

*“If you’re one of the people who’ve
swallowed the crap about “we’re all middle
class now” or “we live in a classless society”
this is the time to stop reading!”*

CLASS: A DEBATE

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WHAT WE BELIEVE

by Class War Federation

Why Class War?

Class War is not just another party seeking to gain power or a new way of telling people what to do. Class war is what happens when ordinary people have had enough of being pushed around and decide to fight back. If you're one of the people who've swallowed the crap about "we're all middle class now" or "we live in a classless society" this is the time to stop reading! We live in a society severely split along the lines of class, where capitalism, the State and the ruling class dominate us. So what do we mean by this?

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system run purely for profit in the interests of a small class - the capitalists - at the expense of a larger class - the working class. The whole of our present society is geared to the needs of capitalism. It is the mechanism whereby we sell our labour, in exchange for money, to purchase the goods and services we need, which we also happen to have produced in the first place! However, we only get a proportion of the wealth that our labour produces, the rest goes to the capitalists in profit.

This is fundamental to capitalism - in order for it to work the many must produce wealth for the few. Western style capitalism is often hailed as being the free market, all it means is that they are "free" to exploit us.

The situation is exactly the same in the so-called "planned economies" of the "Communist" countries. Karl Marx suggested that capitalism is a machine governed by natural laws - it isn't. It's an economic system run by a group of people who compete fiercely with each other for the right to rip us off. Capitalism has nothing to offer us except an endless cycle of war, famine, recession and unemployment. It is not inevitable that it will die of its own accord, it could linger on for centuries yet, lurching from crisis to crisis, therefore it must be destroyed.

The State

Although capitalism is the major form of social organisation in terms of production, there are things that it can't do. Broadly speaking it cannot supply the 'social' organisation of society, this hole is filled by something else - the State.

The State is the means by which a tiny minority control and dominate the rest of us, in the interests of the ruling power in our society --the capitalists. To give you an idea of how small a minority we are talking about, the often

because they can, by withdrawing their labour, bring down capitalism. In fact the centrality of productive workers is exaggerated, as production is only one part of the cycle of accumulation. Workers involved in communication, distribution and circulation can also have a powerful lever. A strike of bank workers might have a stronger effect on capital than a strike of workers in a car factory. A wave of urban riots might have a stronger effect than either.

The search for crucial fractions within the proletariat, whose struggle is privileged, reveals a hierarchical perspective held by the workerist. It stems from the view that communism is a program already framed which just needs troops to put it into practise. This outlook is a hangover from antique socialism such as 2nd International style social democracy, or syndicalism. This type of theory sees class struggle as a form of (bourgeois) war, with foot-soldiers and generals. The "revolutionary" determines the programme, the workers put it into practise.

Workerism and intellectualism are opposites but are not opposed. They complement one another. Thought and action are separated, the workers must put the theorist's ideas into practise. Workerists often have their own critique of intellectuals, but this is only to be applied to other intellectuals, not the workerist himself. The workers must shun other intellectuals, but not the workerist, who pretends to be something other than a specialised thinker. Workerism maintains the opposition of thought and action, and the de facto privilege of thought, which are inherent in capitalism.

The revolutionary subject is not just productive workers, or even all workers. It is the proletariat, those without social power or social wealth, those who have nothing to lose but their chains. In addition non-proletarian strata can play a full part in revolutionary situation, if the proletariat is itself active. This is seen best of all in the revolutionary peasants involved in the Makhnovist movement, and in the communist communities set up during the Spanish civil war.

The aim of the communist movement is not a workers' state, or a proletarian dictatorship. It is the abolition of all classes in the human community created through anti-capitalist struggle.

CRITIQUE OF WORKERISM

by Wildcat (UK)

Workerism is a form of capitalist ideology that is endemic amongst self-defined revolutionaries.

It is an ideology that encourages the acceptance of, and propaganda for wage-labour, amongst individuals who have realised the exploitation and alienation that wage-labour entails. It is thus one of the highest forms of alienation.

Worship of the worker is found in various state ideologies, such as Stalinism and Nazism. Workers are honoured for their role as builders of the nation, the economy, capital.

Workerism is not an ideology that praises all wage labour, but one that promotes only “productive” labour. It in fact vilifies office workers and service industry workers and praises only those who are most closely involved in the reproduction of capital.

Workerism worships manual labour, the “work with hammers”. Its vision of the proletariat is of the muscle-bound male. In rejecting office and shop work, it rejects a large part of female wage-workers, revealing itself as sexist.

Workerism has been present in the workers’ movement from the beginning. The earliest workers societies were Christian inspired, and praised diligence thrift and hard work. These moralistic ideas linger on in workerism, which is a remaining bastion of Christian ideology within the working class.

The strongest proponents of workerism are not manual workers who have had no choice in their labour, but ex-marginals who make a moral decision to become a “revolutionary” manual worker. Their advocacy of workerism is a compensation for their lack of sureness about their own class status, and a moral condemnation of proletarians who are willing to make different choices.

In its theory, workerism sees revolution arising from an escalation of the day to day struggles of workers in capitalism. The history of revolutions contradicts this theory again and again. The French and Russian revolutions were triggered by women’s struggles. The German and Portuguese revolutions were triggered by mutinies. The Paris 68 revolution was triggered by a student struggle. Workerism deals with history’s falsification of its theory not by correcting the theory, but by the falsification of history. In each case the role played by non-workers is marginalised or denied. Revolutionary theory instead analyses the real events in order to understand the moments of weakness in capitalism.

Productive workers are said by workerists to hold a crucial position

quoted figures are still true - that 7% of the population owns 84% of the wealth. The state is a set of institutions and bodies through which government is exercised e.g. parliament, local government, ministries, civil service, police, law, education, and the church. The aim of government is to keep the lid on class conflict, and to control competition between the capitalist, to make sure of the smooth running of society. It does this by enforcing the laws of private property, and the right of capitalists to buy and sell it. It doesn’t matter whether that property is land, food, health, sex, factories, houses or anything else that takes their fancy.

But the State came before capitalism, and it has always been a form of control and oppression in the interests of whatever ruling class is in power, and whatever economic system they choose to use. In Britain we are given the ‘choice’, every five years or so, of what Party we’d like to govern us. This, like many other ‘choices’, is a false one, a con trick to fool us into thinking we can change things through the vote. It also gives us politicians, as figureheads, to blame for our difficulties.

But the reality is that the power of the state lies with the capitalists, and the states own officials - they pull the strings. With power concentrated like it is there is always the risk that a small group can mount an attempt to gain control of the state, for example Fascists or Lenin-inspired communists. This would be nothing more than swapping one set of bosses for another - we want to sweep the lot of them away.

CLASS

Because capitalism represents exploitation, and the State represents domination, it isn’t surprising that the society they have produced is split into different categories, or classes, of people who hold a position directly in relation to capitalism and the state.

It is important that we stress here that we have to generalise when defining class, there are always exceptions to the rule, there are also sub-sections within classes that can confuse the picture.

The Ruling Class

About 5% of the population.

Some examples: Owners of major companies, landowners judges ,top cops, church leaders and the aristocracy including the Royal Family.

The Middle Class

About 20% of the population

Some examples: professionals e.g. journalists, doctors, teachers, management, social workers Also priests, officers in the armed forces and the owners of small businesses

The Working Class

About 75% of the population

Some examples: Factory shop and office workers, nurses, technicians agricultural workers, soldiers up to NCO level and the unemployed

The above figures are not the invention of Class War - they come from the State's own figures and were updated after the 1981 census.

The Ruling Class

In general there are two main factors that give you your place in the class system : wealth and power. The ruling class rule but they don't actually govern - that is left to the State's politicians and officials They don't all sit around in smoke filled rooms conspiring to oppress us, they don't need to most of the time. So how do they keep us in our place? By the old trick of divide and rule - setting white against black, men against women and worker against worker. This breaks down any sense of class solidarity, identity and unity - without which a revolution is an impossible dream.

The Middle Class

Contact between the ruling class and the working class is very rare Most inter-class contact comes between the working and middle classes. The middle class is made up of many sub-sections and layers, all performing different roles and functions necessary for capitalist society to run. Basically speaking they manage us in the interests of the ruling class.

The most recognisable role for the middle class is the economic management of business and industry e.g. work/factory managers, and accountants. These are the top dogs, the highest earners in the middle class, because Without their services capitalism would rapidly collapse.

By it's very nature capitalism is filled with brutality and inequality. If left to it's devices it would end in either barbarism or class revolution. Neither is any good to the ruling class, so this must be prevented by capitalism putting on a `human face` - the caring side of capitalism! a large section of the middle class provide this function. Mopping up the casualties of class society, and providing a `buffer` for class anger, and sometime channeling it into minor tinkering with social conditions. they also provide the vital services we need, but at a cost to us - they have virtual control over whole areas of our lives.

A not so obvious role of the middle class is to provide and intellectual and cultural framework in which ideas that serve the interests of the ruling class become part of our everyday thoughts. The endless repeating of certain ideas, stereotypes and myths try to stifle our class consciousness and turn us into `model citizens`. These can be the crude lies like `all blacks are lazy and thick' or the more sophisticated crap about the so-called `classless

So the inner coherence of the coming class movements is anticipated. Their strategy will not grow detached in the heads of revolutionaries, but lies within the process of the material development (of division of labour, machinery etc.) itself.

