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SOME NOTES ON AIMS AND PERSPECTIVES
AND
A DISCUSSION OF THE ECONOMICS OF
AUTONOMY.

1. THE STRUCTURE OF CAPITALISM.

Too much emphasis has been put in the past on what may be called the Stereotype of Capitalism, that is the idea that there is a monolithic group of people who may be termed Capitalists who exploit labour power for profit. This stereotype has hindered and still is hindering revolutionary attempts to change a structure in which a form of exploitation commonly referred to as Capitalism has flourished. This stereotype of Capitalism has forced many revolutionaries it seems into a back alley of struggle in which the belief that the old image and structure of Capitalism is still relevant. Over the last half a century the structure of Capitalism has changed considerably and if we are to fight it efficiently and economically we must understand how it has changed, why it has changed, and what our own position is going to be towards the change which is taking place today in terms of a continuing struggle.

2. DIVIDE AND RULE - BUREAUCRACY THE WEDGE.

The ability to communicate decisions and 'relevant' informations is central to the ability of any group to control. In present monopoly Capitalism the need of controlled organisation in the administration of labour has become paramount. The centre of decisional or managerial control has over the last decade ceased to be a purely board room prerogative in the case of industry, and of the cabinet in government. The expanding groups of managers in both these spheres may be collectively referred to as BUREAUCRACY. Its development mirrors a movement away from directly COMPETITIVE CAPITALISM to ORGANISED CAPITALISM. The creation of Super states parallels the development of conglomerates in industry and commerce. Alongside this change from competitive Capitalism there has been a change in the role of bureaucracy. Whereas in the stereotype of Capitalism it acted principally as a wedge between the rulers and the ruled, as a divider, it has now become as will be shown later something more, it has become an instrument for control in itself.*

3. RESTRUCTURING THE MECHANICS OF CONTROL.

The constant need to restructure the mechanics of control in Capitalist society in order to maintain the hierarchical basis of power upon which it is built, reveals, if not carried out simultaneously with the development of the need so to do, the artificiality of its workings. This process cannot occur organically because of its artificiality but must be consciously planned and carried through.

4. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE REVOLUTIONARY:

The struggle for revolution it is true has always continued wherever and whenever there is exploitation, but it does not follow that real progress in terms of revolutionary endeavour has proceeded in straight lines, developing from generation to generation bringing us nearer and nearer a total fulfillment of revolutionary ideals and forms. This is not to dismiss the historical perspective as a factor in the understanding of a continuing class struggle, and less still of our ability to learn

* Bureaucracy always has been an instrument of control in itself in the form of the police. I refer here to the development of quasi Police bodies.

from past struggles and experiences. What must be understood though, is that it can never provide us with any formula or programme for revolution.

What we can benefit from however is our ability to perceive tides in historical development which when at full flood bring us nearer to realising the reality and potency of our everyday revolutionary activities. In this sense a perspective may be seen as something which enables us to understand and plan our actions between the occurrence of tides within the totality of historical development.

Such tides occur with the need to Capitalism to accept de facto changes in the basis of power and a consequent need to restructure the mechanisms of control.

Throughout the last 300 years from the development of primitive Capitalism to the present day there have been several tides or crisis of this type. For example the potentially revolutionary situation in the mid 19th cent. was dispelled with the first onslaught and development of a bureaucratic machinery. (For example with the development of constitutionalism and an organised police force.) Several other tides have come and gone, tides from which the 'revolutionary boat' could have been launched, from which the revolutionary movement would have gained real mobility and real potency. History though has shown that wither the boat was too heavy, or badly constructed, for it either failed to float because it was too top heavy, or once afloat was sunk. What future history will show given a genuine revolution, is that not one top heavy boat with its captain, helmsman, and all the rest of the hierarchy all the way down, was floated, but that a flotilla of small versatile boats were launched, capable of adapting themselves more easily to conditions, to running, to sniping, to hiding, speedy and flexible. Behind this analogy lies what I shall go on to describe as the need to understand the economics of autonomy.

