

THE  
NEWSLETTER  
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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

This issue sees the result of several months debate on Newsletter format. Firstly, the principle of rotating production centres seems established, if only de facto, and this is the first issue produced outside of Toronto. The second major point of discussion was around the question of themes in a given issue and while the question is not resolved (and may not ever be) in a general way, this issue does exhibit the theme of auto.

For us in Windsor, auto is obviously a crucial issue. Consequently the first three articles, all from Windsor, deal with the development of the left in relation to auto as well as history of the development of the struggle here. We had intended to include material on other areas in Windsor with a view to their relation to the auto struggles but this material simply couldn't be prepared for reasons outlined later. An article from Toronto and a reprint from Big Flame on perspectives in the auto arena are a part of this issue.

The rest of the newsletter is devoted to a series of articles on the recent rail strike and a theoretical piece in response to Peter and Judy's paper of last issue. Both the benefits and drawbacks of the idea of themes are evident herein. Various perspective on auto are examined with emphasis on different aspects of the struggle, which serve to develop the topic in a manner that would not be possible in one article. At the same point, a clear dearth of articles on other sectors of the invading socialist society, particularly non-industrial labour, and women, leaves one clambering for more.

We have attempted to introduce pictures and graphics to a limited extent this time and hope that this continues. North American socialists have a nasty propensity to blandness of artistic expression and this does not bode well for the society of "human sensuous activity" on whose doorstep we stand. Enough blather.

About money - we need it. Any excess that you might be so lucky as to have after re-producing yourself would be accepted with comradely hysteria. The address is the same:

The Newsletter  
P. O. Box 38  
Postal Station "E"  
Toronto, Ontario

Our lateness in appearing comes out of several things- firstly, our preoccupation with a major change in political structure around the Labour Centre and Community Resources Centre here. It has hindered production of articles and diverted concentration of editorial committee people here on the newsletter itself.

Secondly, the amount of time spent in late '73 discussing direction in the newsletter left us in something of a confusion and delayed production here, especially since our cross-Canada channels of communication are as yet not as well practised as they might be. The struggle continues.

Layout of this thing is the responsibility of four demoralizingly exhausted Windsorians and the introduction suffers, no doubt, from that. So, miserably late though it is, here it is: without further ado, exit stage left.

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# ANATOMY OF A MILITANTS' GROUP

*(The following analysis of Workers' Unity was done by two former members of the group and represents only their view of the situation. Other members may have drawn different conclusions. Therefore, the pronoun 'we' usually refers to the authors only.)*

In June of 1970 a white leaflet announcing a slate of unknown candidates for the union executive elections appeared at Chrysler's plant gates. With that began 18 months of intensive political activity which saw the rise and fall of a small militant workers' group - Workers' Unity. The leaflet was a straightforward demand for struggle around working conditions and many of the power abuses of the union (Brooks) administration. What was most significant, however, was that a small group of relatively unknown militants from a machining department in the engine plant got 22% of the vote. Two members of this slate decided to continue their activity and formed, along with the wife of one, Workers' Unity.

They produced a series of 'pink leaflets' that fall, continuing to focus on local in-plant issues and demanding improvements in working conditions. During that fall, Bron and Ron visited the group and decided to move to Windsor to participate in Workers' Unity. We returned to the city in January 1971 just in time for the proposed Chrysler strike. The reader should recall that in the fall of 1970 GM had struck for 90 days and had set the pattern for UAW agreements; however Chrysler negotiations dragged on and a strike deadline was set for January 17, 1971. (a moment's reflection on the timing for the proposed strike should give you a hint of what kind of settlement the union was going to take.)

Well, as is often the case in the UAW a 'magical' (!) 'revolutionary' (!) agreement was signed on the eve of the strike and the leadership called for a membership meeting to be held at Windsor arena to ratify the contract.

The morning of the ratification meeting W.U. did a leaflet decrying the agreement as a sweetheart contract, sell-out etc. Coupled with this we had made some picket signs which we planned on using at the arena entrance and in the crowd at the arena.

However, as was often the case with us, we were upstaged by a spontaneous action of several members of one department along with a couple of WU members. People jumped over the boards onto the arena ice and marched toward the administration



The following fact sheet was prepared to compliment the newsletter articles on Chrysler, Windsor. For the most part the figures are approximations to give the readers a thumbnail sketch of the company's and union's size.

The Company (Nov. 1973)

Size: Chrysler, Canada operates 4 plants in Windsor:

Car Assembly - Plant # 3	7,246 workers (2 shifts)
Engine - " # 2	2,824 " (3 shifts)
Truck Assembly " # 1	1,206 " (1 shift)
Spring Plant	666 workers

Total Windsor employment - 12,590 (Chrysler employs about 2,500 other workers in plants and parts depots scattered around Canada)

Production (Theoretically):

Plant # 3	- 1040 Satellites, Valiants, Darts per day
Plant # 2	- 2300 engines per day (1/2 million last year)
Plant # 1	- 120 trucks per day
Spring Plant	- over 2 million springs last year

General Information:

- largest employer in Windsor
- presently, largest number of employees in company's history
- started in Windsor in 1925 and "has expanded to cover over 3.4 million square feet of floor space...with 12 miles of conveyor lines."
- 1972 yearly net sales were 1.5 billion

The Union:

Chrysler workers organized into UAW Local 195 in 1942. Local 195 is an amalgamated local of several UAW shops. In 1955 Charles Brooks and others engineered a breakaway of Chrysler workers from Local 195. Brooks then became president of the newly chartered Local 444. He is still president.

All Windsor Chrysler production workers are in Local 444 (the February 1974 dues check-off lists 11,200 contributors) All Windsor Chrysler office workers are in UAW Local 1498.)



seated at the opposite end of the arena.

At this point the place broke up: hundreds of cheering workers yelled support for the protesters and began throwing litter and bottles on the ice in the general direction of the now incredulous administration. Brooks spent the rest of the meeting trying to regain control and assure the membership that it was a good contract, with people leaving in droves, ratification ballots strewn all over the arena and open ballot boxes sitting in windy doorways. To no one's surprise the announcement came later that afternoon that the contract had been ratified by a substantial 68% of the votes cast.

From this point the struggle sharpened considerably and the Windsor Star followed our activities and did interviews etc. Brooks indulged in long harangues about our "anti-union group distributing unsigned pink trash."

WU continued to make and develop contacts and friends and by March the group sensed that there was sizeable rank and file support for its activities. The in-plant union elections were held on March 17 and 18 and while WU did not officially run, the implication was strong. Three members ran and two won. One became plant chairman and the other became a steward. It is interesting to note that all of the incumbent plant chairmen (Brooks men) were defeated during the elections.

By this time the core group had expanded to include a Ford worker and his wife and another Chrysler worker and his wife. The women's group was formed. Peripherally the group had gained a fair amount of active support inside the plant as witnessed by growing numbers of workers who were willing to distribute the leaflets. We received monetary contributions both anonymously to our post box and directly to WU militants in the plant. This period (March to May) was a relatively quiet one as WU prepared to move to a tabloid paper. WU produced a fourpage tabloid monthly from May until September. WU distributed 7000 copies of each issue free at Chrysler and Ford plant gates.

On June 17, 1971 a major event in our development took place. A walkout had taken place at Ford but unlike the several walkouts that we had witnessed before that, the wildcatters remained outside the plant gates organizing their own demonstrations, picket signs etc. This action and the subsequent series of events which closed the plant for 3 days resulted in the firing and suspension of several Ford workers. WU attempted some support action in this struggle and widely publicized the sequence of events that followed. (The entire Ford walkout should be the subject of a future



NEWSLETTER article) Suffice to say that the events illuminated for us a number of points: the role of the union (conspired in workers' firings), the independent spontaneous activity of workers, the difficulty in fighting issues such as firings etc.

After the high point reached during the Ford struggle, personal relationships within the group began to deteriorate. Political differences became sharper although it was some time later that we understood the depth of the disagreement. Despite this, the group continued to grow and expand its contacts. A core group of a dozen or so militants put out the leaflets and newspapers.

In the few instances where mass action by workers was undertaken WU generally made significant contributions in communicating the activity to workers in other plants. Furthermore, in some instances, as a result of the fact that some members in the plant had their fingers on the tempo of things, we were able to act as a catalyst instigating more militant actions than might otherwise have occurred.

During the fall of 1971 the group met a few times and attempted to continue collectively developing an analysis of what we were doing etc. Personal relationships within the group continued deteriorating; however, the final break-up occurred around the December civic elections. The ideological differences that had arisen over the previous months including positions on elections came to a head when 4 members of WU decided to run on the municipal ballot. Under the banner of The Workers' Political Action Committee, a slate of 6 (the WU 4 plus 2 others) ran to establish "a workingman's city council".

The number of contradictions interacting at this point made it impossible for the group to continue.

With the foregoing as a brief chronology of events, we now attempt to examine in depth the political implications of what WU did.

#### WORKERS' UNITY: THE POLITICS

The three original members of Workers' Unity concentrated their attention on in-plant issues (working conditions etc.) and saw running for various elections as the way of raising these issues. Their involvement in the executive elections is a case in point in that it was not an opportunistic situation: they had no desire to win, but simply saw this strategy as a method of becoming known, attracting attention to the issues and building a caucus.



With the in-plant elections, however, the strategy was clearly based on the desire to win - particularly in the steward positions. Chrysler Plant 2 stewards do union work the full 8 hours and this meant (as WU saw it) a lot of time to talk to people, to 'organize' etc. The group also saw the importance of stewards' fighting issues directly on the shop floor and involving as many men as possible. To this extent WU candidates advocated the concept of the rank and file's building workers' councils. The concept was generally adhered to in principle but practically never materialized. (Indeed, we now know that, by definition, workers' councils must be a self-organized movement by workers themselves, not an abstract concept to organize around.)

Our direct involvement with the group began during this pre-election period. We accepted and agreed with the electoral strategy and the ideology behind it. Ron, in particular, based much of his position on Andre Gorz's Strategy for Labour which described the use of a reformed union structure as a basis for advancing socialism; as well, since this was our first encounter with working class politics, we had no other models for comparison.

Beyond the in-plant situation, however, the group's theory and strategy vis a vis the union was very unclear. None of us really saw the International union as the vehicle for socialism, but we were pretty hazy on the question of taking over the union to reform it and somewhat romantic about getting back to the militancy of its early days.

What we did see, in one way or another, was basing ourselves strongly in Plant 2 and it was there that we concentrated. All of WU's union positions were there and one of the group's members was plant chairman - a situation we saw as conducive to the building of a base. That is, we recognized that, tactically, the work of one or two stewards could be easily undermined if the rest of the plant committee (particularly the Plant Chairman) was controlled by Brook's men.

During this period our contribution to the group theory and practice took many forms. Practically, the two of us had the requisite technical skills to lay out an off-set newspaper and it was partly because of our urging that the group moved to this format. Theoretically, our travels around Canada and our discussions with other groups had helped us to develop an anti-imperialist perspective which we attempted to share and to relate to the problem of the international union. Unfortunately this was not reflected in the paper to any great extent - except in the last issue where we began what was intended to be a series on multi-national corporations.



The other major contribution was the development of a womens group around WU. Before our arrival, the discussion of the 'women's question' had been practically non-existent and there had been little attempt to relate the oppression of working class women to the plant struggle. The group that formed attempted some consciousness raising, as well as extensive discussions of women in relation to the plant struggle. Each paper carried a one page article written by the women which attempted to discuss the role of women and the relation of their work to that of the work in the plant. We also attempted to explain why the struggles should be united.

Connected to this aspect of our contribution was an attempt on our part to add some of the perspective of our past 'new left' experience to the major thrust of the group. This involved an awareness, not only of women's struggles, but of students, gays, community work etc. We also tried to focus attention on the national struggle in Quebec. One member of the original group had been involved in community issues, but the group's general practice was to pay lip-service to these areas rather than to attempt to understand them more clearly. Again - and this will be discussed more thoroughly later - the paper generally discussed such issues only when they related directly to the plant situation.

#### Summary

To the extent that we saw the trade union as some sort of base for the revolutionary movement, then, our political thrust was a traditional Leninist one. We did, however, recognize the problems such a strategy raised in relation to an international union. The analysis of this particular aspect of the problem that appeared in Progressive Worker Vol. 6, No. 1 (Independence and Socialism in Canada) was one that we shared.

Implicit in the publication and thrust of our paper - and explicit in our group discussions about it - was the belief that our main task was to 'build consciousness' or 'politicize' the working class. We saw the discussions of in-plant issues as a 'concrete' basis for this process and we attempted to build from there to a 'world view' which related direct, in-plant experience to US imperialism, other workers' struggles, women etc. In all of this, we very clearly saw our function as that of analysing and explaining political reality for the working class. This function is clearly explicit in the following excerpts from the original Statement of Purpose, published in our first issue, even though at times we made verbal appeals for information and articles from the rank and



file at large: *Workers' Unity* believes that no one person, however powerful or intelligent, can decide on the best course of action. Part of the purpose of the articles we print is to give all workers an understanding of the cause of their problems and an idea of how to change them.

#### THE WORKERS' UNITY EXPERIENCE: AN EVALUATION

In general, the Workers' Unity experience was invaluable for us as an introduction to working class politics. We learned a great deal about in-plant conditions, union structures, etc. Politically, the group did raise issues and promote discussions. However, after the in-plant elections (and perhaps even before) we were perceived by the workers as a 'union caucus' group and this did much to invalidate any of the wider aims expressed in our paper.

The other problem was that the group did not have any reliable method of investigating the over all plant situation or of discovering the general reaction to what we said and did. Only a very few people were in a position to talk to workers in the plant and many of these were in union positions, a factor which (as we see it now) may have affected the kind of feed-back we got. More importantly, we could not investigate the situation with people. There was no way for us to explore the perceptions that workers had of what we were doing or of what was going on in the plants.

