

TO NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

This is to announce the dissolution of the New Tendency and the end of The Newsletter.

The New Tendency was composed mostly of people who had been radicalized in the student and women's movements in the late 1960's. We saw ourselves as developing working class politics in the workplace and community, outside the framework of traditional left organizations. The political basis of the New Tendency was laid out and elaborated upon at meetings in Toronto and Windsor in December/72 and August/73.

Since that time, there have been major political changes in the three centres which originally undertook responsibility for The Newsletter. We have all moved beyond the political situation on which the original basis of The Newsletter was constructed.

The Toronto group felt that The Newsletter was becoming increasingly confused politically, and thus decided to send a letter in December/74 to the centres still involved (in Windsor and Winnipeg), proposing that each group write a statement outlining the political developments around The Newsletter and how they saw the further development of political perspective and struggle.

The statements you have before you represent responses to that proposal from one group in Windsor and one group in Toronto. Winnipeg has sent no response. Some of the women who were members of the New Tendency group in Toronto until Spring/74, and who now are part of the Toronto Wages for Housework Collective, plan to write a statement. They have been unable to have it ready at this time due to the mobilization for the Wages for Housework demonstration in Toronto May 2. They agree that the two statements that are ready should be sent out now.

STATEMENT ON THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NEW TENDENCY

Struggle Against Work Collective

By last November, when we decided not to put out The Newsletter #6, it had become clear that the New Tendency was a failed experiment. Not only had the network linking militants in Windsor, Winnipeg and Toronto broken down, but the loss of militants and a hardening of political differences had also severely weakened the local collectives in each centre. Instead of undergoing the anticipated political consolidation and organizational development, the New Tendency had over the preceding year and a half become progressively weaker organizationally and more confused politically. But if certain failures and mistakes are easily described, much more difficult is locating their source within our assumptions regarding the nature of class struggle-- particularly as this necessarily requires an overturning of our original conceptions. At the same time, however, it is only by criticizing our past experiences and assumptions that we learn from our mistakes.

Looking back now, we can see that underlying our political work, we assumed a fundamental division between ourselves and the rest of the working class, i.e. we defined ourselves as "outside" the working class, as "political militants" as opposed to "working class militants". True, we had rejected the traditional Leninist trade union/Leninist Party couplet as a solution to the "mass/conscious revolutionary" dichotomy, but by accepting this separation as basic, we remained tied to the Leninist problematic. Thus at the workplace, we were "the organizers" and the other workers were the "to be organized". Rather than seeing our common interests as basic (our need for more money, less exploitation), we erected a barrier which not only served to divide us from our workmates, but also forced us to see the class struggle as their struggle.

Needless to say, the process of understanding ourselves as working class requires a re-definition of both "working class" and "class struggle" on the one hand; and, on the other, it demands a new understanding of ourselves and our past experiences as militants. While this process is ongoing, yielding increasing clarity as the struggle sharpens, already by seeing our own struggles as part of the working class struggle for more money and less work-- for more power against capital-- our own experiences have become much more coherent.

In particular, by being forced by the struggles of women to see that the working class, far from being homogenous, is divided by capital into sectors with different levels of social power, whose struggles come into contradiction with each other, we can now see our own struggle as part of one of those sectors-- the male waged sector. Thus the class struggle has ceased to be abstract and episodic (i.e. as occurring only in strikes, occupations, insurrections), and becomes instead the daily actions of millions of workers, both waged and unwaged, who, by struggling against work in the workplace, home and school, are struggling to overthrow this system of capitalist social relationships.

I

THE BASIC ERROR:
SEEING OURSELVES "OUTSIDE" THE WORKING CLASS

As militants who had been radicalized in the students' and women's movements of the late 1960's, we emerged from those struggles thinking of ourselves as "outside" the working class, i.e., those in factories and offices. In part, of course, this simply came from the predominant interpretation of the movements in the 60's, which defined the struggles of women, students, etc. as "middle class", "lumpen", or "marginal"-- but definitely not working class. And in part this attitude came from our disorientation which followed the collapse of the New Left.

A section of the New Left (i.e. those in Party and pre-Party formations) had seized on this "separation" and were using it as a basis for adopting the Leninist theory of the Vanguard Party. They were the "conscious revolutionaries" who injected "consciousness into the working class from the outside". The working class revolution was, according to this school, going to continue the Leninist tradition of working class struggle, whether in its Maoist, Trotskyist or "revisionist" version. Thus political work consisted in updating one of these versions and then convincing a "backward proletariat". At this point their "theory" becomes self-justifying: the masses are "backward" precisely because they refuse to conform to this model of class struggle and organization, which was developed most coherently by the Bolsheviks in Russia.

