

CLASS

CLASS WAR



Zabalaza Books

"Knowledge is the Key to be Free"

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***"The Working Class? They're
no problem. I can buy one half
to kill the other half!"***

J. P. Morgan
- American Banker 1991

*** i.e. in the book *Unfinished Business: The
Politics of Class War* from which the text of
this pamphlet is taken**

**The Class War website can be found at:
<http://www.classwaruk.org/>**

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★ INTRODUCTION

So far we have covered capitalism and the State * and shown how these two forces have produced the kind of society we live in. As capitalism represents exploitation and the State domination then it is hardly surprising that the society they have produced is split into different categories or classes of people who occupy a position or status by virtue of their relation to capitalism and the State. In this chapter * on class we get down to the business of applying to society what we have found out about capitalism and the State. As you might expect, we have a lot to say on the subject of class.

★ class Structure

The traditional view of the class division of society still holds true, this sees three main divisions:

- ★ The ruling class; at the top, composed of the capitalists and State managers.
- ★ The middle class; in the middle, composed of the 'middle management' of capitalism and the State.
- ★ The working class; they are the people who are exploited and dominated by the other two classes. They consist of those who live and work in the industrialised world, and those who live and work in parts of the world that are not very industrialised, consisting of rural workers and farmers; called peasants. We see these rural workers as belonging to the same class, the oppressed. The Left traditionally looks upon them as reactionary and a problem, a view we do not share, and a view that history shows is nonsense (as in Spain, Russia, Haiti, Jamaica, The Ukraine, China, Mexico, South America, etc.) This then is the broad outline of the class structure. It will be useful to try and fill in a bit more detail in this picture of the class system, in the UK.

★ SUMMING UP ON CLASS

- ★ There definitely is such a thing as class and the class system will continue to exist as long as there is capitalism, wage labour and governments. Superficial things may change, such as home ownership and holidays abroad for some of the working class in the UK. Class society is a violent, miserable way of organising a society.
- ★ There are broadly speaking three classes; ruling class, middle class and working class. The ruling class have to fight each other and stay on top of everybody else. The middle class can produce competitors for political power with the ruling class and they work very hard to keep society running smoothly by keeping the working class under control.
- ★ The working class fights back spasmodically against the other two classes sometimes on a massive scale. The rest of the time the working classes fight each other.
- ★ In identifying who is who in the class system, wealth and power are the key factors.
- ★ In order to make a new world without class divisions and the misery that they create for everyone we must first destroy the old world and its class system.
- ★ During a revolutionary period the middle class will split and part of it will side with the revolutionary sections of the working class. Equally, the working class will split between those who support the revolution and those who side with the bosses.
- ★ The ruling class does not secretly conspire to oppress us, most of the time they don't need to. They actually believe their own propaganda. As a class they operate by internal consent, mostly in the open. They are of course also capable of plotting and planning ahead with the aid of the middle class and when the need arises, will use every dirty trick in the book.
- ★ And finally the ruling class rules but does not actually govern. That is left to the State's managers, the politicians and civil service, on a day-to-day basis.

Of course everyone is an individual and is also a member of a particular social class. And yes some people are genuinely hard to fit into a class structure; there are always those who do not fit neatly into the scheme of things. That's the genius of humans!

But once you become conscious of the existence of class and start looking at society from a class point of view then the obvious starts to make itself clear. Thus a family can have a son who has joined the middle class and a daughter who is working class. Where before this might have seemed confusing or an 'act of God' or 'fate' it becomes a lot easier to understand. Then you wonder how you ever managed without "class-consciousness"! And the grey areas start to shrink.

★ Subjective Class

What we have been talking about so far is reality. What we must now look at is what people think about class, i.e. the ideas that have been put in their heads about class. A lot of people think they are in a certain class when in fact they are not. This is "subjective class" and is a result of the propaganda campaign waged against the working class and to a lesser extent against the middle class, to deny and warp peoples' class identity. This campaign plays on our aspirations. Who wants to be a worker at the bottom of the pile? Before we examine subjective class we should state that there are people who are perfectly clear about what class they belong to. The ruling class have a clear understanding of this, as do some of the working class and middle class.

★ Some Examples of Subjective Class

A working class person might consider themselves middle class because; they own their own house, are self employed or even because they have a nice carpet in their living room! This is what is called wishful thinking. A middle class person might think that they are working class because their parents were working class or because they have chosen to do a manual job as part of a rebellion against their background. As a rule of thumb it takes one or two generations to slide down the class scale from middle class origins. This is because many of the benefits of being middle class are passed on through 'culture' in the form of accent, confidence, education, attitude, ideas, values etc. Funnily enough some middle class people would rather not be what they are, just like some working class people. It's mad really, but that is the stupidity of the class system. In both cases it is wishful thinking.

★ OUTLINE OF THE CLASS STRUCTURE IN BRITAIN

Please note - the sizes of the classes quoted here have been derived from the 1981 census returns. The State has lists of social classes and socio-economic groups. Both are defined by occupation. Their allocation of occupation to class and socio-economic group does not always agree with our conception of class. For instance much of the white-collar work we would regard to be working class they consider to be middle class, hence the assertion recently by some British politicians that the working class is disappearing.

★ The Ruling Class

SIZE: absolute maximum of about 5% (probably much less) of population = approx. 2.75 million people.