In evaluating our experience we are aware of specific areas which need to be discussed in detail:

##### I. The Union Question

Our public position (as expressed in leaflets, papers etc.) was marred by the fact that it was unclear and ambivalent, especially in relation to such major questions as 1. the International and Canadian unions and 2. the role of the union in a revolutionary movement. This ambivalence, however, had its basis in our ideology and not just in the fact that our thinking was a little 'fuzzy'. Because we accepted the assumption that somehow the union would be some sort of basis for a revolutionary workers' movement, we did not - or could not - look at the trade union movement historically in its ever-changing relation to capital. Our tendency was to treat the obvious changes ahistorically: we lamented them in a moralistic, romantic way as indications of how the union leadership had deviated from the path set by their radical fore-runners of the organizing days, days to which we hoped to return. All of our papers, for example, carried articles describing how the union leadership had misrepresented the rank and



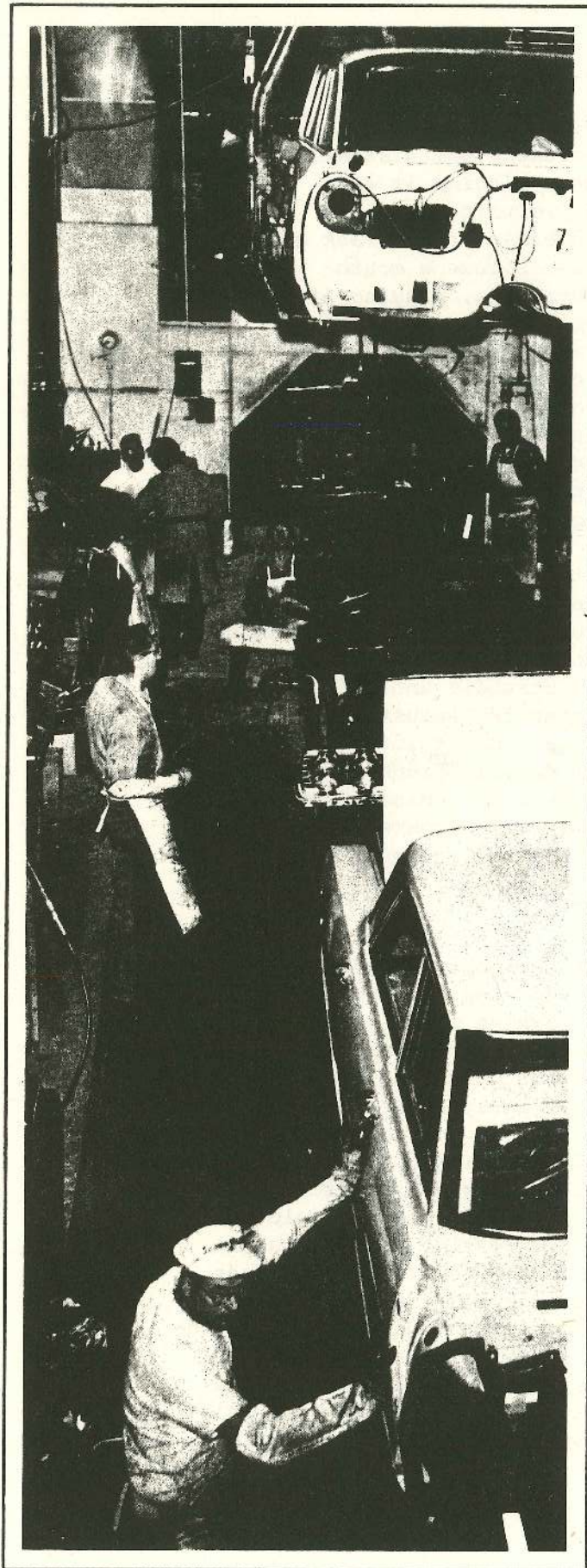
and file in its handling of grievances or had degraded the principles of trade unionism by making them cross picket lines etc. Our final issue contained the following conclusion to such an article: *the present union administrations are the best examples of where playing it safe ends up in the long run. By refusing to support those who act in the interest of the rank and file most union 'leaders' have become a mouth-piece for the companies. Obviously, playing it safe is not the game that will solve our problems. The anti-militancy line is a scare tactic which serves the interest of the corporations and those of an entrenched union bureaucracy. In aligning itself with the companies, this bureaucracy has chosen to ignore its responsibilities to the rank and file. If we do not want this to continue, we must decide how we are going to handle this problem.*

What we missed in all of this was the historical fact that the union leadership had not deviated at all. They are simply recognizing and fulfilling the role of trade unions in advanced capitalism - the function of controlling the rank and file, mediating the in-plant struggle and deflecting any activities which might disrupt peaceful industrial relations. As well, such harangues assume that the attitude of the rank and file who read them is one of dissillusionment, whereas our more recent, more direct experience indicates rather that the rank and file have a very realistic understanding of where the union is at and a growing willingness to move beyond it (and disregard it) when necessary.

Moral harangues - like those against union leadership - or expressions of moral indignation about the weakness of the union have, at best, a short-term agitational effect. At worst, such outbursts from a Marxist paper serve only to distort the analysis which workers, by their actions, are clearly expressing and to retard the potential growth of the movement which can develop as this analysis is generalized.

In running members for union positions, we again failed to recognize the objective function of stewards etc. within the union structure and assumed that 'our' people could do differently, could somehow be a progressive force within a corrupt structure. The experience of the past 3 years has proved this to be impossible and from all that we have seen and heard, the people we put forward have been forced into the union mold, at best posing as a progressive opposition to Brooks. Such a situation arises, not because these people have been corrupted (moral fibre has little to do with it) but simply because the subjective attitude of the individual





cannot in any real way change, affect or be separated from the objective function of a steward in a large industrial union in 1974. One might say that in such conditions progressive stewards are no more useful than 'good' cops.

## II. Vanguardism

We are using the word 'vanguardist' to describe this aspect of our practice in a very specific way. While we may have accepted the Leninist concept of a party, we, as W.U., did not see ourselves as a vanguard in that structural or organizational way. Rather, we were vanguardist in our approach to the questions of the development of theory and organization in the working class itself. This, we consider, was the major error of Workers' Unity.

As we have already said, we saw our function both as Marxists and in the publication of a Marxist paper, as that of bringing theory to or developing theory for the working class. Our method was to take a situation either from the plant or from the outside political situation and explain it - analysing for our readers the situation as we saw it and prescribing, in conclusion, what we considered the obvious and necessary actions that should (the operative word) follow from our explanation. We made no attempt (nor did we have the means) to collect the opinions or ideas of the workers - or of anyone else - on these matters or to use these as the



basis of our discussion. When we talked about the actions of workers (especially those in Europe) we used them as illustrations of our idea of what should be done or of what we wanted to explain about the evils of capitalism.

There are many problems in this approach, the most basic of which is the assumption that we could advance theory for the working class. Any advances in Marxist theory will come, rather from the working class itself and from there alone. We say this, not out of any utopian or romantic idea about 'faith in the people', but from a recognition of scientific fact. One of the basic premises of Marx' theory is that the working class (like the bourgeoisie in a former period) is the "class that holds the future in its hands". Because of the material nature of its relation to capital, the working class acts against the interests of the bourgeoisie and by those actions indicates the nature of the developing socialist society. It is from our understanding of these actions that our understanding of capitalism and socialism advances. In WU we ignored this fact, not simply out of a certain ideological weakness, but also out of our tendency to equate verbal articulation rather than action with a high level of 'political consciousness'.

In our eagerness to explain things to the workers we often overlooked or undervalued situations which could have clarified our thinking. One example is an article which discussed how the union was selling out the rank and file and how it was time for the rank and file to rejuvenate the union. As an example we used the illustration of certain worker tactics in Turin. Only in retrospect do we see how widely we missed the point, for the tactics we described clearly indicated that the Turin workers already had an analysis of the union which was far more sophisticated than ours and which was leading them to experiment with new forms of worker organisations and new relations of production which went far beyond the idea of 'rejuvenating' the union.

As a result of this perspective our objective stance in relation to the working class was one of moralism - an attitude of 'nagging the workers'. Rather than recognizing appreciating and discussing the advances that workers themselves were making, we took it upon ourselves to tell them how to organize and what to do. Almost every article we wrote ends on this note: urging rank and file unity, militancy etc. We had set ourselves over and against the working class, assuming that workers would form an organization (along our suggested lines) in response to our paper. We ignored any informal organization that already existed in the plant as well as the very real prospect of a wider organization emerging, when necessary, from the actual relations of work on the line - an organization that could use a paper such as ours to publicize and expand the ideas generated.



### III. Other Problems

Another problem - or set of problems - was the lack of clarity on the question of the various sectors of the class and their inter-relations. There is not any question about the fact that our position considered the industrial sector as the primary one. One reason for this, of course, arises naturally from the overwhelming impact of industrial labour on every facet of life in Windsor. One sees that everything is affected by this sector of the class, and without much reflection, assumes that all other sectors must define themselves in relation to it. Our tendency was to discuss the situation in other sectors (say the office workers at Chrysler) only in terms of how they affected or did not affect industrial workers.

The problems of this approach were most glaring in the women's group. We came together in the first place as 'wives of W.U.' - the basis of our group being that our men were auto workers and that we wanted to be involved in a support of their struggle. We talked a great deal about our situation and the articles we wrote for the paper are excellent analyses of the position of the family and the working class housewife in a capitalist economy.

We did attempt to discuss other things as well and covered most of the topics usually dealt with in consciousness-raising groups: socialization, sexuality, role playing etc. These discussions were usually exciting and were often the occasion for that kind of enthusiasm which normally leads women to take, often for the first time, some sort of action. It was here, however, that we became trapped, for our action was Workers' Unity, the articles for the paper and the attempts to involve other wives. By seeing our men's struggle as a gauge for our own we tended to stultify wider possibilities for action and movement that grew spontaneously from our own autonomous needs as women.

The result was a group whose 'commonality' was often somewhat artificial and in which the very real contradictions between working class men and women were denied or softened rather than examined and confronted directly. In the articles which dealt with the working class family and the role of housewives, we described the tensions between man and wife (the alienation of the man from his children, the repression of sexuality, the sex-stereotyping in terms of household tasks etc.) but we constantly mitigated their seriousness by blaming all such evils on capitalism and Chrysler Co. In an overall, simplistic way this may be true; it most certainly does not shed very much light on the real complexity of the contradictions between men and women nor does it



analyse satisfactorily the direct oppression that most women feel. The problem was equally obvious in our group practice: in the case where a couple broke up, it was the woman who left the women's group - evidently because she no longer had a reason to be there.

Later after the breakup of the original WU group, we joined other women in an autonomous women's group from which grew a daycare co-op, some of the impetus for the Women's Place, and a series of study groups which have changed as our needs developed. The women in the group continue to work politically with men, but we are also involved in autonomous projects directed specifically to the needs of women.

Of course, the other problem with our group's orientation was trying to get other women involved. We continually lamented the fact that our only potential contact came through the paper - but that paper only reached women if men took it home. In reality, it was our ideology, more than our method, which restricted our means of meeting other women. The method, in fact, was merely a reflection of our limited perspective. Our later experiences at the Women's Place and often in our workplaces has shown that women will readily come together when the basis for that unity is direct: their common experience and needs as women, rather than indirect: their relation to a particular group of men.

While the ideological problems surrounding the women's group were the most glaring, they were not isolated to that situation alone. In general, we tended to see building a strong workers' organization as a pre-requisite to developing struggles in other areas, such as tenants, food co-ops etc. We also assumed that other sectors of the class - white collar workers, service employees etc would begin to move only if and when the industrial sector provided the impetus. The questions of autonomy as they are now being discussed were not part of our analysis at this point.

As well as concentrating on the industrial sector exclusively, we also focused our attention mainly on in-plant situations. This viewpoint was abetted by the in-plant union positions held by 'our' people and, while we are not negating the importance of these as a beginning, we are aware of certain problems. The most major problem is the tendency to see each in-plant problem and the struggle around it as isolated and local rather than relating it to tendencies within capital as a whole and the movements of the class in combating them.

In addition, the affect of having people in union posi-



tions was one of undue concentration on the in-plant politics surrounding these various problems, as 'our' people struggled against the old union leadership. In short, our exclusive orientation prevented us from seeing certain struggles in a wider historical context and from providing that perspective in our paper.

### Conclusions

We can best conclude by re-iterating the three main areas of our WU experience in which we consider the most valuable lessons were learned. The first is the union question and the recognition of the importance of a sound, historical analysis in this area, relating the changes of trade unions to the needs of capital. Such an understanding must be necessary as a framework for any discussion about running for union positions, working with union militants etc.

A second area - that of the inter-relations of various sectors and the totality of the class is one that, for us, requires still more discussion and thought. We both recognize the limitations and narrowness of our previous perspective, but we diverge somewhat in our idea of how to change that perspective and why. The previous Newsletter discussions around the issue of autonomy have been most valuable in clarifying our thinking.

For us, still, the most important change in our thinking centres around the question of vanguardism, both in its structural and organizational sense and in the sense of defining and analysing experience for the working class. In regard to the latter, we can only re-emphasize what we consider the importance of investigation about a particular situation with the people in it. The opinions and ideas of workers themselves, are, for us, of utmost importance to any group of militants attempting to develop a Marxist analysis. As well, the daily actions of the working class, as it gradually builds the basis of socialism, form, for us, the basis of any further development of theory.

Ron and Bron  
January, 1974



# CHRYSLER NON-STRIKE 1973

In September 1973 the workers at Chrysler were handed the biggest 3-day wonder in recent years, the "non-strike". The UAW leadership was determined to force through a major setback as yet another "historic breakthrough". Using as many tricks as was possible in the circumstances, the union intentionally kept the rank and file in the dark as it faithfully played its role in maintaining the American wage guidelines.

