

Red South West

Issue 2 Autumn 98

£1 waged, 50p/donation unwaged

Inside this issue...

- GM Crops
- EMU or Ostrich
- World Crash
- Alternative World Cup
- An anarchist Bricklayer
- Liverpool Dockers
- CLR James
- Communist Manifesto

Soccer's Alternative



The winning team from Soweto celebrate with Thorncombe villagers

World Cup at Thorncombe, Dorset

Red SW No.2 Autumn 1998 - Editorial

Red SW has come about through cooperation between socialist and anarchist individuals and groups across the SW including - the Exeter Left group, the former Somerset Socialist/Somerset Clarion, Bristol Marxist Forum and Anti-Fascist Action. The aim of *Red SW* is to encourage dialog, debate and active co-operation throughout the region. Our pages are open to all and the articles contained within *Red SW* represent the views of the individual authors.

The Crisis of Labour

At a time when the defenders of capital have lost their way (who is William Hague?) the whole opposition movement has fallen into crisis. Anarchy has taken in the fall of *Class War* while the Marxist left has had to face the implosion of the *Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP)* and the transformations of the *Militant* into the *Socialist Party*. There is nothing more like a corpse than the *Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP)* and its glossy *Living Marxism*. The style conscious *Living Marxism* has decayed into *LM* and the *RCP* is dead.

A glance at the audience of any meeting of the left shows something very interesting (in serious need of a sociological study?). The left is growing old. Well, we all do. But it has not renewed itself. We old codgers often say 'When I was a lad' (others may say 'when I was a lass'). The next part of the sentence shows how much better the 'good old days' were. I'll have a go. When I was a lad I joined Gerry Healy's *WRP*. In my early 20s I was one of the movement's 'middle aged'. The bulk of the activists were young students and workers. It ain't like that now.

Behind this is a real problem. Then the left then seemed new, aggressive and radical. We, in the *WRP*, like most of the left had a body of ideas that would turn granny and granddad's world upside down. We were determined to see a better world than the one we lived in. An insight into our radical thinking comes in James D. Young's piece on CLR James.

These days, like Ian Paisley, our preferred word is No! Our politics have been defensive. We have opposed cuts, fought fascism,

Where do we stand? Geoff Barr & Dave Parks, of the Exeter Left Group, write on behalf of *Red SW*

condemned unemployment, etc. On all of these issues we have been right. The snag is that we have told under half the story. We have pointed out that capital has undermined useful services, spawned racists and been unable to employ the whole workforce. This is because it is in a mess.

What we need is to show that only a communist future can overcome these problems. It is on this that we differ not only from the old Labourists but especially the New Labour donkeys. The corrective comes, in part, from an article, which ironically looks back. A leading member of the Bristol Marxist Forum, Jeremy, has written a reminder of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, published 150 years ago. Sometimes we need to track back if we are to go forward. Young Karl Marx and Fred Engels offered some pointers that Jeremy shows are well worth examining now.

The strength in depth of our movement comes over in Dave Chapple's interview with Graham Short and Mick Parkin's exchange with Bob Richie, a Liverpool docks shop steward. Both show (in very different ways) the ability of workers to fight the old enemy. They implicitly pour scorn on those who tell us that the movement is dead and all that is left is to crawl around *New Labour*.

Get Involved!

We hope that *Red SW* will help to revive the Left throughout the region and for this to happen we need to learn from the mistakes of the past. There is diversity on the Left and we need to recognise this and accept collaboration and alliances with others we don't entirely see eye to eye with. If you wish to get involved then contact us or meet us at the Revolutionary Socialist Network conference in Bridgwater Sat, Sun 14th, 15th November.

Help *Red SW* - make it yours! We need articles, news, help with production and sales. Any able cartoonists would be a great bonus. Finally, we aim in the future to produce a web site to complement the

work of the magazine, with links to local organisations. We welcome any able cyber designers and technicians to help with this.

Red South West is part of the larger revival of our movement. As readers will see it is rooted in the South West. It is also part of a movement of hostility to capital. This movement offers a future in which we can express our humanity in a way that is impossible under capitalism.

* * * * *

Contributions and Subscriptions

Please send articles to:-
Dave Chapple & Glen Burrows
1 Blake Place, Bridgwater TA6 5AU
Phone 01278 450562

or to:-
Exeter Left Group, c/o 'The Flying Post', PO Box 185, Exeter EX4 4EW
Will Brown, 3 Fitzroy Street, Totterdown, Bristol BS4 3BY

Deadline for next issue 1st December 1998.

Subscriptions: £5 for 4 issues
Supporters: £10 (includes subscription)

Cheques payable to Red South West

Available for loan.

The following publications are available for sale or loan:-

- Subversion
- CARF (Campaign Against Racism & Fascism)
- Fighting Talk (AFA)
- Counter Information (Glasgow)
- SchNews (Brighton)
- Socialist Perspectives (Swindon)
- Syndicalist (Hull)
- New Interventions
- Troops Out of Ireland

Also two collections of poetry by Mick Parkin:

- A New World Off By Heart
 - Bard-U-Like
- both are £2 waged/£1 unwaged.

Genetically Modified Crops

Few people can be unaware of the continuing genetically-modified organism (GMO) debate; many are opposed to research in this area. However, the imposition of messed-about-with vegetables has clear precedents.

In a society which tolerates pigs that suffer from congenital curvature of the spine – because consumers like long cuts of meat, and turkeys for whom flight and sex is merely something that their ancestors enjoyed – they're now too heavy to either take off or get off, it was clear that plants simply weren't pulling their weight.

First to fall to the food technologists' short, sharp shock treatment was the tomato. Taste, having been carefully bred out in favour of colour and shape, was reintroduced by the insertion of a gene that had started off life in a fish. The imaginatively named Flavr Savr tomato never really took off and so a different strategy was adopted for the next foray into vegetable mutation.

The food 'n' chemical company Monsanto (strapline *Food, Health, Hope* – why *hope*, I wonder?) announced that their wholesaling operations were going to make it impossible to differentiate between their new, herbicide-resistant GMO and non-GMO soya beans. The herbicide in question was their own *Roundup™* product and so the financial incentive was clear. Since much of the western world's soya products originate from Monsanto crops, consumers were going to have to live with GMOs whether they liked it or not.

I have to admit a certain vested interest here. As a vegan of several years standing, I take exception to attempts to mess around with my protein supplies.

Even though protein in the western world is vastly overrated (two Mac-burgers a day not automatically imbuing the consumer with bright eyes and rosy cheeks) it does remain an essential part of the diet. I tend to concur with those cultures for whom daily consumption of slabs of dead flesh is not inherently a lifestyle statement. For many hundreds of years they

Paul Harding, Soya Based Lifeform and Exeter Left Group member, comments on the issues of genetically modified organisms.



Protesters search for a missing snowball underneath genetically modified crops

have known that soya-derived tofu and tempeh, for instance, can readily provide high quality, tasty protein.

Not that it's just non-meat eaters that are going to have pseudo-soya inflicted on them. A perusal of the ingredient lists of many everyday products (an eye-opener in itself!) will, likely as not, turn up soya flour somewhere.

It's not even as if the GMO companies are happy to coexist with alternative suppliers. An organic farmer near Totnes looks set to lose its Soil Association certification and thus much of its business because a neighbouring farm has decided that there's a bob or two to be made from helping the vegetable-meddlers by growing their trial crops.

A high court action by the hapless farmer was thrown out on the grounds that cross pollination was impossible. Unfortunately, research carried out in Denmark and America on oilseed rape, and recently reported by the *Guardian* shows that this may not be the case. Not only did experiments show that pollen could travel more than a mile from the test site, but that genes from the GM rape could cross into weeds from the same brassica family.

The result was 'the worst of both worlds' – the weeds retained their normal tenacity whilst also acquiring the herbicide resistance of

the 'parent' GMO. Repeated application of the optimised herbicide over a period of time – something the chemical companies would certainly be hoping for – allows the GM weed to flourish by killing off its natural competitors.

The GMO-promoting companies bleat that theirs is the only method that will allow the Earth's growing population to be fed in the future. Whilst this is not necessarily untrue, given western farming practices, it does not have to be the only solution.

Few farmers will argue that their animals will require up to ten times as much protein over their lives as is obtained at slaughter. Although some companies believed they had found a solution to this grossly inefficient system when they found that live herbivores could be persuaded to eat dead herbivores, the resulting BSE scandal has cost us all dear and looks set to continue for many years to come.

Studies have shown that a vegan population could be supported on perhaps just a quarter of the farmland in use today, removing at a stroke the need to pin our hopes to the GMO 'miracle'. Of course, I'm biased, but its worth thinking about, isn't it?

Better EMU than Ostrich!

The European road to socialism?