5. REVOLUTION AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS.

Today we are witnessing the occurrence of just such a tide. Marxists have generally seen such tides in terms of economic crisis, but this need not be so. The reliance on the occurrence of such a crisis is just one of the detrimental aspects of the 'stereotype of Capitalism'. The crisis may well be an economic one, but its root causes stem from not having full control and unity between those organisations which hold power. The need for administrative reorganisation usually involves the bringing inside of recognised political forces to assist in the administration and control of Capitalism. If carried out successfully there need be no economic crisis as we understand it, only a temporary period of bureaucratic crisis created by the necessity of reorganisation and reallocation of space and channels of communication for the new members of the controlling elite.

6. TAKE-OVERS : THE IMPORTANCE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY.

Just as the industrial takeover may be used as a springboard for struggle since it represents the increasing control and conformity being sought over the lives of workers in any particular industry, (see G.E.C.) so in governmental terms takeover bids designed to maximise the efficiency of control, e.g. the take over of the trades union structures as fundamental

to the continuance of a controlled society given its present ex-officio power, provide us with a greater opportunity for gaining access and destroying the structure as a whole.

It is during these periods that the system is most vulnerable, when maximum effort if exerted could achieve maximum results. The contradictions must be exposed whilst they are occurring so that the mass of people can see and judge the process for themselves and act for themselves.

If these opportunities are missed it will not mean the end of the struggle, far from it, rather the perception of the reality of revolution will fade as the will and energy and enthusiasm that is associated with it disperses, and as the newly promoted members of the ruling classes are institutionalised in their new role.

7. THE PEERAGE RACKET.

For a hierarchical social structure to exist in an increasingly specialist and expert oriented society it must ever so often breach the barricades of bureaucracy which effectively separates the rulers from the ruled in order to broaden its base of control, and in doing so accepts and institutionalises the demand for power made by pressure groups 'below the line'. At the same time it fortifies and strengthens the basis of control from the top.

The barricades are at the present open for the purpose of admitting such expressions of hierarchical control in the form of the Trades Unions. Similarly the formation of unions today without the historical roots of the original trades union movement may be seen as the opportunistic formation of middle class protection rackets, wishing to qualify for entrance to the club at a time when membership is still open, and before the barricades of bureaucracy perhaps shut again for another decade or half century.

8. CHANGE IN THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF BUREAUCRACY.

The demands of Technology are today outpacing the ability to control it, along with the ability to control the constantly created demands for admittance to the elite of controllers.

What this means is that the door cannot be shut as firmly or for as long as occurred before. As a result control cannot be simply maintained by perpetuating a division between the rulers and the ruled, with bureaucracy acting as the dividing wedge between them, effectively isolating and maintaining a class divided society.

Bureaucracy has always played a dual role, but today more emphasis is being placed upon its secondary role than on its primary one. Thus in order to maintain control and yet allow flexibility in the membership of the controlling groups, control is being exercised indirectly via an increasing diffusion of bureaucratic control in society. Into agencies like the labour exchanges, national security, and police or quasi police bodies associated with the mechanism of the Welfare State ! Pressure towards conformity and consensus is being increasingly exercised not merely downwards, but downwards and outwards and is expanding to the very back door of the controlled. The only difference between these two complimentary forms of control is that one has you by the throat and the other by the seat of your pants.

9. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTIVITY.

If we can agree upon these developments then two basic points arise in connection with the role and function of the libertarian revolutionary.

1. To combat the specific downward trend of the accepted agencies of control, Unions, employers, government.
2. To combat those fingers of control which bureaucracy is extending to our very back door under the guise of the welfare state.

PART 11 THE ECONOMICS OF AUTONOMY.

1. THE MECHANICS OF STRUGGLE.

Neither of the two complimentary spheres of struggle can be fought using organisational structures similar to those which seek to control us, for should such organisations become potent they would eventually and inevitably qualify for membership to the elite. History has shown us that the leaders of such groups or organisations almost without exception willingly except the neutralizing prestige of promotion to the ruling class.

