

Solidarity

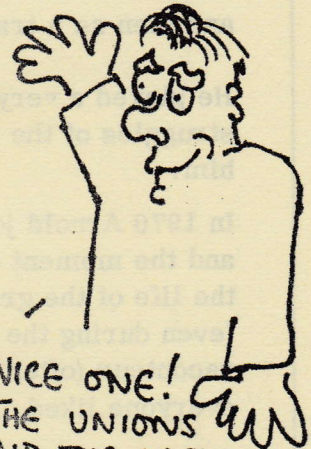
for workers' power vol.8 no. 6

BRITISH AIRWAYS - maintenance engineers, whose unofficial dispute over shift pay has brought chaos to Heathrow, were today ordered by Hugh Scanlon to resume normal working immediately.

Equities recover from sharp falls

The Stock Market recovered a chunk of Monday's sharp falls stemming widespread hopes that Mr Callaghan's administration will survive tonight's censure motion.

INDICATOR	PROFITS	DIVIDENDS
Last week	£384.0m* (+41.5%) ↑	Up: 48 Down: 7 Same: 12
Last 52 weeks	£8,233m (+21.2%) ↑	Up: 2,021 Down: 256 Same: 604



NICE ONE!
THE UNIONS
AND THE LABOUR
PARTY PRACTICE
DEEP ENTRISM
ON CAPITALISM!

The chances of Mr Callaghan avoiding defeat in last night's crucial Commons vote remained uppermost in investors' minds yesterday, and after a quietly firm start, optimism broadened as support for Mrs Thatcher's no-confidence motion gradually eroded as far as the minority parties were concerned.

By late-afternoon, gains extended to double-figures in the leaders as indications of a Labour/Liberal pact filtered through.

ARNOLD FELDMAN died very suddenly on Tuesday, April 19, 1977 of a heart attack, at the age of 55.

Arnold had been active in politics for many years. Towards the end of the war he had been active in the RAF, as an electrician, in the great agitation concerned with repatriation and demobilisation. Like his long-standing friend Joe Jacobs he was for a while influenced by Trotskyism but soon saw through it and moved instinctively to libertarian socialist ideas. He worked for a while in the tailoring trade, and then as a traveller.

He played a very active and positive role in the great London tenants' struggles of the late 1960's. The experience left a deep imprint on him.

In 1970 Arnold joined the London Solidarity group and between then and the moment of his death he was deeply involved in every aspect of the life of the group. Always cheerful, always kind and considerate (even during the most heated arguments), fond of music, and a great raconteur (often of outrageous jokes), he was the sort of person everyone liked.

A year ago he underwent major cardiac surgery and his courage and cheerfulness during the whole ordeal were an inspiration to all. We shall miss him greatly.

MOUNTAINS IN LABOUR

The media proclaim that the spirit of revolt is dead, that crisis has made us all self-interested, obsessed with security and easy to control. On the 'left' there's a strong smell of the early 1960s: cabals in the Labour Party, mass lobbies of Parliament, capturing positions in the unions. You name it, some nutter's at it. For such people it's as if the break in this grey world that was 1968 had never happened. Elections are being talked of: another chance for the oxen to choose their butcher. Business as usual in the democratic abattoir.

We won't detail our contempt for these antediluvian antics. But we admit that there is not the sense of hope there used to be. Struggles are more fragmented. And there's an awful lot of that trad rev crap about. Perhaps it is worth going over the basic points, clearing the decks for those questions we are going to have to answer if our general ideas are to become specific flesh when the next push comes.

THE LABOUR PARTY: A MYTH IS AS GOOD AS A MILE

People are shocked (again!) that the Labour Party has been capitalism's policeman during the last two years. It is incredible, sometimes, how short political memories can be. The history of Labour governments since the war is the tale of their development of a corporate capitalism and of a corporate state. Under their influence, and to the accompaniment of a socialist rhetoric, the state moved first into the debt-ridden industries like coal and railways. Then, during Wilson's 'white-hot abrasive' period, it acted to bring about massive reorganisation of 'private' enterprises (English Electric, AEI, GEC - for example) with quantities of capital unavailable from private sources. The latest gang has continued the trend, with state intervention in oil and British Leyland.

With this process has come no increase of popular control - rather the reverse. The day after nationalisation the miners marched to the pits to celebrate the 'fact' that the pits were now 'theirs'. They found the same men in charge. These men and their heirs have remained in command. No one marched to British Leyland with red flags when that was taken over. Perhaps it is now seeping through that nationalisation is not socialism - though this does not seem to stop the trad revs and the Labour left calling for more of it.

There are no side bonuses. In the areas of civil liberties and foreign policy a Labour government is no different from any other. After 1945 war-time regulations were used to arrest striking dockers. The CND and Vietnam

war campaigns showed Labour governments to be obedient toe-rags of American imperialism. Our present lot of freedom fighters has distinguished itself with the Emergency Powers Act, the Criminal Trespass Bill and the Agee-Hosenball expulsions.

The point we are making is not that Labour governments are 'as bad' as Conservative ones. From the capitalist and managerial point of view they might well be better. What we are trying to say is that the Labour Party, as a party, is not socialist or even particularly egalitarian. (There may be some confused radicals in it, but that is a different thing.) What is disturbing is that the Labour Party has been able to rely on the support of socialists, even when those same socialists have been declaring its policies non-socialist. The idea of an electoral socialist party has an incredibly strong hold in Britain. For libertarians this is best illustrated not by the proclivities of punk-Trots, vaseline in hand, to deep entry into the Labour 'left', nor by the electoral initiative of the SWP or WRP, but by a paralysis of the imagination that cannot formulate alternative strategies.

The 'realistic' possibilities of working in the 'official' Labour movement continue to play their profoundly mystifying and demobilising role. The decline of the anti-bomb movement was in part the result of that movement putting its hopes and energies into the election of a Labour government which would, it was hope, implement anti-bomb policies. It didn't. A further example: the dockers in Pentonville gaol were released as a result of massive industrial action against a Conservative government. The supporters of the Shrewsbury pickets, on the other hand, banked on lobbying the Labour 'left' to get them out. The pickets ate porridge for their pains. The threat of recuperation hovers autonomous struggles, too. A pattern is beginning to emerge whereby such struggles lead to an intervention of the state, which thereby widens and strengthens its areas of social control. The Meriden workers occupied their factory and formed a cooperative. But they then had no place to turn to, except to the state. Now, if reports are to be believed, they are a highly rationalised, much depleted, low-paid and diligent workforce. Appeals for state assistance at Fisher-Bendix in Liverpool have also resulted in a faster run-down there than any private company could have managed.

Yet the hope of quick access to where the decisions are really made springs eternal in the hearts of the innocent.

'Ben says "Insofar as the riot police are not out (at British nuclear power stations) it is partly because people with real anxieties are popping in and out of my office all the time. Walt Patterson (of Friends of the Earth) comes to see me - though I admit there is a demonstration outside sometimes. But if you have your demonstration outside and your man inside you don't endanger the consultation argument".' (Sunday Times, March 20, 1977)

Quite, oh quite. It's either consultation or confrontation, folks. And if you stop your confrontation for a consultation and demobilise, what you gonna do when they won't listen no more?

THE UNIONS

With the process of economic growth has gone a process of centralising negotiating power on the union side. The 'social contract' ('fixed' nationwide at government level with a small number of influential union bureaucrats) has accelerated this process. We have some lovely recent examples of union bosses acting (or attempting to act) like policemen in the industrial field, to preserve their green pastures as middlemen in the labour market. We have been saying it for years. Union scabbing is no new thing but surely there has been no better recent example than that of the AUEW in their joint public statement with government and management declaring the toolroom workers at British Leyland scaked if they didn't return to work. The scabbery didn't work - but was meant quite sincerely. A more 'successful' example in the genre was the less publicised strike at The Times. Here the strikers were simply expelled from NATSOPA by 'their' officials. The implications are quite clear: 'Not only do the print unions have a closed shop but it is they, rather than the employers, who select people for jobs'. (Observer, March 13, 1977). Expulsion from the union meant not only losing a job, it meant that one could never get another one in the print. The strike at The Times collapsed. 'Left' officials have as usual been providing ideal cover for the policies of the trade union bureaucrats. It was Maoist Reg Birch who addressed the strikers when, just before Easter, it was a question of urging the Heathrow Airport maintenance engineers to return to work. And that was before Mrs Thatcher went to China!

