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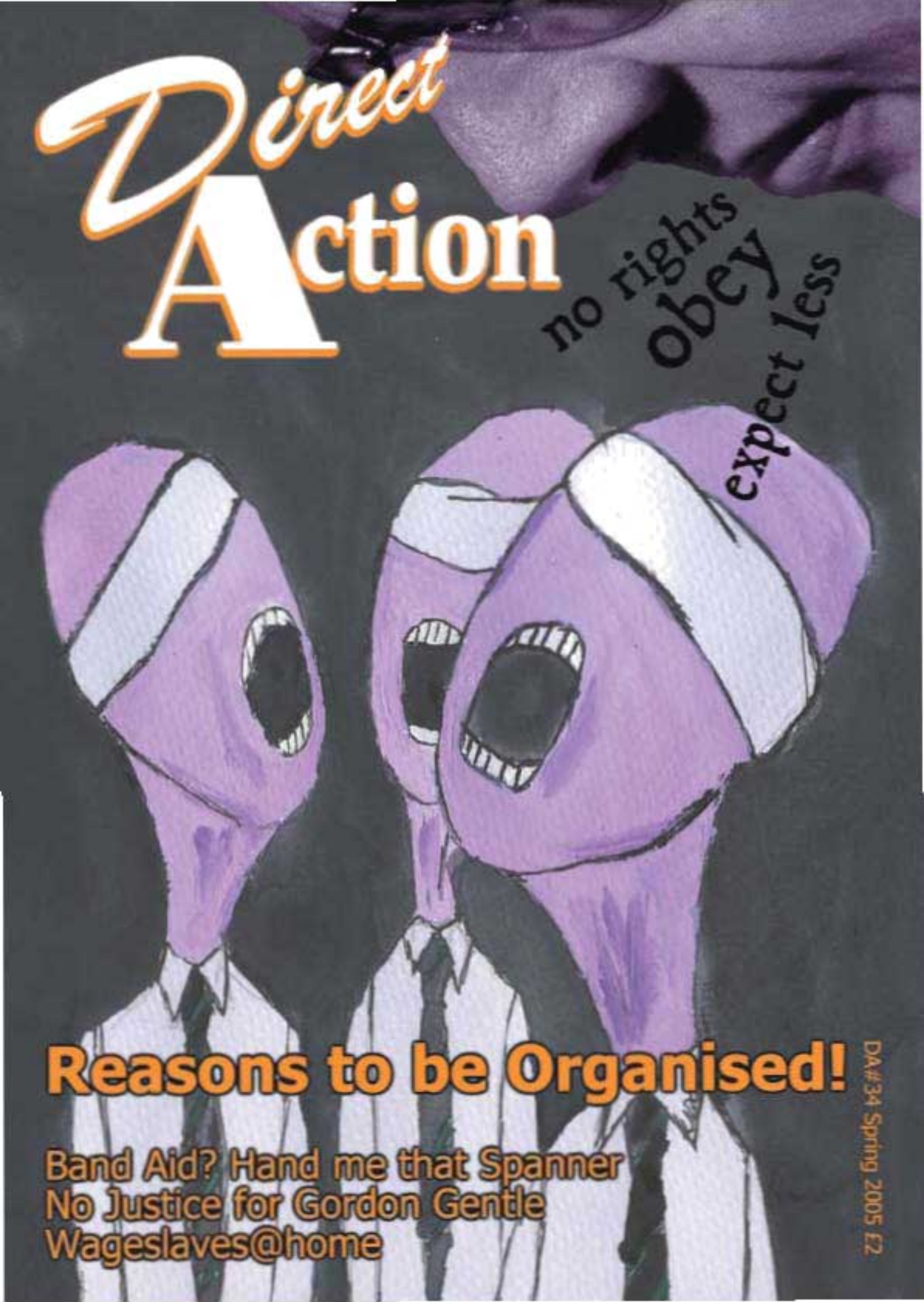

Reasons to be Organised!

Band Aid? Hand me that Spanner
No Justice for Gordon Gentle
Wageslaves@home

DA#34 Spring 2005 £2

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Reasons to be...

...organised!

"Everything I stand for is about personal responsibility, it's about respect, it is about building a cohesive society where you take the consequences of our actions." OK, I'll give you 3 guesses who said that when he was Home Secretary ... before resigning in disgrace ... name sounds like blanket...

The lies and deceit of party politicians the world over is not exactly news – everyone knows what they get up to, just like everyone knows that if you put people in positions of complete power they get nastier in every way than they were before. Power corrupts, and we don't have to look further back than the last two US Presidential elections to see that (in the most recent elections, Jesse Jackson noted that "...in Franklin County, the electric voting system gave Bush 3,893 extra votes out of a total of 638 votes cast").

Then there are the catastrophic effects of having a world where one man (sic) wields enough power to swamp the hopes and dreams (not to mention basic human rights) of millions. Dubya is constantly up-beat about the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, while such lies are exposed by the mushrooming war budget and the ubiquitous "war on terror" rhetoric, which allows them to have a war without end to allegedly "protect us."

Then again, there are the more insidious effects of institutionalised power and exploitation. In Australia, indigenous people now have a life expectancy over 20 years lower than average, and indigenous infants are dying at the same rate as babies in some of the most impoverished developing countries. Meanwhile, here, people are forced to work from home to scrape half the minimum wage on piecework *(Wageslaves@home, p.6)*.

This brings us to this issue of DA, where the theme is less about the state of political corruption and more about how people have organised against it – and what more we can do now. In particular, the emphasis here is on jobs and work, and we kick off with a light take on a dark topic *(Union bosses ... in today's 'stakeholder' society, p.4)*.

By taking matters into our own hands, we can bypass the shocking state of the unions and their bureaucracies. If proof were needed that such tactics can work, we have an interview with a group of Solidarity Federation activists who are currently organising in a notoriously difficult sector – voluntary and community work *(Starting out - Organising at work, p.22)*.

Of course, the idea of self-organisation is not exactly rocket science; neither is it particularly new. During the early part of the 19th Century, working class people started organizing and trying out methods of resistance. Although a coherent set of ideas and tactics was not yet developed, some important lessons were already being learned which would later contribute to the advent of early anarcho-syndicalism *(Luddites & Lackeys, p.18)*.

Another historical perspective is also found within these pages; the brutal class oppression which has characterised the decline of rural working life over the past few hundred years, and continues apace today. The facts show that hunting is the cause of the current rural crisis, not the saviour the bloodsports lobby would have us think *(Get off our land, p30)*.

To bring things back up to date and on-topic, pour yourself a glass of sangria, Rioja, San Miguel, or whatever, and relax (!) to an account of the shipyard protests in Spain over the last year? *(Struggles in the Spanish Shipyards, p.16)*. Such success stories are essential if we are to demonstrate to our workmates that self-organised resistance is essential - and that it actually works. As more people realise it is the only real way out of our current predicament, organising just gets more and more worthwhile.

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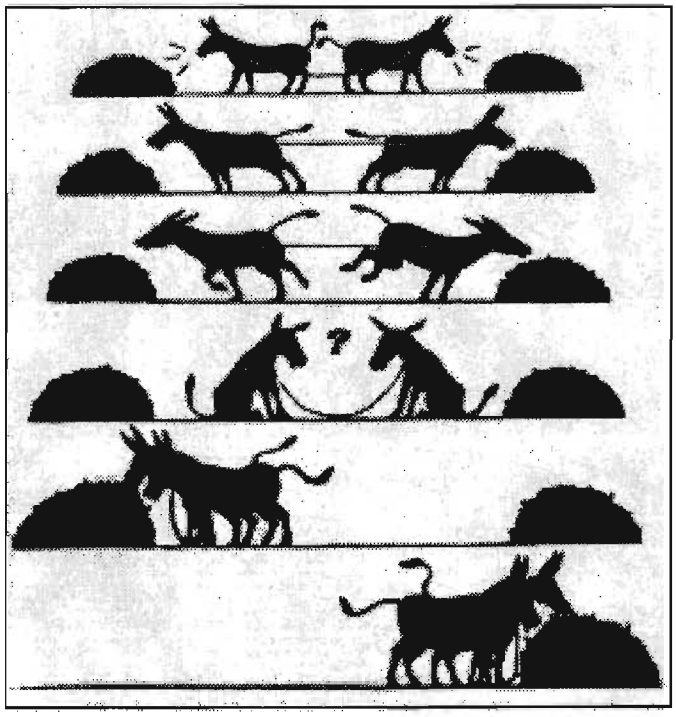
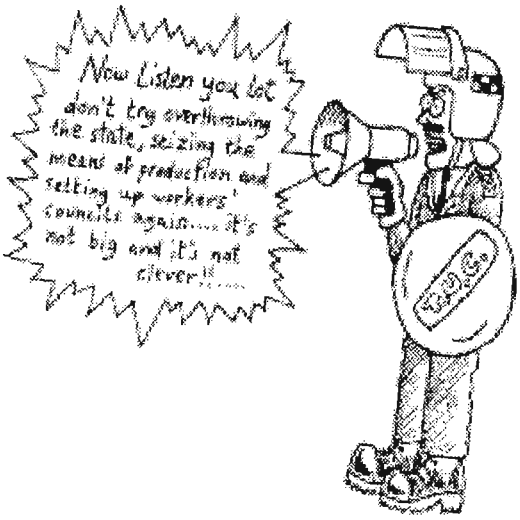




Union bosses

...in today's 'stakeholder' society

I have no idea what unions actually do anymore; maybe they've just left the planet to become estate agents on mars in readiness for the global meltdown here.

You don't see many pictures of 'trade union leaders' in the paper or on telly like you used to. At least I don't, but then I only watch sport on telly and there doesn't seem to be much on sky sports news about them. Mind you, one of the reasons I stick to sport is because I got sick of the union bosses years ago, when they sold their souls to Maggie and took the 'business is good for you' ethic to their hearts. Remember those shiny suits they started wearing for the 'beauty parades', when they tried to sell themselves to 'modern high tech' Japanese or Korean type businesses getting grants to build dirty big factories?

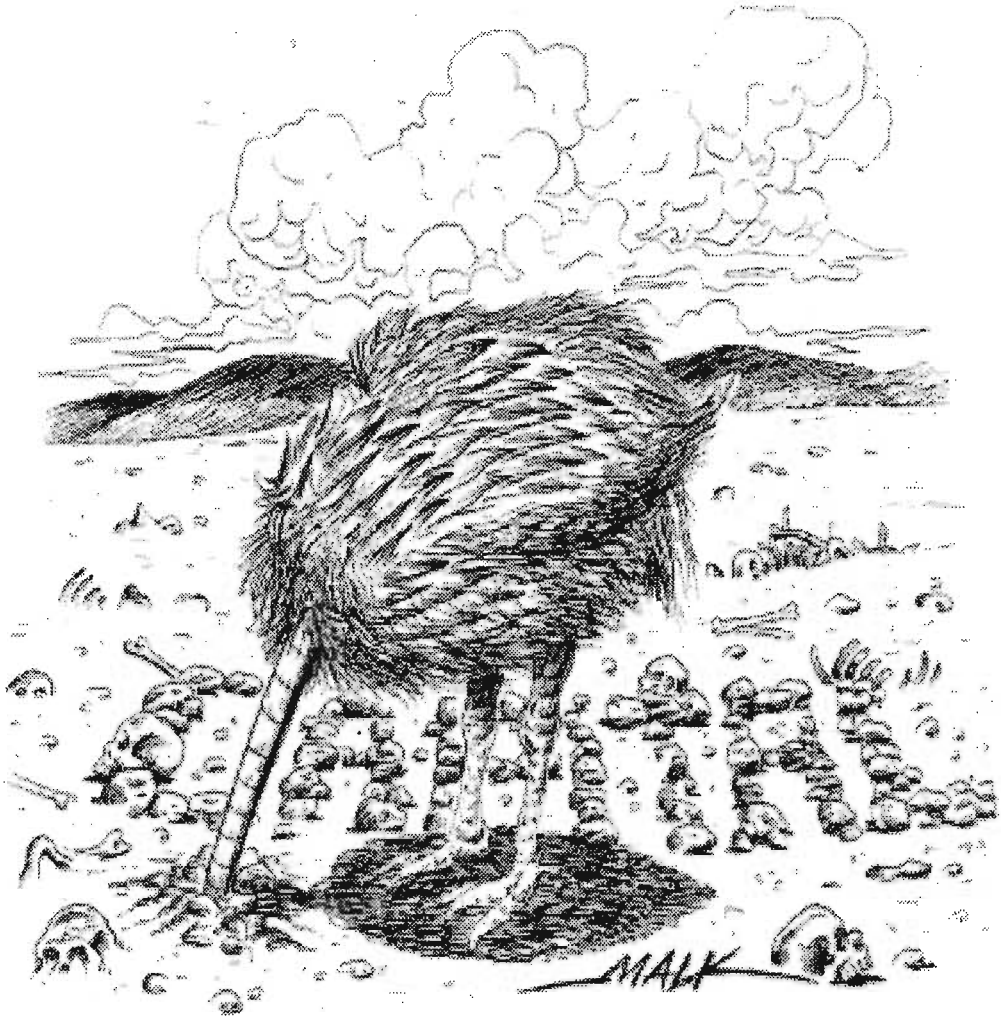
It was incredible, it seemed like the blokes with the shiniest suits got the jobs of the union 'leaders', and it qualified them to tell these capitalists that they were the best ones to 'organise' the new labour force. What they meant by 'organising' was pretending that the new workers' interests were the same as the owners; they were all 'snakeholders'. So, the message was: "pay us your union dues and we'll send you stuff about pensions, mortgages and all that, but don't go on and on about wage rises, they are for the gaffers and the 'leaders'. Oh, and if you have to work on Christmas day don't worry, it's 'cos we live in a post-modern world and have to compete in the global market".

They did it in big businesses everywhere, and ignored the workers, and didn't bother much with little business. Shiny suits, flash cars and briefcases meant you were part of the modern world so beloved by our glorious leader 'Big Toe' and his sidekick the sweet 'Cherry'. These people are so bright and progressive, they don't have to take any notice of 'simple folk', they just have to build the world in their image and we'll all be deliriously happy. So, if *they* can get high on *non*-smoke and binge free drinks, we all can.

I blame the militant tendency for this infatuation with snappy dressing among union leaders. During the early eighties they were all your usual scruffy bastards associated with the 'left' then, one week, all the ones I knew got sharp haircuts. A few weeks later these sharp haircuts were joined by sharp clobber - I assumed the militants had opened a boutique. Then it spread; union 'leaders' of all types, militants, 'broad left', feminists, labour councillors and the usual crew, all started wearing sharp suits and joining the 'young conservatives', and/or '*new* labour'. I have no idea what unions actually do anymore; maybe they've just left the planet to become estate agents on mars in readiness for the global meltdown here.

Of course, back in the days when 'Big Toe' was a 'Little Toe' and 'Cherry' was a pip, people (especially the Daily Mail fraternity) said those nasty trade unions had far too much power. Pictures of 'Red Robbo', 'Red Albert', 'Red Fred' and militants of all colours were plastered all over the telly and 'papers. They had strikes at the drop of a hat. Shorter hours, better money and better conditions are the obvious things, but these militants also had the cheek to put in for better bogs and butties. They got the hump when managers told them to do stupid things, and a lot of people became dead bolshie, and if they weren't on strike it was various go-slows and work-to-rules.

Strangely enough, the Daily (hate) Mail was completely wrong, although it has to be said that it seems workers were more likely to stand up for themselves and fight back in those days. We didn't need the 'leaders' in the (un-shiny) suits; anyway, they were more likely to be 'convenors', or just 'shop-stewards'. A lot of pressure came from groups of 'ordinary' workers, with things like 'wild-cat' strikes, and it was even a bit trendy to be a leftie.



'The British Disease' it was called by those that said unions had too much power. Those commie, Stalinist, bully boys had got every decent, law abiding, man and woman in a vice-like grip. Massive wage rises led to high prices and government subsidies to firms, where militants either went to sleep or went on strike. It all ended with the country nearly going bankrupt. It was stopping 'entrepreneurship' and making less dosh for the rich, which, as we all know, also stopped it trickling down to the bottom of the pile. The decline of manufacturing was blamed on them, so was Britain falling down the league table of wealthy places. All this global market lark meant 'we' had to 'compete' with 'bowl of rice' economies. As a result, "get rid of the unions" was the battle cry, or at least pull their teeth.

Maggie did the dental work by getting *anti*-union laws passed and paying coppers huge overtime wads to beat up miners. She also helped her business mates make it harder to get a job and easier to lose it, with bugger all health and safety. Longer hours, shit shifts, no double bubble or anything much for those lower down the social strata. She was also 'our glorious leader', especially when her policies meant manufacturing gave up the ghost and moved overseas, while the pits, along with loads of other places, shut down and just stayed derelict.

That's when the toothless union 'leaders' started wearing shiny suits, going on parade and acting like Maggie. I remember a mass meeting where I went along to reject a crap wage rise and the sharp suited 'leaders' of the local AUEW asked us to accept it, otherwise the shares would go down. I've never listened to one of those men in suits since, and that was 23 years ago.

Today's suit brigade have been complicit with big business in undermining any resistance from the 'old' days, and otherwise they do very little except take the money and talk to gaffers and government. They're now sponsored by insurance firms and loan sharks. Mind you, UNISON have a woman walking around with loads of people in line behind her (it's on the telly so it must be true). She goes into a gaffers office, coughs and they all cough with her in *unison,* and it's so loud the gaffer shits himself. People I know who are UNISON members say that's all they do, cough.

Where next then? No-one takes much notice of the (wo)men in suits as a general rule, so now all we need to do is get the 'organising ourselves' bit right.

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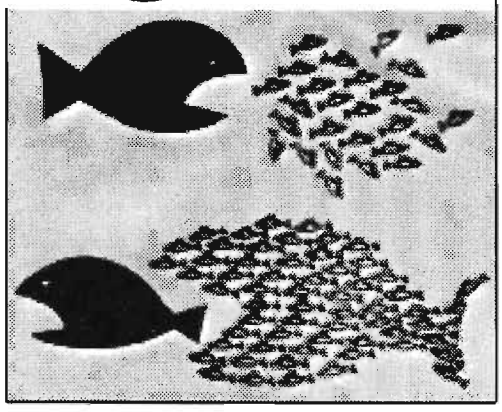
Wageslaves@home



Home workers are an example of the exploitative nature of capitalism running riot and, surprise surprise, the Government is unwilling to intervene to protect these vulnerable and exploited workers.

