Direct Action

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private agendas: public post

noam chomsky: case studies in hypocrisy

cash slavery
no to casual sweaters

plus: international news, letters and reviews

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Direct Action

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Sticks, stones, bones, names;

WHEN WILL WE ALL BE SLAVES?

Surely some mistake? *Casual slavery UK* is nothing more than a wild stab at an attention grabbing headline. It misses the point – that the UK economy is sound, and flexible working is central to it staying that way. Plus, such flippant use cheapens the word slavery – real slavery is something which happens in the poor countries of the world, and involves chains.

Real slaves are powerless and often threatened, bullied and subject to physical and/or psychological abuse. Their conditions are invariably more dangerous than most. Their bosses have no regard for their safety or suffering (provided it doesn't damage profits), and may even enjoy administering misery to those below them. In short, slavery is work done in harsh conditions for low pay. Sound familiar?

Many workers in Britain are wage slaves, because we have no alternative but to take any work given to us. However, the point of all this is not semantics, but dynamics. As we speak, the Labour government's policies of privatisation and casualisation are directly forcing more and more people into harsher and harsher forms of more temporary work (*Rights and Resistance, p.4)*. This is not a result of the odd mistaken policy or two, it is a considered and methodical, multi-pronged attack, designed to deliver victory for the business bums.

Where workers are still organised in large trade unions, the chosen policy is to use the union leadership and the privatisation agenda to undermine working conditions. Following Thatcher's teachings, Tony wants to destroy the last vestiges of morale and solidarity amongst workers, and replace it with a no-choice, casualised, dissipated pool of people with any hope for a better lot knocked out of them. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Post Office *(Private Agendas: Public Post, p.6)*.

In the local authority sector, where government is more obviously involved, the strategy is to use the magic veil of competitive 'efficiency' and 'best value' to allow private firms in with their smoke and mirrors, claiming they can do it better and cheaper *(Casual Housing, p.8)*. Later, faced with trashed public services they deny, deny and deny again. (Yes, MPs have been put away for this kind of behaviour – but they weren't in charge at the time.) Apparently, Hitler said if you lie, lie and lie again, people will start to believe you, and it worked for him for a time so why shouldn't it work for New Labour? Time's up.

In education, the strategy is to isolate professional power and nuke the rest. In Higher Education, wholesale Americanisation is being forced in – lowly researchers and postgrads are being given casual, temporary contracts to do the work of ex-full-time teachers who have retired or left in disgust at dropping standards and cuts *(Life-long Short-termism, p.22)*.

In the 'new' economy, they simply let employers get away with terrorising workers into feeling isolated, hopeless and humiliated. Call centres are a good example *(Slavery Calling, p.20)*.

Welcome to the flexible, go-anywhere job market - where 'free choice' means you can choose from all the shit jobs no-one can stand or survive on.

Of course, the logical conclusion of casualising and temporising low paid work, and forcing thousands of people to take it (*New Labour: On the Cheap, p.18)* is that slightly more decent jobs sink into the melting pot of casualisation, and so upwards, until every last 'secure' job with reasonable conditions is taken a step closer to casual slavery. The result is more poverty and more debt *(First World Debt, p.24)*.

Welcome to the flexible, go-anywhere job market - where 'free choice' means you can choose from all the shit jobs no-one can stand or survive on. New Labour's trick is to try and make it look like the pain is delivered by boss lackeys in private firms, not boss lackeys in parliament.

So this is were we are; now let's try and solve the problem in two easy paragraphs. The root of all slavery is supremacy. Present day relationships are shot through with supremacist values. People are treated as things and graded in importance to the powers-that-be, rather than as persons with their own rights and needs.

Supremacism is presented as something 'natural' by New Labour and other pro-capitalists. If you do not seek to 'climb the ladder' (which always involves treading in other people's faces), you are not 'normal'. Not climbing means you 'choose' to 'fail'. In reality, work supremacism is no different from racist supremacism, sexist supremacism, or any other 'excuse' for relationships based on domination, oppression and coercion. Since humanity is based on us coming together in groups for mutual benefit, it follows that supremacy values are anti-humanity.

We must all act to replace the supremacist values for the few, with the sane values of solidarity and mutual aid for all. Only then can we be humans fit for humanity. Slavery is a name, but the supremacists' sticks and stones are very real. The only option is massive resistance. DA

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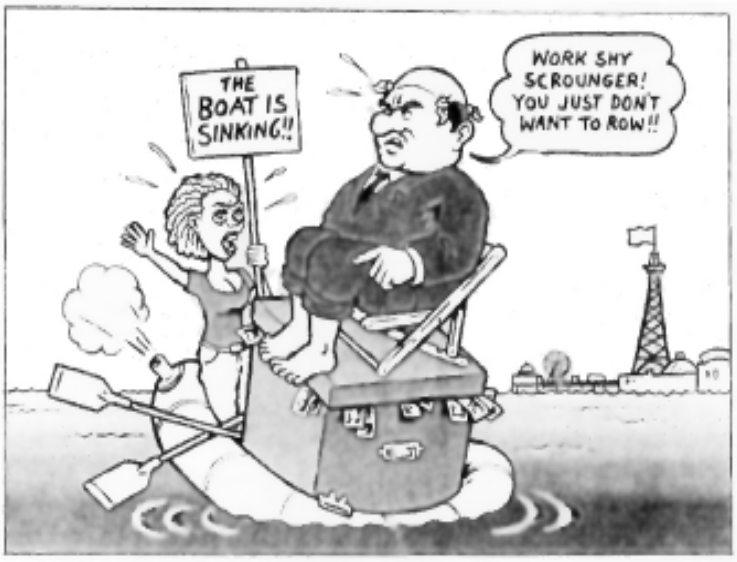

Welcome to our 5th anniversary issue. As ever, DA is done on a shoestring. P lease help us make trouble for another five years by taking out a subscription (form on page 34).

Don't want the sack? don't get sick

Avoiding job agencies is becoming increasingly difficult. In Britain, this £14 billion per year business 'employs' around 1.8 million temps. Job agencies have thrived on the demolition of laws fought for over 100 years.

Sectors affected range from telesales, social services, clerical work, and press-button jobs, to teachers, telecoms and IT technicians. Deregulation of the labour market has led to worsening conditions and insecurity for us and more profits for companies.

Most temporary contracts stipulate that industrial action will result in instant dismissal. They also allow companies to avoid providing sick, overtime and holiday pay. Bosses avoid responsibility for health and safety, while the Health and Safety Executive found that 80% of the agencies don't even know that it is their responsibility.

In the jungle of exploiting job agencies, Manpower is the king. The company has 2,700,000 temporary workers worldwide, clocking 850 million working hours for Manpower's $12.4 billion turnover and $2 billion profit. They have 'employed' some 100,000 people in Britain and have now teamed up with the Employment Service and Ernst Young to run 15 Employment Zones, where they offer long-term unemployed people haircuts and crap advice on how to find a job. Is this the precursor of privatising the whole employment service?

Recently, 307 managers told Manpower, their flesh provider, that under 50% of jobs are to be permanent and work patterns will have to become more flexible; "Anyone who cannot cope with the pace of technological change will have no place." These people are serious; it is time now for us to get serious about fighting back.

Adapted from Bristle, the excellent Bristol-based magazine – Bristle, Box 25, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB. www.bristle.co.uk. Bristol Against Casualisation Campaign is currently undertaking research into casual and insecure employment in the Bristol area. If you have first hand experience working for an agency and would like to assist the campaign, write an account of your experience and send it to: BACC, Box 43, same address as Bristle.

Rights & Resistance

Workers across Britain are being robbed of their basic rights because of casualisation and the spread of temporary contracts. Efforts to enforce these rights through the courts are likely to prove fruitless. Why? Because the Labour Party has a 'pro-business' approach to employment legislation, and because the legal system is biased against workers.

'Casualisation' is a general term for a group of scams pulled by the bosses on their employee. There are three typical sorts of such scam contracts; zero hours, phoney self-employment, and time-limited (temporary).

The 'zero hours' contract is 'classic' casualisation. A worker with a zero hours contract does not know from one week to the next what hours they will be working - the boss simply calls them when they are needed. You have no guaranteed pay, of course. Laws on unfair dismissal can be easily circumvented by the employer. If no work is guaranteed, there is no need to go through a formal dismissal procedure; the employer can simply tell the worker there is no more work available for them and this cannot be legally challenged. These contracts are not a new concept - such an arrangement was the norm in the docks in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and they have now returned, to some extent. Other employers make some use of zero hour contracts. They have been used in more than one of the big supermarket chains, for example. In the run up to the 1997 election, Labour promised to outlaw them in their manifesto 'Building Prosperity'. However, this pledge mysteriously disappeared from the manifesto's final draft.

Another variety of casualisation is the phoney self-employment contract. These are commonly used by employment agencies and state that the agency is a service for self-employed people who wish to find work and therefore not an employer. The phoney contracts are different from the zero hours contract in that the worker on the phoney contract is not regarded as an employee at all, and therefore has barely any rights. For instance, you have no right to claim unfair dismissal and aren't covered by much health and safety law. The law, as it stands, gives employers extensive rights to classify their workers as self-employed. Recently, the House of Lords found that guides employed by Nuclear Power could be classified in this way because their contracts referred to them working on a 'casual, as required basis'. This ruling seems to greatly reduce the rights of all those working for agencies, and is an open invitation for employers to turn zero hours contracts into self-employment contracts. It illustrates an important point about the legal system; employment law is grossly biased in favour of the bosses, since parliament exists to create the legal framework for capitalism. However, things invariably get even worse when the law is tested in court. Courts have consistently acted to erode the rights of the worker and enlarge the power of the boss.

Finally, there are the kinds of temporary contract that offer guaranteed work for a limited period of time. These are often used to try to deny rights to workers who have worked for the same employer for several years, and to prevent them suing for unfair dismissal (a worker must have worked continuously for the same employer for a year to earn this right). My current employer (a Labour-run local authority) has a nice little racket going, whereby temporary contracts are ended after 51 weeks and restarted a week or two later. This breaks the continuity necessary to earn the right to sue for unfair dismissal.

Particular confusion exists over rights to paid holidays introduced by the EU Working Time Directive in 1998. Many employment agencies used the introduction of the law as an excuse to increase their fees to employers. The agencies told their clients that employment agencies were now responsible for holiday pay and this was why their charges had to go up. However, when the British government adopted the Directive, it watered it down with a rule that workers only get the right to paid holidays after 3 months employment. Thus, supply teachers working for agencies, according to one employment lawyer at the Labour Research Department, are deemed to start a new contract every day they go to work, and so will never meet the criteria.

However, the 13 week law was over-ruled in June this year when Bectu (the entertainment industry union) won a case in the European Court, meaning 500,000 people who work on a casual basis, even if it is just for a single day, will now be entitled to holiday pay. The twist, of course, is that

Casual or temporary? You have few legal rights. Anyway, direct action is likely to be a much more successful approach, despite the insecurity of your job.

having rights and exercising them are different things. One worker placed by an agency at my old workplace (a fairly high-profile alleged charity) was told that exercising her right to holiday pay would mean she would get no more work from them - a salutary lesson in bullying for the agency workers employed alongside her.

None of the abuses casualised workers face can be ended by hoping for new legislation or pursuing the pathetic industrial tribunal system. Even if a temporary worker could sue for unfair dismissal, what would they gain? Only 1% of workers who win unfair dismissal cases get their job back. The rest get financial awards, the average being £2-3,000. The government has recently decided to deter people taking tribunal cases by threatening them with having up to £10,000 costs awarded against them. The laws and law courts are there to sustain the capitalist order and the smooth running of the market system. Efforts by workers to find justice in courts and tribunals will always lead to disappointment.

People generally think that casualised workers cannot strike because of the vulnerable position they are in. My own experience does not bear this out. Recently my fellow workers and me (about 40% of them on temporary contracts) staged an unofficial walk-out over council failures to provide a healthy work environment. Efforts were made to victimise individuals, but so far these have failed. The arithmetic is simple. Employers cannot usually afford to sack everyone (there are exceptions to this, so you have to use your judgement). They can and will try to victimise a minority to try and frighten the majority into not repeating the strike action. Temporary workers are the easiest to pick on, so these will be victimised or pressured into acting as scabs in future. But if everyone maintains their solidarity and threatens action over such victimisation, then the arithmetic holds. As long as workers refuse to except divisions between temporary and permanent staff, then all the legal loopholes in the world won't enable the employers to take away the workers' rights and dignity. The message is clear; don't hope to take on your boss alone in a capitalist tribunal - do it together in the workplace.

The International Workers' Association is organising global actions against temporary agencies, see page 35.

Spanish Lessons

Since the late 1990s, the Spanish government has launched a wholesale attack on working conditions, following orders from the IMF and World Bank. The campaign started in earnest in 1995, with new labour reforms, which included legal status for temporary work agencies (Empresas de Trabajo Temporal, or ETTs) and rules allowing bosses to make cut-price redundancies. Thus, the Spanish government embarked on solving the "problem" of labour laws – the problem being that they weren't as harsh as they could be.

With ETTs, as with temporary work agencies everywhere, workers began to be employees of the "bridge company" and they lost many of their basic rights. The reformist Spanish unions (UGT and CCOO), tied as they are to the Spanish State, rolled over and accepted the situation. However, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT immediately began campaigning against ETTs and what they represent – "another turn of the screw", as they put it.

The initial aim was to agitate and create a current of opinion against the ETTs, by exposing the effects they would bring about in working conditions throughout the country. Local CNT groups began to organise well-attended demonstrations as a means of sending a message to temporary workers that they were not alone, and another to the government that there was mass dissent against ETTs. Predictably, the government, police and media simultaneously attacked the CNT, using their usual dirty tactics to try to criminalise legitimate protest. In Zaragoza, when Alta Gestión (an ETT) was occupied and in scuffles, a few glasses and computers got damaged (nothing compared to the damage the ETT was doing to jobs locally), the police began a nasty campaign against people within the local CNT. This vindictive behaviour galvanised solidarity and resolve both within the CNT and amongst people who supported making a stand.

For two years, the CNT organised fortnightly demonstrations against ETTs, especially Alta Gestión. Slowly but surely, the demonstrations swelled, as did the ranks of the CNT. Sadly, so did the number of people suffering. Actions against ETTs have continued, and the CNT is still pursuing this crucial campaign, and still winning the support of other workers. However, tactics have also diversified over the last few years. In creating a culture of resistance against these companies, CNT groups have staged various street theatre events in front of ETT offices, thus adding "new slaves" irony to their list of successful direct action tools. In several cities, workers bricked and concreted up entrances to ETT offices during the night, in an attempt to illustrate the futility of these organisations.

Over the years, demonstrations have been attacked, resulting in extensive damage, and the toll of the arrested has risen, although invariably they have been subsequently found not guilty or had charges dropped. Six years on, ETTs are still operating in Spain. Now, well over half of all new work contracts in Spain are temporary, and multinationals typically will only employ new workers through an ETT. Still, thanks to the campaigning of the CNT, along with other anarchist and working class organisations, there is general awareness about the new workers' enemy. The battle against temporary work will be a long one, but such awareness is the first, necessary step.

Private Agendas: Public Post

Well over half of all industrial disputes which have taken place in Britain in recent years have been the result of action taken by members of the Communication Workers' Union. As a postal worker, I view this statistic with some pride. I would also clarify it by saying our achievements have been made despite the union leadership.

It has been a long war of attrition. We spent two weeks on the picket line during the summer of 1988 to prevent casualisation. We are still fighting it today. Thatcher has been replaced by Blair; the faces of the union bosses have changed – but not much else, it would seem.

A certain disastrous document forms the current national agreement, 'The Way Forward Agreement'. It was the product of years of negotiations between employers and union bosses, ending in May 2000. Since then, under half of all Royal Mail delivery offices have introduced Phase 1 of the revision procedure, which is specifically designed to get deliveries underway by 7am. The CWU/Royal Mail joint high command hoped all offices would have these revisions in place by now; and Phase 2 is impatiently waiting to be implemented.

But, as we in Communication Workers' Network (CWN) predicted over a year ago, Phase 1 hasn't worked, and deliveries are hopelessly overloaded. The fact that over half of all delivery offices have not swallowed the CWU/Royal Mail propaganda is causing some annoyance and embarrassment down there at Wimbledon mission control.

Causing particular concern are those members of staff who insist that Saturday is a day best spent with the family, or following traditional Saturday pursuits such as football, or just putting the old feet up with a cup of tea and the paper. (Well, why not? Senior managers and plenty of CWU officials don't work on Saturdays.) It seems these irresponsible individuals are insisting on finishing at the stipulated time and clearing off home. This means not every item of mail is being delivered by those insisting they implement the Royal Mail delivery standard of not delivering past 09.30. The solution? Why, casual labour, of course. The mail must go out, and CWU/Royal Mail have agreed to casual staff delivering it.

So each Saturday, we see the arrival of young people with no adequate protective clothing against the weather given a short lesson in Health and Safety, and sent out to areas of towns which were previously just areas in the local A-Z road map.

Managers can be heard uttering the refrain, "We would sooner our staff delivered the mail and earned the extra overtime". Well, so would we, but since "The Way Forward" abolished double rate for overtime on Saturdays, you are going to have to whistle. CWU/Royal Mail pushed for acceptance of the deal; now they must live with the consequences. Already these consequences include mail being brought back because the casual staff are unwilling to walk around for several hours in pouring rain dressed only in a tracksuit, increased customer concern that their mail is not being delivered by the usual postman/woman and, predictably, mis-delivery complaints.

By cherry picking The Way Forward to try to take advantage of workers locally, the bosses have implemented the bits they want and made a killing. As a result, since May, when the revisions should have been implemented, people have been working to their old 41.5-hour-week contracts, but only getting paid for 40 hours – as under the new agreement. There are 3 mail centres in this farcical position – Sheffield, Birmingham, and Oxford - while, on the deliveries side, 70% of staff nationally are affected the same way. In Sheffield,

Blame culture's back!

Post Office bosses recently wrote to 140,000 staff basically threatening dismissal if the recent industrial unrest continues. The letter blames a handful of staff for fomenting discontent. Who could argue? In a few short months, this tiny group of politically motivated individuals have caused strikes right across the country. Unfortunately, the letter was sent to postmen and women, and not to those intent on causing the trouble, the management.

Since the election, boss and government tactics have changed. Before, it was "we" want to wave goodbye to the old style of worker against boss and boss against worker. Teamworking was in. Now, reality has re-emerged. Blame culture's back!

Tony Blair blames the demonstrators in Genoa for being brutally attacked by the police. Royal Mail bosses blame wildcat strikes for low profits, after provoking them (see main article). The plan is to take basic rights away from thousands of workers. The 'new' tactic is to punch us in the face until we retaliate, then blame us for poor performance caused by bosses' incompetence.

Profile: Communication Workers' Union

Who is CWU?
The CWU has around 300,000 members, including counter staff, former GiroBank staff, now employed by the Alliance & Leicester, Parcelforce Telecom and Royal Mail.

Stuff CWUers do
The vast majority of CWU actions are classed as 'unofficial' walkouts and strikes. They are also taken as much against the dealings of the union itself as against heavy-handed management. The union leadership have come to be seen as management stooges, especially since the so-called 'Way Forward' deal was pushed through last year at the second attempt.

