

THE BULLETIN

FOR SOCIALIST SELF-MANAGEMENT

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BUILDING WORKERS AND THE LAW

In the Chester and North Wales area the backlash of the builders strike is now making itself felt with a large number of men being arrested and charged.

The background to these arrests is interesting in that it, to our way of thinking, shows fairly clearly how the forces of 'law and order' are used not to enforce great principles of justice but mainly to prevent building workers from organising effectively. The main police targets have been the members of the Chester and North Wales Strike Action Committee. This committee formed at the outset of the builders strike was the first sign of the building workers organising in this area for years. It is still the only active organisation the builders have. At the sell-out of the strike this committee, despite 'advice' from U.C.A.T.T. and T.G.W.U. to disband, decided to continue, to fight victimisation, the 'lump' and to ensure full action on the settlement and to prepare for the next strike.

Three or four days after the settlement and the decision to continue with the Action Committee the police paid the first of their friendly visits to a few men for a friendly chat. This little warning was ignored and hardly commented on. The mood of the second visits five weeks later were distinctly different- probably because the Action Committee had proved itself to be more than just a committee by stopping a 'lump' site at ST. ASAPH, N. Wales and by waging an unsuccessful fight against the victimisation of a well known militant. This time large numbers of builders were visited and taken down to the police station, no-one was informed of their right to refuse to go to the police station. At the station the men were questioned for long periods with threats of prison sentences for all sorts of incredible charges, it was quite common for men

to be threatened with four to five years and in one case life! The men questioned on this occasion were mainly those who had taken part in picketing but who had not been among the speech makers and organisers. The reason for the questioning was to have them go through about 6 volumes of photographs covering major pickets and meetings in the hope that they while denying the ludicrous charges being made may have been forced into making a statement which could be used against the organisers. All round it seems that the forces of 'law and order' resorted to a form of intimidation which was more personal, selective and frightening than anything the pickets could get up to.

The reaction of the builders to this was immediate. On the first working day after these sessions the 800 contractors at the British Steel Corporation site in Shotton had a mass meeting which voted to pay a levy of 15p per man per week to pay for solicitors and any fines incurred.

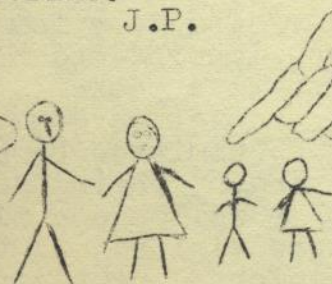
About one week after the questioning the majority of the Action Committee have been charged and remanded on various charges of causing an affray, causing damage, threatening behaviour and intimidation. The next move will be in two weeks when the Chief Constable decides whether the evidence they have is enough to continue with the next part of the charade. Until then the building workers will continue to collect funds by whip-rounds on sites.

THE POLICE ORGANISATION

By far the most interesting aspect of the strike has been the police organisation. In their activities the police have amassed 6 volumes of photographs from the major pickets plus photographs of the committee waiting to go into the Labour Club for meetings. Also they have close minutes from all of the Action Committee meetings and also from some of the mass meetings held during and after the strike. An interesting example of this being Detective Inspector Salisbury quoting the words of a speaker at the B.S.C. works meeting back at him, that was less than two days after the meeting. The very efficient pig in charge of this data collection is a certain Detective Inspector Salisbury who is said to be the leader of a 6 man squad full-time on industrial disputes. They were apparently based in the Royal Hotel, Prestatyn during the building strike.

J.P.

YOU'RE ARRESTED!
for indecently assaulting a housebrick and a small piece of wood, both of which were PRIVATE PROPERTY.



Your family is sentenced to more worry and hardship- for associating with a member of the working class gang and living with someone who causes violence in our society."

WORKERS CONTROL IN EDUCATION AND THE
MASS MEDIA

A report by one of the 200 participants, a teacher at the workers control conference held in London on the 25th. November, '72.

The talks given at the beginning of the conference, in spite of it's title, dealt much more with the way the state controls the mass media and education than with the way the worker does control, tries to or will do. The teachers' talk demonstrated the manner and structure in which working class and ruling children are conditioned right from their nursery days for their future roles in society; the latter for thinking, administrative and managerial tasks and the former for physical repetitive activity. It is crucial to the capitalist system that the working class child drops out of school believing in his own inability to achieve anything of merit and that he is totally responsible for this. If he goes on to further education he must leave with pro-establishment leanings.