7. The task of revolutionaries is the analysis of the capitalist development in order to be able to assess and show the potentials of class struggles

The special role of revolutionaries can not be explained by a "political consciousness" which class struggles could not achieve by themselves. It can only be derived from a general view and interpretation of the things that actually happen. The power, the possibilities of self-organization, of expansion and generalization are set by conditions of production. The task of revolutionaries is to show the coherence between the material conditions and practice and the perspective of struggles. The class movement will take place within the net of development and underdevelopment. Therefore, we have to show the connection of different parts of this net and the political reasons for the inequality. The analysis of the material foundation of workers' struggle also determines where we should intervene. It is not sufficient just to follow the "spontaneous" patterns of struggles and to document them. We have to look for the points which can be of strategic significance for the future. These areas do not need to be the "most developed" or the "centres of accumulation". Often the sectors that connect different levels of development (transport between different factories, "information work" between production and distribution) are significant for a generalization of struggles. For this we need more than just an informal exchange between our groups, we need an organized discussion and intervention.

to cultivate the land in their own “anarchical” way. The factory-struggles in Western Europe at the beginning of the last century developed the socialist hope of running the factories and therefore the whole society under workers control. The struggles of the 60/70s expressed the increasing “scientification” of the production, the increasing terror of machinery and alienation from work and product. The distinction of “workers’ struggle” and other social movements dissolved more and more due to the fact that the whole society (schools, university, town infrastructure) was closer connected to the “actual process of production”. The centres of the movement (factories, universities) appropriated much of the “productive possibilities” of a modern society. The increasing division of labour inside the factory and the assembly line were used to organize new forms of strikes; squatted factories and universities became central meeting points, the “new science” and means of communication were developed by the movement etc. By doing this the movement itself became more “productive” and creative and spread the developed “forces of production” into other parts of society. The movement reflected the “developed forces of production” in their demands: not “factory under workers’ control”, but “automation of the factory” and wealth for everybody...

6. Class composition expresses the inner coherence and the tendency of class struggle

The problems above beg the questions of strategy for class struggle. The strategy can only be derived from the tendencies of capitalism. In the social process of production capitalism creates and connects parts of development and underdevelopment as a reaction to the class contradiction, which explains the dynamic character of the system. Within hi-tech factories there exist departments of different “technological” levels. These factories themselves are connected to suppliers of different standards of development right down to the “Third- World” sweat-shop. The different levels of development are the material foundations for the divisions and unevenness of class struggle. Workers’ struggles which can generalize themselves along the lines of “uneven development” lead to the conditions of production becoming more similar. The struggles of workers in automobile factories in the 60s-80s had the result that the conditions in the main factories became similar worldwide including former “zones of underdevelopment” (Mexico, Brazil etc.): on the level of technology and also for the workers (similar relation between wage and product). Capital reacts to the “political class composition” (the generalization of class struggle) with a “technical re-composition”, with the reproduction of uneven development on a higher level: regions are “de-industrialized”, in others capital makes the great technological leap forward, old “core” factories are divided into different units of a production chain, the production is “globalised” etc. Capital creates new centres of development which can become new points for the generalization of future class movements.

society’. Examples would be the media and advertising industry, education and religion.

Capitalism must have a constant supply of new ideas to create new markets to sustain its profits. It must also evolve in order to survive. Middle class researchers and intellectuals provide the information necessary to make this possible. This is true right from university professors to the new so-called ‘green’ entrepreneurs.

Because of the varied roles of the middle classes there is often conflict and contradictions within its ranks. When the class struggle comes to a head it would split them, forcing them to take sides. As a general rule those near the top would side with the bosses, having the most to lose. Those who come on our side can only do so on our terms. Which is to join us as equals, and not in their usual role as leaders.

The Working Class

The briefest way of describing our class is to say we are everyone who is not in the middle and ruling class! This is not just a smart arse remark. In general the working class are people who live by their labour, the ownership of property that generates wealth is the dividing line - if you have enough property or money not to work then you are not working class.

The other part of class identity is ‘social power’. The working classes do not have the power, we are the ones who are told what to do. We are defined not by what we do, but by what is done to us. But this does not mean that we are powerless - far from it. The state spends vast amounts of money and energy to keep us in our place. Also, because our work is at the very centre of everyday practical economic activity it is fair to say that everything hinges around whether we want to ‘play the game’ or not .

Class is a much disputed topic. the ruling class need to confuse the issue in order to survive. If the majority of people have a clear idea of the workings of a class society, social control would be impossible and the ruling class would be toppled from their positions of wealth privilege and power.

As capitalism developed and class society became a feature of people’s lives , the ruling class found it necessary to stifle class consciousness, and even to get working class people to identify with capitalism. Myths like ‘we’re all middle class now’ or ‘we live in a classless society’ , are laughable and contradictory. These are the rantings of middle class journalists, ad-men and politicians, who want to wish away class conflict and try to create a false idea of equality.

With the rise of the ‘Consumer Society’ and the easy availability of credit, more and more working class people can afford things like their own house, car, holidays abroad etc, But this increase of personal wealth does in no way increase your social power. At the end of the day these extra goods all rely on your ability to work. The day you lose your job and can’t keep up the payments, they all go out the window along with the easy credit that made

them available. and at the same time when we can afford a few extra goodies, the wealth of the already rich and powerful rises fantastically. What counts is not token improvements in our life-styles but the gross inequality in the overall distribution of wealth and power.

With the running down of the traditional heavy industries, the old image of the working class has dramatically changed - massively so during the 1980's. In its place are more white collar workers, and the rise in service industry, high tech and part time employment. But it's ridiculous to say that just because there is a more diverse labour market the working class has disappeared! It hasn't, it's just that to the middle class politicians, media people and journalists if you don't wear overalls, a cloth cap, and get your hands dirty at work you aren't working class. That's how thick they really are!

The end of class society can only come about through working class revolution. This is because the working class is the only social group capable of this massive transformation of society, by virtue of the fact that we are the overwhelming majority and because we have the interest, motivation and ability to do so. History has shown us many examples of the working class's revolutionary ability, there is no good reason for thinking that this will be any different in the future.

CLASS STRUGGLE

As we said earlier, once you are aware of how crap this society is you either:

- 1) Do nothing about it because you belong to the ruling class or middle class and have a lot to lose through a revolution
- 2) Take a cynical 'why bother' attitude, believe that this is the way it will always be and go back to sticking your head in the sand
- 3) Or you believe that things should change and that we have to organise and fight back to do so.

How you go about doing number three depends on how much 'change' you actually want, and what exactly you are prepared to do. Some people feel they are changing society by voting Labour, joining CND, becoming a vegetarian or joining the Green party. There's nothing wrong with being a Green, vegetarian member of CND, but it is being criminally naive if you think it will really change the overall structure of society. The same goes for those who think that by 'dropping out' and living some sort of 'alternative lifestyle' they are doing something to change society. They aren't. The State can tolerate millions of it's citizens wandering off and living in teepees. and would probably prefer them to do so since they would then be not harmless ,

f) communist tendencies

There are widely differing notions of "communist tendency". On the one hand the notion that humans have the "human need" for a better society which they express in their struggles against exploitation. On the other hand the orthodox notion that the development of the forces of production will overthrow capitalism and will make communism possible. Leninism and most of the "left communist" currents have a very mechanical notion of the forces of production: development of technology and the extension of the social division of labour due to the driving forces of competition. The foundation of communism is the fact that the increased forces of production are able to reduce individual work-time. They only deal with the fact that the forces of production are in the wrong hands, and ignore the contradiction that the material form of technology (assembly line), of science (Taylorism) and socialization ("globalisation") itself is the foundation of capitalist command over the workers. The dissolution of this contradiction can only take place in a class movement that both changes the material conditions of production and "socializes" the forces of production along with the struggle. Therefore, struggles have to relate to the contradiction of social possibilities (enormous production of material wealth, increased productivity) and reality (drudgery and relative poverty).

A central problem remains the uneven development: the forces of production do not exist solely as a "stage of the forces of production" detached from the workers. The state of technology, the use of science, the degree of social division of labour is different in every sector, region etc. Workers have to face different states of development in the work-process, so in struggles they relate in different ways to the possibilities and contradictions of the social forces of production. In zones of underdevelopment (no or few investments, investments in "labour intensive" exploitation) the "need for communism" will, above all, express itself in the workers attacking poverty and labour-intensive production as a consequence of the capitalist "usage" of the social productivity. In centres of development the contradiction shows itself in the fact that despite the "technological progress" and "abundance", life is still ruled by drudgery and relative poverty. The main question will be from which points of uneven development struggles can socialize/globalise themselves as a new "force of production". Which struggles will be able to express the possibility and hope for a better form of production due to the material conditions (state of technology, science, division of labour etc.) they arise from?

The communist revolution will have to tear down the artificial existence of "development and underdevelopment". We have to ask at which points of social production this process will start and develop power.

It is not easy to find good examples to show the coherence between the "stage of the forces of production" and the "Utopia" of class struggles. The revolts in agrarian societies had less a "social utopia" than the demand

the media, but that it effects their daily work/life. These effects show the social dimension of production today and so they can destroy the notion of “isolated work-places”. Also the social skills that workers acquire in their existence as a work-force influences their potential to break through the isolation of their struggle by their own activity: for instance the knowledge of how to organize and improvise in the chaos of the production process, the skills to use means of communication, the experiences and connections of immigrated workers etc.

e) political generalization

In the history of class struggle there has never occurred a “mass uprising”, a simultaneous uprising of the majority. It has always been small sections of the proletariat (of a single factory, branch, region etc.) which start the trouble, which push it forward or which become the symbol or focus of a class movement. These “cores” are neither founded on “higher consciousness” nor do they emerge by chance. In the 60s/70s it was mainly the workers in the automobile factories who played this role. The automobile sector was the driving force of the capitalist boom of the previous decades. It absorbed thousands of workers who came from the different poor regions to the metropolis. It generalized the experience of workers by technology and work-organization on an international level. It was the centre of an international division of labour with productive connection to nearly every sector. Though the product was a symbol of an increasing wealth, the only chance to get a piece of it was by subjecting oneself to the command of the factory.

In other times and places there have been particular regions which became the centre of a movement. That was less due to “tradition” than to their significance in the social process of production, for instance port- towns, mining regions. In the centres of development the connection of state and capital can be noticed more easily (planning of infrastructure, labour-market policy, special laws etc.) and the global character of this society is obvious (“foreign investments”, migration etc.). We can take towns like Turin as examples for the 50s/60s or the Maquilladoras in South America and “Special Development Zones” in China for today. Also in Europe there are zones of development (for instance on the west border of Poland, the region around Dresden, Piemont).

