object of job evaluation, from the management's point of view, is to destroy the natural solidarity and social relationships which exist within departments and shops inside a factory. This is done by paying different rates to groups of workers doing similar work, thereby creating artificial elites and artificial barriers to shop floor organisation.

The factors on which evaluations are based are usually kept secret, in order to deliberately mystify the workers. The two factors usually considered the most important are a) the ease with which a man dcing a certain job can be replaced (training periods and the availability of similarly trained men in the area are considered); and b) the cost to the firm of any mistake a man may make.

(2) By 'rate of exploitation' we mean the ratio of surplus value to variable capital (i.e. wages): $\frac{s}{v}$. Even though wages increase, the rate of exploitation can increase faster, through productivity deals and technical innovations.

Solidarity published a leaflet attacking the document and calling for its repudiation, pointing out the strategic position of the paper mills in modern industry and the strength of the workers' position. Following upon this, and at the request of certain Stoneywood workers, another leaflet was distributed calling for the election of a shop stewards' committee. (At this point our input of paper into Stoneywood was almost equal to Wiggins' output!)

As at Donside, the issue involved here is not only one of wages. It is also one of job control. Why should management arbitrarily seek to impose different values for workers' labour power - even when much the same kind of work is being done? In a society based on workers' management of the factories, workers would institute a system based on equality between skilled and unskilled men.

CULTER

As a contrast to all this talk of take-overs and job evaluation, let us look at Culter paper mills. Here there is a real contradiction between, on the one hand, the level of technology and the techniques of production used, and - on the other hand - the attitudes and consciousness of the workers involved. This may be more pronounced than in any other factory in Britain.

Culter mill is unique. It was built in 1751, but has been modernised recently. The 4 machines are all fairly new and much faster than the ones they replaced. The mill employs about 750 workers. Like Donside, it makes mainly coated papers. But it also makes paper for cigarette packets. Between 1967 and 1968, profits rose by 42% to over £750,000.

Until recently the mill was run on feudal lines by Colonel Geddes. He preserved the tied cottage system of cheap mill housing (still in existence) in the manner of a country squire. Even today retired mill workers still receive occasional gifts of firewood from the mill. It is part of the job of the outside labouring squad to scythe the grass in the gardens of some mill cottages. Many of the machinists have their own small crofts and are allowed days off work at harvest time and market days. Just recently the mill has given fishing rights in a section of the Dee which they own to the workers' recreation club! Even the vocabulary of the workers is pre-industrial. When speaking of the mill they use terms usually applied to a big estate.

It would be wrong to get too idyllic an impression of life at this mill. Wages are low, the work dirty and heavy, the safety conditions appalling. All the old patterns of work are disappearing, since the skilled workers in the mill (engineers, sparks, painters, etc.) now mainly come from the city of Aberdeen and the younger country workers know little of farm life.

CONCLUSION.

It can be seen from this article that the human cost of the high-sounding talk of 'productivity' and 'rationalisation' in the 'national interest' is the destruction of traditional working patterns, increasing discipline inside the factory, intensification of the tempo of work, etc., all of which lead to increasing alienation among workers, and increase their dissatisfaction.

Solidarity, unlike other left-wing groups, sees the economic issue (wages and bonus) as important, but pays special attention to issues of job control, i.e. those struggles relating to conditions of work, speed of work, etc., which account for over 2/3 of disputes in industry today. One example of the many from the mills - in addition to the questions of who decides how many workers are employed (as at Donside), or who decides the value of a worker's labour (as at Stoneywood) - can now be discussed. The mills are at present on a three-shift system. A four-shift system may soon be introduced, even though the workers are against it. Most would retain three shifts, but change the starting times from 6, 2, and 10 to 8, 4, and 12 to give themselves a more human social life. Why on earth should management decide our lives outside as well as inside of production? The shift issue should be decided by the workers themselves. Any struggle on the issue of job control can be assured (within our limited means) of the unconditional support of Solidarity.

I. M.

AUTONOMOUS 'SOLIDARITY' GROUPS

ABERDEEN :	c/o P. Roy, 138 Walker Rd., Aberdeen
CLYDESIDE :	c/o D. Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton.
LONDON (South):	c/o A. Mann, 79 Balfour St., London SE17
LONDON (Bow St.):	c/o Morphy, 16 Fielding Rd., London W.14

STUDENTS' CHALLENGE TO BOURGEOIS EDUCATION

In Vol. V, No. 8, of Solidarity we published an article on Students in Search of Positive Self Consciousness, through which we sought to initiate a discussion on 'the significance, objectives, methods, internal dynamic and limitations' of the student revolt in modern industrial societies. The article by Tom Fawthrop published below - with all of whose conclusions we don't necessarily agree - seeks to develop this discussion. We would welcome further contributions.