As the summer negotiations began the union played down the wage issue, propagandizing instead about 'humanizing the workplace'. But events were to show that the propaganda was hollow. In three Detroit Chrysler plants, the rank and file acted upon the issues that affected them. At the Jefferson assembly plant, two black workers, supported by those around them, seized the power room and demanded the firing of a racist foreman; the workers at the Lynch Road forge plant wildcatted for 6 days demanding better safety conditions; and 70 workers occupied the Mack Avenue stamping plant to support a worker from the Progressive Labour Party who had been fighting for safe conditions for many months. To all this Doug Fraser, the UAW vice-president in charge of the Chrysler division, accused the corporation of making an "absolutely...inexcusable" mistake by firing the Jefferson foreman, an act which gave credibility to the extra-union actions of rank and file workers. The union's final step was to bring a flying goon squad of 1000 union marshalls to REOPEN the Mack Avenue plant.

It was within this context that the UAW chose Chrysler as its strike target. Even the Detroit Free Press speculated that the reason was to keep control of any militancy arising from the rank and file.

In Windsor the union did virtually no education around the 'issues' of the negotiations, except to distribute a button about voluntary overtime: "Ask me, don't tell me." Overtime was never linked with a substantial wage increase. The rank and file were concerned that a lengthy strike would severely cut their standard of living. They voted 96% in favour of a strike, but few expected to gain much from it.

Chrysler in Windsor seemed to test how much control the union had over its membership. During August the workers refused to work in the plants during a tremendous heat wave, and walked out of the plants. This was not unusual, because there had been 72 work stoppages in 3 years which the bourgeois legal system considers "illegal". The company retaliated 8 days before the strike by disciplining 1500 workers, 10 of which it fired.

The next day the union promised to fight back, but warned the

1. Detroit Free Press, August 15, 1973, p. 2



workers not to follow Detroit's example; it especially warned against listening to any "action freaks". It held meetings that day but did not discuss the heat disciplines at all. The workers were angry, but for their own reasons did not take any overt actions; they knew that walkouts only hurt them economically.

When the union and the company met that day, Leonard Woodcock and Doug Fraser gave their personal assurances that no more "illegal" work stoppages would occur in Windsor. The next day all the disciplines were lifted. In a leaflet claiming victory for its tactics, the union in the engine plant smeared its local rank and file activists, calling on a company stooge; meanwhile it was planning a softball game and barbecue with production supervisors the Sunday before the strike.

The union continued to play down the strike issues up to and into the strike itself. After calling the 3% annual wage increase an "insult" and a "mockery"<sup>2</sup>, the union agreed to a news blackout on the economic issues. During the last week before the strike deadline it spoke optimistically of avoiding a strike. It agreed to a total blackout for the last 48 hours. When the strike came, all the UAW said was that "we simply ran out of time"<sup>3</sup>. Despite the strike neither the negotiations nor the blackout stopped.

The strike itself was conducted in an "orderly" manner. Picket lines were limited to 4; most often a passerby would see a sign stuck in a fence while the picketers sat in a nearby car. The union decided that it was better to have educationals instead, educationals about the in's and out's of the union bureaucracy and its history. To ensure high attendance, a worker had to go to be eligible for strike pay. The classes were not needed because within three days the UAW and Chrysler announced a tentative 3 year contract. All that was left was the sales job to the 117,000 production workers.

The contract terms appeared to be a mutual recognition by the UAW and Chrysler of the present production crisis and the need of the Big 3 for a disciplined work force to produce the profits. The wage increase was kept within the American wage guidelines. All the money was, in fact, earned in previous contracts. The 3 % annual wage increase (previously called an "insult") was the automatic productivity wage increase won in the 1955 strike. Another 12¢ in the first year, called by the press a "bonus"<sup>4</sup> was the cost of living allowance (COLA) owed to the workers since July 1973. 25¢ of the old COLA was buried in the base rate. The Canadian

2. Globe and Mail Sept. 14, 1973 p. B3
3. Windstar Star, Sept 15, 1973 p. 1
4. Free Press, Sept. 19, 1973, p. 1



workers regained the 11¢ difference between the two countries' COLA which they had lost in the last contract. The take home pay increased from \$143.12 to only \$151.76 a week. With the cost of living increase of over \$11 in the last year, the workers lost \$2.40 per week.

The drudgery, speed and pressures of the assembly line have caused a large turnover and absentee rate among production workers. Both the company and the UAW were concerned about this 'problem', and both agreed on methods to combat it. First they agreed to withhold from the probationary employee 45¢ per hour for the first month, then 25¢ per hour for the next two months; if the worker remains on the job for six months he will receive \$95 of the money back ( a "bonus" (sic)). Secondly, the overtime procedure in the U.S. is designed to keep the worker on the job. He or she must work a 9 hour day, 6 day week. He or she can have every third Saturday off, but only if he or she worked every day of that third week. Even this does not apply for 'critical' plants (not to be determined until April 1974) during the beginning and closing of a production run.

A third proposal of this type was the "historic" pension proposal of 30 and out. The earlier a worker retires, the less money he receives for his pension. The lowest pension is below the weekly cost of necessities as outlined by Statistics Canada. Yet another method is that the contract entitles the company to use a paid absence allowance as grounds of discipline. A fifth term allows the company to bring in temporary employees on any day of the week, instead of only on weekends.

The contract provides another insurance against any interruption in the production process: as for using massive overtime refusal as a means of settling other grievances and interfering with production, Woodcock said "there is a single line in the contract (wherein) it says there is ample protection against collective action. We gave our word and we intend to keep it," he said.<sup>5</sup>

The union's problem now was to get the "historic breakthrough (sic)" past its workers. The sales pitch began immediately; T.V. showed Woodcock and Fraser heralding the settlement as another victory at press conferences. The local newspapers referred to a "substantial" wage increase when in fact none existed; the Detroit News referred to it as a 70¢ increase. The Free Press trumpeted the union's trump card to its power base, the 30 and out. No mention was made of the changing of the base year for COLA from 1957 to 1967, nor that the penny taken from COLA for the dental plan and pension etc. was cumulative.

The next problem for the UAW was its own secondary bureaucracy. All they received was the UAW newsgram which was no more informative than the newspapers. The local officials were in the same boat; at

5. Detroit Free Press, Sept. 18, 1973, p. 21



the Windsor meeting a steward complained that he had no information to give to those workers who had been demanding answers to questions. Dennis McDermott told him that the steward's job was to "police the contract" not to explain it.

The Windsor ratification was held first, perhaps because on the surface this local kept control in face of the heat disciplines. Despite the disruption at the 1971 meeting, it was held at the Windsor arena. As the workers went into the arena, they were handed, together, a UAW newsgram and a ballot. When they got in, they found that there was only one mike in the building, at the podium.

For two hours the union officials at the local and international level kept telling the workers that "once they digested its terms they would realize how truly historic it was". There was continuous booing and heckling ("What about Saturdays?"), but the union tactic eventually succeeded in boring the workers to tears. When Woodcock started going through the details of the group insurance plan, they left in droves. As they went out they threw their ballots into open boxes. Chrysler called in machinists for the afternoon shift as the meeting was ending.

The pattern of the Windsor ratification was followed at every American ratification, but with one exception: to prevent any snowball effect, no results were released until the overall total from all the locals were known. The filibuster was used to smother any opposition; open ballot boxes were available from the start of the meetings. Although some meetings had question periods, the workers did not know the terms of the contract when they had to vote on them. At local 3 in Detroit, the workers exploded on the overtime issue, but the union, with the help of the retirees, carried the day 648-567. The workers at the Mack Avenue stamping plant didn't bother to come to the local 212 ratification because the union refused to make the firing of 73 workers for the sitdown in July a bargaining issue in the local negotiations.

The first week back showed that 'nothing had changed'. At first, there was no great response. This stemmed partly from a lack of information, being unprepared for a long strike and most important an understanding that to reject the contract would mean sending the same union negotiators to argue with the same corporate negotiators. This was not an encouraging situation, what with everyone lauding the "historic breakthrough".

It was historic, but only for Nixon and the bosses. Once the pattern was set it could be rammed through the 700,000 UAW workers and help the capitalist strategy to cool out the economy. In fact, the day after the final UAW contract with GM was ratified, the American price and wage control board made the following deal: if the Big 3 kept their price increases for small cars to a limit of \$150 the board would remove all wage(sic) and price



controls on all other sectors of the auto industry. To remain competitive, the Big 3 could not raise them much more, so the deal was in fact a present for keeping the workers' wages down. It should have been given to the UAW.

Since the strike the workers have not been idle; the paint department in the car assembly plant all stayed home one Saturday sick. When their steward was fired for allegedly hitting a foreman. The company kept the plant open only by using foremen on the line, bringing in temporary help and calling workers from other shifts who were unaware of the action.

Since the beginning of layoffs in the auto industry, Chrysler has made relief workers do odd jobs on the production line in the first half hour of every shift, and the first half hour after lunch. The union told the relief men not to do the extra work because it was against the contract, but when one asked a committeeman to tell the foreman, he refused. Two reliefmen, one in the motor assembly line and one in the chassis line in Plant 3, the car assembly plant, refused to do the extra work and were suspended. The departments have retaliated by sitting down in solidarity with their suspended reliefmen. The company has tried to weaken all the workers by sending them home with no pay, hoping workers will turn against each other. So far, they have not: response to a leaflet supporting the principle of rank and file action has been encouraging. Since then there has been a successful sitdown in the tire department of the truck plant over unsafe conditions.

The article has emphasized the role of the union in the contract negotiations, rather than the company and the workers. This was not totally by accident because the legal strike is the *modus operandi*, the *raison d'etre* of the union under North American capitalism. Debate has begun in Windsor whether the union is trying to control production as a prelude to its role under state capitalism or whether it is playing its role of junior partner in capitalism. The author asserts that regardless how the debate is decided by history, it doesn't change the basic role of the union vis a vis the workers; it would only affect the approach the union takes in its propaganda to the workers.

The rank and file will take its emancipation into its own hands. Although there is unity on this principle, there is debate on how to deal with the union in the concrete. The recent actions by the departments in plants 1 (truck) and 3 have led to further analysis of organisation at that level. Our continuing analysis of such actions and organising should investigate the forms that they take, their relative success, and most importantly, the attitudes and response of the rank and file to them.

Stuart Ryan



# GENERAL REPORT

## MOTOR PLANT WINDSOR

My original view when I first considered writing this article was to divide it into three sections. First, a comparison of "material changes" organized inside Chrysler's Plant #2 (Motor Plant);<sup>1</sup> second, to interview workers who had experienced these alterations, and have them outline their perceptions and reactions to them;<sup>2</sup> lastly, to describe the history of rank and file struggles as they applied to the motor plant.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, this was an overly optimistic approach to the article. After making numerous contacts with local union officials, university professors, radical researchers and, finally a researcher inside the union itself, I came to the conclusion that the information I needed (particularly covering the first part of the article) was simply unobtainable. Although I did do one interview, I could not find any workers who knew or participated in any past collective struggles which might demonstrate a worker's autonomy perspective. While I do believe that there have been such struggles, they were difficult to locate and analyse.

With my original idea somewhat "out the window" I've decided instead to describe the current situation in the Motor Plant in relationship to the lay-offs and the reorganization of the auto workers. I hope that this approach might acquaint those militants who are interested in auto worker struggles with the changes that are now being organized in the auto plants and the political perspective New Tendency militants might have in approaching these struggles. Finally, I hope if any individuals or collectives have either suggestions or criticisms that they would forward them either to Windsor or to the next newsletter. This would help us enormously to correct our practice and broaden our perspective. We certainly need this support from other militants if we are to understand more clearly the struggle workers are waging.

### Description of the Plant

Chrysler's Plant #2 is a motor plant for V-8 360 cubic inch engines and a 6 cylinder engine. This includes both motor assembly and the machining of the different components. The blocks, cranks, heads, cams, pistons, rods, manifolds and oil and water pumps are all separate departments distinct from assembly. In



these areas a "rough" block, for example, is precision machined through approximately twenty or thirty different operations until it is finally loaded on a skid and taken to the assembly line for final production.

The machining and assembly of these two engines takes approximately 2,400 workers. Until recently, the V-8 assembly line produced about 1,500 motors per day on one shift with the machining departments working three shifts. In fact to keep up with the assembly line five day week it was necessary for most machining departments to work six and some seven days.

If a worker was eager to work overtime, he would transfer to one of the machining departments because of the week-end work.

While the assembly and machining departments are organized quite differently with distinct relations to production, I have still reached only tentative and superficial conclusions about the consciousness of the workers in these areas and their corresponding attitudes toward struggle. I would say, however, two rather general things: 1. the workers in machining have a more direct control over their work and 2. they tend to have a more individualistic approach to struggle than, say, workers on the line.

Finally, to conclude, the motor plant is considered a much "better" place to work than the car assembly plant #3 because the work is less tedious and demanding with generally more "free" time.

#### Before Christmas

The workers in the motor plant have generally felt that the current "crisis" in auto would have little or not effect on them. Plant #2 is supposedly the only producer of the 360 V-8 for Chrysler. This engine is not only used for cars, but is also a truck motor. So even if the big car sales slumped, it would still be needed for trucks which were still selling.

The six cylinder engine would obviously still be going strong in the small cars. In fact in the late fall the in-plant committee was telling the workers that the six cylinder line was to be expanded by 300 new workers.

The attitude of most workers in Plant #2 was that while the auto industry was heading "down hill" it would have no real impact on them.

