UR Dalla Costa

FALLING WALL BOOK REVIEW

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Suzie Fleming & Jeremy Mulford, Editors.

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Was Marx a Sociologist?

Karl Marx, *A Workers' Inquiry*, Bewick/ed, Detroit, 12p

Not long before his death, Marx drafted 100 questions to get "*exact and positive* knowledge" about the class "to whom the future belongs", workers of both sexes "in town and country". At that time, "Not a single government, whether monarchy or bourgeois republic, [had] yet ventured to undertake a serious inquiry into the position of the French working class." Today governments, universities, private foundations, political and consumer poll companies and the race and sex relations industries—in a word, the modern State—spend millions of francs, pounds, dollars, rubles, etc., spying on us all. The questionnaire is as much a part of international State control as Interpol (into which answers must often find their way). Was Marx then a sociologist?

Marx's purpose in framing the questions was to gather "material for special studies" which socialists could carry out. Only workers, he says, "can energetically apply the healing remedies for . . . social ills". But socialists can "prepare the way for social regeneration".

Sociologists have another purpose: to inform the State so it can plan us physically and spiritually.

And so Marx asks a different kind of question. How much do you work? Under what conditions and with what level of technology? With what wages? What level of centralisation has your employer reached, and where is his market for your product? Many of his questions deal with the division of labour and the hierarchy of labour powers in the factory: apprentices, skills, women, children.

Marx refers to government investigations into crises going on then—"agricultural, financial, industrial, commercial, political". These still go on. But the scope of capitalist crisis has widened since the 1880s. The working class is at the centre of every capitalist crisis increasingly as protagonist, and less as victim; increasingly outside of the factory as well as in it. That's why they spend so much time asking us questions, and why their questions touch on every area of our lives.

The technology Marx refers to has largely been superseded. The aim of the questions has not. To ask workers in home as well as factory to describe their specific situation in order to plan strategy and tactics is every bit as relevant today. Few who call themselves socialists know as much about any industry as these questions demand we know; few have the sense to ask "workers who . . . alone can describe the misfortunes from which they suffer." If socialists *internationally* who are not themselves workers asked such penetrating questions of those who are, they would have less time (and less inclination) to measure workers' consciousness, and would immeasurably increase their own.

Selma James

Power of the Written Word

John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris (eds.), *Amistad 1: Writings on Black History and Culture*, Vintage, New York, £1.00

Amistad 1 is a very exciting anthology. For a black person to read stories, essays and literary criticism by blacks, about blacks, marks a departure from all that we have experienced in formal education.

The question of why is immediate. It is answered in the introduction of *Amistad 1*. "The truth of western civilisation lies in precisely what has been previously omitted in its teachings". The truth is in fact violent, bloody and barbarous. The excitement of *Amistad 1* lies in the power of the written word at our disposal; the power to assimilate our experiences, to set them down, and by doing so make them legitimate.

'Blood of the Lamb: the Ordeal of James Baldwin' is a good place to start. It is an extensive and sympathetic assessment of Baldwin's writings. The essay updates to deal with post-Baldwin writers; writers like Ishmael Reed, who are more a product of the black movement under the leadership of Malcolm X, than under Baldwin/Martin Luther King.

'D Hexorcism of Noxon D Awful' by Reed was written before Watergate, and now reads like a prediction, sharp, irreverent and contemptuous of the

American Dream.

'The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery' by C.L.R. James deals with the living activity of the mass of people who are the head corner stone of modern industrial society. James writes about slave society as if he was there. It is a deep essay which I think warrants several readings.

'A Poet of the People' by Oliver Jackman has seemingly a different tone from the American writers. The England/West African colonial set up seems less violent, but the same current runs underneath.

For me, 'My Man Himes' rang a certain bell. It is a conversation between Chester Himes and John Williams. The latter says in the introduction, "while Lori and Lesley shopped, Himes and I talked endlessly in the room he used for a study", and later, "American male writers don't produce manly books, Himes' autobiography is that of a man".

In spite of the lone contribution by Verta Grosvenor, *Amistad 1* is a very "manly" book. In fact her piece just compounds the fact. Although the title looks promising, 'The Kitchen Crisis: a Rap', it's not about the crisis of women, but is a very short, hip piece calling for more "Soul Food". As a woman I had at last discovered the reason for a persistent feeling of dissatisfaction with the book; in yet another round of the battle, the power of the written word was at *their* disposal, not mine.

Althea Jones

Classics of the Women's Movement

Edith Hoshino Altbach (ed.), *From Feminism to Liberation*, Cambridge, Mass., £1.95

Several poems and eighteen essays, including the introduction and bibliographic notes, make up this anthology. Five of the essays appeared originally in the February 1970 issue of *Radical America*. All together they include classics of the Women's Liberation Movement, essays which everyone has heard of (and is more or less influenced by) even if she hasn't read them. Variety is suggested by articles on campaigns (Lucinda Cisler on 'Abortion Law Repeal' and Helke Sander on 'Project Company Kindergarten') and by Naomi Weisstein's 'Psychology Constructs the Female'. But the anthology's main emphasis is on the theoretical foundations of women's autonomous movement.

Three of the articles show one line of development of socialist thought on the subject of women and work. In 'Women: the Longest Revolution' (1966) Juliet Mitchell uses the structuralist tools of analysis of Althusser, a French Communist, to find women *marginal* "socially, politically, and economically" and also "in work". In 1969, after Women's Liberation had started, Margaret Benston in 'The Political Economy of Women's Liberation' countered Mitchell's view of women's marginality (and rather hopeless condition) with a new definition of women's condition, based on Mandel's definition of the proletariat. She transcends Mandel, a Belgian Trotskyist, when she says, "The wage-earner . . . 'pays for' the labor done by the mother-wife and supports the children. The wages of a man buy the labor of two people." But afterwards she turns back from this arena of struggle to advocate a "Leninist" strategy: the "industrialization" (the taking out of the home and into the factory, canteen and nursery) of women's goods and services.

Peggy Morton, writing a year later to revise both Benston and Mitchell, takes a giant step forward in 'A Woman's Work is Never Done'. She recognizes the importance of women's labour in the home; she sees the function of the "family" (if not of women) as "the maintenance of and reproduction of labour power" (what Marx defined as "the capacity to work"). Moreover her main concern is not analysis for the sake of analyzing, but for the sake of finding a strategy, a focus of struggle, an access to power for women. It may have been her failure to specify *women's* role (as opposed to "the family's") in the production of the basic commodity, labour power, that caused her strategy to be not basically different from previous writers. For although she explains the central importance of women's work in the home, she speaks of organizing only in factories and offices.

All three of these writers see the family as the crucial institution of woman's oppression (Benston and Morton would add of her exploitation also); all see the family as collapsing; all oppose the over-simple demand for the abolition of the family which was popular in some parts of the movement. 'The American Family: Decay and Rebirth' is the title of Selma James' essay, which is the earliest and longest essay in the book. Written in 1956, it came before any movement of any sort existed, in the heyday of McCarthyism when the young were called "the silent generation". Although the article seems diffuse compared with her present writings, refreshingly she begins with where women were and what they were doing and feeling, when the main public expression of their revolt was the high divorce rate. A postscript, written a decade and a half later when the author had become part of the women's movement in Britain, takes up the question of the family in this new context of heightened struggle. Through both parts runs a theme opposing all institutionalization of people and demonstrating their search for a form that will permit the full development of "freely associated individuals".

Something should be said about the difference in approach of all of these writers. It is useful to analyse the family as an institution, to see how it functions in the capitalist scheme of things, how it oppresses its members—especially women. But it is another thing to speculate about how it can be changed. Those who approach the family abstractly, as an institution separate from all others, almost inevitably fall into the trap of *planning* lives, of creating and imposing other institutions. If the family is collapsing, it is because millions of people find it an enemy to their human needs. Only as oppressed members find the power to satisfy their needs in new forms will new forms develop organically. The point is to join the struggle, to heighten it, not to speculate, plan, and then impose some new form from above. In struggle we have to start with what people are doing and feeling, not merely from abstract appraisals of institutions. Mitchell and Benston fall into planning. Morton and James escape the trap.

The two historical essays in the anthology are very different in kind. Mari Jo Buhle in 'Women and the Socialist Party, 1901-1914' has researched a period in the life of a left party which has amazingly close parallels with the present in regard to the relation of women and of an autonomous women's movement to the left. 'A Historical and Critical Essay for Black Women' by Patricia Haden, Donna Middleton, and Patricia Robinson is more a long poem in concrete and colourful language, an exhortation to revolution, with all of history and prehistory for its background.

Historical in a narrower sense are the journalistic essays of the early days of the present movement, like 'Bread and Roses' by Kathy McAfee and Myrna Wood and 'Where Are We Going?' by Marlene Dixon. They record the fierce struggle that was waged by a few women to break away from the new left in order to establish an autonomous movement. Even though that experience was not known to the mass of women who burst onto the scene in 1969 and 1970, these writers were in one sense at least founders of the movement. Reading of their battles, particularly of the terms in which they had to fight them, gives a poignant feeling. Did the new left actually oppose "psychological oppression" to "*real* oppression"? Did they really believe that women "undermine" the class struggle? It seems they did.

It is impossible to cover all aspects of an anthology with the scope and richness of this one in a few words. Despite unevenness of quality (the poems are, for instance, mostly disappointing) the book gives a perspective on the movement not only to initiates but also to those of us who have been around for a long time. It represents the deepest currents in the movement.

Priscilla Allen

If we allow ourselves to see the slave as Subject, we need not insist that he did not laugh and dance and sing. We can see through the slave narratives that when the slave laughed and danced and sang, he celebrated life and thus resisted destruction. While it is true that a Swiss traveler to the West Indies observed that "a mournful silence" pervaded the slaves at work, this does not mean that the slaves were never joyful. Indeed, the denial that the slaves did those human things that express joy, or the assertion that if they did them it was because they had been infantilized by slavery, are manifestations of the view of the slave as Victim and Object. Those who would hold this view would question: how dare they laugh and dance and sing and make us feel less sorry for them as Victims and Objects?

George Rawick, **From Sundown to Sunup**, reviewed on pp.12/13

Struggle and Strategy

Five Months of Struggle at Halewood: Ford Wage Claim 1973, Big Flame, Liverpool, 20p

In the early months of 1973 it seemed likely that the Ford workers, who two years earlier had fought a ten week strike in pursuit of their parity claim, would emerge as the central group in a struggle against the Tory Government's control of wages. These expectations were not met however, and the only real challenge came from the hospital ancillary workers and the gas workers. In attempting to explain this the Big Flame Ford group demonstrate quite convincingly that the Ford workers at Halewood were not affluent and apathetic, but rather that their militant potential had been dissipated and confused by the machinations of the shop steward committees and national officials of the union. The failure is identified as a failure of trade union organisation, and in response to this they argue for a national Big Flame organisation, built around factory (and other?) groupings which remain autonomous from the stewards committees and the union. The "five months of struggle" thereby become the planks for a general political platform for yet another left group, and for this reason alone it is important that this pamphlet be read critically. All the more so because, in spite of its good points (in particular its stress upon the need for revolutionary politics to be a democratic mass politics), it is clear that the strategies they claim to have developed from these concrete struggles make little real contribution to a theoretically grounded politics.

The central concern of the pamphlet is to examine the nature of trade unions and shop stewards committees and it is here that their analysis is deeply flawed. They cite the enforced settlement of the 1971 dispute and the failure of the shop stewards committee to give any positive lead to the spontaneous actions of the workers against speed-up in support of the view that "when Ford workers have taken the fight into their own hands they have been more likely to win." Now one could go along with this (taking care not to get too carried along by the mystical idea of everybody being involved in everything) but it clearly becomes unhelpful if it is merely left as it is, allied with the oversimple understanding of trade unionism as bureaucratic organisations standing over the working class, manipulating them in the interests of capitalism. Such talk, in fact, can be positively dangerous for it fosters a faith in a spontaneist rank and file factory politics which (however preferable to what is going on at Halewood at the moment) is still likely to be hamstrung by the limitations of trade union activity.

To be specific. Big Flame argue that the 1971 settlement, with its guarantee of two years before another pay claim, left "the shop floor . . . on its own", unable to fight against speed-up with a claim for better wages. Now in fact the Ford workers have always been on their own in this respect (the 1971 agreement—though a backward step—merely made formal what had always been understood), but this had not prevented them from fighting speed-up. Nor was the 1969-71 period at Halewood unique as Big Flame suggest. The fact is that from the very beginning of the Ford plants at Halewood the workers have fought against speed-up by many spontaneous actions similar to those that Big Flame describe as new tactics. During this period the workers at Halewood (like many others on many other occasions in many other plants during this century) *created* their shop stewards committee. It was a product of the class struggle. This fact prompts questions about the processes whereby labour movements develop; about the nature and significance of trade union consciousness within the working class; about the contradictions thrown up by such an understanding and the limitations created by its activity; about the relationship between conflicts fought out in the plants and others fought out by the working class elsewhere. About the problems involved in creating a genuinely revolutionary political strategy out of a fractured and fragmented class struggle.

To ask these questions is to understand the working class as a part of capitalist society, and to focus upon the processes whereby it becomes conscious of itself and its position within that society. And to understand this of the British working class necessitates (almost by definition) a consideration of the hold which trade union consciousness has over large and important sections of the class. This is not to equate the class with the formal institutions that it has created in the past, but rather to recognise the presence of the ideology which underpins those institutions within the rank and file itself, and to indicate how the contradictions the ideology manifests create immense crises for those institutions. (It was, after all, the miners, through their union, that brought down the Tory Government.) To appreciate this opens up the possibility of a rigorous and honest appraisal of the class consciousness of those who work at Ford and elsewhere. It is unfortunate, therefore, that these possibilities are ignored in this pamphlet, which, for all its valuable description and refreshing humour, is flawed by its overwhelmingly *sociological* interpretation of trade unionism. In this it becomes clear that Big Flame's notion of working class autonomy is at root organisational and not political.

Trade union leaders are held to support the existence of capitalism because "for them it is a question of self preservation" (p.26). They are paraded as remote, nasty, heartless men, who are out for themselves and "moving in for the kill" on the shop floor. If the world were as simple our task would be easier.

Shop stewards are treated similarly. While admitting that it is inadequate to argue that stewards are 'bent' or 'right wingers', and that it should be recognised that they sincerely hold certain views, these views are generally ignored, only mentioned as enforcement of the crude notion of the bent steward. Nowhere, for example, are we told how the workers and stewards understood Phase Two; something which is by no means self-evident and which one would think of as essential to an explanation of why a strike did not take place in breach of it. Rather than talk about *ideology*, Big Flame rely upon a crude analysis of the shop steward's 'role' to explain the behaviour of the shop steward committee. "The stewards' job," they say, "has come to be defined by procedure." To question this is not to doubt the importance of bureaucratisation, but rather to question its determinacy and to point out the dangers of following a theory that reduces people to positions on organisational charts. The fact of the matter is that shop steward committees under certain conditions break procedure; they have done so before and they will do so again. It is interesting that in coping with this eventuality Big Flame resort to the notion of "steward as steward", a notion which betrays the intense formalism of their analysis. This formalism is made clear when they typify trade unions and the Labour Party (mentioned once at the end of the pamphlet, in spite of the fact that several of the leading stewards during the "five months" were active members of that party) as "go-between organisations", a concept almost designed to obscure the crucial ideological force that these organisations continue to exert within the working class.

All this has an important bearing upon Big Flame's call for autonomous groups outside of, but making use of, the union. For there is no guarantee that such autonomy of itself will produce revolutionary politics, and it certainly isn't clear how they would differ in substance from a militant shop stewards committee. In fact, their implied reference to the shop steward committees in the engineering industry during the First World War, and to the previous militancy of the Halewood Committee, enforces the impression that they are in favour of precisely that. In their strategy for "the way forward", they state that the interests of capital are in clear conflict with those of the workers, and that the groups should "care only about their needs as workers" (they refer repeatedly to these "needs"). They should be prepared to compromise but "our aim should be to emerge from every struggle stronger than before so that one day we will be strong enough to dispense with the bosses and their society for good" (pp.43/4). These are fine words. So fine in fact that one wonders why workers haven't thought of it before. They have, of course, and found it good rhetoric but much more difficult to practise; for the fact of the matter is that it is not always clear what the 'needs' and the 'interests' of the workers (all the workers) are, and how they can best be served. It was for this reason that Marx argued for a rigorous analysis of history and a scientific socialism based upon it. It's a great pity that the authors of this pamphlet, despite the very useful material they provide—all too rare accounts of real struggles fought by workers—could not have been more moved by such a concern.

Huw Beynon

Was that Marx's view, that it was hunger and suffering that would drive the working class to revolt? . . . examine . . . the words which Marx uses: "It follows therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the laborer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse." . . . Be his payment high or low! Marx's description of actual suffering, hunger, misery, degradation in Nineteenth Century England . . . do not alter the fact that Marx was not talking only of wages or standard of living. He was also talking of the intensification of exploitation on the job, of the increased alienation and fragmentation of the worker in production, of the reduction in the workers' skills and power to control his own work process. Martin Glaberman, **Be His Payment High or Low**, reviewed on page eight.

The Power of the State

C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, Facing Reality, Detroit, 75p

It may be hard for some of us now to imagine the passion with which oppressed people everywhere once defended Russia. The capitalists had been defeated and the Russian State, first under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, and then under Stalin, was considered by workers in every country as their State and indeed their homeland. Millions of workers throughout the world gained sustenance because somewhere workers actually had power. Whatever blows you were receiving at the hands of the imperial powers, in Africa or in Brooklyn, in one country workers had no masters. Through Stalin's purges and the manipulations (and murders) of Communist Parties internationally, workers had to decide: is all this lies by the capitalist media, or has the Russian Revolution also failed, as we have always failed in the past?

It is no surprise, then, that in 1950 when this document was written the nature of the Russian State was still the central political debate in the organisations which internationally made up the Marxist movement.

By the 1930s the Russian State had murdered or doomed to forced labour camps millions of workers and peasants. But the private expropriators were still expropriated. In millions of minds unplanned private capitalist appropriation based on privately owned property had defined capitalism; State appropriation, State planning and State property had defined workers' power. Trotskyism, though it was the only organised opposition to the slaughter by the Russian State of the revolutionary population, was caught in this fixed category: private property equals capitalism and nationalised property equals workers' State. The question was then: did workers' power still exist in Russia? Which led to another and more fundamental question: what *is* workers' power? And what stands in the way of establishing it internationally?

Towards the end of the war, the Red Army swept west through Europe to meet its allies, the United States and Britain, sweeping east. Mother Russia's army paused as German capital slaughtered the Warsaw working class which had rebelled expecting the support of the army of the workers' motherland. Only when working class Warsaw was demolished did that army cross the river and engage its rival, the tattered German army. In Poland, Hungary and all the states of Eastern Europe the Red Army took power, expropriated the private expropriators, substituted itself and put the workers back to work.

Now Trotskyism had to face its dilemma. It was one thing for private property to be abolished by the self-activity of the revolutionary workers and peasants. But in these new 'workers' states' private property and self-activity were abolished at one and the same moment. And they planned. Marxism was in chaos.

This document marks the return to the Marxism of Marx after the detour of Stalinism on the one hand and Trotskyism on the other. If for no other reason, this makes it one of the most important Marxist documents of the 20th century. It attempts, and succeeds, in doing theoretically for our epoch what Lenin in *Imperialism* did for his: outline where the antagonism between capitalist development and the development of the revolutionary forces against it had reached. So powerful is the working class and so centralised is capital in response to that power that the State itself takes over the functions of whole blocs of capital in order to systematically plan the regimentation of the working class. Next to this analysis, the writings on the State by intellectuals of the left such as Ralph Miliband pale and fade. It may be useful to discuss the nature of the power elite, but not in isolation from the class struggle which determines fundamentally the structure and functions that elite must assume.

Those of us who are feminists and watch with a jaundiced eye capital internationally making plans for births, non-births and deaths can see the State in action. Time and motion study in the factory has extended in one form or another to 24 hours of the day of the whole population and to every organ of the body. Those institutions of the State which function for the purpose of control and regimentation are not necessarily officially attached to any *government*. The Rockefeller and Ford and Nuffield Foundations, the Runnymede and other Trusts, are part of the foundations of the *State*, trusted to perform those delicate functions which governments prefer not to be seen manipulating. Having said that these are the State, we have not finished describing who make up the State. *State Capitalism and World Revolution* quotes a previous document of its political tendency.

> In France and Italy any movement of the masses brings them immediately into direct conflict with their own leaders [the Communist Parties and the unions] as rulers or direct representatives of the government. The simplest of the immediate demands concerning the high cost of living or the right to strike become questions of state policy and continually pose before the workers the fundamental question of state power . . .
>
> Every crisis of production, whether resulting in increase or decrease of wages, becomes merely an opportunity of the bourgeois state, behind constitutional forms, to limit and circumscribe the most elementary rights, right to strike, etc., of the masses. Thus, the struggle for democracy, particularly in advanced countries, is no longer the struggle for the extension of popular rights. Liberalism is now the advocate, instead of the enemy of states . . . Thus, in the statified production, the constant struggle for democratic rights becomes the struggle for militant independent mass organisations by which the workers can mobilise themselves to bring pressure upon, control, renew and ultimately overthrow the trade union bureaucracy and the labour leadership on the road to the proletarian revolution.

The above could have been written yesterday. That says a great deal for a document written nearly a quarter of a century ago.

Behind the equation of workers' power and nationalised property is a system of political assumptions. One is that the revolution is a change of State power without a fundamental change in social relations, in the way we reproduce ourselves and each other. I remember at a session of the Women's Liberation Workshop history group almost three years ago hearing that after the revolution, because of the poverty of the Third World, the working class will have to go to work much as it does today. In addition to the racism that excludes the Third World from "the working class", another assumption caused a great revulsion and anger to seize me. I restrained the impulse to say: If you think we're making a revolution to go back into the factories the next day, you're out of your cotton-picking mind. I wondered if those who think this way will one day be armed to try to force the working class back into the factories and kitchens. It is clearly not enough to be against the capitalists; one must be *for* workers' power. *And workers' power begins with the power to refuse to be a worker.*

And yet this power has eluded the working class in the Third World even at the moment of revolution. The technology they have paid for with the working lives of generations is not at their disposal. The first and most devastating example of this was Russia. There is much to discuss about Lenin, the pros and cons of how he dealt with this dilemma of the working class having so little at its disposal with which to exercise power; what this document has to say about Lenin is unique. It claims that one of Lenin's major concerns was that the working class had to organise to protect itself against its own State. In the famous trade union debate in Russia in the twenties, Lenin fought Trotsky who said that since it was a workers' State, the unions should be incorporated into it. Workers' power and the workers' State were for Lenin very different matters.

Another facet of the system of assumptions of those who see workers' power in nationalised property is their own role as leaders. Here the document is at its finest.

> The first sentence of [Trotsky's] Transitional Programme states that the crisis of the revolution is the crisis of revolutionary leadership . . . Exactly the opposite is the case. It is the crisis of the self-mobilisation of the proletariat . . . this theme os orthodox Trotskyism implies that there is a competition for leadership, and that whereas the other Internationals have betrayed, the Fourth International will be honest. Exactly the contrary must be the analysis . . . Honesty and dishonesty, sincerity and betrayal imply that we shall do what they, because of 'supple spines', have failed to do. We do not propose to do what they have failed to do. We are different from them in morals because we are different from them in everything, origin, aims, purposes, strategy, tactics and ends . . .

The revolutionary crisis is not, then, that 'the Party' which will lead the working class has not been built, *but that it has*, and the working class has as yet been unable to destroy it, whether it is Communist, Social Democratic or Trotskyist (as in Ceylon). Here is the history of Spain '36, Italy '45 and '69, France '68 . . . Ceylon, Chile, Poland, Czechoslovakia . . . The list is depressingly long.

When the document says "we" it still meant 'we in the Trotskyist movement', and its total opposition to the Vanguard Party is implied but never stated. The 70 of us who left Trotskyism for good a year later were called the Johnson-Forest Tendency. Unable to make our way in the hostile climate of McCarthyism in the early fifties, Johnson-Forest passed into history. (Johnson, by the way, was James; Forest was Raya Dunayevskaya—a strange organisation in the US led by a West Indian man and a Russian woman.) The work done by this Tendency has more permanent relevance, and has laid the basis for much new politics in both the Third World and the metropolis.

With *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, the debate on the 'Russian Question' was over. The debate on the world revolution and the crisis of the self-mobilisation of the proletariat had begun anew. In any case, discussing the nature of the Russian State was always in reality a discussion of the working class where we were.

Marxism is founded on Marx's proposition that "the working class is revolutionary or it is nothing". In the US, the most advanced capitalist country, it was the confirmed view of Trotskyism and Stalinism that given these two alternatives, the working class was nothing. Revolutionary politics has a murderous logic. Once revolution *where you are* is no longer your perspective, you sink into an ideology of working class backwardness and an acceptance of capitalist brutality. If workers' power is not inevitable, capitalist power is, and we are reduced to accepting crumbs from the inevitable master's table. It takes little imagination to apply this logic to the defensiveness of the various British left sects today. Despite an offensive by the most experienced working class in the world, the working class of Britain, they see only the power of the State and are blind to the possibilities this class is carving out before their very eyes.

Selma James

Commitment to the Working Class

Martin Glaberman, *Be His Payment High or Low: The American Working Class of the Sixties*, Facing Reality, Detroit, 10p

Over the past thirty years Martin Glaberman has been steadfast in his commitment to the revolutionary potential of the American working class. Throughout this period white workers have frequently been disregarded as a radical political force, written off (often by people who should know better) as 'affluent', 'bourgeois', 'racist'. His writings have served as a corrective to the crudeness of this attack, and have persistently argued that "workers . . . are very sophisticated people [very] aware of the realities of life in the process of production."

It is good then that copies of this pamphlet have become available. It contains two pieces written by him in the mid-sixties; the title article published in *International Socialist* and the other—a critique of Aronowitz entitled 'Marxism, the Working Class and the Unions'—in *Studies on the Left*. Both of these offer very useful accounts of the struggles fought in the factories, and the second piece in particular, though short, raises some important issues about the nature of working class politics in the post war period. In this he criticises Aronowitz and others who would attempt to recreate and impose the politics of the 1930s upon the working class of the 1960s, and reminds "radical intellectuals" that their "first task . . . is not to organise workers but to understand them."

All this is for the good, but it should not blind us to the inadequacies of his analysis. His notion of trade unions as "one party states" is particularly unsatisfactory. In this connection it is quite disturbing to see how he uses bourgeois theorists like Lipset and Bell to support this argument, and how this reliance leads him into an implicit acceptance of the argument about the "two party" (but reactionary) Typographical Union. If democracy and one partyness becomes identified as *the* problem, it is easy to see how two partyness can masquerade as a solution. (There are lessons for us all here; eclecticism is the basis for bad politics.)

Too often also Glaberman is inclined to rely upon assertion rather than consistent argument, and the reader will frequently find that there is just not enough information provided in either of the pieces. For example when he claims that the unions have "turned into their opposite, from representatives of the workers to an independent power that imposes its discipline upon the

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A Great Marxist Teacher

C.L.R. James, *Modern Politics*, Bewick/ed, Detroit, 75p

The six lectures in this book were given during August 1960 in Trinidad Public Library. C.L.R. James had just ceased to be editor of *The Nation*, the paper of the People's National Movement, as his split with PNM's leader, Eric Williams, widened. The main cause of the split, as Martin Glaberman points out in his tantalisingly brief Introduction, was Williams's willingness to co-operate with American imperialism. Independence was just two years away.

The context is important. I feel sure that James's selection and depiction of historical episodes is the sharper, his exposition is the more lucid, his generalisations are the more authoritative, the historical sweep of his account of marxist politics is the more confident, for the fact that he is always addressing—either directly or indirectly—a concrete situation, one in which he and his audience are fellow participants. James's subjects are at once his native Trinidad in 1960 and the world (in particular the world from Russia westwards) over the past two thousand five hundred years. His concern is with history—historical *process*—political ideas and modern politics; and, being a Marxist marxist, each for him must be a function of the others.

The nature of the *occasion* is important, too. For the chapters of the book are *talks*, semi-extempore talks transcribed; not writings, first read out and subsequently published. It was a wise decision to leave alone the occasional passage where the speech rhythms make for slight difficulty on the printed page, and also to record "(laughter)" and "(applause)". Such moments enable the reader to recognise more readily the quality of what we are given here—thought in motion. Thought, moreover, that is having to work within the constraints of six lectures only. The result is a rigorous selectivity carried by a remarkable momentum, a habitual totalising stress.

James says at the beginning that "what we are aiming at here is the expansion of ideas" and, whether conscious or not, the ambiguity is appropriate. For James, the expansion of political understanding requires—*means*—the development of a historical sense; and in turn he has no doubt that this must mean beginning with the Greek City State, whose "direct democracy" was "the government which produced what we live on intellectually to this day": that's where the ideas with which he's concerned expanded *from*. In response to a complaint after his first lecture, he says: "I am not doing a history of philosophy . . . I am trying to get at the foundations of modern politics and I am not aware that St. Thomas Aquinas and the doctrines that he preached are essential." "Foundations" here is a complex concept; but central to it is an account of how the political possibilities open to us were discovered—an infinitely complex process of interaction between individual analysis and speculation on the one hand and spontaneous discoveries out of struggle by masses of people on the other. James knows that he can offer no more than a sketch map: "One does not say everything every time one speaks or writes. To begin with it is impossible, and there is no reason to argue further than that."

Given this, for him there is no room at all for Aquinas; but the fact that "Greek ancient democracy . . . achieved a balance between the individual and the community that was never achieved before or since" must have a key place; and so, relatedly, must Rousseau's repudiation of representative government and of party politics because they "deceived the people". There is a continual impulse in these lectures to make the past relevant—though not at the *expense* of the past, of the difference between then and now, there and here. And time and again this impulse manifests itself in a touch that immediately releases possibilities from imprisonment by received opinion and 'common sense'—as here:

> I doubt if you could take thirty or forty people today from anywhere and put them into some government, however small it might be, and ask them to run it. It is not because government is so difficult. The idea that a little municipality, as we have them all over the world today, would have more difficult and complex problems than the city of Athens is quite absurd. *It is that people have lost the habit of looking at government and one another in that way.* It isn't in their minds at all. [James's emphasis]

James is quite different from those countless historians who deal in the 'background' to ideas;

whereby the history of ideas is like a set of scenes on a stage (maybe not even a revolving one) where the characters speak their thoughts in front of a (maybe vague, maybe detailed) series of backdrops. He is concerned, rather, with the social production of ideas, of political forms. This has profound implications. It is not just that a given thinker needs to be seen as *of* his time and place ("I take St. John of Revelations for one reason: he was a colonial. He was a Jew whose country was ruled by the Romans . . . ")—though that is usually important. "My experience," says James, "limited as it has been, shows that, by and large, the great political discoveries, although heralded by great writers and in the speeches of politicians, the great political discoveries, the actual discoveries of actual policy, come as much by the instinctive actions of masses of people as by anything else . . ."

So it was with the Levellers of seventeenth century England: "You see they got it so clearly because they knew what they were fighting against. This and this and that and that had been going on and troubling them and they put up a proposition to meet each difficulty. That is how the people act when they do act. Yet the result was greater than anything you can find in Plato and Aristotle." So it was with the Paris Commune, where the workers declared the Municipal Council should be "legislative and executive at one and the same time". So it was with the formation of the Russian Soviets in 1917—whose significance Lenin was quick to recognise: "He said nobody told the Russian workers to do that; nobody told them to do that . . . Lenin recognised that this was one of those creative events that occur very rarely in history." And so it was with the Workers Councils in Hungary, however they were subsequently used for puposes of Cold War propaganda.

One of the finest achievements of the book is the lucidity with which James explains and justifies the un-utopian nature of Marxism—Marx's unwillingness to produce blueprints for the socialist future. He roots his exposition in an analysis of Rousseau, his subversiveness which says "we have no contract with any government":

> What does Rousseau recommend? And here, in my opinion, is the real greatness of his book [*The Social Contract*]. He knew what he wanted but he didn't know exactly how it could be translated into concrete political terms. He went round and round and in and out and in the end he did not succeed. But as history has gone on and you look you will see what Rousseau was driving at.

Rousseau writes of the "general will", which is something more profound than mere rule by the majority. It is a good example of James's clear-sightedness that, although Rousseau resorts to a "legislator—a man who is able from ability and sensitivity to divine the general will and express it", he rejects as "absurd" the view that Rousseau is totalitarian:

> No totalitarian has a social contract breathing down his neck which if it is not satisfied will burst the whole situation up. Rousseau is not a totalitarian; he is a revolutionary thinker, one of the greatest, and he was pointing his finger at the fundamental weaknesses of parliamentary and party government.

The movement from Rousseau, through Kant and Hegel, to Marx, in the second lecture, is one of the less satisfactory patches in the book: inevitably so—there is a limit to what even a great populariser can do in a few minutes. But the direction and momentum do not falter; and James's account of Marxism from 1848 onwards, and of Marx's notion of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in particular, is a triumph.

James's belief in the potentialities of people is as passionate and thorough-going as Marx's. And to my reading, his penetration and clarity are, as with Marx, a function of his passion. One must recognise, he says, "the objective nature of problems and what they do to people":

> . . . it is not the evil in people that creates problems but the problems that create the evil. In the course of a political struggle you throw bricks and call your opponent enemy and scoundrel and thief and rogue, but that cannot be helped because he is doing the same thing. But if you are studying politics seriously you have to see where the objective problems lie and what are the possibilities of solution. That is what I mean by some problems of method.

James is quite clear about the sense in which Marxism is scientific. With regard to "the labour theory of value, or, as it should be more correctly called, the value theory of labour", he says:

> You can argue from now until 1997; you cannot prove it. [Marx] said the value of the theory is what it produces as you develop it, and if from the basis of your theory you get facts and ideas and movements which are an approximation to society as you see it, that is the proof of your original theory, and there is no other proof.

James's presentation of both "the great progressiveness of capital" and the "barbarism" that prevails when "it is capital that rules, and it is capital that dictates the manners and morals of those who submit themselves to it" is necessarily selective, incomplete. But within the limits imposed upon him his exposition is often brilliantly lucid; and he does quite enough to give solidity to his statement: "The problem for centuries was to master nature. Not so today. The problem in the eyes of Hegel and in the eyes of Marx is the mass of accumulated wealth and scientific knowledge which man has built out of nature."

James is a great marxist teacher—the more so for the fact of his great breadth of reading and interest: the last lecture contains a string of incisive characterisations of writers and other artists of this century which (and this is a very uncommon quality) are very much of a piece with the rest of the book. Given a sense of the context and occasion that I mentioned at the beginning, *Modern Politics* is easily the best introduction to marxism—the best inducement to read Marx—that I know. Which is not to say that it is a completely satisfactory introduction for today. I'll mention three respects in which it needs to be complemented. The book is essentially a document of the late fifties—though an extremely advanced one.

The benefit of hindsight makes the inadequacy of James's brief remarks on Africa especially clear. His optimism about Ghana and Nkrumah's vision of a United States of Africa is allowed to be unqualified because he does not confront, in the manner of his confrontations elsewhere, the problems of leadership in Africa; he does not grapple—in the manner of his grappling elsewhere—with the problem of 'the party' in relation to the self-mobilisation of the people which is one of the guiding principles of the book—and indeed of all his writings. Yes, there are special, acute problems for a non-industrialised country, but the seeming scrupulousness of the following statement, in effect, wraps them up:

> The party, adapted to local conditions and basing itself upon a careful examination of both the Second and Third Internationals, is still valid for countries which are underdeveloped, that is to say, where industry and therefore the proletariat is not dominant.