Home workers represent one of the most exploited groups of workers in Britain. They form part of the huge deregulated and unorganised sector of the UK economy, in which workers are paid poverty pay for working in appalling conditions. Around 94% of home workers are women between the ages of 20 and 45, a significant minority are from ethnic minorities, while some 13% have disabilities or long term health problems. The range of work undertaken by home workers is vast, ranging from packing and assembling, through to skilled work such as hand knitting, sewing, precision engineering, and IT work.

Contrary to popular portrayal, home working does not exist on the very fringes of the British economy; it forms a significant sector, producing goods sold by some of the biggest names in British industry, including the big four supermarkets. Nor should home working be seen as a temporary form of employment used to generate a little extra cash. Like any other job, it is the means by which many people generate the income they need in order to survive.

In fact, apart from shocking pay and conditions, the only difference between home working and other forms of employment is the place of work. Often, working from home is the only real choice for home workers, whether for reasons of poor health, family commitments, or remoteness, access and transport difficulties. Hence, it is the very fact that this group of workers need to work from home that employers are exploiting.

Home workers are not classed as employees and, as such, are not covered by many statutory rights. Also, their isolation from other workers makes it hard for them to organise together. This puts them at a big disadvantage when compared to other workers. Unlike those who go out to work, home workers invariably do not get an hourly rate, and instead are paid piecework rates, such as £6 for every 1,000 Christmas cards packed.

Paying home workers piecework rates has a number of advantages for employers. It helps disguise just how little they get paid and helps get around minimum wage legislation. It also becomes a means of disciplining and punishing workers; anyone who complains about conditions or pay or fail to meet the boss's time/volume requirements are simply not sent any more work. Hence, home workers who have worked for the same company for years can effectively be sacked without notice and without any entitlement to redundancy.

Piecework also gives employers the flexibility to increase or decrease production on a weekly or even daily basis. This can prove disastrous for the workers, who one week find themselves overwhelmed with work, having to work long hours into the night in fear of letting the boss down, then with little or no work the next week, and so no money to pay the bills.

Home working ensures that employers can maximise profits. Typical rates of pay are the equivalent of between £1 and £1.50 per hour. On top of this, employers have few overheads as they do not have to pay for premises, heating and lighting, etc. Nor do they have to comply with costly Heath and Safety requirements. The cost, of course, is borne by the home workers, who have no proper training or protection and so suffer back, neck, hand and respiratory problems. Given the repetitive nature of most home working, there are growing concerns that many may suffer in time from the crippling repetitive strain injuries.

Home workers are an example of the exploitative nature of capitalism running riot in its 'natural' state, and, surprise surprise, the Labour Government is unwilling to intervene to protect these vulnerable and exploited workers. Simply changing the word 'worker' to 'employee' in labour legislation would be enough to ensure that home workers would receive the same rights as those who go out to work. A simple clarification of the national minimum wage enforcement legislation would

Working from home is a 'natural' result of free market madness; the freer the market, the greater the resulting exploitation. However, there is real potential for us to organise ourselves against this trend and show our collective strength.

allow home workers to claim minimum wages without fear of immediate dismissal. It would also do much to end the piecework endemic in home working. Then there's the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention – this lays down basic rights and, if Labour could be bothered to actually ratify it, then it would deliver immediate employment protection to home workers.

The fact that the Government is denying so many hard-pressed people these basic rights indicates their true colours – they are obsessed with deregulation of the labour market and they care nothing about workers in poverty. Labour is driven by free market orthodoxy, which argues that legislation aimed at protecting workers prevents the markets working 'properly' (sic). The reality is that the market is by its very nature exploitative, and the freer the market, the greater the resulting exploitation. The basic truth is that the recent decades of deregulation have brought gross inequality and the impoverishment of large sectors of society.

The relentless and blind rush to ever-greater labour market deregulation, with growing use of temporary workers, home workers, short term contracts, longer hours, the erosion of overtime payments and increased shift and weekend working, is what the Government proudly calls the new 'flexible' labour market. The fact that it has met little resistance from the existing trade unions is testament to their failure. Other than making a few sympathetic noises, the unions have done nothing to organise or defend home workers. As the large unions retreat into their public sector bunkers, run by officials rather than the members themselves, they have become increasingly detached from the everyday experiences of the people who are enduring the worst effects of growing inequality in Labour Britain.

In the long run, growing deregulation will only be defeated through self-organisation. Existing unions staffed by overpaid officials located in fancy office blocks completely divorced from the everyday realities of working class people can never be expected to do anything meaningful. Instead, we must organise ourselves to fight deregulation in our workplaces and in those of our workmates and like-minded workers. To help do this we must create groups and organisations which are properly a part of the communities we seek to defend.

A completely different type of union is needed, whose offices are located in working class communities, run democratically by the people living in that community, for the benefit of that community. Such an organisation will inevitably be part of the local working class, not only in terms of defending economic and working conditions, but also culturally, politically and socially. That is what is meant by an anarcho-sydicalist union – and while they are not yet big in Britain, they already exist in many parts of the world. Here, the Solidarity Federation is seeking to help people form such organisations in their own communities – make contact if you are interested!

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The International Workers Association will be organising an international day of action across the world to fight deregulation and casualisation of labour markets. For info see/contact; www.iwa-ait.org

The Solidarity Federation is organising an ongoing anti-casualisation campaign in the North West. For info contact; Manchester SF, PO Box 29 SWPDO, manchester@manchestersf.org.uk

Bristol Anti Casualisation Campaign etc. The National Group On Homeworking is an independent organisation that campaigns for rights for Homeworkers. They can be contacted on 0113 20005623 or email; Jill@homeworking.gn.apc.org

ON THE EDGE

FUNDAMENTAL FLAMES

Christian protesters set fire to their television licences outside the BBC's London offices. They were outraged over the broadcast of the profanity-laden musical "Jerry Springer - The Opera" that includes a diaper fetishist confessing all to his true love, a tap dance routine by the Ku Klux Klan, and Jesus and the Devil locked in a swearing match.

Michael Reid, a pastor and self-styled bishop, who organised the peaceful demonstration ahead of the airing on Saturday evening, called the musical simply "filth".

"The use of foul language together with mocking Jesus Christ and portraying him wearing a nappy with sequins is highly offensive to Christians and we felt that it was totally wrong." He claimed the BBC would not risk upsetting minority faiths like Islam or Buddhism but, "because we are Christians they think we are fair game for any insults."

Many people who would have had no interest in seeing this musical probably switched on because of all the publicity. Of course, the burning of the TV licences is just a symbolic act, as to get one in the first place means you have already paid the fee. The trouble is, if they were to stop paying, they would surely be going against the teachings of Jesus himself, who apparently said "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, render unto god that which is gods". But then again, rational thought and logic doesn't seem to be a trait in fundamentalist religious thought.

WINNING ONLINE

In the wake of some recent online campaign victories involving strikes in New Zealand and Cambodia, Labourstart have gathered together some thoughts on the subject and published them as a short article. Comments are invited.

You can read it at: www.ericlee.me.uk/archive/000094.html

God: Here we go again

For most of us it seemed that, as the twentieth century drew to a close, Britain had, thankfully, continued to move towards being a more secular society. More and more ordinary people were professing doubts and scepticism around religious beliefs and rites. Those who did profess a belief in a god were more inclined to adopt a more relaxed attitude to some of the finer theological points.

Church attendances fell, with most people only going to church for births, weddings and funerals, mainly through force of habit. Even that was changing, as more alternatives became available. Now, with Bush's re-election and New Labour's religious leadership, religious beliefs and issues are once again centre stage in news and politics.

There is the ongoing argument regarding the expansion of faith schools and the continuing hiving off of social services to faith groups. Then came the news that the government was to introduce the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill, which contains clauses outlawing the incitement of religious hatred. This means that religious groups can force the prosecution of those they believe are attacking their religion. Given the sensitivity of some of the faithful, this could lead to banning of plays, music or even stifling of open debate.

A taste of what may be to come has already been seen in Birmingham, where a play which led to violent protests among the local Sikh community had its run cancelled by the city's Repertory Theatre. The theatre said it had refused to censor the work and was abandoning it purely on health and safety grounds.

The play, Behzti (Dishonour), centres around two characters and depicts a Sikh priest raping somebody inside a gurdwara (a Sikh temple). The protesters claimed the play mocked their faith. The play's author, also a Sikh, revealed that threats had been made against her. The protesters were allowed to leaflet the theatre and their fliers were given out to the audience. Changes were made, but the author refused to change the location of the rape, which was central to the play. Ironically the Rep's other production, The Witches, which Pagans could equally have argued was just as offensive, was staged as usual.

Of course, we already know about Tony Blair's religious convictions, so it came as no surprise to learn of the promotion to education secretary of the staunch Roman Catholic, Ruth Kelly. What is more disturbing are the reports that Kelly, who opposes abortion and euthanasia, is a member of the secretive ultra-conservative Catholic group, Opus Dei.

Once again, we seem to be mirroring developments in the US, where religious fundamentalists are gaining positions of power and religious groups are able to dictate what the rest of us can watch, listen to and do. The "multi-faith" society envisaged by the government seems to leave out those of us who are either atheist, agnostic or just not that bothered. Meanwhile, some sections of the left kowtow to religious prejudices to gain a political foothold in minority communities at the expense of elementary rights that have been fought for over the years.

In the United States, the Christian vote is a powerful electoral force - and may even have been a decisive factor in George W Bush's re-election as president. But in the UK it remains a largely untapped resource. Politics and religion have been, for the most part, kept in separate containers, but now fringe groups like the Christian People's Alliance are attempting to increase their influence. Along with 'Islamaphobia', there is even talk now of 'Christophobia' which seems to some sought of vague assertion of bias against 'Christian' values, usually wrapped around the catch-all 'family values'.

Anarchists have always had a critique of religion and although in many ways things have changed and the power of the established churches has waned, we must be aware of the dangers of religious bigotry and the potential for it to become prevailing force in society. That is not to say that a belief in a god/goddess is automatically seen as a bad thing. It becomes problematic when it is linked to a whole belief system that, at best, preaches acceptance of authority and at worst moralizes and tries to force its beliefs on the rest of society.

Stealing from pensioners

It has been estimated that the Treasury would benefit by a £10 billion pound windfall if the Government forced people to work up to the age of 70. However, according to a recent TUC report, one in four people, and one in three men will die in Yorkshire and Humberside before they reach 65. These figures rise to almost half of men and more than a third of the population as a whole when you get to 70. TUC general secretary, Brendan Barber says "it is simply not an option for many manual workers to carry on working until they are 70".

The government must introduce some changes to the retirement age by October 2006 to comply with European Employment Directive, since the current system which differentiates between men and women has to be addressed. While there is opposition from the Trade Unions to the idea of raising the retirement age to 70, no doubt the prospect of a £10 billion windfall for the Chancellor will be received with glee.

Adoption of this crazy idea will affect 2.6 million workers immediately, between the ages of 65-69, who will pay an average of $4,000 income tax for each of these years instead of drawing their pension. Mr T.McPhail, head of pensions research at Hargreaves Landsdown (an independent advisory firm) says "The reality underlying all this is that we cannot afford to have the type of retirement that many of today's retirees enjoy, because we haven't saved enough".

Ministers are divided as to how to proceed on this matter. Patricia Hewitt, the Trade and Industry secretary, is in favour of getting rid of retirement ages altogether! I suppose we cannot expect people who are currently over retirement age to campaign against raising the age to 70, unless the Government were to try and force people back to work who have retired already... But everyone in their forties and fifties will be up in arms over the theft of what is owed to them, in both time and money.

Reality is, Labour can find money for some things, but not for others. If it is war and destruction then a few billion can be found without question.

The only option is resistance. The Government has written to the TUC asking them not to bring up the question of pensions and the raising of the retirement age to seventy until after the election. Of course, come the summer, with the election over, we will then be told the news, in typical Labour back-door sneaky style.

The time to organise and fight back is now, since if their hand is forced before the election they may actually make a more reasonable decision about their planned theft of our pensions. So, spread the word, tell your local MP what you think and get together and show them we know what they're up to.

Tsunami reaction

We live in a period of intensified state-sponsored religiosity.

In response to the vexed theological question of why god alllows bad things to happen to innocent people, it seems that many religious leaders have been somewhat embarrassed by the dreadful devastation caused by the tsunami. However, this was not the reaction of Israel's Sephardi Chief Rabbi Schlomo Amar - he unashamedly commented that the tsunami;"is an expression of God's great ire in the world. The world is being punished for wrongdoing - be it people's needless hatred of each other, lack of charity, or moral turpitude".

So it is not a question of wrong place, wrong time, or tectonic plate movement, but biblical punishment. Presumably this is why it didn't hit Israel, and all those who have been victims are praying the wrong way or insufficiently.

However, prayers have never stopped a tsunami or a monsoon, and only human co-operation can minimise the risks and clean up the effects of such disasters. The reality is that, far from being acts of god or freaks of nature, such 'natural' disasters are actually human in origin. Indeed, they are a product of capitalism, for if the poor weren't forced to live in areas exposed to tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and the like, and if we had a social system where common sense prevailed so we invested in early warning devices instead of miltary hardware to fight oil wars, then things would be very different. The figures contrasting spending on Iraq wars with aid for tsunami relief are both shocking and telling, and they leave us with one unavoidable rhetorical question; should our action be driven by the profit motive or for the satisfaction of human needs?

ON THE EDGE

TERRORIST THREATS

Anyone can be a terrorist or murderer these days. Even a ten year old school girl. At an elementary school in Philadelphia, a girl was cuffed then taken to a police station. The reason? A pair of scissors were discovered in her school bag, breaking the school's strict no weapons policy. The cops decided as she hadn't threatened anyone with them she had not committed a crime and let her go, but she's still waiting to hear whether she'll be expelled to a special disciplinary school. The girl apparently "cried and cried" with "no idea what she did wrong"...

FFF - FREE SEX NOW!

SchNEWS has a tip for those of you looking for on-line porn but worried about your right on reputation... Fuck for Forest is a Norwegian organization dedicated to having sex in public to save the environment. They raise awareness of environmental issues and raise money by selling eco-porn online...

The organisation is run by a couple in Norway who were in court recently after they stripped off their clothes and had sex on stage during a rock concert by Kristopher Schau and his band The Cumshots! Tommy Hol Ellingsen, and his girlfriend Leona Johansson, said they did it to help save the environment. Tommy 'accidentally' lost his trousers during court proceedings in what he described as, "a short moment of love between him and the Norwegian media". Police fined the couple but they are refusing to pay. Meanwhile, Fuck for Forest are looking for volunteers... Their website says: "Angry? Horny? You can be a model for fuck for forest. Amateurs and professionals alike - anybody is welcome to contact us. We are mainly looking for girls and couples. Get fucked for forest! Don't be depressive. Take control." www.fuckforforest.com

ON THE EDGE

GLOBALISED EXPOSURE

'Eyes on International Financial Institutions' is a new film resource, part of the 'Fawlty Powers' campaign to mark 60 years of the World Bank and IMF. This unique collection of films provides the elusive 'other side of the story' about how these institutions work www.ifiwatchnet.org

FORCED LABOUR

Since December, Government has given itself powers to force local authorities in Manchester/ Leeds/Bradford/North London, to snatch ('take into care') children of failed asylum seekers who do not agree to leave the UK voluntarily. Meanwhile, in the same areas, over 600 rejected asylum seekers who cannot go home immediately will have to do compulsory unpaid community work in return for accommodation and benefits. The policy is being targeted at 150 families who face deportation in Manchester, the Leeds/Bradford area and north London, and local authorities and NGOs in these areas have been invited to 'express interest' in running schemes providing the compulsory work. The agencies will be paid for their work, while the asylum seekers will get nothing for the work they will be forced to do. 'No-One is Illegal', an organization which 'challenges the ideology of immigration controls', has started a 'Campaign Against Immigration Slavery' for non-cooperation/repeal of Section 10 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004, which is the relevant legislation.

CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

The Working Class Movement Library in Manchester is a valuable resource of labour history, and the local council have decided to slash its funding over the next 5 years. It has now produced a CD entitled 'Children of the Industrial Revolution', depicting their lives (see p.35).

No Justice for Gordon Gentle

On June 28th last year, Royal Highland Fusilier Gordon Gentle, aged 19, became one more casualty of the senseless war in Iraq, a casualty which, for me, was also a personal shock – I was Gordon's English teacher for four years. I am saddened, but mostly I am angry. Gordon attended Crookston Castle Secondary School in Pollok, one of the most deprived areas of Glasgow. I remember him as a wee moon-faced, dark-haired boy with grubby hands. As his name happily announced, there was no harm in him.

Seven years have passed since Gordon first sat in my classroom and in that time, plenty has changed in Pollok – the school has closed, is currently being demolished, and the land will be handed over to private developers. One thing, however, remains – the army recruitment desk in the Job Centre.

What was the point of my correcting Gordon's jotters, encouraging him, filing his report cards, meeting his mother at parents' evenings, and preparing him for exams, if ultimately it was all to end at nineteen, just three months after 'completing' his 'training'? What was the nature of such 'training'? Exactly what did the army do to prepare a boy who had left school at sixteen with next to nothing, for his part in the 'War Against Terror'? A boy who had never even punched anyone on the nose in the playground.

You couldn't write it more largely and plainly if you tried – the purpose of Gordon's education was to make him into cannon fodder. This is exactly how much the State cares for boys from certain areas in Glasgow.

If I am angry, imagine his mother's feelings. In fact, Rose Gentle is not only making her feelings clear, but she has sent a much publicised 15 minute 'video letter' to Cherie Blair.

The film 'premièred' in December to about two hundred people at Glasgow's Film Theatre.

...the purpose of Gordon's education was to make him into cannon fodder. This is how much the State cares for boys from certain areas in Glasgow

The whole event was slightly surreal, more like an award ceremony. There was a large contingent from Pollok in the back rows, many of them Gordon's friends and my ex-pupils, who greeted me with good natured, yet ironic cheers – 'even "Gento's" teacher has turned up'. There were also some of the usual trendy 'Art House' crowd; Glasgow's left-wing glitterati, the likes of Rosie Kane (Scottish Socialist Party); and a video message of support from the actor, Peter Mullan. Rose Gentle looked out of place in a panel with the writer A L Kennedy and a smart Eva Jasiewicz from 'Camcorder Guerillas', a group of documentary-makers specialising in issues not covered by the mainstream media, who made the film (complete with a soundtrack by 'Belle & Sebastian', the darlings of Glasgow Indy pop). The people from Pollok looked bewildered, yet excited. They must have wondered what on earth had brought all these smart, beautiful people to their cause, many of whom couldn't have placed Pollok on the map six months ago.

