

Strike up the Gdansk band
Disconnecting the boss: diary of a
telephone takeover

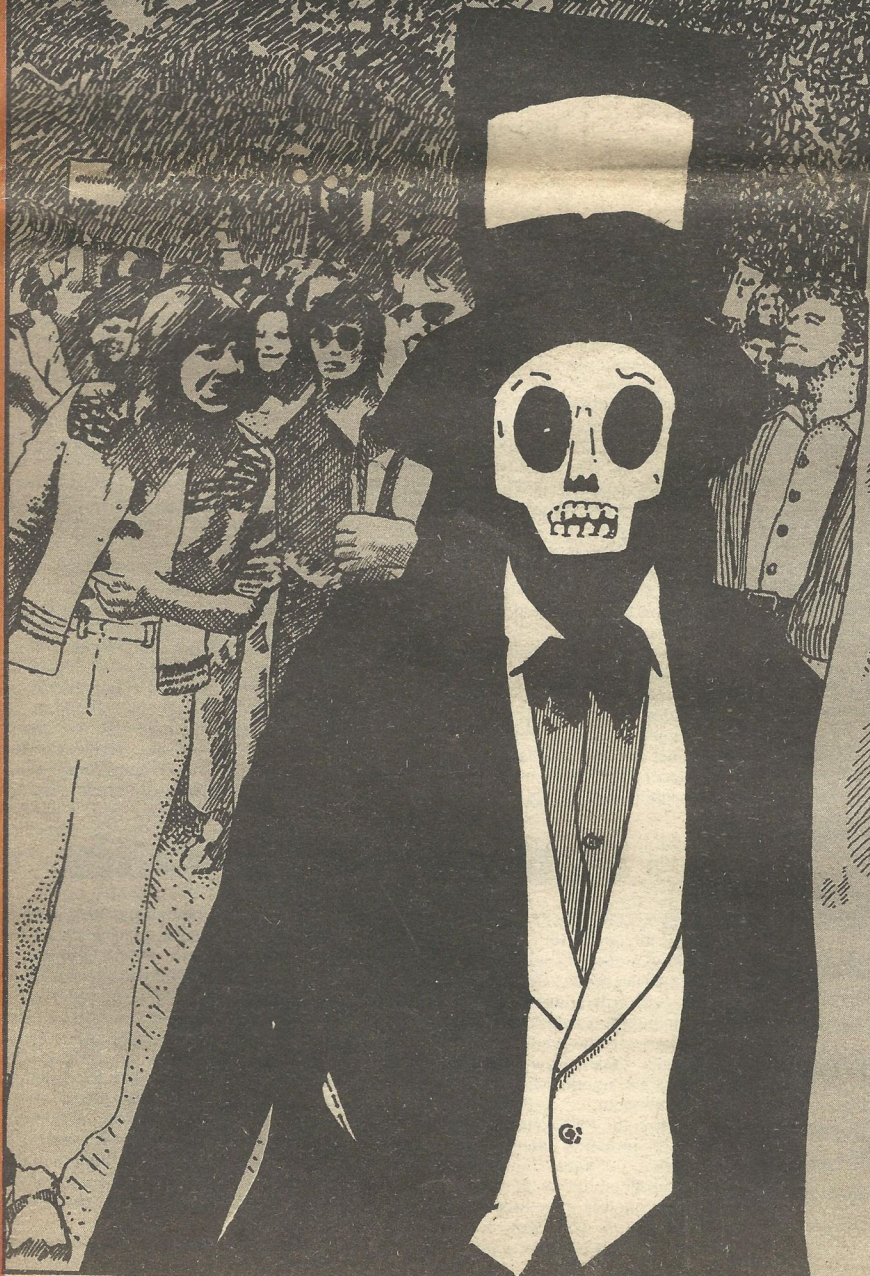
Open Road

Issue Twelve Spring/Summer 1981

Brick the Rich
Swiss youth
mortar
death culture

Parenting:
A subversive
activity

Loving
Relation-
ships
Living the
impossible



THE BLAST

Act and survive

"The capacity of the security forces to contain the urban population if it decides to leave the towns and cities, during a nuclear alert, is virtually nil. It is therefore imperative and of the utmost urgency that the population is sufficiently convinced that it should comply with Civil Defence advice to remain at home. If the numbers which attempt to leave the urban areas are small enough, it is hoped that the security forces, which will include contingents of armed police, will be able to contain them, by use of arms when necessary."

"In order that the personnel and their families who will man the post-nuclear regional HQs can reach the shelters it is essential that their locations remain as unobtrusive as possible and that the security forces keep them protected from persons who may try to invade them. To facilitate access the Government's emergency powers decree that public transport will be stopped, petrol stations closed to the public, and all but authorized transport prevented from using the roads."

"All domestic telephone subscribers will be disconnected, postal services will be terminated and newspapers will cease publication ... to ensure full Government control of communications and propaganda."

"T.V. and radio broadcasts will instruct people to remain at home ... the primary purpose of Civil Defence instructions is control, not survival."

"... The Royal Family and a designated politician from each of the three main parties will be taken by helicopter to a place of safety."

"Regional Controllers may order the execution of persons who attempt to enter the shelters before or after a nuclear attack."

"While it is obvious that details of the emergency powers cannot be made available to the public, it will also be necessary to limit the information given to the middle and lower ranks of the police, security forces and emergency services in case it affects their willingness to perform."



Two of the acquitted:
Ariane Gransac-Sandori
and Octavio Alberola.



Franco's ghost foiled in France

The statements above were taken from top-secret introductions to instruction manuals—available only to army brass—and publicized by a group of anonymous services personnel. A copy of the 20,000 reprint of the original document was sent anonymously to the Open Road with the comment that: "This couldn't be openly published in Britain as it would contravene the Official Secrets Act."

On the Road

Well finally, after a long delay here is *Open Road* #12. The collective has gone through some major changes since #11 and is still in the process of rebuilding. We hope to quickly get back to publishing as a quarterly.

Economics limit us to producing papers as elaborate as #11 only occasionally, so for the time being we have returned to our old format. The last issue cost over \$7,000 and a lot of time since then has been spent fund raising to pay it off. Hopefully finances won't be such a problem with this cut down version.

In this issue we've included three articles of a more personal flavour that we hope will provoke a lot of thought. The Hogue Wyckoff article can be considered a good jumping off point for a discussion on improving personal relationships though in the future we would hope to run a more explicitly anarchist examination of the subject. The parenting article confronts what many feel is an extremely timely and pressing issue in the context of larger social revolution. The reflective piece on Poland and the anti-nuke struggle is a moving and intense personal

response to the terrors of the "hard news" world. It is at once warming and inspiring to rediscover one's own strength through reading another's feelings of vulnerability. As publishing this paper is a relatively new experience for many of us we'd like to hear what others think about these and other stories.

Since the *Open Road* gets no money from advertising we depend upon reader support in distribution as well as financing. If your local distributor doesn't already carry *OR* suggest that they do. Write us about bulk terms.

The paper is available on a subscription basis at a suggested rate of two hours pay or more per year; \$20 per year for an institutional subscription; and \$50 per year for a one year sustaining subscription. For overseas mail please send an additional \$5. The *Open Road* is mailed free to prisoners around the world, which is another reason for you to give more if you can.

Back issues #2, 3, 6, 7, and 11 are available for \$2 a copy and #8, 9, 10, and 10½ are available for \$1 each.

The Open Road welcomes correspondence and contributions (editorial and financial). Write to:

**The Open Road
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Vancouver, B.C. Canada
V6R 4G5**

FRANCO is long dead but his murderous hands still reach out for anarchists.

In a recent, grotesque trial in Paris, ten anarchists were finally acquitted after being vaguely accused of conspiracy in the May 1974 kidnapping of a Spanish bank director. The ten were brought to trial after seven years of "provisional liberty" in France.

The 1974 abduction of Baltasa Suarez, director of the Bank of Bilbao in Paris, was claimed by the GARI—the International Revolutionary Action Group. It's aim: the release of political prisoners in what was then Franco's Spain. The kidnapping came on the heels of the assassination by garrote of one Catalan anarchist, Salvador Puig Antich, and at a time when hundreds of anti-Francoists were being held and tortured in Spanish prisons.

After Suarez was released by GARI, the ten anarchists: Octavio Alberola, Ariane Gransac-Sadori, Lucio Urtubia, Anne Urtubia, Jean Weir, Chantal Chastel, Georges Riviere, Annie Plazen, Pierre Guiber and Daniel Haas, were arrested in France, not on the basis of evidence, but because of their beliefs. All were detained for

some months.

This recent trial was heard five years after the death of Franco when inside Spain all anti-Francoists have long since been amnestied. Most paradoxical is that the trial was mounted by French authorities who said they were pleased to see the advent of "democracy" in Spain.

During the trial the ten denounced "the complicity of the forces of repression" of the Fascism of yesterday and the neo-fascism of today. In the words of Octavio Alberola: "Spanish fascism is turning the European law enforcement area into an antechamber to the concentration camp world which authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of left and right persuasions have always dreamed of."

For more info about the case contact Faustino Llosa, Cercle Garcia Lorca, 15 rue Gracieuse, 75005, Paris, France. Donations are needed to help defray the costs of the defence. Good reading about the history of the GARI is in a book edited by Albert Meltzer, *The International Revolutionary Solidarity Movement*, from Cienfuegos Press, Box A, Over the Water, Sanday, Orkney, KW17 2BI U.K., available for \$5.

Regrouping in Chile

ORGANIZING against an authoritarian military junta is difficult enough, but without money it is even harder.

In Chile, the International Workers Association, a federation of anarcho-syndicalists, is mounting a solidarity campaign to support Chilean anarcho-syndicalists in their efforts to fight back against the brutal Pinochet regime and to rejuvenate the anarchist workers movement.

Before the 1973 coup, all left-wing labour groups, including anarchists, were involved in the CUT (Central Unica de Trabajadores—United Organization of Workers). This organization was effectively smashed by the military after the coup, so that the only "unions" left in Chile today are scab company unions that willingly collaborate with the employers. Anarchists are active in these unions, nonetheless, busy trying to organize a broad-based workers opposition.

Outside the unions, anarchists are helping organize neighbourhood councils similar to the ones that arose during Allende's brief stay in power. Within these groups the anarchists have been urging people to become more combative, autonomous and independent from the leftwing political parties and to adopt a more direct action strategy. They're also beginning to establish an underground network of their own committees.

To help out, send money c/o the Syndicalist Alliance, POB 92085, Milwaukee, WI., 53202. They'll forward all money received to the Chilean anarcho-syndicalists. All donations should be made out to the Chile Solidarity Fund.

Keep up to date on the situation in Chile and other Latin American countries through the IWA's recently established *Open Commission on Latin America*, Postboks, 1735, Vika, Oslo 1, Norway.

Poster people stick it to 'em

By David Spaner

YOU can fight city hall. You can also poster it. These are just a couple of the lessons of an ongoing battle for the right to poster in Vancouver.

Last summer, Vancouver's city council passed a bylaw making posterizing a crime punishable by a \$2,000 fine or two months in jail. As part of the poster crackdown, the new bylaw was given a high profile unveiling, complete with threatening letters to 'known posterers' (bands, political organizations...), press releases, and advertisements asking upstanding citizens to call the police if they saw anyone posterizing.

Within days a loose coalition of over 50 groups, representing an array of political and cultural activity, had organized a defense committee and announced they would defy the law by putting up 3,000 copies of a poster that listed the endorsing groups and exclaimed: "CENSORED. This is a poster. It has a right to be here."

The group kicked off the mass posterizing by openly posting the poles outside city hall. After a couple of people were ticketed, the poster pasters took their protest into the bowels of city hall, taping a poster on the wall behind the outraged mayor's podium and shutting down the council meeting that was in session.

The media jumped on the story, declaring a "poster war" and christening the protestors "the poster people." Groups, independent of the coalition, began adding onto their posters, "This is a poster. It has a right to be here." Benefits were staged, T-shirts and buttons printed, and stickers went up (Yeah... "This is a sticker. It has a right to...").

In October, the poster issue was brought to the walls of city hall. Since city hall was prohibiting the posterizing of poles, the poster people decided to turn city hall itself into a giant posterizing pole.

One-hundred and fifty people lay siege to city hall, plastering the *world's largest poster* (over 1,100 feet long) completely around the building, leaving walls, doors, windows and slow-footed bureaucrats blanketed in their wake. The massive poster was made up of an assortment of regulation sized posters and slogans such as: Billboards are the posters of

the rich; This is the world's biggest poster, it has a right to be here; One big union of posters; Posters: art or menace?

As well as partaking in direct actions, the poster advocates have been busy on the legal front. A team of lawyers have agreed to defend anyone charged under the bylaw and, at one point, had it overturned in court. City council passed a new anti-poster law the following day, but the law is continuing to be challenged in court as a violation of the right to "freedom of speech."

The response to the bylaw caught local authorities by surprise. The assistant city engineer—in charge of poster removal—complained that people who put up posters are nuisances. "My whole purpose in life is to get rid of nuisances," he whimpered. One council member condemned posterizing as a "cross between vandalism and littering."

Anti-poster laws exist in most North American cities (a less severe anti-poster law had been in the books in Vancouver since 1912) but they had never been challenged on an organized, grass-roots level before. (Coincidentally, just a few days before the posterizing of city hall, poster riots broke out in several cities in China.)

A campaign against a civic bylaw may seem unimportant but, in the same way that many began to question and break the laws they had been reared to respect the moment they smoked marijuana or received a draft card, many who now need to poster find themselves confronted by a particularly absurd law.

Whether one thinks posters add a speck of colour to a drab city or are "visual clutter" as the council maintains, is a matter of personal aesthetics—many people think billboards or black office towers are unattractive—but the only opinion being enforced is that of politicians who can afford expensive advertising. The bylaw cuts off one of the few inexpensive means of communication for those who can't afford radio spots, newspaper ads or billboards.

Posters played a vital role in the development of Vancouver punk rock (as they have in the underground music scenes of many communities). When the ability to stage self-promoted concerts is stifled, new rebel rockers—who face opposition from established



Vancouver poster people wrap up City Hall.

promoters—are often discouraged from performing. Posters also played a major role in warning women in one Vancouver neighbourhood about a rapist/jogger. As a member of Rape Relief pointed out, "It's okay to exploit women if you can afford to buy a billboard, but not okay to protect and educate us."

Whether the law will be overturned in court or changed by Vancouver's new city council remains to be seen. But one thing is certain: posters will keep going up and those doing the pasting in Vancouver will do so

with a renewed conviction that posters "have a right to be here."

For further information write to **Poster Information**, c/o The Open Road, Box 6135, Stn. G, Vancouver, B.C., V6R 4G5.

State terror in Germany

In a continuing attempt at repressing the West German revolutionary movement, six militants were recently sentenced to long jail terms. The sentences were: Ralf Reinders and Till Meyer, 15 years each; Ronald Fritsch, 13 years; Gerald Kloppner, 11 years; Andrea Vogel, 10 years; and Fritz Teufel, 5 years.

All were accused of being members of the 2nd of June Movement, named after that date in 1967 when a student was killed by police during a demonstration against the Shah of Iran.

Charges included membership in a "terrorist" organization; the kidnapping of the chairman of the Christian Democratic party, Peter Lorenz, in 1974, that resulted in the release of five imprisoned militants; the killing of the president of the West Berlin High Court, Judge von Drenkmann, in 1974; an attack on a state arms arsenal, and two bank robberies.