#### The Crunch

The real severity of the situation started to come home just before the Christmas break. A week before the ten day vacation notices went up on the bulletin boards that the V-8 line would be



down for 10 days after the holiday break with many of the v-8 machining departments to follow suit. Some of the union reps came into the departments and found a rather hostile bunch of workers. This time off would go unpaid. While all the workers liked the extra time, they wanted to know what this meant in the long term. Was this just a passing phase, or a sign of the future?

The union reps were totally un-prepared to organize departmental meetings to form units of discussion and struggle. When confronted with such a suggestion the steward replied, "We (the union) can't do anything, they (the boss) control the company, not the workers." This attitude that the workers have no alternative but to accept the "boss's crisis" as their crisis was not just the attitude of one steward, but the union as a whole. During this period not one meeting was organized to discuss the situation and plan a counter-strategy.

#### More Lay-Offs

Two weeks after the V-8 line returned, the next round of lay-offs started. The V-8 line was going down from 1500 motors per shift to 1000. This meant that approximately 250 workers were to be indefinitely laid off. The final cut was all workers with seniority less than November 21st, 1972.

This reduction in assembly cut a shift from most V-8 machining departments. The workers whose seniority was before November 21st but not enough seniority to stay in their original departments after a cut in production were generally transferred to the six cylinder assembly line, which had increased production.

#### Boss's Crisis, Re-organization of Work

It is my belief that while there is a crisis in production in the auto industry the lay-offs are simply a cover for a more drastic change, which, I believe, is the whole re-organization of work in the auto factories. I wish to show what this meant in one V-8 departments (cranks) and how the workers resisted this attack. First, the boss eliminated one complete shift, raising production 80 cranks on each of the two remaining shifts. This meant that while previously three shifts produced approximately 1500 cranks per day, now two shifts were to produce 1200. The working day was lengthened from 8 hours to 8 1/2 hours with the starting time changed from 8 a.m. to 7 a.m. on the day shift and from 4 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on afternoons. The jobs were reassigned not on the basis of seniority but on job classifications which, for example, meant in one instance a worker with nine years seniority ended up on the worst job in the department.

The two foremen who were least antagonistic from the point



of view of the workers were transferred out of cranks. Finally, the younger workers ( who usually have the least seniority) were either transferred out of the department or laid off. It is no coincidence that they also have the highest absenteeism, least amount of overtime and the "poorest" attitude toward the company. These workers were also most likely to resist any speed-up.

to summarize, then, the boss in attempting to divert his crisis onto the workers re-organized the department by the following steps:

1. cut a shift plus laid-off workers
2. lengthen the working day
3. re-organized jobs not on the basis of seniority
4. increased production speed-up
5. eliminated two foreman liked by the workers
6. eliminated younger workers from the departments.

### Workers Resist

It was clear that the boss was attempting to increase productivity, eliminate jobs and, as shown in the contract leaflets, reduce the 'real' income of workers. The workers in cranks, however, had other ideas. Once the notice about lay-offs, speed-up etc were known, I started to talk to every worker in the department. I was trying to investigate what they thought about the new developments and what, if anything, they intended to do about it.

The immediate reaction was two sided. On one side every worker wanted to resist, but on the other hand they felt it was impossible to have meetings and organize the resistance. The most frequent reasons given for no clear organization was that either there were "too many informers" or "too many D.P.'s (Displaced Persons i.e. immigrant workers).

The first week of resistance the workers in cranks did not even give the boss the old production (500 cranks). The day shift had 380 and the afternoon shift had 450. This resistance went on the whole week. As far as I know it is still in progress.

After the first week of struggle the company announced that all V-8 assembly and machining would be down for one week. The workers who I spoke to said that the rumour they had heard and believed was that after returning to work for one week the V-8 line was going to cut production from 1000 motors to 650 motors and another shift would be eliminated from V-8 machining. While this is only a rumour, the workers not only believe it, but it is most certainly in the realm of possibilities.

This rumour further enforced the workers' idea of resistance.



It brought home more clearly than ever that the boss only used their labour power when it profited him to do so, regardless of the workers needs. The workers were also aware that if and when the lay-offs ended and they returned to Chrysler they would have even worse jobs than they have right now.

### Three Prevailing Attitudes

Listed are three general responses which I believe generally validate the worker's autonomy perspective: 1. The workers want the lay-offs. Most of the workers desire the time off, but worry about how long SUB (Supplementary Unemployment Benefits) will last. Workers with a year's seniority receive approximately 95% of their wages for varying lengths of time depending on length of service and amount of money in the fund. There is a great deal of concern about how long the lay-off will last.

2. The workers believe that the union will do very little to help them. One worker I talked to said that even though the union mentioned something about a meeting he did not believe they were really serious about it and if they did organize one it would happen too late. This attitude, I would say, is almost universal in the plant.

3. The workers both believe and practice resistance as the only answer to the boss's crisis. The amount and intensity of struggle varies among the workers depending on such factors as age, department, Canadian or immigrant etc.

### The Coming Months

It is my attitude that not only will there be struggle in the plants, but also outside among laid-off workers. We are presently attempting to develop an autonomous unemployed workers' group to fight the UIC and the corporation around SUB payments. The union is already trying to co-opt their militancy and channel their struggle through legal and individualistic routes. IF the boss and the union understand that laid-off workers are not a passive "army of the unemployed" ready to take a militant's job inside the plant then it will have a very important affect on their ability to repress militant struggle on the shop floor.

To conclude, it is my opinion (which is substantiated from our contacts both in the local and international union) that the crisis is much more severe than is presently being shown. There is, I believe, a re-composition of the working class on the boss's agenda and workers in Windsor want a different set of changes. Their struggle will decide!



## Postscript

1. What I have described at Chrysler is peanuts compared to Ford where almost 11000 workers have been indefinitely laid off and we expect at least another 800 to go very shortly. The Windsor Ford plant produces the 400 cubic inch and 351 cubic inch V-8 engines which to say the least are dinosaurs of the highest order. Further they are tooling an Ohio plant to produce a 351 engine that has the same horsepower as the 400. This could make both motors redundant. To add a little salt to the open wounds they have approximately 15,000 engines in storage in Windsor alone. Ford in Windsor could go down to a warehouse fast if the present situation continues. This would not only create depression conditions in Windsor but would completely recompose the working class, channelling them into not only lower paying jobs but also into entirely new occupations.

2. I would like to quote the Monday Windsor Star for figures on how the present situation has affected the small plants: (these are lay-off figures)"...Bendix Automotive 200 out of 520 workers; Freeland Industries, Kingsville 120 out of 270; Gulf and Western (formerly Windsor Bumper), 70 out of 291; Huron Steel Products, 54 out of 60; Rockwell International, 32 out of 220; SKD, Amherstburg, 64 out of 340; Somerville Industries, 30 out of 61; Sun Tool and Stamping, 150 out of 290; Toga Manufacturing, 10 out of 25; Welles Corporation, 70 out of 151; Windsor Crome, 55 out of 85; North American Rockwell, 22 out. (Windsor Star, Monday, February 11, 1974)

## Footnotes

1. The question I was looking for were as follows: (comparing 1963 to 1973)

1. number of workers
2. average seniority
3. average age
4. citizenship (immigrant)
5. average turn-over
6. amount of production
7. place of residence (in or out of Windsor)
8. amount of absenteeism
9. number of workers in assembly - machining - skilled trades.

2. I conducted one taped discussion with a worker with ten years seniority. I hope to have a series of these discussions for the next newsletter.

3. Cases of autonomous struggle were not very numerous or remembered by the workers I talked to. The article on Workers' Unity might contain some such insight. I hope to follow up this matter further.

4. For an excellent description of a motor plant and the resistance of the workers there, I strongly suggest Bill Watson, Counter Planning on the Shop Floor.



# WHAT ARE WE DOING AT FORD'S

The London Big Flame Ford Group is more a Ford Group than a Big Flame group. In other words, it's our activity around Ford that brings us together at the present. Unlike Big Flame in Liverpool, we do not (yet) act as a general political group, and the need to do so is felt differently by different individuals in the group. Our relationship with Big Flame in Liverpool is still unclear. We certainly act autonomously, and think of ourselves as different. However, we have not yet had those discussions that would enable us to define the differences. WE are beginning to develop a reciprocal practice with the BF Ford Group at Halewood, and a series of joint meetings are planned, which could be the beginning of defining a common politics, and of making explicit some of the general political agreement that we tend to assume exists. Our relationship with BF Liverpool has its origins largely in the way we came together initially.

## Origins

In March 1973 the Ford battle over the national wage claim began. Largely encouraged by Big Flame Liverpool, a group of people came together in London (none of us Ford workers, mainly people with prior contact and sympathies with BF) to produce a newspaper discussing the wage claim, the past year of struggle at Ford Halewood, the question of immigration, community struggle, social security, strike-claiming etc.

This newspaper was distributed in 5,000 copies at Ford Dagenham and Langley. After this distribution there were discussions of about 30 people who had been involved in distribution and of these 30 a group of 12 people decided that it would be good to continue work - at least in the short term - at Ford, producing leaflets, and information in the period of the wage claim battle.

In these 7 months the group has met at least once a week. Our main activity has been producing leaflets for mass distribution at both Dagenham and Langley, and developing contacts and political understanding with workers who we meet on the basis of the leaflets. The leaflets have dealt with the perspectives of the factory struggle at that time, and some of our political perspectives in relation to factory struggle have been fairly well-defined from the start. e.g.....



- the 2-year contract is a con, coordinated between TUs and employers to impose the bosses' timing on struggles: strikes every 2 years that can be planned for and take initiative away from the workers.

- big go-home strikes are not the only way to fight. Staggered strikes, non-cooperation, disruption, in-plant violence and dumb forms of action like absenteeism and high turnover can also win results in the factory.

- shop stewards are caught in a double union control-management-cop role, and generally hold back the autonomy and self-confidence of workers.

- revolutionary struggle cannot be confined to the factory alone ... we're only going to win if we're fighting to change every aspect of life under capitalism. This means redefining the terms of struggle set by the TUs and the Left parties.

#### Why Ford?

Our reasons for choosing to work around Ford varied. For some of us the previous existence of BF at Ford in Liverpool opened an area of activity for libertarians in London who wanted to be active in industrial situations. Others of us based this choice on the 'vanguard' role that both Ford management and Ford workers have played in the past years of class struggle in Britain - Ford workers in terms of the history of the wildcat strikes of the '60's and the fight against the penalty clauses and Labour's 'In Place of Strife' in 1969; Ford management in its use of the American-style contract in 1971 to freeze wages and to encourage the union in effectively channelling militancy into the Company's arena and holding back a generalised struggle. Equally, in other European countries, the motor industry, with its impossible conditions of work and large concentrations of young, migrant workers, has been in the forefront of the development of revolutionary struggle throughout Europe...and points the way for other sectors of workers. As an example, the Italian experience of autonomous struggle in the engineering industry was important to some of us. And at the same time, we saw the fact that in the London area alone, Ford employs directly upwards of 45,000 workers, and thousands of others in component and service industries, as well as determining important aspects of social life in the South East (housing, transport, roads, pollution, wage levels in other industries etc).

Finally, all of us had some commitment to working together as a group, to trying to work out our politics together, and to working out in practice problems of 'factory and community' in a concrete intervention.



## The Struggle At Dagenham

In March this year, workers at Dagenham by and large rejected the all-out strike as a means of fighting the company's measly Phase II wage offer. The stewards and convenors had prepared no one for an all out struggle (the union had agreed with the company to negotiate in secrecy), and though they put an all-out strike to the vote, it is doubtful whether the union in the factory wanted to put up a fight for anything other than fringe benefits. At the same time it was clear that Ford was prepared for a strike that it would have to be a long one and that people were distrustful of the stewards' motives and of the union that sold them out two years earlier.

So the tactics adopted at Dagenham were work-to-rules, overtime bans and selective stoppages, tactics designed to squeeze the maximum out of Ford at least cost to workers, and to maintain the maximum initiative on the shop floor. As far as we are concerned, the tactics adopted were an important first expression of the beginning of autonomous struggle at Ford - that is, autonomous of the management bargaining structure which is the basis for social peace and compromise and the incorporation of the workforce into the factory. This strategy certainly expressed itself very unevenly. In some sections - like the electricians' regular weekly one-day strike - it was clearly union led and initiated. In other sections of the PTA and Body Plants, militants were encouraging their sections to take independent initiatives, creating minor stoppages, messing up production in spontaneous and often highly imaginative ways and spreading the overtime ban throughout the plant. It was these actions that at the time our leaflets were trying to encourage as a progressive way of fighting.

At the same time Ford was trying to divide people by extensive use of layoffs, to turn one section of workers against another. (It's also clear how the differential apportioning of overtime was another means of dividing one section of the workforce from the other).

Nevertheless, the actions continued for a surprising length of time. While there was a lot of doubt about how to fight Ford and the Freeze during this period, it was clear that no one accepted the contract - not when it was put to the vote at the mass meeting in April, nor when the unions finally agreed to sign in May.

During this period, much the same as they are trying to do now (Late September), Ford provoked a gruelling work-to-rule in the Press Shop by sacking a worker there. Their strategy was to smash militancy by using the Press Shop work-to-rule to lay off the Body Plant and the PTA (so that both



these plants would blame the Press Shop for the layoffs rather than the company). It was just before the Easter break, so people lost their holiday pay.

Ford's strategy, which we had predicted in our leaflets, was partly successful in defusing the struggle against the pay offer. However, it also created an enormous well of anger at Ford's assumption that it could lay people off whenever it suited the company - after all people couldn't choose to work when it suited them.

It's that anger which has now expressed itself in our leaflets and on the shop floor in the demand for 40 HOURS PAY - WORK OR NO WORK, a demand which has met a fantastic response from workers at Dagenham, and which expressed the politics of the 'guaranteed income', which we never expected that we would be able to introduce in the factory so early in our work there.

