

Proletarian Gob #5

**Daily Survival Getting You Down? There's Only One Thing For It: Forward To
Red Terror And The Dictatorship Of The Proletariat**

Monsieur Dupont

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ONLY WHEN THE WORKING CLASS IS COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL WILL WE BE ABLE TO TAKE REAL CONTROL OF OUR LIVES

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PROLETARIAN GOB is anti-capitalist, anti-State, and anti-authoritarian.

PROLETARIAN GOB is for the creation of a worldwide, free human community, which can only be achieved by the conscious actions of a revolutionary proletariat acting for itself and not at the direction of some 'Revolutionary Party'.

SCIENTISTS ARE SCUMBAGS

The other day, I heard about some Dutch scientists who have discovered that so called "aggressive" people have a defective gene in them which can be traced back in their families. So, once they have found this gene they can look at relatives of the person in question or even dig up stiffs in the local graveyard to see if they have the gene as well. Then they can draw up a family tree and, surprise suprise, there you have it: a few aggressive types in the family history. The conclusion is, of course, that if you are seriously aggressive or bad tempered on occasions it's not because, for example, you've had a bad day at work or feel you have no control over your life it's because you're biologically malformed.

Liberal types are a little worried by this new scientific breakthrough in understanding humans (they wouldn't like to be described as "up in arms over it" as that might mean they too had a problem gene) and have quickly said that social factors are still the most important thing in determining a persons behavior. Liberal experts have a long and glorious history of championing social control as a more effective method of subordinating the working class than the jackboot i.e. make workers feel like they have a real stake in society, dangle carrots in front of them rather than wield whips behind them. So, they aren't going to be too keen on the idea that surgeons could take over social work, even though the result would be much the same.

All this just goes to show what a complete load of anti-human shite scientists really are. Of course, we had no doubts about this before either, the only time scientists will do anything remotely beneficial is when profit margins make it worthwhile. Scientists don't work for humanity, they work for capital, they work for our ruling class, They work for Profit and Control.

If there really is a gene in some people that makes them more inclined to aggression than other people in the same situations, so fucking what? People have different characteristics, we all know that.

Scientists and others who claim to want to understand human beings (but are in fact merely finding more ways to control us and exploit us) won't understand us at all until they see their laboratories burning down around them. This should be our contribution to scientific knowledge.

All scientists, even if they are studying apparently harmless things, like the distribution of worms in a field, are descended from scientists working for Hitler in the death camps of the 1930's and 40's. The only way they can redeem themselves is by stopping their careers and exposing their own and their colleagues squalid deeds.

DEATH TO SCIENCE!

AGAINST CAMERAS ON DEMOS

In recent years there has been a proliferation of people on demos who use cameras. Time was when you could tell who the journo scumbags or police spies were on a demo, these days you can't.

Part of the reason for using cameras is no doubt to record some of the events and people of the day for the posterity of the photo album. This may seem harmless enough, but having a stash of photos of faces on demos lying around your house might not seem like such a good idea when the police come battering down your door. You could argue that the likelihood of the police raiding your house is slim. Also that surely address books are far more damaging. Yes, they probably are, but at least they serve some useful purpose for us (keeping in contact with other comrades) whereas photos don't, and, more importantly, photos on demos record all sorts of things and faces that we don't know about. I don't want my face to appear in someone's album of demo shots: what sensible or wild speculations could be made by the State by its appearance on that demo; with those people; at that point; and in this persons photo collection?? The State doesn't need any more information or evidence, of whatever they want to concoct, than they already have.

The other reason for using cameras on demos, the more serious and worthy one, is that by filming everything that happens the cops can't get away with lying in court or beating people up for no good reason. It is true that evidence of this nature might benefit the odd victim of State justice however it could just as easily damn others. Not everyone on a demo, in a riot, or a similar action is going to be a passive law-abiding citizen willing to take a police kicking lying down. What if you get arrested, or lose your camera, and the cops get to see your snapshots?