But whereas the Leninists had seen their "separation" from the working class as something to be institutionalized, another section of the New Left, the independent left, defined itself by its rejection of the Leninist Vanguard Party although it has continued to operate on Leninist assumptions about its "external" relationship to the working class. Within the independent left, the New Tendency went one step further, and held that "consciousness, leadership and organization developed within the working class." But since we did not see our own past struggles as part of working class struggle, we attempted to overcome our "separation" by shedding our "middle class" backgrounds and "joining" the working class.

At the same time, we affirmed that a theory adequate for revolution in advanced capitalism would be a theory of working class struggle today. Since our past experiences were not working class, and assuming that working class struggle occurred first and foremost in the workplace, top priority was given to "implantation"-- getting a blue collar job. As a result, our own particular workplace experiences were then elevated to the source of all understanding.

This conception of ourselves as "external" to the working class directly resulted in our other problems. In the first part of this statement, we will outline how this conception created difficulties in our understanding and practice concerning: (1) the relation between theory and practice; (2) the relation between the content and form of working class struggle; and (3) the problem of organization and leadership. The method of presentation of our analysis will be to examine certain key events.. Thus the

August 1973 New Tendency conference in Windsor will serve as an example of (1); our work at Ford Oakville as an example of (2); and our own self-organization and the Newsletter experiment as an example of (3).

Finally, as we develop our own analysis of the New Tendency experience, we will concisely indicate our criticism of the other political perspective which consolidated itself within the New Tendency, and which is outlined in the pamphlet Out of the Driver's Seat.

1. Misunderstanding the Relation of Theory to Practice

The agenda for the Windsor conference showed clearly our conception of the relation of theory to practice. Workshops, divided according to "areas of practice" (plant, community, education, men, women) were held first. After these practical experiences had been analyzed, they would be used to further develop our "theory" in the plenary sessions. And, while some of the discussions were certainly helpful, the hoped-for development of "theory" never materialized. Rejecting the hegemony of traditional left theory, and yet unable, in part due to our distrust of our student experiences, to directly address the problem of theory, we structured a mechanical relationship whereby "theory grew out of practice". Rather than seeing them as two sides of the same coin (every struggle necessarily contains an understanding of that struggle), and thus understanding theoretical development as part of the class struggle, we adopted an empiricism which put the shopfloor first, and acted as if theory would emerge "spontaneously", with little effort on anyone's part.

At the same time, our difficulty in addressing the needed theoretical development also lay in our assumption that the working class was homogenous. True, we saw, unlike the left, that the struggles of different sectors of the working class, in order to struggle against the specific mechanisms of their exploitation, had developed autonomously of other sectors. But, because we defined ourselves "outside" the working class, we retained the leftist category, the "working class in general", i.e. we still saw the working class as politically homogenous. These assumptions led us to see the struggles of different sectors of the class as complementary. Thus rather than understanding that the struggle of the less powerful sectors is, in part, directed against the more powerful sectors, we assumed that these "differences" could be submerged within a "general theory". This meant, of course, that during the plenary sessions, where this "theory" was to be developed, the discussion quickly centred on the problems faced by men "organizing" in the blue collar workplace.

Regarding our personal organizing experiences as the source of the development of our "theory", and hence as the framework for political discussion, resulted in another problem which first surfaced around the Windsor conference. When a significant number of people who were interested in our political ideas showed interest in participating in their development, our assumptions led us to insist that their participation had to be on the basis of their personal involvement in "organizing practice", whether in the workplace, community or schools. These assumptions

prevented us from seeing the need for leadership to set up the political discussions these people were seeking, and instead resulted by the Fall of 1973 in their exclusion from the New Tendency.

Finally, our assumptions that our own personal organizing practice was the source of political development led to a denial of the importance of leadership in the development of political perspective. Thus the first aim of the Windsor conference was "to learn from one another". In turn, the resulting "democratism" severely hindered the development of a political perspective by forcing us to adopt a consensus form of political discussion which required common agreement based on our personal organizing experiences.

In some ways, of course, Windsor did mark a step forward. Not only was contact between militants in three cities established, but our rejection of the traditional Leninist model was consolidated-- the road forward would lie outside traditional Marxism. At the same time, however, by continuing to see ourselves "outside" the working class, we were unable to grasp the content of working class struggle, and hence we reduced the problem of organization to one of form. We counterposed "leadership" to "collective development", "organization" to "spontaneity". Presented with the "alternatives" of Leninism or libertarianism, we fell back, despite our professed intentions, into the latter. We can now see that this was a false debate, because by focussing on forms of organization, it failed to situate the problem of organization in the context of our own location within the working class and the content of working class struggle-- the struggle against work. Our preoccupation with form prevented us from seeing our mistakes, from criticizing and overturning basic misconceptions.