Shortly before the summer break, Ford, who was suffering severe components shortages because of the strikes in the component industry, provoked a strike by lorry-drivers in order to lay people off for three days, just before the holidays. In the last few weeks, again because of components shortages and because of continuing production problems with new models, Ford has again tried it on. This time, however, workers refused to take it lying down.

Dagenham has experienced its first, albeit short-lived, occupation, and new ideas about struggle are growing fast inside the factory, in direct opposition to the union stance, which has been to ask for work rather than to fight for pay. The union is as scared by what is happening as is the management. It has lost a lot of authority in its attempts to incorporate the struggle, and it has enabled us to explain in our leaflets clearly where we stand in relation to them. A lot of workers hold the union (as expressed in the convenor, at any rate) in complete contempt. However, this has left a terrific vacuum of organisation inside the plant, and has raised an enormous amount of problems for us about how we should relate to the development of autonomous organisation inside the plant. These are problems that we have always been aware of and that we are going to be forced to confront quickly. People have come to expect and look forward to the leaflets, which at the very least act as a basis of discussion inside the factory, as well as generalising demands, information etc. But we are now moving very fast from a situation where we had to struggle to make contacts, to a situation where people are approaching us for discussion, a number of workers have been actively involved in writing leaflets and we are developing a clear ideological alternative 'presence' inside the plant that is winning a lot of support. The urgent question now is: how workers are joining us, and what they are joining if they do.



## We Want to Get Our Hands Dirty

Despite the fact that we have members and contacts of the group working at Ford, the group's origin was as an external group, intervening in a situation of workers' struggle. From the start we have always written the leaflets as 'we' since the positions expressed in them came as far as possible from discussions with workers. At the same time, though, we have often been very unconfident about being outsiders. Especially when a lot of libertarian thinking seemed to be preaching 'no-involvement-in-struggles-that-are-not-your-own'. It's not intervention as such that worries us. We are involved in a struggle against capitalism that affects all our lives. We don't want to accept the prejudices of the old-style union politicians (with positions to protect) who call us outsiders. The question is what kind of intervention we make. Our lack of confidence is not in intervening as such, but in knowing our limitations: whether we have enough knowledge and experience to be effective; to know what our capacity is as a group; to know what we need to understand and study; not to stretch ourselves to the point of disintegration.

There is a continual tension in the group between wanting to develop long-term work - to build our contacts, consolidate our organisation, develop our political understanding - and the immediate needs of the struggle at Dagenham, which continually forces us to take positions and adopt tactics and take up energies.

In a place like Dagenham, few people know what happens from one shift to another, one plant to another. Especially in periods like the last few weeks, when there has been an upsurge of autonomous workers' activity. The company won't spread the information and neither will the TUs and the steward structure for fear that events get out of their control. From that point of view, our leaflets have an important role in spreading news and generalising demands.

The political parties at Dagenham (Labour, CP, SLL, possible exception of IS) are completely immersed in Trade Union type politics and seem incapable of relating to struggles which are moving beyond the traditional framework. Even if they are active, the limitations of their politics would prevent them from representing the interests of the mass of workers - the large mass of young, often migrant or immigrant workers on the line, who have very little interest in work, Trade Unions and parliamentary politics. In this situation we've found that open discussions of revolutionary politics are on the cards. With very rare exceptions, we've had uniformly good response to our leaflets, and to ourselves personally.



## The Ford Group as a Political Group

Implicitly we think of ourselves as more than a Ford group, as trying to develop a general politics of struggle. De facto, however, that's all we are as a group. This gives rise to a lot of contradictions.

We've always felt that our activity should definitely not be just the factory, with male factory workers around exclusively factory issues. We know that what is gained politically and economically by workers in the factory is recouped by capital through rents, through the dole queue, through the family etc; we know that the organisation of the factory goes far beyond its four walls; and we know that we've all been fighting to change ourselves, to change the ways we live, and challenge the whole of society that oppresses us.

Our weakness is that we, like Ford workers, come together from all over London. Most of us are involved in 'community politics' in the areas where we live, but we don't do this work as a group...mainly because we're scattered like this. This means that, although we've got a very good possibility of meeting Ford workers all over London, we can have at present very little ongoing group practice outside the factory.

This shows in our leaflets. Because we don't have any collective group practice around the community, it's hard for us to write about struggle outside the factory (except in 'token' ways...the odd reference to rents, family life etc.). This makes our political discussions among ourselves and our factory based activity seem hollow and unsatisfactory at times.

We don't want to get into the trap of thinking that the only way to generalise our politics is to think 'everybody had to do everything' - fighting in factories, estates, squatting, claiming etc. If we did we'd all go mad. However, several of us feel that the development of a general politics has to go hand in hand with the development of a general political organisation. 'Anti-Leninism' means nothing at Ford unless we can develop real alternatives. We have been discussing how we can relate to people involved in other struggles in East London (for those of us in East London), possibly as a base group of a wider group that would attempt to develop a wider politics.

A number of specific problems in our practice reflect our need to define ourselves more carefully. Different people have helped us out with leafletting. It has been hard to put them in touch with the politics of the Ford situation at short notice, or to define ourselves in any very satisfactory way



as a group that they might join. A number of women, specifically, have worked with us in this way, but have not felt able, for different reasons (sexism in the factory, sexism in the group, need to work with other women etc.) to commit themselves to working around Ford. At the same time they have been interested in the politics we have been developing at the factory, but there has been no general context in which we could share that experience, and we could have developed that politics together. Again, there have been inequalities within the group, in that some people have had more time than others to make and maintain contact with workers at Dagenham. This makes for real differences in terms of being in touch with what is happening and what people are feeling at the plant, differences that really matter when it comes to writing leaflets. This again raises the question of how quickly more workers become part of the group, and how much energy we put into this process, as distinct from the mass level of propaganda through leaflets.

These problems will only be resolved in determining what kind of political group we are, or are part of, and what kind of organisation we are trying to build in the plant.





# INTERVENTION AT FORD OAKVILLE

This is a brief description and analysis of our group in Toronto's involvement with Ford workers in Oakville in November and December.

At that time most of the men and a few women belonged to a group that's orientation was to do political work in the organized industrial sector. we felt that in order to clarify our theoretical positions and develop our practice as a group we had to concentrate on one area of work. People at the Labour Centre in Windsor sent us 2 leaflets that their group had distributed with information on the contract negotiations that the U.A.W. was not spreading to its members. We saw this as a chance to distribute 1 edited version of the leaflets, minimally spreading this information to autoworkers in the Toronto area. At that point we did not see the auto industry or Ford's as the central focus we were looking for as we were also involved in the rail and post office. Most of the women were in a working women's group having decided to operate autonomously from the industrial group except for general discussions. They agreed to help in the distribution but saw it as a one shot deal and were mainly interested in the plant where the majority of the workers were women.

We put 2 phone numbers at the bottom of the leaflet along with a vague description of ourselves as a group of workers and students interested in spreading information to aid worker's struggles.

We were surprised to receive 5 positive phone calls from Oakville. They mainly were appreciative for the information and inquired if we were communists. We pressed everyone to give us their names and phone numbers except for 1 person who was a steward and felt we were outside agitators.

We developed an approach to the workers we came in contact with- either on the picket line, at their homes or on the phone- which reflected our political approach to the intervention at Oakville.

Our primary work at this time was writing leaflets, with which we hoped to help in the struggle of the Ford Oakville workers. As well, we hoped to make our presence felt in a way that would allow us to



work more closely with contacts we would make. The leaflets were composed of information-either facts the union was not making open to the rank and file during the contract period, or methods other workers had used to win their demands. Pointing the way forward for Oakville workers with examples of other workers tactics, became the focus of leaflets or bulletins we saw putting out. Therefore, in any talk we had with the workers we met we always asked about past and present issues at the plant and the ways people fought to win. People usually responded well and enjoyed remembering and sharing those experiences.

In our conversations with those workers we always asked for criticisms of the past leaflets. As our contacts at the plant increased, we could do this more thoroughly during the actual writing of the leaflet. There were meetings and phone calls with the contacts in Oakville so they could criticize the tone and content of the leaflets before they were printed.

One of the guys who phoned from Oakville had a brother-in-law in Talbotville at the Ford plant there. To fight excessive overtime there, the workers had consistently booked-off sick on their scheduled overtime shifts forcing the company to cut compulsory overtime by 8 hours. We thought it would be a good idea to print a leaflet of the details of this fight to give an example to workers at Oakville. We found out later that in response to the leaflet, 75% of the workers booked-off sick the next Saturday overtime shift at the truck plant in Oakville.

The UAW called the strike to begin Sat. Nov. 24. On Thurs the 22nd, about 3500 people walked off. The Toronto Star quoted Dennis McDermott, the Canadian director of the UAW as saying, "stupid, self-styled militants" were responsible for the walkout. Another union spokesman accused the militants of "ruining negotiations."

The strike was for non-wage issues only, the UAW having said that if the Can. section struck for pay increases above what was already won in the U.S., strike pay to Canadian workers would be cut off.

We organized a committee of 5 to co-ordinate activities between our weekly meetings and one person, who wasn't working, kept everything organized on a day to day basis. There were no picket lines as such, but groups of strikers at each of 5 entrances to the plant, who did one shift of strike duty a week. We went out in groups of 3, generally twice a day to talk to the strikers. We met a lot of people, had a lot of good raps and found out about a lot of stuff happening inside the plant. The strike lasted just less than 2 weeks. A group of us went out one Tuesday, had a good rap about, among other things, working conditions, the NDP, inflation, Watergate and women's liberation. The next Tuesday we got there about 45 minutes



later than the week before and they said-"We thought you'd forgotten us." Word of our presence had spread and people for the most part were friendly, sharing coffee and doughnuts with us.

We were constantly amazed at the amount of unreported militancy inside the plant. Everything from work stoppages in sympathy with someone refusing to do a particular job to the guy who was told he couldn't leave the line to go to the washroom shitting in a grabage can in one of the magement offices.

This was a particularly hectic time for all of us. Most of us were out at the picket lines (30 miles from downtown Toronto) about 3 times a week. That plus work on the strike bulletin, which we planned to put out if the strike continued for a long time, meetings and phone calls to the workers we had contacted, innumerable meetings and phone calls between ourselves, meant that for most of us, we had time for little else outside of our own jobs or school work. But it was a really high time for all of us. We all felt that we were doing something together and it was going well.

The contract was ratified. Voting against it would have meant losing money at Christmas, when no one could afford it, as well as losing the support of the International, which would have meant no strike pay. Voting for the contract meant accepting wages that were falling behind the cost of living increase 45¢ a day in the first year alone.

We distributed a leaflet at the ratification meeting which said that the company and the union had set things up so that whichever way the workers voted they lost.

After the return to work a contact we had made suggested and put together a Christmas card for distribution inside the plant. A cartoon showed George Woodcock of the UAW as Santa Claus failing to "bring the goodies" with a verse inside telling the workers to rely on themselves.

We wanted to develop these contacts further. In a longer term sense we hoped to help in the building of a rank and file organization in the plant. (A note here- We are not advocates of dual unionism. i.e. establishing counter organizations in the workplace of the same nature as unions. Unions due to their nature and their historical role can be used by the rank and file for its defense. The only way for the rank and file to win its demands however is on the basis of its mass action and organization) On the bottom of our leaflets we explained the involvement of the contacts we had made. We asked for more help in the writing, distributing and financing of the leaflets as well as letting it be known we would help



anybody with their own leaflets. We wanted to provide as many ways as possible for people to get involved.

The attempts to make our leaflets sensitive and relevant reflect our "anti vanguardist" orientation. We do not see our organization as central to the organization of the working class. We disagreed with the "vanguardist" groups that talk of workers' struggles only in terms of their own contribution. Leadership of the class is seen as key in such a way that a lot of time and energy is wasted by them in attempting to take over the leadership of trade unions. "Vanguardism" is the basis for people's anti-communism. Workers refused anything to do with us due to this tension. We experienced this and an a-political tendency a lot at Oakville.



"THE CHRISTMAS CAP"



In the case of the anti-communist feeling in the plant, "communist" generally referred to the USSR, but anyone with politics identifiable as left of the NDP is lumped in with the CP as being "pro-Soviet\_"

People who call themselves "communists" in the plant are either CPers, whom the workers recognizes are just in it to change the leadership, to elect themselves to union positions or CPLers, who alienate people pretty quickly ("Nixon, Brezhnev, Mao Tse-tung, all the bosses must be hung!") with their rhetoric and constant moralizing. " The workers should get together. When they stand at the plant gates at 6:30 a.m. shouting, "Buy a revolutionary communist newspaper," they fail to understand the experience of most working people in Canada. Calling yourself a "revolutionary communist" doesn't say anything, except to the left, and they already know. It just conjurs up visions of Stalin and hammers and sickles. That is not to say we should not be specific about what our politics are-we must be. But we must do that in a meaningful way that is not reliant on rhetoric. This was a very important discussion for us as we were under a lot of pressure from the workers we contacted to define ourselves.

The anti-political feeling in the plant came across in two ways. The first viewed politics solely as electoral politics. (It goes along with, "I'm a socialist; I vote for the NDP") With this people view politics as something totally separate from themselves. It happens in Parliament and Queen's Park, not in their everyday lives. And who would be interested in that stuff anyway? "Politicians" call this "working-class apathy."

What's necessary is to change people's definitions of "political". When you come home from work and you've got to make dinner, put the kids to bed, clean the house and try to keep your cool, while work has you so exhausted your body is crying for rest-that's political.

The second way this came across was in the view that people are in politics for personal gains. (It goes along with, "all politicians are corrupt." This feeling comes from people's experiences of CPers starting left caucusses and in the end what they mean is "vote for me". Again and again we got questions from workers about our being a caucus for union leadership in the local.

