

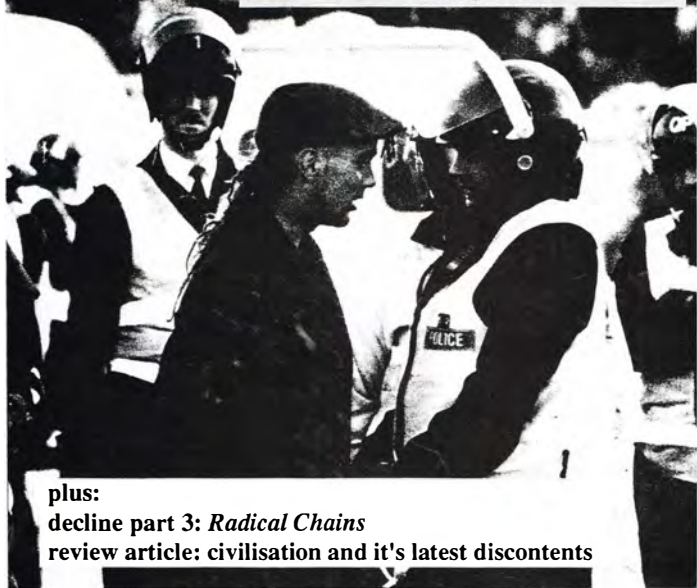
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Aufheben

kill or chill

the criminal justice bill?



plus:

decline part 3: *Radical Chains*

review article: civilisation and it's latest discontents

£2.00

revolutionary perspectives



Contents:

Kill or Chill? Analysis of the Opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill

Last year, the threat of the Criminal Justice Bill galvanized thousands of people to take various forms of action against the state. It also brought very different oppositional elements together in a common practical relationship, many for the first time. In this issue, we examine the possibilities of these struggles.

1. Sign of the Times: Monetarism, the Crisis of Representation, and the CJB

The struggles around the 1994 Criminal Justice Act are notable for their relative independence from the Labour Party and the left. The same national and global economic conditions that have enabled certain oppositional lifestyles to flourish have deprived the traditional forms of mediation and recuperation of their bargaining power.

2. From Campaign to Movement: Latent and Manifest Contradictions

As the opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill began to organize itself, latent internal contradictions became increasingly apparent. Contradictions have been revealed not just between the subjects attempting to enact their antagonism to the state and those attempting to represent them; there have also been massive contradictions within both 'sluffy' and militant-liberal individuals in terms of both their words and their actions. The national demonstrations have expressed both the highest points of the struggle (the Hyde Park riot) and the serious limitations of the perspective of some of those involved.

3. Into the Void: From Single-Issue Campaign to Anti-Capitalist Movement?

Despite the language of 'rights' that has so far predominated, the movement which has emerged in opposition to the CJB contains within it tendencies which posit the dissolution of this alienated world of rights; their experiences in organizing against the CJB and the new law itself have often contributed to the development of such tendencies. The road protesters' refusal of democracy; the squatters' refusal of property rights, and the ravers' pursuit of autonomy: all these suggest the possibility of these particular campaigns going beyond themselves into general anti-capitalist struggle.

Decadence: The Theory of Decline or The Decline of Theory. Part III

*In this, the long-awaited concluding part to our odyssey through the history of theories of capitalist decline, we interrogate the account offered by the **Radical Chains** group. Despite their attempts to go beyond a classical Marxist theory of decline by supplementing it with autonomism, they still end up with an objectivist theory. All attempts to periodize capitalism into objective progressive and decadent phases seek capital's doom not in proletarian self-activity but in the forms of capitalist socialization. Such theories are therefore themselves doomed to fail the struggle of the proletariat.*

Review Article: Civilization and its Latest Discontents.

*Fredy Perlman's influential book **Against His-story, Against Leviathan!** expresses the position of the new 'primitivist' current in which the enemy is not capital but progress. Going beyond leftist notions of the basic neutrality of technology is a step in the right direction: but seeing all technology as essentially alienating is a mystification. Since it is itself an expression in theory of a radical setback, primitivism contributes little to the practical problem we all face of overthrowing capitalism.*

Kill or Chill?

Analysis of the Opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill



Part One: Sign of the Times

Monetarism, the Crisis of Representation, and the CJB

Any analysis of the opposition to what is now on the statute books as the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act has of course to consider what the legislation is all about, to examine its meaning as a weapon in the struggle between the contending classes. Such a consideration is far from easy given the wide ranging nature of the inordinate number of clauses contained in the act, varying from removing the Prison Officers' Association's right to strike to allowing the incarceration of children in prisons. A common criticism of the opposition to the act is that it has concentrated its concerns on Part 5, containing the provisions against ravers, travellers, squatters, hunt saboteurs and the like, and thereby giving the impression that the CJ&POA is concerned only with 'marginal elements'. Some anarchists (such as the Anarchist Black Cross) have argued that the supposedly 'anti-terrorist' measures, such as the reintroduction of stop and search powers, and the removal of the 'right of silence' under police questioning demonstrate that the act is not primarily concerned with marginals but conversely represents an attack on the working class as a whole. And many Leninists have argued that the new offence of aggravated trespass demonstrates that the act is likewise an attack on the working class as a whole by outlawing trade union picket lines, given that to their minds (and despite evidence to the contrary) the working class (or at least the section that really counts) all actually go to full-time work.

Though the first of these arguments may contain a significant element of truth, both fail to grasp the nature of this nebulous beast. The CJ&POA has been described as a bundle of prejudices, and is perhaps best understood as that - a piece of legislation which a divided Conservative Government can unite around as an attack on their favourite scapegoats. But the CJ&POA functions in this way because, whether they are conscious of it or not, there is a method in their madness. Despite the ditching of the 'petty nationalist' Thatcher, the Conservative Party is still divided over the question of Europe: the problem of class rule in the new economic reality of global finance capital. And the recent crisis over VAT on fuel, with backbench Conservative rebels defying a three line whip to sabotage the government majority, clearly showed up the disunity and lack of direction afflicting the government. The problem they face which seems to be defying any easy resolution is simply the need to impose austerity, the need to attack the gains of an entrenched working class, without destroying the fragile Conservative social consensus represented by the 'Essex Man' phenomenon. With the dream of a property-owning democracy sinking into the nightmare of debt, the consensus is rapidly becoming unravelling, but UK plc cannot retreat. What better tonic than a good old attack on those firmly outside of the deal, the marginalized, whose exclusion the Conservative deal was predicated upon, to stiffen up resolve in the ranks for those attacks which threaten to recompose the class. But even such an apparently uncomplicated weapon has been threatening to blow up in the faces of those trying to use it. We are running ahead of ourselves, however. Before we proceed further we have to consider the context in which the battle is being fought.

The character of the movement against the CJ&POA can only be adequately grasped through an examination of the political context in which it has arisen. The most notable feature of the campaign has been the complete absence of the Labour Party's involvement (save for Tony Benn's speeches) and the effective marginalization of the groups which traditionally scavenge in its detritus. The movement may be considered in some ways paradigmatic of class struggle in the era following the retreat of social democracy: unhindered by any powerful mediating force and, as such, both relatively incoherent in its attempts to express its demands and potentially explosive. We seem to be moving towards a situation where the traditional means of recuperation of struggles and integration of its subjects - the 'left' - is finding itself increasingly incapable of representing struggles occurring outside of the productive sphere. This retreat of social democracy is itself a consequence of new global realities.

(i) The crisis of representation

a) The retreat of social democracy:

As the traditional form of mediating the relationship between capital and labour, social democracy, including its radical variants, may be said to be the representation of the trade union consciousness of the working class. Unlike Lenin, who argued that the working class could not develop revolutionary consciousness without external intervention, we would argue that it is the struggles of the working class itself which defetishizes the social relation of capital. But this does not necessarily mean that the working class is just inherently revolutionary. Reformism (or democracy for that matter) is not adequately understood as a con trick perpetrated by the (middle class) left on an otherwise revolutionary class, as many 'ultra-leftists' would have us believe. The tendency to leftism, like the tendency to communism, must be grounded in the social relation of wage labour itself: exploitation mediated by the sale and purchase of labour-power.

Proletarian subjectivity moves along a continuum between the poles of integration and transcendence, poles which represent the acceptance or refusal of the commodity form of labour. Labour-power is a commodity which is not a commodity. A commodity is a thing that is separable and thus alienable from its owner which is produced to be sold; and for capital labour-power is this thing whose exchange-value is the wage and whose use-value is the capacity to create and preserve value. However, not only is labour-power not immediately produced for sale, being produced only as part of the reproduction of human life itself, but it is also not a thing separate from its possessor. The alienation of labour is thus experienced as loss of subjectivity, as estrangement.

Thus the imposition of the commodity form is resisted, leading to the refusal of work, defetishization and the communist tendency. However, in so far as this imposition is accepted, the worker may accept the position of commodity owner in the sphere of exchange and consumption alongside bourgeois and other proletarians alike, and possibly buy a car, house, and other trappings of a 'middle class' identity.

Social democracy represents the acceptance of the commodity-form of labour, the interests of the working class as objects, with trades unions carrying out its collective sale to capital. It represents the interests of a national working class as a whole within capitalism through the use of state intervention against some of the excesses of the market.

Thus struggles against the alienation of wage labour must be recuperated by the left, represented by it, and rendered compatible with the continued objectification of the workers by capital accumulation. And during the period when the refusal of work was manifest, the primary role for revolutionaries was to attack such recuperation, to distinguish the working class as subject from its representation. But it is also necessary to recognize and explore the limits of the recuperative powers of leftism, and this is not possible if the left is reduced to a simple identity with capital (its left wing) rather than grasping it as a form of mediation, a two-way process. Social democracy does not only deliver the working class to capital and preserve national divisions within it, but does so on the basis of being an organizational form through which concessions can be demanded and won from capital, advancing the interests of the working class as a social stock of objective labour-power.

The inherent tendency towards refusal and resistance, a tendency which came to the fore in the post-war revolt against Taylorized labour processes, was recuperated on the basis of the monetarization of frustration: financial compensation for the

experience of alienated labour. Such monetarization of demand was the class meaning of Keynesian demand management. Keynesianism represented the recognition that working class demands could no longer be ignored due to the threat of revolution, but would have to be accommodated and harnessed as the motor of capital accumulation. Thus deficit financing allowed for rising real wages and public spending on welfare, to be repaid by returns from future exploitation.

The basis of social democracy's success was therefore premised on the state's ability to accommodate working class struggles through flexibility in monetary policy, to deliver reforms and concessions which could be recovered from the future production of surplus-value by taxation. As we have seen, this premise has been eroded with the increasing autonomy of global finance capital.¹ With it has come the retreat of social democracy on a global scale.

b) From Labourism to Blairism:

The Labour Party fell from power when the 'winter of discontent' exposed the limits of attempting to impose monetarist economic measures within a Keynesian institutional framework. Wildcat strikes left the social democratic consensus in tatters; a more radical strategy was required, one of dividing the working class to establish a new Conservative consensus based on the exclusion of those whose exploitation would not produce a sufficient rate of profit. It has taken 15 years in opposition for the Labour Party to respond to the dictatorship of finance capital by planning to scrap the traditional commitment to nationalization. During those 15 years the party has swung to the right, recognising that if it is to win an election it will have to satisfy City analysts that it is capable of imposing as harsh a monetary regime as its opponents. This process has reached its logical conclusion with the election of Tony Blair as leader and his plans to reassure the bankers that his party does not even have a semblance of a commitment to the type of fiscal regime which would allow the diversion of surplus value into loss making nationalized industries and public services.

With the development of this 'new realism' has come the decline in the recuperative capability of the left. But this process has not been smooth. Indeed, as the New Left decided *en masse* to enter the party during the start of the 80s, and enjoying the flexibility that comes with being in opposition, the party swung to the left initially. The left wing of the party has been put under severe pressure since then, however, particularly with Kinnock's 'witch-hunt' of Militant. The left of the party, from being a major force in the 1970s has declined to such an extent that it is rarely encountered, and no longer capable of even the occasional pyrrhic victory at 'Conference'.

A stream of employment laws has imposed this 'new realism' on the trade unions over the years. From being in a position of negotiating over beer and sandwiches at No. 10, and occasionally threatening that their members wouldn't agree to what the government wanted without a concession, union leaders now find themselves in the position of simply having to police their members regardless, clamping down on any initiative which could end in the dreaded sequestration. The inability to win anything through acceptance of the union form has been an invitation to wildcat autonomy that has also been all too rarely accepted. Whether this has been due to a certain loyalty to the form which, for all its 'sell outs', delivered so much in the past, or to an understandable lack of confidence is unclear; but the invitation is unlikely to be retracted.

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But whilst social democracy retains a firm if fragile grip on workplace struggles, the decline in its relevance to non-workplace struggles was brought home by the Poll Tax. Who remembers the 'Stop It' campaign (dubbed 'Pay It' by its detractors), launched by the Labour Party, except the union leaders who supported it? Indeed most people's recollection of the relationship between the Labour Party and the 'Tory Tax' will be the vigour with which Labour councils demonstrated their fiscal responsibility by pursuing non-payers.

With this retreat of mainstream social democracy from the concerns of 'the workers', radical social democracy's task of orienting the struggle towards the labour movement was made intolerably difficult. The SWP's position of orienting opposition towards pressing the unions to veto collection was a non-starter. Militant appeared to do somewhat better, with people going along with their non-workerist 'lobby the Labour council' position to the extent that they took it as an invitation to picket, disrupt or riot. Yet they also failed dismally in their efforts, despite stitching up the 'Federation'. Trying to fit the struggle into a social democratic strait-jacket required an attack on the Trafalgar Square rioters whose actions did not conform with a social democratic definition of working class subjectivity, an attack that even disgusted many loyal members. Not only did they fail to deliver the working class to the labour movement, but also got expelled from their beloved party and lost half their members.

Traditional forms of mediation are in crisis. This can best be illustrated by comparing the movement against the 1994 CJ&POA to that which campaigned against the 1977 Criminal Trespass Law.

c) From CACTL to fractal:

Squatting, as a violation of the inalienable laws of private property, is clearly a challenge to the ground rules of the social democratic compromise. Nevertheless, in the 1970s, social democracy proved itself to be quite capable of recuperating a significant squatters' struggle. In 1974 the Law Commission published its initial report proposing to replace the 1381 Forcible Entry Acts with a Criminal Trespass Law which would make all forms of trespass, and consequently squatting, illegal. London's relatively well organized squatters responded immediately: at an All London Squatters meeting they decided to set up a campaign to fight the proposals, and the Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL) was born. Comrades who were involved in the campaign, however, report that CACTL quickly became dominated by Trots, eventually being represented by a couple from the SWP. And this is borne out by CACTL's own propaganda which inevitably played down the effect of the proposals on squatters in order to present the proposed legislation as an attack on workers. In much the same way as the SWP has tried to steer the anti-CJ&POA movement, CACTL sat about orienting opposition towards the labour movement.

By arguing that the legislation was aimed at factory occupations, however, CACTL had remarkable success. Between 1971 and 1975 over 150,000 workers were involved in over 200 occupations, ranging from those at Fisher-Bendix in Kirkby in 1972 and 1974 against redundancies to the occupation of Hopkinson's in Huddersfield in 1975 for a wage increase. Student occupations were also recurrent events during the 1970s, especially during 1976. And that same year, while the Labour left were decrying Callaghan's 'betrayal' at their conference and wondering what to do, Ford workers at Dagenham demonstrated their contempt for leftist mediation by rioting, holding the police at bay while they smashed up and set fire to various parts of the plant. With workplace struggles raging, the workerist card played by CACTL turned out to be a trump, and they began to receive invitations to send speakers to trades councils, trade union branches and student unions.

Radical social democracy was able to recuperate and represent the struggle because it was able to deliver results. By 1976 CACTL had received support from 36 trades councils, 85 trade union branches and 51 student unions, and by the following year not only had the national unions ACTT, AUEW-TASS, and NUPE passed resolutions in opposition to the proposals, but the TUC General Council had also voted to oppose the CTL. Orienting towards the labour movement in this context meant that CACTL was able to mobilize massive support for its demonstrations. In the face of this opposition the Law Commission watered down its initial plan massively.

The 1977 Criminal Law Act represented a compromise which meant that squatting, whilst more difficult, was still legal. The act, which has been the basic squatting law until the 1994 CJ&POA changes, only legislated against violent or threatening entry, refusal to leave when requested by a displaced residential occupier or a protected intending occupier, trespassing with an offensive weapon, squatting an embassy or consul, or resisting a bailiff executing a possession order. A long way short of making squatting itself a criminal offence. The price paid for CACTL's successful recuperation, however, was that many people were under the misapprehension that squatting had been made illegal, and CACTL's own propaganda reinforced this belief, inevitably undermining the squatting movement. Indeed in the summer of 1978 the Advisory Service for Squatters felt it necessary to mount a campaign against this leftist counter-information with the slogan 'squatting is still legal'.

What is most notable, however, is the fact that *three years* before the proposals were to become law there was already a significant campaign of opposition. Less than *three months* before the Criminal Justice Bill was due to become law there was still no specific campaign against it. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, bang! May 1st last year, 25,000 ravers on the streets of London and the left nowhere to be seen, a massive party in Trafalgar Square and everyone dancing to the deliciously ambiguous chant of 'Kill the Bill'!



(ii) Alternative lifestyles and the CJ&POA Part 5

a) Monetarism and mass unemployment:

In 1976 the then British Prime Minister told his Labour Party Conference that deficit financing of public demand could no longer be sustained: 'We used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that option no longer exists and that so far as it ever did exist, it only worked by injecting inflation into the economy.' With that statement, the Labour Party launched its policy of monetarist economic measures within a Keynesian political framework. A policy of 'sound money' demanded the reduction of the state deficit through the abandonment of full employment guarantees, cuts in welfare expenditure and the scrapping of unproductive producers, or a boom in productive accumulation which would presuppose either a rigorous intensification of work or a major reduction in wages.

The struggles of the late 1970s and the 1980s have been well documented elsewhere. We are all only too aware of the extent to which heavy defeats have cowed the working class. Since the defeat of the miners, the level of strike activity has subsided massively. But it is all too easy to allow oneself to become demoralized by the apparent success of our enemy. Whilst the quality of our lives may have been diminished by the violent and repressive accompaniments of monetary terrorism we must also consider the quantitative aspects of this shitty system - after all, our alienation rests upon the numerical ratio that is capitalist exploitation. A balance sheet is required.²

Wave after wave of redundancies have swelled the ranks of the unemployed to the extent that the leftist's hand-wringing when the numbers on the dole reached 1,000,000 now seems ridiculous. The abandonment of full employment and the creation of this huge reserve army of industrial labour has given capital a powerful weapon with which to try to undermine the previous gains of the working class. And the fear of joining those ranks has played a major role in undermining workers' confidence in their ability to resist the restructuring of labour processes. The intensification of work and the imposition of overtime underpinned the apparent miracle of Thatcherism.

But whilst the reserve army may have played a major role in containing wages and intensifying work, the extent to which the British working class's gains have been clawed back has been limited. Throughout Europe, capital faces the same problem of working class entrenchment, a proletariat which refuses the cuts in wages and welfare that have been suffered in the US. Whilst in the economic textbooks the price of labour-power rises and falls in accordance with its supply and demand, in reality wages have tended to be contained only during periods when the level of unemployment is actually rising. They have not been slashed to the extent that will attract money capital towards productive investment here rather than to the other emerging economic blocs. Likewise it has proved impossible to cut that part of state spending which constitutes the social wage to a degree comparable with the US, despite the constant attacks on the NHS and those on benefit.

Many attempts have been made over the years to restructure the benefit system in order to encourage claimants to compete for low paid jobs, most recently the 'actively seeking work' stipulations and the plans in the pipeline for the Job Seeker's Allowance. With a continuing lack of productive investment the British state seems to be opting for the strategy of a low wage economy, competing directly with the likes of Portugal, Greece and Ireland, as evidenced by the Social Chapter opt-out. But there seems to be a bug in that circuit necessary but extraneous to the circuit of capital's reproduction

process: that of the reproduction of the peculiar commodity labour-power; a social process which is subject to particular forms of contestation given that the commodity is the capacity and, crucially, willingness to work. Thus at times when unemployment has been rising in the UK the formation of reserves of idle labour-power desperate for work has been subject to a counter-tendency of the development of alternative lifestyles which take as their point of departure not the wage but the dole as their means of social reproduction. Such lifestyles have undermined, albeit insufficiently compared to their visibility, the state's attempts to impose a tighter relationship between consumption and work, the life-blood of capital.

b) No Future:

Given the close relationship between alternative lifestyles and music, and the importance of music in providing something concrete within which value can invest itself in its repeated search for a new generation of consumers, the word 'alternative' needs to be treated with a degree of caution. Nevertheless, not all youth cultures are the same. Some contain more or less positive tendencies than others, a greater or lesser potential for recognizing the contradictions inherent in the phenomenon and developing a practical critique of their grounding. And all 'alternative' lifestyles are by definition outside of the remit of the usual forms of political representation.

Music was in a moribund state in the mid 1970s. The musicians of the '68 generation had become tired and boring, the naive optimism of hippydom out of tune with the harsh realities of ongoing class conflict. No amount of lustre or glitter on the stage sets of glam rock could disguise the fact that all was not well in the (music) factory, and it was obvious that the new subjects of struggle required new overtures. And as Callaghan declared his intention to launch the war of austerity in 1976, a different declaration of war was beginning to reverberate through distorted amplifiers in the back rooms and basements of London: the declaration of war on 'society' by punk. Punk was able to articulate the frustrations of the new generation. But in comparison to the wave of youth revolt in Italy, both inside and outside of the factories, punk was only a caricature of revolt, superficial nihilism.



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Punk was inherently contradictory. Central to it was the 'DIY' ethos, but it lacked an explicit critique of the commodity-form. This lack of critique allowed self-valorization to give way to recuperation, giving a long overdue kick up the backside to the entrepreneurs involved in the 'youth culture' industry. The shops of King's Road and Carnaby Street testified to the process of turning rebellion into money, shelves laden with designer bondage trousers, studded leather, mass-produced 'Destroy' and 'Vive La Revolution' t-shirts, and badges. But the recuperative powers of these new commodities were not without limit. For the punks that had taken the mocking lyrics of their anti-heroes seriously, the sight of all this commodity capital awaiting realization, and the selling out to major labels of the biggest bands, was an insult they could not leave unanswered. They realized that 'the great rock and roll swindle' had in fact been perpetrated on them.

Perhaps the most important point, however, is the fact that selling an image of revolution to keep would-be revolutionaries from the real thing requires that they have the necessary purchasing power. And many of the working class youth attracted to punk were on the dole and therefore skint. The time was right for a sub-genre to emerge from all this shit to explicitly politicize the DIY ethos that punk stood for.

c) Anarcho-Punk:

'Do you believe in the system? Well OK. I believe in anarchy in the UK'. These words from the release of the first Crass record on their own non-profit making label were accompanied by the words 'Pay no more than £2'. If you still had to pay for your anarchy at least it was affordable! Crass had the means to release their own cheap records, play cheap gigs, and promote other bands who shared their ethos. The anarcho-punk scene soon became a vibrant alternative to the punk scene it declared dead. The anarchism of the typical anarcho-punk was however little more than militant liberalism. Crass had their roots in the old peace movement, and largely ignoring the harsh realities of class warfare in the world outside their commune, set about promoting the ideas of pacifism and lifestyle politics. Offensive though many of their dogmas were, the anarcho-punks must be judged not just by the lyrics they sang along to, but, crucially, by what they actually did.

During the early 1980s, the main political focus for the new breed was the CND demonstrations which drew hundreds of thousands of concerned liberals to Hyde Park on a yearly basis. Grouping under a collection of black flags the anarchists would hand out leaflets and fanzines encouraging personal revolution and then heckle the speakers and try to storm the stage. As numbers swelled, the anti-militarist struggle was taken into the heart of enemy territory with the Stop The City actions when banks and rollers would get smashed under the cover of a pacifist carnival. The obsession with lifestyle politics, however, was a major factor hindering the development of the 'movement', linking links with those who didn't fit problematic, as would become apparent during the miners' strike. Far too many anarchists simply changed their clothes, diet, drugs and musical tastes, deluding themselves that by doing so they were creating a new world within the belly of the old which would wither away once it recognized its comparative existential poverty. But most of the criticisms of lifestyle politics, then and now, were and are mere defences by militants prepared to accept the continual deferral of pleasure in favour of the 'hard work' of politics.³ The desire to create the future in the present has always been a strength of anarchists. How one lives is political. Thus the anarchists may be considered to have constituted a political movement seeking social reproduction unmediated by wage labour.

In 1980 Crass played the Stonehenge festival and a close link with the free festival scene subsequently evolved. Likewise the anarchists gave a massive impetus to the squatting scene left over from the 70s. By the mid 1980s, virtually every town in England and Wales had its squats. Bands were formed, venues either squatted or hired dirt cheap (church halls and the like which meant no bar - take your own home-brew) and gigs organized, often benefits which would succeed in raising money despite cheap entry because the bands would play for next to nothing. During the summer months much of this activity would shift on to the free festival circuit, meeting up with those who had chosen to spend the whole year travelling between peace camps and festivals, and who in turn would benefit from the links with the urban scene (news, contacts, places to rest and repair, opportunities for fraud etc.).

