

Direct **Action**

summer 1997
No. 3
£1.50

surveillance

**preventing
crime
or
taking
liberties?**

--PLUS--

**Power and control - and you
SEXY GENES**

Breaking the laws of language



Direct Action is published by the Solidarity Federation, the British section of the International Workers Association (see inside back cover).

Edited, typeset and printed labour-free by the Direct Action Collective.

Printed at Montenevy Community Workshop, Sheffield.

Supporters Annual Subscription:

£12 Britain and Europe;

£15 rest of the world;

all cheques to Direct Action.

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The summer heat and social control seem unlikely partners, if mediterranean heat and propensity for revolt is anything to go by. Before indulging in a debate on the revolutionary potential of weather, whether pointless or not, it would appear sensible to define one's terms like any good scientist.

Social control is about actions and obligations which prevent you from acting as you should or would want. Definition over. The word 'social' is added to differentiate from economic or political control. The split is arbitrary - social hierarchy and control is widespread at work, the political process is a tool for justifying social control etc., etc...

Whose tool? We are not part of a great conspiracy against us by an organised boss class - 'they' are nowhere near clever enough to get this together for a start. No, it is a series of mechanisms grown up over centuries. It may now appear intricate and orchestrated, but bosses and those with power simply use it because they can and they don't care or think what happens as a result. The result is a set of expectations that early life prepares us to accept and further - not to question. And if and when we do, attempts are made to cajole us into thinking there's no other way but conforming - and anyway it's not that bad, it's liveable with, there are others worse off, etc...(again).

To some, conforming means learning to laugh at prejudicial humour - sexist or Irish jokes ad nauseum, to others it means taking it out on the wife/husband/cat/dog/other. To others, PC is everything, but they get their

control/power kicks elsewhere anyway. Complex and subtle controls and hierarchies run seamlessly like a myriad of threads through the blanket of society. Preach over.

Back to the chunky blue DA; the articles take various threads of this whole social control thing. Editing has been an eye-opener. I mean, start thinking about language and power, subtleties of writing styles -like these words or those on the next pages. I'm not talking (talking mag?) about 'in yer face' preaching and prejudice - no, I'm harping about underlying assumptions of phrasing and expression. Language is a major form of control, again, not orchestrated, but ad hoc and developed over centuries - with immeasurable historical and loaded baggage, as every Chomskyite knows.

And resistance, change? Social control may be everywhere and may be pervasive, but this doesn't make it an impossible enemy; we all have the power and where-with-all to change it. Ideas for action are littered through these pages. Trawling through so much good stuff has been a pleasure - a shame we had to cut so much to fit it in. Anyway, we have more 'tasters' - brief interludes of comments and digested tit-bits on things like food and sex. Each is the introduction to a veritable tome of potential obfuscation, but hell, if you haven't got time or money for books, you can collect these snippets from various bits of the social blanket and fit them together at your leisure. And while out shopping remember, they are watching ...you! (cue finger). Enjoy the blue shiny skin full of monochrome ideas. The rest is up to you.

Bring out your Views!

Readers' views are welcome on all aspects of Direct Action Magazine. If you have something to say, help yourself and help us by saying it. Whether it is good news or otherwise, opinions, additional information or letters responding to articles or raising issues of interest, we want to hear from you.

Notes for Contributors

If you would like to contribute more than brief opinions, we request you send articles (between 500 and 1500 words if possible) in hardcopy and on disk in either Word for Windows PC version not greater than 6 or ASCII format. Contact us for electronic mail addresses or alternative formats. While unsolicited articles are welcome, they can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed.

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Something is seriously wrong with our food and the industry behind it. In a follow up to last issue's BSE article; a brief taster of one of your most favourite genetically engineered foods.

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Anarchy in Albania?

Not the book of revelations

No, anarcho-syndicalism is not a new religion. A viewpoint on personal power, control and responsibility.

"You only say that 'cause you are an anarcho-syndicalist." I get this or a variant on the theme all the time, and I assume I am not the only one. Apparently everything I say and do is because I am an anarcho-syndicalist, I have an agenda! There is some innate part of me that makes me this entity called "an anarcho-syndicalist". Either I caught it, like a virus, or some internal alarm clock went off and "hey, I am an anarcho-syndicalist - cool. I wonder what it means?". If only it was that easy. It would have saved me all those years in the back of beyond (figurative and literally) being a confused and ignorant sod. At least I am not so confused now. To put it a bit more formally, I am an anarcho-syndicalist, a term I choose to apply to myself, because it is a political position that satisfies my desire for a coherent critique of the current society, and also offers ideas on how to change society for the better. These ideas are based both in the here and now and in the longer term. Ideas based in the thoughts and practical experience of numerous people, not just a few isolated great minds.

Admittedly I am now influenced by the reactions and interpretations of other anarcho-syndicalists, we have so much in common already. Given that we share basic understandings

due to the dominance of economic oppression other forms are often neglected or dismissed as barely relevant

such as that we oppose all forms of hierarchical power structures, it is perhaps not surprising I take note of their views. This opposition is to coercive relationships and hierarchical power structures and the rejection of a society organised on systems where people do as others say based on their superior position socially, economically, institutionally, and so on. It is recognising that control and power are not solely or purely based on economic power that is vital. I acknowledge that, in a capitalist society, economic power is the dominant and most prevalent force, either on its own or in conjunction with other forms, and that a critique of economic oppression and control is still essential and central to any critique of the current society. However, due to the dominance of economic oppression, other forms are often neglected or dismissed as barely relevant.

Anarcho-syndicalism involves recognising the essential need to remove all forms of hierarchical power relationship in order to create a better society. The call for the Social General Strike/Social Revolution has to be more than a call for the end of capitalism. It cannot be limited to workers only opting out of the capitalist system and economic control; either because other oppressive control is

not recognised, or because 'the end of capitalism means the end to all oppression'. Neither should it be the overthrowing of capitalism and then it is time to get on with all those other problems. Those 'other problems' need to be addressed (along with economic control) both now, at the time of the social revolution, and no doubt afterwards as well.

It is through awareness of these issues, through confronting them sensibly and with understanding, that we can begin to address them. Local Councils and many employers have anti-discrimination policies, but still inequalities in access to employment and services exist. All too often these policies are part of a quality management process, as long as you tick the box and balance the figures you don't need to address the issues as to why they are needed in the first place. It's no good just sticking a bit about equal opportunities in every now and then if the whole atmosphere is unconducive to change and development. When looking at problems and solutions that may seem to be purely an economic issue (or indeed purely a disability, sexuality, gender or race issue), it is crucial that other inequalities are not ignored. I am not suggesting that at every point somebody says "and what are the issues on this one?", -

social control: political to personal

that is a sure way to alienate people. What I as an anarcho-syndicalist, (and many others, self-labelled or not) see is that social control cannot be just tick-boxed away by following the right procedure, by noting the correct points.

Social control can only be eliminated by two things; one, those who suffer from it being strong enough to reject it and fight back; two, everyone else to seek to ensure that they don't contribute to it but do give support and fight along side those who are fighting back. That is to promote the libertarian principles of self organisation, mutual aid, co-operation and direct action. It is anarcho-syndicalist practice to work with such things in mind: structures have hierarchy removed from them; there is direct democracy, where power is decentralised; mandates and mandated representatives are recallable; there is minimal structure to seek to ensure that small groups and individuals do not gain excessive influence; everyone has a say and an input. Anarcho-syndicalism seeks to organise now in broad terms in the same manner as it would as we enter a libertarian society. With minimum control, with maximum accountability and with the most decentralised of approaches. This puts a lot of pressure on those involved to take responsibility for their actions, to follow the mandates they are given. Then again if you are not prepared to take on the responsibility for things you've agreed to do now how can a libertarian society work? It is through practice and thought, ideas and action, that we learn how to move forward, how to create and how to succeed.

These other forms of oppression are much harder to fully acknowledge and address than institutionalised and overt discrimination. The mechanisms of control are socialised to such an extent that each and everyone of us has to address them personally. Whilst seeking to rid society of social forms of oppression, we have to recognise and address the roots within. This is not a call for navel

anarcho-syndicalism and anarchism, just as they do not suddenly infect one, also do not wash all our sins away once we've paid our first dues



gazing, or for people to wander off and admire their aura in place of activity. Anarcho-syndicalism and anarchism, just as they do not suddenly infect one, also do not wash all our sins away once we've paid our first dues. It is not a new religion. Social control relies on people's tacit support. It is this recognition that it is not really enough just addressing the big picture, fighting the big ogres of government and multinationals, whilst ignoring the day to day detail. It is the difference between waiting for the day of revelations (sorry - the revolution) when the fully conscious working class *en masse* will magically put everything right; and the willingness to work day to day building (for) the future (socially and economically) now.

We must simultaneously look to ourselves and seek to raise awareness that people can and should work together to take control of their own lives. Recognising times when we use our own positions to manipulate, where our own prejudices are not challenged. People can and should be able to live without prejudice and oppression. Power does not only lie in the hands of the bosses and the politicians and police who they pay to defend them. It also lies with the experts, such as doctors who ignore the wishes of their patient and bully and cajole them. It lies with the partner who abuses mentally and physically the one they claim to love. It lies with adults who undermine and humiliate children, and perpetuate the cycle of social control. Social control relies on us all knowing our place. Standing out can be scary, unless everyone stands out, then it is unifying and empowering. It is much easier to have a society of scared isolated individuals all putting each other down than to have a society of strong unified individuals which have to be put down by force. It is always time to undermine our own role in social control. It is continually necessary to remind people that coercive relationships do not rely on money, and that yes

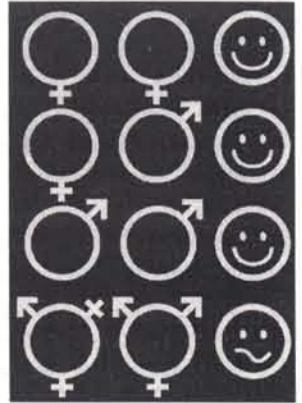
anarchists do behave in coercive ways. I am not calling for anarcho-saints (heaven forbid). It is about the way we behave in meetings and in discussions, in our personal relations, with friends and colleagues. Anarcho-syndicalism is not about being 'Nice', it is about having respect for other people and ourselves.

Perhaps just for an example I can use the term 'free love'. It isn't lots of people in beads and kaftans running around trying to get their notches into triple figures. Free love has nothing to do with "its my/your fault for not addressing my/your own insecurities and jealousies". Free love is where people are free to find their own sexuality (without coercing anyone else with force, money or guilt) and being free to be honest without the fear of persecution, but also being relied upon to respect others' wishes and desires. People are monogamous, promiscuous, celibate or whatever as they wish.

So the term free society does not just refer to being free from financial control. It is also a society where everyone is *free to find their own identity, free to be honest and free from fear of persecution, but also being relied upon to respect others' wishes and desires* (again). A free society is where people co-operate and practice mutual aid to achieve these ends. (I note here that 'free' is a relative term, I use it to denote more 'with the minimum of coercion' or something like that.)

Why I am an anarcho-syndicalist is that I see it as the best method to get to such a society. Not by miracles, not overnight, but starting now, starting at work, in the community and in our day to day relationships. I've had no sudden revelation, I've never been to Syria, I've never been further south than Madrid (the anarcho-syndicalist mecca? -ed) and even then I went by train. Being an anarcho-syndicalist is not a medical condition, even if the name is long enough to be one. It is not a hereditary thing. Not until they find the gene it isn't.

Science and sexy genes



Scientists often get the answer they are looking for. Do you have gay genes and if so how many and who cares?

In the current vogue for 'hard scientific' explanations of social phenomena and behavioural patterns, genetics is getting a pretty good press.

With the increasingly challenged sociological explanations for what goes on in society and inside people, everything now seems to have some underlying genetic cause. Recent 'discoveries' include genes for violence, alcoholism and homosexuality. What are anarcho-syndicalists to make of this? It quickly emerges that these subjects are vast so I'm going to simply comment on one area which is particularly relevant to me: the gay gene idea.

Recently, a team of scientists including Dean Hamer, in a blaze of publicity, declared they had discovered a genetic marker 'making' people gay or lesbian. Other theories have come to light, such as those by Simon LeVay, who

only a tolerant society will make for a tolerant science

believed he had found different brains between gays and straights. As one might imagine, a number of responses have arisen. Some gay groups, especially in the US, have supported this research believing that if you're born like it no-one can reasonably discriminate against you. Worse, but possibly less naïve, are the Bible (or other religious book)-bashing homophobes who welcome these 'facts' as finally the chance to eliminate gays for good. An anarcho-syndicalist response might include the following:

1) Pointing out that there has been a history of genetic and other biological 'explanations' for homosexuality. None has brought lesbians, gays and bisexuals freedom or an end to their discrimination.

2) A healthy mistrust of scientific 'fact': remember that none of these theories have been replicated or proven.

3) Most (if not all) attempts to find a gay gene or the like drip with homophobia or, at best, a simplistic faith in science. Why not look for a gene for homophobia and heterosexism, surely they are the problem, not people enjoying themselves and having a good sexy time?

4) Scientists will not make a tolerant society, only a tolerant society will make for a tolerant science. Any change in our attitudes and defence against homophobia must be social and political.

Justice will come only through tolerance, full acceptance and the destruction of hierarchical principles in society, so that all people can develop their sexuality freely, without any need to 'explain' themselves or be 'explained'.

In any case, the evidence for socialisation is far greater than that of biological causes for sexual preferences. Here, I am not repeating the mistake of trying to explain why people are gay or straight, but we must understand the very real promotion that compulsory heterosexuality receives in most quarters, and the terrible damage that it causes for those who don't fully share those feelings.

manufacturing answers: 1

"Because there are such striking individual differences in sexuality - most obviously between men and women, but also amongst individuals of the same sex - one of the book's major concerns is to look for the biological basis for this diversity"

Simon LeVay, *The Sexual Brain*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass./London, 1993.

This is a brief summary of the topic, from a paper and discussion hosted by Manchester SolFed. For a copy of the paper contact; Gay Genes, Manchester Solidarity Federation, PO Box 29, Southwest PDO, Manchester M15 5HW, UK.

Roots of elitism and fascism

Probing the dangerous underbelly of elitist eugenics. The theory is long disproved but it refuses to die.



Francis Galton 1822-1911, was cousin of Charles Darwin and was much influenced by his ideas. He tried to apply Darwinian ideas to human society and later was to coin the term 'eugenics'. Galton believed that, while the process of natural selection operated for animals and plants, it had broken down in western civilised societies. Galton was a racist, but his main concern was that the lower classes would outbreed the elite. He thought that evolution could not be let to take its course, and that selective breeding was now necessary.

Galton constructed a new pseudo-science which he called 'eugenics', the principle of which was that of encouraging 'better' human stock and discouraging the reproduction of less desirable stock, so that the whole race could be improved. This pseudo-science was a fusion of elements from Darwin's evolutionary theory and political and social ideas that were widespread at the time, such as those of Thomas Malthus and Herbert Spencer.