2. Misunderstanding the Relation of Content and Form of Class Struggle

For the Toronto collective, the agenda for Fall/73 was full. Reacting to the weaknesses of the Windsor conferences, but unable to see them clearly, we saw the path forward lying through developing a "mass practice". Consequently, when comrades in Windsor passed out leaflets giving union-withheld information about the 1973 auto contract, we seized the opportunity and distributed this information to workers at auto plants around Toronto. The response at Ford Oakville was positive. Half a dozen workers contacted us, and over the next several months meetings with these workers were held. Coming out of these discussions two more leaflets were issued. Again the response was positive. For example, on the Saturday following our distribution of a leaflet describing the struggle workers at another Ford plant had made against compulsory Saturday overtime, too few workers showed up, forcing the Oakville plant to shut down for the day. But even as our activity appeared to be advancing, political problems which had confronted us in Windsor began to re-appear. The first was our fixation on the form of workers' struggles.

Recognizing that the union institution is structurally part of the State apparatus for containing and regulating workers' struggles (i.e. making these struggles functional for capital), the alternative for us was the rank and file committee. Having seen that under advanced capitalism workers' struggles develop autonomously, we understood this to mean simply, formally independent of the unions. The fact that the content of workers' struggles (i.e. their daily actions) opposed the actions demanded by the unions was for us an abstraction. At Oakville, our goal was to help construct a formal rank and file organization. The purpose of such an organization was certainly to "develop the struggle", but not seeing the workers' daily actions as a struggle against work which was already utilizing a certain informal organization, we left the concept "struggle" undefined. Thus we attempted to build a rank and file organization which could "initiate" struggle. As it became clearer that this was not how the struggle develops, our activity at Ford Oakville came to a halt.

The second problem which the activity at Oakville illuminated was our misunderstanding of the nature of the relationships between men and women. While it is true we saw the need for different sectors of the working class to develop "autonomously" of each other, because we saw these struggles as complementary, and because we placed ourselves "outside" the working class, we assumed that our organization could transcend divisions within the working class and adequately serve the needs of both men and women. At the Windsor conference, we had simply divided the workshops according to various sectors, and then met together in the plenaries. But this "solution", which was feasible for a conference, proved inadequate for our intervention at Ford. The women therefore quickly found themselves supporting a male initiative, which was not only politically unclear, but which also prevented them from establishing their own basis for working together. And, as the political basis for our work became more confused, as it became clearer that their needs were not being addressed directly, they decided not to continue.

Our activity at Ford also demonstrated another problem. In response to our second and third leaflets, we received criticism from a comrade in the "Driver's Seat" tendency in Windsor. Accepting the assumption that we were "outside" the working class, he described all initiatives we had taken by suggesting certain forms of struggle (e.g. the mass absenteeism used successfully at the other Ford plant) as "vanguardist". A difference in political line, which had been obscured at the Windsor conference because it was "theoretical", now came fully to the fore. At stake was our understanding of the relationship between the New Tendency and the working class, and therefore, our understanding of organization and leadership. Since then, this difference has hardened into an openly antagonistic debate over the nature of working class struggle and organization. And this development was facilitated precisely by our contradictory approach to the problem of organization and leadership.

3. Misunderstanding Organization and Leadership

In Toronto, we were all firmly convinced of the need for working class organization. No one ever argued against the fact that the revolution is the conscious, organized activity of the working class. Our "theory" placed a high priority on this and, in fact, the stated aim of the New Tendency was to assist in the formation of this organization.

At the same time, however, we saw no way to structure our activity organizationally so as to accomplish these tasks. Precisely because we assumed we were "outside" the working class, because we accepted the Leninist definition of organization and leadership as external, we saw our own organization as external to the working class, as an imposition on the working class. Rejecting Leninist organization, but seeing any initiative we would take as Leninist, we were unable to develop any organizational structures. In fact, of course, our activities did require organization and leadership, but because we didn't want to acknowledge these formally, we forced ourselves to informally adopt a set of ad-hoc arrangements.

This in turn had two detrimental effects. First, we effectively prevented a systematic and coherent political consolidation. For example, the criticism from the Windsor comrade charging us with being "vanguardist" was never formally answered by the Toronto collective. By not structuring the relationships between cities, it became all the more likely that the New Tendency network would come undone.

This refusal to structure our activities also affected The Newsletter. Originally intended to provide a forum in which militants could exchange their experiences and analysis of struggles, there was no provision for editorial control. Even though it was soon clear that political decisions (e.g. choices of articles, etc.) were being made, because we saw all formal leadership as external, as over and against the collective, we failed to make an editorial board responsible for these decisions. As a result, not only were publication dates infrequent and often-delayed, but we continued to print contradictory articles which usually went unanswered. Thus even as political differences between ourselves and the "Driver's Seat" group were hardening, The Newsletter became less rigorous and coherent.

The second consequence of our ad-hoc organizational arrangements was the illusion that we were all equal. Rooted in part in our belief that every workplace experience was a source of political understanding, our "democratism" was re-inforced by our refusal to acknowledge leadership as other than Leninist. Within the Toronto collective, by refusing to acknowledge that some individuals were clearer politically, we prevented ourselves from having ongoing political discussion. After all, if we were all equal, then none of us could learn from each other. This democratism is most clearly seen through the fact that political educationals were not held until May 1974.