For all the attendant burdens the rank and file structures of unions have in the past provided some kind of focus for self-organisation. But the areas of freedom are being steadily eroded. Everything from productivity deals to rationalisation of unions (with the ear of government) has cut down these areas of local control, local negotiation, and local organisation. At the back of the Leyland dispute was the demand for local control of their negotiations by the toolroom men themselves. (The stress on differentials was perhaps overemphasised: the use of leapfrogging demands is a time-honoured tactic in the engineering industry.)

THE ANGRY DIGGER

'When Terence Round, a digger driver, was sacked from his job on a building site he decided to have a dig at the site agent by flattening his £2500 car with the bucket on his excavating machine. Mr Round's trail was easy to follow. In his wake lay a line of crushed prefabricated buildings - including the site stores and lavatories, Maidstone Crown Court heard yesterday. He is said to have told police later: "I was looking for a bulldozer - then I could have cleared the site".

Mr Round (33), of Park End Road, Birkenhead, was gaoled for two years after admitting taking the digger without authority and causing £8000 worth of damage to a car and buildings.'

The Guardian, Dec. 10, 1976

Some freedoms remain. Some groups of workers are quietly busting through the guidelines of wage restraint. Others have strong job organisation and so on. It seems to have occurred to everybody but the brain-constipated trad left that unions demobilise autonomous organisations or - to put it minus the jargon - that unions break up grass roots organisation.

Our latest Motor Bulletin describes the struggle at Ford Valencia (Spain) which resulted in a resounding defeat for the management at the hands of workers who were not unionised in any terms we would recognise. (Every worker in Spain is automatically in the state union. The Valencia struggle was outside of this - increasingly irrelevant - structure.) What group of British workers has won a comparable victory recently. We would suggest that any such victory will not only be won - as usual - despite union officialdom, but will have to start to build alternative forms of organisation.

THE CRISIS

There has undoubtedly been a recession in recent years. We don't dispute it. Whether it was a plot by those in power to reassert discipline over the workers, or a period of capitalist readjustment in the wake of the oil crisis and the Vietnam war - or whether it was flatulence in the money supply - we leave at this point to our readers. But what is clear is that an occasion when Christmas spending broke all records, when inflation was rampant, when some economies (like those of Brazil and the oil-producing countries) were booming while others were in difficulty was hardly the traditional shock-horror-crunch crisis beloved of Trots and other Marxists.

By their slogan of 'No return to the thirties' the trad left may have increased people's anxiety to the point where they acted more readily to protect their jobs. But in so doing they have obscured the situation badly. It should be obvious to all that the crisis has been used quite efficiently to create an atmosphere which makes rationalisation and asset-stripping easier. As one manager remarked: 'there is no recession if you manage it properly. We have trebled our profits in three years'. Moreover those in authority have hardly been victims of the rearrangement. While jobs at the base in industry have been lost, and while those who actually do the work in education and health services (and in local authority jobs, like dustmen) have been decimated, the bureaucracy in every area has grown massively.

'During the past six years, full-time staff employed by the 33 boroughs of Greater London has grown by almost 20% and part-time workers by 15%. The staff of Greater London Council itself has risen too. Yet this has happened over a period when the capital's population has actually dropped by nearly 6%.'

(Sunday Times, January 30, 1977)

In a statement that could be echoed by any other local authority, a writer in the London borough of Islington's 'Staff News' (August 11, 1976) stated: 'Over the past year I have both read and heard emotive attacks on the Council because of their alleged policy of "cuts". What has been cut is only the rate of growth'. As a result of 'more and more government involvement in everyday life' (Sunday Times, January 9, 1977) the Civil Service has grown from just over 650,000 to just under 750,000 between 1966 and 1976. Between 1975 and 1976 the increase was 50,000.

The crisis then represents a speed-up of the contraction of the productive base of society, accompanied by an expansion of its bureaucratic superstructure. Crisis is the Health of the Order-Givers.

THE FUTURE

The real crisis is the one that Solidarity has talked of from the beginning: the crisis of authority relations. Economic recession has strengthened the bureaucracy and demoralised the order-takers (though the signs are obvious that many struggles are brewing). The trad left are engaged in activities and propaganda which aid and comfort the Labour government and the unions - i.e. those forces which attempt to defuse

self-activity. As the shock of the recession wears off it will become increasingly apparent to the mass of people that the crisis has been used heavily to erode such freedom of manoeuvre as they had. The possibility of wide-spread revolt will then again be with us. What a nice tenth anniversary for 1968!

'The most concrete of the measures announced by Ennals is the strengthening of the wording used in the warnings on cigarette packets and in ads. ... According to attitudinal research carried out on behalf of the Health Education Council in 1971 these phrases were useless in influencing smokers to give up smoking and may even have been counter-productive. It appeared from the responses of several hundred people that the word "Government" was liable to arouse hostility to the message.'

Sunday Times, 13/4/1977

If a libertarian group has any use it lies in the development of ideas and the dissemination of practical examples from one struggle to another. In the period ahead people will find their own forms of struggle, yet we can be of some assistance. In its reporting of self-activity in every sphere of life Solidarity has up to now concentrated on showing that people can struggle (and control their own struggles)

We have done our best to undermine the idea that manipulation and a division into leaders and led is the natural form of organisation.

Perhaps it is now time to go a little further. Let us now with all humility start to discuss and gather examples of self-organisation in industry without trade unions. How to move from resistance to counter-planning. This is immediately relevant to the questions of community and housing raised by the article from Leeds in our current issue. Let us seek ways in which libertarian ideas can be disseminated, without the group disseminating them becoming a crypto-party. There are great days ahead. It is time to exercise our collective imagination for the next time imagination seizes power.



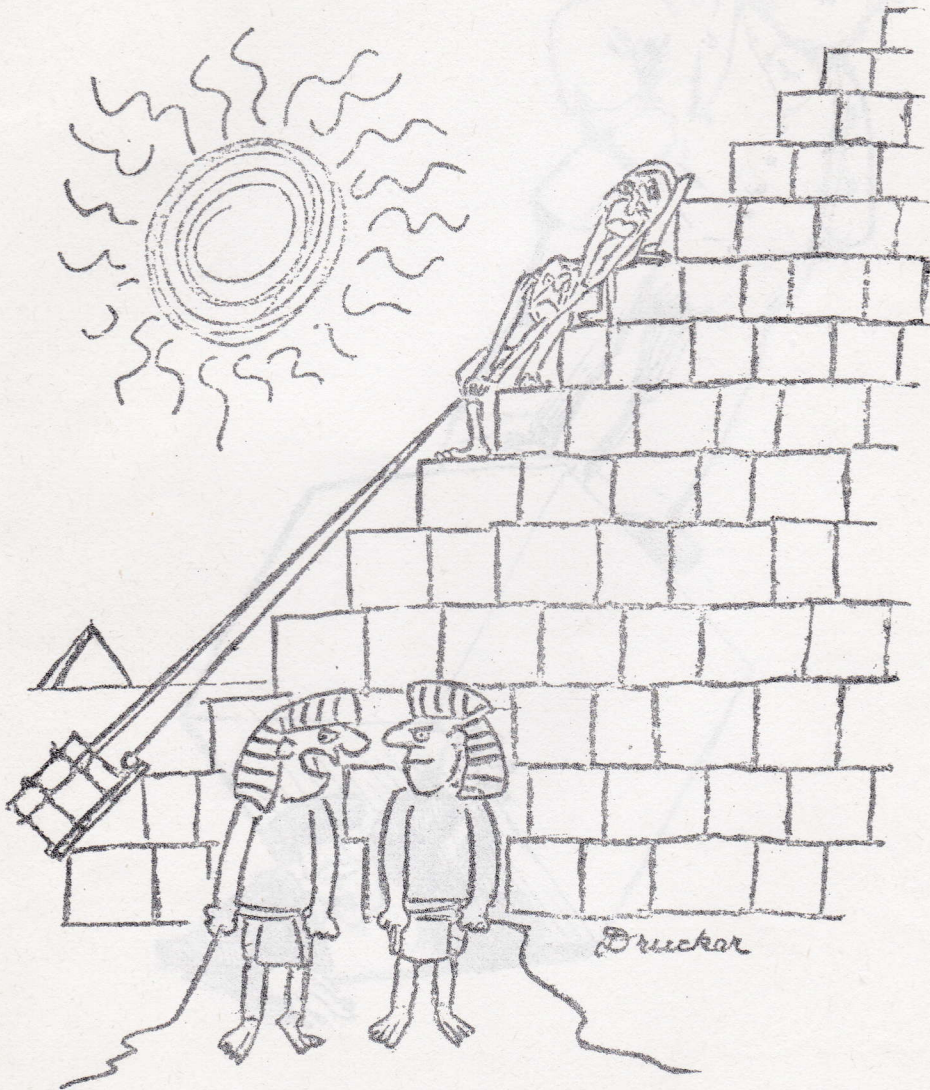
PORTUGAL: THE IMPOSSIBLE REVOLUTION?