The central ideas of eugenics can be found in Darwin's writings. However, he would have been alarmed at the extremes to which his theories were taken. It was passages like the following which supplied

if one partner suffers from a mental illness and/or a disease the marriage has to be postponed until they agree to long term contraception

the scientific underpinning for eugenics;

'With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated, and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilised men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination, we build asylums for the imbeciles, the maimed and the sick, we institute poor-laws, and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the lives of everyone to the last moment. Thus the weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind. No-one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals can doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man' (from 'The Descent of Man', Charles Darwin).

The ideas of eugenics fell into disrepute following the defeat of nazism in the second world war. However, they are now resurfacing in a number of areas, as a vehicle for elitism and so-called scientific racism. These ideas have returned with a vengeance in what may appear an unlikely place - the People's Republic of China. China's law on infant care is clearly eugenic and authoritarian. The law requires couples to undergo pre-natal testing and if the foetus is disabled in any way abortion is compulsory. If one

partner suffers from a mental illness and/or a disease the marriage has to be postponed until they agree to long term contraception.

The Genetical Society in Britain has suspended its membership of the International Genetics Federation (IGF) as a protest against the Chinese eugenic law; the IGF is to hold its next conference in Beijing in 1998. This is an important stand; geneticists must disown any connection between genetic research and eugenic policies. Eugenics is based on bad science and any abuse of genetics is to be resisted.

Eugenics has always provided a certain pseudo-scientific respectability for elitist and racist ideas. We must oppose the re-emergence of eugenic ideas in Britain as they are used to justify elitism, racism, and cuts in health, education and social services. Also they have been used recently by politicians to attack single parents and justify their policies on a wide range of issues. The ideas are central to the political view that social unrest and crime do not have social or economic causes, but are due to a biological degeneration.



More to come on these short taster articles. Why not write in and give your opinions? (p.26 for details)

Breaking the laws of language

Why will most people never be 'suitable' for reading the news? A guide to the workings of the grammar police.

Careful what you say, the language police are just around the corner. Don't let them catch you saying that. You'll be in trouble, that's not proper English.

OK, you won't get a fine or sent to jail, but they'll try to stop you passing GO and collecting your £200. It's done very subtly, by making people feel self-conscious and inadequate about their language. And then they start to mumble, and are seen but not heard.

games grammar police play

Can I have another biscuit? You've got hands, so it's physically possible. *Uh?*

I didn't do nothing. Ah, so you mean you did do something? *No!*

What's odd about these cases is not the language of the first speaker, but the reaction of the second. The message was understood perfectly well. What sort of language user is deliberately awkward, slows down the whole business, and makes the other person feel uneasy or embarrassed? Someone who hasn't grasped what language is for. Not a linguist, certainly, but a pedantic parent or columnist for *The Mail*, or someone aspiring to these groups.

'I can't stand it, me.' is ignorant repetition; 'I, myself, think...' is right posh

If we wanted to be pedantic (and it's a good laugh to take them on at their own game) we could direct them to the philosopher of language, J.L. Austin and his Speech Act Theory. Like all the best theories, it was a brilliant flash of common sense. Although we can often work out the sense of words in isolation; as a social act, language can often have a different force once it's used in context. *'That's right, just dump your dirty clothes all over the floor.'* On the surface, this looks like a congratulation plus a command. But even a child can work out what the speaker actually means.

So why does this co-operative principle break down, once a child is speaking to an adult? Power and status. It's a bit like turning clothing from a practical and personal issue into a power game, dictating who must wear a tie round their neck, where and when. (Only men, with suits, but not in bed as a sexual aid, that's the advice.)

the nonsense of language laws

'You can't begin a sentence with "but". But, I just have! There's a bit of nonsense for you, saying "You can't" when you clearly can. Challenge the language pedants, and they rely on two authorities: Latin and Maths.

'To boldly go where no man has been before.' Don't split an infinitive. You couldn't in Latin, because it was a single word with an ending. But in English it's two words 'to go', so there is clearly an option of putting another word in the middle. (There was a more pressing complaint about the Star Trek slogan - Women went there too).

Two negatives make a positive. That's how it works in Maths. So, all languages work in exactly the same way and they work like Maths? Plenty of languages use double negatives: *'No hace? nada'* - I didn't do nothing. We all know that repetition is a way of emphasising a point.

who gets picked up on suspicion?

Repetition is a no no- when it suits them. *'I can't stand it, me.'* is ignorant repetition; *'I, myself, think...'* is right posh. *'More nicer'* and *'most biggest'* are wrong, but Shakespeare was the greatest English writer, so inventive and expressive in quoted lines like *'More neerer'* (Hamlet) *'This was the most unkindest cut of all'* (Julius Caesar). Whether something is right or wrong depends on the status of the person, and it helps if they've been dead for some time.

top-down or bottom-up?

The fallacy is to have a 'top-down' view of language. Language was not devised by one person, like a game, and it doesn't have rules like a game. The inventor of Snakes and Ladders thought it up and dictates the rules- it only works if everyone accepts that you go **up** ladders and **down** snakes. There isn't even an elected governing body for language, like FIFA for football. Language is NOT A GAME, with a Great Inventor in the Sky.

Try a 'bottom-up' view instead. Languages evolve gradually through contact between groups of people, who need to find a way of communicating. There can only be communication if people share agreed ways of expressing meaning. The notion of a private language is so odd- if a person has their own unique expression that no-one else recognises, it can't be a 'language'.

Children have no status. When they say *'Don't giggle me.'* it's a mistake- you can't use a noun as a verb. Oh, unless you're a businessman and want to *'table a motion'* or *'chair a meeting'*.

Advertising copywriters are a bit naughty about the rules of language too: *'You've been Tangoed'* but, well, they're making loads of money, so we'll put up with their funny ways. And it might be useful to have a few of their catchy political slogans.

Poets? *'a grief ago'*. A bit mad, some of them on drugs, but we'll make an exception for culture. And we could turn it into exam fodder.

Humour? Again, it's probably best to stick with the death test. *'Foxhunting is the pursuit of the inedible by the unspeakable.'* Oscar Wilde has been dead so long now, we can even overlook his sexual preferences.

Foreign speakers saying things like *'I burst myself into tears'*? Come on, it's not their language! The cliché is *'burst into tears'*. Interesting, though, how the new phrasing adds power to the image.

pushing together or pulling apart?

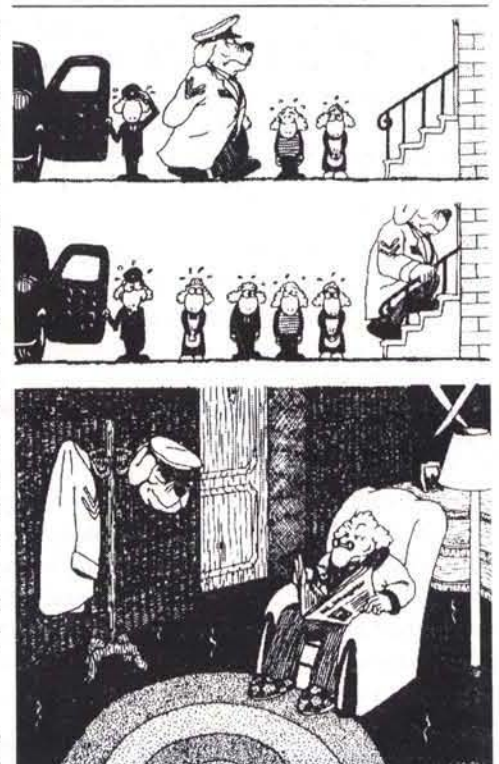
The way that languages develop is a delicate balance between two powerful tendencies. Pushing in one direction is the need to conform with existing conventions. The most obvious is the way infants absorb the language they hear and experiment with those sounds to find ways to communicate. Anyone plunged into another language environment has to try to pick up a different set of ways to express themselves. (Up to now, we have demanded that other peoples pick up our English language- a sort of invasion and colonisation by language.) But this need to adapt happens for adult speakers in our home environment- apart from all the different languages spoken in England, there are so many varieties of English. Yes, they are referred to, in a derogatory way, as dialects- the dialects of different regions and classes and ages- but they survive because they work. The fact that they have little status needs to be challenged. **'A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.'** All languages adapt and change because of contact between people. The more contact, the more pressure to change.

That doesn't mean that we immediately take on every style of language we come across. Language is a badge of identity. Some people want to maintain an identity that is distinct and make very little shift in their style of speech; others want to be taken as part of that group. We balance a need to fit in, with a need to remain individual. Every person's language is as unique as their fingerprints. You cannot pin a language down in a dictionary or grammar book and say **'That IS THE English language.'** Such books are a snapshot of the language, out of date from the moment they are written.

Pulling in the other direction is the need to stretch the

language, so that new things can be expressed in different ways. Each new generation learns the habits of the old and moves on. Nothing stays exactly the same and it's the emerging generation that makes the changes: hairstyles, architecture, music. And of course some people tut- is it nostalgia, need for stability, weariness? Whatever, it's the conservatism of age. Pre-fabricated chunks of language, clichés- we need them for practical reasons, like lack of time; we can't re-invent the wheel everytime we open our mouths. But someone has got to start adapting the wheel or inventing new ways of travel.

Those who resist changes in a living language should have better reasons than: *'That's not the way I was taught when I was a child.'* What about good reasons like: *'It's dishonest to use euphemisms to mask the realities of warfare.'* *'That's so longwinded and pompous, you're not getting your point across.'* If there IS a law of language, it is that it should be used as a skilful tool for communication. Only complain if it doesn't work. People who invent other laws are using language as a loaded weapon and they are pointing it at people who have already had their voices stifled.



Getting the goods

Bangladesh

The Bengali National Garment Workers Union (NGWF) have cancelled their planned strike as the employers have accepted their main demands. At a meeting of the various garment worker unions and the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the following agreement was made:

1. All workers will get Friday off. Emergency shipments can not be given out on Fridays.
2. Child care will be provided in all factories.
3. The May Day national paid holiday will be strictly implemented.
4. The government declared national minimum wage of \$23 a month will be implemented.

Up until now workers in the garment industry usually had to work 7 days a week, sometimes for as little as \$10 a month. Out of the 1.5 million workers in the garment industry, only about 60,000 are organised; one third of them in the NGWF. While the county wide strike is cancelled, the NGWF will closely monitor the implementation of the agreements and take the necessary steps against any violations.

Members of the NGWF are discussing the possibility of setting up an IWA-section in Bangladesh - and representatives from IWA are invited to their November congress.

India

Child labour activists, responsible for rescuing hundreds of bonded (enslaved) children from the glass industry in India, were brutally attacked as they were demonstrating outside the district offices in Ferozabad, Uttar Pradesh, on February 19th.



Members of Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA), a partner of the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), one of the main organisations dealing with child bondage in India, were demonstrating for the immediate implementation of supreme court directives past last December, which would ban child labour from hazardous occupations and aid their rehabilitation.

Eleven people were attacked by baton-wielding police, allegedly at the instigation of the district administration, and all their possessions such as tents, bedding and personal belongings were stolen.

According to SACCS, the district administration is hand in glove with the glass and bangle industry, where the children are forced to work near furnaces up to 1400C, carrying molten glass to moulds, many of them being left crippled as a result. The supreme court directives have been largely ignored by the administration, and the factories and workplaces get warning of a raid to inspect the premises well in advance.

Dilip Sevarthi, head of the BBA, has been on hunger strike in demand of the implementation of the directive and the setting up of education centres for children.

Colombia

The U'wa people, who number approximately 5,000, live in north east Columbia, in the Cocuy mountains. Recently, a license has been granted to Occidental Inc. to conduct exploitation of oil in the area. This firm's parent company is the US Occidental Petroleum Corporation. The license was granted without consultation with local U'wa people, who are opposed to the project. This is in breach of human rights as well as Article 330 of the Colombian constitution.

The International Workers' Association is opposing this disgraceful exploitation of the U'wa people and calls upon all individuals, organisations and pressure groups to do likewise.

Sign the petition/send letters of indignation for Occidental and support for the U'wa for forwarding: Solidarity Federation-IWA PO Box 29, SW PDO Manchester M15 5HW, UK

Or write direct to: ONIC (Indigenous National Organization of Colombia) Calle 13 N° 4-8, Bogota Colombia {Fax: 57 1 797 04 24}

Indonesia

On April 26th officials ordered a factory that makes NIKE shoes shut down after workers burned cars and ransacked its offices, saying the company was not paying them a \$2.50 dollar a day minimum wage.

Almost half of the factory's 10,000 employees took part in the demonstration at Tangerang, an industrial town outside Jakarta. It was the second protest in a week against the factory that makes shoes under the contract for Nike Inc. Two women were hospitalised after police broke up the demo in which protesters burned two cars and smashed windows, doors and furniture at the factory. Several police officers and soldiers suffered minor injuries. No arrests were reported.

Nike and its competitor Reebok deny accusations that they pay Indonesian workers too little and tolerate poor working conditions in factories run by their contractors.

boycott Nike and Reebok products - don't wear their logos



-world-wide

Sierra Leone

With an average income of only \$50 a month, and also because they are fed up with the inhumane treatment which they receive from the owners of the mining companies, workers in Sierra Leone in West Africa have begun organising in the Gold and Diamond mining industry. As previous attempts to organise locally were beaten because the miners had no links with the outside world, they have decided to organise in the Industrial Workers of the World. Through joining a world-wide union, the mining companies and government may hesitate before trying to prevent them from organising again.

As well as union organising, Sierra Leone IWW are trying to rehabilitate people displaced by the civil war. To succeed in their aim, they are asking for help in obtaining computers and photocopying machines, stationery and accessories. Whilst their membership increases daily, they are also experiencing difficulties in translating English language publications.

This is a golden opportunity for us all to promote international solidarity and to assist some of our fellow workers in their attempts to improve their quality of life. Help needed, financially or through providing any of the above items (messages of encouragement welcome - let them know that they are not alone).

Write to: Bright Chikezie
22 Wellington Street
Freetown
Sierra Leone

Mexico

The workers of Imprenta Morales Hermanos, a company which owns 2 factories in Mexico Federal District, have been on strike since July 1996. Claiming bankruptcy, the company's owners stopped paying wages and benefits to the workers and managed to get the machinery out of the premises, in an attempt to avoid all responsibilities for their employees.

The workers, members of Frente Auténtico del Trabajo ('Genuine Labour Front') have sued the company and expect a favourable judgement.

The members of Colectivo Acción Libertaria have been supporting the strike with donations, organising workshops and meetings, participating in demonstrations and boycotts, etc..

Send money and support to;

Colectivo Acción
Libertaria, A.P.11, G. Valle
de GPE, C.P.55270,
ECATEPEC, Estado de
Mexico, MEXICO.

Zimbabwe

1996 saw the most heated class battles in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. A two month strike by nurses and doctors ended recently with negotiations between the state and the workers. Beginning in late October, this was the country's longest strike action by health workers. Despite Police attacks, threats of dismissal, and an initial refusal of the state to negotiate, the workers stood their ground. They were demanding higher wages and better working conditions.

The health workers strike followed a 2 week general strike in the public sector in August, the biggest strike in the country's history. Militant rank and file action sustained the strike despite the cowardice of the union bureaucrats, who run the Public Servants Association (the union federation in the state sector). The strikers were joined by students protesting about cuts in their grants. The action ended when the government finally agreed to look into workers demands. The health workers strike followed the government's failure to keep its promises.