This talk was followed by an informative contribution on how the T.V. companies and newspapers manage to maintain the daily barrage of vicious mind-destroying nonsense that workers are subjected to. The connection between the two talks was easily drawn. The thorough conditioning by the 'educational process' makes it unnecessary for any violent coercion or censorship. The screening process for influential posts ensures the selection of people who will naturally endeavour to preserve the status quo. The programme writers and journalists can be relied on to censor their own work partly because they know of the pro-establishment bias of the selectors, and partly by fears of being put out of work, after a short term contract expires or of being blacklisted (verbally).

The seminar on education, one of four which the conference broke up for was valuable as it helped revolutionary workers in teaching and other fields to get a clearer idea of ways and means of gnawing away at the status quo. Most unions, the N.U.T. is no exception try to keep their members isolated from other members in the same union, and from members of other unions. Trade unionists, all in the communications business of some sort, started to talk, and more and more their problems seemed to be connected. The discussion centred around the possible work that could be done now in the schools and in the teaching unions. The meeting felt that teachers should try to unite among themselves in order to increase the effectiveness of their effort to change things, and that this unification process should go on to involve parents and pupils and other trade unionists as working jointly to improve the schools is common ground. Workers should know the psychology behind education, and two books were recommended by a teacher as a step towards this:- THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FASCISM, by W. Reich, and THE FEAR OF FREEDOM, by E. Fromm.

The timidity of teachers was challenged by other trade unionists. Its cause is explained in two ways, A) teachers are victims of the educational system too. They

suffer from self-censorship due to their conditioning and tend to carry out orders just as they did as pupils, just as a soldier does in adult life. They tend to submit to authority as a way of life. B) That contrary to popular belief, teachers now can and increasingly do get the sack and find other teaching jobs hard to come by. They also resign after subtle and not so subtle forms of mental pressures have been brought to bear; nervous breakdowns are common and more serious forms of mental illness are not rare. Teachers would more readily attack the content ('God made the sun and God made me' i.e. workers don't make anything) and the form ('do as your told now because teacher says so') of working class education if knowing parents and pupils were ready to support them and go on the attack as well.

A serious and relevant point was made which all revolutionary trade unionists who are parents can do something about. We must teach democracy in our own homes by being democratic. If we are dictators at home the work of destroying our childrens natural intelligence is half completed before they start in school, and the similarity of the treatment endorses its correctness in the eyes of our children.

What of workers control? There was no discussion about how we would organise our education, production and distribution in a self-managed socialist society. Some trade unionist genuinely felt it premature, others were obviously agents of the ruling class and had come to the conference in haste to jump on a good band wagon in case it left without them, leaving them unable to stay on and swerve it off course. We didn't learn much about workers control but we certainly saw that there are many who are interested in keeping us ignorant.

M.F.

IRELAND

The basis of law and order in Britain is the protection of private property against those who might be a threat to it - but when the ruling class finds itself threatened it does not hesitate to smash the houses, furniture and property of the working class to search out 'those who would threaten law and order'. The ruling class makes its own laws to justify its domination, and if necessary it breaks its own laws to maintain its domination. Having failed to smash the revolutionary movement in the 6 counties (or even to control the sectarian religion hatred which it has deliberately been fostered) British Imperialism has opted for massive repression in the whole of Ireland. In carrying out the policies of British Imperialism in a much more open way the Lynch Government puts itself in a precarious position. For 50 years the capitalist government of the 26 counties has relied for mass support on its historical links with the republican movement and the aspirations to independence of the Irish people- the actions of the Lynch govt. in the last 2 weeks and the response of the Irish working class mean that those days are over.

D.M. 3/12/72

CHILE- BOSSES ABANDON THEIR OWN PARLIAMENT

Those people who believe in the peaceful parliamentary road to socialism are seeing their hopes dashed yet again, this time in Chile. Here, as elsewhere, there is an inescapable fact: every time a major political change occurs, every time there is an attempt to break the power of the ruling oligarchy, then a violent confrontation eventually has to take place between the old political regime and the supporters of the Popular Unity government. Chile is yet another reminder, if we still need one, that a class in power doesn't allow itself to be dispossessed, not even by 'legal procedures'.

It is the Popular Unity government itself that has got tangled up in its own 'legal procedures'; whereas the bourgeoisie, unlike reformists of whatever colour, know very well how to get round these procedures and send their own mercenaries into the extra-parliamentary struggle. While the Allende government is 'legal', it is the bourgeoisie and its traditional parties (the National Party and the Christian democrats) that have taken to the streets, fighting to get back all their power (quite a lot of it is still in their hands).