"Dare to think, dare to act
In the shadow of repression . . ."

Looking back on the second year of Britain's student revolt, it is becoming all too obvious that expectations have leapt wildly ahead of the real situation.

It is time to realize that in terms of a major challenge to capitalist education, Britain is the most underdeveloped country in the world! Our telescoped experience has led to an almost frantic chase to emulate the feats of revolutionary students in other countries - a not surprising development in view of the poverty of our traditional political environment (1).

The student movement in Britain was born on the crest of the rising wave of student revolt on an international scale last summer. It was nurtured by the euphoria of the moment and the spontaneous awakening of large numbers of students from their more familiar political lethargy. But what happens when the tide turns? The initial momentum of spontaneous awakening recedes and the right-wing (known as the 'moderate') backlash begins. Backlash situations have now developed at Leeds and Hull universities (in response to "sit-ins" last summer) and at Birmingham and Bristol ("sit-ins" before Christmas). In each case, the events exposed the acute susceptibility of student militants to chronic spasms of demoralization in the face of the return of the enemy under the guise of apathy.

Student revolt in this country seems to have rather shallow roots. It tends to be expressed on the primitive level of a desire for direct

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(1) See chapter by Perry Anderson 'Components of the National Culture' in 'Student Power', Penguin, 1969.

action, without any articulate conception of political purpose. Among British students the flesh is increasingly willing but the spirit is still weak!

This is by way of an introduction to the present impasse into which students seemed to have drifted. The impasse is reflected in the morale of the majority of militants and activists, and in our failure to operate effectively between "sit-ins" and demonstrations.

THE MISERABLE MILITANTS

During periods of lull in the more dramatic forms of confrontation the student movement seems to be haunted by a sort of manic-depressive quality, in which massive doses of cynicism gain the upper hand in the struggle . . . including the struggle in our own minds. Plunged into the depths of gloom and despair, militants sit around nostalgically brooding over the past and waiting for the next thunderclap to burst over the campus. This type of militant consciousness may lead to a counter-productive development in the terms of direct action.

Both Essex and Hull students are case studies in the development of depressive reactions which amounts to sheer bloody defeatism. This defeatism in both cases rests (a) on the appalling atomization of militants who seem unable to co-ordinate themselves, and (b) on a stunning absence of theory, clarity of aims, etc. Both these shortcomings lead to a third characteristic. We are all starved of any strategy about what we are trying to do.

"The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (2). Our anti-theory ancestors have certainly made their presence felt on the student scene. Theoretical questions are so often pushed aside by the majority of militants, thus leaving a great vacuum in our consciousness of a situation. This consciousness becomes impoverished just by virtue of leaving theoretical problems to the minds of the few (who generally tend to skate around, in narcissistic circles!). The problems of uniting theory and practice should be the task of all militants, not of a self-styled vanguard.

REVOLUTIONARY EDUCATION - ALL COMRADES ARE LEADERS!

The notion that only the select few can attain the rarefied heights of theoretical insight is sheer undiluted crap!

It reflects a failure to integrate progressive educational ideas with revolution in other fields. Our political education continues with old bourgeois forms (i.e. the formal lecture structure). In our meetings we witness the non-participation of the majority. Inside the movement we see divisions between the theoreticians and the rank and file. We continue to

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(2) K.Marx. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Part I.

buttress, through our own supposedly revolutionary activities, the very hierarchies and bureaucracies we are supposedly trying to destroy.

Revolutionary education should not only be about content. It should concern itself with form as well. Form will often decide on the effectiveness of your communication.

The real life of a general assembly cannot be based on the demagogy of a few orators. It must be based on mass discussion inside smaller groups. Only then should there be a return to the general assembly, for the purpose of generalization and decision making.

This poses a number of challenges to the fossilized structures of many socialist societies. Dull speaker meetings are still too often the order of the day. For many sympathetic students these meetings are no more than a recipe for political boredom. We should not be afraid to learn and apply the ideas of A.S.Neill (3) including the notion that we should bloody well enjoy our meetings. We should not regard them as a dutiful exercise in playing our favourite theme tunes over and over again, or of providing comfortable reassurance for our convictions.