This scene was particularly well organized, and more politicized, in the cities. On Bristol's Cheltenham Road, the Demolition Ballroom, Demolition Diner, and Full Marx book shop provided a valuable organizational focus, with the activities of the squatted venue and cafe supplemented by the information and contact address of the lefty book shop. Brixton squatters not only had their own squatted cafes, crèches and book shop, but also *Crowbar* their own *Class War* style squatting oriented paper. Strong links were forged with the squatting movement on the continent, particularly Germany, and draft dodgers from Italy were regularly encountered. And with direct communication supplemented by the then fortnightly *Black Flag*, a couple of phone calls and a short article could mobilize numbers in solidarity with other struggles.

Whilst the anarcho-punk scene created a not insignificant area of autonomy from capital, such autonomy was always disfigured by the continued existence of exchange relations. Going to gigs and eating in squat cafes, even brewing your own beer to share with mates, all required money. And free festivals, whilst standing in stark contrast to the commercialism of Glastonbury, were anything but - there was no entry fee and no-one would let you starve if you were skint, but drugs in particular cost money.⁴ Unless you wanted to cloud your relationships, obscuring lines of solidarity and friendship by becoming a dealer, if only to cover your own dope requirements, money remained a problem. There was always a correspondence between the satisfaction of needs and the need for money, a correspondence that contradicted the professed desire to abolish the filthy stuff.

d) Fragmentation of anarcho-punk:

This contradiction partially explains the subsequent fragmentation and decline of the anarcho-punk squatting/travelling movement. On the one hand, the state relaxed credit restrictions, abandoning tight monetary policy, producing the credit-fuelled boom which preceded the 1987 stock market crash. This led to a rapid fall in the number of jobless. Many previously involved with organizing in and around the squatting scene got jobs during the boom, and whilst many remained living in squats (to stay with friends and save on rent), momentum was being lost. Individualism tended to replace a collective approach to social problems, as wage earners and dealers could afford to accept the position money held within the scene. The carrot of the boom, however would not have had the same impact without the repeated blows with the stick of state repression.

With unemployment falling, it became easier for the state to make the benefit system more punitive. The changes in 1987 and 1988 certainly increased the disciplining role of the welfare state, thereby throwing down a gauntlet to the lifestyle of work-rejection. Benefits for 16 and 17 year olds were scrapped in favour of an extension of YTS slave labour, thereby removing

the possibility of work avoidance (except by begging) for the young school leavers who had always been central to the movement. The introduction of the Job Training Scheme and the availability for work requirements also had an effect. Restart interviews were easy enough for most people sufficiently clued up to blag their way through, but tended to encourage people to rely on their own wits. Because these changes were ultimately divisive, they encouraged people to look after number one. Attempts to organize against them were met with responses that expressed a distinct lack of solidarity, and this reflected not only the nature of the attack but also the divisions that had emerged within the scene.

The biggest causes of such fragmentation were the smashing of the miners and printworkers on the one hand and the repression of the festival scene on the other. The anarchism of the anarcho-punk scene was always pretty incoherent, a militant liberalism that sought to destroy the state yet which was committed to pacifism. Within the movement there would be differences, some placing greater emphasis on non-violence or animal rights, some more committed to a revolutionary class position. For a while these underlying differences could be glossed over, and whilst people could argue about the 1981 riots, for example, it was just talk. But the miners' strike presented a major challenge by its longevity and opportunity for involvement, one that caused underlying differences to surface with a resultant divergence between those who dismissed the miners as violent macho men performing an ecologically unsound activity, and those who, despite a certain amount of confusion, recognized that there was a war going on and, whatever it was about, they had to choose the violence of the pickets over that of the state's thugs.

Most anarchists supported the miners, even if such support was not of a particularly practical nature, though bands like Crass and Poison Girls and numerous others played benefits for the miners to give some material assistance. The resultant defeat therefore had a demoralizing effect on the anarcho-punk scene.

The same conflict between liberalism and class struggle anarchism came to the fore with the Wapping dispute the following year. The movement was divided between those who saw the need to support the printworkers and those who dismissed them as sexist, racist, homophobic macho men. However even amongst those more sympathetic to the former view were some who argued that it was better that pickets got trampled by police horses than horses get broken legs by pickets rolling marbles under their hooves. The defeat of the printworkers was another demoralizing factor, but also one which accelerated the process of fragmentation. The inherent contradiction in the movement led to a substantial parting of ways, one pole devoting itself almost exclusively to the moral crusade of animal lib and many of those they fell out with getting so fed up with lifestyleism that they joined one of the national anarchist organizations.

Meanwhile those who had been more attracted to travelling than squatting or political activity were being put under severe pressure. The Stonehenge festival was banned in 1985, and the determined attempt to defy the ban was met with a response not unlike that experienced by the miners, culminating in the famous 'battle of the beanfield'.⁵ The following year the state brought in the Public Order Act, section 13 of which established a 4 mile radius exclusion zone around the stones. Other sections gave new powers to proscribe demonstrations and extended the law against trespass. The former were successfully challenged on the streets of London by the Campaign Against the Public Order Act/Campaign Against Police Repression; but whilst many travellers have battled bravely in adverse conditions, the police have been able to use section 39 to intimidate and harass

them, continually moving them on. Travelling and free festivals continued, but, with the loss of the weeks-long Stonehenge focus, went into something of a decline. The police-benefit festival at Glastonbury,⁶ extortionately priced but affordable to those now working, mopped up. And before they were successfully excluded in recent years, convoys of travellers used to gatecrash it (literally), with many others bunking in, and so the new reality was gradually accepted, particularly as the 'unfree' festivals were full of punters waiting to be parted from their cash.

The nomadic dream of rural idyll gradually gave way to the reality of being moved from noisy lay-by to squalid car park, with decent sites often blocked off by farmers and local councils. As the links with squatters and politicians became more distanced, so the mysticism of the 60s hippies, aided by reminiscence of the magical stones now out of reach, took further hold, alongside cynicism. Alienation from capitalist society increasingly expressed itself through alcoholism and heroin addiction, bringing new problems to deal with or run away from. Ghettoization increased, with the you've had a bath so you must be a cunt mentality increasing.

Whilst the late 80s witnessed a decline in the anarcho-punk phenomenon, it did not disappear. The Poll Tax riot demonstrated that the anger of the punks only needed an invitation to riot to stop it being internalized and bitterly misdirected. And despite all the repression since 1985, the loss of direction, supportive links, and ghettoization, a significant travelling scene survived to see the psychedelic cavalry arrive in 1992.

c) Acid House / Rave:

When acid house parties became popularized beyond exclusive clubs with an explosion of huge warehouse parties in 1988, media trend-setters dubbed it the 'summer of love'. It soon became clear, however, that despite the squatting of venues the whole phenomena was becoming subordinate to the interests of a new breed of entrepreneur, and gradually the rave scene has tended to move from squatted warehouses and country fields to licensed venues. It is now well known that the much vaunted love did not extend to letting overheated ravers drink from taps in night club toilets when the dehydrating effects of ecstasy could be exploited to flog overpriced bottled water. The acid house / rave scene provided a perfect opportunity for a rapid accumulation of capital with little outlay, offset only by the risks involved in the illegality. As recognition of the commercial potential of the phenomena grew so free parties went into decline.

Whilst the rave scene may have permitted the opening up of a new area for commercial activity, it has not been one that established capital has been able to fully penetrate, and this is not just due to the illegality of the drugs industry which has an unprecedented cultural importance to raves. Surplus-value has instead been largely distributed amongst a new generation of petty entrepreneurs, from dealers to DJs and home-growers to laser operators, and whilst night-club owners have benefited from police repression of illegal parties, established interests in the brewing and music industries have been worried by the impenetrability of the rave scene for their products. As much of the money circulating in the rave scene becomes siphoned off by DJs and owners of sound systems and light shows etc., often to supplement their dole, at the expense of it being spent on records and CDs, the MTV-promoted grunge phenomenon has been needed to help maintain the level of the music industry's commodity capital consumed by the youth market.

As for ravers themselves, one has to consider the extent to which their lifestyle is 'alternative', if only because of the state's attempts to repress the unlicensed rave scene and possible

Aufheben

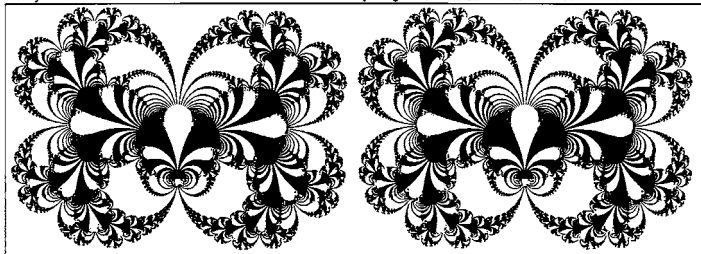
reactions to that repression. Quite clearly ravers are not self-consciously political in the way that anarcho-punks were, because anarcho-punk's premise was a critique of the commercialism of the 'punk industry' whilst the rave scene was built on an acceptance of the commodification of squat parties.

There has, however, been something of a reaction to the crass commercialism of rave culture, although this has been predominantly mystic, seeing crude material interest as being at odds with the 'spiritual significance' of the rave high in which the 'collective consciousness of the tribe' is rediscovered, apparently.⁷ And the development of a more sober critique (apart from the practical one of bunking in to raves) has been hindered by the fact that the sound systems which provide free parties do so with equipment they have accumulated by putting on licensed raves in clubs for money. Many of these entrepreneurs reinvest their share of surplus-value but do so predominantly for the enhanced use-value of their equipment rather than because it can make them even more money. Simply enjoying the parties they put on and the status that comes with it they impose the rule of money on ravers, but not for the sake of money itself.

Otterbourne, Hampshire police repeatedly asserted that there would in no circumstances be a festival, only to have to allow one to prevent the county's arteries of commerce being clogged up by would-be revellers refusing to go home. Since then police have committed resources to a nationwide surveillance operation, hounded travellers persistently and demanded increased powers to ensure such scenarios are not repeated. With the passing of the CJ&POA such powers have been granted.

e) CJ&POA Part 5:

Following the release of the Birmingham 6, the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice was set up to find a way of solving the crisis of confidence in the British legal system. One of its central recommendations was that the right to silence be maintained; but by ite the party with the 'back to basics' programme. In October 1993, after both the opposition parties had banged the 'law and order' drum at their conferences, Michael Howard gave a 'hang 'em and flog 'em' speech to the Tory party conference, presenting a 27 point law and order package which became the basis for both the Criminal Justice



The recession of the early 1990s has seen youth unemployment shoot up rapidly, however, and with it the need for a lifestyle compatible with being skint. It has enabled the development of the 'eco-warriors' that have so infuriated the government through taking anti-roads protests beyond 'NIMBYism'.⁸ But alongside clauses seeking to effectively criminalize anti-roads actions, squatting, travelling and hunt-sabotage, the CJ&POA also contains clauses specifically aimed at raves. In order to understand why, it is necessary to consider the events of 1992, events that left landowners, police and MPs demanding action.

In 1992 the Exodus collective in Luton began putting on free raves that grew to attract 10,000-strong crowds. But the most significant events in the 1992 rave calendar were the free festival at Castlemorton in the Malverns and the Torpedo Town festival at Otterbourne near Twyford Down. These saw a new and exciting fusion of the rave scene with the leftovers of the travelling scene. Such a fusion posed the possibility, on the one hand, of an auto-critique of the commercialism of raves, learning from the old nomadic anarcho-punks, and a critique of soap-avoiding ghettoization on the other. Such a prospect admittedly seemed fanciful at the time given the level of mutual dislike - ravers dismissed as 'part-timers' with no respect for 'their' sites, and 'scrounging' travellers apparently confirming popular prejudices.

But what was far more significant in the short term was the fact that by coming together, sheer weight of numbers meant that each group enabled each other to defy police bans, raising the prospect that the steady process of the state's crushing of the free aspects of each genre could be put into reverse. In

Bill and the Police and Magistrates Courts Bill.

As well as a relatively straightforward, if draconian, increase in the repressive powers of the state (abolishing the right to silence etc.), the proposals attacked every conceivable scapegoat that the party could agree to hate, from the young killers of Jamie Bulger (provisions for children's prisons) to paedophiles (extending the powers of police to raid premises on suspicion they may contain child pornography).⁹ Had the CJB stuck to attacking these relatively easy targets the response would probably have amounted to little more than condemnation from the liberal establishment and social workers. But the CJB also contained Part 5 devoted almost entirely to an attack on squatters, travellers, hunt-sabs, road protesters and, importantly, ravers, and these groups have refused to be scapegoated quite so easily.

What unites these groups in such a way that they have become such hate targets of the government is that, although they may be a long way from consciously declaring war on capital, they share a common refusal of the work-ethic, of a life subordinated to wage labour. As such, they pose an alternative to the life of desperately looking for work, which must be made unattractive. But the state is not alone in not having a clear understanding of the class meaning of Part 5 of the CJ&POA; for this is something which the representatives of the opposition to the act also seem to be painfully incapable of grasping.



Part Two: From Campaign to Movement

Latent and Manifest Contradictions



Class war or a liberal lobby? A movement to defend autonomy and subversion or an appeal for rights? Anyone who has had any involvement in the campaign against the Criminal Justice Bill, if only to the extent of going on one of the three national marches, must be aware that the opposition to the act is riven by this contradiction. 'Keep it Fluffy' or 'Keep it Spikey'? 'Kill the Bill' or 'Chill the Bill'? Communists undoubtedly know which side they are on. But this contradiction exists not just in the antagonism between the different components which make up the campaign, most famously between the media *bete noire* Class War and the media darlings in Freedom Network. It also runs through the hearts of many of the individuals for whom this is their first political engagement. The division exists in the contradictory things the same people have said - and, more importantly, *done* - in different circumstances. It is therefore worthwhile examining the basis of this contradiction, as well as taking sides, for the emergence of a new generation of rebels is dependent upon them understanding and seeking to resolve their contradictory interpretations of the world around them.

(A) Contradictions in the Campaign

(i) Subjects and Representatives

a) Left Behind:

The retreat of parliamentary social democracy may have caused problems for Trotskyism's engagement with the opposition to the Poll Tax, but at least the Labour Party opposed the Poll Tax in parliament, enabling an argument to be made that they offered a hope of salvation worth pursuing, lobbying, pressuring etc. Orienting opposition to the CJB towards the labour movement however would quickly come up against the problem that not only did the Labour Party not oppose the CJB in parliament,¹⁰ but also that its leader was happy to boast that he had even suggested sections of it (the reintroduction of stop and search powers). It is clearly no surprise that the left was incapable of launching a movement against the CJB.¹¹

b) Carry on regardless:

If we understand leftism as a form of mediation, it becomes clear that the crisis of representation does not just open up new possibilities for autonomous class struggle, but also poses new problems. Social democracy provided a political form through which working class antagonism could be expressed. In order to recuperate through representation, the left had to arrange meetings as well as stitch them up, and organize demonstrations as well as police them. For revolutionaries who used to intervene in or heckle at those meetings, leaflet disrupt or attempt to riot on those demonstrations, the crisis of leftist mediation poses a dilemma. Meetings and demonstrations need to be organized in order to bring together atomized individuals so that they can become a collective force.

When the CJB was drawn up, it immediately became clear that contesting its implementation would require drawing strength from the breadth of its attack. Practical links would have to be made between the different marginalized groups affected in order that they could reinforce each others resistance. A movement would have to be forged, beginning by launching a campaign of opposition to the bill, drawing in groups, mediating between them, co-ordinating activities, organizing demonstrations etc. But with the left incapable of performing this role, who would launch a campaign against the CJB?

As we have seen, squatters and travellers have become relatively disorganized and depoliticized since the mid 1980s. Some squatters are still involved in organizing politically around squatting, and the 121 Centre in Brixton is still functioning, even if political activities are being increasingly marginalized. But in 1994, squatters were in no position to repeat their initial success of 1974, and travellers were in an even worse position. A nomadic lifestyle does not lend itself to co-ordinated resistance, and the CJ&POA's provisions allowing police to seize and destroy vehicles means that travellers would be risking their homes by leading a confrontation with the law. Leaving the struggle to those with the luxury of being able to

confront the law on less perilous terrain, many travellers have been consistent with the tendency to try to escape the clutches of the state and have therefore emigrated.

The nature of hunt sabotage and anti-roads protests meanwhile lent itself to a quite different response to the challenge contained in the bill. Most of those involved in these activities justify their actions in moral terms, and it is exactly this commitment to a militant liberal ideology which has made them determined to contest the new laws. For the sake of some external morally pure referent, 'the planet' or 'innocent animals', just about any sacrifice is worth making. Thus the dominant tendency in response to the criminalization of these activities was that of a renewed determination to carry on regardless. But, laudable though this determination may be, this tendency neglected the importance of making solidaristic links, of the need to build a national campaign of opposition.

c) Advance to Go:

On the one hand the crisis of representation, and on the other the opposing tendencies amongst targeted subjects towards running away or carrying on regardless. It is these factors which have combined to allow the 'fluffies'¹² to represent the movement against the CJ&POA; and had it not been for them there would not have been any significant campaign against the CJB, and, ironically given their opposition to (anti-hierarchical) violence, no Hyde Park riot. The main organizers behind the May 1st demo were the Advance Party, made up of the petty entrepreneurs of the rave scene who had woken up to the implications of the bill for unlicensed parties. They used the channels of communication established for organizing raves; to those not involved in the scene the demo seemed to come out of nowhere. As news reached DIY enthusiasts around the country local anti-CJB groups began to spring up, co-ordinated through the Freedom Network, and the 'fluffy' character of the campaign became established.

The connection between 'fluffy' ideology and people with a penchant for shelves from 'Do It All' might seem far fetched, but DIY refers not to this but to a relatively new cultural phenomenon. Communicated through a host of fanzines, DIY culture celebrates self-organization. It is anarcho-punk stripped of its subversive potential, with neither punk's anger nor anarchism's politics. Thus it appeals both to the (predominantly mystic) alternative ravers who reject the crass commercialism of the dominant rave scene in favour of self-organized parties (free and otherwise), and to the 'eco-reformism' in and around the Green Party who are disillusioned by its attempts at electoral respectability but who would rather celebrate recycling their rubbish, getting an allotment, and the worship of Gaia than get involved with Earth First!¹³

(ii) The world-view of the 'fluffy'

a) Basis of liberal ideology and its antithesis:

Fluffy ideology is merely the latest development in liberal ideology, and can be summed up as the view that society is nothing more than the aggregation of individuals. We have consistently countered this by arguing that we live in a class society, and that the struggle we are engaged in is not a question of civil liberties but a moment in the class war. The problem is that we are, each of us, an individual with our own subjectivity, and a member of a class. The contradiction between class war

and liberal lobby is rooted in the contradiction of bourgeois society as a contradictory unity of the spheres of production and circulation, a society characterized by class exploitation mediated by the 'free' sale and purchase of individual labour-powers. Getting to grips with this contradiction in the movement requires grappling with the problematic of proletarian subjectivity.¹⁴

As we saw when discussing the problem of reformism, proletarian subjectivity moves along a continuum between the

poles of integration and transcendence. It is living activity which constitutes both the dialectic of capital - alienated subjectivity - and the counter-dialectic of class struggle - the subjectivity of the working class. Acceptance of the commodity form of labour allows the proletariat to enter the sphere of the circulation of commodities as a sovereign individual relating to other individuals through the reified world of market relations. This is the world of freedom and equality guaranteed by the rights of the individual. This is the immediate appearance of bourgeois society so beloved by its apologists. This is the basis of liberal ideology, the world of atomized citizens all equal before the law.

The only thing which is really free in this world however is money, and the only equality that of the equivalence of different activities as abstract labour. The essence of bourgeois society is class exploitation in the sphere of production, unfreedom and inequality. The appearance of bourgeois society as an aggregation of individuals is not an illusion, but an abstraction from this exploitation. Thus, despite this apparent freedom and equality we find the tendency of proletarian subjectivity towards resistance, refusal, struggle and class consciousness.

But therein lies the problematic. Whilst an individual proletarian may adopt the viewpoint of an atomized individual and *act as such* by him- or herself, the development of working class subjectivity, thinking and *acting* as a class, can only be a part of a *collective* process of realization. Thus working class subjectivity, the transcendence of liberalism, is not immediately given as certain autonomists and 'ultra-leftists' would have it, but must be composed out of struggle.

As workerists will tell you, the realm of production brings proletarians together, in contrast to the atomization in the realm of circulation. But it brings us together only as components of collective exploitation. To the extent that the working class is composed by capital itself, it remains fractured, as capital-in-general itself is fractured into the particular capitals which constitute it. And even within each collective labour process, the co-operative nature of the labour confronts each individual as a hostile power to the extent that it has been really subsumed by capital. Thus the development of an antagonistic working class subjectivity occurs only to the extent that divisions are overcome, whether it be through struggle within and against production (strikes etc., breaking the fragmentation of individuals joined only by assembly lines or telecommunication cables), or struggles outside of production (riots, occupations etc., breaking the atomization of individuals connected to 'communities' only by the market and ballot box). Either way, the working class develops its own unalienated collective subjectivity only through the initiation, development, inter-connection and generalization of the multiplicity of *proletarian struggles* towards the *struggle of the proletariat*.

b) Why liberalism now - an historical perspective:

The above may best be illustrated by looking at the problem historically. Given its basis in the *real* abstraction that is the atomized individual within bourgeois society, it should be clear that liberalism becomes transcended by the process of working class self-formation.

Conversely, an eclipse of a class offensive will inevitably see its return, particularly amongst those most atomized through this decomposition; and so it has proved. Capital's counter-offensive since the 1970s has fragmented the class. Many sites of concentration of the working class have been restructured, dispersed or closed down altogether - industrial, residential and recreational alike. Divisions have increased, between north and south, employed and unemployed, skilled and unskilled etc. Repeats from the golden age of situation comedy clearly demonstrate the extent to which working class subjectivity

imposed itself on the 1970s; no Prime Minister in those days would have dreamt of calling society 'classless'. In the 1990s, far fewer people hold a class perspective, whilst a communist perspective seems to most people who encounter it to be more a matter of semi-religious faith than an expression of a real tendency within society.

The lack of a class perspective and dominance of liberal ideas within the anti-CJB campaign was amongst other things a result of the relative lack of (obvious) class struggle within the UK in recent years. The 1984/85 miners' strike was probably the last battle whose stakes were such that it *demanded* to be understood in terms of a war between classes rather than between a particular set of workers and their bosses. As for class struggle in the 1990s, the movement against the Gulf War presented itself in predominantly moral terms, the 1993 campaign against pit closures presented itself as a defence of the 'national interest', whilst the anti-roads movement tends to present itself as a defence of 'the planet'.

In viewing the problem of liberalism historically, however, it is also necessary to consider the weight of dominant historiography. For us, history is the history of class struggle, whilst bourgeois historians recognize only the result, not the process. The development of working class power during periods of class repositioning has often been recognized by the state in the granting of rights. Such rights, however, are not just a neutral barometer of working class pressure to be defended uncritically, since they play a role in decomposing the class as citizens. As the class eventually retreats, what remains are the rights it has won. And the bourgeois mind then interprets history in terms of the granting of rights and their most prominent individual advocates, leaving the underlying class movement unrecognized. The liberal is then left with a distorted understanding of the historical precedents to their struggle. Thus many liberals, including those in Freedom Network, look to the examples set by Gandhi and Emily Pankhurst, ignoring the class offensives which underpinned the end of colonialism in India and the granting of universal suffrage in the UK.

c) Liberalism and social positions:

The connection between liberalism and the social positions of its adherents is usually grasped in terms of them being 'middle class wankers'. Though this is undoubtedly true of supporters of Charter 88 and Liberty, and may describe the family background of many fluffies, the influence of fluffy ideology within the campaign can be better understood by a closer examination of their current positions within capitalist society. The CJ&POA Part 5 is an attack on marginal elements rejecting the conformity of the 'traditional working class'. Within its scope therefore, including as it does a clamp down on unlicensed raves, are hippy entrepreneurs who have a material interest in adopting a liberal position of defending freedom (to make money in their case, to dance in fields etc. in the case of their punters); adopting a class position would expose the tensions between those who sell and those who always buy, the personifications of the opposing extremes of commodity metamorphosis.

By far the majority in the movement, however, are young unemployed who have no material interest in obscuring class divisions. But this very position of unemployment reinforces the apparent truth of liberal ideology as the claimant exclusively inhabits the realm of circulation and exchange, experiencing only one facet of capitalism. Many in the movement relate to money only as the universal equivalent, as purchasing power, not as the face of the boss. Their income is not payment for exploitation as a component of a collective workforce, but apparently a function of their individual human needs.

Whilst the claimant's pound coin is worth every bit as much as that of the company director, the *quantitative* difference in the amount they have to spend becomes a *qualitative* one that becomes recognized as class inequality, especially if the claimant has not chosen the dole as a preference, has family commitments, or lives in a working class community. But 'young free and single' claimants who have chosen to be on the dole, particularly if they have never worked, more so if they come from a middle class background, and if the housing benefit pays for a flat in an area shared by students, yuppies and other claimants alike, and especially if the higher echelons of a hierarchical education system have increased their sense of personal self-worth, will tend towards the one sided view of the world they inhabit that is liberalism.

Such a tendency is, of course, transformed by experience. For the individuals who engage in the collective struggles of, say, anti-roads protests, there is the possibility of moving beyond liberalism towards a critique of capitalism. To the extent that such activities remain the domain of dedicated 'cross-class' minorities however, it is more likely that a liberal viewpoint will be retained in the modified form of militant liberalism.