Perks and claims to fame
No perks - the CWU is famous for never paying a penny in strike pay. CWU bosses are famous for condemning 'unofficial' industrial action no matter how justified, in order to escape the sequestration of its funds.

Remuneration packages
Average wage around £13K. More with overtime payments, but outside of larger towns, opportunity for overtime is rare and, given the reduction in overtime rates which 'The Way Backwards' brought about, earnings from overtime are further cut back.
However, CWU bosses do rather better - in the year ending December 2000, 10 got over £65K. The breakdown is as follows (this is basic - without expenses):-

D.G. Hodgson. General Secretary	£93,238
J.G. Keggie. Deputy General Secretary	£102,185
S. Bridge. Assistant Secretary	£87,151
W. Hayes. Assistant Secretary	£83,672
M.J. Hogan. Assistant Secretary	£95,817
A.P. Kearns. Assistant Secretary	£90,960
E.J. Lovett. Assistant Secretary	£92,712
A. McGuinness. Assistant Secretary	£90,089
A. Rupa. Assistant Secretary	£65,596
K. Shaw Assistant Secretary	£92,120

News update
Billy Hayes recently took over as 'top dog' General Secretary of the CWU. A one-time left-wing militant, he repeatedly dodged the question of whether he would accept the pay that goes with the 'job'. Champagne socialism? These class traitors have access to the whole cellar. Just a thought while your postie is out on a Saturday morning delivering half a rain forest of useless shite getting piss wet through...

management have repeatedly stalled and shown their general incompetence in full glory. As CW goes to press, strike action has been postponed at the eleventh hour by CWU leaders, pending re-opened negotiations.

However, at Post Office group level (or Consignia, as it now wants to be called – that's "left luggage" in Spanish) such problems with mere letter deliveries and sorting offices are of no real concern. Letters are only part of the picture, and they are likely to be the one bit that will not eventually be fully privatised. So, without competition, they can casualise and cheapen the service all they like. The real fun and bonuses is to be had in portraying Consignia as a global player. We wholeheartedly agree with their claims. They are right up there along with other global sweatshop employers like Nike, Disney and McDonalds. They are prepared to go to any length rather than spend a few bob on making life more tolerable for the workforce.

What the bigwigs said

Recently, light has been shed on the sorry state of mismanagement by the publication of the results of the inquiry into industrial relations. After the industrial unrest of the last couple of years erupted i[illegible]t-out earlier this year, this inquiry w[illegible] rank and file CWU members as a condition of returning to work. Five areas were chosen to become part of the investigation, Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool, Oxford and Watford, all seen to be "failing areas" in industrial relations.

The inquiry was headed by Tom Sawyer, former general secretary of the Labour Party and, in true Labour style, now Lord Sawyer. Its report, although critical of what it sees as the union's 'hard-line' approach, firmly blames management for the number of strikes which have taken place in recent years. In particular, it highlights the authoritarian attitude of management to low-paid employees.

The review body found bullying and macho behaviour by managers at all levels to be rife, with no concept of team work. Here, we agree. The idea that workers and managers in any industry can have something in common is laughable. One employee interviewed by the team said "class war" has broken out. The report called for 'trouble-shooting' teams to go into problem areas and resolve disputes. Sawyer is quoted as saying mail centres were "not nice places to work".

One poster which appeared throughout mail centres and delivery offices had a photograph of the unpleasant Ann Robinson telling workers, "You are the missing link!"

The report goes on, "We were more than once

cont'd on page 9...

Globalised profits, scandalised wages

Current Labour speak is that Royal Mail needs to be "in line with the rest of Europe" and "competing on a level playing field". The subtext is that Royal Mail's monopoly makes things easy, and belt-tightening is needed to become competitive.

However, "in line with the rest of Europe" does not apparently extend to wages and working conditions. In Europe, a 35-hour week is more the norm. In Royal Mail, 41.5 hours work and 40 hours pay is the standard. It has taken ten years to drop three hours off the working week, and it doesn't take a mathematician to work out that to be "in line with Europe" could take over ten years. By this time, at current rates, if we stand back and let these bastards carry on, there won't be much left to fight for.

Royal Mail like to play at being a private company. Sell-offs, acquisitions, and sub-contracts make them look good to the government. It also gives them an excuse to syphon off fat bonuses, like their counterparts on the railways.

In fact, bosses' pay is another thing not in line with Europe. Official figures now confirm that British bosses' pay themselves far more than anyone else in Europe, while British workers' wages are already the lowest in the western world.

To make contact with like-minded postal workers, contact: Communication Workers' Network (CWN), c/o PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW or email da@direct-action.org.uk and we'll forward your note.

Casual Housing

If you still have any doubts about where Labour's priorities lie, look no further than their policies and practices on local authority privatisation. We are far enough down the track to see the effects; in a nutshell, higher costs and crap services. The fact that it doesn't make logical sense for service provision doesn't matter to them; it makes sense to them because they are friends with business. They are as politically motivated as Thatcher ever was to the privatisation dogma – so to them, it is just 'right'.

Privatisation generally takes a familiar pattern. First, the message is sold to local leaders and the local press if possible. Then, consultants are asked to prove that privatisation is the way forward, which they duly do. Then, business mates are asked to tender for the contract and, hey presto, they can do it cheaper and more 'efficiently' than the in-house services (the council). Then, the contract is let to the mateyest of them all, and the contractor generally takes on some or most of the council workers to do the job. In the conversion process, every opportunity is taken to undermine workers' rights and get rid of 'excess' staff. Then, a whole new boss class of watchers and snoopers appears, ostensibly to ensure 'efficiency' and 'productivity' is improved. Staff are sacked, made redundant, or otherwise disposed of, to increase profits (or decrease losses if service, morale, etc. has already haemorrhaged to that stage). With fewer staff, workers suffer from increased stress and sickness, or just leave. The service begins to break down. By this time, the 'message' is that it is too late to turn back now - and anyway, it must just be an isolated local problem with this particular contract.

The local authority privatisation programme has spread across the country, including such solid 'old' labour councils as Sheffield. In terms of the types of local services which have been privatised, it varies, but often the first to go are the ones working-class people depend on the most – for example, local authority housing. Thus, the social burden of privatised, crumbling services falls disproportionately on working-class people.

When the London Borough of Newham privatised their housing department and CSL won the contract, it all looked pretty rosy to the budget holders and politicians. But the newly converted ex-council workers quickly realised there were problems, as staff left and weren't replaced, and the service deteriorated. It soon also became obvious to users of the service that things were going drastically wrong. Yet, when the message got out to the local press about the breakdown of the service under CSL, bosses decided something had to be done – and they promptly suspended 4 workers and subsequently sacked 3 of them – all UNISON shop stewards, what a coincidence (see DA17 'Support the CSL3!'). Even as CSL looked into the matter, their own investigating officer resigned in protest over management tactics in withholding information, etc.

Within months of CSL arriving to run Sheffield's housing services, staff were leaving and not being replaced. The familiar failings started to appear, like suffering service and building backlogs... people being wrongly billed, subjected to suicide-inducing stress and worry, faced with homelessness, etc. CSL's track record and experience equipped them to deal with understaffing and in June, they acted - by announcing 11 compulsory redundancies – including, you guessed it, the union shop stewards. They also 'persuaded' some 40 further staff to take 'voluntary' redundancy (with arms up their backs).

These types do not bat an eyelid when challenged on the morality or legality of their actions. When CSL sacked a woman who had an ongoing grievance against them, and another for being pregnant ('too much time off sick'), they knew they were breaking the law and, frankly, they didn't care. It was a business deal. The pathetic payout they would likely be forced to make by any tribunal was worth it to them.

One of CSL's criteria for redundancy selection in Sheffield was whether people had had more than 9 days off sick in the last year or not. Since nearly half the workforce had, they had plenty of scope to choose at will and weed out the people they didn't like. Lawyers confirmed that at least seven employees had cast iron cases for tribunal – the main charges being unfair dismissal and trade union victimisation. CSL settled out of court.

Over the summer, CSL started to transfer work up to their offices in Barrow, where labour is even cheaper than in Sheffield, to be handled by staff without local knowledge, with predictable effects on quality of service. By August, CSL were

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Note: This article was written by a member of the DA Collective involved in supporting sacked CSL workers. Any views or facts stated are the responsibility of the writer, and not of any current or ex CSL employees. CSL is a wholly-owned subsidary of Deloitte-Touche. For more information on them, contact DA or the CSL Support Campaign (address opposite).

actively attempting to recruit new staff – on £9K a year (compared to roughly £14-16K for regular trained staff). Welcome to Tony Blair's privatisation dream, and the reality of the casualisation nightmare.

The union (UNISON) national executive role in the whole privatisation fiasco is one of spoken rhetoric but privately nesting in the government's pocket. In the specific cases of CSL sackings in Newham and Sheffield, they have shown every sign of being resigned, and even complicit – particularly in the case of Newham. Inactions speak louder than words.

Perhaps the worst thing about politically-motivated schemes such as local authority privatisation is that it won't be stopped, even when the ludicrousy of it all is staring the politicians in the face. In August, Sheffield council went ahead and privatised the domestic waste collection services (that's the bins to you and me). What next? Have your bins gone private yet? If not, now is the time to resist.

The CSL3 need solidarity and support. Send money to help them with their tribunal costs in November. Messages (cheques to 'CSL3') to CSL3 Support Campaign, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE.

Housing Benefiting

Housing is a basic human right. New Labour spin would pay lip-service to such a statement, but what about the reality? Environment secretary Steven Byers has outlined plans to withhold tenants housing benefit from landlords who fail to maintain their property to a decent standard. He stated his determination to make housing an issue for New Labour in its drive against child poverty.

Figures he presented show 2.4 million children live in substandard properties, two-thirds of which are private sector. Mr Byers has promised to take 300,000 children out of these properties by 2004. He thinks it is immoral for the government to subsidise unfit housing by paying housing benefit to bad landlords, and withholding is viewed as an important lever in dealing with the problem. However, the majority of those targeted for moving will not come from the private sector – in other words, he is letting the main culprits, the private landlords, off the hook.

While his ideas are understandably unpopular with property landlords anyway, you may expect unanimous support from housing experts – not so. The concern is that tenants will be evicted and properties put up for sale. Also, it will make the housing benefit system even more complex than it is already, not to mention adding further strain to a system which is close to collapse in many areas.

Here again, is one of New Labour's ill-thought out ideas, which, instead of improving living conditions, will make people's situation worse. No doubt there will be no extra money to run the scheme, other than any savings made by withholding payments.

In short, the government reckons cheap-jack, half-arsed 'solutions' are good enough for those who have the misfortune to live in dehumanising housing.

cont'd from page 7...

presented with a picture of a front-line manager as someone who stands in the middle of a work area with his arms folded watching the employees, and whose permission has to be asked whenever an employee wants to go to the lavatory or get a drink of water".

Perhaps predictably, Sawyer stops short of calling for dismissal of offending managers. All postal workers will recognise the style of management in which the newly promoted line-manager will attempt to gain favour with his superiors by handing out first stage warnings for genuine absences to staff. Sadly, so will workers in practically every other workforce under the current wave of privatisation and casualisation pressure from government and bosses. The bullying of newer staff in particular by lower levels of management; the push to get ever higher levels of production; and the general unpleasant attitude created by jumped up managers is a depressingly familiar phenomenon. Despite countless employee surveys, team briefs and 'face to face' meetings, nothing has been done. It has taken a determined stand by CWU members, but not their leaders, to get things moving.

One thing the inquiry would have done well to give consideration to is the numbers of managers who can be called upon to scab every time there is a dispute. One hundred and fifty were drafted in during one dispute in Cardiff. This begs the question: What are they doing for the rest of the time when there is no strike to break? Do Royal Mail employ a pool of managers who do nothing but sit on their backsides until a dispute breaks out? Perhaps they do, as *'The Courier'* (the bosses mouthpiece) recently reported, each Royal Mail employee is currently making just £7 a week profit on average. With so many useless parasites about doing nothing but living off the labour of others, it's a small wonder.

Royal Mail said it needed time to consider the details of the report. Enough time to come up with the usual excuses, no doubt. Meanwhile, come half past nine on a Saturday, it's off home for me and I'm even less concerned about undelivered mail than the Sector Operations Manager would be (presuming he's awake yet).

on the edge

Day-in day-out robbery

Since the minimum wage was introduced over 2 years ago, thousands of employers have simply ignored it, and continued to pay workers much less than even the paltry minimum. However, some of those who have been caught out are being forced to repay the difference. Over the last year, repayments have reached £5 million nationally. Many workers who have been defrauded work at small firms, although not all; £80,000 had to be repaid at one brewery in the north west.

Although unaccustomed to collecting robbery statistics, we would like to know who the guilty are – send your inside info. to DA: www.direct-action.org.uk, 0161 232 7889.

Shark Practice

That global loan shark the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have slapped Ghana with a $39 million fine "for misrepresenting the state of the economy", something the IMF should know all about. The fine comes just a few days after giving the same government $46 million in new loans! As Soren Ambrose from the 50 Years Is Enough Network points out, "Is the most appropriate punishment for failure on this score to take away 85% of the money lent to a struggling economy a few days before? The fine must be paid now, but the people will be paying that $39m back for years. The IMF's priority is not development, nor people. It's obedience. To the neo-liberal model, and to the IMF itself." www.50years.org

Source:www.schnews.org.uk/

on the edge

Ambience Police

Back in May, a member of the Anarchist Federation had an anti-electoral display in his front window confiscated by the police. Aggrieved, he sprayed "Don't Vote" on his garden wall. This time they complained it ruined the ambience of the area. It would appear a Labour Councillor lives opposite and didn't like it, so called her private militia in.

On the Monday before the General Election, a crowd leafleted Oldham Job Centre. We drew 'jobseekers' attention to the fact that local Labour MP Phil Woolas has demanded that jobseekers be on the electoral roll before getting benefits. Here's New Labour's real attitude to the homeless.

The crowd then moved on to two nearby Labour Party offices. At one,we entered, took pics, and chatted. Apparently unfamiliar with paparazzi, anarcho or otherwise, they reacted by pushing people around until we left. Duly, the police, boxed us in, then 10 of us were arrested and held for 7 hours – no reasons were given. After entertaining our hosts with loud revolutionary songs, one person was charged with criminal damage, which was later changed to assault when no-one could find any damage. Once again, New Labour had called on their private militia.

Barcode health

Hospital porters in Paisley, Scotland went on wildcat strike in July over a new blood transfusion barcode system. Three staff were suspended for refusing to comply with management orders. They were escorted from the building, provoking a mass walk-out by over 60 other workers. The action brought many services to a standstill, although they maintained emergency cover. Willie Young, one of the suspended porters, said: "If we made a mistake with this new system, then people's lives are at risk".

Passing the toxic buck

Last year, it became apparent that an old chemical dump which the giant ICI plant in Runcorn had used between 1920 and 1970 had caused toxins to poison a local residential area, Weston. Local Labour MP, Derek Twigg, went on TV to draw a distinction between 'old' ICI and the 'new' environmentally friendly one. Weeks later, half a tonne of hydrogen chloride gas escaped from the plant and caused a gas which left a wake of people suffering the effects of inhalation.

Soon after, it was found that pollution had spread to the wildlife haven of Frodsham Marshes on the southern banks of the River Mersey. Public meetings were called and assurances given that ICI would clean up their act. The latest Government figures show the ICI plant has recently caused more cancer-causing pollution than anywhere else in England. Data from the Environment Agency reveal that 3,325 tonnes of carcinogens were released into the atmosphere in 1999.

Dozens of families have moved away from Weston after ICI purchased their houses. However, the principal polluting chemical, hexachlorobutadiene (HCBD) had long since seeped into buildings, and it has now become clear that an unspecified number of people (but thought to be at least seventy) have suffered kidney damage as a result. The local Labour-controlled Halton Borough Council remains strangely quiet on the subject of pollution within the borough.

Earlier this year, the entire ICI plant was bought by Ineos Chlor, a chemical manufacturer with interests on mainland Europe. Almost immediately, the new owner announced over 500 redundancies.

Any hopes the local population might have harboured about Ineos making improvements on the appalling safety record of ICI were dashed with the news that they were soon issued a warning by the Environment Agency. A wall designed to retain chemical spillages should have been completed in June. As an indicator of the amount of concern shown for safety, a spokesman for Ineos Chlor said: "It was concluded that there was no immediate need to carry out the work". They were and remain somewhat less clear about what action is to be taken to help those who have fallen victim to the pollution.

Meanwhile, in the midst of the foot and mouth crisis, it was announced the corpses of slaughtered animals were to be brought to Widnes to be burned at the Grannox incinerator. Assurances were given that sealed trucks would be used. Soon, local newspapers were carrying stories of lorries on the move with loose tarpaulins showing exposed bodies underneath and, within days, the first cases of foot and mouth in previously unaffected Cheshire were being reported.

Halton is among the most deprived areas of England and Wales. Along with high levels of unemployment, the hospital has no children's ward, maternity facilities, or even an accident and emergency unit, and the council has closed down local schools. A recent report on health in the area revealed some alarming statistics; an infant mortality rate higher than anywhere else in the country, the highest death rate for all forms of cancer, and a life expectancy four years shorter than the national average. Dr. Paula Gray, director of public health for North Cheshire said, "Once again this year, many questions have been posed about the effect of environmental pollution on human health".

We will be a long time waiting for answers to these questions from a local and national Government intent on lecturing us all about the benefits of private industry. The reality is that poor people don't really matter to New Labour. Small wonder that no firm action has been taken over the ICI plant, despite evidence that local pollution levels are sufficient to affect the development of children in the womb. So, those of us living in proximity to these high polluters will continue to have to put up with an environment which causes an annual death toll of rail disaster proportions, but without the tabloid coverage to highlight it. After all, government and the mainstream media don't want to spread scurrilous ideas, like putting people before profit.

The Age of Alienation

A new curfew scheme for people aged under 16 came into force in August. This is the second attempt by the government to introduce curfew schemes. The first attempt, launched in September 1998, was a failure, in that no single local authority has ever attempted to use the powers to keep children off the streets. The new scheme gives police and local authorities the power to apply for a curfew order, which is designed to cover known 'trouble spots', such as a housing estate, from 9pm to 6am for up to 90 days.

Beverley Hughes, the Home Office Minister, believes the new powers will be useful in allowing police to take a child in breach of an order home or to a 'safe' place. More sceptically, Chris Stanley, of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), commented; "the curfew powers are popular with no-one and are virtually impossible to enforce… They will apply to any child living in the area, not just those causing trouble. Enforcement could prove to be a nightmare, with tension and conflict between young people and the police increasing, not diminishing, as a result".

The National Children's Bureau is also unimpressed by the government's arguments, and views the scheme as potentially counter-productive, causing young people to become increasingly alienated from the authorities and the police. Consequently, there may well be more trouble on the streets than before.

The new curfew scheme represents a further bite at the cherry by New Labour. It will be unworkable, not only practically, but legally, because as yet there are no criminal sanctions for children who refuse to obey an order. There is no reason why young people who are returned home through the front door will not be able to leave immediately by the back door once the police have left.

