Direct Action

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Rank & File Health-workers Show The Way



IN THE RESISTANCE

Escalate the Fightback

Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

ALL OUT TO WIN!

The Manchester nurses' strike on the 7th of January, forced the Tory government to temporarily withdraw its plan to cut special duty payments. This victory has inspired angry healthworkers to go on the offensive over poor funding of the NHS and pathetic wage levels. This action must be extended to an all out indefinite strike if we are to win while we are strong and the mood is right.

However, the form of action to date has been selective. In the long run this will prove to be demoralising and ineffective. Previous NHS disputes (1972, 1979, 1982) failed because of the lack of effective strike action. A more recent example was last year's civil service pay dispute in which selective, one-day actions achieved absolutely nothing and members soon became demoralised. We must learn these lessons - if we are to strike then it has to be effective action. Union leaders and the RCN have stressed that nurses are some sort of "special" case and "deserve" more money. The truth is, all NHS workers suffer from low pay, cuts in staff, and so on. Our fight therefore needs to include all healthworkers in united action if we are to succeed in defeating the Tories.

NUPE and COHSE union leaders have assured us that any strike action would be backed up by emergency cover. Of course we don't want to see patients suffer but we all know who the real culprits are - those who are cutting staff levels, closing wards, and shutting hospitals. Currently most wards are running <u>below</u> the emergency levels set by the 1982 dispute. Clearly we must determine our own levels of emergency cover, and if management do not accept, then we must be prepared to walk out with no cover. In the USA when nurses were faced with the same choice, they opted to walk out with no cover, and they won their strike in a matter of <u>hours</u>. We need effective action that will lead to a <u>quick</u> victory.

Cuts in the NHS must be seen as part of a general offensive against public expenditure. We must build links between ourselves and council workers who are fighting cuts in services, teachers who are fighting cuts in education, and DHSS workers who are facing similar attacks. It is working class people who use the NHS and who suffer from its run-down. It is not public sympathy that will win our dispute but real solidarity from other working class people. We need to build the links now - in 1973 striking nurses picketted out 1500 miners to join their picket lines; last year in Coventry miners and other workers had a half day strike in support of striking healthworkers.

Strikes so far have been initiated by rank and file activists. Union leaders will do nothing to win our dispute, already the NUPE leadership has persuaded ambulance drivers not to strike, on February 3rd. It is essential that joint union meetings are held to cut through union divisions. We must elect strike committees with recallable delegates to organise future actions. We cannot depend on union bureaucrats to escalate action - only rank and file workers can organise this. The one-day strikes so far must be seen as only the start of this dispute. We must use every meeting, rally and demonstration to build for <u>all out action</u> for a decent living wage, more jobs and a decent health service.

DAM Healthworkers, c/o Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge.



Slave Labour in the NHS

A FILIPINO NURSE in Manchester has been at the centre of a slave labour row. Bosses at North Manchester General Hospital have had her working for nothing for a 12 month "trial" period. Allegedly they thought they were doing her a "good turn" by giving her a contract so she could gain experience to work full time in the NHS. The nurse was discharged, with the hospital saying that her work wasn't up to standard. The nurse, who hasn't been named has been supported her English husband during this period. NUPE has taken up her case and is demanding that she be paid £8000 for her work.

The NHS is crumbling due to lack of money but still it can't survive by re-introducing slave labour by the back door. North Manchester Health Authority says she won't receive a penny as she agreed to be taken on without wages. The health authority must be made to pay up. A NUPE spokesperson has stated that the recruitment of auxiliary nurses for no pay has happened elsewhere in Greater Manchester. This situation needs to be investigated nationally. The working class needs to be vigilant in this time of mass unemployment because the bosses feel that they can now turn the clock back centuries, not just to the '30's.

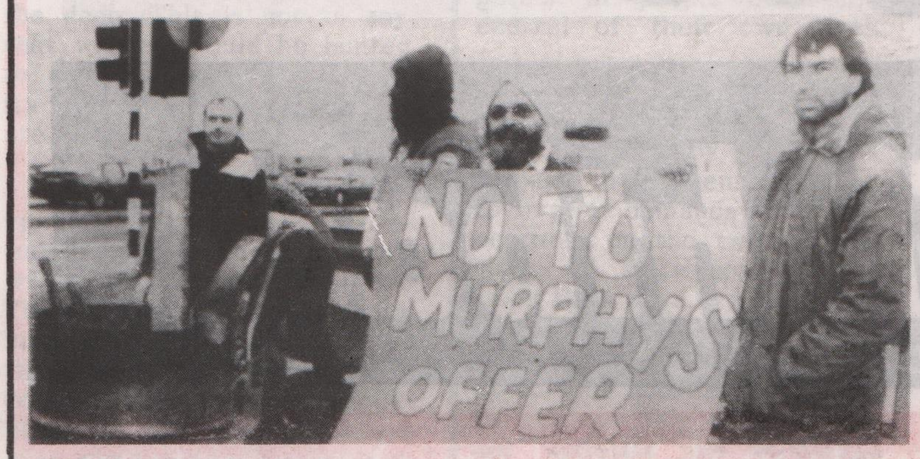
CAR TROUBLE

THE BATTLE LINES between strikers and bosses in the Ford dispute appeared set for a war of attrition - that is, until a majority of Ford's workers, egged on by union bosses, accepted the latest offer. At first Ford offered a 6% pay rise, then 7% with 2 and half per cent above the rate of inflation for the following 2 years. What was eventually accepted was 7% this year and 2 and a half per cent above inflation next year. The deal is linked to drastic changes in work practices. Undoubtedly the Tories wanted Ford workers to go back with a low pay rise to discourage other workers from demanding higher wages.

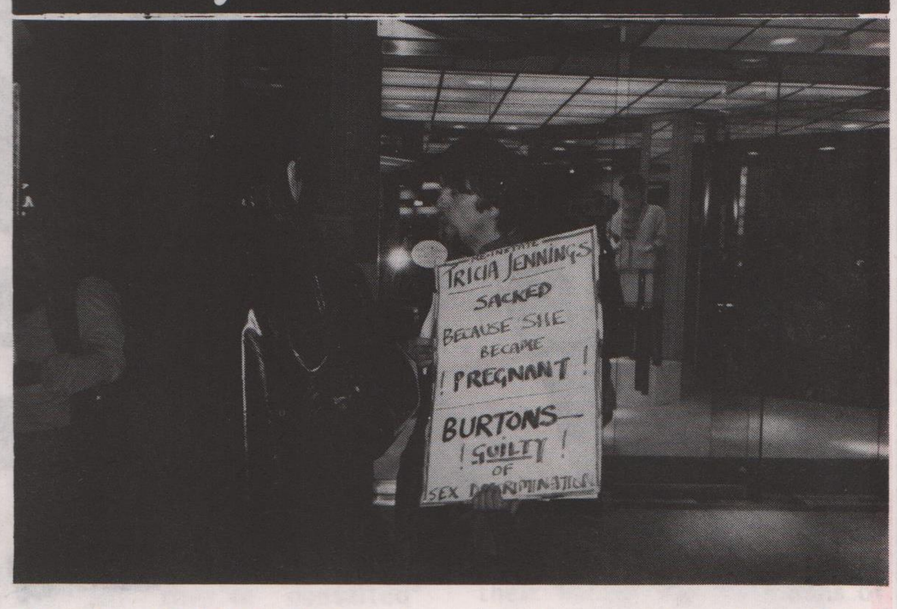
The national strike which started on 8th February was fantastically solid and was a good example to the rest of us. The 10,000 strong workforce at Dagenham struck on the 4th of February with mass pickets and 24 hour picket rotas preventing any scabbing apart from 2 security men. Picketting was also essential to prevent electricians entering the plant to install robots and to prevent management trying to remove parts from the plants.