On the other hand, no such modification can be expected through the world of DIY culture. The collective experience of the rave, simultaneous movement to a pre-determined rhythm with spontaneous outbreaks of cheering or mass hugging, offers the illusion of unity but, once the 'E' has worn off, leaves the individual little closer to becoming a social individual with meaningful bonds than before. The experience of defending a rave against the police, on the other hand, does lend itself to the development of working class subjectivity; but our 'fluffy friends' do not seem to have involved themselves with this most positive aspect of the rave scene, preferring the 'positive vibes' of paganism, Sufism, Taoism or some other theological bullshit.

As for the other aspects of the DIY world, fanzine production often preserves atomization. Either the production of a single person, or a collection of articles with no editorial policy, it serves as a vessel for individual viewpoints to be aired unanswered; there is none of the discussion or debate leading to the development of inter-subjectivity that is required in a collective project. And to the extent that DIY culture concerns itself with grand social problems it does so by fetishizing either the power of the individual 'ethical consumer' or that of the example-setting pioneer in self-sufficiency.

The failure to recognize the need to overcome the atomization of individuals through collective struggles in which they can become social individuals, becomes, not a failure, but a virtue in the world of DIY. As a result, the liberalism of the fluffy is far worse than that of any of its predecessors.

d) Fluffy liberalism versus militant liberalism:

Many who have been on the national demonstrations may be under the illusion that the fluffies are simply the pacifists of the

1980s re-emerging from the woodwork. There are however important differences between fluffys and the pacifism of the old peace movement. Pacifists at least recognized the state as a social force of violent coercion that needed to be confronted for 'freedom' to have any meaning. Fluffys on the other hand

takes liberalism to its logical extreme (and is even more incoherent as a result). The fluffy view of society as an aggregation of individuals denies the possibility of recognizing the state as a *social force*; below their suits and uniforms the bailiffs, police, property speculators, industrialists and even Michael Howard and his cohorts are just individual human beings. Fluffies assume therefore that all individuals have a common human interest. Any conflicts which arise in society can, by implication, only be the results of misplaced fears or mis understandings.

This view underpinned the fluffies' conception of how the campaign against the CJB needed to proceed. As the CJB could only be the result of prejudice, the best way

to counter it would be to demonstrate to those nice men in suits that they really had nothing to fear: that beneath the dreadlocks and funny clothes, strange ideas and new-fangled music, the marginalized community was really made up of respectable and honest human beings making a valuable if unorthodox contribution to humanity. The way forward was to overcome prejudice by demonstrating to the rest of society their reasonableness and 'positivity'. Thus in comparison to the liberalism of the pacifists, fluffys is characterized by being not only fundamentally unconfessional, but also supposedly apolitical. (Its obvious incoherence could be sustained only because of the political inexperience of its young adherents, the extent to which its contradictions had not been exposed through the impact of external reality.)

Two things followed directly from this conception. Firstly, as the purpose of the campaign was to provide itself with a positive self-image, the representation became more important than that which was to be represented. Attracting media attention and getting 'positive coverage' became the be all and end all of the campaign as far as the fluffies were concerned. Indeed, were it possible to get positive TV coverage of a demonstration without the hassles and risks involved in actually having one, the fluffies would no doubt have done so. The fluffy is the situationist's nightmare come true, the rarefied thought of the post modernist personified - virtual politics.

Secondly, the fluffies were initially incapable of considering the possibility that they would not persuade the men in suits not to pass the bill. Unable to think in terms of building a *social movement* capable of defying the law, the failure of the campaign would represent the end rather than the beginning, and, as such, was a prospect that it was best not to think about less it sap the campaign's positivity. Many of the fluffies are too young to have not paid the Poll Tax. For them there are legally enshrined rights, or nothing.



(iii) Latent contradictions in the campaign

There were a number of contradictions, some of which were immediately apparent from the start, and some which

remained latent for a while. These can be considered as operating on three main levels:

a) *Class struggle militants / liberals*: This opposition needs little explanation. Within the groups linked under the umbrella of the Freedom Network there were coherent and organized political elements like the Oxford Solidarity Action and Brighton Autonomists. And the national demonstrations were bound to attract elements seeking an opportunity to confront the state, veterans of Trafalgar Square and Welling. Anarchists and communists, aware of the contradiction inherent in proletarian subjects waging class war being represented by fluffies, were bound to try to help the campaign escape from its liberal strait-jacket. More interesting are the contradictions which became apparent within liberalism itself.

b) *Fluffy liberals / militant liberals*: The campaign was represented predominantly by fluffies seeking to demonstrate to the establishment their respectability. But those groups who would become a large part of the campaign's constituents were not involved in order to demonstrate their loyalty to the status quo, but precisely because they were involved in and wished to continue social struggles attempting to subvert it on some level. The fluffies were initially primarily concerned with the 'right to party', an activity which they reasoned they would be able to show posed no threat to the interests of the establishment once the latter understood it a little better. Hunt-sabs, anti-road protesters, squatters and to a lesser extent travellers, however, all shared a common opposition to those interests.

Thus the contradiction between the militant liberals and the fluffies was that of a political versus an apolitical outlook, a

collective oppositional approach versus an 'individual with contacts' media-oriented approach, and operated on the familiar level of the contradiction between subject and representation.

c) *Fluffy subjects / fluffy representation*: The media obsession of the fluffies meant that this contradiction between subject and representation was even felt within the ranks of the fluffies themselves. For the young raver types amongst them especially, the requirements of the campaign to present them as decent, reasonable members of society conflicted with their desire to drop out, smoke dope, take ecstasy, grow dreadlocks, dye their hair, pierce their faces and all the other things which do not fit with the media's idea of respectability. The need to appear respectable was a matter of self-denial, something which their ('new age') beliefs did not approve of; it contradicted their desire to be 'alternative', however depoliticized that lifestyle may be in comparison with that of the anarcho-punks or eco-warriors.

These three contradictions would come to the surface as the campaign became a movement. And as it became increasingly clear that, in contrast to old-fashioned leftist mediation, the fluffies would prove to be incapable of delivering anything in return for loyalty, this contradiction between subject and representation would become sharper. As it became clear that the only way forward would be to build a movement of mass defiance, this contradiction would become an openly visible rupture.

(B) The Movement: Contradictions Manifested

A complete account of all the actions which took place as the campaign against the CJB gathered momentum is well beyond the scope of this article; far too much has happened over the last year to cover everything in detail. Local demonstrations have been organized all around the country, many of which have been the biggest seen in those towns for years, and some of them have been illegal, explicitly challenging the 1986 Public Order Act. The movement has thrown up squatted social spaces in Oxford, Blackburn, Hastings, Swansea, Brighton, Huddersfield, Cardiff, London, the Isle of Wight, Nottingham, Sheffield, Lewes and Rugby. There was the invasion and disruption of Hackney Council's meeting on the use of the CJB against squatters; this, like the Hackney Homeless Festival, ended in

clashes with the TSG. There was also the clash in Oxford when squatters occupied the lobby of the local nick to protest against their eviction. And there was a whole host of publicity stunts, lobbies, and media opportunities. All these events contributed to pushing the CJB to the top of the political agenda last year. The focus of this article, however, is on the contradiction within the movement between the political activities of class subversion and liberal lobbying, and this contradiction became most clearly manifest at two pivotal moments for the campaign: the national demonstrations in London on July 24th and October 9th last year.

(i) The march to Downing Street:

a) *The 'Coalition': SWP jumps on the bandwagon, but can it steer it?*

The May 1st demonstration last year took the left by surprise. It demanded some kind of response, if not because it demonstrated the left's redundancy then because it provided a new wave of potential recruitment fodder. The SWP, with the keenest nose for an opportunity, and a more youthful rank and file than their main rivals, were first off the mark, setting up the 'Coalition Against the Criminal Justice Bill'. This comprised various groups such as the Advance Party, Freedom Network, the Hunt Saboteurs Association and an assortment of local anti-roads campaigns (notably the No M11 Link Campaign). But it was effectively dominated by the SWP given that these other groups were relatively inexperienced in the sordid business of political manipulation and were easily outmanoeuvred. The Coalition then called a national demonstration in London for July 24th, the weekend before the CJB was expected to become law.

This attempt at leftist recuperation demanded that the campaign be oriented towards the labour movement, and given the Labour Party's position on the CJB, this would have to be orientation towards the unions. SWP cadre became involved at

grass roots level, intervening in meetings of local groups, criticizing fluffiness by emphasizing the class nature of the attack, and arguing for the need to connect to other working class struggles. But any positive impact the SWP may have had on the movement was more than compensated for by the effects of its workermism, which only served to reinforce the appeal of liberalism within the movement.¹⁵

During the build up to the demonstration, the RMT called a series of 24 and 48 hour signal workers' strikes which paralysed the rail network. The SWP's repeatedly stated position was that it was necessary to forge links between the two struggles. Such links would theoretically have been desirable. Besides both being instances of class struggle, the signal workers' dispute and the anti-CJB movement were clearly linked by way of the anti-roads movement.

The prospect of connecting the struggles over transport (in a more meaningful way than the hoots of tube drivers in Leytonstone being reciprocated by cheers from squatters in Clarendon Road holding up the M11 link), the prospects of practical links between struggles forged through recognition of a

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common enemy in state and capital, was obviously one that would have been mutually beneficial.

Unfortunately, the signal workers' dispute offered no such opportunities as it was tightly controlled by the RMT as a signal workers' dispute and nothing more. Aside from a couple of arson attacks on signal boxes, there were no autonomous initiatives by the signal workers for others to support, and not even picket lines in many places. Under pressure from its left wing, the RMT executive agreed to call a national demonstration to support the 4,000 strikers, but did nothing to build it; only 1,500 turned up and about 90% of these were members of Trot groups. And the rally at the end of the march was exclusively for RMT signal workers. The dispute was sewn up by the RMT to such an extent that the making of links could only be rhetorical.

This did not dissuade the SWP, however. In part this was due to their willingness to carry the dead-weight of unionism, doing the donkey-work for the RMT executive whilst pleading for it to call an all-out strike or call out other railway workers.¹⁶ But mainly it was due to their conception of the how the struggles were related.

'you are powerless', ('get a job!'). Given the choice between a 'class line', subsuming the struggle to that of the signal workers, on the one hand and the 'Defend Diversity - Defend Dissent' slogan of Liberty on the other, it is not hard to see why the appeal of liberalism was reinforced by the SWP's workerism. Besides which, there is nothing like seeing a long line of leftist hacks holding their character armour up to their chests, all shouting 'this week's *Socialist Worker*...', to make you feel like reaffirming your individual autonomy. And for those who couldn't quite envisage the signal workers toppling the government before it had managed to pass the CJB, the naive optimism of the fluffies seemed more attractive than the obvious conclusions to be drawn about a movement which could have no workplace presence.

Nevertheless, until the signal workers dispute was finally settled, the SWP tried hard to win the heart and mind of the movement. Their main opponents in this battle for ideological hegemony were the fluffies, particularly their vanguard - the Freedom Network.



Firstly, the SWP argued that the CJB was aimed primarily at striking workers (which is why it was a class issue), and the movement should therefore be defending its most important flank. Secondly, the link had to be made with the signal workers because, as a workplace struggle, it could succeed where the anti-CJB movement couldn't. Telling the main targets of the legislation that they were a mere smoke screen for the target that really mattered was bad enough, but telling them that they were effectively incapable of fighting it was an abject lesson in theoretical disempowerment:

We need to turn our efforts towards the trade unions and workplaces - for two reasons. First because it is at work that most of the people threatened by the bill come together. Second, because it is at work that we have most power.

(What We Think', *Socialist Worker*, July 23rd)

This was the SWP's underlying message to proletarians refusing to allow their lives to be subordinated to wage labour:

b) Keep it Fluffy - Go to Jail:

The Freedom Network started out as a non-hierarchical network between groups co-ordinated through the 'Cool Tan' office in Brixton. Within a short period of time, however, the pressures arising from being the point of contact between the network on the one hand, and the media and liberal establishment (Liberty, Charter 88) on the other, led to the London co-ordinators becoming the voice of the network. As they came to accept the position of representing the movement, so their commitment to fluffiness - and to ensuring its hegemony over the movement - became an increasing problem.

Following the initial success of May 1st, the Freedom Network sought to maintain the momentum of the campaign, but virtually had to be tricked by the SWP into endorsing plans for the national demonstration on July 24th. In the meantime, they pressed ahead with their own plans for escalating the movement, resulting in Operation Emily and Operation Democracy RIP. Operation Emily¹⁷ was considered a great success. Twenty or so people dressed up in Edwardian costumes and chained themselves to railings outside parliament

outnumbered by the watching journalists; and hey presto - as much media coverage as May 1st with 24,980 less potential trouble makers! Operation Democracy RIP was an even more sickening attempt to gain 'positive media coverage': a funeral procession as far from positing the death of democracy as the coffin-bearers were from comprehending that the content of democracy is the atomizing dictatorship of money.

The fluffies immersed themselves in the hard work of representation - the production of pathetic media spectacles, liaising with representatives of the liberal establishment, the press and other campaign groups, co-ordinating the flow of information etc. But an early sign that their ability to impose the politics of fluffiness could be threatened by those they sought to represent occurred at Twyford Down on July 2nd. Local fluffies organized a mass trespass of the M3 extension prior to its opening, and a couple of thousand people turned up, including other fluffies, eco-warriors, travellers and some lefties. But whilst its billing gave the impression that the organizers intended a confrontational exercise in direct action, they had in fact arranged for the trespass to be a largely symbolic affair culminating in a media stunt: an effigy burning for the benefit of invited journalists.

Many of the trespassers on the other hand had different ideas. The numbers there gave the crowd a subversive potential whose actualization had an irresistible appeal, and some small groups set about trying to trash the finished motorway (no easy task) by stuffing rocks down the drains, whilst others jumped up onto security vehicles. Most people were content at this stage to be simply trespassing, however, and continued to march up the hill, at the top of which the crowd would come to a standstill and be confronted with a choice of fundamental importance.

The organizers had halted the march, holding hands and dancing round to their irritating anthem, 'we are the new people, we are the old people, we are the same people, stronger than before', attempting to offer a celebration of the crowd's potential as a sop for preventing its realization. They wanted the crowd to return the way it had come in order to conduct the spectacle of the effigy burning, and they certainly did not want the crowd to carry on down the other side of the hill where potential 'negative press' lay waiting to sabotage the occasion. In that direction stood a thin blue line of police and beyond it the A33, the congested artery the Down had been bisected to alleviate.

Decision time; a spectacular memorial to a defeated struggle by continuing to trespass on an unopened road that the police clearly did not give a shit about because little harm could be done,¹⁸ or an easy confrontation with a clearly inadequate police presence in order to blockade the functioning road beyond it. Hampshire police had obviously been relying on the fluffy cops and the cops in people's heads, and once their arguments had been defeated it was relatively easy to breach their line. Again a long pause, as the assertion of collective power by blocking the road required someone confident enough that others would follow to step out in front of the traffic. But the realization that the road was the easiest way back to liquid refreshment meant that the plunge was taken and the best part of two thousand people piled onto the road. The feeling of collective empowerment, in stark contrast to the feeling of vulnerability felt by the individual pedestrian, was immense. The police were powerless to intervene as the crowd danced its way to Winchester to the rhythm of bongos, chants of 'kill the bill', 'no more roads' and the syncopated 'smash the Criminal Justice Bill'. Would the fluffies be able to contain such energy when 50,000 came together on the streets of London?

As the July 24th demonstration approached, the Freedom Network began to worry about 'their' mass spectacle being 'hijacked' in a similar way. Confused by its rhetoric, not understanding that they are sheep in wolf's clothing, they

thought the SWP was gearing up for a confrontation with the police, a scenario which had to be avoided at all costs for their 'respectability strategy' to have any chance of success.¹⁹ So the Freedom Network decided to make sure the march would pass off uneventfully by providing fluffy stewards, 'Chill the Bill' placards, 'Non-Violence' stickers, and distribution on the day of the infamous 'Keep it Fluffy' leaflet.²⁰

c) The 'Mob' Storms Downing Street?

The tension between the SWP and Freedom Network became increasingly clear as the date of the demonstration approached. But this opposition between 'class politics' and 'fluffiness' is not the contradiction between class *struggle* and liberalism that we are concerned with. The opposition between Freedom Network and the SWP was primarily ideological, a struggle for representative hegemony. Both wanted the demonstration to be a media spectacle, but disagreed as to the particular nature of the image. Neither wanted to see the development of autonomous working class subjectivity that is a proletarian crowd realizing itself in confronting its enemy. Both these groups share a vision of social change which depends on 'the mob' being kept in check. And contrary to the sensationalist reports which appeared in the tabloid press, this development of collective subjectivity was successfully limited; there was no concerted attempt to storm Downing Street.

The coming together of 50,000 diverse proletarians in opposition to government legislation does encourage a sense of solidarity, and to that extent is a necessary step beyond the usual atomization of bourgeois society. But unless the crowd acts as a collective force, the development of collective subjectivity is limited. When the potential goes unrealized, when the crowd simply marches from A to B along an approved route in order to hear boring speeches before dispersing, the collectivity is little more than a collection of atoms, like an inert gas. It is when the crowd *acts* to impose its power on an external barrier that such atomization is overcome, releasing the energy of molecular bonding like the act of combustion. It must act against that which tries to keep it divided - capital and its state form - for its potential to be realized. And on July 24th that did not happen to a sufficient degree.

The SWP headed the march, proudly revelling in the thought of all those photographers capturing the image of copies of the paper and Socialist Worker placards being brandished beneath the RMT banner. Some way behind this leftist contingent, a group of about a hundred or so stopped outside the gates of Downing Street, and perhaps a dozen of these attempted to either pull the gates down or climb over them. But this small section of the crowd remained relatively isolated from the main body of the march, which continued to file past. Indeed, had the ornamental gates actually given way this relatively small 'mob' would have been hammered by the riot police, a point later underlined when it was revealed in *The Observer* that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner had been prepared to authorize the use of plastic bullets, for the first time on mainland Britain, if the crowd had penetrated Downing Street.

That this section of the crowd was isolated was partly due to the 'fluffy stewards'. They, along with the police, encouraged the main body of the march to keep moving; some stewards took their ideological presuppositions to their logical conclusion by becoming 'pacifist police', not only remonstrating with those outside the gates but in some cases actually removing masks to expose faces to the security cameras! But the isolation of combatants was not primarily due to the hold of these fluffies on the march. Indeed no-one took the ridiculous advice of the 'Keep it Fluffy' leaflet to heart by holding hands around the 'trouble makers', let alone sitting down or adopt the 'doormat' tactic. In

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fact, most of the demonstration took neither the side of 'the mob' or of the 'pacifist police'; they simply remained spectators. They were not compelled to recognize themselves in either collective identity, neither the force of negation nor reaction. And whilst many in the crowd were sympathetic to some of the ideas of the fluffies, this decision not to join in was not so much a result of a firm commitment to all the practical implications of fluffy politics so much as the police tactics on the day.

There was little visible police presence on the march. The favourite targets of animal rights activists, McDonald's and Boots, had small numbers of police outside, but there were no riot police on view. Those in Whitehall were in withdrawn positions initially; there were none stationed outside the gates of Downing Street. There had obviously been a decision made to adopt a low profile in order not to provoke any trouble. When the gates began to give way the police sought to distract the crowd by making several limited forays from behind the gates on the opposite side of Whitehall, but having learnt the lessons of the Poll Tax riot took considerable care not to provoke the

rest of the march. After each foray, they retreated, allowing the march to continue, and leaving the would-be rioters with little alternative but to rejoin it.

The events of July 24th indicated that whilst many in the movement preferred the ideological appeal of liberalism to the dogma of Leninism, they had no commitment to the practical necessities of fluffyism. Nothing happened on the march to force it to realize its collective identity as a force of negation - no confrontation occurred that forced it to realize its class subjectivity. But there are two sides in this battle. The state was legislating against class autonomy, and, whether the movement recognized itself in class terms or not, if the movement continued in the direction of mass defiance of the law, and if that legislation was going to be imposed, the state would have to put on a show of force sooner or later. If it chose to attack the movement rather than back down, it could intimidate, divide and disperse it. But it could just as easily help to compose it as a force of working class subjectivity - it could provoke a riot!

(ii) Hyde Park '94 - Stuff the Law!

a) Build up to the demonstration:

The Coalition called another demonstration for October 9th. Over the two months before the demonstration there were, however, significant changes affecting those competing for representative hegemony. The other groups in the Coalition effectively withdrew, pissed off at being continually outmanoeuvred, leaving the SWP in sole charge of the organization. But at the same time as the SWP found itself being handed the reins of the movement it was effectively withdrawing itself from it. The party had never felt comfortable operating on such relatively alien territory, a playing field better suited to anarchism than Leninism; and as they belatedly realized that the signal workers' dispute was going nowhere, the SWP found that it had nothing left to say, and has been struggling for direction ever since.

The fluffies on the other hand were having a field day, and not just because their main competitors were withdrawing their bid. The events at Downing Street had done their credibility no harm whatsoever. Only a small minority, who had been critical of them in the first place, knew how disgracefully the fluffy stewards had behaved, siding with the police against the movement.²¹ The fluffies were in charge of the flow of information within the movement, and many non-fluffy liberals would side with the fluffies to the extent that they knew what had occurred.

But most of the movement did *not* know any of the details of the confrontation, having mostly found out about it through the extensive media coverage. And it was this fact, that the Downing Street clash had sparked off intense media interest in the movement, that put the fluffies in such a strong position. Throughout August and September the fluffies were in their element, giving interviews to the more liberal newspapers or lefty magazines like the *New Statesman*, appearing on radio chat shows, being invited to address meetings etc. The trouble outside Downing Street paradoxically gave a massive boost to the representative opportunities for the fluffies. They became media darlings.

Time was ticking away, however. The House of Lords mauled the bill somewhat, slowing down its passage, but the day it would be passed to the Queen for Royal Assent (unless

her humanity - beneath the crown etc. - led her to opt for a constitutional crisis instead) was drawing nearer. The hunt sabs were gearing up for confrontation once the fox-hunting season began again, and the No M11 protesters were getting ready for the big showdown at Claremont Road. Whilst the fluffies hared around getting 'good press' but going nowhere fast, the realization that confrontation with the forces of the state was going to be inevitable was gradually infusing the rest of the movement.

b) Ravers' revenge:

The atmosphere of the October 9th march was in many ways similar to that of the previous one; lots of percussion instruments and whistles, most people simply intent on enjoying themselves. The police on the other hand were more visible than before, with concentrations of riot cops tooled up along the route. And they would be needed.

Despite the fact that most of the crowd were not seeking a confrontation, their desire to have fun conflicted with the state's need to regulate that fun, and their determination to dance led to a confrontation prefiguring those posited by the legislation against unlicensed raves. The Coalition organizers had agreed with the police beforehand that music in the park would be limited. But would the crowd be content with speeches from boring and irrelevant liberals from the labour and civil liberties movement, welcoming the anti-CJB movement (in so far as they could recuperate it)?

Many didn't bother listening to them, grouping instead around small pockets of music. But these poxy rigs were clearly inadequate for a celebration of unity, for 100,000 or so demonstrators to dance together. The means of production for such a mass rave were arriving, however. Two lorries with sound systems on the back were bringing up the rear of the march, moving down Park Lane to Marble Arch, surrounded by a throng of bodies dancing in the sun. And they clearly intended to carry on into the park, in defiance of what the organizers had agreed (possibly for the all-night rave we had heard rumours about).

Having publicly stated that they were banned from the park the police had little alternative but to try to stop the sound systems at Marble Arch, blocking their progress with police vans.²² Perhaps a riot could have been averted had they simply allowed the ban to be violated, but this approach carries with it inherent dangers as well, encouraging a lack of respect for the rule of law. If they weren't going to stop the sound systems at Marble Arch what would happen to the legislation against raves - would it be taken as a serious deterrent or mocked disdainfully? Where and when would a line be drawn saying 'thus far and no further'? As it turned out the police *did* have to let the sounds into the park. The dancing crowd did not bow to their authority and disperse, but grew as people in the park realized what was happening. A few missiles were thrown and riot police were deployed, along with horses. But the situation remained a stand-off; the dancing continued in the street, on the lorries, on bus shelters, and even on top of a police van. Faced

cops was not something which could be tolerated. And this time they came back in greater force. Units of police horses backed up by baton-wielding cops on foot charged into the park in an effort to disperse the crowd. But the crowd would simply scatter, and then regroup, and then charge back at the police.

Having defied the police over the sound systems a large body of the crowd had already developed a sense of unity. The park was their space, autonomous space. The dancing was a celebration of that collective autonomy, and the police intrusion was a violation of it. By charging the crowd the police only served to further undermine the atomization within it, and each time it refused to disperse it became less an aggregation of independent citizens and more a collective subject.

Proletarians who had been relatively uncritical of the fluffies, who had lobbied for rights, became composed as antagonistic working class subjectivity - defiant and determined to drive the police back out of the park. And this it did, by sheer



with such determination, and not wanting to provoke a major public order 'problem' given the size of the crowd, the police decided to back down. The lorries edged their way into the park and although people pulled crowd barriers into the road to guard its rear the police made no effort to provoke further trouble.

c) Riot! Riot! I Wanna Riot!

That despite this retreat the riot still happened was due to the moment of truth in the police's 'anarchist conspiracy' theory. While most of the crowd celebrated the sound system victory by partying, content to have got their music, a determined minority sought to push the situation further. Class War were no doubt off competing with the SWP and the other leftists in the paper-selling stakes, but some 'class warriors' were pelting police vans with missiles from inside the park. They could have been squatters or travellers angry that the outlawing of their lifestyles was imminent, or just veterans of past battles in Trafalgar Square with an intense hatred of the police. Or they could indeed have been anarchists or communists who reckoned the situation was ripe because the movement had discovered the important moment of truth in fluffy ideology - that beneath its air of invincibility the police force is just made up of individual human beings, strong as an organized collective force, weak in disorganized isolation, and far from invincible when faced with vastly superior numbers on a terrain not of its choosing.