Reinders is believed to be the founder of the 2nd of June Movement, while Teufel is regarded by many as the West German Abbie Hoffman.

Teufel, the founder of Kommune 1 in West Berlin out of which evolved the impetus for several revolutionary groupings, is well-known for such things as remarking after the firebombing of a Frankfurt department store, "Well, it's better to burn a store than to run one."

He commented on the present trial, "Where urban guerrilla activity is concerned, they [the State] invent proof if none exists... to condemn anyone who is unable to prove his innocence and is unwilling to dissociate himself from the actions criticized." Teufel, having already been held for trial for 5 years, is now free.

Valpreda freed—again

THE Italian State never gives up in its macabre game of putting anarchists behind bars, but this time it's waited seven years before threatening Pietro Valpreda with another life sentence. Once again, the State has accused him of responsibility for the "massacre of Piazza Fontana" in Milan 11 years ago.

Valpreda already spent four years in prison awaiting trial the last time before being released for lack of evidence. During that time he had to live with newspaper descriptions of him as "a monster who made us cry."

Now, with no new evidence brought forward he has to fight for his life again.

Fifteen people were killed and 100 injured in the bombing of the Bank of Agriculture in December 1969. Anarchists were immediately scapegoated to justify the repression which followed.

Dario Fo's well known play, *An Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is based on the murder of Giuseppe Pinelli, one of the anarchists rounded up by the police. Pinelli "fell" to his death from the window of a Milan police station while being interrogated about the massacre.

A successful defence campaign mounted by the Italian anarchist movement helped uncover evidence that pointed the finger at the real culprits in the bombing: fascists and the State itself through its ministers, high-



Pietro Valpreda before the trial

ranking army officers, magistrates and the police.

In an interview a year ago, on the tenth anniversary of the massacre, Valpreda commented on the nature of his case: "The

bomb of December 12, 1969 and the assassination of our companion Pinelli, is not an episode of injustice, but is an everyday case of a generalized, systematic injustice, systematic because in the popular consciousness, they became the strategy of the State."

At a recent anarchist press conference in Milan, the parallels between Valpreda's current frame up and the one of 11 years ago were spelled out: "We stated then that Valpreda was innocent and that the massacre was a massacre of the State. You said we were raving; only after our campaign of counter-information did you realize that the anti-anarchist manoeuvring was a massive invention with which to attack the revolutionary movement and the left. Now the prosecutor wants to conceal the responsibility of the State apparatus by putting the blame on Valpreda once more."

More info on the trial from the **Italian Anarchist Federation**, villa Monza, 255, Milano Italy or **Rivista Anarchica**, cas. post. 17120, 20100 Milano Italy. In English follow reports in the biweekly **Freedom**, 84b Whitechapel High St., London E1. Subscription \$25 year.

FLASH

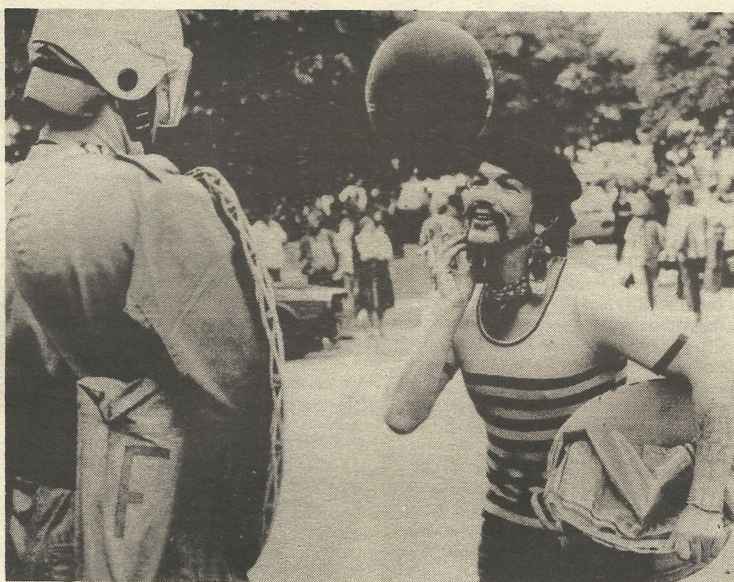
As we go to press we've just learned that Valpreda has been acquitted. A third trial is now scheduled for 1983.

Riot for culture . . .

ZURICH, the home of chocolate, cuckoo-clocks and international capital, has exploded. A place for Swiss youth to operate an autonomous cultural centre was first demanded 40 years ago, but it was not until last summer that Zurich's frustrated young people—who call themselves "the movement"—increased their militancy, swelled their potential ranks to 10,000 protesters, and began regular street battles with the cops.

Last May, as members of Switzerland's opulent bourgeoisie glided up the stairs of Zurich's luxurious lakeside opera, 300 youths blocked the door and pelted them with tomatoes, eggs, and paint bombs. When riot equipped police arrived with tear gas and rubber bullets, the demonstrators fought back with paving stones and bottles. And when the tear gas became unbearable the battle shifted to a high-class shopping district where barricades were erected, shop windows were smashed, and fur coats, jewelry and other posh goods were ripped, smashed and shredded. The end of a well-attended Bob Marley concert multiplied the number of street-fighters.

The fighting was repeated over the next few days during which time the pavillion of the opera house was occupied and 2,000 youths held a meeting to discuss demands and action. The movement was comprised of lumpen, workers, punks, spontanists, anarchists, employees and students, and while their primary demands were for an autonomous youth and cultural centre, and



Swiss battle cry: "Make cucumber salad out of the State."

amnesty for all those arrested in demonstrations, they also face such issues as housing shortages, women's rights, pollution problems, alternate modes of living and working, sexuality rights, ecology, and drugs

and they show an intense hatred of the rich and the police. "Make cucumber salad out of the state," became the battle cry at the demonstrations, which continue regularly up to this moment.

The movement is strictly hostile to authority. It has no leaders, speakers or delegations for negotiating. Demonstrations were called by anyone at any time, and several pirate radio stations regularly followed the movements of protesters and cops and urged people to participate. The anarchist papers, *Stilet*, *Subito* and *Eisbrecher* are sort of organs for the movement.

After they were granted a former factory as a centre in June, meetings took place each week in which all participated equally. Trots and other communists who called for formal organization were shouted down if they tried to speak at meetings. People formed themselves into groups to deal with renovations, direct action, police repression, legal aid, posters, gay rights, music and theatre, etc.

Charges against demonstrators were not dropped, however, and the protests, riots and looting continued. A demonstration calling for the release of all those arrested, became the largest eruption to date with the cops utilizing anti-riot cars and clubs, and discharging tear gas and rubber bullets into the streets at random, including into restaurants and private homes. It lasted all night and 130 were arrested.

The demonstrations, however, were not always so violent and at times were held strictly for fun. As when groups of people ran naked through the streets with 'A' for anarchy painted on their backsides. At one point, 4,000 people liberated 150 flasks of brandy from a classy hotel and marched down to the lake for an informal, drunken dip.

During August they began setting fires in land registry offices and construction sites throughout Zurich to protest land speculation. Graffiti near one brightly burning building read: "For life, against cement."

In the fall, the police culminated their harassment by raiding the youth centre. A major battle broke out in which close to a million dollars of damage was done to rich shopping areas, and hundreds of protesters were arrested. One demonstrator was shot and wounded while attempting to throw a molotov. A police bureau was firebombed in retaliation.

Though demonstrations were made illegal they continue. The fight for youth centres and for other issues has spread to other cities throughout Switzerland, in almost all cases as spontaneous, libertarian uprisings. For some people in the movement the fight is over clearly defined issues and rights; for others it is a highly charged expression of youthful energy and frustration. As one banner read: "We don't want a society in which the risk of dying of hunger is exchanged for the risk of dying of boredom."

. . . and shelter

HOUSING the homeless cheaply and comfortably is verboten in Germany.

At least, that's the message the State has been giving hundreds of squatters, who, like their sisters and brothers in Holland have taken to the streets to battle cops for their right to a place to live.

Whether in "model" West Germany ("no problems here, everything's under control") or its showcase city, West Berlin, the past year has seen an increasingly militant squatters movement in response to "urban renewal" programs that leave no room for people desiring adequate, affordable housing.

Squatters and their supporters in the thousands have fought evictions from occupied houses with an aggressiveness that's taken Germany by surprise. According to police statements, the disturbances are worse than any of the student protests of the 60's.

Since December, a series of impressive street riots and protests demanding the release of imprisoned demonstrators from previous battles, defied the forces of the State intent on containing the squatters' rebellion. During one significant outburst in West Berlin, 50 police cars were wrecked, 17 of them destroyed completely during fighting that raged for days.

A week later, 15,000 marched in a peaceful demonstration (no police provocation) demanding the release of all those arrested earlier.

Not only is this movement drawing on increasing numbers of supporters from among students, working class youth, punks, 60's veterans and many professionals like nurses, doctors, teachers and lawyers, but also, it's making continental links with other squatters such as the Kraakers in Holland. The Kraakers have sent delegations to West Berlin with a film documenting their own battles last spring (see *OR* #11) and to exchange info about their ongoing resistance.

Though not as large or developed as the Kraakers, the German squatters have just as much potential considering the numbers of homeless, especially in West Berlin: 54,000 people are officially registered on a waiting list for low-rent housing with 16,000 of these classified as immediate. At the same time, an estimated 40,000 apartments are torn down each year. A total of 7,000 liveable apartments are now standing empty left to rot until speculators decide to raze them.

For the unlucky, this means they can wait

in line for the privilege of moving into new "social" housing projects often on the outskirts of the city where they could pay up to two or three times the rent they paid previously. If they don't get a new place, they can double up and pay rent for run-down rat-infested ghettos like Kreuzberg in West Berlin where the majority of apartments are without decent sanitation or they can occupy a tenement and renovate it themselves.

The authorities, nervous about provoking more occupations, have offered to meet and

negotiate with squatters' committees, but the squatters have continued to refuse until all their numbers arrested are released.

And, as the English paper *Black Flag* has noted, "the issue is seen as extending beyond the cause of the squatters to the criminalization of protest and the arbitrary use of police violence and as such as arousing widespread support."

Stay abreast of developments through **Black Flag, Over the Water, Sunday, Orkney, KW17 2B1, UK. \$10 for a one year sub.**

BOLIVIA Miners dig at junta

POPULAR resistance in Bolivia against the military dictatorship of General Luis Garcia Meza continues, despite attempts by the military to create a climate of terror by ruthlessly crushing all forms of opposition. Meza came to power on July 17, 1980 in an Argentinian backed coup that has made Bolivia a focal point in South America. Although Bolivia has a history of military interventions, this latest coup is much more serious: the Bolivian military is concentrating its efforts on destroying the Bolivian workers' and peasants' movements, having realized that the political parties are not as important, and the heavy involvement of Argentina in the coup and its aftermath points toward the growing power and imperialist intentions of Argentina, and the prospect of a completely fascitized South America.

All trade unions and political organizations have been outlawed, universities have been closed and occupied by troops, all radio and television have been put under military control (foreign radio broadcasts are jammed), and thousands of people have been imprisoned, tortured, and in many cases, murdered.

In November, 1979, the military attempted a coup, which was defeated after three weeks of general strikes. Well aware that another attempt was inevitable, the Bolivian Workers' Confederation (COB), with other groups, formed the National Committee for the Defense of Democracy (CONADE). Although the COB values its political indepen-

dence and militant anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist stance, with many left-wing tendencies (including anarcho-syndicalist), it felt at the time that the democratic process had to be protected. It was hoped that the COB could better organize its fight against capitalist exploitation and imperialism under a democratic regime. The COB also appealed to the political parties to allow the people to arm themselves—an appeal which went unheeded.

A provisional "caretaker" government, led by Bolivia's first woman president, Lidia Guiler, administered Bolivia until a new election could be held. In June, 1980, Giles Zuazo's moderate left People's Democratic Union was voted into office, becoming Bolivia's first democratically elected left-wing government. The military found this "intolerable," and on July 17 they struck back. Hearing of the coup, COB leaders and members of CONADE met at the Worker's Federation headquarters in La Paz, to organize resistance. There they were trapped by paramilitary forces disguised in civilian clothes; only a few people managed to escape. The socialist leader, Santa Cruz, was shot on the spot, and the others, including COB president Juan Lechin and veteran anarchist militant Liber Forti, were arrested. (It is now believed that Lechin has been murdered. Forti has been sent into exile in France.) Another 5000 people were arrested (and many murdered) throughout Bolivia.

Workers responded to the coup by setting

up street barricades in La Paz, and 5,000 tin miners took up arms in their camps in the Andes mountains to the south. The miners broadcasted over clandestine radio networks, "We are going to resist the coup until the ultimate consequences." Armed with sub-machine guns and dynamite, they blockaded roads and battled troops, destroying three tanks in one district. The military had mining towns bombed and strafed in retaliation, killing over 900 people in the town of Caracoles alone. A general strike was declared for the entire country.

On July 24, Lechin, then a prisoner of the army and badly bruised, appeared on Bolivian television to appeal to the workers to accept a truce, ostensibly to prevent unnecessary bloodshed fighting a lost cause. Lechin's appeal, forced under torture, effectively undermined solidarity and resistance against the coup. Many miners still remained defiant, with 2,000 of them killed or wounded. The junta sent troops into the mines to force the miners to work at gun point. They worked, but instead of mining tin, they mined worthless rock, and the soldiers couldn't tell the difference. Similar acts of defiance in the rest of Bolivia have helped reduce Bolivian exports by over 40%.

Bolivian activists, outside Bolivia when the coup took place, are now organizing an international solidarity campaign to raise money to help fight the junta. At the end of January anarchist groups from Holland, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Spain and France met with Latin American exiles in Paris to discuss ways to create a more effective international anarchist support network. Funds can be sent to: **Mme. Vega S., 1, Bd. Serurier, 75019 Paris, France.** For more information write: **Grupo "P. Nolasco Arratia," Cercle "Garcia Lorca," 15 rue Gracieuse, 75005 Paris, France.**

Kids *and Parents!!* are anarchists, too!

By Charlotte Baggins

The "Kid question". Lots of talk, but is anything really changing?

The Open Road is preparing an article for the next issue which will explore some of the problems of raising liberated children in a repressive system. We hope to offer some viable alternate models for the raising of anarchist children and would appreciate reader input. We would especially like to hear how other parents and involved people have confronted the issue.

Meanwhile to start the discussion we're reprinting this edited version of an anarchist mother's account from Anarchy Magazine #30 (37a Grosvenor Ave. London N5 England; subscriptions \$5).

I CHOSE to have kids, I didn't ask all of you about it and therefore you can turn around and say, "You did it on your own, why drag me in now that you want a babysitter?"

When I looked at my baby sleeping—this tiny little person—I became aware for the first time of the commitment I had made—I looked at her and thought, "For the next 16 years you will rule my life, I will never be 'free' again, you will need me there and I will have to obey the call. What the fuck was I thinking of, why didn't anyone tell me, warn me, stop me?"

So, the resentment has been voiced—silently, never admit your terror—she's smashed my womanhood, my sexuality has overnight been turned into motherhood, into sacrifice and that awesome strength of mothers who cope, who keep going, who support and deny themselves—and while I am denied, my child can never grow into a freer woman, she too will be denied, she too will have children and remember her mother who poured all her frustration and anger over her. And what will she be if I am denied freedom? Will she expect to deny herself? Will she have children who scream if she goes out? Will she say "I'll never leave you"?