Meanwhile, militancy is reviving amongst land-hungry peasants. In October 1996 2,000 peasants invaded an idle state-owned farm. This direct action directly challenges the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) government's fake land redistribution programme.

This rising resistance indicates the frustration of working and poor people in Zimbabwe. ZANU was elected to power in 1980, promising to redistribute the land and bring freedom and socialism, but to date 95% of the landless have received nothing. Instead, ZANU bosses have abused their positions to acquire vast wealth. ZANU is the party of black bureaucratic capital, and is allied with the settler bosses. It has eagerly implemented an IMF 'Structural Adjustment Programme', whose free market policies have led to massive job losses, inflation and devastated social services. At the same time, President Mugabe has used money earmarked for low cost housing to build himself a new mansion and double the salaries of cabinet ministers. The way forward is not to trust Mugabe's socialist pretensions, but to unite workers, students and peasants in the fight against capitalism and the state.



Ireland

Since April 14th 250 workers at Montupet Car components factory in Dunmurry,

then attempted to enter the mass meeting, while demanding proof of union membership for those workers in attendance. The men moved outside and

returned to work. This was on Monday 14th April after a ballot where 68.7% against and 31.3 said yes to going back. The end of the conflict was precipitated by the slap in the face Renault management got from the tribunal at Nanterre on April 4, which annulled the closure procedure of Vilvoorde, because the European Works Council was neither informed nor consulted, and Renault had not respected EU norms. (As an aside - the Comité de Groupe Européen, Renault's European works council, has all unions represented at Renault, except the Spanish CGT, excluded despite their 17% showing in the Spanish plants). This was the second decision to go against Renault.

ORGANISE!

The Irish section of the International Workers' Association is new to the IWA and small but growing. A new revolutionary union movement is not built on fresh air. It is the marching season in the north and Organise! want to set up a Solidarity Centre in Belfast - a place where workers in struggle can come for solidarity and support. Organise! needs you!

Send donations, big or small, to:

Organise!, PO Box 505, Belfast, BT11 9EE, Ireland

Cheques/POs payable to 'Organise! Solidarity Fund'

outside Belfast, have been on strike over pay and working conditions in the factory. The shop stewards were amongst the first to be sacked. This despite offers from the shop stewards to enter into negotiations about a settlement. Geoff McLay, Senior Convenor at the plant, visited Liverpool on 9th May in a bid to internationalise the 4 week old dispute. McLay is one of 20 activists dismissed during what began as an official action over pay and conditions but rapidly developed into an unofficial fight to the finish by 250 workers facing a French multinational, imported seals, and their own union, the AEEU.

Montupet declared £4.5m in profits in 1995-96, at which point £70m of new investment was due to be installed. But after last year's pay rise a four day week was imposed, and the company recently cut back from 3 to 2 shift a day working - while demanding the same level of production. The order books were looking good but still redundancies were constantly threatened. Other grievances included lack of pay for the first 3 days of sick leave and an overtime rate of time and a third for the first two hours.

After balloting, the workers began an official work-to-rule, overtime ban, and half day strike. On 14th April, the workforce requested a meeting with stewards and were refused three times in a row. Eventually, they threatened to down tools if the meeting was not forthcoming by 12 o'clock. Noon passed and the strike began. Fifty minutes later, Managing Director George Senninger turned up and gave permission for stewards to meet the workers. Senninger

decided to stay out until the whole thing was sorted. McLay warned it would be unofficial, and went over to the neighbouring wheels plant to invite them outside.

Dismissal letters were handed to 20 workers. Montupet later issued 26 High Court writs gagging alleged spokesman. As a result, a total of 28 'leaders' were barred from attending the picket line or acting as spokespersons for the strikers, and threatened with further court action. Naturally, there was no strike pay. More significantly, the national AEEU official escorted scabs through the picket line, and signed a three year deal for 25 Belfast men who crossed the line. The rest of the strike is solid. All workers are united in fighting Montupet.

Organise!-IWA have been supporting the picket daily, organising street collections etc.. For full details contact:

Organise!, PO Box 505, Belfast, BT11 9EE, Ireland.

**Letters of support and donations to:
Montupet Strikers and Families Support Group,
41 Queens Road, Parkhall,
Antrim, BT41 1AL, Ireland.**

France

The conflict at Vilvoorde, in Belgium, which started with a factory occupation after Renault management announced they wanted to close the plant, then took a turn for the unexpected when the workers

But is this a victory? The weeks preceding the verdicts were marked by direct actions by workers at Vilvoorde: at Wavrin in the North, 400 Belgian workers seized a parking lot holding 12000 vehicles, including 3000 Renaults. They occupied the area for a week, supported by local people. Elsewhere 500 workers stopped work in solidarity in Flins and a spontaneous demo happened on the Champs-Élysées. A high speed train between Paris and Brussels and a Eurostar were also blocked, and meanwhile, a stoppage organised by French unions at Céron against changes in hours saw about 100 workers from Vilvoorde come to support their comrades. Management arrogance in refusing all negotiation pushed the workers towards radicalism and the unions there were bypassed.

The first Eurostrike? This is a bit of a misnomer as far as solidarity at a European level is concerned. When Renault announced cuts of 3000 jobs a nationwide movement might have been expected to rally all French sites to the struggle of Vilvoorde. None of the union centres tried. The attitude of the Spanish unions, UGT and CCOO was to put on a facade of solidarity and negotiate the conversion of the factories in Valladolid and Palencia. These conversions were directly linked to the closure of Vilvoorde - transfer of Megane production from Belgium to Palencia, where the main unions agreed to raise work rates by an hour a day, work 2 Saturdays a month and create a 3rd shift, without more overtime or staff! The new French socialist government have now promised not to shut Vilvoorde. (Renault is largely French government owned).

In Solidarity:

Stuffing Staffing Solutions

Victory for workers backed by the SolFed in Norwich. One small battle won, but the war goes on.

When in 1993 the Solidarity Centre was established in Norwich, the provision of both active and determined support for fellow workers, along with a premises that would act as a resource centre, were two of the original and central aims.

The former was and is something that comes from conviction and collective organisation, the latter has taken time to bring together and is useless unless tied to outward-looking activity in our workplaces and our locality. A 'resource' centre is only a tool, but one with which we can, in the here and now, win small victories, bring people together in collective action, and by these small victories introduce the realisation that real change is possible.

As a direct result of the Norfolk & Norwich branch of the Solidarity Federation (N&N SolFed) publicising the resources it has in the Solidarity Centre, and its existence as a union Local that takes "the fight to the bosses", one of our earliest workplace campaigns targeted the treatment of agricultural and processing workers at an employment agency called Staffing Solutions in West Norfolk.

To even the most experienced of us, the situation brought to our attention at the WH Knights 'veg' processing plants and surrounding farms came

as a shock. Here was the agency Staffing Solutions in tandem with WH Knights operating labour relations and workplace conditions in the style of Middle Ages' feudalism.

Workers were charged for the cost of items that by law should be provided free. Ear protectors required in high noise environments were being charged to every worker, likewise protective overalls and hats. Whilst all employment agencies cream-off a certain amount of what a company pays for their use, Staffing Solutions on top of this deducted a weekly "administration" charge from workers pay. Whilst in the past a few workers recognised this for what it was - theft, and successfully told Staffing Solutions to stop, the less fortunate and less confident continued to suffer these "admin" charges.

Less fortunate still were those considered easy pickings for their poor command of the English language. Workers from abroad bussed-in for work would not face the average £1.50 travel deduction, but be asked to pay £8 each day for the privilege - amounting to £1 for every hour that they worked each day. This on a wage of little more than £3 an hour.

The more observant quickly came to realise that most, if not every weeks' pay packet, was short. One Staffing



one worker came to us with a complete collection of payslips and his personal record of hours worked. The two never agreed. On one week the discrepancy was over £30

Solutions' worker came to us with a complete collection of payslips and his personal record of hours worked. The two never agreed. On one week the discrepancy was over £30. Those who left the job, whether on their first week or at any other time, never received their last weeks' wages.

Approached initially by one Staffing Solutions worker at the WH Knights plant, it did not take long for us to find some legal confirmation of the rip-offs going on. A problem emerged in the status of those working for Staffing Solutions, who claimed they were self-employed and, as such, Staffing Solutions had no obligation to provide free personal protective equipment. Whilst this was just the area that a pair of solicitors could spend a lifetime and a fortune arguing over, for a number of reasons it was soon apparent that Staffing Solutions claim of workers being self-employed was little more than a dodge that did not fit the realities of the situation. Not only were workers having tax and NI

deducted, but they were subject to disciplinary procedures. By the current legal yardstick, the "multifactorial test", these were all full employees - for all the good it did them!

Our first task was through extensive research to find out all we could about the companies, directors and sites involved. The marriage of the plant owner's daughter to the boss of Staffing Solutions was one discovery we thought a factor in the rip-off double act. The more sites we could identify where Staffing Solutions provided labour, the wider we could make our presence felt and so strengthen the workforce's hand.

In collaboration with the SolFed member working for Staffing Solutions at the WH Knights plant, a number of N&N SolFed members produced a leaflet detailing the rip-offs and their illegal nature. At the same time, we promoted the creation of a workplace branch and collective action as the best way to fight Staffing Solutions.

For WH Knights, having such a leaflet distributed outside their gates came as a bit of a shock; for the workforce it came as a very welcome surprise that anyone was doing something, despite the long-term existence of an ostrich-like TGWU branch. Simultaneously letters were dispatched to WH Knights and Staffing Solutions informing them that the SolFed was aware of their illegal practices, demanding an immediate cessation, along with a promise of further actions should they not comply.

The response from Staffing Solutions was a letter and phone call that consisted of both pseudo employment law and stalling. They were unsure as to who they were dealing with, so were clearly feeding us red herrings to determine whether we knew what we were talking about, and if we had the determination to see it through. At the same time, they undertook their own investigations to find out what we were. On the latter they drew a blank, which, considering their

normal readiness to send goons with baseball bats to visit anyone who threatened their gravy train, was to our advantage. We had no visits...

The response from WH Knights came via their solicitor.

We got threats of legal action for trespass and libel, along with a claim that they had no involvement in the rip-offs of agency workers at their plant. These people were obviously rattled.

Both WH Knights and Staffing Solutions were then sent by N&N SolFed a comprehensive analysis of their illegal activity that could leave them in no doubt as to our understanding of their activities. On the negative side, it is worth stating that from SolFed's initial position with one member at the plant and then a heartening response from workers to our leaflets, we remained in a very weak position on the "shop-floor"; something we could ill-afford to reveal particularly now we were engaged in confrontation. Our options were limited in many respects, but with the threat of going "public" to both the PR-sensitive TESCO and Sainsburys (customers of WH Knights) and their shopping public, our strong legal case, continuous distribution of organising material at numerous plants and the underlying threat of launching a consumer boycott, we were able to use bluff and the threats of further action to our full advantage.

It was clear from the high numbers of ex-Staffing Solutions workers continually approaching us that they needed to be challenged. The problem for us lay in the fact that a high number of workers left within their first week at work, many on their first day. Who could blame them? Turnover was extremely high, so high in fact that Staffing Solutions was forced to recruit heavily from south and eastern Europe, promising high wages and

Personnel Recruitment Solutions

Different Name, Same Game. Staffing Solutions changed their name to Personnel Recruitment after bad publicity from the SolFed campaign.

courses in learning English, the teachers however never materialised.

At this point Staffing Solutions and WH Knights were starting to squirm. Each company claimed that it was the other who was being naughty. It emerged that the rip-offs were in fact a well-oiled double act, putting extra cash in the pockets of both companies. N&N SolFed gave them 14 days to cease their illegal practices...

WH Knights' reply was not slow in coming, they requested a meeting. We agreed, on the basis that Staffing Solutions management also attend. It was at this point that our position (unknown to them), had become weaker still - our member at the plant had had more than enough and, not being able to stand working in a such a soul-destroying environment, had left. It was felt by SolFed members that in such a position we could not continue much longer - yet dropping it all now was out of the question. The management parasites at Staffing Solutions and WH Knights fully deserved a hard time for the rip-offs they felt that they could operate with impunity. The workers - past, present and future - were, at the very least, owed better...

The meeting took place at the WH Knights' plant in Gooderstone, West Norfolk. Three N&N SolFed delegates attended. Considering our organisational position our intention was to insist that ear protectors should be available to all employees free of charge. Other than legal jargon we had nothing to back-up our demands, so it was felt that at this point a victory on limited

we got threats of legal action for trespass and libel, along with a claim that they had no involvement in the rip-offs of agency workers at their plant. These people were obviously rattled

demands was a realistic goal, and preferable to over-stretching ourselves and then come away with nothing. Further work would have to be done to build workplace organisation before we could fight further battles.

The discussion was short. Whilst the manager of Staffing Solutions was obsessed with pumping any and all the information he could on the SolFed, our delegates refused all discussion but that concerning working conditions. WH Knights' plant manager swiftly acknowledged the illegal nature of charging for ear protectors and despite their protest, instructed Staffing Solutions to alter their practice. Confirmation in writing of the meeting's conclusion was requested and subsequently arrived. In view of our oppositions habitual disregard for the law and greed - we felt we had successfully carried out a stick-up with a banana!

what use is talk of a better world, if that's all it ever remains?

Without an established workplace branch at WH Knights or amongst Staffing Solutions workers, there is every chance that the SolFed's achievement will be short-lived. As a result of the intense posturing carried out against Staffing Solutions across Norwich and Norfolk, the hard work and determination of the SolFed reached more ears than all that of previous years. Today, the wider ideas, methods and goals of the SolFed have greater currency, given our readiness and ability to put "our money where our mouths are". Few have dared to take a stand for long against the likes of Preston Andrews, the low-life owner of Staffing Solutions whose business tactics frequently involve his sad goons with their baseball bats.

When all too often apathy and cynicism are the order of the day, grand talk of general strikes and social revolution can sound all too

hollow. What use is talk of a better world, if that's all it ever remains? For anarcho-syndicalists "building the new world within the shell of the old" has always been the basis of our work in our communities and workplaces. Unless we can demonstrate that we are more than able to fight for and win improvements for ourselves and others today, we remain a beautifully "pure" but irrelevant minority. This, for the SolFed, is a shared and guiding principle, and one that we live by - fine words require acting on.

Staffing Solutions have been forced to change their name to Personnel Recruitment, so far and wide had its shabby reputation spread. The SolFed is currently renewing its drive for workers' rights at the likes of Staffing Solutions/Personnel Recruitment agencies in Norfolk.

Forthcoming stuff in DA:

- **food - a poisoned plateful**
food poisoning up by 5 times in a decade - isn't it about time to act?
- **visual grammar; body language**
exposing the parts your teacher never showed you - and the roots of personal insecurity
- **neither healthy nor safely**
action in workplaces where H&S is a bad joke and a worse reality
- **pension rip-off under the carpet**
where did all the money go? a new exposé and analysis of the rip-off
- **QS-9000 total quality? (sic)**
worse pay and conditions, temporary contracts, low pay, more hours and... more quality?!
- **lassez fairyland**
casting a critical eye over the new era of alice in wonderland 'socialism'

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- ☐ Rush me more information about DA and Solidarity Federation
- ☐ I realise DA is strapped for cash and I enclose a donation of ☐£5 ☐£10 ☐£25 ☐other.....