Attempts to fight hierarchical centralised control over our lives then cannot and must not utilise the same structures as those we would wish to destroy, since in terms of the effort and energy and commitment to the creation of a new society based on the principles of self-management they are grossly uneconomic. Organisations structured as such grow and struggle very often against the same enemy and iniatly for the same reasons, up to the point where power is perceived as a reality. At that point their structure dictates a belshevik solution. These structures are uneconomic in many ways. 1. They sponsor a continued belief in the necessity of leadership. 2. They do not utilise to the full the talents and energies of their members. 3. They stimulate alienation within the organisation since each member is not able to fulfill in terms of direct involvment his commitment to a body of ideas and ends up dropping out. 4. The generation of ideas within such a structure is prevented owing to size and nature of its structure. 5. The structure prevants mobility and flexibility. 6. Groups so structured are unable to act as a ~~xxx~~ sensor to situations and developments outside itself in any other than a theoretical way. 7. Groups so structured are wide open to attack given suppression by the state. 8. Such groups as has been mentioned inevitably end up betraying the causes which they set out with, thus wasting the time and energy of those who have given there time to it.

2. On the contrary an economic form of organisation would be one which allows for the following :-

1. Development of autonomy of the individual within the group and of the group itself.
2. Maximum involvement of individuals in groups and therefore maximum efficiency.
3. Collective responsibility and discussion.
4. Collective and Economic decision making.
5. Maximum involvement in base struggles. (see point 2.)
page 4.
6. Flexibility and versatility.
7. Greater immunity from victimisation.

The type of group best able to achieve these things, and best able to fight on the two fronts (see top page 4.) is the small autonomously regulated base group interrelated with other similarly organised groups.

THE BASIC OBJECTIVES of such groups should be the reassertion of the individuals confidence in his own ability to run his own life against the assumed right of those in power directly in the form of the employer or government, and indirectly in the form of those percolating social agencies already mentioned. Both areas of struggle are of equal importance.

3. THE BASE GROUP.

The autonomous group can no longer restrict its activities to struggles solely against those agencies which ostensibly hold power over the running of his life. It must fight on his own home ground against a background of personal involvement and information concerning the particular area in which he is situated. By doing this the group is retaining its character as a base group and is setting up a centre for struggles in a particular area which given successful propaganda and activities can fulfill the basic need for a network ~~xxx~~ of communications in each locale separate from that of the capitalist press, a network which can systematically work and activate against it.

4. THE PROBLEM OF LOCALISM

This position it could be argued would lead us to a narrow localism which if not expanded would become detrimental to the expansion of ideas and the formation of a movement. The need to go out must of course remain of fundamental importance. The need to establish contacts outside your own area, to stimulate the formation of other groups similarly organised. This cannot be done without communication and development.

5. THE NEED FOR ORGANIC GROWTH.

Any living organism grows develops outwards, procreates and dies. The principle of organic growth must be understood in terms of our own organisational principles and development if bureaucracy is to be avoided. In practical terms this need may be seen as a process of EXPANSION and CONTRACTION. Expansion of resources and energy into areas where demands are being made and where there is no other form or expression of struggle. This would continue to the point where some form of group or contact can be established in that area. Contraction then back to the base ideally after having stimulated the creation of a similar group organised around

a particular area or struggle.

6. THE PROBLEM OF DUALISM.

It would be naive to think that this process works automatically, and that autonomous groups will simply form themselves, allowing the base group to return to its own functions. A great deal of deliberate energy will have to be spent in constantly understanding the development of these outside struggles, that a phased withdrawal can be made on the basis of their own development if at all. Realising that there will be periods where the base group will be continuing to fulfill two functions i.e. that of servicing the struggles outside our area and servicing those of our own area. In order to continue this dual role we must have a structure internally that best enables us to understand the relative pressures, and priorities in terms of internal and external demands, which will allow us to employ our energy and resources as efficiently and as economically as possible. To do this we must envisage a form of autonomy within autonomy whereby those most involved with an external struggle can best organise the resources and talents available.