IDENTITY: examples of capitalists; owners of companies and major shareholders, executive and managing directors of the top British companies, bankers, senior managers of investment and insurance companies, stockbrokers, property and landowners, not forgetting the royals and other aristocrats who pervade all the top levels of British society,

Examples of state managers; top civil service managers in national and local government, cabinet ministers, high court judges and law lords, members of the privy council, staff officers of the armed forces, police chiefs, high level advisors such as some economists and top academics such as Oxbridge dons, and of course church leaders.

FUNCTION: to maintain their own and their class's domination over society. Their favourite method is 'divide and rule'; notably setting whites against blacks and other races against each other, called racism; setting men against women, called sexism and setting worker against worker. Of course these divisions do not apply to the ruling class. They are intended only for working class consumption. The morals, rules and laws of the ruling class do not apply to themselves; their purpose is to keep us in our place. The strategy of the ruling class is to keep their class united and others divided.

★ The ruling classes compete fiercely with each other for markets, resources and political power. War between nation-states and civil war is often the result.

ORIGINS: many are born into the class in Britain but in other countries they tend to come from all sections of society.

★ The Middle Class

SIZE: about 20% of population = approx. 11 million people.

IDENTITY: examples of 'professional' people who work for capitalism and the

State; J.P.'s, journalists, doctors, officers in the armed forces, researchers; management: in manufacture, sales, distribution and service industries; small employers (i.e. small capitalists), social workers, vicars and priests, teachers, etc.

FUNCTION: to manage the working class in the interests of the ruling class. To ensure the smooth running of capitalist society. To watch out for potential crisis in capitalism and devise avoiding action. To manufacture 'culture', both high and popular: including pop music, fashion, philosophy, opera and TV.

★ To provide technical skills for capitalism and the State in the realm of production and especially management. A section of the middle class employed by the State form what has been nicknamed 'the mandarin class' (named after the old Chinese Imperial civil service who formed a powerful group in their own right). Then there are the 'failed mandarins' often of a Lefty persuasion who content themselves with creating small time job opportunities in local government to do 'good works' in an attempt to 'save' the working class.

★ To research into different methods of production and social organisation for instance 'green' economics or 'communes'. To promote ideas that keep us divided like racism and sexism by means of the media, education and religion that they control. To explain and justify the existing organisation of society. To divert our energy into harmless activity that is called reformism e.g. Greenpeace, CND, feminism, trades unions - activities that at best will only modify your misery and will not do anything to change the fundamental nature of society.

★ The Working Class

SIZE: about 75% of the population = approx. 41.25 million people.

IDENTITY: the briefest way of describing our class is to say they are everyone who is not in the middle and ruling classes! This is not just a smart arse remark. In general the working class are people who live by their labour (even the dole can be seen as a 'wage' - its the deal the State strikes with us to prevent unrest by the unemployed); the ownership of property that generates wealth is a dividing line. If you have enough property or money not to have to work then you are not working class. The other component of class Identity is 'social power'. The working classes do not have power. They are the ones who are told what to do. As a class we are defined by the activities of capitalism and the State, and the two classes that benefit most from the status quo; the ruling class and the middle class.

THE WORKING CLASSES ARE DEFINED NOT BY WHAT THEY DO BUT BY WHAT IS DONE TO THEM. THEY ARE THE CREATION OF CAPITALISM. This is not to say that we are powerless, far from it. Huge amounts of effort and money are devoted to keeping us in our place. The working class are the only people capable of destroying capitalism and the State, and building a better world for everyone. Because our work is at the centre of everyday practical economic activity in capitalism it would be fair to say it all hinges around whether we want to 'play the game'.

IDENTITY: examples; factory workers, distribution workers in road, rail, air and sea, retail workers in shops, construction and building, service industries such as

lowed by merchant bankers and established 'old' City of London firms, who look down on stockbrokers and dealers who are regarded as the 'workers' of the ruling class!

These grades and aspirations are useful at keeping people divided. The mere image of the car or house you own is enough to place you in the class system. This is the social function of snobbery, to keep us divided.

★ Mobility

The class system is alive and kicking! It is a dynamic set of social relations with people on the way up and on the way down. It is real and the mental hospitals and graveyards are full of its victims. Class politics can be a dangerous game. It is very important to know who you are, where you came from and where you are now in the class system. If you don't, great confusion and stress can result from being involved in active class politics. The middle class are largely recruited from the working class; they do not spring out of the ground! This recruitment has grown largely after World War Two when capitalism expanded so rapidly that it outstripped the supply of middle class people available.

There are of course long established middle class families especially at the upper end of the middle class where they blend into the lower ruling class. Some ruling class people even start out in the working class. The class system in the UK is comparatively static compared to the USA where upward mobility is more open to those with ability and ruthlessness, often called 'meritocracy' by academics. The eleven year reign of Thatcher as UK Prime Minister represented a serious attempt to change Britain towards the American way of doing things. This in itself is a symbol of the struggle going on within the UK ruling class between 'new money' and 'old money'.

There are national differences in class systems but the essentials remain the same everywhere.

★ Grey Areas

There are groups of people who appear hard to fit into the class system e.g. artists, dropouts, the self-employed, shopkeepers, students etc. But many of these 'grey areas' only exist in people's minds through confusion and ignorance, a state of affairs that is essential for capitalism and its class system to survive. The media and education set out to minimise the existence of the class system and stress that everyone is an 'individual' and responsible for how successful, or not, they are. This process blurs the reality of class society and promotes the myth of meritocracy. Concerning artists, they are a good example of the class process at work. Of course there are painters, poets, musicians etc. in the working class, but if they are to succeed in their 'art' and make a living from it then they are under great pressure to enter the middle class, ask them!