But more than just preventing political discussions, by maintaining the illusion about equality, some of us were forced to repress our clarity. Not only were we prevented from shedding light on some of the problems we faced, more significantly we were forced to deny our perceptions precisely because these were not shared by all members of the group. As a result, political development was forced to take place outside the group among a few individuals. By the winter of 1974, the activity of the Toronto collective had effectively come to a halt. True, we were still meeting; but by continuing to see ourselves "outside" the working class, we had been unable to locate the content of workers' struggles at Ford Oakville. And for the same reason, we had been unable to set up structures which would facilitate the necessary political clarification.

II

LEARNING FROM THE CLASS STRUGGLE

1. Discovering the Struggle Against Work

In the early spring of 1974, we made a major step ahead. Postal workers across the country had just staged a union-led wildcat strike. For the Toronto collective, because three of us worked at the main postal terminal, this strike provided an opportunity for an important round of political discussions. During the strike itself, those of us who worked there had been very active during the sit-in and then on the picket lines, trying to "build the strike". But instead of mobilizing the rank and file, we, along with the rest of the left, had found ourselves used by the union first to solidify the sit-in and picket line, and then as scapegoats for the partially unpopular strike. The question we faced afterwards was: "How had we isolated ourselves from the workers during the strike?"

In the ensuing discussions, it became clearer that most of the workers, acknowledging the union domination of the strike, had simply used it as an unpaid holiday. And by expressing their interest in the strike as time off work/loss of pay, they were continuing their daily struggle against work. Previously we had seen the concept of struggle against work used as a tool for analyzing workers' struggles in a general way, but now we saw clearly that it was also a necessary basis for analyzing specific struggles. The struggle against work is the content of workers' struggles against capital.

With this in mind, it became easier to see why we had isolated ourselves from the mass of workers. Rather than operating within the workers' definition of the strike, we had, in fact, simply adopted the union's definition. First, we accepted the strike as completely positive by down-playing the very real loss of pay. Second, we felt the strike could be built by using the tactics of sitting-in and picketing, both advocated by the union, despite the fact that most workers were using

the time off as a holiday. Third, we simply accepted the union's definition of the issues around the adjustment of wages of the "coder" on the new machines and the rehiring of the fired militants in Montreal; by so doing, we ignored that the largest grievance in Toronto was the lack of strike pay.

True, we had hoped that increased rank and file participation would lead to greater control by the workers over the strike. But by failing to see the struggle from the working class point of view, by not seeing the strike as an important moment in the struggle against work, we had simply attempted to change the form of the strike from being union-controlled to being worker-controlled. (For a fuller analysis of the April strike and our self-criticism, see "The April Postal Strike: Workers, Union and the State", in Newsletter #5; separate copies available on request).

Being forced by the postal workers' refusal of the union and the left to see the struggle against work as the content of working class struggle against capital enabled us to begin to develop our understanding of the fundamental mechanisms of capitalist production which the struggles of the working class have thrown into crisis.

Waged work is the fundamental activity through which capital organizes the entire activity of the working class. And this organization of society is directed towards capital's need to accumulate. But this accumulation of capital is not merely the increasing figures in a Swiss bank account. Capital is a social relation whose fundamental characteristic is "essentially the command over unpaid labour... the secret of the self-expansion of capital resolves itself into having the disposal of a definite quantity of other people's unpaid labour". (Capital, v.I, ch. 18)

This unpaid labour, this free expenditure of living labour power, is stolen not only within the "factory". Outside the factory as well, when we're forced onto the subway to get to work, or when we're forced into schools to work at being trained for work, or when women are forced to work at home in order to repair us for work, in return for the "necessaries of life"-- on all these occasions and many more, capital exerts its control over our unpaid labour. For the working class, each of these "points of production and re-production" becomes the occasion to refuse capital's command of our unpaid labour and to re-appropriate the social wealth produced by our unpaid labour and stolen from us by capital: wage demands without regard for productivity; single mothers' struggles for money; sabotage; absenteeism; shoplifting; squatting; free public transit. Through these struggles, the working class internationally is challenging capital's control over their unpaid labour, and has thereby thrown the system into crisis. And as the crisis deepens, it's clear that increased productivity, more work for less money, increased social control, is capital's only solution.

In this framework, our critique of the left goes far beyond a critique of the forms of organization (unions, the Leninist Party, "workers' councils) through which they see the struggle against capital developing.

