

Unity on the Waterfront

Anarchist Communist Federation

1996

Beginning Saturday September the 28th at noon with colourful gatherings of local comrades and supporters from afar including Turkey, U.S. and Australia. Once the march got under way between 8,000 and 10,000 class warriors chanted, sang and danced their way through Liverpool City centre down to the pier head situated at the top of the river Mersey which the sacked Liverpool dockers and their forefathers before them had serviced. Anarchist groups from all over the U.K. hoisted banners high and proud into the wind, amongst them prominent London ACF, Leeds Anarchist Group, Tyneside Anarchist Group, Sheffield Red and Black Anarchists and the indigenous Merseyside ACF Group and Merseyside Solidarity Federation. Remnants of Class War London were also represented and all in all the anarchist presence was magnificent. Heart-warming even.

At the climax of the march a platform was given over to some inspirational speakers: a comrade printer out in dispute for over a year in Chicago; partners of the Liverpool struggle with the dockers "Women of the Waterfront"; staff from the Hillingdon Hospital strike; a worker suffering at the hands of the repressive Turkish regime; and last but not least a young docker's son of twelve years old who spoke every bit as movingly and eloquently on the penury of working class struggle in a dispute as did old lefty war-horse Arthur Scargill a few moments after him. On Saturday evening a squat was established from which a grand rave party ensued. Sunday was a mellowing out process and many groups held workshops for people representing the various cultures of this gathering.

Monday's picket of the main dock gates was the pivot of the entire weekend. Many comrades, again anarchists in the forefront alongside the magnificent "Reclaim the Streets" people were up and out at the crack of dawn, well awake before the dozy cops, to sneak into the dockyards occupying dockshed rooftops and high gantry cranes. The bravery and agility of the R.T.S. people was an inspiration to the other 600 or so of us on the picket at the dock entrance. They waved banners and flags all day long at the heavy handed, lobotomised cops who were pushing and shoving with unnecessary force into the massed picket. Cops provoked 36 arrests by the end of the day including dockers shop stewards, but mainly nicking Reclaim the Streets, who as a group gave overwhelming support and life to the huge protest throughout the day and weekend. Maybe the cops took a dislike to the free and flowing unrestraint of R.T.S style of clothing and dress mode, as against their own bound-up, clone like black and yellow drone dopey appearance. Whatever, they were unnecessarily vicious towards the entire picket assembly culminating late

in the afternoon with the Psycho Squad, the O.S.U., lifting a young R.T.S. male off the ground where he was sitting paring an apple with a fruit knife. Can you believe the excuse they needed to unleash their pent up, macho frustrations and beat the hell out of this innocent young man? There is more integrity in just one of the colourful pieces of string that R.T.S. people wear than in all the burnished brass, braid and button buffoonery adorning her majesty's repressives. On a day that cop thugs not only tried to silence our colour, gaiety and home-made music but our humour and laughter too, one of the copper's helmets was knocked off in a scuffle, captured by the R.T.S. and unceremoniously dumped in the brazier ablaze at the roadside. Christ it stunk as the flames consumed it, whether from the brylcream its owner had plastered over his hair, or even maybe some of whatever brains he had being left inside it, it burned bloody well and gave us the best laugh of the day!

The dockers may still be out of work, the streets unclaimed to our satisfaction, but after a weekend of solidarity action like this there can be no doubt that community and class fightback is on the agenda.

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