We think that struggles can expand without these “centres”, but often the limitation of strike-movements is due to the fact that the “centres” were not taking part or have been defeated. So the question of “generalization” is not really a question of a “political leadership”, but the question of to what extent struggles can socialize themselves along the lines of the social production and hit capital at central points.

and no threat to the State. Others think that by voting Labour they’ll achieve change. We don’t. Class War doesn’t prattle on about ‘waiting for a Labour Government’ or electing Socialist Councils because the Labour Party is about as revolutionary as a pond full of ducks! It’s political aims and ideas are just a ‘soft’ version of capitalism. It also has a negative and destructive influence because it pretends to be the political voice of the working class. The reality is that it’s run by a motley collection of bloated, corrupt union officials and trendy-lefty social worker types who are nothing more than a load of parasitical, careerist bureaucrats, easing their ‘radical consciousness’ by naming tower blocks after obscure Latin American freedom fighters and drinking Nicaraguan coffee at their smart parties, in their smart houses in Hampstead and Holland Park.

Some people join Left-wing groups like the Socialist Workers Party, or Militant. They do want to change society and realise (well some do) that it will only change through a revolution. Class War believers this too, but how these groups see the coming about of a revolution, and what type of society will be formed and by who, is fundamentally different to what we think and want.

Firstly Class War is not another ‘Party’ trying to gain power. We don’t want to swap one set of bosses for another, no matter how ‘radical and progressive’ they pretend to be. They talk about ‘democratic centralism’ and how the working class needs ‘their leadership’ - What a joke! We don’t need them anymore than we need the Tories or Labour - THEY NEED US! We have no intention of destroying capitalism just so that it can be replaced by a NEW state, and new laws. Quite apart from anything else, the very nature of these tiny bands of ‘revolutionaries’ who seem to form new groups, and splinter groups, at the drop of a hat means they usually have an exclusively middle class membership. The working class members soon leave. As a result they launch endless new ‘front organisations’ to try to recruit members. Based around issues such as the war in Ireland, anti racism and sexism and gay rights etc. The damage that has been done by their guilt-ridden brands of anti-racism and anti-sexism, in particular, is a disgrace to see. In reality though, these obscure left wing groups are little more than a talking shop where their members prattle away to their hearts content about ‘the political relevance of one-legged tea pickers in Tibet’. While the real world passes them by...

Unlike the Left we see the community as of crucial importance to our class. It is obvious no what any major industrial battles will not succeed without massive community support, such as during the Miners Strike. Crime and other anti-social behavior, racism and sexism must be fought from within our communities, we can’t sit back waiting for someone to do it for us. This is what the Left want us to do, leave everything to them and they will sort it out for us. But what usually happens is that as soon as something else appears on the horizon they’re off like a shot! A good example of this is the Poll Tax - as

soon as it was announced that it was going to be scrapped they dropped it like a hot potato, probably relieved that there would be no more riots in Trafalgar Square that would threaten their cozy lifestyles.

To the Left the working class are there to be ordered about because we are too thick to think for ourselves. The new concerns of the Left in this country reflect the political, economic and cultural hopes of the middle class more than ever before. Tragically any decent revolutionaries within these groups usually become burnt out, disillusioned and are wasted. Class War makes no 'revolutionary demands' on behalf for the working class. But we do see the need to play up the revolutionary elements within our struggles, towards an objective of creating a popular 'culture of resistance'. This is the popularisation of the ideas of class struggle, class pride and identity, and the values of solidarity, self-management and internationalism. Fundamentally this is about bringing politics into all areas of peoples lives. At present the capitalists invade all areas of our lives - in turn we will have to retrieve every part of them.

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WHAT WE DO

As we have said before, the Class War Federation doesn't have all the answers, neither do we pretend to. We are not a new "party", or leaders in waiting. Unlike the rest of the Left we don't see ordinary working class people as mindless, moronic sheep with no political brain of their own who we must seek out and educate with our "superior" political beliefs. We believe that ordinary people have our basic politics already - that of suspicion of authority, and a hatred for the privileged elite. The role of our propaganda is to champion and develop these ideas.

Our propaganda is fundamentally different from all the other political groups. While the Left whine and moan about the power of the State, injustice, write garbled theory and copy the dated writings of obscure 19th century intellectuals or concentrate on "building the part", Class War tries to increase the confidence, autonomy, initiative and solidarity of working class people.

fortified is generally decided in struggles. Factories, specific sectors etc. with a "colourful" composition are especially decisive in this process.

Relation to the means of production:

Capital is the process and result of a mode of production where the dead labour (machines, work-material) commands the living work-force. A worker who has to obey the rhythm of the machines, and who notices that despite the technological progress his/her situation does not improve, is more likely to attack capital as a contradictory mode of production. Workers of a handcraft work-process who are still "masters" of their tools will more likely see the "boss" as the symbol of exploitation.

Relation to the product:

Workers in spheres of mass-production realize just by working that the quality of the products plays a secondary role and that it is all about quantity. Usually one can not relate to the use-value of the product, because one only sees a small part of the whole production process and at a stage of the product which has no use-value yet. A lot of workers are not working on a material product, but they work under industry- like conditions to perform "services". We have to discuss how this "immateriality" of the products impacts on the workers' struggle.

It remains an open question for us how far struggles of "handicrafts", agricultural workers and other proletarians who do not work under "industrial" conditions can develop an anti-capitalist character. It is a decisive question how these struggles can unite with the struggles of the "industrial proletariat" despite the different conditions and without external mediation (like the so-called "Anti-Globalisation"-Movement, "Peoples Global Action", the "Zapatistas" and other organisations who try to link different "social movements")

d) expansion

Whether struggles can expand themselves also depends on "spontaneity", the social situation and mere chance. For a political strategy it is important to analyse the material foundation of an expansion: what is the relationship between a single struggle and the social production? Single companies are, to a greater or lesser extent, connected to the social division of labour: international production chains, transport, connections to "scientific work" in universities, connection to the "service sector" and distribution. So there are different ways a struggle can effect society, for instance a strike the daily life of a mass of workers. Do workers who are not immediately engaged in a strike notice it's outcomes as producers, for instance because they can not do their work due to missing parts? Do they notice it as consumers, for instance because they miss their daily newspaper in the morning? For the expansion of a struggle it is important that other workers are not just informed through

c) political content

“Political consciousness”, the consciousness to confront capital as a class, can not be brought to the workers from outside, but can only develop in the struggle itself. This developing consciousness also depends on the practical relation between the producers and their relation to the means of production. The specific capitalist mode of production is mass-production based on division of labour and machinery. Whether workers grasp exploitation just from a “unionist” point of view as an unfair distribution of the product or from a “political” point of view as a social relation of production with it’s own laws, depends on the conditions they have to work under. It is not a question of their “right or wrong consciousness” as the Leninists would claim, but the question of whether their exploitation is not only capitalist in a formal way (free wage-labour) but also in its material way (hierarchical division of labour, machine-controlled work-process etc.).

Some examples of how the specific conditions of production influence the political content of workers’ struggle - and their relation to capital as a mode of production:

Relation to the wage-form:

In capitalism the wage-relation, appearing as the “individual exchange of money for work”, conceals the fact that capital exploits the collective labour-power of the workers. A worker who is hired together with a hundred other workers and who has to do the same work is more likely to notice that the “individual contracts” are just a fake than for example a handicraft worker who “possesses” special skills and therefore special “work to sell”.

Relation to work:

Work in capitalism is abstract. The specific tasks one performs are not important, but the fact that work adds surplus labour-time to the product is. A worker who has to do “unskilled” work together with others will have a different relationship to work than a specialized worker. The first will actually experience work as abstract and will be less likely to glorify it and organize within the boundaries of her or his profession.

Relation to other workers:

A formal notion of class does not reach very far. That reveals itself when we look at the composition of work-force on the shop-floor. We could state that foremen, team-leaders or managers are also “wage- labourers” and therefore exploited, but nearly every struggle has to enforce itself against these “little bosses”. The (hierarchical) division of labour of the social production process is the foundation for racist and sexist divisions within the working class. So on the one hand capital divides workers, but on the other hand it brings together workers of every skin-colour, gender, nationality etc. in the process of production. Whether divisions between workers are questioned or

Moaning on and on about how terrible everything is, is depressing and boring and encourages reformism (Green politics for example). We know that however many reforms are made, the ruling class will be in direct, or indirect (e.g. culturally) control of our lives. They will still control where and how we live and work, and to a large extent what we think. Apart from sheer physical force, the ruling class controls us by demoralisation, pacification, creating apathy, robbing us of our identity as a class and fostering and encouraging prejudice of every possible kind to divide us. Through our propaganda, we try to combat this.

There are three ideas central to Class War, humour, populism and violence. Some people have said that writing a paper in this style is patronising - well that’s crap, of course many working class people are very capable of reading intellectual material - and Class War is aimed at them as much as those who aren’t. Humour is essential to the paper, firstly because it makes people want to read it, and secondly because it is the best way we have of making our point. People remember witty one-liners, and repeat them to their mates, taking with it the political content. Humour is a very powerful weapon. It makes our enemies seem ridiculous and less powerful.

Politics is not separate from everyday life, it is life. The idea that politics must be boring and serious encourages us to forget this. The trouble with most lefty papers is that they are difficult and boring to read. There is a reason why people like to read The Sun. It’s not because they’re stupid and ignorant, it’s because a lot of the time is a light entertaining read. This isn’t saying that The Sun doesn’t talk crap. It just means that there is a lot to be said for a paper that is simple, entertaining and easy to read, and that’s what Class War should be like if we want people to read it. The idea that if you enjoy reading a paper like that, or watching soaps or sitcoms on the telly, means you’re thick, is just intellectual bullshit.