Of a different kind is James's treatment of women. His analysis is profound:

> America has shown that by giving [women] legal equality and stating that they have full rights to do whatever they wish in the same way as men, does not solve the problem; it makes it worse than before. Millions of women complain that their life consists of maintaining men in industry and bearing children to work in the industry of the future. They claim that through their husbands they are subordinated to the routines and pressures of the factory as if they were employed there. The beginning of a truly satisfactory relationship in personal lives must begin with a total reorganisation of labor relations in every department of life. And by now it is obvious that this can only be done by the workers themselves.

"In every department of life": the seed is there. But it has need the Women's Movement of the last few years to bring such seeds to life—to show them for what they really are. For in the quotation above there is still an ambiguity about "workers": are housewives "workers" or not? The possibility that they are is there, in that reference to "labor relations in every department of life"; but the bias of James's remarks in this passage (and even more so in other passages) is still towards the limited notion that "workers" are exclusively factory workers, workers outside the home. Thus in extolling the Hungarian Workers Councils as "the ultimate form of modern political development", James writes:

> The new form is a close and intimate relation of the ordinary *man* in *his* labor and on the basis of *his* labor creating a social and political form over which *he* has immediate and constant control. Politics is not carried out in some other room by politicians but in the *factory* itself. [My emphases]

Now it's true that there is an ambiguity, in turn, about James's account of the Workers Councils. He writes:

> Of course there are a great number of questions that the Hungarian Revolution did not answer and could not answer. The Russians destroyed it before it had lasted a few days.

Even so, I'm left uneasy by James's statement, "that is the way society has to go". Quite how are we meant to take "way" there? I ask such

questions, not in a carping spirit, but simply to indicate the significance of the Women's Movement—the re-orientations required by its questions and demands, fourteen years later.

Thirdly, there can be no doubt that the Black marxist who got Trotsky to agree to the need for an autonomous Black Movement would have important things to say about the Black Movement of the sixties and after if he were giving six lectures on Modern Politics in Trinidad today (that is, on the highly dubious assumption that Williams would allow him such rein).

Having made one or two reservations—plus a complaint in the light of these that the "Books to Read" section at the end has not been updated—I want to end by stressing that only very rarely (despite the continual need for simplification) are James's utterances in danger of encapsulating the listener/reader in a formulation that restricts understanding. Just because these lectures are thought *in motion*, they continually facilitate independent thought. There is a prevailing coherence of vision, arguing for the potentialities of all people, and this, in conjunction with James's ability to set thought and aspiration and self-confidence on the wing, makes the book truly subversive. It isn't surprising that Williams suppressed the first edition.

Jeremy Mulford

Black Slave: Active Agent

George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community*, Greenwood, Connecticut, £1.50

The black revolts in the U.S.A. occuring from the early 1960s onwards have posed one of the most powerful revolutionary threats to international capital in modern times. The present crisis within the American State attests to the subversive actuality and potential of these communities formed and shaped in their opposition to American capital.

George Rawick's *Sundown to Sunup* opens the door on the historical origins of these communities. In doing so he places the slave as central to the development of the black community and the active agent in forming and shaping what that community is and has been. More than that—in placing the slave as central, he is posing the opposite to the tendency in American historical thought in which "the black slave himself has been virtually absent from the written history other than as the victim of white aggression or the recipient of white paternalism".

Rawick follows the tradition of Du Bois who, writing in 1935, does for the black movement in the civil war what Rawick does for the slave community. Du Bois also fought against the bourgeois tradition in American historical thought. "The treatment of the period of Reconstruction reflects small credit upon American historians as scientists. We have too often a deliberate attempt so to change the facts of history that the story will make pleasant reading for Americans . . . What was slavery in the United States? Just what did it mean to the owner and the owned? Shall we accept the conventional story of the old slave plantation and its owner's fine, aristocratic life of cultured leisure? Or shall we note slave biographies, like those of Charles Ball, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglas; the careful observations of Olmsted and the indictment of Hinten Helper?"

Like Du Bois, Rawick makes original use of the interviews given by the slaves themselves. Rawick uses interviews taken in the 1920s and 1930s, and draws from them the totality of the slave experience—from sundown to sunup—in the community and at work. But it has to be said that on the slave plantation the separation of the slave community from the place of work was not as sharp as the separation between the factory and the community today.

This point in no way undermines the totality of Rawick's approach. Exactly the opposite, because it is precisely that total approach to politics that underlines the strength and power of the black revolts in the '60s.

Here the author gives us an indication of what those interviews reveal.

. . . they reveal the day-to-day life of people, their customs, their values, their ideas, hopes, aspirations, and fears. We can derive from them a picture of slave society and social structure and of the interaction between black and white. We can see in them the outlines of the slave community, that network of communication systems whereby people were enabled to live.

The black movement in the U.S.A. faced with the counter revolutionary academic's interpretation of the slave as total victim, has tended to portray the history of slavery as the opposite, a series of herioc exploits of runaway slaves and slave rebellions, and a vacuum between them.

This approach fails to grasp the totality of the slave existence and always runs the risk of making the simplistic division between uncle Toms and revolutionaries—those who rebelled and those who didn't.

Rawick rejects both interpretations and sets out a series of possibilities open to the slaves. He then adds:"The slaves could have chosen any of these strategies. In fact they chose all of them and they all were interrelated." "And above and through all these possible approaches was the ever-present, ever self-creating and -renewing strategy of building the slave community."

The international nature of the slave experience is also comprehensively dealt with. One chapter informs on how the experience in Africa, so too the cross fertilisation of the West Indian and American experiences have enriched and contributed to the slave community in the U.S.A. With the rise of imperialism and the consequent sharpeness of the division of labour internationally the black community today has increased quantitively and qualitatively having drawn into its ranks blacks from every part of the globe. No history of the black community can now be written without the voices of blacks from the Caribbean, Africa and Puerto Rico playing a central role—Marcus Garvey, Stokely Carmichael, C.L.R. James. The seeds of that world view of history are sown in *Sundown to Sunup*.

Part II of the book almost appears to strangle the effect of Part I. Titled 'The Sociology of European and American Racism' it is an unchallengeable analysis of the development of racism in American society. However it belongs to another book which will of course tackle the issue in itself. In one sentence Rawick gives a hint of what the second part of the book ought to be devoted to. "Yet while white people often did not feel the presence of the state black people always did." To explore the relationship between the black community and the state seems to me to be the logical follow through from Part I.

Darcus Howe

More than the Vote

Mrs. Wibaut and Lily Gair Wilkinson, *Women in Rebellion, 1900: Two Views on Class, Socialism and Liberation*, Independent Labour Party, Leeds, 20p

This pamphlet contains two differing views on class, socialism and liberation. Mrs. Wibaut demands the vote as a means of achieving some power for women in the class struggle. Lily Gair Wilkinson rejects the vote and discusses not 'how organise' but 'why organise'. She examines class and sex relationships, and concludes that men and women "will gain true emancipation when they strive together for freedom".

Together the articles share a common significance. Both document the fact that in 1900 women were fighting for more than the vote. Both discuss many issues which are equally important today. For example, Mrs. Wibaut develops a coherant argument for wages for housework.

The pamphlet is a crucial contribution to an understanding of the historical dimensions of the women's movement.

Wendy Edmond

Housewives keep their families in the cheapest way; they nurse the children under the worst circumstances, and all the toiling of thousands of housewives enables the possessing classes to increase their riches, and to get the labour-power of men and children in the most profitable way.

Mrs. Wibaut, **Working Women and the Suffrage**

The Most 'Natural' Instinct of All

Edgar Moyo, *Big Mother and Little Mother in Matabeleland*,
History Workshop, Oxford, 30p

When a particular kind of relationship and way of living has been dominant for long enough, it takes on the status of being 'natural'—that is, it's regarded as in the nature of human beings to live that way. In Western society, the relationship of a mother to her biological child, and her desire to look after that child, have been assumed to be the most 'natural' relationship and instinct of all. (Second only to that is the 'natural' desire of a woman to look after a man, to be a wife as well as a mother.)

Edgar Moyo's description of his own childhood and of family life in Matabeleland, in Southern Rhodesia, totally undermines all such assumptions. Because of this, it's a really liberating experience to read this pamphlet.

> It is thought unnatural for the biological mother to show more interest in 'her' child than in those of her sisters and cousins . . . In SiNdabele you do not find a term which means 'child, my own biological child' and a different one meaning 'child, my cousin's child': the same term is used for both . . . If a mother showed more interest in her 'own' children she would be badly thought of by the family and when her turn came to be 'big mother' she would be passed by. She would be regarded as a very selfish person; the family would not like to put children into her care . . .

The 'big mother' is the female member of the family chiefly responsible for bringing up the children in the family—her own, her daughters', her sisters', her cousins', or even her friends' children. One woman is chosen to look after several children, to be the 'big' mother to those children. The 'big mother' is the key figure in the child's life. But every child has several mothers. Apart from one 'big' mother, the central figure, there are all the 'little' mothers, including the child's biological mother (unless she *happens* to be the 'big' mother) and all the adult female relatives.

> . . . children have access to more than one home; when they refer to 'home' they do not mean one special localised house, but a number of different places at all of which they can eat or sleep.

Children have the benefit of a relationship with a whole group of adults, and thus are not so dependent on one relationship, and therefore not so powerless, as in contemporary Western society.

> After a quarrel with its mother a child can announce, and carry out, his/her intention to go off to some other 'mother's' house, for one one night or longer. Children arguing with their mother can call upon another mother or senior relation to intervene . . .

A woman is not usually involved in full-time childcare in the most physically active years of her life, but at the same time doesn't miss out on relationships with children.

> . . . I know a couple in North London, of Matabele extraction, who were both students a few years ago. Mulimu (Our God in the Matopo Hills) smiled on them and they had a lovely young daughter. They at once despatched the baby back to Matabeleland where his mother was going to be her 'big' mother. This way they were able to carry on studying without any baby care problems. I remember many raised eyebrows among our English friends whenever the question of the baby's whereabouts was mentioned. I do not think the English could understand the look of contentment in those two, while knowing their baby was thousands of miles away.

Presumably part of this contentment lay in the fact that if this couple wanted to look after children at some later point in their lives, they could always get the chance at a more convenient time.

Most descriptions of other cultures, of non-Western and non-industrial ways of living, have been written by outsiders, and are therefore coloured by prejudices and assumptions of superiority. At best such writers are sympathetic outsiders, but like Moyo's English friends can't help regarding their own way of life as the norm. What is extraordinary about this pamphlet is that somebody is describing the family system in which he grew up. The pamphlet is based on Moyo's own childhood observations, and his sense of the Matabele way of life now that he is living in a different society, in England.

As such, the pamphlet doesn't deal directly with the adult experience of that family—in important ways it's written from a child's point of view. In describing different ways of relating to and caring for children from those we in the West have known, it challenges not only the nuclear family, but that 'natural' bond that even the women's movement has hardly challenged, that 'natural' bond between the biological mother and 'her' child. It helps to lay the ghost of the 'maternal instinct', which lingers on in our hidden cupboards, haunting us when we don't feel its stirrings, or mocking us when we give our lives over to its callings.

Suzie Fleming

A Little Help from our Friends

TV Handbook, SCAN, London, 20p

The *TV Handbook* sets out to "help people dealing with TV companies"—not company directors, poli-politicians, civil servants or the royal family but people. And that's exactly what it does. Anybody, particularly those engaged in collective action, should read it before they agree to help or appear on the media. It has witty pertinent cartoons, is simple and easy to read.

Its central point is crucial. You don't *have* to appear on TV at all. Too many people agree to go on without thinking. Ask yourselves first: What good will it do? What's in it for us? If you do think it's worth appearing remember that you are current affairs television's bread and butter and as such you have a lot of bargaining power. Get the best deal you can both in terms of money and the opportunity to get your case over.

The pamphlet tells you how to go about that. It will tell you, amongst other things, how much money to ask for, how producers can twist what you say and manipulate the way you say it, how studio discussions and films are put together, how to go about getting coverage and how to protest if you don't like it. Sample their advice about appearing in studio discussions.

> When you arrive at the TV station they expect you to sit quietly in the hospitality room where they will ply you with booze, while the producer reassures you and runs over the area of the discussion *he* wants to take place. Usually you will be kept apart from the other people in the discussion, who may get a different story. . . Insist on meeting the other people before hand and checking that you are in the kind of discussion you want to have. Find out the questions they are going to ask you so you have time to think out your answers. Make sure they are the right ones. Ask to see the programme script so you know how they are going to introduce the discussion—and you! Make sure you agree with it. Remember, if it's a live programme, you can always threaten not to appear at the last moment.

Fine advice. Buy a copy and make sure that other people who need to, see it.

But the pamphlet attempts more than that. It is a political tract arguing that TV is a weapon of the class struggle used against workers and against their organisations. This is true, of course, but their their analysis of how it operates is sketchy and somewhat crude. The individual cases of censorship, neglect and distortion are not well documented and may be misleading. Too much is explained by a simple conspiracy theory.

When the media lies, it seems to argue, it is because of deliberate decisions consciously made by television's mandarins. Sometimes this is the case —in Northern Ireland for example. But not usually. Distortion and misrepresentation usually result from a complex of factors. From the self censorship (often rationalised) of those producing programmes, from the insistance that contraversy must must be 'balanced', from the need to please the politicians who ultimately grant the right to broadcast, from the way television is made, from the limitations of time, money and research, from, in short, television's ideology, technology, finance and structure.

The people responsible for what is said on television are well-to-do and middle class. They may

not understand your position. Some bad reporting is as much a result of ignorance and idleness as it is of malice. As a result of the booklet's conspiratorial perspective, it fails to tell you how to ensure against *indolent* reporting. The answer is simple—do what the capitalists do. Issue concise statements to keep them informed about what you are doing and why. Make sure they understand your case, make their job easy for them. It's called 'public relations'. (You can get any statement straight into the newspaper and TV newsrooms by phoning the Press Association (Tel: 01-353-7440) who distribute all national news by Telex.) It is much easier to make them get it right in the first place than to get them to admit later that they were wrong.

The handbook tends, also, to deride conventional forms of protest. "Don't bother to ring, write letters or go to the BBC's new complaints commission". Why not? The 'festival of light' has used such techniques with some effect. If you can muster a picket on the studios, as the authors recommend, that's good. But failing that try a formal written complaint and a telephone call or two to the Director General. There are no hard and fast rules—just fight back.

Another ommission is what can be done to help those radical people within the media who, like the authors of the handbook, are trying to do what they can. Some points are obvious. Refuse to deal with any one in television except those known to be sympathetic and prepared to stand up for your point of view in the cutting rooms and programme conferences. If they get into trouble, help them. If you see a programme you approve of, phone in your approval. Records are kept of all such calls. This kind of support from 'the public' can be invaluable when fighting off the IBA, the Board of Governors and the Prime Minister! Do what Mrs. Whitehouse does and don't be detered. When she began the BBC issued a directive that no one was to talk to her, let alone have her on a programme. And oh! look at her now! Remember, we all need a little help from our friends.

The handbook is over-optimistic about the support you are likely to get from the trade unions operating inside TV. Most technicians have no say at all on programme content and produce television on a conveyor belt system. So they tend to be alienated and uninterested. The idea that you might be able to persuade a film crew to stop filming is pretty unrealistic (though you can always try). Filming tragedy one day, pap the next, disaster on the third, crews are often cynical about television and don't care about programme content.

If you want support for a complaint, or to try and get something on the TV, you *may* find people on the production staff (directors, researchers, writers) willing to help—after all, their job *is* to produce programme content. The handbook's authors ignore or are contemptuous of production staff, but it is significant that the successful pressure to black the replacement programme for the banned *World in Action* on Poulson came not from technicians , or even shop stewards but from the production members of the union concerned. And this handbook was written mainly by people in production grades.

One specific point. The handbook says that unless you sign a contract the TV company cannot transmit your contribution. Beware: there are those those who think the law is unclear. It may take a test case to decide one way or another. If you want to withdraw your material, do so in writing by recorded delivery, keep a copy of your letter and do it well before transmission.

But all that is mere criticism. The television workers responsible have given us a really useful directory of television written from the inside. What might we learn of the press, the pay board, public health departments, social services, the alkali inspectorate. . . ? Newspaper workers, workers in the civil service and social services, and all—get writing!

Sally Ridge

Continued from page eight

workers", it is important to ask what were the conditions which allowed unions to act as representatives and what others speeded their incorporation. Such a question is not abstract but central to any discussion of "the search for new social forms" whereby the working class can develop its struggle against capitalism.

These are very definite problems and it is good to note that on the evidence of his more recent writings he has gone a long way to resolve them.

Huw Beynon

Note: This pamphlet is now out of print; but we recently got hold of a number of copies, and these are available to subscribers only (one copy each)—Eds.

Free to Subscribers

United Women

During the miners' strike in 1972 a lot of publicity was put out in the press and TV about how women were affected by the strike. This was mainly about some women office workers who broke the picket lines to get to their Coal Board clerical jobs and one or two miners' wives who publicly said they were against the strike.

A women's group in London decided it would be a good idea to contact some miners' wives who supported the strike and find out what they felt about it. We made contact with some women in Betteshanger village in Kent and had a meeting where we decided to put out a leaflet with them at the miners' national demonstration to Trafalgar Square. It was a very simple leaflet informing women that miners' wives in Betteshanger were getting together and would like to hear from other women in other mining areas about what they were doing.

After that contact was made with women in several places—some wrote to us, and in other cases we went to the areas and looked for them. There was a lot of excitement about the idea of putting out a newssheet which could be used to pass information about struggles from one area to another. We just wrote down what the women said and put the different articles together, calling our paper *United Women*.

Helen Lowe

Robert Hutchison, 'How UK publishing firm exploited Tanzania', photo-copy of two-part article published in the Tanzanian *Daily News* on 26 & 27 July, 1973

Robert Hutchison was General Manager of the Tanzania Publishing House from October 1971 to February 1973. He describes the "partnership" between Macmillan and the Tanzania Government whereby the state publishing house was "dominated and largely controlled by Macmillan and was very little more than a vehicle, albeit at times a very inefficient one, to serve Macmillan's main ends i.e. money-making." In so doing, he provides a vivid and representative cameo of Western economic, technological and cultural imperialism in the Third World.

J.M.

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No.2

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Controlling the Population

Bonnie Mass, *The Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America*, Editions Latin America, Montreal, 35p

This pamphlet is an extremely well documented account of the reasons for the massive funding of United Nations population control agencies by the US Government, and of the connections between the various population and family planning groups and the ruling class. It tells you, for instance, that John D. Rockefeller was in charge of the first National Policy Panel of Population established by the UN in 1968, and demonstrates the growing financial support for population control in the Third World at the expense of other kinds of 'aid'.

> Between 1966 and 1969 AID's [the fund-giving arm of the US State Department] population control appropriations rose from $11 to 18 million, whereas agricultural and rural development funds declined by $3 million. In education and training, funds were reduced by almost $6 million and health programs were cut by $49 million . . .

Talking of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Bonnie Mass notes that–

> . . . to-day its trustees include such men as Eugene E. Black (director of Chase Manhattan Bank and the former head of the World Bank) . . . George Kennan (a leading cold war theoretician), and former Senator Ernest Gruening (who as governor of Puerto Rico in 1937 was responsible for the infamous Ponce Massacre).

At a time when the 'ecological lobby' has settled on the need to control population to preserve the world's natural resources and 'feed' the Third World, the pamphlet exposes what population control actually amounts to, and what bearing it actually has on poverty and the use of resources.

> The US, with less than six per cent of the world's population, already consumes some fifty five per cent of the world's available raw materials.

> . . . medical missionaries had undertaken mass insertions of the IUD in the underpopulated area along the Belem-Brasilia highway. This area, with about one person per square mile, is one of the largest well-watered regions in the world that has not yet been heavily settled. Inquiries by the Brazilian parliament disclosed that American investors and ranchers had been buying up enormous tracts of land in this potentially productive agricultural region.

This kind of information is very important, especially for women. It is women internationally who have to deal with the population controllers –it is through and against the female body that they try to perpetrate their controls. Internationally, the question of the size of population, and what *kind* of population, has always been a matter of State policy, and has always intimately affected women who, after all, produce or don't produce the population. At different times, in different places, according to the needs of the State, different policies have been and are being pursued. In Britain, when the call-up for the Boer War revealed that the working class was physically unfit, there were fears for the 'degeneration of the race', which led to a cult of motherhood and the first State welfare provisions for mothers and children. The introduction of the Family Allowance was finally achieved because the government of the day hoped it would bump up the birth rate and provide a growing labour force.

Of course all these measures helped women in Britain, in the sense that their babies no longer died of contaminated milk and their children no longer got rickets. And these measures have always been a response, too, to pressure from women for improved conditions. The same is true of the development of contraceptives and the availability of abortion. While many of those promoting these facilities are doing so in the interests of capitalist planning, nevertheless the development of contraception and abortion technology is of vital importance to all women. Mass tends to assume that if women in the Third World had better wages, housing, food, education and opportunities, they wouldn't want contraception–but I doubt if any woman would *choose* to bear a child every year. However, Mass's main focus is the question of whom population control benefits, and what the motives are of those who try to enforce this control.

In Puerto Rico, in 1965, 34% of all women of child-bearing age had been sterilised. A few months ago, the *Sunday Times* reported that in Britain "Women with unwanted pregnancies are being pressured into sterilisation by doctors who will only do a National Health Service abortion if the operation includes sterilisation. In some cases, the doctors openly make sterilisation a condition of abortion . . . more than a third of the abortion operations in NHS hospitals include sterilisation."

* * * * * * *

Nowhere in the world do women have the right to choose whether or not to have children. For that right to be a reality, not only must free, safe contraception and abortion be universally available. All women need, as well, the money to be able to support their children; and we need to be able to have children without that meaning that we must sacrifice our lives to look after them single-handed, as a privatised activity. In other words, we want a *genuine* choice as to whether to have or not have children.

This broader sense of what it means to have the 'right to choose' is unfortunately lacking in the pamphlet. Bonnie Mass assumes that in the 'socialist' countries where "1/3 of the world's population exist", population *control* has vanished and women have the right to determine their own fertility. This is not so. In those 'socialist' countries where there are fears of a diminishing population, the State's policies vary between cash incentives for having children (Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia) and the banning of abortion and limiting of contraception (in Rumania). (See the *Guardian*, 8 June, 1973.) On the other hand, as Mass puts it, in China "Planned parenthood and marriage are factors for the promotion of a socialist society" and late marriage is encouraged—presumably because the labour force is already large enough.

Bonnie Mass sticks mainly to Latin America, and the way in which population control in Latin America is being used to further the interests of US capital. But once you have proof of how and why the State is controlling population in one part of the world, you can make sense of what is going on elsewhere. The pamphlet demolishes the arguments for population control by showing quite clearly that it is about controlling the population, and is the opposite of us having control of our own bodies and lives.

Suzie Fleming

Wifely Duties

Judy Syfers, *Why I Want a Wife*,
KNOW, Pittsburg, free to subscribers

This short piece by Judy Syfers is a bitterly humourous fantasy about having a wife rather than being one. Judy reverses the sex-roles (though she is unable to refer to a wife as 'he' for obvious reasons) and imagines herself pursuing a career, having first married a wife.

By putting herself in the place of someone who doesn't perform any of the 'wifely' functions she is able to catalogue the vast number of tasks for which her imaginary wife would need to be responsible. The revelation is that a wife's job comprises not only an unlimited expenditure of manual, mental and organisational energy, but that it also requires constant emotional and sexual service to others—because they can't live without that either. To be a 'wife' implies a whole personality structure, conditioned from birth. Not surprising, then, that 'wife' is in reality synonymous with 'woman' in our society.

Sheila Mullen

Nowhere on earth are women free now, although in some places things are marginally better. What we want we will have to invent ourselves. We must have the strength of our anger to know what we know. No more arguments about shutting up for the greater good should make us ashamed of fighting for our freedom. Ever since private property was invented, we have been waiting for freedom. That passive waiting is supposed to characterize our sex, and if we wait for the males we know to give up control, our great granddaughters will get plenty of practice in waiting too . . . There is much anger here at movement men, but I know they have been warped and programmed by the same society that has damn near crippled us. My anger is because they have created in the movement a microcosm of that oppression and are proud of it. . . Sisters, what we do, we have to do together, and we will see about them.

Marge Piercy, **The Grand Coolie Damn**,
reviewed on page 12

Tanzanian Guidelines

TANU, *The Arusha Declaration*, Third World First, London, 10p
TANU, *Tanzania: Party Guidelines*, Liberation Support Movement, Richmond, Canada, 12p

Both the Arusha Declaration and the Guidelines are documents of the Tanganyika African National Union, the most remarkable political party anywhere, not only in Africa. In addition the name of Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, the country that TANU governs, should provoke great interest.

The documents' significance lies in their attempt to face not the abstraction, 'problems of the Third World', but the urgent and concrete problems of people's power in the Third World. In the Arusha Declaration of 1967, the Arusha Resolution dictates the political and organizational principles on which the party is to be run. Point A deals with The Leadership. And number one in Point A says:

> Every TANU or Government leader must be either a Peasant or a Worker, and should in no way be associated with the practices of Capitalism or Feudalism.

That is a remarkable statement. If generally applied some 90% of those who are leaders in political parties today, in and out of government, would have to go out. That is the principle on which this party has been built. To be a political leader, you cannot be practising capitalism or running a feudal estate. You have to be either a peasant or a worker.

Some time later, Nyerere presented to the party a report of ten years of work, from 1961 to 1971. On page 29 is as remarkable a statement as I have read since the death of Lenin. He says:

> . . . although great advances have been made since 1967 in many respects there is one field in which experience has shown that more emphasis is required. We have gradually realised that public ownership of enterprises is not enough.

He continues:

> These enterprises may be—and in most cases in Tanzania have been—managed well, and with the intention of serving the interest of the Tanzanian people.

That seems good enough. You take it away from the foreign owners, you put Tanzanian people there, and they are running it well and in the interests of the Tanzanian people. And then comes the highly penetrating and significant statement:

> But they are still being managed for the people, and only by them in the sense that the decisions are taken by Tanzanians appointed by, and responsible to, an elected government.

You take it from the capitalists, foreign or local. You put in Tanzanians instead who are representatives of the people. They run it. They run it well. They run it in the interests of the Tanzanian people. Yet the workers are dissatisfied. They are dissatisfied because *they* are not really managing. It is being managed *for* the people. Some good people are managing but still *the people* are not managing. He goes on to say,

> Consequently the people who are not in management position in the public corporation still do not feel that these corporations are theirs. Even the workers in the organisation frequently feel that they are working for 'them' and not for themselves.

Nyerere is able to understand that it is not enough that workers are being managed, even though by Tanzanians, and that they are not satisfied. This is something that is taking place throughout the world. Workers and peasants are no longer satisfied to be managed. The workers in the government corporations still feel there is a distinction between 'them' (those fellows who are up there) and themselves. And that is what we have to look at when we come to the Guidelines.

Nyerere wrote TANU Guidelines to deal with this situation in the only way he could. In section 15 he writes:

> There must be a deliberate effort to build equality between the leaders and those they lead. For a Tanzanian leader it must be forbidden to be arrogant, extravagant, contemptuous and oppressive. The Tanzanian leader has to be a person who respects people, scorns ostentation and who is not a tyrant.

He should epitomise heroism, bravery, and be a champion of justice and equality.

Some workers, whether or not they can read, take section 15 into the factory, point to various leaders and say, "He is arrogant" or "He is extravagant" or "He is contemptuous" or "He does not respect the people". "We want him out". There are cases where workers using section 15 have put out certain of the leaders. Nyerere writes this public document and workers are using it. To arm workers with words against their managers is unusual anywhere in the world, not only in Africa. Why does Nyerere do it? We can only sketch the reasons here.

The economy of Tanzania in isolation is not developed enough to be the basis of real workers' power. Nyerere is tackling the problem of how to use the power that workers and peasants do have to stave off the bureaucratic and totalitarian fate which has befallen other Third World countries whose technology is underdeveloped. It is this that makes the Guidelines and indeed everything that is coming out of Tanzania vital and exciting.

C.L.R. James

The Underdevelopment of Africa

Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Bogle-L'Overture, London, 65p

The purpose of the book is to explore, with the aid of historical materialism, the nature and origins of Africa's present-day socio-economic problems. Rodney uses his deep knowledge of Africa's past to trace in detail the process through which the forms and structures of underdevelopment were constructed in the continent.

Most of historical writing on Africa has tended either to simplistically glorify the pre-colonial period without presenting much substantial data—highlighting as usual well-known chiefs and kings and completely forgetting the social basis of the phenomena highlighted—or to naively dismiss the continent as being barbaric and dark. Neither tendency has helped us to understand the continent.

Rodney's book is therefore novel in this respect, for it delves deep into the modes of production and their inter-action and transformation from about the thirteenth century till the beginning of colonial rule. In the process, the book throws insight into many phenomena about the continent that have remained unclear for many centuries, and also explodes many myths that are prevalent in bourgeois historicism. Because her process of integration into the development of Western capitalism involved a crucial phase of slavery, many traces of Africa's socio-economic life have been decimated and her history is as a result comparatively less well-known than that of other areas of the underdeveloped world—Asia and Latin America. Nevertheless, Rodney has collected a vast amount of data to depict a coherent picture of Africa's development prior to colonial rule.

With this book, it now becomes possible to assess correctly the level reached by the productive forces in different parts of Africa—and there is ample evidence to show, for instance, that in some areas that level was higher than that reached in many parts of Europe at the same time—as well as the direction and tempo of socio-economic developments in Africa prior to Europe's intervention. This, then, is neither a glorification nor a vilification of Africa's past, but a scientific examination of historical reality written by an African (by descent) who is capable of appreciating Africa's rich technological and cultural history while also recognising its defects.

The second area on which Rodney throws important light is the contribution which Africa made to the progress achieved in Europe and North America, and the contribution which these latter made to Africa's lack of progress. The scientific explanation of underdevelopment—'the development of underdevelopment'—has only recently begun to be theoretically refined. But empirical data to underscore the theoretical postulation have often been lacking—particularly as far as Africa is concerned. Rodney shows the precise ways in which Africa's contact with European capitalism, and Africa's place in the international division of labour, has meant that Africa was kept as a producer of raw materials. The labour force had to supply the unskilled manual labour necessary to provide raw materials for the capitalist economies at minimum cost to the capitalists.

continued on next page, bottom of column 1

Feminist Awakening

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, Avon Books, New York, 50p

Kate Chopin's novel caused a storm when it was first published in 1899. It was banned and she was hounded to an early death in 1904. These facts may reflect on the experience of her heroine in *The Awakening*; Edna Pontellier, a young wife and mother, is forced to choose between a return to spiritual slavery and death.

Set in the Creole society of the years following the American Civil War, the story is told with a simple and graceful economy. A young woman with a profound and intense capacity for relating to her natural and social environment determines to give full scope to her artistic and emotional life. Her awakening to human status is a subtly-drawn process; her determination to follow her own needs grows inexorably as she discovers them. She reaches a point where she refuses to *belong* to anyone but herself. Even her children, the little ones whose claim is hardest to put off, she must resist. As she tells a woman friend, "I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself." Casting off her husband's claim is her first step, difficult in its own way; nor is she to be trapped by her lover, though her love for him had played a role in her awakening. She is able to tell him at a crucial moment, "You have been a very, very foolish boy, wasting your time dreaming of impossible things when you speak of Mr. Pontellier setting me free! I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose. If he were to say, 'Here, Robert, take her and be happy, she is yours,' I should laugh at you both."

Inevitably she must discover other forces, biological and social, that hem round her search for identity and self-expression. But she experiences a glory of independence before her explorations show her the limits as well as the possibilities of her struggles, before the moment of her ultimate choice.

Chopin wrote two other novels; one she destroyed in manuscript and the other was published posthumously. Her fame as a 'regionalist' rested on her short stories about Creole life. Many of them carry themes related to *The Awakening*. And, surprisingly considering the time of their composition, their view of love, marriage and sexuality is unsentimental and frank. Moreover, what is exceptional in any literature, they are frank and unsentimental from a woman's point of view. For example, one records simply and sensuously an instance of adulterous passion that harms nobody. Another, with an an ironic title, tells of a newly-made widow who is discovering the joys of independence when she is told that her husband is actually still alive. She dies of a heart attack brought on by disappointment, but her neighbours take the cause to be excess of joy.

If to write honestly from a woman's point of view is to be a feminist, then Kate Chopin was a feminist and *The Awakening* contains her fullest development of feminist themes. The novel still has a shock effect and revolutionary relevance, because Edna refuses to resolve a woman's conflict between the role of artist and the role of mother by denying her sexuality; she sees the unity of her full expression as human being and as artist. Despite advances in two regards, the social one of the right to divorce and the technological one of contraception, any woman today faces basically the same dilemma that Edna faced. Male critics are still ganging up on Edna for her "neglect of her duties"; they are still shocked by her lack of romantic illusions about men, as they were at the turn of the century. Seventy-five years later, *The Awakening* still causes controversy. And that is only one of the grounds on which this short novel can be warmly recommended.

Priscilla Allen

continued from bottom of previous page

Now that Rodney has demonstrated how Africa's underdevelopment came about, it remains for other Africans to show in detail how that underdevelopment is maintained at present with the new phase of neo-colonialism and—most important of all—to organise for its eradication.

Henry Mapolu

Canadian Newsletter

The Newsletter, No. 4, Toronto, 35p

The Newsletter is produced by a loose grouping of people in Canada called the 'New Tendency', whose whose history is briefly described in the third issue of *The Newsletter*.

> In December [1972] individuals met in Toronto to discuss the formation of *The Newsletter*. . . Although the basis of agreement was not great, in general most people and in some instances groups were attempting to come to grips with and to a critique of the dichotomy that has been emphasised in the orthodox communist movement between party and class. (No.3, p.10)

They were critical of the 'vanguard party' and based themselves on the position that the working class can organise itself without a 'vanguard' party to 'lead' it.

> Some people leaned heavily on the eruptions of the class struggle in France and Italy and the theoretical developments that have occurred in those countries. Others were strongly influenced by the theoretical work of C.L.R. James who criticized the vanguard party on the basis of capitalist development, mainly the development of state capitalism. There were other directions but these seem to be the major ones. (No.3, pp.10/11)

. . . I can go through fifty cigarettes a day easy. That's normal for the women here. I never bother buying myself things. Before I used to buy myself perfume, make-up . . . Not now. There's things much more important than dressing yourself up. You know things now that you didn't know before. I didn't even know what way the corporation was run, and that wasn't long ago. That was all crammed into a couple of years.

Irish Women Speak, reviewed on page 9

The name they have given the development of this perspective is 'workers' autonomy' (a perspective that has also been developed in Italy); what workers' autonomy means is being worked out by the discussions and activity reflected in *The Newsletter*, but it is based on the premise that the working class is organising without and against the traditional institutions that were supposed to 'lead' the class (parties and trade unions). Further than that, they recognise that different sections of the class are increasingly developing struggles based on the autonomous *needs of each of those sections of the class* (women, blacks, students and school children etc.) and that the development of these autonomous struggles is the only way to develop a unity based on class *needs*, rather than on abstractions about the 'general' class struggle and abstract appeals for 'unity'. They make clear that this is a fact that they have recognised as a result of the struggle of the women's movement to organise autonomously, and in particular from those sections of the women's movement who have seen women's autonomous struggle as integral to the class struggle.

This position implies not only a definitie attitude to 'the party', which has always claimed to embody the 'generalised interests' of the class, but also towards the unions.