Over the last few years Ford have edged toward Japanese-style production methods. But this back-fired because the Japanese methods entail keeping low stocks of parts with a fast turnover. Consequently within a week the strike here caused thousands of lay-offs in Ford works around Europe. It was this that put the Ford strikers in such a strong position that they could easily have held out for a better settlement. A significant minority of the strikers realised this and argued against accepting the Ford offer. But TGWU and AEU bureaucrats, obviously not willing to let the strike continue and so get beyond their own control, threw in the towel and hailed the deal as a great victory. With Ford Europe rapidly coming to a standstill another few weeks on strike would have left the company without a leg to stand on.

The unions had appointed strike committees comprising full time officials and bureaucrats - the same crowd who had urged workers to accept Ford's original offer of 6% over 3 years. These are not the best people to run any strike by any stretch of the imagination. Although this strike indicated some measure of returning confidence in strike action as an effective weapon, it has to be said that to make it more effective control must not be left with the union bureaucrats. Strikes must be run by democratic strike committees and mass meetings at least once a week to discuss the strike and elect recallable delegates from among the rank and file to organise picketting, welfare, publicity and so on as is felt necessary. Bureaucracy must be kept to a minimum and the emphasis must always be on action to win the dispute. It remains to be seen if some of the lessons from the Ford dispute will be taken on board in the strikes now looming in Landrover and Vauxhall.



Boycott Burtons



PICKETS OF BURTON'S clothes shop in Edinburgh over the sacking of Tricia Jennings because she was pregnant (see DA 46) have been going well with support growing every week. Public reaction has also been good with a number of people joining the boycott - but perhaps the most frequent attitude to our leaflet is disbelief that a women can still be sacked for being pregnant "in this day and age". The manager of Burton's is also noticing the effects of the picket - in mid-February the police were called to instruct us that if we did not reduce our numbers then we would be guilty of "obstruction". Despite this the picket will be continuing and we hope to involve more of the Burtons' staff by leafletting their exit. For more information contact: Tricia Jennings Defence Committee, c/o Citizens Rights Office, 43 Broughton Street, Edinburgh.

Community Care : That's Doublespeak

Community Care began as an ideal to end institutionalisation and integrate mentally ill people back into society where it was felt they could belong and function, except in crisis, with adequate services. To the Tories it is cost effective but they don't consider that most psychiatric users are too poor to pay for private care or that there is an 80% rate of re-admission to psychiatric hospitals. Unfortunately, however, the ideals of the proponents of community care do not coincide with those of the Tories whose rhetoric is a great gloss-over for "cheap care". There is plenty such "doublespeak".

The Community Treatment Order is an example - sounds innocent? - it's actually a right to break into users' homes and forcibly drug them. There will be small psychiatric units and their right to detain (section) people will remain. CTO's may help them treat someone if there isn't a bed to push them in as an involuntary patient or it may lead to a section.

I wonder what community care means when a group of residents oppose a hostel being sited near them? There is still ignorance, stigma and hostility towards the mentally ill. Consider how abuse in the street, never mind assault, may seem to ex-long stay patients? Some do make the transition into the community - except their home may be staffed, they may not choose who they live with and they won't be working. Many more will never make that transition. There is now a category called the New Long-Stay - those expected to live all their lives in the hostels. Of those discharged into the community - when all the planned services aren't ready - some do move on to independence (not without a struggle and support); 10% commit suicide; and numbers in prison psychiatric wings are already up.

Despite all the gloom and doom, I believe good community care is possible with more services and choice. It means crisis centres, non-medical refuges, help-lines, home visits, centres open 24 hours and weekends, therapy and counselling widely and freely available; a real service for "neurotics" as well as for "psychotics" and personality disorders. Some centres must be user-run and some must be drop-in centres. There needs to be up-to-date information; patients' councils on wards; a variety of hostels, some unstaffed where appropriate and some owned by residents as housing co-ops; employment opportunities like workers co-ops and equal opportunities for the ex-user; support groups for users coming off psychiatric drugs; more home helps and support for carers who could be overburdened.

The Tories worship "happy families" but this bears no relation to reality. They only wish to cut costs and push mental health care into the home. Besides, many ex-patients go into bed and breakfast, the Salvation Army or private hostels where they are kicked out during the day and landlords make huge profits from DHSS money. The whole thing's already a mess. In the wards patients are discharged as quick as possible even though they may not be ready to leave. The plans mean nothing without money to implement them.

Community care is a good ideal but we need it in reality as the numbers of mentally ill are rising and will continue to do so. I see social conditions, racial tension, rape, crime, housing, prospects (not only for the young), backlash (against gay people and women) worsening; benefits and wages will go down; the poll tax will hit us all - we can expect more people in a crisis.

I'd like to end by saying that we users need not and will not take this lying down - nor need others stand by and watch it happen. It might be you or someone you know who needs psychiatric care in future. There are campaigns involving users and ex-users to improve services and force the Tories to put their money where their mouths are. This also needs mental health workers' involvement and like all workers in struggle, they will need support from other workers. We cannot allow the current farce to continue unopposed with different health authorities fighting among themselves and fighting local authorities for cash and voluntary organisations scrambling around for cash also, or the end result will be a disaster, not progress.



Out in the ever-loving community ex long-stay patients are visibly "different"

PSYCHIATRIC USERS ORGANISE

There is now a national network of psychiatric users groups called Survivors Speak Out (SSO) whose first conference in September last year produced the following charter of needs and demands:

1. That mental health service providers recognise and use people's first hand experience of emotional distress for the good of others.
2. Provision of refuge, planned and under the control of survivors of psychiatry.
3. Provision of free counselling for all.
4. Choice of services including self-help alternatives.
5. A government review of services, with the recipients sharing their views.
6. Provision of resources to implement self-advocacy for all users.
7. Adequate funding for non-medical community services, especially crisis intervention.
8. Facility for representation for users and ex-users of services on statutory bodies including Community Health Councils, Mental Health Tribunals and the Mental Health Act Commission.
9. Full and free access to all personal medical records.
10. Legal protection and the means of redress for all psychiatric patients.
11. Establishment of the democratic right of staff to refuse to administer any treatment without risk of sanction or prejudice.
12. The phasing out of electro-convulsion therapy and psycho-surgery.
13. Independent monitoring of drug use and its consequences.
14. Provision for all patients of full written and verbal information on treatments, including adverse research findings.
15. An end to discrimination against people who receive, or have received, psychiatric services - with particular regard to housing, employment, insurance, etc.



We will need a mental health system very different from what is currently on offer"

The first demo for psychiatric users and ex-users was on Saturday, 5th December, at the Royal College of Psychiatry. Letters have been sent to the Mental Health Act Commission and Sir Roy Griffiths who is doing a parliamentary review of community care and who promotes user consultation (though his own consultation with users in Leeds was derisory - he gave them 10 minutes). The users' group I'm in is applying for funding from Social Services though we will still be critical of them. To campaign for a choice of different and improved services is vital now that the shift to community care has begun. The promise of community care must be upheld - ie funded. We users have a chance (at last) to have some say in planning and provision of psychiatric services including alternatives. If we don't, then community care may be more than a travesty - it may be a tragedy.