The previous week, 'The Herald' ran a double page spread in its weekend magazine, which neatly side-stepped any political points made by the 'Justice for Gordon Gentle' campaign (who wish to prosecute the Government for neglect in its 'duty of care'). Instead it focused on the mother's loss of her 'beautiful soldier boy'. This was illustrated with plenty of 'gritty' photography of Gordon's mates hanging out in the scheme, smoking and drinking from strategically placed, prop-like lager cans. There are rumours that even Michael Moore wants to make a film. Clearly, social deprivation still sells.

Textile Troubles

2005 is not shaping up very well for some of the most abused and poverty-stricken workers on the planet. With the garment industry quotas ending this January, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions puts the consequences boldly in a recent report; "Disaster Looms with the End of the Quota System". It predicts massive social deprivation of global proportions following from the end of the Multi Fibre Agreement. The expected consequences include "the loss of millions of jobs in countries which are already some of the poorest in the world". Read it at: www.icftu.org/

Greece...

In October and throughout November, dismissed workers occupied the Trikolan textile factory in Naousa, northern Greece. The action followed the announcement by the owners, Klonatex, of their intention to exploit cheaper, more unregulated labour markets across the border in Bulgaria and elsewhere in the Balkans. The main aim of the occupation was to prevent the transfer of machinery.

Throughout northern Greece, most textile workers have now seen their jobs disappear since the country joined the EU. The workers in Naousa have also been fiercely critical of a political system that has consistently supported, and even financed, the closure and transferral of many factories.

There has been widespread solidarity with the Trikolan occupation, not only in Naousa, but also in nearby Thessaloniki. Also, in late November, anarchists in Athens demonstrated outside the headquarters of Klonatex.

This international news could not have been brought to you without the following excellent WebSources:
A-Infos News Service; www.ainfos.ca/
IWA (International Workers' Association); www.iwa-ait.org
SchNEWS; www.schnews.org.uk
Labourstart; http://www.labourstart.org/
ASeed - Roots; http://antenna.nl/aseed/
Earth First – Action Update; http://host.envirolink.org/ef/
Corporate Watch; www.corpwatch.org, www.corporatewatch.org
No Sweat; www.nosweat.org.uk
www.red-star-research.org.uk

...Bulgaria...

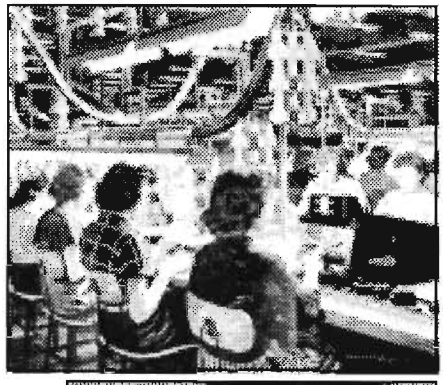
Many textile companies, formerly operating in Greece, are now exploiting the female labour of Petrič in southern Bulgaria. Here, working conditions include:

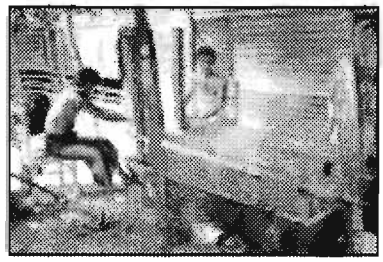
- •4.50 for an 8 hour shift (compared to 10 times that in Greece);
- no sick pay or holiday pay;
- workers are locked in if targets are not achieved;
- wages are lowered when the unemployment rate rises;
- the few regulations on working conditions are not enforced.

...and Worldwide

The information on the textile industry in Bulgaria comes from a report prepared by Working Women Worldwide (WWW) project 'The Rights of Workers in Garment Industry Subcontracting Chains'. The report brings together research by women workers' organisations in Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and Britain. It provides a wealth of information on how the garment industry actually operates and on the issues facing workers at different levels of the subcontracting hierarchy.

For the full report see www.poptel.org.uk/women-ww/Garment%20Report.pdf.





The Trikolan textile factory occupation in Greece (see text)

Haiti

Workers at the Codevi Free Trade Zone in Ouanaminthe, Haiti, have had continuous problems with the owner of the factories there: Grupo M. Though the case has received international attention, Fernando Capellan, President of Grupo M, along with the bankers (part of the World Bank), and Levi's, haven't acted to stop the labour violations.

www.campaignforlaborrights.org/

Croatia

Illegal quarrying in Croatia is threatening one of Europe's most sensitive forests. But activists opposing the destruction are facing a tight web of corruption and violence, weaved by the powerful industry mogul Vlado Zec.

Read more... www.corporatewatch.org/news/forest_quarry_boss.htm

IWA-AIT International Congress

The International Workers Association (IWA), the global anarcho-syndicalist organisation, met in Granada, Spain in December. The Solidarity Federation (SolFed) were there representing Britain. Richard, International Secretary for SolFed, said: "It was well organised and generally a good congress. Some important issues were faced. There was a real awareness of what the other sections are doing."

A junior branch of the IWA, Solfed have nevertheless been agreed as the hosts for the next IWA-AIT meeting in 2006, and could be affected by a new resolution to help smaller groups. Richard explained: "It will be good for Britain to have the congress. All of us who went came away feeling positive. "We haven't asked for any help yet, but the IWA tries to support its smaller sections."

On the down side, the US contingent was absent, following internal problems with two distinct groups there, although both sent greetings. Questions were also raised over the status of Germany's group, the FAU, on which Richard commented: "The FAU is perceived by some sections as proceeding through its own path and not in concert with the IWA, in particular for associating with CNT-Vignoles, a reformist group in France, who split with the IWA group there".

However, he had many more optimistic comments about the progress that has been made: "Despite the fact that the IWA doesn't have a US group, many more links have been made over the last decade. This time there was the acceptance of a new Serbian ASI group; Israel's ASI have also been accepted as friends. This adds to another 3 new groups added at the last congress, and a further 7 groups at the previous one".

"In Latin America, the IWA is being consolidated with existing sections and is going from strength to strength. It's a stronger position than it has been for many years." It was decided to make an international magazine and supporting web-zine. IWA are having a co-ordinated series of actions against temp agencies and work casualisation from April 14 to May 1 (see www.iwa-ait.org for details). Greetings also came from other groups in Germany, Holland, Pakistan and Chile. Norway was re-elected as the secretariat until 2006.

Present at the congress were: SolFed, CNT (France), AIT-Portugal, CNT (Spain), NSF(Norway), FAU (Germany), Direct (Switzerland) USI (Italia), Priama Akcia (Slovakia), FAG (Chech Rep.), KRAS (Russia), FORA (Argentina), COB (Brazil) and Amigos de la AIT (Colombia). Various observers from Serbia, Greece, Croatia, Slovenia, and the Spanish CNT were also present.

¡TODOS A LA CALLE POR EL FUTURO DE LOS ASTILLEROS!

UN FUTURO PARA LOS ASTILLEROS
CARGA DE TRABAJO ¡¡YA!!

¡ni cierre, ni privatización, ni despidos!

¡SOLIDARIZATE!

CNT otra forma de hacer Sindicalismo Confederación Nacional del Trabajo - FEDERACIÓN LOCAL DE SEVILLA

At the same time as the Congress took place in Granada, the CNT was also protesting across Spain, defending workers' rights - for example, see the shipyards disputes article in this issue's globalfocus, p.16-17.

Slovakia

In November, Neusiedler, an Austrian company owned by Mondi Paper, sacked 5 workers with just an hour's notice at its factory at Ruzomberok in Slovakia. The reason – campaigning for a wage rise; breaking away from the existing KOZ trade union; and organising a new union, ZOO Papier, with 90% support among the workforce. Other workers who joined the new union have also been dismissed, or have been given dismissal notices.

Solidarity Federation, together with workers in other countries, have mounted protest actions at Neusiedler and Mondi Paper plants. Such actions in support of Neusiedler workers will continue until the following demands are met:

- Readmission of sacked workers;
- Withdrawal of dismissal notices;
- No more lay-offs of union members;
- Recognition of the new union, ZOO Papier;
- No victimisation for workplace and union activity;
- No harassment of union members and their families.

Priama Akcia, the Slovakian section of the International Workers Association, point out that this struggle is the first in Slovakia to throw off the grip of the old bureaucratic unions in an attempt to form new, more open ones. For example, the new union's officials are paid an average wage; they are recallable at any time, which is not possible in any other union; and decisions are made through mass meetings which is rare, if not impossible, in other unions. ZOO Papier are open to direct action methods; to new views on how workers organisation; and to experiences from all over the world, including those of anarchosyndicalists.

E-mail solidarity messages to: noveodbory@post.sk or sativa@zoznam.sk.
E-mail your protests to: miloslav.curilla@neusiedler.com, or hovorca@neusiedler.com.
In Britain, Neusiedler can be found at Horatio House, 77 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London, W6 8JC - tel: 020 8237 6050; fax: 020 8741 3790; email: infolineuk@neusiedler.com. Mondi Paper also owns many plants in various parts of the UK – contact manchestersf@manchestersf.org.uk for further details.

Russia - pensioners fight back

In January, Russia shook with protests unseen since the "rail wars" of 1998, when embittered miners blocked railway connections around the country. The battleground this time has been planned liberal reforms which will remove the rights of many disadvantaged and poor people to free transport, medical treatment, and so on.

During 1998-2003 the liberal right was held in check by the aforementioned rail wars and the presence of some sort of communist opposition in the parliament (Duma). Since December 2003, when the current right wing KGB clique seized all power, liberal reforms are very much back in full swing, from ending free transport and medical treatment to partial privatization of elementary education, to clampdowns on freedom.

The new laws passed last summer basically mean that rights to public services will be replaced by a means testing system of payments and, due to the annihilation of independent TV in Russia and the fact the laws were rushed through, it is only recently that it has become clear what this really means. For example, in Leningrad, those who used to enjoy free benefits (telephone, transport, health, etc.) get a lump-sum compensation of 230 rubles (about £4) a month. A single local train fare from Gatchina to St Petersburg costs 42 rubles (about £1). In Voronezh, the city government decided to compensate revoking benefits with a payment of just 100 rubles (about £2).

So, January saw widespread, more or less spontaneous collective protests (see box for examples), plus countless individual protests, such as non-payment, and arguments with conductors. In some cities, the municipality started dispatching only male conductors, since they considered female ones too vulnerable to assaults from pensioners and the disabled. In Kaliningrad, the city government hastily returned free travel to police after a bunch of cops mishandled a conductor, and in many other areas concessions were quickly made in the face of the protests. Indeed, pensioners were returned benefits in Tyumen, Yekaterinburg, Primorsk, Almetevsk, Chelyabinsk, Chukotka and St Petersburg.

The anarchists have been participating in the protests and are demanding not just a return to the status quo, but new guarantees for pensioners in areas where they haven't had the free benefits before. In some cities, the rallies were broken up by force, but mostly the authorities seemed scared and held back. Pensioners are not only respected culturally but are also an important voting constituency.

It is no surprise that in some cities, anarchists and their friends organizing and participating in the protests have been targeted with a fierce repression.

To help/stay updated;
russia.indymedia.org
www.avtonom.org

Examples of demonstrations:

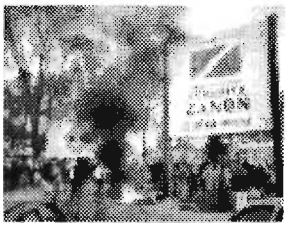
- **11th of January - in Dzerzhinsk of Nizhni Novgorod region, 400 veterans and disabled demonstrate illegally against cancellation of free benefits**
- **12th of January – 1,000 pensioners and disabled in Penza**
- **13th of January – 2,000 pensioners in Stariy Oskol**
- **13th of January - 300 in Krasnogorsk (Moscow suburb)**
- **14th of January - 400 in Kaluga**
- **14th of January - 400 in St Petersburg**
- **14th of January – 1,500 in Penza**
- **14th of January - 200 in Cherepovets**
- **14th of January - 200 in Rybinsk**
- **15th of January – 1,000 in Himki (Moscow suburb)**
- **15th of January - 300 in Kazan**
- **15th of January - At least 8,000 in St. Petersburg**
- **18th of January – 1,000 in Perm**
- **18th of January – 5,000 in Tomsk.**

St. Petersburg, 15-1-05

Around 1000 persons gathered at 12am at Smolna in an illegal, spontaneous meeting. After 2 hours, without any previous agreement with city authorities, they moved to Suvorovsky prospect, blocking the traffic. Then on to Nevsky Prospect, where traffic was blocked as well. Some of the crowd's slogans concentrated on the benefits issue - most had a general, political character: "Down with Putin!", "Down with the government!", "Down with the regime of plundering!", "Revolution!" etc. By the time the demonstrators arrived at Sadovaya street they had swelled to over 5,000, so many were joining in spontaneously. There, the crowd joined with another from Gostiniy dvor, which itself now numbered over 2,000, making 7,000 people blocking all movement in Nevskiy prospect and Sadovaya street. Meanwhile, another 1,000 people had gathered in Victory park, blocking movement in the Moscow prospect. One angry driver drove over three protesters, one of whom died.

Later in the day, two activists were kidnapped by plain-clothes police in Samara and taken in. One, Lashmakin, was brutally beaten up, his mouth was shut with tape and he was targeted with traditional "Dyba" torture, where he was hanged between two chairs and beaten. Then, both were placed in a cell, where everyone arrested during the day was placed until court next day. Cops shouted "you all will suffer because of him (Lashmakin)", and sprayed teargas all around. Eventually, the case against Lashmakin collapsed in court.

Argentina



During the 2001 economic crisis (see previous DAs), 20,000 Argentineans slid below the poverty line every day, as the economy went into meltdown and $130 billion left the country for Western banks. Five presidents were ousted in two weeks. The response of the Argentine workers was to take back factories shut down by owners with burned fingers, and run them themselves.

Many occupied factories have become successful in a country where the US-driven neoliberalist project has dramatically crashed and burned, as elsewhere in South America. For example, workers at the Zanon plant took over after the owner closed it down claiming it wasn't making enough profit. After the occupation, the cooperative has taken on 50% more workers and production levels have increased threefold.

During the crisis, 'Que se vayan todos!' (Out with them all!) became the common call of protesters. The Piquetero (flying picket) movement of thousands of unemployed workers who use direct action have fought pitched battles with the authorities. In Argentina's second biggest city, Cordoba, civil servants set fire to the city hall.

However, it didn't take long before things started to return to the 'normality' of capitalist carnage. Now, the banks are seeing a return to profit, and there are mass arrests and protesters being shot dead on the streets. That's practically back to normal then.

With a right-wing government back in, the gloves are off and the government is clamping down on anti-capitalist demonstrations and organisation, and closing worker controlled factories. Once again, government policy is all about foreign debt payments, privatisations and corporate-friendly laws.

Still, there are over 15,000 workers occupying 200 workplaces. Occupied businesses are usually run on a one worker, one vote basis and many factories pay all their workers the same salary. The Zanon workers' co-operative is one of those occupied businesses. Called FaSinPat, short for 'Fabricas Sin Patrones', (Factories Without Bosses), it has occupied a ceramics factory since October 2001.

There are many reasons why the local community is so supportive of the co-op. For the past twenty years the poverty stricken community of Nueva Espaqa has been asking the government, without success, to build them a health clinic. Taking on the challenge, Zanon workers voted to build a community health centre and finished the job in just three months.

To kill this worrying trend of self-help, judges and politicians have been planning offensive actions against the movement. In an attempt to split the co-operative the government has offered 250 jobs to 400 workers in a new factory making prefabricated buildings. If they refuse they face violent eviction. Zanon's ex-executives have even organised groups of several dozen "barrabravas" (paid hooligans) from the football club Cipolletti to hassle Zanon workers. Various attempts have been made to evict the factory and things are looking rather tenuous for the workers.

The police have a track record. Last August, over 100 workers of the occupied factory Gatic (which makes Adidas clothes), were evicted with tear gas, clubs and rubber bullets. In the face of such barbarism, the workers are defending themselves. Dozens of Buenos Aires telephone workers occupied the two main telephone exchanges in the city and cut all international calls in December. After a worker-organised occupation lasting almost 9 days, the telephone workers union FOETR announced that they had won a 20% wage increase from the employers Telecom and Telefónica de Argentina. Although they were demanding a 50% salary increase, this settlement is a major gain for them.

Union website: www.foetrabsas.org Sign the petition: ww.petitiononline.com/zanon/petition.html. Check out 'The Take', a film about the occupied factory co-operatives: www.nfb.ca/thetake. Two more films: Obreras sin Patron (Workers Without A Boss) and Cuatro Estaciones (Four Seasons), focus specifically on the Brukman garment factory in Buenos Aires. Both are available for viewing and/or download from www.workerswithoutbosses.net

Poland

The Praga group of the Anarchist Federation in Warsaw, Poland, has been organising in recent months against government plans to 'liberalise' rents charged by private landlords. The following is adapted from a leaflet they have been circulating.

Most working people in Poland have just about enough to pay their bills – many don't even have that. Rent liberalisation will mean that basic housing will be unaffordable for many. The result will be more poverty, overcrowding and homelessness.

Landlords claim they need more money to repair buildings but there is no proposal to ensure that increased rent income will actually be spent on repairs. In fact, where rents have risen, there is little or no evidence of repair work. What is more, in some housing estates, repair funds have been stolen or misused.

The government is clearing the pitch to allow its rich friends to benefit from the growth of land and property speculation at the expense of the vast majority who cannot afford to own anything. If this is coupled with cuts in the provision of social housing, the already obscene gap between rich and poor will widen further.

Instead of this sham, Praga Anarchist Federation put forward direct action including public involvement in the running of public housing. Among their demands are that buildings and their operating budget, including all income and costs, be under the direct control of tenants and available for examination by all.

Indonesia

A worker, Partaki, was dismissed from the FILA-run PT Tae Hwa factory back in 1999. The Clean Clothes Campaign is fighting for justice and for the company to address ongoing labour rights violations in the factory, including inadequate wages, compulsory overtime, impossibly high work targets, denial of trade union rights, sexual harassment and verbal abuse.