In *RSW 1* Ron Thomas, ex-MP and stalwart of the old Labour 'Left', rehashed the case against European Monetary Union and the EU itself. He starts off by claiming that "most socialists have opposed the Common Market and European Union", but he ends by making many points that I would make in their favour.

Now he may be right about "most socialists". I've not met many who weren't anti-EU. However, that stance seems to have more to do with a folk-memory of the anti-EEC campaign led by Tony Benn and Co than with any well-thought-out objections. These can be summarised in Ron's phrase: "the EU is a capitalist bloc whose institutions operate to serve the interest of powerful multinationalist companies in their global search to maximise profits."

Workers of the world unite

So what else is new? The nation state, that his party exists to serve and currently is trying to govern, is part of the same system. So why aren't more socialists calling for withdrawal from the UK and for city-states to mint their own coinage? A sort of L.E.T.S. (Local Economic Trading Scheme) Utopia perhaps?

In the long-term this might be a good idea, but I thought that "socialists" held to principle that you organised to fight on the same scale of operation as the capitalist opposition. Isn't this what's implied by the marxist theory of dialectics?

Undoubtedly the EU is intended by its present designers to be everything Ron says. Yet international solidarity is still another lefty pipe dream that's been pissed on by Labour governments and trade unions alike. If British workers have yet to grasp their common interest with brothers and sisters in Asia, Africa or Latin America, perhaps they might find it easier to do so with employees in the same companies across the English Channel, who have the same-sized pay-packet and the same bills?

You have everything to lose...

I know this is wildly optimistic, but there's no more mileage in going it alone. Even Ron must remember

Richard Anthony, Exeter Left Group, questions the traditional Left hostility to Europe as outlined by Ron Thomas in *RSW 01*.



The Dockers have demonstrated that workers internationalism is alive and well

how, in the mid-'70s, the IMF and its famous "gnomes of Zurich" put the brakes on Labour's plans to borrow their way out of the oncoming recession. Workers in a single country have no hope of combating the repressive nature of 'globalisation' and the so-called 'Free Trade' of GATT and its latest weapon: the "Multilateral Agreement on Investment". MAI means that multinationals can sue the shit out of any government which tries to control their activities - like selling us genetically-screwed-up food - as illegal restriction of trade.

To his credit, Ron knows this and makes the point that "EMU-EU reminds us - if we need reminding - that attacks on workers' conditions ... are not constrained by national boundaries or 'nation states'". He even refers to "strikes & demonstrations across Europe" and "an Euro March", which were not against the single currency as he claims. Rather they were calling for open, democratic and peaceful Europe, which the authors of the Treaty of Rome promised, and for the kind of social justice that one state can't hope to deliver, even if its social democrats weren't conservatives by another name.

When right-wing Tories, including alleged Europhiles, denounce "the

European Socialist Super-State", they are not kidding. It scares them rigid. They are only divided on how to prevent it happening, but the smart ones have decided that isolationism is not an option.

... but why break the habits of a lifetime?

Would that those who purport to speak for the British working class had as much sense! They seemed to relate more to "It Ain't Half Hot, Mum" than to "Auf Wiedersehen, Pet" (if you're old enough to remember either programme). In the last year or two there have been some major battles and victories on 'the Continent': the occupation of French Job Centres, the fight to maintain the value of the minimum wage in France and elsewhere and, as Ron points out, a reduction in the working-week and the removal of a French Conservative government.

The response of the traditional left in the UK to these events, not to mention others closer to home like the world-trade summit in Birmingham and the EU end-of-term meeting in Cardiff - has been, at best, pathetic, but more generally: zero. I don't see that staying detached from Europe is going to improve this track record.

As for EMU - why not cut out the middleman and use dollar\$?

Surviving The Crash

I was going to start this article by saying that the eyes of the 'international community' (the world's rich people) are fixed on Wall Street - that as long as the American Stock Market holds, the current world economic crisis will not develop into a full blown international recession. But I caught the radio news while having breakfast in a Totterdown cafe and the first item was a major slide on Wall Street (*nearly 6% drop, 2nd biggest in history - ed*). Many people can remember where they were when they heard that Princess Di died. I remember where I was when the stock market crashed.

If Wall Street crashes (as many observers believe it will), what will happen next? Several things in quick succession. Someone said to me once that to be involved in British politics during the miners strike was as if someone had suddenly turned the lights on. Events were so fast moving and the battle so desperate that relationships and interests that had previously been hidden or confused were suddenly naked and clear. Similarly, if you want to understand the world economy better, now is the time to take notice.

The first thing that will happen if Wall Street crashes will be 'the flight to quality'. Capitalists and others who have speculated on the great bull run in shares will try to get out of the market and put their money where its value will not be eroded. The two destinations of frightened money will be the Government bonds of countries with low inflation risks and strong, stable domestic systems. Three candidates are obvious - the US, Germany and Switzerland. Money flooding into these bonds will boost these currencies putting increased pressure on all other currencies trying to shadow them. The EMU will be put under intense pressure. And the US will be threatened by a flood of cheap imports.

The second consequence of a crash of the US stock market is that consumer confidence within the US will collapse. The US market is so high precisely because more people than ever have sunk their savings in it. The savings of middle class America are riding on Wall Street as they were in the 1920's. If the market goes, then these savings will be savagely cut. People will stop spending freely. The housing market will fall and discretionary consumer items

Will Brown, Bristol Marxist Forum, comments on the world economic crisis and asks, where to now?

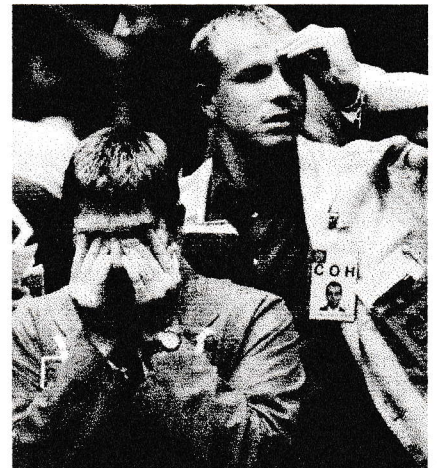
(expensive clothes, luxury cars) will stop being bought.

The third consequence of a crash will be that all businesses will review their production plans. Expansion plans will be axed. Production plans will be cut. Unprofitable businesses will be ruthlessly closed.

During the coming months there will be much media comment on economic events - some very good - some just whistling in the wind (i.e. of the 'there is no need to panic' variety). Two key facts must be remembered - capitalism is not a conspiracy in the sense that the ruling class does not control the economic system. They have the economic power and profit from the way the system is organised - but it is a monster beyond their control. And secondly - capitalism is not a zero-sum game. If there is a recession in Japan that is not always good news for America. In a crisis - the whole system begins to grind to a halt like an airport in heavy snow.

As the world recession gathers momentum, unemployment will climb and company profits will crash. A world stock market crash on the scale of 1987 will guarantee this - stock markets are infallible leading indicators of profitability and output when they fall by 30%. Think back to 1982-83 or 1990-92 to remember what happens. The economic tensions lead to political tensions within nation states and between nation states. The banking systems begin to fail under the strain. The banks act like the control rooms of capitalism - as the system breaks down panic breaks out in the control room as smoke rises from the levers and dials.

How bad will things get? Will Hutton, editor of the Observer and leading economic pundit, was saying recently that 'real catastrophe' was a distinct possibility. He was calling for the creation of a world central bank able to issue billions of dollars to flood the world with spending power. The radical nature of this suggestion underlines the severity of the situation. The world economy emerged from the last two world recessions on the back of economic, technological and political developments:- the expansion of South East Asia, the adoption of the new Japanese production methods, the new technologies of IT and the collapse of the Communist bloc. There



is no equivalent hope for capitalism on the horizon at present. The great fear for capitalists is that world recession would lead into depression on the scale of the 30's when world trade collapsed by 2/3rds, US unemployment rose to 25% in one year and the ruling classes of the world fell apart into impotent, squabbling national elites. It was only the Second World War that saved capitalism, by dramatically re-configuring the balance of power internationally and forcing through massive technical change. Even the most ruthless ruling class would be reluctant to embark on another world war, given that the power of nuclear weapons would threaten its own annihilation.

What are we to do in the face of recession? We have to learn the lessons of how we have survived past recessions and we must take this opportunity to understand capitalism better. We must look after each other - solidarity is key as always. We must not allow ourselves to be divided - particularly across national borders or between those who are working and those who are not. Recent initiatives that have stressed autonomy and collective creativity - that mean a crisis of capitalism is not a crisis for the people - must be developed - from LETS schemes to dance culture to Reclaim The Streets. Internationally, the survival of Cuba gives hope that alternatives to capitalism are possible. We must work out the best way to deal with oppression and the agents of the state - whether to try to fight them or to laugh at them. Above all we must see that capitalist crisis is not our crisis, that the system is not our system and that we should not be frightened or upset about the crisis of a system that has produced the holocaust, burnt the rain forests and runs on fear and poverty.