Class War doesn’t shy away from violence, it promotes open class violence - the idea of a lot of people fighting a common enemy. We feature people fighting back in the paper to show that it happens all the time (it’s ignored or marginalised by everyone else), and to show that it works, giving people the confidence they need to take on capitalism and the State. After all the ruling class aren’t just going to roll over and give up their power - it will have to be taken from them.

We also produce a range of propaganda for people who have read Class War and want to know more about what we believe - you’re reading some now! Our theoretical journal, The Heavy Stuff, comes out regularly and goes into current issues and affairs with more depth than Class War does. We also have Unfinished Business, a 200 page book which goes into the present situation that our class is in, how we got there, and how we can learn from the past to change the present. All of the ideas you have read here are gone into in more detail, and it’s highly recommended reading.

WE ARE CLASS WAR

The Class War Federation is made up of normal people, we are not weirdoes or loony lefties! Our politics are common sense and straightforward not the intellectual ranting of university professors. We strongly believe that everyday life and politics are the same thing. If your politics aren't part of everyday life then they are worthless. Our political activity must be as open to a 30 year old housewife, as to a 40 year old miner as to an OAP.

We do not demand 6am paper sales outside factories in the freezing cold, or 24 hour activity (endless rounds of meetings etc). Class War is not arrogant like the Left, or your everyday politician. Yes, we do have ideas and we do stand firm behind our views, but we don't think we are perfect, we don't put forward a theory and say that if everyone followed it to the letter then everything would be fine and the sun would always shine! Our politics come from our lives and the real world; they are a necessity, not a theory.

Class War are not the only "Left wing" group who recognise that working class people are political (because they have to be) - it's just that it's couched in different terms from the intellectual claptrap of the Left. We believe that it is right, and a necessity, that there should be similar groups to our own, and that there should always be debate within our Federation. Because we are a working class group, and because our politics come from there, we are able to respect and work with working class people who are not yet political, or who may have different views than our own.

and production, use of special machinery) and the form of re-production (living-community, family-structure etc.)

* the **"political class composition"** describes how workers turn the "technical composition" against capital. They take their coherence as a collective work-force as the starting-point of their self-organization and use the means of production as means of struggle. We are still discussing the question of at which particular point in the process of workers' struggle we can describe it in terms of "political class composition". One position uses the term as soon as workers of a single company or branch organize their struggle out of the conditions of production. The other position takes as a pre-condition for a new "political class composition" a wave of workers' struggles that are unified into a class movement by struggles in central parts of the social production process (for example in the 60s/70s the focus for the class movement were mainly the struggles in automobile factories).

In the following passage we want to sketch how specific forms of production influence the ways, contents and perspectives of struggles:

a) immediate organization

Whether workers try to find individual or collective solutions for their problems mainly depends on the way they have to relate to each other in the daily work-process. When work is mainly based on individual performances and skills (for instance handicraft work) dealing with conflicts on an individual basis is more likely. When the division of labour creates a mutual dependence between workers the need for a collective action is more obvious. The potential for self-organization furthermore depends on the question of whether the work-process enables the workers to communicate with each other (high degree of co- operation, concentration of many workers in one work-place or living-area etc.)

b) immediate power

The foundation for the emergence, the content and prospects of workers' struggles is the question of whether they can gain power against capital. That depends on different circumstances, for instance if workers are concentrating on points of significant importance for the process of production and accumulation; if the struggle takes place in a specific economic situation (for instance boom, lots of orders) or under a particular composition of capital (for instance high standard of machinery requires production around the clock) that increases the dependence on the work-force.

4. The reason for the different political notions and practice of Leninism and its left critics are the different material conditions of exploitation and class struggle they had to face

Council-Communists and others mainly criticize the patronizing and undemocratic character of the Leninist Party. We think that the more profound critique on Leninism consists of the analysis that the Bolshevik form of party emerged from the specific material conditions in Russia in the late 19th and early 20th century. An agrarian society with dispersed and isolated peasant villages, a high rate of ill iteration and just few zones of industrialization could only be politically unified by an external mass-organization. Therefore the most profound critique of the Council Communist is that this kind of organization was not useful and appropriate in their historical situation: in the industrialized regions of Western Europe during the 1920s. They realized that the factories had already unified the workers and that the creation of workers' councils during the revolutionary period 1918-23 was the political answer of the working class. Today just a few critics of Leninism reflect this "material core". The critique usually remains on a political level, not touching the material roots of Leninism and other currents. Today we have to put the critique on it's feet again by analysing the changes in the organization of exploitation and of workers' struggle. That is the precondition for the development of new political strategies. The notion of class composition can help us with that.

5. The core of the notion of class composition is the thesis that there is a close relation between the form of struggle and the form of production

Workers do not fight together because of the consciousness that "they are all exploited". Struggles of workers arise from concrete work-conditions, from actual situations of exploitation. Workers' struggles take different forms (in the past, in different regions or sectors etc.), because the concrete labour-process and therefore the material form of exploitation differs. The mode of production and the position within the social process of production determines the form and possibilities of a struggle: truck-drivers' struggles differ from those of building-workers, strikes in factories producing for the world-market have different outcomes than strikes in call centres. In the analysis of the coherence of the mode of production and workers' struggle we distinguish between two different notions of class composition:

* the **"technical class composition"** describes how capital brings together the work-force; that means the conditions in the immediate process of production (for instance division of labour in different departments, detachment from "administration"

Review of "UNFINISHED BUSINESS..... the politics of Class War"

from Subversion

This long awaited book represents a serious and welcome attempt by the Class War Federation to sort out its own politics and present them to the working class in a clear and comprehensible language.

Subversion shares some important areas of political agreement with Class War which are hammered home in this publication. In Summary these are:

1. A clear rejection of 'reformism' as a way forward for the working class and a commitment to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its state.
2. A recognition that the overthrow of capitalism means the complete abolition of the wages system, money and the market in all their forms.
3. Rejection of the 'old labour movement' as represented by the Labour Party and the trade unions and a commitment to independent working class struggle.
4. The need to combat racism and sexism within the context of the class struggle.

They also reject, as we do, Leninist views on revolutionary organisation. Whilst they continue to use the term 'federalism' to describe their approach to organisation, they clearly do not mean by this the kind of 'every idea or tactic is of equal value' and 'every individual or group can go its own way' approach of traditional anarchism.

Having said this there are some important weaknesses in the book which are very much hangovers from traditional left wing politics and in particular, anarchism. Firstly, their analysis of capitalist class structures is very confused. They attempt an amalgam of 'Marxist' and anarchist definitions of class, relating this to 'wealth or property' ownership on the one hand and 'social power' on the other, rather than a straightforward 'relationship to the means of production' definition which we would use.

We wouldn't disagree with them when they say that capitalism is basically divided into three classes; the capitalist or ruling class; the middle class; and the working class. But their estimate of the size and importance of the 'middle class' is completely mistaken and their examples of who make up these classes reveals the muddle they've got themselves into. For instance, they say that rank and file soldiers are working class but rank and file policemen are not! Despite both being part of the state apparatus of

repression. This distinction sees them reverting to an ideological rather than a material definition of class. They classify people like teachers and doctors as middle class but go on to say that in a 'revolutionary' period a large section of the 'middle class' will come over to the working class side, whilst sections of the working class will side with the capitalists. But if teachers and their like have distinctive and opposing class interests to the workers, why should they? They also imply that 'peasants', i.e. small agricultural landowners, could be considered working class, whilst small business owners are clearly middle class! What Class War have failed to do is make a materialist analysis of the way capitalism has developed over the last 150 years and how this has effected its class structure.

Modern capitalism is based on a complex division of labour on an international scale. Putting it very simply, commodities are no longer produced in factories and surplus value extracted from individual factory workers, but are the social product of the 'collective worker' as represented by factory, transport, communication, educational, health, housing and other workers. For example, whereas teachers in the early days of capitalism were for all practical purposes 'outside' the production process and for all their low pay, 'middle class' today we have a mass education industry fully integrated into the production process, with teachers playing their part in the creation of the social product of capitalism. Most teachers have become working class. This isn't to deny that the role of teachers inclines them to conservatism and places obstacles to their becoming class conscious. But this equally apply to other sections of the working class. It does mean that there is a material basis for teachers and other similar groups of workers to be drawn into the advancing class struggle when it reaches a certain pitch. Even today it is fair to say that there were probably more teachers actively involved in supporting the last British miners' strike than there were 'working class' soldiers!

There is certainly more chance of teachers and other 'professional' workers becoming involved in a revolutionary struggle or the overthrow of capitalism than there is the remnants of the peasantry or small time business people and others of the traditional middle class which still survives.

The important point for us is the relationship of people to the means of production. Thus many doctors running their own business might be 'middle class' whereas others fully employed in the NHS could more reasonably be considered working class. As Class War themselves say, there are many grey areas and it is certainly true to say that there is much more class mobility amongst some sections of the (mainly better paid) working class than others. The potential for upward mobility may detrimentally effect the ideology of some sectors of the working class, it doesn't alter their objective class position at any given time.

A radical, militant and collective working class movement may well develop initially amongst the traditional working class--i.e. average manual and office workers. A recognition of this is important to our political strategy.

formal notion of capital leads to a formal notion of working-class: a mass of exploited individuals who have to sell their labour-power due to their "non-possession" of the means of production. From this similar notion of working-class different political conclusions are drawn: the Leninists emphasise the need for a political party that is able to gather the masses whose only coherence is the formal similarity of non-possessing. The party has to give a strategical direction to the spontaneous struggles of the exploited. The Council-Communists just notice that the mass of exploited create their own forms of organization in struggle. They neglect the question of strategy and see their main task as distributing the experiences of self-organization among the workers.