This campaign is reformist but some activists see that users overwhelmingly belong to poor and oppressed sections of society. Bad housing and poverty are seen as real causes of stress alongside grief, divorce etc. Some user groups like CAPO (Campaign Against Psychiatric Oppression) specifically state that psychiatry is social control and see many users not necessarily as heroic non-conformists, but as people who do question their roles and are pressured to adjust to society again. Many radical users are marxist rather than anarist but would agree the whole of society must change to significantly alleviate much mental illness. I'm not alone in wondering how militant the users' movement could be but some activists are not very politicised and are experiencing for the first time some power through protest and putting input into the planning process. Many demoralised users feel we can have no influence. Yet we've little option but to pursue good community care with all our strength and to build up solidarity to ensure we do have a say.

Nevertheless some believe that doors are opening and we will succeed - I remain sceptical that success will be so smooth. To succeed we need not only allies in the services, including grass roots mental health workers, but also in the public. If we can win the real support of the sections of society we chiefly come from we could make everyone aware of our demands (the list SSO produced is a good start but it can be extended). This, though, may not appeal to all the users' movement, aiming as it does at a higher political profile and more impact. Still, it remains to be seen how the users' movement - or parts of it - will grow and develop.

Addresses of groups involved in "mental health self-advocacy" can be obtained by writing to: Box DAM, c/o 52 Call Lane, Leeds 2.

DHSS: Couldn't Care Less!

COLIN IS A 29-year old resident of Woolwich in south east London. Two years ago he was diagnosed HIV positive and a year later he developed AIDS. Seeking medical advice he was told to eat a diet high in protein and dairy produce to keep strength up as he had already lost three stone. Last August Colin applied for a special dietary payment from the DHSS and was awarded an extra £2.15 towards his weekly food bill of £37.50. He asked for more and sent a letter of support from his doctor. He was informed by the DHSS that the matter had gone to a senior medical officer.

He heard nothing until January when he was told his papers had been lost. Meanwhile he has had to stop having two bottles of gold top milk a day as he couldn't afford it and has lost weight again. If Colin receives more money from the DHSS it will be no good even in arrears as it won't help him put weight back on. Colin is the victim of a system that is not working or even helping people survive a possibly fatal illness. For them he is just another piece of meat who can fade away and die.

NEW COP TOYS

Poison darts and electrical cattle prods could soon be part of an increasingly deadly arsenal of weapons used by the British police. We've already seen the use of plastic bullets and CS (tear) gas by police, first in the north of Ireland and now in Britain. These are, however, just the tip of an iceberg which includes weapons that seem to come out of the realm of science fiction.

Electrical shock weapons have been used in the USA for years. Developed from cattle prods, they give a massive electrical charge of 45,000-50,000 volts (the mains at home are only 250 volts) so the victim is literally too shocked to move. At present 2 types - the Nova and Taser - are being tested by British police. The Nova must be used at arm's length but the Taser can be used at a distance as it fires 2 darts at the victim, the shock passing down tin wires, but is incredibly inaccurate. The Nova has been banned in the US since - surprise, surprise - cops were using them to torture detainees. Such weapons are "ideal" for this as they leave no marks and are very painful but then "good old" British bobbies would never torture, would they? Aside from this shock weapons can kill people, especially those suffering from weak hearts, the old or children. Poison darts were also developed to control animals and inject many different chemicals from vinegar, which produces incredible pain, to cyanide, which can of course kill. It has been claimed that they would only be used to drug people using sleeping drugs but the correct dose depends on the victim - too little might have no effect; too much could kill.

SELF DEFENCE?

The police claim these new weapons would only be used in hostage situations but exactly the same was said of tear gas. In 1968 Mr Buchan, Secretary of State for Scotland, said CS gas would only be used to deal with armed criminals or violently insane persons in buildings from which they cannot be dislodged without danger of loss of life, or as a means of self defence in a desparate situation - that in no circumstances should it be used to help control disturbances. A year later in the 6 counties it was being used in massive amounts on the streets against rioters.

The justification for police weapons has always been that they for self-defence; are harmless - or at least better than "real guns" - and are used to control dangerous situations. The facts show all this to be untrue. In practice it's impossible to tell the difference between aggressive and defensive weapons - the police are trained to use defensive shields as dangerous clubs and other weapons are used aggressively. These weapons are <u>not</u> harmless. In the 6 counties plastic bullets have killed 18 people and maimed many more and tear gas has killed in South Africa. In fact it has been said that to be effective they must be potentially lethal and besides, they aren't used <u>instead</u> of real guns but as well as them. Far from controlling dangerous situations it has been shown that in fact they make them worse. A study at Lancaster University sponsored by the Ministry of Defence showed that introducing riot control weapons to the 6 counties destabilised the situation. So shocked were the MoD by the findings they had them checked but the result was exactly the same.

So why do the police use dangerous weapons that don't even work? A lot is to do with the companies that make them. Glossy advertising and high pressure sales are used by arms firms to sell their very profitable goods. Also, using killer weapons is a cheap way to intimidate people and control a situation. As an army brigadier put it: "Three or four times as many troops might be required if they were only allowed to use persuasion, as would be needed if they were to use batons and gas; and 3 to 4 times as many troops might be needed if they were restricted to using batons and gas as would be required if they were allowed to use small arms". As government becomes more and more repressive vicious weapons will be used again and again against even peaceful demonstrations and strikers.



Plastic Bullets Victim

OFFICIAL "SECRETS"

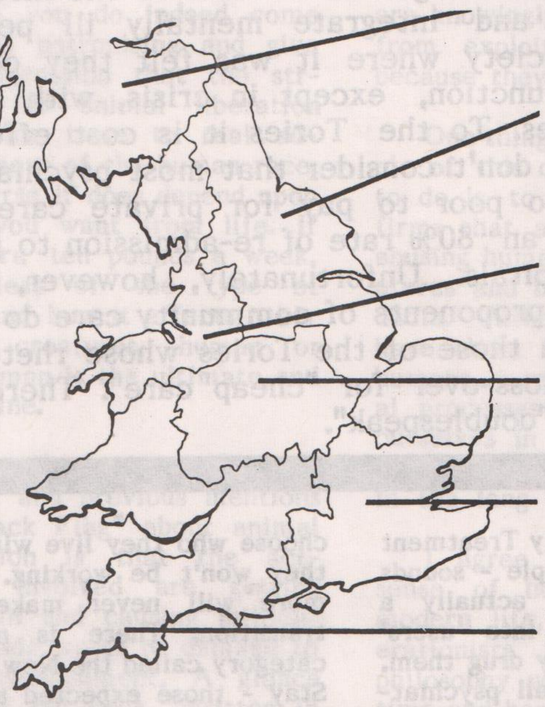
In 1973 the London Bureau of Newsweek was informed that photographing the Shoreditch employment office to accompany a story on unemployment constituted a breach of the Official Secrets Act!

In 1979 Yorkshire Television was making a programme on Rampton Mental Hospital. The government considered it prudent to make the staff sign the Official Secrets Act to discourage them from participating in the documentary!

Ludovic Kennedy's daughter, Ailsa, had to sign the Official Secrets Act while working on a holiday job picking out marigolds at Hampton Court. The official explanation given to her was that she might at any moment be transferred to weeding at Porton Down!

