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1996 – Year of struggle?

Anarchist Communist Federation

1996

As we enter 1996, some signs are pointing to a change in the tempo of struggle. Could the wildcat strikes that have happened, and are happening, in particular in the Post and the car industry, be signs that workplace militancy is once again on the increase? And this despite the ‘wisdom’ pushed by the media, the Conservatives and New Labour that strikes are a thing of the past. Certainly the number of wildcat strikes outside the control of the unions backs up our assertions and analysis that workplace struggles must break with the unions. Similarly, social discontent is shown through riots that broke out in 1995 in Leeds, Luton and Brixton.

The promising signs in Britain are outshone by the scale of social unrest in France and Belgium. Far from being the ‘end of history’ and the end of class struggle, the events on the Continent prove that revolutionary change is still very much not a thing of the past.

As Labour drops any pretence at ‘socialism’ and comes out of the closet as a champion of capitalist management, various efforts are being made to recreate Old Labour with moves by Scargill, Militant Labour and other remains of social democracy, Stalinism and Trotskyism. In other words, they will try to develop structures that keep alive any illusions in electoralism and reformism, and

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Retrieved on May 13, 2013 from web.archive.org
Published in *Organise!* Issue 41 – Winter 1995/1996.

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that attempt to coopt any socially combative movements, to sidetrack social discontent. Revolutionaries must respond with vigour to these moves. Both New Labour and any variants of Old Labour have to be challenged.

As we head for a possible General election this Autumn, the chances that Labour will take over the reins of Government seem likely. This Labour administration will carry on with the restructuring of capitalism that will involve further attacks on jobs, services and conditions, as well as an emphasis on Law and Order. The Blair administration will be a staunch supporter of the strong State, as the social discontent that is simmering begins to boil over.

New opportunities have opened up for Anarchist and libertarian revolutionaries. Not since the late 60s have the conditions looked so good for the growth of our movement. Yet it remains pitifully small. We must open up new forums for debate within the movement on how we can take effective and united action, and on how we can make our propaganda and our activities as widespread and as coordinated as possible. Whilst recognising our differences, we must now look for ways that we can reach unity in action. To remain within our own little groups and to refuse to engage in dialogue would be to throw away the new opportunities that are now presenting themselves.