For kids to be able to walk away they need two things: the self-possession gained from their care/love/security, and the knowledge that they can:

- 1) Get away.
- 2) Come back if they want.

As very young children they demand the impossible, they want our constant attention. They need others and other people need them. And I must let them get away—and they must let me get away—they must not grow up believing in the all or nothing choice that is all we have won at the moment. I can "choose" not to have children. I can "choose" when to have children—but what has been done to make it better if I do "choose" to have children? What has changed?

Parents should not be faced with a choice of "you can be a revolutionary or a parent"—we demand both.

How do I as an anarchist/mother/woman relate to her as an anarchist/girl/daughter? How do we grow together and not stifle one another's ambitions/hopes/dreams? How do I not infect her with my despair/loss/anxiety? How do I share my ambitions/hopes/dreams/experience without stifling her? How does she grow/learn/experience without threatening me?

So far you've heard the bad bits, the sorrow, the fuck-ups and the unanswered questions. I want the joy to get a look in too, because that's why we go on, and that's the bit so many people in writing about kids *don't* write about. Kids are fun, kids question and explore and are not so inhibited/socialised that they don't express their feelings—my kids have opened up feelings for me when they find them for themselves. Kids don't bullshit as much as adults—they'll lie when it suits them, sure, they'll fantasize and I'll not easily know reality from dream, but they are basically honest, when they love me, they hug/kiss me, when they hate me, they kick/hit me—

I usually know where they stand! Basically, before they get too fucked-up, kids are really good people.

As anarchists we surely start from a basic caring—call it whatever fancy name you like, but it's about self-respect and respect for other selves. Anarchy being about life/living I have this crazy dream that it includes us as babies, adolescents, young people, older people. To this end we deserve/expect respect—kids and parents expect and deserve more than just to be tolerated. Parents should not be faced with the choice of "you can be a revolutionary or a parent". We demand both.

As an example, I foolishly went to the Oxford anarchist conference with two children and their other parent. We had received the list of proposed workshops—"anarchy and organization," "mental health," "nuclear power," "prisons," "Northern Ireland," "violence"—and been invited to add suggested topics. Oh how I longed to suggest kids/parents.

Before we left, Millie—just seven—had said that she wanted to meet more anarchist kids and I had foolishly replied, "You'll meet some at Oxford." "But they'll just be in a boring daycare group, why can't kids have print shops/workshops/pubs/cafes, you get them all and we don't have anything." So we all discussed how Millie could talk with the other kids and see what they wanted and then they/she could make their demands. Chris warned her about the vagaries of adults who would probably clap and cheer and then say, "What's next on the agenda?" He told her to demand the who, when and where, and not to give in 'till she'd got it.

Millie and I arrived at the daycare—two other kids, both too young to talk with Millie, not much in the way of toys or books, no orange juice/food, no music—not a great deal of enthusiasm! I went to find out about accommodation, we'd rung to say we were coming, given the kids' ages, brought sleeping bags—no sweat, right? Wrong!

An anarchist woman said, "It might be a bit difficult, there's not many people who'll have kids"—now just for a moment, think

about that—think about the implicit rejection/put down/denial of a seven-year-old anarchist girl, of a three-year-old anarchist girl, of their anarchist mother and father. When my kids are excluded in the big, bad outside world I usually fight back/make a scene/boycott the place—*something*—but to have to do this at an anarchist conference? It was knowing that if she'd said instead of "kids"—blacks, women, gays, cons—we could have had a good riot going within minutes—but *kids*? I certainly couldn't rely on the support—maybe a half-dozen people, right? And I couldn't voice the rage, hurt and anger because that's how fucking oppressed parents/kids are, right?

Eventually I got talking to some other parents, and we were all voicing the same kind of pissed-offness about how it is, but didn't see how we could make much of a mark at the time. However, at the end when the person standing up at the front said, "Has anyone got anything to say before we close?", my rage got the better of me, and I streamed off a somewhat incoherent and passionate plea for a better deal for parents and kids within the "anarchist movement." I sat down and the guy at the front said, "That's it then?" and the Oxford anarchist conference was over.

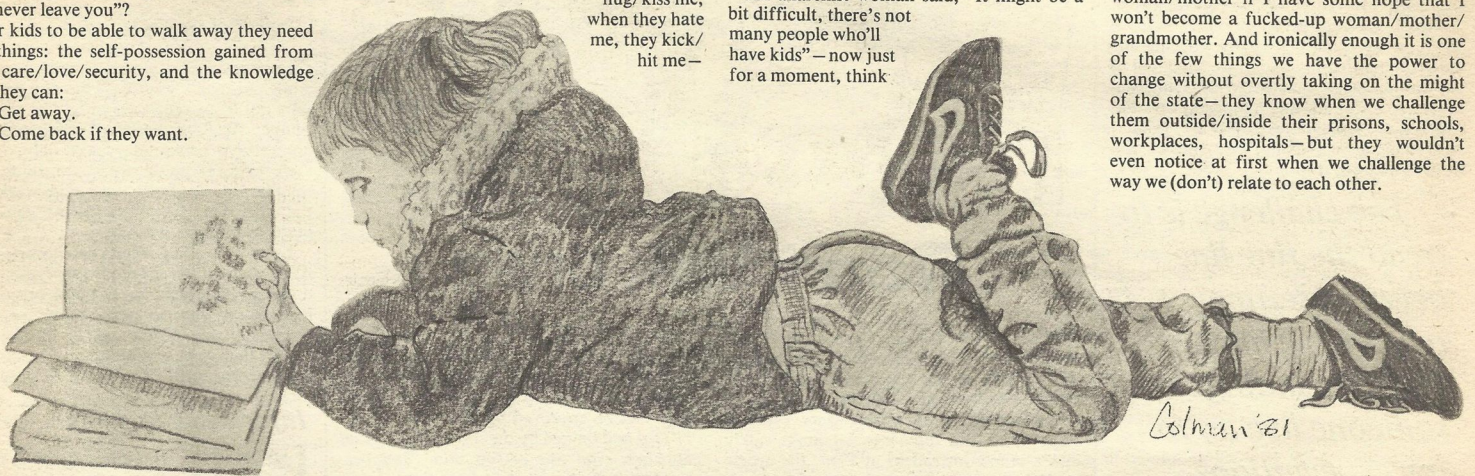
That's it then? All I'd probably done was to annoy those who'd played with the kids at the daycare by making it sound like they hadn't done well enough or I wasn't grateful enough. I wasn't getting at them, I was screaming at the people who have such tiny minds that they think/live only within their own narrow peer groups.

A word about the London Anarchist Center. However much room there is or is not available, there has to be some way or kids can be there and enjoy it—not a "boring daycare." I would like it to be a place where anarchist kids can meet and learn and play. I would really like for Millie to say she wants to go to the anarchist center, and for there to be something for me too while she is there—think about it. Kids are people too.

Okay, I didn't ask you first before I had my kids, but then you didn't ask me how I felt about you being born, and if I came to a meeting and questioned your right to exist, I'd be out of order, and you and others would tell me so.

At least think about it, think about how you live, who else is around, and how we could live. Think about when you were a kid, think about what anarchist kids could teach us. And when you've thought, start acting it a little.

I can only cope with being a fucked-up woman/mother if I have some hope that I won't become a fucked-up woman/mother/grandmother. And ironically enough it is one of the few things we have the power to change without overtly taking on the might of the state—they know when we challenge them outside/inside their prisons, schools, workplaces, hospitals—but they wouldn't even notice at first when we challenge the way we (don't) relate to each other.



Anti-draft resists Uncle Sam

AN official looking paper recently showed up at Disney headquarters in Anaheim, California. Addressed to Michael M. Mouse, it notified the star of his failure to properly provide all required information for a selective service registration.

Flabbergasted Disney representatives informed the government that the cartoon mouse was 52 years old. They had assumed that he was not included in the group ordered to register for the new draft. Draft officials admitted that they seem to have been subject to a hoax. Having cleared that up they were now free to check out the two Donald Ducks and five Jimmy Carters who had registered.

Registering as mice, ducks, presidents and other cartoon characters was one tactic by which America's 18-20 year old men expressed their opposition to the reimposition

of draft registration. Far more young men defied the order by simply refusing to register.

The Pentagon had predicted that 98% of the 4,000,000 affected would register. But, according to Selective Service reports from February, only 87% of those required to register had done so. Anti-draft organizers suggest that up to 2,000,000 young men simply stayed home on days that mass registration was ordered.

Draft opponents tried to encourage non-cooperation by keeping the issue of registration in the news with a wave of direct action, including frequent blockading of post-offices where registration was to take place.

To date, no one has been prosecuted for failing to register.

To what extent the significant resistance to

the draft was due to the effectiveness of the anti-draft campaign is still being questioned, though, by some of the organizers.

According to one anarchist from the Oregon Committee Against the Draft: "Most of the registration age men were not swayed by either the government or anti-draft propaganda. They 'voted with their feet' and just refused to register because they didn't get anything out of it. They realized it was a swindle."

There's also an ongoing debate about the politics of the broad based coalition coordinating the resistance, the National Committee Against Registration and the Draft (NCARD).

As the *Fifth Estate* commented in their March issue on a recent NCARD conference in Detroit: "What was clear from our exper-

iences at the NCARD conference was that we should not let the left and the liberals capture the anti-draft activity by making coalitions like NCARD appear as the only game in town, but nor are we interested in representing the "organizational competition" of the leftist sects. Still, if we don't begin to create a movement based on our politics—opposition to *all* conscription and to *all* governments—we will end up being the black flag contingent at NCARD demonstrations after a long line of politicians have finished their speeches."

Follow anti-draft action through the Fifth Estate, 4403-2nd Ave., Detroit, MICH. 48201 (\$6 a sub); WIN Magazine, 326 Livingstone St., Brooklyn, NY 11217 (\$17 a sub); or NCARD, 245-2nd St. NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Screw the State,

By Hogie Wyckoff

After much heated discussion, we decided to run the following article in the Open Road because we have never had anything on this subject and because some of us felt that the anarchist movement has often neglected the whole area of inter-personal relationships in favour of "external" politics. Some members of the collective were opposed to this decision and only agreed to printing it on the condition that space be made available for a few of their criticisms. Those are reprinted below. We welcome your response so that in future issues we can continue the discussion. Originally titled "Loving, Cooperative Relationships," the article (which we edited down) is reprinted from Issues in Radical Therapy #25 (POB 5039, Berkeley, CA. 94705; \$7 for a one year subscription). Hogie Wyckoff is the author of among other titles, the book Solving Women's Problems.

IT'S no wonder that many of us have had rough experiences with friends, lovers, relatives, roommates and co-workers. Who was there to teach us how to cooperate, communicate with ease and do what feels right instead of fitting into prescribed life patterns? So we have to teach ourselves and dare to risk reaching out again past our emotional scars. Intimacy and community make life sweet and give us sustenance to carry on. Remember our right to the "pursuit of happiness?" Capitalist culture has translated that to mean money, commodities and material power.

If we want to satisfy our needs more fully I suggest we look at our awareness of power dynamics and how we define and choose our relationships.

We are taught rigid definitions of what is a good relationship. We are urged to select from prepackaged plans. From an overly simplified view, the instructions go like this: Life is empty without a lover. Find someone of the "opposite" sex and fall in love. Somehow make a transition from dressy dates to a solid partnership that will last forever. Never consider your same sex friends as important as a lover. If you cannot satisfy your needs in the ready-mades of romantic love then there must be something wrong with you.

Least important is having a sweet relationship with yourself. The competitiveness of capitalist culture permeates our internal dialogue. Yet while we may be nagging and judging ourselves inside, we are supposed to put out an image of self-confident independence. Worst of all, it is completely up to us whether we succeed or not. Your gender, race, class or age should not prevent you from climbing to the top.

The challenge is to tread the fine line between setting reasonable limits and demanding that someone live up to my expectations.

OUR families and schools reflect the competitiveness and hierarchical power structures of the culture. In these institutions we learn survival skills that include misusing power to win and how to discount our feelings. Did school have to be that dreary and tedious, or were we being educated to be well-behaved workers? Many of our parents' marriages were duty-bound and lacking in joy. Good relationships do not have to involve pain and great struggle. Choosing wisely and creating visions customized to fit our needs can make loving easier.

When choosing a lover-partner the idealism of romantic love presses us to value our emotions and fantasies. Why spoil it with a cold factual analysis? This either-or view between intuition and intellect can cause lots of trouble. It does not ruin the chemistry and magic to realistically know another person. An honest friendship enhances intimacy. And it helps us to be clear about our expectations and ambivalence. I am focusing on

caress your lovers

lovers because people get hurt most in sexual relationships. There is something about the core opening that can happen in sex that can make us more vulnerable to each other. But the principles apply to other spheres of contact.

There is no need to choose between how we feel about someone and what we think of them. It's good to know whether you feel comfortable with them, and like the way they feel, smell and taste. And it's equally good to know their personalities and problems. We all have our crap—ways of thinking and behaving that are destructive. We can tolerate some people's crap better than others. We need to know what our own is so we can assess who we can best struggle with. Sometimes our crap can collide with another's so that we stimulate it in each other.

I cannot stand to be bullied or lied to. Maybe you hate to be manipulated by withdrawal. The Incredible Sulk drives you wild. The issue is to avoid bonding with anyone who can devastate us or we them. Having direct and open communication allows us to develop a picture of how our crap clicks together, and what our blind spots are. Two yellors may collide in temper tantrums and verbal abuse and be unaware of the damage this is doing to them. Far better for them to

make a firm commitment not to discharge on each other. They need to learn to blow off steam without directing it at the other. They can wring a towel and curse, smash the bed, and scream, run or swim and then talk with honesty and respect. Or decide it's impossible for them to relate. It can be very difficult to get rid of the scars that build up after too much emotional violence has been done.

MANY of us bring a backlog of old rage, pain and distrust to relationships. It becomes too easy to always hurt the one you love. We are not taught cooperative communication skills. Often role models have shown us how to politely hold things in and then blow it when we finally speak out by using insults and overstatement. If we think we are going to be discounted then we may overdramatize to make our point.

Mary Yeller may come home from an awful day at work and explode at Fred: "I hate you, you pompous jerk! You never help around here and always expect me to take care of dinner." He counters with a power play, threatening to move out. Then they are off, destroying any chance of comforting each other. Much better if Mary could come home and say: "I've had a rotten day. I want to go kill a pillow in the name of my boss,

then I want to talk with you, Fred." Later she tells him: "I'm furious and hurt that you don't cook dinner as often as I do. We have to make a deal and change this."

The solution lies not so much in totally ridding ourselves of the "win" ethic, but rather in developing skills in cooperation.

Fred isn't the enemy, sexism is. When Mary attacks and blames him she doesn't get satisfaction. He gets defensive, and wants to prove her wrong. Then they both lose. Such is the way of competitive power struggles.

Early on we receive constant training and role-modeling in the "art" of competition. The subtle ways in which this affects our behavior are difficult to eliminate. The solution lies not so much in totally ridding ourselves of the "win" ethic, but rather in developing skills in cooperation. This requires learning how to be an equal and enjoy this arrangement of power. It's hard not to slip into a one-up/one-down position in relation to one another. But once we experience the relief from competitive power struggles we can see what's in it for us. Sometimes it requires a leap of trust to let go of control and learn the benefits of being in balance with another.