> Trade unions today are the expression not of the unity of the working class, but of its *division*: the division between unionized and non-unionized, between the employed and the unemployed, between the skilled and unskilled, between men and women, between immigrant and Canadian workers. The process of autonomous struggle by different sectors of the class, often located in the same workplace and 'members' of the same union, cannot look to the union as a main instrument of struggle.*There certainly may be instances when the union can be an instrument for developing autonomous struggle, but we have to make a break with the traditional left approach to the union as the main instrument of workers' struggles, as well as with the traditional left's methods of working in unions (union caucuses, using the union as a 'platform' for 'socialist propaganda' etc.). (No. 2, p.46)

Within this general framework however, the group is quite diverse—for instance some of the women support the wages for housework perspective, while others don't.

What it means to develop these politics in concrete practical situations is a concern which predominates in *The Newsletter*. Most of the articles are descriptions of struggles that people in the New Tendency have been involved in. These descriptions are quite different from most writing of this kind, because the aim of the articles is not to recruit to a group by glorifying the activity and 'successes' of its members, but to exchange information and experiences, and to test the validity of the politics and develop them in the light of practical experience.

A good example of this is a question which is really a recurring theme in the current issue, No. 4. This is the question of how and if women and men can work together in the same group. There are three articles in this issue about the car industry, and the involvement of people working in and around car factories in the struggles that have been going on there. Two of the articles are from Canada (Windsor and Toronto) and one from the London Big Flame Ford Group, to whom the New Tendency people are sympathetic. In each case a group of women and men from outside the car plants was involved, and the two articles from Canada are both written jointly by a woman and a man. In Windsor, the authors were members of a group called 'Workers' Unity', which was working round the Chrysler factory. (This group no longer exists, but some of its ex-members are now involved in the New Tendency.)

> . . . Another problem. . . was the lack of clarity on the question of the various sectors of the class and their inter-relations. There is not any question about the fact that our position considered the industrial sector as the primary one. One reason for this, of course, arises naturally from the overwhelming impact of industrial labour on every facet of life in Windsor. One sees that everything is affected by this sector of the class, and without much reflection, assumes that all other sectors must define themselves in relation to it. Our tendency was to discuss the situation in other sectors (say the office workers at Chrysler) only in terms of how they affected or did not affect industrial workers.
>
> The problems of this approach were most glaring in the women's group. We came together in the first place as 'wives of W.U.' [Workers Unity]—the basis of our group being that our men were auto workers . . . [our] discussions were usually exciting and were often the occasion for that kind of enthusiasm which normally leads women to take, often for the first time, some sort of [collective] action. It was here however that we became trapped, for our action was Workers Unity, the articles for the paper and the attempt to involve other wives. By seeing our men's struggle as a gauge for our own we tended to stultify wider possibilities for action and movement that grew spontaneously from our own autonomous needs as women. (No. 4, p.13)

The article from Toronto takes up the same question:

> Throughout the intervention, the role of women in the group was a continual tension . . . There was a contradiction between our perspective theoretically, which stressed the importance of organizing women around thei wageless position within capital and our practice of organizing men working in factories . . There were women working at Ford in the of fices and the cafeteria. The struggle there was

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All the books and pamphlets reviewed are available by mail order from the Falling Wall Book Service. For details, see page 16 and inside back cover.

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* The strike of Asian workers at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester is an obvious example of this fact. (See *Race Today*, July and August 1974)

never generalized to include them. There was no opporunity for women in the group to work from a feminist perspective with other women through the auto intervention.

> After much discussion and disappointment this has led to a re-organization of the priorities of the women in the group. The auto intervention is now at best a secondary priority. We want to work directly with women around issues that affect them rather than through support for a male-orientated intervention. (No. 4, pp. 40/41)

The women have since formed a women's collective and though they continue to meet with the men in the tendency for discussion on the perpective of workers' autonomy, "All of the women see the developing women's collective as decisive and as a place to develop our understanding of Marxist feminist politics and to begin to put those into practice."

The London article, which is written by a man alone, is the only one of the three which fails to engage with the question of women's autonomous organisation. This may be because the author's concern is with the development of the group *per se*, so he tends to evaluate what's going on in terms of the progress of the group. For instance, in discussing the anger of the workers at management's layoffs he writes:

> It's that anger which has now expressed itself in our leaflets and on the shop floor in the demand 40 HOURS PAY—WORK OR NO NO WORK, a demand which . . . expressed the politics of the 'guaranteed income' which *we never expected we would be able to introduce into the factory so early in our work there*. [my emphasis] (No. 4, p.30)

apparently without any sense that such a demand could have come from the shop floor without the intervention of the group.

The article about the Workers' Unity group in Windsor sees the main weakness in the way the group operated as their tendency to see themselves as leadership, as people who would *tell* the workers what to think:

> We were vanguardist in our approach to the questions of the development of theory and organization in the working class itself. This we consider was the major error of Workers' Unity. . . we saw our function. . . as Marxists . . . as that of bringing theory *to* or developing theory *for* the working class. . . As a result of this perspective our objective stance in relation to the working class was one of moralism—an attitude of 'nagging the workers'. Rather than recognizing, appreciating and discussing the advances that workers themselves were making, we took it upon ourselves to tell them how to organize and what to do. Almost every article we wrote ends on this note: urging rank and file unity, militancy etc. (No. 4, pp.11/12)

But people in the New Tendency are not frightened of intervention. They see their own theory and experience as a contribution to a given struggle.

The past issues of *The Newsletter* have been particularly useful because of the juxtaposition of the experiences of women and men made possible by having articles from both sectors alongside one another. For instance, in the second issue, there was a long article by two nursing aides about organising in nursing homes, in a situation where there was no union, and the question was whether or not to *bring in* a union as a means of organising. In contrast, the current *Newsletter* describes how the men railwayworkers in Vancouver have been organising by *leaving* their union. What is clear from this is what completely different directions women and men can come from when they discuss the unions; for women, in many situations, the question is not how to deal with a union that's already there, but whether to get involved with a union at all, or to try and organise in a different way from the start.

It isn't clear now what the formation of autonomous women's groups will mean in terms of *The Newsletter*, whether the women will continue to write for it, and what will happen in the New Tendency if the women develop their own groups. But *The Newsletter* so far has been a really useful, exciting and informative publication, and the current issue is a good example.

Suzie Fleming

Note: The Book Service has copies of the current issue, No. 4, in stock. We are sorry not to be able to stock any of the previous issues, but they're sold out. The next issue should be out at the end of the summer. If after reading *Newsletter* No. 4 people would like the Book Service to order copies of the next issue for them, they should place an order as soon as possible, so we can make an advance order.

Irish Women Speak

Irish Women Speak, New York, 35p

> *"There'd be nothing in Belfast or the North without the women."*

Though women do occasionally appear in the radical literature and films that deal with Northern Ireland, few people have attempted to look at the situation from the point of view of women in the way this pamphlet does. To do so, we are told, would be a diversion from the 'real' issues of the war. The cross-section of women interviewed here, representing many different political views, describe the reality of life in a British colony at war and show that the war and their daily struggle are one and the same thing.

Their detailed accounts of everyday life in the shadow of the army are the other side of the coin that never gets mentioned in all the distorted news coverage of Northern Ireland. Housewives describe how the troops really behave, terrorizing, bullying, killing, but also for example destroying TV aerials for a whole block of flats or baiting women and children about their dead relatives, singing "where's your mama gone". They describe how women are involved in defending their communities with arms and petrol bombs when necessary, how women support the men interned and the men on the run, how women are responsible for rent strikes and protest marches. They describe their own work for women's protest groups or their training and experiences inside the IRA or UDA.

Since the pamphlet was completed in 1972, the visible involvement of women has been increasing. Many more women have been interned. The Price sisters are only two of the many women interned or in prison. In the North women are forced to confront the British army every day—they are always present on the housing estates as an army of occupation.

Though the women say it is difficult for Protestant and Catholic women to organise together owing to sectarian intimidation, they express little hostility for each other. (The Catholic community supported the recent Protestant organised general strike—for once it was clear they had a common enemy.)

Whatever the women's ideas for the kind of peace they would like to see and the methods of achieving it, they are all involved in the struggle. This has meant a change in their attitudes towards their traditional role as women and towards the Church. Though some of the women say they just want to look after their homes and families in peace as they did before 1968, many of them, especially the younger women, have something quite different in mind; they have been through too much to go back to old ways and old attitudes.

Esther Ronay

Unequal Pay

David Beecham, *Rates for the Job 1974*, Pluto Press, London, 5p

In February of this year, if you were working as a crane driver in Brentwood, for Firestone, you'd be getting paid £44.33 for 40 hours; you'd be getting £19 less if you did the same job for Black-Clawson in Newport, and less still if you ended up working as a 'food process worker' for Walls at Willesden where the rate was £21.46. Doing the *same* work in the *same* locality brings no guarantee of equal—or even similar—payment either. In Bristol, Imperial Tobacco were paying copy typists over £4 more than were Cadbury Schweppes, who were also demanding a longer week.

The people who are going to be able to *use* information like this know about unequal payment; the merit of a pamphlet like *Rates for the Job* is that it adds precision to a knowledge which is all too often dismissed out of hand by Personnel Officers and wage negotiators up and down the country. The pamphlet contains information on wage rates extracted from wage agreements made with fifty different firms (information that is, incidentally, quite easily collected, and it is a further indictment upon the union bureaucracies that they, through their various research departments, have yet to produce anything to compare with Beecham's pamphlet). Such information is notoriously difficult to present in a meaningful way: tables need to be persevered with and frowned at,

and very few people are likely to be interested in a pamphlet full of them. Beecham's novel solution to this problem is to replace the table with the map. And it works. The maps are good and easy sources of reference, and they make *Rates for the Job* an eminently *useful* pamphlet.

But there are inadequacies. While the span of Beecham's information is extensive, there are some quite surprising omissions (e.g the Ford rates on the motor industry map), and it's rather one dimensional. Given his reliance upon formal wage agreements, Beecham pays little attention, for example, to the important issues of sexual and racial discrimination. Hopefully the replies to the questionnaire reproduced at the end of the pamphlet will provide the basis for a more extensive second edition.

On the subject of wage rates Marx was quite clear: when it comes to the distribution of the product between labour and capital it is the size of labour's spoon and not the size of the bowl that is important. Pamphlets like this one have an important, if limited, role to play in the fashioning of bigger spoons within the working class.

Huw Beynon

Note: The copies we have available are remaindered copies of the first edition. A second edition is being prepared.

... because of the super-profits created by non-European peoples ever since slavery, the net flow was from colony to metropole. What was called 'profits' in one year came back as 'capital' the next. Even progressive writers have created a wrong impression by speaking about capital 'exports' from Europe to Africa and about the role of 'foreign' capital. What was foreign about the capital in colonial Africa was its ownership not its initial source.

Walter Rodney, **How Europe Underdeveloped Africa**, reviewed on page 4

"Which buildings we will build"

Anne Summers et al., *The Little Green Book: The Facts on Green Bans*, New South Wales, Australia, free to subscribers

In January 1972 Jack Monday, ex-secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Builders' Labourers' Federation, wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> Though we want all our members employed, we will not become robots directed by the developers–builders who value the dollar at the expense of the environment. More and more we are going to determine which buildings we will build.

This was a year after the New South Wales Builders' Labourers' Federation had started to apply selective bans on demolition and construction in the Sydney area. Responding to requests from groups of residents, the BLF has used bans to protect trees and parks (hence "Green"), theatres and pubs; and, most important and trouble-making, to stop commercial 'development' of the old working class residential areas on valuable city-centre land, while the people themselves work out their own plans in their own interests.

When the booklet was written last year, the bans had "about $3,000 million [£2,000m] worth of development tied up". Clearly the BLF are hugely unpopular with everybody, except the people. In an extraordinary manner they have illuminated the power of State government, developers, police, courts, newspapers, and the 'left-wing' national leadership of the BLF as minority power, *over* the people most of them claim to represent. But they have done it in a way that has also shown working people the power they *already* have if workers in industry can find ways of uniting in political practice with their own people in the home and community.

The booklet, produced by BLF members and resident-activists, describes the development of the campaign, the nature of the opposition (naming names and sums), and the various bans in detail.

Gavin Edwards

"Self management? No, self defence!"

Lip: How French Workers are Fighting the Sack, RSM Publications, Bristol, 6p

If the boss sacks you, it is a tragedy and a defeat if you aren't able to pick up a job that is at least as good or, better, get money from the State via the dole or Social Security. If the boss threatens you with the sack and you have choices, you may not wait for his decision; you make your own and can quit. But if there are no choices for you, or even sometimes when there are, the point is to refuse to let the boss decide if, when, where and under what conditions you are going to work. That is what the Lip workers did. They seized the Lip watch factory in the Spring of '73, because it was to be dismantled and many of the workers made redundant, and produced watches and sold them at cost.

To take over a factory and use it and the congealed labour it contains as a bargaining power, where appropriate, is an excellent and effective tactic. From the Luddites on (and probably before) workers have used the appropriation and destruction of capital which has exploited them as a bargaining lever. In the last years this tactic has been seized on by the left, parliamentary and anti-parliamentary, as their blueprint for the new society. Take over the factory, manage it, and of course work in it. The UCS work-in seemed to breathe life into an ideal. The Lip workers didn't confuse their tactic with their goal. *"Autogestion? Non, autodefense!"* Self management? No, self defence! When the police tried to get them out, the struggle moved beyond self management to a fight against the State which had come to see that the workers returned to what capital had originally planned for them.

But the workers were prepared for this fight because they had extended the tactic of takeover and self management to selling to the local consumer—who is also of course the local producer. The entire working class in that area was mobilised on the one side, united as producers/consumers, and as producers dependent for their jobs on Lip's production. On the other side was the State defending capitalist planning and property. Lip of course course had the advantage over UCS in that what they were producing was watches and not ships, consumer rather than capital goods, which they could sell to other workers.

They were finally defeated. The only way they could have won was for their struggle to have spread: other workers challenging not only redundancies but capital's power to plan our existence, depriving us of work or *insisting that we work*, depending on its particular needs at any moment. Let us bury the myth that fighting redundancies and fighting for pay rises are qualitatively different in their objective. They are different in that in one case the capitalist needs you and in the other he doesn't. But your needs in both cases are for the money, not for the work.

When, as at Lip, the working class challenges the power of capital to decide whether you have access to money through work it is assumed that it is work, and not money, that we are fighting for. It is precisely in this situation of weakness, when we are expendable, that workers are more inclined to take more drastic actions, such as taking over the factories. This is by no means the only possibility; we could take over the dole offices in which case the tactic would unambiguously express the goal (but it might not be as effective in achieving the goal). During the UCS work-in this was actually happening in the same city, but was barely mentioned. Those advocates of self management or workers control who impose their analysis on working class struggle will ignore (or condemn) that tactic because otherwise they would have to acknowledge its goal.

This pamphlet gives a good many useful facts about the Lip struggle, its imagination and inventiveness, but it is difficult to identify clearly the politics of those in France who wrote it. The point of view of the English editors is more familiar and therefore their confusion of the takeover tactic with self managment as a model for the new society is identifiable immediately. The facts the pamphlet gives can only be understood in another context, the context of "Autogestion? Non, autodefense!"

Many questions about the takeover are not

raised, or are dealt with insufficiently (it is after all a short pamphlet). To give one example. The Lip workers had been largely skilled and were being reduced to unskilled workers. We are also told that 50% of the work force was female. Past experience leads us to believe that deskilling and woman-ising the work force are connected; and that issues were raised in the strike by women which were not noticed by the pamphleteers. We know from the pamphlet that there were demands that wages be levelled, that everyone be paid the same. But it is not made clear that the levelling would have been between unskilled largely female assemblers, white collar (female?) workers and skilled male machinists. Nor are we told about the creation of day care facilities as a necessity for the struggle. And what happens if you're so busy organising a struggle that you have no time for housework? Once again, the women's movement will have to do its own research on the role of women and in the process will find out more about what happened to the men and the children.

Selma James

Up off her knees

Marge Piercy, *The Grand Coolie Damn*, New England Free Press, Boston, 5p

This pamphlet is about the autonomy of the women's movement. I was drawn to it first by these lines:

> It is true that some oppression kills quickly and smashes the body, and some only destroys the ability to think and create. But I know no man can tell any woman how to measure her oppression, and what methods are not politic in trying to get up off her knees.

Marge Piercy is not saying that no man can have any useful ideas. She is rejecting the control that men have had over our struggles, and their power to *prevent* us doing, saying and being things. Her anger is in reponse to that.

The Grand Coolie Damn analyses the revolutionary movement as a microcosm—a heart breaking mirror-image—of capitalist society. Marge Piercy was obviously shaken at having to make this analysis because she herself had been part of the male-dominated left. Her new understanding of that movement was the painful rebirth of the feminist in her. Although *The Grand Coolie Damn* is in one sense the account of an individual its general truth is always clear.

The accuracy of her analysis is affirmed by her own rebellion and that of the autonomous women's liberation movement. Wherever there is exploitation there will be rebellion—even in the revolutionary movement. Exploitation there certainly is and it is charted in this pamphlet with a precision which cuts. Left men should read it to glimpse themselves as we have had to see them, it will be an education. In fact until men begin to look at the world through female eyes they will know very little about the class struggle *in general.*

There is another quotation I'd like to make here. It is a very important sentence, but I don't think its significance was understood by Marge Piercy when she wrote the pamphlet.

> The real basis [of the movement] is the largely unpaid, largely female labor force that does the daily work.

Just how much of a microcosm that is of capitalist society is only now being revealed by the women's movement, which is turning its attention to the unwaged work of the woman in the home, and revealing how central the housewife has been, and is, to the class struggle as well as to female experience and rebellion. To see and assert all this it was necessary for us to break from the male left. Marge Piercy urges us to make this break at the close of the pamphlet:

> Any attempts to persuade men that we are serious are a waste of precious time and energy: they are not our constituency. . . Sisters, what we do, we have to do together and we will see about them.

It was no small thing, that break, but it was not as big as the question the pamphlet leaves unanswered. What politics will we develop? Answers to that abound now as a result of the growth of our movement and also because of the new developments in working class power. I don't think it matters that this particular writing could not handle that question.

What is worrying though is the damage our oppression can do to us, when we look around in search of a political perspective. There has been a tendency to reject theory because it was once mystified and controlled by men and academics. Jargon replaced communicating language mostly because revolutionary theory was never properly understood—if it had been this question would not have been necessary:

> If you have contempt for people and think they cannot know what they want and need who the hell is the revolution for? . . . Oppression is becoming something for professionals to remove from certifiably oppressed other people.

I think that says a lot about the politics we were all rejecting. But theory should make clear what we observe and when we understand it we can talk about it in a straightforward way. However, many women are still bruised by those jargon fights and I'm afraid that Marge Piercy in *Grand Coolie Damn* looked ready to fall into the trap of rejecting theory altogether.

There are two other problems raised in the pamphlet which are related to the refusal to theorise; one of them is the value of life-style politics and the second is the acceptance of women as bourgeois. There is an ambiguity about both these things which reflects a deep weakness in Marge Piercy's notion of what power is and therefore of what social relations and politics are. Living the exemplary life is no substitute for politics—it is religion. Any woman, let alone a man, who carries around in her head the notion of woman as bourgeois will never in a million years understand feminist class politics. But serious as these two weaknesses are there is a strength in the rest of the pamphlet which indicates the way in which these ambiguities will be sorted out.

Here is a final quotation which I think will ring true throughout the world today, not least in Ireland.

> I have been a house nigger in the movement. Since I was first on my own as a skinny tough kid, nobody ever succeeded for long in exploiting me as a woman, until I came into the movement. Then I laid down my arms before my brothers to make the revolution together. How much I swallowed for my politics I have only realised in the pain of trying to write this piece truthfully.

Emma Wood

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PAMPHLETS REVIEWED HERE

—SEE INSIDE BACK COVER—

From Priscilla Allen's review of **From Feminism to Liberation** in issue No1:

. . . the book gives a perspective on the movement not only to initiates but also to those of us who have been around for a long time. It represents the deepest currents in the movement.

From Jeremy Mulford's review of **Modern Politics** in the same issue:

There is a prevailing coherence of vision, arguing for the potentialities of all people, and this, in conjunction with James's ability to set thought and aspiration and self-confidence on the wing, makes the book truly subversive. It isn't surprising that [Eric] Williams suppressed the first edition.

Taking Your Time

Bill Watson, *Counter-Planning on the Shop Floor*, New England Free Press, Boston, 5p

The pamphlet describes the situation in a car factory near Detroit where Bill Watson worked for a year. He describes some of the numerous forms of sabotage that went on while he was there. What is remarkable about the sabotage is the extent to which it was organised. To give one example.

> A plant wide rotating sabotage program was planned in the summer to gain free time. At one meeting workers counted off numbers from 1 to 50 or more. Reportedly similar meetings took place in other areas. Each man took a period of about 20 minutes during the next two weeks, and when his period arrived he did something to sabotage the production process in his area, hopefully shutting down the entire line. No sooner would management wheel in a crew to repair or correct the problem area than it would go off in another key area. Thus the entire plant usually sat out anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes of each hour for a number of weeks due to either a stopped line or a line passing by with no units on it. The techniques for this sabotage are many and varied, going well beyond my understanding in most areas.

Sabotage goes on in factories everywhere. As described above, it's not a matter of whether or not you put the spanner in the works of a particular machine–rather, it's a revolt against management's rationalisation of time. As such it can take many forms–like dealing with the time and motion man for instance. What you do is that when the time and motion man comes round, you have to prove that you can't work any faster than the rate you want to go, so when he's watching you, you make sure that the job runs in such a way that you build into the job leisure time that isn't supposed to be there. For that to be effective though, obviously everyone's got to work slowly–in other words, you've got to be organised to be able to do it. Where there's a strong shop floor organisation, all this can easily be arranged. For instance in Britain there may be an agreement that management have to inform the stewards before a time and motion man comes round, which gives you plenty of time to set things up. But even apart from this kind of *organised* sabotage, there are hundreds of ways in which you can affect machinery so you can give yourself more time.

Watson points out

> A distinct feature of this struggle is that its focus is not on negotiating a higher price at which wage labour is to be bought, but rather on making the working day more palatable.

But of course the effect is that the price of labour for the employer goes up: he's getting less work for the same money.

Watson sees the kind of in-plant sabotage he's describing as being "beyond unionism", "glimpses of a new social form we are yet to see full-blown, perhaps American workers' councils". But we're left guessing as to how this is to come about. He says himself

> There is little if any notion that the daily struggle in the plant has anything to do with the State or society as a whole. Rather, it is seen as a struggle waged against an immobile bureaucracy in the company and against the labor establishments to improve working conditions. . .

He goes on

> Yet it is not so important that workers so often miss the social significance of their activities; the vital point is not their consciousness, but what they actually do.

This is an important truth. In order to work out how to organise, you have first to see what other workers are actually doing. The workers in the plant Watson describes are clearly *organised*, but they are organised to fight only a day to day rearguard action against the employer's practices at that particular moment. A movement which can effectively destroy that whole system by which a person's time is not his/hers but the employer's needs to have a longer term stategy in mind, built on those struggles that are already going on.

It's important to recognise that this kind of in-plant organisation of sabotage is an expression of power–it's possible only because workers aren't frightened of losing their jobs. It's also an expression of impatience. Instead of waiting for years to negotiate a shorter working day, workers are finding ways to get that here and now. It needs to be more widely recognised that this kind of direct action is going on; it's something that's not talked about much outside of the plant, and is even more rarely recorded in writing.

Arthur Fletcher

On May 23rd, a personal letter containing veiled threats and divisive insinuations was received by each worker at home: 'no work, no pay', it said in substance. The letters were put in a heap and burnt on the factory floor–the ashes were sent in a little coffin to the Paris board.

Lip: How French Workers are Fighting the Sack, reviewed on page 11

Working Women's Wages

Giuliana Pompei, *Wages for Housework*, translated by Joan Hall, Cambridge Women's Liberation, 3p

This pamphlet was written in 1972, after a conference of the Italian women's group *Lotta Feminista* had met to discuss the question of wages for domestic work. Almost a year earlier, in June 1971, the first draft, in Italian, of *Women and the Subversion of the Community* had begun to circulate amongst women in Italy. This document had laid the theoretical basis for an autonomous feminist movement which would base itself on the housewife. By April 1972, the women in *Lotta Feminista* were anxious to start working out the practical goals and activities of such a movement, and called the conference to deal with these issues. *Wages for Housework* was written after that conference, and takes up the question of women getting money for themselves, and for the work they do in the home for nothing.

Although written more than two years ago, this pamphlet still stands as a condensed but very lucid and logical account of the nature of women's exploitation under capitalism, and the possibilities for struggle against that exploitation. The pamphlet is more accessible now than it was two years ago when it was first translated, because discussion in Britain, and events, have helped to clarify the position of women as housewives. But even now, much that Giuliana says needs to be elaborated further, and the pamphlet is so full of new ideas that it needs careful reading. The major points, however, are made with great clarity and conviction.

In the first part, the analysis of women's role under capitalism, she begins with the proposition that the family "is a place of specific exploitation of our [women's] labour power", and that the work women do in the family contributes to the profits that capitalism makes from workers. Because all women are trained to do this work in the home and are tied to it by their dependence on a man's wage, they all share a common relationship to the modes of production under capitalism.

> We say that a housewife is in herself always a proletarian though her social status varies according to the income of the man she depends on (no one has ever thought that a slave was not a slave if he had a rich master who could guarantee him a higher standard of living than other slaves).

The work women do in the home is essential to capitalist production and yet their labour is paid for indirectly (via a man's wage) and is extremely cheap. This leads to the second part of the pamphlet, which is about the objectives of struggle against such exploitation. Women can and must demand that their work be paid for in full by capital–only in that way can women begin to refuse their oppression. Giuliana makes a very important point that demands for free social services–nurseries, launderies etc.–are in themselves demands for wages, insofar as they are demands that capital pay for the services, instead of women providing them free in the home.

> Precisely because the fight for free social services is already essentially a wage demand, we see no contradiction between this struggle

and the struggle based on the demand for direct wages for housework, the work we are doing now and will go on doing even if tomorrow we win our fight for a reduction in hours and workload.

At the same time she makes clear that the fight for more social services is *not* to enable women to work harder at a second job, outside of the home.

> . . . this greater availability of goods and services which we demand as the minimum compensation for all the unpaid work we have on our shoulders, we intend to enjoy: what we want is not to become more productive, not to go off and be exploited better somewhere else, but to work less.

The third and final section of the pamphlet touches on new forms of class activity in the U.S., Britain and Italy which base themselves on the demand for more money and less work. Giuliana shows that in Italy, there is a cutback going on in women's employment outside the home. The response, she says, must be an offensive movement based on getting work in the home paid for, rather than an attempt to break in upon the employment market, which would have the effect of lowering everyone's wages.

This leads to the final important point—that it is only by women struggling for themselves in their own right that the struggles of women *and* men stand a chance of being effective:

> We assert that as long as men are set against women by their role as instruments and immediate recipients of women's servile labour, as long as women's unpaid labour works as a break and a form of blackmail on the capacity for struggle of women and men, the system can be sure of a basic guarantee of equilibrium and a wide margin for manoevre to reabsorb the conquests of the working class.

Sheila Mullen

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Items reviewed in issue No.1

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Martin Glaberman, *Be His Payment High or Low*, Facing Reality, Detroit, 10p*
Robert Hutchison, 'How UK publishing firm exploited Tanzania', photo-copy of two-part article published in the Tanzanian *Daily News* on 26 & 27 July, 1973, free to subscribers*
C.L.R. James, *Modern Politics*, Bewick/ed, Detroit, 75p
C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, Facing Reality, Detroit, 75p
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Edgar Moyo, *Big Mother and Little Mother in Matabeleland*, History Workshop, Oxford, 30p
George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community*, Greenwood, Connecticut, £1.50
Mrs. Wibaut and Lily Gair Wilkinson, *Women in Rebellion, 1900: Two Views on Class, Socialism and Liberation*, Independent Labour Party, Leeds, 20p
John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris (eds.), *Amistad 1: Writings on Black History and Culture*, Vintage, New York, £1.00
Five Months of Struggle at Halewood: Ford Wage Claim 1973, Big Flame, Liverpool, 20p
TV Handbook, SCAN, London, 20p
United Women (newssheet produced during 1972 miners' strike), free to subscribers*

Items reviewed in issue No.2

David Beecham, *Rates for the Job*, Pluto, London, 5p*
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, Avon Books, New York, 50p
Bonnie Mass, *The Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America*, Editions Latin America, Montreal, 35p
Marge Piercy, *The Grand Coolie Damn*, New England Free Press, Boston, 5p
Giuliana Pompei, *Wages for Housework*, translated by Joan Hall, Cambridge Women's Liberation, 3p
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Trinidad Working Class
Franklin Smith

Dorothy Kidd on

Power of Women Journal

Selma James on **Sexual Politics**

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No 3-4

Double issue

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Edited by Suzie Fleming & Jeremy Mulford

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The annual subscription will remain unchanged for the time being, and will cover three issues.

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MARXIST FEMINIST JOURNAL

Power of Women, Journal of the Power of Women Collective, London, Vol.1, Nos.1 & 2, 15p each

> Whenever women make a struggle, a lot of ideas come crashing down. (Editorial, *Power of Women Journal*, No.2)

The journal of the Power of Women Collective has amplified this statement in many ways. The first two issues are made up of a wealth of articles from many areas of women's struggle, both in Britain and internationally. They have so far included the struggles of women as nurses; in Ireland; at Imperial Typewriters; in Italy; in the Family Allowance Campaign; about sexual politics; and fighting for cheaper food. Starting from accounts of women's specific fights at work–inside and outside the home–the journal is an important contribution to the rewriting of working class history, from a Feminist and Marxist perspective. Many women in the women's movement have seen 'wages for housework' simply as a demand. The journal shows how wages for housework as the Marxist Feminist perspective can extend class analysis, and out understanding of many struggles. It demonstrates concretely how the force of the women's movement, from which the perspective has grown, has started an important redefinition of many classical Marxist concepts. This has meant not only just a redefinition of the working class, but also a new look at the basis of working class social power; and a redefinition of our revolutionary goals.

The latest issue of the journal, featuring several articles on the nurses, shows this very clearly. A few of the Collective are nurses, and since June and July, many of the others have been involved, in some way, in the nurses' struggle. This struggle of service workers challenges the traditional view of the working class made up of white, male industrial workers, whose basis of social power was the factory. The nurses' dispute demonstrates instead that workers whose primary function is servicing people to make them ready to work again, can also have power, by refusing that work. This has important implications for housewives, whose work of servicing people is much like that of the nurses.

> The struggle of the nurse has demonstrated that producing things and producing people are done on the same assembly line, the assembly line that is capitalist society. If production at any point is stopped, then production on the whole line is disrupted. That wasn't clear until service workers organized: the assembly line can be stopped in the most unpredictable places . . . (No.2, Editorial)

The articles on the nurses also put into a class perspective the trade unions. Each starts from a description of the material conditions of work, and how this defines the organization and forms of struggle that women workers use. (The 'material conditions of work' do not just include the actual tasks in the hospital, but the structure of the en-

tire working day—which necessarily includes housework at home—as well as the effects of racism on that work.) This truly Marxist approach is really refreshing, after so many years of the traditional 'vanguard' articles which start at the level of 'trade union consciousness' among the workers. Finding so few who fit their narrow definition of 'conscious' workers, they end up with the need to instil a 'trade union consciousness', especially among those workers with traditional 'low consciousness', women. The nurses' actions have made this fetish absurd. In the past several months, as a demonstration of their new collective identity as workers, many have joined unions. Yet through joining they have realised that the union stands in the way of their class interests, and they have had to start developing other forms of organisation, autonomous not only of the management, but often now, of the unions as well. (The journal does not explore this development much further, leaving the question of organisation to the nurses. The implication is that the Collective sees its major task in pulling together the feminist lessons of struggle, a role that is not spelled out very clearly, as I try to discuss below.)

This same feminist application of Marx's tools has brought together a whole new understanding of agency workers. At a time when the trade unions and many left groups are scapegoating agency workers, in struggles throughout the public sector, this is crucial. In the last five years, hospitals have been hiring more and more agency workers, to bolster up a labour force chronically understaffed , because of the refusal of many workers to accept such poor working conditions.

POWER OF WOMEN JOURNAL

ISSUE No.3, JANUARY 1975, 15p

CONTENTS INCLUDE:—

'This is Housework'

'They give you £10 when you leave prison . . . nothing from school'

'Housewives to British Leyland'

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Many of these same 'refusers' now are agency nurses. Housewives as well as nurses, they left for more flexible hours so that they could continue to do their housework, especially the rearing of their children. While they have to continue to do this housework, impossible for them is the 'labour of love' to build up the National Health Service.

The agency nurses are not 'letting down' the NHS, that's happening through no plan of theirs. Even if it were true that agency nurses are doing better than those in the NHS, they're not the enemy. By attacking the traditionally weak housewife, the trade unions and left groups are only reinforcing the divisions within the hospital that the management has reproduced. Yet it's certainly not the first time that women have been the ones to absorb the brunt of capital's use of the division of labour. The *Power of Women Journal* reveals the importance of understanding women as housewives in any analysis of their self activity and fight against capital. The important question now, which the journal fails to pose, is how will the potential power of the agency nurses be built, how can they organise in their isolated, constantly changing working situations? How can this independence of the agency nurse by used by the NHS nurse to break the confines of 'professionalism' and and the blackmail of 'socially useful work'?

This is part of the weakness that I've found with the journal. It doesn't go far enough in exploring the political content and lessons for organisation coming out of the various struggles that it documents. Although this may be too much to ask of a group and publication so new, it leaves unclear how it sees its relationship as a Collective to the developing struggles and organisation. Who is the journal directed to, and what is its political use?

This lack of clarity is the case in an opposite way in the reference to the Cowley housewives in the second editorial. It certainly focuses on new organising forms, but fails to draw out clearly all the political ramifications. Last spring in Cowley (Oxford), a small number of the wives of autoworkers demonstrated for a return to work, following a walkout in support of a steward the company refused to recognise. This action does represent the potential power that women can exercise, who are tied to the factory by the waged work of their husbands. Yet surely we must look beyond their demonstration for more power for themselves, to see why; before using it as an example of revolutionary activity. Behind the small number of Cowley wives, whose husbands were not on strike but laid off, was the local right-wing paper and Conservative party. All acts of the working class, though exciting in form are not necessarily revolutionary . . .

One of the most politically significant things about the journal is its form. It combines good and simple layout with a lot of graphics and photographs. Many of the articles are first-hand accounts, while the rest are all written in an easy to read style. This combined with the ever present feminist thread and the variety of the articles is the real strength of the journal. As one activist who doesn't agree with wages for housework put it, "It's the only thing that I can give to the women that I'm working with in the community, to read about women . . ."

The Collective is now discussing the future use of the journal. This will probably pinpoint more clearly how they see using the journal, and its political role within the movement. For the journal now fulfils two functions—both as a forum for theoretical development of the Marxist-Feminist perspective, and a popular magazine about current women's events. Whatever road is chosen, the journal has already made a very important contribution to feminism which furthers the development of an international Marxist class analysis.

Dorothy Kidd

Note: No.3 is now available from the Falling Wall Book Service, in addition to Nos.1 & 2. For details, see page two.

Shopfloor at Ford

Ferruccio Gambino, *Workers' Struggles and the Development of Ford in Britain*, Big Flame, London & Liverpool, 15p

Read in the light of the recent breaking of the seven month old 1974 contract by Fordworkers, Gambino's article is revealed as the really perceptive piece of analysis that it is. Many of the points made in 1971 have been confirmed since, as the content of Fordworkers' struggle has emerged even more clearly in 1974.