Some journalist types (the ones who pretend to be on our side, as long as we are good democrats) deliberately film bust ups between proles and the State not only for the money they can make when they sell the shots, but also so that lawyers and Jo Public can see what really happened. Unfortunately, this means that the State can also see it, and after such bust ups the police are bound to say to themselves that these journalists should hand over their film so they can identify the troublemakers. These well-meaning, career-minded journalists could get us into a lot of trouble. They are the sort of people who believe that if only the police and the State were subject to more public scrutiny and accountability than all cops would be nice and the State would be a genuinely lovely thing. What they forget is that the State and its cops exist to maintain the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. The State and its hired thugs didn't arrive by accident, they're here for a specific purpose. If we don't realize who we are exploited by and why then we'll remain like stupid ants forever. These patronising journos and their ideological soulmates (i.e Tony Benn) just add to the general level of mystification and lack of class consciousness in our class. The road to hell is paved with Liberal idiots.

Another good reason you shouldn't take a camera on a demo is that one day journos are going to be universally known for the anti-working class scum that they are, and when that day arrives their cameras, notepads and dictaphones are going to be shoved into the parts of their body where the sun doesn't shine. We don't want any innocent or naive proles to be at the wrong end of this unpleasantness.

If you have any demo photos at home, get rid of them. And don't bring your camera to any more demos.

FOOTNOTE:

One interesting recent development in the monitoring of demonstrations is the formation of the Legal Defence And Monitoring Group, which is London-based and aims to be fully active by March 1995. This is "a group of people from various campaigns and causes in London [who] have come together... to stand up against police and state repression". They intend to monitor and record police action on demos, provide legal support for such events and provide follow up support, and encourage claims against the police. This group may be instrumental in getting one or two individuals charges, or in incriminating the cops, but we have to realise that what they are doing entails risks. In a demonstration-type situation the camera is very indiscriminate, lots of things might be going on that people don't want recorded, and also in this situation your mugshot is being taken without your consent. As well as these things being shown in court, the police are certainly going to be interested in looking at the Group's coverage of an event if they think it will aid them in their enquiries. Obviously, we will have to see whether these dangers outweigh the benefits.

The Legal Defence and Monitoring Group can be contacted at BM BOX HAVEN, London WC1X 3NN, where you can get a copy of their "aims and objectives" and their "can you help leaflet". They only operate in and around London, however.

TECHNOFETISHISM or Total Mind Control For Kids

A phrase has been coined recently by some communists in Scotland who aim to oppose the increasingly technological nature of the bourgeois domination of the working class. The phrase is "Technofascism".

In the texts I've seen they examine everything from mind control using microwaves to tagging babies. A lot of it can make for scary and depressing reading. Very soon, the implication is, we aren't going to be able to make a move without the State knowing about it. All our phones are going to be bugged, all our computers, all the electrical sockets in our homes, and it will be possible to track all cars. By the end of the century, it is said, our rulers hope to keep tabs on us all by electromagnetic means. More than that, many in the ruling class want to physically control our minds - in various ways that have been researched since the second world war and before.

It is easy to fall into a hopeless pit of despair when considering these predictions, allied with the knowledge of the incredible array of weaponry the State now has at its disposal maybe we should just top ourselves? -One liberal argument against communism is that we would all be wiped out if we dared to get involved in an insurrection, perhaps world revolution was possible before the second world war, but it isn't now. The Opponents of Technofascism don't take this view since they still believe that the working class can eradicate its exploitation by making a revolution. However, they do see capitalism eventually entering a period of "technological despotism", where "electromagnetic and biotechnological surveillance and influence are exerted over every body and mind". But, they assure us, "exploitation will remain visible" and "there'll be some kind of resistance everywhere", i.e. there'll still be class struggle.