Last month they sent their shock troops- an estimated 6,000 men well armed and well trained-onto the streets and they were able to paralyse the country, by mobilising not only their own class but also groups of workers who still depend on them. The right wing knows that their political and para-military forces are not in themselves enough to beat the Popular Unity government and the workers supporting it, but the army is still overwhelmingly hostile towards the new government, and with its support the bourgeoisie could prove to be the winner eventually. However, they are not sure of victory yet: the extreme right National Party and the Christian Democrats have joined forces, but they are not completely united. There has always been a section of the Christian Democrats which has refused to use violence against the Allende government; this is because although they are a bourgeois party they are also a mass party, which has always reflected the interests of the workers belonging to it.

Elections to the legislature are due in March of next year, but the bourgeoisie cannot be sure of winning them, instead, they hope to swing the army over to their side by creating an increasingly disturbed situation in the country: hence the demonstrations, the employers' 'strikes', the attacks on the Popular Unity militants. The importance of the army lies in the fact that Chile is nowhere more than 95 miles wide and could be cut in two by quite a small military force: the para-military forces of the extreme right would then have the job of 'mopping up' left wing militants. The reason why all this has not happened is because the army in particular is afraid- not of the 'legal' government but of the resistance of the masses.

And rightly so: the masses are beginning to mobilise themselves. For example, on the second anniversary of the

regime they produced the largest demonstration that Chile has ever known. But they have gone further. In spite of official government appeals for calm, they have organised their own resistance to a possible coup: self-defence committees have been set up in local neighbourhoods, workplaces, factories and universities. These self-defence committees are armed as well as possible for the present moment.

All the parties in Popular Unity have agreed to them even the Chilean Communist Party (which controls the main Trade Union). It has done so because it sees these committees as a gesture, warning the army against the dangers of trying to reverse any of the Allende governments measures. In other words, in regards the committees as being merely a defence of what has already been acquired; meanwhile it's policy for the future is to seek an alliance with the Christian Democrats. In other words, the Communist Party is sticking to the theory of 'revolution by stages'.

It is true that the other parties represented in the Popular Unity (M.A.P.U. and the Socialist Party) have a more militant line, but it is hardly a revolutionary one. They are in fact prisoners of the Allende governments policy of 'prudence'. Only a limited number of Socialist Party militants (most of them remote from the masses) have insisted that the best way of neutralising the lower middle classes is to demonstrate the strength and determination of the proletariat, not to make overtures to the Christian Democrats, especially at a time when sections of the lower middle classes are beginning to desert them.

The Chilean working class wants the Chilean revolution to continue, to the point where there is real workers power. This demand is expressed when workers occupy and take over factories where the government has failed to expropriate the owners; and it is happening not only in the private sector but in the nationalised one also, to the point where the government is being forced to think about accomodating the workers demands over the questions of management in the new constitution.

The decisive factor in the present struggle will be the self organisation of the masses. A real mobilisation against the right and for the victory of socialism can only come about if the masses are fighting for their own power; if the Popular Unity parties, C.P. or otherwise, fail to assist in this autonomous process, the result will be demoralisation.

S.P.



ISLANDS OF SOCIALISM ?

Just as quickly as the work-ins and sit-ins were happening the ideas of workers control were being discussed on the media and by ever widening circles of people. But as the occupations and work-ins brought workers control into the limelight other voices were raised, notably at the U.C.S., and subsequently taken up by the main organisers of occupations- and their message is 'YOU CAN'T HAVE ISLANDS OF SOCIALISM IN A SEA OF CAPITALISM'.

As such it is a truism and it became the immediate reply to anyone who attempted to raise the new issue of workers control. But how relevant is the idea of an 'island of socialism..' to the concept of workers control, does the advocacy of workers control necessarily involve the creation of an 'island...'? To me, this answer to workers control is a product of a sectarian outlook and a lack of understanding of what is meant by workers control and why the idea has been raised.

Essentially 'workers control' is an attempt to 'politicise' the everyday work of a trade union activist, in opposition to the mainly economic emphasis on increasing wages, which is a never ending struggle (necessary, yes!) but it could never seriously undermine a healthy capitalist economy. Inflation had been built into the economy precisely to handle wage demands. Thus the I.W.C. and advocates of workers control are raising their voices to emphasise that capitalism exists on the acceptance of the division of labour between managers and labour, and that a major obstacle on the way to socialism is the working class's belief that management is something only a certain class of person can do. In fact the idea is that people and individuals should learn to control their own lives, free from the dictates of a foreman or manager who is there not because of a superior job knowledge, but merely to 'manage' men, to maintain the authoritarian relationship between capitalist and worker which is necessary to ensure profits.