We've finally done it! Phil Mailer's book is now out, after its prolonged gestation. It is a moving and exciting eye-witness account of the events that changed the face of Portugal in 1974-75. It is also an intelligent analysis, from a libertarian communist point of view fairly close to ours, of the social forces at work and of the consequences of the 'putschist' concept of the social revolution.

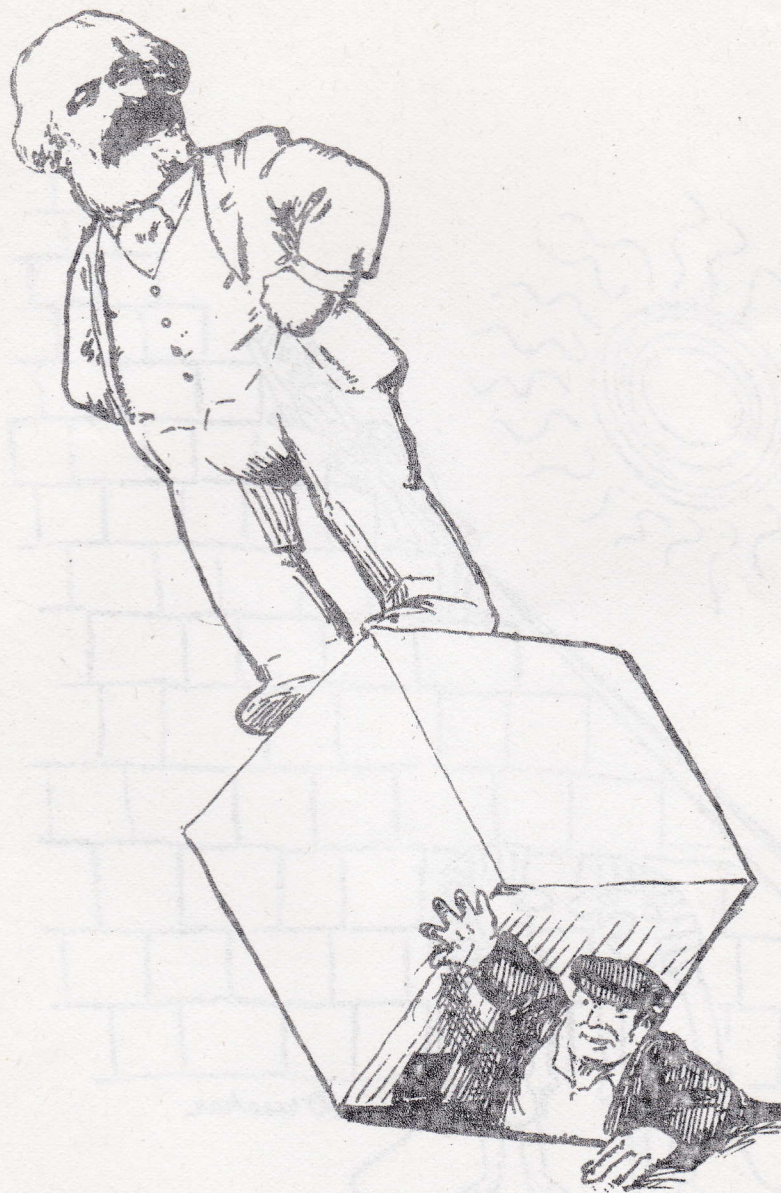
The book runs to 400 pages, has illustrations and cartoons, a detailed chronology of Portuguese history from 1926 on and a glossary of organisations, bodies and firms mentioned in the text. The hardbacks cost £5 each, the paperbacks £2.25. Postage extra.

We urgently need to get the book as widely distributed and discussed as possible. We urge all readers to order their own copy - and copies for their friends. Anyone ordering 5 copies or more - and settling with the order - can have a 33% discount. We have big debts to repay and need a quick turnover.

Please ask your local library to order a copy. Call on your local bookshop and see if the book is being stocked. Get the literature secretary of your local soc. soc. or anarchist group to take a few copies. Write a review of the book for your local group paper (and send us a copy if they accept it). Contact us for publicity material and sample covers.



*"There are plenty of jobs around. People just
don't want to work."*



REARRANGING THE DECKCHAIRS ON THE 'TITANIC' ...BUT WILL THE ICEBERG BE FOOLED?

THE 'BULLOCK' REPORT (Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy. Chairman : Lord Bullock. Cmnd. 6706, £3, HMSO).

To suggest that this Report is no significant Milestone on the Road to Socialism is something of a commonplace for Solidarity and the libertarian left in general. But in view of the illusions held by large sections of the 'left' about trade unionism and Labour government legislative proposals, it seems necessary to emphasize it. Particularly so, in view of the fact that by far the most astute observations on the Bullock Report stem from the pen of a Conservative journalist (1) and I quote:

'The basic purpose behind the Bullock proposals is to strengthen management; to restore authority to the boss ... It is not about freedom at all but about order. The key phrase is as follows: "There must be a new legitimacy for the exercise of the management function ..." which in plain English means: there must be a new way of endowing the boss with what it takes to make workers toe his line'.

Such an opinion is, of course, somewhat at variance with the views of both official and unofficial Labourism, and official Conservatism. However,

(1) Peregrine Worsthorpe, 'Beefing Up the Bosses', Sunday Telegraph, January 30, 1977.

THE 'BULLOCK' MAJORITY PROPOSALS

Any firm with more than 2000 employees must introduce worker directors if 20% of the workers want it.

There will be equal numbers of union and shareholder representatives on the board (2x) plus a smaller group of co-opted directors (y) agreeable to both parties.

Worker directors will be chosen only through union channels.

They will normally serve for 3 years, with expenses but no fee, but can be removed earlier if all the Company unions agree.

An Industrial Democracy Commission will watch over the rules, encourage participation and, if necessary, impose the "y" group in cases where unions and shareholders cannot agree.

Subsidiaries can also opt for workers-boards if they employ more than 2000.

£3m will be set aside to train union candidates in management, company law and finance.

WHO WOULD THEY AFFECT?

'...all companies subject to the Companies Acts - whether limited by shares or guarantee, unlimited, public or private, quoted or unquoted - irrespective of ownership; but exclude the nationalised industries incorporated under their own statutes as well as building societies, cooperative societies and other bodies such as partnerships which are not companies.

Bullock Report, p.4

the sentence from the Report quoted by Worsthorne becomes much more interesting when looked at in full (2):

'The benefits in terms of the effective management of companies accruing from such a reconstituted policy-making board would, in the TUC's view, be considerable. By establishing a forum for agreement on a framework of policy within which management could act, the existence of such a board with parity employee and shareholder representation could provide a new legitimacy for the exercise of the management function. Given the increasing tendency ... for employees to question more traditional bases of managerial authority, this could be a key factor in making possible the fruitful cooperation between management and labour needed to tackle and overcome our current industrial problems'.

Need we doubt that such fair and reasonable sentiments from the Rt. Hon. Lionel Murray, PC, OBE, and his colleagues were music to the ears of the industrialists on the Committee - notwithstanding the sanctimonious tone they adopted in their Minority Report.(3) Generally speaking, the media have treated the Bullock proposals as an unjustifiably large increase in trade union power. The Minority Report itself uses such terms. Indeed, the Majority Report does propose a large increase in trade union influence - but within well-defined limits. The ordinary worker will see the direction of this new influence as distinctly ambiguous. But trade union power?

In discussing the admittedly 'highly unlikely' eventuality that - horror of horrors - worker directors might be in a majority on the board of a subsidiary company (through manipulation on the part of worker directors at Holding Company level) the Report states (4) that '...we do not wish our proposals to be open to this criticism, however theoretical it may be ... it is no part of our intention to make recommendations which could possibly produce such a result'. Further (5): 'It is no part of our task to prevent or hinder the continued operation of business in the private sector on a group basis'. In other words, in no way must there ever be a situation in which even the board of a subsidiary has a majority of worker-directors, nor that any 'Bullock' board shall hinder corporate strategy. Workers' power?