When Ford management referred to the "total disintegration of the workforce" in October of '74, they were not joking, from their point of view. For only months after the contract was signed in February 1974, sections of workers began demanding extra payments, based on various arguments, with some—like the demand for wash-up payments—taken from the miners. Wash-up was first won by Body Plant lineworkers at Dagenham, and was quickly spread to all lineworkers. Soon after, offline workers began demanding it as well, and several sections in the Paint, Trim and Assembly Plant (PTA) at Dagenham began taking token strike action, most of them in June.

Other money demands came from the craftsmen (for a £5 interim increase), from groups in the Paint shop for upgrading, and finally from the Press shops at Dagenham and Halewood for improved shift allowances. It was the three and a half week Press shop strike in September that was the last heavy straw that broke the back of the '74 contract. Ford came back at this point with money, which for most workers is worth about £8 a week the first year and £6 the second in a two year contract. In addition, Ford came back with its own demands—for efficiency improvements, for the introduction of charge hands, to bolster the flagging authority of its foremen, and for an end to Halewood's ban on Friday night working.

Struggle against work

It is in this ban on Friday nights and also the demand for full pay, work or no work, that we can see the real content of shopfloor struggle, as Gambino outlines it. Halewood workers refused to go back to work on Friday nights after the three day week ended early last year. "Friday night is music night" became the slogan of the shopfloor, as workers chose against work, in favour of a better life.

The demand for full lay-off pay has been around for several years in British car plants, and has been particularly strong at Ford. There is already an agreement giving 80% of pay in situations where the lay-off has external causes, i.e. recession or outside strikes. But the main demand

has centred on situations of internal strikes and lay-offs. The demand for and action over lay-off pay was part of the "disintegration" Ford management was talking about; for hard on the heels of the recent sectional actions over money, came the actions–riots, blockades, strikes etc.–by groups of laid off workers. In the Dagenham PTA, managment during this period became afraid to lay off the shift, because of action taken in June. They kept workers inside on full pay, doing no work, playing cards all night.

"Insubordination is the ability of the working class to organise *the struggle against work*." (p.4) The attack on authority and hierarchy at Dagenham, although sometimes individual and physical (punching, hitting foremen with iron bars) has been one of collective pressure. Some foremen avoid parts of their areas altogether because of intimidation; for most, many of their orders go disregarded. The refusal to obey the foreman has become for many Dagenham workers the right to disregard him.* Sabotage, often practised as a collective tactic, is intertwined with insubordination and is aimed at causing financial loss to Ford, or more often, at winning free time through line breakdowns.

The background to these clear demands and tactics was (and still remains) the huge labour turnover. As Gambino says, "Ever since the 'Ford Revolution' and the introduction of the assembly line in the 1910s *workers' mobility* has been the main form of struggle in the motor industry." (p.15) By autumn 1974 Dagenham Ford was short of 3,000 men (or 11%) and the turnover rate was over 50%. This alone caused Ford a production loss of 30,000 cars in 1974 (while the Press shop strike lost 54,000, with 60,000 lost through the three day week). Even in a period of an over 30% drop in new car sales, Ford could not deliver. The backlog of orders is still 30,000 cars. For Ford, the production crisis had chiefly internal causes. As Gambino points out (p.14), "from the workers' point of view [all] this is a way of fighting unemployment and guaranteeing overtime", and putting off the mass redundancies that have hit car workers elsewhere, and that have been used to smash shop floor organisation. In Britain now, the political use of the threat of mass redundancies has come clearly into the open with Wilson's speech about British Leyland's Cowley plant.

* The demoralisation of foremen went so far that in August they struck for two days in an effort to bolster their sagging authority, during which time there was a near festival atmosphere inside some of the plants as workers on full pay, and not working, roamed the plants, 'shopping' for car radios, coils etc., played cards, showed blue movies, and went freely in and out to various pubs and clubs. When shop stewards cooked up a scheme with the plant management to get the lines running and "show that we don't need the foremen to run the lines" (workers' control), there was widespread refusal to work.

Organisation at Dagenham

To bolt down his continuous flow production Ford had to smash the shop stewards organisation that emerged during and after the Second World War. In 1962, seventeen militant stewards were sacked, and from this point on the location of resistance to Fordism really moved to the shopfloor. Since then, building on a plan developed in the U.S., the unions, including the shop stewards committees, have been much more integrated into the company. The gap between the majority of stewards and the shopfloor proceeded apace, with almost all the initiatives, demands and actions stemming from the shopfloor itself. The 1974 contract was broken by the shopfloor and against the unions. The unions, until it became clear there was no choice but to go along, wanted to protect the Social Contract and ensure the re-election of the Labour Government. However, when Ford workers acted, and Ford management gave in, the unions (through the National Joint Negotiating Committee) came in to do the talking.

Immigrant workers, especially black workers from the West Indies and Africa, have a tremendous weight in the struggle–not only because in many sectors they make up 60% of the workforce, but also because their experience, and their situation outside the factory, has a very important influence on the struggle. Shopfloor organisation, often built around a small group of black workers, and sometimes racially integrated, takes the shape of unofficial 'line committees'. The object of these is not only to organise the section, but often also to organise the struggle against work. This, of course, takes place almost always without the shop steward. Some groups have also an object of organising more than their own line, but so far, none see organising the whole plant, or all the plants, as a possibility at this point.

I haven't read the last half of Gambino's article (as yet unpublished in English). But if it helped me to understand what is actually going

Continued on next page, foot of column one

Lordstown Working Class

Ken Weller, *The Lordstown Struggle and the Real Crisis in Production*, Solidarity, London, 10p

It is only since the sixties that Europeans have really realised that America has a working class. Black men and women let the white male power structure know that either some fundamental changes would take place or they would burn everything to the ground. Black and white men in Vietnam 'fragging' their officers (blowing them up rather than go into battle behind them) suggested that the working class had not sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. But still, in the richest country in the world, with one of the highest rates of exploitation, we had no sense that this must inevitably carry with it a violence and hatred toward the factory rarely exhibited elsewhere in the world. Some recent struggles, notable among them those at Lordstown (Ohio), have begun to bring this home.

Ken Weller's pamphlet on the struggle at Lordstown begins to bring to Europe some of that experience. It gives a fairly detailed description of the struggle between one of the largest corporations in the world, General Motors, and some 7,800 workers at the new Lordstown plant.

> In the winter and spring of 1971-72, under the pressure of increased workloads, workers . . . began to pass cars down the line with the odd bolt or minor part missing. The movement rapidly gained momentum. In one case a car came down the line with the body shell neatly covering a pile of unassembled parts . . . The company started suspending and disciplining men right and left and generally tightening up. Many suspected that the company was attempting to provoke a strike to lance the boil . . . (p.9)

on at Ford (particularly from the point of view of a Fordworker) as much as the first half it would be very useful indeed: the first half begins to provide a framework that makes sense out of the actual shopfloor struggle.

Dave Feickert

Note: This article is the first section of a longer piece by Ferruccio Gambino. The Big Flame Ford Dagenham Group is to publish the whole of the original article later this year. Falling Wall Book Service will stock copies as soon as they are available. The first part of the article, reviewed above, is published as part of *Factfolder 3* by Big Flame, and is available as a separate article from Falling Wall Book Service only to individual subscribers.

The pamphlet tells something of the surrounding area, and of the situation in the auto industry as a whole. The Lordstown plant, when it was opened, was the most automated plant in the world. Unfortunately, the pamphlet lacks a certain understanding of American society and the changes in social relations over the last decade.

For instance, one gets no sense of the connection between the social upheaval over the Vietnam War and the workers at Lordstown. But General Motors picked the Lordstown site to get away from urban blacks who were burning the city down, only to run into a whole layer of young whites already pissed off at having to go to Vietnam to fight a war they wanted no part of.

The pamphlet does begin to deal with one of the most important aspects of the struggle of workers everywhere: the refusal of work. But Ken Weller himself seems somewhat confused on the point, stating in the Introduction that the "Lordstown story is a clear example of working class resistance to work itself"; and a few paragraphs later, ". . . workers are beginning to think about a more human existence in work." These represent two different viewpoints: the former is relatively new and the latter is the old ideology of workers' control. The main thrust of the struggle at Lordstown was to cut the line speed. The workers were basically only interested in workers' control to the extent that it could be used by them to get out of work altogether. This attack on the speed of the line is also of course strategically where capital is most vulnerable. The workers did not demand the three-day week. While many will spontaneously take it, on the whole people do not feel they can win on it yet. And of course there is another problem, to make enough money in three days.

This leads me to another confusion of the pamphlet, which is that on the one hand American workers are plump and well paid, and on the other

that they are not especially interested in wage increases—as if there were something backward about wanting wage increases, and large ones at that. It all belongs to us anyway. But because of the lack of any real Welfare State, there is an immense gap between the employed and the unemployed, and between those employed in certain major industries—auto, steel, lorry-driving—and those who work either for small companies or in other sections of industry, hospitals, offices, etc. What this means is that you live in continual fear of extreme poverty. Even when not that low-paid yourself, you are always worried about money and always up to your eyeballs in bills. You are paying for a house for maybe the next 25 years. You have to get a new car every three or four years. These are absolute necessities. It is often impossible, for example, to get to work and back without owning a car. Most families find it impossible to meet these kinds of commitment even on an autoworker's pay. Hence the wives tend to be working outside the home just to make ends meet. And if both the husband and the wife have waged jobs, the family may have to finance two cars. If the women don't work for money, then the men feel compelled to work even more overtime than is forced on them. One young guy I work with expressed happiness that his wife had just taken a part-time job. It paid for the days he took off.

The problem of course is that wages are the prerogative of the International [i.e. North American] Union. Not even the local union has any say in it, let alone the workers. This makes the question of wages almost out of reach, and any movement to deal with wages on a local level would be tantamount to attempting to smash the International, with all the violent confrontation that that would bring.

There are some other things which make the pamphlet out of touch with the U.S. British cartoons don't help. For one thing, Hillbillies are proud that they are Hillbillies and they are never passive. Like every other immigrant group, they bring with them special problems which make them automatically subversive. It is in this sense that Blacks and women as well as immigrants are the vanguard of the movement. They represent objectively a broadening of the class struggle. Where they are in the factory, they can use that factory as a lever of power for a whole variety of objectives. Some 4,000 Arab workers shut down a Chrysler plant in Detroit when they discovered that the U.A.W. (United Auto Workers) was holding Israeli war bonds. Lordstown is another case in point. Since there is no city there, the plant is surrounded by massive mobile home camps. These are the ghettoes into which the Hillbillies have been stuffed. And demands which that community makes (and women will be at the center of any such struggle) will be aimed directly at General Motors.

One final comment. Lordstown has just been on strike for another seven weeks (July-August 1974), this time over the backlog of local plant grievances (4,000 of them) which the union works hard to ignore. Halfway through the strike, a spontaneous demonstration (not union led) of some 2,000 workers took place in front of the plant gates to make sure they remained closed. Once more the workers seem to have been defeated by the combined efforts of company and union. But the struggle is far from over.

The time is long overdue for workers in Europe to be informed about struggles in the U.S. against the same boss they are struggling against here. This pamphlet is a useful beginning.

Sam Weinstein

"Counter-organisation is the putting over to the public by action rather than by propaganda the views of the government. For this purpose individuals can be sent amongst the community for the purpose of doing work which will help to remove sources of grievance and at the same time make contact with the people."

This is not Leo Smith, our Participation Officer, but Brigadier Frank Kitson, the main army theorist on counter-insurgency. Whatever the neighbourhood organisers who operate under the Participation Scheme (ICSS, Tenants Liaison Officer) think of their own role, the ruling class see them as Intelligence Officers serving in a counter-insurgency army for only these organisers know what the people are thinking and doing.

Don't Be Too Hard on Soft Cops, reviewed on p.30

Sexual Politics

Wilhelm Reich & Karl Teschitz, *Selected Sex-Pol Essays 1934-37*, Socialist Reproduction, London, 40p

Marx began with the basic assumption that human individual and social activity was the motive force of human development, and that the human condition at any particular historical moment was a stage of that development.

Freud, on the contrary, assumed the human condition under capitalism was given, static, natural. Not a result of human activity, we humans could do precious little about it. Penis envy, for example, was an attribute of women, not one of many responses of women to male power. Neurosis and sexual repression were man's (and of course woman's) fate.

Not until Wilhelm Reich in the turbulent twenties in Germany related sexual repression and neurosis to the capitalist organisation of society was the human sexual condition and the social activity of transcending it—the class struggle—reintegrated.

Sex-Pol was a theoretical and organisational attempt by Reich and his comrades to integrate "sexual politics" (his phrase) with the reactionary and vanguardist politics of the leading working class political organisation in Germany, the Communist Party. The reason Reich was anxious to do this was that the Communist Party was the heir apparent of the Russian Revolution. But the attempt was doomed because the politics of the Communist Party were based precisely on the same repression that Reich and Sex-Pol were fighting. Their work was of course discredited and maligned by that party. (Reich himself died in an American prison some years later, having been persecuted, this time, by the American State.)

The essays in this book are from the period 1934-37. The Introduction by the publishers, Socialist Reproduction, attempts to place the essays historically, and to show how useful they can be to us as a critique not only of capitalist sexual politics, but of the depth of misunderstanding of so-called Marxists. "Reich's concern," they say, "was not at all to draw a line between sexual politics and all other forms of political activity, but, on the contrary, to establish the precise function of his sexual/cultural critique in relation to existing forms of political activity, and hence to integrate his sexual analysis into, rather than substitute it for, other forms of class struggle." (p.27) Earlier they give some idea of Reich's political frame of reference, quoting Reich:

> The practical consequence of Marx's theory of value is the appropriation of the use values by *all* working individuals, that is, *the social appropriation of the products*. I repeat: the *social* appropriation, not appropriation by the 'state' or private monopolies. The socialist politicians confused social appropriation and appropriation by the state, greatly to the detriment of the clarification of socio-economic questions. While social development as a whole, as a result of the war, is more and more in the direction against private monopoly *as well as* state monopoly, the socialist parties still wish to replace private monopoly by state monopoly. This follows logically from their equating state and society . . . (pp.25/6)

This is clearly directed against the Communist Party and shows that Reich understood what was fundamentally wrong with the Communist Party. (This analysis only reappeared and was developed in the forties in the United States [see *Falling Wall Book Review* No.1, 'The Power of the State']. Socialist Reproduction take it for granted thirty years later, but in this they are still unusual in Britain.) While Reich understands the distinction between appropriation of property by the State and social appropriation, he does not develop what this means in terms of the *production relations* which produce that property. Because of this, he fails to see sexuality as part of production.

As for Reich's concern to integrate sexuality with the rest of politics, this could not become a mass concern, that is, a mass struggle, without the birth and development of a mass feminist movement. The book shows there was a connection between Sex-Pol's emergence and a tremendous youth movement. But what exactly was the connection between the struggle of women and

Reich's revolutionary views on sexuality as a form of capitalist repression is not clear from Reich's writing (or from the Introduction to this book), and it should be. There *must have been* a struggle of women for these ideas to emerge at all. But from reading Reich it is clear that feminism was not yet strong enough to show him what at least one international tendency in the feminist movement now knows.

First, sexuality for women is itself capitalist work; and therefore sexual repression is first and foremost sexual repression of women, whose work is also to pass on our own repression to our children.

Second, and following from this, human social activity to bring about the transformation of sexuality from work to a free social activity cannot be left for professional sexologists even to initiate. Social activity for freedom is the opposite of professionalism and specialisation; it is mass activity against all the exploitation and restraints of capitalist life by the working class. Our violence in the struggle against the State is a crucial expression of our break with its restraints, is itself a sexual liberation. Where specifically *sexual* exploitation and restraints are concerned, the spearhead of mass activity must be women. James Connolly, the Irish revolutionary, said of women: "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them." We must rephrase more accurately: the chains will never be broken unless the people who wear them break them.

Reich, whose ideas were opposed in Germany by Fascist and Communist and Socialist parties alike, and in the U.S. by the government, was isolated by them from the mass of the people. This isolation not only helped stunt his development but led to some rather strange ideas (what Lenin might have called 'sexual project-hatching'). Of course the Establishment has guaranteed that he is better known for these than for his early exploratory work and revolutionary insights. *Sex-Pol Essays* aims, among other things, to bring some of these early writings and the struggle for survival of Sex-Pol in Germany to our attention. That alone makes it a worthwhile book. Here is one of Reich's insights, quoted in the Introduction, from his book book *The Sexual Revolution*:

> . . . Owing to the economic dependence of the women on the man and her lesser gratification in the processes of production, marriage marriage is a protective institution for her, but at the same time she is exploited in it. For, she is not only the sexual object of the man and the provider of children for the state, but her unpaid work in the household indirectly increases the profit of the employer. For the man can work at the usual low wages only on the condition that in the home so and so much work is done without pay. If the employer were responsible for the running of his workers' homes, he either would have to pay a housekeeper for them or would have to pay them wages which would allow the workers to hire one. This work, however, is done by the housewife, without remuneration . . .

This was part of an essay, 'Sexual Maturity, Continence, Marital Morality', originally published as early as 1929. So that long before the present debate on whether or not women in the home labour productively for capital, and whether or not our wagelessness is the key to our powerlessness (and the struggle for wages the key to our power), Reich in a paragraph deals successfully with both questions. Women are productive, —exploited as well as oppressed—we are sexual objects producing workers for the State, and our wagelessness ensures that we continue in this way. We accept his view that women have "lesser gratification in the processes of production" only if sexuality is considered one of the "processes of production" (production by women of workers for the State, of labour power). Otherwise there is a presumption that there is *any* gratification for *any* worker in *any* process of capitalist production. But this would be to criticise Reich ahistorically. Germany in the thirties was still substantially a country of the skilled craftsmen who no doubt received gratifications which those of us who grew up on the assembly line can't even imagine.

Sex-Pol itself was limited by this historical limitation. It could see sexual repression as capital's need for submissiveness; it could see sexual sublimation in violence for the state (fascism); it could see the unwaged sexual situation of housewives as productive, as adding to profit by lowering wages. But it could not see that sexual repression and repression through work of other aspects of individual and social creativity were one and the same thing. It could not see that were we not sexually repressed, women *and men* would find that work had even "lesser gratification"; and conversely, that the possibility of sexual gratification is destroyed by work.

> The passive sexual receptivity of women creates the compulsively tidy housewife and can make a monotonous assembly line therapeutic. The trivia of most of housework and the discipline which is required to perform the same work over every day, every week, every year, double on holidays, destroys the possibilities of uninhibited sexuality. (*The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, p.41)

So that sexual repression is a necessity of capitalist work, *is the product of capitalist work* and, for a woman, is itself capitalist work.

The Introduction shows that 'revolutionaries' like Gramsci understood this better than Reich—but from the other side! The authors quote Comrade Gramsci:

> The formation of a new feminine personality is the most important question of an ethical and civil order connected with the sexual question. Until women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics and caution must be exercised in proposals for new legislation . . . All these factors make any form of regulation of sex and any attempt to create a new sexual ethic suited to the new methods of production and work extremely complicated and difficult. However, it is still necessary to attempt this regulation and to attempt to create a new ethic . . . The truth is that the new type of man demanded by the rationalisation of production and work cannot be developed until the sexual instinct has been suitably regulated and until it too has been rationalised. (p.33)

The Introduction comments: "Gramsci's reasoning on this is very curious. The reason for supporting female emancipation is to get more work out of male workers!" Clearly this Introduction is not a routine piece of work. It is an attempt to sythesise a number of relatively new currents in Marxist theory, among them C.L.R. James who did his basic political work in the United States, and Mario Tronti who was one of the midwives of the Italian extra-parliamentary left of the sixties (all wings of which are now either defunct, or no longer extra-parliamentary). Its weakness is that no question, and particularly not the sexual question, can be adequately confronted without confronting the exploitation of women and the questions raised by the feminist struggle. Despite this, it is an exciting introduction and is evidence that the new Marxist spirit is growing in the land. Next to it, *The Irrational in Politics*, an attempt by a man in Solidarity to explain Reich, looks like the philistine, elitist document that it is: the political vanguard is replaced by the sexual vanguard. Big deal.

One final question. Clearly Sex-Pol was dead wrong when it spoke of a "natural sex life". There is as little natural in sexual life as there is in exploitation; both are social, and when we have abolished the latter, we will begin for the first time in human history to explore the former in freedom, freedom from forced labour and from the repression it demands and creates. At the moment, we know very little about human sexuality. It is our good fortune that Gramsci's wish to rationalise it proved impossible for the ruling class of either State or private monopoly. Sexuality can be repressed, channelled and distorted, but it cannot be rationalised; it is the essence of our spontaneity, bound up with every other facet of our capacity to become the social individuals we will make ourselves into by the process of revolution.

To the credit of Reich and Sex-Pol, they opened the question Freud and the 'Marxist' parties had closed, the relation between sexuality and other aspects of the class struggle. To the credit of Marx, he saw that communist society, which comes into existence by the mass creative human activity of the revolution, would lay the basis for us to consciously plan a society which would give full scope to our "natural and acquired powers". In such a society, sexuality would no longer be a compartment of living, no longer a ritual (as eating and sleeping and leisure—'not working'—have become), no longer making women slaves and men masters, degrading both; but something else. What else? Reich introduces his book, *The Sexual Revolution*, with the following quote from old Karl:

> Since it is not for us to create a plan for the future that will hold for all time, all the more surely, what we contemporaries have to do is the uncompromising critical evaluation of all that exists, uncompromising in the sense that our criticism fears neither its own results nor the conflict with the powers that be.

We have not transcended Reich yet. Even some who do not fear physical conflict with the powers that be are still afraid of the results of an open sexual critique. If they are men, it challenges their

power to the degree that sexual prowess is the mythical measure of that power. If they are women, it questions whether they are challenging the absence of that power and the compromises that inevitably follow from all relations with men. We are all frightened, as Reich said we were. But now there is a feminist movement internationally to confront this fright, to confront the powers that be on all questions and particularly on this one. For the "uncompromising critical evaluation" of sexuality we are dependent above all on lesbian women.

Selma James

Note: This pamphlet is now out of print. It is available from Falling Wall Book Service to individual subscribers only. The publishers of the pamphlet, Socialist Reproduction as they were then called, have asked us to add the following note:
The pamphlet-producing activity of Socialist Reproduction has now been discontinued. However, certain of the pamphlets they have produced are still available from 'communist basis', the group within which the comrades responsible for this material have subsumed their prior activity as Socialist Reproduction. This does not include any of the pamphlets by Reich, the reprinting and distribution of which have been altogether discontinued on political grounds, the basis of which will be outlined in forthcoming material produced by 'communist basis'.

Trinidad Working Class

Bukka Rennie, *The History of the Working-Class in the 20th Century (1919–1956): The Trinidad and Tobago Experience*, New Beginning Movement, Trinidad and Tobago, £1.30

Bukka Rennie's *History of the Working-Class in the 20th Century (1919-1956)–the Trinidad and Tobago Experience*, published by the Toronto Chapter of the New Beginning Movement, is the eighth in the current series of popular booklets being published by the Trinidad Organisation, and is by far the most important and substantial work to have come out of the Trinidad Revolution so far. Covering the history of working class self activity and self organisation in Trinidad from 1919 to 1956, Rennie's book succeeds in breaking completely new ground in a number of ways.

Told from the perspective of the activists, rather than that of the academics, the history of working class militancy in Trinidad from the year of the Waterfront Strike (which signalled the emergence of the working class as an independent social force) to the year of Williams' rise to power (which marked the end of working class self organisation and the take-over of the anti-colonial movement by the professional middle class for a whole generation), unfolds in all its richness and creativity.

We are taken through the rise and fall of the Trinidad Working Men's Association (TWA), led by Cipriani in the '20s and early '30s, the explosive period of the late '30s, which saw the emergence of new leadership and new organisations, in particular the Negro Welfare Association (NWA) and the Butler movement, the slow demise of the revolutionary militancy of the working class in the '40s; and finally the emergence of the middle class as an important social force in the anti-colonial movement, culminating in the rise of Williams in the '50s. In stressing the centrality of working class struggles as the motive force in the social evolution of modern Trinidad and Tobago society, Rennie not only provides the present generation of working class activists with a sense of historical continuity (with the confidence that this brings). He also restores to Trinidad and indeed Caribbean historiography its revolutionary foundations.

The petit-bourgeois historians have been systematically negating this rich tradition of mass struggle, and have been viewing the development of this society purely in terms of the political manoeuvres of the colonial autocracy and the British Colonial Office. They have also been portraying the struggles of labour as if their only value lay in the fact that they laid the ground-work for the emergence of 'responsible' and 'educated' leadership in the '50s, meaning by that the bankrupt leadership of the professional middle classes, headed by their arch representative, the Oxford-educated Williams. In restoring the working masses to their rightful place as the creators of modern Trinidad and Tobago, Rennie succeeds in placing the rise of the middle class leadership in the '50s into its proper historical perspective, as a *setback* to the continuous development of working class creativity and militancy–a period which has since come to an end with the spectacular re-emergence of the masses on to the social stage in 1970 and since.

Once we situate ourselves within the self-activity of the working class and see the class not as object but as subject of its own history, a number of current petit-bourgeois myths about the creative capacity and ideological sophistication of the class come crumbling down. One persistent belief–that the workers are incapable of throwing up by themselves the most advanced forms of self-organisation in their battles with the colonial capitalist state–stands hopelessly exposed for what it is in the face of evidence such as the Negro Welfare Association, a Marxist-oriented organisation in the '30s and '40s completely manned by working class activists with a degree of ideological and organisational sophistication which has yet to be equalled by any other political organisation since seen in Trinidad. The NWA, many of whose leaders like Jim Barrat and Bolton Johnson, and Christina King, are still alive in Trinidad, was widely recognised at the time as being in the vanguard of working class struggle particularly in North Trinidad. Arthur Lewis, in a forgotten pamphlet entitled *Labour in the West Indies* published by the Fabian Society in 1938, where he describes the background of the 1937-38 riots in the Caribbean for a British liberal readership, mentions the NWA as one of the central political forces in the Trinidad version of these region-wide riots.

Ironically, through a combination of factors, the memory of the NWA has been, until Rennie's *History*, virtually wiped out from the consciousness of the society. None of the established histories of Trinidad society during this period have even so much as acknowledged its existence, much less its importance to the struggles of the working class in the '30s and '40s. This is partly because of the national prominence achieved by the charismatic Butler, leader and spokesman for the Oil Workers in the South who were first to erupt in Trinidad in 1937 (the NWA had its major base among the workers in the North). The petit-bourgeois historian and social analyst with his propensity for viewing history as the creation of individual leaders, rather than as the movement of the *collective subjectivity of the masses*, and with his weakness for finding the facts only from the evidence given by public and official documents, rather than from the testimony of the actual participants within the class itself, has tended to treat this entire period of revolutionary activity in Trinidad and Tobago as the fruit of Butler's leadership, and the central role of the NWA has been completely erased from historical memory. Rennie, who bases his history on a wide series of interviews with working class activists of the period who are still alive, and in particular with the amazingly sophisticated leadership of NWA, has done the labour movement a great service by restoring the NWA to its rightful place in Trinidad labour history.

The fate of the NWA stands as a frightening testimony to the way in which whole periods of history can be distorted, and vital portions of social experience completely smothered once the writing and recording of history is left in the hands of a class which stands outside of the the self-activity of the masses. Already, a similar process has begun to take place with the 1970 mass uprising in Trinidad. A number of myths and mystifications have begun to spring up in the writings of the foreign and local petit-bourgeois social analysts like the Lloyd Bests, the Ivaar Oxaals, and the Selwyn Ryans. The history of the 1970 uprising still remains to be told by those who were its direct participants. For the time being there are two current myths which have to be debunked as soon as possible: the myth that the mass uprising was 'organised' or 'led' by the student activist organisation, the National Joint Committee (NJAC), and the myth that the oil workers stood aside from events of 1970 because they are a 'privileged' sector of the working class in Trinidad. NJAC was a vitally important element in the leadership of the social movement which exploded so suddenly in 1970, but the history of the scores of *self-organised* youth groups which suddenly surfaced throughout the society and of the role that they played in carrying the momentum of the spontaneous rebellion is still to be written. Throughout the eight weeks of mass upheaval, NJAC did not *lead* but fought bravely to *keep up* with the tremendous outburst of self-activity among the people, an outburst which was not simply the activity of a disorganised and amorphous crowd, but the consciously organised actions of large numbers of self-organised youth groups all over the country.

It is this tradition of autonomous self-organisation among the unemployed in Trinidad which has found its highest social expression so far in the emergence of the National United Freedom Fighters (NUFF), the guerilla organis-

ation. The myth of the 'passive' oil workers also has to be debunked, and this can be done by simply recalling three vital facts. Throughout the upheaval the nationally recognised voice of the spontaneous mass movement was the *Vanguard*, the newspaper of the Oil Field Workers' Trade Union (OWTU), a fact which the petit-bourgeois analysts, for their own reasons, are trying hard to smother today.

Secondly, on the day of the army mutiny, the general council of the OWTU was on the verge of voting unanimously to call a strike of oil workers in sympathy with the rebellious soldiers, but this move was delayed through the deceit of reactionary members of the Trade Union executive, particularly Edwards and Beckles, who have since been exposed and thrown out of the union. Thirdly, throughout the eight weeks of the mass upheaval the leader of OWTU, George Weeks, was a prominent participant in all the mass demonstrations organised by NJAC.

In the process of resurrecting the memory of the forgotten NWA and recording the real history of working class activity in the pre-1956 period, Rennie also put an end to two widespread myths about the Tinidad working class spread by the petit-bourgeoisie. The myth of the 'lack of internationalism' in the Trinidad working class consciousness and the myth that the Caribbean community in exile is not a relevant participant in the struggles taking place in the islands.

Let us quote a few extracts:

> Another factor that helped to build the revolutionary consciousness of the working community on the Waterfront was its constant contact with the outer world. Many of the workers on the Waterfront took jobs, periodically, on ships that plied the international waters. They saw how people lived, worked and organised abroad, especially workers of the U.S.A. and Britain.
>
> They brought back literature that was passed from hand to hand, as was done with the literature brought into the country by foreign sailors. Special mention must be made of Ferdinand Smith, a black Jamaican, one of two West-Indians, that helped to perfect the Trade Union movement in the U.S.A. He helped to organise the NAU that was a forerunner to the present CIO. Ferdinand Smith, originally a sailor, contacted all ships that came to the U.S.A. from the West-Indies. He talked to the West-Indian workers on board and sent literature back with them to be given away.
>
> He explained to them that the workers' struggle was an international one, and gave them suggestions as to how they could better the conditions at home. A few years after 1919, Ferdinand Smith was banned from Trinidad. (pp.17/8)
>
> It is also significant to note that most of these soldiers and leaders of the TWA were influenced by Garvey. In early 1919 Garvey's newspaper 'The Negro World' published in New York and widely distributed throughout the Caribbean was banned from Trinidad. However, copies from U.S. ships were smuggled through the Waterfront. (p.19)
>
> . . . between 1935-36, the NWA kept 'defense' meetings and demonstrations for Angelo Hurdon, a youth leader of the United States, that was framed and jailed for preaching revolution, for the 9 Black Scottsboro Boys that were framed sometime previously on a rape charge and sentenced to jail for a total of over 100 years, for Mother Bloor, a German working-class fighter that was jailed by the Fascist regime, and for Andre Aleka, the black editor of a working-class newspaper in St. Lucia, who was framed, won his case, but was then murdered by government thugs, tied to a sheet of galvanize upon which stones were placed, then thrown into the sea.
>
> The NWA was put into contact with George Padmore, a Trinidadian revolutionary of world renown, and others in England, through Peter Blackman who was organizing West-Indian and English workers there. The NWA contributed articles on the local situation to Padmore's newspaper, edited by C.L.R. James, and which was world-wide in circulation. The NWA also came into contact with Mrs. Pankhurst, an English woman, one of the founders of the Women's Liberation Movement, and who also published the 'Ethiopian Times'. (p.49)

There are defects in Rennie's *History*; it would be a miracle if there were not, particularly as it is one of the first attempts to reconstruct the history of the Caribbean working class *from the inside of its struggle*, and was written, moreover, by someone who is himself deeply involved in the present outburst of working class militancy in Trinidad. A few of them should be mentioned:

1. In his enthusiasm to restore the memory of the highly organised NWA, and in his anxiety to place the charismatic and undisciplined Butler in his proper historical perspective, Rennie sometimes leans dangerously towards exaggeration and almost falsification of the facts, as for example in his dismissal of Butler's role in the 1937 upheaval with the charge that Butler was the leader 'purely in the minds of the people'. Revolutionary history should be a record of the *real* experience of the class and not an extension of sectarian disputes within the revolutionary movement. This kind of deliberate exaggeration is unnecessary and can even be harmful.

2. The interconnections between the Trinidad struggles and the development of the Caribbean working class as a whole are also underplayed and even neglected. For an event as widespread as the 1937-8 riots, it is a major mistake to treat the riots in any of the islands as if they were totally independent of what was happening in the other islands.

3. There is very little treatment of the relations between the African and Indian sections of the working class during the period covered. Rennie makes the traditional African mistake of 'taking the Indian for granted' which is coming increasingly under attack within radical circles in the region. The relationship between the immigrant Indian worker and the 'native' African worker constitutes an important and integral part of the history of labour in Trinidad and Guyana. Colonial capitalism thrives upon these divisions within the class and this cannot be wished away by subsuming both sections of the class under some abstract objective notion of 'working class unity', or by pointing only to those instances where they have united in a common struggle against the state or management. The real divisions and tension between these two sections of the working class and their constant attempts to find ways of solving them constitute an important and central part of the dialectic of Trinidad labour history.

Franklin Smith

Note: This review has also been published in *Race Today*.

REVOLT OF THE DISPOSSESSED

20 Years, Paul, Jimmy and Mustafa Support Committee, Birmingham, 15p

All of us are programmed from the time we are born to take our allotted place in the capitalist hierarchy of work, whether it be in a factory, office, or the home. The family, the school, television, and a host of other agencies of the State prepare and discipline us for our eventual role within the hierarchy throughout our childhood and youth.

To say this does not mean that the system is completely rigid. On the contrary, a certain flexibility is built in, giving the appearance of free choice. But in reality our options are very limited.

First there are the limitations of sex, race, and class. We enter a world in which we are all in general limited by the pre-existing division of labour. A working-class boy has far less chance of making it in the world of high finance, even if he should want to, than the son of a bank manager.

Secondly whatever our background we are not allowed to opt out. If we refuse to work at all or refuse to accept the kind of role meted out to someone of our background, we are immediately up against a whole range of sanctions from parents, social workers, and the police, to say nothing of the economic ones.

Clearly the further down the social scale you happen to be, the more vicious the reprisals, the more you feel hemmed in and denied any kind of existence. The personal violence practised daily against the inhabitants of every urban ghetto, with the full sanction of the State, can only result in an exploding and destructive anger ready to erupt at any time and against any available target.

The form this anger takes varies. It may be an attack on a drunken Irishman walking down the street, on meths drinkers, on gays on Wimbledon Common, or a bout of 'Paki-bashing'. It may be vandalism on a council estate, a gang fight, or attacks between rival football fans.

These are what George Jackson in *Blood in My Eye* describes as "a totally destructive countersweep of frustrated retaliatory rage", which he says is quite justifiable. "But," he continues, "that is not our purpose. As revolutionaries, it is our objective to move ourselves and the people into actions that will culminate in the seizure of State power. Our real purpose is to redeem not merely ourselves but the whole nation and the whole community of nations from colonial-community economic repression." (pp.153/4)

It is against this background that the Paul, Jimmy and Mustafa Support Committee's pamphlet *20 Years* should be read, because we can see more clearly its considerable merits and shortcomings.