All cheques/postal orders payable to 'Direct Action'

(every bit helps!)

Name

Address

*overseas outside Europe add £3 extra to cover postage

Magnet

The kitchen bosses get desperate

After 3 years of pay freezes, 350 workers at Magnet's Darlington factory took strike action in September 1996 against a below inflation pay offer to 60% of the workforce and nothing for the remaining 40%. The bosses response was a disgusting ultimatum to 'sign or be sacked'. Even those on long term sickness got a copy. 12 days after walking out, all those on strike were sacked and Magnet has since refused all attempts to negotiate. The vast majority of the workers have long-standing service but they were sacked by a boss who had worked for Magnet for only 42 days.

new phase

The dispute has recently entered a new phase. The collective boycotting of Magnet Showrooms has paid off and the scabs and bosses at Magnet are getting desperate. Early June saw physical attacks by thugs on peaceful picketers outside the Darlington factory. In one instance, when a van pulled up at the picket and a gang emerged and beat up those on the picket, two of the thugs were

recognised as scab workers at the factory. The bosses have already stooped to the gutter, and paying their scabs to carry out physical beatings takes their behaviour to new depths.

Meanwhile, picketing outside showrooms goes on, and the other factory making doors and windows at Keighly is expecting lay-offs and short time working due to the resultant poor sales. Magnet's profits last year were £27million, £11million of which was earned by Magnet Darlington. One thing that will really hurt these bosses is severe loss of profit.

Magnet has already spent millions covering the cost of this strike (a decent pay rise for their Darlington workforce would have cost, at most, a mere £40,000 a year).

Not surprisingly, the scabs don't make furniture like skilled craftsmen - there are reports of poor quality workmanship, low production levels, and low morale among the scab workforce.

The boycott isn't an ideal solution, since many customers are traders who don't necessarily visit showrooms, but it is a tactic which has shown its worth in this case.

SolFed groups up and down the country have been backing and organising boycotts locally. If you want to join in, contact them via your local group or via us at DA (see inside front cover).

Alternatively, write your support to the strike fund, buy the Tshirt (£6) address on the leaflet (picture)



They wanna fight; we wanna party

"It was a marvellous day. The march, the rally and the action were all organised jointly between the Liverpool dockers' shop stewards committee, Reclaim the Streets and other environmentalist groups. The links made between the sacked Liverpool dockers, RTS and other groups are so important and they need to be built on."

"If anyone hijacked the march it was the police - people were having a great party and were showing that there are a lot of groups, a lot of people, who are fed up with injustice and are doing something about it. The only way forward is to get together more and more because we're all fighting against the same system. Speaking for the dockers, we can't wait to organise our next joint action."

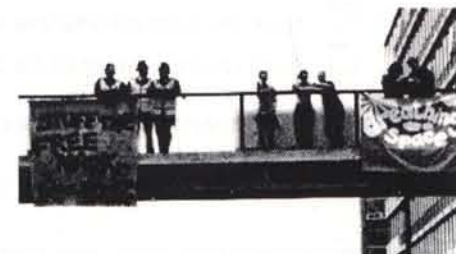
Billy Jenkins, Liverpool Dockers' Shop Stewards Committee.

Text reprinted from SchNEWS.

Since the Reclaim the Future demo in London in April, Reclaim the Streets actions have continued up and down the country, without the permission of the council or the police.



500 people walked of Sheffield's streets (pics) and stopped for partying on a short stretch of what is usually busy dual carriageway. The obligatory mobile sound system, people in wild and wacky outfits together with a few book and food stalls made all the more for the festival atmosphere. But it was a demo, honestly...



BOYCOTT MAGNET KITCHENS

After 3 years of pay freezes, 350 workers at Magnet's Darlington factory took strike action in September 1996 against a below inflation pay offer to 60% of the workforce and nothing for the remaining 40%.

After only 12 days all those on strike were sacked and Magnet has since refused all attempts to negotiate.

The vast majority of these workers have long-standing service but they were sacked by a boss who had worked for Magnet for only 42 days.

Magnet's profits last year were £27million, £11million of which was earned by Magnet Darlington.

Magnet has already spent millions covering the cost of this strike - a decent pay rise for their Darlington workforce would have cost, at most, a mere £40,000 a year.

There are reports of poor quality workmanship, low production levels, and low morale among the scab workforce.

What You Can Do

1. Don't buy a Magnet kitchen!!
2. Send donations [to "The Magnet Families Hardship Fund"]
3. Send messages of support to the strike committee;
c/o 109 Jedburgh Drive, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL3 9UP.

SHEFFIELD RED AND BLACK CENTRE
Sheffield Solidarity Federation, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

Bradford

Reclaiming May Day '97

A whole week was programmed for this year's Bradford May Day events. The lin12 Club organised and hosted a diverse range of successful events, from the inevitable bookfair to a gig bonanza,

serious meetings, and an ace production of 'The Haymarket Martyrs'. Direct action was thin on the ground, but there was plenty of talking, which is a necessary prelude to successful action...



Blair's workers welcome:

Council workers' strike

Thousands of Sheffield Council employees walked out on strike on 28th May. The walkout was sparked by the Council issuing the first ever compulsory redundancy notice to non-teaching staff. Several Council unions have a long standing policy of walking out if a redundancy notice were to be issued and the response to the strike call has been fantastic. The redundancy notice that caused the strike was issued to a Finance Officer at Ann's Grove School. This school is set for a £12,000 surplus this year, while the head is proposing that governors volunteer to cover the work of the "redundant" UNISON member. The seven UNISON members at the school have all voted for an escalating program of strike action. The return to work was agreed, subject to a ballot of the whole membership employed by the City Council for a rolling program of escalating action. The events came after 450 'voluntary' severances and early retirements Sheffield's Labour Council, and in the face of threats of up to 67 compulsory redundancy notices, with a further 148 later in the year.

Postal strike success

After a 5 day unofficial and illegal strike by workers at a North London NDO office, a victory has been won on the issue of the use of casual labour to do normal work after the end of the temporary work they were taken on to do. The temporary workers were taken on to cope with extra work during the general election but were then kept on to do normal postal work. 800 workers walked out without a ballot, and after 4 days on strike a deal was negotiated between national Communication Workers Union officials and management which workers rejected. On day five, four other London delivery offices came out in support and management agreed to remove casual workers and give permanency to those on temporary contracts.

Website

Yes, Solidarity Federation and Direct Action are (finally) getting it together electronically. Online readers can now access us direct:

SolFed on the web
<http://www.gn.apc.org/SolFed>

This is a LabourNet site; LabourNet promotes computer communications as a medium for strengthening and building organised labour. It operates as a subgroup of GreenNet which is a non-profit organisation providing affordable access to computer communications. GreenNet is part of the Association for Progressive Communications linking progressive computer networks around the world. LabourNet works closely with the US based APC affiliate LaborNet to promote international labour movement communications.

As LabourNet puts it: Computer communications has been crucial to the globalisation process for the employers. We cannot confront the power of the transnationals without ourselves making full use of this technology. The labour movement has been built on traditions of organisation and solidarity. LabourNet aims to carry these traditions into the computer age. Together we can create a real alternative to the controlled media owned by capital and its state organisations and work to counter its bias and distortions. Labour movement organisations hiring space within our web site have the right to put forward their viewpoint without restrictions from us. LabourNet does not vet, nor is it to be held responsible for their views...

Our emphasis is on contributions and reports from rank and file trade unionists... discussion on articles posted is positively encouraged. LabourNet is run by a steering committee of people who work actively within the project. We do not seek to implement a particular political line; we come from a range of political viewpoints from within the labour movement. We do however share the common aim of... using computer technology to provide accurate information and the right to be heard to trade union activists...

Surveillance *counter-surveillance*

The new surveillance technology is too expensive to be used for catching criminals. It does lots more.

Anarchosyndicalists are opposed to all forms of hierarchy and domination in human life and relationships. While capitalism and authoritarian societies have been around for generations, there has always been fierce resistance to boss class rule. Consequently, if the powers that be are to remain in power, they have to have a clear view of what is going in society, especially at the lower levels of the class structure.

Present day society can be visualised as having the form of a pyramid with the rich and powerful at the top and the working class beneath. The contradiction is that the upper levels can never really know what goes on among the workers. It will always be the case that workers will not report their mistakes, shortcomings and faults to their superiors. More likely, they will seek to present their work and actions in the best possible light.

A whole caste of supervisors, inspectors and overlookers has grown up over the years, but even here the same contradictions are at work. Who will watch the watchers? The capitalist class have always sought to criminalise opposition and resistance to their hegemony. This has taken different forms but the subject here is the powers of the police in modern societies. Now, with new technological developments, police forces have been able to assemble a formidable arsenal of scientific devices to aid them in their task.

a whole caste of supervisors inspectors and overlookers has grown up over the years, but even here the same contradictions are at work. Who will watch the watchers?



Sensors - cameras, microphones etc., can be attached to cockroaches which live in ducts and corners - relaying messages back.

The recent Police Bill and related legislation has been brought in to legalise what has been done illegally for years - it merely regulates the status quo. Civil liberties groups believe the police will now be beyond the law and are therefore opposed to it; police chiefs have welcomed it as it clarifies a grey area. Until now the police could be technically guilty of criminal damage or trespass when breaking into houses to install 'bugs', cameras and microphones.

The changes in legislation, while not without significance, are entirely dwarfed by the impact of the developments in surveillance technology. There is now a whole generation of 'superbugs' which use the latest microchip, laser and satellite technology. These will be used to take advantage of changes in legislation, and to make a case out for the police to expand further.

While the police have been acting illegally for years, the latest developments in technology mean it may be no longer necessary to break in, trespass or to cause criminal damage when they 'bug' property. For example, it is possible with laser parabolic microphones to listen to a conversation inside a building by shining a beam on a window and detect the vibrations. Consequently, there is no need to force an entry or trespass. The use of evidence from 'bugging' has been increasingly used in cases before the courts, without any objections being raised by the judges.

crime

The context for the debate on surveillance is always that of crime. We are continually assured that the use of this sophisticated technology and the evidence gleaned from it will only be used to 'fight crime'.

Anarcho-syndicalists do not believe this will be the case. The State has now at its disposal a formidable armoury of devices to monitor the conduct and conversations of the people, and this will be used to the fullest to support the existing authoritarian system.

Here it is useful to give an example of police activity against one of their own, but someone who was challenging the status quo: Alison Halford, a former Assistant Chief Constable with the Merseyside Police, alleged in a letter to the Guardian (17/1/97) that "whilst pursuing my sex discrimination case over a two-year period, I believe that Big Brother Merseyside Police placed me under surveillance and listened to my communications throughout the legal process". Ms Halford wasn't a criminal or a subversive.

This example shows up in sharp relief the effect that surveillance technology can have on the world of work and employment issues. Perhaps you feel Ms Halford's experience was unusual in the extreme, but the mere existence of this technology allows this kind of abuse to take place.

In our working lives we obviously generate a lot of personal data because employers want references from the workers they are recruiting. Many employers go further and ask for information which is more personal, details of trade union membership or political affiliation. In the past much media attention was focused on the Economic League which, before it was wound up in 1993, supplied companies with information on 'subversives'. Its blacklist was extensive and besides the names and addresses of ordinary workers gave those of prominent Labour MPs and senior Trade Union leaders. The organisation has been reformed as Caprim, based in Redditch. Caprim's services include "special enquiries, CV verification and research into anti-business activity". Caprim denies any link with the Economic League.

Some of Britain's largest employers are licensed to keep records on the sex lives and politics of their employees. For example, BNFL and WH Smith hold sexual information and British Telecom holds information about party membership.

the state

The State is the largest holder of personal data and many civil liberties organisations are already concerned about the vast amount of information that the various state agencies hold. If all the records held by the police, the DSS, the Inland Revenue, the NHS, the Intelligence agencies, and social services were gathered together in one large file, then freedom even as an abstract concept becomes threatened.

The pooling of all this information would provide a very precise profile of a person's life, and of their family and associates. This would signal a significant move towards establishment of a totalitarian State.

The last tory government was

BNFL and WH Smith hold sexual information and British Telecom holds information about party membership

actively engaged in planning to issue a national identity card. It met some opposition (but not from the Labour Party) and was put off by the cost of setting up a comprehensive system. However, the threat has no doubt only faded temporarily and will be back in the near future. New Labour will recycle old tory ideas, subjecting them to their own spin and polish.

Now there will be a gradual approach with the incorporation of further data into a revamped driving licence. In the long run, however, it may not be the 'smart card' which will carry or give access to our personal details, but our palm print as the future of ID lies not in the form of a plastic card but in the simple swipe of your hand. In biometric systems, an automated scan of your hand will be enough. Systems based on a similar method are already in operation at certain airports with ID cards containing an encrypted handprint.

The technology of surveillance has grown by leaps and bounds, and spying and surveillance becomes easier by the day. People are not aware of these developments and as yet have only a sketchy idea of the consequences for society of this technology. Unfortunately, when people do become aware of the potential of these devices, they tend to feel demoralised and powerless

counter surveillance

When the new surveillance technology is discussed in media, it is always presented as providing security in the battle against crime. However, the state has not invested large sums of money, time and effort to just combat crime, but to remain in power and to run the system for ruling class advantage and profit.

Surveillance has always existed, and in a class society, it is used to ensure that power is unequally distributed, so that the strong stay strong and the

weak stay weak. Liberals think that they can restrain power by passing laws to limit its abuses. Also, liberals see things in terms of privacy and individual rights rather than seeing surveillance in the context of the inequality of power. Liberals believe that governments should pass laws and establish agencies to protect privacy and correct the data on file. The abuses of the system are to be exposed and regulated. However, the problem lies elsewhere, with fundamental imbalance of power.

what can be done?

Awareness is the initial step; we must become aware of what the state armed with (surveillance) technology is able to do. Generally there is scepticism and a reluctance to believe what the current level of surveillance is, and what the technology is capable of doing. Certainly, much of this seems to border on the realms of science fiction. When people do realise what the capabilities of the technology are, they become demoralised. We have to combat this. Much surveillance depends on the co-operation, or at least the acquiescence of the person about whom the information is collected. When we fill in forms we should keep in mind the old adage, 'rubbish in, rubbish out'. Also, we should bear in mind that much of the information gathered is of little use at the present time, even though it may be at a later date. Some of this information may only be of importance if we were living in a real totalitarian state.

Basically, two things need to be done immediately; we must make people aware of both the level and technology of surveillance; we must also take the initiative in compiling dossiers on members of the boss class, state functionaries and politicians. If we are to take their power away from them totally, we must start now to tip the balance of power in our favour.

Direct Action will be watching this issue! -



The world's smallest helicopter sits easily on a peanut -and it flies.

No questions No lies

England and Wales have worse crime records than any other western industrialised country apart from the Netherlands. Incidentally, the research which confirmed this came to light just weeks after the election, about a week before we are told that the Tories were fiddling the NHS and new Labour are thinking of stopping us from using doctors and hospitals by charging us money we haven't got for them. Government swaps are obviously a good time to get unconcealable lies out, like Michael Howard's claims that crime in Britain is down.