Alternative World Cup, Dorset 1998

**Roger, Bristol
Anti-Fascist
Action, reports**

In an almost unheard of initiative, a Sunday football club in Bristol organised an international amateur football tournament at the end of July 1998. After a year or so of planning the "Alternative World Cup" was born kicking and screaming in the sleepy village of Thorncombe in Dorset. The 4 day festival of football, music and debauchery was attended by over 500 people and attracted 20 11-a-side teams from England, Germany, Poland, Norway, Ireland, France, Belgium and South Africa.

The idea for the tournament came from a series of smaller European events held in Stuttgart, Bad Muskau (Polish/German border) and Antwerp over the last 7 years. This was the fourth international tournament hosted by the **Easton Cowboys F.C.** in England and by far the largest. The basis for the creation of these European links was the fusion of the thrash/punk music scene, anti-fascism, the love of the great game and a healthy attitude to drinking (i.e. as much as possible). Since the Cowboys travelled to Stuttgart in 1993 (according to their players the point where the team really took off as a socialising machine), the alternative European football scene has really blossomed, with new teams being involved every year.

This first "World Cup" was won by the team from South Africa. The **Diepkloof Eleven Experience** as they like to be known, hail from one of the townships in SOWETO and lit up the tournament with their electric football. Star player **Benedict Vilakazi** was top scorer over the 3 days of group and knockout games, scoring the winning goal in the last minute of the final against the German team **ICE Neckerstrasse** from Stuttgart. Diepkloof have a considerable pedigree having several players signed up for **Kaiser Chiefs** and the brother of Lucas Radebe (of Leeds Utd.) playing in goal. Their manager is confident that at least one of their players will represent his country, and if not, the team itself could make it as a professional male voice choir, their rendition of ANC victory songs was as superb as their football.

Semi-final losers included **LKS Leknica** from Poland (finishing third) and the aptly named **Lunatics** from Antwerp, whose dance of joy after



Winners & Losers: Diepkloof Eleven Experience, ICE Neckerstrasse

losing in the semi-final will be remembered for a long time. The English teams didn't fare so well (where have we heard this before) the exceptions being **Republica Highland** (Leeds) and the **1 in 12 Club** (Bradford) who notched up good results both in the bar and on the pitch.

The event itself was not just about football, in fact the, music, socialising and sex being more important (and so they should be!.. -ed) despite what the "new lad" culture might be trying to engineer. All the European tournaments are treated as a place for everybody to have a laugh, supporters, children, local residents, pets (yes, there was a dog show) with the football being a pleasant diversion during the afternoon. These attempts to make the great game an opportunity for all of us to have a good day (and night) out are a refreshing change from the macho boredom of much of amateur football. As one excited festival goer shouted "**Football is the new punk**".

On the international level the "Alternative World Cup" was a brilliant example of co-operation across continents, outside of any control by "official" government/council/F.A. bodies. Clubs dealt directly with each other and teams and their Communities (Bristol, Leeds, Bradford, Stuttgart and Bad Muskau) raised over £9000 to help fund teams from the less wealthy countries to attend. This commitment to real "hands across the water" organisation makes the current F.A. initiatives look pathetic and still stuck in the "Little England" mentality which plagues this country in its attitudes to Europe. It should be added that none of the teams

involved in the co-ordination of the events have received any money from government/council bodies in their history, achieving everything through their own initiative and local organisation. This had its drawbacks financially, but has allowed them to remain in total control and not get bogged down in local bureaucracies. After all grants from local councils etc. should be there to benefit initiatives such as this, but often involve constantly proving you are in line with the latest politically correct fashion, endless form filling, concessions to bureaucrats and massaging the ego's of would be local councillors. One notable exception was the trade union **UNISON** who made a donation to the cause at short notice to help the South African team travel to the event.

All in all, the last 6 years has taught the Easton Cowboys that some dreams can be realised and just about anyone can do it if they have the vision, commitment to Internationalism and drive to push it through. After all we started with nothing and now we have a linked community, sharing similar ideas, which stretches across Europe and Africa. We are nothing special, anybody can do this.

**For a world without nations,
footballers of the world unite, you
have nothing to lose but your livers!**

For further information about the Alternative World Cup 2000 or the Easton Cowboys F.C. please contact: Easton Cowboys, c/o Easton Community Centre, Kilburn Rd., Easton, Bristol
E-mail: worldcup@cowboys.softnet.co.uk
The Cowboys web site is at: <http://wkweb5.cableinet.co.uk/easton.cowboys>

GAndALF - Breaking The Silence

It may well be the British free speech case of the century. But the silence about it in the media and in government is deafening.

Last November, Steve Booth, Noel Molland and Saxon Wood were locked up in punishment for articles they had written in their paper Green Anarchist. They were charged with "conspiracy to incite other people to do direct action against road-building schemes and vivisection labs". For this, they were each sentenced to three years.

Two more people are awaiting trial in the autumn, on identical charges - Paul Rogers, another Green Anarchist editor, and Robin Webb, press officer for the Animal Liberation Front (hence the name GAndALF = Green Anarchist/Animal Liberation Front).

What was the establishment reaction to this outrageous violation of civil rights? The civil rights organisation Liberty sent an observer to the eleven-day trial of the original GAndALF Three. According to Steve Booth, this observer spent only one day in court, where he "never even opened his notebook." The Guardian published a snippet about the trial. The rest of the capitalist media was silent.

In the alternative press, fortunately, it was a different story. Papers like SchNews and Earth First Update understand well that the convictions represent an attempt to intimidate and silence them. Several

Margaret Jones, Bristol, speaks out!

hundred publications have signed a statement of protest against this blatant repression. In defiant refusal to be intimidated, Earth First Update accompanied a front-page report on the jailing of the GAndALF Three with a detailed account of a direct action quarry protest. There has also been international protest against the GAndALF prosecutions, involving groups as far away as Finland and Canada. Noam Chomsky has written from the U.S in support.

When U.S. Amnesty International decided to list the GAndALF Three as political prisoners, it seems the British State had had enough. The Three were released on bail, and are now awaiting an appeal against their convictions.

Things now look more hopeful. If the original convictions are overturned, then Paul Rogers and Robin Webb may never have to come to trial at all. But the battle is by no means over.

If the GAndALF Three lose their appeal, they could be returned to prison. If the defendants have their sentences reduced but are not acquitted, this is clearly still dangerous for the rest of us. If any of these prosecutions stick, then the State will use "conspiracy to incite" to suppress free speech, again and again. Anyone writing an article in

favour of direct action - anyone putting their phone number on a leaflet calling others to a road protest - is at risk.

All this may well seem quite hypothetical and abstract to some people. But as Steve, Noel and Saxon can tell you first-hand, there's nothing abstract about being banged up on prison. We must break through the silence surrounding this case - for the sake of all of us. Meanwhile, let's go on acting - and inciting!

Write to the London GAndALF Support Campaign c/o London Greenpeace, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP. Or phone 0117-9541443 for local information. Or write to Margaret Jones, c/o Green Leaf Books, 82 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BZ

GANDALF VICTORY

In July the GAndALF Three had their convictions quashed in the High Court. The High Court judges strongly criticised the original judge for misdirecting the jury and giving excessive sentences.

Paul Rogers, another GA editor still up on the same ridiculous charges described the outcome as a "hammer blow" for the authorities, who have spent offer £4 million of taxpayers money trying to silence the underground press.

BNP & PAEDOPHILES IN SOMERSET

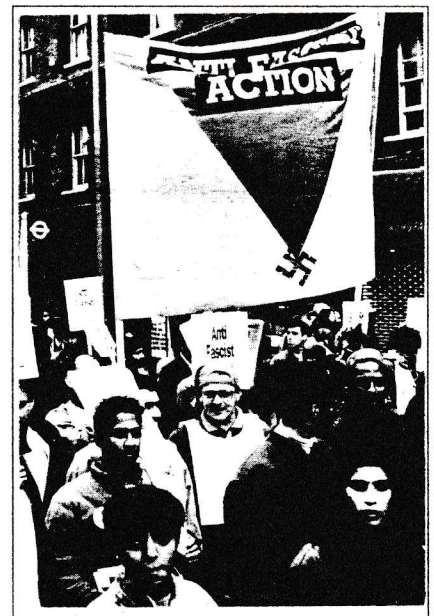
This summer, British National Party members & supporters have been leafleting demonstrations organised by working class families in Yeovil, Bridgwater & Taunton against the rumoured re-housing of released killer & paedophile Sidney Cooke.