It seems many men do not feel safe enough to open and be vulnerable without a guarantee of full involvement by the woman. One cooperative solution is to slow down the timing so they both can learn ways to meet each other's needs without compromising

Better to be clumsy and share your interest than to stay lonely.

themselves. He may need to open gradually while testing his security, while she gets support not to be rebellious or to feel claustrophobic. Bashing each other's heads with competitive power plays will only destroy their love. If either does something s/he doesn't want to do, or does more work than the other there may be short-term gains, but in the overall they will lose.

Lying or keeping secrets deteriorates trust. And cooperation depends on honest and direct communication. It takes practice to learn to say what we feel in a fair, kind and respectful way. Better to be honest and clumsy than to be a smooth liar. Constructive criticism is a gift. We need it to grow and evolve.

Informed Choosing

INFORMED choosing helps ensure longevity. Based on what we learn about each other over time we can define the central issues that trouble us. We want to highlight areas where our crap hooks into each other's and poses the worst threat to our friendship. Let's look at how a couple dealt with pushing each other's buttons.

Jane and Jack generally get along fine except when they argue. Jane's mode of handling conflict is to worry and to spend long hours analyzing and problem solving. Jack's tendency is "not to worry" and to laugh things off. His discount stimulates Jane's crap to obsess and overdramatize. Early on they saw this pattern develop between them. Since Jane had been in a women's Co-operative Problem Solving Group, she knew the value of making contracts about contradictions. Jack is committed to taking seriously issues that concern Jane. She complements his effort by working on her worrying and overreacting. Occasionally they go a round or two but they get better at calling it sooner and don't try to blame the other. They both assume equal responsibility

The Newspaper COLLECTIVE



Don't talk crap

While a few OR members thought the article was entirely useless in its approach to the subject, among the more specific criticisms raised were the following:

While it may be useful for Mary Yeller to come home and discharge her anger safely into a pillow instead of at Fred, the article neglects to deal with the source of Mary's frustration—her working environment. She could blow off steam and then sit down with Fred (or someone else) and brainstorm about how to organize on the job or get rid of the boss for some real satisfaction beyond pillow punching.

In the statement: "Many men do not feel safe enough to open and be vulnerable without a guarantee of full involvement by the woman," the words "woman" and "men" could be interchanged, as the problem is common to both sexes. Some of us thought that the range of human interaction in the article was limited to feminist and new-age stereotypes.

The "Jack and Jane" happy couple presented lots of problems for us. As one OR member put it: "It's bullshit. The language and the tone reek of childish simplicity." We found it too facile and not touching on the real pain and complexity of actual situations. Some thought, though, that it contained useful suggestions for approaching non-monogamy.

The assumption that we can attain truly human relationships in a fucked up, capitalist society is unrealistic because it discounts the real limits we're up against. Relationships can be improved but the horizons are defined and limited by the surrounding social situation. And one person said: "Interpersonal change by itself is liberalism; interpersonal change and social revolution is anarchism." Another felt that the article reduced politics to personal therapy and didn't make the necessary links with the outside world. We want to work towards better relationships not only because they're a desirable end in themselves but also because they may help us be more effective in actual revolutionary work.

Some ORers felt that Wyckoff is wrong in saying that good relationships don't have to involve pain and great struggle. "Yeah, sure, and the Social Revolution doesn't have to involve pain and great struggle either. Any human endeavor of beauty and inspired substance requires pain and great struggle for it's backbone and our search for a way around this will leave our politics as shallow as our relationships sometimes seem to be."

Everyone agreed that the article can't be read as a panacea but could be considered a possible model—"boring and simplistic" for some, but "useful and exciting" for others.

in every problematic situation.

But they don't have this success in isolation. Their friends are crucial support to them. When things get rough, they ask for help and meet with a friend who mediates at one of their regular bi-weekly home meetings. Jane and Jack have some separate friends who give them support and feedback about their individual crap. This community sure came in handy when they decided to act on their long-term interest in non-monogamy.

They made a deal to freely admit jealous and competitive feelings and ask for nurturing. They knew this lifestyle is not for everyone, and they had to see if it could work for them. This meant viewing this change as a process to be tried on in steps. They wanted to learn how to do it as they gained experience. Over time some agreements developed. They made involvements only with people who were not interested in a primary relationship, so it was clear they were not looking for

a mate or new partner. This was also intended to protect the new lover. They made their times with others as predictable as possible. They did not pursue each other's friends or enemies. They avoided being in each other's space with another lover. They were honest without going into too much hurtful detail. Over a long time they gradually grew comfortable with each other's occasional friend-lover. This arrangement met Jane and Jack's needs better than a closed marriage. But there are no set rules. We have to design our own.

Satisfying Bonding

WE require designs that permit full satisfaction of the needs we truly feel, not needs we have been taught to feel. Satisfying bonding can take many forms. Two women can love each other deeply and create a family connection with or without being lovers. They may prefer being celibate

or connecting sexually with other friends. A single parent and child may bond in a non-sexual partnership that fulfills both their needs. It's equally viable for some people to bond only with themselves and relish an independent lifestyle garnished with many friendships.

And it makes sense that we learn to end partnerships as friends. Maybe a separation period is necessary to make the transition, but why waste people we have good history with?

One interpersonal gymnastic trick that helps me is to straddle apparent contradictions. I like the dance in which I am totally accepting of who someone is while at the same time not tolerating his/her crap. The challenge is to tread the fine line between setting reasonable limits and demanding that someone live up to my expectations.

Tuned-in timing is another useful tool. A friend of mine could not understand why she

was having trouble with a lover. When she described their painful conversations, it was clear that her exquisite honesty bordered on aggression because his timing was so much slower than hers. It is possible to use techniques such as "no secrets" in a covert, hostile way. Part of cooperation is striking a compromise that respects the style and timing of both people.

Change or die is a fact of nature. Cooperative relating necessitates an openness to change, both in ourselves and in our friendships. Better to blurt out and make a mess than to build walls that isolate. Better to be clumsy and share your interest than to stay lonely. As we create new ways of being with each other the key lies in practice. We pay the dues for our mistakes, so we might as well get the benefits in lessons. But I firmly believe that it's worth it. Don't sell out to a gray, safe loneliness or despair. Loving is the most important contribution we can make to life.

Video death

By Rachel Sherban

WHEN they come home from work their eyes are red, sore and swollen; they have headaches and their backs hurt. They complain about dizziness, nausea, tiredness they can't shake. Many have symptoms of deteriorating eyesight, increasing shortsightedness and blurred vision. They worry about getting cataracts in their eyes; they're afraid of becoming infertile, or giving birth to children with birth defects.

Most of these workers are women. They work in offices in almost every industrialized country in the world. They operate a sophisticated product of microelectronic technology called, variously, a word processor, video display terminal (VDT), video display unit (VDU) or cathode ray tube (CRT).

VDTs are used widely in travel, insurance, banking, newspapers and printing, telecommunication industries—any industry that sends, receives or transforms information. Introduced about 5 years ago, today there are millions of the machines in operation even in small businesses where they're used for account-keeping or stock inventory.

A VDT consists of a keyboard, a visual display unit, a memory, a computer which contains complex electronic circuitry on a silicon chip about the size of a thumbnail, and a printer. The image of what is keyed into the memory is displayed on the screen; corrections and additions are made by further keyboarding. The text may be printed onto paper at the worker's station or somewhere else altogether so that she never sees the finished product. In some workplaces, such as the telephone company, information is stored and referred to again and again.

This handy piece of technology performs amazing feats—who has not experienced the speed with which a train clerk can check through several schedules or a bank clerk assess an account? But the price of space-age efficiency is turning out to be the health of the workers who operate it.

Increased Production

INFORMATION about the hazards of VDTs has been compiled by workers' health groups in North America, Great Britain and Europe. The Leeds Trade Union and Community Resource and Information (TUCRIC) Bulletin recently published a supplement which describes how VDTs damage workers' eyes: glare on the screen from reflected light and too-bright overhead lighting, the screen's noticeable flicker, small characters and above all, continuous use without breaks, add up to serious eyestrain and eye injury. TUCRIC's findings were echoed in November 1980, by a study conducted at the insistence of the Newspaper Guild by the National Institute of Safety and Health (NIOSH) in California.

These reports and others recommend regular breaks for users—e.g. 10 minutes off the machine each hour—and limited daily use. Journalists in West Germany and Switzerland have negotiated a four hour daily maximum; a bank workers' union in France has settled for five hours.

Demands for limited use of the machine

cut into its biggest selling point—increased production. While office costs have doubled over the past decade, office productivity has remained almost stagnant compared to other industries. Some VDT manufacturers promise increases of 400%. Once purchased, the capacity of the machine determines work patterns which generally consist of solid eight hour shifts, often two shifts a day.

To ensure maximum productivity, machines can be programmed to monitor everything a worker does—when she starts; when she stops to talk to a neighbour, go to the bathroom or make a personal phone call; how often she makes a mistake; how her work compares with others or with her own last week. The flow of work can also be completely controlled by the supervisor: a new operator at a telephone company in Winnipeg describing her aggravation at the continual flow of calls directed at her at 30-second intervals says that, at this point, simply answering a call on her own would be a relief.

Damage to Fetuses

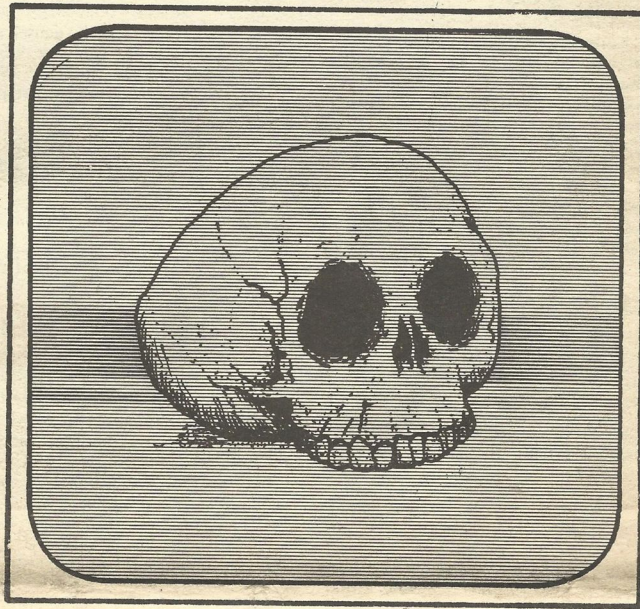
BECAUSE workers are virtually glued to the machine for hours at a time, they are vulnerable not only to the stress and demoralization of such close supervision, but also to the hazards of the machine. Along with eyestrain, fatigue, neck and back pain, the hazards include exposure to low levels of non-ionizing radiation in the form of microwaves. While leakage from the machines is often below the legal limits, the standards are being seriously challenged by workers in the U.S. and Canada. The allowable exposure levels in North America are far higher than in other countries.

Exposure to non-ionizing radiation at very low levels has been known to cause a particular kind of cataract in radar technicians. Now there are VDT workers who have developed the same kind of cataracts which greatly diminish eyesight.

In the spring of 1980, two young copy editors at the New York Times who sued for compensation when they developed microwave cataracts ran into the traditional obstacle course: manufacturers minimize or deny the dangers of radiation leakage; government standards are based on manufacturers' recommendations. The editors' machines were leaking all right, but not above the "allowable level." They lost the case.

Early in January 1981 a woman in Thunder Bay, Ontario who had worked on a VDT for a year and a half developed microwave cataracts, filed for compensation. If she wins, it will be a significant victory for workers, forcing a change in standards for occupational exposure to microwaves in Canada.

Studies done in Eastern Europe and in Sweden suggest that exposure to microwaves causes damage to fetuses. Again in Ontario, of seven pregnant VDT workers at the *Toronto Sun* who gave birth during a three-month period last year, four gave birth to children with abnormalities. The women's machines were tested for leakage at the current standards and given "a clean bill of health." In fact, the full extent of biological damage to human beings by low levels of microwaves is not yet known. It may be that no level is safe.



WORKERS are demanding changes. Two years ago 75 typists at the United Nations in New York walked off their jobs, refusing to use VDTs because of the physical stress and exposure to radiation. When 500 other workers joined them, the General Assembly was forced to continue a week longer than planned. It was big news at the U.N. though not at the New York Times which printed only a paragraph about the incident.

In many places where VDTs have been introduced, informal groups have formed for workers to compare experiences and share strategies. They are learning to challenge the charge that they are "hysterical women afraid of a new technology." Often different workplaces, unionized or not, support each other in generating a more informed position to deal with the health problems associated with VDTs.

They have learned that some machines are easier to work with than others. For example, those with larger screens are easier on the eyes, and detachable keyboards allow for adjustments in position which lessen back, neck and eyestrain. Workers can be protected from exposure to microwaves if the machines are shielded to prevent leakage and if the machines are separated to prevent multiplying the effects of radiation. Rigid maintenance of the machines is another essential protective measure.

As the evidence mounts, workers are conducting their own surveys, documenting changes in vision, and in general health. Some unions are employing their own eye specialists to monitor eye health. Recognition of the hazards of VDTs by employers will mean that some workers will need to be protected for their "vulnerability"—older workers, workers with less than perfect eyesight, and pregnant workers will be especially in danger, not only because their workplace is hazardous to their health, but because their employers will want to "protect" them right out of their jobs. Unions are already demanding transfers for these workers with no loss in privileges, seniority or pay.

THE struggle of VDT workers for a safe workplace is tied in with the fight

against automation. Manufacturers boast that one machine equals three secretaries. In Europe the machines are called job-killers. In West Germany it's been estimated that 40% of all office work is suitable for automation. This means that millions of jobs will be eliminated. And since the majority of clerical workers are women, it is their jobs that are in danger. As yet largely unorganized, these workers are not in line to benefit from union demands for job security.

Besides eliminating jobs, the introduction of new technology by management has a more invidious role. It puts more power into management's hands leaving the majority of workers, other than a small group of elite technicians, out of touch with the technology of the workplace. Furthermore, it de-skills clerical work taking even more information away from workers and opening the way for lower pay.

But the fight is not against the technology. The fight is to make the machines work for us, not for our employers. VDTs have the potential to make clerical jobs more interesting and less repetitive. Our work could be completed sooner, giving us more leisure time. The possibilities for information-sharing and communication are exciting.

The solution to the problems currently presented by the VDTs clearly lies in worker control. Workers who decide how to use the machines and for what purpose, workers who set their own work-pace and who choose machines with the best health and safety features will benefit from the technology. To make this vision a reality, we have to work together now to protect our health and our jobs.

For more info on the VDT fight write to: NYCOSH, P.O. Box 3285, Grand Central Station, N.Y., NY 10017 for "Health Protection for the Operators of VDTs & CRTs" \$1.00, or, TUCRIC, 29 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds for their supplement in VDTs. 5p. Share information with Women's Action On Occupational Health, VDT group, 150 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. Read Zapping of America, Paul Brodeur, Norton Press, 1978, about microwaves, and the cover-up by the government/industrial/military complex of their dangers.

Workers occupy B.C. Telephone Company

Operators dial

By Rosa Collette

The bosses cried *Anarchy*, and the mass media picked up on the theme. For once, they were on the right track. They were talking about the massive, six day occupation in early February of British Columbia's key communications network, the B.C. Telephone Co., by 11,000 members of the Telecommunications Workers Union.