Extracts from David Hoope's book, Official Secrets (Secker and Warburg).

ECONOMIC LEAGUE



The Economic League's regional boundaries, addresses and phone numbers

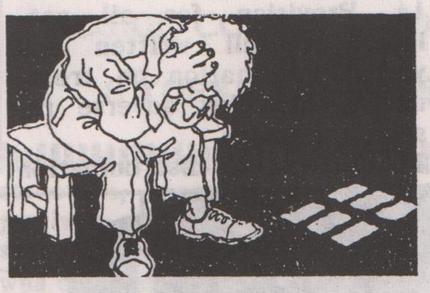
THE ECONOMIC LEAGUE was founded in 1919 and has since carried on a notorious "labour screening" scheme. This is the vetting of the political persuasion or affiliation of potential employees for subscriber companies notably banks and breweries but many others besides. High on the list for such vetting are trade union, strike support and political activists. Anyone who saw "World in Action" on February 1st will be aware that the Economic League will stop at nothing to gain information. Paid infiltrators are employed to check on potential employees whose livelihoods are threatened by their names appearing on the lists.

VIOLATION

Such secret files are a violation to civil rights and a menace to working class activists. However it must be said that the Economic League is merely a tool for their paymasters - the capitalists. Italy, Germany, Spain and Portugal all had such lists to intimidate ordinary workers from organising in their own defence. The same mentality exists in Britain and the banks, breweries multinationals and so on are determined to hold the whip hand on their workforces.

—Martin Foran Update—

LEEDS BLACK CROSS has been authorised by Martin Foran (see DA 45) to open and handle a campaign bank account as follows: "What I plan to do is set up two funds - one with a solicitor to cover legal defence, one with you to cover leaflets, printing bills and postage... Thought you would best be able to sort money out, cover all costs, and if possible help my wife out...To start the defence fund will you split the cash you have raised, send half to the solicitor, you keep half for your fund."



We have opened a bank account in the name of "Martin Foran Support Fund", to which cheques should be made payable and sent to Leeds Black Cross, Box JAG, 52 Call Lane, Leeds 1. All the money in this account will cover campaign costs and we will also send money to Martin's wife, Valerie, as and when she requires it. Obviously the more money raised, the more campaigning we can do, and more quickly. The defence fund is being managed by Martin's solicitor - Roger Merry of Wilkes Solicitors, 9 Garfield Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight. This will pay for his legal costs in suing the police, etc. Please make cheques, etc payable to Martin Foran Defence Fund Trust.

At present although over £250 has been raised by East London DAM, Oxford Black Cross and Plymouth Anarchists, it was all sent to Valerie Foran for Christmas, so more donations are needed to keep the Support Fund going. It is suggested that if people raise money at benefits, etc, they split it 50/50 and send half to each fund. Finally Martin sends thanks and greeting to all comrades who have been supporting him in his struggle for justice and freedom.

GOING DOWN?

IN OCTOBER 1985, Charlton Athletic Football Club left their ground, The Valley, and moved across South London to play their home games at Crystal Palace's ground, Selhurst Park. This is over an hour away for the fans and since Charlton were promoted to the 1st division their attendances have been lower than expected. Meanwhile the Valley has been rotting away in the middle of a working class area. The owners want to develop it into a luxury hotel or if that fails yuppy flats. As yet they've not had planning permission for either idea.

Not prepared to let club officials sort the matter out a group of fans who produce the "Voice of the Valley" fanzine have called for a boycott of the March 26th game against Oxford United. Instead of going to Selhurst Park they want fans to demonstrate outside The Valley. They hope people will join them as they do not want to see a club which was part of a community vanish. Charlton Athletic was moved to benefit big business and will die a slow death. Meanwhile The Valley will eventually be used as the starting point to move working class residents away from another part of London in the continued yuppification of the city. This will be opposed by fans and the people living nearby.

THE MINERS' NEXT STEP

Last month's DA featured the first half of an interview with David Douglass concerning the issues presently facing the miners and the NUM. Here David continues giving us his opinions on strategies of struggle for the miners, the Labour Party and Arthur Scargill's re-election among other things:

DA: With massive pit closures and redundancies the NUM is smaller now - also there is the UDM. Has the NUM remained militant and how can it continue to function against the Board's sustained assault?

DD: This is the crux of the problem which the self-styled revolutionary left, by and large doesn't understand and, I dare suggest, doesn't care about. You can't keep shouting "charge" regardless of the costs, the enemy and adverse situation. It may be glamorous for someone selling "Socialist Worker" at the top of the pit lane to see the miners battered again but I can assure you they're in no mood to be anybody else's martyrs. So it's a question of a strategy that allows the fabric of the union and lives of people in mining communities to continue whilst offering the maximum resistance possible. I think we have sufficient edge to confront the Board but not for an all out assault on the government and general political situation - we've no allies in that. My perspective would be that if the Board want coal - for another week, say - then they'll have to pay to get it and that of course means we are really talking about a last ditch stand.

STRIKE

Most mining families still haven't recovered from the last strike. With the best will in the world we just wouldn't get the response for an all-out strike - it isn't spirit we need but the means to fight. Other areas have talked of an overtime ban to affect not just production but all weekend work. Personally, I'd call for an unlimited series of 1-day strikes. That has the beauty of everybody losing the same time. The thing about overtime bans is if you're on night shift you don't lose any time but certain categories on day shift will always lose time. I'd say a series of 1-day strikes will show the Board it can't continue its prospectus for the industry without negotiating on a whole range of issues. If, after a given period, 1-day strikes don't work, you start seeking a series of 1-week strikes. So you escalate that way. By then we'd know if the Board want to see us right into the ground, and themselves with us, or want to compromise.

DA: Scargill's election* - he has had a lot of flack for this though he always maintained he'd call for an election after 5 years - is there an ulterior reason?

DD: Being a Yorkshireman, Arthur is a pragmatist - whether it's principle or



tactic is beside the point. The thing is, as I outlined before, how the NEC is composed has stopped any form of action. The meetings are a bloodbath with continual back biting and bickering. Due to Communist Party domination in S Wales and Scotland and the chorus of "new realism" Arthur is continually told that he is "out of touch and he doesn't live in the real world", "he's a utopian", "he's an ultra-leftist and the members don't back him", that "the army's fled", that "he's a general without an army". Now they've told him this enough times that he really does need to check if he's got any troops left. If the membership won't fight there's no point in him shouting for it. So that's one aspect. A vote for Arthur will undermine the cockiness of the more conservative and CP dominated areas.

STRATEGIES

It also gives Arthur and the union the opportunity to campaign around all the issues. Without this election there's no way we could campaign in S Wales and Scotland and see what ordinary members there think of the 6-day week or disciplinary code. It's not about Arthur's hairstyle but about where you stand on the issues and what strategies we've got. Hopefully he can have exchanges if this is taken in conjunction with mass branch meetings with feedback from the crowd. It's not just a matter of a tub-thumping speech - we really must sit down and talk about strategies besides re-electing Arthur; we need to know how we fight. As I've said, a death or glory charge isn't what serious revolutionaries would consider. You've only to reflect on the syndicalist/industrial unionist document produced in S Wales at the turn of the century - "The Miners' Next Step". It's all about finding a strategy to maximise damage on coal-owners and minimise damage to miners. They ruled out unlimited strike action due to the beatings they'd had. Now I hope nobody would call them moderates for considering our own side's losses. That's essentially the same situation we're in at the moment.