Another aspect of the road to socialism is that while the economic structure is over-ripe for socialism, the political will or in other words the class consciousness is not there. What passes as class consciousness today is too often a parochial identification with those you grew up with in opposition to impersonal forces, or what is absurdly seen as management ie office staff. The political will of the class, the Labour Party and trade unions, are merely forms of 'nationalised' parochialism. While the economic necessities for the new society have matured and gone rotten inside capitalism, the vehicle of history, class consciousness has progressed only by defeats. Workers control is put forward as a method for raising class consciousness. As such it is better than all of the leaflets and political harangues and despite denials to the contrary by leaders and the acceptance of the statement that you 'can't have islands etc'

by the majority taking part in occupations and work-ins the fact that the work forces either functioned without the law of property in control, or denied the laws of property raised the workers consciousness and was a justification of workers control as a relevant revolutionary tactic.

IN PRACTISE

The idea of workers control did not fall from the sky into the heads of a few intellectuals, it has existed consciously and unconsciously for over 50 years in Britain. Consciously at the beginning of the century amongst loco men and South Wales miners. Unconsciously in the everyday activity of the trade unions in particular within the shop stewards work.

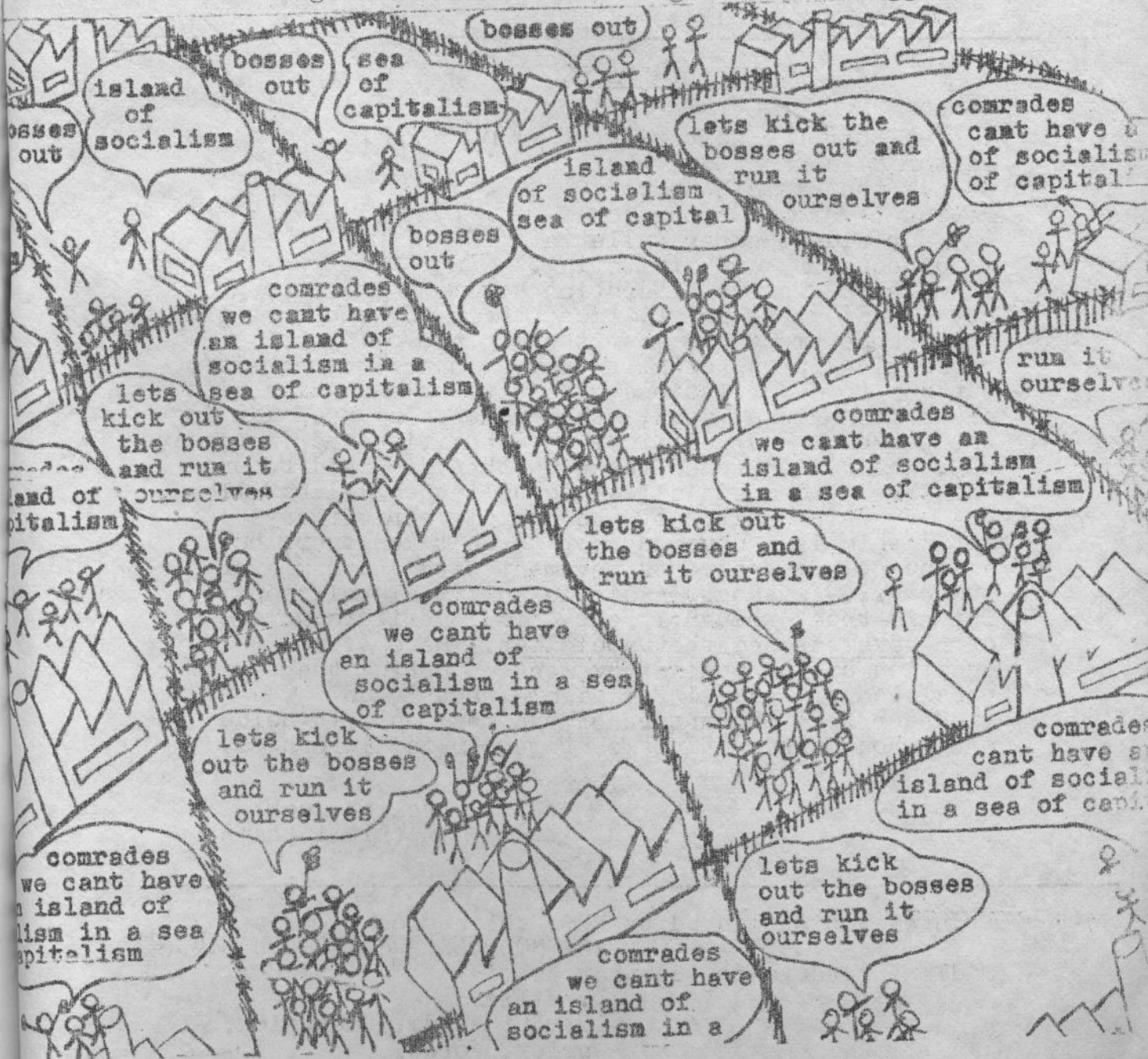
The fact of being able to negotiate wages hours and conditions of work, means that workers have taken from the bosses the 'right' to make arbitrary decisions. At that point they begin to exist consciously as workers. These hard fought for rights, considered revolutionary in themselves at one time (?) contain the germ of workers control which if expanded could have a far greater effect on British history than the advent of trade unionism or shop stewards.