At this point we would like to clarify our position on trade unions. As already mentioned, little contract information was made public to the rank and file during the negotiations except in the bourgeois press. Workers were kept in the dark. Not only were the demands not talked about but at Oakville, none of the usual overtime bans before the strike were organized by the union so that they would be in a position of strength before the strike. The Canadian strike was called the two weeks before Christmas, the worst possible time for the workers. This underlines the weaknesses of trade unions. They have become as much a component



of capitalist production as assembly lines.

The limitations of trade unions are not in their leadership or political base but in their very structure. In the basic agreements unions make with their companies they sign away the only power their members have in dealing with the company, i.e. the stoppage of production, for the length of the contract.

At contract time, the union's power is subverted by the labour laws of the state. Strikers can be ordered back to work by the state as we saw in the recent rail strike. It breaks the strength of the picket line by providing police to help scabs into the plants. Injunctions against the unions can be made by the companies and individuals in the leadership can face huge fines.

At a recent wildcatt in Lordstown, the union refused to support the members as they were afraid of being sued. Unions can also be forced to arbitration with the state choosing the "neutral" judge.

To ensure profits any wage gains made by the various unions are passed onto the entire working class with higher prices thus strengthening the division between the organized and unorganized sectors. The bourgeoisie has also used the wage gains to further develop the home market, expanding the consumption of goods.

As a reflection of its position in capital's organization, unions fit their demands into it. Any victories won are traded with guaranteeing production. In this strike the union did not go for wage gains above the 3% increase laid out by the Nixon administration. Any gains won in social benefits eroded the position of the younger workers, the company's biggest production headaches. (Probation was lengthened and wages were reduced for the period with the money given in a lump after the completion of the period- the time of high turnover) The reduction of compulsory overtime with no wage increases will force most workers to work the old schedules to keep up with the cost of living. (if the work exists)

Our approach to trade unions is a tactical one. We do not see ourselves as opposition. We are not interested in forming left caucusses attempting to push the locals left or in running for positions of leadership. The struggle of the workplace is on the shop floor and that is where demands will be fought and won. On the other hand, we feel that trade unions have been important for the working class under capitalism.

Unions have been formed mainly in the skilled trades and capital intensive industries with the exception of the public sector. Two thirds of workers are not organized. Unions are



important in improving working conditions, ending harassment of individuals by management and in guaranteeing the wage settlements of the contract and thus are important to organize for the defense of workers.

For workers of all sectors, though, these are the limited capabilities of unions. To challenge the basic antagonistic relationship between capital and the working class, workers have to rely on their own strength and develop offensive tactics. Workers can only seize control of their lives through their collective understanding of their situation and collective thrust to secure and win those demands. e.g. work stoppages.

This was our approach at Oakville. In our leaflets we pointed to the bankruptcy of the international and the local without setting ourselves up as opposition. We illustrated how workers can only rely on their own strength to win their demands and worked on the development of their organization to achieve this.

Throughout the intervention, the role of women in the group was a continual tension. All of the women involved had been influenced to a large degree by Selma James and her analysis. There was a contradiction between our perspective theoretically, which stressed the importance of organizing women around their wageless position within capital and our practice of organizing men working in factories.

We had organized a women's group, which fell apart after we began draining our energies into the auto intervention. At this point, this has only been partly resolved - most of the women have left the auto group and are now discussing re-forming a women's collective with other women who are not part of what has been called the 'new tendency'.

During the intervention at Ford Oakville this was a continuing tension for us. This can be seen, for example, in our relationship or lack thereof, with the wives of the auto workers we were meeting. Our analyses saw their wageless labour as important to the maintenance of capital, but we related to them only around auto. At one meeting with an auto worker from Oakville, one from Talbotville, their 2 wives, a woman and two men from our group, for a little while there was one conversation with everybody, where the wives objected to their husbands going involvement. (They saw it as a threat to both their relationship with their husband, and to their financial support, since they were worried about their husbands losing their jobs.) Afterwards it broke down into two conversations- one with all the men discussing in-plant militancy and one with the wives talking about other things. The woman from our group was left feeling out of place in both, yet drawn to both.

There were women working at Ford in the offices and the cafeteria. The struggle there was never generalized to include them. There was no opportunity for women in the group to work from a feminist perspective with other women through the auto intervention.



After much discussion and disappointment this has led to a re-organization of the priorities of the women in the group. The auto intervention is now at best a secondary priority. We want to work directly with women around issues that affect them rather than through support for a male-oriented intervention.

The tension was good in that it forced us to deal with people's whole lives and not just the time spent in the plant. The second leaflet, on overtime, for example, states in the conclusion, "Only when workers make a living wage on a normal week's work will they be really free to refuse overtime and have time for themselves outside of work." This was early Dec. and workers were doing 2 hours overtime a day, plus 8 hours on Saturdays. We actually heard of cases of people sleeping at the plant - getting off evening shift Friday midnight and expected back on the line Saturday morning. Three months later, those same people were laid off for lack of work.

Over the Christmas break, we, as well as the workers inside the plant, went through a period of loss of momentum. As a group we had long discussions about our future. Should we stay together with one focus of work or should we split up?

At this point a smaller group of the original auto group are continuing to work on the auto intervention. Another base group of the Industrial Intervention Group has gotten together to work at the post office where three of the people involved work. At this point, there are some women in both of those groups. As well, some of the women and men from the original auto group have been meeting with others, who are doing "community organizing" mostly around housing, to try and get a community group together. All of us from what was the auto group are continuing to meet for a series of educationals on the perspective of workers autonomy.

All of the women see the developing women's collective as decisive and as a place to develop our understanding of Marxist feminist politics and to begin to put those into practice.

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We found the following useful:

- 1) the pamphlet, Italy: New Tactics and Organization, from Windsor
- 2) documents from Big Flame in England on their intervention at Ford there.
- 3) an unpublished English translation of 3 documents from Base Ouvrier in France on their intervention at a Renault plant in Flins. The originals were in Les Temps Modernes.

Lissa Donner and David Kidd



# TROUBLE ON THE LINE

(The following article was taken from Canadian Dimension, Volume 9, Numbers 7 & 8.)

"I want it recorded that on Labour Day 1973, the union bosses ordered the workers back to work and the NDP sold us out for 4¢ an hour."

The meeting of picket captains and union executives of the non-ops in Winnipeg is now over. The speaker is a young man, maybe 24. Other young men have spoken too. They are angry.

"Your union defied the government's legislation. Don't make any mistake about it," a union official pleaded. "For 48 hours" someone scoffs, "and on a weekend. And even then only because you guys are facing a convention next week." They are not impressed.

And from another official: "This is a political matter. The only way we'll get a break is to vote the NDP into office." Jeers and catcalls. There are few believers here.

"Why don't you call for a vote of the members? At least in '66 we voted to go back to work. Now your telling us."

"I'm just telling you what we were told by the national committee. 96 locals voted to go back."

"Yeah, they probably voted like we voted."

"No contract, no work," an older man yells. (Cheers and foot stomping.)

"No union gets away with that" an official replies, "Your asking the impossible." They're still not impressed. "It's like I said the other day," one says, "It's 1966 all over again. I warned you guys. This leadership of ours. They always crumble. I won't crawl back to work."

They shuffle out.

8 a.m., Tuesday (September 4).

The workers file through the gates at the Transcona and Symington yards. The strike is over. But wait.

10 a.m. A commotion inside. Somebody yells, "There's a picket line outside. Let's go." There's confusion. Some want to stay but they're prodded by the rest. They grab their lunch pails. Only the supervisors, foremen and company police are left.

Outside a dozen or so young men are picketing. They're



joined by a few hundred others. A thousand men stand across the street. They wait. They want to see if the line will hold. There's some shouting. Finally they go home. The picket remains.

10 p.m. a few days later.

Not a train has moved. Twenty-five men are huddled in groups in front of the Symington yards. It's chilly. They are all men. Most of them are young. But there are some oldtimers too.

"Did you see what happened this morning?" C...., our union leader tried to crash the line. But he couldn't get anyone to go with him. He won't show his face around here for a while."

A young man with a beard comes by with a gas stove and coffee pot. "I'm here for the night."

"There's no leaders here," one of the picketers explains. "No picket captains, no spokesmen. We're our own spokesmen." There's pride in his voice. Another joins the conversation. "You see these guys? Nobody called them to the picket line. No two hours picket duty here. I'm here because I want to be here. I didn't have to be called."

"It's more fun this way," another one says. "And it means something."

"We've got three enemies," this from an oldtimer, "the company, the government and the union. We can't beat them all now, but we're starting something. It's the young guys that are responsible for this. They started it. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't be here now. They're different. They're fearless. They don't give a damn for the company or the government or the union. It's a new generation."

"There's the business management and there's the union management - and then there's the workers," one of the young picketers volunteers. "The union is just the other side of the management coin. NObody trusts them since the '66 sell-out. And they wonder why we don't come to local meetings."

"It happened after the 1919 strike," another veteran tunes in. "What d'ya think, we should be united again? That's gotta be more trouble. They know that. So they keep us divided. And we go along with it. Maybe we'll smarten up one day."

There's no consensus as to why they are there. Mostly



it's a defiance of the union leadership. "They're just in it for themselves." One says that if the legislation provided for a decent wage he wouldn't be there. But others say it isn't the wages. "They've taken away our right to bargain. I won't be ordered to work. I'm nobody's slave."

Is there any organized effort to maintain the picket line? "It's spontaneous. People can come and go as they see fit." Is anyone planning some kind of rank and file committee to keep the militants together? It hadn't occurred to anyone. "Don't talk to me about tomorrow. This is where we are today. It it'll happen, it'll happen."

7 a.m. the next morning.

Cars are lined up on both sides of the street in front of the yards. Four or five hundred men and women are standing around in groups. The protesters are still there. About 50 of them.

"You see those guys. They're confused. They don't know what to do. They're waiting for someone to tell them. They should either come over here or go home."

An oldtimer explains: "The union has drummed it into our heads never to cross a picket line. Now its come back to haunt them. They can't control the members. Things work out funny that way."

One of the protesters is shouting obscenities across the way, taunting the waiting workers. "See that, he'll make a good union boss," another murmurs. "That's what we're trying to get away from. He shouldn't do that. Let them figure it out for themselves."

Two of the workers cross the road. The protesters cheer them as they join the line.

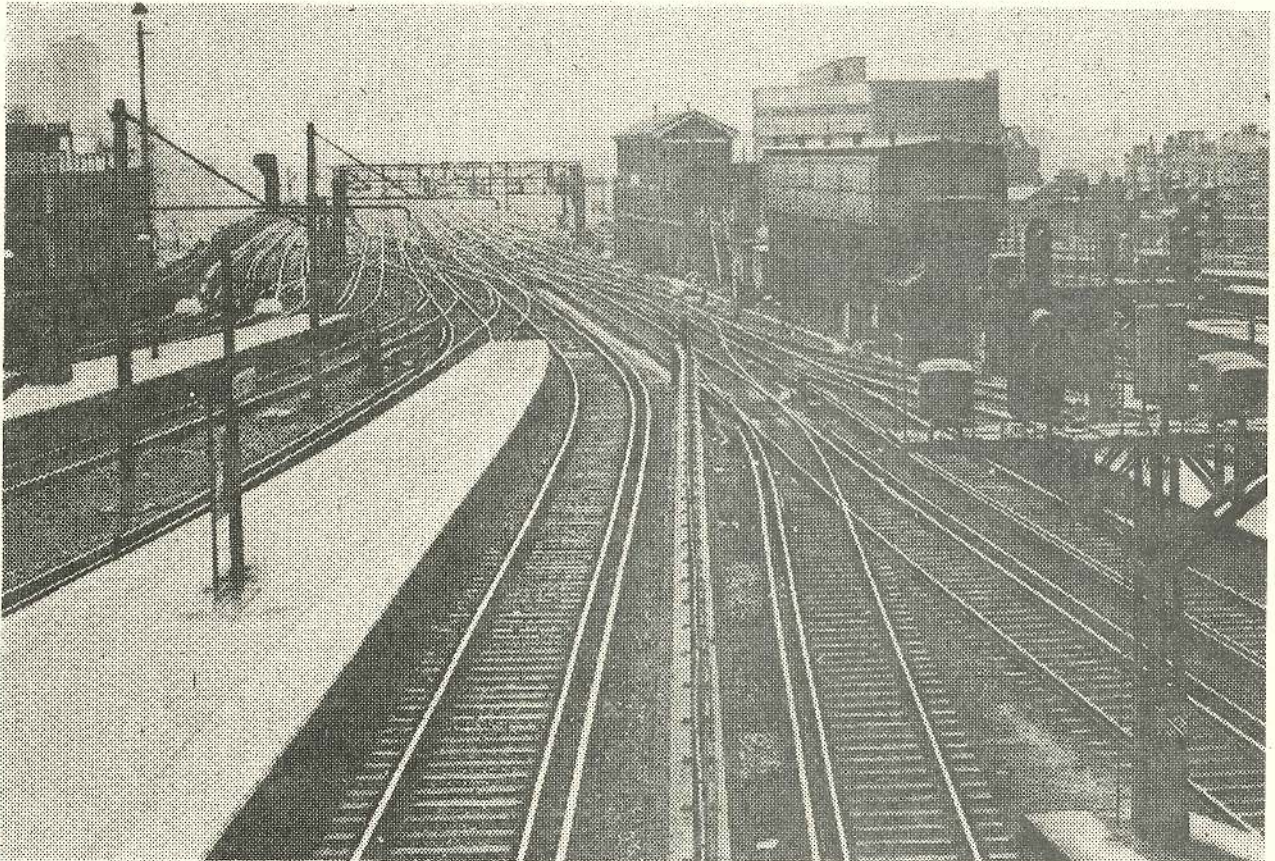
"Guess who calls me up this morning to go back to work:" a protester asks. "H..., chairman of our local. Isn't that a son of a bitch. He's doing the company's dirty work. The union is supposed to do what the company can't - control the men. But the men won't listen to the union any more than they will the company. We're our own boss now."