The scheme is a classic example of new Labour in a nutshell; authoritarian in tone, with much soft spin and hype, but no cash or resources. As you may expect, there is no serious plan to deal with the underlying causes of vandalism and crime. Instead, it is simply another heavy-handed and clumsy attempt to suppress young people – to stop teenagers being teenagers.

All young people have the right to go out, whether on a working-class estate or in the heart of suburbia. The subtext indicates that the government would like their agents to change this.

Typically, the government didn't choose a middle-class area for its 'experiment' to test its new scheme. Instead, they chose a working-class area in Hamilton. In a Home Office study on the pilot scheme, 87% of parents whose children had been returned home were recorded as approving of the action. Imagine how they came up with this figure…

The idea of the curfew scheme provides no attempt at a solution to the problems which cause alienation and marginalisation amongst young people. We as anarcho-syndicalists must respond to what is instead a blatant piece of class discrimination. Spreading awareness and opposition to the scheme is essential, as is exposing its authoritarian roots and crass hypocrisy. Needless to say, real solutions will only come from community projects based on direct democratic intiatives, discussed and developed at street and neighbourhood level. But that would never do, it would leave no role for the politicians and bosses.

Berlusconi = Mussolini

The Italian government tacitly supported the police and army brutality in Genoa (see page 16). It then ran scared, and started looking for other countries to take on hosting its next two big meetings.

So where is this government coming from? It is a coalition of the dodgy millionnaire Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the Northern League, which is anti-immigrant, and the Allianza Nazionale, which changed its name from the Movimento Sociale Italiana (MSI) in the early 1990s. The MSI stood as the poltiical disciples of Mussolini, yes, the fascist dictator who ruled from 1922 to the Second World War. The current leader, Gianfranco Fini, is now deputy Prime Minister.

Many protesters arrested at Genoa were tortured and forced to sing fascist songs. Meanwhile, The Northern league's leader has introduced a new Bill calling for immigrants to be jailed for up to 4 years for the crime of entering Italy.

on the edge

Don't Trust Guiness

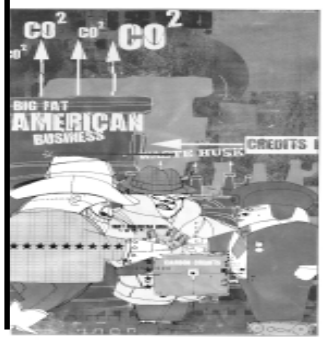
When it set out, the Guiness Trust promised to sell the Homes for Change Housing Co-op in Manchester to its members. Now, they are having second thoughts. Escalating action is planned to persuade them to live up to their name. For info/action details; www.homes4change.org

STOPE$$O

In late July, protesters shut down Esso's fuel distribution centre at Purfleet, Essex. Esso is number one global warming villain and is behind George Bush's refusal to sign the Kyoto climate treaty. Two large customised shipping containers were bolted to the road. Two people were chained inside each. Others occupied parts of the site. Esso (ExxonMobil in the US) is the world's biggest corporation, making record profits of over $17 billion last year, when the company spent $7.9 billion on oil exploration and absolutely nothing on renewable energy or green fuels. Still, they failed to kill off the Kyoto treaty, a watered down version of which is now to become legally binding by September, 2002. The US, which is responsible for 25% of global warming gas emissions, is still refusing to participate.

As you boycott E$$O and affix your Greenpeace bumper sticker, it is worth noting that all the major oil companies have appalling human rights records and all supported Bush's election campaign. BP is actively lobbying to drill in the pristine Arctic.

www.greenpeace.org.uk
www.stopesso.com



on the edge

Hiding the Truth

Something the police are practised at – and no more so than the Met, who have been trying to gag the film industry. "Injustice", a film made by Migrant Media, took seven years to make, and exposes the reality of police behaviour, far removed from the trashy TV cop shows. It centres on 3 of the 1,000 people who have died in police custody over the last three decades; Shiji Lapite, Brian Douglas and Ibrahim Sey. As a result, Amnesty International and Liberty have raised the matter with the United Nations. Meanwhile, Police lawyers Russell, Jones and Walker sent legal threats out to cinemas planning to show it.

On 26th July, people gathered at the Cornerhouse in Manchester, where the film was originally to have been shown and, after some debate, everyone walked around the corner to the squatted OK occasional café, where the screening went ahead. By using the tactic of moving the venue at the last minute, the film makers have shown several successful screenings, including in London, Liverpool and Manchester.

The Police Federation have indicated their guilt in typical style – by trying to hide the truth. They are only viewed favourably by those in the professional classes who do not see how they operate in working-class and ethnic areas –-which is basically as an army of occupation. While they continue to try to suppress the truth, it is necessary to continue the guerrilla cinema campaign. Info: www.injusticefilm.co.uk

UK Government: Guilty of Racism

A dozen British immigration officers worked at Prague's international airport over the summer. Their main task; to make racist judgements, picking out darker coloured people, who may be of Roma descent. By the end of July, some 100 people had already been stopped from boarding their flights.

Emil Scuka, from the Roma community in Prague, put it plainly: "The whole thing is aimed against Roma, so they can't go to Britain and ask for asylum". Meanwhile, systematic persecution of Roma people in the Czech republic continues, with regular and organised attacks by neo-fascist skinheads, often with tacit police involvement. Roma children are segregated in their schools, and over 20 Roma people have now been murdered since the upsurge of racism in recent years.

A British diplomat in Prague said Britain did not consider Roma to be "systematically persecuted" in the Czech Republic, and that, therefore, they could not demand asylum in Britain. However, a report by the human rights committee of the United Nations stated that it was "deeply concerned about discrimination against the Roma".

These racist anti-Roma activities in the Czech republic by British officials are morally abhorrent, yet perfectly legal. The immigration service have been exempted from the provisions of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, giving them licence to discriminate legally. However, the message the UK Government sends out to racists and their sympathisers by this abhorrent behaviour is equally clear; it is OK to be racist against people.

Racism, in all its forms, is disgusting. Institutional racism is still racism, and the British Government is as guilty as the BNP and the Daily Telegraph, in tacitly encouraging the spread of small-minded racist hatred. DA

Taking on Nazi no-brains

Lancs and Manchester Solidarity Federation groups and Burnley anti-fascists have been taking on the fascists, especially in Burnley and Oldham. More details and analysis will follow in the next issue of DA. Meanwhile, to get involved contact Lancs Solidarity Federation (details on page 34). Also, "Clarets United Against Racism and Fascism" is a group of Burnley supporters committed to fighting racism, xenophobia, nationalism etc. on the football scene. They are at CUARAF, c/o PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF. claretsunited.cjb.net. DA

Imprisoned Asylum Seekers start Hunger Strike

On Thursday 26 July 2001 at 11:30am, asylum seekers and immigration detainees in HMP Liverpool refused to take their midday meal, and notified outside supporters that they had begun a hunger strike against their intolerable imprisonment. Around 100 detainees are held in Liverpool and the strike was solid.

Detainees in HMP Liverpool have to live, eat and sleep in a toilet (popularly known as a prison cell). This is degrading and inhumane. Despite their supposed status as "remand prisoners", detainees are typically locked up 23 hours a day, denied education and forced to wear prison uniform.

Detainees elsewhere are expected to join the hunger strike in sympathy with Liverpool and in protest at their own detention. None of the detainees held in normal prisons, detention prisons or detention centres are held through decisions by a court of law. They are detained indefinitely at the whim of immigration officers. As at 31 May 2001, 1,787 persons were recorded as being in detention in the UK solely under Immigration Act powers.

Despite an earlier Home Office claim that prisons would not be used to hold detainees beyond October, it is now believed that prisons will continue to be used until at least the end of this year.

The model letter below can be faxed or mailed to the Home Secretary, David Blunkett: Fax: 020-7273-3965 (from outside the UK +-44-20-7273-3965) Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP, Home Secretary, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT

Dear Home Secretary,

I am more than sure that you know a number of immigration detainees have gone on hunger strike against the intolerable conditions of their imprisonment. Their demand is simple. I quote from their own statement. All they are asking for is "restoration of our human rights under the European Convention of Human Rights and the 1951 United Nations Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to Status of Refugees". This can be complied with by you simply instructing the Immigration and Nationality Department to Release the Detainees immediately.

I would hope that you choose to do so. Yours sincerely,

==========

Copies of letters: 0161-740-7113
Faxes of solidarity: 0161-740-7113
Or e-mail c/o: NCADC - tony.openshaw@pop3.poptel.org.uk
Merseyside Against Detention - gregd@gn.apc.org
They can also send further info.
Or write to:
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), 110 Hamstead Road, Birmingham B20 2QS. Phone: 0121-554-6947 Fax: 0870-055-4570. Web site: www.ncadc.org.uk/ DA

Religious Education

The riots that took place in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in the summer were obviously fuelled by fascists who use the frustration felt by people in deprived areas to direct anger, not at the real cause of their poverty, the capitalist state, but at people from different cultural and racial backgrounds.

In July, a report commissioned by Bradford City Council stated, "There are signs that communities are fragmenting along racial, cultural and faith lines. Segregation in schools is one indicator of this trend. Rather than seeing the emergence of a confident, multicultural district where people are respectful, people's attitudes appear to be hardening and intolerance is growing."

The BNP have targeted Muslims as they switch to attacking cultural differences instead of simply skin colour. This is a cynical attempt to spread divisions within the ethnic minorities. Their work has not only been helped immeasurably by the attitudes of the Tories and New Labour towards asylum seekers, but also by the government encouraging religious groups to have a greater input into the educational provision of the young.

Religious groups, particularly the Church of England, have always had an influence disproportionate to their actual numerical size. Now it seems they are to have even more. Before the election, Tony Blair reiterated his belief that Christianity and socialism are one in the same, and talked of a faith in God underpinning society's ethical and moral code. It was also announced that there would be increased funding for religious-based schools.

An increase in religious schools can only lead to further suspicion and misunderstanding. It is often argued by government ministers that standards of education are higher in faith-based schools. This is not because of any inherent superiority but because they are highly selective - not just in obvious but in covert ways. Church-based schools can pick and choose, whilst middle-class parents have the resources to move house and/or attend church for a while to get the vicar/priest's approval to get their children in. Small class sizes play a crucial part. The government does not put real resources into making all schools as good as possible, but supports faith-based schools as a cheap alternative to private education for middle-class parents who cannot or will not afford it.

Besides the obvious class bias, adherence to religious beliefs is divided among many differing and often competing minorities in our society. Giving money to run schools in which new generations are indoctrinated in these varying and exclusive ancient belief systems is fundamentally wrong. By using tax money to subsidise religion-based schools, the government forces those of us who are opposed to superstitious beliefs and practices to contribute against our wills to their perpetuation. Religion is a matter of private conscience and choice, and as such is not a proper target for public support. If some people wish to have their children taught in a belief in God, astrology, space aliens, elves, or whatever, they should pay for it themselves.

Segregated religious schools are harmful both to individuals and society. They perpetuate divisions and entrench intolerant attitudes. By giving money to a variety of religious organisations - Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu - historically and theologically at odds (which mutually blaspheme one another's faiths), the government is helping to entrench divisions. Children of all backgrounds ought to be educated together for greater mutual understanding, not educated apart in religious ghettos, thereby perpetuating the exclusivity and mistrust which must arise if people believe their religion is the only true one and everyone else is wrong - perhaps even that they are dangerous fanatics. Children should not be taught as "facts" the myths and legends of ancient religious traditions: to do this to anyone unable to evaluate their credibility is a form of brainwashing or even indeed abuse.

The variety of religious traditions could be taught in schools - but as historical phenomena. This would not please the religions, which are keen to indoctrinate young people, since that is one of their chief means of survival. Few who first meet religion in adulthood are able to take it seriously; priests know that, to keep the old faiths alive, they have to get their hands on children.

The reality is that New Labour, having ditched any sort of pretence to socialism, no matter how vague, is trying to appropriate Christian values to hide the fact that they have no coherent ideology underpinning their policies. They are attempting to win support from those with religious beliefs but, in doing so, are pandering to all the bigotry and superstition of the religious business package.

on the edge

Strike a light

The strike by Merseyside Fire Brigade workers got popular support despite efforts by the Fire Authority and local media to undermine it.

In mid July, firefighters from all parts of Britain and as far away as Australia converged on Liverpool for a march through the city centre in a massive show of solidarity. Many marchers wore T-shirts stating their views on Chief Fire Officer Malcolm Saunders, the man responsible for the walk out.

Mr. Saunders wishes to place staff with no experience of fire fighting into management posts, stating equal opportunities policies as the reason for bypassing normal procedures. He doesn't seem concerned about the resultant risk to public safety, nor the fact that he is ignoring the decision of the National Disputes Panel. Why Merseyside Fire Service seem unable to recruit women and people from ethnic minorities raises many questions about how the brigade operates it's recruitment procedure.

Out came the army and their ancient Green Goddess fire engines to cover emergencies. Over the first weekend of the strike, there were 400 call-outs. Whether this included the member of the public who was hit by a reversing Green Goddess is not known.

On the Sunday, a Southport scrapyard fire broke out just after 5.30 p.m. Seventy families were evacuated by a large number of police. It took the army nearly three quarters of an hour to get their Green Goddess to the site - then another hour to get water to the fire. Professional firefighters were less than impressed, and nearby Lancashire Fire Brigade refused to cross the border, joining Cheshire colleagues who also decided not to do so in solidarity with the strikers.

Colombia

Four women, all trade unionists in the public sector, and a man were assassinated in late July. Another man, a teacher, has gone missing. Repression against trade unionists in Colombia is even worse than last year: 67 people had been assassinated by July last year; this year the rate is up by over 15%. This murderous policy has created a profound humanitarian crisis, against a backdrop of mass forced displacements, refugees and a widespread breakdown in services. The US-sponsored Plan Colombia (really; 'trash Colombia and strip out the best for our businesses') can only make things worse. Send protest e-mails, faxes and letters demanding; a) protection for trade unionists under threat; b) the removal of state impunity from those carrying out the assassinations; and c) real steps to dismantle the far-right paramilitary groups:
Doctor Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic, Palacio de Narino, Santafé de Bogota, Colombia. E-mail: rdh@presidencia.gov.co
Fax: 00571 336 2109 / 337 1351
Copies to: CUT Trade Union Federation, Departmento Derechos Humanos, Calle 35 Nº 7-25 Piso 9, Bogotá, Colombia.
Tel/Fax: 00571 288 8577/323 7550
E-mail: cutcol@col3.telecom.com.co

Ecuador

Ecuador's indigenous and grassroots organisations began a mass march on July 24th to protest the government's economic and social policies. The mobilisation, called by the broad Co-ordinating Committee of Social Movements (CMS), began in Zamora Chinchipe, in the southern Amazon region, and ended in Quito on 10th August, Ecuador's Independence Day.

The protests focused on opposing a bank bailout and the planned privatisation of the electric company and other public institutions. Also participating in the mobilisation were striking doctors and health workers, teachers, retired workers demanding higher pension payments, etc.

This international news could not have been brought to you without the following excellent WebSources:
A-Infos News Service; http://www.ainfos.ca/
DAMN (Direct Action Media Network); http://damn.tao.ca/
IWA (International Workers' Association); secretariado@iwa-ait.com; http://www.iwa-ait.com
SchNEWS; http://www.schnews.org.uk
Labournet; http://www.labournet.org/
ASeed; http://antenna.nl/aseed/
Earth First – Action Update; http://host.envirolink.org/ef/
Corporate Watch; http://www.corpwatch.org
Thr@ll; thrallnet@yahoo.com
Corporate Watch UK; http://www.corporatewatch.org
Anarchyaction; http://www.anarchyaction.co.uk
WSA Info Service; wsany@hotmail.com
For updates & future events, visit antenna.nl/aseed/, www.anarchyaction.co.uk, www.schnews.com/guide.htm

Malaysia

Since late 1999, Save Our Sungai Selangor (SOS-Selangor) has been campaigning against the Selangor Dam. Apart from environmental and human habitation destruction, local people are concerned about safety, given poor workmanship and the fact that dam failures worldwide have already killed 243,000 people. The regulated water after extraction could leave only a flow of 300 million litres per day in the river - much lower than even during the dry season. Resultant salt water intrusion into surrounding land along the river will destroy land, agriculture and the unique natural habitats around Kuala Selangor. Info:
www.savesungaiselangor.org
Tel: 03-778 43525

Mexico

Thousands of farmers marched through the Mexican capital, posing the most direct challenge yet to President Vicente Fox's 8-month-old administration. The march, on Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata's birthday, was a show of force for the "old Mexico", opposed to the new, entrepreneurial nation that businessman Fox has promised.

In the new era of free trade mayhem, Fox has abandoned any pretence at making Mexico self-sufficient in food production, and instead advocates ever-closer business relations with the biggest tyrant of them all – Bush's US.

The protesters' rhetoric harked back to Zapata's 1910-1917 Revolution, as young and old marched in a sea of straw hats and baseball caps, cowboy boots and tennis shoes. Small children armed with toy noisemakers joined men and women waving banners reading "United States out" and "Fox means misery." Streams of farmers chanted "Zapata Lives! The struggle continues!", as they fanned out across the world's second-largest city to blockade government offices and shut down a half-dozen major boulevards.

South Africa

Privatisation and resultant job losses have brought a strike wave which has been gathering momentum all year and is expected to peak this autumn. Strikes cost 85,000 days work in the first quarter of the year, but the figure rose to 235,000 for the second quarter. The third quarter is traditionally a peak period for strikes, as it follows wage negotiations in June. Given the number of negotiations and disputes taking place across several industries as DA goes to press, things are still definitely on the up side of the wave.

The strikes have already all but paralysed the health and educational sectors and it would appear that, following the years of post-military transition, workers are discovering their true role as agents of change. The minimum wage of N5,500.00 (less than US$50 per month), which the government claims is spectacular, is a pittance alongside the wholesale privatisation and its attendant capitalist millionaires.

Even The Guardian, the leading national newspaper was not immune, as workers took industrial action which forced the paper off the streets for two weeks. The Newspaper ran an editorial accusing the central labour Union NLC [Nigerian Labour Congress] of "anarcho-syndicalist tactics." You 'aint seen nothin' yet.

Zimbabwe

A mass two-day stay-away in July became a general strike co-ordinated by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. The action was against austerity measures - primarily, 70 percent fuel price increase - and occurred against the backdrop of Mugabe's increasingly violent regime. In a show of international solidarity, the 1.8 million-strong Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) declared its support for the industrial action, and accused Mugabe of "terrorising the economy and ordinary citizens".

During the action, reports emerged of armed soldiers and police officers beating up people in Budiriro and Dzivaresekwa. The police dragged about 200 people from their houses and arrested them after a bread delivery van caught fire in Budiriro. Most shops, factories, offices and banks were closed, as riot police patrolled high-density suburbs.

"Ningun Ser Humano es Ilegal" Mark Vallen 1988. www.art-for-a-change.com

Workers & Immigration

Just a month before Genoa, there was another international gathering in northern Italy – in Milano. But this was of a very different kind. Anarcho-syndicalists from across the globe gathered to discuss ideas and actions to defend immigrants everywhere. Contact DA for a copy of "FREEDOM VOICES", a compilation of statements prepared for the International IWA Conference on "Workers and Immigration" in Milan, Italy, on June 22- 24th, 2001.