More info. on how to send solidarity, etc. from the Clean Clothes Campaign and www.nosweat.org.uk

Venezuela: Chavez isn't the answer to your question

The August 2004 elections legitimized Hugo Chávez's presidency, approved by the multinational powers-that-be, despite the opposition's claims of electoral fraud. However, the Venezuelan anarchists' perspective is not exactly embracing of the Chávez Presidency.

The Comision de Relaciones Anarquistas' (CRA's) reaction was: "From the viewpoint of the leaders of the two opposing camps (the officialist, under Hugo Chávez, and the so-called Coordinadora Democrática), people's participation and bottom-up democracy are mere slogans without any basis in reality. These leaders prove once and again that, in order to remain in charge and accumulate more power, they are willing to do any kind of behind-closed-doors deal, as well as performing any political juggling necessary to channel the citizens' anger towards their own benefit. Autonomy means everybody being capable of self-determination, able to establish their own dynamics and pursuing their own concrete goals. The self-proclaimed leaders know perfectly well that their living depends upon turning their own affairs into general interest issues. They present themselves before their constituencies as guarantors of their aspirations, which will be realised in a hypothetical future if, and only if, they are appointed as the bosses. But they never deliver, no matter their colours. For these politicians, the only thing that really matters is to perpetuate their own positions of power.

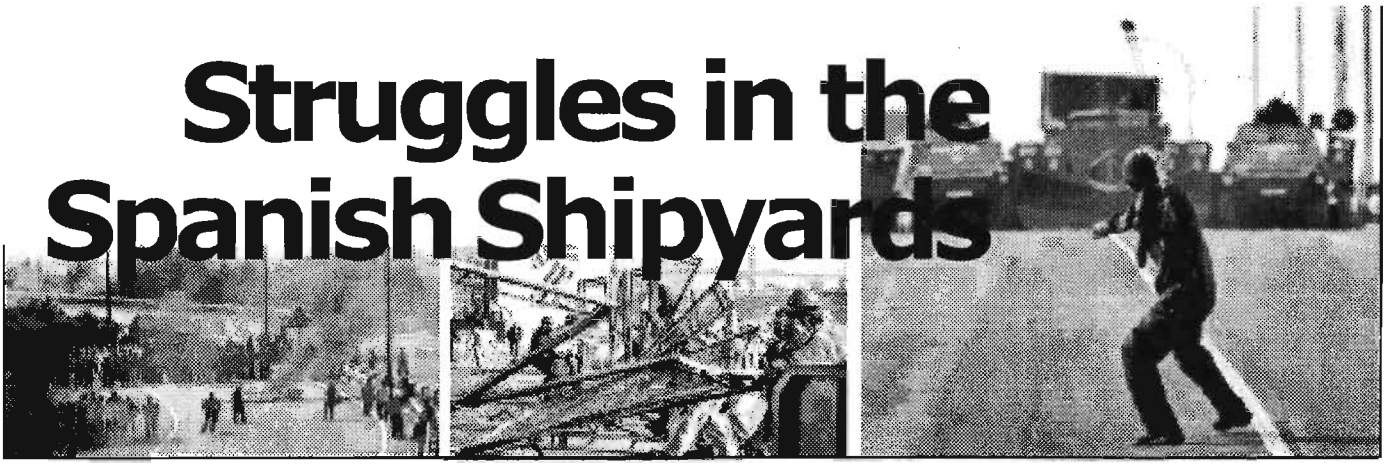
The current levels of poverty, unemployment, street violence and general ills are not going away without deep structural change. Anything less is mere crumbs falling from the table of those who talk about "revolution" while pocketing millions. There is one alternative: to part company completely with the pseudo-leaderships old and new, and for the excluded and oppressed of any colour to build our own paths. This means creating new organisations, horizontal and non-hierarchical spaces, where nobody speaks in the name of anyone else. These then become the foundations for building a new kind of life as well as resisting oppression in the old one. As free-thinking individuals, we go against the tide of the established ideas and practices born out of false consensus and blackmail, deepening our experiences through socialization and self-teaching. These spaces shall recover our best traditions of citizenship, participation and solidarity, and build a really alternative culture, one which takes into account every side of each human being.

Let's turn a deaf ear to the sirens' wails; their power is built upon lies. When they talk about "civil society against dictatorship", they are planning to occupy future ministries and governorships. When they decry against "imperialism" and "oligarchy", they are giving away the country's wealth to the multinationals in the privacy of five star hotels. When they propose to create "emergency programs against poverty", it is because they will not change the social structure that creates it, since it brings huge profits to them. They only call to "participation" when they need our votes. When they call to "unity" and "reconciliation" it is because they want to shut us up and reduce us to passivity.

No politician does your work; let no one make your decisions. From the diversity of common practices shall be born the community of multiple, limitless forms of association with which we shall fight every form of domination. Weaving a dense social fabric is incompatible with warlords, politicos, militarists and demagogues of all colours. Shedding every kind of dependency, we exercise our potential for autonomy. Anything less than that would mean we remain forever under the thumbs of those who profit from our miseries.

From: El Libertario collective. In November, the CRA published issue # 40 of El Libertario, celebrating the 9th anniversary of the CRA and the newspaper. At the same time, the Centro de Estudios Sociales Libertarios (CESL) has opened in Caracas, a library and space for libertarian action and thought. Continued support and solidarity is appreciated. For more information, see the regularly updated El Libertario website www.nodo50.org/ellibertario which includes a large section in English.

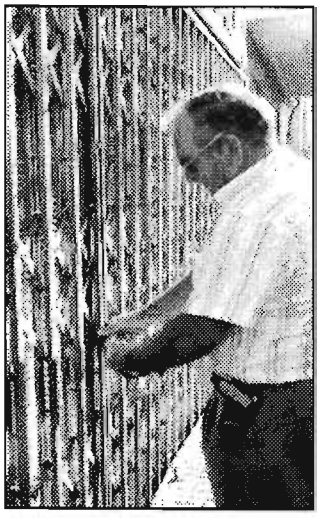
Struggles in the Spanish Shipyards



2004 was a busy year for shipyard workers in Spain. In the run-up to the elections in March 2004 (and the train bomb attacks in Madrid), shipyards across Spain were in open revolt against wage levels and lay-offs in the State-run IZAR shipyards. Battles raged across the country, particularly on the streets of Cadiz (in the South) and Bilbao (in the North). After a brief respite during the spring, the situation deteriorated and the workers again took to the streets, ensuring that the end of the year was as busy as the beginning.

Shipyards are still major employers in Spain. In addition to the 11,000 workers directly employed by IZAR, there are 60,000 in the auxiliary sector (often subcontractors) and 36,000 in adjacent industries. Workers' organisations vary, the most effective being the Anarcho-Syndicalist union CNT (Spanish sister organisation to the Solidarity Federation in Britain), which combines aggressive anti-boss action with a popular following, especially in the auxiliary companies of the shipyards of Seville and Puerto Real.

When the New Labourish Spanish "Socialist Workers" Party won the election, the main shipyard unions immediately made a pact with the new Government to cancel the whole campaign of industrial action. Officially this was to give the Government "a chance" to save the shipyards. In fact it looked like the yards had given in to the new Government and were practically finished. Not surprisingly, the CNT and the workers were disgusted with this dramatic and total union sell-out.



As the summer progressed, the Government set up a Commission to look at the future of the shipyards, a move that was interpreted as trying to find a new way to cut back the industry. In July, it was revealed that the previous PP Government (People's Party = Tories) had known that the European Union was demanding the return of •300 million of illegal subsidies given to IZAR, but had not bothered to mention this to the PSOE – so now the yards were in even more financial trouble.

Direct Action

Everything came to a head on 8th September, when SEPI (the organisation which runs the shipyards for the State) announced that it was going to split the shipyards in two and privatise half of them. The State would convert half of the yards into profitable military ship production (and keep control of them) and the other half would become a commercial ship-builders and be sold off.

The following day, the shipyard workers hit the streets across Spain and the mainstream unions called four days of official strike action. For the rest of that week the workers of San Fernando (Cadiz), whose yard is threatened with closure, battled with the police and erected burning barricades across motorways and railway lines. The first official strike day featured demonstrations at all 10 Spanish yards, with street battles and barricades outside the Cadiz yards of San Fernando and Puerto Real.

The next day, wildcat action by the workers of San Fernando took the police by surprise, erecting burning barricades to block major roads, overturning a car on the motorway and setting it alight. The following day, the workers of the Sestao yards in Bilbao set fire to a number of barricades and blocked roads and railway lines. The fighting was widespread and fierce, with one worker losing an eye when the particularly nasty Basque "Ertzaintza" riot police attacked the workers with CS gas and rubber balls (like bullets but round).

Workers in Puerto Real also took to the streets, using catapaults to defend themselves against the police, who blocked the way into Cadiz with armoured cars and a tank. Meanwhile, in San Fernando, workers decided to take a day off as they had fought with the police and blocked roads for the past six days!

The next day, a large group of shipyard workers in Seville tried to block the huge Centennial V Bridge, but were forced back towards the yards by a ferocious riot police attack that left at least 23 injured. They blocked

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another main road instead, with lampposts and furniture taken from a lorry. Subsequent strike days on 21st, 28th and 30th September were marked by large relatively peaceful demonstrations, with a few exceptions at individual yards. In Gijon, roads and railways were blocked every few days with burning tyres, and in Sestao, workers built barricades from burning cars. Then, workers from the San Fernando yards blocked the main railway line for a couple of days running, and ripped up 100 metres of track in the process!

Solidarity

By the end of September, there were demonstrations at every shipyard in Spain, with the local communities showing widespread support for the strikers, joining them in large numbers on their demonstrations. In the past, regional politicians and unions have tried to play the yards off against each other, and it was feared that some of the smaller yards would be left to fend for themselves. In this light, the fact that there was broad unity of action across Spain has been a welcome indication that the workers won't fall for that bullshit. However, their resolve was tested by the politicians when Sestao workers discovered that a ship which had been scheduled for construction at their yard was being switched to Puerto Real. Workers' anger over this decision provoked one of most violent days in the City.

In Ferrol, a peaceful demonstration of 3,000 workers turned violent when the strikers began to block roads leading into the port. Later in the day, sentries at one of Ferrol's military installations threatened demonstrators with an assault rifle after fireworks were allegedly thrown. Meanwhile, the workers of Manises blocked the runway at Valencia airport, in response to fears that the local Government want to sell off their yard to property developers because of the high value of the land.

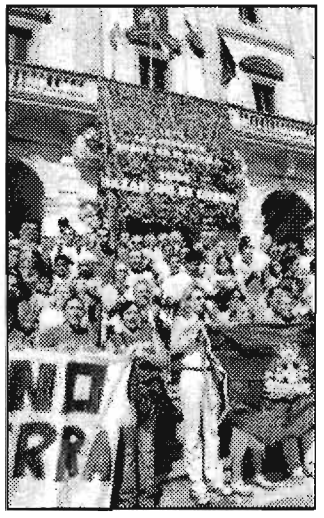
In October, there was a widespread general strike in San Fernando and Puerto Real in support of the shipyards; the first strike of its kind since 1991. As the month progressed, large demonstrations brought shipyard workers from across Andalucia onto the streets of Seville. Here, they joined forces with workers from the Altadis factories and the Magical Island theme park of Seville (who are also threatened with closure), and workers from FASA-Renault and EADS-CASA. In an attempt to prevent a repeat of this show of strength and unity, the police subsequently tried to stop the shipyard workers from marching into the city, resulting in what was described as a "pitched battle". In the face of the police onslaught, the workers were forced to defend themselves. As a result, home-made rockets were fired, cars were burned as barricades, and defended with petrol bombs.

In San Fernando, another fierce battle around the shipyard itself saw a 38-year-old man lose an eye after being shot by the police some 60 metres inside the factory. An ambulance taking him to hospital was blocked by a tank that was deliberately parked across the gates of the yard.

In Puerto Real, the workers again fought the tanks and armoured cars of police, who were intent on stopping them from entering Cadiz. The strikers later displayed missiles that the police had been firing at them.

The concerted and violent action of the shipyard workers has shaken the new President Zapatero, with some commentators referring to them as "urban guerillas". On the union front, the pressure is increasing and splits are appearing between the mainstream unions. The two largest unions (CC.OO and CGT) eventually came out in support of privatisation, much to the dismay of all the other unions. Sadly, it was not surprising to the CNT militants who have had to put up with such about-turns from these opportunist organisations for many years.

Despite such drawbacks, workers militancy and resolve is strong, and it is this which has forced the Government to come up with a proposal which apparently promises no closures and no job losses. It remains to be seen if this is all it first appears and what protection there will be for the workers of the Auxiliary Industry.



organising: early unions in Britain

Luddites & Lackeys

The period 1750-1830 saw the rapid rise of the market economy in Britain. As capitalism tightened its grip on the emerging working class, the first signs of real resistance against this new form of economic oppression also began to develop. During the early part of the 19th Century, working class people started organising and trying out methods of resistance. Of these, one of the most significant was the idea of the Grand National Holiday - the forerunner of the General Strike. Although a coherent set of ideas and tactics was not yet developed, some important lessons were already being learned which would later contribute to the advent of early anarcho-syndicalism.

Many historical accounts of this period are somewhat patchy in their record of working class history. Notably, they tend to underplay or even dismiss the reality that workers could organise themselves and take direct action in the pursuit of revolutionary aims. This tendency is partly because of a wider inclination to portray revolutionary aspirations as somehow "un-English" and not part of the English working class character.

The myth of 'Englishness' is deeply pervasive, and the fact that the history of the working class does not conform to such caricatures is often explained away by the liberal use of the words "mob" and "riot" in the average history book covering the period. These terms tend to imply that, typically driven by poverty, the normally docile working class occasionally lost control and committed isolated and random acts of violence before falling back into their placid acceptance of capitalism.

Historians may have good reasons to underplay a highly organised working-class response to capitalism. Liberal and right wing historians deliberately talk down co-ordinated action, or may not make the (rather obvious) connections through the course of their research. The motives for this are probably already clear - talk of revolution and organised direct action tend to encourage people to review not only their history, but also their present social position. Marxist historians, on the other hand, wish to demonstrate that workers could not reach "political consciousness" without the revolutionary perspective of the Marxist intelligentsia, which was absent at this time. Labour historians prefer to stress the social democratic tendencies of workers by attempting to distance trade unions from violent direct action and revolutionary goals.

This problem is further compounded by the fact that the working class perspective of working class history is often missing since, during this period, the actions taken were often illegal and punishable by death or transportation. Operating in such circumstances, it is not surprising that working class organisation remained largely clandestine, with very few records kept to indicate how the organisations operated and what their aims were. However, there is strong circumstantial evidence that many of the actions of the period were in fact highly planned within working class communities, with detailed aims.

The growth of workplace unions can be interpreted as being an integral part of this wider struggle against capitalism. The goals of these integrated working class organisations were as sophisticated as the organisations themselves. Most significantly, the struggle for immediate improvements to pay and working conditions during the period were often backed up with longer-term aims that clearly demonstrate a revolutionary perspective. The combination of working class community and workplace organisation, linked to the struggle for both immediate gains and longer term revolutionary change, formed an important initial basis for the set of ideas which was later to emerge as anarcho-syndicalism.

Class organisation

As factory based capitalism developed, workers came together in large groups and suffered the same working conditions in the same building on a daily basis for the first time. It did not take long for them to recognise a common interest between themselves, and against their bosses. This growing sense of class-consciousness was the catalyst that led to organisation and working class action. Between 1760 and 1850 the British ruling class sustained the biggest attack on its authority ever organised by the working class.

Workers had begun to form alliances and unions for their own self-protection. Around the end of the eighteenth-century, the Government stepped up action to make such early unions illegal. To get around such legislation, workers organised friendly societies, and often used these to mask their covert union activities. This was a successful strategy, and friendly societies quickly spread to most parts of Britain. So effective was this form of organisation that the sustained action against the starvation caused by soaring food prices during the eighteenth-century was able to draw on a well-developed and self-organised national network of working class friendly societies.

The food riots

Although the massive unrest and violent action of the period has largely been viewed as unplanned, disorganised, desperate scuffles, the unions were instrumental in this organised campaign. Many of the 'food riots' of the late 18th Century were carefully planned; they were simply too well organised to be otherwise.

In 1795, the climactic year of the food riots, workers took co-ordinated action across Britain. In Carlisle, Nottingham, Newcastle, Cornwall and London to name a few, well-organised actions against high food prices have been documented. Very often these protests took a characteristic form. After a prearranged signal, often a woman holding aloft a loaf of bread decorated with a black ribbon, the so-called 'mob' would take over the market place, often for days, in order to enforce low food prices.

Government response

Fearful of a French Revolution type insurrection taking place in Britain, the Government introduced a range of Acts of Parliament in the last years of the 18th Century, aimed at breaking working class organisation. In 1795, Prime Minister Pitt introduced the Seditious Meeting Act, which banned public meeting and brought forward legislation suspending habeas corpus. In 1799, the Combination Acts were introduced, which outlawed trade unions.

In 1797, an Act was introduced which made the swearing of unlawful oaths illegal. This piece of legislation was of great significance, for the swearing of oaths was the basis by which the working class organised successfully, and ensured both secrecy and solidarity. Not only did the ancient guilds (and later the unions) organise around oath-taking, so did all manner of working class organisations, from political clubs to insurrectionist movements. By banning oaths, the Government hoped to end the methods by which clandestine working class organisations had been operating for hundreds of years. The importance the Government placed on undermining working class organisation by attacking the oaths system can be seen from the severity of the sentence for conviction under the new Act - up to 7 years transportation. By contrast, the anti-union combination legislation carried a maximum sentence of three months imprisonment. It was under the swearing of oaths Act that the Tolpuddle Martyrs were found guilty and transported in 1834.

The fact that it presented such a threat at its height may indicate why the Government sought to spread false rumour as to the Luddites' reasons for their actions and their intent.

Radicalism takes off

As the 18th Century drew to a close, Government fears that working class unrest may begin to take a revolutionary direction appeared ever more justified. In December 1800, magistrates in Sheffield issued a proclamation against 'numerously attended' meetings that were being held in fields at night. By March 1801, this had spread to Leeds and Huddersfield, where magistrates reported to the Government that they feared 'an insurrection was in contemplation by the lower orders.' In Lancashire, magistrates reported that in Ashton-under-Lyne a delegate meeting had taken place with 'agents' present from Yorkshire, Birmingham, Bristol and London. To join the United Britons - an organisation based in Lancashire. All were required to answer yes to the following questions:

- Do you desire a total change of the system?
- Are you willing to risk yourself in a contest to leave posterity free?
- Are you willing to do all in your power to create the spirit of love and brotherhood and affection among the friends of freedom?