The Autonomous group besides being an activist group must also be able to act collectively as a barometer of the pressures and demands being made upon it. It must be able to collectively define situations where such action as was mentioned above is required and act upon it as a unit wherever possible.

The most economic structure which will enable us to do this must accept the need for :-

- a. A limited division of labour in terms of roles and tasks.
- b. the avoidance of the centralisation of information.
- c. the need for economic decision making.
- d. a degree of autonomy within autonomy.
- e. the relating of the autonomy within its own autonomy (i.e. inside its own group) and communication with other similarly organised autonomous groups.
- f. Flexibility in terms of its membership and resources.
- g. establishing internal and external channels of communication.
- h. ~~the~~ planning.

8. a. DIVISION OF LABOUR - BAROMETER OR BUREAUCRACY.

The structure best able to evaluate and define pressures and priorities is one where each individual within that group has responsibility for a separate task. This will enable the group to act as a collective since collective discussion is best facilitated where each member is able to contribute his knowledge and information vis-a-vis his own role. This can then be discussed, understood, and assimilated in terms of collective development. In this way and only in this way can a collective function most efficiently and economically since it :-

- a. provides for selectivity of information on the basis of personal knowledge.
- b. It establishes greater involvement within the group, prevents alienation and paves the way

- b. cont.
for more productive discussion.
- c. It prevents the confusion and animosity which arises
an established though undefined division of labour.

9. b. CENTRALISM - INFORMATION AND BUREAUCRACY.

The present bureaucratically organised system under which we live relies to a large part upon the ignorance of the mass of the people, an ignorance which it controls and through which it maintains control as a result of the alienation and apathy which it generates. It is impossible for everyone to possess all the information all the time. Centralised control is maintained in part by a monopoly of information as well as a monopoly of power and resources. Only a system of interconnected but autonomous groups can avoid the conflict which arises through monopoly control of information and the resultant growth of bureaucracy. Our ability to divide economically functions and responsibility within the group not only makes the management of group activities a great deal easier, but also provides a more accurate basis for group discussion. Such a structure also prevents structurally the growth of bureaucracy by preventing the centralisation of information. This factor is one of the most important aspects of the economics of autonomy. Without the decentralisation of information autonomy becomes totally inefficient.

10. c. THE ECONOMICS OF DECISION MAKING.

Decision making it seems has always been a perennial problem for the libertarian. The reason for this is the uneconomic attitude towards the relationship between individual and collective responsibility. The overemphasis on the collective as a reaction to the total deficiency of control in ones work situation, has clouded, blurred and even stigmatised the role and function of individual initiative and decision making. This overemphasis on the collective has resulted in a preoccupation for everyone to know everything, a situation which was stated earlier to be an impossibility if the group is to be flexible, discerning, and active. This attitude can paralyse a group if it continues and will deflect its activities into blind alleys as well as creating wholesale alienation.

Economic decision making involves the participation by each member on the basis of the information his is able to contribute. Again then by allowing the full distributions of tasks we are also paving the way for a more economic form of decision making and are building up the collective aspirations of the group by allowing each individual to assert control over his own responsibilities. This surely is what we are attempting to achieve as the end product of our actions in society as a whole. Economic decision making also allows for a greater flexibility in procedure and for a greater flexibility in the discussion of our general and theoretical development, since administrative decision making ceases to occupy the prominence it did where an uneconomic preoccupation with the collective exists.

11. d. AUTONOMY WITHIN AUTONOMY.

Earlier the idea of autonomy within autonomy was mentioned as a position which might develop following upon the acceptance of a responsibility to service a struggle which on the criterion put forward concerning the function of the base group is strictly outside our limits, but where no alternative organisation has been produced at the centre of that struggle to take over.* The need to accept such a position should cause no surprise since as has been seen in the earlier discussion of the division of labour for the autonomous group to function economically it must already have accepted the limited autonomy of the individual within the collective. If we accept this form of autonomy within autonomy why not the autonomy of groups within the group who for specific tasks act autonomously given a specific situation.