'We are quite clear that an employee representative would be in breach of his duty if he voted in a particular way solely because of the instructions of his trade union. He must be a representative, free to

(2) Bullock Report, p.28

(3) *ibid.*, pp.167-195

(4) *ibid.*, p.138

(5) *ibid.*, p.131.

express his opinions and to reach his own conclusions about which policies will work for the greater good of the company, not a delegate told how to vote by his constituents'.(6) Quite. So that when the Sunday Times editorial bleats on about 'negation of democracy as understood in this country since Burke' one can be forgiven for believing that their editor wouldn't recognise a Burkean statement when he saw one.(7) The Burkean theory of representation is a classical conservative viewpoint, which no socialist should tolerate for an instant. Not, of course, that even an entire boardful of worker-directors running a capitalist enterprise would have much socialist content - except, naturally, to the traditional 'left'. We shall not have to wait long to read, in the 'trot' press, about campaigns calling for the election of more 'lefts' to the board of ICI.

CONSERVATISM : 'MODERNIST' AND ANTIQUARIAN

'No sensible discussion of the Bullock report can afford to lose sight of this central theme: that it is about ways and means of making workers more malleable and less rebellious, more disciplined and less free, by grafting the waxing authority of Socialist trade unionism onto the waning authority of capitalist management.

'That this aim should be disguised under the title of industrial democracy is so much claptrap, expressly intended to mislead workers into supposing that they are being offered more freedom rather than less. In fact, workers today enjoy immense freedom to disobey the boss with impunity. In no other country in the world can the worker get away with such flagrant and brazen demonstrations of personal independence, laying down tools at his slightest whim and fancy. This chaotic state of affairs is precisely what Bullock is intended to put an end to...'

Sunday Telegraph, 30/1/77
Article by Peregrine Worsthorne

'Now we know what "industrial democracy" means. It is clear that this attractive but bogus catch-phrase is designed to conceal a major political move, led by the extreme left-wing of the TUC, to secure control of the whole of major British industry, by capturing its top directing bodies and putting union-nominated shop stewards in a position to dictate to their managements. And control not only of private industry, but also of the whole of the nationalised industries and the public services as well.

'This has nothing to do with the efficiency of industry, or with democracy. It is plain social revolution, or "worker control", and the object of its authors is not the welfare of the British economy but the destruction of the capitalist system.

'This blueprint for revolution is cleverly camouflaged as "employee participation", with which it has nothing whatever to do.'

The Times, 5/4/77
Letter from Sir Henry Chisholm

The attention of the media has focused on the proposal to elect worker-directors solely through the unions. The Report's own justification for this runs as follows (8): '... board level representation does not raise any new issues of principle for trade unions which already engage in collective bargaining. It simply creates an additional means by which they may influence the managerial process, particularly those aspects of this process which collective bargaining is inadequate to handle by itself'. More specifically (9): 'Our proposals ... do not provide any special rights for employees who are not members of a trade union. ...we do not see how or why we should make provision for those who have chosen not to join a trade union and who are thus unable to speak with a collective voice. ...if employees wish to be represented on the board, they must be prepared to organise at lower levels. ... When unions engage in collective bargaining, they generally determine the terms and conditions of employment for everyone employed in the grades for which they are recognised, not just for those who happen to be union members. Employers would find it highly disruptive if this principle were not followed in collective bargaining. And we think they would find it highly disruptive if the same principle were not followed in employee representation on the board'.

The Minority Report, of course, disagreed. (10) So too, apparently, does the Great British Public, to judge from a distinctly hasty opinion poll in the Sunday Times (January 30, 1977). To the question 'If employee representatives were to sit on a company board, do you think they should be appointed by trade unions or should they be elected by all employees of that company, whether or not they belong to a trade union?', the response was:

	<u>All respondents</u>	<u>Trade Unionists</u>
Appointed by trade unions	6%	10%
Elected by all employees	87%	84%

Fairly clear, although one could perhaps query the wording of the question, in particular the respective connotations of the words 'appointed' and 'elected'. It will be interesting to see which view wins out when the bureaucrats actually have to operate the proposals (or any others) in practice.

(6) op. cit., p.85

(7) Editorial 'A good cause ill served', Sunday Times, January 30, 1977. To clarify this: the Editor has either not read Burke, or 'Bullock', or both. Nowhere does 'Bullock', which is permeated by Burkean sentiments, even suggest the possibility of 'revocable delegation' - a concept which is central to socialism.

(8) op. cit., p.125

(9) op. cit., p.112

(10) e.g. para 25, p.175; para 60, p.183.

If it is done through the unions, as I suspect it will be, then it seems unlikely that much interest is going to be aroused in the workforce, save perhaps in the initial novelty. Fairly soon it will degenerate. It does not take much imagination to foresee the likely content of union meetings after 'Bullock': not much different from today's content. Small numbers of 'committed' and probably well-meaning people voting on the merits and demerits of 'Broad Left' and 'Socialist Alternative' candidates (shop stewards all) for seats on the board. Most of the workforce won't even turn up, as they don't now. The whole affair will have about as much interest for them as the shareholders' meeting of their Insurance Company. The way will be open for bureaucrats and careerists of all kinds - taking advantage of the paltry proposed £3,000,000 of state money allocated to training in management, company law and finance. The Report itself states that the comparable amount of money to be spent in the further education sector - excluding independent management institutions and universities - will be approximately £60,000,000.(11)

All these people will have impeccable shop floor credentials: 'Bullock' envisages its worker-directors coming predominantly from amongst the shop steward stratum. But as the opportunities open in front of them and they rise higher and higher (secretly practising 'entrism' into the British Institute of Management, of course) how much 'power' will their erstwhile mates on the shop floor actually feel that they themselves have? Probably none. And they'll be right. The worker-directors will talk of their working class loyalty. The tears will roll down their faces as they produce their tattered union (or party) cards, recall what it was like on the shop floor and utter fine-sounding phrases about 'the battle for production' and 'the national interest'. We can hope that the workforce gives them a similar reception to that received by Hugh Scanlon from the Leyland toolmakers.

So what is the Bullock Report all about? Worsthorne (12) gives us a large clue. In one sense - there is no 'conspiracy' in this - the Report can be seen as yet another example of the flexibility of those who run industry and society. The ruling elite is ready to absorb new blood. There is little argument (since 1968-69?) about the need for 'industrial democracy', rather more on the form and initial extent. In another sense the Bullock Report can be seen - and, again, there is nothing conspiratorial about it - as part of the trend towards corporate state capitalism, with the unions firmly entrenched as an arm of the state. Indeed, the Report proposes new links between state and TUC.(13) The proposed 'Industrial Democracy Commission' will, in some cases of inter-union dispute, use the TUC as its arbitration procedure; its residual powers to impose co-opted directors where unions and shareholders cannot reach agreement are obviously a source of great potential influence. A move towards 'transmission belts'? (14)

(11) Bullock Report, p.159

(12) see footnote (1)

(13) op. cit., p.154

(14) see Lenin's 'Role and Function of the Trade Unions' in Selected Works, vol.III, pp.705-715, especially p.712, Moscow, 1961.

Finally 'Bullock' can be seen as a variety of 'social contract' at company level. The gamble is that 'the presence of trade unionists on the board will help solve the problem of worker insubordination and lack of discipline' (15) or, put another way, 'to find a new way of rendering the inevitable disciplines of a technological society acceptable to those whose fate it is to bear their brunt'.(16)

Just as the other Social Contract does not -- and will not -- depend on the existence of a Labour government, neither does this company-level 'social contract' really depend on 'Bullock'. The arguments about the Bullock, or any other, proposals will doubtless be fierce and full of 'issues of principle' -- and ultimately very boring, except to aficionados of such matters. But that something of the sort will be with us within a decade (and this is a Europe-wide phenomenon) we need have little doubt. Nor that the traditional 'left' will be completely fooled. But will the workers?

S. A. C.

On March 29 Joe Jacobs died of a heart attack in University College Hospital, at the age of 62.