With the temporary measures under the 1795 Seditious Meetings Act expiring, it became lawful once again to call public meetings, and these began to be called in a highly co-ordinated fashion. An alarmed Government quickly re-enacted the Seditious Meetings Act and habeas corpus was suspended for a further year.

As well as these shadowy insurrectionist organisations, the early 1800s saw the growth of a national organisation campaigning for a minimum wage. This aimed to use constitutional methods to achieve its ends, although the campaign itself was illegal, being organised on the basis of secret committees. It was well represented in the industrial heartland, with some twenty secret committees of weavers existing in the industrial towns of Lancashire alone. The common geographic spread, class situation and clandestine organising methods strongly indicate that these committees had connections with the more insurrectionist groups, although this is often denied in the history books. Agitation for a minimum wage reached boiling point in 1807, with petitions, strikes and demonstrations. Despite a heavy Government response and the arrest of many involved, a similar burst of protest occurred in 1811, when a petition in support of a minimum wage was handed in to Parliament, however the signatures were wasted on the Government.

The failure of the minimum wage movement to gain reform through constitutional methods drove many working-class people to direct action. On the failure

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of the petition, the Lancashire organising committees apparently abandoned constitutional reform and, acting in a single mass block, they turned to Luddism.

Luddism

The popular contemporary portrayal is that it was an uncouth backward looking movement; so much so that it is common even now to refer disparagingly to someone who is suspicious of new technology as a 'Luddite'. Popular historical interpretation has constructed the Luddites as simple minded labourers reacting to the new system by smashing the machines which they thought responsible for their troubles. A slightly more sophisticated analysis is that Luddism was a form of collective bargaining based on sabotage. However, none of these representations are accurate.

Luddism originated in Nottingham around 1810 and it quickly spread. The movement was well organised with members swearing an oath and paying regular subscriptions. Regular secret meetings were held, mainly on the moors at night, from which organising committees and delegates to attend regional meetings were elected. By 1812, the Luddites were confident and numerous enough to begin attacking well defended mills. Pitched battles were fought with soldiers, with many being killed or wounded on both sides.

The fact that it presented such a threat at its height may indicate why the Government sought to spread false rumour as to the Luddites' reasons for their actions and their intent. As its strength grew, Luddism increasingly took an insurrectionist nature with activities including the collection of arms and raising of funds. A secret House of Commons committee noted this with alarm. Luddism's appeal also began to spread beyond weavers, and workers from various industries began taking part in armed raids. Luddism, especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire, became increasingly inspired by the notion of overthrowing the Government.

The fear amongst Britain's ruling class increased and the Government quickly responded by making the crime of frame breaking a capital offence. Armies of Government spies were dispatched in an attempt to infiltrate working class communities. By the end of 1812, more than 12,000 troops were stationed in the most affected areas of northern England, a larger force than Wellington had under his command in Spain. Despite this army of occupation, the Luddites were able to continue to operate. This was only possible because of the protection they received from the wider working class community. The authorities offered very generous rewards to desperately poor workers for information, but in the main, they still failed to get workers to inform. When authorities were able to bring cases to court, trials were often moved to other areas of the country, both to ensure conviction and prevent unrest. Despite the efforts of the ruling class, the funerals of those executed for being involved in Luddism were turned into mass political rallies by the working class.

By 1814, the economic and military power of the ruling class meant the odds began to be stacked against Luddism, and it declined in the face of massive Government oppression. However, as Luddism passed, the revolutionary atmosphere that it generated led to other forms of resistance. Working class clubs such as the Hampden Clubs sprang up, and there was an upsurge in the number of radical papers and periodicals being produced and distributed. The explosion of radicalism that swept across the country maintained momentum up to the 1840s.

Luddism developed and contributed important experience to working class organisations and tactics. It was a movement of the working class that united workers. It also employed methods of direct action in the struggle against capitalism. Luddism not only sought to make immediate economic gains, but also increasingly linked this struggle with the need for widespread social and economic change. Though the aim of the Luddite radicalism remained parliamentary reform, many of those involved equated parliamentary reform directly with revolutionary change. Luddism linked the short-term aims of reform with longer-term aims of revolutionary change. In short, the Luddites developed and practised some of the basic principles on which anarcho-syndicalism was later to be built.

Even the movement for reform was split

into those who advocated change through peaceful constitutional methods and those who argued for insurrection as a way of bringing about change. While attention has been paid to the emerging politics of the former, the latter has been largely forgotten or rejected in popular history. Much is known and written about the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, in which soldiers butchered peaceful demonstrators. However, the attempted uprisings in Derby and Huddersfield at the same time have been given little attention. With hindsight, and a modern perspective, the aims of the insurrectionists may seem confused. Indeed, the Derby and Huddersfield episodes were tragedies bordering on farce. However, it is clear that these events were a reflection of the genuine desire of many working class people for revolutionary change.

Early general unions

Amidst unprecedented Government repression, the unions attempted to organise in new ways. A combination of growing working class identity and solidarity in the face of government repression and the growing factory system, contributed to changes in the approach to workers' organisations. Up to this point, unions had been based on individual trades, often promoting the sectional interest of skilled workers (as in the guilds). Now, the idea of general unions began to evolve, within which all workers would be organised.

In 1817, even though unions were banned, an attempt to form a general union of workers was made in Lancashire. This was known as the 'Philanthropic Society' and it soon spread as far as London. Though it was short-lived, the idea of a general union did not die away. With the repeal of the combination laws in 1824, union organisation began to grow. Within a few years, another attempt at building a national general union was made.

Following a failed strike by cotton spinners in Lancashire, the Grand General Union of the Operative Spinners of Great Britain and Ireland was formed. After a conference in Manchester in 1829, it was decided to turn the union into a general union

called the National Association for the Protection of Labour. In a short time it had gained 10,000 members covering twenty trades. However, the union was short-lived, and it collapsed in 1832 after a defeated strike. In 1831, the London based Metropolitan Trade Union was organised, which federated a number of trades. This organisation, though again short-lived, is relevant because of its strong involvement with the National Union of the Working Class. This organisation went on to form the London Working Men's Association, and then onto the idea of a National Charter.

The Grand National

In 1831, The Operatives Builders Union was formed. This was a national organisation of builders unions who subscribed to the idea of co-operative production, and it went on to form the more general Grand National Guild. From this, in 1834, the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union was formed. The Grand National grew rapidly to over half a million members. These included workers who had not previously been organised, including agricultural workers and a small number of women workers.

The aim of the Grand National was the complete replacement of capitalism and the system of competition with a co-operative system based on workers' control. Here, in 1834, we further elements emerging of early anarcho-syndicalist ideas. In particular, that of one organisation uniting all workers with the aim of direct workers' control of industry –an organisation based on the ideas of solidarity and mutual aid.

Though the Grand National did not survive long, it was able to provide limited support for strikers, and was pivotal in organising a massive demonstration in London in support of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. The idea that growing union organisation among agricultural workers had resulted in the spate of hayrick burning organised by the "army" of Captain Swing instilled instant fear in the Government. The Government responded with brutal repression targeted at the new unions.

Coupled with the Government repression, capitalist bosses also developed tactics aimed at curbing growing union organisation. They started to practise lockouts and use 'the document', whereby workers were forced to sign a pledge that they would not join or belong to a union. In the face of such Government and capitalist repression, and with its funds drained through the financial support given to strikers, the Grand National began to splinter, and collapsed around 1835.

Grand National Holiday

The earliest idea of a 'general strike' was made popular with the 1832 publication of a pamphlet entitled 'The Grand National Holiday and Congress of the Productive Classes'. This was produced by the National Union of the Working Class (NUWC) and written by William Benbow, a follower of Thomas Spence. It was an instant success, and the tactic of a national holiday was endorsed by the London Committee set up to defend the Tolpuddle Martyrs in 1834.

In the pamphlet, Benbow argued for a month-long strike and the setting up of an alternative convention or congress. During the month, the people would be provisioned through 'an expropriation of the expropriators'. Benbow questioned the state's right to rule and argued for the people to create institutions of their own. He articulated the growing working class hatred of the capitalist class and politicians, that to expect help from the existing political parties and the middle classes was 'sheer madness', and the working class could only rely on themselves to bring about change. This represents one of the first documents in English that argues that the working class should utilise their growing industrial strength by the use of the social general strike to bring about revolutionary change. Furthermore, in calling for a national convention, Benbow was well on the way to arguing that the working class should set up alternative organisational structures to those of the state. 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 the setting up of working class organisations outside those of the state.

The idea was taken up by the Chartist Convention although there remained deep divisions within the Chartist movement over its implementation. The more moderate elements feared its revolutionary implications, while many in the more radical wing argued that not enough preparation had been done to sustain a general strike. Two days before the 'holiday' was due to take place ion August 1839, the Chartist Convention called the strike off. Even so a number of radical Chartists attempted an uprising most famously, at Newport where thousands of miners were dispersed by soldiers. At least 24 miners were killed.

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When the Charter was again presented to Parliament in 1842 there was general strike in the midlands and the north of England. The 'Plug Plot' started as a protest against wage-cuts and led to strikers pledging to stay on strike until the Charter was passed. However, it ended in failure, with the organisers being arrested and the strikers being starved back to work.

Though the Charter was subsequently presented again to Parliament in 1848, this too largely failed. With the failure of the Charter, the radical movement went into decline. Though the unions were to come to advocate the need to replace capitalism with socialism over the next sixty years, they were increasingly looking to winning state power through the use of the electoral voting system to bring about change. It was this trend that led to the unions setting up the Labour Party through which socialism was to be established.

In spite of the demise of radicalism by the 1840s, the lessons, ideas and tactics developed in struggle by the early British working class were not entirely lost. The idea of forming an organisation of the working class, which sought to use the methods of direct action, most notably the general strike, were soon to be further developed by workers throughout the world, in what became known as anarcho-syndicalism.

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Starting out: Organising at work

With large sections of the working class now surplus to the needs of capitalism, the British state is withdrawing from many areas of welfare provision and handing responsibility over to charities, religious groups and the voluntary sector. This brave new world follows the US model, where those in well-paid jobs have private schooling and health provision, while the low-paid and unemployed are left to 'compete' for under-funded public sector provision and whatever handouts the voluntary sector provides.

Over the past few years, as councils have hived off their duties to the private sector, there has been a substantial growth in the voluntary, charity and community sectors. These groups can cover a whole range of jobs from housing to care, urban re-generation to environmental concerns.

It is not only those who need services who suffer from this; there are also major implications for those who work in the public services. As the Government and local authorities retreat from welfare provision, many people who worked for local government have moved into the voluntary sector as their previous posts have disappeared. Many who would have found employment as council workers now find themselves employed by a charity run by a board of trustees.

Local government was formerly one of the most widely unionised areas of work. Even if you worked in a small office or depot you were linked to hundreds of other workers in the same town and across the country. Now, by and large, workers find themselves isolated in non-unionised workplaces numbering only a handful. This process of casualisation has resulted in a dramatic decline in pay and conditions, with many workers being employed on part-time and temporary contracts.

This seems like a depressing situation, which indeed it is. Voluntary sector workers in Bristol however saw their circumstances as an opportunity to start afresh and take the fight to their complacent bosses in their own style. Direct Action spoke to Solidarity Federation (SF) Local *Solidarity Bristol* about their response to this situation.

Solidarity Bristol (SB): "One of our lads started working in the voluntary sector in Bristol five or so years ago. He used to work in local government where the unions are still fairly strong. He told us that in his previous job in a metropolitan housing department the management was kept in check by Glaswegian shop stewards who harassed and harangued them all day long. When he started work in Bristol he found only shit conditions and sod all union organisation. There weren't any burly Scots around so, after finding a dusty copy of a recognition agreement in a drawer one day, he got himself volunteered as the first ever shop steward in the organisation. Management thought it was funny, they certainly didn't view it as a threat. I suppose this in itself says a lot about unions in the voluntary sector."

Direct Action (DA): Was there no union presence at all at this place?

SB: "A handful of members, but mainly amongst management. There certainly wasn't any organisation. This was reflected in the working conditions. Workers were grafting for ten hours without proper breaks. Health & safety was virtually non-existent. Management certainly weren't accountable to anyone, except the board, which was populated by the friends and business associates of management. Salary grading reviews used to take place in the pub for Christ sakes. Management was taking the piss."

"Our lad started nagging his workmates to join the union and organised meetings in the pub over the road after work. He just made it up as he went along. He got people to talk about what was bothering them at work and took on small individual concerns as well as low-level collective gripes. Irregular informal dialogue with management began and a lot of these matters were sorted pretty quickly."

DA: How did the management react to this development?

SB: "They were a little curious, but didn't appear overly concerned. Some of the issues that were sorted were long standing and once resolved life became a little easier for everyone. A big change occurred however when there was a cluster of grievances and disciplinaries. One of the workers was up on a ludicrous charge of gross misconduct but, with the help of the steward, the worker himself saw a swift end to that. Then a couple of workers were fired on tenuous grounds for upsetting the wrong people. The atmosphere thickened further when a manager got off a bullying charge without even a verbal warning. This sent out a clear message to the workers and they responded by piling in behind the workplace union who had defended the workers involved."

DA: What effect did this growth in union membership have?

SB: "It certainly gave the union more power. The workplace union began to meet more frequently and a second shop steward was nominated. The two stewards negotiated time for the union to meet during work, something that made it easier and more enticing for workers to attend. Following the disciplinaries, the dynamics in the organisation changed. The workers began to see the union as the vehicle for channelling resistance to management, and as a consequence management began to see the union as a threat. The stewards were organising the workplace and contact with management over routine and specific problems became almost daily."

"The problem with this was that the stewards were getting tired. On the one hand they were being cornered by management on a regular basis and on the other they were being pressured by the workers for information and results. The branch official only provided limited assistance and so the steward role became a heavy burden. It was at this point that the workers made a

Workers organising in the voluntary and community sector, i.e. getting blood out of stones.

collective decision to dismantle the shop steward system and replace it with a system of rotational posts. The posts were essentially elements of the steward's role: grievances & disciplinaries, secretary, health & safety and 'management liaison'. Suddenly, management no longer knew who to isolate and attack. The 'management liaison' delegate acted as a conduit for information between management and the workers; an answer phone rather than a negotiator. This annoyed the shit out of management. At the same time, the workers constructively excluded management from union meetings by demanding privacy and making it uncomfortable for managers pushing to attend. It sounds obvious but you can't have an effective fighting union at work if you invite management to union meetings."

DA: What sort of activity was the union involved in at this time?

SB: "The usual reaction to individual and collective problems at work, but also a health and safety campaign. One of the workers got trained up as a safety rep and passed lots of information to the others. The safety rep forced the creation of a workplace safety committee with the aim of giving the union a specific and reasonably secure means of attacking management. Mandates were issued by union meetings and, via the safety rep, the safety committee agenda was flooded with what amounted to union demands. On top of this the safety rep began interviewing workers in private, carrying out workplace inspections and serving notices on management. They didn't know what was going on. Many demands were backed up with threats of direct action and this sent management into a spin. A quick succession of victories followed and the workers gained confidence. Management agreed to a committee to discuss other issues. Again, delegates were instructed by union meetings and some right royal rows followed. The knobheads on the board, mainly middle and upper class types used to having it all their own way, were furious."

DA: How did they respond?

SB: "They tried different tactics, usually spreading confusion and time wasting. They also tried befriending the workers they considered to be weak links. The union system counteracted these moves by bringing workers back together and presenting a united front to management. Management even tried this befriending tactic during committee meetings, but union delegates stuck to their mandates, so attempts to divide the union were usually frustrated. The union was sometimes cautious about who it sent in to meet with management. Participation of all workers and rotation of duties was always promoted but, on occasions, the union had to rely on the workers who had the most experience and who could spot any tricks."

DA: What role did the union branch play in all this?

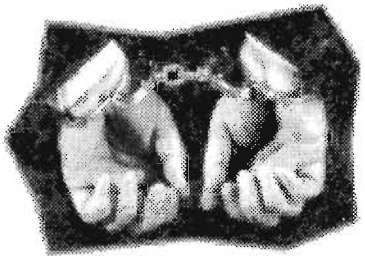
SB: "Very little. At the beginning the stewards used to ask for advice and support but all they generally got back was a lecture about not doing this, that or the other in case it jeopardised union funds. The workplace union did receive advice and support from elsewhere though, mainly from the Solidarity Federation and union organisers around Bristol – bus drivers, warehouse workers, porters, council workers, uni lecturers, nurses, all sorts of people helped out. The workplace union certainly wasn't impressed by the local branch that seemed to be under the control of the Socialist Workers' Party. One of the workers attended a health & safety seminar organised by regional officials of the union in the hope of learning something new, only to be told (by a fucking manager hired by the union) that the best way of combating stress at work was to eat fresh fruit. It really does beggar belief. Anyway, the workplace union got wind of a maimed council worker who was getting fucked over by her branch and this was the final straw. A proposal to collectively leave the union was drawn up by a couple of the workers. This was discussed and carried unanimously at a workplace union meeting. This is the stage they're at now."

DA: So what next?

SB: "They're going it alone, setting up an independent union. They're working on a constitution along syndicalist lines. Subs are to be held in common by the workers. They're very aware of isolating themselves. The level of horizontal organisation in the sector was virtually non-existent before, so they're hoping to improve on this. Other voluntary sector organisations in Bristol have got wind of this and some workers are talking about trying to organise their own workplaces. There's certainly the will to federate across the sector. It's going to take a lot of grafting but there's potential."

DA: Would you say this is 21st Century anarcho-syndicalism?

SB: "No, although the structures and the way decisions are made are heavily influenced by anarcho-syndicalism certainly. Union meetings, where virtually all major decisions are made, issue mandates to recallable delegates. Union posts are rotated to spread knowledge and skills and to prevent elites developing. Direct action such as walkouts and boycotts is used and the workers take little notice of officials telling them what and what not to do. In this respect it's a directly democratic, fighting workplace union, but it lacks the political dimension of an anarcho-syndicalist union. Maybe this will come in time, but for many people it's a hell of a bloody leap from scrapping it out with your boss to revolutionary politics. Workers are understandably sceptical of 'left-wing politics', largely because of the authoritarian left. What the Solidarity Federation (SF) argues for has little to do with all that nonsense. Developing trust and solidarity across the working class is what matters, and so you can say that the events in Bristol form part of the struggle. We're certainly not claiming the credit for this. The spark and some of the support may have come from the SF but the organising and battling has been done by workers, many barely into their twenties, with little or no previous union experience. Not only have they made their working lives a hell of a lot less miserable but they've also smashed into pieces the argument that workers' organisation and militancy is dead. We'll drink to that."



