

## AngryWorkers

### Our political starting point

The power of state and capital is based on the fact that individual workers are brought together under their command (machines, university infrastructure) in order to cooperate with others and produce this society. Capital and state seem to be the pre-condition for social production. They have to bring workers together in order to exploit their productivity, but they have to divide them at the same time in order to avoid workers' collective power and struggle. This is the main political contradiction of the capital - labour relation.

Therefore the 'workplace' is at the same time a place where various workers meet, where they have potential collective power, at the same time the 'workplace' is already part of the social division within the class. In this sense we have to criticise 'workplace' organising: we start where workers work together in daily contact, but we have to emphasise politically and in practice that they depend on collaboration with others beyond the workplace: suppliers of material, service workers, domestic work. Only once workers' struggle manages to go beyond the separation of the immediate work-place, will it a) develop the necessary POWER and b) develop a political criticism of the current system: why are we separated, why are their hierarchies between us.

This is where we see the political content of struggles: breaking down barriers within the class by referring to a cooperation or mutual dependency which already exists, but which appears as the power of capital. This is the main task of revolutionary theory and practice. This is our main perspective from which we analyse and criticise the struggles of our class and organisational efforts of the left: do our efforts strengthen self-organisation of workers and do they try to push beyond the given divisions. In most cases the trade union framework uses the given separations as an organisational framework and thereby actually strengthens the divisions: based on professions, companies, sectors, nations. We are also doubtful towards political proposals which claim to 'unite the working class' without materially breaking-down barriers within social production, e.g. by saying that 'the organisation'/party can unite workers as individual members or individual groups of workers under common demands (guaranteed income, wages for housework). We think there are no short-cuts, the working class has to overcome the divisions during struggle themselves.

What do we do? We start from where we assume that workers already have a certain degree of collectivity, e.g. in bigger workplaces, and potential power, e.g. because their work is necessary for the profit machine. It is fairly easy to find these 'concentrations', e.g. in our case big warehouse complexes, much more difficult to find the already existing connections between the 'concentrations' and the more isolated or remote conditions of the working class, e.g. the supply workers abroad or the unemployed at the job centre who are supposed to replace you. In many cases the connections are not

direct, but workers find themselves thrown into the same social situation: the pressure in the labour and housing market, the benefit and migration regime changes, the zero-hour and minimum wage existence. We have to refer to these commonalities.

We are not from the outside of the proletariat, but can to a certain degree decide collectively and under political considerations where to get a job. People might criticise the 'militant alienation' of doing hard low wage jobs if individually we might find 'better jobs', but we think that in the long run the alienation of doing a job, which is less connected to where we think 'the working class might be able to rock the boat' is worse. From then on it is 'learning on the job', understanding how the work is organised, what divides us, what are workers already doing, where are limits and potentials. a lot of trial and error of collective steps. Trying not to lose the bigger picture: how is our place connected to others. Document the experiences for the debate within the revolutionary milieu. This is what we would call workers' inquiry.

### Where we're at

If this is our general political perspective, how does it play out in concrete in the warehouses in West-London?

- this is a centre of big money, with a high level of foreign trade involvement, with a heavily invested infrastructure e.g. Heathrow Airport, Western Corridor.
- the area is a mixture of small processing plants and storage shed and big food factories and distribution centres
- largely 'unskilled work', big daily and seasonal differences in workload, just-in-time deliveries, therefore there are various ways by which management try to keep workforce in flux (temp work, varying working-hours etc.)
- it is largely a migrant workforce, with different backgrounds and statuses
- the main division within the workforce is between the temps and permanents
- the role the union plays is to deal with small individual grievances, but they have little influence on general problems: wages, shifts, pick-rate...

(For a more detailed write-up of our experiences of working in the warehouses, go here: <https://libcom.org/blog/grford-where-hells-14092014>)

Our current attempt is focused on distributing a leaflet about the high pick-rate and idea for a potential slow-down. The nature of the work we do automatically means we have a connection to the permanents, drivers and supermarket workers, but support from outside may also be necessary, see example of logistics workers in Italy.

Future plans: to publish a local newspaper and have a van tour to talk to other warehouse workers across the UK.