They go on to say: "It may be easy to point to capital's limits, as the French group La Banquise (Ice Cap) did, by noting that whilst bacteria and robots don't do real work the "technicians, workers and researchers" around them do; and that "the day when the proletarian necessary to its functioning folds his arms, the bacterium comes to a standstill." (La Banquise 4, 1986). But

the word worker (ouvrier) here remains strangely undefined, the reference to the "day" is too vague, and one wonders what form "arm-folding" might actually take. Whilst recognising that resistance by (former) scientists and engineers is definitely something important, rebels will also want to work out what the rest of us will be doing, where our power will lie on an everyday "structural" [what?] level and where the radical flashpoints are likely to occur involving parts of the working class."

The Opponents Of Technofascism state that "opponents of capitalism who willingly ignore this field [the history of mind control, from electrodes in the brain, to narcotics, to smells, to auditory messages relayed by microwaves, and more] just aren't serious". Oh, dearie me, in the face of this masculine and superior certainty a lot of us must feel very foolish if we haven't read any books on mind control recently! The problem is: what, as lowly proles, can we do about mind control specifically, apart, of course, from read about it, tell other proles, and get depressed? It is certainly useful to know the terrible lengths our rulers are prepared to go to to maintain the status quo or to extend their control, but this should be no surprise to us, history and the present shows us that if workers cause too much trouble they will be killed.

Surveillance is certainly a method of control, that's why passports were introduced, to keep checks on people and to maintain national boundaries in an age when it was realised that the working class, and therefore troublemaking, was international. As surveillance technology progresses so does their control of us, soon, for example, we'll have 24 hour cameras in every high street and shopping centre in Britain. Pretty soon, if you want to do anything unruly, like fly-posting, you'll have to mask up before you leave your house, and even then you'll have to leave via a secret underground tunnel emerging on an isolated hill in Wales...

There are a couple of problems with these dire warnings of our future. It seems to me the debate exists mainly on the terrain of our rulers, on two levels. Firstly, threats to our future (real or imaginary) are good for keeping us demoralised, they are good for those liberal "oppositionists" who tell us that our opposition must be channelled through democratic means, who say that if we go too far all their good work will be undone and things really will get nasty as the State and bourgeoisie retaliates.

Secondly, the debate exists on the terrain of our rulers because it is a "nit-picking" debate, in opposing a future type of social control, it makes it alarmingly easy to defend the present forms of social control they use on us! This is not to say that our examination of trends within capitalism isn't important, but we mustn't get caught up in their debates about society and progress at the expense of focussing on the exploitative nature of this world society now: life for proletarians was shit a hundred years ago, it is shit now, and it'll be the same in another hundred years. We don't oppose capitalism (the world economy) because things are progressing badly or in the wrong direction, we oppose it because it makes our daily lives shit! Of course, the realisation that things could get harder in terms of making trouble may spur on a few people to greater revolutionary effort now. (This would be good, but my experience of recent years hints that the opposite is more likely, but this is by-the-by.) The development of capitalism, its technological revolutions, may mean we have to adapt our tactics of resistance, but from the beginning of capitalism our death-blow to it remains in stopping work. This is why the La Banquise group (see above quote) are sort of only half right: I doubt if many scientists and engineers will suddenly stop their anti-human activities at some point in the future because of a fit of conscience, these people are probably (as the Opponents also suggest) going to have to have their arms folded for them. At the same time that we are burning down the universities where they were trained, for

example. Where does our power lie? As always it lies in our ability to stop working (capitalism grinds to a halt) and our numbers.

Another problem with the idea of technological despotism, or technofascism, is that it still doesn't sound as bad as living under an old style fascist dictatorship, of which there are still many in the world today. In these regions opposition is watched, locked up, tortured and killed on a far grander scale than in Britain, for example. This seems to work just as well as a technofascist State might work. However, big companies are always going to persuade governments to use the latest in worker control techniques, after all, it creates jobs, doesn't it? But one problem with all totalitarian States is that watching and controlling people takes an awful lot of effort and resources, it stifles business and "economic growth". Totalitarian States never last forever, not because of proletarian resistance (although that is the main tool), but because the bourgeoisie decide that their usefulness has passed. Of course, this may not be all the bourgeoisie, and the State may be so entrenched that proletarian lives are going to have to be laid down fighting for a brighter business future for their bosses.