Almost everyone I know has been the victim of crime in recent years, so I'm not surprised the latest report shows that we in England/Wales outrank all-comers on car crime and burglary - and we are way ahead of the US on practically everything. Incidentally, crime is lower in Scotland and Northern Ireland - the latter has the lowest overall crime of the 11 regions studied. That's according to the figures; it is notoriously difficult to reflect unreported crime, which is significant. I haven't reported any crime for ages - it hasn't stopped it happening, but I just don't see the point - it never leads to a solution.

Undoubtedly, crime is a major problem - it deprives the poor of the few possessions they have. Also, possibly worse, it causes people to live in fear. Media whips us up into a frenzy so our personal risk meters go haywire. We are scared of doing anything because that 1 in 10

**Watching them watching us.
Get your paranoid hats on
for a ride into the world of
peeping tom.**

million rapist may be lurking or 'they' might see that we are out of the house.

solution?

This fear is blatantly used as a means to get us to accept any panacea for crime that may be waved in front of our faces. It is all jobs for the boys (in blue). The police are presented as our protection but they clear up only a small number of crimes. They have other jobs to do. We now know that they routinely use criminals as grasses, allowing them to continue their criminal activity while feeding information to the police on whatever other fish they have to fry. If the answer to the question of crime is the police, it is a lie.

**the rapidly
expanding
budgets for
this
increased
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come from
us - and if
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it is a lie**

The police try to get every 'criminal' (and more) in prison, the university of crime. A solution? They force us to accept state control by creating a need for themselves. They criminalise ethnic minorities, producing racism. Then they blame us for the problems they've created. I watched a police documentary the other day. They were pulling cars over on the basis of the clothing of the occupants, on 'suspicion'. The officer said 'you have to stereotype

in this job, because it works'. Eventually, after hassling unnumerable people (not all shown), a guy was nicked for drug possession. The officer estimated £3K street value, turned to the camera, and said 'that's nearly my overtime for tonight'.

Watching us is sold to us (yes, we are paying for it) as a solution to our problems. It is a rapidly growing business area for surveillance equipment manufacturers, security firms, and most of all, the police. The rapidly expanding budgets for this increased surveillance come from us - and if the answer to the question of crime is surveillance, it is a lie. Surveillance does not and will not solve our crime problem - people's crime problem. Simply because it is developed for other reasons; job security for security/police forces, information gathering on innocent people (who do no crime to other people but may wish to threaten the state) and 'big boys games' (helicopters, hi-tech equipment and covert operations all fall into this category). It's just a good easy living.

To stop the lying answers, we must re-phrase the question. What causes the ideas and practice of criminality? Market forces - the thing the police are really trying to defend. Market forces determine labour markets which determine low incomes which causes crime on people. Simple. Stopping it means replacing the state apparatus - and removing the police. Isn't lying a criminal offence anyway?

Bits and bites on big brother and his little helpers

CC what's on TV

In the past decade, the use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) for surveillance and crime control has grown to unprecedented levels. In Britain £150-300 million a year is now spent on a surveillance industry involving an estimated 300,000 cameras covering shopping areas, housing estates, car parks and public facilities in many towns and cities. While Britain is clearly the lead nation in implementing CCTV, other countries are quickly following. North America, Australia and some European countries which a few years ago would have rejected the technology, are installing the cameras in urban environments. CCTV is very quickly becoming an integral part of crime control policy, social control theory and Community consciousness. It is promoted by police and politicians as primary solution for urban dysfunction. It is no exaggeration to conclude that in Britain, the technology has had more of an impact on the evolution of law enforcement policy than just about any technology initiative in the past two decades.

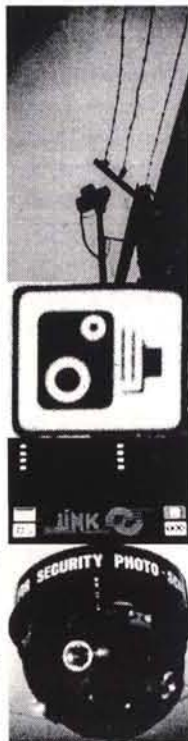
Source: *Privacy International*
<http://www.privacy.org/pi/>

1in12 CCTV facts

The 1in12 Club in Bradford (UK) have a lively informative website at: <http://merlin.legend.org.uk/~brs/kdis12>. Bradford got the first council CCTV system in Britain in 1990. 1in12 have raised issues of costs, secrecy of CCTV locations, privacy, lack of targets and monitoring of 'success'. Police have data on effects of CCTV on crime, but they are 'not for general public consumption'.

**Not online, want more?
Contact DA - we'll
forward mail etc.**

**at work, at
home, in town
- in every
aspect of
daily work
and life, we
must meet
growing
surveillance
and control
with solid
resistance**



Surveillance and censorship

The FBI and Secret Service, looking for new work opportunities and excuses to exist post-'communism', now cruise the web checking out for potential 'business'. The main excuse given for training 100's of agents a year to 'track and snare hackers' is to stop trespassing online and protect state and business computer networks.

And censorship? -the internet is the freest form of communication, relatively unregulated, following the current vogue for 'self-regulation'. But latest censorware, used to ban/block undesirable websites (in the name of the 'war on cyberporn') is being used to block progressive political web sites too. CyberPatrol currently blocks some 13,000 internet sites and aggressively markets itself as the number one filter and, somewhat paradoxically, a safeguard of free speech (!).

Some quick research has shown around 15% of sites on anarchism on their CyberNot list (i.e. blocked), including the IWW's Industrial Worker site. None of the banned sites checked had any sexual, violent or profane material on them. The Planned Parenthood site is also blocked, as are many gay/bisexual/lesbian safe sex lines. These blocked sites are inoffensive to humans, but apparently potentially offensive to the state.

CyberPatrol is being increasingly used by providers, libraries and schools in the US. Without downloading CyberPatrol, you can verify whether sites are blocked at: <http://www.microsys.com/cybernot>.

Thanks to DN for research.

Registration and control

The power of a massive database of personal information is clear. If you have a supermarket 'loyalty card' such as Safeway ABC or whatever, your dates, times and food preferences can be recorded. The information is valuable, and all new schemes involve more detailed records. Chipcards are a 'safepay' system, they are getting bigger and more widespread. The AirMiles save system is an enormous database. The list goes on.

But real power comes in getting databases talking, so bigger and better pictures of people's lives can be built up. The biggest databases are held by government, and getting those of DVLC, social security, tax and others talking to each other will result in an incredibly powerful information and checking system.

Membership cards are on the backburner again in Britain, while elsewhere in Europe they are a fact of life. In France, 100,000 asylum seekers have already got a chipcard with their fingerprints on it. The British model may continue to arrive at the same point by a more subtle means - using DVLC registration (etc..) and getting those talking databases to do the work.

Surveillance Sources:

Lyon, D. *The Electronic Eye*. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Martin, B. *Antisurveillance*. Anarchist Studies Autumn 1993, No.2.

Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punish; the birth of the prison*. Vintage. New York.

Davies, S. *Big Brother - Britains Web of Surveillance*.

Workers Control not Immigration Control

A further exposé of the Asylum and Immigration Act, and the racist rhetoric behind it.

In DA2, the article 'Racist Laws in a "Free" Democracy', covered the main measures of the Asylum & Immigration Act 1996 (AIA '96). We looked behind myths such as Britain's 'long-standing welcome... to those genuinely in fear of persecution' that the right wing press are always peddling and showed the Act to be the latest in a long line of

increasingly racist and restrictive legislation aimed at immigrants and asylum seekers. Here we look in more detail at the employer sanctions contained in the Act and examine the 'official' labour movement's shameful history of support for such sanctions.

Section 8 of the Asylum & Immigration Act came into force on the 27th January of this year and creates a new criminal offence. It means that, for the first time, an employer is committing a crime if they employ someone who does not have permission to both live and work in the UK and, if convicted, is liable to a £5,000 fine per 'illegal' worker. For a successful defence against section 8 employers must prove that they saw and kept a copy of one of a number of documents specified by the Home Office.

On the face of it, section 8 seems to punish employers for exploiting a source of cheap and unorganised labour. The reality is different. In fact it allows unscrupulous employers who will ignore the law to offer worse pay and conditions in the knowledge that anyone who complains has no rights in an industrial tribunal because their contract will be illegal. Furthermore, they will be liable to deportation.

The 'pass law' atmosphere that already exists in the provision of

local authority services and welfare benefits is now being spread to other workplaces with employers becoming quasi-immigration officers and Black and Asian people having to carry ID just to go about their normal business. The discrimination already faced by Black and Asian workers in the job market can only be worsened by section 8 as employers are put off employing someone who might be an immigration risk or who requires extra paperwork to prove their immigration status.

Employer sanctions have existed for some time in a number of EU countries and in the USA. They are part and parcel of the Fortress Europe policy which, while allowing free movement of EU nationals among the member states, intends to clamp down severely on so-called illegal immigration. This began as long ago as 1976 when the European Commission issued a draft directive 'On the harmonisation of laws in the Member States to combat illegal immigration and illegal employment', which called for the imposition of employer sanctions.

What might surprise some people is that it has taken 20 years for it to reach the statute book in Britain. Certainly it appears that there would have been little or no opposition from either the Labour Party or TUC leaderships. In fact, under the

VOICE FROM THE ALIENS

About the Anti-Alien Resolution of the Cardiff Trade Union Congress.

We, the organised Jewish workers of England, taking into consideration the Anti-Alien Resolution, and the uncompromising remarks of certain delegates about the Jewish workers specially, issue this leaflet, wherein we hope to convince our English fellow workers of the untruthfulness, unreasonableness, and want of logic contained in the cry against the foreign worker in general, and against the Jewish worker in particular.

It is, and always has been, the policy of the ruling classes to attribute the sufferings and miseries of the masses (which are natural consequences of class rule and class exploitation) to all sorts of causes except the real ones. The cry against the foreigner is not merely peculiar to England; it is international. Everywhere he is the scapegoat for other's sins. Every class finds in him an enemy. So long as the Anti-Alien sentiment in this country was confined to politicians, wire-pullers, and to individual working men, we, the organised aliens, took no heed; but when this ill-founded sentiment has been officially expressed by the organised working men of England, then we believe that it is time to lift our voices and argue the matter out.

It has been proved by great political economists that a working man in a country where machinery is greatly developed produces in a day twice as many commodities as his daily wage enables him to consume.

Jewish trade union leaflet against immigration controls, 1895

last Labour government, the House of Commons Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration recommended in 1978 'effective sanctions against employers who knowingly employ overstayers and illegal immigrants'. Much less surprising, though, is the fact that the 'new' Labour has no commitment to repeal section 8.

The TUC has also proved itself to be no friend to immigrants and asylum seekers. At its 1990 Congress, the General Council's 'Statement on Racism and Immigration' was accepted. This called for legislation penalising 'agencies and employers' involved in 'illegal labour trafficking'. This was proposed on the grounds that the TUC was 'particularly concerned at the exploitation by unscrupulous employers of workers not legally resident [in the UK]'. And, of course, what better way to protect exploited workers than to get their bosses to shop them to the immigration authorities who can deport them out of harm's way? You'd think they'd never even heard of workplace organisation!

A more likely reason for the TUC's support of employer sanctions is revealed by its Hotel & Catering Industry Committee in 1978 which saw 'a problem of unauthorised employment of visitors from overseas which undermined the development of collective bargaining and the terms and conditions of employment within the industry'. This reflects the official labour movement's inability to completely throw off its century old support for immigration controls.

In fact it could be argued that the trade unions were in no small way responsible for the implementation of immigration controls in the first place. They actively campaigned for the 1905 Aliens Act, the first ever piece of immigration legislation.

Immigration control became official TUC policy in 1892 after which it actively campaigned for the wholesale exclusion of Jews

escaping persecution in central and eastern Europe.

This is not to say that there has never been opposition from within the labour movement to controls. We have to look first and foremost to the heroic struggles waged by the very people at the sharp end of the state's racist policies - the Jewish, and later the Black and Asian, workers who organised and mobilised in the teeth of the official labour movement's campaigns in favour of controls. While many unions and trades councils were passing resolutions calling for immigration controls during the 1890's, Jewish labour organisations held mass meetings and demonstrations against the proposed Aliens Act. One of these, in 1894, passed the following resolution:

'This mass meeting of Jewish trade unionists is of the opinion that the vast amount of poverty and misery which exists is in no way due to the influx of foreign workmen but is the result of the private ownership of the means of production; and this meeting calls upon the government to pass a universal compulsory eight hours day with a minimum wage as an instalment of future reform.'

The following year saw ten Jewish unions launch the first ever leaflet against immigration laws, *A Voice From the Aliens*, condemning the TUC for its support for controls and calling on English workers to show solidarity with their Jewish fellow workers.

The 1960's and '70's saw this same process repeated with Black and Asian workers organising against the 1962, 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts. It was this agitation that led at last to the TUC calling in 1973 for the repeal of the '71 Act. Despite this and despite some union branches and individual members supporting the various anti-deportation campaigns, official TUC and Labour Party policy remains very much one of 'firm but fair' controls, an idea that assumes immigration controls can be non-racist in the first place.

Any anarcho-syndicalist approach to immigration issues, besides giving practical support to campaigns and actions as they arise, should call for the removal of all controls. This is the logic of our opposition to all borders and all states. It might seem utopian but is it not utopian to believe immigration controls can somehow be non-racist, or be operated in a non-racist manner?

The very idea of having controls to keep out those who are perceived as aliens, foreigners, non-British, non-white, or whatever, is racist through and through and no amount of dressing up in liberal and 'fair'-minded language can change that. The realisation that controls have operated for less than a century along with the fact that Britain is experiencing net emigration in any case surely means that having no immigration controls at all is far from utopian.

Something else we must refute is the idea that immigration causes worse wage levels and working conditions.

Echoing the words of Jewish workers of a century ago, it is greedy bosses and the capitalist system itself that cause poverty and hardship. Instead of insisting on immigration controls, 'fair' or otherwise, the TUC could spend its resources more usefully on combating such divisive ideas and attitudes.

*** Some of the background for this article (not least the title) has been taken from the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit pamphlet, 'Workers' Control Not Immigration Controls - Why Trade Unionists Should Oppose Immigration Restrictions', available from:**

**Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit,
400 Cheetham Hill Road,
Manchester, M8 9LE.**

the very idea of having controls to keep out those who are perceived as aliens, foreigners, non-British, non-white, or whatever, is racist through and through



frequently asked questions



anarchism:

the

Drawn from Workers Solidarity,
Voice of Anarcho-syndicalism
Vol.2 No.2.

FAQs

This issue's FAQs are on understanding and defeating racism - with an eyeball on south africa

where does racism come from?

Racism is not natural or inevitable. It is rooted in class society.

Racism developed alongside capitalism and the modern State since these emerged 500 years ago. It justified the conquest, slaughter and enslavement of indigenous people in the Americas, Asia and Africa. Later racism was used to divide and rule the working class majority, and to exploit and repress sections of the working-class.

Racists argued that colonialism, slavery and Black worker oppression were a "civilising mission". In truth, racism gave huge profits and power to the capitalist ruling classes of Europe and Japan.

how did it develop in south africa?

Racism in South Africa developed from colonial conquest, and genocide against Khoisan people and slavery in the Cape. The discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1870s strengthened racism. Why? The mine bosses and capitalist farmers needed ultra-cheap labour to make profits.