DA: Given the Labour Party leadership's dislike of Scargill, the quest for the yuppy vote, moves within the Labour Party and left groups against working class or traditional working class organisations - which way now for militant unionism?

DD: Kinnock hates what we stood for in that year. He made no secret of what he stood for when the crunch came between the state and the working class in struggle and he's made no bones of his dislike for Arthur. During this campaign he's come out strongly saying Arthur is a disaster for the union and he'll support whichever other candidate. Also there's Maxwell fronting up a paper saying "A vote for Scargill is a vote for Thatcher". So we see the whole column filling out to the right. This is always the danger of a strike ballot and why we resisted one in '84/'85. The media and everybody else wants to tell the miners who's best for them.

Obviously the Labour Party leadership wants to ditch any traditions of support for working class struggle and is trying to come up with a shiny new social democratic machine like the 2 Davids wanted. One band wagon has rolled off the field and Kinnock's preparing Labour to fill its place. There will be no place for traditional socialists in Kinnock's point of view. The whole thing is problematic - it was never a question of Labour being socialist. The question for socialists has always been "what position do you occupy vis-a-vis the large number of working class people who support it". In my view you direct yourself at Labour members either from inside or outside. You certainly can't ignore the genuine people in the party despite Kinnock.

DA: During the strike links were made with solidarity groups and miners have shown solidarity with South African striking miners recently. How far have links been maintained and what has been done to maintain them?

SOUTH AFRICA

DD: On the question of South Africa, our union has done as much and more than any other. We've hosted 2 international conferences on S African coal and ore (gold, uranium or whatever) in solidarity under the direction of the South African NUM and Namibian miners' union. We've also produced, for every member, a booklet on the situation in S Africa and why we oppose apartheid and racism - you can't fight apartheid unless you oppose racism in Britain. We've hosted demonstrations, and pickets - it's a big campaign but short of sending pickets to S Africa it's been very difficult to be physically involved. There is a strong argument for miners to picket S African coal imports but I strongly oppose calls for general import controls. Coal from South Africa is a solidarity question not one of protectionism.

I think the momentum has gone from solidarity groups. I can't speak for the women's organisations but it appears that at the end of the strike the rug was pulled from under them in a very bureaucratic way by people determined to control them. I think, not to put too fine a point on it, they pissed a lot of people off. Those left, and there are genuine people, carry on to maintain the work of the women's support groups. Some have simply changed direction - like at Thorne and Moorends they were the printers' support group and though there were no printers on strike there they organised pickets of newsagents. Some support victimised miners and some support S African miners. The national fabric of support groups I don't think has remained, partly because when the strike collapsed and the impetus left the movement there were people only too happy to let it finish. It's potential was too great - it frightened a lot of people. We tried to maintain it with Wapping but I think it did collapse.

DA: What kind of support do the miners want now?

DD: We've still got more than 360 dismissed miners now facing their 4th year without a wage packet. So any support people can give financially is important. It's very, very important that wherever the Coal Board hosts exhibitions, etc to show the modern coal industry (which of course I support as a miner) people turn up to show the other face of the industry with over 360 people on the scrap heap for no other reason than they fought for their jobs and communities. We must also continue raising the victimisation of Ted Scott and Paul Whetton, branch secretaries sacked for carrying on their union work. Now if they were Lech Walesa, or someone else, Thatcher would organise the picket herself. Solidarity in Poland isn't the same as having solidarity in Britain. Those are the things we need to continue with. In forthcoming struggles any help in terms of pickets, demonstrations, lobbies, etc would be greatly appreciated.



Yet another pit closure in Notts

* This interview was carried out during the campaign for presidency of the NUM.

"ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM"

Rudoph Rocker's "Anarcho-Syndicalism" written in 1938 and recently re-printed by Phoenix Press, is a classic introduction to the subject. Rocker, a prominent anarcho-syndicalist himself, gives an account of the origins of the labour movement, the forerunners of syndicalism and the evolution, objectives and methods of anarcho-syndicalism. Martin Everett's introduction describes Rocker's background, anarcho-syndicalism in Britain up to the present and its relevance to today's world: "The world is in crisis, and the overthrow of capitalism, in all its many varied forms is now essential in order to ensure the survival of the planet...anarcho-syndicalism is not a narrow ideal with limited goals, but rather a programme for the destruction of capitalism and the regeneration of human community based on the concept of social self-management."



RUDOLF ROCKER

The book starts with a chapter that defines anarchism, its aims and purposes: "In place of the present capitalistic economic order anarchists would have a free association of all productive forces based upon co-operative labour, which would have as its sole purpose the satisfying of the necessary requirements of every member of society." Rocker outlines the development of the anarchist philosophy from the ancient Chinese and Greek philosophers through the middle ages and later on the writings of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. He also describes the ideas of individualist "anarchists" and links them ideologically with the demands of liberalism, leading him to the idea that anarchism is a sort of merger between socialism and liberalism - which we think is rather debatable.

Socialism must be free, or it won't be socialism. Rocker appears to assume that socialism implies the denial of individual liberty, but such a state of affairs would not be socialism, and those people who advocate a kind of "socialism" under state control either don't understand what socialism is or they want to form a new ruling class. Liberalism, on the other hand, does not aim to abolish the economic system which reduces us to wage slaves, nor does it aim to abolish the monopoly of power - the state. It merely aims to allow more political freedom and curtail capitalism's excesses but fails to recognise that capitalism cannot be made to run in the interests of the majority. This makes "democracy" under capitalism meaningless. Although Rocker realises this he still sees anarchism as a synthesis between socialism and liberalism.

NEW HOPE

There is a good deal of historical information to illustrate the development of the modern labour movement from the industrial revolution; the creation of the "proletariat" and their attempts to defend their living standards by forming unions. Thus the class struggle was born: "It breathed new hope into the victims of an economy of unrestricted exploitation and showed them a course which offered the possibility of safeguarding their lives and defending their outraged human dignity". Rocker then describes the upsurge of political radicalism in Britain, the reform movement and the Chartists: "Only from everyday conflicts between labour and capital could the doctrines of socialism, which had arisen in the minds of individual thinkers, take on flesh and blood and acquire that peculiar character that makes them a mass movement, the embodiment of a new cultural ideal for the future.

Rocker deals next with the fore-runners of syndicalism which arose from a labour movement permeated by socialist ideas. The creation of the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1834 and later, the International Workingmen's Association (or First International) are described in detail, the latter being "the first great attempt to unite workers of all countries in an international alliance". The influence of Marx in the 1st International is dealt with and, briefly, the disastrous consequences of Bolshevism in Russia which Rocker labels state capitalism.

We then come to the objectives of anarcho-syndicalism using the ideas and practice of the Spanish CNT. The book then covers the methods of anarcho-syndicalism and the emphasis of direct action as opposed to participation in bourgeois parliaments: "Even the freest ballot cannot do away with the glaring contrast between the possessing and non-possessing classes in society. It can only serve to impart to a system of social injustice the aspect of legal right and to induce the slave to set the stamp of legality on his own servitude". Rocker explains that anarcho-syndicalists do not reject politics and political struggle, only that it must take the form of direct action and that politics must be brought on to the economic field: "The focal point of the political struggle lies, then, not in the political parties, but in the economic fighting organisations of the workers. It was the recognition of this which impelled the anarcho-syndicalists to centre all their activity on the socialist education of the masses and on the utilisation of their economic and social power."