For six days, until they marched out at the point of an injunction, the workers controlled and operated more than 20 installations over an area as large as California, Oregon and Washington combined. They moved in spontaneously out of frustration with the union-busting initiatives of a multi-national corporation (Owners: General Telephone and Electronics Corp. of New York), taking a first tentative step toward supplanting every form of external authority. They did it on their own, too, without the "help" of political groups of any stripe.

The move electrified an already highly-charged labour scene in a province which, since the early 20th century presence of anarcho-syndicalist unions like the Western Federation of Miners, the Industrial Workers of the World and the One Big Union, has enjoyed a tradition of militancy and solidarity on a scale unrivalled in North America. A wave of sabotage, mass secondary picketing and even a one-day general strike in selected towns and cities followed the occupation. The business and political establishment, alarmed by the prospects of a long hot summer, finally put pressure on B.C. Tel to come to terms with its workers.

The following text is adapted from the diary of one of the B.C. Tel occupiers, a directory assistance operator who had worked there for several months before the takeover.

Day 1

THIS is a vision beginning to work itself out in real life-size form. One day into this thing, and I'm tired, but compared to the positive sensations that are passing through this place, fatigue doesn't stand a chance. Imagine, walking onto the floor, ignoring management completely, deciding amongst ourselves what work needs to be done. We are the new managers at B.C. Tel.

Johanne and I go down to the building late at night to talk to our shop stewards. She's working graveyard, 11:30 p.m.-6 a.m., so I stay with her until just after midnight. Who will ever forget the look on management's faces when we tell them we are now in control, and their services are obviously no longer needed: astonishment, confusion, fear. They tell us, "You might as well go home, you're on strike and you're not getting paid." We say, "we're not on strike—we're taking over the building."

Graveyard is the first bunch to test the collective strength of directory assistance operators in our building. They're a bit nervous, but they have guts and see the night through. I imagine it's a slight shock to come to work and have your co-workers tell you not to listen to the supervisors, and if the cops come in, just unplug your headset, lie down on the floor, and offer no resistance if they try to bodily remove you. But these are not just thoughts or dreams to sleep by, but an episode in the struggle (fight) for workers' control.

Finally, I go to the Quadra (women's bar) and get drunk, a little.

Day 2

WORKING today is absolutely wonderful. It might be nice if management paid us for our admirable political exercise, but we will soon see that our rewards aren't monetary. I'm disappointed management hasn't been physically removed yet; they have this uncanny ability to throw you off balance.

The guys from downstairs—switchers, technicians, maintenance people—keep coming upstairs and offering to throw them out. I appreciate their sentiment, but we operators have to control and run our department ourselves. They'll be out soon enough. Once they go out, they're not being let back in; there's only one left to go.

One of the first things we do is open the blinds. We're on the tenth floor in downtown Vancouver, and the view of the mountains and the sea is naturally beautiful when you're allowed to see it, especially some of those crimson sunsets over English Bay. So now we have natural light; out go the ugly, glaring fluorescents.

The whole atmosphere is so much more relaxed, even though we're taking more calls, working longer hours, but we're doing it because it's our choice (it's also not a bad way to win a collective agreement). Usually, we're supposed to take a call in 30 seconds or under, but we don't need those oppressive quotas now. Our stand is Super Service—and good service and profits don't mix together.

It's the first time I can talk freely with customers without being legitimately paranoid that my calls are being

monitored. It makes an incredible difference about how you feel about your job. I like talking to people on the phone. I like knowing what the weather's like in Mississippi, or what's expected for the fishing season up north. We talk about the occupation, their jobs, their phone bill, the weather, authority, politics, nationalizations, their unions. Marvellous. This is the stuff that makes or breaks a job; it makes the time go by faster, it reduces the level of alienation.

I've made a few friends in other departments. I get to go on an unofficial tour of B.C. Tel. Then the whole thing hits me like a ton of bricks. We have the whole show, all telephone and radiophone systems in B.C., media, satellites, cable; it's mind-boggling.

We're finally getting to meet operators from other Lower Mainland (Greater Vancouver) centres; we're all in this occupation together. We have a beer together tonight and trade off management and company tales. A toast to cooperation.

We're all flying. Sailing on pure adrenalin. It's like we own the bloody thing.

Day 3

WE'RE starting to get a clearer picture of how all these occupations got started. First was Nanaimo (on Vancouver Island): 26 people were laid off for "underproductivity" (slow downs), so 150 workers seized the switch-room and took over the entire building. That was Tuesday—four days ago.

Then on Thursday morning, a shop steward who works at the purchasing and supply centre on Tenth Avenue in Burnaby (a Vancouver suburb) showed up at work with an anti-Tel T-shirt. Management told her to go home and change. She checked with the TWU; they said "refuse." The Tenth Avenue buildings were also taken over, this time by 700 workers.

From there, it was like an epidemic, contagious, like wildfire, the word being spread through the company's own lines. We control 20 centres in every part of the province, small towns, remote islands, mountaintops, the big city (Vancouver)—11,000 TWU members in all.

We'd heard the union had been considering occupations for quite a while; they were just waiting for the right moment. Only they had never considered it on this scale. For instance, our building, 768 Seymour, wasn't part of the original plan; it's the nerve centre for all B.C. They thought it was too big, too complicated, with all the overseas circuits, the rack rooms, the major switching equipment for the entire province. But the workers, 1,000 of us who work in this building, felt differently.

The idea of the occupations is to show that the union, the workers, can run things efficiently. We had control of all equipment, which is probably billions of dollars. All equipment is to be left alone, undamaged. Everything as normal, except we don't collect phone bills. There is to be absolutely no violence.

The company is holding us in contempt, and has filed a court injunction against us. We aren't to leave the building willingly. The RCMP (Mounties) or Vancouver city police will have to carry us out—passive resistance. We are staying in until we get a contract.

It's 7 a.m., Saturday morning; the calls aren't pouring in yet—we'll be swamped in an hour, though. I can even drink a coffee while taking calls. What a treat; too bad it isn't standard practice.

Day 4

EVEN though we're trying to work our regular hours, most women are working overtime, 10 and 12 hours. It also means we're a lot more flexible with our breaks. People who are friends from work are finally getting to have lunch or coffee together. It's very hard to get to know people while you're working because we have no control over the number of incoming calls, and the system is so programmed and computerized that the number of workers and calls are supposed to match. This means we're supposed to be occupied approximately 97 per cent of our working time—between 650 and 800 calls per shift. That means no waiting time between calls, which virtually prohibits any fluid conversation among operators, or even giving your mind a rest. So once in a while I would unplug from the board to regain some sanity. This is absolutely forbidden by management.

We're also making friends from other departments. Guys from downstairs are coming up to help out and learn our jobs. We're actually shortstaffed for the number of calls, because company threats have succeeded in keeping some oper-



Who will ever forget the look on management's faces when we tell them we are now in control, and their services are obviously no longer needed.

ators off the job.

This skill-sharing proves to be one of the most valuable experiences of our occupation. The company strategy all along has been to train its management personnel to do all our jobs, so they can scab in time of strike. Now we're turning the tables on them. B.C. Tel, being no different from any other employer, pays women the least and tries to work us under the most rigid and nasty working conditions.

Now guys who didn't take our demands seriously before are changing their minds; after actually doing our jobs, they realize we're overworked and underpaid. We let these guys listen in on our calls, then go through the basics: how to key in, how to talk to the customers (you can't let them intimidate you if you can't find a listing, etc.).

Then they take over a board themselves. Sometimes it's like the comedy hour in there. I mean, how often in your life do you get to see men looking vulnerable and naive, let alone being trained by women? All of this is taken in good humour by all concerned; it isn't a matter of revenge.

WE'RE all flying. We're going through urns of coffee and tons of cheezies. Sailing on pure adrenalin. It's like we own the bloody thing.

During our breaks, a few of us go on a tour of the building. It's shocking if you're not familiar with electronics and the computer age—in fact, slightly terrifying. These computer terminals vary in size, have thousands of gadgets and lights and all work in microseconds. A lot of jobs entail watching them, lots of troubleshooter work available. And to think, we have all of it—not only do telephone signals and switches come through these buildings, but so do TV and radio signals, banking terminals, muzak . . .

Finally, we get to see what other operators' jobs entail. Everyone agrees: we're doing just fine without management, no speedups, signs blinking on a video screen. Instead of "speed up, please" our messages read SOLIDARITY FORWARD, WE SHALL OVERCOME, and "Good morning TWUers, we're doing great, we are the workers."

direct action



Top: Tel workers end occupation after five days of working without bosses. Below: "We don't need management..."

Everyone is answering their calls a little differently. I've heard everything from "TWU Repair," "Directory under workers' control," and "Union supplied directory" to "Hello, and where are you calling from?"

Back upstairs, finishing off the last few hours. We're pretty busy. A rumour's floating around that management is being let back in. Minutes later, two supervisors come in. We're all just fuming; their very presence has the capacity to fuck things up. Even though they don't do anything in particular, but just hang around, they somehow shake our confidence momentarily. They're "sympathetic" types; they sail right into our coffee room to get hot water or a coffee, and say "Hi." It's slightly unnerving, and people answer back politely.

This is making me real edgy. I go downstairs to Radio and talk to a couple of operators; they are pissed off, too. A couple of women talk about withdrawing support if the union is going to keep flip-flopping with management.

The union's position is that management is freaking out and making statements to the press that we are doing vandalism and damaging equipment, so Clark (union president) made a concession and said, okay, a few can go in, for observation purposes only.

They send in management from all over the Lower Mainland. Before we know it, 35 of them are crawling all over. They're stacking them up on the operators—floors where virtually no men work. Yet, it's mostly men who made the decision to let the management types in.

So Marian and I go downstairs, where there are about 30 guys controlling the lobby and the door. And do we have an airing! We are logical, rational and controlled, and make absolutely 100 per cent sense, even if I do say so myself. For

instance: there are now actually more supervisors than usual on the floor, and people are responding to their social conversation, which undermines our control; it's a generally uncomfortable environment; one of them actually tried to answer the phone, and I had to put a customer on hold and run for the phone; management has no right to see us running the show when we are so short-handed and disorganized; and how come operators, who have to deal with direct supervision constantly, were never consulted on the matter?

We walk back to the elevator very satisfied. A lot of guys are on our side—that's clear from their comments. I return to work, writing a bulletin and taking calls simultaneously—proof that I know how to do my job well. I give it to the shop stewards and other operators for input.

I've been working for ten hours now. My eyes are killing me. I want to rip them out of their sockets. A person can only work so long on these wretched machines. Time to take off.

At midnight I go to a party with Marion and Susan K. I see the gang, but mostly I need sleep, so home to a bath and bed.

Day 5

SIX a.m., and I'm here for my regular Sunday morning special. I only got to sleep at 3 a.m. last night, and I need something to dull the pain. Things are still pretty slow, so I get some time off, and eat cold pizza and drink black machine coffee to wake up. It sort of works. We hear that some women aren't coming because the usual crowd of 20-30 guys are in the front lobby, and that's intimidating. A bunch of us go downstairs to balance things out, greet the 9 a.m. shift, and make sure nobody gets harassed.

While I'm working, I suddenly see Rose, from my old home town. She's about my mum's age, but her kids and my family grew up together. Her son Ricky was the mysterious, daring one who'd take a freighter to Africa and send a postcard from the Ivory Coast eight months later. Rose has been working in the North Van centre; we see each other across the room at the same time; both of us unplug and go for coffee. Things are like that: magical, and happening real fast.

Experience can be the best teacher! So solidarity—another bullet in the iron heart of B.C. Tel.

Today's the big day: TWU's organizing a big media tour. All radio stations, newspapers, TV, the big labour boys. The signs on the front door say, CO-OP TEL: UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT—NO MANAGEMENT ALLOWED.

Everything has to look ship-shape for the tour. Everything is cleaned up, garbage collected from the coffee rooms, our hair brushed, the whole bit. It's like it's our one big chance, all nice and shiny for inspection by "the generals." Extra phonings are made to guarantee that people come in and we look like we're fully staffed (ha ha). Most of us are on double overtime by this point, so we're all tense and dying of anticipation.

Reporters are trekking in video equipment, tape recorders, microphones, portapaks. Next thing we know, questions, camera shots, interviews. Hello world! See how TWU members are competent, friendly and even give good service! The reporters' questions really get us going: Why do you have to put up red flags when you go to the bathroom? How often are you unknowingly monitored?

We talk about rules and more rules, long hours and lousy working conditions, and why we're doing this, how we can win, solidarity and community.

One sharp-eared reporter hears me say "TWU directory assistance—under workers' control." A microphone is shoved down my throat, then a thousand others. "What does this occupation mean to you?" That we don't need management. The atmosphere's lively; we work things out through cooperation, not by answering to so-called supervisors. "What's the public's response?" Great! They love us. Everyone hates B.C. Tel. Don't you know your phone rates have just been increased?

I take a break for supper—more pizza. I come back just in time for the bomb threat. Run down ten flights of stairs. There we all are out of the building because some yahoo on Seymour Street put a dime in a pay phone and called us up. A shop steward dislocates her shoulder running down the stairs. Can she claim workers' compensation?! I have visions of a hundred management scabs rushing the doors and locking us out as we helplessly gape from the other side of the street. But in a short time we're back inside the building.

LATE tonight, near midnight, a notice goes up on the front door: No supervisors are allowed from now on.

People from all floors had been complaining about the supervisors; we feel good about our part in having the decision changed. But this brings up the whole question of just how do decisions get made in an occupation?

The general rule is: everybody continues in the job they were doing, and things should run more-or-less normally, except that we can relax a bit and not obey the psychological pressures of time and management. But what happens when a decision is needed, when a crisis arrives? Some people feel comfortable with the old ways: putting up a flag to go to the bathroom, asking someone in "authority" for direction. But that's not good enough in this new situation; we now have an opportunity to stop and think and figure out how to run our workplaces according to our needs. For instance, what's the best time for people with kids to come to work? Before the occupation, the boss decided; for the last four days, people have been deciding individually, switching their hours around, sometimes even bringing their kids along. But if the occupation is to continue, we are going to have to deal more seriously with this problem—we need collective action on childcare. In fact, we are going to have to develop a whole range of new forms for collective decision-making: general meetings of workers on each shift, floor, department, building; a flood of bulletins and other information; creative ways of involving people in directing their own lives.

WELL, the Supreme Court has decided we're in contempt of court, and orders us to vacate. Who would expect the State to rule in favour of the workers? Still, some are surprised... the union leadership has been acting as if they were confident we would sail through this and possibly be commended by His Lordship for our admirable actions. Even the business community is on our side, aren't they?

By now, we're really getting the hang of this occupation business. I have a really great conversation this morning with an operator from Nanaimo. Me: "Hi operator, how's your occupation going, where are you calling from?" Her: "Nanaimo. Just great." Me: "You're our inspiration from Day One." Her: "Yep, just one big happy union." We're really getting into it, discussing the injunction, morale, etc., when the customer pipes in: "Look, I really support you, but I have to make this call." Us: "Don't worry, you're not paying for this call, B.C. Tel is." Absolutely wonderful, unforgettable moments. Conversations like that between operators would have been grounds for suspension under management rules.