Another thing to remember is that the society we live in in Britain is in many ways totalitarian enough, what with our TVs, newspapers, sport, lottery, shopping, work and democracy. At the risk of sounding flippant, does the State really need to use implants in our brains to control us?

There is a wider debate going on at the moment amongst troublemaking types, concerning our future also, that concentrates on the nature of work and "community" in the present economic climate. It is argued that "workers struggles" are as good as over and that the arena for class conflict now exists mainly in "community struggles". Apart from the debate usually resting on a false dichotomy anyway, a kind of "community" obsession has arisen that owes less to class analysis than to the ideology of nationalism. People seem to think that there will never be anymore strike waves in Britain again and that working class power lies more in the streets and estates we live in than our position as wage slaves. There may be a lull in class conflict at the moment, but that doesn't mean its nature has irreversibly changed. These desperate ("downturn"?) formulations are perhaps a symptom of not looking at class struggle in global terms. The power of the working class in Europe and the USA in the sixties and seventies caused Capital to flee to less troublesome areas. "Western" investment in South America and South East Asia has happened because the bosses couldn't put up with workers demands in Europe and the USA any longer: they ran away. In a sense it was our "victory" that has put us into the situation we in Europe and the USA find ourselves today. It seems to me that the next areas of major class war will happen in South East Asia and the southern hemisphere. (Maybe we should all move to Brazil or Vietnam so that we don't miss out on all the fun?!) Of course, this doesn't mean we should all twiddle our thumbs and listen to the World Service. The fact is, as ever, we should be looking to further any situation in which we see the potential for greater class struggle, whether this happens around workplaces or not. Whether we are talking about current struggles or the future of technology, we have to remember that the root of our crap and precarious lives lies in capitalism and the work we and others do to keep it alive.

I don't think things are changing as fast or as radically as people are suggesting. Maybe it appears that way in the hallowed toilets of academia or maybe we've just seen too many editions of that propaganda programme for "progress", Tomorrows World? We have fallen for capitalist ideology if we really believe our lives are different now to what they were 50 or 100 years ago, or if we really believe they are going to be any different in the future. Our lives are not our own.

Yes, we should be aware of the array of physical and psychological weapons our rulers already use and plan to use on us to keep us behaving like good workers and obedient citizens. However, I reckon that specific opposition to this increasing "technological despotism" will come from liberal oppositionists, not the working class. Our real opposition to it will probably come out of class war, when we attempt to sweep all despotism away. Our main task is still to encourage and criticise explosions of class conflict, and we have to hang on until there's more of it.

Because our lives are already crap and because capitalism still does, and will always have to, exist on the work we do for it, the reality of our future is far less interesting than either sad cyberpunk gits or even the propheciers of doom would have us believe. As always we face the routine of misery and death, and the sneaking suspicion that we aren't in control of our lives. The bleak future is not as important as our bleak present. We have nothing to defend but our continued misery.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

The "Some Opponents of Technofascism" have produced two things I know of, a document called "Technological Despotism" which, since writing the above, I've discovered was printed in Here and Now No. 15 (send El.20 to H&N, P.o. Box 109, Leeds LS5 3AA). And a leaflet about babies being barcoded, which I've also recently discovered can be read in Scottish Anarchist (El.OO + 30p stamps from Glasgow Anarchist Group PO Box 1008, Glasgow G42 8AA). Since I didn't know where the Technological Despotism article, or the leaflet, came from until now (i.e. too late to write a letter to H&N) my article should be seen as partly an "open letter" as well as part of the debate which the writer of Tech. Despotism hoped to encourage. A Reply To Gomma's Rights in Cyberspace, and a leaflet circulated at the Terminal Futures conference in 1994. Available from Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8.