In Bridgwater one Sunday, two BNP supporters, including Bridgwater-based Southwest BNP Secretary Bruce Cowd, were among a crowd of 100 outside the Police Station. A BNP national leaflet against paedophiles was distributed, & "armed" with this, adults & children stopped traffic & briefly blockaded the police station entrance. Next day, local anti-fascists attended to confront Cowd & distribute a local leaflet pointing out the number of British fascists with paedophile convictions.

Early in August, a couple of BNP supporters attempted to leaflet a 250-strong anti-Sidney Cooke march on the Priorswood Estate in Taunton, but were chased off by some of the marchers. Later, Taunton, Bridgwater & Bristol Anti-Fascist Action supporters leafleted most of the estate, helped by local people.

Taunton Liberal Democrat MP, Jackie Ballard, who attended the first demonstration, accused the local men who had chased the fascists off of being BNP themselves! This appears to have been purely on the basis of their short hair & aggressive manner!

It is hoped to set up a Somerset Anti-Fascist Action group, working with Bristol & Exeter comrades.



An Anarchist Bricklayer in Plymouth

Graham Short was born in 1948 and was brought up with an older brother in a 'prefab' on the Honicknowle estate in Plymouth.

During World War II, Graham's Dad was conscripted into the Army and sent to Lossiemouth in Scotland for Arctic training where he met and married a girl called Margaret Leslie from Elgin - they married in 1943. Graham's brother Raymond was born in 1944 and the family moved back to Plymouth in 1946. The Short household in Morristown was flattened in one of the bad raids on Devonport Dockyard - a huge naval base and prime Luftwaffe target. As his father told it: he came home one day to find nothing left of the house but a bit of wall, a window sill with their cat sat on it.

Plymouth after the war was a huge bombsite and was not fully restored till late in the 1950's. Prefab houses were built quickly to house the bombed out and homeless. Graham remembers standing in a bus queue in Fore Street as a toddler and feeling that 'something very dreadful must have happened'.

William Leslie. Graham's mother used to tell her sons that her family, including an Aunt Violet who married a farmer from Northern Ireland, were Scottish Communists. One day in 1997 Graham's mother received a letter from a lecturer in Dundee University concerning her father William Leslie. He had played professional soccer for Glasgow Rangers and Manchester United. This lecturer had been recently searching through the Lenin archives in Russia and had found two letters from William Leslie to Lenin. It seems that as a young man he had been so inspired by the Russian Revolution of October 1917 that he gone to Petrograd by stowing away on a boat. He came back to Scotland and was one of the founder members of the Communist Party there. Much later William Leslie became opposed to the British CP and had resigned before Hungary and Krushchev's famous speech in 1956. Graham's Aunt was a CP and Daily Worker supporter for years and also visited Russia at one time during Glasnost.

Hill & Lang's. Honicknowle in the 1950's was a rough council estate. Graham didn't get on at all well at the local schools and became a rebel in the last few years. In 1966 the prefabs were demolished and the family, by this time with the addition of a sister Elaine, was rehoused at West Park. By that time Graham had become an apprentice bricklayer with a local firm Hill & Lang. He remembers joining and signing those Medieval style papers - 'Must keep good hours; must not keep company with immoral women' and the like with some illusions about learning to build arches and fine architecture - these were soon dispelled. The bricklaying apprenticeship was for 45 hours per week over four years. The starting wage was £7 a week with incremental rises on birthdays. But Graham and his mates were just used most of the time as young, cheap unskilled labourers; mixing concrete, digging trenches, sweeping up etc.

Director Norman Lang was Chairman of the Apprenticeship Committee and tried to maintain a philanthropic attitude. But they knew they were being exploited. Graham was one who represented the Hill & Lang apprentices in complaints and disputes over refusals to unload lorries and digging trenches; the lack of proper supervision of their skills training. Graham was marked as a

Dave Chapple, Bridgwater, talks with Graham Short about his involvement in the movement...

troublemaker from early on. The union was the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers (AUBTW), but the steward on site was not interested in recruiting apprentices - even though there were three to every skilled man. - and there was a closed shop for adults. The steward only started to take an interest in Hill & Lang apprentices when they started to demand their rights. Graham could have joined but he didn't. He disliked the idea of a forced closed shop and suspected that the union was just after control of the young rebels.

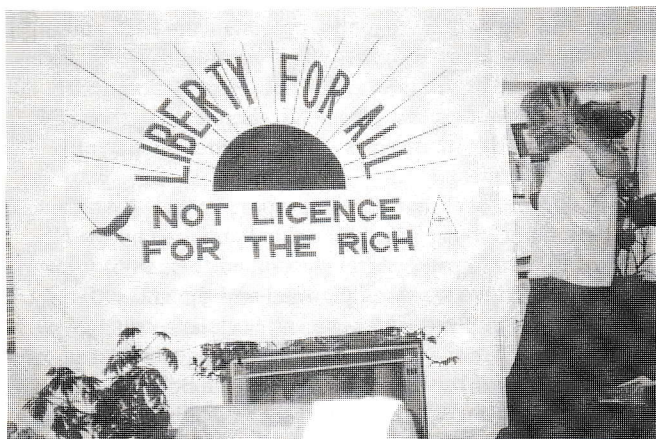
Hill & Lang had some big contracts but the job that Graham remembers best was the conversion of an old stately home out at Fleet in the South Hams - 'all granite mullions and porches' - into luxury flats. Hill & Lang had an unstated policy of getting rid of as many apprentices as possible when they had finished their time. Graham was transferred to another firm A N Coles in Stonehouse a month before the end of his apprenticeship. Norman Lang had got fed up with Graham's organising skills and had threatened to cancel his indentures, which was a bluff.

During 1969 Graham was married to local secretarial worker Elaine May and was working as a fully skilled bricklayer for Costain's at Bickleigh Marine Barracks. On Costain's Graham had run-ins with the Communist Area Organiser of the AUBTW about joining. He argued that men only joined as control fodder for him and were afraid of him. He argued that a good union was one that was founded upon workers' solidarity and not a forced closed shop. Nonetheless, Graham did join the union, after the organiser spoke to the other bricklayers who then told Graham that they would refuse to work with him unless he joined. None of the three building firms Graham worked for were well organised or militant and it wasn't until the 1972 national strike that things began to happen.

Anarchism & Pacifism. Graham's school rebellion, apart from refusing corporal punishment, involved an examination of early Christian values but there seemed to him a great gap between the theory and the practice of the Church. It also seemed that the word 'capitalist' was forbidden. Graham was aware of the early CND issues as a schoolboy at Honicknowle. He remembers the debates over the Regional Seats of Government - who would take over in a nuclear war - especially when as a young bricklayer he might be expected to build the bunkers.

But it wasn't until 1970 when his daughter Emily was born, that he began to call himself an anarchist. In general this was a response to the radical spirit of 1968, but in particular Graham became friends with John Northey, a Devonport Dockyard electrician, and anarchist who subscribed to the anarchist weekly *Freedom*. Graham also read the writings of Philip Sampson as well as the Christie & Meltzer book *The Floodgates of Anarchy*.

Graham had contacted the Peace Pledge Union and attended meetings held at the Friends Meeting House in Plymouth. He began to sell *Peace News*, *Freedom* and *Black Flag*, along with other anarchist and libertarian books and publications, with John Northey at the Eastlake Walk underpass and other sites - a sale that lasted consistently



until the early 1980's. Graham's anarchism was pacifist to start with, but after long discussions with John Northey and others, came round to a class-struggle/trade union libertarianism, a syndicalist perspective.

Plymouth Community Workshop. In 1971 Graham, alongside John Northey, other working class anarchists, and quite a few more of the idealistic 'hippie' radicals in the city, set up the Plymouth Community Workshop (PCW). They leased premises at Manor Street, Stonehouse and the PCW became the base for an explosion of alternatives in Plymouth. Projects included:- womens liberation; gay liberation; school kids liberation; anti-racism; anti-psychiatry; drugs advice; the Plymouth Anarchist Group; strikers support; the Claimants Union; green politics; Housing/squatters groups, as well as local Trotskyists, members of the Socialist Labour League, International Socialists or the International Marxist Group who would occasionally look in for arguments about how the workers' struggle was more important than personal liberation!

Money was raised via benefit gigs, with bands such as Hawkwind and MC5; jumble sales and other events. The PCW was kept going for a couple of years but the drugs advice gave the police the opportunity to raid it and to smash up the place and the printing equipment. Graham, along with others, was roughed up and dragged down the stairs by the police - all for the sake of a 'quid deal' which nobody was charged over. It was the end of the PCW but not of its impetus which was carried on by the Plymouth Anarchist Group.