Printers and plasterers do not have the power of a teacher who has a class of thirty or more people to mould into 'good' citizens or a doctor who has to decide who lives or dies in our inadequate health system, or a social worker who has to decide whether to take your children from you. Power is the deciding factor here. The privileged working class might have a bit of money, a flash car, a house and often a head full of junk! But what they do not have is power or the prestige that goes with it in the British class system.

★ Romanticising Poverty

Amongst the Left, especially those from the middle and upper class, there is tendency to be romantic about poverty. Some of the intellectuals see working class people as the "Noble Savage". This is often expressed in their films and books etc. about us. The Russian anarchist Bakunin, who was from an aristocratic background and very sound on most political matters, went so far as to describe tramps as the 'flower of the proletariat'!

We think these attitudes are a hindrance and reflect a middle class obsession, which in recent years has resulted in some of the children of the middle class in the UK going off to the inner cities and adopting a 'tramp' dropout type lifestyle. This strange behaviour is usually accompanied by the use of hard drugs and right-wing individualism hiding behind the label of 'anarchism', which is of course a complete opposite to what anarchism stands for.

This is the latest development in a long line of the bohemian tradition of the middle class. It speaks volumes about the inner misery and despair of middle class life but does little to shed light on life at the bottom of the class system. People from our class tend to see poverty, ignorance and squalor differently. This is how one working class revolutionary saw it:

"A lot of nonsense has been written by sections of the socialist movement about this: to romanticise that way of life is daft. When human beings don't care about their own health or personal cleanliness and think of nothing but drink, they are no good to the movement or to anybody else."

Harry McShane
from "No Mean Fighter", with Joan Smith

★ Internal Differences

Each class has internal differences, grades and prestige. For instance the working class has at the top, the 'privileged' workers (that may aspire to a middle class lifestyle), skilled workers, down through semi-skilled, labourers, and at the bottom the unemployed, etc.

Even the ruling class has grades. For instance the aristocracy are at the top, fol-

leisure, cleaning, catering and the finance industry up to section supervisors. Agricultural workers, workers in the chemicals, steel, drugs, coal, electronics, engineering industries, many of the self-employed e.g. brickies, plasterers, truck drivers etc., nurses (over 500,000 - the biggest single work group), secretaries, bank clerks, computer operators, soldiers up to NCO level, the unemployed, the poor, the destitute - those of no property.

★ The Question of Working Class Identity

The working class has its identity questioned and attacked from the cradle to the grave. Instead of their obvious and real identity, together with their real need for mutual solidarity, they are offered a warped image of themselves. This image is differential to their 'betters' and a patriotic pride in the State (the UK) and Royalty. Their self-confidence is comprehensively attacked by education, religion and the media. Superstitious and bigoted ideas are encouraged at every opportunity.

The people who do this to us (the middle class) then have the cheek to moan about how awful we are! For instance our young men are encouraged to be aggressive and competitive and are praised as patriots when they go to fight for their masters in Ireland, Argentina and Iraq. Yet when they swagger down the street on Saturday nights they are 'louts' or worse according to what paper you read.

If you look at the media in the UK you will find that the working class are allowed only three kinds of image and are encouraged to look at themselves in the following ways;

- ★ The honest, loyal, hard working, good-hearted citizen.
- ★ The stupid and the misguided, to be patronised.
- ★ The rest, who are portrayed as scum, animals and evil who are constantly to be put in their place; who are to be shot down like dogs when the need arises.

Into this third category the media will shuffle anybody that stands up against injustice and oppression e.g. strikers, prisoners, gays, blacks, rioters, etc. and us. All we can say is that we are in good company!

We are offered a way of life by our rulers that is 'normal'. In this false world of 'normal', patriotism is considered good when in fact all it represents is loyalty to our rulers. Parochialism, i.e. being concerned with only what happens in your own small corner of the world, is encouraged at every turn from the 'Little Englander attitudes of the southern counties of England, to the 'Tyke Nationalism' of Yorkshire and the sentimental myths surrounding Scottish nationalism. Ignorance and racism are elevated to virtues in the 'normal' outlook and reinforced at every opportunity by the media and advertising. Even the way we speak becomes a way of assigning class identity and privilege in our society. BBC English has the police jumping through hoops!

★ Function of the Working Class

Exploited: to produce goods and services for the capitalists in return for a wage. To buy back what we produce, (whether we need it or not!) To act as a market for capitalism. In short to be exploited.

Dominated: to be ordered around by the State's laws, police and the bosses rules; to be the target for vile political campaigns aimed at splitting and antagonising our class from each other e.g. young and old, workers and unemployed, black and white, men and women, gays and heterosexuals, parents and kids.

Exterminated: to be the cannon fodder in the military adventures of their governments, yet the middle and upper class express horror at the class they have helped create as if it has nothing to do with them. Yes we are wild and brutal at times - oppression does not necessarily make you a nice person.

★ Class Structure - General Points

In general there are two main components that give you your place in the class system, **WEALTH** and **SOCIAL POWER**. Confused? If there is any doubt in placing someone in class terms then social power is definitely the deciding factor.

★ THE WORKING CLASS - POLITICAL DIVISIONS

This is a good time to talk about the main divisions that afflict our class and keep us weak. The main divisions are nationalism, racism, sexism, and anti-gay bigotry. We are not born like this. It is an artificial state of affairs and can be changed. In fact we have a strong tendency to unity and solidarity because daily around the world our class shares the same experiences; essentially to be bossed around (dominated) and ripped off (exploited). In fact we have so much in common and so much to gain from coming together that it is obvious to those that rule us that we must be stopped from doing so at all costs.