Spirits are high. Two young protesters break for the supervisor's office. They burst in. "Listen here W... When we come back, you'll do what we say. There's no union now." Another supervisor walks in. "We're talking to W... now. When we've finished with him we'll call you." Five minutes



later they're back in the line. They joke about their heroics. But a while later they're looking worried. Maybe they overdid it. They'll have to wait and see.

Word gets around that the federal government is seeking an injunction against some of the protesters. They're not willing to go to jail. They disband. They feel they've made their point. The strike in Winnipeg is over.



**AND WE ALL KNEW  
WHAT IT MEANT ...**



The sun is brilliant, the passersby blink at us, a little dazzled. Office workers going to lunch. Government officials clothed in grey.

"We won't go back. We won't go back" The chants ring out as we march, sweating, in the 95 degree thick heat up Parliament Hill.

"This is going to be the most orderly workers' demonstration ever seen on Parliament Hill," had proclaimed the chief union marshall, just before we moved off.

Now we are almost opposite the stone stairs leading up into the House. We pass by the 60 member all-union Non-op negotiating committee, standing like generals reviewing a parade, off to one side. They are nervously sweating in their executive suits, clearly worried by the defiant slogans and the size of the demonstration. They planned for a demonstration of 200, not 200, a mild protest as the M.P.'s rush back from their peaceful vacations to legislate in the nation's (bosses') interest.

And then these guys from Quebec appear, coming up on our left, like a band of troubadours, not in the mainstream of the demonstration of chanting marchers. Up they come, half-running, half-walking, half-naked, turning around to their mates, shouting at one another, slapping one another on the back. It looked as though they had just come from a festival.

Regrouping, they rush the main doors, start heaving them. Just thirty of them.

The main demonstration stops dead. We stand rooted to the spot. A second passes and then about ten guys, individually, break ranks and run off up the steps.

"C'mon, let's go." A loud hailer rings out, and a huge group from Toronto breaks off from the head of the demonstration. We rush to join our brothers from Quebec, pushing the flabbergasted union marshalls roughly aside.

The huge glass-paned double doors burst open, glass shattering all over the marble steps inside. Mounties in full dress uniform stand back as if shell-shocked and further inside others are nervously pulling on their soft leather dress gloves. They stand transfixed as over two hundred of us rush straight down the hall, shouting slogans that echo around the gleaming arches and marble pillars. M.P.'s and visitors scuttle out of the way, as the Quebecois lead the charge.

Big wooden doors at the end. Forced open - "Shit, just



a bunch of bloody books." We hit the library by mistake but no one seems to know where the House of Commons is.

One young guy starts methodically kicking out the huge panes of ornate window. Gingerly, the Mounties move in. Suddenly, fierce fighting erupts. The Mounties try to arrest one guy, they get beaten up for their trouble. They leave us alone. A huge cameraman gets too interested in the fighting and is punched to the ground by two older guys half his size. A. who is five foot two lays in with determination and anger. (Politicians were later to say that the news films should be used to identify and prosecute us.)

Half-stunned, jubilant and all as angry as hell, older guys, younger guys, French, English, Italian and Spanish, it's as if representatives have been chosen from every ethnic and trade group to be there today. Slogans and shouting in all languages. Loudhailers reverberating.

Lalonde sneaks in. Diefenbaker passes, is harrassed. Lewis appears then disappears in a crowd. Starts speaking, but is drowned out, gets up on a small bench by the stone wall. A small bottle whistles through the air, misses him but hits a huge portrait of Diefenbaker, hanging on the wall, falls and doesn't break.

F. leaps onto the bench beside Lewis, puts his arm around his neck and threatens him with his other fist. "Mange la merde. Fuck off, you bastard."

Out at the main doors other guys are still coming in, fighting their way past a large squad of Mounties, defending the entrance. R. and J. fight their way past and join us. Reporters and cameramen are all over the place, interviewing groups and individuals on their portable tapes, flashes go off constantly.

Inside, however, the action is falling to pieces, nobody knows where the Commons is, some guys sit down around a pillar and shout slogans, others are leaving. Outside the union bureaucrats are trying to make speeches on the steps but are booed and shouted down; Lewis tries again and is drowned out. "40,000 a year baloney."

We break slowly away and go to the nearest pub. Black, white, English, and French, truckers from Montreal and Toronto singing raucously in both languages and the whole pub sings in French. The air is thick and sweet. "Unfuckin-believable... never in my life did I see anything like that .. you kicked that fat cop in the throat and he was standing up!..you guys motormen from Toronto?...solidarity forever, for together we are strong...we won't go back, we won't go back...the loudhailers get stuck on one band as John holds them one in front of the other.



# UP AGAINST THE STATE: Experiences of a Railworkers Group

## Introduction

The longest and hardest fought contract struggles ever on the railways have recently ended. Yet, everything is not entirely wrapped up: when the Arbitrator's report comes out in January guerilla actions could begin all over again. At least one union is committed to passing out Ratification Ballots (Can. Brotherhood of Transport and Gen. Workers) and if two thirds of the 20,000 workers reject the report, there will be a strike.

In a sense the contract struggles on the railways are never over; once one ends, the next one is about to begin. Negotiations between the unions and the companies begin several months before the expiry dates and always carry on for months afterwards. Rank and file action often begins even earlier. In Toronto our group, which came together to resist a number of company attacks on working conditions, started agitating around contract demands eight months before the contract expired in December of 1972. (The next contract will expire in December '74, less than a year after the arbitration report appears.)

The depth of the railworkers' struggle has never been greater. Rank and file initiative has been clearly developing throughout, always in the face of strong union-company opposition and collaboration to prevent and smash the struggle. The clearest example of this is seen in the struggle of B.C. yard crews against CNR's efforts to cut jobs, which was previously agreed to by the union. (More later)

In Toronto, we began in late '72 to demand a nationwide work to rule movement, to back up our contract demands, which centred around massive wage increases, questions of discipline, shorter hours, pension demands and support for other workers on the railways. However, we didn't succeed in developing a massive rank and file momentum until some months later, in March '73. As a result of our efforts a mass meeting organised under the Area Council of the C.B.R.T. Toronto took place April 1. The meeting of 700 was very stormy - we came close to throwing the National President of the union out, quite a few of us wanted to strike from then, but because the militancy of the others was less, we adopted instead the work to rule tactic. The work to rule spread through



Ontario and was taken up by Non-Op workers on the CN and CPR in other parts of the country. (Non-ops are rail workers who aren't directly involved in running the trains - e.g. clerks, truckers etc.)

Strong rank and file actions had already broken out in B.C. among engineers and yard crews. The struggle there ran very deep and became very bitter. As in Toronto, workers had to fight both companies and unions. The CNR and the running trades unions (United Trans. U., Bro. of Locomotive Engineers) had already reached agreement over reducing the yard crews from three to two men, by giving the remaining two men walkie talkies; the new practice had been in effect in most of Eastern Canada, when the yard crews, including engineers booked off sick in the Vancouver area. The CNR retaliated with a successful law suit of around \$80,000 against some two hundred men, who had "conspired to withdraw their service." The men then went on a work to rule that was instantly very effective. Because they had got nothing but back-stabbing from their union officials they started a non-payment of union dues campaign. (They don't have a compulsory check-off) The unions and the companies moved together against this and those not paying dues were declared "delinquent" and struck off the seniority list. The CN also flew in 60 supervisors from the East to "work with" the yard crews; and by this means at least five men have been fired, as their demerit points for breaking rules, allocated by company investigation courts, have climbed to 60 within a year.

Disgusted with the B. Of L.E. Vancouver and Kamloops engineers sent their local union charter back to Cleveland. Union President Coughlin then suggested that Cn should fire them all.

This struggle in B.C. is reflective of a much deeper one - yard crews have had a considerable power over work processes for many years, and the companies all over Nth America have been attacking this head on. But more on this later. This fight, that began in earnest in '73 before the contract had expired, provided a back drop for the actual contract struggle; it meant that the rank and file rail-workers were already well organized and this was to come out very clearly during the strikes especially during the last week of the illegal strike, when mass meetings took place daily all over B.C. (In Vancouver over 1000 per day unanimously voting to stay out.)

#### Forms and Content of the Struggle

From the two storm centres, Vancouver and Toronto, actions



spread, until almost every group of workers, every trade, in all parts of the country had taken some kind of action. There was a rich variety of militant activity, including just about every form of struggle that industrial workers have ever used. Many groups used a traditionally skilled workers weapon (especially the operators): the book off; booking off to go to a union meeting or all booking off sick. Slowdowns and work to rules have been used by railworkers very effectively in an industry which hypocritically sets hundreds of safety rules, that work loads demand be disregarded. If one works according to the rules, however, no work is carried out. There were also wildcat strikes, mass meetings and mass demonstrations that climaxed in Ottawa with the storming of Parliament and in Vancouver with the huge meetings of all strikers. All of the forms of struggle have been used before by railworkers faced with state repression (There were mass meetings in B.C. in 1966 to refuse the Govt. injunction) but never have they been used on such a mass and widespread scale. Several of the demonstrations were well over one thousand strong, with some reaching 2000 as in Toronto and Ottawa. Two new forms appeared as well: in Toronto there was an occupation by CPR Tormon agencies workers; and throughout the country, especially later in the strike, groups of workers from one section, officially on strike (the Non-ops) and other groups went from yard to yard pulling the others out too. These roving picket lines appeared in Toronto and Winnipeg and also in many of the smaller centres like Thunder Bay, Capreol.

The dynamic of rank and file autonomous actions grew very strong in the first week of the rotating strikes and almost became a rank and file led national strike. Almost the whole West was out on an unauthorised strike, while Quebec was out officially. If in Toronto we had been able to start a strike a national strike would have begun then. But in Toronto the struggle had not deepened much since the April mass meeting and the work to rule drive, and although our group had increased in influence, many things ran against us. Many militants left for better paying jobs elsewhere - we had been fighting for wage parity with wages in the trucking industry, but many workers found it much easier to go and get a job for some trucking company.

One of the other problems was that we hadn't been able to make thorough contact with other sections of Toronto area workers, not all of whom were as militant as Toronto non-ops, or as militant as Vancouver area skilled workers. And importantly, after the first week of rotating strikes, we lost one third of our members in a massive layoff. Many militants were laid off at this time and effectively were out of the fight for six weeks. We didn't have the strength to strike in response to the layoff. This was a victory for the unions,



as they had been calling for discipline against the Companies' attempt to provoke a national strike; they also swore that those laid off would collect Unemployment insurance (no one got a cent) and were even able to convince many of the militants that it would playing into the companies' hands to strike nationally. The growth of basic solidarity was reversed at this point, and the loss of the young militants sabotaged our final fight with the state. Although solidarity was grievously harmed in big cities like Toronto, in places like Capreol and Thunder Bay, Fort Erie and Windsor, workers from all trades and unions joined together on the picket lines. ( Of the four bargaining groups on the railways only the non-ops were in a legal strike positinn, with the shopcrafts and other groups still in conciliation stages.)

### Content

The struggle of railworkers in '73 has been significantly different from past struggles on the railway and has several features that other working class struggles in CANada (with the exclusion of Quebec) have not had. In fact, railworkers appear as a kind of class vanguard that has taken the class struggle to a higher level. The following, much in need of further analysis, are some of the characteristics of the struggle.

1. An emerging rank and file autonomous control of the struggle, most significantly in B.C., especially after the strike became illegal - the operators, skilled workers, took over at this point - they had been fighting for years. Almost all actions were initiated by rank and filers and almost always controlled by them. One of the first mass demonstrations that our group initiated in Toronto, however, was taken over by the union and effectively killed. But in subsequent demonstrations in Toronto and Ottawa we didn't let this happen.

2. Mass meetings and demonstrations were for all railworkers, and solidarity on the picket lines added up to a direct attack on the division of labour and the careful reproduction of it by the rail unions. Old forms of struggle were refined and the new ones were developed.

3. A nation-wide struggle that other workers supported and couldn't help but notice - something that the bourgeoisie really feared. It became a strong factor in the development of class unity precisely because of its national scope. Yet at the same time regional problems emerged quite sharply as workers in various parts of the country became aware that different levels of militancy were somehow related to the varying level of wages in different regions.



4. Development of a radical political consciousness in a situation of political confrontation with the state - this was best seen in those who invaded parliament. As the state moved to regulate wages etc. more and more workers were becoming aware of political power. This became very sharp in the last week of the strike which saw a mass defiance of the law.

5. An emerging mass critique of trade unionism, that doesn't stop short of new 'good' unions like the Transportation Employees Canadian Union (TECU)\* but that attacks all those hallowed aspects of unionism (permanent high paid officials, compulsory dues check off, formal democracy, the reproduction of the divisions of labour, which TECU would repeat. As most rank and file militants have not yet found a political language this critique is often voiced in union language.

6. The question of nationalism is most problematic in relation to a Canadian union like TECU; but rank and file militants are more interested in pulling together their own fighting organisation than in nationalism. Workers in international unions don't like their dues going to the States, but neither do members of the C.B.R.T. like their dues going to Ottawa. The question is one of control. Do you control your own money, do you control your own organisation, do you control your own fight? However, it is logical at this point that any industrial union that would be acceptable to railworkers would also be Canadian. It is also pretty clear that the problem faced by Canadian railworkers are almost identical to those faced by railworkers in the U.S. and elsewhere. The week we began our work to rule in Toronto, Japanese railworkers began one too, their major demand being the unhindered right to strike. Some of my friends heard news reports about the slowdown in Japan and thought it was about us! Apart from the fact that the demands put forward in Japan and Canada were similar, the situation of state repression and state regulation of wages etc. is also identical. Moreover, a struggle is still going on among U.S. operators which is identical (except in its militancy) to that of B.C. operators.