Plymouth Anarchist Group & the Libertarian Workers' Alliance. Graham remembers the 'Jesus Revolution' of 1972 in Plymouth as the beginning of the end for the era of hippie radicalism. Most radical groups were carried on until the mid-'70's when they began to be professionalised by community workers and assimilated by the Trotskyist parties. The Plymouth Anarchist Group became the Libertarian Workers' Alliance (LWA), and by this time Graham was attending national meetings of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation (SWF) and building networks. He was also very sympathetic to the Council Communists (Lenin's 'ultra-leftists') and their journal *Solidarity*. The LWA was a core of six people who produced a local newsletter printed on an old printing press in the PCW and sold it along with their other libertarian literature. Other activities included political prisoners' support especially for the victims of fascism in Franco's Spain to whom we sent letters and parcels in the 'model' prisons.

The Fine Tubes Strike. The 165 Engineering workers at this US owned Plymouth factory were on strike for three years from June 1970 until June 1973. They were mostly members of the AEEU and TGWU (see *The Fine Tubes Strike* by Tony Beck, stage 1 1974). The main issue at stake was

'productivity'. It was almost the opposite of the closed shop; at Fine Tubes in 1970 workers were being forced out of their jobs for organising *in* their union. Scabs were taken on and given the wage/productivity rise that the strikers had been asking for. Pickets were organised. Postal workers refused to deliver the mail. An injunction was threatened. Rolls Royce workers at Patchway, Bristol walked out to boycott Fine Tubes products coming into the plant.

The LWA were hostile to the Trades Union bureaucracy - right wing or heavily influenced by Communist Party hacks - so they organised their own solidarity in an alliance with the IS and other Trotskyists. Both groups were reasonably successful but the strike dragged on, hampered by the national and regional full timers of the AEEW and TGWU, and was eventually defeated by June 1973. Some of the best local support came from construction trades unionists in the ASW and AUBTW, which Graham helped to organise through branch meetings and on sites.

The United Front. Via the Fine Tubes picket line, and the support group, Graham, came into contact with the full range of British Trotskyist groups and their newspapers. He wasn't impressed. They seemed 'workerist', at one and the same time putting working class struggles way above all other radical movements, 'idolising manual workers', but at the same time patronising the workers themselves. Graham did not idealise workers nor place their concerns above other struggles. As he says: "we just wanted to find a way out of the nonsense we were living under." However, the circumstances of being a revolutionary in Plymouth, with a strong right wing Labour and Trades Union movement - aided now and then by the CP - and based upon a Devonport Dockyard workforce of 20,000 in the 1940s and 50s meant that, in the peace movement, the Fine Tubes strike, the Anti-Nazi League, the Miners' Strike and later struggles, anarchists and Trotskyists have in practice worked reasonably well together.

The 1972 National Building Workers' Strike. By 1972, the year his son Justin was born, Graham was a skilled bricklayer working with Carkeek and was a regular attendee at AUBTW branch meetings. The local full timer was a Stalinist and Graham's branch secretary, Ron Simmonds, became a Labour Councillor (and much later Lord Mayor). Graham was disgusted with such officials; "What's that got to do with the class struggle? It's just mimicking the bourgeoisie." At meetings Graham would argue against Checkoff - because it would mean a loss of contact with the full timers - and for a single Industrial Union of all building trade unionists. The AUBTW did merge with ASW to form UCATT, but the new merged union was far from the syndicalist force Graham had hoped for. The merger was largely a case of local and regional officials - right wing and Stalinist - keeping control both of the rank and file and their own positions. Meetings were attended in those pre-strike days by about 15 people but Graham disliked the atmosphere. Workers would turn up to pay a fine if their dues lapsed, and there were occasional amnesties when tension rose until workers were re-accepted. With the closed shop, no UCATT card meant no job.

The 1972 strike was about a claim, of £30 for a 30 hour week, but central to the strike was the increasing threat of uninsured, non-union, self-employed labour - or the 'Lump'. The strike revitalised the union rank and file, and cinemas and large halls had to be booked instead of a back room. Construction workers were fed up and angry. Flying picketing was enthusiastic and now and again violent;

(Continued on page 10)

Anarchist Bricklayer (cont)

(Continued from page 9)

'Bricks were thrown at scabs and windows; plant was destroyed'. Then came the issue of conspiracy and the national case of the Shrewsbury Pickets; Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson were jailed. Every branch official and steward was under threat but in Plymouth, Graham remembers, officials stifled proposals from him and others to escalate the action. The line was 'leave it to the national officials and the union lawyers', with the result that Des stayed locked up, even under a Labour Government after 1974.

Graham's firm, Carkeek's, was a 'selected' site and remained solid. The main problem site in Plymouth was at the Robert Daniel's Cash and Carry at Derriford where scabs were sleeping on the site. Picketing was heavy and violent, as was the police presence. Arrests were threatened, which after Shrewsbury was not to be taken lightly. Graham went out on flying picket car loads to sites at: Exeter, Newton Abbott and the South Hams where, after setting up a picket the workers would usually walk off the site to join the strike.

Graham became disillusioned with both the building industry and the union by the early 1980's and left both. He joined the TGWU in protest about 'poaching' issues during the mid-'70's and briefly joined NALGO during the early '80's when, as a Youth Opportunities Program (YOP) supervisor, he was astounded at a NALGO steward considering Graham's defence of trainees against abuse and exploitation by host employers as 'unprofessional'. Graham resigned, along with others, during 1982 when YOP became compulsory YTS under new legislation.

Plymouth Anti-Nazi League. By the mid to late 1970's the National Front were growing in influence, both in the Dockyard and in the city in general. The city was 99% white, with a very strong imperial navy influence. The main NF organiser was a nasty piece of work called Derek Merry. The local ANL was non-sectarian and, although set up by the local SWP, always had a non-SWP majority. Local punk bands did Rock Against Racism benefits,

badges and banners were made, protests were held and of course the meetings - some of which were attended by the NF. There were arguments about police protection and Graham was clear on this - the ANL should do without the police and protect themselves - 'We're better off having a punch up with the NF'.

The successful climax of the campaign was the ANL occupation of Coburg Street school hall, booked by the NF in April 1979 for a pre-general election address from John Tyndall. The move was well planned and the anti-nazis got in early and set up an outside picket. Socialists, trades unionists, revolutionaries, students, working class people, "punks with their banner, 'Never Mind the Bollocks - Stop The National Front'." The NF sent the police in to clear the ANL out. Nothing doing! People sat down 'we're not going'. Eventually the police gave up, the NF disappeared, John Tyndall had his car damaged as he got away in a hurry. The rest of the evening at the school hall turned into an anti-nazi party, with piano player, beer and political discussion. Fascists have occasionally re-surfaced, but have never yet recovered from that night. After the 1979 victory, Graham, who had been Chair of the Plymouth ANL, and his anarchist comrades argued that it was time to change the way of organising, he didn't see the point of carrying on with something just for the sake of it.

By the 1980's things had changed. The Tories and Thatcher were in power. Graham and other radicals in Plymouth were to lead many other struggles in that decade. The fight against cruise missiles and the growth of the new wave of CND; the Falklands War; the Miners Strike and Wapping; right up to the anti-poll tax union; Graham Short as a committed Plymouth working class anarchist, fought in all these struggles; Today he writes and distributes his own samizdat polemics against Labour Councillors and against the corruption of institutionalised 'volunteer' groups, and other local issues.

So, this isn't just a piece of history... but Graham Short and Plymouth after 1980 is another tale.

Somerset Postal Workers

Yeovil CWU members recently won their first ever local strike ballot, even if by a narrow margin, against Royal Mail attempts to impose an unagreed revision of duties. The deal eventually struck was not that good, but progress is being made at this office. This time managers decided to compromise with the strength of feeling, whereas in 1997, when a strike ballot on another issue was lost, they just carried on without the CWU.

Growth in the mail has led managers at Taunton sorting office to agree with the CWU a dozen new jobs, even if they are all part-time at present. CWU at Bridgwater are hoping for a similar number of new full time duties in the near future. This should more than compensate for the loss of their dispatch to the huge Bristol mail-processing centre at Patchway. Members are also looking for more 5-day week duties.

CWU members at Burnham-on-Sea have just unanimously kicked out Royal Mail revision proposals; again, new jobs are not in debate, but the CWU members want full time not part-time.

Westcountry Wildcats

Royal Mail Burnham-on-Sea.

On Thursday 10th September at 5 am, 35 CWU members walked out over a staffing issue involving two non members. The walkout was unofficial and unballoted. After 7 hours a return to work was agreed when a satisfactory deal was struck.

Appledore Shipbuilders, North Devon.

Several hundred mostly GMB members walked out for a day on Wednesday the 9th September, demanding that the new company employing them gives the same pension rights to new employees as the old hands. Following the take over.

First Line Bus Bristol.

800 first line bus drivers in Bristol held a one day stoppage on the 21st September. As a result the company increased its pay offer to 4.5% plus 0.5% bonus, which was accepted by a majority of TGWU members.