Their method is the tried and tested one of 'divide and rule'. They use nationalism, sexism, racism, religion and hatred of gays to turn us against each other. Education, religion, culture, the media and advertising are the carriers of these poisonous ideas. As each generation gets battered down by this process they tend to bring their kids up the same way. Yet not all of us get fooled and sometimes in the course of struggles such as strikes and wars we get to see what is really going on in this world. This is what the ruling class dread. They know that solidarity and ideas

between the richest and the poorest in our society has widened."

Nigel Fountain
The Guardian 30/11/90.

Briefly, we would say that one third of our class live in poverty. Another third earn up to about twice the income of the official poverty line and the final third of our class do better than this. Through the 1980's our class has been squeezed harder with cutbacks in benefits and welfare. So what we have is an economically divided working class as well as all the political divisions that are created to keep us apart.

★ Comments on Class - the 'Alternative' Middle Class?

Put brutally, an economically poor offspring of a middle class family still has more power than an average working class person. This power includes; knowing how to 'work the system', a social network that can provide access to money or work, an accent that commands respect from those in authority; the values, attitudes, self confidence and assertiveness that goes with a middle class upbringing. In short a ragged-arsed bare foot hippy from the middle class on the dole is still middle class.

★ The Police

The police and similar groups like bailiffs, prison officers and DSS snoopers have a unique role to play in the preservation of the status quo. Some actually do believe in trying to do good like stopping crime, but such naivety quickly disappears after entering the force. The Establishment only want those people who are suited by character, temperament and politics to join the ranks of the police force. Those unsuited quickly leave. History is full of instances of soldiers etc. coming over to the side of the people in revolutions. The same cannot be said of the police. While most of the police start off from a working class background they cannot be included in our view of the working class. A very large section of our class has a healthy contempt and disdain for this type of traitor and practically keep them at arms length.

★ Privileged Working Class? (money but no power)

There always is a section of our class that does better than the rest; remember divide and rule. In recent history we have seen the so-called 'aristocracy' of labour doing very well with workers like printers, car workers, plasterers and some technical workers often earning more than some middle class jobs like teachers, middle management or social workers. This, we are told, heralds the end of the class system, nonsense! Remember its power that counts.

in this survey means married man and woman with or without children).

Families on the poverty line - total percentages:

- ★ Out of all families with no children 29% are on the poverty line.
- ★ Out of all families with one child 20% are on the poverty line.
- ★ Out of all families with two dependant children 15% are on the poverty line.
- ★ Out of all families with three children 33% are on the poverty line.

There are large numbers of families only just above the poverty line as well. And the picture gets worse for the old, 75% of all pensioners are on the poverty line. The accuracy of these figures depends on the sample being representative of the general population. Assuming this is so (this type of survey has been going on for years) then the figures make sobering reading. These figures were backed up in late 1990 by a United Nations survey into child health in the UK. The results showed that 25% of British children were malnourished to the extent that their growth was stunted.

Further support is given to our rough figures by an examination of the work of a lefty professor Peter Townsend. In 1979 he published a thousand page survey and examination of poverty in the UK. He says:

"By the State's own definition of poverty (the dole etc.), therefore, there were between 15 and 17.5 million in a population of 55.5 million who were in or near poverty."

**"Poverty"
by Peter Townsend**

In percentage figures this amounts to about 32% of the total UK population living in poverty. The Professor, after 892 pages of statistics, philosophy and case studies came to the following conclusion:

"The chief conclusion of this report is that poverty is more extensive than is generally or officially believed and has to be understood not only as an inevitable feature of severe social inequality (the class system) but also as a particular consequence of actions by the rich to preserve and enhance their wealth and so deny it to others."

**"Poverty"
by Peter Townsend**

Well done Prof! However his solution is economic reform by government, which the State and Establishment would not allow to happen, as we all know quite well. But poverty is one thing that can't be denied. Even the dreadful bleeding-hearts liberal paper The Guardian admits that there is a large number of the poor.

"According to the Governments Central Statistical Office, the bottom half of society own just 7% of the wealth. In the last decade the gap

can spread like wildfire amongst us. The pressure from us toward unity is so strong that the ruling class has to devote lots of time, energy and money to keeping our heads full of nonsense. They employ some of the middle class to do this for them.

★ Religion

This is much more important than many of us in the UK at first realise. We will concentrate here on Christianity, the 'official' religion of the British State, but much of what follows applies to all religions. Much of what we say here follows on from the points made about the relation between religion and the State in Chapter Two. *

Throughout history, the growth and control of organised religions has been a perversion of natural and social needs that people have felt: the hunger to explain ourselves, how we relate to each other and the world, and the curiosity about where we come from. This is a positive and useful inquisitiveness that we all have.

The religious leaders have worked hand in hand with the capitalists, the State and politicians to exercise moral, social, and political control over the world's working classes. This is all to keep themselves in mystical positions of power by forcing social and religious beliefs upon us, (often at the point of death: look at the missionary work in the early days of capitalist imperialism). In the UK many of us are supposed to believe in the official religion of Christianity. We are told that Christ was a guy who knocked around 2000 years ago, was born by a woman who never had sex with a man, worked magic tricks, got crucified, rose from the dead and went to a place called heaven where everything is nice. Come on! Pull the other one! We are told that this is the "true faith" and that other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Taoism etc. are 'backward', which is a laugh.