#### Why the Militancy?

This point needs to be investigated much more than I have done. Our group has been action oriented rather than research oriented, which I certainly don't see as an error, but rather as an insufficiency. We weren't equipped to do the necessary research, which must, however, be done if a more

\* TECU is presently floundering because it looks just like the old unions with a new Canadian paint job. Not a few groups are dissatisfied with the constitution and either won't join or have quit because of it.



than superficial answer to these questions is to be found.

### Wages

In the course of the struggle it became popularly known that railworkers' wages have fallen considerably: from being among the highest of the industrial sector in 1950, today they are among the lowest. e.g. the average non-op wage per week was \$154 while the average wage in B.C. was \$178 and in Ontario was \$166. The rapid increase in the cost of living over the last year served as a detonating factor.

### Jobs

The 1950's marked the beginning of a comprehensive attack on rail employment levels that has run on for twenty three years with a great deal of success for the companies. In 1959 131,000 worked for the CNR; today there are 79,000. A similar process has taken place on the CPR; all levels of skill and all sections have been reduced. Some like the firemen have been wiped out completely except in Newfoundland. Naturally, with all of this has come a huge increase in productivity. One group in Toronto has fought around a number of the company's attempts to speeup truck drivers and warehousemen.

### Company Attacks on the Power of Skilled Workers

A recent paper by a retired railworker Lefty Morgan from Vancouver illustrates and documents the real power and control over the work process that the yard crews have attained. Yard crews are mostly unsupervised and set the real work pace, which is only imaginatively based on the worklist given out by the yardmaster. The crews also have a considerable power over who is hired, as they are responsible for training. As reflected in the struggle of B.C. yard crews, what lies behind the militancy of running trades or operators is the attack of the companies on the power of these groups through the introduction of new technology, like walkie talkies. Central traffic control, retarder yards and the possible use of T.V. spy cameras in the yards also are part of the companies' plan to restrict the power of yard crews and thus make more money.

### For the Future

We have developed good contacts with rank and file groups in other parts of the country. We are in touch with a group in Vancouver that formed a large part of the leadership of the strike and the wider struggle there. We are also in touch with groups in Montreal, including the one that led the invasion of parliament. Presently the project of a rank and



file, industry-wide newsletter is being discussed by all groups, and its probably more a question of when than if. It was a pity we were not in touch with these other groups during the strike; it took the strike for us to discover one another.

In my opinion we are in need of all the help we can get from outside militants, although this aid must be guided by certain principles, for example a desire to help build the struggle rather than to recruit members or to wave the flag of some particular political line.

Other questions that must be considered are:

- how to develop further the fight against classifications and also against the division of labour in general - when the fight exists very unevenly at this point, and when within significant skill groups, like engineers and tractor drivers the demand is more for the skill.

- how to make the struggle of railworkers more social. Two obvious lines of development are firstly, around the use of the Pension Trust Funds (\$1.50 in the case of CN) for worker's housing etc instead of huge commercial developments; secondly the fight of railworkers is part of the general community fight for better, less polluting transportation. Both rail companies are phasing out passenger transport while leaping with both feet into the pipeline business. The Toronto CBRT held a badly organized meeting around these issues, to which a number of community oriented groups came.

the question of Quebec and the autonomy of the workers' struggle there; there is a need for links with groups in Quebec that can help railworkers develop the struggle there.



# A MARXIST DEFINITION OF PRODUCTIVE LABOUR

## Introduction

This paper is written in response to the many discussions arising from both Selma James' article and the material coming out of the Toronto New Tendency. This paper is an attempt to deal in depth with the question of defining productive labour, since the way the subject is dealt with by these various writers seems to differ from the way Marx dealt with the problem. In doing so, I have tried to restrict myself to the material relating directly to the 'productive labourer' and 'productive labour'.

## The Definition Investigated

In the labour process, man through the active manipulation of the instruments of labour effects an alteration upon the subject of his labour in such a way as to create a use-value. Marx writes: *If we examine the whole process from the point of view of the results, the product, it is plain that both the instruments of labour and the subject of labour are means of production and the labour is productive labour.*

*This method of determining from the standpoint of the labour process itself, is not directly applicable to the capitalist process of production.*

*Capital Vol. I P. 176*

Thus we see that the labourer can labour productively only by acting upon the constituent elements of the product in such a way as to create a new use value. The labourer transfers the value of the elements of production not by labour in the abstract, but by virtue of its usefulness, i.e. its productive form. Thus in productive labour the value of the elements is transferred into the newly created product. This ability to transfer the elements of production to the product is in itself no loss to the labourer but is advantageous to the capitalist in that it retains the value of his advanced capital.. That which is produced is a new use value in which the old exchange value of the elements of production reappears.

Marx becomes more explicit in a most interesting if a bit lengthy excerpt: *As the co-operative character of the labour process becomes more and more marked, so, as a necessary consequence, does our notion of productive labour, and of its agent the productive labourer, becomes*



*extended. In order to labour productively it is no longer necessary for you to do manual work yourself, enough if you are an organ of the collective labourer, and perform one of its subordinate functions.*

The first definition given above remains correct for the collective labourer considered as a whole. But it no longer holds good for each member considered individually.

*On the other hand, our notion of the productive labourer becomes narrowed. Capitalist production is not merely the production of commodities, it is essentially the production of surplus-value. The labourer produces, not for himself, but for capital. It no longer suffices, therefore, that he should simply produce. He must produce surplus-value for the capitalist and thus work for the self-expansion of capital. If we take an example from outside the sphere of production of material objects, a school master is a productive labourer, when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his scholars, he works like a horse to enrich the school proprietor. That the latter had laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, does not alter the relation. Hence the notion of a productive labourer implies not merely a relation between work and useful effect, between labourer and product of labour, but a specific, social relation of production, a relation that has sprung up historically and stamps the labourer as the direct means of creating surplus-value.*

P. 247

This is the characteristic that all classical economists have used to define the productive labourer. Thus the productive labourer's day is divided into paid and unpaid labour-time and the creation of value and surplus value. Productive labour is therefore the characteristic mode of capitalist production.

#### Labour in the Process of Circulation

The metamorphoses of commodity capital into money capital and money capital into the elements of production cost both time and labour power. This expenditure is not for the creation of value, but for the transformation of value from one form to another. *If by a division of labour a function, unproductive in itself, although a necessary element of production, is transferred from the incidental occupation of many, into the exclusive occupation of a few, into their special business, the nature of the function is not changed.*

Vol. II P. 134



Thus for the labourer, though performing a necessary function and working as efficiently as the next man, his labour is unproductive since he creates neither value nor surplus-value. His usefulness being, to society that he ties up less of society's labourpower in unproductive labour. In the case of the wage-worker in this sphere he may work ten hours and be payed for eight, but neither the eight he is payed for nor the two he performs gratis produce value. However through the work that he is payed for, a part of society's product is transferred to him. And through the surplus labour he performs no extra value is created but the costs of circulation are reduced.

Take book-keeping for example; its function is necessary to the efficient regulation and recording of the capitalist's expansion, however the expenditure on the instruments of labour and the book-keeper's wages create neither value nor surplus value. However these costs increase with the expanding social social of the capitalist process and the costs decrease with the concentration of production and as book-keeping becomes socialized.

Costs of circulation, originating in a change of form of value, do not enter into the value of commodities but are deducted from the productively expended capital.

This, however, leaves a few loose ends which Marx ties up in this way: *On the other hand, they may be from the standpoint of society expenditures of living and materialised labour, but for that reason may be productive for the individual capitalist, may constitute an addition to the selling price of his commodities. This already follows the fact that these costs are different in different spheres of production, and here and there even for different capitals in the same sphere of production. By being added to the price of the commodities they are distributed in proportion to the amount borne by each individual capitalist. But all labour that adds value can also add surplus value and always will add surplus value under capitalist production, as the value created by labour depends upon the extent to which the capitalist pays for it. Consequently costs which enhance the price of a commodity without adding to its use value, which are therefore to be classed as unproductive as far as society is concerned, may be a source of enrichment to the individual capitalist. On the other hand, as the addition to the price of the commodity merely*



*distributes the costs of circulation equally they do not thereby cease to be unproductive in character.*

### Political Conclusions

"We choose methods of reasoning which enable us to analyze contradictions, not to hide them. Therefore following Marx, we say that the national income is the objectified labour of productive workers in the realm of material production. Capital investments and services in the broad sense of the word are paid for by the value created in the sector of material production: supplying the investment fund and paying for the police, army, culture, health etc, these are done out of the national income. Aside from those services that the workers pay for out of their own pockets, all the others are paid for by the unpaid labour of the workers and peasants - the surplus-product. We must therefore examine the distribution of this surplus product to determine in whose interest it is used."

- Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski

These writers would have us believe this is a Marxist position. However, another group whom I had thought were Marxist and will continue to do so unless they disclaim such vices, put forth in the "Elements for a Political Perspective" a different position. They maintain that capital "is extending its domination beyond the factory into society, via the state. Capitalist production has become increasingly socialized," further maintaining a "shift towards productivity at the social level."

These positions appear to be in opposition to one another, the root of the difference appearing to lie in what the two pairs of thinkers conceive of as production. One pair conceives it as "the objectified labour of productive workers in the sphere of material production"; the other pair describes the productive labourer as someone who labours "productively - that is in function with the overall goals of social capital." From this statement arises the social factory concept. But what are the overall goals of social capital?

### Social Capital: The Subject Investigated

*The direct process of the production of capital is its labour and self-expansion process, the process whose result is the commodity-product and whose compelling motive is the production of surplus-value.*

*The process of the reproduction of capital comprises this direct process of production as well as the two phases of the circulation process pro-*



*per, i.e. the entire circuit which, as a periodic process - a process which constantly repeats itself in definite periods - constitutes the turnover of capital.*

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At this point, I shall do a short analysis of the process of the reproduction of capital.

The circuit of the reproduction of capital can be divided into three recurring phases, with M representing money-capital P representing productive capital and C being commodity-capital. The circuit of simple reproduction can be described thus:

$$M \text{----} C_{MP}^L \dots P \dots C' \text{-----} M' \text{----} M \text{----} C_{MP}^L \dots P \dots C' \text{----} M'$$

The capitalist takes his capital in the form of money and transforms it into commodity-capital in the form of labour and means of production (L,MP). The labourer and the means of production are then brought together and the process of production takes place. At this stage the labourer through the manipulation of the instruments of labour effects an alteration on the subject of labour creating a new commodity-product which is of greater value than that expended previously on labour-power and means of production. It is to be noted that only in this phase does the creation of value take place. However for the process to continue as we assume it must the commodity product must be transformed into money-capital, the product must be sold. Since the money capital returned is of greater value than previously, we assume in simple reproduction that the capitalist expends this surplus on his own necessities or generally does with as he will, this new capital in the form of money can thus be used to purchase labour-power and the means of production and the process repeated.

This process leads of course to numerous problems of a secondary nature e.g. turnover, reserve funds etc, which however, have little relevance to this discussion and should be taken up by groups and individuals at another time.

*Every individual capital forms, whoever, an individualised fraction, a fraction endowed with individual life, as it were, of the aggregate social capital, just as every capitalist is but an element of the capitalist class. The movement of the social capital consists of the totality of the movement of its individualised fractional parts, the turnovers of the individual capitals. Just as*



the metamorphosis of the individual commodity is a link in the series of the metamorphoses of the commodity-world - the circulation of commodities - so the metamorphosis of the individual capital is a link in the circuit described by social capital.

This total process comprises both the productive consumption (the direct process of production) together with the conversion of form (materially considered, exchanges) which bring it about, and by the individual consumption together with conversions of form or exchanges by which it is brought about. It includes on the one hand the conversion of variable capital into labour-power, and therefore the incorporation of labour in the process of capitalist production. Here the labourer acts as the seller of his commodity, labour-power, and the capitalist as its buyer. But on the other hand the sale of the commodities embraces also their purchase by the working-class, hence their individual consumption. Here the working class appears as buyer and the capitalists as sellers of commodities to the labourers.

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Thus the circuit of the aggregate of the capitals as a social capital consists of in its totality the general circulation of commodities, which consists of two components, the circuit of capital proper and the circulation of commodities entering individual consumption i.e. that on which the labourer expends his wages and the capitalist his surplus-value. The expenditure of the surplus-value and the wages not forming a link in the circulation though of course the continuance of the process is dependent upon the expenditure of wages.

This analysis I would take to be the basis for the social factory concept. The basis of my distrust of the theory lies in that it masks the contradiction that one part of the population is engaged in the process of producing value and the rest of society is engaged in the consumption and transformation of capital. These roles are constantly undergoing change due to the continuous changes taking place in the modes of production of capitalist society.

The *raison d'etre* for the article appears to be the justification of the organization of society other than those loosely termed industrial. This is a valid goal as these sectors in the past have certainly been neglected. But this



was not due to the poverty of Marxism. Those aware of the richness of Marxism are also aware of Marx's analysis of the growing tendency of capital, through the division of labour to make labour homogeneous, the ever increasing socialization of the spheres of circulation and the tendency of small masses of capital to subordinate themselves to larger masses with which they inter-relate. One would also be aware that Capital is to date probably the best analysis of these processes. What is not needed is a rejection and distortion of Marxist categories, but their expansion.

*One remark more. Throughout philosophy we do not seek for correct, still less plausible definitions, whose correctness appeals directly to the popular imagination; we seek approved or verified definitions, the content of which is not merely assumed as given, but is seen and known to warrant itself, because warranted by the free self-evolution of thought.*

G.W.Hegel The Logic p. 186

Mike McLister

from *Aufbruch* by Kathe Kollwitz