RED TERROR WILL BE FUN

In the past I've not been happy with phrases like "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "red terror" because they seem open to too many different meanings. I don't want to get bogged down explaining what I mean by the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" when what I'm trying to say is that in a communist revolution we will seize everything and everywhere and it will be held by everyone; the bourgeoisie and their agents will be dispossessed and displaced; the revolutionary proletariat will have taken control not of the organs of power, not of other people or classes, but of their own lives. When we seize control of our existence the maintenance of that seizure will depend on our ensuring that everyone else is also free. We can only be free when everyone is free.

The same goes for the phrase "red terror". While for me it means the suppression of everything that stands in the way of communism and the revolutionary proletariat, I can understand that other people might see it as the massacring tendencies of a so-called Revolutionary Party in its quest for power itself. Is it worth using a phrase that may just lead to more misunderstandings and yet more explaining?

I don't know. On the other hand it seems that we types are always misunderstood, often deliberately which shouldn't be a surprise to us. If I was extra careful about being misunderstood I wouldn't use the words communist or anarchist either, maybe we shouldn't. However, why should we pander to workers who are hostile to us, it is experience that will change their minds

about things not just hearing any of us rant on. These phrases and words also have the good effect of clarifying or encapsulating an idea and keeping that idea on target.

It is possible that some people dislike the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" not simply because it is open to differing interpretations but because it actually offends their inherent liberal consciences! Dictatorship of the proletariat sounds a bit undemocratic, it sounds like some peoples freedom might be taken away. Quite right! When we make our revolution we are going to have to suppress the bourgeoisie, we are going to have to take their power away from them - this means smashing their hired thugs and the tools with which they spread their nasty lies and ideologies. The bourgeoisie will not be allowed to print their newspapers or put their TV stations on air, they won't own anything anymore, and if they or their agents pose a threat to us even after they've been liberated of their power (presuming they haven't already been Strung up) they will be eradicated. Hopefully, we are not going to overthrow everything and then let the capitalists rebuild their power.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is the actions of the proletariat against its enemies and the dictatorship of each of us over our own lives, it is the suppression of class society and all bosses. The dictatorship of the proletariat will be a joyful carnival.

The same goes for Red Terror. Our red terror manifests itself on day one of any working class insurrection. It means bumming all records, opening up all the warehouses, chasing away all the scumbags who did us wrong. Our class enemies will be frightened. They will call us terrorists, and for good reason, since they will feel terrorised! They will have to live without their power, they'll have to muck in with the rabble. They can like it or lump it. We must look at the phrase Red Terror from our angle, it has been in the past, and it always will be, FUN!

Pamphlet Review: Zapatistas - in their own words

Proletarian Gob received this as a "review copy". So here is a review of it:

This pamphlet contains a lengthy interview of a spokesperson of the Mexican Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) called Marcos, by some anarchists who later printed it in the New York anarchist paper Love And Rage. It also has the Zapatistas original declaration of 1993, part one from Jan. 6 1994, and part of Zapata's Manifiesto of 1914. The introduction is from an editorial in Ecologist Magazine of the UK.

The first thing you realise about this pamphlet is that it is not what it says it is. Apart from the two communiqués the interview is with only one Zapatista (Subcomandante Marcos) and he is their official spokesperson and a major ideologue of the movement. It might have been useful to interview the humble footsoldiers of the movement as well as people in villages and towns who had contact with it. From the interview you learn that the EZLN was probably a Marxist-Leninist student organisation that headed into the mountains to build an army to overthrow the dictatorship of Mexican President Salinas. The movement was inspired by the general wave of guerilla movements that arose in Latin America in the 1960's and '70's. Despite the fact that the movement seems to have absorbed whole villages, whose grievances are more immediate than the political aims of the EZLN, it would appear that the dominant ideology of the EZLN has remained intact. What the EZLN wanted and wants is democracy, so that a space is created in politics in which "the political parties, or groups that aren't parties, can air and discuss their social proposals" (p. 12). What the indigenous inhabitants of Chiapas wanted was to defend themselves

from the attacks of the landowners, the EZLN seems to have given them the opportunity to do this by taking up arms. In Marcos' words: "They needed military instruction, and we needed the support of a social base. And we thus tried to convince them of the necessity of a broader political project" (p.5). This contradiction is not explored in the pamphlet, how far has the EZLN got in persuading the landed and landless labourers of Chiapas that their problems will begin to be solved by installing a democracy in Mexico? And how has the EZLN coped with the possibility that their "social base" might just want to seize the land?