More and more guys are coming up to learn the ropes. A few of them go on TV stating they now support equal pay for us, and that our working conditions have to be rewritten. People are really spilling their guts out to the media, since the court decision came out. Anger, sadness, frustration, disappointment expressed on video... B.C. Tel's petty rules: no hair combing when you go to the bathroom, your name recorded every time you go to the bathroom, operators constantly supervised by people and machines we have no control over.

We watch the 11 p.m. news and see our sister and brother workers leaving their respective buildings. The news states that the occupations began because people were laid off for unproductivity, then it shows occupiers playing cards and drinking coffee. What a joke, after five days of hard work, occupying and running and providing services.

The business agents and other paid officers come up at 11 p.m. and tell us that instead of passive resistance and being carried out by the cops, we are to walk out tomorrow at noon, greeted by a rally of the B.C. Federation of Labour and its affiliates. They also drop valuable bits of news, like the Nanaimo, Nelson and Vernon locals freaked out when passive resistance was dropped. I don't know what the process was for coming to that decision, but I think there will be some examination of it later. Because the leadership had led everyone to be so optimistic about the court ruling, there is no formalized opposition to defy the decision or the injunction.

Sadly, we keep on working, knowing that tomorrow is our last day. About 11:30 p.m., someone (a union rep. from somewhere) comes around with B.C. Fed leaflets. We call up all the operators we know to tell them about the rally and to get them to come. That's fairly successful. Then Sara and I take some of the leaflets and go out posterizing.

Day 6

SO this is it. Our last morning of bliss. Even though we're going out at noon, we're all still up. I feel so much strength and solidarity with everybody. The sun's shining and beams are streaming across the room—a magical atmosphere is created. Someone's watering the plants.

A voice through the loudspeakers: a telegram extending solidarity from Men Against Rape is read, we all give a clap and a cheer.

The press is here again for its last sweep; an air of anticipation fills the place. Customers are asking all sorts of questions; the telephone numbers they want are almost incidental to the conversations.



POLAND

"It may not be accurate to say Solidarity is non-authoritarian although there is a conscious and determined effort to operate in this way."

WE have recently been treated to the curious spectacle of the western straight press—inadvertently—supporting a workers' struggle against the State. Predictably the Polish workers have been portrayed as anti-socialists striving for a more "American" way of life including "democracy," "free" enterprise, "free" trade unions and religious "freedom." There has been a deliberate refusal to recognize the complexity and the uniqueness of the events, as well as many of their implications.

The Polish working class movement is anti-capitalist—whether it be State capitalism or the western version. Many workers consider themselves Marxists; a few have anarchist ideals. The union Solidarity has repeatedly stated (as did the Inter-factory Strike Committee, MKS, previously) that it is not seeking the restoration of the means of production to private ownership. There is a continual—though much hampered—effort to organize the union from the bottom up. Also overlooked are their efforts to *equalize*, not only increase wages. A paper produced by the Gdansk shipyard workers during the strike stressed, "It is better to ask for an increase of a definite amount, say 1000 zl. and not for a percentage increase, which would benefit most those who already earn more."

It is a mistake to compare Solidarity to western unions and their goals. The British socialist journal *Solidarity* points out that the term "free trade union" is a label devised by western media and is "a crude attempt at pre-emptive recuperation. It quite wrongly conveys associations with the 'free' world, the 'free' enterprise system." The MKS demand was for

independent, self-managed unions which implies a decentralized organization with power at the base.

STRIKES and rebellions in Poland are by no means a recent development. In 1956 massive anti-Russian demonstrations in Poznan brought Wladyslaw Gomułka into power despite Soviet objections. A number of reforms were made including granting approval of voluntary religious education in schools, making collective farming non-compulsory, and allowing 5,000 workers' councils to be set up. Predictably, all reforms were soon eroded and Gomułka gradually buried the effectiveness of the workers' councils in deadening bureaucracy.

A Revolutionary Socialist Manifesto was written in Poland in 1964 by Karol Modzelewski, and by Jacek Kuron who is now active in Solidarity and has been recently arrested. The book explains how the workers' councils were eroded in '56 and it seems to be a warning to the workers there today:

"In the immediate post-October months, the new leadership of the bureaucracy was completely deprived of the means of crushing the revolution by force. The only chance it had of retaining power was through the mobilization of confidence in, and authority for, the new leadership. It had to win hegemony over the masses, make concessions and manoeuvre till such time as economic stabilization would lessen the tension of the social crisis and the apparatus of power would regain its repressive strength and control over society. The only chance of expanding the revolution was to propose a working class program and to organize a movement around it opposed to the rule of the liberal bureaucracy.

"At this decisive moment, the left not only failed to put forward such a program and organize itself... but it lent support to the liberal bureaucracy, the chief anti-revolutionary force... In this way, the left contributed to maintaining the power of the bureaucracy, and by the same token, it prepared its own political death and the defeat of the revolution.

"In the spring of 1957... the leadership of the bureaucracy was able... openly to condemn the concept of expanding the Workers' Councils and convoking a national congress of councils as an 'anarchistic Utopia.' By the autumn of 1957... the police [were] crushing a strike by streetcar workers in Lodz, then came... dispersing mass demonstrations in the streets of Warsaw, abolishing freedom of the press... and, finally, in the spring of 1958, the subordination of the moribund Workers' Councils to the control of the Party apparatus... In this way, all the achievements of October which exceeded the framework of an internal reform of the system were liquidated and the October Left was finally crushed."

In 1968 there were student riots but they had little workers' support. In 1970 there were more workers' riots over a 30% rise in food prices. Gomułka mobilized the army and the workers were defeated after hundreds of deaths. Gomułka was then replaced by Gierek in a new bid for reforms.

Gierek initiated massive loans from the West in an attempt to boost the economy. The attempt backfired and in 1976 food prices rose 70%. Again the workers took to the streets where many were beaten and thousands were jailed. The

Self-Defense Committee (KOR) has been active, largely underground, in the last four years (see OR#6) and was instrumental in initiating the present revolt.

THE onset of the strike was, in one way or another, helped. But it very soon became a widespread, self-managed movement. . . . Activists would emerge spontaneously, day by day. After a while the preliminary work wasn't important any longer."

Konrad Bielinski, KOR member (from *Solidarity*)

On August 15th shipyard, factory and transport workers were on strike throughout Poland. Some were simply concerned with wage demands; others, such as the railway workers in Lublin, were calling for free elections of union officials. All had agreed on two decisions: no drinking, no street demonstrations, whatever happened. As the KOR paper *Robotnik* (Worker) later explained: "The authorities were waiting for us to go on the streets where they could denounce us as hooligans and beat us with truncheons. So instead we just sat quietly by our silent machines."

In the late afternoon at Lenin shipyard in Gdansk the directors faced 110 shop-floor delegates and members of the strike committee. Lech Walesa, who had been on a 1970 strike committee at the shipyard and had turned up again to help with this strike, was one of the most vocal. Loudspeakers which worked both ways connected this group to the rank and file outside. Disagreement prevailed.

The following morning the factory set up an independent union and returned to negotiations to find a new offer from the directors. The strike committee and the crowd outside did not want to accept it, yet most of the shop-floor delegates voted to accept. Walesa asked that they hold out for a written guarantee of no recriminations but otherwise it seemed to be settled.

When they returned outside things began to change. Walesa was cheered for not giving in to compromise and delegations from other factories began to arrive saying, "If you go back no one anywhere else will get a thing." Finally Walesa got up saying: "We haven't the right to rat on the others. We must continue the strike in solidarity, until everybody wins." New delegates were elected and many who were unsure about the new course of action went home. About half stayed on.

Workers in other plants were excited by the news and it was decided to form a central strike committee, the MKS. That night delegations from all over arrived at the shipyard and they drew up a list of demands including the right to strike, freedom of expression, representation of "all socio-political currents" in elections and an end to the privileges given police and party. Many were highly excited by these decisions; others were cautious or frightened of government retaliation.

ALL that individuals can do is elaborate, clarify and propagate ideas corresponding to the popular instinct and contribute their incessant efforts to the revolutionary organization of the natural power of the masses, . . . the rest can and should be done by the masses themselves."

Bakunin

Kuron has referred to Lech Walesa as a "brilliant symbol," a rallying point, yet at the same time he and many others consider Walesa too accommodating in his dealings with the State. Walesa is extremely moderate by anarchist standards; he wants to make changes slowly and to remain faithful to the church; he does not want violent confrontation or to overthrow the government. He tries hard to influence others to exercise restraint. Yet his importance has been overrated. The crucial point is that while he is aware of his leadership position he does not entirely identify with that position or utilize that power. He speaks, rather, as a determined and passionate individual, aware that his views may not prevail and, that he may be wrong. Excerpts from a few of his addresses show some of this attitude:

"You must stay with your factories, places of work and Inter-factory committees, but do not let them tell you what to do and do not leave the responsibility in the hands of someone from Solidarity so that he ends up telling you what to do. . . . You must not believe in anyone, you must believe in your own strength. Otherwise, in a few years time, people will say: 'So what did he achieve, this Lech? He promised a whole lot and look what happened.'

"I'm against direction, against centralization, against decision imposed from above. . . . Each factory and institution, each region, every town, knows best what its needs are. You alone right there at the bottom can say what needs to be improved and how to do it. . . .

"Inside the trade unions there is no place for alters and no place for Holy Mass. . . . In Solidarity there are Party people and non-Party people, believers and non-believers and people of other faiths. We must respect this and not have Holy Mass inside the trade unions.

"I am only here for the present. Truly, later on, I don't want to continue. . . for the next few years I am not the right person.

"Now we don't believe anybody. Don't believe Lech either. Believe in yourselves."

The system proposed in *A Revolutionary Socialist Manifesto* is not one which can be labeled simply; it consists of some Marxist and some anarchist ideology. The structure proposed is akin to anarcho-syndicalism, and also to Council Communism, yet curiously more complex and less defined than either. It involves replacing the Communist Party with Workers' parties, Workers' unions, and Workers' councils, all managed from the bottom up, all autonomous and independent of each other, and all in some undefined way running everything. Parallel to this are to be a similar system of peasants' organizations.

Recent events have perhaps hinted at similar goals and yet the immediate goals have been primarily reformist. They are not, however, reformist because of a lack of awareness of libertarian thoughts and aims. Rather it seems that the intelligentsia, knowledgeable of anarchist as well as other Leftist ideologies, are quite willing to (as they do to some extent with the Church) accept and reject what they please and come up with a uniquely Polish approach.

The most obvious threat which could limit the rebelliousness of the Polish workers is that of Soviet retaliation. To an outsider a Soviet military movement appears to be possible at any moment—yet the Polish workers seem to be curiously unconcerned. When it was suggested once to a group of strikers that the situation could become dangerous they reacted with surprise and "No, no, don't worry."

IT is not clear that the Poles accept without question all the authority of the Church. Undeniably their views, their private lives, their culture are imbued with Catholic thought. Yet it appears that at least some are able to use what they want from Catholicism—including its ability to unify the population—and reject what does not suit them.

The anarchist paper *Freedom* reports that "one morning at Gdansk shipyard the Party newspaper printed a call from the head of the Polish Catholic Church for the strikers to return to work. The strikers were unanimous in their opposition to the statement and began questioning his religious authority." It is a small incident yet the strikers repeatedly ignored statements by the Church which they didn't agree with.

The influence of the Church cannot go unchallenged and on some levels must be rigorously opposed. Kuron and Modzelewski in *Revolutionary Socialist Manifesto* speak about the collaboration of Church and State—even in Poland where they are supposedly antagonistic: "Of considerable importance are rightist groups and currents, with the Church hierarchy in the lead, attached to the old reactionary symbols.



"Very soon the strike became a widespread, self-managed movement. . . . Activists would emerge spontaneously, day by day."

"The bureaucratic system provokes natural antagonism and hate among the masses. It identifies itself with socialism but ruthlessly suppresses all opposition from the Left, thus creating conditions favourable for spreading rightist ideologies among the masses. People look for ideological symbols to express their protest against the existing dictatorship and, in the absence of opposition from the Left expressing their real interests, they find the old symbols of the traditional Right. In this manner, the bureaucratic dictatorship aids the traditional Right and even enters into agreements based on collaboration with them as with agreements with the Church hierarchy."

None of this is to excuse the early prominent religious displays but to examine their significance. It is clear that some Poles are acutely aware of the problems associated with the Church, and others are at least beginning to question.

THE straight press is strictly confined to authoritarian and bureaucratic terms of reference. Thus we find Walesa referred to as a seemingly self-appointed "leader" of Solidarity, rather than a delegate by popular support; the organization is referred to as a "free trade union" rather than an "independent, self-managed union;" a plea for restraint is called a "ban on unauthorized strikes."

It may not be accurate to say Solidarity is non-authoritarian although there is a conscious and determined effort to operate in this way. Some of the moderates would prefer a little less local initiative yet the strength at this level seems to be growing rather than becoming "more manageable."

For a while it appeared that Solidarity might create its own hierarchy but it now seems the rank and file are learning to trust their own initiative. Jan Litinski, an editor of *Robotnik*,

explains: "Having lived for 35 years in a totalitarian state it was hard to learn that one could defend oneself without seeking refuge behind authority."

The group knew that it was faced with a unique opportunity and also knew of the possible dangers. This awareness and the resulting disagreement continued throughout the strikes and continue now.

The demands were reworked a number of times and modified. The one thing they all agreed on was that it was essential to ensure the survival of the autonomous organizations after the strikes. In late August, at the height of this first wave of strikes, 600,000 had stopped work.

During a new wave of strikes in September delegates from 35 interfactory workers' committees and over 100 single factory groups formed a loose confederation which at this point included about 3,000,000 workers.

In November, two people were arrested for having passed on a document from the prosecutor-general's office which detailed the State's plans to crack down on the opposition. A general strike was called in Warsaw to demand their release. Strikes protesting government corruption brought the province of Bielsko Biala to a halt in early February.

Many other issues were fought over including the right to form an independent farm union. At last count Solidarity claimed something over 10,000,000 members, close to a third of the population.

WHEN asked to explain the nationalistic and independent Polish character, a Polish woman stated: "We can only be compared with the Irish." A Western diplomat who had served in Poland put it differently: "The Poles are a bunch of anarchists."

This description gets tossed around in the press while many anarchists are highly critical of the Polish attempts at revolt.

It is true that at this point the changes have been reformist in nature. The concept of government itself has not been challenged, as exemplified by their focus on obtaining the legal right to strike and thereby giving credibility to government authority. They have not challenged all aspects of authority or even all aspects of the State and they remain tied to wage work. The Detroit libertarian paper *Fifth Estate* stated: "What underscores the movement's defeat is that a solution was even thought of in union terms—a desire for a greater selling price of human labour." And the British anarchist paper *Black Flag* commented that "by seeking legitimacy from the government which had historically repressed them, they acknowledged the right of those rulers to continue to oppress them."

Other criticisms focus on the failure to challenge the authority of the Church. During the early strikes Catholic masses were held in the shipyard.

At the slightest sign of a bureaucratic tendency in the union or of authoritarianism on the part of Walesa the criticism comes fast and hard. And rightly so. Yet this criticism must be thoughtful and any anarchist "dogma" carefully examined in the process.