Whatever, the police, seeing that it was only a tiny minority, chose to confront the missile throwers rather than pull back their vans. Their initial foray into the park was brief. The small deployment of police horses was insufficient to take on those who were attracted by the disturbance, and they were quickly driven from the park by a jubilant mob. But they came back into the park - public order had to be reasserted. Dancing was one thing, but trashing police vans and attacking mounted

weight of numbers. Weapons were scarce, although a few resourceful individuals showed great initiative in inventing ways to satisfy this newly produced need (empty tins filled with sand, smashed up park benches and litter bins for example). And a few individuals showed remarkable bravery in leading some of the attacks. But the overwhelming characteristic of the riot was the number of anti-CJB campaigners who showed class solidarity and, one for all and all for one, forced the police to retreat.

When the police were successfully driven out of the park, another stand-off ensued. The police were on one side of the railings and the rioters the other. The police were unable to come over the railings without getting hammered, and the crowd showed no desire to try either, content to use the railings as a traditional 'barricade', a boundary marking the autonomous zone it had reclaimed.

Dancing, smoking, drinking, watching the fire breathers; the atmosphere was unlike recent riot situations in that the territory the police wanted to retake was being held relatively easily and it was possible to gradually relax and enjoy the occasion. The 'rinky dink' bicycle-powered sound system arrived to try to diffuse the crowd's joyous anger, but merely managed to provide audible accompaniment to the rebellious revelry under the trees.

And, with time to look around and reflect, identifying friends and familiar faces beneath hoods and masks, it became clear that this crowd was demonstrating that the contradiction between class war and liberalism was not simply one of different people, 'militants' and 'liberals', with different ideas. It was also one of proletarians who had reflected their relative atomization in their liberal arguments now reflecting the extent to which it had been overcome in the collective activity of rioting. Bourgeois ideology and the active negation of bourgeois

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society as dialectical opposites within the same individual subjectivity.

d) Reflection:

During the hangover which follows an intoxicating experience such as this it becomes easier to assess the limitations of what has been achieved. The riot has not swelled communist ranks by 100,000, nor did it transform the nature of the movement overnight.

For starters perhaps only 5 or 10% of the crowd actually took part in the riot. Not having experienced the riot themselves, those who had not taken part were far more vulnerable to the dominant competing interpretations of the events. And the rioters themselves dispersed to return to 'normal life',²³ albeit with a heightened awareness of the shallowness of its roles. After experiencing its active negation, returning to the reified world of bourgeois society is like finding oneself on the set of a soap opera where the other actors will not admit that they are playing cameo roles and are seemingly unaware that they could invent their own characters instead. As the memory fades the sense of separation from the cameo diminishes, and resignation to the boundaries of this stage set, where social connections are mediated by money but where the semblance of life contains certain guarantees, appears an easier option than continually trying to shake the other actors.

To the extent that a 'community riot' actually succeeds in creating a community, collective subjectivity may be preserved by the sharing of experiences and the desires they gave rise to.

(iii) 'CIA Week': Meeting the Act Head On

Only ten days after the events at Hyde Park, a lobby of parliament organized by the Coalition was taken as another opportunity to confront the Met. A mini-riot ensued, with bottles and sticks thrown at the police, railings destroyed and fire-crackers used against police horses, before it was defused by a police withdrawal and Coalition stewards taking over from the absent fluffies. During the same period, there were also many opportunities for the fluffies to argue on the radio or TV shows like Kilroy that no, the legislation was not necessary (for some undefined but universally accepted 'common good').

Thus the development of working class subjectivity neither reached 'critical mass' nor was completely fragmented; the movement continued, and contained within it the same contradictions.

On the day the bill became an act, the No M11 Link Campaign organized a mass trespass of motorway construction sites, and the following day a publicity stunt on the roof of the houses of parliament: two actions which oscillated around the pivot rather than expressed the poles of the basic contradiction.

The No M11 Campaign were also involved with a number of other groups (hunt sabs, youth CND, Freedom Network and others) in organizing a week of actions, in and around London, designed to publicly defy the new act. The week was intended both to warn the authorities and to encourage potential targets of the legislation of our intention to intensify our activities rather than curtail them; it was hoped that, in the face of large numbers of people participating in each others campaign actions, the police would be reluctant to make arrests under the new act. Dubbed 'CIA (Criminal Injustice Act) week', most of the actions failed to achieve quite the participation or the co-operation between different groups that was hoped for. The highlight of the week was perhaps the trespass / rooftop demonstration of Michael Howd's new house in Kent, which combined clever direct action, taking the police completely by surprise, with publicity stunt. However, most of the actions that week can be considered successful in that the police were

The problem of decomposition is far greater following a riot like that in Hyde Park. Many combatants will have returned to 'communities' in which there is a greater awareness of the frustrations and aspirations of the inhabitants of Albert Square or Ramsey Street than of real neighbours.

The TV and newspapers will have screamed 'scum!' at them, repeating the police assertion that the riot was the result of deliberate manipulation by 'violent hate-mongers'. If they returned to a local anti-CJB group they were likely to have been outnumbered by non-combatants bemoaning the 'tragedy' of the riot, exchanging stories of how this or that 'innocent bystander' got truncheoned by the police. To the extent that our rioter finds him- or herself isolated in the face of this barrage, it becomes easier to cling to the explanation of the organizers²⁴ than to defend the class position that the riot was a good thing. Such logic is class logic, a collective logic, and its voice sounds strange when entering into arguments whose terms of reference are limited to the continued existence of bourgeois society.

Just as an individual subject may contradict his or her liberal ideology by developing working class subjectivity in collective struggle, so this process of class reconstitution is subject to the counter-tendency of decomposition and fragmentation. The Hyde Park riot allowed a few more proletarians to glimpse the possibilities of the life of the truly social individual. But as these social individuals returned to the privations of bourgeois individuality, so the dominant ideas in the movement could reassert themselves.

largely unwilling to arrest people using the new laws when faced with mass defiance; clearly they did not want 'trouble' after their recent disastrous intervention at that other CJB/CIA demo at Hyde Park.

But whatever happened in 'CIA week', what really mattered was whether, after the initial fuss had died down, the movement would prove to have had any lasting effect in reinforcing the areas of autonomy and subversive struggles that needed to be defended against renewed assault, armed with more repressive legislation, by the state. Would the movement go forward with the same spirit of determination and resistance that characterized the intentions of those who wanted to meet the new act head on? Could the movement meet the challenge of continued resistance, or would the mundane reality of the act signal the decomposition of the movement?



Part Three: Into The Void

From Single Issue Campaign to Anti-Capitalist Movement?

(i) The Movement

Although the CJ&POA has only been law for 5 months now, and some sections of it have yet to be implemented, it seems fair to say that to a limited extent the movement has risen to the challenge; it has not crumbled in the face of the law. But there have been significant developments.

a) The Coalition:

The Coalition has organized two mass trespasses, at Chequers (the Prime Minister's residence in Buckinghamshire) and Windsor Castle, ostensibly to challenge clause 70 of the act against trespassory assembly. But unlike the trespass at Michael Howard's place, these have been pre-arranged with the full knowledge of the police; and with the SWP having done little to build them, even failing to mobilize significant numbers of its own cadre, there have been insufficient numbers to pose any real threat to the large contingents of police on standby.

SWP stewards have had some difficulty getting 'trespassers' to stick to public footpaths; at Chequers the SWP agreed with the police to proceed along the Ridgeway *footpath*, i.e. a public right of way, but were ignored by elements who mistakenly thought the whole point of the exercise was to *trespass*, thereby challenging the police to use the new law. But these stage-managed events have been at best publicity exercises, at worst little more than cynical recruitment exercises.

The Coalition is now little more than a classic front organization. With each event, more of the movement becomes disillusioned with it, with the result that each trespass or demonstration produces diminishing returns for the party. Another national demonstration cannot be ruled out, but it is equally likely that the SWP will disentangle itself from the movement completely in favour of involvement in one of the various public sector disputes which are looming, where they would be on a more comfortable terrain. The 'pressure the union leadership' position would find a more receptive audience amongst nurses, teachers or civil servants than road protesters and ravers, and the movement as a whole would lose one of its national foci.²⁵

b) The Fluffies:

Meanwhile the fluffies have entered 'the void', the period after the passing of the law, the future which they had considered only in their dystopian nightmares where even family picnics would be broken up by marauding riot police. As they have done so, the latent contradiction within the fluffy tribe - identified earlier in terms of subject and representation - has come to the fore and is leading to something of a parting of ways.

There is rumoured to be a division within the Freedom Network, between those who see the struggle against the CJ&POA as essentially over, and who are arguing that attention should now be turned to the next civil rights lobby,²⁶ and those more attracted towards maintaining opposition by engaging in defiance of the law. And this division is confirmed to some extent at local level. The most anti-proletarian fluffies, those for whom there was less of a contradiction in presenting themselves as upright citizens, are now orienting themselves towards working with Liberty and Charter 88 or green reformism, and are becoming less relevant to the remainder of the movement.

Those fluffies who have rejected this approach have not done so because they have suddenly developed a critique of the right-on ideology of the liberal bourgeois establishment. Not surprisingly most remain uncritical of the strategy of challenging certain sections of the CJ&POA in the European Court of Human Rights or lobbying for a written constitution (remaining critical only of criticism itself).

But instinctively most fluffies are not prepared to dissolve the movement and wait for deliveries from on high. Despite arguing that we are all just individuals they have found themselves as part of a social movement and do not want to return to their previous atomization. As a result, many are taking their slogans of DIY more seriously at last.

For some, who are still obsessed with the media image, this has meant concentrating on self-media production like *Undercurrents*, an alternative video news service produced by 'Small World' (a non-profit making organization committed to supporting liberal campaign groups). The democratization of the image enabled by the camcorder revolution has created its own problems, and not just the security risks posed by cameras in situations of confrontation with the police. Even in situations where video evidence is more likely to be of use to the defence than the prosecution, such as on NVDA actions, the presence of cameras creates the feeling that even in the act of negation one is still playing a role on the stage set of reification, only producing an image of negation and not its substance. Others still are more interested in looking after the flow of information in order to create the impression of a dynamic movement at the expense of organizing direct action, a strange interpretation of the 'Deeds not Words' slogan that defines the group.

But the majority of Brighton's fluffies, who previously declared themselves apolitical and non-confrontational but were also more committed than some to an alternative lifestyle defined by opposition to dominant values, are now moving towards a commitment to direct action. They have remained with the movement by moving from a position of just lobbying for legal rights to one of defying the law as well: from playing the 'upright democratic citizens' card to engaging with the anti-roads movement's refusal of the democratic process.

And it is worthwhile reviewing further how far many of these people have come in moving towards the positions of militant liberalism. When the campaign started up, it was the first engagement in any form of political activity for many, and early meetings would often be plagued by the mysticism that some of the 'alternative ravers' brought along with them from the scene. There would be proposals to chant 'Om' together on the beach to increase the psychic energy of the group, reports that mediums had been consulted to ensure 'the spirits' would be on side, and reassurances that the 'little people' were behind us. But involvement in even a limited campaign rapidly demonstrated the inadequacy of these ideas, as just organizing a picnic or benefit gig necessitated a level of collaboration between humans that exposed the limits of the spiritual world.

The fluffy ideology may not be considered that much of an advance, but despite it many people helped to organize political demonstrations or open squats for the first time. In doing so they have slowly begun to move from a definition of 'alternative' in terms of *ideas*, to one defined through *activity*; negatively by the

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refusal of work, and positively by involvement in an oppositional movement. They have been exposed to the arguments of more experienced squatters, environmental activists, leftists and even communists. And now that the CJB has become law, fluffy ideology is itself being transformed somewhat as the fluffies embrace overtly political actions. The commitment to non-violence is maintained, but even this becomes less absolute in the face of state brutality.

c) Dispersal?

The extent to which it is possible to speak of 'a movement' as opposed to 'the movements' is a function of the extent to which those struggles are linked, not just by virtue of having been legislated against, but by interconnections through which both information and people flow. The Coalition is both uninterested in and incapable of performing the role of national co-ordination, and it would seem that the Freedom Network are disengaging themselves from the movement.

Filling the vacuum is the *SchNews* team in Brighton's 'Justice?' (sic) group which receives information from other local groups as well as the Advance Party, Road Alert, Hunt

(ii) The Movements

a) Squating Movement:

At the time of writing, not all of the anti-squatting provisions of the act have been implemented. But the 'protest squats' the movement has thrown up give some hope that squatting in this country could develop in the direction of the continental squatting scene.

Squats in much of continental Europe have not had the legal protection enjoyed by squats in this country under the 1977 Criminal Law Act. As a result, their survival has depended on their ability to defy the law by force, either being heavily fortified with squatters well armed to contest the eviction, or by having sufficient local support which can be mobilized onto the streets to pose a public order headache for the authorities. European squatters have therefore had to be more organized and politicized than British squatters, who have tended to rely on their legal rights. But, as these rights are removed, squatters in Britain will have to overcome their fragmentation and reconstitute themselves as a social force if they are to continue to squat. If this is to happen, squatted social centres will play a crucial role. If squatters choose not to coalesce in mass residential squats, for understandable reasons, then social spaces where they can connect and organize anti-bailiff solidarity will become essential.

The squatted social centres thrown up by the movement have had both similarities and differences to the social centres which provide the basis for autonomous organization in places like Italy. They have been characterized by expressing the contradictions inherent in the movement. The Courthouse squat in Brighton fell between the stools of a centre for a 'community of struggle' and a 'community arts centre', as it was forced both to meet the needs of the movement's participants and satisfy the obsession with gaining positive representation.

Overtly political activities - like workshops held on the continental squatting movement, prisoner support and contradictions in the anti-roads movement, and meetings to discuss the groups activities and direction - competed for space with poetry readings, Tai Chi, massage, cinema, drumming workshops and art displays etc. But this division was at least an expression of the differing needs of the movement. The publicity stunt with Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes appearing as a prosecution witness in a mock trial of the government, the 'no drink or drugs policy' (which no-one observed), and the argument against resisting the eviction, are

Saboteurs Association and others, producing a weekly news-sheet for national distribution which details the latest from the various struggles.²⁷ From this information, it is clear that whilst the movement has gone into decline in some places, local anti-CJB groups are still going strong where they are - or have been - more closely connected to the various struggles attacked by the CJ&POA.

Those groups such as Brighton which set up squatted social centres seem to have benefited both from the number of people such centres brought into the orbit of the movement and the unifying effect that resisting evictions ultimately had. In certain places, proximity to anti-roads protests has allowed momentum to be maintained; similarly, in Cardiff, the opposition to the Cardiff Bay barrage development has provided a focus for consolidation.

Thus given that the movement as a whole is now little more than the sum of its interconnected parts we must now interrogate them in turn.

just three out of many instances which demonstrated the extent to which, for the sake of representation, the fluffies tried to present an image which contradicted their own needs.

The eviction of the Courthouse was resisted, however, if only to the extent of using barricades and sealing off the roof area in order to slow the bailiffs down. But given the previous fragmentation of the squatting scene this is at least a start, and there has been other bailiff resistance since then. This recomposition could continue if it is not undermined by the idea, held by some fluffies and reinforced by both police statements and press coverage, of a difference between 'good squatters' (who are 'creative', middle class, and do up the buildings they squat) and 'bad squatters' (who aren't and don't). But, importantly, many of the participants, through their involvement in the squat, have developed both a need for space free from the clutches of capital - where they can socialize without it being subordinated to organized leisure entailing mass consumption of some commodity or another - and the beginnings of a recognition of what it is that stands between them and the fulfilment of that need: the organized power of the state.

Far from having crushed squatting, the CJ&POA may have breathed new life into the movement which, by refusing to allow basic human needs to be subordinated to the power of money, prefigures the day when everyone will be able to live in their own cathedral.

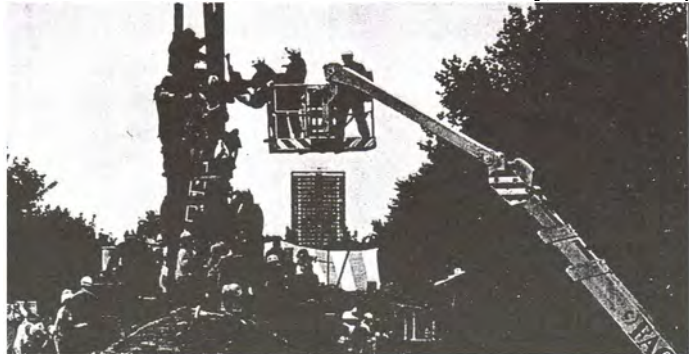
b) Anti-Roads Movement:

By leafleting the national demonstrations and encouraging people to come to parties afterwards, the No M11 Link Campaign was able to draw significant numbers to the showdown at Claremont Road. By the time the law was passed in late October, the campaign was centred on defending this squatted street from the Department of Transport. In preparation for the eviction, rooftop towers and walkways were constructed, along with tree houses and street barricades cleverly disguised as works of art and thus blending in with the explosion of colour and creativity which made this car-free street such an island in the grey sea of east London.

The urban setting of this campaign, dealing with the impact of road building on daily life (housing, health and the human environment) meant that it became relatively unplugged by the Donga-style mysticism which so afflicted the Twyford Down

campaign. The resistance to the eviction of Claremont Road was easily the high point of the anti-roads movement to date. It took the state 4 days to retake the street in an operation which cost £2 million and involved over 700 police with dozens of bailiffs and security guards. The tactics of withdrawing to rooftops or 'locking on' in vulnerable positions are not without limits, however. Whilst the whole eviction may have taken 4 days, the police managed to retake the actual tarmac and pavement in little over an hour. This left people cut off inside squats, in tree houses and on the main tower in siege conditions, many with insufficient food and water or warm clothing and, after a while, no electricity. Such conditions breed the martyrdom syndrome, with divisions and recriminations as a result.

While the eviction of Claremont Road was not actually prevented, the effects of the resistance - on top of more than a year of direct action against the building of the link road - need to be judged in the wider context of the government's roads programme as a whole. The costs of this eviction, and of the security as a whole over the past year (reported to be £6 million), will have a bearing on future road building schemes. Projections to be fed into the Department of Transport's cost-benefit analyses and contractors' bids will be affected, and schemes where the economic advantages are at present marginal could therefore be shelved.



But the most important point, for this article anyway, is the fact that the state was unwilling to use those provisions of the CJ&POA which were explicitly drafted with road protesters in mind. None of the 'aggravated trespassers' were even arrested let alone charged under the act; neither was the new offence of trespassory assembly evoked. The scale of the resistance, in combination with its timing, occurring so soon after the Hyde Park riot, seems to have produced a recognition that using the CJ&POA could have created more problems than it was designed to solve.

But this raises the question as to who actually made this decision: simply referring to a retreat by the state glosses over the fact that, despite cross-party support in parliament, the state is far from united over the act. The police, and screws for that matter, hate 'their boss' Michael Howard. Indeed, there are a number of reasons for this division opening up within the state between the police and parliament. Firstly, by making previously civil offences into criminal ones, the workload of the police could be significantly increased; this, at a time when many forces are facing Treasury driven cutbacks, means an

unwelcome intensification of work. Secondly, and particularly following the Hyde Park riot, the police recognize that the legislation could force them into more situations of conflict, both exposing them to more risks and increasing resentment of them. In short, the police see much of this legislation as serving the self-interests of the government whilst leaving them to pay the price. Given this, it may be more accurate to say that it was police discretion which meant that the law was not used at Claremont Road.

In the last issue of *Aufheben*, we devoted considerable attention to the contradiction between the class struggle against roads and the liberal ideology held by many of its participants. Although some of the most active elements in the No M11 Link Campaign did have a critique of capitalism and democracy, for many in the campaign a recognition of the objective basis of the campaign was still sorely lacking. It is vital to recognize how ideas and practice are related, however, in order to grasp how the development of an anti-capitalist perspective may emerge. There was a degree of local support for the No M11 Campaign, especially at certain times when the struggle was in Wanstead, less so as it shifted into Leytonstone. But more often than not, protesters would invade construction sites to find themselves outnumbered by potentially violent security guards. In this situation of numerical disadvantage, notions of class solidarity

count for little. Playing the game of non-violence and hoping the rules are respected by the opposition seemed the best way of escaping a good kicking. The appeal for police to 'do their job even handedly' by protecting your 'right to protest', is at least in part a result of the weakness of the movement in relation to the violence of the road builders' protectors. Unfortunately the *tactic* of non-violence tends to encourage the adoption of a *principled pacifism*, to the detriment of an analysis in terms of class warfare.

This relation with security guards is becoming inverted in the campaign against the proposed M77 through Pollok Park in Glasgow. An unprecedented degree of local opposition to the scheme, and support for the 'outside' protesters, whose ranks are regularly swelled by local kids bunking off school, has meant that conditions no longer lend themselves so easily to appealing for the unwritten rules of non-violence to be observed on each side. Pictures of security guards having menacingly been posted up around the local estate, and they have been warned in no uncertain terms that there will be severe repercussions if they beat up any protesters. In the face of this intimidation, finding

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the boot on the other foot for a change, and being charged with siding with the yuppies against their own class,²⁸ many security guards have quit, including 24 on one day alone. In these circumstances, the limitations of non-violence as a principle should be more clearly exposed, and the development of an anti-capitalist perspective *may* be encouraged. The recent spate of arson attacks in other parts of Glasgow on the show homes of the main contractors, Wimpey, is a sign that things could be moving in the right direction.

The CJ&POA, far from crushing the anti-roads movement, has swelled its ranks. Not only has involvement in the anti-CJB movement led to a degree of further politicization, as anti-roads protesters have faced new questions and arguments arising from events like the Hyde Park riot, but the conditions for this movement becoming conscious of itself as class struggle are becoming more fertile as well. As it begins to do so, it prefigures the day when transport will no longer serve the requirements of the circulation of commodities, and people as commodities, but will be a function of enriched human needs and desires.

c) Hunt Saboteurs Movement:

Hunt sabs have, in the main, been reluctant to become involved with the movement. Those that have engaged with it have, because of their emphasis on direct action and lack of hang ups about violence, been useful allies against the fluffies at various junctures, and have themselves become politicized. This politicization has been a result of their engagement with other struggles, and this engagement has only been possible to the extent that these hunt sabs have left the ideological baggage of 'animal rights' behind them. It is necessary to examine this particular brand of militant liberalism in order to understand both why many hunt sabs have not become involved with the movement, and why those that have can appear better but in some ways be worse than the fluffies.

Militant liberalism looks at the world in terms of individuals and their morality. Militant liberals experience the horrors of capitalism more sharply than other (middle class) liberals, but unlike revolutionaries project these horrors onto particular manifestations of 'evil', which it is a moral imperative for individuals to confront. Thus militant liberalism has a certain appeal to activists seeking to save 'the planet' (good) from the (evil) 'road monster', for example. Many road protesters confront those protecting and carrying out road construction work with the argument that they should be ashamed of themselves for having made the wrong moral choice; they confront non-participants, seen as abdicating their moral responsibility, with the guilt trip of the morally pure and innocent unborn child: 'what did you do in the eco-war, daddy?'

But there is an important difference between the militant liberalism of the roads protester and the hunt saboteur, in that the very activity of road sabotage can lead to the transcendence of liberalism because it is essentially a struggle against capital. As it is objectively a form of class struggle, it carries within the possibility of being recognized as such. Hunt sabotage, on the other hand, does not, as it is purely a moral question. Fox hunting is not an imperative of capital but a mere tradition, and sabbing in itself therefore leads nowhere. The most logical development in the ideology of the hunt saboteur is from fox = good / hunters = bad, to animals = good / animal 'exploiters' = bad; the ideology of animal liberationism.

Animal liberation ideology is best understood in terms of its relation to the humanistic liberalism of the peace movement, in many ways its precursor. Again we find that, in contrast to the activities of the hunt saboteur, the activities of the NVDA wing of the peace movement were an expression of opposition to capital's imperatives (for the militarization of the state form)

and thus open to development in an anti-capitalist direction. But the most important contrast between the militant liberalism of the pacifists and that of the hunt saboteurs is that the world view of animal liberationism is an inversion of this humanistic liberalism.

For the peace movement, the individual was seen as basically good, and thus humanity was basically good, and this was counterposed to the evil of nuclear weapons which threatened humanity's destruction. For the animal liberationist on the other hand, it is not humanity which is good or innocent, but animals. Humanity (excepting the vegans) is therefore seen as the evil in this case. Humanity 'exploits' animals for its own ends, and each individual is implicated in this crime of humanity by eating meat or drinking milk and allowing it to happen.²⁹ Thus whilst the *humanistic liberalism* of the peace movement would have made it contradictory to use violence against other human individuals, those hunt saboteurs who cling to an *anti-humanistic liberalism* find that violence is perfectly compatible with their ideology. And it is not surprising that most hunt sabs have not wanted to become involved in a movement in which many individuals have not purged themselves of this crime of humanity.

Thus whilst other liberals in the movement may be able to move beyond their liberal perspectives because they are fighting for themselves, even if in a distorted/projected form, and are involved in the development of class solidarity, hunt saboteurs, to the extent that they confine themselves to the orbit of animal liberationism, projecting the horrors of capitalism away from themselves *absolutely*, can never move beyond the discourse of 'rights'.³⁰ Animals can never play a part in class recomposition, no matter how much animal liberationists anthropomorphize them to justify giving them 'rights'. Unlike other groups *demanding* rights, animals cannot develop proletarian solidarity; they can only be *granted* 'rights'.