Shed No Tears For Blunkett

When David Blunkett boasted, characteristically, that he would make his predecessor as home secretary, Jack Straw, "look like a woolly liberal", I doubt there were too many people who believed this was possible. Straw may have been at least as Draconian as Michael Howard before him, but he didn't have 9-11, an event, which if one were needed, gave Blunkett's innate authoritarianism and xenophobia full-reign.

In the wake of Blunkett's overdue resignation a picture is being painted, with himself as the primary artist, of "an honourable man brought low by love". The career of this vain, arrogant, conceited individual was not brought to an end because of his private life, something he has done his utmost to deny the rest of us, but because he is a liar and corrupt, neither of which are new.

I first met Blunkett in 1974, and later suffered under him when he was leader of Sheffield City Council. Neither his dishonesty, nor his corruption, nor his right-wing views are recently acquired. He's simply been better in the past at hiding them. First and foremost, he has been a ruthless careerist, no wonder, like Margaret Thatcher before him, he's blubbing now.

Thatcher was a great political ally to Blunkett in his Sheffield Council days; he could cover up the corruption and incompetence of his administration by blaming everything on central government: Northern Grit squaring up to Whitehall. Thatcher was despised in Sheffield, leaving the local Labour administration as secure as a one-party state, and they ran it accordingly. As Blunkett well knew, during this period, you could have put a red ribbon on a dog, and people would have voted for it.

In the 1980's, Sheffield City Council had a publicity machine worthy of Stalin's Russia, and any talk of 'socialism' was never more than empty rhetoric for Blunkett and his pals.

Under Blunkett, more than half of the council's 32,000 employees earned basic pay below TUC guidelines, and 10,000 were paid less than the Council of Europe 'decency threshold'. Women workers got a particularly bad deal, earning far less than their male colleagues, and getting fewer promotions. Only 1% of council employees were black, a quarter of what should have been, and there were rumours of a 'colour bar' in the Town Hall's heavily subsidised restaurant, where no black person had ever been employed.

Meanwhile, there were plenty of jobs and high salaries for the Labour Party faithful. Irrespective of their true politics, careerists from all over the country flocked in. Sheffield didn't need freemasonry, we had the Labour Party. Usually the jobs doled out were in social or youth work; Sheffield had more social workers per head of population than any other place on the planet. In special cases, a job would be invented, such as the creation of a highly-paid 'Peace Officer' role for one Blunkett crony.

Blunkett presided over a huge homeless problem, while massive numbers of council-owned properties lay empty for years, and sometimes for decades. Early in 1983 'Peace City' was somewhat embarrassed to find that a group of young peaceniks had squatted one long-empty council-owned building and turned it into a 'peace centre'. In response, Blunkett's pal Roger Barton, then Chairman of the 'Nuclear Free Zones Committee', cut off the electricity to the building. Blunkett promised the young pacifists that they would not be evicted, a promise he quickly broke. Another embarrassment for the Blunkettgrad 'Nuclear Free Zone' was when a British Rail guard blew the whistle on the transportation of nuclear waste through the area, a fact the council had tried to keep quiet.

As homeless figures in the city continued to soar, other long-unused council-owned properties were occupied. The council's response was always swift and ruthless. One group of squatters wrote to Blunkett personally to ask for a stay of eviction while they found somewhere else to live. With typical arrogance Blunkett replied: "It would seem to me that anarchy can hardly expect reasoned and structured responses within the system which is being attacked". After the eviction the building stayed empty for several more years.

Blunkett's administration also waged a long and bitter war against travellers, even evicting them in the middle of a TB epidemic. The treatment of Sheffield travellers led to a perinatal mortality rate of nearly 50%.

Blunkett and his cohorts constantly railed in public about the corruption of Tory politicians in Whitehall, while Sheffield City Council junkets were legendary and almost every night the Town Hall hosted a lavish function or banquet for some group of councillors or another. Some friends of mine once went to visit Blunkett in his Town Hall office in 1983. Walking in unexpectedly, they witnessed a huge feast laid out; this was Blunkett's elevenses.

A big part of maintaining the illusion necessary to running Blunkettgrad was the notion of 'squaring up to Thatcher'. Things were made easier by the fact that to a very large extent the Council 'owned' the unions, the tenants associations, the peace groups, and just about every political front, tendency, and organisation operating in the city. One Blunkett stand was over 'rate-capping', when Sheffield and several other Labour council's refused to set 'a Tory rate'. The inside word at the time was that Blunkett had been instructed to back down personally by Neil Kinnock, who was then waging a war against Militant Tendency, particularly in Liverpool, where they controlled the anti-rate-capping council. Blunkett's promised reward was the advancement of his cherished political career. He was subsequently elected as MP for Brightside, one of the most solid Labour seats in the country.

Another 'stand' was against bus-fare increases. The city's famously low fares had actually begun to increase, but in 1986 Thatcher's deregulation of public transport threatened to send them spiralling. After more hot-air, Blunkett again capitulated, and as always he crushed dissent ruthlessly. As a member of a group opposed to the fare increases I was sent to prison for putting up a poster advising passengers not to pay. I wasn't prosecuted by the police, I hadn't committed a criminal offence, but by the Labour council, for not having planning permission.

As home secretary Blunkett's abuses of human rights and civil liberties have been staggering. He has introduced internment without trial for suspected foreign terrorists, and barely a day went by without him dreaming up another crackpot neo-fascist scheme to attack civil liberties and put more and more people behind bars. Under Blunkett the British prison population rose to over 75,000, with growing numbers driven to suicide. Callously, Blunkett refused to meet the mothers of young women

cont'd on next page...

This article has been slightly shortened for DA - the full-length version is available driect from Mark Barnsley: Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddersfield, HD13XX, England.
barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com
www.freemarkbarnsley.com

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.

DA:

We are asking you, our supporters, to extend the spirit of mutual aid in a very tangible way so that the IAS can continue to support radical writers in the New Year. If you have not already done so, please contribute to our fundraising campaign.

Our e-newsletter provides something of a look back on the past year's events and accomplishments, and a push forward into the excitement of the year ahead. The latest issue of Perspectives on Anarchist Theory is now available online, as are a growing number of audio recordings from the Renewing the Anarchist Tradition (RAT) 2004 conference. We hope that the recordings will inspire challenging panel and presentation proposals for RAT 2005, which will be held in Plainfield, Vermont on September 23-25, 2005. And don't forget that the deadline to submit applications for the winter 2005 round of IAS grants is quickly approaching.

A number of fund-raising events are being planned for the coming months in order to enable the IAS to continue providing grants to radical authors and translators, and developing forums in which anti-authoritarian and anarchist theoretical engagement can flourish.

With wishes for justice and freedom in 2005,

AS, IAS

Reply to:
ias-news@anarchist-studies.org

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driven to these acts of desperation, while his only comment on prison suicides has been to quip that he was inclined to open a bottle of champagne after Harold Shipman killed himself.

He sought to hide his corruption by playing the same 'my private life is my own' card that he has been trying to deny to the rest of us. The man who has assured us in relation to ID cards, that 'if we have nothing to hide, we have nothing to worry about' has come unstuck. His assistance with passport and visa applications on behalf of his rich former mistress sits in stark hypocrisy with the hard-line stance he has taken towards those fleeing war and torture abroad. Just like Thatcher before him, the only person David Blunkett is able to shed tears for is himself.

DA:

Villapon Vega was 74 years old and a well-known peasant activist in Colombia. He was travelling on a bus when it was stopped at a paramilitary roadblock, where he was dragged off and shot in the head. According to the trade-union-backed Justice for Colombia campaign, "the Colombian army and their allies in the paramilitary death squads have gone on a killing spree" in that region of Colombia recently. Other victims included a 13-year-old girl. Unions in Colombia are demanding that human rights organizations be allowed to travel to the area and document these events, and have also asked for messages of protest to be sent to the Colombian government.

Meanwhile in China, Yao Fuxin, who is one of the imprisoned labour activists from the northeastern city of Liaoyang, is being denied room heating and warm clothes in his icy cell, according to a report in the China Labour Bulletin. The local temperature has fallen to minus 11 degrees. Prison officials have denied his wife permission to pass on warm clothing. Last winter, facing similar conditions, Xao's right leg became lame and parts of his skin blackened. Yao is currently denied the right to go outdoors, read newspapers, shower, or talk to other prisoners. His life in Lingyuan prison has become a living hell.

And in Kirkuk, in northern Iraq, 40-year-old Nozad Ismail, the president of the local branch of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, lives under the constant threat of assassination. The so-called 'resistance' has twice tried to kill him. He receives daily threats on his life. Labour Friends of Iraq has issued an urgent appeal to the international labour movement to publicize the case - and to demand that the intimidations and threats stop.

Let's not forget our brothers and sisters, trade unionists like ourselves, who have given their lives, or live under threat of assassination, or languish in the jails of dictatorial regimes.

Solidarity forever!

EL

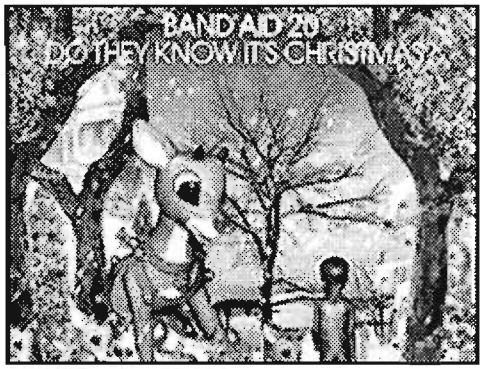
Visit these three web pages for more information and suggestions for action:
www.labourfriendsofiraq.org.uk/archives/000097.html
www.justiceforcolombia.org/urgent_action.html
www.china-labour.org.hk/iso/news_item.adp\?news_id=3793

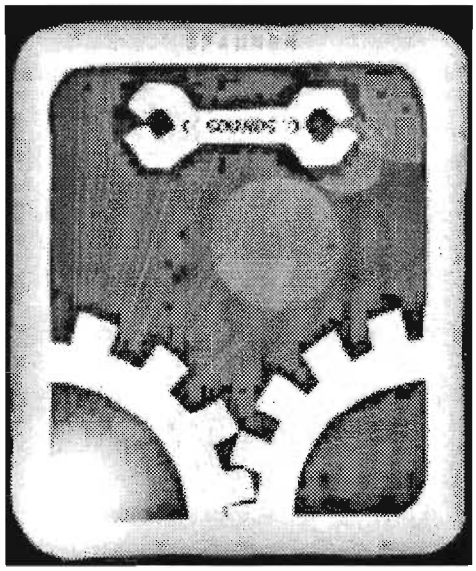
Spanner or sticking plaster?

Band Aid 20 *'Do they know it's Christmas?'* & Spanner *'Gate Crashers'*

'Gate Crashers' is available from SPANNER, Box 36, 82 Colston St, Bristol, BS1 5BB, www.spannerintheworks.net
'Do they know it's Christmas?' is *still* available from just about bloody everywhere, worst luck.

In few places are you likely to find Band Aid 20 and Spanner mentioned on the same page, never mind inhabiting the same sentence. The two outfits respectively occupy opposite poles of the English music scene. Band Aid 20, with its vast array of superstars, is the hideously familiar face of the corporate scum, while Spanner is the bristling edge of this country's fine musical DIY tradition. Of course it doesn't take a particularly brainy person eating spinach to hazard a guess at whose side we're on but fk it, let's have a rant anyway.**





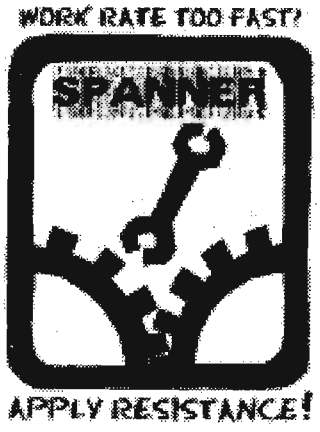
Band Aid 20 is the hideously familiar face of the corporate scum, while Spanner is the bristling edge of this country's fine musical DIY tradition.

When I first heard that the nation's favourite stars© were rehashing the already appallingly bad *'Do they know it's Christmas?'* I hit the roof. I hadn't been so angry since, well, the week before when I saw a picture of Victoria Beckham presenting a South American street orphan with a stick of Prada lipgloss. These people have got to be amongst the sickest bastards on the planet. Either that or the self-obsessed little shits have no concept of poverty and oppression. Yeah that's right mate, low rainfall levels are the only cause of the misery suffered by millions in Africa. A pure Act of God. Nowt to do with trade arrangements or western-sponsored dictatorships sitting on all the wealth whilst socialising the debts of course.

Certainly nothing to do with individuals and small groups of people in the west living on millions whilst half the world starves. This is Robert Tressell's Organised Benevolence Society up in lights, a smug band of wealthy exploiters wringing the public for all they can get (away with) by affecting concern for the victims of the system that feeds their gluttony.

This system needs not the mock sincerity of the Band Aid tosspots but the swift paralysis advocated by Spanner. The Bristol ska punksters have released a four track CD of impressive quality and boundless energy. The politics are spot-on with the tracks covering asylum & refuge, the Genoa protests, self-management & state brutality respectively. The Clash and the Scavengers are likely influences and Spanner rattle along in a similarly enjoyable fashion.

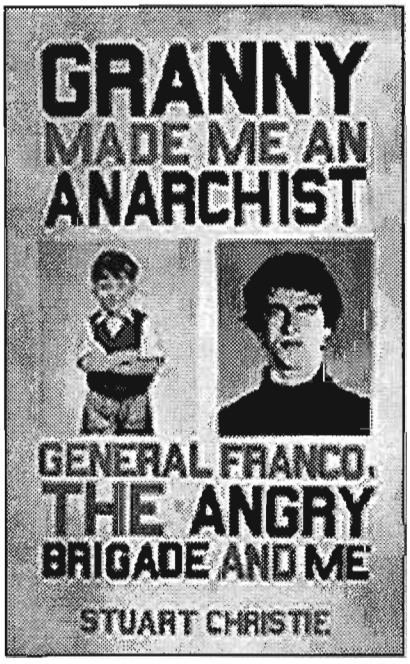
Because Spanner live in the real world, their anger sounds, and is, genuine. The goons on Band Aid 20 sound like some shit Christian evangelist band desperately trying to maintain a tune and a straight face. It is our comrades in Spanner who waste little time in exposing who and what is to blame for many of the world's ills. Theirs is a soundtrack to our struggle against the capitalists and imperialists, amongst whose ranks strut the wealthy hypocrite scum that comprise Band Aid 20.



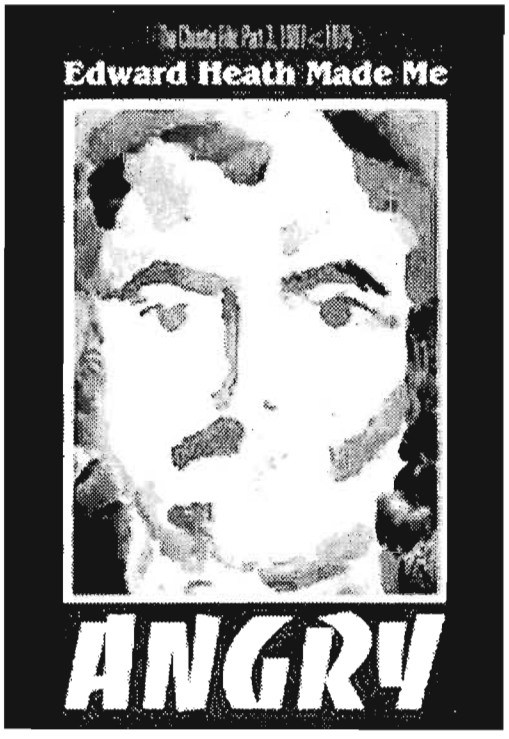
Christie pickings

Granny Made me an Anarchist: General Franco, the Angry Brigade and me
423 pages, £10.99; Simon & Schuster UK Ltd. (Africa House, 64-78 Kingsway, London, WC23 6AH)
Edward Heath Made me Angry: the Christie File – part 3, 1967-1975
308 pages, £40.00 (+ post & packing – UK £5; rest of the world £9); www.christiebooks.com

In 1964, Stuart Christie was arrested and jailed in Spain for his part in a plot to bomb General Franco. In 1967, he was pardoned and returned to Britain after a letter writing campaign by his mother. In 1973, he was one of eight defendants in the (in)famous Angry Brigade trial, but walked free from the courtroom. These are the main events that Christie retells in *Granny Made me an Anarchist.*



For those of us much too young to remember, Christie's narrative brings to life the British and west European anarchist scene of the 1960s and '70s. It is a movement set against a background of the continuing struggle against Franco's dictatorship; of the intrigue, paranoia and surveillance on the part of Britain's political police; and of events and campaigns like the Committee of 100, the anti-Vietnam war protests, the near-revolution in Paris 1968, and Edward Heath's doomed attempt to take on the trade unions.



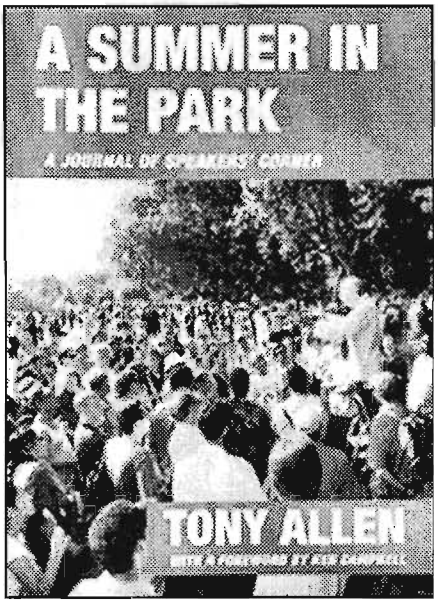
However, if you own a copy of *the Christie File*, published a quarter of a century ago, then you'll find nothing particularly new in *Granny Made me an Anarchist*, bar a somewhat mellower view of Christie's time in Franco's prisons. The original *Christie File* has become increasingly hard to get hold of, so this new version of the life and times of 'Britain's most famous anarchist' (*sic*) has a certain merit. And, with much packed into more than 400 pages, the £10.99 price tag is only a little on the dear side.