The pamphlet deals with the 10- and 20-year detention sentences passed in March 1973 on three young men from the Birmingham ghetto of Handsworth, Paul Story, Jimmy Duignan, and Mustafa Fuat. The sentences, of unprecedented length, were given under the Children and Young Persons Act 1953. Their crime was that they had beaten up and half killed a man walking home from a pub on the night of November 5th 1972, and robbed him of 30p, some keys, and five cigarettes. Their unprecedentedly long sentences were upheld on appeal.

The usefulness of the pamphlet is that it examines the grounds on which such sentences are said to be justified, and systematically destroys them. There is a short and extremely useful statistical analysis of the 'rising tide of violence' in the 50s and 60s, and the authors show how State spokesmen and judges use crime statistics to call for ever higher sentences, but conveniently forget that ever higher sentences have done nothing over the years to reduce the level of violence. So far as the general trend is concerned higher sentences have failed as a deterrent.

Then they deal with the press campaign on so-called 'muggings', which reached its peak in autumn 1972, just before the Birmingham incident. This campaign resulted in a deliberate 'get tough' policy by judges. Three-year sentences for mugging became the norm. However these severe deterrent sentences were not having their effect. One solution therefore was "to *suddenly and dramatically* increase the length of sentence to an unprecedented level in the *hope* that the *shock-value* will provide the deterrent effect . . . Unfortunately for Paul Story, Jimmy Duignan, and Mustafa Fuat, Croome-Johnson [the judge] chose the last course . . . The failure of the earlier 'severe' sentences of three years for 'muggers' to halt the growth of violent crime laid the ground of the imposition of even more severe sentences in a further attempt to 'stem the rising tide of violence'." Such sentences become "perverted into a ritualistic restatement of the legitimacy of the social order and the original sin of its opponents." (pp.16, 38, and 31)

On appeal the sentences were justified on two main grounds, 1) on the need to protect the public and 2) on the ground of their flexibility. Though stated to be 10 and 20 years the Home Secretary has power to release the victims of such sentences as soon as they rehabilitate themselves. The reasoning here is similar to that behind the Californian penal code, which introduced the kind of indeterminate sentence under which George Jackson and many others were condemned. And we know the result of that. The authors of the pamphlet demolish the Court of Appeal's rationale, and devote a short chapter to show that in practice the chances of these young men being released soon, unless they completely debase themselves and lick the boots of their captors, are remote.

Where the pamphlet is weak, in my view, is the part in which the authors try to deal with the politics of sentencing and of crime. In perhaps the key chapter (chapter 5) they attempt to set out an alternative view of crime in society. In their view there are three factors which must be taken into account, if we are to understand crime: structures, cultures, and biography. The structural factor is really our social environment, what sort of society we live in, where we are in the social scale, and what sort of jobs or housing are available. Secondly a person is influenced by the sort of cultures available to him or her. These are the ideas, beliefs, values and notions of right and wrong; crime reflects the values of authority's culture, but this may not be the same as a youth, class, or ethnic culture. A person may have little access to cultures which are law-abiding. Thirdly each person has his or her own particular history; this includes the family situation, school record, and psychiatric state. The authors quite rightly say that in sentencing people courts are really only concerned with biographical explanations for so-called criminal behaviour, and rarely take into account the other two factors. Thus on their present performance they cannot hope to understand crime and deal with offenders. Thus in the case under discussion the judges were completely unable to understand why the young men had done it, and in sentencing them could only fall back on some primitive retribution.

This all sounds very fine and it allows us to have have a right go at the judges. But the problem with this kind of structural analysis is that it still seems to me to be locked within the framework of the existing order. It remains the analysis of outsiders looking in on the objects of their study, in this case so-called criminals. It does not start from the Paul Storys of this world as self-active human beings trying to deal with the very real pain and anger experienced as a result of the repressive violence with which they are every day hemmed in. Because it does not start from there it is at best ambiguous. It leaves open the question of revolution or reform. On the one hand it is admitted that the social environment is so bad that it must be changed, but on the other hand no mention is made of the means by which this is to be achieved. Thus within the structural analysis there is room for everyone who says that the existing penal system is no good. It therefore contains within it the seeds of a new capitalist strategy for heading off the destructive anger and energy of the most oppressed sections of society. Someone putting out this analysis can still rub shoulders at criminological conferences with the sadists of the Home Office or have meaningful discussions with judges over cocktails. As an analysis it is on a par with those who see the cure to racialism in the building of more houses, schools, and hospitals and the provision of better job opportunities. In any event the chances of judges or any other State functionaries seeing the radical light are so remote that they can surely be dismissed. And on the other side the revolt of the dispossessed is becoming less arbitrary, more conscious, and more directed than anything Peter Story and his mates got up to. And so the question I ask is: where does this leave us, the writers, lawyers, and academics? We can no longer hide behind our ambiguous and obscure theories. The forces of repression will seek us out any way. So we might as well put our skills and talents unambiguously behind the forces of personal and social regeneration and cast aside our fears. I do not feel that the authors of this pamphlet have yet done this, though they have come a long way.

Ian Macdonald

FREE THOMAS WANSLEY

Anne Braden, *Free Thomas wansley: A Letter to White Southern Women*, SCEF Press, Louisville, 3p

This booklet is important for two reasons. It can primarily be read as part of the campaign to free Thomas Wansley (it was published as part of that campaign in 1972), but it can also be seen as a document raising serious and important points about the position of Southern women in the U.S.A. Anne Braden states these points by using a subjective approach. The booklet deals with the development of her consciousness as a woman and her understanding of the part she had played in the 'Southern way of life'.

At the very beginning of the booklet, Anne makes clear her aims. She wants women of the South to take part in the campaign for Thomas Wansley. Wansley had been in prison since 1962, on a false charge of rape. His death sentence had been commuted because of a national campaign, but he was still not free. Anne seeks to show that new strength can be added to the campaign if those who had been used to put Wansley in prison could mobilise, with black organisations, on his behalf. That is why her letter is directed to the Southern white woman.

One of the first points that Anne makes is about the silence of many Southern women. Even though organisations, such as the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, had been active in the 1930s, the mass of white Southern women had allowed themselves to be enslaved in silence. They had not realised the ambivalence of their position. On the one hand they were figures on a pedestal, to be cherished and protected, while on the other hand they were 'powerless victims' of the whims of male society. They were no more powerful than the blacks they were used to persecute.

It is important that we see rape charges in the Southern states for what they are—that is, a method of repression. They are a weapon to terrorise the black community and create greater feelings of anti-black hysteria among whites. We all

know of the Ku-Klux-Klan and their terror campaigns, after slavery. This is just an extension of that brutal assertion of control, from whites who feel that their power was slipping away. We should note that Thomas Wansley's arrest came at a time of great turmoil in the South. Black people were organising against racism at all levels, through strikes, sit-ins, and demonstrations. Accusations of rape were an attempt to divert the movement and obtain some control over it.

Rape has only been given serious consideration when black men are involved. Significantly, in the Northern states, women have been fighting a long battle for the recognition of rape as a serious attack on their person. Even though rape is increasing in the North, it is virtually impossible to bring a charge. It is a fact of the South that not only are rape charges being made but also false ones can be used to persecute black men and their families.

Anne Braden marks the turning-point in her own political development with the case of Willie McGee in 1945. Though unsuccessful, this case was important because of the way black and white women, throughout the country, mobilised themselves around it. Anne now appeals to the Southern women to organise around the case of Thomas Wansley. She wants to see them spurred to action. By revealing her own development and final realisation of her power, as a woman, she hopes that the women will see that their only course of action is to rally around the campaign to free Thomas Wansley.

She makes it clear—and we must see this also—that this case is a symbol of black and white oppression. The white woman is as much the victim as the black man. As long as she accepts the fact that black men should be falsely rail-roaded to prison on her behalf, then she is strengthening the links that bind her to a degrading myth. The chain can only be broken when she rejects her apparent 'privileges' and attempts to define her life for herself. Anne sees support for Thomas Wansley as part of that break for freedom.

She does not ask women to make the issue one of self-sacrifice—a gesture to the blacks. It is, more meaningfully, a step towards their own liberation. We should remember that blacks as relatives, friends and organisations had been mobilising around these acts of terror for many years. Anne Braden cites her brief, but profitable association with the wife of Willie McGee, who continued to fight other similar cases until her death.

This booklet might surprise some readers. Many have felt that the issues of racism and rape charges were no longer of consequence. They were issues of the dim and distant past. Obviously, this is not so. Wansley is still in prison. Even though he was released in January 1973, when a federal judge overturned his conviction, by November 1973 he was back in prison, when the U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the January ruling. There are others others who are in prison after similar charges. All those who said that these acts of terror had died out have been proved wrong.

Just as rape charges are still being made, so too are other acts of racism. Many felt the issue of bussing had been won some ten years ago, yet the recent riots of Boston show that the battle still wages strong. The right-wing power structure is just as powerful and fights each case very carefully. Each case becomes a symbol of struggles which they feel cannot be lost.

We should regard each case of repression even more seriously. As a black woman I feel that it is important to understand the points that Anne Braden makes. She is asking white women to join in that vital struggle that black people, and particularly black women, have been engaged in for many years. If her readers do take up the challenge then a new dimension will be added to the case for Thomas Wansley. As Beulah Richardson says in the the poem at the back of the booklet, the possibility will be posed of black and white women working together and sharing common objectives.

Beverley Bryan

From recent letters from SCEF (Southern Conference Education Fund):–

Tom is in prison in Virginia. Our efforts to secure his freedom from prison have thus far been unsuccessful. However, we intend to continue our fight to free Tom . . . Here is Tom's address. I am sure he he would be glad to hear from you and others.

Thomas Wansley – 89980
Northside, State Farm, Virginia 23160, USA

Recently there are indications that there is a resurgence of this kind of frame-up. For example, James Carrington, serving 75 years in Virginia. For example, 3 young black men sentenced to death in Tarboro, North Carolina, in December '73.

The Importance of Teachers' Action

Teachers' Action, Nos.1 & 2, Teachers' Action Collective, London, 5p & 10p respectively

> By labour-power or capacity for labour is to be understood the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description'. (Marx, *Capital*, I, Chapter 6)

> This [labour-power] is a strange commodity for it is not a thing. The ability to labor resides only in a human being whose life is consumed in the process of producing. First it must be nine months in the womb, must be fed, clothed and trained; then when it works its bed must be made, its floors swept, its lunchbox prepared, its sexuality not gratified but quietened, its dinner ready when it gets home, even if this is eight in the morning from the night shift. This is how labor power is produced and reproduced when it is daily consumed in the factory or the office. *To describe its basic production and reproduction is to describe women's work.* (Dalla Costa & James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Introduction)

Of the various papers, magazines etc. whose subject is education and which offer themselves as in some sense 'radical', the most significant is I think the one that is the most unprepossessing in appearance, *Teachers' Action.* It is produced by a small group of London teachers and there have been two issues so far. Its unique distinction is to be related to a very important development in Marxism of recent years. This development, represented by the second quotation above, is the one that derives particularly from the work of Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James and Peggy Morton (the latter's 'A Woman's Work is Never Done' is included in the collection, *From Feminism to Liberation*, reviewed by Priscilla Allen in *Falling Wall Book Review* No.1).

Two of these three women have analysed how women are not only oppressed but exploited—how "by the non-payment of a wage [to housewives] . . . the figure of the boss is concealed behind that of the husband" (*Power of Women*, p.33). Dalla Costa and James see the objective relations between men, women and children as a function, basically, of the wage relation, of the fact that "capital rules and develops through the wage" (ibid., pp.25/6):

> What has been neither clear nor assumed by the organizations of the working class movement is that precisely through the wage has the exploitation of the non-wage laborer been organized . . . *Where women are concerned, their labor appears to be a personal service outside of capital . . . Where children are concerned, their labor appears to be learning for their own benefit.* (Ibid., p.26)

Thus, the passages on children and schools in *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* are central to the book's analysis. The "expulsion" (p.22) of children, by capital, from the home into schools is complementary to its concentration of women's essential function into the production and reproduction of labour-power sold as a commodity. "We are dealing with the entire organization of the society, of which family, school and factory are each one ghettoized compartment." (Note 5, p.50) Parents have the job of disciplining children in the home; but the nature and role of their disciplining is a function of this very compartmentalisation, of the comprehensive division of men, women and children from each other:

> Women, responsible for the reproduction of labor power, on the one hand discipline the children who will be workers tomorrow and on the other hand discipline the husband to work today, for only his wage can

pay for labor power to be reproduced. (pp.45/6)

Even when, as is often the case, the discipline of the mother over her children is to an important degree an expression of the father's authority, the *burden* of the task is hers. And whilst, in working class children, "there is always an awareness that school is in some way setting them against their parents" (p.23), at the same time there is often a strong tendency for parents to connive at this alienation of their children. Either their aspirations, that "their children should . . . be equipped to escape the assembly line or the kitchen to which they, the parents, are confined" (p.24), or their defensive feelings for their children in the face of the law and/or the simple need for survival–either or both are co-opted.

In other words, the onset of compulsory schooling–"forced learning"–further divided the working class family:

> In England [during the period when compulsory schooling was established] teachers were conceived of as 'moral police' who could 1) condition children against crime–curb working class reappropriation in the community; 2) destroy the 'mob', working class organization based on a family which was still either a productive unit or at least a viable organizational unit; 3) make habitual regular attendance and good time-keeping so necessary to children's later employment; and 4) stratify the class by grading and selection. (Note 2, p.50)

This division of the class–the development is wholly characteristic of the organisation of society under capital–only made more possible the co-option and exploitation of parents, mothers in particular.

Teachers' Work

The most important (and the clearest) strands of the *Teachers' Action* group's thinking relate closely to this analysis. The group take collective responsibility for their articles, and they courageously seek a different order of analysis from that of the usual left lines, represented most prominently by Rank and File.

Teachers Action begin with the nature of teachers' work. They are concerned to demystify its primary functions in capitalist society, in producing labour-power:

> . . . teachers are workers not because of their life-style but because they are productive in that they skill, discipline and grade the future labour supply: they contribute towards the production of cars, the extraction of coal or the manufacture of steel as surely as if they were the assembly-line operatives, the colliers or the blast-furnace men themselves. Our labour is bought for this purpose. (2, p.1)

To skill, to discipline, to grade. And to these three functions they add a fourth, child-minding ("A Conservative M.P. . . . during Britain's three-day week, said that teachers should be prepared to do a Saturday stint in order to free women for production"–1, p.6; Raising the School Leaving Age "is one form of employment rationing or unemployment rationing"–2, p.23).

> Our dissatisfactions with the way we are treated as workers forces us to the conclusion that although the State cares about the amount of schooling the children receive, it does not particularly care about the quality. (1, p.2)

The formulation is accurate with regard to the great mass of the population.

Teachers' Action's understanding that, in basic function, teachers are not relatively marginal servicing agents, but of central importance to the production of surplus value–this understanding means that they recognise, to a very uncommon degree, the potential power that teachers have. Which helps them to see that the traditional perspectives of teachers' unions and associations are at best irrelevant or inconsequential and, characterictically, reactionary in effect. It *also* enables them to see that the conventional left's approach to this situation is inconsequential, too. A passage in the second essay of issue No.1, on 'The Exercise of Teachers' Power', shows the group at their incisive best:

> . . . the weakness of the sort of approach often used by 'militants' in teachers' unions is that they channel their energies into the passing of resolutions at meetings of a minority of relatively politicised teachers and then go back into the schools and attempt to move other people to follow the lead. The poverty of this strategy is that there is no effective base for action. The average union member is always expected to implement rather than to initiate. When there is an inadequate response from the membership then scapegoats must be found, usually in the executive of the union. The solution is seen to be to throw out the old leadership and elect a new one: a new driver for the car but still no petrol. (p.10)

They are not categorically against *using* unions; but they know that exclusive preoccupation with union structure together with the consciousness, 'If only we could replace them with ourselves . . .' results in mere tinkering and/or the nullities of vanguard-partyism.

What about Workers' Control?

Teachers' Action reveal, in fact, an understanding of the State, and of the nature of working class power. At times, though not consistently, they demonstrate how seemingly 'progressive' moves can readily amount to disguised co-options by capital. While they seek to promote "the generation of action on local issues" (1, p.10)–that is, the realisation of local *power*–they "do not want to see staff associations taking over the functions and responsibilities of the administration and the State–for example making demands for a particular timetabling structure and then suggesting ways in which this can be achieved within the limited resources at their disposal" (1, pp.11/2). Relatedly, they know that just as "a council of slaves within slavery would be the most absurd democratic forum of its time, an imposition and not a reflection of power" (2, p.19), so–

> Councils of elected pupils are not parliaments of fools, they are parliaments of slaves. Not unworkable because the students can't think of anything they want, but because what they want is so total that their position as total dependents on their families makes their demands in school impossible and unspeakable. (2, p.26)

Just as 'Workers on the Board' must turn out to be merely advanced capitalism being especially advanced, so the 'progressive' notion that "the energy of student revolt can be channelled into a school council or other democratic organisation which will give the students a voice" (2, p.20) is properly met by pupils' "silence, their seeming apathy and unenthusiasm for the democratic school council is wiser in its estimation of the forces on their lives than our enthusiasm for such a forum" (2, p.26). (Compare *Socialist Worker*, 11 January 1975, p.6: "Rank and File works *within* the NUT but sees the need for the members to be able to act 'independently' if and when the leadership misrepresents its views or wishes. Rank and File fights for a single salary scale for all teachers, for democracy in schools and for democracy in our union." Their italics.)

Wages for Schoolwork

In their second issue, more than the first, *Teachers' Action* are seeking an analysis that penetrates below the level of classroom antagonisms: they see their pupils unequivocally as allies. In an article on 'Wages for Schoolchildren' in No.2, they define the revolt against discipline as "a rebellion against the power which the school system gives its waged workers over its unwaged ones" (p.24). Schooling is an "unpaid apprenticeship" (p.20), but the "mass apprenticeship to the mass labour market is disguised" (p.21): "The system makes it appear that grants are for living and wages are for work. The grant is tied to a means test, which makes it seem a subsidy of somebody else's work" (p.22).

The group stress wages for schoolwork as a means of helping to undermine the way in which the State co-opts parents. Waged workers are by definition unfree, unindependent; but unwaged workers are even less free, and the truth in a remark by a school student interviewed in No.2 is clear enough: " . . . if we was naughty, they'd say [i.e. parents], oh you're not getting your money today, and all things like these. Like if we had our own wage, we'd be independent." (p.29–the interview is a shortened version of one published in the *Power of Women Journal*, No.2.)

However, as with wages for housework, the *perspective* of wages for schoolwork has an additional significance–in what it can *reveal* of the workings of capitalism. In this I think the group's analysis is only partially successful. They start to penetrate the nature of what students are doing in school, but circle its core. Their problem is over establishing that going to school is going to work for capital.

Wages are paid to workers through the time

at work for the time away from work in which the worker is reproduced. The years at school are years of reproduction of the whole labour force. (2, p.22)

The placing of the two sentences together is obviously meant to imply something like a one-to-one identity between waged workers and their time away from the workplace on the one hand, and future waged workers and the period before they start waged work for the first time on the other. But the two sentences are so telescoped as to conceal much, in three ways.

First, in the statement "the worker is reproduced", you can envisage an actual worker—being reproduced (chiefly by his wife's servicing); but with the phrase "reproduction of the whole labour labour force", you can't do anything similar, since "labour force" is in this context an abstraction, operating as it were *across* the generations of waged workers. Thus, the identity implied by the placing of the two sentences together involves an albeit undeliberate sleight of hand. For the tendency of this juxtaposition is, in the context, to invest the abstraction "whole labour force" with the meaning 'future labour force'. Only if that tendency is effective in the reader at the critical moment, thereby suggesting—vaguely but strongly—an equation between attendance at factory or office and attendance at school, is the case for wages for schoolwork seemingly carried.

Secondly, the use of the passive voice in the first sentence—"for the time away from work in which the worker *is reproduced*"—conceals the *other* worker, the housewife who is chiefly responsible for servicing him, i.e. for reproducing his labour-power. It also conceals the fact that the waged worker contributes *actively* to the reproduction of his own labour-power during his time away from the workplace: I'm thinking here not so much of husbands helping with the washing-up, as of the reproductive function of 'leisure activities' under capital.

Thirdly—given the drift of the context, the intended meaning of the juxtaposition of the two sentences, and the phrase "years at school" in the second sentence—the authors conceal the fact that wages are paid not only "for the time away from work in which the worker is reporduced", but also towards the "reproduction of the whole labour force", in so far as parents contribute to this. (It may be as well to state here that, from another—complementary—point of view, waged workers are *not* paid for their time away from the workplace; since they are far from being paid for all their work *at* the workplace . . .)

That *Teachers' Action* are uneasy with their own analysis is suggested by the fact that, later the same page, they try a different tack:

> The wage, untied from the productivity deal, is from the workers' point of view a payment for time.

I don't really know what this means, but 'time' here seems to belong to the common parlance notion of time (the sort you can sometimes have 'to spare') than to that sense of time in Marx which understands it as literally part of your life, in which you move that bit closer to the point when your labour-power is no longer even inefficiently reproducible—i.e. death. That this is not an unfair reading is borne out by the next sentence:

> From the pupil's point of view it becomes payment for compulsory time under compulsory schooling—to them 'work'.

The uncertainty is carried in the insistence of "compulsory", and is definitively confirmed by that last phrase, "—to them 'work'". What kids do at school is not "to them" work, it doesn't just *feel like* work, it's not 'work' any more than housewives' work is 'work'—it's *work*.

This problem of identifying 'work' as *work* can be traced back to—or at least is compounded by—the words *Teachers' Action* use to describe the function of teachers in schools:

> People are not innately provided with the requisites of production, and it is our job to *inculcate* these. (1, p.2)
>
> Our product differs from most in that it is something *instilled in* people . . . (1, p.3)
>
> Not only does schooling *clothe* children with the right skills . . . (1, p.5—my italics in each case)

It's not that these words are quite inaccurate: they are partially accurate. But their partial *in*accuracy is critical. What they do is to present learning as something that is *done to* you; they obscure the fact that learning—however authoritarian and repressive the teaching—is *active*. Pupils, however unwillingly or inefficiently, are active accomplices in the business of internalising not only the skills but also the repressions, the attitudes, the dispositions—in a word, the disciplines—which are

important constituents of labour-power under capital. To take a simple and eloquent example: the accommodations an infant has to make, sooner or later, once it has been left at school by its mother for the first time are *extremely hard work*. He, or she, has now begun to work for capital in earnest.

Teachers and the State

Being teachers, it is right that *Teachers' Action* should begin with what being a teacher is about. But this necessary priority continually tends to issue in discussions that are unduly limited in scope. For example, that reference to the waged worker being reproduced in his time away from work is the nearest the group get to what is the staple of women's work; and their account of their own function is too much—by default—at the expense of what parents, and women in particular, do *in the home*. Their analysis can only lose by this sort of exclusiveness.

In addition, their teacher-oriented view of learning, which is the cause of their difficulty over why their pupils' work *is* work, is paralleled by their account of themselves as workers. Their statement—

> . . . teachers are workers not because of their life-style but because they are productive in that they skill, discipline and grade the future labour supply . . . (2, p.1)

is true and very important. And when they write—

> The fight for the wage will in itself focus and clarify the relationship of the pupil to the teacher, to the institution and to the society as a whole. (2, p.26)

they are correct. But not so as to warrant their remark at the end of the previous essay, on 'Discipline—Whose Problem?':

> The way forward must come from teachers and pupils joining together with a common aim for change. (p.18)

This smacks too much of the unreality of 'Black and White Unite and Fight'. In saying that—

> . . . [students'] rebelliousness is against us, their growth to power can only be with us or in spite of us. (2, p.27)

they miss a third (and the only viable) alternative: the growth of pupils' power will come with teachers *and* in spite of them. For teachers willy-nilly are—in that phrase which deserves greater currency than it has at present—the State in the classroom. In immediately foreseeable circumstances, any teacher who *comprehensively* forsook that role literally wouldn't be allowed to carry on. Either he would be assumed to have had a nervous breakdown and be excluded with authoritarian kindness, or he would be out on his ear: either way, the response would be immediate (and of course his union would not become *politically* active on his behalf).

I had better be clear: the cases of Michael Duane at Risinghill and Chris Searle in Stepney, for instance, are *not* precedents for what I'm talking about. To say that is not to make a criticism of those two people, or to deny their courage and the importance of their stands. For what I'm talking about is the *impossibility* of being a teacher "unambiguously" on the side of pupils: the most 'innocent' of behaviour ('Go and ask Dorothy to come and see me, would you? Tell her I'm ready to talk to her about her essay now if she'd like to come and see me') will partake in some measure of the authority structure—which is very strong and finely textured.

Teachers' Action are the more able to ignore this because of their tendency (it is only a tendency, though a persistent one) to separate the authority structure—the system—from the classroom teachers that are part of it. In their account, there are in fact two views which—especially in relation to such statements as, "since the beginning of State education . . . teachers have unambiguously been workers" (1, p.7)—can only be contradictory. They bitterly know from experience that the classroom teacher is coerced into doing most of the shit-work for the "hierarchy":

> . . . it is . . . common 'administration' policy to measure a teacher's success by his/her ability to discipline a class . . . (2, p.14)

And they know that the medium of much of the shit-work is the curriculum:

> . . . we grade the youth, help them acquire certain skills and stop them acquiring others. (2, p.21)

Elsewhere, though, they offer a model, of what school can do to new young teachers, whose cen-

tral feature is a myth of innocence:

> To most new teachers, entry into the classroom is nothing less than a traumatic experience. They enter the job with enthusiasm and a genuine concern to pass onto their pupils something which they consider to be of value. They are totally unprepared for the reaction which hits them. Their good intentions are rejected b' the kids; they find it difficult to manage their situation and become quickly disillusioned with their original aim. They begin to feel that the kids don't want to learn anything. When they turn to the school hierarchy for help, nothing is forthcoming. Total disillusionment sets in. (2, pp.9/10)

I certainly wouldn't deny that for many a teacher his or her first experience of teaching is "traumatic", that "enthusiasm", "good intentions" etc. often turn into "disillusionment". But the drift of this passage is that teachers *enter into* an authority structure; that there is typically a chalk and cheese relationship between what they find there and what they bring with them in their heads. Yet it is because what is in the texture of the school's authoritarian structure corresponds, in some degree, to what is in teachers' heads–everybody's head (my own, of course, included)–that the experience can seem so unresolvable, except into "disillusionment". This is part of the explanation of why some teachers can tolerate the intolerable for surprisingly long periods. And paradoxically this partial explanation can fuse with its contrary–the knowledge that sometimes something happens in spite of the system, something sometimes can be done that denies the system. It is of the greatest importance to recognise the extent to which capital divides and rules *in the individual consciousness.*

Fragmenting the Analysis

Teachers' Action therefore make it too easy for themselves, by concentrating on the more extreme forms of authoritarianism that the system would have teachers maintain:

> . . . but when the standards which the rules are aimed at upholding are alien to both the teacher and the kids, imposing discipline becomes both pointless and impossible. Hence there is a growing movement, particularly among young teachers, to refuse to enforce rules which they see as being irrelevant to the learning process. Who cares if girls wear jewellery in class, or smoke outside the school gates at break? To the hierarchy, the wearing of jewellery is the rejection of a rule and therefore something which must be corrected. If 'education' is a consumable product that we are offering the kids, what has jewellery got to do with it anyway? (2, p.15)

There is, here, an implicit endorsement of the view that many rules are "pointless" and "irrelevant". But as *Teachers' Action* indicate elsewhere, 'arbitrary' rules about uniforms, moustaches, jewellery etc. are not meaningless: they are part of capitalist education which is, in the first place, about maintaining order and hierarchy. Such rules keep, or are intended to keep, students in their places now (i.e. as unwaged children); and they can infect minds even while they are being ostensibly rejected, let alone when they are met with acquiescence. And even the sense of escape that most people feel when they leave school can work for the existing order: people are more likely to be uncritical of the *capitalist* category of childhood (that is, they are more likely to accept it as in the nature of things) when their sense of release from it has been such a physically welcome one. The fact that these effects are less apparent than they used to be is a testimony to students' increasing understanding of what is being done to them, and to their increasing unwillingness to stand for it; but it does not reduce the rules' "educational purpose". There is just as much educational *purpose* behind them as there ever was, even though more progressive representatives of the ruling class are coming to see that this purpose might be better served by other, new means–for example, school councils . . . "A council of slaves within slavery would be the most absurd democratic forum of its time, an imposition and not a reflection of power." (2, p.19)

Discussion in terms of the 'meaninglessness' of various forms of authoritarianism fragments the totality of *Teachers' Action*'s basic analysis. The following passage is a different occasion, but it has a similar effect:

> . . . those young teachers who enter schools full of ideas and ideals about education . . . want to interest, excite, teach about life and its complexities, widen horizons and prepare pupils for a notional maturity, building up the kind of relationships that will enable them to do it. What they actually find, unless they are extremely lucky in their choice of school, is a course directed towards an exam, the necessity of getting so many pieces of work into a folder before a certain time, often regardless of the real educational benefit of that work. (1, p.4)

The betraying phrase is, "unless they are extremely lucky in their choice of school". It's a phrase that–drawing inevitably on the preceding uncritical representation of young teachers as bright-eyedly eager to be bountiful to kids–suggests that *kids* who are lucky enough to be in one of a small minority of schools might actually get an education which wasn't essentially about producing labour-power for capital. Not that there aren't some schools in which you would be "extremely lucky" to find yourself, relatively speaking. The point is that, in such schools, no less than in those schools where you would be extremely *un*lucky to find yourself–

> The struggle for material independence and this demand for a wage [would] bring into the open the relationship of school students to the whole system of production, and to the wage earners in the institution of school. (2, p.26)

–and that relationship, "to the whole system of production, and to the wage earners in the institution of school", would not be basically different.

The way that *Teachers' Action* move, not infrequently, from their main frame of reference to a liberal one (and then back) can be very disconcerting. Here are some more examples:

a) Rules and regulations, *most of which have no 'educational' purpose*, have to exist in order to teach the future workers their position in the production process. (2, p.13–my italics)

b) . . . although the State cares about the amount of schooling the children receive, it does not particularly care about the quality. *It is this quality which we see deteriorating with our own work conditions.* (1, p.2–my italics)

c) Increasingly a smaller number of students–it could soon only be 'A' level students–are asked to create their own style, plan and think logically, give their own ideas on a given subject. (1, p.5)

d) We complain that the children just don't seem to want to learn and often the hierarchy of the school don't know the answer either. (1, p.6)

The effect of the italicised part of (a) is to make 'education' (compare "the learning process" in the first quotation of this section) a neutral category, removed from political reality, in a way that is characteristic of–essential to–liberal pedagogy.

To write of deteriorating work conditions is one thing, and comparatively striaghtforward. But as soon as you write simply and unguardedly of deteriorating *education*, as in (b), then you have implicitly to endorse what prevailed before. This is the beginning of a slippery slope which has remarks like (c) halfway down it. The latter is a piece of myth-making, about 'A' level now as much as other 'levels' in the past, which belongs unequivocally with the sort of mild agonising to be expected from the more liberal of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Yet further down the slope is (d): what is this one answer–"*the* answer"–which can be found by *Teachers' Action* and/or the ruling class? *The* answer is that it doesn't exist; cannot exist–and *Teachers' Action* have supplied enough reasons why in their basic analysis.

All the quotations in this section concede too much to the other side; which means that they concede too much to the liberal position, and *via that fact*, to the reactionary position. At moments like these, *Teachers' Action* abandon their Marxist frame of reference and take up a 'left' position within another frame of reference–a frame, that is, that can encompass both a 'left' and a 'right' position. Given such moments, it's not at all surprising that the work of *Teachers' Action* should be unsatisfactory when they tackle the curriculum. They avoid 'The Challenge of the Curriculum' (the title of the last essay in No.1) chiefly because they abandon, this time more than momentarily (and the same is true of the essay on teaching Science in No.2), their basic analysis.

The Challenge of the Curriculum

Both essays on the curriculum lack rigour. For

example, in issue No.1 *Teachers' Action* write:

> . . . the National Association for the Teaching of English classifies the writing that children offer their teachers, but apart from enabling the teacher to isolate and indentify these categories, it offers no help on why these categories are important. N.A.T.E. does not push its invaluable work to its necessary conclusion. (pp.15/6)

They appear to be referring to the work of James Britton and his associates, at the London Institute of Education, on 'The Development of Writing Abilities 11–18 Years'. In which case, they are ignoring the follow-up project, of Nancy Martin and her associates, on 'Writing across the Curriculum'–a project that set out to explore the practical implications of the categories developed in the earlier research. Here is what the team led by Nancy Martin have to say, in their pamphlet called *Why Write?*, about what they call their "basic" category, the "expressive":

> . . . *in which it is taken for granted* that the writer himself is of interest to the reader; he feels free to jump from facts to speculations to personal anecdote to emotional outburst and none of it will be taken down and used against him–it is all part of being a person vis â vis another person. It is the means by which the new is tentatively explored, thoughts may be half-uttered, attitudes half-expressed, the rest being left to be picked up by a listener or reader who is willing to take the unexpressed on trust. (p.11)

The work in and around these projects frequently stresses the significance of the "expressive"–the importance, among other things, of children being given abundant freedom to write in the expressive mode. Is this the sort of "necessary conclusion" that *Teachers' Action* are looking for? Their basic analysis would suggest the answer No; for that analysis indicates why children are not, and cannot, be given such freedom*–however much researchers may call for it. Yet *Teachers' Action* leave me wondering about their attitude, because of the casualness of their engagement with the two projects mentioned, and because a little later they complain that "no theory of a revolutionary *curriculum* has come about" (1, p.17–my italics). I no longer think that such a phrase can have any meaning in a Marxist analysis.

The chief significance of the work of Britton, Martin and the others who work with them inheres in its implicit clarifications of the present system–that is, of what *cannot be done* in that system. The same is true of other curriculum development projects–for example, the N.A.T.E./Schools Council project, 'Children as Readers' (with which I worked for a number of years after ceasing to be a teacher). Some of the work done in that project undoubtedly has profoundly subversive implications: I'm thinking of what has emerged of children's creative understanding from the study of small groups talking about poetry and stories on their own, without an adult present and without having received any teaching specific to the texts beforehand. The response of many teachers has demonstrated classically how the system can (must, to survive) contain human potentialities and channel them into practices that effectively deny them. Time and again after expressing interest, surprise–often wonder–at the way in which children engaged with texts when their 'responses' weren't being manipulated (at least directly) by an adult, teachers would then say, Yes, if it could be managed, it would be good for all children to have a session like that from time to time. In other words, the subversive potentiality in these teachers' reactions suffered an immediate metamorphosis and issued as a proposed *technique*–one that the system could easily accommodate and even welcome. That is how the system works; that is just one example of how it constrains and infects *every* teacher–more, or less. (In that particular case, even a teacher whose reactions didn't immediately transform and accommodate the subversive wouldn't be able to get much further in practice.)

* Though the degree of unfreedom does vary somewhat, primarily according to the nature of the labour-power being produced. As Jenny Walsh, a 15-year-old member of the National Union of School Students national committee, put it in an interview published in the *Guardian* last year:

> My school is liberal . . . because it can afford to be. It's small and we're middle-class kids. Sex education, for example, is very good. We've talked about contraception, abortion, and homosexuality. But working-class kids are not encouraged to think for themselves because they're expected to go on to the production lines. We're expected to become teachers, social workers, and the rest, so we're encouraged to ask questions, but not too many questions.