★ Catholicism

The Catholic Church is a massive multinational company, a landowner with the richest city (the Vatican) in the world as the jewel in its rotten crown. The majority of the Catholics in the world are working class and peasants, living in poverty. But they are expected to give, and live, for the greater glory of a God whose spokesman on earth is the Pope, a close friend of some of the most right-wing regimes in the world, and who vindictively opposes both contraception and abortion, condemning many women to poverty and ill health.

★ Church of England

These religious leaders regularly change their ideas to hang on to their followers. In the 1950's Rock and Roll was seen by most Christian 'thinkers' as "the Devil's Music". But now in 1992 the present Archbishop of Canterbury says he loves pop music in an effort to attract young people back to his church. The same church, the Church of England, is officially part of the government of this country, and regularly

blesse weapons of mass destruction and justifies the brutality of British forces in Northern Ireland. This church owns thousands of empty properties and acres of land yet does nothing about homelessness.

Both Protestantism and Catholicism massacred untold numbers of women in the Middle Ages in Europe as they extended their spiritual and physical empires. Their hatred of and discrimination against women has left a scar on our class in the form of sexism from this era. We have not forgotten.

All religions benefit by encouraging distrust and bigotry between different peoples such as racism. This has the effect of binding their followers more closely to the church (the sectarianism in Northern Ireland is actually good for the churches on both sides). Again the early history of colonialism is instructive. Many Christian religious leaders pronounced that the 'natives' were not human, had no soul and so it was OK to kill and enslave them as they were little more than animals!

Just as capitalism is a small number of people controlling what we have and how much we have to work to get it, organised religion means God's bosses seek to socially control us.

In the Spanish Revolution of the 1930's some of the peasants who had lived in squalor and ignorance under the rule of the Catholic Church for centuries showed what they thought of their spiritual leaders. They shot every Nun and Priest they could find and when they ran out of live ones they went to the graveyards and dug up the dead ones and shot them too! Not content with this, in several places statues of Christ were taken down from the walls of the churches and 'He' was tried for his crimes against the people.

After being sentenced to death the statue was taken in front of a firing squad, shot and then buried. Notices were then posted around some villages announcing that the leader of the gang (the Church) responsible for so much physical and emotional suffering amongst the peasants had been caught and executed. The notice added that this time Christ was not coming back!

This brilliant piece of working class propaganda sets very well the right tone for dealing with religion.

★ Racism

The splitting up of people along the lines of where they come from, or the colour of their skin is dead useful at keeping the working class weak. But racism does not just attempt to create a division in the working class, its aim is to make sections of the working class support and collaborate with the ruling class. Racism, by creating an illusion that there is some sort of natural unity between members of the same ethnic group disguises the real nature of class conflict within capitalism. Nationalism functions in much the same way, as was described in Chapter Two. *

In this way class-consciousness is replaced with race consciousness. That is, when sections of the working class believe they have more in common with their rulers than other sections of their class. Class issues get turned into race issues as the media, the State and the ruling class scapegoat black sections of the working

than ever parents are under pressure to conform and instil the 'right' values in their children. Throughout the 1980's the breakdown of the family was being blamed as the source of social disorder by the politicians. The fact is, the family cannot cope with what is expected of it by capitalism and that is why it is breaking down.

At school this process is carried even further. We learn to obey the all-powerful institution of the school and are conditioned to place trust in 'official knowledge'. When we are in our adult lives we are influenced by what is called 'common sense'. This so-called 'common sense' is usually set by the media and politicians. Thus ideology tries to penetrate our very ideas and sense of what knowledge is.

★ Conclusions on Ideology and Culture

As was mentioned above both ideology and mass culture are not as all-powerful as they seem. Within our class culture there are the essential elements for class struggle, the ruling and middle class know this only too well. Ideology cannot guarantee 100% allegiance from even the most right wing of our class. Its main function is to thwart any development of a radical working class consciousness and to seek out discontent and neutralise it. From our point of view it is essential to promote and strengthen the working class culture that already exists. This culture needs to counter the ruling class ideologies such as sexism, nationalism etc. whilst setting its own agenda in the class struggle; making demands that the ruling class cannot even contemplate, let alone fulfil.

★ THE WORKING CLASS - ECONOMIC DIVISIONS

Here are some statistics - on the subject of wealth. For this purpose we shall use the measure of "Disposable Income of a Household", as used by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and others. What this means is the amount of money that a family has left to spend after tax, national insurance, rent or mortgage etc. are paid.

First we took the amount of social security payable to a family unit as the reference point for material poverty in the UK and then set about using the poverty trap tables of gross income versus disposable income found in "Social Trends" from the CSO as a tool. We then applied this tool to the results of the Dept. of Environment Family Expenditure Survey.

This had a sample of 7,081 households, and is carried out regularly. The figures are from 1985. We found that the following number of different households were on and below this arbitrary poverty line (which we think is far too low anyway). Percentages are expressed of the total of that sort of family in the sample ('Family'

to people. Who works just to survive? They also know that 'leisure' is a large market in its own right.

Mass culture is brought to us through the mass media; books, newspapers, magazines, films, TV, 'pop' music, etc. It does not just sell us products and push political ideas (propaganda), it maintains by subtle ways all the necessary prejudices, myths and stereotypes that keep us ignorant of each other, so fostering fear, isolation and divisions between each other. It is the same old story of divide and rule that keeps us in our place (the bottom) and them in theirs (the top).