This can be partially explained by the fact that the current Polish situation is different than others in which the Soviets brought in tanks. In Czechoslovakia in '68 an anti-Russian movement was beginning to filter downward to the grass roots. It was easy then for the Soviets to replace those at the top and stop the process. In Poland of course the movement is broadbased. Yet mass support alone should not in itself make the Poles so confident: they are, after all, unarmed. This support, though, has spread to some extent to within the Polish army and it appears that the Poles believe it has also spread beyond their borders—perhaps even within the ranks of the Russian and other Warsaw pact armies. While this may seem naively optimistic, it is a view put forward by Kuron and Modzelewski: "the possibilities of armed intervention on the part of the Soviet bureaucracy will not be measured by the number of tanks and planes but by the degree of tension of class conflicts within the USSR."

This would suggest that the restrained approach of the Poles—downplaying militancy, street demonstrations and violent confrontation—is not primarily aimed at keeping the Soviet leaders from retaliating—this provocation has already been considerable—but in order to build and ensure massive popular support from workers everywhere. They may also be quietly examining and hoping to build up the willingness of Western workers and militants to offer armed support.

If this analysis is correct, then what we are witnessing is not an attempt at revolution but conscious preparation for revolution, and we should hesitate before crying "reformist."

TO change the existing social order, to challenge all existing authority—and win—without a vanguard party, and with military threat so near, requires a powerful, confident and informed population. The Polish people are learning broad-based self-organization and rapidly building their own strength. As *Black Flag* has said: "The power of the experience of large numbers of people collectively taking matters into their own hands is not to be underestimated because that experience creates a dynamic which far surpasses any written set of demands." This mass determination and a strong support network are the only possible defense against the military machine.

Criticism and discussion serve a purpose throughout all stages of a struggle or revolt. But when and if the situation reaches a crisis all opportunities must be utilized to supply support—in words, in support strikes, in funding, in arms, in demonstrations, in force.

We wait to be able to participate in revolt yet in fact must create those opportunities ourselves. That participation is limited only by a hesitant imagination—for if the convictions are strong, the responses clear and appropriate, for if the support is backed by determination and vitality, "the rest can and should be done by the masses themselves."

Life on the razor's edge

REFLECTIONS ON POLAND

By K. McTigue

I DREAMED about the Polish strikers last night. Not surprising—the news has been filling the front pages of newspapers, each story marked by a photo.

The pictures show them listening to each other's speeches; reaching for the striker-run newspapers and shouting the news of government concessions; leaning easily on fences to talk with supporters bringing food and news; or just sitting, looking resolute and gazing with clear-eyed and unselfconscious pride directly into the camera.

So there are the Polish workers with their current battle. And the question that forms itself as I look at the photos and stories spread out in front of me, is this: Why is it that their struggle looks so much more noble than our own?

Not being in the habit of worshipping "The Workers" as the exclusive movers and shakers in the realm of revolutionary change, the question puzzles me. I begin by defining "us," to find "our struggle." In another time, my sense of "us" would be large. It would include, here in Spain, the people fighting against military service, against censorship laws, against Spain's entry into NATO. It would include the women and men fighting, here as elsewhere, for a more feminist world, for equality for gays, for the right to abortion and cheap birth-control.

"Us" would mean fighters against racism and the persistent re-emergence of fascism. It would mean the people working against the absurd spread of nuclear power, from the farming people of southern France hurling insults and dung at surveying crews, to the occupiers around the world, to the continuous anonymous sabotage of uncompleted plants here in Spain.

In another time all of the "good guys," as I define them, would make up my "us"—all the old battlers for Right against Might. But in this time and context, everything else is flooded out by an awareness of the world's fast lurches toward disaster. Therefore my "us," for now, is made up of those people who share this awareness and are trying to do something about it. Again then: looking at the faces of these Polish workers, why does their struggle look so much more noble than ours?

True, they're demanding the fundamentals of immediate life: enough to eat, enough work, less bureaucracy, freedoms of speech, assembly, association. In demanding these things they're demanding control over their lives—something most of us cheer whenever and wherever it happens.

"The fundamentals of immediate life," I wrote. I compare this workers' struggle with the struggle that is ours. What could possibly be more fundamental, more immediate, than attempting to avert annihilation?

We sense ourselves on the razor-edge these days, so delicate and deadly a place to even walk near, and yet here we are astride, carried by the force of generations and left here with precious little freedom of movement. Most of us have lived our entire lives so far with a sense of destruction always whispering just below the conscious level, a sense that's grown stronger over the years until now it tends to scream out in a panic.

"Destruction." We give it other names too, like "holocaust" and "apocalypse." All of them describe what we fear and fight against, but they're vague enough that they help us not think too specifically of what's coming.

Where will the millions of souls be who die in the first blast? How will the other millions live in the period it takes them to slowly rot? Is the time close (today? tomorrow?)? Is there an area of the world that might be spared? If so, should we go there or stay here and keep working against it? How many of us will live through the first (second, third) flashes long enough to realize the horror?

And what about these men, these ludicrous, power-drunk men, who even now, as I sit here eye to eye with the calm-looking Polish workers, are capable of loosing the madness, pushing us all over the edge for good, and then trotting off to their pre-ordained shelters to maintain "order" and "continuity" while our world (OUR world) disintegrates?

The questions, like the times, are numbing. But they put a name to the eventuality that we, with our puny islands of human strength and sanity, are trying to change.



Strikers in Gdansk occupy Lenin Shipyards in bid for freedom.

And no, we don't look as noble as the Gdansk workers. In fact, we tend to look ridiculous when the camera catches us. Look: there's a group of us climbing the fence at Lockheed; here you see another group sitting on the railroad tracks at Rocky Flats to stop the transport of nuclear waste; over there's a group blocking access to Lawrence Livermore Labs where they plant the seeds of the nuclear bombs.

In the Southwest U.S. you see us sitting in, rallying, blocking to prevent the MX missiles from plowing under this corner of the world. In the Black Hills we're standing with Native Americans (and in Australia, with Aborigines) to stop uranium mining. All over the U.S. we've been seen in front of post offices, urging 19-year-olds not to register for the draft.

And all over the world, in horrified tones, we walk, we call out, we organize, we write, think about the uncontrolled militancy around us, the U.S. government's new nuclear "strategy," the juxtaposition of this "strategy" against the nuclear war that has almost come upon us three times in one year: due to computer error. Due to computer error.

Really, we don't look at all noble, do we? I think it's because, in addition to the dragon we hope to slay, we're always plagued by another, more subtle one: disbelief. Disbelief that flies in the face of all evidence, disbelief that results in an insular indifference. Disbelief that, even among our own ranks, makes the people that are "us" feel just a little silly.

The Gdansk workers capture the imagination because they're fighting for the thinkable, the vital freedoms that everyone relates to. Who wants to diminish those freedoms by putting them next to the one thing—our extinction—that makes them irrelevant?

Better to believe the leaders as they keep on blathering, even now in the face of an undisguised first-strike policy, about how a nuclear war will never happen because both sides consider it "unthinkable." Better not to ask how nuclear war can be unthinkable with so many megatons of nuclear destruction sitting on the doorstep, breeding more every day. (Stare down the barrel of a loaded shotgun and don't think about the probability of it going off.) Better to obey the implicit command of the experts and *make* nuclear war unthinkable by simply refusing to think of it.

Look out your window now: are the kids playing in the yard? Has the cat found a sunny spot to sleep in? Can you hear a thunder-storm rolling in? Is there a bird singing within earshot? A fly humming around the room looking for a window?

Everything is so normal! Nothing threatens; no opaque shadow looms on the horizon. Better to leave it like that: don't dig too deeply, don't think too hard of the implications of each day's news. Deny the possibility, deny even the thought; so there are some crazy alarmists running around, so what? Every generation has its characters.

It's easy to turn in a little circle, like a dog as it lies down to sleep, and wrap it all up, send it away. And it's a hell of a battle to shake ourselves awake again, because to be aware, to be awake, is to have to acknowledge not only impending apocalypse, but also how achingly little time, and how pitifully little power, we have to avert what is not only thinkable, but *logically inevitable* if things continue as they are.

Do we have any chance of changing things? It shouldn't surprise us when we feel ridiculous and inadequate in the face of all that must be done. We haven't been trained to feel our strength. We were taught to obey the experts, not challenge them. We have never exercised our real and potentially vast power, we as "us;" and until we do we will not know how much power we have.

What we can do is unclear; we'll have to discover it as we try. But that we act, and keep on acting, is as vital as breathing.

One more time I look into the eyes of the Polish workers. Noble? What struggle for freedom isn't? They'll keep on, and we'll keep on. We share a love of freedom, and a love of life. And whether or not we share the awareness of it, we all are teetering now on that razor-edge, together. Our time and our energy have to go into making of that razor-edge the world as it should be: the firm, good earth, where we can stop teetering, and dance.

Takeover diary

continued from page 9

We're all getting pretty hyper, we hear that quite a crowd is waiting for us outside. Finally, 11:30 arrives. We unplug—the next calls are left for scabs, coming in through the back door. We each grab a picket sign and head for the cafeteria to await the word. There are at least 1,000 people in here—it's incredible.

Bill Clark is coming in, led by a bagpiper! He gets up on a chair and gives us a little bit of rah rah. We're all commended and thanked for doing our bits, a cheer from the women rings through the cafeteria when he says one of the most significant parts of the occupation is the breaking-down of the operators' isolation. This wouldn't have happened so quickly if guys hadn't volunteered to learn our jobs. They

realized the monotony and the way we are miserably underpaid. Experience can be the best teacher! So solidarity—another bullet in the iron heart of B.C. Tel.

We pour out onto Seymour Street, amidst cheers, whistles and foot-stamping from 2,000 supporters. More greetings and speeches, messages of solidarity. We sing a rousing chorus of Solidarity Forever; then we're off to the lock-out headquarters, picket signs in hand. It's easy to get sentimental over this one. A sigh. Oh well. The struggle continues.

Occupations like the one at BC Tel are a hallowed tactic of militant, anti-authoritarian insurgencies throughout history. In Spain, the working class through its mass-based anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT, signalled the start of the anti-Franco uprising in 1936 by taking over and running the Barcelona telephone system. Rank and file workers, their revolutionary committees and their syndicates, reorganized and administered production, distribution and public services in every sector without capitalists, high-salaried managers or the authority of the State.

What follows is an excerpt from Sam Dolgoff's book The

Anarchist Collectives (page 88) which describes telephone workers' self-management in the Spanish Revolution:

"More than half the telephone lines were destroyed by grenades during the fighting. The restoration and repair of telephone connections was imperative. Without waiting for orders from anyone, the workers restored normal telephone service within three days. Thousands of new lines were installed in union locals, militia centers, and committee districts. Once this crucial emergency work was finished a general membership meeting of telephone workers decided to collectivize the telephone system. From within their own ranks the workers chose a management committee. Each district elected its own responsible director. Although very few telephone workers belonged to the UGT (most belonged to the CNT), the collectivization was conducted under the joint auspices of the UGT and CNT. (Ed. note: the UGT was the socialist union.)

The subscribers declared that telephone service was better under collectivization than under private ownership. As in collectivized transportation, the wages of the lowest paid workers were significantly increased."

Anarchists unfurl the Black & Green

ANARCHISTS in the north-eastern USA are getting together in a big way through a new and promising organization: the New England Anarchist Conference.

Already past the second of planned quarterly gatherings, NEAC has generated substantial discussion and controversy among New England and New York area anarchists and is rumoured to have inspired other groups by their organizing initiative.

Over 175 people gathered from all the New England states, New York, New Jersey and even Quebec at the founding conference last fall at Goddard College in Vermont. They were responding to a call from several Vermont affinity groups to create "an ongoing body of anti-authoritarian affinity groups and committed individuals who are dedicated to the perpetuation of liberty and a truly substantive free society."

A major policy statement was adopted (an edited version is reprinted below) and an affinity group organizational structure agreed to.

At the second conference in January in Somerville Mass. which focussed on anarchism and feminism, over 125 participants attended and contributed to workshops on topics like "monogamy and jealousy" and "the relationship of racism and patriarchy."

The results, according to one observer: feminism and its important contribution to NEAC will now become integrated into the conference with time to be set aside at future meetings for discussion about feminism.

Controversy continued however, over the influence of "pro-consensus, anti-analytical, New Age" thinking within the anarchist movement—a debate that started at the first conference and is expected to be ongoing.

As to NEAC's roots and future direction, one of the organizers says they can be traced through the name of the NEAC paper, *Black and Green*: "The traditional anarchist colors of black and red have been a testament to the roots of contemporary anarchism in the labour movement. It's our belief that the labour movement has long exhausted its potential as a revolutionary force, that the traditional working class as a class has so assimilated itself to the regimes of consumer society that it has become an actively counter-revolutionary force.

Instead, we look to the rapidly growing community movements for models of organization, direct action and mutual aid (despite their frequently reformist leanings), and to ecology for a vision of a new relationship with nature and the transcendence of an imposed system of needs. Combined with the traditional black flag of revolt, this gives us *Black and Green*."

So far, NEAC seems to be fulfilling its purpose. As one member put it: "We are gradually evolving the kinds of political agreements and interpersonal contacts among affinity groups and individuals around the area that should result in a more self-conscious anarchist presence in local movements and community based efforts of all kinds."

For more info about NEAC's upcoming conferences write **POB 373, Burlington, Vermont, 05402. Subs to their paper Black and Green are \$3 for four issues.**

NEAC Manifesto

WE live today in a period of social crises produced by far-reaching imbalances between humanity and nature and between human and human. We may be faced with the annihilation of society in every form, if not the destruction of life on this planet.

Our food, water and air are being polluted by toxic chemicals and radioactive isotopes. Our freedoms are being subverted and eliminated by state, corporate and domestic hierarchies which threaten all our liberties, particularly those of young people, women, ethnic minorities, gays, the poor and the elderly, the deprived and neglected. Mass media and the trashy products of mass production invade the private recesses of our lives, threatening the integrity of personality itself, while totalitarian, centralized governmental and corporate hierarchies threaten to take full command over our social destinies,

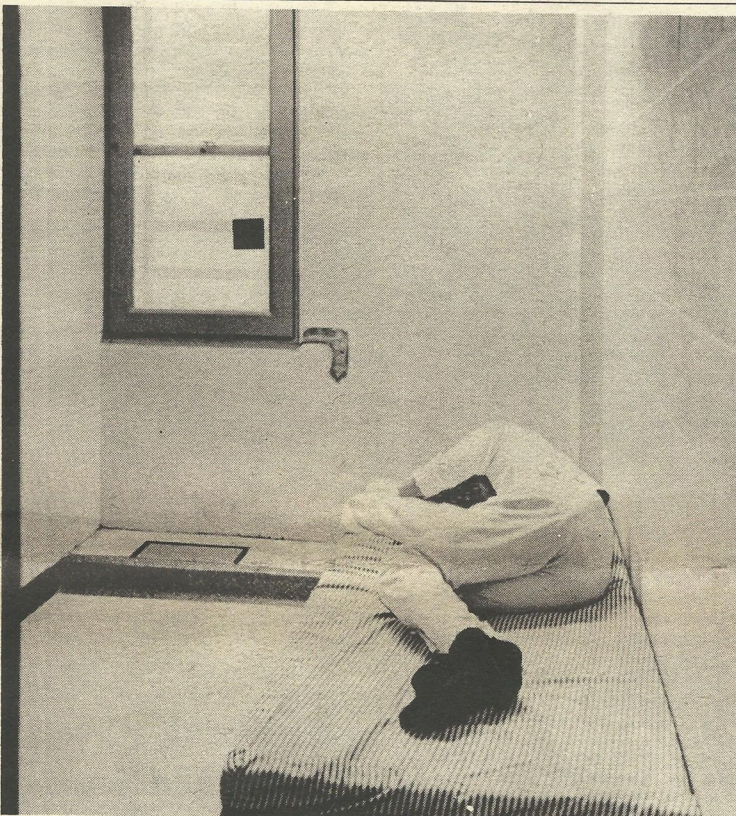
rendering us into powerless and pathetically ineffectual beings. Finally, there is the ultimate threat of radiological destruction from nuclear power plants and nuclear war.