With their demands for "nationalization", "workers' control", and women's "right to work", it is clear they accept capital's definition of work (i.e. waged work), and are simply concerned with changing the form of that work -- i.e. with improving the institutional arrangements by which the working class is forced to perpetuate themselves as sellers of labour power. As such, the left's activity re-inforces capital's plan to use the institutions of the "official" workers' movement (the unions and left parties) as increasingly active "co-managers" of the working class (e.g. the British Labour government's "social contract"; "job enrichment"; "equal pay for equal work").

This criticism applies just as completely to the Out of the Driver's Seat perspective, which, by believing that the revolution will consist of workers "assuming control of their factories" while eliminating the "economics of capitalism" (p. 49), fail to see that the existing factories themselves, as well as the home and the school, are the material embodiments of capitalist social relations of production.

2. Discovering Ourselves as Working Class

In terms of our activity as a collective, the clear identification of the struggle against work as the content of working class struggle, forced on us by the struggle of postal workers, enabled us to go back over our experiences at Ford Oakville and see how we had focussed on forms of organization in abstraction from the actual daily struggle of the workers. At the same time however, we still saw the struggle against work as their struggle. Due in part to the importance for political development that we placed on our personal presence at the workplace, and in part to our acceptance of the "working class in general" (i.e. the acceptance of the working class as politically homogeneous), we still placed ourselves "outside" the working class. Then in the early summer the women left the collective.

For the men who were left behind, this was a severe blow. First, the collective lost about half its members, including some of the leaders. Second, precisely because we hadn't been aware of the support we had been getting from the women in the collective, we became even more disoriented. This was seen most clearly by how we rationalized their departure: Even though the political confusion and our resulting inactivity which had set in following our work at Ford Oakville was continuing, rather than seeing the women's decision to leave as a political criticism of ourselves, we attributed it to a "theoretical" notion of autonomy. Caught up with our belief that the struggles of different sectors of the working class were complementary, we failed to see their decision as part of the struggle that they, as members of the female, unwaged sector of the class, were making against us as male waged workers.

Over the summer, our confusion continued. In fact, it was several months after the women left before we were able to discuss some of the implications for ourselves. At the same time, the women, who had been meeting regularly, were beginning to sharpen their own perspective.

As this increasing clarity began to express itself to us, through informal discussions and through public statements, it was apparent that they, and not ourselves, had a more coherent understanding of their decision to leave the New Tendency.

Central to their understanding is seeing themselves as working class, as members of a specific sector of the working class. Taking as their reference point the struggles of women over the past decade, it is clear that as women, their common situation is as housewives (i.e. as [re-]producers of labour power), and their common struggle is against capital's attempt to enforce this unpaid work. And, because their struggle involves the whole of their life, both inside the home and outside, and because their struggle brings them into continuous conflict with men, the immediate beneficiaries of their unpaid work, it was much clearer to them that their leaving the New Tendency was simply part of the struggle that they, as members of the least powerful sector of the working class, are making. At the same time, because their dependence on men is rooted in the fact that housework is unwaged, they have seen most clearly that the struggle for money is a struggle for power, and that within the working class there exists a hierarchy of wages, a hierarchy of power relations which form the basis for the power struggles between sectors of the working class.

For us, these advances by the women have forced a fundamental reassessment of ourselves. First, by seeing their leaving the New Tendency as part of the class struggle, we can see that class struggle occurs not simply in the workplace, but throughout our lives, our collective included.

Second, we can now see ourselves as protagonists in the class struggle. In order to understand our interests and our exploitation by capital, it is necessary to see the ways that we as men have been subject from birth to a set of social relationships (family, school) which have moulded our creative powers, our sexuality, our "masculine personality", our identity as breadwinners-- and clearly stamped us male wage labourers. In the most personal way, our needs for more money and less work-- for more power to refuse capital's command of our unpaid labour-- constitute our own interests in the struggle against capital. We can now see more clearly the power our refusal has already developed-- not only in the workplace, but also in the whole culture of refusal of work among youth, in the gay movement's refusal of the "masculine personality" and sexuality, in prisoners' and mental patients' refusal to be "rehabilitated" as male wage labourers, in the refusal of native people to be integrated into waged work.

Third, we have been forced to dispense with our view that the struggles of men and women, of different sectors of the working class, are complementary. By seeing that women's struggles are directed, in part, against us, we can now understand that their struggles come into contradiction with ours, and that between us there exists a social division of power. At the same time, we have discarded the notion of the "working class in general", seeing now that the working class struggle against capital is precisely the power struggle within the working class-- a struggle against allowing ourselves to function as labour power for capital.

Fourthly, and most importantly, by seeing women as the least powerful sector of the working class, precisely because their basic situation is unwaged housework, we can see that their weakness is also the weakness of the entire working class. Not only is capital using this weakness to re-compose the labour force by introducing women and then reducing wages, thus undermining the strength of male waged workers. But also, because we as male waged workers are charged by capital with the responsibility for "our dependents"-- i.e. "our" unwaged women and children--our power to wage our own struggle is severely diminished. On the one hand, it is true that this responsibility gives us the power to command labour power of women as housewives for our immediate benefit. This is best summed up by the classic phrase: "At least at home, I'm the boss". But at the same time, this "advantage" is purchased only by submitting ourselves more completely to the discipline of capitalist work. Now, by challenging our power over them, by refusing to submit to capital's command of their unpaid labour, women are making a struggle which is advancing their interests, and what is the same thing, is developing the power of the entire working class to refuse capital's system of social relationships.