3. A formal notion of class can neither explain nor support the self-emancipation of the working-class

The formal notion of exploitation (appropriated surplus labour-time) can not reveal the possibility of self-emancipation that workers can develop. As "non-possessors" of means of production their power can not be explained. The mere fact that they are all exploited does not create a real coherence between the individuals. The possibility of self-organization can only be derived from the fact that workers have a practical relation to each other and to capital: they are working together in the process of production and they are part of the social division of labour. As producers they are not just opposing capital as formal "wage-labourers", but in their specific practice they are producing capital. Only arising from this relation can workers' struggles develop their power. The isolation of workers in single companies, branches etc. cannot be overcome "artificially" by taking the similarity of "all being exploited" as the foundation for an organization. This attempt generally ends up in another "rank-and-file" union: there will always be the need for an outside institution if the coherence of the workers is not based on their actual social co-operation, but just on the "formal coherence" of exploited wage-labour. Leninism does not realize this deeper reason for trade-union forms of workers' struggle. It tackles the problem as a mere question of leadership: is the external coherence built up by the unions or the communist party? The criticism of Leninism usually reduces itself to questioning just the form of this external coherence: it is "undemocratic", not built by the workers themselves etc. The left critics very rarely analyse the process of production in terms of the foundation for the coherence of workers' struggle. Therefore they tend to just follow the spontaneity of struggles without realizing or supporting a strategical direction within this. Why do different political currents develop despite their similar notion of class?

DISCUSSION PAPER ON CLASS COMPOSITION

by Kolinko (Collective(ly) in Communist Movement)

Class composition is a central notion in our search for the possibility of revolution. We are looking for a force that is able to change society from the bottom up. It is correct, however general, to say that only the exploited are able to overthrow exploitation, but how does this process of liberation actually take place? The perception of the Marxist-Leninists is different from our experiences: the “working class” is neither a united object nor do we see the possibility that it just needs a political party to overcome the class divisions and give a revolutionary direction to workers’ struggles. The analysis of class composition can help us understand what is determining workers’ struggles, how they can turn into a class movement and how we can play an active part in this process.

The work-shop on class composition can therefore be the starting-point for a deeper discussion about our “role as revolutionaries” and our political strategies: where is a deeper coherence of the “workers’ net” of CRO in Bologna, the “workers’ inquiry” of Kolinko in the Ruhr Area, the interventions in Brighton, the newspaper project of Folkmacht etc.? About which questions do we have different political assessments and what possibilities for further co-operation exist?

We want to start with some short points on the relationship between political practice and the notion of class.

1. The notion of the “role of revolutionaries” has its basis in a specific notion of class and in a specific relation to class

In the discussion about the “role of revolutionaries” different political currents (Leninism, Syndicalism, Council-Communism etc.) are usually just “compared” to each other. We have to analyse how different notions of the role of revolutionaries and their organisation derives from different comprehensions of class and from a specific historical relation to class struggle.

2. The different communist currents (Leninism, Council-Communism etc.) have a formal notion of class in common

In general the different currents grasp “capital” as just a formal relation of exploitation: the surplus labour-time is appropriated by private hands or by the state. The actual material process of exploitation/work is neglected. This

It will only successfully go on to challenge capitalism if it draws in firstly the unemployed and then the rest of the modern working class. We can’t expect more than a handful of genuinely ‘middle class’ people to become committed to the movement precisely because they have got more to lose than gain in the immediate situation.

Secondly, Class War have an extremely ambivalent attitude towards nationalism.

On the one hand they state correctly that ‘Nationalism is one of the ways of keeping the working class divided’, but then they say, ‘....in the face of often brutal oppression nationalism gives working class people something. That “something” is identity, pride, a feeling of community and solidarity....’

We would say it gives the working class a false sense of pride, a false identity and a false sense of community and solidarity.

We do recognise, as Class War say, that in places like Northern Ireland many of the struggles engaged in by the Catholic working class are not purely nationalist. But our job is to clearly split the nationalist from the class elements, both theoretically and practically, not fudge the two as Class War does.

Sadly, even the strengths of this book are not consistently carried through in the practice of the Class War group. This is shown starkly in their confused approach to the trade unions. One of their very few members to talk and write regularly about workplace struggle is Dave Douglass, but despite some interesting insights into aspects of this struggle he still promotes an outdated ‘rank and filsetto’ approach which ends up defending the Trade Unions. (See the interesting Wildcat pamphlet “Outside and Against the Unions” for a criticism of his views.)

As worrying, is the ‘idealist’ tendency in Class War which sees many of their members worn out in an endless search for the ‘right formula’ that will get their ideas across to the working class. This was particularly evident at their final “Communities of Resistance” Rally in London where any critical discussion was deliberately squashed, with instant appeals for us to ‘get stuck in’ and ‘do something’ only to be told by Class War at the end that their idea of doing something was yet another typical lefty “Day of Action” stunt.

These are not by any means our only criticisms of this book of the Class War group, but we’ll leave it at that for now.

What's the working class anyway?

a letter exchange from Subversion

Dear Comrades,

In your review of Class War's 'Unfinished Business' you quite rightly argue for a material definition of class as opposed to Class War's ideological mishmash. However, when examining our strategy as communists - in addressing different groups of the proletariat - surely we shouldn't discount all ideological factors? This 'strategy' means our identifying of which groups of people we should spend our time dishing out propaganda to, or talking to, or working with, etc. - and which groups we should be suspicious of and not waste our time on. Obviously we don't bother with our class enemies: the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. But I'd also say shouldn't bother with the professional army, police, etc., and a lot of 'professionals', who have often been university trained (the University itself is an ideological institution which extends beyond its campuses into our everyday lives, like the Church used to).

We are best talking to those people who have a more immediate experience of their class position, those to whom class struggle is, or often becomes, a daily reality - i.e.. the working class (but not all those who are not the big or small bourgeoisie). Anyway, it is these people who engage in proletarian class struggle - it is not, for example, Managers and Experts (who generally act to defeat the working class, of course).

As you say, it is only through class struggle that class consciousness, and the eventual defeat of class society, will come about. How could the manager of a supermarket come to a communist perspective without abandoning his/her job? How could an architect (who decides on designs for proletarian living areas, for example), a journalist, a priest or a social worker remain in their profession if they became communists? More importantly, given the jobs they do, how are these people going to be involved in class struggle? The same also goes for members of the police or professional army, of course.

In non-revolutionary, and even revolutionary, times hardly any of these types would become communists. Our strategy as communists involves exposing the fact that these people are the enemy of a class conscious proletariat - not by fact of their relation to the means of production (they are proletarian), but by the fact of their ideology and the actual job they do. The same also goes for the unions of course, and the fact that, in the final analysis, a shop steward fulfils a similar function for capitalism as does a foreperson.

Whereas the job of a car park attendant is basically 'neutral', the actual job and day to day existence of a journalist or social worker consists precisely of actively protecting the status quo. They do just the same job

Footnote: 1 Although Marx's Capital was written half a century before state-capitalism started masquerading as socialism, some of Marx's comments still throw light on the social situation that existed in Russia. "An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers), and sergeants (foremen, onlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist." and "It is not because he is a leader of industry that a man is a capitalist; on the contrary, he is a leader of industry because he is a capitalist. The leadership of industry is an attribute of capital..." volume 1, page 314, Lawrence & Wishart. Back

Published in 1995 in "Whatever"

reproduce the commodity of labour power. The work they do is productive labour appropriated by capital as surplus value. Having said this, the category of “housewives”, like the category of wage labourers, is not homogenous. Just as some wage labourers are middle class because of the social power they wield, so it is with “housewives” as well. These at first glance all appear to have the same social power and so all appear to be of the same class. It would be wrong to argue this way. As hinted at in the discussion above on school kids, in these areas, where the means of subsistence aren’t paid directly as a wage for work done, it is often necessary to look at the “class background” of the people involved. So that if a woman who doesn’t go out to work is married to a middle class man, it is probably reasonable to say that she is middle class too. She would certainly share some of his material interests, and therefore consciousness. It is still the case that “housewives” don’t have any direct usage of social power, and are effectively unpaid workers, so this may mean a downward pressure on class position, a partial proletarianisation. I am aware that this is a weakness in the class analysis I have put forward. There are other difficulties that now arise. What happens when a couple are from two different classes, say one a manager, the other a non-supervisory worker? From the example on housewives, we would have to say that the non-supervisory worker is elevated into the middle-class. If this is starting to get silly, it is not because the class analysis is totally wrong, it is because this is the wrong way to use it. Classes are social phenomenon, that are created in the mutual antagonism inherent in exploitative society. Using class analysis to analyse individual people in isolation is a moralistic endeavour, not a radical one. This is an important fact that many leftists totally ignore. For them the ability to individually “analyse” and condemn particular political enemies (or justify themselves) is their only reason for using class theory.

Class Community

Class is a social relation amongst large groups in society. It is not an object open to scientific analysis but exists in the conflict between classes. These class conflicts are power struggles primarily between a minority of possessors of social power and a majority whose social power is alienated from them. In capitalist society, alienation takes on specific forms. These include direct authority relationships, capital, and the spectacle. The function of, and need for a class theory is to understand how to destroy capitalist society by and through the creation of anti-capitalist modes of living. The revolutionary proletarian struggle is not an attempt to raise the proletariat to the position of a ruling class, but to abolish all classes through the destruction of capitalist social relations. The real communist movement is our struggle, the community we create through struggle against the social relations that destroy us. Communist or anarchist society is the victory of this real social movement, the generalisation of this human community.

as priests used to do (and still do). Nationalism, for example, is a purely ideological enemy of communism and the working class when it exists amongst the class--but a journalist or social worker is a physical enemy in as much as the person embodies the ideology s/he has accepted and made a living out of. In a revolutionary event people like these will be physically swept aside, however, there will be no revolutionary event if the escalating class struggle hasn’t squashed the power of the ideology of nationalism.

The problem for us (strategically) is recognising that some sections of the proletariat are irrevocably lost to bourgeois ideology and that they will ultimately to be smashed physically along with the machinery of state and the bourgeoisie itself. (Universities, for example, should be destroyed).

Some professional or ‘expert’ jobs seem more ambivalent though. University trained engineers, or NHS doctors, for example, may be ‘neutral’ --but socially and ideologically they would probably feel closer to journalists than to car park attendants.