All of these threats to our rights, indeed to our humanity, can no longer be viewed as isolated abuses or passing episodes, each to be dealt with in isolation. They comprise a constellation of coherent and meaningful regressions that requires an equally coherent social movement.

We wish to raise new ideals of freedom and liberatory alternatives of social organization in the broadest sense: freedom of the individual from corporate, bureaucratic and mass manipulation; freedom of women to control their own bodies and achieve fulfillment of

their human potentialities; freedom of ethnic and gay groups from every vestige of misanthropic chauvinism; freedom of future generations from the mindless and ruthless poisoning of the entire planet; freedom of communities from centralized controls; freedom of the poor and elderly from deprivation and humiliation; freedom of society from totalitarian rule and the obliteration of our venerable liberties.

To these ends we have organized The New England Anarchist Conference, an ongoing body of anti-authoritarian affinity groups and committed individuals who are dedicated to a truly substantive and free society. We have chosen the word "Anarchist" not from any perverse belief in "chaos" and "violence":



Inside "one of the most repressive apparatuses of State control in the West."

Prison militants put on ice

By Fred Mobile

BLAME the messenger. That's how authorities everywhere respond to evidence of their misrule, but prison officials specifically have elevated the technique to a pure art form.

When prisons start to come apart at the seams, when the accumulated years of mistreatment and incompetence spawn new and higher levels of suffering and rebellion inside the walls, when even the public begins to wonder what's going on, then the keepers know they need a scapegoat.

The kept. There would be no organized prison movement without the individual and collective examples of prisoners in institutions ranging from maximum-security penitentiaries to police lockups from one end of North America to the other.

The accelerating pace of insurrections (spontaneous and organized), the riots and smash-ups, the hostage-takings, the escape attempts—all are clear messages from prisoners that the entire system is corroding dangerously, that the authorities can't even guarantee the safety of those in custody, much less their "rehabilitation."

But the message has been delivered at a very high cost: more prisons, more solitary

confinement, more harsh treatment, more cries for law-and-order.

Canada is a case in point. Behind the benign and bland liberal facade of a society smugly complacent with its self-appointed role as the friendly conscience of Uncle Sam lurks one of the most repressive apparatuses of State control in the West.

One in every thousand Canadian is behind bars (compared to one-fifth as many in the Scandinavian countries); sentences are the longest on record (up to 25 years before hope of parole); the parole system is so tight that it virtually guarantees that an ex-prisoner will very soon be no longer ex; the bureaucracy is so bloated that there are actually three prison staff (guards on up) to every two prisoners.

And, just like in the U.S., a whole new system of super-maximum-security lock-ups is being developed right across the country to contain and neutralize male prisoners suspected as "dangerous." Not just that they hurt themselves or someone else while behind bars, but that they might cause trouble for the authorities by organizing themselves and others to protest their conditions.

Four years ago, Canadian authorities were clearly on the defensive as a result of a series

quite the contrary, we are people who believe in a moral order and in a society guided by the ethics of peace. We view the word *anarche* simply in its literal Greek sense of "no rule," that is of no domination of human by human, be it in society, public administration, workplace or family.

We eschew the degraded word "socialism" because it has become a subtle form of hierarchy at best or an overt form of totalitarianism at worst. The same has become true for words like "communism" and "liberalism." Unlike the socialists and the communists, it is hierarchy we wish to abolish, not only the exploitation of "man by man." We have seen how "classless" societies in the names of socialism and communism have reproduced the coercive and overbearing bureaucracies, the totalitarian "people's democracies," and the patriarchal relations that have brought humanity into subjugation.

As anarchists we define ourselves not only by what we oppose, but by the reconstructive forms of freedom we propose. We hold to the anarchic ideal of a decentralized society, scaled to human dimensions, that all individuals can understand and control. We seek to decentralize the means of production using new technologies—solar, wind, horticultural and the like—to substitute for the brutalizing factory system, assembly line offices and monstrous retail malls that have reduced people to objects of industrial manipulation and passive consumers of useless, where not overtly toxic, commodities.

We do not oppose science and technology; we see a new science and technology emerging that can bring machines, tools, knowledge and nature into a new and rational harmony.

Do the Impossible

As against the insensate rivalry, sexism, racism, elitism and egoism that characterize market society, we propose a new mutualism and solidarity and sense of giving that characterize an ecological and communitarian society.

Our reconstructive focus is thus local, municipal and regional—based on the free coordination of localities and regions—not national and totalitarian based on centralization, obedience and command. We seek a "body politic" in the literal sense of free citizens, convening in local assemblies, who share with other communities the formulation and administration of policy. Our emphasis is on the right of each individual to directly affect the course of events. Hence our commitment to methods of direct personal and collective empowerment—not as "tactics" or "strategies," but as real bases for direct action and self-management that will foster the development of these new "selves" that can administer a society in a substantive and creative democracy.

We draw our inspiration from the continuing feminist struggle for non-domination and the ecological, communitarian civil rights, new left, antiwar, gay and women's liberation movements. We support and learn from all revolutionary social movements dedicated to a truly democratic and non-hierarchical society; we can no longer return to the traditional politics of so called "left wing" movements and sects. For us, the true social movements of the present and future must be a new culture, a poetry of ideas and practice that will remake us and ultimately society into a creative and humane civilization. We are committed to far-reaching change, not to half-hearted compromises. We eschew violence for education, "parties" for networks of loving affinity groups and communes; sclerotic "programs" for living models and examples that foster communal solidarity and mutual aid.

These approaches alone, we believe, can open a new way for a world that is faced with totalitarianism, nuclear war, and almost certain ecological immolation. If our views seem utopian, it may be that we have reached a point where only utopia can rescue us from sheer annihilation.

In May-June 1968, the students of Paris raised the magnificent cry: "Be Realistic! Do the Impossible!" In the face of the crises that loom before us, we must now add: If we don't do the "Impossible," we will surely wind up with the Unthinkable!

continued on page 14

Roadside Notes

State terrorism

Dear Friends,

I'm sending you a leaflet that circulated in Paris after the bombing of the Jewish synagogue at rue Copernic.

The idea that the State itself is the organizer of acts of "blind terrorism" has been rapidly gaining ground over here, especially after the publication last June in French of the book, *Du Terrorisme et de l'Etat* by the ex-situationalist, Gianfranco Sanguinetti. The leaflet:

For what can a blind bombing serve if not to blind? The emergence of a "nazi" terrorism in Italy, West Germany and France is but the logical outcome of the "strategy of terror" inaugurated in 1969 by the Italian state with the bombing of the Piazza Fontana and pursued ever since. It is not the lunacy of some deranged activists "black" or "red" that is responsible for the explosion at rue Copernic but the cynical reasoning of the defenders of a bankrupt commercial order. Here, just as in Bologna or Munich, terrorism has become for the state the medium permitting it to militarize social welfare, to increase police control of society, to pass through dirty legislation as in Italy where it is now permitted to keep an accused person in prison for 12 years without trial. The scarecrow of a despotic fascism is used to render acceptable a despotic "democracy." Auschwitz is brought out and turned into a spectacle to conceal that it is precisely this society that has become a concentration camp.

The preachers of the Left and the creeps of the Right, professional snivellers and religious rabbinocrats who today prevail in replacing the traditional parade of sane indignation, are engaged in urging crowds to join the institutions which they are more and more inclined to reject.

Illusions kill more than bombs and the powerless "innocents" are all but corpses in power. He who has not yet understood that terrorism is the work of the State is doomed to remain an exploited worker, a poisoned consumer, an insulted voter, a manipulated militant, a sacrificed pigeon and a martyr, peddled by the ideologists.

If you want the end of terrorism, prepare for the end of the state.

Dinos Stergides,
Paris, France.

Italian anarchism

To the Open Road Staff,

I've just read *OR* #11 "Lessons of the 70's; Strategies for the 80's" and I've got something to say about the article: "Anarchy: an Italian Model," which contains some excerpts from the GAF program:

- GAF's program lacks any analysis of 70's struggles in Italy and the role the anarchist movement played; it doesn't deal with criticisms or self-criticisms, which could be valuable for the 80's; it's merely an intellectual study where workers, working-class, class-struggle are objects from which GAF are separated, far apart, splendidly isolated, in their anarchist tower. Someone reading their program might decide to join GAF, but they won't have a precise idea about Italy and what can be done.
- I disagree with GAF's analysis which speaks of three classes: workers, masters and technobureaucrats. This view allows them to be comfortably far removed from class-struggle and everyday struggles, saying that: "...the class-struggle of the exploited will serve, willy-nilly, the technobureaucratic interests..." So, according to GAF, class-struggle becomes useless—they forget or ignore that anarchist-communism spreads from class-struggle and that liberation of the exploited is possible only through class-struggle.
- GAF says anarcho-syndicalism is the best way to fight for anarchist workers. I think, on the contrary, that just looking back at the 70's, it is necessary for the 80's to throw out one slogan: class

unity, workers' unity against capitalism and State. An anarcho-syndicalist organization would cause another split among workers. Instead, anarchist-communists must work among the workers for their unity, inside the unions, rank-and-file organizations, base groups, etc.

- The anarchist-communists' role is to be, as workers, among the workers fighting for class unity and self-management of all struggles; building strong and efficient political organization, able to elaborate strategies and tactics to pull down bourgeois society. Historical disorganization in the Italian anarchist movement teaches us, after the 70's, that what is necessary is a political anarchist-communist presence and proposal, unitary and not divided in many little groups and theories.

Anarchist strengthened class-struggles ran through the 70's, but anarchist organizations weren't able to push 'em forward because they were politically absent; the 80's will probably see defensive class-struggles, and this time, the anarchist-communist organization to elaborate strategies and to support struggles of its members and workers can't be absent, if we wanna save the 70's workers' conquests from Capitalism's attack. Anarchist-communist greetings and good work,
Donato Romito
member of Organizzazione Rivoluzionaria Anarchica
Italy

Survival strategy

Dear Open Roadies:

I want to break off with *Open Road*. I've been thinking for a while that something is wrong here, but what precipitates this letter is the fact that I don't want my activities monitored.

A friend whose opinion I trust thinks that the next world war will take place within five to ten years. My own survival strategy demands a good deal of freedom of movement. I won't have that if the RCMP think I'm an anarchist sympathizer.

Beyond that fact, I don't think the anarchistic movement is accomplishing very much. If anarchism is the wave of the future, how come anarch countries don't exist? How come anarchism isn't successfully competing with other practices and world-views, and emerging as a prevailing way of life? Capitalism prevailed that way.

I'm being opportunistic. So be it. I claim to see little reason to maintain my connection with the anarchist movement, and sufficient reason to sever it. I hope that this letter moves you to examine your difficulties and to find solutions.

Yours sincerely,
G.S.
Victoria, B.C.

Creative biking

Dear Comrades,

Congratulations to Bob Silverman on the "Bikesheviks" article. Down here, a new high-level bridge has been planned to transport the autocracy to West Seattle with no bicycle access, but resistance has been led by a man named Jack French.

More important than glorifying bicycles as a commodity is building determination to kill off the autocracy of Detroit gas hogs. Most people in the near future will probably choose mass transit over bicycles. In the long run, an ecologically balanced society should make walking or horse riding a realistic option with no dependence on steel mills.

Direct action against particularly offensive gas hogs is much easier than attacking nuclear power plant sites, as evidenced by the recent Seabrook demonstrations. Tires, engines, windows, wires, hoses under the hood, etc., are all vulnerable to any number of imaginative tactics. A jackknife, pellet gun, and roofing nails should be standard equipment for the fashionable Bikeshevik.

Pedestrians, transit patrons as well as cyclists are directly exposed to auto collisions

and smog, while motorists are protected by their steel cocoons. Anarchists could easily raise these and other creative possibilities among transit patrons and bike clubs.

What's Bad for G.M. is Good for the People! Destroy what Destroys you!
The New Luddites
P.O. Box 81091
Seattle WA 98108
U.S.A.

The real criminals

Dear Brothers [and Sisters—The Eds.],

I wrote you on the 7-5-80; since then I received *Open Road* #11, summer 1980. I appreciated this magazine and especially liked the article "Riots in Amsterdam"... I cannot contribute financially 'cause I'm broke and have been in prison three years, serving eight years for a shoot-out with the fascist police.

I believe in armed struggle—any methods are justified to destroy the State and free ourselves from centuries of slavery, oppression, genocide, torture, brutality, wars, plotted and done by the real criminals, the rulers of this world. These lunatics must be removed from power, before they make a nuclear war. Well, that's it, brothers. I would appreciate it if you replied to my letters, possibly correspond with me regularly, and send me more literature if possible.

Best Brotherly greetings,
S.P.

Adelaide, Australia.

Good-news nihilist?

Dear *Open Road*,

"The Promise of the 80's"? Promises, promises!

As the saying goes, "figures don't lie but liars figure." Long after most people stopped believing the pollsters and pundits, John Zerzan still faithfully parrots their pronouncements—after airbrushing out the inconvenient ones. If productivity and voting decline, that's verily the Last Trump announcing the

Endtime for Zerzanist eschatology. But if church attendance rises, or nationalist mobs attack Iranians, or millions vote in the death penalty, the jesuitical Zerzan changes the subject. For this good-news nihilist and happy-faced nay-sayer, "worse is better" in this, the very best of all possible worlds.

It never occurs to Zerzan that the authorities might have their own reasons for publicizing these stories and statistics. In fact their function is obvious for those with eyes to see: plummeting productivity statistics set the workers up for the rigors of "reindustrialization"; rising crime rates "justify" stepped-up repression; anecdotes about inept or unruly enlistees are the prelude to conscription.

And what about the episodes of spectacular asociality with which Zerzan adorns his articles and posters? Not many are advanced enough to appreciate that being gunned down by a sniper or having your face pulped by teenage toughs has the merit of enabling some goon or psychopath to commit an unrecuperable revolutionary act. The Antithesis works in mysterious ways, its wonders to perform... the esoterics of negativity are *not* for the vulgar.

Wake me when it's over,
John Hartmann, U.S.A.

Jesus an anarchist?

Friends;

I am presently a Quaker student who came to an intellectual interest in the political ideology of Anarchism through my studies of Quaker history and also from reading Proudhon. I am very interested in opening dialogue with Anarchists in various places with various outlooks. My particular 'brand' of anarchist interests are of a Christian orientation (I hold, with Garrison and Tolstoy and others, for example, that what Jesus taught was a spiritual and political anarchism), but I am interested in a variety of views...

If you could put me in touch with others whose Anarchist leanings are in a Christian direction, I would appreciate it.

Thank you,
D.S.
Elkhart, Indiana



We had a riot putting out the last issue,

but the bill was less exciting. How about doing a bit of your own looting? We could use the spoils. Like \$50 a year for a sustainer. Or, for the less adventurous, two hours wages per year would be fine. You'll get a subscription for sure.

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the world from our
ancestors, we borrow
it from our kids.”**