Dominican Republic

"We have left our native land to look for a living, worked hard in the cane fields, and the most we earn per day is 35 or 40 pesos," exclaimed one worker. "They pay us bread crumbs, give us whatever they like for our work," said another. "When we become ill, they don't even bother taking us to a clinic; look, my foot has been rotting for more than one week after I accidentally hit it with a machete while cutting cane…," said a third.

The assembled cane cutters decided on the list of demands that they wanted to present to the Barahona Refinery owners, including changes in the way the amount of cane cut is measured. They also demanded a pay rise, better lodging conditions, including that the company immediately constructs latrines in the proximity of each large dormitory, and effective medical services - the company already retains 2.5% of their wage as social insurance cover. To make management listen, the cane cutters assembly declared a three-day work stoppage starting Monday 23rd July. The proposal for the strike was supported by all those present, without exception.

Barahona Refinery's biggest shareholder is SUCDEN, the French multinational, which has operations in several countries of Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. In the Americas, SUCDEN is present in Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Chile, Cuba, and Dominican Republic. The SUCDEN group produces approximately 5 million tons of sugar, which is equivalent to 15% of the world-wide exports.

Complaints to SUCDEN and solidarity for the workers are needed. For more info: www.gn.apc.org/haitisupport

Bangladesh

10,000 dockers at Bangladesh's biggest port went on strike after reports that ports multinational Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) has been awarded a $500m concession to build a new container terminal. The walk-out took place after press reports that the deal was to be confirmed shortly.

A port official confirmed that the stoppage had resulted in a total shut down. Some two dozen vessels were caught up in the dispute. SSA is planning to build Bangladesh's first private container terminal on a 200 acres site at Chittagong, 220 kilometres south-east of Dhaka. Proponents argue that it is needed to ease congestion problems at the port. The project, which has been mooted since 1997, was put on hold last year on account of widespread local opposition.

Euroland

EU Commissioner David Byrne has caved in under heavy US lobby pressure on GM food. Now, products labelled 'GM free' are allowed to contain 1% GM ingredients. In other words, food companies will be able to lie legally on their product labels.

Meanwhile, activists across the globe have been actively preventing GM crops from contaminating existing crops and the environment, both in Europe and across the globe. Next year's global biotech convention is to be June 9-12th in Toronto. Canadian activists are excited about hosting the alternative 'Biodevastation 2002', the sixth such grassroots gathering, around the same time. Info/updates: www.biodev.org

Iran

Workers from the Chit-e-Rey textile factory, near Tehran held the big boss hostage for 3 hours on 19th June, in protest at non payment of their wages. Guess what, the dispute was immediately resolved!

The factory was recently sold – and this major victory includes a reversal of the move. The original deal terms were secret, but the workers have reason to believe factory debts equalled nearly $10m, and it was sold for 20m rials ($2,500) to three private investors, whose only intention was to declare bankruptcy and sell its 16 hectares of land. Production duly stopped and the workers were not paid.

The hostage action followed other actions over several months, including blocking the main Tehran- Karaj road on a number of occasions. The target was Bonyad Mostazafin, the corrupt head of The Foundation for the Oppressed and War-Wounded, which employs 63,000 people and owns 400 companies. He claims only 85 of these are profit-making, and tried to justify multiple sell-offs as a move towards reducing manufacturing and expanding the retail sector.

Workers in Iran are deprived of independent workers organisations, the right to strike, or to protest, and the victory will no doubt encourage many other workers facing similar conditions.

Spain

Spain's longest strike ended in success for 1,000 workers of the defunct telecommunications Company, Sintel. They had set up a squatter 'Camp of Hope' on the pavement outside the finance ministry over six months ago in the middle of Madrid's icy winter. This was in protest at being laid off by Sintel, which is alleged to have been asset stripped by American investors. Sintel was privatised 5 years ago after being part of the state-owned Telefónica and sold to the Miami based anti-Castro leader Jorge Mas Canosa. The workers used their skills and tools to illegally tap into overhead cables, and they built home-made cabins with fully equipped kitchen ranges. Running toilets were created by plumbing pipes into local sewers, and there were even three portable swimming pools. All of this came from donated or scavenged street junk. A deal was struck with the social and finance Ministries to get eleven months back pay and early pensions. Six former directors of Sintel are being investigated for illegal asset stripping.

Genoa Diaries

As usual, the governments and media bosses lied and lied about what happened - and then moved on to the next headline. The truth is more enduring. Here's two participant retrospectives on the Carabinieri-induced carnage...

DIARY 1

Even before the start of the Genoa Social Forum (GSF) and long before the first march through the streets of Genoa, the Italian police had commenced its campaign of intimidation and hostility. It is disturbing but not surprising that events ended as they did with a police raid on the GSF/Indymedia centre and the school opposite, which had been set aside as an accommodation space for protestors.

In the lead up to the demonstrations, reports had been published in local and international press of missiles being prepared for airborne anti-capitalist attacks, hundreds of body-bags being taken into the city and allegations that protestors would be bringing weapons, including plastic bags filled with HIV infected blood, to disrupt the G8 meeting.

In Genoa itself, demonstrators and media alike were being detained and arrested, while other attempts to prevent the demonstrations were already happening across the country and across Europe. Teargas was used when demonstrators attempted to detain a train after authorities denied entry to some passengers. The French government colluded with the Italians in their attempt to deny freedom of movement to the 'Globalise Resistance' train from England. The French rail company carrying over 500 demonstrators was told to cancel the journey. The threat of a strike by French rail unions made the French government back down, and the GR protestors eventually made it to the city of Genoa.

A letter bomb exploded at a police station, injuring a police officer. A 'suspicious looking' vehicle was destroyed and bomb threats were raised throughout the city. A few days later, four more bombs exploded in Italy (two in Bologna and two in Milan). A further bomb was safely detonated in the Carlini stadium housing, amongst others, the Tutte Bianche. To many of the Italian activists, this reeked of an all too recent past in Italian politics, the 'strategy of tension'.

The first march, on Thursday afternoon, was the Migrant March. This 50,000 strong march wound its way through the city, moving alongside the large red shipping containers that had been deployed to split the city into Red and Yellow Zones.

Friday was the day of direct action. A number of independent 'blocs' staged actions against the G8 in different parts of the city.

At around midday, one of the first skirmishes between protestors and police occurred. Teargas was dropped from helicopters and around 200 police confronted a 1000 strong Black Bloc. The police, being outnumbered, soon left, and the Black Bloc continued their action for over two hours without another confrontation with the police. The lack of police adds weight to the claims of police infiltration and active police management of the Black Bloc.

Whilst the Black Bloc continued without further confrontations, the police were attacking the peaceful Pink/Silver Bloc and numerous places throughout the city were turning into war zones.

Tutte Bianche led the march from Carlini Stadium at around 1 p.m. They headed directly towards the Brignole Station and the Red Zone, where they were confronted by the police. The fighting was intense, lasting for a number of hours. A number of demonstrators were arrested, several taken away soaked in their own blood after being beaten by police. Some officers attempted to drive their vans directly at protestors whilst others shot teargas canisters at close range.

Demonstrators began building barricades to stop the police attacks. Unfortunately, this proved ineffectual and, after several hours of toing and froing, police water-cannons ended the demonstration.

The death of Carlo Luigiani has been widely reported and, although we must reflect on the brutality of the state in this instance, it is more important to remember that Carlo was only one of thousands that the G8 killed that day. His was perhaps the most visible death, but the misery and deprivation imposed on people across the globe must not be forgotten. As Carlo lay dead, shot twice in the head and then driven over by a police van, the G8 had signed the death warrant on millions with their refusal to provide adequate funding for AIDS prevention in the developing world. Through the night, the city continued to be highly explosive with people being controlled, arrested and generally hassled by the police.

On Saturday, up to 300,000 people came together to march through the city of Genoa. Because of the actions of the day before, the Drop the Debt march was cancelled. However, there was still a mass of trade unionists, anarchists, socialists and other activists.

After an hour the police apparently attacked and split the march without any provocation, which resulted in another long running battle.

Teargas was fired indiscriminately by the police with canisters being shot both far back into the crowd and directly at demonstrators on the frontline. The shots of teargas created a mass panic amongst the tens of thousands of people in the middle of the march, and they then proceeded to try and run away from the mayhem which resulted in a crush. The police had also attacked the march in the middle splitting it up and causing even more panic. Many groups were herded back onto their buses and then made to leave the city. Other groups were dispersed into the hills and along the coast miles from the Convergence Centre.

That night at around 11 pm, police vans containing around 300 officers raced down via Cesare Battisti, which housed the GSF/ Indymedia centre, a school that had been given over to demonstrators as an accommodation space. The first van drove through the school gates into the 'accommodation' school and a small plain-clothed team of officers sealed the IMC/GSF building up. Some people in the GSF building hid on the roof, pulling black sheets over themselves or hiding in the water-tank to avoid detection from the helicopters swooping by overhead. The people on the street at the time were attacked first. IMC worker, Mark Covell, was one of the first to be attacked. He ended up with a punctured lung, broken bones, head wounds and internal bruising.

At first the police did nothing to the people inside the GSF. They were able to listen to what was going on across the road. Reports from those who were within earshot are chilling. Fear-filled screams and shouts filled the air. According to some it sounded as if people were being murdered. On entering the school after the raid, the signs of violence were everywhere. Blood was spattered throughout the school. Lots of blood at the point where sleeping heads were resting.

In the end, 80 or so people had been arrested; most were taken to hospital. Laptops, gasmasks, pocket knives and other 'weapons' were taken (later to be shown on Italian TV as the weapons cache of the Black Bloc). If not for the presence of an Italian MP, many are convinced that the destruction and brutality may not have ended when it did.

The stories of those that were arrested are chilling in their own right. People forced to sing fascist songs, to lie in their own excrement, beaten, urinated on. Women were threatened with rape and people were denied access to lawyers or their embassy.

Was the demonstration a success? Although the Red Zone had stood strong, those 300,000 or so demonstrators will come away from that day with an awareness of the lengths to which their 'leaders' will go to continue their own agenda. Hopefully, those people will go home and keep fighting; hopefully, this is the moment when the anti-capitalist movement comes home to roost.

DIARY 2 - BLACK BLOC
I guess there must have been about one hundred and fifty Irish, an initial group of fifty odd on one bus, joined later by another bus of fifty as well as various stragglers who made their own way over.

The main political bodies present were Gluaiseacht for Global Justice, a new network of Student Green and One World societies with a good emphasis on non-violent direct action and direct democracy, and Globalise Resistance, which in Ireland is not the out and out Socialist Workers' Party front it is in Britain (i.e. it has other folk in it)…

With our varying points of view, we represented a microcosm of the movement as a whole, and I am pleased to say the anarchist presence meant that it was harder to write us off as violent nutcases or as anti-organisation dreamers. Despite political disagreements and natural tensions, there was a strong sense of solidarity. It is of maximum importance that we, the anarchists, do not isolate ourselves but are in the midst of opposition movements, promoting our viewpoints and learning from others in the ferment of ideas…

On Friday, the Day of Action, the Irish grouping divided and went with three larger blocs, the Pink bloc, the Red bloc and the Black bloc. One problem was that many more would have marched with the Black Bloc but for apprehensions about violence, but I think a peaceful anarchist bloc is a non-runner as it's peaceful nature will of course not be respected by the police, which is the point of the Black Bloc in the first place…

The ethos of the Black Bloc is best summed up by the slogan from Gothenburg "Police Attack We Fight Back". Contrary to what you may have heard, it was not exclusively anarchist or even libertarian (although that was by far the dominant tendency), and it was international. One section of it formed up in our campsite and went on to converge with a larger group which included many from Cobas, the Italian syndicalist movement, and some which were dressed like Ya Basta! We were now thousands strong…

I have not seen the detailed reports and photos outlining the actions of agent provocateurs, but if they were there, I am not surprised - after all, we have seen the Italian State repeat its tactic of planting bombs and blaming the opposition, just as the British State has planted bombs and blamed the IRA, and so on...

I think we could unite around non-violent direct action, but where was the non-violent direct action? Blocking the streets so delegates cannot enter a summit is direct action but simply marching is not; marching is saying 'Please Mr. Capitalism, Abolish Yourself' . If pacifists find a non-violent way to shut down a Governmental conference in a city which is turned into a medieval fortress, then I am with them, but I will not travel for three days to ask any government to do anything because that is as useful as a sunroof on a submarine...

As far as I'm concerned, the level of State violence was in no way alien to a 'liberal democratic parliamentary West European' State; in fact, they can do much worse. In many ways, the violence/non-violence issue boils down to this: How much violence do you expect from the State and do you think that the system can be reformed?

I have not seen much of the newspapers and T.V. back home, none at all in fact, but I have heard some stories of the bullshit they have been spreading. There is no way we can reform the media, and the only way to counter its lies is to be there active in communities and unions, spreading an alternative view. Some ways in which we could perhaps address the agent provocateurs problem as well as the problem of straight forward idiotic behaviour is for the local movement to provide more stewarding, the local movement (who know the area) determining the nature of the action and calling on organisations elsewhere to provide groups to support them, with someone from each couple of groups to liaise with the local movement. This is just a tentative suggestion, but from what I saw in Genoa, more organisation and more prior organisation is needed. Also, these events should not just be opportunities for direct action but also opportunities to spread anarchist ideas.

Full version -www.struggle.ws/freeearth.html

POSTSCRIPT:
Over 250 cities have seen protests against police brutality. As DA goes to press, dozens of people are still inside and many missing - one Italian syndicalist has been found strangled to death in a river. Info. email: supportolegaleto@disinfo.ne
Info. updates: www.indymedia.org or www.peoplenotprofit.co.uk.
Other actions around the world: g8solidarity.protest.net/

New Labour:

The government has done virtually nothing for low paid workers, save the paltry minimum wage. But it has done everything possible to let the bosses make work more casual, temporary and de-humanising.

A poster with the promise of 'work today, pay today' was spotted recently at Huddersfield University. Such an 'offer' appears to be a new twist in the race to recruit ever more casual workers.

In their drive for more and more profit, the boss class demands a low wage economy. And what capitalism demands, New Labour delivers. Although unemployment figures are now the lowest for over two decades, there has been no corresponding decline in poverty levels. Instead, this unemployment 'miracle' has been built completely on an increasingly part time, flexible and temporary workforce, the vast majority of whom are paid a pittance as a wage.

Many have been forced into such casual work by threats of having benefits stopped. However, joining the vast army of casual workers are more and more students, a trend which flies in the face of one of New Labour's proudest claims, trumpeted at every opportunity, namely its commitment to education, and especially to widening access to further and higher education for those from 'non traditional', i.e. working-class, backgrounds. Clearly, the election pledge should have read something like "Education, education, and new slave labour".

The situation with students, their finances, and their social class are key factors in their increasing need to work in a variety of low paid and casual jobs. Students must pay none, some, or all of the £1000 student fee, depending on their family's disposable income. As such, fees tend not to act as a bar on students from less well off families. Incidentally, whether it is working-class or middle-class families that feel the pinch is no reason not to oppose such attacks on 'free' education.

For working-class students, however, the introduction of student loans to replace the maintenance grant has had a much more severe impact than fees. In the middle and late 1980s, Thatcher's attempts to put a lid on spiralling youth unemployment brought a rapid expansion in student numbers. To no-one's surprise, however, the Tories were less than willing to come up with the accompanying increase in the cost of student funding. First student grants were effectively cut by freezing them, then came student loans.

These loans are not all they are cracked up to be. Despite the relatively low interest rates and the postponement of repayments until the student is earning above a set threshold, loans are far from being enough to house, feed and clothe a person for a whole year. The money to plug the gap has to come from somewhere. The well off, as always, have been able to rely on their families to bail them out. But for those who are not fortunate enough to have such a parachute, there are two options. One is to take on additional debt, debt which isn't on such 'favourable' terms as offered by the Student Loan Company. The other is to join the march of students into casual and low paid work. Increasingly, these jobs are not just a few hours behind a bar, and many students now work many hours a week, often approaching full time.

Nor are we talking only about students in higher education. It is now common to find 16 to 18-year-old students in further education colleges working in a variety of shop and fast food jobs. This is especially true of those from working-class families; families for whom an extra full-time income would have made a big difference. Recently, concern over the hours worked by some students led Eccles College in Greater Manchester to meet with companies and unions at the nearby Trafford Centre, an out of town shopping centre.

The demands of both a job and full-time study prove too much for many. The resulting drop out rates are, not surprisingly, highest among working-class students, those for whom the government are pledged to improve access. The massive rise in student numbers over the last fifteen years has not been reflected in increased working-class participation in higher education. The top social classes, 1 and 2, provide 70% of all higher education students, while the bottom, social class 6, provides a paltry 1.8%. And still New Labour continues to ignore the evidence. The Dearing report of 1997 recommended that students be entitled to social security benefits – the government still hasn't implemented this and is unlikely to. In February, a House of Commons select committee on higher education chose to ignore the links between current student funding and the twin problems of working-class people being deterred from entering higher education in the first place, and those that do enter not completing their courses either because of poverty or because of failure due to studying and working at the same time.

Like all New Labour's empty promises, talk of increasing working-class participation in the universities is more to do with propping up its declining popularity, and less to do with any willingness to restore the maintenance grant, the single measure that would do most to make their promise a reality.

Casual Killing

Simon Jones was a student forced into casual work by New Labour's 'social security' system (sic). He was beheaded by a crane after 2 hours on a dangerous job at the docks, having received no training (the bosses go on trial on 5th November; for more, see previous DAs and www.simonjones.org.uk) New figures show 295 people have died at work in the last year, 73 in falls, 64 by vehicles, 52 by falling objects, etc. This is over 30% up on 1999 - a clear trend. The Health and Safety Commission boss stated the obvious by saying most of the deaths were preventable. The rising death rates correspond closely with the rise in casual and temporary work.
What's more, 39% of 11-16 year-olds now have some sort of job, and 19% of them have had an accident or injury at work.
For advice on casual work, health and safety, etc. contact SolFed - see box on p.35.

ON THE CHEAP

Resisting McDonalds

Why pick McDonalds? Because they are the biggest, baddest slave-owning, rainforest-munching, anti-environment corporate that many love to hate? That'll do, but it could also be because of their continuing appalling record of abusing their own workers, the vast majority of whom are forced to work under casual contracts for low pay.

With a $30 billion turnover and profits of $3 billion, they still have the cheek to think that advertising "free uniform" as a job perk will help recruitment. Rights are ignored, and any move by workers to organise themselves results in sackings and management going to extraordinary lengths to finger the suspects. In France, Hassen Lamti was unsuccessfully framed for armed robbery before they offered him a bribe to renounce the union. He kept fighting and the now established union branch has won numerous court judgements against the company to stop harassment and illegal business practices.

Meanwhile, casual workers at McDonalds continue to get wages "accidentally" unpaid, made to work in unsafe conditions (Mark Hopkins was electrocuted to death while working at Arndale McDonalds in Manchester), and generally forced to smile at customers while being abused by management. Conditions are no better in factories in China, where the happy meal toys are made. In 1997, 220 workers at Keyhinge toys became seriously ill with acetone poisoning (acetone levels were 84 times the recommended exposure limit) and overwork (the average is 14-15 hours per day, 7 days a week).