Joe had been a rebel since childhood and a revolutionary all his political life. Active in the workers' movement in the 1930's (see his article 'The Good Old Days' in Solidarity vol.7, no.10) he was expelled from the Communist Party in 1937 for advocating street mobilisation and working class direct action as a means of fighting the fascists in London's East End.

After an association with Trotskyism in the early 1950's, Joe joined Solidarity in 1970. He wrote our pamphlets The Postal Strike and Under New Management in 1971 and 1972 respectively. In the last couple of years Joe developed severe disagreements with the London group. These eventually led to a parting of the ways. Despite this we all retained personal respect and affection for him. He was young in heart and he gave unstintingly of himself to the revolutionary movement. We regret he did not live to see the triumph of the cause to which he devoted so much of his life.

(15) Worsthorne, op. cit.

(16) *ibid.*

watch it stay up!

This is an eyewitness account of the fight by a group of Leeds residents to save their homes from the bulldozer. The author was heavily involved in the two-year battle and makes no claim to be objective. (It is difficult to be objective about proposals to knock your home down.)

The story involves an area known as the Ebors, some 160 houses of which a third are back-to-backs and the rest a mixture of large and small through terraces with odd semis and detached houses. The mixture of houses parallels a mixture of people. There are the Leeds born and bred working class with additions of Irish immigrants from the 1930's, Asian, East European and West Indian immigrants since the war, with a more recent admixture of students and lumpen intelligentsia. (The University and Polytechnic are half a mile away and the lumpen intelligentsia are mainly ex-students who decided they liked the place and stayed.) The area is well served with shops, pubs and buses and is a stone's throw from a large park, Woodhouse Moor. For all its diversity of people the area has a comfortable easy feel to it. If the Leeds City Council were allowed to demolish the houses they would be demolishing a damn sight more than that.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE EBORS

I do not wish to be "slum-romantic". There are many areas of old Leeds that have quite rightly been bulldozed to the ground. There are some left that should be. There are, in my opinion, estates only a few years old, that should be bulldozed.

But planners are too bound up in statistics: so many houses to the acre, too many back-to-backs that are bad for the "image of Leeds" (1), too few houses demolished last year. An area like the Ebors needs sensitivity - a sensitivity that can only be provided by those living there. We know from our everyday experience what makes it tick.

Sure, the Ebors had and still have big problems. Some of the back-to-backs lack an inside toilet and bathroom. Worse, although back-to-backs

are fine for single people or couples, in one or two, there are families with four kids living in hopelessly overcrowded conditions.

As for the big houses, the bourgeoisie left these for the private landlords who are more interested in a quick profit than maintaining them. The attitude of Building Societies does not help here. They will not lend money for people to buy houses in inner city areas such as the Ebors because such places are always likely to be in the "redevelopment" part of a planner's dream. Hence, the houses are sold to those who can pay cash - landlords.

The result of this is: increasing private rented accommodation, and increasing multi-occupancy. Too much multi-occupancy means an unstable population - too many people who don't give a sod about the district.

The prophecy of the Building Societies therefore becomes self-fulfilling. Because of their policies (known as blue zoning districts) the place DOES become a slum, and falls to the bulldozer.

Most of all, however, the problems of the Ebors were due directly to the policies of Leeds City Council. Ever since 1961 the area had been in either the 1977-81 or 1972-76 slum clearance programme.

This meant that those who wanted to improve their houses couldn't obtain grants because a minimum 15-year life is needed before such helping hands are given. But worse was the blight that gradually set in.

The area had no future. Hedges were neglected, repairs and decorating put off, broken walls not replaced, houses left empty. (2) Small things in themselves, maybe, but they signified an increasing lack of pride in the district and, taken together, they added up to a general picture of neglect and decay.

GETTING OFF THE GROUND

Yet the people who lived in the area still wanted to stay. (3) Moans over garden walls were frequent: "This used to be a lovely district. If only they would do something it could be again. These houses have got years of life - what a shame." It was this sort of prodding over a period of some months plus a personal anger that they could do such things which led to two of us deciding that we should do something.

In May 1974 we sent out a leaflet to every house calling a public meeting. The first lines of the leaflet ran as follows:

"The Ebors and surrounding streets are not bad ones in which to live. The area is going downhill, however, because nobody knows or will say exactly when the houses are due for demolition... ..In this

atmosphere of uncertainty it is not surprising that people are not over-bothered about proper maintenance or about improving their homes."

The leaflet ended:

"...While the houses are still standing there is time for us to do something. But we won't get very far if we restrict our "something" to moans over the garden wall with next door neighbours. We therefore ask everyone - young and old, owner occupiers and tenants to try and attend the open meeting..... The more there are of us, the more the Council is likely to take notice, and the more chance we have of success."

I have quoted extensively from the leaflet because it set the trend: open meetings and the active support of as many people as possible. It would have been all too easy at this stage to call in friendly Architects and other "experts" from the outside: ask them to do it all, and let them pit their wits against the experts on the Council.

We didn't. The fight was worth fighting only if the residents wanted to fight, and because of this emphasis the campaign ultimately became much more than a housing campaign.

Thirty-odd people attended the first meeting. Encouraged we formed an ad hoc group to do a survey of the area and to organise a bigger and better public meeting to which the ward city Councillors would be invited.

The next day I was amazed. People from the streets next to mine, people who I had never spoken to before, stopped to say hallo and offer help. The feeling was there to win.

SMALL ADS

Daunted by the difficulties of achieving revolutionary change? Don't despair - thrill to the exploits of the oppressed heroic Ruritaniens, somewhere in the back of beyond! Identify with them in the comfort of your own armchair! All subscribers get FREE full colour poster of glamorous freedom fighter PLUS big BIG lapel badge. Be a REAL militant. Write today.

WANTED - impressionable young men and women in need of ideological crutches. Dissatisfied with church, youth club, girl guides, etc.? Join the Vanguard in-crowd today and get sloganised, comradesed, sisterised ... No more nasty doubts or awkward thinking - all the answers on a plate! Apply IMG, SWP, WRP, etc.

EARLY DAYS

I knew well two very sympathetic offset litho printers - Leeds Community Press - who operated literally 100 yards away from the Ebers. For our second meeting, therefore, the ad hoc group decided to print a broadsheet. This we called 'Heresay' after the initial letters of the streets involved. The broadsheet was backed up with flyposters under the theme: "An Area Fit to Live In?"

The public meeting took place four weeks after the first. We had made a boob over the date - it clashed with the Scotland-Brazil World Cup game on the telly. Nevertheless over 70 people packed the hall for what turned out to be a "bear-baiting" session with two of the Ward Councillors (both Labour Party).

I gave a short introduction. The first person who spoke after me was a bloke in his fifties with a strong Yorkshire accent. After a beautifully timed build-up, he said: "I'm going to fight for my 'ouse and I hope everyone here is with me." Spontaneous applause, and we were on our way.

On the surface, nothing positive ever comes out of public meetings with politicians. I know of no better way, however, of instilling an overt sense of solidarity within a group of people.

One of the Councillors present was particularly good at this. "Now you leave everything to us, we know best... As Harold Wilson once said, a week is a long time in politics... I don't think you quite know what you want..." And after one very beligerant speech from a resident: "I've been in politics 25 years and I haven't come here to listen to speeches like that. Why don't you stand for the Council?"

Devious, divisive, patronising, she stood out a mile. By the time the local radio reporter turned up, just before the end, the meeting was baying for blood.

There followed, over the summer, two public meetings among ourselves. The first appointed a Treasurer, Secretary and Chairman (me). I was instructed to "go right to the top" and demand a meeting with those on the City Council responsible for our homes.

It was decided NOT to have a formal committee. Everything would be decided at the public meetings. Delegations and ad hoc committees for specific functions would be elected as the need arose. It was also agreed at this meeting that everyone living in the area should be kept fully informed of everything that happened in connection with the housing campaign, whether they came to meetings or not. 'Heresay' therefore should

continue to come out and be delivered to every door.

The second meeting was to elect our first delegation. Via the friendlier of the two Ward Councillors, we had at last been invited to the Leeds Civic Hall.

This meeting also passed unanimously the following resolution:

1) "The basic demand for the Ebors Action Group is a minimum 15-year life for all the houses in our area, so that improvement grants may be obtained."

2) "That all delegations should consider this basic demand to be non-negotiable. Any modifications can only be made at a public meeting."

So there it was. Control of the Ebors Action Group was theoretically in the hands of all the residents. It was up to us what we did with it.