A vast industry now surrounds mass culture, including advertising, market research, psychologists, education (especially higher education that researches and experiments with new ideas and methods), public relations firms etc. It is a 'booming' market worth billions to the capitalists. This all reflects the importance and size of the market that is represented by leisure and information in our society, and the need to maintain social stability. Mass culture employs large numbers of middle class people and as we mention elsewhere this is one of the roles of that class in capitalism, and a source of much tension for them too! As a class they are constantly having to change their view of the world as the needs of their capitalist masters change.

★ Mass Culture and Class Culture

Despite all this our class position in society creates a certain culture all of its own that grows around our common class experience. Daily our class around the world share the experience of exploitation at the point of production and consumption, and domination by the State. These things are not imagined. They are real and a powerful force towards unity. Our culture reflects the boredom, alienation and sterility of a class based society; but it also expresses a healthy amount of hostility, conflict and resistance to capitalism and the State. The working class are aware most of the time that they are in an inferior position, and at moments in our daily lives we fight back and gain a space we can call our own. Mass culture tries to join the working class to the middle and ruling class parts of society but it never succeeds. Instead it just papers over the cracks of class divisions.

★ Ideology in our Daily Lives

Thinking about ideology doesn't figure much in our daily lives; but it is our very own personal experiences that are shaped by it, in much the same way as it is shaped by class and the economic system. When we are young we are instructed to believe and do certain things; to fill certain roles and ways of behaving; this process is known as 'socialisation'. We learn about sexual roles and behaviour in our families. Parents are under great social pressure to conform to what is known as "responsible parenting". The family is the basic social unit in capitalism and is under extreme pressure as capitalism lurches from one crisis to the other. Now more

class for problems created by the capitalist system, like unemployment. Please note that when we say 'black' we mean all non-white people in this country.

What the white working class get out of racism is a sense of superiority and identity and the feeling of being better treated by the State and the bosses. While most of this is an illusion it is a powerful illusion. The only sense of power allowed the working class in this society is when they crap on someone else. There is a defined pecking order and at the bottom are black women.

Racism in Britain has caused the isolation of many ethnic groups. The response to this treatment on a local and national level has been the setting up of black political organisations. This has been a necessary step, due to the crippling effect of racism on the British white working class. While we welcome such initiatives we push for a wider class-consciousness within these movements.

★ Sexism

The importance of this division to our class is reflected here in the length devoted to it. Sexism means the oppression and putting down of women just because we are women, implying we are of lesser importance than men. All women experience this to varying degrees according to what class they live in. While this division predates capitalism and came from religion, it has been used by capitalists for their own ends, working in partnership with the State to justify the oppression of women by men. Exploiting this sexual division enables them to keep the cost of producing future generations of workers down by getting free childcare and family maintenance. Whether a person is female or male should be of no importance. Biological differences are irrelevant. The fact that our sex is used to decide our future life opportunities is a social and political division.

Sexism like racism, is a form of prejudice promoted by those in power, via the media, legislation and 'popular' commercial culture. Its purpose is to keep the working class divided. The effect of this discrimination is to exclude us from the arena of public life i.e. work, politics, business, trade unions, the media and anything that can influence public opinion in a big way. By these means women become 'non' people, not worth consulting with.

"The consistency and completeness, over the centuries, of the exclusion and subordination of women has no real parallel in the experience of any other social group, and nowhere is it clearer how central a problem the 'State' remains if human capacities are ever to be fully realised."

"The Great Arch" (notes on the making of the English ruling class) Corrigan and Sayer.

This exclusion from public life applies to all but the lucky or the rich. On a practical level the availability of childcare is crucial for women to take part in public life, either in paid work, or involvement in community groups, trade unions or politics. Yet

this is treated as a very minor side issue, relegated to the interests of the so-called 'loony left' by the likes of the tabloid newspapers.

Women are seen and valued in terms of their body. It is important to live up to expectations of attractiveness. A multi-billion pound industry caters for this, reinforcing the idea of looking good. By skilful marketing and manipulation women are encouraged to spend vast sums of money on cosmetics, clothes, slimming products, health clubs, exercise classes etc. This fascination with the body-beautiful is connected to sexuality and both are used to sell anything; cars, holidays, clothing, food, etc. We are presented with a series of impossible roles and images to live up to, many of which contradict each other such as the virgin, the whore, the mother, the worker, the career woman, the slim 'object of desire' and so on. All this social conditioning which we receive via the family, education, religion, the media and various State institutions is intended to get us to accept a second rate status in life. It is 'our duty' to accept these limitations we are told, and as for imagining things could be a whole lot better...

★ **Changes**

The various phases of women's political movements from the 1880's onwards has had some impact in changing public attitudes about women, and introducing women to political life, increasing women's influence and representation. It has done better in the area of health care. The development of effective contraception and the legalisation of abortion has helped to improve maternal health and lowered mortality rates. Control over our own fertility, being able to decide if and when we have children and how many, is a major gain in women's lives. Concerns about political, economic and social rights are meaningless if you have ten children to look after.

The other major change is the large increase in the numbers of women working outside the home. The limited economic independence this created has brought a certain amount of freedom with it. In capitalism if you have no income of your own your options are severely limited, as anyone on long-term welfare benefits will tell you.

Employment outside the home is no longer the issue it was in the 1950's when the ruling class propaganda pushed the ideas that a "women's place is in the home". Of course in times of crisis and war there has been no problem in creating nurseries for children to enable women to work. This is one of the roles that women fulfil in capitalism to act as a "reserve army of labour" to be called on as and when the need arises. As the film "Rosie the Riveter" showed, women were forced back into the home after the Second World War to make room for the men returning from the armed forces, similar events happened in the First World War as well. A woman's place is wherever the ruling class seem to think they need us! One minute we are all supposed to be career women; the next we are all supposed to be meek wives at home. The 'back to the home' trick may be wheeled out again as the recession deepens in the 1990's.