Groups of McDonalds workers across the globe have now formed McDonalds Workers Resistance. With no official membership and no dues, MWR is currently concentrating on building a network of monkeywrenchers. It has already been subject to attempts to infiltrate by paranoid bosses desperate to smash it. As McSues, the Glasgow MWR branch free newsletter proclaims: "If the company makes $3 billion profit a year, and we're on the minimum wage, it doesn't take a genius to see that they are taking the piss out of us big time. Add to that unsociable hours, the company's bollocks propaganda, that fucking clown (not Nigel Dunnitigham, the other one), never finishing when you're meant to, and then being told to fucking smile..." They have also come up with the following 10 ways to fight back.

How McDonalds Workers Can Fight Back...

1. Work-To-Rule: Bizarrely enough, one of the best weapons is to follow every procedure exactly. The company has developed procedures for controlling quality and hygiene that are incompatible with the labour costs they expect and the speed of service they require. So in the kitchen, we do everything right, and soon there's no food in the bin. "Hustle, hustle", they'll say, "hustle is the efficiency gained through the safe and effective use of the three Cs, it does not involve running or rushing", we reply. Eventually they have to take people off the front and put them in the kitchen, less people are served, and they lose money. Soon they realise that it is cheaper to give us what we want than to keep losing custom. Simple, right? What we win could just be large fries on our break, but in a couple of weeks we do it again, and all the time we are exercising our power, increasing our unity, and realising our potential to win anything we want.
2. Go Slow: Like the work-to-rule, only you do everything at the pace of a constipated old man who has dumped down with a good book.
3. Be Stupid: You know the shit, you all pretend to be salaried.
4. Fuck The Food Costs: Lettuce and cheese are quite expensive so don't be shy with the condiments, and its Big Cahoona burgers all round.
5. Local Strike: This is dangerous but we've done it in the past.
6. (Inter)National Strike: This is still a bit ambitious but we have to dream...
7 Sabotage: Unplug equipment, misplace things, short circuit the grills, lose that bit of the breakfast cabinet...
8. Insubordination: "Go on fries", "nu", easy enough, yeah?
9. Steal: Happy toys make an easy target, I mean, if we weren't commy bastards we'd be doing a nice sideline punting them.
10. Have Fun: Joke and laugh your way through a shift, turn their dehumanising workplace into a creative site of resistance.

Fertile Resistance

McDonalds Workers Resistance can be contacted at: MWR, PO Box 3828, Glasgow G41 1YU, Scotland. Other useful contacts: McSpotlight: www.mcspotlight.org Support Network for McDonalds Workers, c/o MSC, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N19DX.

Slavery Calling

Call centres have been operating in this country for years and are on the increase in many cities and regions. Millions work in call centres in the banking and insurance industries, in technical support hotlines, in sales and marketing and in order services. Workers in call centres call up people (outbound) or answer their calls (inbound) using integrated telephone and computer technology. They work in shifts and the work is divided into short, precisely defined work steps controlled by team leaders.

Many people work in call centres because in some areas, it is the easiest way of getting a job. Sometimes these jobs are better paid than those in factories, in cleaning, or in shops. The bosses and politicians present call centres as a "modern form of work", but they are, in fact, a modern form of a sweatshop.

The creation of call centres has allowed them to overcome the refusal of many office workers to accept a deterioration in their working conditions (in banks, insurance, telecom and other offices). With increased competition in the service sector, companies have to find new ways to maintain profit levels. The traditional 9-5 office job proved to be an obstacle, so the bosses' solution was to extend working hours and "flexibilise" the job.

For many workers, call centres mean longer working hours, forced shift work, constant control, and intensification of work. Working in call centres can mean stress, and monotony. There is an obligation to be friendly while working long hours for very low pay. The workers do not work in "dirty" factories but nevertheless work under factory conditions, doing the bosses, dirty work, and fobbing off customers.

Call centre bosses have realised over the last few decades that there's big money in tying their workers to computer screens with telephone cords for them to make and take endless amounts of in and outbound calls. On top of this, they expect them to work more hours in the day, more days a week, be as flexible as possible and "on call", while handling as many calls as possible to increase their profits.

Preaching the new religion of "customer service", the bosses have justified extending total working hours far beyond what they were: many call centres are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. Why? Because the longer the office stays open, the more profit they can make. The workforce is expected to be available to work at their beck and call, whether this is evenings, nights, weekends, or public holidays.

To keep their production costs to a minimum, the workers only get paid for the actual hours and minutes that they are on-line. They don't get paid for lunch breaks, and other breaks are either unpaid or strictly monitored by the ACD (automatic call distributor). In some places they even insist that work preparation, like logging on and off or reading instructions, has to be done in unpaid time.

Some workers come through temporary agencies and means that paid holidays and sick days are reduced. On top of this, many agencies sneakily reduce the amount of paid holidays, usually by not paying public holidays. Even when qualifying for sick pay, it is only paid after the third day of illness, by which time a doctor's note is required; so no more days of "pulling a sicky" to increase meagre paid holidays!

"Just-in-time" production methods, pioneered in factories, have also been extended to office work. By calculating the volume of work - in this case calls - that comes

THERE IS USUALLY A MESSAGE SAYING, "THESE CALLS MAY BE RECORDED FOR TRAINING PURPOSES". WHAT THIS MEANS IS THE CALLS ARE MONITORED TO ENSURE THAT THE WORKERS USE CERTAIN PHRASES, DO NOT USE OTHER PHRASES, AND ASK CUSTOMERS ABOUT CERTAIN 'SPECIAL OFFERS' OR FINANCE DEALS. THEY ARE ALSO EXPECTED TO "SMILE" WHEN THEY ANSWER THE PHONE.

in and goes out, the bosses aim to employ the right number of staff to suit fluctuating work periods. Whereas in the past companies would have employed enough workers all year round to absorb the work, whether busy or slack, they now do the opposite: staff levels are kept to a bare minimum and "offer" workers overtime and extra shifts when times are busy. If this isn't enough, they will take on a few more temps for a short time. Then, when things slow down, they get rid of them and refuse extra shifts and overtime. In this way, the bosses pay workers only when needed. Temps make for extra profits because they are the new "just-in-time" workforce. This is the true meaning of 'flexibility'.

As call centre bosses are well aware, there is no lack of demand for overtime and extra shifts. Having lowered wages substantially from what they used to be in the "old" offices, they have made it a financial necessity to sign up for both. They use this as one of their main weapons to ensure a good, obedient workforce. Overtime becomes a perk that will only be "awarded" to workers if their productivity stats are up to scratch. A sense of self-discipline is enforced to keep productivity up during normal working hours.

At the moment, the bosses try to justify these measures by arguing that it is the only way to maintain profitability in the face of intense competition. Whether the motivation is pure greed or necessity is unimportant. The point is that it is done at the workers' expense! The supposedly 'labour-saving' technology has done nothing but extend the working day.

When anyone calls one of these services, there is usually a message saying, "these calls may be recorded for training purposes". What this means is the calls are monitored to ensure that the workers use certain phrases, do not use other phrases, and ask customers about certain 'special offers' or finance deals. They are also expected to "smile" when they answer the phone.

Call centre workers do fight back, but only on a piecemeal basis. Cheating the clock/ ACD for paid breaks, taking a (non-paid) 'sicky' when the job becomes too stressful, or covering the phones for other workers if they need a break are commonplace. Although these tactics can be a lifesaver at times, they can only provide some individual relief in the face of worsening conditions.

Earlier this year, the TUC set up the hotline to address the "sweatshop image" of call centres. They found that many centres were using bullying tactics to pressurise and intimidate employees. One of the worst cases was from a call centre where staff were told the person who spent the most time in the toilet would be forced to wear a nappy. The manager of the centre, which has not been identified, made staff sign a "toilet book" to check how long they spent there. Another regular complaint from call centre workers is that staff have to put up their hands for permission to go to the toilet.

Many workers also complained that they did not have enough time to rest in between answering calls. One worker was only allowed three seconds between answering calls, while another was disciplined for allowing a six-second gap between calls.

Despite threats from employers against workers getting organised, the fight back has started. There is a web site, www.motkraft.net/prol-position/,which links call centre workers from all over Europe. These links have to be extended to the customers who use the services, who need to be made aware of the sweatshop nature of the job. By bringing together the workers and the clients, changes can be made by exerting pressure on the companies who pride themselves on their 'customer care'.

PREACHING THE NEW RELIGION OF "CUSTOMER SERVICE", THE BOSSES HAVE 'JUSTIFIED' EXTENDING WORKING HOURS: MANY CALL CENTRES ARE OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR...

...TEMPS MAKE FOR EXTRA PROFITS BECAUSE THEY ARE THE NEW "JUST-IN-TIME" WORKFORCE. THIS IS THE TRUE MEANING OF 'FLEXIBILITY

Life-long short-termism

The government's commitment to life-long learning in Higher Education is largely hot air. The strongest evidence for this lies in its determination to casualise the Higher Education sector by sponsoring a transition to temporary, fixed-term contracts.

According to the Preamble to the European Directive on Fixed-Term Work, "contracts of an indefinite duration are, and will continue to be, the general form of employment relation between employers and workers". Well, someone should tell that to British universities. Higher Education in this country is now well on its way to having over half its teaching, research and academic-related (library, computer and administration) staff in temporary employment, mostly on fixed-term contracts. These contracts are routinely abused by the universities so that, instead of progressing into permanent employment, workers can spend years on one fixed-term contract after another. Fixed-term contracts have many disadvantages, including periods of unemployment between contracts; uncertainty over future prospects and income; as well as discrimination with regard to holidays, sick pay, maternity entitlement and incremental progression through pay scales. They also allow employers to easily dismiss workers and employ new staff, thus avoiding the extra costs and rights of permanent workers.

As permanent staff retire, they are replaced by fixed-term contract staff who dominate most junior grades. Of 400,000 employees in Higher Education, a quarter are employed on a temporary basis, including 86,000, or 21%, on fixed-term contracts. This figure represents 11% of all fixed-term contracts in the UK, higher than any other industry. Among academic staff, fixed-term contracts are now at 42%, including 73% of all new appointments in 1999/2000. It is not the case that these are young workers setting out on new academic careers - in fact, 70% of fixed-term contract staff are over 30 years old; the majority had been on a fixed-term contract prior to their current appointment; and only 6% had been students before that appointment.

A third of all academic-related staff, and 50% of those in grades 1 and 2, are on fixed-term contracts. This figure includes 62% of those with under five years' experience. The norm is for several renewals of contract to carry out essentially the same work. Among teaching and research staff, there was a sharp increase in the use of fixed-term contracts in the mid-1990s. They are most widespread in the 'lecturer' and 'other' grades, the latter including graduate teaching assistants and people in 'teaching only' posts on academic-related scales, often with 10 and 11-month contracts.

But it is among contract research staff that fixed-term contracts have really gone through the ceiling. An astounding 94% of such workers are on temporary contracts, mostly fixed-term. A popular view of university researchers is one of young, inexperienced postdocs serving a one or two year 'apprenticeship' before getting a 'proper' job as a lecturer or in industry. This is a myth. Contract researchers are increasingly likely to spend years moving from contract to contract with the same or different institutions, often following grant holders or taking salary cuts to ensure their next contract. Surveys have shown that 45% have been on fixed-term contracts for between 3 and 10 years, and 12% for over 10 years. The average length of service is six years, while the average number of successive contracts is four. It is not unheard of for researchers to spend their whole careers on a succession of fixed-term contracts.

Despite all of this, universities have no need for the current unrestrained casualisation. They are huge establishments with thousands of workers and relatively stable, if diverse, incomes of hundreds of millions of pounds. They are not buffeted by changing market conditions to anywhere near the same extent as private companies.

There are two factors which have driven the recent explosion in fixed-term contracts. One is an addiction to short-term thinking, the other is an attempt to attack workplace organisation.

University management argues that because most research funding is time-limited they need to reflect this in their staffing policies. While for some (not us, though) this might justify the employment of research staff on fixed-term arrangements, it can hardly account for the increasing numbers of teaching and academic-related staff on such contracts. Universities have devolved their staffing budgets, including the management of research funds, to individual departments and research teams. The result is that staffing policies have become entwined with the fluctuations in research funds attracted by those departments and research teams. At this level research funds are treated as uncertain. But across a whole university such fluctuations even out. Given the relative stability of university incomes, it doesn't take an Einstein to work out that a fairer and more sensible employment policy would be one linked to a longer term view of a university's total income.

Instead inefficiency, short-termism and downright bad management lead to a turnover of academic and research staff, variously estimated at between 25 and 50% per year. This beats any other industry. With few opportunities, fixed-term contract staff move out rather

Poetry Corner

Enrol.
If you enrol in the course
the main thing is not to die.

If you die; sometimes
they don't even pass you.

Carol Batton. April 2001.

Corporate Corner

In December, the University of Nottingham accepted £3.8 million from British American Tobacco to contribute towards the setting up of an International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility. The acceptance of the money caused a storm of protest, which eventually led to the resignation of Richard Smith, a professor of medical journalism at the University. For more: www.corporatewatch.org.uk/newsletter/issue4/nl4corporate_universities

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than up. The result is a continual waste of resources on recruitment, induction and training, not to mention the cost of unfinished research, a waste which must surely outstrip any savings on labour costs.

Fixed-term contract culture brings not only discrimination in pay and conditions, it also brings sex and race discrimination. About half of women academics have fixed-term contracts compared to just over a third of men. These women can only expect statutory maternity provision even if their university provides extended leave and pay for permanent staff. A little over a third of white staff have fixed-term contracts, compared to almost half of non-white staff. Fixed-term contract workers often return to the bottom scale on starting a new contract. The result is that over time, they come to be paid substantially less than permanent staff with equivalent service.

Although there has been much talk of improving the situation, that's all it has been... just talk. For instance, UCEA (the University & College Employers' Association) recently proposed a "Guide to the management of fixed-term contracts". The irony is that while this document resulted from a working party to reduce casualisation, it only serves to consolidate existing practices and spread casualisation still further.

The European Directive on Fixed-Term Work is set to fare no better. The Department of Trade and Industry is currently drawing up regulations for implementing the directive. This is the same DTI that is well known for its 'light touch' in interpreting regulations; the same DTI that was responsible for the Employment Relations Act, 1999, an Act which, according to Blair's boasts, still leaves Britain with the world's most lightly regulated labour market.

Among measures proposed by the government is a four year limit on successive fixed-term contracts. After this limit, any new fixed-term contract is to be regarded as open-ended. However, the measure will not be retrospective, nor will it make much difference unless the 'justification on objective grounds' loophole is closed. Many employers won't hesitate to use this to justify indefinite fixed-term employment on the grounds that research funds are time-limited. The AUT (Association of University Teachers) calls for a limit of two years and for 'objective grounds' to be restricted to exceptional circumstances, like maternity cover. Such views are likely to get short shrift. The same fate awaits the rest of the AUT wish-list, which includes proposals to prevent employers replacing workers dismissed after a fixed-term contract; to include pay, pensions and maternity provision in the regulations; to count employment at different institutions as continuous service; to give tribunals the power to convert fixed-term contracts which breach the regulations into open-ended contracts; to give fixed-term contract staff the right to bring claims of less favourable treatment than permanent staff. None of this is addressed by the DTI.

Obviously, we can't rely on New Labour to look out for fixed-term contract workers merely because the AUT, or anyone else for that matter, wishes it. To make such gains requires the back-up threat of action, something neither the AUT nor NATFHE (National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education) can deliver. Academic unions, like those in schools and health, are riddled with the curse of 'professionalism'. They are so easily swayed by fear of the press and court action that any threat is soon watered down into so-called days of action. More often than not, these become days of inaction, held when the uncommitted can easily avoid taking part.

An article in a recent issue of the AUT's magazine, 'AUTlook', pointed out that "in an ideal world, we would end casualisation tomorrow, with staff simply refusing to participate in any (devolved) management responsibility which involved staff on casual contracts". It goes on to imply that this is impractical and unrealistic. There is undoubtedly some truth in this, but the article doesn't acknowledge the role played by misplaced ideas of professionalism in this sorry state of affairs. Clearly in some localities, the AUT has been campaigning vigorously around casualisation and other issues. However, unless this spreads to all universities, and unless it results in the type of effective action so usually downplayed by 'AUTlook', then UCEA will continue to impose casualisation and other demoralising and disorganising employment policies.

With few opportunities, fixed-term contract staff move out rather than up.

Fixed-term contract culture brings not only discrimination in pay and conditions, it also brings sex and race discrimination.

1st World Debt

Words and images are filtered through the capitalist media. Today, terms like "debt" and "poverty" might conjure up images of starving people in the Third World, or "anti-capitalism" protestors fighting with Police. However, in case you hadn't noticed (sic), the daily reality of debt is as real for us in the so-called First World as anywhere else.

The difference is, in the Third World, governments owe money and people pay the price, whereas in the First World, people owe money and people pay the price. In both situations, the governments and financial institutions of the First World are the winners.

Victorian Britain was shocked by Charles Dickens' portrayal of social conditions. Social reform and movements followed, striving to change conditions for the poor. The popular notion was that, through the welfare state, the position of the poor was changed; wrong. The "Debtors Prison" is not a thing of the past, it has just become an open prison, and more and more of us are its inmates! Debt has moved out of its position as a vice of the very rich to trap all of us - and it has brought with it an "Invisible Poverty", from which few escape.

While there has always been credit and debt (the old "penny on a shilling a week" moneylenders and "Pawn Shops"), these were often the last refuge of the "feckless poor" or the very desperate. The idea of avoiding debt is strong, particularly amongst older Working Class people. However, subsequent generations have been driven into debt since the welfare state and the post war boom. They have also been seduced into debt culture by financial institutions that have become as addicted to pushing moneylending as we have to borrowing.

Until the 1970s, credit was difficult to obtain. The number of mortgages was limited; to buy a house, working-class people had to have saved with a building society for years, and queue up to get the limited number available. For many people, the '80s mortgage and the Thatcherite dream of home ownership was their first taste of debt.

Today, credit and its dark partner debt are available everywhere, at the click of a mouse or the dial of a number. Some is run up on frivolities, but for many, debt is incurred to get absolute essentials, such as cars, without which most of us wouldn't be able to get to work to earn the money to pay the debts.

With all the credit available, and increasing needs to spend, it is small wonder that debt has become a nightmare. The finances are constantly on a "knife edge". The credit card pays off the store card, which chases the bank loan. Any crisis is enough to tip the balance over - and that's when the sharks come in.

The image of a Loan Shark is a heavy in a sheepskin jacket ready to rough you up for the cash. While these do still exist, the modern version is more likely a 'legitimate' faceless company, with catalogues willing to sell essentials such as clothes, cookers and washing machines on the never-never, at phenomenally inflated prices. Others are finance companies offering instant car loans to people with County Court Judgements (the notorious CCJ's).

Worst of all are "Debt Counselling" companies that seemingly offer you the way out, but you end up in worse problems than ever. These are more accurately called "Loan Parasites" rather than "Loan Sharks", since they don't even lend you any money; they just take it.