But the possibility does still exist of hunt saboteurs seeking solidarity from others in the movement (rather than animals), thereby opening up the possibility of the development of a class perspective.

Apart from the recent live export protests, hunt sabotage is the most open and collective of animal rights activities. Sabs who are less committed to the ideological baggage of the puritanical self-sacrificing vegan may be slagged off, but are not completely excluded. Many sabs hold contradictory ideas, just as they did when hunt sabbing was popular amongst anarchists in the 1980s until the miners' and printers' disputes resolved such contradictions one way or the other. And it is likely that developments will occur in the hunt saboteurs' movement, in the face of increased repression, that will expose some of these contradictions.

The discretion the CJ&POA gives to the police has meant that, in contrast to the anti-roads movement, the law has been extensively deployed by the police against hunt sabs; there is little chance of repercussions in the countryside. Hunt sabs have undoubtedly borne the brunt of the legislation to date. But those sabs more committed than others to a militant liberal ideology are unlikely to seek solidarity from the movement. Two opposing tendencies offer themselves as ways out of this repression for those who choose to continue to prioritize the end of fox hunting.

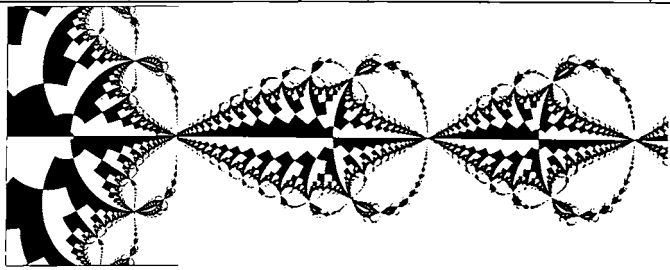
On the one hand there is the inherent tendency towards guerrilla activity. For many of the most committed animal rights activists, hunt sabbing is seen as a relatively ineffective activity suitable mainly for education and recruitment purposes, spotting those who might best graduate to Animal Liberation Front activity. Thus one possible response to the pressures on hunt sabbing may be the development of more covert attacks on hunt vehicles and kennels etc., at present the fringe activities of

groups like the Hunt Retribution Squad and the Justice Department which emerged as repression and violence increased in the late 1980s.

On the other hand there is the tendency towards the lobbying tactics of the League Against Cruel Sports and the RSPCA. The banning of hunting by parliament can no longer be seen as an impossibility given the recent commons majority in favour of a ban. This may not lead to a new law during the

result from a mere change in ways of thinking, but can only be the result of the revolutionary transformation of social relations.

The unity of a rave is illusory to the extent that ravers remain alienated from each other. We remain alienated from each other because we are alienated from ourselves; our subjectivity is stolen from us by capital and returns to confront us as a hostile power, the dull compulsion of the economy. The unity of a rave is an illusion because ravers still carry their



lifetime of this parliament, but should Labour win the next election a ban is certainly likely. Despite the Hunt Saboteurs Association's commitment to direct action, the movement does contain its less militant and more democratic wing, usually in charge of the movement's representation. A leaflet the HSA put out on the July 24th national demonstration must have made many hunt sabs cringe, stating: 'We believe that police officers should be allowed to do what they joined the force to do - catch criminals and try and make this country a better, safer place to live...'

Either of these tendencies would remove hunt saboteurs even further from the class struggle. In contradistinction to our hopes for the anti-roads movement or squatting, there is little hope for a favourable resolution of contradictions in this particular movement at present.

d) Rave New World:

Our previous statement that the rave offers only an *illusion* of unity requires qualification in the light of experience. Quite clearly, the crowd at a rave shares something which is missing in a cinema audience or a crowd in a shopping centre. It is necessary to examine the nature of the illusion. The illusion of unity derives from the shared transformation in consciousness that occurs during a rave. This is brought about largely by the empathic intoxication induced by ecstasy, and moving as one to the same beat. It is this consciousness-shift that becomes mystified as 'recovering the lost consciousness of the tribe'. And it is celebrated in lyrics which promote the idea that freedom results from a mere change in attitude, a 'revolution of consciousness' as it has been called.

Supposedly a better world can be created if we think about each other in a more loving way. And for the DIY idealist, the rave is the beginning of the transformation of this alienated world, a process to be continued by 'being in touch with ones feelings' even when not intoxicated (substituting the drug of eastern religion for orthodox narcotics) and being generously disposed to others, hugging them even after the empathic effects of ecstasy have worn off.

But alienation is not just a question of consciousness. It describes the social relations which give rise to specific forms of consciousness: the process of reification. Thus freedom cannot

social bonds with each other in their pockets in the form of money. Social relations remain mediated by exchange, reified as the economy, external to us and out of our control.

But if this unity is illusory only to the extent that capitalist social relations keep ravers essentially alienated from each other, then to the extent that those relations are subverted through forming relations of collective struggle, the unity is no longer illusory but becomes real. If ravers create relations which are direct, immediate and visible, then the celebration of unity is qualitatively different. The raves which have occurred after demonstrations against the CJB were celebrations of a real if limited overcoming of bourgeois atomization, attempts to preserve a real collective unity experienced for the first time by many. And in Hyde Park, the unity celebrated by the dancers confronting the riot police was similarly no longer illusory. Could these ravers come to recognize that the 'revolution of consciousness' is inseparable from the transformation of material reality? Could they become dialecticians?

A summer of class conflict between ravers and the police would dwarf the significance of events like Claremont Road. Unlicensed raves may have declined in recent years but, sufficiently well organized, would still attract huge numbers of proletarians in defiance of the law. There are literally millions more ravers than road protesters, and dealing with only a fraction of these would cause the police major problems. But it is not just the quantitative dimensions of such potential conflicts that makes them such qualitatively important prospects.

Raves are on the whole the least politicized of the activities targeted by the CJ&POA, but ravers are potentially in the best position to see the capital relation behind the actions of the state. The legislation against raves is an attempt to further subordinate them to the commodity form and reintegrate them into the mainstream circuits of capital where they can be regulated and subject to taxation. Many ravers who have become involved in the movement have little understanding as to why they are being picked on so unfairly. The Advance Party cannot help them as it cannot criticize the commodity form. But as the more money-oriented rave organizers tend towards further acceptance of the constraints of commercialism, rather than risk having their 'constant capital' seized and confiscated by the police, the divisions within the rave scene may become more sharply focused.

Clearly much depends on how those with the means to put raves on respond to the act this summer. There has been a degree of organization emerging amongst those sound systems who have put free raves on in the past, so it is possible that the commercial pressures may be resisted. But there are also signs that such resistance may not lead to the open antagonism that offers such potential for a hot summer of class struggle. There are signs that such antagonism may be mediated, as has been the case in Luton with the Exodus collective.³¹

Exodus have been putting on free raves around Hertfordshire since 1992 and have faced extensive police harassment. But in doing so they have also built up a lot of support in the area. Thus when the police arrested 52 party goers and organizers, seizing their equipment, an angry crowd of 4,000 ravers descended on Luton police station to demand their release. Bottles were thrown; and the 150 police inside the station, fearing an outbreak of proletarian-style justice, turned to Exodus for help in policing the crowd. Exodus defused the crowd's legitimate anger and negotiated with the police for the release of the prisoners and the return of the confiscated equipment. When an agreement had been reached Exodus in turn told the crowd to disperse and go home.

By demonstrating their ability to mediate, policing the power of ravers in return for concessions from the police, Exodus now find themselves in a position where the police are no longer trying to crush them but want to work with them

instead. The CJ&POA clauses concerning raves give discretionary powers to the police, who may therefore allow 'responsible' groups like Exodus to put on free raves while cracking down on easier or more dangerous targets. The development of open antagonism could therefore be undermined by such mediation.

The continuation of free raves would represent a victory of sorts, but as with those delivered by old fashioned social democratic mediation, it will have been at a price. Consider the plans announced by Exodus after the Hyde Park riot for a demonstration in London some time this spring involving sound systems from up and down the country pledged to non-violence, with microphones on all the floats to help control the crowd.³² We can speculate that, having experienced the wrath of the Hyde Park rioters, the police would give in to the demands for music, and in return Exodus would no doubt strive to ensure no-one rocks the stitched up boat. Ravers could get what many fought for last year without having to fight again. But the legitimacy of the state would have been reinforced by such a negotiated 'freedom to party'.

The deliverance of such freedoms by these new recuperators may serve to undermine a challenge to the guarantors of the condition of unfreedom, unless ravers too, through their involvement in the movement, have developed a need for the kind of freedom that can not be given, but must be taken.

Conclusions

The CJ&POA is an article of legislation which addresses us as individuals equal before the impartiality of the law. The 'right to silence' can no longer be used by either a shoplifter or Michael Howard. The Queen can no more party in my back yard without my permission than I can in hers. And the directors of Tarmac or Wimpey can no more stop me going about my lawful business on my own property than I can them on theirs. Are these ironies lost on those who continue to represent the movement in terms of 'civil rights', or do they believe such *class inequalities* can be cured by their progressive furtherance?

As individuals, we are protected by rights. The fundamental right from which all others are derived is the right of private property. Bourgeois society has in most countries abolished the slavery whereby I may be taken against my will as the property of another. I am an equal to others, free to dispose of my private property as I please; if someone else wants what is mine, the law says they cannot take it forcibly but must buy it. But what have I to sell? Only my capacity to labour. Thus the social relation of private property becomes on the one hand those with the means to satisfy labour and on the other those who must sell their labour to them. The essence of private property is laid bare, not as ownership, but exclusion:

Proletariat and wealth are opposites; as such they form a single whole. They are both forms of the world of private property... The proletariat ... is compelled as proletariat to abolish itself and thereby its opposite, the condition of its existence, what makes it the proletariat, i.e. private property. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in its self-alienation; it sees in it its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence.

(Karl Marx, The Holy Family)

No amount of rights can compensate for the absolute poverty of the proletarian condition. The world of rights is founded upon our alienation. Rights define, not freedom, but its limits. Real freedom can only come about through the dissolution of this world of rights, the restoration of our creative

capacities unto ourselves in a world where the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all. Communism abolishes rights in favour of free determination, the production first and foremost of ourselves as social individuals with richly developed needs and desires. The lobby for rights on the other hand serves to maintain this stinking rotten world of work and duty, unfreedom and poverty.

The negation of bourgeois society exists in the process of becoming, however. It must be discovered in the tendencies of the here and now. And despite the language of the movement which has emerged in opposition to the CJB, if we care to scratch its surface we can find that it contains within it tendencies which posit the dissolution of this alienated world of rights. It exists in the road protesters' refusal of democracy, the squatters' refusal of property rights, and the ravers' pursuit of autonomy. It is expressed by the self-organization of the movement, and found its highest point in the Hyde Park riot.

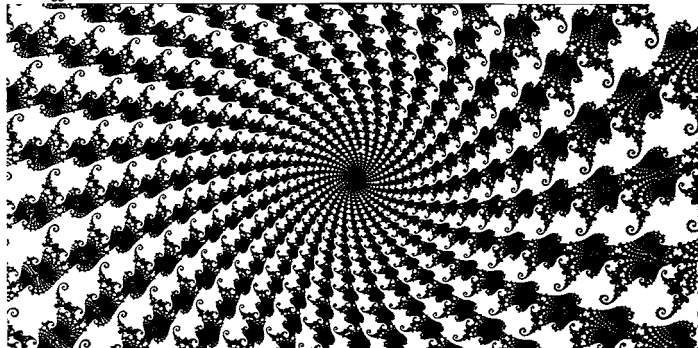
We have to look at the possibility of these tendencies articulating themselves as a self-conscious anti-capitalist movement. Such a possibility is not just an abstract or utopian one, but one posited by the movement itself. The CJ&POA has brought previously separate phenomena into a relation with one another and has resulted in a degree of cross-fertilization between struggles. As it has done so, it has raised the question amongst some participants of how these struggles are related. Thus it has opened up the possibility of the recognition of the *general* (capital-in-general) that exists in and through the *particular* (the road industry, music industry, farming industry, property developers, police force).

The possibility exists of the recognition of the enemy as the differential unity of capital, and thus its negation no longer in terms of separate groups but in terms of their connection as the differential unity comprising the universal class that is the proletariat.

Such a development of working class subjectivity is inseparable from the political recombination of the class. Further decomposition could see these tendencies smothered even deeper under the blanket of liberalism. In the present

context, the development of a struggle against the Job Seekers Allowance, which poses a threat to social reproduction on the dole which is the basis for most of these struggles and lifestyles, could be an important step towards a better understanding of the class nature of bourgeois society. In the long term, it will depend on making links with the struggles of the rest of the class, a possibility which is posed by the state's need to move beyond attacking the marginalized sections of the working class to attack the entrenchment of the remainder. The development of class consciousness is inseparable from the experience of class struggle.

judge. What is certain is that the theory and practice of many revolutionaries were forged in relation to the left during a bygone era, defending proletarian autonomy against its recuperative tentacles. But as the world about us changes, so theory and practice must develop. Revolutionaries need to theorize the new conditions of struggle which are emerging, conditions which have given this movement its unique character. If we don't we will be consigned to the museum of revolutionary ideology. This article is a contribution to that process of *Aufhebung*.



An undialectical approach to this question is insufficient, however. The relationship between consciousness and being is not one way, and an approach which conceives of it as such can only be a repetition of, or an inversion of, the misconceptions of Lenin. Human activity is conscious activity. People do not function automatically only to think about what they have done afterwards. They also think about what to do beforehand. What the anti-CJ&POA movement does reflects the different ideas of its protagonists on how to proceed. *Ideas* are important.

The liberal establishment has an influence on the ideas of the movement. It offers ideas which guide the movement in the opposite direction to emancipation. Groups like Liberty and Charter 88 are not seen as having a political agenda, because agendas are proposals for change and these groups are fundamentally in favour of the status quo. They aim for the perfection of the bourgeois state, its correspondence with the democratic ideal. Comfortable in their alienation these professionals who advocate legal reform do not recognize the fundamental antagonism within this society, an antagonism that means that their dreams will never be fulfilled because the exploited class will always have a tendency to disobey the rules of the democratic game. But many in the movement, whilst unaware of the real meaning of the liberal establishment's agenda, are not insulated from the harsh realities of capitalism by the wealth and status that come with a professional role. Many in the movement have nothing to lose but their illusions that they have something to gain by conforming. Their positions as marginals in class society means that, whether the prospect is appealing or not, for many the future holds nothing but confrontation. In these circumstances revolutionary ideas can play a role.

Have revolutionaries responded adequately to the questions posed by the struggle? Have they helped the self-formation of the working class through their praxis? Let the reader be the

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Notes

¹ See 'EMUs in the Class War' in *Aufheben* 1. The post-war boom was based on the Keynesian settlement. Governments' role was that of inflationary demand management, the stimulation of demand through deficit financing, i.e. state expenditure based on credit. The channelling of monetary claims on future surplus-value on an unprecedented scale underpinned the guarantee of full-employment growth and relatively generous social welfare programmes. The price paid by the working class in exchange for the social wage of health care, housing provision, education and social security was acceptance of the 'Fordist deal', entailing the surrender of control over production. The settlement was premised on the expanded reproduction of relative surplus-value, which allowed for rising wages alongside increased profits. An ever increasing rate of exploitation (the ratio of surplus to necessary labour) was the key to the expanded reproduction of capital which allowed credit to function as boom-lending. The accumulation of productive capital formed the basis for the accumulation of money capital. The centre of Keynesian demand management was the regulation of the international flow of capital through the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates, the regulation of international deficit financing of demand on the world market on the basis of an inflationary supply of dollars from the dominant US economy to the rest of the world. By 1973, however, the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 was in tatters.

By the mid-1960s the growth in world trade had brought with it a rapid expansion in the circuits of international money capital and the development of global capital markets. The development of the Euro-dollar markets in particular, which traded on dollars which had previously been repatriated in exchange for US-produced commodities, signalled that the institutional arrangements which had constrained the international flow of money capital to the national accumulation of productive capital were becoming strained. But it was the struggles of the new generation of post-war proletarians that led the strain to become a breach. Working class aspirations had to be integrated into the economy through wage concessions and increased public spending. The increased costs of 'demand management' only served to worsen the ratio of surplus to necessary labour, thus fuelling the costs of productive investment. And as profits were squeezed, capital not only

sought to borrow more money to make up for falling profits, but increasingly tended to place earned profits on the money markets. Thus as the post-war boom began to slide into recession, depressed rates of productive accumulation coincided with rapid monetary accumulation as boom-lending gave way to the recycling of credit, the speculative deferral of capital liquidation, which prevents the collapse of productive activity but keeps it going on an ever more fictitious basis. The oil price hike of 1973 gave a massive boost to the relative autonomy of money capital by liquidating and diverting huge sums of capital away from industrial capital into the coffers of the international banking system.

This uncoupling of the different forms of capital is what we have described as the new global reality of international finance capital. The abandonment of fixed exchange rates established an unregulated market for currency speculation which has imposed monetary discipline over the national organization of money. Speculative movements against the currency of nation-states perceived to be weak (as signified by the accumulation of public debt, balance of payment problems, high inflation etc.) diverts money capital away from those states, undermining the integration of their domestic economy into the world market, and forcing their governments to change their policy directions. Thus, state policies are subordinated to the flow of money capital in international financial markets. This fact was brought home to the British state by the sterling crisis of 1976, which led to the Labour Government borrowing from the IMF and promising to step up its austerity drive. We will return to this question of the retreat of social democracy in a future issue.

² A useful account of the extent to which monetarism has failed to deliver on its promises can be unearthed from the unfortunately academic waffle in Werner Bonefield's *The Reconstruction of the British State During the 1980s*, Dartmouth Publishing, 1993.

³ A good example being 'Anarchism in the Thatcher Years', in *Socialism From Below*, Vol. 1 no. 1, July 1989. This article makes some valid points about the limitations of 'lifestyle' politics, but most of the Anarchist Workers Group who published this short-lived magazine have subsequently joined the RCP, an example of leftism as lifestyle if ever there was one!

⁴ The gradual invasion of Stonehenge by market forces is looked at in more depth in 'Om sweet Om - A Cautionary Tale of Stonehenge, Convoys, Mutoids etc.', an article in *No Reservations - Housing, Space and Class Struggle*, BM CRL London WC1N 3XX / News From Everywhere Box 14, 136 Kingsland High St., London E8.

⁵ Foreign readers may not be aware of this 'battle', which was in fact so one-sided that it was more of a rout by the police. The travellers' convoy was unable to breach the police roadblock, as many of us on foot had hoped it would, and was instead forced onto a beachland near Stonehenge, not far from Stonehenge, where the police proceeded to beat the fuck out of them and trash their vehicles.

⁶ Although billed as a benefit for Greenpeace or CND, a far greater proportion of the takings goes directly to the police.

⁷ See 'What Future for the Real Raver?' and 'The Political Economy of Ecstasy' in *Here and Now* 14, 1993. These articles are the best attempt to throw some light on the rave scene to have reached us so far.

⁸ See the articles in *Aufheben* 1 and 3.

⁹ Not forgetting video-pirates, obscene telephone-callers, (vulgar) racists, 'pornists', ticket-touts, cannabis smokers, and gay men under 18 years old.

¹⁰ The left of the party abstained because they identified certain 'progressive' clauses in the bill, such as the new law against harassment, ostensibly to deal with racists. But the law is not specific and is more likely to be used against people harassing their MPs or councillors than racists. The Labour left do not recognize that the state is the primary problem and cannot be part of the solution. Either that or they recognize that the real solution to these problems would spell their end.

¹¹ Both the SWP and Militant are flapping around like floundering fishes. The problem of the rightwards drift of the Labour Party has been compounded by the collapse of 'actually existing socialism'. Militant are finding it hard to adjust to life after entrism, dabbling in areas such as claimants unions which have tended to be in the orbit of anarchism (since the 1930s anyway) and, finding that the unemployed most into defending their conditions are often those least into identifying themselves as unemployed workers, failing dismally. The SWP, being outside of the Labour Party in the first place, and more revisionist about the Soviet Union than other Trot groups, has managed to gain a large influx of raw recruits, but has found turning such raw material into finished cad far more difficult. If Brighton is anything to go by the SWP is in severe trouble, losing members and foundering around directionless. Only the ANL seems to be keeping the party afloat, but there is limited mileage in manufacturing fascist threats to satisfy the needs of the party, only postponing but ultimately increasing disillusionment within the ranks. We should not overestimate the crisis of the left, however, as both Militant with its 'Alliance' and the SWP with its 'Coalition' pose threats to the autonomy of the anti-CJ&POA movement.

¹² Although we refer to 'fluffies' and 'fluffy ideology' as if they form a coherent body of people and ideas it should be borne in mind that our 'fluffy' is something of a stereotype made necessary by the fact that the people and ideas we are referring to are so contradictory and incoherent.

¹³ The most visible manifestations of DIY culture are the licensed squats Cool Tan Arts in Britton and the Rainbow Church in Kemish Town, and the plethora of 'community arts centres' which have sprung up (and then been evicted in some cases) around the country over the last six months.

¹⁴ What problematic of proletarian subjectivity? For Trotskites there is no problem of proletarian subjectivity, only the problem of leadership, the problem of building a vanguard to deliver the subjective requirements of revolution now that the objective conditions are ripe. For Radical Chains there is no problem as proletarian subjectivity does not enter into their theorization of working class self-formation, as this is seen to be a process taking place behind the backs of the working class, corresponding to the socialization of production. For certain Anglophone autonomists such as Harry Cleaver or Midnight Notes there is no problem. Developments are seen as the outcome of two competing strategies; thus working class subjectivity is simply assumed by the existence of a working class strategy. This neat assumption allows them to see working class struggle in all manner of apparently liberal social struggles and relate to them uncritically. The uncritical acceptance of working class subjectivity linking apparently separate single issues gets around the problem of the liberal aspects of those struggles by ignoring them. This strategy may be suited to demonstrating the continuing relevance of a theory of class struggle to American academia, adequate for a relation to those struggles of contemplative if supportive separation. But for subjects engaging in those struggles as revolutionaries, the liberal aspects need to be criticized mercilessly in order to make practical links between struggles in such a way as to bring out the underlying class content. Many ultra-leftists share this assumption of the existence of working class subjectivity, but draw exactly the opposite conclusions. They cling to an ideal of assumed working class subjectivity which the reality of class struggle subornly refuses to live up to, seeing, for example, in anti-fascism only a defence of democracy, in student struggles only a defence of privilege, in feminism only bourgeois demands. This inability to grasp the contradictions within these movements find its logical conclusion in rejecting the grounding of communism in the fundamental contradiction of capitalism in favour of primitivist romanticism. But none of these ways of glossing over the problem are adequate. We can neither take these struggles at face value and dismiss them critically, nor ignore what they say they are and accept them uncritically. Revolutionary praxis requires a critical engagement with the existing contradictions, the search for possibilities of developing struggles beyond the liberal perspectives which hold them back - a project with both practical and theoretical moments.

¹⁵ Having dealt with the problem of workism in relation to the anti-roads movement in *Aufheben* 3 it should not be necessary to repeat our argument here. The workism of the SWP was amply demonstrated on a demonstration in Brighton when a local back approached some travellers' children (no more than 12 or 13 years old) who were happily chanting 'kill the bill' and taught them to chant 'the workers united will never be defeated' instead. They were a little bemused to say the least!

¹⁶ The left's knee-jerk reaction of calling on the RMT to call an indefinite strike or bring out the rest of its members in solidarity ignores the fact that the strikers were very effective in their own terms. The signallers were able to make up the pay lost on strike days in overtime sorting out the mess they had caused whilst Railtrack had to pay all their other workers for doing nothing on strike days. There was no need for them to strike as well - it would simply have saved Railtrack from having to pay their wages - unless to broaden the basis of the dispute. An autonomous strike against privatization (the RMT cannot call for such a thing due to the threat of sequestration) could have called for passenger involvement. But railway workers have chosen not to sabotage privatization, opting instead to take their chances in the break up of the industry. It is not the case that the RMT executive is simply stitching them up - they are accepting the RMT's representation because they fear the consequences of a full-blooded strike.

¹⁷ Operation Emily was named after Emily Pankhurst, the respectable face of the suffragettes. The fluffies are presumably unaware of the more proletarian elements in the suffragette movement who were not averse to a bit of class violence. Sylvia Pankhurst, for example, would have approved of the use to which another set of railings were put later in the year.

¹⁸ Having to fix the drains did, however, add to the contractor's costs and further delay the opening of the road. But the main value of the sabotage lay in its impact on the mood of the crowd, undermining the position of those fluffies who considered sabotage of property to be 'violence' and therefore illegitimate.

¹⁹ The problem was discussed at the 'Interactive Diners Club' in the Rainbow Centre, where someone who was particularly worried about hunsabts suggested spraying 'trouble makers' with paint to make them

identifiable to the police, a suggestion which was thankfully quashed by an Exodius delegate. Then, a week or so before the demonstration, the Freedom Network in Cool Tan proposed pulling out of the demonstration altogether and organizing an alternative non-confrontational event on the same day in a different location, and had to be persuaded not to by groups around the country who had spent weeks arranging transport etc.