OUR FIRST SET-BACKS

Our first meeting at the Civic Hall took place in late September 1974. We met the paid Council officers who advise the Housing Committee, i.e. the local bureaucrats.

Although the officers are only supposed to advise the politicians, in practice their power is very great. As one Councillor once remarked: "If you don't take the advice of your paid experts, why employ them?"

We didn't get anywhere. The environmental health officers, especially, were hostile. To them the area was to be measured solely in terms of damp cellars and crumbling garden walls.

It came as no surprise, therefore, to the six of us on that first delegation, that the Housing Committee's decision, 6 weeks later went against us. The area was to be split into two halves. The southern half was to remain in the 1974-76 clearance programme, the northern was to be rephased into the 1977-81 programme.

The uproar that followed this announcement, however, was surprising. People stopped each other in the streets, and several angry letters and telephone calls were made to the Housing Committee Chairman (we published his address and telephone number in 'Heresay').

A public meeting was hastily arranged to which the Housing Committee Chairman was summoned. He claimed a prior engagement, not that he would appear before us rabble anyway. A heated phone conversation went as follows:

- If you can't come can you send someone else from the Housing Committee?
- No.
- Very well then, I shall go over your head and invite them myself.
- They won't be allowed to come.
- Why not?
- Because I say so.
- I see. Well, if you're insisting on exercising dictatorial control over your committee I shall make sure every newspaper in the country knows about it come tomorrow morning.
- Now hang on a minute. (Mutter, mutter, mutter, climb down).
I'll see what I can do.

In the event, over 50 residents turned up on a cold, wet November night to find themselves confronting the Deputy Chairman of the Housing Committee, the Tory Shadow Chairman (4), the Chief Environmental Health Officer for Leeds, his deputy in charge of demolition, and two planners.

Of all these celebrities, only the Deputy Chairman and the Chief Environmental Health Officer said anything. But they were enough. Some of the things they came out with were unbelievable even to someone like myself who has read all the correct books about those in authority.

Typical exchanges were:

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, don't you think you would all be better off in a nice modern Council house.

RESIDENTS: No!

DEPUTY: There's a lady down there who disagrees with you.

Uproar; In fact the lady in question had previously said that she wanted her landlord to be forced to provide her with an inside bathroom. Nothing about wanting a new Council house.

CHIEF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER: My men have been inside every house in the area.

CHAIR (to meeting): How many of you have been visited by an Environmental Health Officer?

Silence for a few seconds and then more uproar as nobody raises their hand. Hurried whispers among the Councilmen.

RESIDENT: Having heard how angry we all are, will you return and recommend reversing your decision?

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No. My colleagues and I have gone to a great deal of trouble tonight to come and listen to what you had to say. But the decision was taken three weeks ago and must stand. Now, it's very cold in this hall, if you don't mind we'll take our leave.

The Councilmen left to pandemonium.

Three days later the Chairman of the Housing Committee telephoned to say that the decision on our houses had been suspended pending further consultation with the residents.

THE LONG GRIND

More public meetings and more delegations (each one being elected afresh) followed. We produced our own full report and obtained the help of a friendly architect for the section on the physical structure of the houses (we still wrote it ourselves). We even had a spontaneous delegation descending on our MP. If nothing else, this was good publicity, and sympathetic articles appeared in the local papers.

The Council too put in a good deal of effort. On several occasions the Chief Environmental Health Officer was seen touring the area with his underlings - making sure that every house was visited.

Eventually, in May 1975, it was announced that the Northern half of the Ebors was to be removed from the demolition programme and was to become one of Leeds' first four Housing Action Areas (5). The southern half was to remain in the 1974-76 programme.

Personally, I thought, "This is it. The campaign has already dragged on a year. The 'Divide and Rule' is bound to work." But no - a public meeting made the mandate clear. Continue to fight for the southern half, although we now agreed that some houses (about 20) in this half would be best demolished.

The decision had not yet actually been made, so a picket of the Housing Committee meeting the following week was arranged. Back-up publicity was obtained by the evening paper and Yorkshire Television, and the Housing Committee saw its first public demonstration in years.

MORE SMALL ADS

WANTED - PSYCHOLOGICAL CRIPPLES. Lack self-confidence, repressed, cowed by authority? Get your own back on selected helpless victims! There's a place for YOU in the Armed Forces, Prison Service, Police, etc. FREE fetishistic uniform.

BOOKS! BOOKS! BOOKS! Books by Comrade Hack in the 'Correct Revolution' series:

- (1) When to start your revolution
- (2) How to start your revolution
- (3) How to build your Party
- (4) How to consolidate your revolution
- (5) How to run your revolutionary society
- (6) How and when to sell out your revolution

Also 'Understanding Marx' by Mrs. Marx.

The decision went through, but still had to be confirmed by the full Council. A delegation was arranged to attend the June Council meeting, where we were allowed to make a five minute speech. This was presented by someone who had lived in the area over 30 years. She put so much feeling into it that a spontaneous burst of applause greeted her at the end.

Then there came the ritual proposal that follows all delegations - that "this matter be referred to the appropriate committee". A farce? Sure - but at least it meant that the subject would be raised again, and we obtained yet more publicity.

The delegation worked. The Housing Committee deferred their decision while members had a tour of the Southern half of the Ebors.

We received word of this visit and decided to arrange a welcoming party. Posters went up in house windows demanding improvement rather than demolition, window boxes full of flowers lined the streets, and across one street - Regent Terrace - a huge banner swung: "Regent Terrace Welcomes Happy Councillors"

The crowning glory, however, was a jazz band in one street to greet this rare delegation from the municipal seat of power. "The Sunny Side of the Street" rang out as they walked past.

Alas, the Councillors kept a stiff upper lip. They even refused offers of cups of tea from residents following them round.

FINAL SKIRMISHES

Our tub-thumping and publicity was having some effect. The decision on the Southern half was again deferred at the next Housing Committee meeting "pending more consultation with the residents". Meanwhile, we started talking seriously of setting up a Housing Co-operative in the Ebors.

These "consultations" lasted many months, with many delegations. Finally, in Easter 1976, the Housing Committee Chairman intimated that he would be prepared to look at fresh expert advice on the Southern half.

We read this as a face-saving tactic, and I, for one, sensed we were about to win. What the Chairman was saying, in effect, was that he wasn't going to accept anything from the plebs who live in the Ebors, but if it came from an acknowledged "expert" then it may be O.K.

We brought in a friendly architect again, and told him what we wanted doing with the Southern half: twenty houses demolished, in two blocks. In their place we wanted new "infill" housing and/or play areas.

The architect agreed and produced a beautiful report with so much "correct" jargon that it almost mystified us! We passed the report unanimously at a public meeting and sent it off to the Council.

One month later, within the space of half an hour I received three phone calls. The first one was from a Ward Councillor.

- Don't say anything, but there will be a decision on the Ebors soon and you should be pleased.

The second was from the Council Officer in charge of the Leeds Improvement Programme.

-Don't say anything but the Council Officers have just produced a fresh report on the Ebors which is very sympathetic to you.

The third was from the Housing Committee Chairman.

- Don't say anything because the other Councillors haven't seen the next Housing Committee agenda yet, but we will be making a decision on the Ebors in line with your Architect's report.

Ten days later the Housing Committee accepted a report from its officers on the Ebors. This coincided exactly with our Architect's report.

We'd won.

THE AFTERMATH

The Ebors were declared Leeds' second Housing Action Area in August 1976. The improvement programme is now getting slowly (too slowly) under way.

The Housing Co-op idea was dropped fairly quickly. It did not help to be told such things as, "With all the financial strings attached to your money, which is public money may I add, you'll be left with little more choice than the colour of your own wallpaper".

Without going into a major critique of Housing Co-ops, suffice to say that enthusiasm soon waned when we learnt we would be little more than our own rent collectors.

Instead the Ebors Action Group has joined the Leeds Federated Housing Association. This is a weird federation of small housing associations in Leeds plus groups like ours (6). It is also a housing association in its own right and by virtue of us joining it, it has taken on the improvement programme for the Ebors. The Housing Corporation, a Government financed body, provides part grants, part loans for this purpose.

The problem is that before the Housing Association can improve any houses, it's got to own them. With the Ebors being so close to the University

and Polytechnic, there is a high demand for rented accommodation. Therefore rents throughout Hyde Park are the highest in Leeds. It is not financially worthwhile for many landlords to sell, especially as the Housing Association can only offer a price suggested by the District Valuer.