Probably the best known loan parasites are companies like "Baines and Ernst" and "Chilterns", both of whom advertise on TV, but there are dozens more. Trading on ignorance and deliberate misunderstanding, they claim to be able to reduce your payments. However, this is all at a charge, usually between £50-£300 a month, on top of your existing payments… plus a set up fee which can top £1,000!!

Often, this service is totally worthless, with poor advice which is standard and available free from other sources. The reduced payments don't have to be accepted by your debtors and often aren't.

Some "Debt Management" companies are so shoddy that they are treated as "financial lepers" by the rest of the financial sector. There are even a number of financial institutions who simply refuse to deal with the companies at all - so their advice and services are useless.

Although millions of households are now tied up in some form of debt, the greatest misery falls on the very poor. It is they who have to accept the crippling interest rates that standard institutions wouldn't dream of offering their better-off customers.

For the most part, people are trapped into poverty, not simply because of the amount of financial resource they have, or their ability to control that financial resource. People's poverty is not just a result of economics - but also of power.

Financial institutions such as Building Societies were formed by working-class communities to control their financial power and, while they can only be partial solutions, these and similar institutions, if placed under the direct control of communities, could help to alleviate some of the poverty people face due to the march of debt.

Bank of England figures show debt has risen from £87 billion to £127 billion over the last 3 years. Much-hyped Government announcements to take on loan sharks are dressed up in 'self-regulation' measures like codes of practice. Since loan sharks only have one code - making money , this means 'business as usual' to them; they will still be able to set their own crazy interest rates.

Solidarity Hunger Strikes

On the 8th of August in Istanbul, Turkish police forces trashed the offices of the paper Vatan -which is close to one of the organisations with members on hunger strike in the prisons (see DA19). With the same violence as they used in the prisons attack in 2000, walls were broken down with sledgehammers and offices destroyed, and several dozen people arrested.

This new police operation is one more step in the State's attempt to smash the long-running hunger strike and the solidarity shown by families on the outside. The district of Kucukarmutlu (Istanbul) was sealed off for 4 days by police forces to forcibly take out prisoners' families on solidarity hunger strike. Police threats to break into people's houses were only withdrawn when they threatened to kill themselves. Currently, several dozen prisoners' relatives are between life and death, in solidarity with their relatives who have died or, in some cases, have been on hunger strike for over 100 days. Inside prisons and hospitals, they are suffering from brain, kidneys and lung disorders but are kept alive by force-feeding – which contravenes international treaties. The State is desperate to minimise the publicity which more deaths bring. At the time of writing, 59 hunger strikers have died since 19th December, 2000; 28 prisoners who were then on hunger strike died during the police assault against 20 prisons throughout the country, and 31 additional strikers have died since. The latest was Osman Osmanagaoglu, a prisoner who was recently released (the State is releasing some on the point of death in the hope they will stop their hunger strike). He died on the 299th day of the death fast.

The struggle is mainly for the closure of confinement prisons (F-type) and the abolition of anti-terrorist laws that allow the incarceration of anyone being suspected of having any link with an organisation classified as "terrorist" by the State. Discussions between the government and representatives of human rights organisations led to some minor concessions but were judged insufficient by both the negotiators and the prisoners. Since then, the State has retreated to unashamed violence. Meanwhile, European States remain silent, the EU still furnishing the Turkish government with 101,8 million euros in aid. In the meantime, several prisoners' families and friends are on hunger strike in solidarity with the resistance going on in Turkey, including Kurdish and Basque prisoners, and others in Austria, the Netherlands, Germany, England (Mark Barnsley, HMP Wakefield and John Bowden, HMP Bristol) and across France. Hunger strikes have also been announced/commenced in Texas and Mexico.

Anarchist Black Cross - Dijon c/o Maloka B.P. 536 21 014 Dijon-cedex, France Email: maloka@chez.com Web site: www.chez.com/maloka

Zehra Kulaksiz has refused solid food for over 5 months - despite already losing one daughter, her father supports her protest.

Texas resistance

Texas prisoner Carl Horne is working on getting an anti-prison newsletter up & operating. CAPTIVE VOICES seeks to build solidarity amongst ALL prisoners globally, and to act as an internationally-focused forum addressing all manner of prison-related issues (including, but not limited to, prisoner rights, prison conditions, abusive/inhuman conditions, and the like).
He wants contacts with prisoners and prison activists or abolitionists globally – plus articles, news updates, photos/drawings/comics, etc.: Carl Horne, #418860, M.W. Stiles Unit, 3060, FM 3514, Beaumon, Texas, 77705-7635, USA.
Also in Texas, Chris Plummer will be released on parole in January 2002, after 8 years of a 15 year sentence for anti-fascist action, of which 4 years was spent in solitary. He has sustained life-long injuries while inside, at the hands of the State and nazi gangs. His parole is 'super intensive', meaning he will be closely monitored, since he has made it clear he will be getting straight back into anti-fascist action with the Houston ABC chapter. He needs funds and support to adjust to the outside. Contact him; Chris Plummer, TDCJ# 677345, PO Box 4500, TN Colony TX 75886, USA or; Rebecca Plummer, PO Box 101, Austin, TX 78767, USA.

Gothenburg

23 people have so far been found guilty of rioting during the EU Summit with sentences from eight months to four years. 8 others are still in prison awaiting trial. Hannes Westberg, the man who was shot by the police, is out of hospital and working with the prisoner solidarity group. Despite his injuries, he still faces a trial. Send publications, letters, money etc., to pass onto the prisoners to: Solidarity Group GBG, c/o Syndikalistiskt Forum, Box 7267, 40235 Gothenburg, Sweden. Tel + 0046 733 16 42 96.

Abolish Prisons

A Prison Abolition Conference is being organised for Saturday 26th January, 2002 at Conway Hall. For more info or to help out, send SAE to Prison Abolition Conference, c/o BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

Chattanooga 3

With trial and sentencing, there was a partial victory that the Chatanooga 3, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, Damon McGee and Mikail Musa Mohammad, were not sent down. They were found guilty of disrupting a meeting of Chatanooga City Council, for protesting against police brutality against the city's black citizens. They need funds for the appeal - to Account #7515108434, Old Kent Bank, 4705 W Main St, Kalamazoo, MI, USA. If paying in sterling, to; Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474, London N8. Updates/messages direct to/ from Lorenzo: komboa@hotmail.com

Prison labour

On the second day of the Earth First! summer gathering in the Peak District, there was a workshop on prisoner support. Here, the idea of a solidarity action against Hepworth Building Products was mooted. In Wakefield Prison, prisoners are required to make prison uniforms, their own prison bars, or give 25 hrs a week to Hepworth in tedious packing work for maximum pay of £8. Mark Barnsley is one prisoner resisting this. He is in solitary as punishment for refusing to work in forced labour.

A banner was hastily knocked up and it was off to Doncaster, where the security gates were locked, and photocopying facilities were borrowed to knock up some fast leaflets and some extra DIY banners. Eventually, police escorted us from the building. Outside, the locks proved too sturdy for police to boltcropper them, and after a wait the fire brigade arrived. We talked to them about taking a role in political activity, and they soon decided, with a wink, they couldn't obey police orders without their area manager being there. Finally the locks were blowtorched off by the company itself. We cheered the fire brigade for not scabbing as they drove off waving. Mark Barnsley was really pleased with the action. The Governor was less pleased, and immediately slapped Mark in segregation. Feel free to contact Hepworth Building Products at: Eddlington Lane, Eddlington, Doncaster DN12 1BY. Tel: 01709 856300. Fax letters of protest at Mark's treatment to 01924 384391.

For info on Mark, contact Nick (Justice for Mark Barnsley Campaign) on 07944 522001. Email; barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com www.freemarkbarnsley.com Letters of solidarity to John and Mark: John Bowden, HMP Bristol, 19 Cambridge Road, Bristol BS7 8PS. Mark Barnsley, HMP Wakefield, 5 Love Lane, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 9AG.

letters

Send letters to:
DA-SF (letters),
PO Box 1095,
Sheffield S2 4YR.
All letters are welcome, but space is always very short.
Make yours incisive, brief and questioning if you want it printed in full.

Good News for Notts

Dear DA,

A collective in Nottingham (loosely based around the old Rainbow Centre that has now shut down and was home to the famous Veggies Caterers) has formed and somehow raised the money to buy an old empty ex-Social Centre in the heart of a working-class community, Forest Fields. We intend to set the building up as a genuine non-hierarchical independent community resource: a veggie cafe during the day, meeting space, activity space (we have self-defence classes and parent / toddler groups already interested), cheap internet cafe, party venue, radical library, and three nights a week, we will be the cheapest bar around with the friendliest slave labour! We hope to open in September.

Raising the money for the building was no small feat, and now we have to do loads of building work to get the building in shape (disabled access, and up to planning and fire regs). We are trying to do lots of the building work ourselves to get costs down, but still have to raise another £30,000 to complete the work. If anyone has any building skills they would like to offer, get in touch. Also, if anyone can think of a great name for the centre (and the bar!) that would be double appreciated (anything has got to be better than the Rainbow Centre!). After a year of thought and arguing about it, we can't think of anything clever, witty, inclusive, inspiring or friendly... maybe you could!

Contact: Rainbow Centre, c/o 182 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3HW, or telephone 0845 458 9595, or email info@veggies.org.uk. B.

Livingstone Lies

Dear DA,

In April, the Daily Telegraph published a letter from Ken Livingstone, in which he condemned the people planning to participate in the Mayday Monopoly actions. Livingstone wrote of sinister figures in masks and boilersuits, threatened them with 'zero tolerance', said that he would be working closely with the police "to ensure a co-ordinated response to the protests", and warned that anyone attending the protests would be arrested. Livingstone has followed the familiar route of a former leftist swinging to the Right; indeed, he has moved farther, faster, than most!

Those of us who supported his campaign to become Mayor of London had hoped that his appointment of Bob Kiley, a former Director of the CIA with a proven, ignoble track record as a union-buster in New York, was only a one-off, an aberration, designed to placate the City - now it appears to be part of a disturbing trend. With hindsight, Livingstone's "socialist" posture during his time as leader of the GLC looks less genuine, more like a pose, designed solely to give the Tories an excuse to abolish that body, something they had wanted to do since it became clear that the GLC was not going to be what they had planned - a gerrymandered vehicle giving them permanent control of London's local government!

It is a pity there's no way to allow voters to get their votes back. Some years ago, in Arizona, US voters were able to "recall" state Governor Evan Meachum when he proved incompetent; if ever there was a candidate for "recall", Livingstone is it! Yours, KJA

Labour Lies

Dear DA,

One week the Minister for Health stands up in the House of Commons and categorically rules out any NHS clinical staff jobs (such as nurses) being privatised. Although bricks and mortar everywhere is being put into the hands of profit-making companies (against the wishes of 89% of British people, according to an opinion poll), nurses jobs are safe, apparently. The New Labour spin is that they are providing funding for more NHS nurses and the last thing they want is to 'lose' them.

A week later, and we get the announcement that the Cottage Hospital in Herefordshire has been flogged off to a private firm. Just another sell-out sell off? No, this time the nurses have been flogged off too. The nurses will be offered jobs (they say) for the new employer – but details of pension entitlements and conditions, etc.? The firm has promised it will improve the service and provide more beds – but has not mentioned whether there will be any more staff to run them. In other words, more work, less pay, rubbish conditions. Is there no end to the Labour lies? JK.

NOT FUNNY

"When I was coming up, it was a dangerous world, and we knew exactly who 'They' were. It was 'Us versus Them,' and it was clear who 'Them' was. Today, we're not so sure who the 'They' are, but we know 'They're' there."

George W. Bush, 2001.

PROUD TO BE A PANSEY

(Politically Active Not Seeking Employment)

Become the Media

Jello Biafra

Spoken Word Album #6.
Alternative Tentacles/AK Press, 2000 3xCD

This is the sixth spoken word album from one of the leading names of American punk, ex-Dead Kennedy Jello Biafra.

With three CDs, there is getting on for four hours of Jello's thoughts on globalisation, the US Green Party, hacking, WTO/World Bank/IMF, genetically modified food, the US Democratic party and links with fundamentalist Christians, and on how to become the media. It's a lot of material, but here's the general feel...

Jello Biafra is, from this CD collection at least, a radical libertarian/liberal. He is anti globalisation, big business, fundamentalist Christians taking control of other people's lives, and pro people taking control of their own lives. He is pro-participation in politics, at all levels, including being now active in the US green party – even being nominated and accepting standing as a prospective presidential candidate. He also encourages people to be worried of factionalism and of becoming so radical and pure that they burn out, and become conformist sensible citizens after just a few years. Now, I recognise the fact that many people do enter radical politics full of fire, energy, purity of objective and certainty only to get disillusioned and drop out after a while. However, encouraging people to join a political party rather than trying to look to ways of controlling their life for themselves seems rather counter productive...

I don't know about the US, but over here, plenty of people join up with the mainstream political parties, run around for a while, then get distracted by other things and move on. In anarchosyndicalist groups, political activism is a supportive part of everyday life. It's not going to be all fun and dancing, but there should be a bit of that as well. It's up to those who've hung around a bit to help those passing their first flush of enthusiasm to see that it is worth sticking with it. Things may not happen tomorrow, so it is important to have a life that is more than the actions, meetings, heated political discussions and what have

you. Life and politics are the same thing, signing up to a political party compartmentalises 'politics' and can only lead to others making choices on your behalf. A structure based on representative politics is one based on hierarchy, and those that do well at manipulating hierarchies will always do better in them and do the worst for everyone else. Anarcho-sydicalists, anarchists, libertarians and all should be, far

from encouraging people to support and join political parties, getting those who still put faith in them to put some more faith in themselves and others – after all, if you won't trust people to run their own lives, how come you are so keen to let them run yours? While compartmentalising the political and seeking to take control, political parties always veer towards compromise with the existing order. No matter how radical they may seem when small and powerless, they capitulate as they near real authority.

To be fair, Jello Biafra consistently says that politics should be an everyday thing. In becoming the media, he points out that we have not only to put out stuff on paper, the internet, CDs etc., we also have to recognise that one of the most important ways of spreading ideas is by talking to people. Talk to people about refugees (politicians and the media won't, they are too busy getting wound up about their 'bogus asylum seekers'); about the events in Genoa and elsewhere; challenge people's assumptions. You don't have to start off on some revolutionary tract, but by just putting some information their way, reminding folk that the television and newspapers have their own agendas and they are not in the interests of the vast majority of us - that is personal political activity.

There is also discussion on the recent court case, where the former members of the Dead Kennedys took Jello Biafra and Alternative Tentacles to court over control of the band's back catalogue – largely because they felt that the music had not been sufficiently 'marketed'. This marketing, or lack of it, included the refusal by Biafra to allow the classic Holiday in Cambodia to be used in a Levi's commercial! It looks like the rest of the band have won, having hired a big shot music industry lawyer. For more details, check out the Alternative Tentacles' website at www.aternativetentacles.com

Jello Biafra is an entertaining speaker, less dry than Chomsky, not as funny as Bill Hicks, but fair enough, my only reservation (apart from some of his politics) is the sheer volume of stuff. Three CDs is a lot of talking, and added to the five previous releases, that's a lot of Jello Biafra rabbiting on. Maybe, just maybe, it's time he did a few more records with songs on them? Eh, go on Jello, please, another one with DOA, or try again with Nomeansno, or even a proper full length release from the No WTO Combo… DA

Global A Go-Go

Joe Strummer & the Mescaleros

In 1999, after a ten-year gap, Joe Strummer, ex singer with The Clash, bounced back with his album "Rock Art and the X-Ray Style". There then followed a successful tour that confirmed he had lost none of the passion and energy that had been his trademark.

"Rock Art" saw him bringing in several styles of music; "Global A Go-Go" continues this with a heady mixture of world music styles. Of course the reggae is still there, but it is mixed with latin, folk, celtic, eastern European and many other styles in a multi-cultural bonanza played on instruments from around the globe.

Lyrically, the album also celebrates the multi-cultural mix of Britain today, with tracks like "Bhindi Bhagee"- "We got akee, lassi, Somali wacky baccy". While the title track tells a tale of a global DJ having freedom of the airwaves, not only abolishing geographical boundaries, but stylistic boundaries as well as name-checking everyone from Nina Simone to the Bhundi Boys via the Bo Diddley and the Stooges in between.

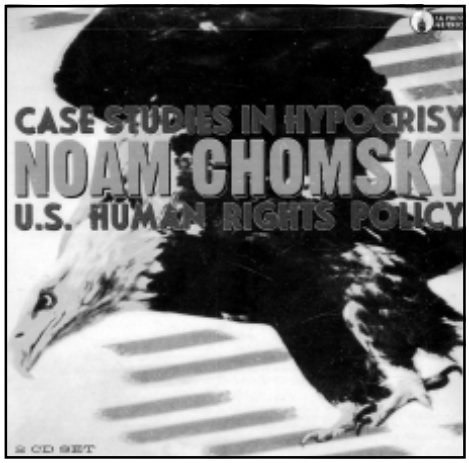
We need to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of these islands, and Joe and the Meskys do just that. This is the kind of globalisation we need! Check out the tour this November to hear the new stuff and some old Clash favourites from the man who walks the talk. DA

Secrets, lies & moviedrones

Noam Chomsky: 'Case Studies in Hipocrisy; US Human Rights Policy'

Twin CD Set (AK Press/Alternative Tentacles Records)

If you know of Chomsky, it is 99% certain you are already a fan. If not, this double CD is a way to listen your way to becoming one.



The 2 CDs are entitled:

1: US Human Rights Policy: Rhetoric and Practice

2: US Iraq Policy: Motives & Consequences

The first disc is a lecture in which Chomsky looks at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was ratified at the General Assembly of the UN in 1948, and examines whether the United States has lived up to its obligations. Guess what? It hasn't. In a speech which covers global economics, military action, domestic policy and the media, Chomsky uncovers the self-serving moral relativism that characterises US policy making. Much of the material in this lecture can also be found in his pamphlet, *'The Umbrella of US Power (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Contradictions of US Foreign Policy)'*, and some of the rest in *'Profit Over People'*, but even if you've read them both, this is still worth a listen.

Chomsky's dry sense of humour comes across more in his lectures, although it is never entirely absent from his writing, and he uses it here to emphasise the often surreal nature of global politics. "Workers are too intimidated to ask for benefits, wages or better working conditions", he tells us, "and that contributes to something called 'the health of the economy' - that's a technical term…"

Disc Two is specifically concerned with US Policy towards Iraq. As Britain has been a lap dog to the US on this issue, there are a lot of lessons for us too. By looking at the facts chronologically, he undermines any notion that the 'international community' gives a damn about the suffering of the Iraqi people. One of the standard defences for our murderous policies is that Saddam Hussein is a despot who has used chemical weapons against his own people. True, but so is the fact that when Saddam's internal brutality was peaking in the mid 1980s, the US and Britain were stepping up the arms shipments and subsidies to the Ba'athist fascists. Back then, of course, he was our 'favourite monster.' Chomsky also quotes Madeleine Albright's disgusting remark about the current sanctions - that she considered that "the price [of 500,000 Iraqi children's lives] is worth it."