3. Leninism and Libertarianism: Two Sides of the Same Coin

In this framework, our differences with Out of the Driver's Seat on the question of organization and leadership appear as quite fundamental. They continue to posit the two basic assumptions of the Leninist left, including the independent left and the New Tendency: (1) There is a fundamental division between a Marxist organization and the working class; (2) Since any Marxist organization is "outside" the working class, it is also "outside" the contradictory relations of power within the working class; therefore it can develop a Marxist "theory" of the "working class in general" and "apply [its] findings in [its] practical work", "in the struggle along with their fellow workers (gays, women, students, blacks, etc.) fighting for socialism". (See pp. 62-63 of the pamphlet) Within the framework of these Leninist assumptions, they not only reject the Leninist Vanguard Party, but also draw the libertarian conclusion that any form of organization and leadership beyond the "spontaneous" self-activity of the working class is imposed from outside the struggles of the class, and ultimately leads to the development of a Leninist Party.

With those assumptions, we agree they can reach no other conclusion. But as we have learned in the past year and a half, the simple rejection of the Leninist Party does not rid us of Leninist assumptions about our relationship to the working class which, unless thoroughly rejected as well, leave us with the false alternatives of an external vanguard party or the rejection of all organization and leadership. By locating ourselves within the working class, and more precisely as part of the male waged sector, our own activity in developing and spreading a political perspective and the organizational forms it requires can be correctly understood to be part of the self-activity and self-organization of the working class as it struggles for the power to destroy capital.

A far more serious consequence of seeing themselves "outside" the working class is Driver Seat's failure to come to terms with the fact that the working class is divided through the wage into a hierarchy of power relations, and that the weakness of the less powerful sectors (particularly the unwaged) is the fundamental source of capital's power over the whole working class.

This failure is most clearly expressed precisely at the heart of Driver Seat's theory of the nature of the class struggle: Where they see that the "invading socialist society is generated at the point of production (i.e. the factory) through the co-operation inherent in work, (and) it generates and challenges all social relations"(p. 48), we see, on the contrary, that capital, by planning the hierarchy of power relations within the working class, running from the male waged worker in the factory to the unwaged woman in the home, divides the working class and thereby rules the whole working class. And capital's rule over the whole working class is fundamentally challenged as the less powerful sectors refuse capital's power over them, because this involves refusing the power of the more powerful sectors over them as well.

Thus the original position of Out of the Driver's Seat turns into its opposite. The failure to locate their own struggles as men and women within the working class becomes the rejection of all organization and leadership as external to the working class and therefore "vanguardist"; at the same time, this rejection of the need for organization becomes the acceptance of capital's organization of the working class, including principally capital's planning of power relations within the class; finally, the acceptance of capital's organization of power relations within the class becomes the rejection of working class power, for as long as the question of power relations remains unposed, the question of working class power likewise remains unposed. Thus starting from a rejection of Leninism, Driver's Seat ends up embracing fundamental Leninist assumptions about the class struggle, assumptions which rather than challenging capitalist social relations, instead perpetuate capital's rule over the working class.

III

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Where does all this leave us as a collective of militants? What are the tasks we see ourselves engaging in at the present time as well as in the future?

We feel that the production of this statement has been for us an essential process in order to confront the above questions. The fact that the statement originated with our need to deal politically (and not technically) with the problem of the Newsletter must not be taken as a matter of detail. Having been forced to acknowledge that the political basis for the Newsletter no longer existed, we were still unable to clearly locate all the contradictory elements in our political experience which prevented us from moving forward. The production of this

statement, while it has not allowed us to rid ourselves of contradictions we embody as members of one sector of the working class, has nonetheless forced us to confront them squarely, thus enabling us to sharpen our perspective on the class struggle. We take it seriously because it is not based on a series of "theoretical somersaults", but rather on our need to come to terms with our political experience and with the struggles in which we-- individually and collectively-- have been involved.

The most important rupture with our past assumptions we have been led to make has been to thoroughly reject the Leninist conception of our relationship to the working class. By locating ourselves within the working class and within the struggle against work, we have been able to reject our conceptions of the relation of theory/practice and organization/leadership, and are now able to pose these questions in a new light:

1. Development of a Political Perspective

The development and spreading of a political perspective is not seen as developing "theory" outside the class and then bringing it "to" the class. Nor is it the generalization of our personal organizing practice within the working class, a conception which implies that being "outside" the class, we must attach ourselves to the class, either through implantation or intervention, in order to "guarantee" the working class basis of the perspective. The struggle against work is the self-activity of the working class as it struggles to refuse its unpaid labour to capital, and our activity in developing and spreading the struggle against work perspective is part of the working class's self-activity and organization.