The way forward for the Ebors Action Group is probably a rent campaign. Already one public meeting has been held on the subject. The idea would be to get every tenant to register their rent at the rent tribunal and obtain a so-called "fair rent". This may not be very "fair" but at least it's almost certain to be lower than what everybody is paying at the moment.

I know of at least one landlord who is thinking of selling to the Housing Association under the threat of a registered rent.

If landlords don't sell, then they can be forced to improve - but such clauses in the Housing Act are full of loop holes and take a notoriously long time to implement.

But, if the Ebors Action Group is going to mount a rent campaign it must change. We always prided ourselves in the past on making no distinction between owner-occupiers and tenants. We were for all the people who live in the area, and although our active supporters contained proportionately more owner-occupiers, many tenants played a full part.

Now the owner-occupiers have got what they want. By and large they live in the best kept houses, and they, as individuals can apply for improvement grants.

A tenant emphasis is needed, simply because tenants face the biggest problems.

NATIONAL MAGAZINE

Issue No. 3 of the National Solidarity Magazine will be out shortly. Write for further details to Graham Jimson, c/o E.O.A. Books, 34 Cowley Rd., Oxford.

The 'small ads' in this issue were taken from 'Black Jake's Occasional Organ', c/o Cradwell Books, 235 Jesmond Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 2.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I said 2,000 words or so back that the Ebors was much more than a Housing Campaign. I have tried to convey some of the "umph" with which the campaign went at times. Yet the manner in which it brought people together manifested itself in a host of ways.

Right from the beginning we got into the habit of going straight to the pub from meetings. At the end we even arranged a trip to the other side of Leeds to view the first Housing Action Area plus its local.

Also, there were the "talks" we were invited to give from time to time. Always a support group would travel with the speaker.

I must mention the Christmas Parties - in the upstairs room of one of the local pubs. A mixture of formal acts and do-it-yourself from the floor, the three we have held so far will hold fond memories for all my life. In the last two we have even presented original plays - 'The Golden City' (A comedy-folk musical about the area) and 'Eborella' (A panto).

There is so much latent creativity in people, so much desire to enjoy ourselves, that even a cynical 'Solidarity' subscriber would have been impressed and not knocked us too hard for not quite getting it correct.

When you're out at work all day, you can't come home each night and put what little energy you have left into a housing campaign if that campaign is dull, monotonous toil. It's too much like what you've just come home from.

But, if the campaign is fun to participate in, then you can keep it up indefinitely. Well, you can keep it up at least for two years, which is what the Ebors Action Group did.

The same goes for power. The internal power of the Ebors Action Group lay in its public meeting. Every resident was entitled to attend, speak and vote. Public meetings were usually well attended because people knew they made the decisions there.

I do not wish to conjure up images of incredibly conscious public meetings. They weren't, and I have to be honest and say that some people put in a lot more spade work than others.

A fair proportion of the spade-workers were people from the "lumpen intelligentsia" who I mentioned earlier. It was naughty of me to categorise us (half an hour's break for self-criticism). One success story of the campaign was that black and white, academic and worker, treated each other as nothing less than individuals in their own right.

Forgive me for using the word again, but what the lumpen intelligentsia could offer were: more time; vitriolic fingers to work vitriolic typewriters; contacts with such people as cheap printers, theatre groups for landing stage props, and architects.

Yet we offered this because we lived in the area. I became involved not because I'm an agitator and it's my duty to become involved, but because I was furious about my lack of control of our environment.

The lumpen intelligentsia were not a bunch of politicians who moved in from the outside with an agitation kit, nor were we social workers. The area was our home too, with a good number of years tradition behind it as being our home. We harmonised, (and that's all you'll get from me on self justification).

The residents of the Ebors won a reform - a reform that could easily be accommodated within the system. But more important, we learnt first-hand what those in authority are like - they lie, they cheat, they twist, they're opportunist creeps (7). Most of all we learnt what sticking together can do.

Is such a reform, won in such a manner, reformist?

Are we all better people as a result of the campaign? I hope so.

I called this section "Some Concluding Thoughts". The thoughts that are left to me now are all memories. They probably say more than every other work I have written.

- To Theresa, in the off-licence the day after our first public meeting: "Hello love, we're going to show those buggers we know our rights".

- To Les, in the pub. "We used to hold this country to ransom in our Union (the Constructional Engineers). Had it by the short and curlies we did. Then things went wrong in the '50's. I got out of union politics and closed me garden gate - until this housing thing came up". (Les also led the first May Day marches in Leeds after the war).

- To Hilda, talking to an Environmental Health Officer: "We've all sorts in this area - Poles, Asians, West Indians, students - and we like them living here. We want them to stay".

- Environmental Health Officer in reply: "Well, I can see you're not going to give up. You're a jolly crowd at least."

- To Connie, having just got me out of bed at 11.15pm. "I've just rung up the Housing Chairman and told him what I think of him. His wife

told me he was in bed at first and that he worked 24 hours a day. I asked what he was doing in bed at eleven at night ... Did I do wrong?"

- To Angharad, after a stormy public meeting with Councillors and officials: "This is supposed to be a democracy. Yet you come here and say the decision's already been taken. You haven't listened to a bloody word". The Councillors stood dumbfounded at this outburst and then breathed a sigh of relief as she stormed out of the hall, slamming the door on her way.

- Finally, to the Environmental Health Officer in charge of Improvement, confiding in an acquaintance: "The Ebors are falling to pieces. It was a political decision that had them saved".

In other words, the politicians had over-ridden the judgement of their advisers because we had shouted too loud.

What a tribute! After all we weren't the National Union of Mineworkers with real economic bargaining power. There was little else we could do but shout.

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Footnotes.

- (1) Quoted from Leeds, Housing Potential and Priorities, 1971-1991. This was accepted by Leeds Council in 1971.
- (2) At the time of writing (January 1977) 10 houses are empty in the Ebors.
- (3) Our first survey indicated an 80% support for the Housing Campaign.
- (4) Since June 1975 the Chairman.
- (5) Housing Action Areas were invented in the 1974 Housing Act. They are supposed to be areas where social factors and physical conditions combine to create housing stress. The idea is to take the area by the scruff of the neck, inject a lot of money and bring the houses up to standard in five years. The basis feature is 75% improvement grants for house owners (including landlords).
- (6) For example Leeds Women's Aid which runs the battered wives hostel is a member. So too is the Action Group representing Leeds' first HAA.
- (7) Three days after the Ebors had been saved a local Ward Councillor had the nerve to say on local radio: "Look what I did for the Ebors". What she did do was tip me off once when Councillors were to tour the area, and to say how delighted she was at the Housing Committee meeting that saved us.

A MESSAGE FOR ALL MAOISTS

Here is an urgent message for all those travelling East to socialism. You're going the wrong way. Pull over to the hard shoulder. Check your vehicle. Ask yourselves some questions:

- 1) What the hell is going on in China? Who is in control?
- 2) Is Madame Mao a revisionist? If so, for how long was Mao too senile to recognise the fact? 1 year? 2 years? 10 years?
- 3) Is Teng Hsiao-Ping a revisionist? Or a revered leader? Why does he, chameleon-like, keep changing from one to the other?
- 4) Who chose Hua as the new leader of China? Did the Chinese people have any say in the choice?
- 5) Why have neither the Peking Review nor The Worker provided any answers? Are they aware of the significance of the questions? Do they appreciate the significance of their silence?
- 6) Has the 'Party of the Working Class' really got no idea of what is going on in China? Why doesn't the pro-Mao press report the faction fights?
- 7) Why were various libertarian organisations (including Solidarity) able to predict that faction fights would break out in China as the new class consolidated its power? (See Theses on the Chinese Revolution.)

Any Maoist providing acceptable answers will be rewarded with a willing convert. No answers to these questions will be forthcoming, however, for China is run by a gang of not just four, but of thousands of bureaucrats and managers.

IT'S COMPETITION TIME !

Arrange the following in order of nastiness ! Win a year's subscription to The Worker !