Revolutionary education means the permanent contestation of bourgeois ideas and structures. The battlefield is certainly the enemy's lectures and tutorials, but also our own meetings as well.

In attacking examinations, we attack a characteristically bourgeois form of intellectual activity: isolationism. The atomized student burrowing away beneath layers of textbooks is severely limited and hampered by the inane notion of "one's own work". Militants should regard revolutionary education as group activity, the province of the collective mind, pooling ideas and criticisms. Course-critiques can only thrive on the basis of this type of group involvement, which in itself is the only possible basis for a dynamic group of militants.

Commitment is desperately lacking precisely because we have failed to evolve the type of structures which minimize leadership, and maximize the activism of the majority of members.

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The struggle inside every college is the struggle for student allegiance between the authorities and the organization (if any) of the militants.

We will always lose this struggle whilst the majority of militants remain content to relegate politics to an agreeably small corner in the vast spectacle of life. Revolution in this country sadly smacks of a

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(3) See parts of A.S. Neill 'Summerhill', Pelican. Also L. Berg, 'Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School', Pelican, 1968.

spectator sport, which inevitably focusses on the big occasions, wrapped up in the fanfare of publicity (i.e. demonstrations, for instance that of October 27).

What happened to our 70,000 "revolutionaries" on the Monday morning? The need to pose the question poses the need for our concentration on between-demonstration activity. This activity could be stimulated by the existence in every town of dynamic groupings, action committees, red bases, etc., which are more than just political cells.

To sustain any form of vigorous life such groups have to be able to reach into the shadowy depths of the human psyche - to comprehend the motley jumble of crippled minds and crushed hearts that form the emotional roots of the individual in capitalist society - including the revolutionary individual.

Unless we as the revolutionary force can penetrate the human jungle of personal problems, our ideas and our movement will forever remain remote and emotionally distant from the life of the majority. We all mention the revolution in human relationships in passing. Few of us take it seriously enough. We have to begin by consciously building up a collective awareness around our political activities, by extending the basis of our social activities together (more parties, socials, cultural activities, etc.), such that present narrow political boundaries which imprison us in a peculiar false consciousness of our own (common to most Soc-Soc, R.S.S.F., and I.S. groups) are smashed by a wider conception of what politics is all about (4).

The alternative to the creation of a subversive sub-culture in which comrades feel personally committed to embryonic revolutionary communities is to labour painfully on in the present schizophrenic wilderness, broken only by the traumatic spectacle of periodic confrontations. The tiny number of familiar regulars will carry on their agitation in a pervading atmosphere of disillusion and passivism both before and after the situational dramas of Grosvenor Square, or the occupation of an administration block. Of course the number of militants is growing after each confrontation, but most remain latent militantsas opposed to the desperately small numbers of activists. This passive quiescence of the majority (of any revolutionary grouping) places an intolerable burden and strain on the minority of activists and "leaders" (both those who want to be, and those who don't). These come to dominate political initiative because our situation represents them as the experts on revolution, theory, strategy, etc.

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(4) To clearly differentiate ourselves from the corrupt company of politicians we might refer to the POLITICS OF LIBERATION, the destruction of the mystification of everyday life which distorts the real nature of politics as something alien to life and living (which of course bourgeois politics is, but the contestation of elitist politics is not). Unfortunately many notions of "politicization" used by revolutionaries betray precisely this surrender to bourgeois type politics, and a failure to conceive of revolutionary perspectives in the theatre, tenants' associations, the cinema, and many other fields apart from those eternal factory gates.

The crucial debate on organization has yet to take place. It will not be about organization versus spontaneity. Instead of grappling with the eternal bourgeois dichotomies we will be working out a truly marxist theory of organization with more reference to the educational impulse of student revolt, which is inspired by anti-authoritarianism. The Comités d'Action in France would seem to point the way. The real issue has never been organization v spontaneity, but what sort of organization? Democratic or elitist? Action groupings or a revolutionary party? And perhaps one might suggest - heresy of heresies - that we might need more than one type of organization, including even democratic centralism. What we need above all is the flexibility that can combine a variety of revolutionary organizations in a common cause.