The idea of the social general strike is described and Rocker explains how the state would be powerless to intervene due to the scattering of its forces leading to the relaxing of military discipline and the possibility of soldiers being "won over" by a determined revolutionary working class. "For the workers the general strike takes the place of the barricades of the political uprising. It is for them a logical outcome of the industrial system whose victims they are today, and at the same time it offers them their strongest weapon in their struggle for liberation, provided they recognise their own strength and learn how to use this weapon properly."

EXPERIENCE

Rocker goes on to show the evolution of anarcho-syndicalism, with emphasis on the French CGT, the founding of the Spanish CNT in 1910, the USI in Italy and the FORA in Argentina, founded in 1891. The book ends with the inclusion of the first chapter from Rocker's "London Years" as an appendix, in which he talks about his experiences with the Jewish anarchist movement in London in the 1890's. This book is well worth reading for it is very informative and to my knowledge is the only book that explains completely what anarcho-syndicalism is, how it came into being and what it aims to achieve.

Available from: Phoenix Press, PO Box 824, London N1 - cost: £3 (including p&p).



Dairy under workers' control, Spain 1936

Anti-Social Fund

THE MAIN MEASURES of the Social Security Act 1986 come into force on April 11th, representing the most savage attack yet on the unemployed and low-paid. Even on government figures there will be more losers than gainers and this ignores the effects the abolition of single payments will have on claimants. Supplementary Benefit will be replaced be Income Support; Family Income Supplement by Family Credit and both will be assessed in the same way. Weekly additions for heating, special diets and laundry costs and long term scale rates for those with difficulty signing on will be abolished. This means the most vulnerable in society - the elderly, the disabled and single parent families - will be worse off. Single parents with part time jobs will be losing out - this ties in with the right wing drive to discourage single parent families.

DEPENDENCE

Benefit paid to single people who are childless and live independently will be £5.50 a week less and they'll have to pay water rates and 20% of general rates (a ploy to make claimants think twice before voting for high spending councils). This will lead to increased homelessness and dependence on the family. For those already on benefit by April their present benefit will be frozen until the new amounts catch up so it is crucial for those people to ensure they are getting what they are entitled to. To do this they should get a benefit check from a local advice centre or citizens' advice bureau. However, those forced to take temporary work or a government scheme will be put on the new benefit rates when they return to benefit.

The single payment system, for items like furniture, bed clothes and deposits on flats will be replaced by the Social Fund. But rumour has it that claims after 15th March won't be dealt with. Besides maternity needs and funerals which will still be covered by grants (though payment for funerals is recoverable from the deceased's estate) other claims will be dealt with by discretionary loans with no right to appeal. If the Social Fund Officer doesn't like the look of you or doesn't think you can repay the loan they can refuse to give you anything. The DHSS are so worried about this measure that interview rooms will have floor to ceiling screens to protect their officers. If the money in the Social Fund runs out there is nothing the claimant can do. Officers, however, will give you guidance to "other sources of help" - friends, relatives, clothing clubs, mail order catalogues, overdraft facilities, credit cards, charities and benevolent funds (oh yes?!). Anyway, despite these problems, if you are "lucky enough" to get a loan it is recoverable from your giro - another form of cut from benefits and attack on the poor.

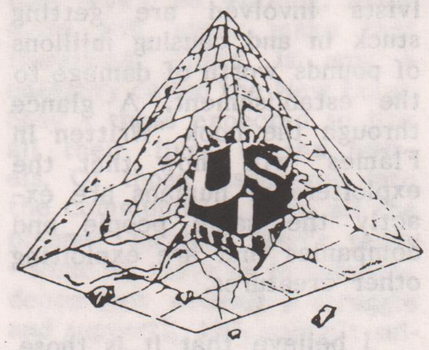
What can be done? Make sure you claim for single payments before 15th March and that you are getting the weekly additions you are entitled to. Local authority workers, unions and voluntary workers in other agencies are refusing to co-operate with the Social Fund - it's essential that unions and claimants alike support and encourage these moves. It is also important to campaign against this by linking it to other attacks on our class - the poll tax, the removal of the NHS - only then can this be defeated.

Growing Dissent in Italy

For almost a year now Italy has seen wildcat strike after wildcat strike organised, not by the official unions, but by the "Grassroots Committees", the Comitati di Base (COBAS). They have been almost exclusively in the public sector, schools, railways and airways and have met opposition from both the bosses and the union bureaucrats. The politicians have debated anti-strike laws but the government hasn't managed to get anything on to the statutes due to many problems within the ruling five party coalition and last year's nuclear referendum. This shook the system up a little when a majority voted against laws supporting the nuclear establishment. Naturally the nuclear establishment hasn't collapsed and for the present the coalition is holding but not a lot is getting done in parliament.

At least 1 national daily paper has referred to the "return of anarcho-syndicalism" to the industrial scene and the threat it poses. This is perhaps not yet justified, as there are many different elements involved with the COBAS - various marxist groups as well as anarchists. However there has been a growth in the USI/AIT and USI militants have been firm in their support for the actions of the grassroots groups. The COBAS have been less happy with the "support" from some of the marxist groups who would like to take them over for their own vanguardist purposes.

With the government in a crisis over the budget the most recent attack on the COBAS have come predictably from the CGIL/CISL/UIL union confederation. In January, after a long period of debate, they finally agreed on internal rules for the re-



gulation of industrial conflicts. Pizzinato, Marini and Benvenuto, the 3 union bosses, explained to the government their continued support for the agreement made nearly two years ago which limited strikes in certain periods of the year and which forbade simultaneous strikes in the rail and air services. The new regulations also limit the duration of strikes and propose punishment for members of sections which break these rules. There could be fines for individuals and suspension of union rights for rebel sections, and maybe other sanctions too. The confederation plan to individualise essential services which they believe should be maintained even during strikes and the duty to perform these services, plus the other regulations, will be written into new contracts to be legally binding.

The excuse that the union confederation has used for these measures is that they can avoid the necessity for government legislation by introducing these internal regulations. But this is by no means certain and, given the links between the unions and the main parties, it seems more like a return of corporatism, where union bureaucracies play a part in economic planning. What they can't get in by the front door they get in by the back door - and further legislation may be necessary. Another uncertainty is over whether COBAS rebels should get the "benefits" of new contracts if they strike against them demanding better conditions and wages. The Communists in the CGIL are against this punishment but the possibility remains in the new code of practice that only the union "faithful" will get the increases. This would create a situation like that in the UK where the UDM scabs get more than miners in the NUM.

It remains to be seen what the COBAS will do in the face of this further betrayal by the official unions. Strikes will undoubtedly go on. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the unions which won't go away with these new rules.

Legacy of 1917

THE BOLSHEVIK coup d'etat in 1917 heralded a counter-revolution which the world's labour movement has not yet been able to recover from. The dictatorship over the proletariat ruled by Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin was seen as the model for aspiring governors around the world. The coming to power of socialist bosses in Eastern Europe after World War 2, the Chinese personality cult of Mao, The Korean cult of Kim Il Sung, the Cuban cult of Castro and so on are held up by their apologists as "progressive".