Taken together, the CDs are a great introduction to 'The New World Order', and as the first disc provides an overview of the subject of US imperialism, it helps us put the case study of Iraq in context. This makes the set ideal for anyone who is new to Noam Chomsky's work. However, the detail in the Iraq presentation will also be especially interesting for those who have already read most of his recent work on neo-liberalism, human rights and the media.

Bread & Roses #6

IWW Union Magazine, £1; PO Box 4414, Poole, BH15 3YL

On the off-chance that you were thinking things are quiet on the industrial front, the 20 pages of reports and views in Bread & Roses 6 should set you straight. The highlights include the informative pieces on the postal and education industries. The common thread of the TUC unions' capitulation to capitalism's greed and New Labour's bankruptcy are clear. But if you're after more in-depth treatment of the relations between the current industrial scene in Britain and national and global economic policies, then you'll need to look elsewhere. Nevertheless, Bread & Roses is well worth the read.

Howard Zinn, 'Stories Hollywood Never Tells'

(AK Press Audio/Alternative Tentacles Records)

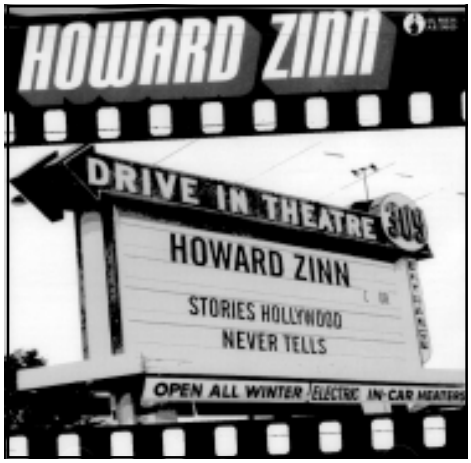
Martha Gellhorn said of the dissident writer John Pilger that 'he takes his work seriously, but never himself - a rare quality, but one definitely shared by Howard Zinn. Zinn's uniquely readable brand of people's history is often rife with tragedy, but his approach always uplifting. He is a true optimist, but could never be called naive. He often mocks his own unfailingly positive agenda to keep our feet on the ground, but never does so to undermine the aspirations of his readers or audience. For instance, on this CD, after complaining that Hollywood never seems to make films about revolutionary struggle, Zinn says to the audience at the Taos Film Festival, '*now you can all go off and make them*'.

He says at the beginning that someone will probably interrupt him, by shouting out that one of his ideas has already been made into a film. *'In that case'*, he says, *'we can all have a celebration'*. Howard Zinn's (notably uninterrupted) 50 minute presentation is introduced by his friend, David Barsamian of Alternative Radio, who spends several minutes declaring his 'dear love' for the popular historian. Zinn takes the stage, pauses and asks in mock-bemusement: *'who is that man?'*

This is no academic or investigative study of the role of film in democratic societies, or an in-depth analysis of how history is rewritten through popular fiction, although he does make references to these

Heroes & Martyrs

Emma Goldman, Sacco and Vanzetti, and the Revolutionary Struggle
by Howard Zinn
AK Press Audio, double CD



themes. It's more a vehicle for little-known stories from history which, Zinn believes, should be made into films. He tells us of his heroes, mainly from popular struggles in US history. There are some great characters, like Eugene Debbs, who led a railway strike in 1894, went to prison, made a huge impression on his fellow inmates and came out a committed socialist. He also wants to see a film about Mother Jones, who marched for days with some factory children to where Roosevelt was on holiday, carrying signs saying, *'we want time to play'*. At the age of 85 she was sent to prison for her work with female unionists. There are stories of anarchists, socialists, feminists and anti-war agitators - all of which have the ingredients of major blockbusters but, unsurprisingly, none have been made into films.

'We have to stop at noon, right?', he asks at the end of his presentation. *'Is there a boss? Who am I subservient to? Hmm, is there time for a populist rebellion?'* Alas, there wasn't, but listening to Howard Zinn is a sure way to reaffirm your faith that one day there will be. Like his writing, Zinn's oratory style is informal, friendly and refreshingly absent of slogans and clichés. He believes that reclaiming our history from the distortions and lies of the elite is an important step in achieving what he jokingly calls, *'that modest aim - changing the world'*. Particularly for the moments when you're feeling lonely, frustrated or pessimistic - Zinn is the perfect antidote.

The problem with listening to Howard Zinn's lectures is that you invariably feel he could tell you more, although I sense that this is of his own design. While his lectures are always informative and entertaining, if you want to know more, you will have to go and research. In fact, he tells his audience this. Maybe he believes it is an effective way to get people involved, rather than just amusing them for an evening.

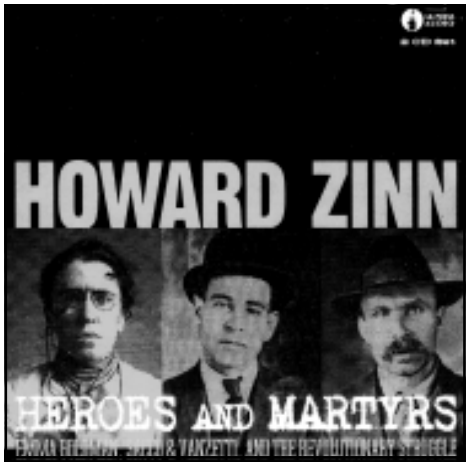
The two CDs consist of two talks, one on Emma Goldman, and the other focusing on Sacco & Vanzetti.

For individuals unfamiliar with the subjects and the general history of revolutionary struggle and anarchism in the United States, these lectures will come as a bit of a surprise. In the early part of the last century, the repression of working-class struggle in America was high on the agenda, and anarchists such as Goldman, Sacco and Vanzetti played major roles in fighting against this restraint. But as Zinn explains, the tactics used by the likes of Edgar J. Hoover were quiet malicious.

Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were two Italian immigrant anarchists whose arrest, conviction and execution on trumped-up murder charges produced storms of protest around the world. Apparently, after a bank robbery, a witness saw two individuals running from the scene in an 'Italian manner'! That clinched it. Guilty.

Zinn does not try to argue that they were innocent or guilty, they might well have been guilty, although the evidence was flimsy to say the least. What he does concentrate on is the justice system's method of securing the execution of 'these anarchists'.

Zinn uses the case of Sacco and Vanzetti to draw parallels with the more recent case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, whose life will hopefully not receive the same



outcome.

Emma Goldman, born in Lithuania, then part of Russia, was an immensely complex and interesting character who was never one to hold back on her opinions. Her views on free love surprised even her closest friends. In 1917, her anti-war activities landed her in prison for two years and, after being released, was deported to Russia. With revolution in full swing, this was of no disappointment to Goldman, until she realised that the victorious Bolsheviks were no improvement on the previous regime.

And in the Zinn tradition, if you want to know more, you'll have to research. As an add-on to this review, I think it's worth including Goldman's definition of anarchism; she defined it as:

"...the philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary. . . . [Anarchism] stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; . . . a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations."

I'll go along with that.

In the Hands of the Enemy

Notes for Mark Barnsley

Out September 2001. Price £4.50 from Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD13XX. Tel: 07944 522001 www.freemarkbarnsley.com

The title of this collection comes from a line in Alexander Berkman's classic 'Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist'. Any working-class person who comes up against the criminal justice system finds themselves in the hands of the enemy, more so if that person has a long history of political activism. Mark Barnsley is such a person.

With pieces penned by those who knew Mark before his imprisonment, friends and family and those who have come to know him since, here is a tribute to a man with a strong sense of social justice, which has remained strong during the years in jail. Those who have shared prison experience with Mark tell the story of a man who has gained respect from other inmates wherever he has been sent, for the dignity he shows while all the time refusing to bow the knee by maintaining his innocence.

The fact that so many who didn't know Mark prior to this nightmare have felt inspired to act on his behalf, in some cases jeopardising their own liberty, tells us of the respect he has come to be held in.

That many of these people are not professional writers shows through on occasion, but the book is all the better for it. They are honest pieces written from the heart about a man whose case deserves to be more widely known.

Anger is a common thread throughout this book. Anger at a system which has banged up an innocent man and anger at the [redacted] left and anarchist [redacted] have done more for the [redacted]stice. As one campaigner [redacted] should tell people he is a [redacted] put shampoo in his [redacted]

[redacted] arouse indignation against [redacted] treat ordinary people in [redacted] also inspire others to take [redacted]r justice, not only for [redacted] for victims of [redacted]tice everywhere. [redacted]cored an own goal in [redacted]nsley. It sought to [redacted]ut here in this book are [redacted] many mouths which have opened in his support and which will encourage others to join the campaign to clear his name.

Can I Quote You On That?

A guide to working with the media

Frank Albrighton & Sarah Watts,
The Association of University Administrators (AUA) Good Practice Series no. 25; AUA National Office, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL. Revised edition, 2001; 16 pages; ISBN 0 947931 47 3; no price

Although aimed at university administration, this recently updated guide is relevant for all. In recent times, what with media 'interest' in what anarchists and anarchosyndicalists have to say about anti-capitalism, it has been argued that a space may be developing in which we can put our point of view across to a wider audience.

When considering the pros and cons of relations with the media, two themes recur: the question of editorial control, and the media's negative portrayal of anything anarchist. A third consideration should be the extent to which we respond to and participate in the media's agenda rather than initiating and publicising our own agenda.

This pamphlet addresses these and other issues. Firstly, there is no hope of exerting any editorial control - even reporters lose editorial control at subediting or the equivalent stage in broadcasting. Secondly, the pamphlet warns of the necessity to be aware of and to prepare for different (including negative) angles that reporters will be looking from. The tips and advice on how reporters work and on presenting your case in interviews are very valuable in this regard.

On to the third consideration above, this guide is geared towards both responding to media contact and initiating such contact. For the media, however, revolutionary politics is a different kettle of fish to the world of education. In terms of the media's agenda regarding anti-capitalism, SF has refused to be drawn in by the likes of Newsnight, Talk Radio, the Today Programme, and Channel Four News. The media's sole purpose is to build up a violent image of anarchists and anti-capitalists, so there is nothing to be gained by taking part. On the other hand, there is an argument for using the media, especially at a local level, to promote and publicise our own agenda and that of campaigns and groups we are involved with. It is here that this guide is particularly useful; it contains inspiration for something more directly related to the political/direct action scene.

Dizzy Spells & Ex Orkest

The Ex

Dizzy Spells & Ex Orkest – Een Rondje Holland. Both Ex Records 2001 www.theex.nl

Two new records from the legendary, seminal or at least extremely long-lasting, The Ex - the Dutch punks who have been making big hearted angry noise since the late 70s.

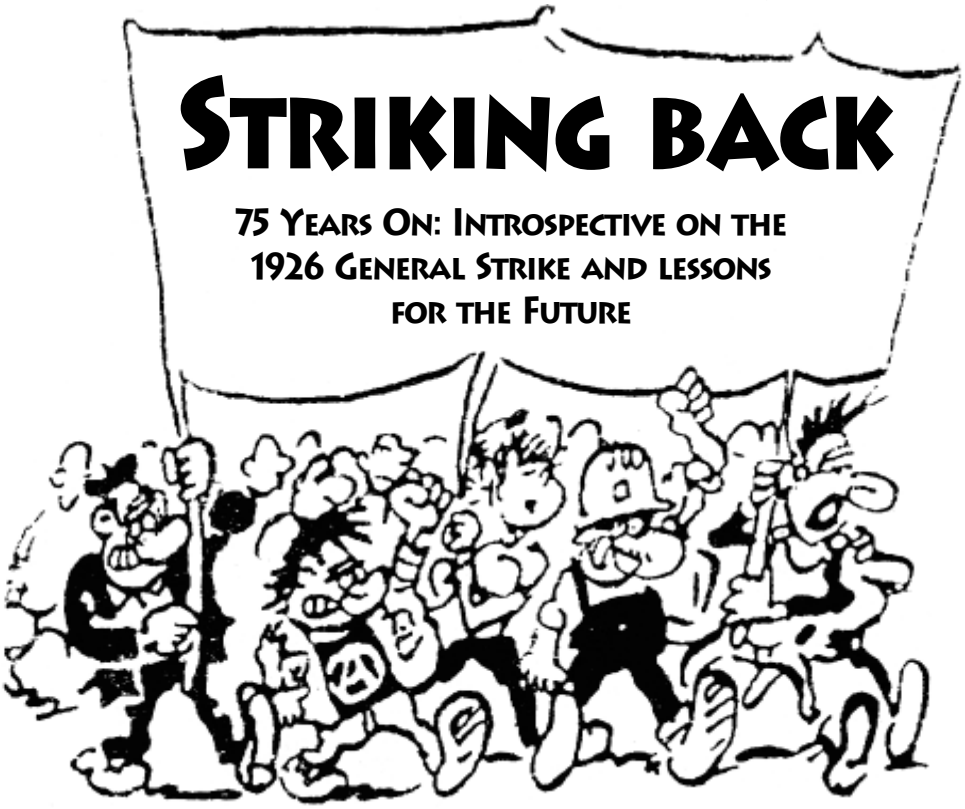
Long time activist and stalwarts of an activist music scheme, they've sung the songs, done the demos, benefits, squats, spread the information – been there, still doing that. Musically, not much has changed in all those years. On 'Dizzy Spells', a Steve Albini produced effort, the music is different from 1981's 'History is What's Happening' – the songs are longer, more musical, less obviously in-your-face angry, but they are both defiantly/ definitely the same band. The one thing that seems to be missing from these shiny little CDs that used to come with vinyl was the posts, the information on things going on, and the great artwork.

Lyrically, they have moved on. The Ex were never as blunt and shouty as the Crass type of bands, and there was always much more humour; they are even less openly polemic now. Though the message is frequently clear, there is room for interpretation,. The songs speak of paranoia, of the loss of a city being built with no care for people, only commerce; of tiredness, of life facing the daily grind of shit and joy. 'Dizzy Spells' is another fine record by The Ex. However, increasingly what I find The Ex do best is working with other people. Two of the finest records I have heard are the two they released with cellist Tom Cora.

'Een Rondje Holland' (a Dutch trip) is another collaborative work. Ex Orkest was a special project by The Ex with a twenty piece orchestra and recorded live in Holland, Belgium and Germany. It's an engrossing recording, ignoring friends who likened passages to a goat in an orchestra pit (good job I didn't play them a previous release, 'Instants', in which bits really do sound like a squealing pig in a drum shop). It's not classical music, it's not punk, it's not folk, it's not jazz, it's avant garde, if that term hadn't been abused and debased of any meaning. The lyrics are all in Dutch, and I am afraid I don't understand any of them. The second track 'Kokend Asfalt', translates as 'scolding asphalt '. The tune is the same as 'State of shock' from that record with Tom Cora, which gives me a nice excuse to dig that out.

Striking Back

75 Years On: Introspective on the 1926 General Strike and lessons for the Future



Seventy-five years ago, in late spring, the whole country came to an abrupt halt. Trams and buses stood idle in the streets, the railways were silent and there were no newspapers on sale. An industrial conflict borne out of social unrest and economic instability had polarised the country. The workers massed against the bosses, the people faced down the State. It was a charged conflict, the like of which had not been seen before in Britain. With most of Europe in turmoil, and the events of 1917 in Russia fresh in the memory, many feared, or hoped for, revolution.

As the country recovered from the devastation of the First World War, trade union membership grew quickly, as did unemployment. The 1920s brought a fierce international trade war, and the coal industry in Britain suffered as much as any other. The industry faced particularly stiff competition from Germany, where miners had seen their wages slashed in a concerted drive to reduce costs and increase competitiveness.

In April 1921, miners, railwaymen and transport workers' unions called for a transport strike in response to a mine owners' announcement of wage reductions and posting of lock out notices. The union leadership called off the strike in the eleventh hour, forcing workers to return to work on the owners' terms. In addition to weakening the strength of these unions and fuelling the growth of the Communist Party, this event, which became known as "Black Friday", foreshadowed the general strike of May 1926.

As many British industrialists viewed it, the coal industry in this country was disadvantaged by the restrictive presence of a national agreement on wages and working time that the miners had secured under the previous Government. The industry's position was made worse by the incoming Conservative Government's decision to return the economy to the gold standard in an attempt to inject some life into the flagging pound. While mine owners agreed to wage increases in 1924, the mining industry suffered from an economic crisis in 1925. So it came as little surprise when, on 30th June 1925, the mine owners made known their intention to abandon the national agreement in an attempt to break up the unions, cut wages and lengthen the working day.

The mine owners demanded that their workers return to the wages and working hours of 1921. When the miners, railwaymen and transport workers responded with an embargo on the transportation of coal, the government stepped in. Surprised and relatively unprepared for such resistance, the government (who by this time were brokering on behalf of the mine owners) agreed on 31st July to provide a nine-month subsidy to maintain the miners' wages until May 1st, 1926, at which point a royal commission would give a ruling on how to resolve the conflict.

Hailed by union leadership as a victory and dubbed by the Daily Herald as "Red Friday", the subsidy and royal commission, in fact, gave the mine owners and the government time to prepare for a major dispute. It also gave union leaders time to manoeuvre themselves into a position to control the labour side of the dispute, rather than themselves to get swept aside by spontaneous mass action.

The Government wasted little time in organising for the anticipated dispute. A strikebreaking organisation was formed and volunteers, drawn from the middle and upper classes, were trained to run essential public services in order to minimise disruption and support the police and military in crushing any resistance from striking workers. Large numbers of special constables were recruited and mobile police squads were organised. The country was placed on a war footing and divided into ten geographical areas, each under the administrative control of a civil commissioner. As the Government made preparations, the Royal Commission it had appointed published a report agreeing with the demands of the mine owners, sending a clear message to the unsurprised, and unimpressed, miners. The subsidy had run its course, and neither the Government nor the miners were in any mood to compromise. The strike was on.

Across the country, the miners came out on 1st May 1926, International Workers' Day. A Royal Proclamation declared a state of emergency and the Government sent out a call for "all loyal citizens" to assist in maintaining vital services. Speaking in the House of Commons, the Liberal MP Lloyd George attempted to play down the importance of the strike, "I have never seen the working classes less inclined for revolution… they are not wild… I am perfectly certain they want nothing but fair play."

A few days later, strikers were fighting pitched battles with the police on the streets. By this time, the railway workers were out, as were the dockers, the utilities workers, the steel workers, the iron, metal and heavy chemical trade workers, the builders, the printers and the transport workers. Even workers at the Daily Mail had downed tools. The following extract is drawn from an article entitled "For King & Country", scheduled for the Mail's leader pages on 3rd May 1926.

"A General Strike is not an industrial dispute, it is a revolutionary movement intended to inflict suffering... and put forcible constraint on the Government..." When the printers read this, they came out in solidarity with the miners. No Daily Mail appeared on 3rd May 1926

"A General Strike is not an industrial dispute, it is a revolutionary movement intended to inflict suffering upon the great mass of innocent persons in the community, and thereby to put forcible constraint on the Government. It is a movement which can only succeed by destroying the Government and subverting the rights and liberties of the people. This being the case, it cannot be tolerated by any civilised government, and it must be dealt with by every resource at the disposal of the community. A state of emergency and national danger has been proclaimed to resist the attack. We call upon all law abiding men and women to hold themselves at the service of King and country."