COMBAT SOCIALIST PESSIMISM

With our eyes firmly glued to the spectre of recent failures, on the aftermath of confrontations, and on the sudden disintegration of mass support, it is all too easy to retreat into a state of defeatist paranoia. The present level of student strategy is essentially negative in its response. It is an anti-administration movement positively lacking in creative inspiration. This negativism generates its own pessimism.

What we can perceive is an emerging cycle: confrontation - anti-climax - demoralization - confrontation - despair - defensive strategy (better than no strategy) - pessimism dominating the political psychology of the movement . The dynamics of struggle are systematically weakened by our failure to consolidate our organized strength (5) after confrontations, and by our failure to establish some sort of political continuum of mass-activity, in and out of confrontations.

The plaintive cry of 'no victimisation' becomes symbolic of an overall strategy which takes students to the brink of a show-down with the authorities, and then at the last moment falls back on defence, when faced with repression. No gates, no police, and no victimisation (if granted) would leave the L.S.E. students exactly where they began: a liberal university producing bourgeois ideology. Maybe we should celebrate the closing of the L.S.E. rather than lament the tragic loss of being deprived of the opportunity to imbibe bourgeois ideology. Let us remember January 24 as the L.S.E.'s day of liberation!

Of course the demand of no victimistation has to be made. But 'no victimisation' is not enough. After a time it becomes repetitive. Positive demands (the liberated college, a free university) are an essential part of the campaign to disrupt the capitalist university. No opportunity should ever be missed to point accusing fingers at the wasted potential of modern higher education, or to stress the great potentialities of a socialist education in discovering frontiers of the mind hitherto undreamt of. The fact

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(5) Most confrontations have been dramatic breakthroughs, and yet comrades have afterwards lost ground through lack of imagination and determination in the organisational field.

that a capitalist society could never tolerate the existence of centres of liberated education is irrelevant if our aim is to destroy capitalist society.

A more sober analysis of our triumphs (yes, they do happen) as well as of our failures, would lead to a less defensive strategy. This in turn would generate a more positive commitment to turning our colleges into red bases (6). Let us confront our faint-hearted comrades with this strategy.

DON'T LET THE BASTARDS GRIND YOU DOWN

Our educational system is lubricated by the twin motives of fear and ambition: on fear of authority and of academic failure, and the ambition to "get on", to achieve a career status.

The Vice Chancellors plan of repression for "taming the militants" is aimed above all at recapturing the minds of militants for the service of the bourgeois university. Frightened militants become respectable marxists. They play the "safety first" games of role conflict, reconciling the life of a bourgeois academic with that of a revolutionary. In the face of massive repression this may no longer be possible in a number of universities. To seek to avoid confrontation is to run away from the enemy. It is to betray the student struggle. Our confrontations are as inevitable as any factory strike. The problem is one of achieving maximum impact by putting forward positive demands which transcend more immediate negative ones (i.e. 'no gates' at L.S.E.)

The central demands must be TOTAL WORKERS' CONTROL OF COLLEGES, self-management by all who work in the buildings, one man, one vote for students, cleaners, teachers, gardeners, etc. But any such democratic conception has to be inextricably linked to the notion of "LIBERATED EDUCATION". This in turn must be based on the notion of creative and uninhibited development of the minds of all workers on the campus, free of such bourgeois barriers of examinations, rigid specialization, petty restrictions on areas of study, authoritarian teaching relationships, and occupational seperation, and the reduction of people to the role of 'outsiders' through an unnecessary division of labour (gardeners are gardeners, etc.). Maintenance, construction, cleaning, gardening, administration, and learning should all be regarded as a variety of socially necessary activities, in which all should participate - <u>such that all have the opportunity to be students</u>.

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(6) <u>Red bases</u>: a permanent organizational expression of contestation at all levels of capitalist education. Challenge to established education is through guerilla action groupings whose chief aim is to paralyse existing college structures so that the smooth conversion of graduates into servants of capitalist management is increasingly disrupted.

<u>We will not fit into Capitalist plans!</u>

We now have to prepare in new ways, and evolve new organizational forms for possibly new types of confrontation. A timid strategy will kindle little enthusiasm either among militants or among the mass of students. We have to adopt a bold strategy to galvanize the radical constituency on every campus, to raise their level of commitment to the revolutionary aims of the movement. The days of the part-time and the 'demo-day' revolutionary are numbered. If we can effectively organize and commit ourselves in a revolutionary direction, we can systematically undermine capitalist education.