Yet in all these countries, for example the case of Solidarnosc, no independent workers' movement is tolerated. Activists are harassed and criminalised. In the Soviet Union the coal miners, Aleksei Nikitin and Vladimir Klebanov, were deemed "insane". Their "crime" or "insanity" was to fight for health and safety conditions in the mines where they worked in Dombass, in the Ukraine. They were sacked. When they met other victimised workers they set up the Free Trade Union Association - FTUA - in 1978. The aim was free trade unions independent of the state and run by the workers themselves as well as the right to strike. The FTUA was open to all Soviet workers regardless of region or industry. About 200 people joined. Aleksei Nikitin has since died in jail in 1984. Vladimir Klebanov's whereabouts in the maze of psychiatric jails is unknown. Despite this protests for his release continue as he is symbolic of many more individuals persecuted for their independence.

Another organisation set up by rebel workers is SMOT which has also been criminalised but continues to survive and slowly grow. Both organisations are sustained by the solidarity of other workers. As their members aren't academics or artists they are shunned in the west as they are too similar to uncontrolable workers here for publicity in the capitalist media. Further, the failure of the "left" in the west to support FTUA and SMOT can be traced to their worship of bureaucratic state socialism.

The repression of the Kronstadt Soviet in 1921 and persecution of Ukrainian anarchist workers and peasants were carried out by Lenin and Trotsky. Stalin carried on Lenin's work faithfully. Later uprisings against stalinist tyrannies - East Germany 1953, Poland & Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1970 & 1980 - and the strike waves in the Soviet Union itself haven't only faced state repression but suspicion and inaction by the left in the west. Solidarity whether it's not crossing picket lines or siding with workers in the eastern bloc should be elementary. For anarcho-syndicalists who have never been taken in by the Bolshevik myth this has always been the case - "an injury to one is an injury to all" regardless of the bosses' politics.

SLAVERY TODAY

SLAVERY DIDN'T END with the American Civil War or in 1833 when the 685,098 slaves in the British Empire were liberated. The Anti-Slavery Society defines 5 categories of present day slavery - "chattel slavery", where one person totally owns another; "debt bondage" where someone is in such debt to an employer that they'll never escape from working for them; there is serfdom, where agricultural labourers cannot leave the estates in which they work; there are servile forms of marriage in which a woman is sold to her bridegroom; finally the selling of children is widespread - in Bangkok it is possible to buy a child for about £70 - you'll even get a receipt!



The Anti-Slavery Society's journal had a front cover depicting a 3 year old chained up in a cellar in Bangkok 24 hours a day packing heroin to be smuggled out of the country. The drug trade is notorious for using slaves. In 1984 Mexican television showed concentration camps in Chihuahua state which had contained thousands of slaves to grow and process marijuana. They were worked from 4am to ten at night and fed one meal of soup and beans - if they became too ill to work they were killed.

In Thailand boys and girls are sold into prostitution. At 16 they are considered too old and all that's left for them is begging, crime and pushing drugs. Child labour in the Third World is a desparate problem which must be eradicated. There are about 80 million children under 15 working throughout the world. This is about 11% of the world's children between 10 and 14 years old. Child labour is linked to poverty, which is also as true of deprived children in the West as in the Third World. To alleviate the constant threat of starvation children are put to work, becoming old before their time. The hope of escaping malnutrition is empty - child labour is counter-productive as it undercuts adults' wages and employment. This is why children are preferred to adults.

Today, in India, there are approximately 5,000,000 bonded labourers who are, to all intents and purposes, slaves and are bought and sold as such. The Bonded Labour Liberation Front (Bandhua Mukti Morcha) has existed for over 10 years freeing and re-habilitating bonded labourers, many of whom are aboriginal and tribal people who have gotten into debt and thus slavery. Often the debt is as small as £5 but £50 or so is more usual. The "employers" falsify the document once the labourer has put their thumbprint on it - extra zeros are added to the sum and with interest up to 200 per cent the labourer cannot escape. Often the labour of wives and children is pledged and sometimes the "debt" continues down the generations - among these people there is only their labour to mortgage.

This article has used material derived either directly or indirectly from the Anti-Slavery Society, 130 Brixton Road, London SW9.

FORWARD COMRADES!

THE FOLLOWING is a statement from "Tierra y Libertad", organ of the Iberian Anarchist Federation on the latest ruling by the Spanish court against the CNT-AIT (Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union and section of the AIT/IWA).

On December 2nd the Territorial Court in Madrid, dealing with the dispute over the ownership of the name and symbols of the CNT, declared in favour of the Renovada splinter organisation and against the CNT-AIT. Thus it appears that the manoeuvres and walk-outs by those that have sought to destroy the form and content of anarcho-syndicalism in Spain, have succeeded - at least temporarily.

It has to be said that anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists have never owed their existence to the state judicial system and it's a mistake to believe that we need to be granted their so-called legality. As anarcho-syndicalists we are in constant struggle against both the state and the harsh changes in social organisation everywhere like those the judges from Madrid protect and defend.

There is little point at this stage in analysing the judicial proceedings or attitudes surrounding the case except to say that only the CNT-AIT, not the notorious Renovada opportunists, do and always will deserve our support regardless of how many judgements fall upon them.

It might well be that the Supreme Court - to which the case will next be taken - will confirm the pro-Renovada finding. Whatever the outcome we hope that the CNT-AIT will continue to use its own name and not surrender it to a puppet organisation of the state, one that sooner or later will join forces with the reformist unions such as the Communist CCOO.

Now more than ever, we must be aware that we cannot leave the defence of the CNT to its own militants alone. This is not the moment to be faint-hearted. We must continue to struggle with all our strength for our own ideas which in the end will be the only way of finishing with our enemies. We must go forward, comrades!

ters...Letters...Letters...Let

Dear Comrades,

I am writing as a rank and file member of NUPE. As a nurse in Leicester, February 3rd was a crucial day; a day when at last a huge number of NHS workers decided enough is enough and cut through the emotional blackmail imposed on us from every angle and decided that the rank and file alone must stand up and fight to defend the National Health Service. Nurses particularly (if tentatively) are starting to realise that the established "professionalism" - as defined in the UKCC's "Code of Conduct" (and upheld by the Royal College of Nursing) - of our job is just wool which has been pulled over our eyes. We are workers like our colleagues in the NHS (and in industry, agriculture, etc...) and as such have every born right to flex our muscle in unity and use militant industrial action in order to fight the ruling class, whose main aim is to privatise the NHS and take away the only real concession ever made to the working class by any British government.

Thatcher and her hatchetmen and hired thugs are now on the verge of destroying the NHS once and for all - this dispute is not even mainly about pay for nurses; it is about rich versus poor; it is our last chance to defend the NHS!

February 3rd was "the beginning". It was a rank and file action which showed all over the country the anger felt towards the cuts, short staffing and general management of the NHS. It showed the possible strength of a united rank and file in both its ability to stand and fight and also to undermine the union bureaucracy (at local and national levels) and ignore their patronising rubbish. We are not sheep to be led. We have had enough and now it's time to fight back.

As you may already be aware shop stewards' councils, committees and networks are now being set up nationally, following the February 3rd actions. With a little bit of luck the rank and file union set up will grow very quickly. For on March 5th (Saturday) there is to be a big(?) demonstration in London...in protest at the erosion of the NHS. We feel that this is a superb opportunity to demonstrate our unity - both as NHS workers and with the industrial working class in general - before declaring all out "war" on the ruling class that threatens not just out jobs and livelihood but our health as well.