Social service workers in Cornwall, UNISON members, have voted to strike over severe job cuts; already staffing levels in the county are the worst in the west country.

Liverpool Dockers: Still Sticking Together

Are things still happening in Liverpool?

When the dispute ended, that was a terrible experience, and it wasn't so clear cut as the 4 to 1 vote - it was an awful lot closer. Then we had outside groups criticising us - like the SWP was always saying that we ought to be occupying the port, but it's five miles long, and anyway, when we put it to a mass meeting there was very little support. Still, that decision to end the dispute, it haunted me for weeks afterwards.

It was important to us to get as many people as possible back to work. Of course any potential employers would look at it - two and a half years on strike - and just say 'Goodbye'. We went back to the idea of organising our own co-operative Labour Supply Agency, providing skilled labour to the port industry. It may seem strange, but the Dock Board were interested...

Is that because you've got the skills the scabs don't have?

We're multi-skilled, even, and with 30 or 40 years experience.

What wages are the scabs on these days? (The rate before the dispute was £10 per hour)

Drakes at the container terminal are on £6 per hour, but in the general cargo terminal they're still only paying agency labour £3 per hour.

What sort of support are you getting for the co-op?

The council in Liverpool and Sefton have been really helpful and so have John Moore's University. The government gives us £75 a week for the first year, for each job we create, then there's a lot of European money too. You see companies paying over £3000 to have people trained up on the fork lift trucks - and that's just for a one week course - so now we've got 9 men on a course to be instructors. They're on week 4 of the 6 weeks training - then that'll be another arm to the co-op.

And the dock work has started too?

Last week the first 20 men got a start, and it was great. You had men - 50 years of age - coming up to you and saying 'This is great - for the first time in my life no bosses'. But the 20 men, they've really got to pull their weight, because a lot depends on the impression they make.

And how's the work shared out?

There'll be a standard 32 hour week - no overtime - and they get paid £7 per hour, even if no ships come in. We've been fighting against casual labour all our lives so we're not having that in our co-op. The co-ordination needed to keep things running - National Insurance even - all

The following interview with Bob Richie, a docks shop steward from Liverpool was carried out in Malmö on the 7th July 1998 at a conference of the SAC, the Swedish syndicalist union. The interviewer is Mick Parkin.



that's down to the stewards, and we'll be working unpaid until there's enough money coming in. We run things day-to-day, then we report back to a mass meeting once a month.

How many of the men are involved with the co-op?

About 200, because some of the men took their pensions, or they're on sickness benefit, and some of the younger men got pushed into taking low-paid jobs by the JSA ... but obviously they're welcome to come back in as the co-op expands.

And you don't have to work with the scabs?

No - we won't work in the container terminal alongside the scabs, so we work in the timber terminal, and they stay out of it. They got very brave once the dispute ended, but you still hear stories every week where some scab walks into a pub and one of the customers - not even a docker - has thrown a pint in his face.

There's another side to it too: the increase in injuries at work has been terrible. Even the company can see that, though the damage to cargo is what really worries them. Jaguar have started using the port again now, but they're having to send their own drivers down to take the cars on. That was traditionally dockers' work, so we might get to do that again.

Careful you don't bump into any scabs.

We'll just give them a wave. No, we'll keep the windows up, so there's no contact - but just let them know that we're back and they haven't got long.

How's the international side?

We're keeping up the links: I was over in Australia with the dispute that's on there, and I'm going to Japan next week. The faxes never stop coming, so we help anyone we can. And the women's group is still active with the people who have been disappeared in Turkey, or Hillsborough... Tameside workers - which is really

impressive cos these women are in a caring profession, but now they're industrial militants as well.

The Company thought they could just chuck you on the streets and forget it, but instead...

They've created a monster! The thing is that all through the dispute, we consulted the men. Sometimes the stewards had to make a snap decision, but we always went back to the men and said 'Is that okay?' And this co-op - we're all in it together, so even when we get a new building - we'll pay the bar staff £7 an hour as well, everyone at the same rate of pay. That'll cause ructions throughout the whole catering industry!

Tell us a bit about that.

Well, we want to move out of Transport House as soon as possible and get our own building. We'd have one floor for the offices, one for a museum of the dock industry going right up to our dispute then, on the ground floor, a bar and restaurant. Anyone who's ever been to Liverpool will know there's a need for a bar.

How are relations with the T&G?

The sooner we get away the better - maybe even start building our own union.

Do you think there's a similar groundswell in other unions?

I think the rank and file in the whole movement is looking for something completely different. We're paying massive wages to these officials who sign agreements then come back to the members and say 'Sorry, that's the best we can do for you' - but the members haven't even discussed the offer. If we do need paid officials they should be on the same pay as the members, and if they're not doing their job properly we should be able to get them out. Certainly, we want people elected - not appointed from the top.

Thanks and good luck with the co-op.

The World of C. L. R. James, 1901 - 1989

In 1951 an old socialist lent me his copy of *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938) by C. L. R. James. It made a big impact on me, and in 1954 Jim Stocks, another Edinburgh socialist, lent me his copy of James's book *World Revolution 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (1937). Stocks warned me to read it very critically since James, according to Leon Trotsky, did not really understand 'the Marxist dialectic'. However, it was not until 1950 that the ideas of James began to influence my thinking about politics culture and the history of socialism.

I still feel a special intellectual debt to my friend Seymour Papert, who first introduced me to James's less well-known - and indeed almost 'underground' - American writings. It was Papert who in 1956 gave me some of the Samizdat books and pamphlets on James. The author of the brilliant best seller *Mindstorms* (1980) and world authority on computers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Seymour was the most intellectual, the most critical and open-minded, and the least pretentious person that I encountered in the workers' movement in London.

By the mid-1950s I was somewhat disenchanted with the elitism of large sections of the Left. A white middle-class South African, sensitive to the unique experiences and struggles of blacks in South Africa, Seymour Papert was trying to develop a libertarian Marxist critique of the dominant 'socialist' attitudes in South Africa, Britain and Europe. Because I could not reconcile many left-wing socialist attitudes with my own working-class background and experience as an unskilled worker, I was often seen by Tony Cliff and Gerry Healy as someone who was asking too many critical and heretical questions.

At a time when I was writing for obscure left-wing newspapers in Britain and America, Seymour encouraged me to write about working-class life, experiences and politics from the centre of my own experiences, insights and, as he put it 'artistic vision'. In touch with Cornelius Castoriadis and the 'Socialisme ou Barbarie' group in Paris, with Raya Dunayevskaya and

Veteran socialist, James D. Young, reminds us of the often overlooked contribution to the movement of C.L.R. James.

the 'New and Letters' group in Detroit and with C.L.R. James and the 'Correspondence' group in London, Seymour stimulated me to read the writings of George Padmore and James.

Until 1960, when Seymour went to work in Paris and a number of us dropped out of the 'Socialist Review' group led by Tony Cliff and Michael Kidron, we got the opportunity to express some of our unorthodox Jamesian ideas in 'Socialist Review' and in Gerry Healy's 'Labour Review'. It was a heady time; but it was James more than anyone else who persuaded us that a comprehensive and multi-dimensional critique of the international world order was a pre-condition for any attempts to change it.

Although we did not belong to James's group in London in the late 1950s, we met and discussed ideas with him. His pamphlets and books have continued to influence my view of the world towards the end of the 20th century; and I still treasure my tattered and torn first editions of *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The World of Herman Melville and the World we Live In* (1953) and, above all, *Facing Reality* (1958).

I discovered that James was reaching back - however tenuously, and without perhaps being fully conscious of what he was doing - to the 'lost world' of the socialism and socialist historiography of the Second international and the earlier world of 'classical marxism'. Providing a new generation of socialists in a world becoming, for those who lacked a socialist compass, increasingly brutal, disoriented and bewildering, James has just begun to come into his own. The militant Left should be on their guard to protect the legacy- of the real James: moves are now underway to incorporate and turn him into a harmless 'icon'.

In the foreword to the late Walter



Rodney's book *A History of the Guyanese Working Class, 1881-1905* (1981), George Lamming made a perceptive point that 'Rodney belongs to the same order of importance as Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, George Padmore and C. L. R. James. Products of various doctrines of imperialism, they had initiated through their work, as writers and orators of distinction, a profound reversal of values. It is not possible to have a comprehensive view of all the ramifications of Africa's encounters with Europe without reference to these men'. Recognising the impact of James's socialist thinking on Rodney, Lamming understood that, as he put it, 'to grow up [in the Caribbean] was to grow away'. Cultural imperialism was not 'an empty or evasive phrase'. It was 'the process and effect of a tutelage that has clung to the ex-colonial like his skin'.