So the State fooled Africans into wage labour through taxes and land dispossession. It imported Indian semi-slaves for the sugar farms. Repressive systems such as the compounds, and a lack of political and union rights meant African, Indian and Coloured labour was kept cheap and controlled. White workers and poor whites were deliberately divided from their Black comrades through massive racial privileges such

as relatively high wages, political and union rights, and social services.

why did racial capitalism enter a crisis in the 1970's?

The system of racial capitalism worked well for the bosses up until the 1970s. It made huge profits and kept the masses down. But the local market was restricted to whites and was thus too small for further capitalist growth. Also, massive skills shortages developed.

Only Whites got a decent education and were allowed to do skilled work. More important, the Black workers and the poor, joined by some middle- and upper-class elements, rose in revolt; the 1973 Durban strikes; the Soweto rising of 1976; the emergence of a mass trade union and civic movement in the 1980's; the revolutionary uprisings of 1983-86; the mass protests of the late 1980's.

are elections the way forward?

This crisis forced the racist ruling class to the negotiating table in 1990. The 1994 elections were a massive victory. For the first time in 350 years Black people are not ruled by a racist dictatorship. The right to vote, to free speech, to trade unions, to equal social services has been obtained. These rights must be defended with mass action if necessary.

But elections do not bring real freedom. The State always serves the ruling class. Power does not lie in parliament but in

the State bureaucracy, the military and the corporate boardrooms. The State centralises power in the hands of a tiny, privileged minority of both Blacks and Whites. Elections must be boycotted - only multi-racial mass struggle can win change.

why is the abolition of capitalism so fundamental?

The fight against racism is a fight against capitalism and the State. These structures have been built on racism, and always create new forms of racism.

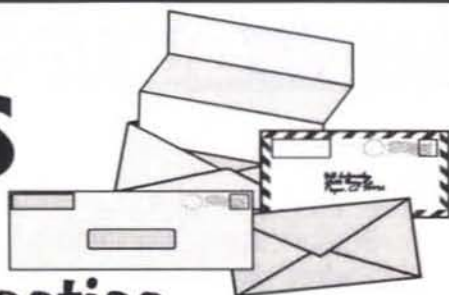
Yesterday, it was Apartheid. Today, it is the arrest and deportation of so-called illegal immigrants from Africa. The 'immigrants' are blamed for crime and unemployment, both of which are really the bosses fault. The immigrants must be defended!

A united multi-racial class struggle of all the workers of the world is the only road to freedom. A united struggle on a principled anti-racist platform is vital.

**Workers Solidarity
Federation
can be contacted at:**

**WSF,
PO Box 1717,
Rosettenville, 2130,
South Africa.**

Letters



A question of tactics

Dear DA

Some further comments on my letter (Act-back!?) and your reply in DA2. I was not advocating a method of struggle-organisation to bring about a revolutionary change in society. I don't think anything like that will be possible for decades (if ever). I was proposing a campaign of illegal covert direct action by and in the interests of the 'underclass', i.e. that large minority of 'developed' capitalist societies who are not Blair's 'stakeholders'. I did include certain economic demands (which I think quite moderate, though I suppose the stakeholders think otherwise) and a simple practical tactic which might be a major inducement to the enemy to concede them if practised widely and persistently enough. You chose not to print this, presumably for legal reasons.

Such a campaign requires not so much 'organisation' as covert mass-propaganda. This is difficult, but not, I think, impossible. It's difficult to see it providing career opportunities to the sort of crooks attracted to unions and political parties, so I don't think that's a major problem.

Never mind the underclass being further marginalised, what we are being offered now is poverty and forced labour. The prospect we face in the future could well be starvation and death as is already the case in the 'developing' capitalist world. Our 'fellow workers' won't give a toss about us in that situation except insofar as some of them may be in it themselves.

The definition of the middle class is quite simple. It includes anyone whose material standard of living could not be maintained in an egalitarian society. For instance, this includes all private car owners. For all the world to have the same level of car ownership as the UK, the global total of cars would have to be

quadrupled. Do you seriously imagine the earth could handle the resulting pollution? Let's not waste time considering the effects of spreading all the other trappings of consumerism to the whole of humanity. The point is, most of what you call the 'working class' in the rich countries are not remotely interested in overthrowing capitalism, not because they are duped and lackeys, but because their personal material interests are dependent on its continuation.

So all that is left to the 'underclass' is to seek to force concessions from the state, the bosses, and our middle class 'fellow workers' by taking action that costs them plenty of hard cash, as well as irritation, inconvenience and, yes, even hardship. We suffer these things each and every day, why should anyone else be immune?

Such a campaign is precisely about breaking barriers, for in fact the material privileges of the middle class are the foundation of the political support necessary for capitalism to exist, and the strongest barrier to the united 'working class' movement that revolutionaries dream about. Unless something of the sort takes place, the underclass, individually and collectively, faces only increasing hardship and perhaps death. As things stand right now, we would be better off buying lottery tickets as a chance of individual salvation than placing any faith in the 'solidarity' of our 'fellow workers'.

Anon.

Dear DA,

I read your 'Frequently Asked Questions' column in DA2 with some interest but also with a growing sense of frustration. Frustration at Noam Chomsky's inability, or unwillingness, to come forward with even a hint at the anarchist vision of a future society. Instead he hides behind

unhelpful statements like: 'Do we understand enough to answer questions about a society in such detail?' and 'Answers to most such questions have to be learnt by experiment'.

While I agree that there isn't a 'master plan' or a 'detailed blueprint', I feel that anarchists should be able and confident enough to present some broad outlines of the types of structures we wish to see replace those of present-day society. After all, as Chomsky states in referring to the Spanish revolution, it 'was not a spontaneous upsurge, but had been prepared in many decades of education, organisation, struggle, defeat, and sometimes victories'. I'm sure all this 'preparation' and 'education' would have included a fair bit of discussion and debate about what a new society would be like.

I accept that we have to avoid the trap of prescribing one particular course of action as the one and only true path, and that a certain amount of trial and error is inevitable, but surely we also have to give some vision, some inspiration about the society we want to create. Otherwise, we'll always be seen to be against everything and in favour of nothing.

Perhaps 'what would an anarchist society be like?' could be a FAQ in one of your future editions.

Yours in solidarity,
MB

I should say in Chomsky's defence that the interview was heavily edited due to lack of space -ed.

Dear DA

I was impressed by the last issue of DA, 'Breaking Barriers'. I have heard too much about 'middle class, this class, that class and the other class' from the marxist-trot left. There are only us and the big bosses who are driving this particular machine. Virtually everyone feels forced to participate in our horrendous capitalist system - the vast majority are hungry for change. This amounts to a mass-psychosis of self-hypocrisy, self-doubt and firm distrust of those who purport to offer us a road to the garden of eden. What is sets of ideas which are strongly constructed, simple,

letters: tales of the inner city

transparent, and demonstratively of the people and no-one else.

There is no tangible middle class. There are simply people who are more willing to do the bosses dirty work, and profit from, knowingly or unknowingly at the expense of everyone else. With today's JSA (*Britains welfare system - Job Seekers Allowance -ed*) and typical contractual working conditions, most people are going to be unemployed and working at different times. People do not live in a vacuum - there is still even the remains of community out here! Workers, employed or not, have families where unemployment and poverty lurks. The fear of being sucked into it is real. It is not a question of 'sod them I'm all right', it is a question of holding on and hoping.

Yes, we an inclusive radical revolutionary organisation which unites people in doing something about the plight of people and our earth, in getting rid of capitalism. No, that doesn't mean a liberal coalition or some top-down marxist clique; it means international solidarity and organisation in simple but effective mass-organisations. Keep up the good work towards this.

This brings me to my last point; obviously we need a strong international organisational structure to take on modern globalised capital. Some more stuff about the International Workers Association and how international links can be developed in the future would be good.

MC

about letters

Readers' letters are welcome, feel free to write in.

However, we get a lot of correspondence; if you want your views aired here, mark your correspondence 'letters'.

Try to keep them brief and to the point. We can only print within space permitting, and reserve the right to chop bits on longer or less coherent material.

All letters are kept and so full versions are available from us at DA.

Send your letters to:

DA-SF (letters),
PO Box 1095,
Sheffield S2 4YR
Britain

Out for a laugh

'OK comedy lovers, it's time for the caption competition. You know what to do, don't you?'

'BOLLOCKS!' The bellow from a hundred throats was slightly out of sync.

'That's right. If you think the caption's a load of shite, you yell 'Bollocks'....'

'BOLLOCKS!'

'Thank you. And if you like it, you shout...'

'BOLLOCKS!'

This was The Last Laugh Comedy Club in the oh-so-trendy student area of the city and Leni and Mel felt as if they'd croaked their last laugh- half an hour before they arrived.

'Cutting edge of new comedy- Not!' Leni felt weary. There was something spirit-sapping about being ranted at. OK, they were young men in jeans and T-shirt, but just as threatening as some suited, cynical headteacher berating the masses from a school assembly platform.

'Forty minutes of tits and willies from that guy from London and now we've got to sit through wanking and pussy jokes from the audience.' Leni could tell Mel was really pissed off. She had turned her seat round so her back was to the stage. There were more laughs to be had from the group they were with. They'd squeezed up to make room in the corner for four kids with dreads and tattoos. None of them felt inspired to write some gag about Betty Boothroyd holding Nelson Mandela's hand, but they could sense the level it was about to sink to.

'OK,' the compere knew what they wanted. 'We'll start with a batch of the usual crude stuff: "Get your knob out, Nelson, I haven't had any for ages."'

'BOLLOCKS!'

'Can't wait for the subtle ones,' Mel said. 'Look at the stack of paper he's got to wade through. Is it time for another drink?'

'If you move now, Mel, he'll pick on you. He's already had a go at the guy with a bald head.'

'I'm going to the bar. I'll get them for you.' Leni could see the young lad through the compere's eyes- long hair in dreads halfway down his back, raggedy hand-knitted sweater. Why was it all so predictable and stale - was there to be no escape anywhere from the old stereotypes set up for Mail readers? She watched him pick his way through the crowd.

'Don't forget a drink for your dog, mate. Or have you left him at home?' Roars of laughter at the poor guy stranded in the open. And he'd probably get it again as he struggled his way back from the bar.

'I know this makes me sound old, but what's up with today's students?' Mel was talking to the girl with tattoos and a nose ring. She just shrugged. 'I mean, what have they done- read half the book and missed the point?'

'We heard this club was good.'

'Yeah, good for what?'

'He won't like it if we keep talking,' Leni warned. 'Bet you anything he makes some crack about the geriatric corner.'

'What?' The lad had arrived with their four pints.

'Look, I bet you he makes some comment about us - either Crusties or Geriatrics. Come on, here's a fiver.' Leni grabbed some money out of her purse and beer slopped all over the table.

'Whoa! Careful!'

'Hey, can you keep it down in the corner!' The compere walked over to the edge of the stage. 'What is this - a Care in the Community outing?'

'Yes!' Leni leapt to her feet. 'You owe me a fiver!'

The laughs started, stopped, not sure who they were laughing at or why. The compere was floundering. His troops were in disarray, not sure where the enemy was anymore.

'The Community fights back,' Mel said, suggestively.

Review



McLibel - Burger Culture on Trial

John Vidal
McMillan, 1997
£15.99
ISBN 0 333 694619



John Vidal is the environment editor of the Guardian and he writes extensively on 'green matters'. Generally speaking I find I agree with most of what he has to say and when I don't, he is usually interesting none the less. No doubt this is the first of a flood of books now that the verdict of the McLibel trial is upon us. In the past McDonalds have been quick to threaten journalists with lawsuits if there is the slightest suggestion that McDonalds are in some way imperfect.

Nobody can miss the size of the miscalculation McDonalds made when they decided to take on Helen Steel and Dave Morris of London Greenpeace. The trial is set to have cost McDonalds £10 million, and even this bill pales into insignificance alongside the damage to its image. This case is one of the most spectacular in the history of libel. McDonalds paid a legal team around £7,000 a day while Steel and Morris defended themselves with no financial resources or legal aid. Steel and Morris prepared their case on the tube on the way to court. Brilliantly.

The intrigue of this David and Goliath story has got both people and the media interested. Supporters have raised £30,000. Steel and Morris believe the case has been an affirmation of consumer power; "It shows the power of ordinary people when they are determined to fight for change." Morris says that consumers are now more willing to take on companies.

To say McDonalds have been embarrassed by the trial is an understatement. As Vidal succinctly puts it; "McDonalds wanted to silence its critics but finally its legal tactics have backfired". Hopefully it will make capitalist firms more cautious about using the law (and arguably illegal snooping methods) to silence campaigners in the future. Plus it is a good read - shame pressing wasn't held until after the verdict, but I suppose they wanted to get in first.



Contact **McSpotlight** at:
<http://www.mcspotlight.org/>



Various Artists: Sally's Photographic Memory

Worlds End/Vital, 1997

A double CD of, for want of better terms, dance/trance music in memory of Sally Harding, a photographer mainly noted for her work with the artists and with the Trance Europe Express series of releases. The profits go to Shelter.

Dance compilations come out at a rate of knots, seemingly by the dozen a week. Most are either crass looking cash-ins on this or that latest sub-sub-genre or label compilations giving samples of the myriad of releases the multitude of labels put out. As 'dance' is so wide, from ambient doodling to the full on lobotomy of Gabba, the sheer volume of material out there makes it impossible for all but those with prodigious memory, money and time to be fully up to step. So, compilations are by and large a useful way to keep up, well just a few or so months behind.



This compilation is in itself a bit unusual. Not because it's a benefit, there are enough of those,

but because it's not specifically promoting the bands, the label or even Shelter. It is to the memory of their friend. In doing so it gives you two fine CDs of mostly top quality stuff from the opening mournful piece by Kirsty (Opus 3) through the always marvellous Orbital and a wonderful acoustic sort of thing from Slab. Other names include the Drum Club, Meat Beat Manifesto, System 7, Banco de Gaia, Spooky etc. There are no bad tracks, no even poor tracks, but a couple do get stuck in amble mode for a bit.

The version I got, I bought mine early so it may be a limited version, came in a big white box with a nice booklet full of Sally Harding's photographs. These are mainly of the bands included, plus a few others and pictures of anti-Criminal Justice Act events. Something which showed a lot of cynical old politicos who hadn't been paying attention past the tabloids and colour supplements that ravers and what have you could address social issues. It also pushed home the fact to all those weekend ravers and hedonists that just because you think you are doing nothing wrong doesn't mean politics isn't going to force itself upon you - start fighting back whilst that's still an option. The CJA did bring home the fact that dance music can be political, it can have a voice, it can protest, but dognabit what's wrong with having a good time as well?

There always was more to dance music, and there always were artists supporting social and political issues. From public statements, to benefits, to specific tracks. The Shamen started with Drop, a (gorgeous) psychedelic guitar pop chocked full of politics and dubious drug references moving on to producing serious dance (I try to ignore Ebenezer Good, it's hard, but I do try) with more politics and dubious drug references. The aforementioned Orbital have done various tracks connected to various issues, e.g. Belfast about, ..Belfast. Their track 'Girl with the sun in her hair' was recorded using solar power only and it's got a spiel about it on the sleeve. From the early Shut Up and Dance, through to other small obscure labels like Prolekt putting 'Viva Los Zapatistas' on the records. There has always been politics in dance

music. (I have not even mentioned rap and hip hop as they are really out of the scope here). The thing is you can't really discourse on the evils of capitalism and ponder on a post social revolution society when you have few or no lyrics! I am not claiming that dance music is full of anarcho types just waiting to put out Crass style polemics, but there are issues and awareness in there and many dancers are interested. A lot of people start from single issues around their self interest, like ravers and the CJA. It gets them out in the open, gets them involved. Its up to us oldies to demonstrate that there is more out there to do if they really want to dance on.