Perhaps we need new labels for these different sections of the proletariat, so we don’t resort to calling them ‘middle class’.

You are right to argue that a material definition of class is essential, however, I think defining what the class struggle is, or could be, is at least as important, and part of that involves understanding and pointing out the real ideological divisions in the proletariat and exposing everything that is the enemy of communism.

Having suggested all this I’m not, of course, saying that you don’t already know it (or know better, which is more likely!), and I realise that your comments in Subversion 11 were only brief.

Pete Post, Sydney, Australia.

Dear Subversion,

Although having some sympathy with your criticism of Class War, in particular its obsession with ‘profile’, a few other points I must take issue with. In particular your assertion that Class War in its book ‘unfinished business’ gets into a muddle over class.

You say Class War is wrong to put squaddies in with the working class when the police are then placed as (reactionary thugs of) the middle class. You consider it more accurate to place everyone in relation to the means of production.

As C.W.’s book correctly states though, mutiny within the army is an historical reality that has little parallel within the police force. Thousands

of unemployed workers are cornered into taking up shit lives - bound to long contracts within the armed services. Coppers on the other hand are well-screened, well-paid and well-used to sticking the boot directly into the public.

Subversion, being seemingly unaware of this reality, leaves me wondering. Surely Subversion you are not peddling that naive crap that the police are only workers in uniform? If so don't expect sympathy when in an upsurge of struggle you're gunned down by a police force joyously wielding their Armalite toys. Does working class blood have to be spilt time and time again as testament to the failure of blinkered Marxist analysis?

Or, could it be that, having teachers making up [a large part of] Subversion, it is you yourselves who have the hang-up about class?

Arguing, as Subversion have done at length, how teachers are part of the production process, therefore share a common interest in revolution with the rest of the working class. Let's look at this.

Ignoring teachers relatively high salaries and function to condition and control the next generation of workers, there is some truth in what Subversion says.

But, despite the proletarianisation of the profession, teachers are still professionals and as such enjoy something of a cultural status. This acts as a link to middle class identification in a way not accessible to the majority of the working class.

I have no problem seeing teachers as middle class. This does not mean I declare them first up against the wall. Indeed I welcome thoughtful, committed members of such middle class professions who contribute constructively to the creation of international Communism.

Now if a copper was on fire I wouldn't piss on him. Class War is trying to put this reality into political terms. Not trying to bend reality to fit political theories.

In Solidarity

Harry Roberts junior, Class War supporter.

Subversion Reply

Of these two letters, the one from the Class War supporter is completely off the beam, whereas the second one makes some good points which we partly agree with. To answer all the relevant points we need to have a more precise analysis of "class" than the formula "relationship to the means of production".

of the steward in charge of the picket, Mike Hicks. He not only condemned the violence, even that in self-defence, but called anyone attacking the police, "agent provocateurs" (i.e. police agents). He also physically attacked people who argued for this type of action. These counterrevolutionary actions were carried out not by the top union bureaucrats, but by a low level official. Hicks himself was a Stalinist, and so a more or less conscious counterrevolutionary. But his actions are not so far removed from that other union officials. Unions are capitalist institutions which have as their function the representation of variable capital, i.e. workers. They negotiate the rate or form of exploitation, according to their own interests (they need, from time to time to demonstrate their usefulness to both boss and worker). They are entirely part of the present system and can only attempt to repress any struggle that goes against this system. Union officials, at all levels, are in the belly of the beast, and are in fact separated from the proletariat. This is due to the increased social power that they enjoy. Their middle class nature can be seen by the fact that despite often being the most militant of workers on day to day issues, in the more bitter struggles they always play a conservative role, pulled three ways trying to represent the workers, the union, and the manager or boss.

Growing up in a working class environment, I gained a hatred for the police before gaining any formal radical politics. Friends and family were arrested or imprisoned, the pigs came round our house to check up on us, we were stopped and hassled in the street, they came to our school to indoctrinate us. The "marxist" class theory, that just looks at the relationship to capital, defines the police as proletarian, because cops don't own any means of production. Some groups run with this result, and call for the unionisation of the police (in Germany, unionised cops have been on strike for more repressive powers). Other groups find it embarrassing to define pigs as working class, and twist their theory to correct this one error. In reality, police are middle class, and not because they are the exception to the rule. They are the purest example of holders of alienated social power. Those radicals who call teachers or shop stewards "soft cops" hit the nail on the head; these other middle class groups are only a diluted form of the archetype.

Contradictions

I have pointed out contradictions or capitalist interests in certain class theories. I can't however claim that the one I have presented can unerringly categorise every individual. One problem area is that of "housewives" or other full-time unpaid carers. (The role of the stereotypical housewife, who stays at home, looking after the house and the kids, has gone into decline since the sixties. This is due both to women's struggle, and to capitalist restructuring, away from the model of factory and stable nuclear family. But this role is still something of an archetype for women in this society.) "Housewives" and other carers perform labour in the context of a capitalist society. They produce and

education, are part of the middle class, because of the direct power they wield and because of their role in perpetuating ruling class ideology (although they are not major players in this field). Of course teachers do engage in collective class struggle. When these struggles are not aimed at protecting their “status”, but are for a wage increase say, then we can even see some sort of “proletarian” content. But struggles that go against this society, struggles which hold the seeds of capitalism’s destruction, are those that are expansive, which tend to unite more and more people. Teachers are, through their social position, divided against a large part of the proletariat (schoolkids) and they will have to go that much further to break from their social position. This doesn’t mean that there can’t be some individuals who are more strongly against their official role, I certainly have met a couple of teachers who have been involved in riots for instance. But class analysis is not useful for predicting the behaviour of each individual in a certain class position, only the general characteristics of that group as a whole. I should add here that there are certain categories of teachers, those who do not work in the compulsory sector and who are not deeply involved in the reproduction of ruling ideology, who are probably proletarian, or at least much closer to that condition. I’m thinking in particular of those that work in community education colleges, and some of those that do workplace training. This is not because I want to make some exception, perhaps for someone I know, but because they do not possess the criteria that make them middle class; i.e. capital, power, a significant spectacular function. This lack of homogeneity, sameness, is not just restricted to teachers, but appears in almost any sociological grouping. I will say again, sociology, the identification and classification of separate groups in society, is of no use as a basis for radical class analysis.

It’s Official

I have worked only in the non unionised private sector, or in temporary or casual jobs. This, together with the fact that I had a basic anarchist critique of unions before I left school, has meant that I have never been a union member. To me they have always seemed organisations of this society, not things outside or against it. This has meant that much of my criticism of unions has been second hand, based on the experiences of friends, family and comrades as well as stuff I have read. I have only come into conflict with unions in certain large workers’ struggles, and first of all that against News International 1986 - 1987. This struggle started when the majority of the workforce was sacked. The union tried to keep things legal and peaceful, supposedly trying to win over public opinion. The struggle of the sacked printers, local youths, and extremists was continually violent, aimed at the cops, scabs and NI property. The police tactics were also very violent. The top bureaucrats of course condemned any violent action by the pickets (but not the cops) over their PA. This surprised no one of course. What particularly struck me were the actions

The first point to consider is how we decide that one class rather than others has the potential to be revolutionary. Why does the communist strategy for revolution base itself on the (existing) economic struggles of the working class? After all, lots of other people suffer from the present system (Capitalism), such as poor peasants, street vendors etc.

The answer is that when workers need to defend their living standards, their immediate response is to struggle, together with their workmates, against the capitalists who employ them. The immediate response of, say, a street vendor would be to either raise their prices (creating a conflict with their customers, including workers), or alternatively to lower them and undercut the other vendors.

What is distinctive about the workers therefore is that they have an inbuilt and immediate tendency both to conflict with the capitalists and to collective action with other workers (at least in the same factory or same industry - but the potential is there for it to spread). We believe that this already existing conflict (which can never be got rid of by capitalism) is the seed out of which a revolutionary movement can grow. Naturally, this “seed” will have to grow immensely, but there’s no other “seed” to rival it.

The key point here is the conflicts that are built in to various social relationships. This is not simply a matter of whether someone earns a wage or not, because certain types of job contain other conflicts in the job itself. So to take the most obvious example, being a cop means having a fundamental conflict with workers who engage in struggle - the fact that cops receive wages is just a “sociological” fact of little significance. To answer the Class War supporter, no, coppers are NOT workers in uniform! The distinction that this comrade makes between them and squaddies however is tenuous, as the army has always been (and always will be) used against serious manifestations of class struggle. There is indeed a history of mutiny in the army but we’re talking here about draftees, which is a different matter.

There are other groups of wage earners who, in a less stark way, have conflicts with the working class at large built in to their jobs: teachers, with their role of social control and indoctrination of young workers; lower level bureaucrats whose job involves giving orders to others; people whose job involves taking money from workers, e.g. till operators, bar staff, bus drivers - try getting on a bus and saying you refuse to pay (a conflict between you and the owners of the bus company) and see whose side the driver will take. That doesn’t mean that all these sections are our enemies, but rather that they are, to varying degrees, in a contradictory position (unlike cops who ARE our enemies pure and simple). We may not put much effort into talking to the more “dubious” sections (like teachers) but we don’t write them off and we recognise that under the right conditions many of them will join in the struggle. This is not a question of “ideology” but of the position of these groups in society, in relation to other groups or classes.

All of this brings us on to the second point to consider - the distinction

between the present-day working class, whose day-to-day existence is largely passive (acquiescent towards capitalism) and the revolutionary force that can overthrow capitalism. This latter will grow out of the former, but is not identical to it. The former (which can be called the “class-in-itself”) is just a “sociological” category whereas the latter (the class-FOR-itself) is a revolutionary category.

When workers engage in struggle their “nature” changes in that they reject their normal passivity and begin to become a class-for-itself. It is this “class-BECOMING-for-itself” that we support.