Only by accepting this do you avoid the growth of a self-perpetuating consensus oriented group directed not by the members which constitute the group, but by circumstances from without over which it has no control, and towards which it can only react but cannot influence.

Autonomy within autonomy then prevents the group from slipping into a position whereby the group is autonomous as an entity but not the individuals in it, and whereby actions are directed on consensus lines outside and unconnected to the real wishes and desire to those who go to make up the group. Similarly the principle of autonomy within autonomy by reasserting individual initiative, and providing the basis mentioned above for the group as able to act as a barometer and prevent what results from an overemphasis on THE GROUP i.e. reactionary actions based on energy stimulated through crisis.

12. e. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS.

The need to maintain contact between individuals or groups of individuals within our own group is obvious since we would still be acting as a collective, but acting as a collective in the most efficient and economic way. This accepted should also bring us to a wider understanding of the need for contact with other groups of our ideas, of our activities, of the possibility of linking up struggles, and of the relevance of all these things to building of a movement.

In a group which does not display those feature of the economics of autonomy already described but is motivated on the basis of consensus it becomes possible for individuals to dominate that group via their ability to manipulate consensus reactions whilst putting forward ostensibly at least individual preferences. It will be found that in a group so organised there exists a natural repugnance towards other groups which prevents any form of liason other than that of a perfunctorykind. This results not because there is necessarily no basis of agreement with that other group as such but because of its lack of economic autonomy.

*For example in South London at the moment it would be more economic for those principally connected with the construction engineering Ind. to work together within the group towards the development of a concerted policy and application of resources to this expanding but as yet rootless in terms of a base group, struggle.

The idea of the formation of a movement will naturally be inimical to those who are enmeshed in a consensus structure, (outside separate political considerations) since it threatens THE GROUP or the personalities which control that group.

It is not simply for the benefit of the individual group that a more sensitive and economic structure must be found, but rather until it is found and implemented it will be impossible to form any broader based movement, and impossible to establish any presence beyond an ad hoc system of communication with those who we wish to convince and work with.

In practical terms the division of roles is vital here to the development of a communications network. Correspondence in particular must be viewed not as fodder or as fan mail but as the beginnings of something much more, the development of another link another finger to fight the fingers of control now being developed by the state.

15. h. PLANNING AND BUREAUCRACY.

It was mentioned right at the beginning that Capitalism as it slowly realised the need to restructure and change its organisation, must plan and execute this plan. This sort of restructuring can be seen to be taking place today. Whilst we reject the ends towards which this state is planning, we must not at the same time necessarily reject the mechanisms it uses.

Part of any perspective must accept the need to plan even if it is only that the plan can be changed, evaluated, tested, reformulated and discussed. To plan you must be able to make meaningful decisions on the basis of a collective understanding of the situation. Those decisions must allow for the constant reformation of the ends ~~xxx~~ towards which they are directed in practical terms, in the light of the acceptance of those ideas. increase to the point where positive political action becomes possible.

The need for a perspective or plan does not arise until a situation has been created, or a presence established, where responsibilities have been taken on. Any group must be sensitive to the reality of such a situation and not only to the apparent situation. It must be able to exercise its powers of analysis over each situation if the decisions which follow are to be in key with its overall aims. This it cannot do with just the blunt instrument of a consensus motivated but autonomous group !, it must flow from the ideas and energy of the individual members within that group. The consensus type group by its very nature creates a barrier of intolerance to 'individuality' which prevents the dynamic discussion of ideas.

The ability to plan creatively and not bureaucratically depends then on the overall ability of the group to discuss as a group and to make decisions economically. Our whole ability to define and to a certain extent to predict situations and to act with clarity and precision necessitate the combination and establishing of a dialectical relationship between individual and collective responsibility. We will fail in this if collective responsibility is seen as paramount to the exclusion of the individual.

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