And on the subject of said demonstrating, the March for Social Justice in London back in April brought together striking Dockers from Liverpool and Reclaim the Streets all to the noise of sound systems. Whilst it may be traditional to troll along at the back of a march making cutting points about the left and waiting for the first cider casualty, it's not for everyone. So now we have an alternative - us old-timers trudge along to the trots calls of "Blair, Blair, Blair - out, er, in, err - oh shit" and the kids get down by the sound systems having a fun time in their own peculiar way.



Buenaventura Durruti

NATO CD 777 733, 1997

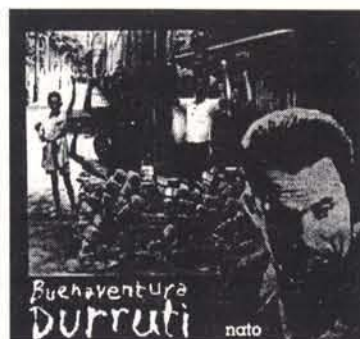
Despite being quite enthusiastic about this release, I do have a problem with how to start describing it. Listening to it was, initially, quite difficult enough. There are such a wide range of styles and performances in this mammoth project that it was a bit daunting. However, it is clear that this is a labour of love and impressively researched,

played and produced. There are 36 tracks spread over 2 CDs and nearly 3 hours of music with over 100 contributors involved. Added to this, almost all the lyrics and accompanying text are provided (in two booklets) in either French or Spanish which, for someone with my limited linguistic knowledge, was a bit of a problem.

Much of the texts used come from sources which might be familiar to politicians- Abel Paz (who speaks briefly on one track) is a major contributor while there are also quotes from, among others, Subcommandante Marcos, Lorca, Alfred Cat, Emilio Prados and Durruti himself. Musicians include Free/Contemporary Jazz veterans, Phil Minton, Evan Parker and Tony Coe. On first hearing, it reminds me of the song cycles of Lindsay Cooper/Sally Potter or Mike Westbrook, or something you might occasionally hear late at night on Radio 3!

To do full justice to the CD, I would need far more space than is available here so I'll try to give you a brief snap shot of what is on offer. Some tracks are traditional folk tunes rendered fairly 'straight' while others are modern arrangements of popular Spanish songs, for instance, 'El Paso del Ebro' (also known as *Ay Carmela*, *Rumba la rumba* etc...) is arranged by Henry Lowther for himself on trumpet and the Ladybones Trombone Quartet. There is a version of 'Los Cuatro Muleros' sung by Phil Minton and arranged by Noel Akotcha at the end of which there is a snatch of a 1931 recording of Lorca on piano accompanying La Argentinita singing the same song! Other classics include a stirring version of 'Hijos del Pueblo' sung unaccompanied by Violeta Ferrer and a moving flamenco song 'Durruti no ha Muerto'.

The modern compositions weave in source material either in the form of quotes, or in one case, extracts of dialogue from the Richard Prost film 'L'Espagne Rouge et Noire'. Elsewhere there



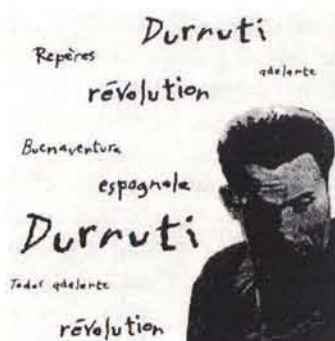
is a big band workout for the classic 'A Las Barricadas' and songs in remembrance of Ascaso, the collectives, the Nostros and Solidarios groups and the fight against Fascism - and nothing in praise of the International Brigades!

The more you listen and read the more curious and exciting gems reveal themselves, like the short version of Albert Aylers 'Angels' (from Guernica) played on 'distressed' electric guitar, or the North African influenced song based on the writing of Algerian revolutionary Sali Mohammed. Orwell inevitably makes an appearance, but it's OK, it's a piece slagging off the Communists and saying how he wished he'd joined the Anarchist Column.

Occasionally quotes from Durruti and others appear against improvised or free Jazz compositions. This might put some people off as it's not exactly easy listening but it's only a few tracks. To me these pieces brought to mind Paz's description of Durruti's emotional but chaotic funeral procession. As you have probably worked out by now, not every track is devoted to Durruti, so don't worry this is not hero worship taken to Stalinist proportions. Rather, Durruti serves as a symbol for the general thread running through the tracks - that of celebration, resistance and anarchism.

Both the subject matter and the wide collage of performances make it an intriguing and unusual release, and not something you are likely to come across very often or find in your local High Street record shop (it is not a 'commercial' release). And here is the sting - because it's a French release the distributor Harmonia Mundi are charging over £25 (inc. p&p) in Britain. Questions of solidarity are lost on Harmonia Mundi but I wonder how the musicians who conceived the project feel about it?

It's a shame that the limited distribution and price might prevent many people from hearing this CD. It's a real breath of fresh air and it should be heard more widely, not just by the privileged few. If you have the cash, 'phone Harmonia Mundi (0171 2530863), if not, borrow it.





Libertarias

Vicente Aranda, 1996.

Firstly, this is not a "Land & Freedom" in Spanish. It doesn't go into all the history, politics, and scheming of the various protagonists of the Spanish Revolution. It is a film about women's experiences in the Spain of the time, specific women's experiences. This gives it a great advantage; "Land & Freedom" suffered because Ken Loach's politics shone through, causing anarcho-syndicalists to raise their eyebrows if not their voices. Since it is 'just a film', it (hopefully) makes no great claims as a political or theoretical treaty. The focus is on women, the main protagonists of which are in Mujeres Libres ('Free Women' a libertarian women's organisation aligned to but independent of the CNT, FM and FIJL, -see Ackelsberg's book Free Women of Spain).

Yet hardly any mention of the work of the Mujeres Libres is shown after the first quarter of an hour. The majority of the action takes place on the Aragon front, where a small and diverse group of remarkably well equipped, fed and clean anarchists (a spiritualist, an ex-prostitute, an ex-nun a couple of released criminals and what have you with tommy guns aplenty!) fight the fascists.

It's basically a film about people in a war - goodies and baddies. There are the anarchists (the goodies) who are really the only people except the fascists and the Catholic Church (the baddies) who exist. A film where anarchists are the vast majority of the people involved and where they are to a greater extent portrayed entirely positively. How many other films can you name which have quotes from Kropotkin, Bakunin and Durruti (in person) which are not forced, which are not said in a stilted monotone and which are used to portray the aspirations and hopes of real people? All in all a fine film, a few good jokes and quality acting (& easy to read subtitles!). Anarcho-syndicalists are

portrayed as human beings struggling for something better, with humour and compassion. The only major problem was the ending; it was both poor and brutal; the only graphic brutality in the whole film was by Moorish soldiers on the fascist side. I am sure they were brutal, but so were many others and the use of them in the film was unnecessarily graphic and poorly thought out.

If you want to knock political holes in this film you could spend weeks doing so, but there are much better targets, so sit back and enjoy, assuming, that is, you can find it. Look in independent cinemas for 'Spanish seasons' and the like. It has been a big hit in Spain, so hopefully your search shouldn't be fruitless - it may even be out on video soon. Well worth the search.



Class War

Asked to start a magazine review series by reviewing the latest issue of Class War caused confusion for me. Why start with a mag which has reached the end of the road? So I thought sod it, I'll be extremely brief and limit myself to extremely personal opinions; here goes.

The final ever issue of CW (no comeback concerts?!) is not all sadness and gloom on the passing of CW. As ever, it is a good read, with incisive, critical and well written columns, e.g. on the left, the left (again) and women. Buy it for these alone. It is, on its own admission, primarily a navel gazing exercise, and is almost humble in parts; '...we have been as honest and frank as we can. We have taken the bold step of getting our dirty washing out in public'. But I get the feeling that the navel gazing isn't over. It is almost as if the authors realise they have gone down a blind alley, know an about turn is in order and are talking about it, but cannot bring themselves to do it. Having said that, changing direction on politics and organising is never easy; CW hasn't worked but what else has? SolFed is the only organisation showing any signs of real growth and its



network strategy is not exactly top scorer in the superleague. If recognising the problem is really half the cure, CW is getting to half way there.

I never found the rent-a-mobbish end of CW appealing; but what really concerned me was the lack of positive direction. A dose of well-organised politics, education, and action was/is needed. I'm not a widely read political type, and I see things rather simply. A serious revolutionary organisation takes one of two roads. The first; either you have a party, pretend party (party in all but name), or sect. The party may recruit vigorously but always retains a central clique. For the anarchist sect, principles are dear - purity not practice is the watchword. Basically you keep yourself pure until the tide comes in, which is never. The second option is some sort of confederation of mass membership - without this there can never be democracy. The discussion here is mainly about tactics. The trick is in getting an organisation or system where people can be attracted in the first place and politicised so the organisation doesn't become reformist or slide into the first category above. This needs 'aggressive' democratic structure, self education and an inclusive attitude.

There are opportunities for the whole movement in this; opportunities for open debate, crossing old battle lines not crossed for years; in short, breaking barriers. Apparently there are to be open conferences. On the basis of the paper, these could be interesting and fruitful - hope to see both new and old faces there.

Social democracy reaches the buffers



Part II of the trainspotters epic journey through the murky world of train unions and the blaired future.

Incidents occur from time to time, which shake workers out of their passive role and ignite latent class consciousness. The rail unions of the 80's and early 90's are littered with cases of rank and file workers demanding action and being betrayed by union officials.

But it is much more than just a case of an out of touch leadership selling out the rank file as the left would have it. What we have is a group of militant workers using the tools of class struggle coming directly into conflict with the social democratic consensus politics of reformist trade unionism. The unions step into such disputes to try and ensure an agreement acceptable to both workers and management with a return to work as soon as possible to restore the "good relations" so vital for the efficient running of the rail network.

Such disputes may reveal the true nature of reformism, with ordinary members suddenly finding "their" union more interested in meeting with management to get a quick return to work instead of fighting for their demands. Once the immediate dispute is over workers, having no alternative, return to their passive role, with the union settling

the main problem with the broad left type organisation was and is its (lack of) political direction

back into their armchair. It must not be forgotten that on the railways the post war period brought "jobs for life" and rising living standards backed by state provision of better housing, education and health. The union message that co-operation with capitalism could deliver was a strong one. What was needed was a challenge to that message that would highlight the class conflict, the realities of low pay, killer levels of overtime and atrocious working conditions, and that would demonstrate that capitalism in truth was not delivering and had to be replaced.

Here we reach the failure of the left. For though there were various attempts to organise "rank and file" groups over the years, none sought to challenge the social democratic ideas of the unions or of the capitalist system that underpinned it.

rank and file

Rank and file organisations fell broadly into two types. Firstly, let's look at the "Broad Left" type of organisation. It is not the intention here to repeat many of the criticisms of the way this type of group organised. These are well documented, ranging from the fact

that they organised in the union structures instead of the workplace, to the failure of a strategy of getting left candidates elected to union positions - which reduced them to little more than electoral machines. The main problem with the broad left type organisation was and is its (lack of) political direction. As the name implies the broad left sought to group together workers from different political persuasions and bring them together as railworkers to fight for better pay and conditions. The theory was that day to day (economic) demands are separate from the broader political demands which are best pursued away from the workplace through the political party.

The broad left hoped to gain control of union structures in order to set a more militant agenda. Broader political gains were to be achieved through the election of a more "socialist" Labour Party whose members dominated the broad left. Politics for the broad left was not the linking of day to day struggles to the failure of capitalism, but rather arguing in branch meetings for the union to change its position on Labour party policies. The aims of the broad left were limited to building a more militant trade union

in partnership with a more left wing Labour Party. They never sought a class conscious organisation built on a revolutionary perspective seeking to challenge capitalism but a more militant form of the Labour Party and TUC. The aim was for greater gains to be squeezed out of capitalism but ultimately not seeking to challenge its existence. As such the broad left was simply a more left wing form of social democracy. Like the unions, they were able to offer quite plausible arguments during the post war boom, but come the recession, they were unable to provide an alternative to rampant capitalism other than to hope for a return to capitalist boom when again their arguments would appear plausible.

The second form of organisation, of which there was a number of attempts to set up over the years, was the more workplace based rank and file organisation. These tended to be launched by political groupings, though in recent years, a number of organisations have sprung up based around militant depots sickened by the unions failure to respond to management attacks (a recent one being the 'Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union'). At first sight these did appear to be seeking an alternative to the unions, rejecting the broad left approach, and arguing for militant action based in the workplace. They also rejected the idea of being linked to any political party, totally rejecting the Labour Party, arguing for an independent organisation. Unfortunately, this positive stance was set against much confusion as to short and long term aims. Though they were quite prepared to act independently of the existing unions, all of the various groups rejected the idea of attempting to build alternative unions. They instead committed themselves to reforming the existing unions but with no clear strategy of how this was to be achieved. The rejection of links with political parties became a rejection of a political perspective of any kind, so there was no real long term aim. So the workplace rank and files limited

themselves to arguing for militant action under democratic control; but militancy linked to no strategy or broader ideas.

The lack of a clear political direction of the various rank and files was partly due to the reluctance of workers to break with social democracy but was also due to the influence of the various marxist groups, who, despite their own revolutionary ideas, actively sought to limit the rank and file groups to reformist aims. The marxist's fear of the growth of an independent organisation with its own revolutionary perspective, challenging the "leadership" role of the party was so great, they constantly sought to limit rank and files to economic demands. Thus, the strange sight of the "political leadership" of the working class attempting to stifle political debate for fears that workers may be politicised and start to build their own revolutionary organisation.

This confusion over strategy and aims resulted in the work place rank and files not having the coherence needed to ensure their long term survival. Unlike the broad left who could organise around the fight to change union and labour party policy and the attempt to capture positions, rank and files tended to grow up when militant action was taking place only to fall back and collapse once action had died down. What was needed was a clear set of ideas that the rank and file could organise around which went beyond just arguing for militancy.

This failure to establish a coherent organisation, based in the workplace, that could forward an alternative to the social democratic unions was nothing short of tragic. Come the recession and management offensive, what was needed was an alternative movement which could have provided the organisational framework essential for a workers fightback. Workers resisted despite, but that resistance remained localised and uncoordinated. My own depot, for instance, organised

numerous unofficial bitter strikes. The problem being that we were unable to spread the disputes. To do this would have required the existence of an organisation with enough workplace support, capable of preparing the ground and enabling us to widen the dispute. In the absence of such an organisation we were left dependent on the reformist unions. Rather than attempt to spread the dispute, they did all they could to keep our depot isolated and under control.

miners' strike

Another, more important example occurred during the miners' strike, where lack of organisation again prevented effective action. While some railworkers were risking their jobs to prevent the movement of coal, others were operating additional oil tanker trains to replace lost coal supplies. The union refused to spread the dispute and black the movement of oil. Fear of losing control of dispute and widespread panic among many officials that the miners were going beyond accepted social democratic bounds prevented the union taking action. An effective rank and file organisation could have gone beyond the limits of the reformist unions and perhaps the history of the miners' strike - and the working class - would have been different.