AS stated the idea came out of the actual everyday practice of workers in industry and every day now workers continue this struggle. An example of this is the TAYLOR WOODROW G.P.O. site in ST. Johns St. Chester, where after a series of long drawn out disputes the men have gained the best conditions in the area from a noted 'LUMPER' firm. The first major dispute occurred when T.W. attempted to lay off men because the contractor they worked for was pulling out. T.W. intended to bring in other men from outside under a new contractor- this provoked an immediate strike and the closing of the site. The men were demanding control over the hiring and firing until then a jealously guarded prerogative of management. Here the men were helped since the G.P.O. were screaming for the building- they won after a long drawn out confrontation and went back as a union site. The national strike followed fairly closely after the settlement and delayed the building even further. This prompted the G.P.O. to offer T.W. extra money to get the job back onto schedule. T.W. accepted with targets being set saying that so much should be done before Xmas etc. With all of this going for them the men were able to screw from T.W. the full implementation of the national settlement plus generous bonus and overtime rates.

The reaction of T.W. has been not to increase management personnel but to leave the men alone to get on with it. In fact the present federation steward, when he first turned up at the gates for a job was refused employment since he was a known militant, which provoked the threat of a strike to have him employed. T.W. caved in and he was promptly elected site steward. Since then the lads on the site haven't looked back, using the expertise of the new site steward they have secured favourable bonus rates and times- workers control over wages and time for doing a job. The bonus rates and times are said to be set mainly by the site steward who tuors the site with the bonus clerk, stipulating the

rates and times 'almost marking the board for him'. The men on the site have also learned the lesson of unity in strikes and have applied it to the bonus scheme, with the bonus being pooled and being allocated pro rata, the smallest bonus so far being £22 the highest £35 per week per man. Other small things occur to prove to T.W. that the men now have to be reckoned with such as the complete blacking of men and machines used to break the national strike, the extension of tea breaks, organised clocking in and out. The result of this is that the atmosphere on the site is very good with none of the typical jealousy and aggro of a building site.

As can be seen from the above my idea of workers control is not when the workers are in complete control- that is workers management- but it is a stage of the struggle to



strip away the mystic of management. Unfortunately at the G.P.O. site the whole process is seen simply as 'screwing T.W.' (a company that needs to be screwd) and before workers control can really expand the reality of what they are doing will have to be grasped. They are in the words of the bosses ' challenging managements right to manage, a right confered only by the ownership of property. If the struggle can become a conscious one then the men will be able to move on to the offensive and take the initiative in managing the job: controlling their own lives, more and more challenging the blind forces of capitalism and realising their own power.

J.P.

WOMENS LIBERATION

I feel that the editors'/ editor's (comment) at the end of the article on the National Womens Conference in your mid-November Bulletin is unnecessary and irritating.



I am in the Womens Liberstion Movement and, though not a Radical Feminist, found their workshops at the conference among the most thought provoking and realistic- women actualt trying to work out their/ our day to day relations with/without men, kids, with claimants unions, work, other women, very much linking the personal and political in a positive and impressive way. Their ideas need to be further dicussed before they are condemned as leading us into a 'blind alley'.

The writer of the article herself says that ' this is a movement not to be taken over, but a ganuinely grass-roots movement with a dynamic of its own... (without) a single political philosophy'. This is true, though I felt this year it is more of a movement and that socialist. There is no question of the Womens Movement 'adopting the possition of Radical Feminism'- that is to misunderstand the nature of the movement. It holds many groups and activities together in sisterhood.

Liberation!

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(Birmingham)

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