- Capitalist lackeys
- Running dogs
- Paper tigers
- Revisionists
- Ex-leaders, now capitalist-readers
- Ex-capitalist readers, now leaders
- Imperialist aggressors
- Petty-bourgeois elements
- Traitors to the cause of the international proletariat
- Followers of Confucius
- Friends of Mrs Bandaranaike and of Yahya Khan

REVIEW

ELEANOR MARX : the BBC2 television serial

Marx and marxism have today become intensely saleable commodities. One of the positive by-products is that the goods on display must bear at least some resemblance to their historical prototypes. A new Marx is gradually emerging, more real in every way - and therefore more riddled with contradictions - than the various Jehovah-like versions that have for so long peopled the revolutionary Olympus.

The BBC2 recent three-part television serial on Eleanor Marx (Karl's youngest daughter) was interesting in that it sought to break at last from the official hagiographies. In the first episode there was an almost human Marx, complete with boils (which he could not have avoided) and patriarchal Victorian attitudes (which strike one as strange today, when Marx is so widely acclaimed by some who should know better as the ideological forefather of women's liberation !).

The atmosphere of the Marx household, at 28 Dean Street, was cleverly reconstructed. We saw a Marx who both adored and exploited his Tussy (Eleanor). His brilliant exposition of the notion that 'the dominant ideas of each epoch are the ideas of its ruling class' was unwittingly illustrated by his own attitudes to Tussy's male friends, attitudes that would be deemed outrageous by today's standards.(1) When Lissagaray (a survivor of the Paris Commune and without doubt its most serious historian) showed signs of 'excessive'(i.e. amorous) familiarity with Tussy, Marx's strictures were those of the bourgeois paterfamilias who owned his daughter. It is amazing that Eleanor should have emerged as such an appealing person, with such a zest for life, for both her respectable mother and her 'revolutionary' father did much to make her conform to the mores of her time.

The story of Freddy, the illegitimate son Marx sired from Lenchen, the family maid (2) was not glossed over. We are shown Engels, assuming 'responsibility' for the 'fatherhood' - and by and large treating the lad rather shabbily. Freddy, the only proletarian in the Marx household, came over as one of the least neurotic people in the whole ménage.

(1) That these attitudes were no passing clouds on Marx's ageing judgment is revealed by the much earlier letter written by Marx to Paul Lafargue (see p.), who was then 'paying court' to Laura, another of Marx's daughters.

(2) Known to the Marx children as Nim, Nym or Nimmy, her real name was Hélène Demuth.

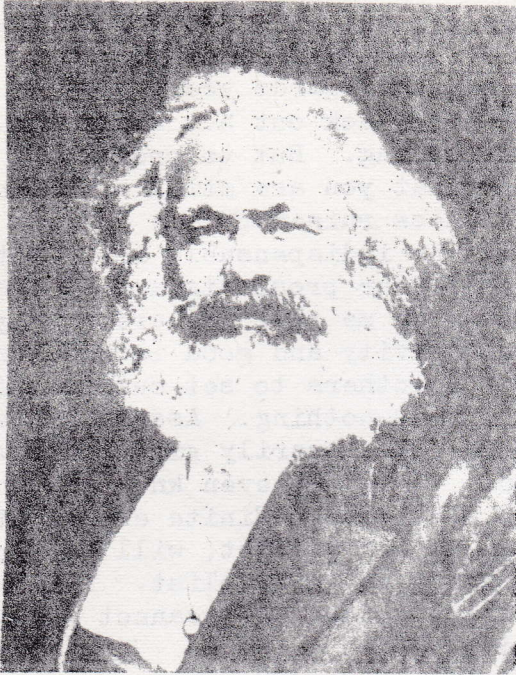
But why was it necessary, even in the era of trivialisation by the mass media, so violently to torture some of the facts? Why was Bradlaugh (who had never been a member of the SDF) made to denounce Aveling at an SDF meeting for the financial irregularities he (Aveling) had committed during his tour of the USA? (The tour of the USA took place at the end of 1886, while Aveling had left the SDF nearly 2 years earlier.) Why was Engels, dying of cancer of the oesophagus, shown as telling Eleanor that Marx was Freddy's father (and therefore her half-brother), whereas it is well known that the information had been conveyed to Eleanor some time earlier by Sam Moore? (3) Why was Will Thorn, the general secretary of the Gasworkers' Union, shown as totally illiterate? There is no substantiation for this belief; that I know of. Eleanor may have helped him improve his reading and widen his vocabulary, but this is quite a different matter. Why, at the time of Engels' death, was Louisa Kautsky made to appear as a rapacious widow, seeking the exclusive possession of Marx's documents, whereas she was at the time only the rapacious wife of one Ludwig Freyberger? Why, finally, was Aveling made to appear as a knowing accomplice to Eleanor's suicide? He was a sad enough character as it was, without being saddled with this additional load of odium. Bernard Shaw's assessment of him (4) as 'quite a pleasant fellow who would have gone to the stake for socialism or atheism but with absolutely no conscience in his private life' shows a more differentiated approach to the complexities and contradictions of human behaviour.

One day it will be possible to assess members of the Holy Family objectively, with all their strengths and all their weaknesses. Producer Louis Marks' efforts were a step in that direction. It is all the sadder therefore that new myths were created, no sooner the older ones discarded. Perhaps this will last for as long as political producers - and politicians in general - prefer the ease of the black and white stereotypes to the effort required in coping with various shades of grey.

M. B.

(3) An English lawyer (1838-1911), one of the oldest friends of Marx and Engels, the translator of the Communist Manifesto and co-translator of volume I of Capital.

(4) Letter to L. Preger, February 22, 1946. Quoted by Warren Sylvester Smith in The London Heretics 1870-1914, Constable, 1967.



BY GAD, SIR
YOU CAD,
SIR!

London 13 August 1866

My dear Lafargue,

Allow me to make the following observations:

1. If you wish to continue your relations with my daughter, you will have to discard your manner of 'paying court' to her. You are well aware that no engagement has been entered into, that as yet everything is provisional. And even if she were formally your betrothed, you should not forget that this concerns a long-term affair. An all too intimate deportment is the more unbecoming in so far as the two lovers will be living in the same place for a necessarily prolonged period of purgatory and of severe tests. I have observed with dismay your change of conduct from day to day over the geologic epoch of a single week. To my mind, true love expresses itself in the lover's restraint, modest bearing, even diffidence regarding the adored one, and certainly not in unconstrained passion and manifestations of premature familiarity. Should you plead in defence your Créole temperament, it becomes my duty to interpose my sound sense between your temperament and my daughter. If in her presence you are unable to love her in a manner that conforms with the latitude of London, you will have to resign yourself to loving her from a distance. I am sure you take my meaning.
2. Before definitely settling your relations with Laura I require a clear explanation of your economic position. My daughter believes that I am conversant with your affairs. She is mistaken. I have not raised this matter because, in my view, it was for you to take the initiative. You know that I have sacrificed my whole fortune to the revolutionary struggle. I do not regret it. On the contrary. Had I my career to start again, I should do the same. But I would not marry. As far as lies in my power I intend to save my daughter from the reefs on which her mother's life has been wrecked. Since this matter would never have reached its present

stage without my direct intervention (a failing on my part!) and without the influence of my friendship for you on my daughter's attitude, a heavy personal responsibility rests upon me. As regards your present circumstances, the information, which I did not seek out but which has reached me nevertheless, is by no means reassuring. But to proceed. Concerning your position in general, I know that you are still a student, that your career in France has been more or less ruined by the Liège incident, that you still lack the language, the indispensable implement for your acclimatisation in England, and that your prospects are at best entirely problematic. Observation has convinced me that you are not by nature diligent, despite bouts of feverish activity and good intentions. In these circumstances you will need help from others to set out in life with my daughter. As regards your family I know nothing. Assuming that they enjoy a certain competence, that does not necessarily give proof that they are willing to make sacrifices for you. I do not even know how they view your plans for marriage. I repeat, I must have definite elucidation on all these matters. Moreover, you, as an avowed realist, will hardly expect that I should treat my daughter's future as an idealist. You, a man so practical that you would abolish poetry altogether, cannot wish to wax poetical at the expense of my child.

3. To forestall any misinterpretation of this letter, I can assure you that were you in a position to contract marriage as from today, it would not happen. My daughter would refuse. I myself would object. You must be a real man before thinking of marriage, and it will mean a long testing time for you and for her.

4. I should like the privacy of this letter to remain between our two selves. I await your answer.

Yours ever,

Karl Marx.



"Prices up, unemployment up, stable wages!" If I didn't know better, I'd think we'd all died and gone to heaven!