But if the recession exposed the failures of the left, it totally brought home the true position of the unions. For recession meant falling profits, changing markets, cuts, and the return of mass unemployment. This freed capitalism, with unemployment now acting as a check on workers militancy, enabling it to go on the offensive, sweeping aside the whole post-war consensus and the reformist unions along with it. On the railways management simply brushed aside agreements with the unions. They withdrew from the machinery of negotiation and set about systematically de-recognising the union, even going so far as to stop the life blood of reformism; the pay bill deduction of RMT members

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dues. All the illusion of rail union power, enshrined in the machinery, melted away. The truth emerged that post war recognition had not been won by workers power, but had been bestowed on the unions because of prevailing economic conditions. In effect union recognition had been a form of management patronage to be taken away when it suited them. The unions, pampered and flattered by management over the years, had come to see agreements as a source of power in themselves, not mere bits of paper. They forgot the true source of union power is the workers ability to enforce any agreements made.

Management's new disregard for agreements was met with a sense of total bewilderment by most union officials. The unions, steeped in consensus politics, could not come to terms with changing economic conditions and management attitudes. Their whole structure and political outlook was geared to a world of ever expanding capitalism and a compliant management. As the attacks increased the union responded by scaling down their demands to meet the new economic realities, in the hope that it would be enough to get management back into negotiation. The more management refused to negotiate the more the union scaled down their demands.

It has now got so humiliating for the unions they would be willing almost to make no demands and accept any conditions in return for negotiating rights. RMT leaders would sign any agreement if management reintroduced pay bill deduction of union subs and granted them even the most limited of roles. The drivers union ASLEF increasingly looks like a company union, rubber stamping any management proposals for fear they may suffer the fate of the RMT and have pay bill deductions stopped. Both unions have been reduced to enfeeblement by the management onslaught and now pray for some relief from the new labour government.. (what prayers).

**social
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and the
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what future for the rail unions?

Clearly there will be no foreseeable return to "the Machinery of Negotiations" days when unions could make demands on management. Much depends on the emerging attitudes of the new owners post-privatisation. Some may carry on with the free market driven policy of smashing the unions. Perhaps some may seek to undermine collective ideas, by seeking to replace the unions with works councils based on the individual stakeholder ideas of Blair (outlined in previous DAs). While other owners may allow the coward unions a minor role on the strict understanding they behave and make sure their members behave.

Either way it will do little to improve the position of railworkers. The failure of the unions has left workers disorganised and completely exposed to management attacks. Railworkers now have to live with constant redundancy threats. Working conditions have been eroded to an extent unimaginable fifteen years ago. In many areas management have introduced an industrial relations system based on economic terror; with even minor breaches of discipline and absence through illness leading to the sack. Increasingly workers, especially union activists, are sacked merely as examples to others, in part of a wider strategy of management through fear and intimidation. The post war democratic consensus has truly left the rail industry.

lessons to be learned?

Reformist unions have completely failed to defend workers in the new era of global capitalism. This is no due to failures of organisation, nor is it down to how they are organised within any given society. The unions are proving just as ineffective in the state regulated works council system of Germany as they have been in the less regulated free collective bargaining

system of Britain. It also matters little which Government is in power, the unions in "socialist" Spain have fared little better than those in Thatcherite Britain.

The failure of the unions stems from the reformist politics that dominated



them. The whole rationale of the unions, the social democratic idea that government regulation would ensure a capitalist system free of recession, capable of delivering ever rising standards of living, is flawed. The union role, to negotiate a share of the fat capitalist cake acceptable to both worker and management, was a myth which has now been exploded by recession. The union, having long abandoned the idea of replacing capitalism, can do little but accept the market logic and scale down demands to suit what the crisis-hit economy can afford. With recession and a capitalist offensive, the unions, having no alternative way forward, can do little but defend the old social democratic order which the new economic conditions have rapidly swept aside.

We have to come to terms with these new economic conditions and that the failure of the unions is that of social democracy as a whole. It matters not which government is in power or what form of social democratic system is introduced. Social democracy and the reformist unions can no longer meet the challenge of global capitalism and guarantee even basic workers rights.

We have to break with reformism and build a union movement based on a revolutionary perspective. Only this will be able to both organise militant action to win immediate demands, and effectively challenge capitalism itself.



Beanz meanz genes

The EC has now given the go-ahead for Ciba-Geigy's genetically engineered maize. This was on the advice of three EU scientific committees. The EC has over-ruled the member states who voted against the maize in June 1996. At this time, the blocking of a genetically engineered crop plant was hailed as a landmark decision.

Ciba-Geigy had developed the maize to resist attacks by its worst enemies; the European corn borer. Ciba-Geigy have developed an in-built protection against this pest through genetic engineering, so that when pests attack the maize they are poisoned by a toxin. This toxin is normally made by the soil bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT). Ciba have now spliced the gene that makes BT into the maize so it has an in-built pesticide. They have also spliced another gene which makes the maize resistant to a herbicide sold by Ciba under the trade name 'Basta' (which means 'enough' in Spanish).

Consequently, farmers can kill weeds without killing the maize, so it will be tolerant of high levels of herbicide in the soil, which will be absorbed by various plants. This herbicide, having entered the food chain via the corn, will be consumed by people leading to build up of the herbicide in the body of maize or maize product consumers.

While this is bad enough in itself, it is not the end of the story; the maize has also been spliced with a gene

the question of the production of food is too important to be left to greedy capitalists



Consumer pressure: alternatives to soya milk - pea milk without genetic engineering

that makes it resistant to the antibiotic ampicillin. This gene serves no useful purpose in the crop but acts as a marker which allows genetic engineers to screen out plants which have failed to take up the extra genes. Ampicillin is widely used to treat infections in humans and cattle. There is the worry that cattle fed on the corn may become resistant to treatment - the gene may even find its way into bacteria in people. Louise Gail of Greenpeace has been quoted saying: *"Once more the commission has given in to pressure from the genetic engineering industry and the US. And once more, the commission has ignored its duties to protect the environment and public health."*

towards a shopper's strike

Greenpeace called for a ban on the engineered maize and took practical direct action. Two days after the decision was announced Greenpeace blockaded a shipment of the maize at the port of St. Nazaire in France. The UK supermarket chain Tesco said it was banning Ciba maize in animal feed for its meat products.

The lack of labelling is an obstacle to effective direct action through consumer boycotts and blockades. In Britain the Liberal Democrats are in favour of a modified maize ban until effective labelling is in place. Obviously, Ciba-Geigy and other firms involved are less than keen to label foods because it is likely to lead to such consumer boycotts.

Something is seriously wrong with our food and the industry behind it.

In a follow up to last issue's BSE article; a brief taster of one of your most favourite genetically engineered foods

The fact is people do care about what they eat. However, just as there is an onslaught on our food, there is a parallel campaign of misinformation and advertising by the industry, politicians and other vested profiteering interests.

Anarcho-syndicalists see the production and distribution of food for what it is - crucial to our well-being. The question of food production is too important to be left to greedy capitalists. Malnutrition and contaminated food have long had a disastrous effect on human conditions. It is one of the basic problems we could have dealt with long ago in the absence of a selfish profiteering system.

Awareness of such food industry developments as in genetics is an essential first step, as is awareness of the machinations of the capitalist onslaught on OUR foodstuffs and food production.

Exposing what is happening to our food and developing a new agenda is crucial. We cannot rely on anyone else to fight our battles for us. We can, however, research and investigate, and then make this research available.

Organisation between consumers, food production workers, farmers, and agriculturists is the key. With anarcho-syndicalist organisational structures for a 'people's agenda', this major profit-fuelled assault on our health and well-being can be fought and resisted effectively.

Anarchy in Albania?

The first and only positive thing to come out of the events in Albania following the collapse of the infamous pyramid investment schemes is the observation that popular insurrections are still possible (and probable) in Europe, rather than being safely consigned to the history books. Albania may be a marginalised and peripheral corner of Europe, but similar tensions are bubbling under the surface across central and eastern Europe, and the logical end of laissez faire capitalism is to reduce much of the population of the West to bare subsistence too.

Less positive is the observation that, once the uprising had sent the State packing from southern Albanian towns, a dense of direction and organisation was lacking. Media reports repeatedly referred to "anarchy in Albania", while in fact the revolt was fuelled by the desperation of a destitute and there was no ideology or concerted organisation involved. Rather than attempting to build a society without government, they merely wanted shot of one particular bunch of thieves.

Imagine if there had been a mass organisation like the CNT during the Spanish Revolution in place. Instead of a million looted guns being aimlessly fired into the air, a workers' militia would have been formed and set off for Tirana to eject Berisha and his clique. Instead of a situation of everybody for themselves (chaos, not "anarchy"), with a gun to protect their home from marauders, we might have heard about workers' and peasants' collectives building a new society. Instead of the sad cargo of people fleeing across the Adriatic, we might have heard about the Vlore dockworkers' union collectivising the port which was now exporting produce from the collectives. Now, that's anarchy...

When the "Communist" regime collapsed in Albania at the start of the nineties, people streamed across the Adriatic into Greece in search of a better life, no doubt seduced by the mirage of Berlusconi television candy beamed across from Italy for years. In Brindisi, they were herded from the docks to detention in the football stadium. Similarly, the recent Italian-led international intervention force was a reaction to unwanted immigrants. If this requires that the navy rams the odd rust-bucket and drowns 80 people, so be it.

What we now see in southern Italy is a replay of the U.S.-Mexico border, where "wetbacks" trying to escape grinding poverty (imposed by the rich North) get a decidedly cool welcome to the "free world". The foundations for the walls of this Fortress Europe were being laid at the time when the hype surrounding the collapse of the Iron Curtain was at its height, but naive liberals and "democrats" were too busy celebrating the dismantling of the Berlin Wall to notice. All that's happened is that the wall has been moved eastwards and southwards, and is now designed to keep people out of the West rather than in the East.

At the start of this century, destitute Italians fled in their millions across the Atlantic. After a brief glimpse of the Statue of Liberty, they encountered Ellis Island, racist immigration quotas favouring northern Europeans and only the worst jobs (if any, and if they got in). The mafia thrived. Similarly, Albanian immigrants in western Europe have become involved in the drugs trade and pimping, whilst many left behind in Albania depended on gun-running and sanctions busting during the Bosnian War. This criminality is used as a justification for keeping them out (and is, incidentally, the source of much of the

money invested in the pyramid schemes). But is it surprising, when the alternatives on offer were starving in Albania or being a squeegee merchant by the roadside in Italy? Welcome to the "free" market. These two mass emigrations from different ends of the Twentieth Century show how little the world has changed. The locations, geo-politics and level of technology are different, but the capitalist game is the same; inhumanly moving millions of the world's poor around like pawns on a Chessboard.

Peru

It's difficult to imagine a more vomit-inducing sight than that on our TV screens at the end of the siege of the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, with the triumphalist commandos gathering around President Fujimori in a bullet-proof jacket to sing him the national anthem. Not one of the 14 Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas was wounded or captured alive, surprise, surprise. The MRTA had had four months during which to kill their hostages but didn't. The ruthless terrorists were obviously on the outside, not inside the compound.

This isn't the time or place to ponder the MRTA's tactics. Anarcho-syndicalists are opposed to vanguardist armed groups who set themselves apart. On the other hand, when other avenues were closed, anarchists have always carried out and applauded symbolic actions and individual blows against arrogant oppressors. One of the MRTA guerrillas killed in the storming of the compound, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini, was a veteran of a union struggle in Lima in 1979, repressed by the authorities at the cost of three workers' lives. Even if the MRTA are embarked on the dead-end road of elitist armed struggle, they were pushed there by the culture of the death squads.

The Zapatista uprising and other groups in Mexico; the landless movement (Movimento Sem Terra) in Brazil; the MRTA siege; all signs that neo-liberalism will not wash over Latin America unopposed. The Peruvian government may have ended this siege, but others will take up the struggle; Fujimori and his dogs can crow now, but ultimately, the writing is on the wall.

Solidarity Federation

The Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994 by the joining together of the Direct Action Movement, industrial networks in transport, education and public service sectors, and other groups and individuals. This was a considerable step forward for anarcho-syndicalism in Britain.

The SolFed (SF) provides what has been lacking for many years - a concrete base in the working class for uniting struggles in the workplace with the wider political struggle in the community. In other words, SolFed is a revolutionary social and economic organisation. The ideas and practice of anarcho-syndicalism are not new, although they constantly change in response to our rapidly changing world. Whilst not yet a fully fledged revolutionary union federation, SolFed is a significant step towards this aim.

As industrial networks grow in members and influence, so does the scope for action. The industrial networks have established a reputation in their industries and are showing real results in membership and effectiveness.

Locals

SolFed is not just organised through industrial networks. It also organises locally through "locals".

A local is made up of all SolFed members in an area regardless of network membership. The work of locals is varied: general solidarity with the networks and other workers; local political campaigns like anti-fascism and environmental issues; holding public meetings; producing and distributing anarcho-syndicalist material. Many of the already established locals have or are working towards getting a local, an actual building as a permanent base.

International Workers Association

The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the IWA, giving it the strength of international solidarity and experience from the larger sections such as the CNT in Spain and the USI in Italy. Founded in 1922, the International Workers Association (IWA) has sections all over Europe, in South America, Australia and the USA.

Why organise internationally? As capitalism has become increasingly international, always looking for new markets to 'exploit', so it is essential to stress the need for internationalism among

all workers. Capitalism relies on divide-and-rule tactics. It therefore preaches rabid nationalism and patriotism. The Labour Party and the TUC go along with this and continue to use similar slogans whenever the opportunity arises.

A genuine workers movement must completely reject this. Our movement is based on the principle of solidarity. Workers are exploited everywhere - that is our common link. We have far more in common with French railway workers, Polish miners or South African street cleaners than with any boss or politician, British or otherwise.

So where has the IWA been these past 74 years? Until the Second World War, it had over 5 million people world-wide affiliated to revolutionary unions. A combination of war, fascism, state capitalism and communism all but destroyed it. Following the re-emergence of the Spanish CNT in the late 70's, the IWA had a new lease of life. Today there are sections in over a dozen countries, ranging from propaganda groups to functioning unions. The Solidarity Federation in Britain is currently in the process of transition between these two stages.



Aims of the Solidarity Federation

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of people who seek to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit world-wide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege.

In their place, we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisations based on similar principles - revolutionary unions. These are not Trade Unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues - both in the workplace and outside-which arise from our oppression.

We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Unless we organise in this way, politicians - some claiming to be revolutionary - will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of **Industrial Networks** and **Locals** which are the nuclei of future revolutionary unions and centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on **Direct Action** - action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through direct participation of the membership.

We welcome all who agree with our aims and principles and want to work to achieve social revolution. We recognise that the class struggle is world-wide, and are affiliated to the **International Workers' Association (IWA)**, with whom we share the same **Principles of Revolutionary Unionism**.



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