The development of this political perspective means more than to unravel "theoretical" problems and to interpret empirical data; it also means to uncover all the ways capital shapes our lives as men in order to perpetuate its control over our unpaid labour. And most importantly, since this political perspective is not for our personal enlightenment, but is a means to increase the power of the working class to refuse capital's power, therefore the spreading of this perspective, through collectivizing experiences of struggle and generalizing their content and direction, is an indispensable part of our activity as a collective.

In this context, the preparation and distribution of materials (e.g. pamphlets; a regular bulletin) is a very important priority. While we are not yet sure what the organizational implications of this activity will be, we know that it will require that we take our own self-organization seriously-- it cannot be left to be an ad hoc after-thought of our political activity as it has in the past. We definitely do not want to repeat the mistakes of the Newsletter in this respect.

2. Organization and Leadership

Within our collective, by clearly establishing the development and spreading of the struggle against work perspective as our political basis, we provide the context in which leadership and collective development can be correctly viewed: leadership is not a power outside

or over against collective development, but a necessary part of the collective in its process of development.

In addition, by seeing ourselves as members of the male waged sector of the working class, we can see that whatever "externality" we have is merely a physical one, in relation to specific units of capitalist production (workplace, school, prison, etc.). As a result, the question we face in our activity is not whether we are an organization within the working class, but rather whether we are an organized expression of the class's needs and of the class struggling to gain more power. It is the ongoing confrontation with the struggle which will test the perspective we are working on and determine the course of our collective. It will also clarify the areas where we can take leadership-- a leadership determined not by pre-arranged organizational models, but by our collective capabilities, clarity, experience, and their function to serve the needs of the struggle. We have no illusions that this process will be anything other than complex and exacting.

3. Our Relation to Struggles of Other Sectors of the Working Class

If our perspective on autonomy and power relations within the class has allowed us to dispose of false problematics, it also raises important new problems. One of these, for instance, stems from our support of wages for housework struggles. On the one hand, we acknowledge the fundamental importance of these struggles for the revolutionary process, but we also are aware that these struggles come into contradiction with the struggles we make as the male sector of the class which capital utilizes to perpetuate the weakness of women and therefore the working class as a whole. How will our support become more than a mere show of solidarity, and how will it find concrete organizational expressions? Furthermore, how and when will these struggles combine to overthrow the rule of capital over us all? We do not know. The fact that we do not have the answer does not mean there is no answer, but rather that the answer will emerge only through the process of struggle.

In conclusion, because we take this statement very seriously, and because for us it has involved an important process of political clarification based on experiences and needs which are by no means our "exclusive property", we are interested in responses from readers. We are not interested in polemical wrangles and debates-for-the-sake-of-debates, primarily because we feel nobody would benefit from them, least of all the development of the struggle. Political interaction which will force the verification of each other's experiences and political choices is, on the other hand, an important part of the class struggle, and we welcome such a process.

March, 1975.

John Ford	David Kidd
Tim Grant	Bruno Ramirez
John Huot	Peter Taylor

Struggle Against Work Collective
P.O. Box 38, Station E,
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Tel. 537-5148

January, 1975
Windsor, Ontario

Dear Comrades:

I am enclosing our collective response to your proposal for Newsletter #6. However, I personally wish to emphasize two points not stressed in our response and am using the form of this open letter to do so.

First, I would like to state my opposition to Point 5 of your proposal which states you are prepared to distribute the final issue of the Newsletter only to those who respond to the readership survey. Besides the fact that I have serious questions about any such survey, I believe it to be extremely important to distribute this Newsletter in the same manner as all the other issues. We have a responsibility to those who have followed our development through the past two years. If nothing else, this final Newsletter serves as an historical record and represents a completion of this phase of the independent left's development. Our accomplishments over the past 18 months have been significant, and in view of this, we should choose not to fade quietly away without explanation, but rather to conclude in a definite manner.

The second point that needs to be made is my extreme dismay at the decision not to print the three articles perviously written for the Newsletter. Point 3 of your proposal describes your reasons for not wanting to print the "workers' autonomy as a political perspective" article and consequently not printing our "response". This means that the workers' autonomy position continues to be known only to a few. Even if you believe it to be dated, it is a beginning and it is your responsibility to develop it. I might remind you that articles which were considered out of date by their authors have often been printed in the Newsletter because others felt the material to be valuable. For example, Newsletter 5 carried a 15-month-old article by Bron, printed at the urging of Winnipeg comrades and issue 3 carried an outdated article by the Windsor students' working group, despite reluctance on their part.

