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Anarchist Communist Federation

Obituary: Subversion

And So Farewell...

1999

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Readers of *Organise!* and contacts of the ACF may well know of the revolutionary group Subversion with whom we have had a fraternal working relationship over the last decade. We have organised a number of joint day schools with Subversion, and in Manchester a number of public meetings were also jointly organised. We also co-operated on organising a series of summer camps with comrades from Subversion. We share many of the political perspectives of this group.

So it is no surprise that we are saddened to hear that the group has decided to call it a day and disband.

In its ten years Subversion produced 24 issues of its magazine, an often thought-provoking and stimulating read. It attempted to get to grips with practical problems facing the revolutionary movement and this was often due to Subversion comrades actually being involved in these struggles. Such was the case with their coverage of the Poll Tax struggle, the Liverpool Dockers, the Job Seekers Allowance, the anti-roads movement and Earth First! activities, as well as workplace activities. It is no idle claim to say that Subversion, through its magazine, pamphlets and spoken contributions

had a far larger influence on the British revolutionary movement than its membership, no more than 8 at its largest, would imply. There was often a fruitful exchange of ideas between Subversion comrades and ACF comrades and other revolutionaries.

We know that Subversion attempted to avoid the pitfalls of rigid ideology often seen in both the Marxist and anarchist camps. In doing so, they admit that “they bred some suspicion” among those who they think preferred their “cosy comforts”. Their description of themselves as libertarian communists, which is unquestionably what they are, should have been more insistent and sustained, rather than clever sophistries of self-description as seen in one issue of Subversion where they described themselves as anti-left communists. We know that means they are opposed to the left, as much as we are, but this led to confusion and puzzlement in some quarters.

The signing-off statement of Subversion claims that they had nothing new to say which they regarded as the most compelling reason to wind up the group. But surely revolutionaries will always have something new to say about the twists and turns and the new developments of capitalism. The essential message of revolution is a fresh today as it ever was, precisely because state and capitalism, hierarchy and oppression, still exist. We feel sure that as individuals, the ex-members of Subversion will continue to have something to say. We hope that they continue to be active in the class struggle. We can do nothing but applaud their past activities within the Northern Anarchist Network, the Revolutionary Socialist Network and the Class Struggle Anarchist Network.

In line with a willingness to continue to work with the ex-Subversion comrades, the last National Delegate Meeting of the ACF decided that the pages of Organise! should be opened up to them. Indeed contributions from these comrades and other revolutionaries are welcome in Organise! As Subversion noted, their bulletin “provided an organised framework for revolutionaries to debate new issues arising in the class struggle”. We hope that to

some extent we can continue to do this in Organise! Of course all contributions would be subject to the same editorial framework as articles written by ACF members (length etc.).