In marked contrast, is *Edward Heath Made me Angry*. This comes in a lavish 'coffee table' format in a limited edition of 100 copies, for which you can shell out an equally lavish £45 (although KSL inform us they can let their subscribers have it for £25). Covering essentially the same ground as the third section of *Granny Made me an Anarchist*, this volume appears to be an unnecessary indulgence, despite the many photographs and illustrations that adorn its margins. In fact, it might be enough to make some people angry!

Christie's narrative brings to life the British and west European anarchist scene of the 1960s and '70s.

A Summer in the Park

Tony Allen, Freedom Press, 2004. £8.50



Tony Allen's take on Speaker's Corner works in much the same way as Eminem's 8-mile. In both cases, they talk about peculiarly arcane rituals which have grown up beneath the feet of the modern world, where victory is won not through impressing all-knowing judges, but via the ultimate democracy of the crowd.

In both of them, there are the great speakers, who know how to manipulate, heckle, to destroy their enemies verbally and sway doubters to their corner. They themselves are the new, talented but terrified talkers who desperately want to be a success on the podium.

Unlike Eminem's character Rabbit, Allen is the veteran of a long career in stand-up, a profession he believes did him no good at all. "Nothing can prepare you for the Hyde Park speaking experience... Even the roughhouse of street theatre is subtle by comparison."

Allen's edited notes on a year's experience speaking and heckling at the cradle of free speech in 2000 form the basis of A Summer in the Park. Written in a semi-diary format, it draws you into a world where Anarchists, Socialists, Religious fundamentalists and Far Right demagogues mix in a single space with surreal and maddening humour.

The characters who weave in and out of his story are unique and sometimes frightening individuals, but his sensation of repeating the same questions and answers with an almost rehearsed monotony will be familiar to every anarchist. What seems to fascinate him most is the crowd dynamic, how it can be changed but never controlled, and his infectious enthusiasm for the subject.

Why is it that all the most extreme creeds, brought under one big sky, can coexist? As the book progresses it becomes apparent that not only coexistence, but friendship and ultimately respect can be found between the worst of adversaries, even co-operation against an outside threat.

Ultimately, the themes of the book are those we often see in the more optimistic of anarchist writings, that given half a chance people do get along. It is not specifically written for an anarchist audience (though it has wonderful in-jokes), but it is an uplifting, well-written and slyly comic book.

Vera Drake
Director: Mike Leigh

Starring: Imelda Staunton, Phil Davies, Peter Wight, Adrian Scarborough, Heather Craney, Daniel Mays, Jim Broadbent
Running time: 125 minutes

Outside the cinema there is a poster advertising Vera Drake. It shows repeated images of Vera with the captions under each image reading in turn: wife, mother, criminal.

This encapsulates the message in a powerful film with an outstanding performance by Imelda Staunton as Vera, helping girls out who had got into trouble. There have been numerous films and books, such as 'The L-shaped Room' and 'The Millstone', which look at the predicament from the girl's perspective, but none which explore the motivations of the abortionist. If they are featured at all, they are shown to be mercenary and uncaring.

The basis for Mike Leigh's film is not works of fiction, but rather the factual material his researcher discovered which highlighted the dilemmas before the 1967 Abortion Act. In particular, he drew on interviews with convicted abortionists in Holloway Prison, which were carried out by sociologist Moya Woodside in the 1950's. These women often had not taken money, had no criminal record, and regarded themselves, like Vera, as performing a social service. They were often highly regarded by their neighbours who, rather than ostracise the women, welcomed them home at the end of their sentence.

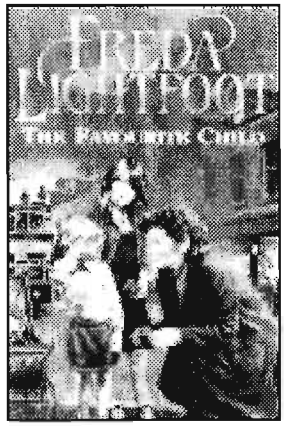
The film contrasts the situation of the upper classes with the plight of Vera's clients. The rich could buy abortions (usually using the code names D and C's) from doctors and psychiatrists colluding to subvert the system. Vera Drake is a 'must see film' because of the superb quality of the acting and cinematography, but it also helps to redefine what is an uncomfortable subject and raise new questions about the role of women in the 1950s.

The Favourite Child
Freda Lightfoot

Coronet Books, 2001, 410pp, ISBN 0340 769017

Lightfoot's central character in this book is Isabella Ashton, who has always been her father's favourite. However, when she gets involved in the birth control movement and the setting up of a family planning clinic he is scandalised. When Isabella's enthusiasm shows no sign of waning, her father eventually throws her out of the family home.

The author's descriptions of the early days of the modern birth control movement in the Salford area of Manchester are detailed and extensively portrayed. Love interest is provided by the comings and goings of two rivals for Isabella's affections. Without giving away the juicy bits, it all culminates in a situation which puts the whole clinic project at risk, not to mention Bella's personal safety.



Evidently, Lightfoot has conducted detailed research on the actual Salford and District Mothers' Clinic of the 1920s and '30s, work which pays off in the meticulous yet engaging dramatisation she has produced. Clearly, the history of the birth control movement is not without humour, and, for example, Lightfoot makes full comic use of the clinic's location above a pie shop, so that the identification of who was a customer and who a patient often became blurred.

On the more serious side, the political and moral issues are woven into the fabric of the book, like the fact that the local press would not accept adverts from the clinic. Indeed, apart from word of mouth, the only real exposure the clinic got was the negative publicity from regular denunciations, such as from Salford's Catholic Cathedral.

Mainstream popular novels don't often get an airing in these review pages, but here is an example of the important minority which raise social and political issues in a progressive way – worth looking out for.

Lifelines
David Gribble

LIB ED, ISBN 0951 399799
Libertarian Education, Box 9, 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX

The last time DA reviewed David Gribble's work was his previous book, Real Education (DA12). Lifelines is very much a sequel to this earlier work.

The core idea of the book is to provide a wide range of experiences of broadly egalitarian approaches to education provision for children and young adults. In particular, David Gribble is clearly interested in success stories with 'problem' groups. In this vein, he visited organisations working with children and young people in Thailand, Delhi and Chicago, involving deserted and abused kids, street and working children, and youth gangs respectively.

The conclusions are unmistakeable and perhaps predictable given the authors past working in alternative schools and his perspective. Basically, it bears out the A S Neill approach involving mutual respect, openness and freedom in relations between teachers/carers and children and young people.

However, the real strength of the book lies in the detailed, lively recording of the case studies, making it essential reading for anyone who is working or interested in alternative solutions to education and youth work.

Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice
Rudolf Rocker

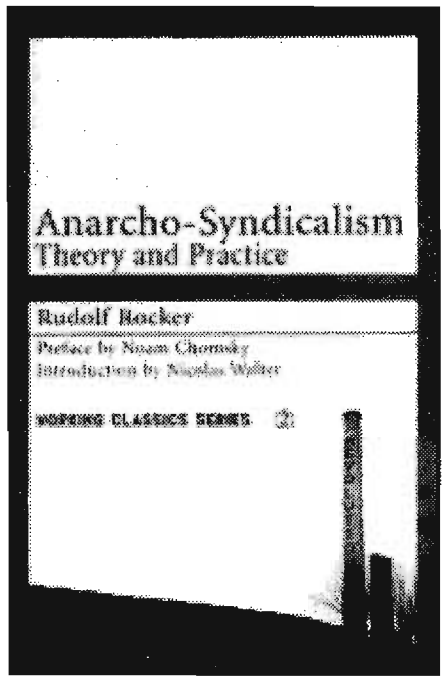
AK Press, paperback, ISBN: 1902593928 £9.00

Here is a 19th century classic. Inside this latest edition from AK Press is a new preface by Noam Chomsky to go with the introduction written in 1988 by Nicolas Walter.

Rocker presents a systematic conception of the development of anarchist thought towards anarcho-syndicalism and provides a concise, yet thorough history of the labour movement and how anarcho-syndicalism evolved. It was written almost 70 years ago, but most of the content is still relevant today.

Throughout, Rocker expresses his faith in the capacity of ordinary people to construct *for themselves* a world suited to their needs, to discover through their own thought and commitment the institutional arrangements that can best satisfy their deeply rooted striving for freedom, justice, compassion and solidarity.

Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958) was one of the most admired and dedicated anarchists of his time. No mere academic, Rocker was a German anarchist who moved to London after being exiled from his home. While in England, he gained notoriety as a writer, orator and organiser in the Jewish and immigrant labour movements in London's East End sweatshops. He was an activist whose politics came from practice. He was interned by the British as an "enemy alien" during World War I and was deported back to Germany in 1918, where he became a leading figure in the anarcho-syndicalist International, the IWA. He was forced to flee Germany again when the Nazis took power, and eventually settled in the United States, where he continued to write and agitate.



He began writing *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* in 1937 at the behest of Emma Goldman. Rocker penned this political and philosophical masterpiece as an introduction to the ideals fuelling the Spanish social revolution and resistance to capitalism the world over. Within, he offers an introduction to anarchist ideas, a history of the international workers movement and an outline of the strategies and tactics embraced at the time (internationalism, federalism, anti-militarism, direct action, sabotage and the General Strike).

The book is as fine an introduction to anarcho-syndicalism as you could want - although you have to remember that it was written in 1938 and anarcho-syndicalism, far from being a fixed doctrine, evolves and develops constantly. That is not to say that the principles illustrated by Rocker do not hold firm - simply that the world has changed since 1938.

Seán M. Sheehan, *Anarchism*

Reaktion Books, London, 2003, £10.95

This new book of under 200 pages is not only an informative read, it's also an ejoyable one. Here is anarchism in many forms, including historical movements and present activities.

The book starts with an analysis of how important libertarian, non-centralist ideas are to the current anti-globalisation movement. This is a refreshing read and not one that ducks issues such as the way this movement is going, what anarchism can bring to it and the possible problems that emerge with anarchist practice.

The second and third chapters look at anarchism's historical and philosophical background and fit it within Enlightenment ideas on the individual, liberty and opposition to the state and power. The fourth chapter looks at some historical moments when anarchist-like movements or libertarian inspired movements enjoyed some success, such as in the French Revolution and in the twentieth century, in Spain. Other parts of the book cover various alternative movements such as punk and the music scene.

Sheehan's book is well printed and nicely presented. All in all, it's a pleasure to read and good to find that anarchism and anarchosyndicalism are given a balanced and fair look at. Sheehan does not shy away from the problems of the anarchist ideal or from the difficulties encountered in making it work. This is all to the good.

Honest, down-to-earth and politically astute writing; that's what this book amounts to.

Get off our land!

The history of the British countryside is that of the gradual ethnic cleansing of the peasantry, as ownership and control of the land has become concentrated in the hands of the aristocracy and landed gentry. As people were forced off the land, it was either pressed into the service of large scale factory farming, or became playgrounds for the rich to pursue their passion for killing animals for fun. Either way, the effects on rural communities were disastrous.

People were cut off from the land as a means of making a living, and forced into cities in order to survive. This, of course, was planned, since cheap mass labour was needed for urban factories. As a result, society was transformed and distorted. Britain become artificially divided into sprawling overcrowded urban areas and depopulated rural areas made up of shrinking rural communities struggling to survive.

The slow, torturous death of rural Britain dates back to the Norman Conquest, when William the Conqueror seized large areas of land and turned them into hunting parks. Up to a quarter of what is now England and Wales was made into Royal Forest, within which the new Norman elites could pursue their passion for killing deer. On top of this, large tracts of land were handed over to close friends of William, such as Le Gros Veneour, ancestor of the current Duke of Westminster and William's chief huntsman, who was given much of Chester and Cheshire. Predictably, he kicked everyone out of the region and converted it into the rolling open hunting grounds which are still recognisable today (and now are presented as 'traditional' and ancient).

Across England and Wales, Barons and Bishops, taking the lead from William, started kicking people off the land and turning it into their own private hunting domains. Hence, in creating their own hunting forest and deer parks, they transformed land usage and property relations across great swathes of the English and Welsh countryside.

The Norman land seizures were the first step in eliminating the mass of the population from the land. Prior to the Norman Conquest, private property in the modern sense of the word did not exist. Society as a whole had a basic claim on the land: Ancient rights allowed the cutting of peat, hunting, grazing cattle and the taking of wood and picking of nuts and berries in the vast forest areas. A large proportion of the land was owned by the community as a whole in the form of common land, and serfs were given plots of land to cultivate crops.

When this changed, in the name of hunting, whole villages were destroyed and large areas of common land swallowed up, and the peasantry were denied access to great swathes of forest. The Norman Conquest saw the introduction of the concept of the land as private property for the exclusive use of the owner, and for the first time there were large landowners who did not have to take any account of the impact of their choice of land usage on the wider community.

Such a dramatic change in property relations could not take place without a bit of 'friendly' persuasion and so laws were duly introduced that made the taking of wood or collecting of berries punishable by imprisonment, while the taking of deer for food by serfs was punishable by castration and blinding. These laws had to be enforced, and so a vast army of gamekeepers and Royal Police were created, along with courts staffed (of course) by landowners. This was the start of today's complex state property law system, and gaming laws were the initial primary means of enforcing the property rights of the rich and powerful.

The practice of the aristocracy stealing the

The slow, torturous death of rural Britain dates back to the Norman Conquest, when William the Conqueror seized large areas of land and turned them into hunting parks.

The history of rural Britain is a story of brutal class oppression that in many ways surpasses the horrors inflicted on the urban population by capitalism.

Hunting is the cause of the current rural crisis, not the saviour the bloodsports lobby would have us think.

land for their exclusive use (with the support of the state) was taken up with relish from the 16th Century onwards. In response to rising sheep prices, the aristocracy started to spread the concept of private property by enclosing the land, evicting the serfs, and replacing them with sheep. The brutality of the enclosure movement is hard to exaggerate: Whole communities, which had lived off the land since ancient times, found themselves evicted from their homes and denied access to their land. The result was the immediate impoverishment of a significant sector of Britain's rural population. Over the next three hundred years the serfs were systematically eliminated from the rural landscape and the British countryside become the exclusive property of the aristocracy.

This massive aristocratic land-grab continued throughout the 17th Century, and as time went on, the state introduced ever-more draconian legislation, such as game laws which made petty 'theft' (sic) of small game a capital offence. By 1627, all forms of hunting across Britain had been made illegal except by the very rich, with the normal punishment for poaching being hanging. To prevent the increasingly desperate rural population from straying onto this newly stolen 'private' property to get food and fuel, mantraps and spring-loaded guns were made legal. Clearly, the state had decided the rights of the rich to steal and secure their new property were above human live.

The brutal game laws had little to do with protecting game from the impoverished peasantry; they were the means by which the aristocratic state enforced the theft of the land, and a means of social control. Throughout the enclosures period, poaching not only became one of the means by which the rural population survived; it also became an instrument of class resistance. Game laws became a principle instrument by which the state attempted to quash rural unrest. For example, in the 17th Century, a group known as the Waltham and Windsor Blacks (so-called because they blacked their faces for their night-time raids), protested against the royal hunting restrictions on farming and gathering rights. Their protest took the form of poaching, damaging the property of the hunting gentry and beating up gamekeepers. In response, fifty new capital offences against the Blacks were passed by Parliament without debate. Immediately, you could be hanged for crimes as grievous as pulling down a fence or blacking up your face.

By the mid-1800s the enclosures had come to an end, mainly because there was little useful land left to enclose. There is a persistent myth here, that the industrial revolution spelt ruin for the British Aristocracy. The image still portrayed today is that of impoverished aristocrats struggling to keep their ramshackle stately home from collapsing around their ears. The reality is that, through enclosures, the aristocracy had taken complete control of the British countryside.

In 1873, an enquiry into land ownership found that 80% of the land in Britain was owned by just 7,000 people. In England and Wales, a quarter of the land was owned by just 360 people and half was owned by 4,200 people. In Scotland, the picture was even more dire; 24 people owned a quarter of the land and 350 owned two-thirds. The results of the enquiry were suppressed and quickly forgotten.

The concentration of land ownership was not the only problem. If the aristocracy had rented the land to small farmers, Britain would have retained a thriving rural community. However, increasing mechanisation coupled with the profits to be made from the economies of scale resulted in the countryside being dominated by large-scale factory farms using transient, casual labour. As a result, the rural population declined dramatically. An 1867 report found that small farms (5-20 acres) now only occupied 13% of total farmland, and was increasingly marginalised to hilly areas such as the Lake District or the fen country of the South East.

The agricultural labourers on the larger farms were no better off than the small farmers; as machines replaced unskilled labour, the number of agricultural workers began to decline dramatically. By the 1870s, agriculture employed only 20% of the population, and by 1900 it

...protest took the form of poaching, damaging the property of the hunting gentry ... you could be hanged for crimes as grievous as pulling down a fence or blacking up your face.

Although the 20th Century saw the birth of social democracy and the idea of redistribution of wealth, it had little effect on land ownership.

employed less than 10%. Hunting still continued to play a role in emptying the countryside of people, as large areas of England and Wales remained closed off, the land totally given over to hunting and shooting. In Scotland, over a quarter of the land was now set aside for deer hunting. This vast area only employed 800 full-time and 1,000 part-time workers.

As the aristocracy took control of the land, a new culture evolved, with its own custom, etiquette and hierarchy. This was how the increasingly powerful aristocracy defined itself as a class. Much of this paraphernalia dated back to Norman times, when William the Conqueror introduced pomp and pageantry to hunting, insisting on the wearing of ridiculously coloured uniforms and the blowing of horns. Ritualised hunting was now central to the culture of the aristocrat, but was never part of the wider culture of the countryside (as it is still often incorrectly portrayed). Instead, it was always confined to the British elite, who were not truly rural, as they spent as much time in London occupying the houses of Parliament and/or participating in the elaborate social calendar, which was and remains central to the aristocratic way of life.

Meanwhile, Britain's new capitalist class was desperate to prove they had 'arrived', and so they began to try to ape the aristocrats' habits, and sent their children to public schools to learn the ways of their aristocratic forbears. They also used their new-found wealth to buy up rural land so they could mimic their aristocratic friends. Thus, it became fashionable for the new rich to decamp to the countryside at the weekend to fish, shoot and hunt. This was the start of the countryside coming to be viewed as a place of leisure; a weekend plaything for the rich.