Furthermore, I consider Jim Monk's "response" to the workers' autonomy piece to be more a statement of Marxism and a representation of our political tendency than a mere response to your article. (As an aside, the piece took a month, 5 drafts, and three meetings to produce)

However, the most serious exclusion is that of the article by Jim Brophy on the rank and file auto group in Windsor. There is no reason given by you for this exclusion. I understand that the piece traces the historical development of the auto group through the specific writings (actual leaflets, etc.) that it produced. This is combined with a brief commentary on how each leaflet was received. Such material is invaluable to leftists doing workplace organizing. The group itself represents an important development in the independent left and is a concrete example of how a working class organization might be built. I feel that it, along with the Workers' Unity experience, best exemplify serious and prolonged attempts at workplace organizing in Windsor. The material is valuable both to those attempting similar organizing and to those developing a critique of this form of political practice. Surely this should be given room for articulation and expression. While it is no secret that I have strong disagreements with the rank and file auto group as envisioned by Jim B and others, the group does exist: its efforts must be respected and deserve to be communicated.

The totality of your proposal made it impossible for us to respond collectively to each of its constituent parts. I have therefore take this opportunity to register my personal protest of these two points.

Looking to the future,

Ron Baxter

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The period which marked the inception, development and ultimate demise of the New Tendency represents to us a decisive period of political development, both for our group and for the independent left in general. The ideas it generated with regard to our analysis of vanguardism and trade unionism and the stress it placed on developing a sociology of the workplace were important as the basis of the development of our position, outlined in Out Of The Driver's Seat.

The Newsletter we saw as a form through which these basic ideas could be articulated and refined. While we felt that emphasis on workplace articles was important, we also saw the necessity of using the newsletter to develop a more precise understanding of Marxist theory and methodology. In fact as the political differences began to emerge, we saw this second function as even more important. It represented a means by which theory could be refined through debate and discussion in an organ which was not devoted to expressing one political perspective nor was used as a tool for 'political organizing.'

That the Newsletter was important to others beyond its immediate contributors, we can only assume on the basis of the fact that requests regarding it are constantly received by Mile One Publications and that those stores with which we have contact report equally enthusiastic response. For us, this means of evaluating the Newsletter is as valid as the attempt to measure its impact through response to a readership survey. For this reason, and also because the issues raised in these final documents are important, we request that they be distributed to the entire readership and not just to those who reply to the survey.

We view the demise of the Newsletter as unfortunate, but we consider it a logical and inevitable outcome of the political differences between our group and the Workers' Autonomy group.

We agree that at this point the two positions are entirely contradictory. The main point of difference is the way in which the two groups use marxist methodology in the development of their analysis. For us, Marx's methodology and analysis provides an adequate basis for understanding the development of capitalism in all its stages: laissez-faire, monopoly, imperialist and state capitalism. Our understanding of that analysis is imperfect, our use of the method, clumsy, and much remains in the task of applying Marxism to the present situation. However, we see no necessity of 'going beyond' Marx to theories of social factory which set marxism on its head by rejecting the law of value and

relegates Marx to the position of another nineteenth century economist whose contribution is no more important to our understanding of modern capitalism than that of Ricardo or Adam Smith. Of late, this position has gained us the label of 'traditional marxists'. If this means 'carrying on in the tradition of Marx', something accomplished by few since his death, we heartily embrace the epithet and are prepared to accept the consequences.

For us the consequences of this position are less unpleasant than those which seem to follow from the Workers' Autonomy perspective. We are concerned with logical conclusions here and we can see no way in which the Workers' Autonomy perspective does not lead eventually to the necessity for a party. To focus the struggle on the demand for 'a living wage, work or no work' and to reject the qualitative differences which exist between struggles in the workplace and struggles in the community appears to us to replace the objective organization of the working class for one imposed from without. While we recognize the power of any struggle undertaken by the working class, we cannot underestimate the decisive factor inherent in the objective organization of capitalism and the invading socialist society: in the struggle to control production and thereby end forever the capitalist relations of production upon which the exploitation of the working class is based. Any concept of organization which ignores this objective fact implies, no matter how unwittingly, that there is a need to exhort the working class to action, and to organize it by means other than its own objective relation to capital. This position carries with it the further implication that the working class is unconscious and therefore backward, since it is incapable of using its own objective organization in the struggle against capital. This position we reject completely.

This being the case, debate by means of a common publication is clearly impossible, if for no other reason than that the differences of position imply marked differences in the use made of any publication.

Our position is outlined in detail in Out of the Driver's Seat. We wish to make clear that that position does not imply, as has been charged, either that we reject the need for marxist organization or that we believe in doing nothing. The original "out of the driver's seat" group has dissolved itself into a wider group of workers, students, women and gays currently considering the eventual publication of a newspaper in Windsor. One hope is that the newspaper will provide one means of articulating and communicating the daily activities through which the working class creates the conditions for socialism.