The jobs women do now are still lower paid and lower status despite equal pay

to drugs and booze or religion or even fascism. This kind of poverty is different but just as bad as a lack of money. Put the two kinds of poverty together and you have got bad news.

We must now look at how these Ideas and divisions are created and kept alive in our class.

★ **How the Political Divisions are Created and Maintained**

It becomes quite clear that these political divisions benefit no one but the ruling and middle classes of our society. But the questions we have to ask ourselves are: how do they get away with it? How is it sustainable over such a long period of time that it becomes a way of life and is accepted as normal? Why is this necessary for capitalism to survive? To answer these questions we must first look at the nature of class domination itself. It is difficult for any ruling class to maintain its rule by force alone, i.e. a straight forward dictatorship. This is inefficient and not likely to succeed in the long run. The ruling class need a minimum amount of co-operation and support from the working class to make the system work, in other words they require a certain amount of consent.

But for people to give their consent to this they have to see things in the same way as their rulers - they must have a common point of view. The ruling class obviously want the working class to see things their way because the easiest way of exercising power is through consent. This point of view is made up of a set of ideas, beliefs and values that represent a particular way of viewing the world; this 'package' is what we call an ideology. There are other ideologies some of which are anti-capitalist.

The ideology of the ruling class is not rigid. To survive it must be flexible, practical and able to respond quickly to the needs of the ruling class in their class struggle with the working class. At certain times this ideology may be brutal and reactionary, and at other times it is more reconciling and reformist. In this country during the last forty-five years there have been many changes in ruling class ideology - from the New Deal under Labour in the 1940's, the consensus welfare politics of the 1950's and 60's, the austerity measures of the 1970's, right through to the 'popular capitalism' of the Thatcherite era of the 1980's. What next for the 1990's and the 21st century?

★ **Mass Culture**

Having a coherent ideology is of no use to the ruling class unless it is sold to the working class at every opportunity. This is one of the roles of mass culture. The other role of mass culture is to stimulate mass consumption, i.e. consumerism, in order to create evermore markets to make a profit in. Mass culture also partly fulfils the leisure needs of the working class. The capitalists know that leisure is important

within their own movements. **WE'RE OUT AND STAYING OUT!**

★ Fascism

This is an extreme form of capitalism. It is really a kind of 'super-patriotism' to the nation-state. In practice this means that a so-called national identity is promoted in the working class. This 'national identity' really consists of a more intense form of what the ruling class want us to be normally; racism, sexism, religious bigotry, respect and worship for our 'leaders' and war are all used to pull our class close to the ruling class and their nation-state. It aims to get the working class to identify strongly with the State and the interests of the ruling class in order to oppress them more effectively and destroy opposition from within the class. Fascism is used as an insurance against the threat of a united working class. The various fascist groups and movements are maintained and tolerated by the ruling class for this purpose. But it is also unstable as it brings maniacs into power e.g. Hitler, and is kept as a weapon of last resort by the ruling class.

Fascism is another way of running capitalism and protecting it. It's not very efficient but is crude and effective and very bad news for our class. Racism is often a strong element in fascism and is used to bind the working class more strongly to the local ruling class e.g. the UK and France. It goes without saying that fascism must be beaten down at every opportunity by our class.

★ Poverty of the Spirit

It has to be said that material poverty is not the only kind that our class must contend with.

Earlier in this chapter we discussed the false divisions that are created in the working class; nationalism, religion, sexism, racism, hatred of gays and nationalism. The world we live in is dominated by the ideas and values of the ruling class and these are pushed at us very hard. In their view of the world it is good to be the bully, the snob, the scab, the racist, the anti-gay bigot etc. This has a terrible effect on our personal lives and our communities. They are wrecked by the divisions of fear, mistrust, ignorance and hatred that these ideas bring with them. This reaches every part of our class, both those doing well in secure well-paid jobs and those with next-to-nothing at the bottom of the pile.

In some of our communities the main hobbies are wife battering, drunkenness, hard drugs, racism, bigotry, robbing off each other and grassing each other up to the cops or the DSS. We have no illusions about the conditions our class live in. The ruling class wants us to hide behind our front doors afraid of each other believing only what we see in their newspapers and TV, living a life of isolation and mistrust. This is the state they try to keep us in to stop us uniting against them. We might not be starving but we are dying of boredom, anger, frustration, stress and ignorance.

It is not surprising that some of us 'go under'; give up hope, lose self-respect, turn

legislation. Relative to men, women earn two thirds of the average male wage and are concentrated at the lower levels of the workforce pecking order. Since the 1960's most women work, often on a part-time basis until their children are older. Much of this is in work that is part time or temporary, and often in non-unionised and low-paid sectors.

★ The Present

The sexual division of labour also puts pressure on men, mainly to be breadwinners. They need to be ambitious, to compete and to win, with aggressiveness not far behind. This is the economic basis of what is, at present, the male identity. This identity is centred around the job they do. Without this a man has no status and no useful role to play in society as it is currently structured. Men are certainly not encouraged to show interest in home based activities, as this is, in effect, the woman's workplace, and since when has being a full-time housewife been a high-status occupation? These different attitudes and lifestyles distort the relationships between women and men. Both lose out, and there is much unhappiness, which while not formally spoken about, shows itself in disastrous relationships, marriages or domestic violence. Now in some parts of the UK it is the women who make up the bulk of the workforce due to male unemployment caused by the capitalists restructuring of the 1970's and 80's. This is another ingredient in the tensions between men and women.