Teachers' Action can see clearly the necessity of going beyond "free-schoolers" who–

> . . . do not see schools as the places for training, grading and disciplining labour which they are, but see them as places of education which are unable to function properly because of the authority structure. The problem is not one of authority, but one of society's economic organisation which results in that particular type of authority. (2, pp.17/8)

But when they themselves write about the curriculum, they fall short even of the free-schoolers' analysis. Either that, or their treatment is too summary. An example of the latter is their description of recent innovations in science teaching, "with its much greater emphasis on discovery methods" (2, p.32):

> . . . the approach has been seen as the spearhead of a revolution in school science. To a certain extent this is true–it emphasises the need for pupils to be involved and in control of the material they are learning
>
> However, a comparison of the fundamental material being taught in traditional and Nuffield science courses shows that although the methods for selling it vary, the goods remain very much the same. (2, pp. 32/3)

In this case, the crucial task is to trace what has happened to the principle of using "discovery methods", and to the principle that pupils should "be involved and in control of the material they are learning": to trace how these principles have been channelled and perverted into something else, so as to become a new way of "selling" old "goods".

On the other hand, *Teachers' Action* fall short of what they characterise as the free-schoolers' view in the way they forget astoundingly, in the same article on science teaching, the nature of the institutions they are writing about, and adopt an attitude that could easily find similar expression as a praiseworthily-radical internal memo at the Department of Education and Science:

> We need to aim for an educated awareness of the role that science has played and can play, so that everyone has the information they need to make demands for the development of technology for their own benefit–to ease their working conditions, to develop automation so that manual labour becomes minimal, to control the environment by providing balanced diets for everyone rather than by doing more weapons research. Although we do not have a blue-print as to how science teaching must change to include these possibilities, it is clear that the curriculum innovations already in progress have not yet tackled the roots of the problem. (pp.35/6)

The whole drift of this passage is away from the analysis which locates "the roots of the problem" in the very nature of capitalist society.

Although *Teachers' Action* complain, in response to recent language studies, that "no theory of a revolutionary curriculum has come about", in neither issue do they pursue their complaint *at the level of theory*. Until they do this, it is inevitable that, in this area, they will veer about. Sometimes, because of an overriding sense of what the system is about, they do not register the potentialities revealed by certain developments–albeit ones that cannot but be thwarted or perverted under capital; which also means that they miss important opportunities for understanding better how capital works. At other times, they talk as though a revolutionary curriculum is possible in some respects now. And on one occasion when they do recognise the need for "recourse to a very broad framework", they actually take off–and in a very unpromising direction:

> Does this mean education for the politics of the future? It certainly does mean education for the management and control of new organisations, groupings and enthusiasms which seem to be emerging from a critique of the old. That doesn't simply mean telling pupils the truth about strikes, or the truth about unions. It doesn't merely mean a course in potted Marxism for the fourteen year old. It means the inculcation through a process of the confidence and responsibility to shape and control one's working conditions, and a consciousness of the extent of freedom in one's 'non-working' life. It means learning to plan and learning to execute the freedom of autonomy, intellectual and material. (1, 17/8)

To write of "education for the management and control of new organisations" etc. is, again, to abandon the strengths and direction of their main

analysis. And to embrace the conventional category "'non-working' life" is, even with the use of the inverted commas, to do the same.

The Collection of Progress

The failure, to date, of *Teachers' Action* in the face of the curriculum can, I think, be related to the contradictions in their theory of struggle. On the one hand, they–

> . . . do not want to see staff associations taking over the functions and responsibilities of the administration and the State–for example making demands for a particular timetabling structure and then suggesting ways in which this can be achieved within the limited resources at their disposal. (1, pp.11/2)

But on the other hand, they maintain:

> When staff associations decide on issues such as how many free periods they need and how these should be used, and how the resources of the school should be deployed, they are doing more than just settling minor issues. They are on the first step towards the control of the school, a step more meaningful than any number of union resolutions and directives. (1, p.12)

The comparison with union resolutions etc. is telling enough; but the step-in-the-right-direction family of political dead metaphors are among those with the most potent and seductive after-life. They lead to delusively simplistic strategy, as in the last statement quoted (which, bizarrely, comes only a few sentences after the previous one). It accords readily with the liberal model of struggle and progress as simply the *accumulation* of good things; as when, having noted–

> It is recognised that [the curriculum] needs to be of greater relevance to the pupils' present and future position, hence the proliferation of Mode III C.S.E.'s [the syllabus of which is designed by the examinees' own teachers] and new syllabuses demanding relevancy. Again, one strong argument put forward in favour of mixed ability groupings is that it eases indiscipline.

Teachers' Action continue:

> Whilst these general trends in the school system are to be encouraged . . . (2, p.17)

The central fact to grasp is that, in political terms, there can be no absolute good in any particular development under capitalism. Take, for example, two hypothetical schools. Liberal school A did away with uniforms and allowed moustaches and jewellery years ago. In school B there has been a hard struggle for years, by pupils and a few staff, to achieve the same situation. The situation in school A is different, politically speaking, from what would be the situation in School B once the militants got their way, where the liberalising of the rules would amount to a demonstration of the pupils' and staff's power. But, in turn, the situation in school B would itself become different, immediately after its achievement. In order to give such an achievement meaning in strategic terms, the struggle would have immediately to refocus and redirect itself. If you see your task as merely the collection, the accumulation, of 'progress', you are effectively working *for* capital, not against it. For capital can be as *progressive* as it has to be.

A Developing Perspective

It would be wrong not to acknowledge the extent to which *Teachers' Action*'s contradictoriness reflects the contradictions that radical teachers especially cannot avoid living every day (you are the State in the classroom, but–for example–some children in your class may turn to you at moments of stress more readily than to any other person in or outside school). However, the great strength of *Teachers' Action* is that, in many passages, they provide their readers with means to criticise their inadequacies in other passages. They possess the basis for a strategic analysis as yet undeveloped.

Teachers' Action's most important task is the development of a perspective which recognises that, although they feel at one with the Wages for Schoolwork perspective, it cannot be theirs. It cannot be theirs because they are teachers, not students. I think they need to develop a perspective that doesn't ignore, but takes account of, the contradictions in their relationships with students. They themselves have, in fact, done the preliminary work that is needed for this. For they write:

> It is amongst the group of pupils who reject schooling that the greatest discipline problems are found, since that rejection takes the form of not accepting the values and therefore the rules of school . . . By refusing to accept the values and rules of schooling, pupils are beginning to change the school system, even though this power to change is unrealized and disorganised. (2, p.16)

And, as *Teachers' Action* fully appreciate, what such rejection (whether outright or partial) means, among other things, is that teaching is becoming *much harder work*. The implication is clear: the more that teachers fight to reduce the amount of work they have to do, the more they will be realising a strategy that actually bases itself in the reality of school antagonisms–but in such a way as to complement, and effectively endorse, the perspectives of their most radical students.

Jeremy Mulford

Seeking Your Fortune

Stephen Hymer, *Robinson Crusoe and the Secret of Primitive Accumulation*, Warner Modular Publications, Andover, Mass., 30p

The paths of people who make it their business to study novels and people who make it their business to study economies, societies or ideas seldom cross. Established disciplines tend to study only the material which will most easily reflect back to them their own presuppositions. *Robinson Crusoe* has been for a long time, at least in England and North America, one of the exceptions that only prove the rule. For economists and historians it is one of the points at which literature can be rifled for vivid quotations about the state of the nation or of the nation's mind. For literary critics it is an occasion for people who will never use the word again to talk about the 'bourgeois' ethos; the momentary change of gear justified (and made invisible *as* a change of gear) by calling Defoe's novels 'realist', i.e. a special variety of literature which goes in for that sort of thing. The assumption that there is some necessary connection between the novelist's accumulation of facts and his character's accumulation of things would be worth investigating, but it remains a largely unexamined assumption because literary critics, like preachers, usually prefer an analogy to an analysis.

The great virtue of Hymer's essay is that it breaks out of this situation. He uses economic realities and the marxist theory of them to illuminate *Robinson Crusoe*, but equally *Robinson Crusoe* to illuminate them. He writes as someone who knows that we never come at any text, any more than at any other activity, innocent, though we often think we do. We come at a text through assumptions, which include the assumptions of other texts.

> The solitary and isolated figure of Robinson Crusoe is often taken as a starting point by economists, especially in their analysis of international trade. He is pictured as a rugged individual–diligent, intelligent, and above all frugal–who masters nature through reason. But the actual story of Robinson Crusoe, as told by Defoe, is also one of conquest, slavery, robbery, murder, and force. That this side of the story should be ignored is not at all surprising, "for in the tender annals of political economy the idyllic reigns from time immemorial." The contrast between the economist's Robinson Crusoe and the genuine one mirrors the contrast between the mythical description of international trade found in economics textbooks and the actual facts of what happens in the international economy. (pp.11/2

–and, as the quotation from Marx suggests, the contrast between the mythical description and Marx's description. So the discrepancy between the economist's reading and what is patently in the novel also acts as a kind of independent corroboration both of the accuracy of marxist analysis and of Marx's critique of bourgeois economics. This method of sharp juxtaposition and cross-reference also has the virtue of raising certain questions it does not actually ask. For what Hymer describes as the economists' view of the book is also the view of it held by most people who have never read any economics or literary criticism, whether they have read *Robinson Crusoe* or not. How can this be?

Defoe's language, his way of investigating the world, is very different from Hymer's, or Marx's,

or mine. But this kind of difference is something Hymer does not try to suppress. Instead he uses it, putting one thing in the context of another apparently unrelated one so as to highlight unexpected similarities and differences. And indeed this is the method he often shows at work in Defoe, and even in Crusoe himself, and then extends on his own account:

> Money and capital are social relations representing social power over others . . . Robinson is partially aware of this when he meditates on the uselessness of gold on his island:
>
> 'I smiled to myself at the sight of this money. "O drug!" said I aloud, "what art thou good for? Thou art not worth to me, no not the taking off of the ground, one of those knives is worth all this heap; I have no manner of use for thee; e'en remain where thou art, and go to the bottom as a creature whose life is not worth saving." However, upon second thoughts, I took it away . . . '
>
> He thus negates the Mercantilist system which made a fetish out of gold, but does not fully pierce the veil of money to uncover the underlying basis of surplus labor—does not in his theories, that is; in his daily practice he is fully aware of the real basis of the economy. (p.20)

At another point Hymer quotes a passage in which Crusoe describes Friday, but substitutes the word 'she' for 'he'. "This is not done to suggest homosexuality but to emphasize how rulers conceive of the ruled only as bodies to minister to their needs." (p.26) Once again the intersection of two languages is illuminating in *both* directions: it is not so much an analogy, which would stop us at the point of seeing resemblances, but an explosive illumination-in-a-strange-light of each by the other. It is a provocation to the analysis of the actual relations between the two forms of oppression. Or rather, it can be. Hymer himself rather stops the process in its tracks by dismissing the possibility that there is a homosexual relationship between Crusoe and Friday. But the effect on me was to make me ask questions I had never thought of before. Isn't it a very *peculiar* thing that, through all his 28 years on the island, Crusoe never has a sexual thought (especially as it cannot be put down to simple prudery in Defoe, who did not hesitate to write the 'biography' of a prostitute, *Moll Flanders*)? It is also significant that Crusoe engages in many occupations which are women's back in Europe.

All through, Hymer assumes that Defoe knows what he's doing. For the most part he assumes that what Defoe is doing is showing reality, but at the end of the essay Hymer says:

> In the last analysis, however, the story is only partly dialectical. We hear only of how Robinson perceives the contradictions and how he resolves them. In this work of fiction he is always able to fuse two into one. In actual life one divides into two, and the system develops beyond the capitalist's fantasy of proper law and order. Economic science also needs the story of Friday's grandchildren. (pp.35/6)

"In the last analysis" (always a danger-signal) seems here to mean 'in the last paragraph of my analysis'. When Hymer says "Friday's grandchildren" he partly means later generations of slaves who would not buckle under so easily, and partly that aspect of the owner-slave relationship which was never as smooth as Defoe makes out because people never did fully buckle under. Deliberate ambiguity is characteristic of the essay as a whole; and it mediates between the idea of Defoe as a kind of marxist analyst and Defoe as a bourgeois ideologist. But the deliberate ambiguity can be evasive. And here it vainly tries to resolve a surely very sudden switch from the one Defoe to the other. Perhaps the answer is that Hymer wants to see Defoe too much as knowing just what he's doing, the novel as a fully-conscious mind. And that may be why the essay doesn't give much help in exploring how it has been so possible for readers to misread it.

Hymer assumes of the novel what he says rather oddly of "the connection between exchange value and surplus labor" in ancient Athenian society: that though Aristotle and others couldn't see it, "it was there for all to see" (p.21).

To this extent the patent differences between Defoe's language and Hymer's (or Marx's) do amount to no more than a difference of expression in the narrowest sense: what Marx or bourgeois economists show or conceal with theories, Defoe shows or conceals with stories. And if we look at some of Hymer's formulations of what Defoe says, I think we can see that he changes more in changing the expression than he lets us know. For example:

> Robinson Crusoe was born in 1632. The son of a merchant, he could have chosen to follow the middle station of life, and raise his fortune "by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure." Instead he chose to go to sea—partly for adventure, partly because of greed. (p.14)

Certainly Crusoe is motivated by greed; and certainly, as he says, he "had a mind to see the world". But the reason why many readers find themselves puzzled about Crusoe's motives (and why recent literary critics tie themselves in knots wondering how far Defoe is aware of the contradictions in Crusoe's behaviour and attitudes) is that the two things (among others), adventure and greed, are in the novel expressed in terms that make any clear formulation of a distinction between them impossible. Crusoe starts out his first voyage, which is also, as Hymer says, the first circuit of his capital, with "toys and trifles" he has bought with £40.

> This £40 I had mustered together by the assistance of some of my relations whom I corresponded with, and who, I believe, got my father, or at least my mother, to contribute so much as that to my first adventure.

Now "adventure" there surely means *speculation*, financial 'venture', at the same time as it means adventure in the modern sense that Hymer can distinguish, as a distinct motive and activity, from greed. Robinson Crusoe sets out to see what fate (and later God) have in store for him. Robinson Crusoe sets out to get money and power. Robinson Crusoe goes to *seek his Fortune*. It is surely the same language that enables the novel to reveal so specifically and sharply the nature of the processes of what Hymer calls "primitive underdevelopment", and Crusoe's partial apprehension of it, which at the same time ensures that the contradictions in them are apparently resolved. It is surely this same language, way of investigating the world, that provides the basis *in the book* for the kinds of ideological 'mis-reading' which Hymer so effectively subverts.

Gavin Edwards

It was with great sorrow that friends and comrades of Stephen Hymer heard of his sudden death last year, in a car accident.

Relative exploitation *is higher at Ford than at BLMC. Part of the difference between the two is negotiated—ie the fact that Ford negotiates wage levels that are lower than other motor companies. But the other part is not negotiated—ie the* rate of work *(speed-up etc) which is imposed on workers by the Ford assembly line, in which they have little say.*

The organisation of work at Ford partly explains the fact that, for a long time, Ford shop stewards were very close to the interests of Ford line workers. At first, in the 1930s, factory organisation was hard to establish, because Ford, like Vauxhall, were prepared to concede wage increases. Then after the 2nd World War, union bargaining made company planning of wage levels a very precarious and temporary affair, and at the same time, shop stewards were put in a position to negotiate by the fact that there was a strong rank and file drive against work-speeds and conditions of work in general.

As a rule, with the Ford organisation of work, the more flow production *is introduced, and the assembly line is 'fluidified', smoothing out the bottlenecks and discontinuities that are typical of the UK engineering industry, the less room there is for anyone to* negotiate *the particular work conditions of any one group of workers. At this point, either the shop steward 'rejoins the workers' instead of fulfilling his role as a go-between in relations between the shopfloor and management, or he comes closer to the Union, and tries to use it and make his presence felt in the negotiation of money wages.*

Ferruccio Gambino, **Workers' Struggles and the Development of Ford in Britain**, reviewed on pp.3-5.

Notice of Need

Don't Be Too Hard on Soft Cops,
Dancing in the Streets, Nottingham, 5p

From many angles this is a curious document. With a presumably ironic title, it addresses itself to a large and neglected subject: the problematic role of social workers and community workers in the class struggle. The four-page article reproduced here by a group called Dancing in the Streets (a delightfully connotative name) of Nottingham appeared originally as a leaflet put out by Islington Gutter Press of London inviting "community workers etc" to a meeting to discuss their role. We are not told what happened at that meeting or whether, indeed, it occurred.

Nevertheless the pamphlet opens up a question that needs much more attention. Limitations of space do not permit the scope and depth of analysis that the introduction claims for the pamphlet. The practice and the literature of social work are vast and the pamphlet alludes cryptically only to some instances of local practice and events.

The interpretation that the pamphlet supplies has its limitations as well. It has two main failings: 1) throughout it emphasises the power and the conspiracy of the ruling class to subvert, contain, or co-opt the struggles of the working class and hence it belittles the power of those working class struggles to which the ruling class reacts; 2) more seriously, the pamphlet itself exhibits something like a social worker's attitude to working class struggle. As an example of both failings let us take an allusion to a youth centre. The pamphlet mentions a struggle that resulted in 'hush money' in the form of "a £12,000 log cabin and three full time workers". It speaks of the log cabin as a "partial victory" and adds that "the acid test will come in the use of it". One senses that the pamphlet writer would like to get the youth to *use* the centre under the aegis of some revolutionary social worker or organisation.

Contrast this to the uncompromising attitude of the youths themselves. A well meaning agent of the ruling class, writing in *New Society* about the "mobs" of Birmingham recently, complains that there is "a fine £12,000 youth centre at Shenly Green" (perhaps another log cabin?) but the local "mob" aren't interested in it.

The basic contradiction that the pamphlet labours under is that while it recognises the counter-revolutionary role of social workers, it is attempting to build a revolutionary organisation in their ranks. Individual revolutionaries there may be among them, and they no doubt subvert the intentions of the ruling class where they can. But the role, the job itself, is counter-revolutionary. It cannot be reformed or revolutionised—it can only stop. Perhaps some ex-social-worker-become-revolutionary will write an account of social work that covers the vast literature and practice of the profession. Until then, we have this pamphlet, this curious and contradictory notice of the need.

Priscilla Allen

The Threepenny Doctor

The Threepenny Doctor: Doctor Jelley of Hackney,
Hackney Workers' Educational Association, London, 10p

This pamphlet is one of a series of publications that is being produced in the working class area of Hackney (London) about the history of the people who live there—history recalled by people of the area, which gives a powerful sense of the quality of people's lives in the past. This pamphlet is a collection of reminiscences about Dr. Jelley, a doctor in Hackney early in this century.

Dr. Jelley was the people's doctor. At a time when most people had to pay directly for a doctor's visit, and pay what often amounted to a quarter of the family's weekly income (two shillings or two and sixpence) for the benefits of 'professional service', Dr. Jelley charged 3d. He was the threepenny doctor who lived up the road, and wasn't interested in the trappings of professionalism by which most doctors hold onto their authority over other people.

> He didn't carry a Gladstone bag. He used to carry all kinds of implements hanging out of his pockets. I've seen him walking along with his stethoscope hanging from one of his pockets. He wasn't like the ordinary doctor who would have a house in a very reasonable area; Jelley lived amongst the people . . .(p.3)

The introduction gives a vivid sense of what health and illness meant in a working class area sixty years ago, and of the humiliations to which people were normally subjected in looking for medical help. It also makes clear the extent to which people relied on their own remedies for coping with illness—and with fertility. Knowledge of herbal remedies and mixtures for various illnesses, and of primitive methods of abortion and contraception were passed on through the family. Women's health especially suffered, from a combination of undernourishment and frequent pregnancies.

> This context of inadequate or inaccessible medical treatment (and particularly the health and difficulties of overtaxed mothers), is important if we are to understand why Dr. Jelley was an important figure in Hackney. He was not just a colourful eccentric who provided everyone with a good laugh, he was 'the threepenny doctor' who had put his knowledge within everyone's reach . . . (p.v)

Jelley understood that a major health hazard was undernourishment, and would often prescribe steak rather than medicine. He also sympathised with the problems which women faced. He went to prison for performing an abortion, and when he came out "he bought a broken down old brake to take the women of Homerton to Southend as they needed a holiday."

Most of the stories are funny—he was an eccentric man whose antics people indulged and enjoyed because of their regard for him.

> I also remember him looking after his Christmas puddings boiling away on a coal stove up in the corner of his surgery, watching his puddings at the same time as he was seeing to his patients. He had plastered all over the front of his shop notices complaining about the police and he used to put certain words which he indicated by a long dash and left you to fill the swear words in. He had a notice complaining about the next door neighbours chickens that were coming into his garden and what he would do with them with his shotgun. (p.8)

Suzie Fleming

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For roughly ten years, between the time he first saw the print of a foot in the sand until he met Friday, Robinson Crusoe led a life of fear, anxiety, and care during which time his productive activities were reduced to a minimum and he scarcely dared to venture outside the narrow confines of his strongholds. When Friday comes, he becomes expansive again, teaching, building, accumulating. Though no mention is made of accounting, one can deduce that labor again became valuable, for Robinson is once more purposeful, and interested in allocation and efficiency, as he orders, causes, gives Friday to do one thing or another, instructs him, shows him, gives him directions, makes things familiar to him, makes him understand, teaches him, lets him see, calls him, heartens him, beckons him to run and fetch, sets him to work, makes him build something, etc., etc. Through his social relation with Friday, he becomes an economic man. Friday becomes labor and he becomes capital—innovating, organizing, and building an empire.

Stephen Hymer, **Robinson Crusoe and the Secret of Primitive Accumulation**, reviewed on pp.27-9

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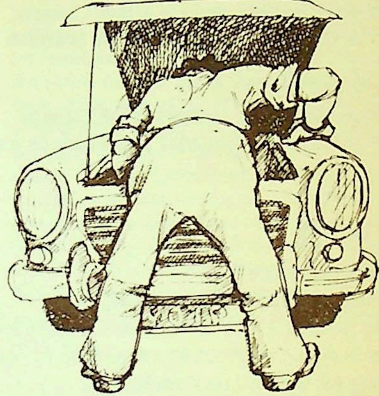
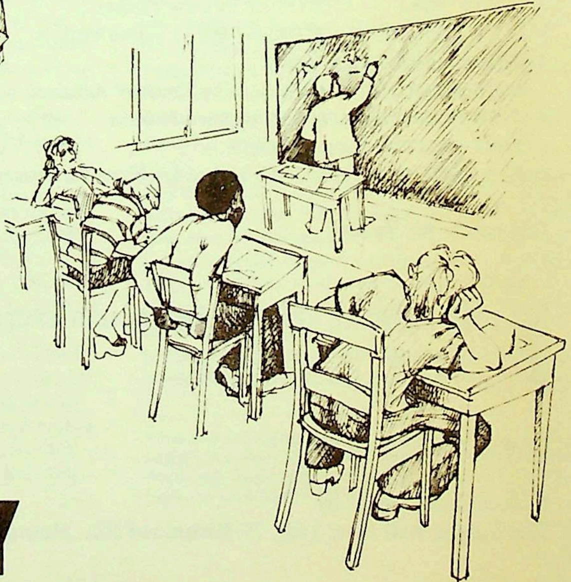
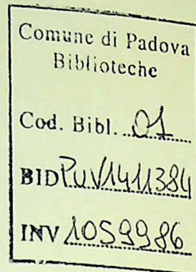




THE SOCIAL FACTORY

FALLING WALL REVIEW

Edited by Jeremy Mulford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The Social Factory

Introduction

The following article was written in September, 1974. For many of us, it was a turning point. We had recently dissolved our political group, Modern Times, an independent left organization in Cleveland, Ohio. Like many other collectives of the era, we had emerged from the student, anti-war and women's movements and our politics had been shaped by those experiences and the wave of black and other community struggles of the '60s. Through the student, anti-war and women's movements, we had tested the limits of our power and felt the need for a base bigger than ourselves, 'the working class'.

Again like many of our peers, we left the universities or the 'movement' and went out looking for the working class. Where was it? In the factory? In the community? In the offices? In the army? We were essentially libertarian—anti-vanguardist, anti-trade union, anti-left dogma and devoted to developing theory from practice on a local level. We did not see the necessity of an international perspective. We had failed to grasp the meaning of the struggles of the '60s. We had failed to see our connection with the rest of the working class and we had failed to see the working class, black, white and 'other', working in the community and in the 'workplace', divided by the wage or lack of it.

We knew what we were against, but we did not know what we were for. We knew the community was important but were not sure why. We knew we had to organize women but didn't know how. We concentrated on 'workplace organizing' because we thought that was where the power lay. Our 'practice' did not lead to 'theory'. But it did lead us to discover that not to understand how to organize in the community meant not to understand how to organize in the factory. Not to understand how to organize the power of women meant not to understand how to organize any sector of the working class.

We were politically bankrupt and we dissolved Modern Times in the spring of 1974. Some of us, however, were beginning to understand the wages for housework perspective and its implications for the entire working class. This understanding transformed our view of the class struggle and allowed us to break from our past, break from left politics, both libertarianism and vanguardism. The dissolution of Modern Times freed us to make that transformation and the writing of 'The Social Factory' several months later marks the transition. 'The Social Factory' documents our break with the left and we hope it will help others to do the same. Although our understanding has gone beyond the article, we have chosen to print it as originally written.

For most of us in Modern Times, 'The Social Factory' also represents our last effort in the context of a mixed men and women's organization. Although Modern Times had been dissolved several months before the article's writing, at the time it was important to speak in the name of the organization. Many of us are now in the Wages for Housework network and are helping to organize an international campaign for the wage. As part of an autonomous movement of women, we can finally speak for ourselves.

There are two points which we cannot leave without comment. The first was the failure to make clear that the document could not have been written without the wages for housework perspective. That perspective allowed us to see the power struggle within the working class and the need for the autonomous organization of various sectors.* It enabled us to begin with the unwaged labour of women and, through that, see the unwaged labour

* For this and a great deal more, we are indebted to Selma James's *Sex, Race and Class*, originally published in *Race Today* and since republished as a pamphlet by Falling Wall Press and Race Today Publications, February 1975.

of the rest of the working class. It allowed us to understand the 24-hour working day of the international working class and the need to struggle on that level. This is the debt that the whole movement owes to revolutionary feminism.

The second error to be noted here appears in the second paragraph of the article. We then believed that we lacked a national perspective; we did not yet understand that what we lacked was an international one. The Wages for Housework network sees the need for an international perspective and strategy because we recognize the level of power we need in order to confront capital. Our international solidarity is neither based on moralism nor restricted to words. We are beginning to understand the implications of an international perspective because we have no other way to understand our local situation. We are beginning to organize internationally because we have no other way to win.

The truth of this became much clearer to a few of us since we moved to Los Angeles, California. Undocumented workers* from Mexico are continually brought into the United States and primarily into the Southwest. They are forced to come to the U.S. because their alternative is starvation in Mexico. They have been used as strikebreakers against the United Farmworkers and work under the worst conditions because their employers, who knowingly use them in the fields, factories and domestic service, threaten them with deportation. At the same moment that Mexican workers are slipped into the country with Uncle Sam looking the other way, Mexican women are being sterilized against their will in Los Angeles and elsewhere. Women in labour, women under sedation, women who speak no English, are being compelled to sign consent forms. Capital plans internationally: who will receive a wage and who will not, who will work in factories and who will breed children, who will be denied abortion and who will be sterilized, who will live and who will be allowed to starve.

The conditions of our lives are determined by the needs of capital internationally. The wages for housework perspective not only shows how capital plans in order best to exploit our labour power internationally, it points the way to defeating capital's plans. Wages for Housework means wages for everything we do; it means developing the power to refuse all the work we do for capital, whether it consists of turning screws on an assembly line, washing dishes or quietly dying in a corner. Wages for Housework means to struggle for what we need and to develop our power to get it. In other words, it means to defeat capital.

Beth Ingber
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* Workers who have entered the country 'illegally' and have no work permit.

The Social Factory

Many of us in the independent left have reached a point of re-evaluation. We have found our political perspective and organizing inadequate and sometimes irrelevant to the needs and activities of the working class. And yet we have found ourselves unable to integrate our collective practice and maintain a national discussion from which could emerge new perspectives.

Our lack of political clarity and development on both a national and local level contributed greatly to the dissolution of Modern Times. For example, we in Modern Times came to doubt the viability of our primary organizing perspective: the 'mass revolutionary organization at the workplace'. To the extent that such organizations are possible, how are they essentially different from trade unions? In what way are they capable of going beyond the limitations of the factory? But although our own experience made us doubt our original organizing perspectives, we were not able to posit alternatives which might have helped us move forward.

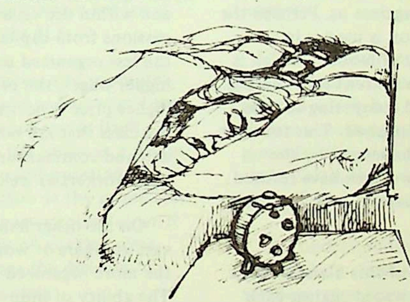
Our inability to move forward left us in a political limbo. Four members of the former Modern Times collective reacted by retreating to traditional left politics based on class struggle trade unionism (for example, the politics of I.S.). The majority of us reject these politics.

Perhaps at a future time, it would be useful for us to present a direct critique of traditional left politics. We feel, however, that at this point, there are more urgent matters. We would like to present an alternative perspective on the class struggle, one which we hope will help us go beyond our former limitations. Although these ideas are still in embryonic form, we feel they point in new and important directions.

What is the working class?

We begin with the question: what is the working class? The answer is generally posed by the left as follows: the working class is the industrial proletariat, i.e. the blue collar workers. Sometimes the working class is stretched to include non-industrial waged workers—white collar workers, nurses, etc. Outside the working class, there are 'the rest of the people'—blacks, women, prisoners, gay people, students, the unemployed, welfare mothers, schizophrenics and cripples.

This is essentially capital's definition. There are productive workers on the one hand, and on the other, there are the social problems who are a drain on the 'society'. The left picks up on this analysis and develops it further by designating the productive workers as exploited and the rest as oppressed. Productive workers are sometimes defined by their position in industrial production, and sometimes simply in terms of their being waged or not.



This view of the working class reflects a failure to understand that modern capitalist society is a factory—a social factory—the whole of which functions to reproduce capital in an ever-expanding form.*

In the social factory the state more and more plans the utilization of our labour, always with the view toward the maximim profitability on the social level. When capital decides to cut inflation by creating more unemployment, the unemployed are functioning to expand capitalist profits. When capital needs women's labour power off the market, both their unwaged labour in the home and their 'unemployment' are productive to capital. When it is more profitable to capital to keep the elderly off the labour market, they are thrown into the junk heap of social security.

The working class, then, cannot be defined in terms of its productivity on the individual factory level, nor can it be defined according to whether or not it is waged labour. The productivity of the working class exists on the level of the social factory and the role of some of us in that factory may be to be unemployed.

Employed or not, we spend 24 hours a day working for capital in the social factory. Waged labourers spend their remaining hours 'after work' reproducing themselves to return to work. Eating, sleeping, drinking, movies, screwing are all essential work which we do in order to be prepared for the next day's labour. These same functions are perhaps even more essential for the 'unemployed' so they will not turn their violence against capital.

Women's labour is central to the social factory. Aside from providing a cheap labour force which can be returned to the home with relative ease, women bear the burden of bringing up the next generation of workers and feeding, clothing and comforting their men so they can return to another day's labour. They also have to manage the family budget in the face of inflation. All this is unwaged labour for capital.

One reason that it has been so difficult to see

*The functioning of the social factory is more and more under the direct management of a constantly expanding state. The institutions which comprise the modern capitalist state attempt to both absorb our struggles and organize our exploitation. Universities, social workers, town planners and prisons, for example, plan and attempt to carry out the absorption of social revolt. Economists, trade unions, the army and the media either plan or function to facilitate the regulation of our labour and consumption.
Through taxation, the state accumulates large chunks of capital which are necessary for economic planning. The defense industry is expanded or shrunk. Injections are given to near bankrupt industries to prevent social dislocation (for example the $200 million given to Lockheed to prevent bankruptcy). The economy is inflated, deflated, stagflated.

the working class is that some labour is waged and some unwaged. For example, the unemployed, welfare mothers and the elderly receive social welfare which disguises their role in the social factory. The amount of money the unwaged receive generally depends on two elements: the minimum required to reproduce labour power—their own and their children's—and the amount of power they have or can threaten to exercise.

There are many levels of power within the unwaged sector. Unemployed youth have more power and can demand more money than invalids—not only because their labour power is potentially more valuable to capital, but because black youth can threaten to burn down the cities.

As a whole, the unwaged have less power than the waged, their wageless state being both a cause and effect of their powerlessness. There is, however, an overlap. Domestic workers have been known to earn less than the unemployed! *

The division between the waged and unwaged

The division between the waged/unwaged is one of capital's strongest weapons against us. Perhaps the most obvious way this division is used is in the creation of the 'reserve army of labour', which is an international army. To the extent that there is a large group of unemployed competing for the same jobs, wage levels are depressed. This function of unemployment is being challenged by the working class. Many young workers have refused to accept low-paying or distasteful jobs and prefer welfare or hustling.

A second and related use of this division is the turning of the waged and unwaged against each other. Wage labourers are invited to join in an attack on welfare recipients who are supposedly causing higher taxes. Since a disproportionately high percentage of the unemployed are non-white, this encourages white racism.

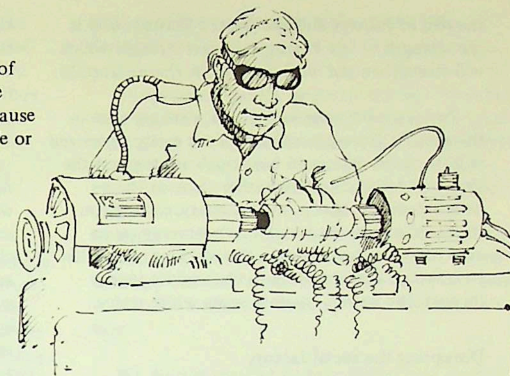
A third use made of this division is to divide the working class in its loyalties. It is difficult for waged and unwaged workers to see an identity in their class interests. When welfare women fight for more money, auto workers don't easily see that as a wage struggle which should be supported like any other.

The division between waged and unwaged is used very effectively against women whose work in the home is only beginning to be recognized as work. Particularly because of the central role of women in reproducing the working class, both in terms of raising children and keeping men going and ready to work, men could easily see a struggle of women for wages and a shorter workday as a threat to them and not as a legitimate workers' struggle.

In reality, the wageless and powerless condition of housewives and other sectors of the working class is both the strength and weakness of the more organized sectors of the class. The wageless position of the wife gives a power to the husband. Skilled workers and highly organized mass workers have maintained a position of power against capital and within the class because they can demand concessions from capital, the cost of which is borne by the less organized sectors. If auto workers strike for higher wages, the price of cars will go up and that higher price is borne primarily by those sectors of the class that are not in a position of power to demand commensurate wages. That includes lower-paid workers as well as the unwaged.

On the other hand, the wageless condition of vast numbers of workers weakens the struggles of the more organized in the ways outlined earlier. The ability of industry to move south or out of the country in the face of high wage demands is an example of this. (This in no way implies, however, that as industry moves, the working class in the newly developing areas won't increase its own struggle. On the contrary, capital's inability to control the working class is international.)