It seems that since the uprising Subcomandante Marcos has even seriously considered becoming the Zapatistan candidate for the Mexican presidency (p.14). What would he have to do to his "social base" to keep it in line then?

The interviewers of Marcos are sycophantic and uncritical. It is condescension or a form of racism that allows anarchists to support national liberation movements in other countries, when they should know that the interests of these movements are opposed to those of workers (us!). Democracy is just another form of bourgeois dictatorship.

Proletarian Gob supports the struggles of the landed labourers and wage slaves of Latin America against capitalism, whether it is through daily class struggle, or insurrection. I cannot support democrats and other manipulators of the working class, no matter how "heroic" they might seem.

Better to die on our feet than to crawl around on our knees installing new oppressors!

COMMUNISM OR DEATH!

GET SOME KULCHA!

People often talk about "working class culture", but what are they really talking about? Going down the pub?; watching TV?; watching football?; playing football on Sundays?; pop music?; going to see a Bernard Manning show? This can't be called "working class" culture, this is proper, establishment culture. It may not be how the professional strata or the ruling class would want to spend their leisure time but it certainly isn't our culture, we didn't create it, it was given to us, to keep us passive and pathetic.

If we are going to talk about working class (or popular) culture we have to be more precise in our definition of what we mean by it otherwise we'll end up calling everything that we do "culture". The only way (I can think of anyway!) of making sense of the term culture is to describe two types of it, firstly there is official culture, and secondly there is unofficial culture. Within the bounds of official culture there is all ruling class culture (eg. art, philosophy, nationalism, liberalism, fox hunting, S&M, etc) plus all the establishment culture we see around us every day (the stuff that makes a profit out of our so-called free time), eg. advertising, TV, sports, pubs, pop music, popular novels, newspapers, gambling, etc. Unofficial culture must therefore be the culture our rulers can't control and can't make a bundle of money out of. [I'm not here going to talk about criminal culture, which is anyway a culture that exists to exploit the working class and is therefore sort of proto-capitalist at best.] Sadly, capitalism is so hungry for our constant attention and admiration that, in Europe and North America at least, there isn't much unofficial culture left.

If we are going to talk about working class culture, then, we must talk about unofficial culture. This is the culture that our rulers are constantly trying to stamp out, and so far they've done a pretty good job. We have no more folk tales that we pass down from generation to generation,

we have no more music that we can call our own, we don't have our own entertainment, we don't have our own sports or carnivals where anything could happen, and usually did. Now I'm not saying anything of these things were particularly useful for anything, all I'm saying is that in the past there was more popular (or unofficial) culture than there is now.

To a certain extent, of course, all popular, unofficial, culture has been seen as a threat to all ruling classes throughout history. This is why in the age of the spectacle, in which "the organisation of work and the organisation of leisure are the blades of the castrating shear whose job is to improve the race of fawning dogs", where the perfection of our slavery has reached giddy heights, we don't have much popular culture left. Unfortunately for our bosses though, this state of affairs has led to the situation where unofficial culture is almost purely the culture of resistance.

Working class culture can now only really be found in resistance to work and resistance to subordination and ideology. Working class culture is now class consciousness. Under capitalism they have taken away all our means by which to entertain ourselves and make our own customs, and they have left us with only one way of expressing ourselves, i.e. through class struggle.