CONCLUSIONS

(1) It takes more than two years to build up a Zengakuren or an S.D.S. type student movement.
(2) Our failure to achieve the impossible is an obscene reason for defeatism.
(3) We have to create sub-cultures within the existing society, 'red bases' in every town which provide a focal point of revolutionary life (art, music, politics . . . everything).
(4) Destroy passivism in our own ranks - all comrades are leaders.
(5) The discovery of appalling weaknesses in our fledgling movement is not a sufficient justification for a defensive strategy.
(6) For militants to be intimidated by the threats of purges of the left in universities is to play into the hands of the authorities.
(7) Confrontations are essential to any struggle - but we could and should develop much more from them. We require POSITIVE PROGRAMMES.
(8) Higher education should be regarded as a major strategic area for revolutionary activity. It is the industry for producing bourgeois minds and ideas.

What happens to a dream
deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore...
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over...
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load

OR DOES IT EXPLODE?

Langston Hughes

READ

SOLIDARITY

(South London)

Issue No.2 now out.

Contains articles on May Day; Labour's Blueprint; Red Faces at LSE; The C.P. mystery leaflet. Also articles of special interest to construction workers: Kingsnorth Kowboys; Struggling at Kellogs; Daggers drawn at Dungeness. Available from A. Mann, 79 Balfour St., SE17.

VAUXHALL militants beware!

The ink had hardly dried on the Ford settlement (see 'Solidarity', vol. £, Nos. 8 and 9) that Vauxhall Motors were also trying it on. The day after the Ford men returned to work (March 20) the Vauxhall management published the first of a series of proposals. These are the outcome of discussions with the 3 unions which have negotiating rights. The following article, written by a Vauxhall worker, deals with the response of the men at Luton.

In 1967 the unions had signed the infamous 'Slaves Charter'. The story has been fully documented in 'Solidarity' (see vol.4, Nos.8, 9, 10, 11, and vol.5, No.1). The agreement aimed at weakening the newly-emerging shop floor militancy and at giving the management greatly widened powers. The object was a substantial speed-up. But the plan has come unstuck. Not only has job organisation remained in being but it is probably stronger now than it was before. And the Company's production targets - set in 1967 - have not been achieved by a margin of about 10% (according to the management's own admission).

The Company's current proposals, which they would like to see replacing the 1967 agreement when the latter runs out in October, contain all the usual ingredients: a large-scale reduction in shop floor bargaining power leading to a massive speed-up, the whole pill sweetened by a moderate wage increase (the consolidated rate for Grade A production workers would be raised from 10/- per hour to 10/8, with a roughly pro rata increase for other grades). This would still leave the wages of Vauxhall workers well below those of Midland car workers.

The Company's proposals must be taken very seriously. The 'no strike' clause quoted in the article is virtually a carbon copy of the infamous agreement signed by the union leaders in October 1962 at Fords (6 days later this agreement led to the victimisation of leading militants at Dagenham, and to a defeat for shop floor organisation from which Ford workers have only just begun to recover. The defeat at Fords was followed by huge reductions of work standards and the imposition of a gestapo-like regime within the factory).

Anyone who believes that the trade union officials at Luton will play a less despicable role needs his head examined. R.R. Hopkins, manager of Vauxhall, put the situation very clearly in his verbal evidence to the Royal Commission on the Trade Unions in February 1966. Seeking

to explain the relative industrial peace at Vauxhall's, he said: 'Perhaps our relationships with our district union officials are closer and more intimate than they might be at national level'. At Vauxhall's the relationships between management and the trade union officials are not only intimate, they are positively obscene!

Resistance to the new proposals is building up inside the factories. As our contribution, 'Solidarity' intends to provide continued and accurate coverage of developments at Vauxhall's. To do this properly we need help. We need articles, letters, comments and criticisms from workers involved. We are fully aware of the dangers of victimisation and we guarantee protection of the identities of all correspondents.

K. W.

FIRST ROUND AT VAUXHALL

Vauxhall Motors are the same as any other employer. They are out for the largest profit in return for the smallest investment. But like other bosses they are also frightened that the workers they employ might one day revolt.

Following hard on the heels of the Ford settlement the General Motors-owned firm decided to benefit from newspaper-inspired fear of unofficial strikes and militant shop stewards. They proposed a new agreement which, in return for moderate wage increases, would tie the trade unions (NUVB, AEF and ETU) to disciplinary action against members who are not prepared to sell their liberty for a couple of coppers.