When the printers read this, they came out in solidarity with the miners. The machine workers, stereotypers and packers joined them. No Daily Mail appeared on 3rd May 1926.

Although preparations had been made in anticipation of some trouble, the government had underestimated the level of support for the miners amongst the people. Its line that the strike really was nothing to worry about no longer sounded tangible. Faced with a situation over which it was rapidly losing control, the Government quickly changed its tune. In the early hours of 3rd May, Downing Street issued a statement denouncing direct action, such as that carried out by the workers at the Mail, as "a challenge to the constitutional rights and freedom of the nation". Three days later, Baldwin, the Tory Prime Minister of the day, sent a desperate message to the nation, "The laws of England are the people's birthright. The laws are in your keeping. You have made Parliament their guardian. The General Strike is a challenge to Parliament, and is the road to anarchy and ruin." The ruling class was obviously shitting itself.

A brief history of the general strike in Britain

William Benbow first put the idea of a general strike forward in 1832, with the publication of his pamphlet 'The Grand National Holiday and Congress of the Productive Classes'. In the pamphlet, Benbow argued for a month-long strike and the setting up of an alternative convention; a congress that would inspect the corrupt institutions of the British State and decide on how to rid the country of the misery which had been inflicted upon it. During the month, the people would be provisioned through 'an expropriation of the expropriators'. In essence, Benbow questioned the state's right to rule and argued the need for the people to create institutions of their own. In so doing, he was reflecting a radical tradition in Britain that had always had a deep-rooted antipathy to the state, dating back (at least) to the Diggers and Levellers in the English Civil War.

Benbow articulated the growing working class hatred of the capitalist class and politicians. He argued that to expect help from the existing political parties and the middle classes was 'sheer madness', and that the working class could only rely on themselves to bring about change. As such, Benbow's pamphlet can be seen as an early exponent of two important ideas of early anarcho-syndicalism. For Benbow and for later anarcho-syndicalists, responsibility for the emancipation of the working class lay not with political parties and reform of the state, but with working class people themselves. It also involved setting up working class organisations outside those of the state.

The first instance of a General Strike took place in July 1842, when the colliery owners of Staffordshire reduced the wages of the miners. The strike spread to Cheshire, Lancashire, Warwickshire, Yorkshire, Scotland and Wales. At the same time in the north of England the 'Plug Plots' took place, so-named because of the strikers' tactic of pulling the plugs on the steam engines that powered the mills.

Initially this dispute was an economic one, but the strikers soon added the political demands of the Chartists. In fact some of the strikers went beyond the demands of the Charter calling for an alternative 'Parliament of Industries'. However, some of the middle class Chartist leaders, when faced with the example of workers taking spontaneous direct action, did not believe that this was possible without their guidance. They, along with a certain Friedrich Engels, asserted that the strikes were the result of machinations by the mill owners and the Anti-Corn-Law League, showing how far removed they were from the reality of the industrial workers. In the end, the strikers were forced back to work by the extensive use of troops and the government took its revenge.

A more localised version was the General Strike that took place in Liverpool in 1911. This occurred during the period of industrial unrest that began in 1910 and was characterised by the syndicalist nature of the strikes. It was begun by the railwaymen in August on an unofficial basis and was for an end to the enforced conciliation system that was in operation as well as a wage demand. Within days dockers and carters joined them in sympathetic action. A strike committee was convened and, following a lockout by the ship-owners, a general strike was called and met with an immediate response from workers of Liverpool.

There developed a complete social polarisation as 30,000 troops were drafted in and gunboats sailed up the Mersey. Despite police brutality, especially the violent attack on a peaceful meeting that became known as 'Bloody Sunday', the government and the bosses were forced to back down. The strike was a success due to it being controlled by the rank and file, through the strike committee, not by the trade union leadership.

THE TUC LEADERSHIP ENDED UP ON ITS KNEES TO THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE IT WAS SCARED TO CARRY OUT THE WISHES OF ITS MEMBERS. THE COMMUNIST PARTY, THE SELF-APPOINTED POLITICAL VANGUARD OF THE WORKING CLASS, WAS CAPABLE OF NO MORE THAN MEALY-MOUTHED SLOGANS.

With unity amongst industrial workers just about solid, and with strikers growing more confident by the day, the Government was being forced into a corner and so looked to the middle classes for help. This was an obvious and logical strategy. As is the case today, the strongest support for the State lay amongst the professional wealthy classes, and it was they who were the most vociferous in the calls for the striking workers to be brought to heel "in the national interest". One problem with this tactic was the fact that many middle class people had not done a stroke of manual work in their lives. Indeed, some had not done any work at all. However, such was the determination of the wealthy not to allow any significant change in the social fabric of the nation, that lawyers, stockbrokers and students appeared on the streets, along with members of the fairly sizeable British fascist movement, to maintain public services. In the charged climate of industrial conflict, much of this work was viewed as a bit of a giggle by the middle-class volunteers, many of whom were living out childhood fantasies for a few days. Most considered the work simplistic and the workers' grievances wholly unjustified. It hardly needs pointing out of course that these strike-breakers took on the work voluntarily and none had to suffer the low wages and poor conditions of the work, or the inadequate housing and ill health resulting from poverty in any fashion close to that suffered on a daily basis by the workers.

Faced with growing unrest and a strike spreading by the day, the Government broadcast an announcement notifying the armed forces and police that they would receive the full support of the State for any violence they may choose to commit. The police, particularly the mounted "specials", recruited especially for the purposes of the strike, duly obliged with intimidation, wholesale arrests and baton charges against strikers and anyone else they cared to harass. Then, on Wednesday 12th May 1926, with no sign of the tension easing, came the bewildering news; the TUC had called the General Strike off. The workers had been betrayed. The General Council, who had been looking for a way out since the strike began, had surrendered unconditionally to the Government "in order that negations may proceed". The miners were furious, as were the vast majority of those that had struggled with them. Many refused to accept this betrayal. The miners vowed to fight on regardless. They were to stay out until the winter of that year when, despite the best efforts of their communities and fellow workers to sustain them, their hunger forced them back to work. Their wages were cut, the working day lengthened, and district agreements replaced the national agreement.

The day after the TUC had surrendered to the Government, the "strike leaders" let their masks slip. Speaking in Parliament, the railwaymen's leader, J.H. Thomas, commented, "What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this, if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man would have known what would have happened. I thank God it never did."

The TUC leadership ended up on its knees to the government because it was scared to carry out the wishes of its members. The Communist Party, the self-appointed political vanguard of the working class, was capable of no more than mealy-mouthed slogans. During the first few days they called for "all power to the General Council". This referred to the TUC General Council, that is, J.H. Thomas and company - those very same people who were too scared to honour their members' decisions. As strikers became increasingly bitter towards the TUC Leadership, the CP changed its slogan to one calling for the "formation of a Labour Government" to nationalise the mines.

Away from the leadership, workers had rapidly organised themselves creating alternative structures under their direct control, such as transport permit committees and councils of action. Had there still been a mass-syndicalist organisation able to aid and direct this spontaneous action, perhaps British history would have been different. As it was, the 1926 strike ended in bitter defeat, and was followed by victimisation on such a scale that the National Union of Railwaymen, under the leadership of Thomas himself, threatened to resume strike action. The defeat put the British labour movement back 20 years, and militancy of any sizeable force would not resurface until after the Second World War.

The Self-Education Collective course "A History of Anarcho-syndicalism" contains insights into direct action of the past, with details you won't find in the average state-sponsored history book.

Units are downloadable free from www.selfed.org.uk or write to: SelfEd, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

SF Contact Point:

SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE
Tel. 0208 374 5027 Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk

www.solfed.org.uk

Networks - make contact with others in your type of work-

Education Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.
Public Service Workers' Network, PO Box 1681, London N8 7DN.
Communication Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

Locals - get involved locally in regular meetings and action-

North & East London SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE. Tel. 0208 3745027.
Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX. Tel. 0207 358 1854.
South West Solidarity, SWS, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.
South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.
West Midlands SF, PO Box 6705, Redditch, Worcs. B97 6SQ.
Lancashire SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF. Tel 01772 464853. lancsolfed@blueyonder.co.uk
Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 0161 232 7889. manchestersf@scandrac.demon.co.uk
Sheffield SF, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.
West Yorks Solidarity Federation, PO Box 5, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks HX7 8YN.
West Yorks SF (Leeds), PO Box 77, Leeds, LS8 3XX.

SF includes contacts across England, Scotland and Wales. Use the SF Contact Point above to make contact with people near you.

Direct Action - delivered

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Return this form to: DA-SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW, England.

About Solidarity Federation...

Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994. It is a federation of groups and individuals across England, Scotland and Wales. Everyone involved is helping to build a non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian solidarity movement. The basic foundation used for doing this is the Local group.

LOCALS

People are getting together to form Locals – Solidarity Federation groups. Locals put solidarity into practice. In time, each Local will have a premises as a base for solidarity action in the local community. Locals are organising or getting involved in local campaigns across a wide range of issues – both in the community and in workplaces. Issues are wide-ranging: defending our natural and local environment and health; opposing racism, sexism and homophobia; in fact, anything which defends or contributes to our mutual quality of life. It is all part and parcel of building a solidarity movement.

DIRECT ACTION

Apart from being the name of this Quarterly, Direct Action is the tool which Locals use in all their work. At a basic level, this can be simply the spreading of information through leaflets, local bulletins and public meetings to raise awareness and involvement locally.

However, Direct Action is not limited to spreading information. It means a physical presence in defending and promoting a better quality of life. Fundamental to Direct Action is the reality that we can only rely on ourselves to achieve our goals. While we reserve the right to take opportunities to fight for improvements to our quality of life now, the solidarity movement must always remain independent from those we are demanding from. Solidarity Federation will accept neither leadership, charity, nor guidance from government or business – instead, we must couple our principle of solidarity with the practice of self-reliance.

NETWORKING

Solidarity Federation members who work in the same work sector have formed Networks. Their purpose is to promote solidarity amongst workers. Networks also use Direct Action to fight for better pay and conditions, forming a basis for a completely new labour movement, nothing like the Trade Unions, which are weakened by having to abide by ridiculous laws, and by hierarchical power structures and self-interested paid officials. The fundamentally different nature of Networks fits their fundamentally different aim.

WHERE NEXT?

As Locals and Networks grow, they practise community and workers' self-management. Eventually, industries will be run by producers and consumers. In other words, by workers (in Networks) and people in the wider community (Locals), who want the goods and services they provide.

And this is no flight of fancy or text-book dream. As the solidarity movement grows in members and influence, so does the scope for action. Both the Locals and Networks have already established a reputation and are showing real results in membership and effectiveness.

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Capitalism is international, so we need to be organised globally to oppose it and build a viable alternative. Nationalism and patriotism lead to pointless and false divisions, used as tools to fuel economic and bloody wars. Solidarity Federation opposes these in favour of a movement built on global solidarity.

Solidarity Federation is the British section of the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers' Association (IWA). This gives it essential international solidarity and experience from much larger sections, such as the CNT (Spain) and USI (Italy). Founded in 1922, the IWA has a long history of solidarity in action; by the 2nd World War, over five million people worldwide were affiliated. A combination of war, fascism, and soviet 'communism' all but destroyed the movement, but after the Spanish CNT re-emerged in the late 70s, the IWA had a new lease of life. Today, there are sections ranging from a few dozen to thousands of members, and growth is rapid. At the 21st IWA Congress in Granada, Spain, in December 2000, three new groups were welcomed into the IWA, to add to the seven new sections welcomed at the last Congress four years ago.

GETTING INVOLVED

A global solidarity movement can only gather strength as many more people who share the same aims get involved. Contacting Solidarity Federation offers the possibility of contributing to this growing momentum.

It is not like joining a club, union or political party – rather, it is an opportunity to channel your efforts for change and, at the same time, benefit yourself from the experience.

For more info, write to the SolFed Contact Point (above left).

Events/Campaigns/Gatherings...

Solidarity Federation

Manchester SolFed

Support, Advice and Discussion Meetings, first Wednesday of the month, 8.30pm.

3/10/01 - Education
7/11/01 - Fascism and how to fight it

All sessions open & free at: The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road, Fallowfield, Manchester. Or contact Manchester SF (address in contacts, p.34).

North & East London SolFed

Socials: Last Thursday of the month, 8pm, near Camden Tube. We also hold advice surgeries and have regular discussion meetings. Contact us for details of times and places (see contacts, p.34).

Communication Workers

Bulletin 8 out now – Summer of Slavery – action, scandal, etc. in the Post Office. Free copies from CWN (address in contacts, p.34).

South Herts SolFed

Discussion Meetings 8pm, 2nd Wednesday of the month in St Albans (near main railway station). Contact South Herts SolFed, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.

SelfEd Collective

Self-education - developing and sharing ideas and skills. 'A History of Anarcho-syndicalism'. Pamphlets are a quid each - or get them ALL FREE in FULL VERSIONS - easily downloadable from the SelfEd website. www.selfed.org.uk. SelfEd, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR.

Catalyst

Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation - IWA

If you like DA, you'll like Catalyst. Send a stamp or phone for your copy - or for a bunch to hand out at work or play.

Catalyst, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.
Tel. 0161 232 7889. Email;
manchesterSF@scandrac.demon.co.uk

ORGANISING IN THE WORKPLACE:
AN INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH & SAFETY

Discussion Day: 10.30 a.m. Saturday, 27 October 2001
The Yard Theatre, 41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RF
(opposite The Junction pub)

Sessions will include:
Health and Safety, and the Law: including how we as workers can use it to our advantage.
Health and Safety: a direct actionist approach.

All welcome, open discussions, no dogma, no charge. Crèche available.

Further information - Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 0161 232 7889. manchestersf@manchestersf.org.uk; www.manchestersf.org.uk

MANPOWER: THEIR LOGO SHOWS THEM CRUCIFYING WORKERS

The International Workers' Association - the anarcho-syndicalist international - is planning to organise actions against employment agencies, especially Manpower and Adecco, across the globe in the last week in October.

All anti-authoritarians are more than welcome. Let's make them realise we are on to them - and we intend to stop them.
Offers, messages, info - solfed@solfed.org.uk or secretariado@iwa-ait.com
Contact SF (details opposite) for updates

3 THINGS YOUR BOSS WON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW:

1. You have rights to holiday, rest breaks and sick pay;
2. Your workplace must have adequate heating, ventilation, lighting, sanitary facilities, cleaning, water and a place to have meals;
3. Sacking on grounds of pregnancy, race, sex, union membership or without written notice is illegal.

For totally free, friendly support, more info, help fighting your bosses, etc., contact:

Solidarity Federation, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE
0161 232 7889. www.solfed.org.uk

Friends and Neighbours

[To get listed here, write to; DA (F&N). PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, da@direct-action.org.uk]

Haringey Solidarity Group

For direct action, direct control of communities and workplaces, and direct democracy.
http://home.clara.net/hsg/

Kate Sharpley Library

KSL - the long running source and publisher of lesser known gems of history. For details of backlists, current pamphlets and projects, contact KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX. Send a stamp for a current newsletter.

Loombreaker

Send a stamp for a copy- c/o Manchester EF!, Dept 29, 22a Beswick St, Manchester M4 7HS. loombreaker@nematode.freeserve.co.uk
Also, join Riotous Assembly - 1st Tuesday of the month, 7.30pm, Yard Theatre, 41 Old Birley St, Hulme, Manchester.

Anarchist Bookfair

October 20th, 2001. Venue is the Camden Centre, at the back of Camden Town Hall, just opposite St Pancras Station (directions on the website, www.anarchistbookfair.org) Anarchist Bookfair, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1. mail@anarchistbookfair.org

Corner House Briefings

Briefings are available for free in electronic format from cornerhouse@gn.apc.org. Website: http://cornerhouse.icaap.org/ Or write to: The Corner House, PO Box 3137, Station Road, Sturminster, Newton, Dorset DT10 1YJ.
Tel: +44 (0)1258 473795
Fax: +44 (0)1258 473748

Cosmetics Testing

Cosmetics testing on animals continues despite the fact that more reliable tests now exist. Avon cosmetics recently stopped all animal tests due to public pressure. Sign the worldwide petition www.petitionpetition.com/cgi/petition.cgi?id=1776 Get info. from cosmeticpetition@hotmail.com

London MayDay Prisoners

John Lawrie needs witnesses. He is 55, 5ft 4" and had a light blue fleece top coat over a black fleece, and black woolly hat, tracksuit bottoms and boots. He also had a plastic horn and was on the roof of a ladies toilet by Oxford Circus underground. If you saw him, call Andrew Katzen at Moss & Co, Tel. 020 8986 8336; email: andrew@mosslaw.co.uk
Also support needed for all MayDay prisoners - LDMG, c/o BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX. 020 8245 2930

Asylum Support

National coalition of anti-deportation campaigns (NCADC) brings together families and individuals fighting deportation. 110 Hampstead Road, Birmingham B20 2QS.
Tel. 0121 554 6947.
North West Tel. 0161 740 8206,
London Tel. 0207 701 5197
Email ncadc@ncadc.demon.co.uk
Website www.ncadc.demon.co.uk

SchNEWS/SQUALL Yearbook

300 page annual of SchNEWS reprints, stuff from SQUALL, plus more articles, news, pictures, and satirical material about March 2000 - April 2001. £8.50 (inc. p&p) from SchNEWS (cheques payable to Justice to SchNEWS/Justice?, P.O. Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX. Or order it from your library. Web: www.schnews.org.uk/

World Events

Global Day of Action on November 9th, on the opening day of the WTO Conference in Qatar: www.global-unions.org. For more info on next year's World Social Forum and a full summary of this year's meeting; www.forumsocialmundial.org

PoliceThePolice

Campaign set up in light of recent shootings of innocent people by the police, and shortcomings of the investigations around them. Sign the PoliceThePolice ePetition calling for an Independent Body to investigate all Police Shootings in the UK. www.policethepolice.org.uk

Anarchist Calendar Project

State-supported Gregorian calendar promotes acceptance and compliance with the State. A new secular anarchist-oriented calendar will help reduce reliance on the State, and reinforce anarchism. See the forum at clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/anarchistcalendarproject

Friction Solidarity

Support needed for 87 Friction Dynamics workers, sacked in June by new owner - US cowboy Craig Smith. www.frictiondynamex.co.uk. Donations to strike fund, info on Craig Smith's companies etc: 01286 672031 or 01286 672102.

Desist

Essential, free reading - official authorised ZINE of Globalise Desistance. Plus other publications from Anarchist Federation, c/o 84b, Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. www.afed.org.uk. 07946 214590

Anarchist TU Network

For info. send six stamps with any union affiliation details: Box EMAB, 88 Abbey Street, Derby DE22 3SQ. williamgodwin7@hotmail.com http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Parliament/2522

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Get your hands on the ultimate in revolutionary headwear. Subscribe to DA and get a free copy of this classic balaclava knitting pattern. Be the envy of other activists and keep safe and warm too! Produced by voluntary labour, (yours), this stylish and practical item is sure to make you the envy of your friends, (if you have any left).

see page 34 for subsciption details.

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