Unofficial culture comprises of things like sabotage at work (from putting a spanner in the works, to going sick), to shoplifting, to rioting, to organising against things like poll tax, to wildcat strikes, go slows, to attacking the spectacle and its presenters etc. Some people might say things like: "But surely racism and sexism are part of working class culture?" (Even after they've read all the above!) They are wrong: racism and sexism are official culture, international proletarian solidarity is the culture of the working class. The work ethic is official culture, our culture is anti-work, anti-wage slavery. The fact that expressions of our culture are small scale, dispersed and occasional just shows that we are weak at this time.

Only in communism will we now be able to build a culture, a creativity, that is not simply class resistance. In the present society all our creativity either goes into the work we do for capitalism or the resistance we put up to it. Hopefully we will increase the creativity of our fight back, at the expense of work.

Neither the content of "Eastenders" nor the fact of lots of us watching it constitutes working class culture. "Eastenders" portrays working class people in submission to official culture. Neither watching these lovable characters drinking in The Queen Vic, nor going out to a pub yourself has anything to do with unofficial culture. We're doing exactly what our rulers want us to do, that is: either passively admiring and learning our lessons, or getting a bit merry and spending our dosh. It's all crap. Frankly, if we had any sanity left, we would be going mental.

LETTERS

Dear Gob,

I didn't see the article in issue no.1 about students but I saw the 'letter' about it in no.2. While I can completely identify with extreme hatred of students as a social group (I live in a back-to-back terrace surrounded on three sides by the scum), there is quite a sizeable section of working class 'mature students', who have taken up studying as a result of the absolute mindlessness of everyday life. Note that I'm not referring to kids from working class backgrounds who go straight to college, I'm talking about people who have been in shit jobs, or on the dole, for long enough to want to do something a bit more interesting with their time, I'm one of these, I was

on the dole for nearly a decade and to me studying was a means to keeping my mind active. I hate being in close proximity to the real studenty students and it never ceases to amaze me that there isn't a lot more anti-student violence happening.

Luckily my course is nearly all real people.

cheers, John.

P.G. reply:

I don't mean to pass judgements down on people who go to university, I'd just like to make them and everyone else aware of the role students perform and are intended to perform after they leave the hallowed piss-bucket of academia. That is, to become managers, investigators and manipulators of the working class. I don't blame you at all, or anyone, for wanting to do something more interesting with their time, whether they work or are on the dole. The problem with mature students is that most of them actually want to be able to go into a "more interesting" job after they've got their degree, i.e. the sort of job that a degree gets you. The other thing to remember is that universities usually prefer to have mature students: since they know what they'll have to go back to if they fail, they usually work harder; and also they aren't generally as obnoxious as students straight from school are, since they have "grown up", so lecturers get on better with them. For the universities, it's probably a case of: the more mature students the better!

LIVING ZOMBIES SPEAK OUT!

THE ALIENATION OF LIVING ACTIVITY. From REPRODUCTION OF DAILY LIFE, by Fredy Perlman, 1969

In capitalist society, creative activity takes the form of commodity production, namely production of marketable goods, and the results of human activity take the form of commodities. Marketability or saleability is the universal characteristic of all practical activity and all products.

The products of human activity which are necessary for survival have the form of saleable goods: they are only available in exchange for money. And money is only available in exchange for commodities. If a large number of men accept the legitimacy of these conventions, if they accept the convention that commodities are a prerequisite for money, and that money is a prerequisite for survival, then they find themselves locked into a vicious circle. Since they have no commodities, their only exit from this circle is to regard themselves, or parts of themselves, as commodities. And this is, in fact, the peculiar "solution" which men impose on themselves in the face of specific material and historical conditions. They do not exchange their bodies or parts of their bodies for money. They exchange the creative content of their lives, their practical daily activity, for money.

As soon as men accept money as an equivalent for life, the sale of living activity becomes a condition for their physical and social survival. Life is exchanged for survival. Creation and production come to mean sold activity. A man's activity is "productive," useful to society, only when it is sold activity. And the man himself is a productive member of society only if the activities of his daily life are sold activities. As soon as people accept the terms of this exchange, daily activity takes the form of universal prostitution.