The 'no strike' clause proposal reads as follows: 'During the life of this Agreement the unions will not cause or permit their members to cause, nor will any member of the unions take part in, any unauthorised work stoppage or slow down, curtailment of work, restriction or interference with production in any plant of the Company. The unions will not cause or permit their members to cause, nor will any member of the unions take part in, any strike or stoppage of any of the Company's plants or premises until all the procedure has been exhausted. The Company reserves the right to discipline any employee taking part in any violation of this section of this agreement and will expect the unions to review the conduct of any member in violation within union rules and procedure and support such action as may be necessary and appropriate'. (my emphasis)

Vauxhall is in a stronger position to impose its wishes than most of its competitors. Its workers already accept the lowest level of pay in the industry - with the result that they can ill afford industrial action. Then there is the Company-inspired Management Advisory Committee set-up, which attempts to by-pass the shop stewards. The ratio of staff and supervision to ordinary workers is fantastically high, meaning a high proportion of company men and potential blacklegs. And lastly the

Company has already been able to introduce measured day rate which is known locally as 'consolidated pay'.

However, over recent years there has been a steady increase in struggles within the plant, mainly centred on the Passenger Vehicle Paint Shop, A.C. Block, which have managed to squeeze certain condition allowance payments from the Company for a total of about 700 workers out of 28,500. This is offensive to Vauxhall because of the scope for shop floor bargaining. The 'new deal' proposes to do away with this by consolidating the rate anew. The proposals state (Para 8, section (A):

'It is the responsibility of management to remove or improve below-standard working conditions and employees should not be paid additional money to tolerate or accept shortcomings in this field'.

THE PAINT SHOP

In the A.C. Paint Block, even if nowhere else at Vauxhall's, this policy is doomed to failure. The workers in this shop will tolerate no alteration in the wage structure which is disadvantageous to them, and if the trade union officials and management don't know this, they will find to their cost that what we have we hold.

At a recent mass meeting of Paint Shop workers the following resolution was passed unanimously: 'That the shop stewards and the branches of unions having membership employed within A.C. Paint Shop, Vauxhall Motors, Luton, exert every pressure necessary on the District Committees and Negotiation Committees to instruct Vauxhall Motors that no Agreement will be reached which is in any way derogatory to the membership therein employed'.

This is probably the most restrained resolution ever accepted by the Paint Shop workers. But it is all the more powerful because of that restraint. It demonstrates absolute determination not to give an inch. It has since been followed by similar resolutions in other shops.

The mood in Vauxhall Motors is now one of disgust towards the Company, for its flagrant hiding behind the government's skirts as exemplified by the Prices and Incomes Board, the Department of Employment and Productivity and 'In Place of Strife'. But Vauxhall workers are determined never again to suffer the indignity of another 'Slaves Charter' sell-out. The Vauxhall workers must prepare to fight. The Paint Shop thinks they will.

Taurus, A.E.F.

STOP PRESS

As we go to press, we have received a copy of the second instalment of Vauxhall Motor Company's thrilling proposals, aimed at strengthening the chains which already bind their workers. The men are virtually unrepresented. The union officials have not even made any properly worked

out claims. Up to 1967 Vauxhall could have any agreement it liked by simply buttering up the officials. There is a great danger even now that Vauxhall will be able to get the current agreement signed, simply by offering the unions better facilities for recruiting new members and possibly deducting union dues from the pay packet. If they don't act, Vauxhall workers will be the victims of the biggest carve-up since Munich.

The April Document is in part an argument for the Company's proposals. It suggests 1) an even wider employment of women, 2) the introduction of three-shift working, 3) a tightening up on time-keeping and absenteeism, 4) the extension of management-determined standard times and the disciplining of those unable to work to them, 5) the no-strike clause.

The other part of the document is an argument against the men's demands for wage parity with the Midlands. This part is characterised by an imaginative juggling with statistics, unlike anything seen since the days of the late Herr Goebbels. For example they quote the D.E.P. figures for the average wage received in the motor industry for 1968 as being £27/6/5 and compare it unfavourably with the figure for Vauxhall of £27/9/6. What they forget to mention is that Vauxhall Motors systematically pursue a policy of undermanning, making up the short fall in production by massive overtime. So what the figures really mean is that Vauxhall workers get 3/1 a week more for working an average week, conservatively estimated* as being in the region of 5 hours a week more than the average. Some deal!