* Just as there is a continuum of power within the unwaged sector and between the waged and unwaged, there are two continua of power within the waged sector. One is the continuum among industries: steelworkers in general have more power and earn higher wages than agricultural workers. Labour which is an extension of housework—hospital work, clerical and domestic labour, etc.—is low on the scale. Some power is based on skill and restricted union membership, as in the construction industry—a situation maintained by the trade unions. On the other hand, the power of mass industrial workers is based on organized struggle—struggles which gave birth to industrial unionism.
The other continuum of power within the waged sector exists within each industry. Again this may be based on skill or degree of organization.
Certain sectors of the population are clearly over-represented in the bottom layers of these continua. Women, blacks, chicanos, immigrants . . . the list could go on of the more powerless sectors of the class which are either unwaged or concentrated in poorly paid or dangerous jobs. Racism has been a tool to keep non-whites in this powerless position.



Waged women have keenly felt the effects of the wageless state of their sisters. Women have been compelled to accept low-paying jobs because their only alternatives are to be a wageless wife or a welfare recipient.

Another example of the way the wageless condition of some weakens all would be found by looking at an auto worker in his family situation where the wageless condition of his wife means that his wage is not only expected to reproduce himself but his entire family.

The same kind of dynamic clearly applies within the waged sector of the working class. Capital is more willing to give in to demands of the more organized sectors if the cost can be passed on to the less organized. But in the same way, the powerlessness of any sector of the class weakens the whole working class. Perhaps a classic example of this dynamic is the South African auto worker, where the white workers earn enormously higher wages than the blacks, yet their wages are far lower than auto workers' in the U.S.

The trade unions both express and promote the division between the waged and unwaged sectors, as well as within the waged sector itself. Although one's relationship to the union in a particular workplace must be a tactical question, developing trade union struggles as the prime emphasis cannot be a revolutionary strategy since it neither relates to the activity of working class militants, nor does it challenge the division of labour and power within the class.

Power struggle within the class

The explosions of the '60s, such as among blacks, women, welfare recipients, students etc., can now be seen in a different light. These were not 'oppressed minorities' struggling against discrimination. They were sectors of the working class struggling for power. They represent not only a struggle against capital but also a power struggle within the working class.

The working class is continuously redefining itself through its own activity. When the black community demanded more money, it clearly raised the point that if blacks were unemployed, it was because capital wanted them unemployed. This is both a demand for wages for unemployment and a struggle for power. The recent unionization and wage struggles of hospital and clerical workers is another instance of a sector of the class demanding recognition as workers and developing power within the class. Prisoners have struck as well to demand union wages and recognition as workers.

These workers are making clear their relation to the productive process—to the social factory—a relation which has been mystified for so long. And they are challenging the position of the more powerful layers of the male industrial working class, just as the mass industrial workers challenged the skilled workers in the '30s.

An understanding of this power struggle within the working class as well as against capital must be the departure point for revolutionary strategy, for it is only through this struggle that the working class can unite itself and increase its power as a class. This whole dynamic applies on the international level as well. Any increase in the strength of the international working class strengthens the position of the national working class.

In the Portuguese 'coup' it was the struggle in the colonies in conjunction with increasing strike activity in Portugal which forced the capitalist class to loosen the reins in the metropolis—Portugal. But Portugal is a kind of third world to the more advanced capitalist countries. And it is the increasingly acute class struggle in Portugal which is preventing international capital from continuing to use Portugal as an escape from the class struggle in

the rest of Europe and the United States; i.e. it is the strength of the Portuguese class struggle which will strengthen the working class in the metropolis.

To locate the vanguard of the working class in the already more powerful or more easily organized sectors of the class is to base one's strategy on the divisions within the class rather than on their destruction. To base a revolutionary strategy on the trade unions is to base one's strategy on an even narrower layer within the working class—that layer which is still willing to channel its energy through the unions—mainly some white males.

Disrupting the social factory

Our strategy is to disrupt the social factory, to develop the power of the class as a whole so that it can choose to act according to its own needs, and not those of capital; to withhold its labour, to refuse its function in the social factory, to destroy capital's plans. To do this, a strategy must attack the divisions within the working class, divisions among waged workers, and between the waged and unwaged. The capitalist-defined division between the workplace and the community must also become irrelevant. Our whole lives are integrated into the social factory and we do and must resist on that level.

This strategy does not envision all sectors of the working class subsuming their needs under a general program which would of necessity reflect the interests of the already more powerful layers within the class. It seeks to develop the power of all sectors of the class so that unity can be built on the basis of the power each sector could offer the others. That is the meaning of autonomous organization of different sectors of the class. Women, for example, must organize autonomously, not only because men cannot express women's needs or develop women's politics, but because women must develop their power within the working class.

The struggles of the wageless are crucial. Money demands by the unwaged are a direct attack on the waged/unwaged division. They are also extremely subversive in that they allow *workers* to make the choice to refuse to work for capital. As long as we are unemployed for the benefit of capital's profits, we are working in the social factory. When we begin to find ways to disrupt capital's plan for how many and who are to be unemployed, we are subverting the social factory.

Women need wages for housework. Women in the home, whether or not employed outside the home as well, are providing up to 24 hours a day unwaged labour. This is not only a source of weakness for women but for the whole working class. Women must struggle for power against capital and within the working class, for the recognition of their labour, a shortening of the workday, services provided by capital, and money.

Wages for Housework would fundamentally disrupt the social factory. Capital could no longer expand on the backs of an unwaged female population. Housework would have to be revolutionized if it were paid hourly. And women would have the choice of refusing to be pushed into the second job, outside the home, whenever it suited capital.

If much of this appears to neglect those highly organized and powerful workers in, for instance, auto and steel, we wish to make it clear that this is not the case. At the time of writing we are on the brink of a miners' strike which could easily change the whole character of the class struggle in this country. If, as happened in Britain, the miners defeat the government, they will have made it clear to all those less powerful that the government can be defeated. They will have raised the level of expectation of all other waged workers and made the gap between the waged and unwaged even more glaring.*

The fight between the miners and government is a critical one because both the size and the nature of the miners' demands challenge capitalist planning and disrupt the social factory. The size of the demand makes a mockery of capitalist wage policy; and the nature of the demands (e.g. $500 [£250] a month pension after 20 years with the union rather than with any particular company) will allow workers to stop working at 40.

This already begins to go beyond the factory gates. We are beginning to decide when, and under what conditions, we are going to be on the labour market. The large-scale unemployment which seems to be in store for us can be met in a similar fashion. We must make it clear that it's the money we're interested in, not more jobs. Sub pay† in auto and steel is already a realization of this demand.

These points hardly begin to indicate what kind of struggles could be developed with the perspective we are putting forth. This whole discussion has of necessity been very schematic. Many other elements could have been explored, like the false dichotomy between economic and political struggles—a dichotomy which leads one into being a good trade union militant at work and a 'revolutionary Marxist' in the party. But hopefully this will do for a start, to open up some needed discussion.

We do not pretend to have everything figured out. But confusion is something that we may have to live with until our practice and the activity of the working class will clarify many things. We cannot allow our inability to answer all questions to cause us to return to more comfortable, traditional approaches.

Beth, Bob, Joe, John, Kathy, Michael C., Paula, Rick, Sam, Sidney

November, 1974

* The government was attempting to put a ceiling on wage settlements, hoping they would be somewhere in the region of 5%. With a declared inflation rate of 12½% in the U.S., this would have meant an enormous defeat for the working class. By the time the miners' strike took place, in early November 1974, steel workers had already had a wage increase of 14% rammed down their throats in exchange for a no strike clause lasting until 1980.

The miners, on the other hand, were dealing from a position of strength, having just won a series of wildcat strikes against the mining companies and the state government over questions of safety, the right to take time off, and buy petrol whenever they wanted it [in defiance of rationing during the 'oil crisis']. The government, perhaps with an eye to what had taken place in Britain a few months before, decided this was not to be a test case and the miners were given much of what they asked for after only about 5 weeks.

The gains were estimated at about 54%. Pensions jumped from $150 to $375 per month (about £190). They won company paid disability insurance of £47 a week for up to one year, and a cost of living escalator which will cover about 60% of the rise in the cost of living. Wages were increased by 9% and will increase by 3% in each of the two subsequent years (from an average of £24 per day to £28).

While it is clear that the strike did not in fact radically alter the class conflict, in part at least because the government refused the challenge, a settlement of this size cannot but have some long term consequences. Already Ford has had to invoke Taft-Hartley [a law postponing a strike against the 'national' interest] against the railway workers who are demanding a package of similar proportions.

† A benefits system under which a laid-off worker from one of the big auto makers receives 95% of his base take home pay. He must have at least one year's seniority. But the money comes from a fixed fund, which is contributed to on the basis of the number of workers working at any given time. Because so many autoworkers are on lay off now, the fund at both Chrysler and G.M. has already been exhausted. Workers are back to living on regular state compensation (which varies from $35 [£18] per week in Texas to $95 [£48] per week in New York).

From Slaves to Proletarians

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*, New York, Atheneum, 746 pp., £2.50

In this fat volume written between 1933 and 1935, Du Bois proved that the black slaves were the motive force in the abolition of slavery in the United States. It was neither the white radical abolitionists nor the Union Army that took the role of protagonist in that long, protracted struggle. Yet when Du Bois wrote *Black Reconstruction* the line of defence of pro-Reconstruction historians was based not on the activity of the black people but on "the reflex response to slavery by a disturbed conscience", as C.L.R. James phrased it.* Du Bois went further. If he had just proved the crucial role of the slaves in making themselves free he would already have made quite an achievement against the anti-black historiography that had been dominating the field for sixty years between the end of Reconstruction and his book. In fact, apart from its being a documented vindication of the contribution of the black proletariat to the making of North American society before, during and after the Civil War, *Black Reconstruction* demonstrated that the political skills of the slaves in the antebellum South had achieved a sophistication that the slaveholders did not dare imagine, and even less control.

The planter class was not able to survive the slaves' relentless struggle. The slaves went from the silent, day-to-day struggle to the withdrawal of their labour from the plantations and to volunteering in the Northern army. The slaves' 'general strike' which transferred their labour "from the Confederate planter to the Northern invader" (chapter 4, p. 55) transformed the war from a duel between slaveholder and industrial capitalist into a confrontation between the black proletariat and the State as a collective capitalist.

* C.L.R. James, 'The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery', in *Amistad 1*, edited by John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris, New York, Vintage, 1970, p.156. [This anthology was reviewed in *Falling Wall Book Review* No.1, and is available from the Falling Wall Book Service.–Ed.]

The black proletariat

Du Bois outlined the contours of *Black Reconstruction* at least 20 years before writing the book, as his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), *John Brown* (1909), 'The Benefits of Reconstruction' (1910) and *The Negro* (1915) prove. Yet he wrote his masterpiece only when he broke away from the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People (NAACP) early in the '30s, and was prepared to face the hard fact that the blacks had no 'progressive' allies left at a time of Depression. He was looking for the time and people that the blacks had had the strongest impact on. Therefore he went back to the Reconstruction years in his search for a time when his own people stood up—and fell—as a central force and not as a rearguard in moulding U.S. society. In the Reconstruction Du Bois saw primarily the self-activity of the ex-slaves becoming a modern proletariat with arms and power in their hands—and also the angry "counterrevolution of property" and its postbellum State. At a time when the 'Marxists' usually portrayed the working class as an appendage to progressive capital, the structure of Du Bois's book left no doubt about his class viewpoint: first comes the black worker (chapter 1), then the white worker (chapter 2), and *only then* the planter (chapter 3). This is the new sequence established by the greatest historian of U.S. society in this century, a sequence that was unheard of in the Western world in the '30s. After *Black Reconstruction* it has become a proved nonsense for historians to talk about labour *and* black people: black people as working class, as the oldest and most experienced section of the working class against the U.S. State, that was the lesson to be drawn from the Reconstruction years in the '30s, when *labour* and *blacks* were regularly conceived of as two separate entities.

In the first part of *Black Reconstruction* (chapters 1 through 6) Du Bois focussed on the black masses' ability to clash and win against the slaveholders even at the cost of being "repeatedly and deliberately used as shock troops, when there was little or no hope of success" (chapter 5, p. 107). In the second part of the book (chapters 7 through 17) Du Bois retraced the black community's attempt to put itself together again after the material and human ruins of the Civil War. Then the black proletariat came as close as no other section of the working class in the U.S. to exercising State power, what Du Bois would have liked —and could not—call 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. The heading of chapter 10 makes the point clear: "How in the years from 1868–1876, in a state where blacks outnumbered whites, the will of the mass of black labor, modified by their own and other leaders and dimmed by ignorance, inexperience and uncertainty, dictated the form and methods of government" (p.381).

The defeat of the black proletariat in the South was a direct result of industrial capital's conquest of the State through the Civil War and its aftermath. It was achieved with sheer and wild violence, organised fraud, and the "dull compulsion" of imported and native capital. To crush the resistance of the blacks and their rising alliance with the poor whites the State had necessarily to reject the "40 acres and a mule" demand and to drive 40,000 black people off the land of the Sea Islands and adjoining lands that they had occupied and cultivated as Freedmen. However, this was not enough. The new men of power in the South seized a rising industry (iron and coal) and moved rapidly to throw the black proletariat from a position of attack to a position of defence. In the plantations, the mobility of the ex-slaves was violently limited; in the rising urban ghettoes seclusion was the rule. This counter-revolution needed an ideology. Racism provided an easy one. Racism had been deeply ingrained in Western society, but now it took a key importance. It had to do to the white population in terms of consensus what the material chains of slavery had done before to control the black people. As Du Bois had written in *The Souls of Black Folk*, "the Negro suffrage ended a civil war by beginning a race feud" *. Yet some of the black people's accomplishments during Reconstruction were irreversible: the right to geographic mobility in some areas of the South, the founding of a public school system throughout the South from scratch, the ferment produced in the working class by the fugitive slaves and their political heirs, especially among miners, all these new activities could not be stopped by armed property.

* W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, New York, Fawcett, 1961, p.40

In a sense one can agree with Robert S. Starobin " . . . even if slavery is theoretically and practically incompatible in the long run with full industrialization, the point at which this inconsistency would manifest itself had, apparently, not yet been reached between 1770 and 1861."† Capital and slavery, capital and wagelessness could co-exist, if not indefinitely, certainly for a long time, if it were not for the resistance and attack of the slaves against their masters. It took the black people slavery, Civil War, Reconstruction, peonage, ghettoisation, the revolts of the 1950s and 1960s to put two words such as capital and wages irreversibly together, and to open a new stage in the struggle of the wageless against the State as collective capitalist

Ferruccio Gambino

† Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slaves in the Old South*, New York, O.U.P., 1970, p.189.

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Hillbilly Women

Kathy Kahn (ed.), *Hillbilly Women*, New York, Avon, xxiv & 151 pp., 65p

> When all this murdering and killing happened over at Evarts that was when the coal company hired gun thugs and they met up with the miners that was out on strike . . . During all this time the thugs kept coming to our house a-searchin' for the machine gun that was used at Evarts. They'd come in and tear everything up, tear up the bed, cut open sacks of beans, a-lookin' for that machine gun. One time when they come . . . Mommy stood there and held the shotgun on them the whole time . . . When they had finished searching for the machine gun, they started to leave. But Mommy held the shotgun on them and made them put everything right back just the way it had been before, made them clean up the house.

The experience of having our homes invaded by the enemy is common to women wherever the class war surfaces in armed confrontation. In the U.K., women in Northern Ireland, and other women especially in Irish and black communities, will see their own situation and their own resistance reflected in the struggles of hillbilly women. And others, who know less about the class war, will begin to learn that the American working class has not been 'bought off' but forced at gunpoint to submit to an intensity of exploitation unparalleled in most of the world.

Hillbilly Women however does not concentrate only on the violent confrontations that have established the terms of life and work in the Appalachian mountains. It is a collection of transcribed tapes in which 19 women from the region tell their own stories. And the stories show clearly how, even when the thugs and deputies do not cross the threshold, the mill owners and mine owners are bosses in our homes, how, with the State, they control every minute of our lives, and how they are constantly resisted. They show women working day and night to keep their families and neighbours fed and clothed. They show children, too, harnessed to reproducing the area's labour force: "I worked in the wheat and rye; helped stack it, haul it, and thresh it. Then after I'd finished I had to run to the house and help Mama on that old cook stove, cooking for all those men who worked at the saw mill and boarded with us . . ." They show how pollution—of the countrside, of the workplace, of homes and of bodies, is one of the processes of production. Miners die of black lung, women and men in the cotton mills die of brown lung, strip mining destroys the mountains and hollows that hillbillies who migrate to the flat stinking streets of Detroit and Cincinnati always say they will some day go home to. Explosive blasts and the dampness and floods that strip mining create destroy the homes that mountain families build: "The doors won't close, the foundation sinks and cracks the walls . . . your walls mould . . . your children stay sick with bronchial troubles . . ." And to complete the invasion and conditioning of our bodies by production and for production, women in the Appalachians, like women everywhere, take 'nerve pills' to help them 'carry on'. It is a sign of the production rates common in the U.S., from the sweat shops of the mountains to the 'best' jobs in the car plants of Detroit, that American women take speed as well as tranquillisers: "see, they have to keep up their production . . . the pills can be got by just snapping your fingers."

The women speak for themselves

As these stories describe the international conditions of women's work where these conditions are most brutally exposed, they show also the international realities of our struggle. Let the women speak for themselves.

On survival:"It's always been there was trouble for us . . . from day to day we've fought, worrying about where the next meal's coming from . . ."

On the unions, which these women had built and risked their lives for: "We keep fighting for the union but so far the disabled miners and widows haven't got nothing for the help we give them every time they go out on strike. If there was a picket line I feel I'd have to go on it. But I won't attend no more meetings with the union people just to hear the same talk I've heard for years. I'm wiser now."

On femininity: "If a working woman wants curls in her hair, damn sure let her have curls . . if you want to blow five dollars in the beauty shop to feel like a woman on the weekend, that's little enough to ask. And if you want a bottle of halfway decent perfume, that's a pretty cheap price to pay for what you have to put up with all week."

On sex: "If I'm gonna sleep with a guy . . . I want him to feel like he's the king. But if I know he doesn't care about my satisfaction, just wants to get his kicks, that'd turn me off in a minute. And I think you can tell that before you even get into bed."

On race: "Okay. I'm white. If all I have to make me feel better than anybody else is a freak of nature, I ain't got a whole hell of a lot going for me . . . I'm proud to be white. I've got it a whole lot easier than if I was black, yellow, red or anything else. But I'm also proud to be a *woman*."

The discipline of wagelessness

All of the women who speak in this book are white. We will have to look elsewhere to learn about the particular conditions facing black women in the Appalachians. But the struggles that these women describe are struggles that, we know already, black women have been making, and in many cases leading.

It is important, especially, to hear what the women interviewed have to say about welfare and about work.

Wagelessness, including male unemployment, has always and everywhere been capital's lever to try to force us to beg for jobs on any terms; it is not only a strategy but an integral part of the wage-labour system. In certain times, like the present crisis, it's use becomes violent and clear. Third world people everywhere have long known this violence. The wagelessness that has been concentrated on them has served to discipline workers of all races and all over the world. But other workers, too, have been used in this way. Those most directly affected know it best.

Granny Hager: ". . . what the coal operators did, they would come around and say, 'Well boys, I'm losing money, I just can't work it this way. If you all will take a cut, we'll work on, and if you don't we're going to have to shut down.' Naturally, the men would take a cut. First thing they knew, they were down to working for nothing."

Shirley Dalton: "After the OEO fired all the men, a caseworker [social worker] came up here. She said why didn't I put my husband in jail. Because he wasn't working."

Their responses indicate how much success capital can hope for from this strategy now. Granny Hager, along with other women, took part in the invention and organisation of roving pickets that drove past police ambushes to other mines, bringing miners into the union and out on strike; the strike was defeated only when the union failed to pay more that half the strike pay due. Shirley Dalton says: "People is ashamed they get food stamps [subsidised food for those on welfare], their faces is as red as a beet. But I can't see being ashamed. Because before I'm going to let my kids go hungry *I'm* gonna *fight*. I'm gonna be at that welfare department and I'm gonna be there till I get something."

Miners' wives in Britain, who did just that during the strike in '72, and women on social security who have spent long hours in the offices waiting and fighting for their money, will recognise this refusal to be blackmailed. And they will also be sympathetic to Donna Redmond's appraisal of women's second job, the strategy the left is putting forward for our liberation: "If being able to work like a horse for a living is being liberated for a woman, I'd just as soon be dependent."*

Hillbilly Women is introduced and edited by Kathy Kahn. She includes songs and photos which help to make the book the pleasure it is, and frequent narrative passages of her own. Though these give some useful background, they are sentimental and a little obtrusive; they are soaked in the values of the society which these women are destroying by their actions, and therefore do little to highlight the significance of what is happening in the Appalachians. But the stories that she has drawn out and recorded, histories of the struggles women have

* Women are now working underground in the coal mines of the Appalachians. A victory in the eyes of those who see Women's Liberation as 'equality' with men. A defeat for the women who are forced down the mines by their need for more money.

made from the '30s to the '60s in the Appalachians and in the slums of Cincinnati, can teach us plenty by themselves about the real conditions of women's war with the ruling class.

Ruth Hall

Homeworking for Next to Nothing

Marie Brown, *Sweated Labour: A Study of Homework*, London, Low Pay Unit, 35p*

The Low Pay Unit is a new independent body established with funds from the Rowntree Studentship fund. The Unit sees their main function to be drawing attention to the extent of low pay and its concentration in the Wages Councils' sector,* to propose measures to tackle low earnings, to act as a watch-dog on Government, employers and trade unions to see how their actions affect the well-being of the low paid. They encourage the reader to launch homeworkers' campaigns in certain areas, and request Government and trade union action against exploitative employers.

The pamphlet, with these aims, is not written for homeworkers to read (they have no time, and anyway the cover price is 50p for 26 pages). Presumably written for officials and employers (as if they didn't know how their workers are exploited!), its value to us is in the information it gives on the condition of homeworkers. Working conditions are fully explored.

A fundamental condition to the exploitation of homeworkers, like all housewives in the home, is the isolation. While there are at least a quarter of a million homeworkers in the U.K., they are effectively silenced for fear of being blacklisted by employers from their only means of support. All, of course, are women. They do crocheting and knitwork, make toys, Christmas crackers, lampshades, paint figurines, assemble hair rollers, finish fishing rods. For the women covered by the survey, rates of pay range from 2p an hour to the top rate of one woman—a coil winder—of 72p an hour. Full-timers averaged £5.61 [c.$11] for a 45-hour week; part-timers, who are presumably less dependent on the wage and therefore have a bit more power, averaged £3.81 [c.$7.50] for an 18-hour week.

All the employers use their homeworkers as a buffer against fluctuation in demand for their products—women usually received no work from 1 to 12 weeks in the year, for which time they were of course unpaid. The costs of homework are high—often the homework requires up to a quarter of the entire family's living space. Electrical costs for machines used are paid by the homeworkers, and often the machinery must be bought by them before they can begin work. The costs of collecting and mailing the work are paid by the homeworker. The workers have to breathe fluff and dust all the time, or glue vapours. Iron filings scatter everywhere, nylon cuts the hands, fish-hooks are embedded. The only thing an employer does is profit. To get an idea of the rate of profit we are given examples. The homeworker gets £3.50 for painting 1,000 tiny footballers. The retail price of 11 footballers is 50p.

The most important section of the pamphlet is entitled 'Why Do Women Seek Homework?'. The answer is, of course, for money. Women who are trapped in the home, with young children, ageing parents, bills to pay, no other income—there is no choice. Living on Social Security [Welfare] is impossible for many people—too much trouble for too little money—so they take in work. Many women attempt both, but if they are on Social Security they are allowed an additional income of only £2 a week. Employers, knowing the risks for women in this situation, have free rein with the rates of pay. The adverts are ruthless and cunning: "Earn up to £30 weekly doing simple clerical work at home—ideal for housewives, shut-ins, disabled persons or anyone wishing to earn money in the comfort of their own homes." The accounts are cruel. Capital is cruel to all of us, and the more powerless the individual the more capital can wring from her.

The pamphlet presents cases, but it does not tie up these women's conditions with the conditions of all of us women. Women are universally wageless under capital for our first job, housework. We produce and reproduce labour power for capital, looking after the workforce of the present and future, and we receive no wage for it. This wagelessness forces us to be cheap labour. As the women all said bitterly, "Beggars can't be choosers."

The Low Pay Unit defines homeworkers as "those who receive work and payment directly from a manufacturing establishment and who work in their own homes". They admit to ignoring service workers, childminders etc., but feel it necessary to deal with each set of women in their 'proper' categories—a classic trade union position. The Unit persists in the idea that only trade union organisations can improve the "plight of homeworkers" (although they state that most unions are opposed to out-working and want it abolished altogether). The Transport and General Workers Union consistently urges the Wages Councils to raise the Standard Minimum Rate of homeworkers to that of the lowest paid female factory worker. What an improvement! The pamphlet says fines to employers who pay substandard wages should be increased, Wage Council Inspectors should spend more time visiting homeworkers. The pamphlet even suggests that employers of sweated labour should "put their houses in order"! "Only if we gain action on all fronts is there hope of improving radically the rewards of Britain's army of sweated labourers."

Cheap labour will never be abolished by hoping that some benevolent, concerned Wages Councils will DO something. The exploitation of homeworkers is part and parcel of the exploitation of all women as sweated labour, as wageless workers in the home. With so many wageless housewives, the bargaining power of women is very low. Those of us who can manage the double load (and many women *have* to) get waged jobs on top of the housework. Those of us who can leave our homes work outside, in factories, offices, hospitals, etc. And those who cannot leave the home take in homework. The only difference is in the *degree* of powerlessness, and therefore of exploitation.

When we are forced to hustle for money because we are fundamentally wageless, employers and the State have us on their terms. Beggars can't be choosers. Our struggle is to win the power to dictate OUR TERMS. We can only do this by destroying our wagelessness, the wagelessness which makes all of us work as cheap labour in the first place. Only with wages for housework will sweated labour and all cheap labour be abolished.

Bonita Lawrence

* To *Review* subscribers only—one copy per subscriber.

† Some homeworkers have the 'protection' of Government Wages Councils. The Councils, set up to "protect the interests of workers in industries where it was difficult for trade unions to build up an effective organisation", fix a Statutory Minimum Rate. The SMR is criminally low, and is never enforced. Wages Council Inspectors never visit most homeworkers, and do nothing with their findings anyway. The Wages Councils are useless even as a reform measure.

Refusing to Compete

The Police and the Black Wageless: A Race Today Statement on Mugging, London, Race Today Publications, 4pp., free*

This four-page leaflet is a reprint of an editorial which appeared in *Race Today*—a London-based black publication. Considering the necessary brevity of any editorial statement, this is an extremely clear and concise *political* statement on an issue which the authors see as "a crucial arena of the class struggle". What is the relationship between black crime and the class struggle?—this is the key question that the authors succeed in exposing, drawing from a direct knowledge of the black community.

If in London mugging has become predominantly a 'black crime', this is so because its practitioners—the black youth—are refusing the specific position into which capital has forced them. The authors point to the black youths' wagelessness—which results from their refusal of shitwork—as the material condition which perpetuates their lack of power:

> We see the mugging activity as a manifestation of powerlessness; a consequence of being being without a wage. . .

and which explains why this activity has emerged in a way that transcends the immediate reality of the black community.

> If the labourer does not work, he must do

* To *Review* subscribers only—one copy per subscriber.

something else in order to acquire the necessities of life and more. What he does or does not do as an alternative depends almost entirely on the power that the social grouping in question could exercise in relation to the dominating power in the society.

Thus in making their bids for power—*Race Today* argues—the black wageless unemployed youth are not just 'generating crime'; nor, as is often claimed, are they undermining the power of the working class.

> By refusing to compete [for jobs], (because that is in essence what they are doing) young blacks contribute directly to pushing the wage of the workers [in jobs] upwards.

Rather, they are forcing into the open the intricate web, both legal and extra-legal, through which capital seeks to undercut and divide the struggles of the class. Perhaps more importantly, the struggles of the black wageless point to where some of the fundamental weaknesses of the working class in Britain lie today.

Bruno Ramirez

NOTE: Bruno Ramirez has written a substantial review of the politics developed in *Race Today* during the period from January 1974, when the present editor, Darcus Howe, took over. This will appear in the next issue of the *Review*.—Ed.

Black Girl and White Doll

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, New York, Pocket Books, 160pp., 70p*

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison is a novel about black women, about the struggles we must make and the prices we must pay to survive in the tangled web of social relations created in the black family a d community by capital. Thus it is also a novel about black men, about how they unleash the rage and impotence of their dehumanization on the nearest and most vulnerable targets, their wives and daughters. So also it must finally be a novel about white people in America, or white people everywhere that capital reigns; for the distortions America creates in its dark underside are its own distortions, and what appears as the negation of American family and community life is in reality its mirror image.

Thus woven throughout the novel like a haunting refrain are passages from the 'Dick and Jane' primer, a small and deadly patriarchal idyll that has been used to train generations of Americans, black and white, how to read. Again and again these passages conspire to taunt us with the American ideal of family life against which the real life of the black family is a grotesque reflection. For what has been reified and mystified by white sociologists as the 'cycle of poverty' in the black community is in reality the pattern in which capitalist power relations are reproduced within the black family between and over generations in the conditions of material scarcity imposed on black people by capital itself. Thus we see the black mother struggling to feed and clothe her children and keep a home together, with little energy and time left over for love. The love that is there, deep and strong and powerful as it is, must often be expressed surreptitiously, harshly, by forcing the children to do what is for their own good, that is, what is good for their survival under capital, in a way that the children themselves do not always perceive as loving. For the discipline of capital on the black family is a stern discipline, and the mother's first role is that of disciplinarian: she must reinforce capital's discipline over the children, even when that means teaching them to hate themselves.

We see, then, the struggle of little black girls to be themselves, to love themselves, and finally to learn somehow to cope with the contradiction that, in order to win the approval of their mothers, they must succumb to the adulation of white femininity which capital demands for their survival. And we see black men, stripped by capital of the power to provide materially either for their wives and children or for themselves, the only remaining power of their manhood the penis itself. We see their rage in the face of the power that has stripped them turn toward the most immediate and palpable reminders of their impotence, and thus of their hatred, black women; and thus the love between black men and their wives and daughters coincides with hate as sexual conquest, as rape.

In the family of Pecola Breedlove all these power relations are exposed in their most grim reality. When the mother, Mrs. Breedlove (whom her children call "Mrs. Breedlove"), first moves up north, her greatest pleasure is watching movies in which she identifies with the white heroines in all their artificial beauty and manufactured loves. Eventually she becomes the sole support of her family, taking a job as a maid for a white woman. She discovers in that white woman's kitchen all the decency of home and family life that she never had in her own childhood and which she cannot provide for her own children. She communicates the message of that decency to her daughter, Pecola, by inculcating in the child her own obsession for a respectability that she can never achieve and which, being unattainable, must induce self-hatred.

Mrs. Breedlove throws herself into church activities, hoping to secure some respectability there. She despises her husband, but needs him—needs the burden of his wretchedness to confirm her own righteousness. Pecola's father, Cholly, had been left on a junk heap by his mother when he was a baby; when he eventually finds his father in another town, the father refuses to acknowledge him as a son. As a boy in the south, he had been forced by white men to have sex with a black girl while they watched. When the spectacle was over, he hated the girl, not the white men.Up north as a grown man with no skills and no job, a drunkard, Cholly Breedlove is powerless to give his daughter any material thing. Instead he sees her growing self-hatred and impotence begin to mirror his own. Finally, when he is in a drunken stupor, his love for her, twisted with hatred and pity, explodes: he rapes her.

Thus there is nothing in Pecola's experience, neither in the material conditions of her existence nor the love of her parents, to contradict the ugliness and powerlessness she must feel as a little black girl. So instead she falls in love with the image of Shirley Temple; or more precisely, she cultivates a longing for blue eyes which for her represent a way of seeing and being seen by the world which is the very opposite of her own realit[y] For all the weight of her experience affirms that the only way for a little black girl to be seen and loved is to have blue eyes. Thus for Pecola rape triggers madness: a break with reality in which she counters the dirtiness of sexual assault with the miracle of blue eyes.

Blue eyes are thus symbolic of the power relation between black and white women under capita[l] a power relation that is fundamentally enforced b[y] the material contradiction of the relatively less scarcity in the lives of white women than black women and maintained by a division of labour in which white women are objects of beauty, cleanliness and love, and black women are objects of ugliness, dirtiness and sex. As the novel opens, a little black girl, Claudia, is given a white doll. She immediately recognizes the doll as an instrument of her discipline, like the discipline of keeping clean, and resists it, both because she does not want to be trained for motherhood and because th[e] the doll is white. She recognizes in it the antithesis of her own reality both as a child, free of the duties of motherhood, and as a black woman. But because all the forces of the adult world both at home and at school reinforce this discipline, the pressure of older women eventually forces Claudia into a "fraudulent love" for the doll—but not befor[e] she has dismembered it to see of what it is made. And in this Claudia, unlike Pecola, is victorious: for in dismembering the doll she clearly recognizes that it belongs to the world of things, that behind the appearance of beauty, cleanliness and love there is but "a mere metal roundness", which we can understand as the power of capital itself. Thus in her struggle against the white doll Claudia exposes the objectification not only of black women but of all women as commodities under capital.

While blue eyes are indicative of the power relation between black and white women under capita[l] we discover further in the novel an array of power relations and divisions among black women as well There are the 'beautiful' black women like Mauree[n] Peal, whose power is contingent on how nearly she

* We have only a few copies of this novel (which is currently out of print). They are available to *Review* subscribers only—one copy per subscriber.—Ed.

approximates to the white ideal of physical beauty. Her compensation for this power is the hostility of other black women, the majority of us, who can never hope to measure up to this ideal so closely. There are the 'middle-class' black housewives like Geraldine, whose compensation for not having to take a job outside the home is obsessive self-hatred and negation of her blackness and repressed sexuality within the confines of a 'middle-class' patriarchal marriage. There are the 'respectable' women of the church, who are compensated for their unwaged drudgery in the black household and for the jobs they are forced to take outside the home at the bottom of the economic ladder by a fanatical moralism and a preoccupation with church activities. And there are the prostitutes whose compensation for social disgrace is money for sex and a modicum of independence from men, coupled with contempt both for men and for the 'respectable' black women who must have clandestine affairs.

These divisions among black women and the different levels of power they confer reflect not only the degree of approximation to the white ideal both materially and ideologically, they reflect the different forms of struggle each sector of black women has made and the relative 'success' they have had in carving out for themselves a piece of the general scarcity of the black community, as well as the prices they have had to pay for this 'success'.

And when we look more closely at the power relations among black women we must see that they are the power relations among all women and even more precisely, that they are the various moments in the life of every woman. For the central theme of the novel, the contradiction between beauty, cleanliness and love, which are identified with white women, on the one hand, and ugliness, dirtiness and sex, which are identified with with black women, on the other, is nothing more than the dichotomy between virgin and whore, mother and wife, wife and prostitute, in all its various guises, that is imposed by capital on all women—and is the very essence of the repression of female sexuality by the state in order to regulate procreation, in order to control the uterus as the factory of capital's labour power.

Thus *The Bluest Eye* unveils for us how the sectors of the black community, women, children and men, are wedded in a scenario of struggle and mutual torment within the family and how that scenario is designed and maintained by the power of capital. It speaks, therefore, to the implosion of the racist patriarchal relations of capital within the black family and community. It shows us on the one hand madness and degradation as moments of defeat in the struggle of black women to burst the confines of that scenario, and on the other, points to victory in the struggle to dismember, to destroy and so to recognize that scenario, that system of social relations, for what it is. As such it points to the struggle of all women—and to the struggle of the entire working class.