Referring to the “Working Class” is vague because there are really several “working classes” - the passive, sociological working class, the conscious communist working class of the future that is overthrowing capitalism and the struggling working class (“becoming-for-itself”) - this last category is the most important one and shouldn’t be confused with the first one (it may be argued that it’s the same people but this is wrong because, apart from the fact that it’s SOME of the same people not ALL of them, the key point is that it’s not a thing that we’re talking about but an action, or rather a thing in action - sociology deals in “things” but the “class-in-action” is a revolutionary concept).

Questions such as “are coppers part of the working class?” are therefore in some sense pointless since they refer to membership of the “sociological” working class. They are certainly not going to become part of the “class-in-action” which is the “class” that WE support.

To come back to the question of “relationship to the means of production” as the formula for defining class, the most important “defining” that we have to do is to define how the “class-in-action” will come into being (a constant, repeated event) and how it will develop. Among the factors which determine this, “relationship to the means” of production” is the foremost, but is insufficient because it implies “relationship to property”, i.e. being a wage earner or not, whereas the other factors considered in the first part of this reply can be just as important. The best way to put it is probably “relationship to the developing class struggle” - this being determined by all the factors mentioned above.

and more people will be attracted to it. We aim to unite with whoever really shares our struggle no matter what role they play under normal conditions. The situationist Ratgeb/Vaneigem expressed this brilliantly: “Doesn’t it give you a certain sense of pleasure to think how, some day soon, you will be able to treat as human beings those cops whom it will not have been necessary to kill on the spot?”

Back to reality

This article has presented a theory, an analytical tool. But it has done it in a too abstract way. Where did these thoughts come from, a book, a discussion, a dream? These ideas did not appear fully formed but have been put together by me from my own experiences in this society, and my own experiences in my struggle against it, as well as from talking with other radicals and reading different books . This is a process started perhaps fifteen years ago and still continuing (though my ideas on class have only changed in details in the last eight years, say). I will retell some of my own experiences, so that you can understand more where I am coming from, and to bring this down to earth a bit more.

“But Teacher!”

My first involvement in any collective class struggle was at age eleven. At that time I was going to the comprehensive school on the council estate where I lived. Most of the kids there were working class, or else they were lower middle class. (Of course they all had similar amounts of social power, none, but where people are “temporarily” outside of the cycle of accumulation, it is probably sensible to look at their class background.) That year there were a number of teachers’ strikes which resulted in some disruption of classes. We even got sent home early a couple of times, which was brilliant. Some kid, with a good sense of humour, had the idea that we should all go on strike “in support” of the teachers. Basically we just all met up at the tennis courts and didn’t return to lessons. What was the reaction of the teachers to this mass “support” for their cause? They made no attempt at fraternisation with us. Their only response was to try to get us to return to normal passivity. One vision that stays with me is of one of the teachers, a leftwinger, fighting with one of the fifth years to prevent him joining our strike. All the teachers, and all the pupils recognised the true situation, that there could be no unity between the students and staff, only class conflict. Teachers, as part of their job, have a role in supervising and disciplining pupils. They also disseminate capitalist propaganda. Their role is one of socialising school kids into capitalist normality, the five day week, obeying orders; even the more or less useful stuff such as teaching kids to read is carried out because capitalism needs an educated workforce. Teachers, at least those who work in compulsory

CLASS ANALYSIS, FOR ANTI-CAPITALIST STRUGGLE

Anonymous, published in “Whatever” 1995

wholly integrated. These radical chains lead to radical struggle. Proletarian struggles are always anti-capitalist (in potential) because the proletariat can find no liberation within capitalism. Its struggle therefore tends towards an all out struggle against capital. This tendency comes to the fore only too rarely. Most of the time the proletariat exists primarily as a class defined by capitalism. Only through struggle can it form itself into a community consciously opposed to capitalism. The material conditions of existence of the class precede radical class consciousness.

The capitalist class is a small minority of the world population. Capitalism requires competition and therefore struggles between rival capitals. The capitalist class can therefore never be fully unified. However, capitalists must struggle not only against themselves, but also against all the other classes. The ruling class is under permanent assault from many directions. This results in a high degree of class consciousness possessed by the capitalist class. When a powerful anti-capitalist struggle breaks out, rival capitals can temporarily bury the hatchet and act in concert against the proletariat. The usual stereotype of the bourgeois is of a fat, top-hatted oaf, smoking a large cigar. It should be realised that the ruling class is small, fast and ruthless.

So who are our enemies; just the capitalist class or both they and the middle class? When it comes down to it the answer is: neither. What really destroys us is not the rich or their functionaries, it is the social relations of capitalism. It is the accumulation of capital, wage labour, social isolation, the state, borders, and more besides, that we are really need to do away with. In as much as the capitalist class, the middle class, or even the working class defend these relationships they act against our own liberation and the liberation of humanity as a whole. The point about class analysis, is that we can see who is most likely to defend these relations, and who is most likely to attack them. I once had a talk with someone who said that we should reopen Auschwitz and exterminate the richest 2% in this country. This kind of extremism has a sort of gut appeal. But there were a couple of problems. One was that this guy was a South African fascist who identified himself as an Anglo-Saxon. He argued that apartheid was more strongly established in the UK than it then was in South Africa, and that the ruling class was entirely of Norman origins. His wish to wipe out the rich was akin to the Nazi extermination of (Jewish) finance capitalists. The second problem was the industrial, and therefore capitalist, nature of his solution. The reason that we can't use prisons, concentration camps, or even firing squads for our liberation is not that we are liberals who respect an absolute right to life. It's because these are dehumanising institutions for the jailers as well as the condemned. Rebel violence can be liberating, but can never be institutional. We use enough violence to achieve our aims; we need to create a new community out of our struggle, hopefully as many people as possible can be integrated into this human community as rapidly as possible. As the revolution develops, more

This article is an attempt at communication with individuals and groups involved in subversive activity. The background of all present radical struggles is an attack on the social relation of capital, whether or not this is realised by the participants. The destruction of modern global conditions implies a global struggle; the only terrain on which a world-wide struggle can be fought is one which centres on a global class. The success of all or any of the partial struggles now being fought (over wages, squatting, environmental defence, work refusal etc.) means an extension and integration of proletarian struggle. An understanding of class relationships, although useless on its own, can lead to a greater effectiveness of our own struggles. This analysis has been developed out of practical experience. It is hoped that it may have practical results, that it is not theory separate from practise.

I have found that apparently minor disagreements on class analysis (such as whether teachers are middle class or working class) can turn out after much discussion to rely on very basic disagreements as to how the world is. In particular, disagreements on the nature of truth. Therefore it is necessary to start at a very basic level. My own understanding of the world is materialist. But I don't plan to waste much time arguing materialism versus idealism. The opposing world views are so far apart that there is no common ground to argue from. I will state though that the world is made and remade by material forces not by ideas. For instance, it may be or may not be the case that your ideas change after reading this. But any such change would be totally irrelevant if your actions, your behaviour do not change as well. In any case, ideas are not changed merely by the reading of some article, but in the context of some wider experience. If that were not the case then everyone reading the same stuff would end up thinking the same thing, which certainly isn't what happens.

Where is your truth, when god is dead?

In some societies such as Europe in Medieval Times, and perhaps in some modern theocracies, it was the case that truth was something that appeared to come from outside of society. Certain important disputes were argued out and decided upon according to a fixed official truth. In Medieval Europe the fixed truth was the scriptures. The particular interpretation of the “fixed truth” might in fact be determined according to interests of the most powerful groups in society, but it was nevertheless the case that there existed some reference point around which important disputes would turn. In particular,

revolutionary class struggles in the Middle Ages seemed always to have religious disagreements that corresponded to the opposing class forces. (For instance, the Muenster commune was created by Anabaptists, the Taborites were also protestants who fought against the established church, and the various class forces in the English civil war also had their own religious sects.)

This state of affairs was smashed by the bourgeois revolution. God was ripped from the centre of society leaving a vacuum that cannot be filled by a constantly developing science. With no generally accepted truth, new opposing truths are developed by contradictory sections of society. Nowhere is this more obviously so than in the area of class theory.

One current capitalist version of class theory is based on sociology. With this method, society is categorised according to type of occupation, education, and salary. In one variant, skilled workers are categorised as C2's, for example. This class analysis is used most especially by the advertising industry. In order to maximise sales, advertising is aimed at particular groups. More interestingly, this type of analysis is also used by political parties in order to maximise the efficiency of their campaigning. In Britain, the C2's are seen by most political pundits as a crucial territory on which to fight. People lower down the scale might have a tendency to vote Labour, those higher up Conservative. Skilled workers are a significant group where careful campaigning and policy making can tip the scales one way or the other. The Conservative policies of selling off council houses, mortgage relief and of widespread share issues, were deliberately aimed at this group. Their use of the sociological class analysis has been crucial to their continued grip on power. This theory is therefore certainly true; it corresponds in an exact way with the real world. But it is only true for capitalist forces. It corresponds to their worldview, it is useful for them to plan their strategies against us. It is true, but true only for the capitalist class in the maintenance of its power. We need class theory for an entirely different reason. We wish to understand this society in order to destroy it. Therefore our theory must be based not on the scientific notion of categorising differentiable strata, but instead on the active relationship of different groups, with each other, and with capitalism and the struggle against it.

Class in History

Every civilised society has been a class society. Each of these societies has based its civilisation, its culture, its technology, on the oppression of the majority by a minority. The earliest civilisations were based on open class power. The main productive class were the slaves, who originally were kidnapped from free communities or rival civilised societies. Over time, the master slave relationship became accepted by both parties as normal, and the slaves participated in the reproduction of their slavery.

In Statism and Anarchy, Bakunin had written that

“former workers .. as soon as they have become rulers and representatives, cease to be workers .. and look down on the whole common workers’ world from the height of the state. They will no longer represent the common people but only their own claims to rule them.”

Marx responded that workers, as representatives or governors, cease to be workers “as little as a factory owner today ceases to be a capitalist if he becomes a municipal councillor” Here Marx misses the point disastrously. Proletarians are defined by their alienation, just as bourgeois are defined by their possession of capital. Factory owners are not proletarianised by the assumption of even greater alienated social power. But proletarians cease to be such when they become representatives, because they take on the power that a ruler or representative possess by definition. Marx is useful where he talks about alienation or political economy, but his politics (and activity) were mostly bourgeois.