²⁰ The Criminal Justice Bill attacks our right to peaceful protest. It is vital that we defend this ... in a peaceful way. In the past large events have been turned into 'riots' by a combination of heavy-handed policing and violent agitators in the crowd ... it is up to you not to be provoked. ... The 'law and order' lobby and most of the media would jump at the chance to portray us as violent hoodlums who need to be forcefully dealt with. Remember you are an individual ... If one or two individuals become aggressive, forming a circle of non-violent people around them can be effective. ... 1) Join hands ... 2) All sit down ... 3) ... form a 'doormat' by all lying on the ground. ... Please keep to the route, which has been agreed with the police. ... Remember the police are all individuals - with families, emotions and problems of their own ... try to be friendly and polite ... If you are arrested try to stay calm and do not resist arrest. - Freedom Network.

²¹ Squall did not exactly help matters by publishing an article by freelance journalist C.J. Stone. The necessarily twisted logic of those who simultaneously enjoy the thrill of refusal whilst clinging to the security of submission is demonstrated in his article 'The Triumph of Love Over Anger' in Squall 8, Autumn 1994. His fear of losing his role as syphonic commentator by entering into a world free of roles where he could become anything is clear when he accuses not the fluffy stewards but those fighting the police of being 'agents of the state, serving its interests not ours'. Lefty journalists delude themselves that they serve 'the people' despite the fact that they work for media whose very existence presupposes that 'the people' are kept atomized as wage-slaves. The left/liberal gloss he paints onto his lies makes C.J. Stone worse, not better, as it makes them more likely to be believed by those who really matter. He should be treated with the contempt reserved for 'agents of the state'.

²² We reject out of hand the argument put forward by fluffies that the police deliberately provoked the riot. It is interesting that many 'ultra-left' types share this type of interpretation of riots.

²³ The press repeated the police's claim to have eventually driven the crowd from the park. This was not the case. Realizing that the crowd was gradually decreasing in size, people eventually decided *en masse* to leave together, and engaged in a bit of window smashing down Oxford Street as they went.

²⁴ As our situationist friends might put it, the totalitarianism of the spectacle does not mean that it allows only one interpretation of an event, but is rather characterized by offering a multiplicity of conflicting explanations which are all expressions of spectacular thought. The police fear the autonomous subjectivity of the crowd for obvious reasons and after they have tried to smash it by force they attempt to decompose it through the conspiracy theory. Leftists fear it as well, seeing in it the negation of their role. Whilst some may be content to see their role negated those further up the hierarchy, who have invested more of their own subjectivity in their alienated role, tend to regard it as their own nemesis. Militant demonstrated after the Poll Tax riot that the preservation of the role of mediation is not best achieved by piously denouncing that which refuses constraints on its immediacy. Thus the Coalition sought to deny the crowd's rationale by apologizing for the riot as an understandable if undesirable reaction to bad policing. Two conflicting messages for the atomized spectator to choose from, one of a passive crowd manipulated by anarchists, one of a reactive crowd provoked by the police, both seeking to deny the negation of all that is spectacular.

²⁵ Militant would undoubtedly be prepared to fill this gap with its 'Alliance', but whether the movement would give it any credence is another matter. Interestingly, the way Militant is setting up the 'Alliance' is in stark contrast to the way the anti-Poll Tax 'Federation' was established. That was set up on a delegate basis which allowed Militant to maintain a stranglehold on the organization, whereas the 'Alliance' is a loose coalition which they seem to want to dominate only through having the most coherent understanding.

²⁶ Note, for example, the much hearded occupation of a piece of derelict land in Surrey by the land reform movement 'The Land is Ours'. This group, led by the academic George Mombior, claims to have gone 'beyond' the so-called 'reactive' protests such as the anti-roads movements by being 'proactive' and 'setting new agendas'. Behind this radical-liberal language, however, the movement is an attempt to reinvent CJA/POA-related activism into the democratic process; the 'new agenda' is merely one of reform - attempting to get a few more rights from the mean old landowners - and therefore falls well below the visions produced in some of the 'reactive' struggles, visions of doing away with the whole system of duties, rights and exchange altogether. Moreover, the 'direct action' of the Land movement is decidedly indirect, being more concerned with creating publicity through

tokenistic events to get the attention of the powers that be than with actually changing their lives through their own action. No doubt if anyone emulated too closely the actions of the group's supposed inspiration - the Diggers - (by actually reclaiming land that the landowners wanted) they would be thrown out for being 'troublemakers'!

²⁷ *SchNews c/o 'On the Fiddle', P.O. Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex.*

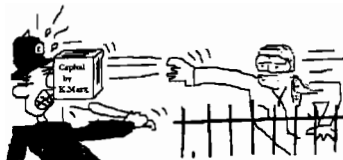
²⁸ Militant Labour have been central to this aspect of the campaign, recognizing the scheme as a class issue in terms of the M77 being built to serve yuppie commuters at the expense of local proletarians rather than having developed a critique of the road building programme *per se*. Any detailed analysis of this campaign would have to confront the contradictory effects of their involvement: pushing a class analysis but continually orienting events towards the media; encouraging local involvement but encouraging kids playing truant to return to school, get unionized, and negotiate for time off to attend the protest.

²⁹ The placards seen at recent live export demonstrations equating those unprovoked by these displays of little Engländer chauvinism and dewy eyed sentimentalism with Nazi collaborators assisting the Holocaust are an offensive but logical conclusion to be drawn by the animal liberationists. Maybe it should be said that whilst, for example, residents close to Shoreham Harbour didn't lift a finger to prevent coal being brought into the port to help defeat the miners' strike, it is better that they responded to this assault on their sensibilities by clashing with the police rather than sitting at home writing letters to MPs, if for no other reason than it provides an opportunity for local proletarians to enjoy a bit of argy bargy with the cops.

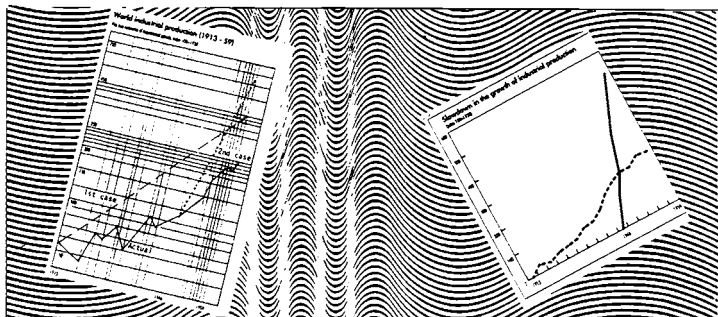
³⁰ Many apparent engagements with struggles outside of this orbit are in fact attempts to extend it. Thus the engagement with the opposition to the Gulf War was on the basis of 'wars kill animals too'.

³¹ See Squall 8, Autumn 1994 for details.

³² *New Statesman and Society*, October 14th 1994.



Decadence: The Theory of Decline or the Decline of Theory? Part Three



Introduction: The story so far

As our more patient and devoted readers will know, the subject of this article is the theory that capitalism is in decline. In the previous two issues, we traced out in detail the development of the theory of the decline of capitalism which has emerged amongst Marxists and revolutionaries over the last hundred years. In this, the final part the article, we shall bring our critical review up to date by examining the most recent version of the theory of decline, which has been put forward by *Radical Chains*. But before considering *Radical Chains* and their new version of the theory of the decline of capitalism, we should perhaps, for the benefit of our less patient and devoted readers, summarize the previous two parts of this article.

In Part 1, we saw how the theory of decline, and the conceptions of capitalist crisis and the transition to socialism or communism related to it, played a dominant role in revolutionary analysis of twentieth century capitalism. As we saw, the notion that capitalism is in some sense in decline originated in the classical Marxism developed by Engels and the Second International.

At the time of the revolutionary wave that ended World War I, the more radical Marxists identified the theory that capitalism was in decline as the objective basis for revolutionary politics. They took as their guiding principle the notion from Marx 'That at a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production... From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution'.¹ They argued that capitalism had entered this stage and this was expressed in its permanent crisis and clear objective movement towards breakdown and collapse.

In the wake of the defeat of the revolutionary wave following World War I, for those traditions which claimed to represent 'proper Marxism', against its betrayal - first by the reformist Social Democrats and then by Stalinism - the acceptance of the notion that capitalism was in decline became a tenet of faith.

For the left-communists, the notion that capitalism had entered its decadent phase with the outbreak of war in 1914 was vital since it allowed them to maintain an uncompromising revolutionary position while at the same time claiming to represent the continuation of the true orthodox Marxist tradition.² For the left-communists, the reformist aspects of the politics of Marx, Engels and the Second International, which had led to support for trade unionism and for participation in parliamentary elections, could be justified on the grounds that capitalism was at that time in its ascendant phase. Now, following the outbreak of the World War I, capitalism had gone into decline and was no longer in a position to concede lasting reforms to the working class. Thus, for the left-communists, the only options in the era of capitalist decline were those of 'war or revolution!'

For the Trotskyists and other associated socialists, the increase of state intervention and planning, the growth of monopolies, the nationalization of major industries and the emergence of the welfare state all pointed to the decline of capitalism and the emergence of the necessity of socialism. As a consequence, for the Trots the task was to put forward 'transitional demands' - that is, apparently reformist demands that appear reasonable given the development of the productive forces but which contradict the prevailing capitalist relations of production.

So, despite the otherwise fundamental differences that divide left-communists from the Trots,³ and which often placed them in bitter opposition to each other, for both of these tendencies the concrete reality of capitalist development was

explained in terms of an objective logic heading towards capitalist collapse and socialist revolution. The underlying objective reality of the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production reduced the problem of that revolution to organizing the vanguard or party to take advantage of the crisis that would surely come.

However, instead of ending in a revolutionary upsurge as most decline theorists predicted, World War II was followed by one of the most sustained booms in capitalist history. While the productive forces seemed to be growing faster than ever before, the working class in advanced capitalist countries seemed content with the rising living standards and welfare benefits of the post-war social democratic settlements. The picture of an inescapable capitalist crisis prompting a working class reaction now seemed irrelevant.

Then, when class struggle did eventually return on a major scale, it took on forms - wildcat strikes (often for issues other than wages), refusal of work, struggles within and outside the factory - which did not fit comfortably into the schema of the old workers' movement. Many of these struggles seemed marked not by a knee-jerk reaction to economic hardship caused by 'capitalism's decline', but by a struggle against alienation in all its forms caused by capital's continued growth, and by a more radical conception of what lay beyond capitalism than was offered by socialists.

It was in this context that the new currents we looked at in Part 2 of this article emerged. What currents like *Socialism or Barbarism*, the situationists and the autonomists shared was a rejection of the 'objectivism' of the old workers' movement. Rather than put their faith in an objective decline of the economy, they emphasized the other pole: the subject. It was these theoretical currents and not the old left theorists of decline that best expressed what was happening - the May '68 events in France, the Italian Hot Autumn of '69 and a general contestation that spread right across capitalist society. Though more diffuse than the 1917-23 period, these events were a revolutionary wave questioning capitalism across the world.

However, in the 1970s, the post-war boom collapsed. Capitalist crisis returned with a vengeance. The turn by the new currents away from the mechanics of capitalist crisis which had been an advantage now became a weakness. The idea that capitalism was objectively in decline was back in favour and there was a renewal of the old crisis theory. At the same time, in the face of the crisis and rising unemployment, there was a retreat of the hopes and tendencies which the new currents had expressed.⁴ As the crisis progressed, the refusal of work, which the new currents had connected to, and which the old leftists could not comprehend, seemed to falter before the onslaught of monetarism and the mass re-imposition of work.

However, the various rehashings of the old theory of capitalist crisis and decline were all inadequate. The sects of the old left, which had missed the significance of much of the struggle that had been occurring, were now sure that the mechanics of capitalist decline had been doing its work. Capital would be forced now to attack working class living standards and the proper class struggle would begin. These groups could now say 'we understand the crisis: flock to our banner'. They believed that, faced with the collapse of the basis of reformism, the working class would turn to them. There was much debate about the nature of the crisis; conflicting versions were offered; but the expected shift of the working class towards socialism and revolution did not occur.

This, then, is the situation we find ourselves in. While the advances of the new currents - their focus on the self-activity of the proletariat, on the radicality of communism etc. - are essential

references for us, we nevertheless need to grasp how the objective situation has changed. The restructuring that has accompanied crisis, and the subsequent retreat of working class, has made some of the heady dreams of the '68 wave seem less possible. To some extent there has been an immersion of the imagination from which that wave took its inspiration. There is a need to rethink, to grasp the objective context in which class struggle is situated. The bourgeoisie and state do not seem able to make the same concessions to recuperate movements, so the class struggle often takes a more desperate form. In the face of a certain retreat of the subject - lack of offensive class struggle - there is a temptation to adopt some sort of decline theory. It is in this context that the ideas of the journal *Radical Chains* are important.

The Radical Chains synthesis

Despite all their faults and ambiguities, Radical Chains have perhaps more than any other existing group made a concerted attempt to rethink Marxism in the wake of the final collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the fall of Stalinism. In doing so, they have sought to draw together the objectivism of the Trotskyist tradition with the more 'subjectivist' and class struggle oriented theories of autonomist Marxism. From the autonomists, Radical Chains have taken the idea that the working class is not a passive victim of capital but instead forces changes on capital.⁵ From the Trotskyist Hillel Ticktin, Radical Chains have taken the idea that one must relate such changes to the law of value, and its conflict with the emergent 'law of planning'.

In adopting the notion that the present epoch of capitalism is a transitional one, characterized by a conflict between an emergent 'law of planning' - which is identified with the emergence of communism - and a declining law of value, Radical Chains are inevitably led towards a theory of capitalist decline, albeit one which emphasizes class struggle. Indeed, as we shall see, the central argument of Radical Chains is that the growing power of the working class has forced capitalism to develop administrative forms which, while preventing and delaying the emergence of the 'law of planning' - and with this the move to communism - has undermined what Radical Chains see as capitalism's own essential regulating principle - the law of value.⁶ As such, Stalinism and social democracy are seen by Radical Chains as the principal political forms of the 'partial suspension of the law of value' which have served to delay the transition from capitalism to communism.

However, before we examine Radical Chains' theory of the 'partial suspension of the law of value' in more detail, it is necessary to look briefly at its origins in the work of Hillel Ticktin which has been a primary influence in the formation of this theory.

Ticktin and the fatal attraction of fundamentalism

Hillel Ticktin is the editor and principal theorist of the non-aligned Trotskyist journal *Critique*. What seems to make Ticktin and *Critique* attractive to Radical Chains is that his analysis is not tied to the needs of a particular Trotskyist sect but takes the high ground of an attempt to recover classical Marxism. As such, for Radical Chains, Ticktin provides a perceptive and sophisticated restatement of classical Marxism.

With Ticktin, the Second International's central notion, which opposed socialism as the conscious planning of society to the anarchy of the market of capitalism, is given a 'scientific' formulation in terms of the opposition between the 'law of planning' and the 'law of value'. Ticktin then seeks to 'scientifically' explain the laws of motion of the current transitional epoch of capitalism's decline in terms of the decline of capitalism's defining regulatory principle - the 'law of value' - and the incipient rise of

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the 'law of planning' which he sees as heralding the necessary emergence of socialism.

Like the leading theorists of classical Marxism, Tickin sees the decline of capitalism in terms of the development of monopolies, increased state intervention in the economy and the

accommodate the rise of global finance capital of the past twenty-five years within the classical Marxist theory of decline. To this extent, Tickin provides a vital contribution to the development of the classical theory of decline.

But it could be objected that the increasing autonomy of



Angry proletarians burn an effigy of H. Tickin after hearing about his plan for the transitional period.

consequent decline of the free market and *laissez-faire* capitalism. As production becomes increasingly socialized on an ever greater scale, the allocation of social labour can no longer operate simply through the blind forces of the market. Increasingly, capital and the state have to plan and consciously regulate production. Yet the full development of conscious planning contradicts the private appropriation inherent in capitalist social relations. Planning is confined to individual states and capitals and thus serves to intensify the competition between these capitals and states so that the gains of rational planning end up exploding into the social irrationality of wars and conflict. Only with the triumph of socialism on a world scale, when production and the allocation of labour will be consciously planned in the interests of society as whole, will the contradiction between the material forces of production be reconciled with the social relations of production and the 'law of planning' emerge as the principal form of social regulation.

However, unlike the leading theorists of classical Marxism, Tickin places particular emphasis on the increasing autonomy of finance capital as a symptom of capitalism's decline. Classical Marxism, following the seminal work of Hilferding's *Finance Capital*, had seen the integration of banking capital with monopolized industrial capital as the hallmark of the final stage of capitalism which heralded the rise of rational planning and the decline of the anarchy of the market. In contrast, for Tickin late capitalism is typified by the growing autonomy of financial capital. Tickin sees twentieth century capitalism as a contradiction between the forms of socialization that cannot be held back and the parasitic decadent form of finance capital. Finance capital is seen as having a parasitic relation to the socialized productive forces. It manages to stop the socialization getting out of hand and thus imposes the rule of abstract labour. However, finance capital is ultimately dependent on its host - production - which has an inevitable movement towards socialization.

By defining the increasing autonomy of finance capital as symptom of capitalism's decadence, Tickin is able to

finance capital is simply the means through which capital comes to restructure itself. In this view, the rise of global finance capital in the last twenty-five years has been the principal means through which capital has sought to outflank the entrenched working classes in the old industrialized economies by relocating production in new geographical areas and in new industries.

So while the increasing autonomy of finance capital may indeed herald the decline of capital accumulation in some areas, it only does so to the extent that it heralds the acceleration of capital accumulation in others. From this perspective, the notion that the autonomy of finance capital is a symptom of capitalism's decline appears as particularly Anglo-centric. Indeed, in this light, Tickin's notion of the parasitic and decadent character of finance capital seems remarkably similar to the perspective of those advocates of British industry who have long lamented the 'short terms' of the City as the cause of Britain's relative industrial decline.⁷ While such arguments may be true, by adopting them Tickin could be accused of projecting specific causes of Britain's relative decline on to capitalism as a whole. While footloose finance capital may cause old industrialized economies to decline, it may at one and the same time be the means through which new areas of capital accumulation may arise.

This Anglo-centrism that we find in Tickin's work can be seen to be carried over into the theory put forward by Radical Chains. But for many this would be the least of the criticisms advanced against Radical Chains' attempt to use the work of Tickin. Tickin is an unreconstructed Trotskyist. As such, he defends Trotsky's insistence on advancing the productive forces against the working class, which led to the militarization of labour, the crushing of the worker and sailors' uprising at Kronstadt and his loyal opposition to Stalin. But Radical Chains resolutely oppose Tickin's Trotskyist politics. They insist they can separate Tickin's good Marxism from his politics.

We shall argue that they can't make this separation: that in adopting Tickin's theory of decline as their starting point they implicitly adopt his politics. But before we advance this argument

we must consider Radical Chains' theory of decline in a little more detail.

Radical Chains

The world in which we live is riven by a contradiction between the latent law of planning and the law of value. Within the transitional epoch as a whole these correspond to the needs of the proletariat and those of capital, which remain the polarities of class relationships across the earth.⁸

This quote from Radical Chains' Statement of Intent succinctly summarizes both their acceptance and their transformation of Tickin's problematic of capitalist decline. Radical Chains' theory, like Tickin's, is based on the idea of the conflict between two different organizational principles. It is not enough for the proletariat to be an 'agent of struggle'; it must be the bearer of a new organizational principle that, in its inescapable antagonism to value, must make capital a socially explosive and eventually doomed system.⁹

But Radical Chains are not Tickin. Radical Chains accept the idea that the proper working of the law of value has given way to distorted forms of its functioning. However, there is a very significant shift in Radical Chains from conceiving of the law of value purely in terms of the relations between capitals to seeing it in terms of the capital/labour relation. The crucial object of the law of value is not products, but the working class.¹⁰ Thus while for Tickin it is phenomena like monopoly pricing and governmental interference in the economy that undermine the law of value, for Radical Chains it is the recognition and administration of needs outside the wage - welfare, public health and housing, etc.¹¹ This is an important shift because it allows Radical Chains to bring in the class struggle.

Central to Radical Chains' theory is the interplay between the state and the law of value. Their combination creates regimes of need, which is to say ways in which the working class is controlled. If the orthodox decline theory has a schema based on *laissez faire* free markets as capitalism's maturity and monopoly capitalism its decline, Radical Chains offer a similar schema based on the application of the law of value to labour-power. Capital's maturity was when the working class was brought fully under the law of value; capital's decline is the period when that full subordination was partially suspended by administrative forms.

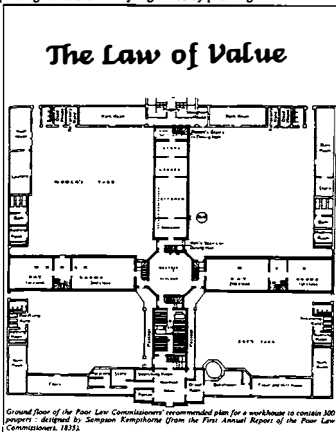
Full Law of Value

For Radical Chains, the 1834 Poor Law Reform Act was the 'programmatic high point' of capitalism because it marked the establishment of labour-power as a commodity. In the previous Poor Law, the subsistence needs of the working class were met through a combination of wages from employers and a range of forms of parish relief. The New Poor Law unified the wage, by terminating these forms of local welfare. In their place it offered a sharp choice between subsistence through wage labour or the workhouse. The workhouse was made as unpleasant as possible to make it an effective non-choice. Thus the working class was in a position of absolute poverty. Its needs were totally subordinate to money, to the imperative to exchange labour-power for the wage. Thus its existence was totally dependent on accumulation. This, Radical Chains argue, was the proper existence of the working class within capitalism.

For Radical Chains, only when the subjective existence of the working proletariat corresponds to this state of absolute poverty is capitalism in proper correspondence with the pristine objectivity of the law of value. Once there is a change in this relation, capital goes into decline.

The 'Partial Suspension of the Law of Value'

This full subordination of working class existence to money prompted the working class to see its interests as completely opposed to those of capital and, as a result, to develop forms of collectivity which threatened to destroy capital. The threat is based on the fact that the working class, though atomized by the law of value in exchange, is collectivized by its situation in production. The law of value tries to impose abstract labour, but the working class can draw on its power as particular concrete labour. Radical Chains' idea of proletarian self-formation expressing the law of planning is bound to its existence as a socialized productive force. In response to the full workings of the law of value, the working class developed its own alternative, pushing towards a society organized by planning for needs.



Ground floor of the Poor Law Commissioners' recommended plan for a workhouse to contain 300 prisoners - designed by Sampson Kempthorne (from the First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1832)

The bourgeoisie recognized the inevitable and intervened with 'administrative substitutes for planning'. One aspect to the Partial Suspension of the Law of Value is that the bourgeoisie accepted forms of representation of the working class. Responsible unions and working class parties were encouraged. At the same time, there was the abandonment of the rigours of the Poor Law. Radical Chains trace the eventual post World War II social democratic settlement to processes begun by far-sighted members of the bourgeoisie long before. From the late nineteenth century, haphazard forms of poor relief began to supplement the Poor Law. The 1906-12 Liberal government systematized this move to administered welfare.

Such reforms amounted to a fundamental modification of the law of value: the relaxation of the conditions of absolute poverty. The wage was divided with one part remaining tied to work while the other became administered by the state. There was

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a move to what Radical Chains call the 'formal recognition of need': that is, the working class can get needs met through forms of administration. Bureaucratic procedures, forms, tests and so on enter the life of the working class.

There are now two sides to capital - the law of value and administration. This Partial Suspension of the Law of Value represents national deals with the working class. The global proletariat is divided into national sections which have varying degrees of defence from the law of value. This acts to stop the proletariat's global unification as a revolutionary class, but it also acts as a limit on the effectiveness of the law of value which must act globally.

Crisis of the Partial Suspension of the Law of Value

Within the forms of the Partial Suspension of the Law of Value, the working class struggles. It uses the existence of full employment and welfare to increase both sides of the divided wage. Administration proves a much less effective way of keeping the working class in check than the pure workings of the market. Radical Chains see the forms of struggle that the new currents connected to as evidence of the working class breaking out of its containment. The last twenty years or so are seen by Radical Chains as a crisis of the forms of prevention of communism to which capital has responded by trying to reunify the wage and reassert the law of value. Radical Chains do not see much point in looking at the different struggles; the point is to locate them within a grand theoretical perspective!

The attraction of Radical Chains' theory is that the concrete developments of the twentieth century are explained by a combination of subjective and objective factors. Revolutionary theory has a tendency to see the subjective aspect - working class struggle - appearing in revolutionary periods and disappearing without trace at other times. Radical Chains conceptualize the subjective as contained within the forms of the prevention of communism - Stalinism and social democracy - but continuing to struggle and finally exploding them. This analysis seems to have a revolutionary edge, for Radical Chains use the theory to criticize the left's tendency to become complicit with these forms of the prevention of communism. However, there is an ambiguity here because Radical Chains hinge their account on the idea of an underlying process - the breakdown of the essence of capitalism before the essence of communism - planning. This, as we shall argue, is exactly the framework that leads to the left's complicity with capital.

However, before moving to the fundamental conceptual problems that Radical Chains inherit from Tickin we should point out some problems with their historical account of the rise and fall of capitalism.

In the Blink of an Eye

Radical Chains are right to see the New Poor Law as expressing bourgeois dreams of a working class totally subordinated to capital. They imagine that this period of proper domination beginning in 1834 and lasting till the beginnings of the Partial Suspension of the Law of Value with the movement towards haphazard forms of poor relief in the 1880s, the mature period of capitalism, lasts around fifty years.