From the publication of the 'Black Jacobins' onwards, James refused to fragment his social picture of the links between history, politics and peasants and workers' lives. This was the key to understanding his profound suspicion of institutional or institutionalised intellectuals. In 1938

in the 'Black Jacobins' he had indicated his continuing - and passionate - interest in culture, imaginative literature and even surrealism. Then in a remarkably stimulating introduction to the book 'Red Spanish Notebook' (1937) by Mary Low and Brea, he depicted the agitational work of Benjamin Peret, the famous French poet - and of other socialists in Paris and elsewhere - who fought fascism without forgetting the importance of what Ignazio Silone called the 'bread and wine' of the socialists' struggles.

From the beginning of his socialist activities as historian, writer and agitator, James stood in the tradition of the Austrian socialists committed to developing an alternative socialist counter-culture depicted by Joseph Buttinger in his book 'In the Twilight of Socialism'. He independently developed a complex (if still largely unknown) Gramscian analysis of the existing social order and its grave-diggers and their culture as well as communicating all of this to his readers in clear, understandable language. Too many academics have fragmented his unified vision of history and the worlds of the 19th and 20th centuries by focusing on his achievements either as a great historian or a major cultural critic.

In the brutal New World Order of late 20th century multinational capitalism, the Left needs the books and the example of James's lifetime of struggle for the better socialist world to come. However, not only the Left but humankind needs the unfragmented socialist moral vision and critique of the great C. L. R. James.

Caliban's Freedom: The Early Political Thought of CLR James

Anthony Bogue, Pluto Press 1997

Book review, by RP, reproduced from *Heresy No. 7*, the magazine of the Revolutionary Socialist Network

This book (the first of a proposed two volume study) is recommended as an accessible account of James' early politics, particularly his journey into, through and out of the Trotskyist movement of the 30s and 40s. Along with Castoriadis (and Tony Cliff, whose own break was ultimately far less radical), James, as a leader of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, broke with orthodox Trotskyism largely over the question of the Soviet Union. His critique of Soviet bureaucracy was part of a wider critique of bureaucracy in contemporary capitalism, particularly in relation to the Labour movement. Although James always claimed fidelity with Lenin, his libertarian Marxism emphasised workers' own organisation at the point of struggle. Thus, there are clear links between James' socialism and the Council Communist and Syndicalist traditions (although James' Leninism also says something about the indeterminacy of political ideas). However, as the author of this book emphasises, as a black activist, a product of the Colonial experience, James was also well-tuned to the dynamics of black struggle as something not reducible to the experience of the metropolitan white working class. As such, James helped open up space for autonomous organisation within the wider class struggle. A key theme of this book is

that James stands not only in a western Marxist tradition but also in a tradition of Black radicalism; and that his particular emphasis on the self-activity of the exploited and oppressed and their potential for self-actualisation is shaped by both traditions. This notion that political discourse can be shaped by divergent but complementary (and why not divergent and contradictory?) traditions and experiences is an important one. On what is left of the revolutionary left, the tendency is still towards a narrowness of understanding, which encourages dogmatism and inhibits the imagination. Today, James enjoys the dubious privilege of being lionised, patronised and ignored in equal measure. Certainly, his optimism in historically immanent liberation seems a bit thin now. And later, his attempt to cohere black liberation, anti-colonialism and revolutionary socialism did result in James embracing regimes that were less than liberatory, at least for a time. Nonetheless, as a comrade 'who knew as much as he knew', and who attempted to define a liberatory, democratic revolutionary socialism which acknowledged the importance of diversity and autonomy in struggle, James should be welcomed as a fellow-traveller with important stuff to share.

Spanish Posties Fight Privatisation

Postal Workers in the Barcelona section of the Syndicalist Union, CGT, have kick-started a series of national strikes against privatisation by rejecting the defeatism of other unions and adopting a strategy of direct action.

On the 11th and 12th of March they occupied the main postal building in the centre of the city which was a major success, despite some very serious confrontations - especially when the riot police were sent in to clear them out. Throughout

all this, officials from the CCOO (a reformist union) were on hand to encourage workers to cross picket lines and to deride the strike as futile.

Due to the success of the Barcelona initiative, a national platform of all postal unions was formed. The CCOO joined this, but then quickly left once they had secured a few sops from the Government. As a result, a large number of posties have left the CCOO and joined the CGT.

The platform has organised a

series of successful one-day strikes and a rally in Madrid on the 23rd of May, which was attended by twenty thousand posties.

The privatisation of the postal service was passed into law on the 10th of June, so the CGT will continue to lead the fight against its effects, which will resume after the summer holidays.

The effect of privatisation would be to axe 30,000 of the postal services present staff of 65,000 and to introduce the usual kinds of flexibility'.

A Spectre Is Haunting Europe...

In 1847 Karl Marx & Frederick Engels were commissioned by the League Of The Communists, a small group of German socialists to write a manifesto and in February 1848 the "Manifesto Of The Communist Party" was published in London (in German). Despite its title, there was no Communist Party. The current title "The Communist Manifesto" was only adopted in 1872.

Publication occurred a few weeks prior to the European revolutions of 1848 and its initial impact was exclusively in Germany. The first edition was reprinted three times in a few months and was serialised in newspapers. However, with the failure of the 1848 revolutions the document, along with the group who initially published it, fell out of sight. Until 1868 only two translations (in Swedish and English) were published.

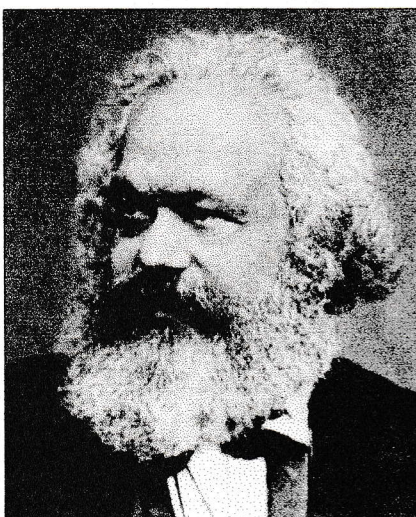
With the launch of the International Working Men's Association (the First International) in the 1860s and the emergence of new political parties in Germany at the same time, interest in the ideas and publications of earlier groups was re-awakened. The SPD leadership were tried for treason in Germany in 1872. Bizarrely, the prosecution read the text of the manifesto into the court record. This meant that it could be legally published in Germany for the first time. The 1872 edition is the one on which all subsequent ones have been based. Nine editions in six languages followed on quickly.

Prior to 1917, there were several hundred editions in thirty languages, including Japanese and Chinese. However the manifesto's main influence was still across Europe. The largest number of editions was in Russian (70). There were another 35 in other languages of the Tsarist empire. 55 editions were published in German; 34 in English. These numbers don't reflect the importance afforded to the manifesto in particular and theory in general, in different countries. The SDP in Germany had hundreds of thousands of members but only published the manifesto in print-runs of 2-3000. Their own program (the Erfurt program) was printed in an edition of 120,000. This compares with the 70 pre-

With the 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto, Jeremy Clarke, of the Bristol Marxist Forum, assesses its history and relevance today.

revolutionary Russian editions, mostly published by illegal organisations with memberships of only a few thousand.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 changed the world. The ideas of the Communist Manifesto became inextricably linked with political events. In 1932 a cheap edition was published in English. A political classic at last had mass circulation.



What is in the Communist Manifesto? It is written in four sections, beginning with "Bourgeois And Proletarians" - an analysis of the development of capitalism. This is clearly a class analysis containing the famous sentence - The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. It explains the development of capitalism out of feudalism and clearly describes the progressive role of the bourgeoisie. There is a discussion of the commoditisation of all forms of labour, the destruction of the family, expansion of the market and the revolutionising of production as capitalism spreads throughout the world. The economic and political centralisation consequent upon the development of capitalism is described, as are the contradictions between the productive forces and the conditions of production. The concept of capitalism as a system of crisis is

clearly raised and the primary cause of such crises put down to overproduction. The development of the proletariat is described and its special role as the gravedigger of capitalism. The proletariat must destroy capitalism to assert its own interests.

The second section - "Proletarians And Communists" discusses the relationship between the communists and the working classes. The argument is based around a number of principles: *the communists should not organise a separate party opposed to other working class parties*; communists have not interests separate from those of the proletariat; communists have *no sectarian principles*. Communists are distinguished by being internationalist and non-sectional. It is clear from the argument put forward that communism is seen as one strand within the working class movement.

Communists are in favour of the abolition of property, the family, countries, nationality and religion. A series of measures are proposed to begin wresting power from the bourgeoisie. These include nationalisation of the banks, transport and communications; expansion of public ownership of industry; free education. Marx and Engels stress however that different measures will be relevant at different times in different countries.