The principle that we should be able to support ourselves and not need the long-term financial support of a man is attractive in theory. However while we are seen as the primary carers of children, elderly parents and disabled relatives, our position in the workplace is regarded as secondary to our work as mothers and wives or girlfriends (a heterosexual relationship is assumed here). This is used to justify lower wages, as it is assumed we are economically and socially dependant and not people in our right.

The idea that childcare should be more equally shared between the sexes is a good one, but in practice women find themselves working the double shift. Having worked during the day, we come home and start on round two; the washing, ironing, cooking and looking after the children. There is no direct male equivalent. When men have had enough, they can go down the pub etc. A woman doesn't have the same option, since firstly children are not welcome and secondly, pubs are a male environment in which an unaccompanied woman is seen as 'fair game' to be 'picked up'. It's hard to round up female friends for a night out due to all their own commitments. It is of course easier for young unattached women - until they 'settle down' that is.

The social security system, along with that other wonderful social institution, marriage; where for instance the married couples tax allowance (or dole) is only payable to the man, are good examples of institutionalised sexism. Men do not need to concern themselves about the cohabitation rules which cut women off from any welfare benefits in their own right and force them towards dependence on a man. Imagine

what having no income of your own does to your self-confidence or sense of identity in a society built around money.

★ Objectives and the Future

The objectives of equality for women can only be achieved as part of a wider social revolution (very true in respect of how family responsibilities regarding childcare are concerned).

It needs to be recognised that women will need to organise separately at certain stages of the class struggle. This is vital in order to overcome the discrimination that we face. It's not just lack of childcare that holds us back but the pressure involved in working in groups made up of mainly men and thus mostly concerned about things of interest to men. Women need their own organisations as well, to gain the necessary experience to deal with public life and represent our interests, so that we can participate in events, contributing actively to the fight of our class. What is being proposed is not female separatism, which is a safe haven for the middle class feminist, but the means to enable women to play their part in the wider class struggle, and avoid becoming marginalised, as has happened in other revolutions. While it is true that the women's or 'feminist' movement (the latter term has become a word of abuse), has mainly benefited middle class women who dominate it, this does not mean that women do not need their own organisations. It is not a choice of class struggle or women's liberation, it is both. One cannot happen without the other.

The only way working class women will get a better deal is through our own efforts; no one else will do it for us. When we start to take control of our lives, and get out of the habit of being passive and waiting for permission or approval from others before doing anything, we gain confidence just by getting on and doing things. That is when we realise how well we have been fooled.

We need to recognise that we have the right and the need to determine our own lives ourselves and not let others constantly do this for us. Equally it is for us to take action, to achieve a better way of life and not expect it to be handed to us on a plate. This will involve struggle and radical change, initially in the area of how we think and feel about ourselves and by working in the wider social movement.

As working class women our voice and identity has been denied throughout history. Any revolutionary organisation that denies or plays down the importance of women's freedom is useless to the struggle to build a better world.

★ Sexuality

Another key way of keeping us divided is by laying down the rules on with who, and how, we should love or have sex with.

★ Men and Women

Relations between men and women (heterosexual relationships) are a constant source of tension and conflict. Sexuality is the virtual monopoly of men, for men. This male dominance has led to all sorts of double standards, hypocrisy and contradictions. Promiscuity in men is supposed to be a sign of natural virility; in women it means they are branded a 'whore', 'slag' or 'tart'.

Capitalist society in general is filled with all sorts of hypocrisy. On the one hand the sexual moralists, like Mary Whitehouse and the churches, are given a free hand to spout their guilt-ridden nonsense that tries to deny any form of pleasure from sex and insist that sex is only legitimate within the confines of marriage and then really only for making children. While on the other hand sex means big money and has become one of the most marketable commodities. Pornography has become industrialised to cope with demand caused by the frustration and guilt caused by the moralists. One cannot live without the other. Women's bodies are used to sell products, and sex through prostitution can be bought and sold on the market. The sex market mainly caters for men; women's second-class status in society means that they can end up providing some form of sexual service in order to survive. Women's social worth is somehow supposed to be linked to their sexual attractiveness; this constant pressure to be 'beautiful' is making many women's lives a total misery, for some it is literally killing them e.g. anorexia and other dieting disorders.

★ Gay Sexuality

The same people who bring us sexism and racism tell us relations between people of the same sex are supposed to be 'wrong', 'evil', and 'unnatural'. The result is frustration and an underground existence for many of us.

Homosexuality, whether lesbian, gay or bisexual is neither wrong nor immoral. It's a natural choice for millions of people, a happy and equal one only tainted by the bigotry of others. If sexually mature people choose to love or have sex with each other, that's no one's business but their own, regardless of race or gender.

Anti-gay and lesbian propaganda has been thrust at us, especially in this century, by the ruling and middle classes with their newspapers and TV stations in exactly the same way as racism has. In both cases the objective is the same, to get us to swallow ridiculous stereotypes and divert our anger into attacking those who we have no logical reason to attack. These stereotypes are paper-thin and are destroyed every day: there are gay truck drivers and oil-riggers, lesbian nurses and newsreaders.

No one, apart from those who want us divided, benefits from this homophobia (fear of lesbians and gays). Currently the gay movement is less and less a ghetto and more people are 'coming out' (openly admitting their sexuality). A lot of this is due to the hard work of working class gays and lesbians who have not only had to contend with bigotry but also with middle class power-seekers and reactionaries