Wilmette Brown, Margaret Prescod-Roberts
Brooklyn, New York
January, 1976

Against Work at Chrysler

Wildcat: Dodge Truck, June 1974, Detroit, Black & Red, 32pp., 10p*

Notes on Developing a Political Perspective: 'The Refusal of Work', Windsor Autoworker Group, Windsor, Ontario, 6pp., free*

The pamphlet, *Wildcat*, put out by a political collective in Detroit, gives a sharp picture of American class struggle and the workers' power which the Big Three auto companies have been trying to smash with the 'oil crisis' and mass layoffs. A well printed pamphlet with good photo graphics, it tells the story of a wildcat strike in June, 1974, which shut down the Chrysler Truck facility in Warren, Michigan. Closely following on the three Chrysler wildcat strikes just before the 1973 contract strikes, came the lay-offs of thousands of U.S. carworkers. The truck plants were not hit so hard, and this strike at Warren, under a year after the 'Mack Avenue' and 'Jefferson Avenue' strikes, gives a clear hint of what would have happened in American auto if the lay-offs had not come.

The immediate issue of the wildcat at Warren, Detroit—working conditions in the metal shop—detonated a strike that was really about "*everything*. Exchanges were peppered with 'Watergate', 'inflation', 'those assholes in the Union', attacks on the institution of 'work'." The atmosphere is captured well in both photos and words—"Previously dull eyes glowed, grumblings turned to laughter, and unwilling submission formed into a total resistance." Photos of a county judge in full black robes, who, standing on the back of a Chrysler pick-up truck, did his thing and arrested over 30 pickets on the scene; photos of angry workers resisting the union-police attempt to throw them out of their own union's local hall.

* To *Review* subscribers only—one copy per subscriber.

The role of the American United Autoworkers [trade union] is here, once again, crystal clear—practising terrorism alongside the police, courts and company, against the workers. The local [branch] union officials are included in this attack. A white racist 'in-group' of local officials has recently been replaced by a mostly black 'out group', which has quickly turned against the workers, in its turn. Militants from the Revolutionary Union, an American Maoist group, have burrowed into the union, and are clearly caught in the contradiction of union versus workers. The workers, a majority black, 15% black women, single parents mostly, and many Vietnam Vets, both black and white, fight on against the union-courts-company consortium of organised terrorists.

The political significance of the pamphlet lies in the arrival of this Detroit collective—partly through personal involvement-practice, and partly through analysis—at what has been the main content of working class struggle for a long time—the struggle against work. American capital has known about it for some time, through the disastrous consequences to production and accumulation which this struggle has had and is having. Even before 'Lordstown', the death of the work ethic was already being recognised by U.S. business magazines.

Just across the river-border from Detroit, in Canada's 'motown', Windsor, a Chrysler workers' group has been organising in the plants for three years, with roots that go back much longer. It has recently clarified its politics around the 'refusal of work' perspective. In outlining this perspective at several places in their discussion document, the group makes clear on what basis they are organising. Their leaflets reflect this well, particularly in respect to the analysis of the effect of the crisis on life inside and outside the auto plants in Windsor. They have dealt not only with the daily issues of increased internal mobility, but also with the incidents of violence, stabbing etc., that have taken place between workers, most often between Canadian and immigrant workers. They analyse these events from the refusal of work perspective, telling a pretty straight story—one that reveals a deeply political and internal concern with all aspects of life in the plants.

After explaining that they see the refusal of work, the refusal to co-operate with the whole capitalist organisation of production, as the content of workers's struggles in advanced capitalist society, they express clearly the influence of the wages for housework perspective in seeing the refusal of work as "much more than just what happens in the factory."

> It means organizing against the way capital organizes our entire life. For instance, our working day consists of much more than just the 8 or 10 hours between when we punch in and punch out. It also includes the time spent driving to and from work. The time spent fixing our cars so we can drive, the time spent resting or trying to forget the plants. The time our wife spends helping us forget (through all kinds of emotional and sexual support), the time she spends washing our clothes, the time spent fixing our meals, etc.

Dave Feickert
July, 1975

Editorial note: After the above review was written, the Windsor group added an Introduction to their paper which included the following:—"The largest part of the paper—where we talk of the content of the in-plant struggle and the crisis of capitalism—reflects the influence of 'refusal of work', 'worker's autonomy', and the tradition of the Italian extraparliamentary left. . . Certain other parts of the paper—where we talk of *our* 24 hour working day and the unpaid labour of women as a source of *our* powerlessness—do not reflect either this Italian tradition or our experience directly in the plants. Rather, these reflect the massive impact the Wages for Housework movement has had on our group. It is an indication of the progress we've made since March that, when we wrote the paper, we could not acknowledge the impact of Wages for Housework, even though it had already fundamentally altered our political development."

MAY DAY: Housewives Organise

Wages for Housework: Women Speak Out—May Day Rally, 1975, Toronto, Amazon Press, 40pp., 35p

This pamphlet was produced by the Toronto Wages for Housework Committee after their rally in a public square in Toronto for May Day, 1975. In it are reproduced the speeches given then, photographs, songs and leaflets that were handed out in other countries—U.S., Britain and Italy—during their May Day demonstrations.

The women who spoke at the rally came from many different situations—a student, single women working in restaurants and factories, an unsupported mother, a lesbian, a married woman with kids. The force of the speeches (for they are all powerful and lively) comes from their being based on what each woman really knows—her own life. The unsupported mother quotes from a letter she wrote to Davis, the Premier of Ontario:

> You don't recognize our work as work, Mr. Davis—you give us welfare; we're charity cases, welfare bums; you expect us to work for love. Well have you ever tried living on love, Mr. Davis? It hurts! It hurts when you send your kid off to school with holes in his boots . . . And when you get up every night with the baby and then there's the next day and night and the day after that and you're there by yourself and it's always you that has to do the work . . .

For all the women who spoke, the Wages for Housework Campaign is not just a new idea or something which would help other women, it is the logical outcome of their particular experience as women. This gives women who are totally unused to speaking in public the courage to stand up and talk—because they really do know what they're talking about. One woman starts by saying, "The fact that I'm so nervous being here will give it away that I have been a housewife for a long time. I have been married for 28 years, and I am not used to standing up and expressing my own ideas." But she goes on to talk vividly about the work those 28 years have meant, and she ends by saying that when she first heard about wages for housework, "I wanted to shout and ask if it could please be retroactive. I have such a lot of wages due."

The common basis of all these women's situations, that they are all housewives and treated as such, and the importance of all women uniting in a common struggle for wages from the state, is made explicit by the speakers. The student nurse sees clearly that nursing is housework under another name, and that there's a link between her low wages and the wagelessness of the woman at home: "As women, we're all doing the same work - some of us unwaged and some of us partially waged. Women's work. Always unpaid or underpaid. As a student, as a nurse, as a housewife, it's all the same—no money."

The lesbian woman points out that it is only when the situation of all women changes that her particular situation as a lesbian will change. "I am still a housewife. We are all housewives. And we have no choice until we have the power to refuse that unpaid work."

And the pamphlet makes the point that it is not only women in Canada who are coming together in the Wages for Housework Campaign, but women internationally.

The rally was the first major public event that the Toronto Wages for Housework Committee organised. The introduction outlines how they prepared for it. The pamphlet will be helpful and encouraging to other groups as it shows what can be achieved even with limited numbers (there were then 15 in the Toronto Committee). "The rally lasted 1½ hours, and during that time, we spoke to approximately 500 people. The media was there and we received wide coverage . . . Since May 2, there has been a two part news program on Wages for Housework, based on our rally . . . Already we have reached many more people than were there with us on May 2 . . "

Owing to the short time the group had been in existence, there are no *speeches* about how the public existence of the Wages for Housework Campaign is increasing the power of women's struggles and bringing them together, though the rally itself is an example of that. The pamphlet shows how the Wages for Housework Campaign comes from the experience of women's lives and struggles. And it also proves that however incompetent we may fear we are, we are all able to stand up and make a political speech—we can simply talk about our own lives as women.

Judith Mathew

The Home and the School

Editorial note: *We invited Teachers' Action to comment on the article, 'The Importance of Teachers' Action', in* Review *No. 3/4 because we thought they shared a fundamental political ground with the* Review. *As it turned out, we were wrong about their politics; and in normal circumstances we would see every reason for* not *publishing an article such as their reply below, which shows such contempt for the struggles of women, and therefore for the possibilities of working class power. However, we are publishing it for three reasons. First, as we specifically invited Teachers' Action to reply, at whatever length they chose, we felt an obligation to print what they sent us, and in full. Secondly, and more importantly, having published a very long review which emphasised the unique importance, as it then seemed, of Teachers' Action, we felt an obligation to our readers to show why that recommendation was mistaken. And thirdly, there is a particular appropriateness in Teachers' Action's reply being published in this issue of the* Review, *because their politics are so fully confronted by the article, 'The Social Factory'. At the same time, because their reply constitutes an attack, in the main, not on the reviewer but on the Wages for Housework movement, Silvia Federici was invited to comment on some of the major issues. Below therefore are Teachers' Action's reply, followed by Silvia Federici's comments on behalf of the International Wages for Housework Campaign, and a postscript by the reviewer.*

View from the Staffroom

In his review of Teachers' Action's first two publications, Jeremy Mulford agrees with our fundamental statement of teachers' basic position: as workers. Before stating this though, he identifies as "a very important development in Marxism in recent years" the work of James, Morton and Dalla Costa relating to women's "exploitation as unwaged labour in the home." In this analysis "women's work" is seen as work for capital, reproduction of labour-power by servicing a man and providing children as future labour-power. Their claim is that since these tasks are essential to production, they should be waged and the fight is supposedly on, in supermarket and launderette, to win this wage. We think that the difficulty women experience in organising for this fight is an indication that their claim is over-extended. The launderette is not a base for action in the same way that the shop floor is for car workers. Housewives must first be convinced by the theory before they begin action: there is no inbuilt productive relationship. At the same time we are surprised at the obvious concern the women

show over classifying housework as productive labour. Marx's definitions of productive and unproductive labour bear no value judgements. He simply defined productive labour as wage-labour which is "exchanged against the variable part of capital"* and which, besides reproducing its own value, produces surplus-value for the capitalist. He saw it as totally unnecessary to give all labour the respectability of "demonstrating that it was 'linked' with the production of material wealth."†

He is also quite specific about the nature of housework.‡ The working class has to do this work for itself (unlike those who can employ cooks and housekeepers) but it is only possible as a result of having previously laboured productively. A person can only start cleaning his or her house once he or she has laboured productively to obtain means to rent or buy that house. The labour that the working class carries out to maintain itself, then, is unproductive. It "never enables them to repeat the same unproductive labour a second time unless they have previously laboured productively". The fact that women mostly carry out this labour, from an unwaged position in the home is a reflection of their lack of power in society. The way forward must surely be for them to gradually build their power as waged sections of the working class and then be in a position to demand either not to do housework at all or be paid for it as an accessory to their waged labour.

We think that Jeremy Mulford is accepting our statement that teachers are workers on the wrong basis. He is linking our position to Selma James' analysis of the position of the housewife. We as teachers fit more precisely into Marx's category: our objective function is to produce labour-power, to prepare future workers for the disciplines and routines of production. Mulford agrees that we skill, discipline, grade and incidentally childmind. This last function undoubtedly has the important subsidiary role in the economy of releasing the mothers of primary school children for production. Another indication of our childminding role is the real effect of 'suspending' a child. The parents' first reaction is not dismay that he or she will miss so much schooltime, but annoyance that he or she will be around the house and have to be occupied or taken care of in some way, even to the extent of the parent losing time from work. It is becoming clear to the parent that whatever does go on in school it is not the transmission of something for the child's own direct benefit. The tendency in our society is for the school to increasingly take on this child minding role and responsibilities for disciplining that go with it. And here we have to make a distinction between the position of teachers and that of housewives.

Our work as teachers is productive labour because of its relationship to the economy. We produce a commodity, that of trained, graded, skilled or unskilled labour power. There is a fundamental difference between physically producing children, in other words the labour force, and preparing them to become labour-power which is effectively what teachers do. The first means increasing the number of available bodies; the second is producing the commodity of labour-power whose exchange value is bought by the capitalist and which is an essential part of the capitalist economy. Further, our wages are paid out of that part of capital which is accumulated through taxation which the state extracts from individuals and institutions. It cannot be argued that housewives are productive in an analogous way. Capitalism would certainly cease operating without their labour in producing tomorrow's worker, the child, but so would it if we stopped breathing—where does the fight for wages end? The direction that the wages for housework struggle has taken so far supports this. Women workers have demanded extra time during the working week for doing their cooking, shopping and cleaning. Here, the demand which all women rightly have has been shaped by their objective conditions. Being involved in production, they have a working base for organisation.

Education then, or schooling, to use a more accurate term, results in the production of a commodity, labour-power. What is transmitted in school is not something for the child's own edification. The skills passed on are not use-values, but must be exchanged against capital in the labour market with someone to whom they will serve as use-values. The only situations in which use-values are directly transmitted are outside state education, where, say a music tutor teaches a child to play an instrument, which he or she then does solely to entertain the parents. The commodity produced here is a use-value and the music tutor, being paid out of the parents' revenue (money they have for their own benefit, to spend entirely on themselves) is an unproductive worker.

We need to clear up certain points about schoolchildren. They are in the position of being required by the state to spend fixed hours of their time at a place outside the home, without being paid. This time is not used to create surplus-value directly, but because it is compulsory time, the activities that take place during it are loosely termed 'work'. Mulford suggests that since capitalism needs its future workers to be prepared for production in this way, there should be direct material benefit: "going to school is going to work for capital". He is therefore in favour of the perspective of wages for schoolchildren. He seems to regard this, again, in the same way as wages for housework: capital depends on its workers being prepared for work just as much as serviced while working. He sees it as logical then that both these stages be directly waged.

Our view is that children's whole position, based on material dependence on their parents needs to be altered. A way towards achieving this became clear at the time when ROSLA [the raising of the school-leaving age from 15 to 16—Ed.] was first introduced. That year of kids and each successive one has literally been deprived of 52 weeks' wages. The length of time they are dependent on their parents increased while the state neatly lowered its unemployment figures. Unlike Mulford, we are not in the political justification game, especially when it comes to proving that only workers deserve money. We are with schoolchildren in their demand for a wage not because they 'work' (which is why he's for it) but because they *are* and we believe that the society in which we live is in the process of being compelled to pay a wage to the wageless. Schoolchildren have a base for this demand and we have tried to say in our magazine (*Teachers' Action* 2 and again in *Teachers' Action* 3) how they articulate the demand and not we, as a vanguard on their behalf. In our pamphlet *Teachers and the Economy* (published *after* Mulford wrote his review of *TA* 1 and *TA* 2) we try to assess the potential that automation, increased productivity and redirected accumulated capital poses for the whole working class and come to the conclusion that it has to mean material prosperity and material autonomy for all. Part of the political task of getting there is to force the dissociation between being 'productive' and having material independence. In an article in *Radical Education* No.3 we said that a section of young black workers in this country are doing just that. Through their refusal to work and their effective gains in reproducing themselves by forcing the state to pay, through social services, hostel projects, 'community' projects etc. for their reproductive needs, they are in the broadest sense defeating the protestant work ethic, not in the minds of people, but in the actual mechanisms of the society. We feel, as does Marx in our second quotation from *Theories of Surplus Value* that we don't have to become sycophantic underlings of political economy by trying to categorise any and everything as productive labour. We know that housewives, schoolchildren, the black unemployed and other wageless sections lack a wage—it is only their manifest power, of connection to the 'productive' machine, to a productive worker through whom they can apply pressure, or through their own disruptive potential that they will win anything from this non-benevolent world order.

To see why housewives' and schoolchildren's wages are fundamentally different propositions, we need to examine how wages stand in a society.

> *. . . The individual consumption of the labourer, whether it proceed within the workshop or outside it, whether it be part of the process of production or not, forms therefore a factor of the production and reproduction of capital; just as cleaning machinery does, whether it be done while the machinery is working or while it is standing. The fact that the labourer consumes his means of subsistence for his own purposes, and not to please the capitalist, has no bearing on the matter. The consumption of food by a beast of burden is none the less a necessary factor in the process of production, because the beast enjoys what it eats. The maintenance and reproduction of the working-class is, and must ever be, a necessary condition to the reproduction of capital. . .*
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> Capital, Vol.1, Ch.23

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* *Theories of Surplus Value*, Karl Marx, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p.152.
† Ibid., p.176.
‡ Ibid., p.166.

They are a shifting entity, a function, firstly of the amount of money needed for a particular section of the working class to reproduce itself. The fact that this amount is not standard, but varies between regions of a particular country and enormously between countries—compare the average wage of a car worker in Britain and a car worker in India—reflects the second variable on which wage determinations and demands are based: the extent of organisation that capital and the task itself impose on the worker. Let us spell out the import of our example: the car worker here and in India produce the same commodity, but there is no productive connection between them. The airline pilots of India, on the other hand, last year went into a prolonged strike of three months to demand parity with European pilots, because the airline trade has an international consortium of companies and because the pilots can compare standards, work, productivity, with those of the European pilots. Schoolchildren are already partly organised in that they are brought together in an institution. In this way they have some kind of base from which to start building power. They meet every day and share conditions and routines. They have an immediate target for making themselves felt, the school. Housewives, without such a possibility are in a totally different situation. Some of us, as women in Teachers' Action Collective, know that the part-time schoolteacher who has the responsibilities of looking after a child, not only suffers that extra burden, but is also deprived of the scaled posts that give one extra money in our wage structure and loses out from not being able to be as active in the politics of the school as she would like. Also, the supposedly caring community of school doesn't give a damn whether we've taken two periods off to attend to a sick child, but puts a black mark on our attendance roster for the occasional morning off. Nevertheless, we feel that it is through the strength that we can build in the staffrooms that men and other women find empathy with this material struggle. If, using this empathy, we fight for the right to work less, and this amounts to wages for housework, then we are for wages for housework; but we have yet to find the women's group or supermarket or community launderette which suggests a practical way out of this predicament.

Mulford misunderstands what we say about organisation within schools. We believe that the main direction in which teachers' demands are moving is for more control over their time at the workplace and more part in the decisions that affect its organisation. He dubs this "workers' control", which, in a sense it is, but we are not advocating the sharing of administrative power as an end in itself. We emphatically do not want to make demands for a particular timetabling structure and then have to implement them ourselves. There are many cases of nominal 'workers' control', workers participating in management by being on Boards of Directors, but in practice implementing decisions that are by no means in their own interest. Teacher Governors are a homely example of this situation and, from the kids' point of view, schools councils are another. The appearance may be the kid glove of democratic organisation but it is only a mask for the iron fist of control: all the more effective for being subtle. What we aim for is the control of capital by those who are defined as workers today and those who are not defined as workers such as pupils. We do not aim for the demolition, smashing, whatever you like of accumulated capital—we believe that the accumulative process whereby some wealth will be used to create more will and must go on. We are against the relations that capitalism imposes within and around the productive process. The destruction of these relations can only be achieved by sections of the working class building their autonomous power and seeking the collective power of class action when they reach the limits of their sectional power. For teachers this means a degree of dictatorship by the workforce over the time for which they sell their labour power and the conditions and contract of wage under which they sell it.

In concrete terms teachers are demanding to work less in all sorts of ways. (cf. 'Battle of the Working Day' in *TA* 3.) Practically, we could win either a deintensification of the working day or an actual reduction of the time spent in class contact and in school. The latter depends on the strength and autonomy of the pupils' movement, whereas the former can possibly be won without their autonomous demands, even though their resistive power in schools fuels the demand of the teachers and makes it possible for us to gain a deintensification. Our experience in schools tells us that the one demand is connected to the other and the deintensification leads to the demand for less work all round, even though to an outside theoretician the mechanism of connection may not be immediately clear.

In the section on the authoritarian structure of schools and the relationship of teachers to that structure, Mulford argues that it is because this structure "corresponds, in some degree, to what is in teachers' heads—everybody's head ([his] own, of course, included)—that the experience can seem so unresolvable, except into 'disillusionment'. This is part of the explanation of why some teachers can tolerate the intolerable for surprisingly long periods." Later he spells it out more clearly—"It is of the greatest importance to recognise the extent to which capital divides and rules *in the individual consciousness*." Mulford thus suggests that the working class in Britain has not yet overthrown the ruling class because we are all suffering from political schizophrenia. If we accept that view, we would be rejecting the role of the historical development of class struggle and dropping the political task to take up the psychotherapeutic.

Consciousness is not static—it changes according to the situation in which we are. Moreover consciousness does not in the first instance dictate events, but rather the other way round. Just as the economic failures of feudalism and the specific class antagonism that the system necessarily created determined the political consciousness of the bourgeoisie, which overthrew that system, so capitalism creates specific contradictions which eventually force the working class to revolution. The dynamic factors are economic and historical; they are not just in people's minds. Do we have to fight the class battle in our heads before we can enter into it in our workplace? Is the only meaningful political activity consciousness raising?

We work for capital not because part of our mind tells us that we should, but because our material needs tell us that we have to. We come to work against it when our self-interest determines that we have no other choice and when we see the possibilities of action and the scope of our power. To accept the notion of the divided consciousness is to try to opt out of class struggle, to forsake the barricades for the psychiatrist's couch.

Mulford is fond of using the phrase "State in the Classroom" for teachers and presumably, by the same naivete, 'state in the home' for mothers, 'state between the sheets' for hubbie, 'state behind the camera' for television workers, 'state on the press' for those who print the *Daily Express* and/or *Falling Wall Review*, because all these in some sense work on the minds and bodies of people. Now we believe that Engels had a specific purpose in defining the state clearly and that Lenin brilliantly followed and developed his theory of the state. We are aware that authority structures between workers exist. We also believe that hierarchies of labour exist, the most blatant ones being those in which unwaged sections come into productive contact with waged sections of the working class. Nevertheless, to call all such power differentials, or the section with more power, 'the state' is to mechanistically deny that section of workers a potential for involvement in the process of combating the state in conjunction with the section they are seen to oppress. To put it very simply, if white workers are 'the state in the factory' in relation to black workers, then no struggle which dialectically links the two and puts them on the same side in the process of history is possible. That is a lot of nonsense, and if we were as given to political abuse as Mulford we would call it non-dialectical, mechanistic in its attribution of a fixed static nature to certain workers and reactionary in its refusal to view the final struggle of all workers as indivisible.

For his contentions about the 'curriculum' which he defines as the work simply of research bodies paid to make it up, rather than the activity that can take place in an institution intermediate between the family and the present day world of

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ICELAND, OCT 24, 1975—
GENERAL STRIKE OF WOMEN.
Full-time housewives, factory workers, telephonists, teachers, actresses, childminders, typists, air hostesses, bank clerks, school girls, mothers, grandmothers. Some businessmen took their children to work. 90% of industry ground to a halt. Meals not cooked. Shopping not done. Floors not swept. Of 60,000 women in all Iceland, 25,000 at mass meeting in the capital, Reykjavik. Women struck to show their power—and did!

Caption over photographs from Iceland shown on the BBC TV programme, *All Work and No Pay*, made by the Power of Women Collective, London, February, 1976.

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wage labour, we can only say we are in the process of working through the assumptions we have set down in the articles he objects to. We expect to put out a whole issue of *Teachers' Action* on the subject. We apologise to him for not being perfect, for not having all the right answers, but would like to take the opportunity to advertise this intention to other teachers who may want to come and discuss it with us. Our address should be printed below.

Teachers' Action Collective
2 Turquand Street
London S.E.17

View from the Kitchen

We are replying only very briefly to Teachers' Action because the political perspective they are putting forward is one that we have replied to many times already (see especially *Counter-Planning from the Kitchen**).

1. Our demand for a wage for housework springs not from the premise that we are productive (which we are) but from our need. We demand a wage for housework because we need a wage as a lever of power against the State's use of our labour power in and out of the home. We need to be autonomous of men who are agents of the State in relation to us. We need to do less work. We do not see a separation, as Teachers' Action do, between demanding "not to do housework at all" and demanding to "be paid for it". Wages are "the amount we can refuse to give capital and the amount we win back from them" (editorial, *Power of Women Journal* No.4). The left have never understood what the wage is and have never understood, therefore, that demanding money and refusing work are both wage struggles.

2. As long as we are wageless in the home, we are oppressed by the exploited–men with a wage–and exploited by capital. 'Hubby between the sheets' is *precisely* a facet of the State in relation to women, just as the teacher–an exploited worker–is the State in the classroom in relation to schoolchildren. *Ask the kids.* (But they won't tell you if you're the teacher.) These are the power relations within the working class which are spelled out in *Sex, Race and Class.*† Not to see the power relations within the class is to oppose the autonomous movements of blacks, women, children–those who tend to be low waged or wageless. In other words, it is to be racist and sexist. We had expected better from Teachers' Action.

3. We women can *win* the wage–

a) because capital can't do without us. We reproduce our own and other workers' labour power. Teachers' Action seems to believe that babies are taken from us at birth and put into schools where teachers "prepare future workers". If Teachers' Action don't know that women are the primary producers of labour power, let them ask any woman teacher who has children. We don't lose time from work when children are "taken care of in some way" by us at home; we lose time from *waged* work. That is the difference between teachers and mothers, a mere matter of a wage. (We cannot here go into all that housework–the reproduction of labour power–entails. May I suggest, in addition to *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, my own pamphlet, *Wages against Housework.*‡)

b) because overwhelmingly women in the world do this work, that is, have the same "inbuilt productive relationship" to capital. Therefore we have enormous potential power on an international level. (See the Backlash, 'Immigration and Population Control', by the Power of Women Collective in *Race Today*, July 1975.)

c) because, like the unemployed wageless, we can organise our power *against* the way capital has organised us.

Let us spend a moment on this last point.

Should the wageless go through the experience of the factory in order to be able not only to survive but to be organised by capital? Or should the struggle of the wageless be directly aimed at reappropriating the social wealth that capital has built on our backs? The answer for Teachers' Action is both, depending on who the wageless are. If they are black youth (who are all male!) the answer is certainly that they have the power to refuse the factory. But, according to Teachers' Action, in the case of women, white and black, young and old, the situation is totally different. Where a black youth can gain the power of refusal, "through [his] own disruptive potential", his mother, sister, and female cousins, not to mention his girlfriends, have to get the jobs that he is refusing. In other words, *women have no choice but to scab*, to take the waged jobs men refuse. This is capital's plan and the left's political line. How often those two coincide!

Teachers' Action is obviously ignorant of the massive struggle of Welfare (unsupported) Mothers in the United States for wages from the State, a struggle led by black women. In fundamental respects this has been the only section of the black community to articulate a coherent working class strategy–to demand and fight for the wage directly. (Teachers' Action weren't there to tell them they should 'get a job' instead!)

4. Finally, on Marx. How dare Teachers' Action say that *any* category of Marx's "bear[s] no value judgements"! They all bear *surplus value* judgements, the judgement that the sweat of our brows must stop flooding the sea of accumulated capital. Teachers' Action say: "What we aim for is the control of capital by those who are defined as workers today and those who are not defined as workers such as pupils." And they "believe that the accumulative process whereby some wealth will be used to create more will and must go on." Capital is not a thing, but a social relation. 'Accumulation' is not a word but a *power relation.* Marx spells out that the law of accumulation of capital is the accumulation of the power to command more labour, the accumulation by capital of the working class internationally. It is the power to transform peasants into wageless workers and most of the world's population into an industrial reserve army. Marx was not an academic Marxologist but a revolutionary. His whole point was that, "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole . . . " Teachers' Action has "come to the conclusion that it [accumulation] has to mean material prosperity and material autonomy for all"!

But Marx was not a feminist. He saw that the working class has to do housework for "itself", but he didn't see that it was a *particular section* of the working class–women–who did this housework. He said that this reproduction of labour power, housework, was productive labour, and that our consumption as workers was productive. We agree with him. (He *never* said or implied that only productive workers should get wages. He could never have opposed any section of the working class demanding the reappropriation of its own wealth, and thereby undermining accumulation.)

Teachers' Action dismiss the Wages for Housework movement unless it be factory-based, insist

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I've seen my mama go to work when she wasn't able to walk. She couldn't go to the doctor cause she couldn't spend the money. I've seen her wear the same dress for years, it was the only decent one she had. She had two pair of cut-off blue jeans to wear to work. If being able to work like a horse for a living is being liberated for a woman, I'd just as soon b dependent.

Donna Redmond of Atlanta, Georgia, speaking in *Hillbilly Women*, which is reviewed on pp. 10-12 above.

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* *Counter-Planning from the Kitchen: Wages for Housework–a Perspective on Capital and the Left* by Nicole Cox and Silvia Federici, New York Wages for Housework Committee and Falling Wall Press, second edition, February 1976.

† *Sex, Race and Class* by Selma James, with contributions from Barbara Beese, Mala Dhondy, Darcus Howe and correspondents to *Race Today*, Falling Wall Press and Race Today Publications, 1975.

‡ Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Falling Wall Press, 3rd edition, 1975; Silvia Federici, *Wages against Housework*, Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, 1975.

that we can achieve power only by accepting increased capitalist exploitation, assume the inevitability of "the accumulation process", see no "productive connection" between the Third World and the metropolis (unless you're an airline pilot), refuse to see how their work as teachers is the work of social control on behalf of the State. We have heard it all before, from capital and from the left. In *Teachers' Action* 3 they say, "Our task is not to prescribe, but to describe." But in the article above they take as their task to describe in such a way that they prescribe, organise and plan to take over accumulation, to take over capital. In this they seem to want to extend their function as the State in the classroom to the whole of society. Thanks, but no thanks.

Silvia Federici
New York Wages for Housework Committee

P.S. One of the founders of Teachers' Action is in the collective which produces *Race Today*, a magazine which we have been distributing in North America. *Race Today* has in the past attempted to

apply the wages for housework perspective specifically to the black struggle. Naturally, we in the North American Wages for Housework movement have to know where *Race Today* stands on this scandalous document by Teachers' Action.
S.F.

Postscript

A few points to complement what Silvia Federici says above.

1) Given that Teachers' Action see childbirth as the only contribution women in the home make to the production and reproduction of the future labour force, it's hardly surprising that they should take no account of the contribution of cooks and cleaners in the school; or that they should be so eager to belittle the differences between men and women teachers:

> Women's issues as such, with the exception of equal pay and the tendency for women to remain at the lower end of the scaling system, are not what are most concerning women in teaching at this time. . . Most issues that take up teachers' time and energy affect male and female alike, for when it comes to the crunch the mode of production determines our actions and our ideology: most of the time therefore men and women teachers will without prejudice 'unite and fight'. (*Teachers' Action*, No.3)

I would have thought that the "crunch" for most women teachers came daily when they left the school gates to begin their second (split) shift.

2) My discussion of schoolwork and the wage was in the context of a defence of school students against Teachers' Action's somewhat condescending and reductive account. I wrote:

> What kids do at school is not "to them" work, it doesn't just *feel like* work, it's not 'work' any more than housewives' work is 'work'—it's *work*. . . What [Teachers' Action] do is to present learning as something that is *done to* you; they obscure the fact that learning—however authoritarian and repressive the teaching—is *active*. Pupils, however unwillingly or inefficiently, are active accomplices in the business of internalising not only the skills but also the repressions, the attitudes, the dispositions—in a word, the disciplines—which are important constituents of labour-power under capital.

Establishing this is not of "logical" but of strategic importance; for it helps to clarify the nature and extent of students' potential power.

3) To claim that you're thinking dialectically is not the same as doing so. And, with their 'black and white unite and fight' stance over teachers and students, and their refusal to recognise that *all* teachers—even 'radical' ones—are State functionaries, Teachers' Action show no understanding of the politics of autonomy which are established in *Sex, Race and Class* (see the second footnote on page 24). Though shocking, it is on reflection not surprising, therefore, that in their issue No.4, in an article about the Black Parents' Movement, Teachers' Action should take up an attitude to calling police into schools that is—to say the least—ambivalent:

> It is not our intention here to consider the rights and wrongs of the police actions in these cases, although the parents feel very strongly about their role in the incidents and we can't be indifferent to the increased involvement of the police in our schools.

A good example of where ambivalence is not neutrality: if you're not unambiguously against using police to reinforce school discipline, then you're effectively for it.

4) It is because of the failure of Teachers' Action to understand how capital divides sectors of the working class against each other that they take such exception to my remarks about teachers' heads. What I said about consciousness was in response to their suggestion that many young teachers *enter into* the authoritarian structures of schools in a state of innocent idealism—as though they don't carry with them, in some significant measure, assumptions about adults and children which partake of the power relations between the two in this society. And Teachers' Action's assumption that a concern with what goes on in people's heads implies a belief in psychotherapeutic as against political solutions, together with their assumption that a concern with consciousness implies a preoccupation with 'consciousness-*raising*'—I think these say much more about the received categories of Teachers' Action's thinking, than about my own. At no point, incidentally, did I say or imply—or could I ever think of saying or implying—that consciousness is "static".

5) And at no point did I "define" the curriculum—let alone in the way they suggest. The occasion of my reference to certain research bodies was Teachers' Action's vague and inaccurate comments, in their issue No. 1, on the National Association for the Teaching of English. If Teachers' Action want to define the curriculum as everything that goes on in schools, so as to include students fighting back against teachers' power, then I'm with them in supporting grassroots curriculum development!

6) I'm sorry that Teachers' Action should have found me "politically abusive". I sought to make common cause with them: my criticisms were as detailed as they were because of that; and because I thought my initial proposition—that of all the "various papers, magazines etc. whose subject is education and which offer themselves as in some sense 'radical'" *Teachers' Action* was the "most significant"—had established unequivocally my good will. I'm disappointed that I was wrong about their importance. And I'm sorry to have enraged them so—and to a level of incoherence which allows sarcasm about wages for breathing to appear alongside advocacy of wages for being. (In so far as the distinction between breathing and being has any meaningful content here, it merely reflects Teachers' Action's recurrent tendency to see students as passive recipients.) I can only assume that what has enraged them into producing this diatribe is the suggestion that they based themselves in politics that women have autonomously developed.

Jeremy Mulford

FALLING WALL REVIEW No.6

The theme of this issue will be *Work.* Major articles will include:—George Caffentzis on Harry Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, Suzie Fleming on *Zerowork: Political Materials 1*, Bruno Ramirez on *Race Today.*

For details of subscription rates etc., see the inside front cover.

'OUR BODIES, OUR STRUGGLE'

This was the title of a leaflet, reprinted below, produced by the London Wages for Housework Committee for the march organised by the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) in March, 1976. It tackles NAC's hiving off of the struggle for abortion into the 'Abortion Question'.

For years we women have fought for and defended our right to *FREE AND SAFE ABORTION ON DEMAND.* We know every child means years of unpaid work and dependence on men. Abortion is our refusal of that work and that dependence. And we are not going back to backstreet butchers.

But abortion is only part of control of our bodies. Butchers in the NHS [National Health Service] are operating right now, sterilising women without even telling them. If we're not married or if we're black or immigrant, *the medical butchers deny us the right to have children.*

Because we work for no pay at home and low pay in outside jobs, many of us have to wait years till we can 'afford' the children we want. With the crisis, mothers are giving their children away because they have no money to feed them, to house them, to look after them. *Having no money denies us the right to have children.*

Governments all over the world want to dictate to women which of us will bear and raise workers for them and how many. Population planners blame starvation and pollution on our having children to make us feel guilty if we get pregnant. And they are using our own struggle against us– *to deny us the right to have children.*

Control of our bodies begins with control of our struggle. NAC is led by parliamentarians and political parties; our needs as women have never been their concern. They are building their power on the energy of thousands of women who have been fighting for the right to choose if, when and how many children we have, and under what conditions. But NAC says *abortion* is 'the right to choose'. It isn't if you face sterilisation. It isn't if you can't afford children.

WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN

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