Although the 20th Century saw the birth of social democracy and the idea of redistribution of wealth, it had little effect on land ownership. The 1945 Labour manifesto gave a commitment to the land nationalisation, although, needless to say, just like countless promises since, it never happened. In fact, the landed gentry's grip on the land has in many ways strengthened. Land ownership is no longer a mainstream political issue and rarely gets a mention. In fact, we still have no idea of who owns the land as, after the shock of the 1867 investigation into who owned what, government didn't dare to create a register of land ownership in Britain. Despite this, recent research shows that 189,000 families or individuals own 88% of the land in Britain, while just 0.28% of the population own 64% of the land in England and Wales.

One thing is clear; the countryside is practically empty of normal working people. A dramatic post-war increase in mechanisation meant that, by 1971, there were under half a million agricultural workers left in Britain. By 2002, agricultural workers made up less than 2% of the total workforce. The city state of Hong Kong now employs twice as many farm labourers as in the whole of Britain. And this depopulation of the land is still getting worse, as 10,000 agricultural jobs are currently being lost each year.

Today, vast tracts of land remain set aside for the exclusive use of hunting. Cornbury and Wychwood in Oxford was a favoured hunting ground for medieval kings, and is still largely given over to the hunting of deer and pheasants today. Much of the Duke of Northumberland's vast 132,000 acre estate is still enclosed for the exclusive use of hunting and shooting, as is much of the Duke of Buccleuch's 250,000 acre Scottish Estate. Deer Parks dating back to William the Conqueror remain, for example, Berkshire has 39 such parks, 5 of which have public access, while there are 59 in Hampshire, 7 of which have public access, and the numbers

A man crossing a field is stopped by a landowner, "get off my land" is the greeting. The man asks "what makes you think it is yours?". "It was passed down to me by my father, it has been in the famil,y for generations" he replies. "How did your grandfather's grandfather get to own it in the first place?" asks the man. "He fought for it" replies the landowner. "Right, get your coat off then", says the man...

for Cheshire are 48 and 18.

Just to ensure that the 189,000 people (0.3% of the population) who own 40 million acres (90% of the land) between them do not starve, they receive £4 billion in subsidies from the British state alone. Since land tax has been abolished, the land-owning classes now contribute just £103 million per year in council tax. In contrast, the 59 million of us who are squashed onto the remaining 4.4 million acres contribute £10.4 billion in council tax.

For all the talk of social democracy, redistributing wealth and bringing an end to class rule, successive governments have done nothing to loosen the grip Britain's elite have had on the land since they stole it from us over the last few hundred years. In fact, they have only boosted their power, by handing over vast amounts of public money in the form of state subsidies. Perhaps this is really what is meant by the social democratic idea of the redistribution of wealth!

The land is the key resource in the countryside; it is the way of sustaining rural communities. However, over the centuries the rural population have been systematically denied access to it as a means of making a living. It is no surprise then that rural society in any true sense is on the point of collapse in many areas of Britain. A survey undertaken between 1991 and 1995 found that 33% of rural people live below the poverty line, 86% of parishes had no GP, 52% had no school and 71% no shops. This is a depressing picture of a rural community in ever-deepening crisis.

Worse still, the urban middles classes have been adding to the plight of rural communities by buying villages to use as second homes. As a result, house prices in many rural areas have gone up way beyond the reach of ordinary people, and the villages are ghostly empty places except on weekends and holidays. Holiday homes provide no economic, social or cultural life to speak of. Hence, just as the 19th Century capitalists sought to copy their aristocratic forbears, so now the barristers, accountants and estate agents are trying to ingratiate themselves with the landed gentry. The countryside is fast becoming one vast weekend theme park, where the wealthy can play out their chocolate box parody of country living.

It is this unpleasant mixture of urban and country elites that control the Countryside Alliance. Its backers include landowners such as the Duke of Westminster and the Duke of Northumberland, capitalists such as Sir Robert McAlpine and professionals such as Charles Wilson, former managing editor of the Mirror Group and Professor Caroline Tisdall, Oxford don and journalist. Of course, all these are to be found at 5am on a daily basis tending the cattle and ploughing the fields.

Worse still, thanks largely to a sympathetic mass media, the elitist Countryside Alliance has been able use the crisis in rural Britain and the plight of rural people, and present it as a struggle between the urban majority and the down-trodden rural minority. If the likes of the Duke of Westminster, whose Grosvenor family first made their pile during the land grab of the Norman Conquest, are to be challenged, then the debate has to move on from the cruelty of fox hunting to the cruelty of the inequality which lies at the heart of the rural crisis. The real debate is not in terms of town verses country, but rich against poor. Central to this is the issue of land ownership. The only way regeneration of the countryside can take place if is large-scale factory farming is curtailed, and replaced with more labour intensive forms of cultivation, thus ensuring that the sustainable use of land once again becomes the primary means of sustaining rural society.

Nor should this be seen as an issue for the countryside. Factory farming coupled to the increased use of pesticides has resulted in the poisoning of the very food we eat, and has turned the countryside into an environmental disaster zone. How the land is used affects us all, and society as a whole should have a say in how land is used/abused. This can never happen while the British countryside is owned and controlled by the rich elite who, behind the private property sign, are allowed to dictate land usage with total disregard for the effects it is having on society.

Issues such as rural decline, fox hunting, food production and the environment are all actually linked within the question of land ownership. Our long-term aim should be the taking back of the land from the aristocrats who stole it, and its sustainable use under common ownership. We may be living in an 'advanced economy', but who owns the land and how the land is used remains central to the long-term well being of all the occupants of this (not so) green and pleasant land.

Just to ensure that the 0.3% of the population who own 90% of the land do not starve, they receive £4 billion in subsidies from the British state alone.

SF Contact Point:

SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE.
Answerphone 07984 675 281
Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk

www.solfed.org.uk

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

Education Workers' Network, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
Public Service Workers' Network, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.

Locals - get involved locally in regular meetings and action-

North & East London SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE. nelsfsolfed@fsmail.net
Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX. Tel. 0207 3581854.
South West Solidarity and **Solidarity Bristol**, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB. www.solwest.org.uk
South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.
Northampton SF, c/o The Blackcurrent Centre, 24 St Micheal's Av, Northampton NN1 4JQ. northamptonsolfed@hotmail.com.
Preston SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF. Tel/Fax 01772 734130 prestonsolfed@boltblue.com http://prestonsolfed.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/index.html
Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 07984 675281. www.manchestersf.org.uk
Sheffield SF, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. sf@sheffsf.force9.co.uk
West Yorks SF, P.O. Box 75, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks, HX7 8WB.

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

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

About Solidarity Federation...

Formed in 1994, SolFed 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

Locals put solidarity into practice, organising and joining local campaigns in communities and 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

Direct action is what locals do. 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,it also 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

SolFed members who work in the same sector have formed Networks, to promote solidarity and use direct action where possible to fight for better pay and conditions. They form a basis for a completely new labour movement, nothing like the weakened and hierarchical Trade Unions.

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. SolFed opposes these in favour of a movement built on global solidarity. It is the British section of the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers' Association (IWA), which provides global solidarity and experience from much larger sections, such as the CNT (Spain) and USI (Italy). The IWA has a long history of solidarity in action. Today, there are sections ranging from a few dozen to thousands of members, and growth is rapid. At the last IWA Congress in Granada, Spain, three new groups were welcomed into the IWA, to add to the seven new sections welcomed at the previous Congress.

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. No experience or background in politics/activism is necessary. SolFed groups are open and egalitarian. Do not expect to be patronised; do expect to be made welcome. Fill in the form below to meet your local SolFed.

Solidarity Federation Membership Application

I wish to join the Solidarity Federation
I have enclosed a cheque for £5.00 (made out to "Solidarity Federation" to cover my initial three months membership. I understand that my details will be passed on to the nearest SF Local who will contact me shortly.

Name.....

Address.....

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Tel. No..... Email.....

Occupation (If any).....

Fill in as much as you like and return to the SF Contact Point address (above left)

Events/Campaigns/Gatherings...

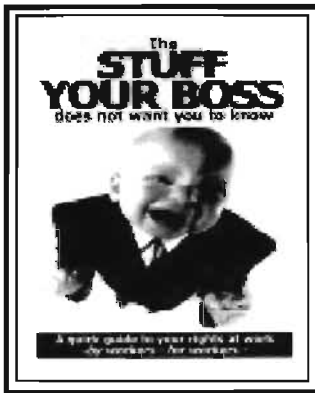
Solidarity Federation

North & East London SolFed
Free Solidarity Bulletin. Socials: Last Thursday of the month, 8pm, near Camden Tube. Also for people SE of London and along the S. Coast. Contact details p.34.

SelfEd Collective
Self-education - developing and sharing ideas and skills. Download pamphlets FREE in FULL VERSIONS from the SelfEd website. SelfEd, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. www.selfed.org.uk

Northampton SolFed
New SolFed group in the Northampton area - looking for more members and contacts - Northampton SolFed c/o The Blackcurrent Centre 24 St. Michael's Avenue Northampton NN1 4JQ northamptonsolfed@hotmail.com

Pirate Radio
Everything you wanted to know about the rise and fall of pirate radio – and 'ow it usterbe in them there days. Also, pamphlets on Bulgarian history and much more!! Take a look www.solwest.org.uk



The "stuff your boss" leaflet is still available for free/donation from: SolFed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. solfed@solfed.org.uk Write to the same address for info on stickers and other stuff.

Children of the Industrial Revolution

CD depicting the lives of working class children from the 18th to the early 20th centuries.
Cost £10 each or £12.50 incl. p+p (cheques to 'Trustees and friends of the WCML')
Shelf Life, Working Class Movement Library, 51 The Crescent, Salford, M5 4WX. Tel. 0161 736 3601
Web www.wcml.org.uk
Email enquiries@wcml.org.uk

Freedom
Freedom - anarchist fortnightly paper, www.freedompress.org.uk. Email subs@freedompress.org.uk for free sample copy. Also; enrager.net

Squatters Handbook
The New Squatters' Handbook is out and is £2 including postage from Advisory Service for Squatters, 2 St Pauls Road, London, N12QN.

Defy ID
It's all here – essential reading given the government's attitude to our freedom of information: www.defy-id.org.uk/index.htm

Brighton ABC
Writers needed to keep life on the inside more bearable – e.g. you could write to James Borek LL6803, HMP Blundeston, D-108, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 5BG. James was sent to prison in January 2004 for four and a half years for injuring a cop during the June 18th 1999 "Carnival against Capital" in London's financial district. More at: www.brightonabc.org.uk

Manchester Basement
A radical bookshop, radical library, vegan cafe, exhibition space and info point (for community groups and campaign groups to network from) and more is now open in central Manchester. The Basement is at 24 Lever St, Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester M1.

Travel to Palestine
Olive Co-operative has a new bursary fund for people on low incomes wanting to visit Palestine to work for a just peace. More info. about this and Olive Co-op tours generally: www.olivecoop.com 0161 232 8177

Toxcat
Essential exposures of polluters, polllution and cover-ups. £2 or sub £12 from ToxCat, PO Box 29, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 3TX.

Norwich Anarchists
£1 for newspaper 'Now or Never'; PO Box 487, Norwich NR2 3AL. norwichanarchists@hotmail.com. Web - http://twotins.tripod.com

Friends and Neighbours

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

Kate Sharpley Library
Dedicated to recording and revealing the history of Anarchism - send SAE ; KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1 N 3XX. www.katesharpleylibrary.net

Cultureshop
Online shop for independent/radical/ political issue-based videos. www.cultureshop.org

Networking Newsletter
Networking in Greater Manchester working for positive social change. Tel: 0161 226 9321. www.networkingnewsletter.org.uk

Bradford Anarchist Group
Local anarchist group for the Bradford/Wakefield area, contact; BAG, c/o 17-21 Chapel St, Bradford BD1 5DT.

Resistance
Freesheet of the Anarchist Federation. Anarcho news, views and comment from: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. www.afed.org.uk

AK Distribution
Anarcho books, and merchandise of every description. New Catalogue out - PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, EH89YE. Tel 013155 5265. ak@akedin.demon.co.uk www.akuk.com

Air America
America's new progressive radio network - Stream it, email it and call in - Americans need to hear voices from other countries! www.airamericaradio.com

56a Infoshop
Bookshop, records, library, archive, social and meeting space. Anarchist, eco-activist, queer, feminist, DIY, squatting, class struggle. Open Thur 2-8, Fri 3-7, Sat 2-6. Near Elephant and Castle/ Kennington tube: 56 Crampton St, London SE17 3AE
authoritarianism listings, ideas, news, history and discussion forums.

NoLondon2012
A coalition of east London community groups, anti-authoritarian and social justice campaigners have set up 'NoLondon2012' in opposition to the bid to stage the Olympics in London in 2012. Info. at www.nolondon2012.org

Variant
Free, independent, arts magazine. In-depth coverage in the context of broader social, political & cultural issues. www.variant.org.uk/20texts/ issue20.html

Use Your Loaf
Squatted Centre for Social Solidarity, all welcome, or you can hire the venue (see letter on page 24). 227 Deptford High St, London SE8. 07984 588807
Email - useyourloaf@btinternet.com

Roundhouse Appeal
The Low Impact Roundhouse in Pembrokeshire National Park is once again under threat of demolition. Get on the phone tree to defend it 01460 249204 chapter7@tlio.demon.co.uk

Organise!
Working Class Resisitance is back on the streets of Ireland - freesheets and info. from PO Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ

Clean Clothes Campaign
2 new reports; 1. Garment Industry Subcontracting and Workers Rights - Report of Women Working Worldwide action research in Asia and Europe 2003; 2. East and Southeast Asia Regional Labour Research Report. Read more and find links to the CCC website to read in full at www.nosweat.org.uk

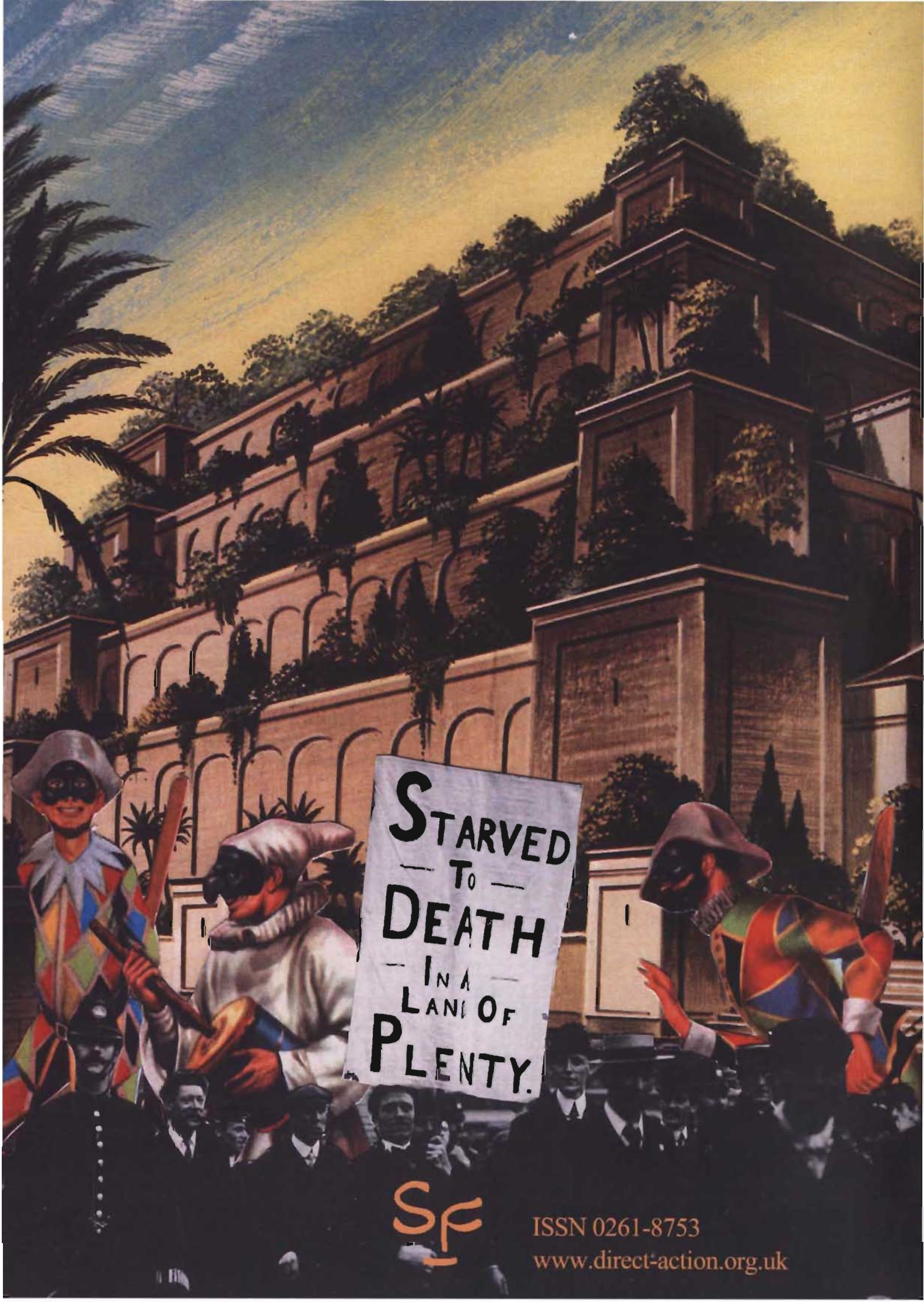
Anarcha project
The Anarcha Project is a people's history project covering interviews with anarchist women; http://www.anarcha.org

STOP G8
The Dissent Network is organising against the next G8 Summit at Gleneagles hotel, Perthshire, Scotland from 6th-8th July 2005. Watch out for the Festival of Dissent in April 2005, meanwhile, there are bimonthly meetings; g8gathering@yahoo.co.uk www.dissent.org.uk

NO COMMENT
The defendant's guide to arrest - an invaluable guide for anyone at risk of arrest (i.e. all but the rich and powerful!). Available free from www.ldmg.org.uk or for 21p postage from: NO COMMENT, c/ o/ BM Automatic, London WC1N 3XX.

How to Win Online
In the wake of some recent online campaign victories involving strikes in New Zealand and Cambodia, Labourstart have published a short article. Comments are invited. You can read it at: http:// www.ericlee.me.uk/archive/ 000094.html

Tsunami Solidarity
Unions around the world are sending aid and the TUC has an appeal. To donate send a cheque, payable to 'TUC Aid –Tsunami Appeal', to TUC Aid - Tsunami Appeal, EUIRD, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. See also: www.labourstart.org/tsunami or www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-9205-f0.cfm



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