Class theory and its use

So far a way of determining the class position of different groups in society has been identified, by analysing the amount of social power that they wield. But it has not yet been said what this characterisation means, how it helps us. The utility of class analysis is in identifying the material interests of different social groups, both in the day to day running of capital, and in the on going struggle against it. The main reason why the proletariat is so often identified as the revolutionary class, is precisely because it has no material interest in the maintenance of capitalism, either immediately or in the long term. The capitalist class, both owners and top managers, are the class that directly benefits from the present society, and will organise whatever measures are necessary to ensure its continued existence. The middle class, be they petty bourgeois, peasants or the new middle class, are society's leftovers.

The middle class are both exploiter and exploited, or they are neither; they have some small privilege but no real security. Proletarianisation is a constant imminent danger for the middle class, and something they always fight to prevent. This struggle can be reactionary where it means a struggle against the proletariat to defend middle class position. But it can potentially be revolutionary when it is a struggle against capital's encroachment, and can lead to united action with the proletariat. In general, the middle class are only defined by their position in this society, and not by their struggles. This is because this class has no clear class interest in or against capital, and so never struggles as a class.

The proletariat is defined first of all by its dispossession. It exists as a negativity, as something alienated from this society, and which can never be

declared that the proletariat no longer existed in the developed countries. We should also accept the arguments of liberals and Trotskyists, that revolution is now located in the third world. The Trotskyists say this because western workers are a labour aristocracy and the real proletariat are the impoverished workers overseas. The liberals say it because the west is their (imperfect) paradise, and the third world countries need a democratic revolution to achieve our own general conditions of existence. Barrot recognises alienation as a producer of the proletariat but makes too much of the economic imperatives. Barrot is being too economic in fact. If we go back to “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right. Introduction” as Barrot recommends, we see that “the proletariat .. is ... formed ...from the mass of people issuing from society’s acute disintegration and in particular from the ranks of the middle class”. This identification of the middle class origin of the proletariat ties in with comments in the “Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts” on the workers alienation from the product of their labour.

“...man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself created. In tearing away the object of his production from man, estranged labour therefore tears away from him his species-life...”

This idea that workers (who might be women or men) create themselves in the creation of their product, is almost incomprehensible in really modern industry. Most workers hardly see the product they collectively produce. Where they are really directly involved in its production, then the division of labour is so acute, that they have no room to assert their individuality in the productive process. This was not true in Marx’s day. At this time, petty-bourgeois producers were being collected together to produce as proletarians for a single capitalist in manufacturing. Or else petty-bourgeois or manufacturing workers were being collected together in the new social institution of the factory. These new proletarians, issuing from the disintegration of middle-class society, would really have directly felt the alienation of the product of their labour, which previously they themselves would have owned, but which now was possessed by the capitalist. From this we can see the importance of alienation, ahead of impoverishment in Marx’s theory, as well as the archaic form of alienation which he talked of in the above passage. Alienation is still the crucial pre-condition for the proletariat, but today takes on yet more acute forms. Nowadays, the worker is alienated from their product to the degree that they hardly recognise it as their own product. The process of producing yourself through your product is itself an almost alien concept. It belongs to another world.

If in general, we can say that Marx’s class theory was correct for its time, we should also point out his most spectacular failure in class analysis.

In more recent times, the place of the slave class was taken by that of the peasant. The peasants lived in their own village communities. But these communities were not the free communities that existed before (or outside of) civilisation. The communities were dominated by the power of the lord, the church, and eventually the state. These forces were external to the agrarian community but none the less played an important role within it. The lord was the protector of the community (providing a form of protection that is usually associated with organised crime), the peasants worked perhaps one day a week on his lands in return for his care. This relationship, also tended to become accepted, and both lord and peasant recognised a system of complementary rights and duties.

Previous historical societies had class relationships that were very different from today’s. But these relationships are also recognisable. Workers are often referred to as wage-slaves, and although, workers are not bought and sold, but are legally free, this phrase has some obvious reality to it. How do we relate our own class oppression to the class oppression of our ancestors? What is the common factor in all systems of class domination? The answer, which is both obvious and commonly denied is the existence of social power. In all class societies, the members of the lowest class have their power alienated from them in one way or another. This alienated power is wielded by the ruling class and their functionaries. In ancient societies, the power of the slave was alienated absolutely, so that the slave was an object, a simple commodity to be bought and sold, a dog to be kicked. The peasant on the other hand, was allowed a measure of social autonomy, within strict limits. Today the alienated power of the majority is wielded especially by the functionaries of capital and by the agents of state and spectacle. This use of alienated social power is an active relationship with those it is used against.

“Marxism”

The society we live in is capitalist, characterised by wage labour, a centralised state, commodity production, the accumulation of capital. Can we still talk of class being determined by power in this society? The first “coherent” class analysis I came across was a Trotskyist version, touted by the Workers Revolutionary Party, the then official British section of the 4th International. The class theory they put across was that class position is determined by whether or not a person owned capital. Those that owned a large amount are the bourgeoisie, those who own a small amount, petty bourgeois, the rest of us working class. This theory (which is held by many more or less marxist groups) obviously has a lot going for it. Ownership of capital definitely is important in capitalist society! But the theory also has serious flaws in it. The biggest problem was revealed by the WRP’s analysis of the Soviet Union. The USSR had all the typical social relations of capitalism; wage-labour, commodity production, etc. However it did not have a class of people who

owned capital. The position of the WRP was therefore that the USSR did not have a capitalist class and was a form of worker's state. The idiocy of this position does not come from the WRP misusing the theory, but from the theory itself. A class analysis that looks only at whether individuals own capital or not to determine their class position, is worse than useless. It provides a theoretical justification for supporting particular states which are in every way capitalist. It fails to locate the real fault lines in all modern societies.

Ownership of capital is a crucial determinant of class; if you own a large amount of capital you are a capitalist. But it is incorrect to turn this statement round. It is not true that not owning capital makes you proletarian. The Soviet Union was a capitalist state with a class society. The class contradiction was not one of ownership against non-ownership, it was one of possession of social power against powerlessness. The ruling class, the capitalist class of the USSR were the top managers who commanded its economy, its state and its ideological apparatus. The intermediate class between capital and labour was primarily that of the lower managers, whose job it was to rule the enterprises on a day to day basis. 1 This recognition of the forms of class power in the USSR leads us directly to an examination of so-called mixed economies such as Britain. In Britain too there is state ownership of certain industries. Certainly traditional bourgeois benefit from these industries (through the advantages of planning, or subsidies etc) but these industries are not capitalist by proxy. State industries are in no way "socialist" (in the non capitalist sense). The nationalised industries use wage-labour in order to produce and accumulate surplus value; this is the very essence of capitalist production relations. The individuals who run these industries are themselves a part of the capitalist class in their own right. Finally we look at private enterprises. The stereotypical description of a capitalist enterprise is of a factory owned by a capitalist who controls it directly. This quaint vision must be well over a century out of date (in as much as it was ever really accurate). Typical private enterprises today are owned collectively by capital, through multiple share ownership by both individuals and institutions. They are not operated primarily by individual bourgeois but by top managers. In free market societies, as in state controlled societies, the capitalist class includes top managers, the middle class includes lower managers. In the free market these strata exist along side private capitalists and petty bourgeois. The bourgeoisie, the owners of capital, are ruling class not because they are rich and we aren't. The bourgeoisie are ruling class because their ownership of capital gives them certain rights, abilities, power over productive forces (including variable capital, i.e. their employees). Ownership of capital is only a form of class power that appears in particular variants of capitalism. It has its own characteristics but also has some continuity with other forms of domination, just as the proletarian condition has similarities (as well as differences) to historical forms of subjugation.

Wages

I will mention another variety of false class theory. Sometimes, it is claimed that class is determined by the amount of wages that a person receives. Now, there is a class difference between the rich and the poor, but this is not due to wage differentials. A class analysis based on wage differences would result in "an infinity of classes". There would also be the problem with differences in wages paid in different regions; either we have regional class differences or regional variations in class analyses. Silly. More to the point such a theory fails to understand what wage differences are about. At one level, wages are determined by the class war, with higher wages reflecting successful struggle by workers. But this is only one side of the story as wages are determined within the context of the capitalist system. In part they reflect the different exchange value of different forms of labour power; some people are paid more because their labour power is more expensive to reproduce. More commonly, wages vary due to fluctuations in the labour market, reflecting supply and demand for different types of labour. Most importantly, wage differentials are deliberately created by capital in order to divide the proletariat. The class is divided by jealousy or elitism, against itself. Basing a class analysis on wage differentials means taking artificial divisions created by capitalism to ensure its own survival, and then deliberately accentuating them. Such theory does capitalism's work for it, and against us.

Communist Analyses

The class analyses I have criticised so far have been essentially, or absolutely, counterrevolutionary. They are used more or less consciously to defend capitalism (though not in each individual instance of their use). There are also class analyses produced by revolutionary currents which I believe are incorrect. Jean Barrot's "Capitalism & Communism", which appeared in "Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement", is perhaps the best introduction to communist theory. Especially because it recognises the limitations of theory, and the poverty of what normally passes as theoretical activity. His description of what the proletariat is, for the most part, is an excellent modernisation/generalisation of Marx's theory. One position I disagree with though, is his characterisation of the proletariat as "those who have no reserves". Barrot attributes this phrase to the Left Communist Bordiga but says his purpose was to go back to "the general definition". The function of this definition in Barrot's theory, is to make the struggle of the proletariat primarily a struggle against economic oppression. The class struggle then becomes a function of the ill health of capital. This process is obviously a major source of class composition and class struggle, but is far from adequate to describe the proletariat. If we accept this definition, then we should also accept the arguments of those sociologists, who (especially in the 60's & 70's)