But there is a difference between intent and reality. The New Poor Law while enacted in 1834 was resisted by the working class and the parishes so that it was not until the 1870s that it became properly enforced. So virtually as soon as it was enforced the New Poor Law began to be undermined.¹² From this it would seem that the high point of capitalism becomes reduced to little more than a decade or two. From an historical perspective in

which feudalism lasted for more than a several centuries, capitalism's maturity is over in the blink of an eye.

Against this notion that capitalism matured for a mere twenty years in the later part of the nineteenth century and has ever since been in decline, it can of course be countered that the world has become far more capitalist during the course of the twentieth century than it has ever been. This view would seem to become substantiated once we grasp the development of capitalism not in terms of the decline of the law of value, but in terms of the shift from the *formal to the real subsumption of labour by capital* and the concomitant shift in emphasis from the *production of absolute surplus-value to the production of relative surplus-value*.¹³

Formal and Real Domination

In the period dominated by the production of absolute surplus-value, the imperative of the control of labour is simply to create sufficient hardship to force the proletarians through the factory gates.¹⁴ However, once relative surplus-value becomes predominant, a more sophisticated role is required. The capital/labour relation had to be reconstructed. The reduction in necessary labour required the mass production of consumption goods. A constant demand for those goods then became essential to capital. As a result, the working class became an important source not only of labour but also of demand. At the same time, the continual revolutionizing of the means of production required a more educated workforce and a more regulated reserve army of the unemployed.

Of course Radical Chains are right that these changes are also being forced on capital by the threat of proletarian self-organization. But the idea that they thereby represent capital's decline is not justified. It is only with these new ways of administering the class that relative surplus-value can be effectively pursued. The phenomena of Taylorism and Fordism indicate that capitalism in the twentieth century - the pursuit of relative surplus-value - still had a lot of life in it. Indeed, the post-war boom in which capitalism grew massively based on full employment and the linking of rising working class living standards and higher productivity is perhaps the period when working class needs and accumulation were at their most integrated.

Indeed, from this perspective, the New Poor Law was more of a transitional form in the development of capitalism. On the one hand it was in keeping with the draconian legislation that capital required in its long period of emergence. On the other hand it created a national system to control labour. The multitude of boards that it set up are the direct forerunners of the administrative bodies that came to replace it.

So, rather than a massive break, there is a great deal of continuity between the sorts of institutions created by the 1834 Act and those bureaucratic structures that were set up later. The forms of systematic national management of labour that were created by the New Poor Law simply to discipline the working class were the material basis for new relations of representation, administration and intervention.

We can see, then, that the New Poor Law was introduced to fulfil the needs of a period of the production of absolute surplus-value. What is more, though it was enacted in 1834, it was only in the 1870s that its provisions totally replaced earlier systems of relief. By this time, capital was shifting to its period in which the production of relative surplus-value came to predominate, and this required a new way of relating to labour.¹⁵

The underlying problem of Radical Chains' historical analysis is that they take the *laissez faire* stage of capitalism at its

own word. Its word is an individualist ideology which was immediately undermined by the growth of collective forms. The idea of a perfect regime of needs under the law of value is a myth. The law of value and capital have always been constrained, first by forms of landed property and of community which preceded it, and then by the class struggle growing up within it. Capital is forced to relate to the working class by other means than the wage, and the state is its necessary way of doing this. The Poor Law expressed one strategy for controlling the working class; administration expresses a different one. Once we see the law of value as always constrained, then the idea of its partial suspension loses its resonance.

The fetishism of planning

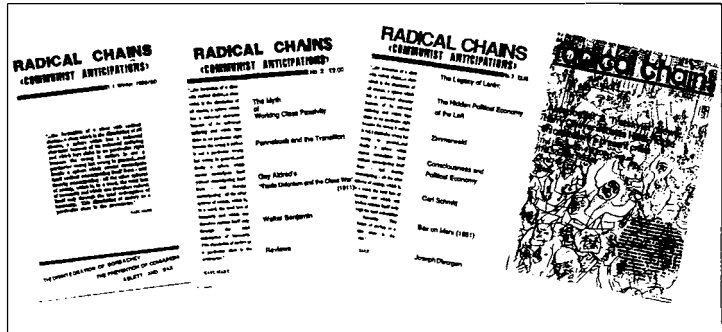
Given that Radical Chains seek to emphasize the relation of struggle between the working class and capital, it may seem strange that they do not consider the shift from the formal to real subsumption of labour to capital. Yet such a consideration would not only undermine their commitment to a theory of decline but also run counter to the conceptual framework that they have drawn from classical Marxism through Ticktin. To examine this more closely we must return briefly once more to the origins of classical Marxism's theory of decline.

must step in to take over the baton of economic development. From this perspective, socialism appears as little more than the planned development of the forces of production.¹⁷

However, viewing history in terms of the contradiction between the development of the forces of production and existing social relations, where each form of society is seen to be replaced by a succeeding one which can allow a further development of the forces of production, is to take the view point of capital. By articulating this view, Marx sought to turn the perspective of capital against itself. Marx sought to show that, like preceding societies, capitalism will repeatedly impose limits on the development of the forces of production and therefore open up the possibility for capitalism's own supersession on its own terms.

From the point of view of capital, history is nothing more than the development of the productive forces; it is only with capitalism that production fully realizes itself as an alien force that can appear abstracted from human needs and desires. Communism must not only involve the abolition of classes but also the abolition of the forces of production as a separate power.

By seeing socialism principally as the rationally planned development of the forces of production - and opposing this to the anarchy of the market of capitalism - classical Marxists ended up adopting the perspective of capital. It was this perspective that



As we have already noted, the notion of an objectively determined decline of capitalism is rooted in the orthodox interpretation of the Preface to *A Critique of the Critique of Political Economy* where Marx states that 'At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production... From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution.'¹⁶ For the classical Marxist at the turn of the century, it seemed clear that the social relations of private appropriation and the market were becoming fetters on the increasingly socialized forces of production. The driving force towards revolution was therefore conceptualized as the contradiction between the productive forces' need for socialist planning and the anarchy of the market and private appropriation.

Of course, implicit in all this is the idea that socialism only becomes justified once it becomes historically necessary to further develop the forces of production on a more rational and planned basis. Once capitalism has exhausted its potential of developing the forces of production on the basis of the law of value, socialism

allowed the Bolsheviks to take up the tasks of a surrogate bourgeoisie once they had seized power in Russia, since it committed them to the development of the forces of production at all costs. The logic of this perspective was perhaps developed most of all by Trotsky who, through his support for the introduction of Taylorism, one-man management, the militarization of labour and the crushing of the rebellion at Kronstadt, consistently demonstrated his commitment to develop the forces of production over and against the needs of the working class.

As a long committed Trotskyist, there are no problems for Ticktin in identifying socialism with planning. Indeed, in restating classical Marxism and developing the contradictions between planning and the anarchy of the market, Ticktin draws heavily on the work of Preobrazhensky who, alongside Trotsky, was the leading theoretician of the Left-Opposition in the 1920s. It was Preobrazhensky who first developed the distinction between the law of planning and the law of value as the two competing principles of economic regulation in the period of the transition

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from capitalism to socialism. It was on the basis of this distinction that Preobrazhensky developed the arguments of the Left- Opposition for the rapid development of heavy industry at the expense of the living standards of the working class and the peasantry. Arguments that were later to be put into practice, after the liquidation of the Left-Opposition, under Stalin.¹⁸

For Radical Chains, adopting the notion that we are in the period of capitalist decline and the consequent transition to socialism, in which the principal contradiction is that between the law of value and the law of planning, is far more problematic. An important part of Radical Chains' project is their attempt to reject the traditional politics of the left, particularly that of Leninism. This is made clear in such articles as 'The hidden political economy of the left', where they resolutely stress importance of the self-activity of the working class and attack the Leninist notion of the passivity of the working class and its need for an externally imposed discipline. Yet this is undermined by their adherence to the 'good Marxism' of Ticktin.

As a result, we find that when pressed on the question of planning Radical Chains' position becomes both slippery and highly ambiguous. Their way of vindicating planning is virtually to identify it with self-emancipation. They ask us to make a revolution in the name of planning and insist that really that is fine because 'Planning is the social presence of the freely associating proletariat and, beyond that, the human form of existence.'¹⁹ But planning is planning. The free association of the proletariat is the free association of the proletariat. For all their efforts, by refusing to break with the framework set out by Ticktin, Radical Chains end up simply criticizing the left's idea of planning from the point of view of planning. For us, this classical leftist Marxism must not be revitalized but undermined. This means questioning its very framework.

For us, the market or law of value is not the essence of capital;²⁰ its essence is rather the *self-expansion of value*: that is, of alienated labour. Capital is above all an organizing of alienated labour involving a combination of market aspects and planning aspects. Capitalism has always needed planning and it has always needed markets. The twentieth century has displayed a constant tension between capitalism's market and planning tendencies. What the left has done is identify with one pole of this process, that of planning. But our project is not simply equal to planning. Communism is the abolition of all capitalist social relations, both of the market and of the alien plan. Of course, some form of social planning is a necessary prerequisite for communism: but the point is not planning as such, as a separate and specialized activity, but planning at the service of the project of free creation of our lives. The focus would be on the production of *ourselves*, not things. Not the planning of work and development of the productive forces, but the planning of free activity at the service of the free creation of our own lives.

Radical Chains concluded

With Radical Chains we have the most recent and perhaps most sophisticated restatement of the classical Marxist theory of decline. Yet, for us, their attempt to unite such an objectivist Marxist theory with the more class struggle oriented theories which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s has failed, leaving them in a politically compromised position. With Radical Chains our odyssey is complete and we can draw to some kind of conclusion.

In Place of a Conclusion

Is capitalism in decline? Coming to terms with theories of capitalist decline has involved a coming to terms with Marxism. One of the essential aspects of Marx's critique of political

economy was to show how the relations of capitalist society are not natural and eternal. Rather, he showed how capitalism was a transitory mode of production. Capital displays itself as transitory. Its negation is within it, and there is a movement to abolish it. However, the theory of decline is not for us. It focuses on decline as a period *within* capitalism and it identifies the process of going beyond capital with changes in the forms of capital rather than the struggle against them.

Decline cannot be seen as an objective period of capitalism, nor can the progressive aspect to capital be seen as an earlier period now passed. The progressive and decadent aspects of capital have always been united. Capitalism has always involved a decadent negative process of the commodification of life by value. It has also involved the creation of the universal class in opposition, rich in needs and with the ultimate need for a new way of life beyond capital.

The problem with Marxist orthodoxy is that it seeks capital's doom not in the collective forms of organization and struggle of the proletariat but in the forms of capitalist socialization. It imposes a linear evolutionary model on the shift from capitalism to communism. The revolutionary movement towards communism involves rupture; the theorization of the decline of capitalism misses this by identifying with aspects of capital. As Pannekoek pointed out, the real decline of capital is the self-emancipation of the working class.



Notes

¹ Preface to *A Contribution*... we'll come back to the meaning of this later on.

² Pannekoek was a dissenting voice in the move by the left- and council communists to embrace a theory of decline.

³ While left-communism has defended revolutionary positions against Trotskyism, this defence is undermined and appears dogmatic by being grounded on a rigid conception of capitalist decadence.

⁴ The autonomists made the best theoretical response with their class struggle theory of crisis, but this lost its way when the offensive class struggle receded.

⁵ See for example Negri's argument that the Keynesian form of the state, which promoted full employment and rising living standards paid for by increased productivity, was a strategic response by capital to the threat of proletarian revolution. A. Negri (1988). *Revolution Retrieved*. London: Red Notes.

⁶ Part of the whole problem with Radical Chains and Ticktin is the use of the term 'law of value'. The idea is that, by referring to the 'law of value', a profundity is reached. As Radical Chains say, 'The analysis puts the law of value at the centre. Agreement or disagreement requires a grasp of the law of value.' It is because Ticktin has done this that Radical Chains see him as a good Marxist. The law of value is used to sum up capitalism - it is its essence. But if law of value is used like this, it must be taken in its widest possible sense as summing up all the laws of motion of capital: the production and accumulation of absolute surplus-value, the revolutionizing of the labour process to produce relative surplus-value, the compulsion to increase productivity and so on. On the other hand, the law of value has a narrower meaning simply as the market. When the two senses become confused, when changes to the narrow law of value - limits on the market - are seen as capital's decline, the other aspects of capitalism are forgotten. Radical Chains think they have opened up the meaning of the law of value by focusing it on labour-power, but they still conceive of it purely in terms of the market.

⁷ The idea originating with Hilferding that the era of capitalism's decline is marked by the integration of banking capital with industrial capital can equally be accused of Germano-centrism since Hilferding based such conclusions on the high level of integration of banking capital and the big concerns that typified the German economy at the turn of the century.

⁸ *Statement of Intent Radical Chains 1-3*. In issue 4 there is a slight change. The new formulation is 'The world in which we live is riven by a contradiction between the need for and possibility of planning and the law of value.'

⁹ *Radical Chains 4*, p. 27.

¹⁰ 'The law of value does not stand apart from the working class as a separate mechanism; it would be more purposeful to say that the law of value is the existence of the working class standing apart from itself.' *Radical Chains 4*, p. 21.

¹¹ Ticktin occasionally mentions the need-based sector as one factor in the law of value's decline but Radical Chains revolve their theory around it.

¹² The best source on this topic is chapter three of *Public Order and the Law of Labour* by Geoff Kay and James Mott (MacMillan, 1982). Essentially Kay and Mott's point is that the application of the law of value to labour through the wage contract has always occurred within a wider law of labour backed by the state. Radical Chains would seem to be very indebted to the analysis in this book, yet Kay and Mott describe no pure subordination which declines. Rather, because the application of the labour contract is always insufficient - labour-power refuses to be simply a commodity - different controls have constantly to be developed.

¹³ Marx grasped the nature of class exploitation in capitalist society as being hidden in the payment of a wage for a period of labour some of which - necessary labour - replaced the wages, the rest - unnecessary labour - produced a surplus-value. Absolute surplus-value increases surplus-value by extending the working day. Relative surplus-value increases surplus-value by decreasing the amount of time necessary to reproduce the wage. Relative surplus-value thus requires an increase in productivity. The two forms are not mutually exclusive, but one can say that as capitalism develops there is an important shift where the application of science and technology to the revolutionizing of the productive forces in pursuit of relative surplus-value becomes decisive.

¹⁴ In the period dominated by the production of absolute surplus-value, the capitalist takes over a labour process that, while capable of greater efficiency of scale, remains essentially the same as it did before capital took it over. Relative surplus-value, on the other hand, demands that the capitalists reorganize the whole labour process. There is a constant revolutionizing of the productive forces; production becomes specifically capitalist and dominates the worker.

¹⁵ In the *Law of Labour*, Kay and Mott are good on this. It seems that what Radical Chains have done is take a text written from a more autonomist type perspective and fitted its notions of needs and capacities into a decline problematic. It does not fit.

¹⁶ Marx, *Early Writings* (Penguin: Harmondsworth) pp. 425-6.

¹⁷ It seems to us that, while the dialectic between the forces and relations of production may have been instrumental in the overthrow of feudalism by the bourgeoisie, it cannot be the guarantee of the decline of capital. This contradiction may be the root of crisis, but this does not mean a terminal crisis requiring socialism to resolve it. Unlike earlier modes of production, capitalism is not tied to a level of the productive forces. Rather it is based on the constant revolutionizing of them. It does create a barrier to their growth in the fact that it can only produce for the market. However, the barrier that capital creates to itself is a barrier that it constantly tries to overcome. Capital constantly revolutionizes productive relations to allow its continued expansion. This need to constantly transform social relations means that capital is constantly forced to confront the working class. An established pattern of class compromise cannot be maintained indefinitely. The crisis may create conditions where the proletariat moves towards opposing its needs to those of capital. But equally it is possible for capital to resolve the contradiction at a higher level of the productive forces. Capital revolutionizes its own social relations to continue to develop the productive forces. The perspective of the productive forces is that of capital not the proletariat. The proletarian perspective is of a conscious breaking of that contradiction which otherwise continues.

To take the point by Marx in his Preface as justification for the idea of decline confuses logical with historical decline. Capitalism contains within it the logical/real possibility of decline; i.e., defetishization of the law of value and the creation of the free association of producers in its place. But to see that possibility as a historical fact/epoch is reification: the process of a part of capital (i.e., the proletariat) going beyond capital is reified into something within and of capital and its change of forms. This is not to say that defetishization and thus communism is an ahistorical possibility with no relation to the development of capitalism and the productive forces; in the world market and in the reduction of necessary labour, capitalism creates the basis for communism. But there is no technical level of the productive forces at which communism becomes inevitable or further capitalist development impossible. There is an organic relation between the class struggle and capitalist development. At times, the development of capital and the class reaches a point of possible rupture. Revolutionaries and the class take their chance; if the wave fails to go beyond capital, then capitalism continues at a higher level. Capitalism restructures to neutralize the composition of the class which attacked it; i.e., capitalism takes different forms. The further development of the productive forces is in a way, then, the booty prize for failed revolutions.

¹⁸ It was Stalinism's commitment to planning that led Trotsky and orthodox Trotskyism (together with a multitude of Western socialist intellectuals) to see the USSR as progressive. Ticktin's 'break' from this tradition is to claim that the USSR had neither planning or the market. Ticktin contends that for Lenin and Trotsky planning was necessarily 'democratic'; Lenin's support for Taylorism, and Trotsky's call for the militarization of labour, show that the early Bolsheviks' ideas concerning planning cannot be so easily separated from the Stalinist version. To simply insist on adding the word 'democratic' to the socialist project of the planned development of the productive forces is clearly inadequate. Capital as a social relation is quite compatible with democracy. Communism is a content - the abolition of wage labour - not a form. The unrecognised nature of Ticktin's Trotskyism is clearly shown in 'What would a socialist society be like?' in *Critique 25*. It involves, after the taking of power, the 'gradual elimination of finance capital', the 'gradual phasing out of the reserve army of the unemployed', the 'nationalisation of major firms and their gradual socialisation.!!'

¹⁹ *Radical chains 1*, p. 11.

²⁰ The law of value is one way the *essence of capitalism expresses itself*. Competition and the market is the way that the law of value is imposed on individual capitals.

Civilization and its latest discontents

Review Article:

Fredy Perlman (1983). *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!* Detroit: Black & Red.

I'm born in a certain age which has certain instruments of production and certain kinds of knowledge; I have the possibility to combine my ability with my knowledge, and can use the socially available means of production as instruments with which to realize an individual or collective project.

(R. Gregoire & F. Perlman, 1969)¹

Civilization is under attack. A new critical current has emerged in recent years, united by an antagonism towards all tendencies that seem to include 'progress' as part of their programme. Perlman's book, described in the AK Distribution 1993 Catalogue as 'One of the most significant and influential anarchic texts of the last few decades' (p. 30), is one of the key texts in this 'primitivist' current. In the U.S.A. and this country, it is in anarchist circles - particularly amongst those engaged in eco-struggles - that primitivism has become particularly popular. But Perlman used to be a Marxist (see the quote above), and he contributed usefully to the development of a libertarian version of Marx's theory for a number of years. The wholesale abandonment of Marx in favour of primitivism has touched the non-Leninist revolutionary milieu in this country too, with the recent conversion of *Wildcat*² to the anti-civilization position.

One direction that the primitivist current points in is the need to develop a critique of technology. This is something the old left cannot grasp, and is one of the reasons why it is unable to connect properly with tendencies toward communism. According to most varieties of leftism, technological progress and therefore economic growth will be of universal benefit so long as they are planned rationally; what prevents the full and rational development of the forces of production is the irrationality of the capitalist market. All this is reflected in the way leftists relate to the new struggles over technological 'progress', such as the anti-roads movement. Thus, while opportunists like the SWP treat these new struggles as valid only because they might be fertile grounds for recruitment to the 'real' struggle, leftists who are more openly traditional on this issue - such as the RCP - repeat the old claim that what the proles really want is more and better roads (so we can all get to work on time, perhaps): a modern infrastructure is necessary for growth, and an expanding economy necessarily makes for a better quality of life.

The old project of simply taking over existing means of production was the creation of an era before capital had so thoroughly invested its own subjectivity in technology, design and the labour process. The technology that promises to liberate us in fact enslaves us by regulating our activities in and through work and leisure; machines and factories pollute our environments and destroy our bodies; their products offer us the image of real life instead of its substance. Now, more than ever, it is often more appropriate to smash existing means of production than merely manage them differently. We must therefore go beyond leftist notions of the neutrality of technology and problematize their definitions of progress.

The current anti-roads movement offers an example of a practical critique of progress - that is, one which contests dominant definitions of progress through physically disrupting their implementation. As we argued in our last issue, struggles such as that over the M11 link road in north-east London should

be understood as part of the class struggle. This is often despite the ideas of those taking part, some of which echo Perlman's ideological critique of progress. In contrast to the practical critique, the ideological critique actively *hinders* an adequate critique of capitalism. Thus Perlman rejects unwanted leftist notions only through a retreat into a form of romantic quasi-anarchism which is unable to grasp the movement necessary to abolish capital. Given that Perlman is only one voice, however, the present article will use a review of his book as a springboard for a critique of other expressions of the new primitivist current.

The case against 'progress'

Perlman's book begins by distinguishing between a state of nature (harmony between humanity and the rest of nature) and civilization. Civilization began, not because everyone wanted to improve their conditions of existence, not because of 'material conditions', but because a small group of people imposed it on everyone else. Perlman traces the origin of civilization to the Sumerians, who, he says, felt obliged to build waterworks to ensure a regular supply of water. The Sumerians invested power to direct the building of the waterworks in one individual, who eventually became a powerful expert elite and then a warrior elite - the first ruling class, in effect. Under the direction of their ruling class, the Sumerians then waged war on their neighbours, eventually enslaving them. The rest of Perlman's book is taken up with the rest of world history, comprising the evolution of - and resistance to - various types of Leviathan (the name, taken from Hobbes, which Perlman uses for civilization, class society or the state), each of which takes in human beings as its living energy, is animated by them, and excretes them out as it decays, only to be replaced by yet another Leviathan. Leviathans fight with each other, but the winner is always Leviathan. Given that the opposition is between Leviathan and the oppressed majority, the differences between types of class society can therefore be largely glossed over.

Perlman appears to agree with Marx that what distinguishes civilization from primitive communism is the development of the means of production, which enabled surplus labour and thus the existence of a parasitic non-productive class. But the book challenges the traditional Marxist view by suggesting that in primitive communism there were already 'surpluses'.³ If there was no problem with means of subsistence, then there could be no need to develop the means of production. The emergence of civilization is therefore comparable with the 'fall' from the Garden of Eden.

However, Perlman's claim that the ancient Sumerians felt obliged to introduce technological innovation suggests that primitive communism wasn't always so idyllic after all: the place where they were living was 'hellish'; they were intent on 'farming a jungle'; in the rainy season the floods carried off both their crops and their houses, while in the dry season their plants dried up and died.⁴ This might suggest that population

growth forced people to live in marginal lands, away from any surpluses. It also seems to conflict with Perلمان's repeated claim that material conditions were not responsible for the development of technology and thus civilization; if lack of a regular water supply isn't a material condition, then what is? Similarly, the material condition of a growing population isn't discussed.⁵ The social relations Perلمان describes which accompany the new technology seem to be rather arbitrary. Much (the whole of history, in fact) seems to hinge on the decision made by the 'wise' (sic) Sumerian elders to appoint 'a strong young man' to be the 'supervisor' of the waterworks project. (So is chance to blame rather than the small minority?)

The writings of John Zerzan, such as his collection of essays *Elements of Refusal*,⁶ seems to take Perلمان's general argument further (back). Zerzan's writings are not orthodox within the new primitivist current, but they have been important in the American primitivist and eco-anarchist scenes in setting agendas for debate on issues such as agriculture. The whole problem in Zerzan's view may be summarized as follows: symbolization set in motion the series of horrors that is civilization's trajectory. Symbolization led to ideas of time, number, art and language which in turn led to agriculture. Religion gets the blame as well, being carried by language, and being one of the prime culprits for agriculture: food production is 'at base ... a religious activity' (p. 70). But why is agriculture so bad? According to Zerzan, 'captivity itself and every form of enslavement has agriculture as its progenitor or model' (p. 75). Therefore while Perلمان might have wanted to defend existing primitive communities against encroaching capitalist development, Zerzan sees anyone using agriculture as already alienated and therefore not worth saving: even most tribal types wouldn't be pure enough for him. Similarly, permaculture is an aspiration of many primitivists, but, within Zerzan's vision, this too would be part of the problem since it is a method of production. His later work⁷ has even dismissed hunter-gathering - since hunting leads to symbolism (and all the rest).

It might be easy to dismiss many of Perلمان's and Zerzan's arguments as just half-baked idealism. They are not particularly original, and indeed might be said to be no more than vulgarizations of the ideas of Camatte (see below); if we are interested in theory, it might therefore be more appropriate to develop a critique of his work rather than theirs. However, Camatte is far less well known and far less influential than either Perلمان or Zerzan. The fact that their ideas are becoming something of a material force - in the form of an increasing number of people engaged in struggle espousing primitivism - means that we have to take them seriously in their own right.

The modern context of primitivism

Ideas of a golden age and a rejection of civilization are nothing new. The Romantic Movement in bourgeois philosophy began with Rousseau, who eulogized unmediated relations with 'nature' and characterized 'industry' as evil. (Perلمان quotes Rousseau approvingly.) But why has this old idea become so popular now?