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* In 'Labour Relations in the Motor Industry' by Turner, Clack and Roberts, (Allen and Unwin, 1967), p.140.

EAST LONDON SQUATTERS

The struggle in Ilford has reached a crisis. Over 60 bailiffs supported by the police have, without even a Court order, evicted 3 families, brutally assaulting and threatening them in the process. Eleven activists in the group have also been arrested and bound over.

The officials responsible for this action have been subjected, by persons unknown, to a sustained campaign of annoyance. Loads of coal, gravel, manure and concrete have been dumped outside their front door. So have wreaths. Undertakers have called to measure them up for coffins. They have become very niggled indeed.

For the struggle to be extended effectively there is an urgent need of physical and financial help. All those interested should get in touch with the East London Squatters, 128 Hainault Road, London E.11.

SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

A National Meeting of members and supporters of SOLIDARITY was held in Leeds during the week-end of April 19 and 20. It was attended by about 60 people. Aberdeen, Clydeside, Bow Street, North London and South London groups were represented, and there were comrades from Cambridge, Colchester, Leeds, Manchester and Warwick.

The meeting heard reports from the five groups and from other areas. The North London group was able to report the production of 55 editions of 'Solidarity' and of over 40,000 copies of various pamphlets. The greatly increased interest in libertarian ideas and the extension of Solidarity's work into new areas and fields of activity was noted.

The discussion on perspectives was opened by a London comrade, who briefly related Solidarity's history from the time, in 1960, when the original members broke with the S.L.L. Avoiding the usual dead-end of trying to become 'real trotskyists', Solidarity developed instead a modern revolutionary libertarian approach, influenced by the ideas of the French group 'Socialisme ou Barbarie'.

Several student comrades suggested that new fields of revolutionary activity were opening up, such as women's liberation and the conflict of generations. The paramountcy of industrial struggles was emphasised. Solidarity's contention that workers would increasingly challenge managerial prerogatives was being confirmed more definitely at each turn of the struggle. Coming struggles against 'penalty clauses' and anti-strike legislation would provide valuable opportunities for revolutionary work. The movement for a strike and demonstration on May Day (i.e. May 1st) in which Solidarity has participated was gathering momentum and would provide a focal point for activity by both workers and students.

A London comrade pointed out that there was a deep crisis in every field of theory, even including the physical sciences. He emphasised the size and scope of the theoretical tasks now facing the movement. Solidarity was a political organisation with a general and detailed critique of society, from which our activity must flow.

INDUSTRIAL WORK

On Sunday, the discussion on the building of Solidarity groups centred for some time on the difficulties of student groups breaking out of their isolation.

Aberdeen comrades said that they had decided to concentrate on the paper mills, because they were relatively large-scale and modern, but lacked any real shop organisation. With a few articles on the mills from contacts who had worked there, and research into mill profits and ownership, a pamphlet had been produced, which had sold well at the mills and

led to a number of further contacts being made. The possibility of building links between Aberdeen and South London paper workers was discussed.

A student comrade from South London stressed the need to avoid the 'what can we do for you?' approach, which was common when students attempted to contact workers. The partnership must be one of equals. The essential prerequisite for students was to make their own struggle meaningful, so that they would have something to contribute from their own experience.

In a short discussion on industrial organisation, certain speakers expressed some doubts about working with the trade unions, as even shop stewards were increasingly being integrated into the system. Others expressed a contrary view.

NATIONAL ORGANISATION

Under the heading of 'National organisation' the meeting discussed a proposal from two comrades for a national, federal organisation, a delegate national committee, and eventually a national paper. Most comrades present felt that these proposals could not be gone into in detail without prior discussion in the various groups. The proposal (and alternatives) should first be drafted and circulated. The original proposal was then withdrawn.

An alternative proposal was accepted after amendment. It called for an ad hoc group to be set up to organise the next national meeting (in about 2 months' time) and also weekend schools and meetings on specific subjects. This group was also given the task of servicing local groups and helping to form new ones; it was then elected, and may be contacted through Don Kirkley, 30 Winchester Avenue, London NW6.

It was noted with some satisfaction that considerable developments had taken place since the last Solidarity National Meeting in Birmingham in March 1968, when there were only 3 Solidarity groups (Aberdeen, Clydeside and London) plus a few contacts in Leeds. It was generally felt that this Conference had marked a step towards a more effective organisational structure for 'Solidarity', although an enormous amount of work both in the field of theory and of organisation remains to be done.

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