The third section - "Socialist And Communist Literature" - is largely a review of other groups, counterposing (largely) petty-bourgeois socialism to working class communism. These groups are chastised as romantic, backward looking, abstract and utopian. Only the Chartists in England and the Reformistes in France escape the sharp-end of Marx and Engels tongues.

The Manifesto ends with the section "The Position Of Communists In Relation To The Various Existing Opposition Parties". This attempts to answer the question, what do Communists do? They get involved in

immediate struggles for immediate demands. They ally with other working-class parties against the bourgeoisie, or with the bourgeoisie against the monarchy and feudalism. But they always work to instil into the working class the intrinsic antagonism between bourgeois and proletarian. They support every revolutionary movement against the existing order; always raise the question of property; are unswervingly internationalist in outlook; and never conceal their aims and views.

Reading the Manifesto today it has to be remembered that it was written in and for a particular situation. This is reflected in the language, form and content. It represents an immature stage in the development of Marxist thought, but nonetheless is a major statement of the fundamentals of the ideas of Marx and Engels. Throughout their lives they were happy to see the Manifesto re-published without significant amendment, despite the

fact their ideas developed markedly over the years.

It was written prior to the greatest nineteenth century expansion of capitalism, but foresaw many of the developments which were at best only germinating in 1848. Arguably many of the points that appear as statements - the globalisation of capitalism; destruction of the family - have only become true in recent years.

What makes the Manifesto relevant to socialists today is its insistence that capitalism is not (cannot be) permanent. The description of the historical tendencies of capitalism,

greatly expanded in later works is key to this. Above all, the existence of the proletariat as the one revolutionary class. Marx and Engels are often criticised for being deterministic. The Manifesto, with its clear argument that political action is important to the outcome of class struggle does not fall into this trap.

If you've not got a copy, buy one. If you've got one and not read it for thirty years, get it down from the shelf and dust it off. If nothing else it's a good read - but it's much more than that, it's a call to action!

Workers of the World Unite!

**REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST
NETWORK CONFERENCE
14th & 15th November 1998
Crown Inn, St John Street
Bridgwater
Details & bookings: 01278 450562**

A Ballad Against Work

Richard Antony, Exeter Left Group, reviews this book from Collectivities, Farabad, India

Last year we got a letter from India, requesting support for factory workers who hadn't been paid for nearly a year. We sent a letter of support. Then a few months ago we received this book from the same people.

There are undoubtedly many studies of modern working practices, but this stands out for a number of reasons. It is very readable. It has a provocative style I haven't seen for thirty years. And it comes from a part of the world we tend not to associate with advanced industries or with revolutionary thinking. However it is precisely the 'developing countries' who are in the front line of new methods of production and the control of workers.

'management of exhaustion'

Total Productivity Management, aka 'total quality management', is the latest means to increase the rate of extraction of work. As the Ballad observes: "In the Fordist assembly line the labour process was designed to occupy the workers 45 seconds in every minute. In the

flexible production plant, workers are occupied 57 seconds in every minute." Subsequently the Japanese have acquired a new word: karoshi, meaning sudden death due to overwork.

The aim of 'flexible working' is "the eradication of any uncontrolled movement of a hand or the unproductive glance of an eye or the unwanted wandering of a mind." Thus the rate of extraction of workers' output by the ruling class has risen in the last 300 years of capitalism from between 1/10 to 1/4 to 95% nowadays the authors estimate.

But workers are party to their own exploitation. We have been seduced to believe, for example:-

- work makes our lives easier
- work makes the world a better place
- technological research is geared to reduce work
- money simplifies social interactions
- it is a sin to live without working for a living
- the wages we get are equal to our contribution in production

Unity is ... weakness

Traditional work-place organisation is based on the idea of reaching agreement with management. Despite much anti-union legislation, unions are still necessary for large concerns to be able to control their

workers. As long as socialists lack a more sophisticated analysis of work, they'll continue to be co-opted by the ruling caste, whether this is a 'stakeholder democracy' or the 'nomenclature' of a Leninist Party elite.

... but we are not alone

Workers however continue to fight back in their own ways. For instance, in Malaysia a factory assembling tiny electronic parts was brought to a halt when one of the women workers saw a ghost through her microscope...

The Ballad Against Work is a critique and an excellent piece of propaganda in a soft-cover magazine format. It holds out no global solutions to the present situation, but the publishers' name, Collectivities, gives an idea of their tendency.

Through the spread of American and Japanese investment, we are all gradually being brought under the same system. The exchange of experience and information is crucial to future struggles.

This slim volume would be a good addition to anyone's collection of quotable works. It can be obtained from [no price on it, send a donation to cover costs]:-

Majdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, NIT, Faridabad 121001, India
e-mail:-revelrytion@www.hotmail.com

Obituary; Roger O' Hare, Bridgwater

A tribute by Dave Chapple, Bridgwater

The tragic early death has occurred of Roger O'Hare, the Bridgwater working class socialist, who had been active in every local protest movement from the days of the early 1980s.

A Bridgwater council tenant and exceptionally well known throughout the town, Roger joined the local Labour Party in the early 1980s, an event which totally changed his life. Labour Party left wingers such as Pat Morley, Bob Brookes and Glen Burrows encouraged Roger to become active in the local Branch, but more important, to take his first public steps to overcome the severe learning difficulties that his 'education' had saddled him with.

Roger was a past master, once he gained confidence, at talking to Bridgwater people and so getting them to read and accept leaflets and papers, produced either by the Labour Party at election times, or the local left wing organisation the Somerset Community Defence Campaign.

Roger's first sustained socialist baptism came in the 1984/5 miners strike when he collected food and money on Bridgwater's streets on a regular basis for over a year. Later on, at the many meetings, protests and Marches (including 7 May day marches) run by the SCDC, Roger was always at the front holding the



Roger O'Hare (pale coat, holding banner) at Unemployment demonstration in London in 1992, with SCDC banner....

banner, or urging bystanders to take part, or both.

Politically, his finest hour came in 1989 when he led a strike of young Employment Training Scheme workers, high up in the Quantock Hills at Fyne Court, who for two months refused to work a compulsory extra day at hard dirty landscaping, for the same pittance, dole plus £10. Bridgwater Trades Union Council put out national publicity and appeals for funds, and there were articles in the SCDC's Somerset Clarion, and other journals. At the end, Fyne Court managers gave up, and after an internal inquiry, the whole scheme was wound up....

Wherever Roger worked: at Welworthy's piston factory, where, despite bad dermatitis, Roger was placed in the foundry with its extremes of heat and bad conditions, or Sainsbury's, he always continued his TGWU membership. He was a Bridgwater TUC delegate for several years in the early 1990's.

Committee in Defence of the Iranian Workers (CIDI)

The deepening political and economic crisis of the Islamic Regime in Iran and the resurgence of the Iranian workers movement has sharply re-emphasised the necessity for an ongoing campaign in its defence. We invite all socialist and worker activists to join us in this committee and to support our campaign.

The main aim of the Committee are to defend:

- the independence of the workers movement
- its demands and struggles
- and its right to organise

To achieve these aims the Committee intends to organise the following activities:

- mobilise international support in defence of the Iranian workers movement;
- inform the international workers movement about the situation in Iran;
- and to help link these two movements.

The Committee is independent of all political organisations and its membership is open to all those who agree with its aim. The policies of the Committee are decided by its members and in general assemblies. Until the election of a co-ordinating committee in its first assembly, the founding group would temporarily organise the activities of the Committee (The Communist Party of Iran, The Association of Iranian Workers in Exile, The Workers Left Unity of Iran)

You can contact us on 0171-372-0526 or email us at cidi@isf.org.uk

Stop the MAI - Stop Corporate Feudalism

Imagine a world in which local authorities could no longer give preferential treatment to local companies, goods and services.

Imagine if Mr Shell, Mr Sony, Mr Nike and Mr Coca-Cola were legally given the power to sue national governments which attempted to harm their profits, whereas it would be illegal for governments, citizens and NGOs to sue the companies for environmental damage and exploitation.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) sets out to ensure this would be the case. Negotiated within the rich-man's club, the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the MAI would have officially acknowledged that corporate capital had more authority and freedom than local and national governments.

The secretary general of the OECD described the MAI as a "modest first step" towards global development, that would create wealth and well-being.

Yet the NGOs and activists who brought this agreement into the open brought that the MAI would allow polluting factories to be set up in rural, protected areas. There would be no solar, wind or tidal power, nor would there be electric cars.

Public health laws, such as bans on tobacco advertising, could be overturned, as could regulations in Local Agenda 21. Developing countries would face a future of being low wage, cheap commodity exporting nations, with no right to choose their own strategy for development.

The world wide campaign against the MAI has temporarily succeeded. The negotiations, that were due to be signed in March, were set back for the second time for at least a year. Friends of the Earth, the World Development Movement and Third World First will continue the campaign.