It would seem no coincidence that anti-civilization ideas have blossomed in particular in the U.S.A. It is easy to see how such ideas can take hold in a place where there is still a recognizable wilderness which is currently being destroyed by production. The U.S.A. differs from Europe also in the fact that it lacks the long history of struggle that characterizes the transition from feudalism to capitalism (and the making of the proletariat). Instead, it has had the wholesale imposition of capitalism on indigenous cultures, a real genocide. Moreover, in recent years, the U.S.A. has also differed from Europe in the extent of the defeat of proletarian struggle over there.

Defeat brings pessimism, and when the current radical movement is on the decline, it may be easier to be radical about the past than to be radical in a practical way in the present.⁸ In

the biography of Perلمان, we can trace a movement from hope in the proletariat as the liberatory force to a turn to nature and the past in the context of defeat. As a Marxist, Perleman was caught up in the events of 1968, where he discovered the texts and ideas of the Situationist International, anarchism and the Spanish Revolution, and council communism. Afterwards, however, on moving to the U.S.A., '[t]he shrinking arena for meaningful political activity in the early 70s led Fredy to see himself as less of an "activist" and more as a rememberer.'⁹ Perleman's development is closely linked with that of Jacques Camatte, sometime comrade of the Italian left-communist Bordiga. Camatte broke with left-communist organizations partly due to his recognition of the need to go beyond their (objectivist) perspective and rethink Marx on the basis of the radical promise offered by such texts as the 'Results of the Immediate Process of Production' (The 'missing sixth chapter' of *Capital* Volume I), the *Grundrisse*, and the *1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. However, Camatte eventually concluded that capital was in fact all powerful: given this, the proletariat offered no hope and the only option for humanity was to run away and escape somehow.

In the case of Zerzan, his early work romanticizes proletarian spontaneity; on the basis of his observations of apparently new expressions of resistance in the form of worker sabotage and absenteeism, he pronounced this to be the future of class struggle.¹⁰ In the early 1980s, the recession threw millions out of work. We might take this as the vindication of his critics' predictions about the transience of these forms of the revolt against work as viable expressions of the class struggle; for in the face of widespread unemployment how could workers commit sabotage or go absent? But instead of recognizing the setbacks to the struggle as a whole, Zerzan saw in the new unemployment figures the 'collapse' of capitalism and the 'vitality' of the revolt against work. For those who were still in jobs, work intensity increased during this period. To Zerzan, however, the most important thing, was a decline of the work-ethic. Zerzan also dismissed strikes (successful or otherwise) as being cathartic charades. His focus on attitudes allowed the perilous state of the proletariat as a movement to be overlooked.

Zerzan's unrealistic optimism is merely the flipside of the pessimism that comes with defeat.¹¹ But holding on to such ideas - substituting the simple negation of civilization for the determinate negation of capitalism - is not only a reflection of pessimism with current movements; it also functions to prevent adherents from connecting with these movements. The ultimate test of the primitivists' case might be its usefulness in struggles. Primitivists say they don't want to 'simply' go back (maybe they want to go back in a more 'complex' way - in a tardis, perhaps), but neither do they say much about what we should be doing now; and Perleman and Zerzan give few examples of collective struggles that seem to them to point in the right direction.¹² In the past, Perleman and Zerzan made contributions to revolutionary struggle; but whatever useful contributions Zerzan may make now do not particularly seem to flow from his theory.

For the modern primitivist, the despair of failing to locate the future in the present, and of failing to counteract the pervasiveness of production, may leave no alternative but principled suicide (possibly in the service of a bombing mission against one or other manifestation of the 'mega-machine'), or resignation before Leviathan's irresistible progress, and a search for an individual solution. Although primitivists see capital as a social relation, they seem to have lost the sense that it is a process of class struggle, not just an imposition by a powerful oppressor. Since, in their account, *all* praxis is alienated, how can proletarian praxis possibly offer the way out? So, for example, George Bradford, writing in *Fifth Estate*,¹³ argues that all we can hope to do is maintain human decency, affirm moral coherence and defend 'human personhood', and hope that others do the same.

History produces its own questioners

The argument that the turn to primitivism reflects the limits of the class struggle at the present time has certain consequences for the coherence of the primitivist position. To say that primitives necessarily resisted civilization may be to project on to them the primitivist's own desires - specifically, her own antipathy to technology and "civilized" (i.e. class) society. Primitives very likely were not conscious of their way of life as a possibility or choice in the way the modern primitivist is, and therefore would not have valued it in the same way that we might, and may not necessarily have resisted the development of the productive forces. The desire to transcend civilization seems itself to be a product of class society; the rosy view of pre-history is itself a creation of history.

The issue touches upon the definition of 'human nature'. In confronting this, we find two sorts of position in the writings of primitivists. Firstly, consistent with Marx's approach, some acknowledge that human needs and desires are indeed historical products.¹⁴ But, for the logically pure primitivist, this is problematic because such needs and desires would therefore be an effect of the very thing they are trying to overcome; these needs would be part of history and civilization, and therefore alienated. (Recall the traditional leftist view that capitalism holds back our needs for technological progress; to the primitivist, needs like these would be part of the problem.)

Given this, primitivists often imply instead that the human needs and desires to which civilization is antithetical are ahistorical or supra-historical.¹⁵ Perlman says nothing explicit in his book about the precise features of this ahistorical human nature he seems to be positing, except that he 'take[s] it for granted that resistance is the natural human response to dehumanization' (p. 184). The rest, we can assume, is simply the negative of his account of civilization: non-hierarchical, non-working and so on.

Again, an ahistorical 'human nature' argument against capital ('civilization', 'government' etc.) is not a new one, and we don't have to re-invent the dialectical wheel to argue against it. In fact, we can turn to some of Perlman's own work for a pretty good counter-argument. In his Introduction to Rubin's *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*,¹⁶ Perlman discusses Feuerbach's conception of human nature. As Perlman says, for Feuerbach the human essence is something isolated, unhistorical and therefore abstract. The great leap in theory beyond the bourgeois idealists made by Marx was to argue against this that 'the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.' (p. 122).¹⁷

By contrast, then, the later Perlman makes a huge leap backwards in theory to rediscover old, bourgeois notions which define human nature in terms of certain negative desires located within each individual.¹⁸ Similarly, Zerzan counterposes 'alienation' (be it through hierarchy, agriculture or wage labour) to an a-social humanity. His more promising early writing on absenteeism and sabotage was flawed by his inability to recognize the limits of struggle that does not become collective.¹⁹ His more recent work centres on a critique of language, that aspect of human life which, probably more than any other, allows us to share and therefore makes us social beings.

Primitivists' conception of the essential ontological opposition as being between history (civilization) and an abstract human nature, instead of between two historically-contingent sets of interests (capital versus the proletariat), means that their critique tends to be merely a moral one. For example, as his widow and biographer states, Perlman argues that the trail-blazers of civilization did have other choices,²⁰ in

Worker-Student Action Committees, a similarly voluntaristic theme works as a useful critique of the limits of the practice of those taking part in the events in Paris in May 1968: 'Subjectively they thought they were revolutionaries because they thought a revolution was taking place ... They were not going to initiate this process; they were going to follow the wave wherever it pushed them.' (p. 82). But, in the absence of a proper recognition of the logical-historical drives and constraints of particular modes of production, Perlman's primitivism represents the degeneration of a non-objectivist version of Marxism into a version of the anarchist critique of power, with all its obvious weaknesses: 'These leaders were just bad or stupid people!' Similarly, in the case of Zerzan, language is said to have arisen not so that people could co-operate with each other, but 'for the purpose of lying' (*Elements of Refusal*, p. 27). So we must blame, not class interests, but people's moral failings!²¹

Whose progress is it anyway?

Primitivists say little about variations and changes in climate in pre-historic times. In certain times and places, there may well have been societies like the idyll described by Perlman; but it is equally likely that other situations were nightmarish. All primitive societies relied completely on the benevolence of nature, something which could easily change; and changes in climatic conditions could wipe out thousands.

Bound up with the primitivist view of pre-history as an ideal state is the rigid distinction they draw between nature and human productive activity. What makes us human are the set of 'first order mediations' between *humanity and nature*: our needs, the natural world around us, our power to create, and so on. To be human is to be creative. Through 'second order mediations', these basic qualities of existence are themselves mediated by relationships - of power, alienation, exploitation and so on - between *classes*. Zerzan idealizes a golden age before humanity became distinct from nature only because he conflates human creative activity per se with alienated creative activity; to him, any human creative activity - any activity which affects the rest of nature - is already saturated with exploitation and alienation.

What the anti-civilization position overlooks, therefore, is the *mutual constitution* of humanity and (the rest of) nature: humans are part of nature, and it is their nature to humanize nature. Nature and humanity are co-defining parts of a single moving totality; both are therefore subject to change and change each other. Changes in the world may lead to new social relations among human beings - relations which may involve a different relation to that world, a different praxis and technology (such as when the Iron Age developed out of climatic changes). We are products of nature, but we also create ourselves through our own activity in shaping the world that we inhabit. While it is certainly true that to privilege 'humanity' in any of these changes may be to damage the very environment we need to live, to privilege 'the natural world' by viewing all our activity as an assault on it may be to damage humanity.

If the change from pre-history to agriculture and other innovations wasn't necessarily alienating - if the latter weren't by their nature imposed within and through social relations of domination - then the whole historical opposition Perlman and Zerzan set up between progress and its popular resistance is thrown into doubt. Evidence from history suggests that progress is by no means necessarily the expression of the powerful; rather the powerful were sometimes indifferent to progress, and the powerless were sometimes the ones who contributed to it.²²

In Antiquity, particularly in Greek society, there was technological stagnation rather than progress. The surplus product of slave labour was used for innovations only in the sphere of civic society and the intellectual realm. Manual

labour, and therefore innovations in production, were associated in the minds of the Greek ruling class with loss of liberty. Although the Romans introduced more technical developments, these were largely confined to the material improvement of cities (e.g., central heating) and the armed forces (e.g., roads) rather than the forces of production. In both cases, military conquest was preferred to economic advance through the forces of production.

In the feudal period, both lords and peasants had reasons to bring innovations to agriculture to increase production. The growing desires for amenities and luxuries in the aristocratic class as a whole, particularly from about the year 1000 onwards, motivated an expansion of supply from the countryside. Hence the introduction of the water-mill and the spread of viticulture. The peasants were motivated to create and satisfy new needs by the particular parameters of the feudal mode of production, which tied the peasant to only a certain weekly toll and fixed number of days to work: the rest of the time was their own, and could be used to improve their quality of life. Hence more and more villages came to possess forges for local production of iron tools; cereal cultivation spread; and the quality and quantity of production on the peasants' own plots increased.

The key to understanding the massive growth in productivity in the feudal period, however, was the recurrent rent struggles between peasants and landowners. Disputes over land, initiated by either pole of the feudal relationship, motivated occupation and colonization of new lands in the form of reclamation of heaths, swampland and forests for agricultural purposes. It was a continual class struggle that drove the economy forward.

Primitivism, by suggesting that the initiators of progress are always the ruling class, projects features of capitalism back into the past - as do most bourgeois theories. Previous class societies were based largely on a settled level of technology; in such societies technological change may have been resisted by the ruling classes since it might have upset settled relations of dominance. Capitalism is the only mode of production based on constantly revolutionizing technology and the means of production.

Moreover, characterizing capitalism as simply the rule of technology or the 'mega-machine' fetishizes fixed capital as a prime mover, thereby losing sight of the struggle behind the shape of the means of production. Progress within capitalism is characteristically the result of capital responding to forms of resistance. For example, in the shift to Taylorist production methods, the variables that the management scientists were having to deal with were not merely technical factors but the awkwardness and power of the workforce; this could best be controlled and harnessed as variable capital (so the scientists thought) by physically separating the job of work into its component parts and the workers along the production line so they were unable to fraternize. One of the next steps in improving output was the introduction of the 'human relations' approach, putting a human face on the factory, which was forced upon capital by worker resistance (in the form of absenteeism and sabotage) to the starkness of pure Taylorism.

Thus, we might understand progress in the forces of production not as the absolute imposition of the will of one class over another, but as the result of the class contradiction itself. If progress is in an important sense a compromise, a result of conflict - both between classes and between competing capitals - then some of its effects might be positive. We might hate capitalism, but most of us can think of capitalist technologies we'd like to keep to meet our present and future needs (though not as commodities, of course) - be it mountain bikes, light bulbs or word processors. This is consistent with our immediate experience of modern capitalism which isn't simply imposed upon us monolithically, but has to reflect our own wishes in some way. After all, isn't the essence of the spectacle the

recuperation of the multiplicity of our own desires? Therefore it is not some abstract progress which we want to abolish, but the contradictory progress we get in class society. The process of communism entails the reappropriation and radical, critical transformation of that created within the alienated social relations of capitalism. To hold that the problem is essentially technology itself is a mystification; human instruments are not out of our control within capitalism because they are instruments (any more than our own hands are necessarily out of our control), but because they are the instruments of capital - and therefore of reified, second-order mediations.

Given all this, the argument by Wildcat²³ - that IF the productive forces need to be developed to a sufficient degree to make communism possible, and IF these forces are not developed sufficiently now, THEN revolutionaries might have to support their further development - applies only to Marxist objectivism rather than to the version of Marx's project we are trying to develop. At any time, the revolutionary supports the opposition to capital (and, by extension, takes the side of any communist tendency in any class society). Actions by the opposition to capital can force concessions from capital, making further successful resistance possible both subjectively (confidence, ideas of possibility etc.) and objectively (pushing capital beyond itself, weakening its mechanisms of control etc.). 'Progress' often describes the deferment of this revolutionary process, as the mode of production is forced to change its form: look at the way the class compromise of the post-war settlement entailed the development of new production and accumulation methods in the form of Fordism. In their attack on progress, Wildcat mistake the shadows for the substance of the fight.

Good and bad Marx

Perلمان and Camatte certainly knew their Marx, and developed their early, more promising, revolutionary theory through a confrontation with him. But *Against His-story* and much of Zerzan's work recommend no such constructive confrontation; rather they encourage a simplistic and dismissive attitude by characterizing Marx as merely a nineteenth century advocate of progress. From that perspective, any apparently radical critique of Marx is welcomed, including that of postmodernist scumbags like Baudrillard. (*The Mirror of Production*, a book by the media darling and recuperator of situationist ideas, which groups Marx with the rest of the 'modernist' has-beens, is promoted in the primitivist-influenced *Fifth Estate* periodical.)

A critique of Marx and Marxism is certainly necessary, but primitivism (like postmodernism) is merely the ideologization of such a critique. The anti-civilization position is not just a necessary attack on leftism, but a counter-productive attack on everything in Marx. In defending some version of Marx against primitivism, we certainly need to acknowledge the problems in attempting to separate from some of its own consequences a theory which sought not merely to interpret the world but to change it. However, some of the primitivist critics seem to simply fit Marx up rather than attempt to understand some of the limitations of his theory. For example, Zerzan's critique of Marx claims to link Marx's practice with the supposed problems of this theory. But the critique consists almost entirely of a list of Marx's personal shortcomings and says virtually nothing about his theory.²⁴

At least Wildcat bother to dig out some quotes from Marx, which they then use as evidence in a critique of (their reading of) Marx's theory. From the *Grundrisse*, they find a quote to show that Marx thought that capitalist progress and thus alienation was a necessary step to the full development of the individual;²⁵ and from the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* they quote Marx's well-known statement declaring that the development of the productive forces is the precondition for communism.²⁶ These kinds of

theoretical statements they link to Marx's failings in practice, in particular his support for the American Civil War. In response, we might pick out a dozen more quotes from different texts by Marx - or even from the same texts *Wildcat* draw upon - to show the importance he placed on proletarian subjectivity and self-activity; and we might link these with his important and innovative contributions to revolutionary practice, such as his support for the Silesian uprising and the Paris Commune.

But a mere selection (or even an aggregation) of quotes from Marx is not an analysis. If we think there is anything useful in Marx's work, we could try to locate his limits and contradictions in their historical context rather than in the person of Marx in abstraction.²⁷ As Debord argued, Marx's limits and contradictions reflect those of the workers' movement of the time. The economic element in Marx's theory - exemplified in writings such as *Capital* - was merely one facet of his project as a whole. When the struggle appeared to be at its most promising, the totality and hence the subjective came to the fore in Marx's theory (as in the case of the overall content and direction of the *Grundrisse*); but in the face of setbacks Marx was reduced to scientific justifications. It was also important rhetorically, of course, to foresee the inevitability of the communist revolution in the maturation of capitalism (as in *The Communist Manifesto*, for example). Understanding Marx this way allows us to critically develop his revolutionary theory in the direction of communism rather than leading us simply to dump it as a whole uncritically.²⁸

In an important sense, Marx was simply describing his observation that the development of the forces of production in the end brought communism closer through the proletarianization of the population. It is also true that at times he was an advocate of such development. But the main point is that such advocacy of capitalist progress does *not* flow from his theoretical premises in the clear cut way the primitivists would have us believe. Productivism is one trajectory from his work; this is the one taken up by the Soviet Marxists and other objectivists in their narrow, scientific reading. But, taking his project as a whole, Marx's theory also points to the active negation of capital through thoroughgoing class struggle on all fronts.

Theory, history and future

In approaches to history, there is an important difference between looking to it for a communist ideal and attempting to understand why previous communist tendencies have failed - and thus why we have more chance than the Luddites, millenarian peasants, classical workers' movement etc. But in order to go beyond these previous tendencies, we also need to interrogate the present and the future. What new developments in technology call forth new unities within the working class? Do changes to the means of communication enable those engaged in struggles to understand and act more effectively upon their global significance?

To grasp present trends, we need more than the radical anthropology offered by primitivists. We need theory that allows us to understand the historical specificity of struggles. Capitalism is the most dynamic of class societies; the proletariat is the only revolutionary class that seeks to abolish itself and all classes. There are therefore many features of the present epoch of class struggle that are lost in the simple gloss 'civilization'. In order to struggle effectively, to understand the possible directions of struggles and the limits of particular ideologies within struggles, we need to develop - not reject - the categories Marx derived to grasp the capital relation and the process of its negation.

'Primitivism' is itself a product of a particular period of capitalist history. The same setbacks that have encouraged

postmodernism among radicals in the academic realm have helped produce primitivism in circles of activists. One merely describes 'the end of history', the other actively calls for such an end; both are an inverted form of liberal idealism which reject the traditional liberal faith in capitalist progress.

However, if primitivism was, like postmodernism, simply a complacent expression by well-paid academics of the defeat of industrial class struggles then we wouldn't bother giving it space in these pages. All of us are forced to make a response to increased pollution and environmental destruction brought about by the growth of the alien-power that is capital; primitivism is, at best, an attempt to engage in struggles around these kind of issues. The alarming and compelling new appearance of the fundamental problematic of alienation, in the form of world-wide environmental destruction for profit, has encouraged new forms of resistance (particularly in the U.S.A.), and these new forms seek ideas. Marxism, identified with the old forms (of both capital and its resistance), is seen to fail in the eyes of this new wave of resisters - hence the appeal of a radical alternative, such as primitivism. But the problem of primitivism lies in a flawed diagnosis of the problem of Marxism: the essential problem in Marx and Marxism is not the belief in *progress*, but *objectivism*.²⁹ A revolutionary theory adequate to the struggle needed at the present time must therefore start with a critique of the objectivism of previous revolutionary theories.³⁰

Notes

¹ *Worker-Student Action Committees*, p. 85. Detroit: Black & Red.

² *Wildcat 17*, Spring 1994.

³ The argument is based on M. Sahlins's (1974) *Stone Age Economics* (London: Tavistock), which suggests that stone age types had 'what they wanted' in abundance.

⁴ *Against His-story*, p. 18.

⁵ If 'overpopulation' by human beings is seen as the problem, the solution might be to call for the annihilation of 99.99% of the human race to return the other 0.01% to the state of nature, a rather problematic conclusion for someone who is supposed to be on the side of the human race against Leviathan: for, after all, who will decide who should make up the privileged 0.01%?

⁶ J. Zerzan (1988). *Elements of Refusal*. Seattle: Left Bank Books.

⁷ J. Zerzan (1994). *Future Primitive and other Essays*. New York: Autonomedia.

⁸ The historians E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and Christopher Hill are prime examples of people who, because of the separation of past from present, are/were able to pursue a revolutionary historiography within academia alongside a merely reformist political practice.

⁹ Lorraine Perlman (1989). *Having Little, Being Much. A Chronicle of Fredy Perlman's Fifty Years*. Detroit: Black & Red, p. 91.

¹⁰ See *The Refusal of Work, Echanges et Mouvement* (1979).

¹¹ *Wildcat's* position too seems to be tied up with a pessimism that comes from the low point of the struggle: 'it is difficult at present to see how the New World Order of Madonna and MacDonald's [sic] contains its own negation' (*Wildcat 17*, p. 16). The all-or-nothing approach that is characteristic of varieties of ultra-leftism swings fixedly from unreasonable optimism to despair, when resistance is strong, it seems to make sense to see the proletariat as attempting always to express spontaneous revolutionary tendencies, which are hampered only by leftism and the unions. But when the resistance is defeated, there seems to be nothing left - hence the appeal of a diametrically opposite extreme position.

¹² In the same way, Rousseau was aware that his moral critique of civilization did not point to any practical solution.

¹³ 'The Triumph of Capital' (*FifthEstate*, Spring 1992).

¹⁴ Needs are created by human society, along with the means to satisfy them.' (*Wildcat 17*, p. 16)

¹⁵ Freud argued that the essence of civilization was the sublimation of (socially unacceptable) pre-existing drives. In seeing an opposition between civilization and the full and unadulterated expression of human desires, Perlman and Zerzan agree with Freud: the only difference is that Freud thought much of civilization was good. (S. Freud (1930). *Civilization and its discontents*. In A. Dickson (Ed., 1985). *Pelican Freud Library 12*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.)

¹⁶ I. I. Rubin (1972). *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*. (Trans. M. Samardzija & F. Perlman). Detroit: Black & Red. (First published 1928).

¹⁷ Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, in C. Arthur (Ed., 1974). *The German Ideology* (Student Edition). London: Lawrence & Wishart.

¹⁸ An example of the drive to expand civilization and the productive forces being located in the psychology of individuals rather than in the totality of social relations comes in *Against His-story* when Perelman attributes the conquest of primitives by Europeans to the latter's 'resentment' of those who seem to be free (p. 267).

¹⁹ See the debate in *The Refusal of Work*.

²⁰ L. Perelman *op. cit.*

²¹ The moral undertone in the critique of civilization resonates with the puritanically moral conceptions of human needs held by many eco-anarchist types, who tell their comrades that the latter 'don't really need' some of the things they desire, and who attempt to specify to them 'all the things we really need' - usually a spartan list reflecting historically-contingent notions of 'biological necessities'.

²² Descriptions based on Perry Anderson (1974), *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, (London: NLB).

²³ *Wildcat* 17, p. 11.

²⁴ 'The practical Marx' (1979) in *Elements of Refusal*. The style seems typical of Zerzan whose articles are frequently made up of a collection of quotes and empirical snippets with little analysis.

²⁵ *Wildcat* 17, p. 24.

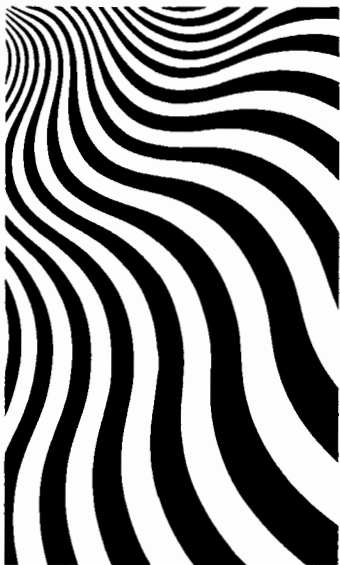
²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 9-10.

²⁷ The irony of Zerzan's pseudo-critique is that he could find legitimate reason for making a valid criticism of Marx simply by opening Volume I of *Capital* where the Luddites are dismissed as 'reactionary'. Marx contradicts himself in the 'missing sixth chapter' of the same volume ('Results of the Immediate Process of Production') by characterizing technology not as a neutral object but as the very agent of the worker's alienation and therefore a proper target of rational class hatred.

²⁸ On this point of developing Marx using Marx's method, see G. Debord (1967), *The Society of the Spectacle*, (London: Practical Paradise Publications), A. Negri (1984), *Marx beyond Marx*, (New York: Autonomedia), and F.C. Shortall (1994), *The Incomplete Marx*, (Aldershot: Avebury). It is true that the question of ecology which concerns primitivists remains neglected even in these relatively recent developments. Again, however, it is only by understanding the historical context of this neglect in Marx and others that we might develop revolutionary theory instead of merely counterposing it to an ecological approach.

²⁹ The primitivist George Bradford suggests that the only way that capital and the mega-machine will be destroyed is through the weight of their own complexity - in other words through an objective process of decline. A mere critique of 'progress' is an inadequate critique of objectivism (and hence an inadequate grasp of the subjective) and so reproduces further objectivism.

³⁰ See 'Decadence' article in this issue and *Aufheben* 2 and 3.



Aufheben

(past tense: *hob auf* ; p.p. *aufgehoben* ; noun: *Aufhebung*).

Aufheben has no English equivalent. In popular German it normally has two main meanings which are in opposition. One is negative, "to abolish", "to annul", "to cancel" etc. The other is positive, "to supersede", "to transcend". Hegel exploited this duality of meaning and used the word to describe the positive-negative action whereby a higher form of thought or nature supersedes a lower form, while at the same time 'preserving' its 'moments of truth'. The proletariat's revolutionary negation of capitalism, communism, is an instance of this positive-negative movement of supersession, as is its theoretical realisation in Marx's method of critique.

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