The sold creative power, or sold daily activity, takes the form of labor; labor is a historically specific form of human activity; labor is abstract activity which has only one property; it is marketable; it can be sold for a given quantity of money; labor is indifferent activity; indifferent to the particular task performed and indifferent to the particular subject to which the task is directed. Digging, printing and carving are different activities, but all three are labor in capitalist society; labor is simply "earning money." Living activity which takes the form of labor is a means to earn money. Life becomes a means of survival.

This ironic reversal is not the dramatic climax of an imaginative novel; it is a fact of daily life in capitalist society. Survival, namely self-preservation and reproduction, is not the means to creative practical activity, but precisely the other way around. Creative activity in the form of labor, namely sold activity, is a painful necessity for survival; labor is the means to self-preservation and reproduction.

The sale of living activity brings about another reversal. Through sale, the labor of an individual becomes the "property" of another, it is appropriated by another, it comes under the control of another. In other words, a person's activity becomes the activity of another, the activity of its owner; it becomes alien to the person who performs it. Thus one's life, the accomplishments of an individual in the world, the difference which his life makes in the life of humanity, are not only transformed into labor, a painful condition for survival; they are transformed into alien activity, activity performed by the buyer of that labor. In capitalist society, the architects, the engineers, the laborers, are not builders; the man who buys their labor is the builder; their projects, calculations and motions are alien to them; their living activity, their accomplishments, are his.

Academic sociologists, who take the sale of labor for granted, understand this alienation of labor as a feeling: the worker's activity "appears" alien to the worker, it "seems" to be controlled by another. However, any worker can explain to the academic sociologists that the alienation is neither a feeling nor an idea in the worker's head, but a real fact about the worker's daily life. The sold activity is in fact alien to the worker; his labor is in fact controlled by its buyer.

In exchange for his sold activity, the worker gets money, the conventionally accepted means of survival in capitalist society. With this money he can buy commodities, things, but he cannot buy back his activity. This reveals a peculiar "gap" in money as the "universal equivalent." A person can sell commodities for money, and he can buy the same commodities with money. He can sell his living activity for money, but he cannot buy his living activity for money.

The things the worker buys with his wages are first of all consumer goods which enable him to survive, to reproduce his labor-power so as to be able to continue selling it. And they are spectacles, objects for passive admiration. He consumes and admires the products of human activity passively. He does not exist in the world as an active agent who transforms it. But as a helpless impotent spectator he may call this state of powerless admiration "happiness," and since labor is painful, he may desire to be "happy," namely inactive, all his life (a condition similar to being born dead). The commodities, the spectacles, consume him; he uses up living energy in passive admiration; he is consumed by things. In this sense, the more he has, the less he is. (An individual can surmount this death-in-life through marginal creative activity; but the population cannot, except by abolishing the capitalist form of practical activity, by abolishing wage-labor and thus de-alienating creative activity.)

SEIZE YOURSELF!

The slogan "Seize the Day" is full of bourgeois individualism and desperate nihilism. Seizing the day is what people like Richard Branson or the leader of a band of bloodthirsty mercenaries do. Seizing the day says that life is futile (rather than that it should be fun) and that the only way you can rise above the dreary lives of your fellows is to be bigger than them, in all respects. Seizing the day is the desperate attempt to do something before you die. Forget death, throw your calendars and clocks away, no more imitations of heroic acts, no more playacting, the communist slogan is Seize Yourself! No more wage slavery, no more living our lives for the benefit of bosses! Our freedom lies not in escaping from ourselves and our surroundings but in smashing our alienation from our own lives and each other by collectively becoming human. To do this we need to destroy global capitalism and throw every bourgeois, every government, every tyrant, every bureaucrat, cop and priest that stands against us on our carnival bonfire. However, this isn't going to happen tomorrow, so what do we do in the meantime? We take our chances when we can, we cause as much trouble as we can to anyone or system that seeks to control us, we refuse to do their dirty work, we get together with like-minded troublemakers and try to increase the amount of class consciousness in our class. We dream of bonfires and living in a world without bosses

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