Talk is growing among the militant shop stewards and rank and file of attempting to draw public backing in our defence by trying to call a "general strike" on perhaps March 15th (budget day), as Thatcher will be looking to put yet more nails in the NHS's coffin. We MUST resist as a united class, and I urge all fellow anarchists, DAM members and everyone else to support our struggle. We must show our strength on March 15th and then the battle will commence...

Liberation and solidarity,
GD.

Dear comrades,

May I use your letters' page to announce that we are holding a conference in June 1988 under the heading of "ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID!"

This will be a rank and file conference and we would like to hear from comrades whose trade union branch, Trades Council, etc have taken or are attempting to take direct action against apartheid.

We would like all those comrades to participate in the conference so that we can share our experiences and work together in a non-sectarian and positive way to assist our brothers and sisters in their heroic efforts to confront the evils of apartheid.

If you feel you can contribute in a meaningful way to our conference please contact us as soon as possible at the Anti-Apartheid Sub-Committee, Cambridge & District Trades Council, c/o Steve Flanders (Secretary), 82 York Street, Cambridge, CB1 2PY.

Yours fraternally,
B Wells (Vice-chair).

Dear DA,

I am looking to compile a Buffo style booklet on political pranks in the '80's played on those who oppress us everyday. This would include spoofs, changed posters, etc....Thus places, dates, photos, leaflets, press cuttings and the like should be sent anonymously, before April 1st to: ROXIE, Box ASS, c/o Leeds Other Paper, 52 Call Lane, Leeds 1, W Yorks.

Dear Direct Action,

Alas in your article about the pamphlet on animal liberation you do indeed come over as patronising and give the impression that the struggle for animal liberation is a side issue to real advancement of the human race. Of course it does depend upon what you want from life. If an extra ten pounds a week, regardless of the type of work and how it affects other living creatures, human or non-human is the ultimate end then fine.

What does come out of that article and previous mentions in "Black Flag" about animal liberation is that the activists involved are getting stuck in and causing millions of pounds worth of damage to the establishment. A glance through the book "Written In Flames" will show that the exploiters of humans are exactly the same people and companies that are exploiting other creatures.

I believe that it is those people who desire liberation for humans as the ultimate goal who lack perspective. We should all know by now that every species is linked through a complex chain of interdependence. The animal rights movement considers that all living creatures on this planet have an equal right to live out their natural lives. We also realise the need for a radical change in our diet and way of life. Our meat eating is directly depriving people in Ethiopia and other countries of food. It is also poisoning us and making us dependent on drug companies and chemical firms who are polluting this planet and destroying our future. Is it right to side with people who are knowingly making a living from exploiting animals just because they are poorly paid?

One thing the working people of this country may have to do is to stop working for firms that are exploiting and abusing humans and other creatures and boycott their products. Although they might have short term benefits to humans, many of the industrial processes that we involve ourselves in are not beneficial to humans or the planet in the long term.

I agree that there is a sense of hopelessness about modern life, and animal liberationists are following a philosophy which is as old as time and has none of the contradictions of human made systems. It is based on the simple premise that everything has a right to life and that we interdepend. This knowledge gives us strength to fight some of the biggest industries in the world with relatively small numbers of people.

I was really pleased that the Ford workers came out. I hope it puts Ford out of business, but I'll not join a picket line that has banners that read "We're Brits Not Nips". Even if this was the view of a very small section of the picket. The others should have ripped it dowm, just as they would an NF flag, I hope.

Yours in peace and freedom, Carl T.

Dear Comrades,

While I was glad to see you review "Attack" in DA 46, I would like to add a few comments of my own.

Firstly, a minor complaint - why do you give a contact address for both the Class War theoretical journal and the pamphlet on animal liberation, but not one for "Attack" (it's BM 6577, London, WC1N 3XX)? A simple error, or something more calculated?

Come to think of it, "The Heavy Stuff" gets a very favourable review, even though it totally rejects anarcho-syndicalism and even large chunks of anarchism. On the other hand, you seem to go out of your way to pick holes in "Attack". For instance, you complain of contradictions (specifically in the articles in Ireland), as if there is one "correct" line on every "issue".

Second, you devote a large part of your review to an analysis of trade unionism. Incidentally, nowhere does "Attack" suggest that it's better not to be in a union - just that building unions comes as a poor second to building barricades. The DAM of course has a different approach. The DAM agrees that trade unions are "non-revolutionary" and do not fight to abolish capitalism. But you propose an "alternative" called revolutionary unionism - as if it's simply the content of trade unionism that's faulty, rather than the form itself. Sounds like the old leftists' whine that "if only the leadership was changed.."

Finally you say that the whole tone of "Attack" is destructive. I agree. More should have been included on the other side to our struggles - the love, the support, the creativity, the organisation. But "Attack" was just a paper, not a platform, and it's well aware of its own shortcomings. What really angers you is that "Attack" apparently reinforces the popular negative stereotype of anarchism. But since when did we base our actions on what the media will think? Is this some sort of "new realism"? As for your final claim that "Attack" will only marginalise anarchist ideas, as far as I'm concerned, the sooner some of those ideas are marginalised the better. Anarchist ideology is dead (however useful some of the ideas are) - let's hurry up and bury it!

In solidarity, Chris.

REPLY

Firstly, apologies for not including an address. I certainly intended to but it somehow got left out.

The reason why the review appears to be "picking holes" compared to "The Heavy Stuff" is that they were reviewed by different people. Personally I think a review should be critical so I criticised elements of "Attack" I objected to. As for contradictions, I find it odd to read one thing in a paper, then read something else saying the opposite. A reader is left thinking: "Can't these people make up their minds?" No one is saying that you should lay down the "correct" line on an issue, only that where there is disagreement the cases should be presented as a discussion or alternatively a compromise between the two.

On unionism, "Attack" may not explicitly say: "Don't be in a union" but the general impression of the article is that it's a waste of time being in one. This isn't true - being in a union means you have a shop steward you can turn to for advice and it's certainly helpful to have one present if you get called into the boss' office to be "disciplined". Also there are many minor day to day disputes that can be won through union activity. If I started talking about building barricades at work I'd be laughed at - It's pure romanticism.

You accuse us of not recognising that the form of trade unionism is at fault - I don't know where you get that idea from. If you read what I said again you'll see I was arguing for a different kind of unionism - in form, structure, content and objectives. We certainly don't say: "If only the leadership was changed.." because we are against leadership and believe that the rank and file should be in control.

As for the accusation of "new realism", this usually means accepting that we can't change anything, only make the best from what we've got. This we certainly don't stand for - we are struggling to change society totally, from capitalism to anarchist communism. However, there are strategies that are destined to failure - Bolshevism, reformism, insurrectionism. We are serious revolutionaries who want to change things and are not interested in party building or throwing bricks just "because it's a good laugh". What we are interested in is helping to build a pre-revolutionary organisation to defend our interests as a class and eventually go on the offensive to abolish capitalism and enable us to take the running of society into our own hands.

Regarding the "marginalisation" of anarchist ideas you say that: "The sooner some of those ideas are marginalised the better". I'd be interested to know which ideas you want to see marginalised and why you think anarchist ideology is dead. Anarchist ideology isn't something that was written in stone a hundred years ago by the likes of Proudhon or Bakunin, who in fact had some dodgy ideas. It evolves through a combination of the experience and the thoughts of those who want to see an end to all domination and exploitation. Only when we cease to think about the problems in this world and cease to argue for a revolutionary change will anarchist ideology be dead.
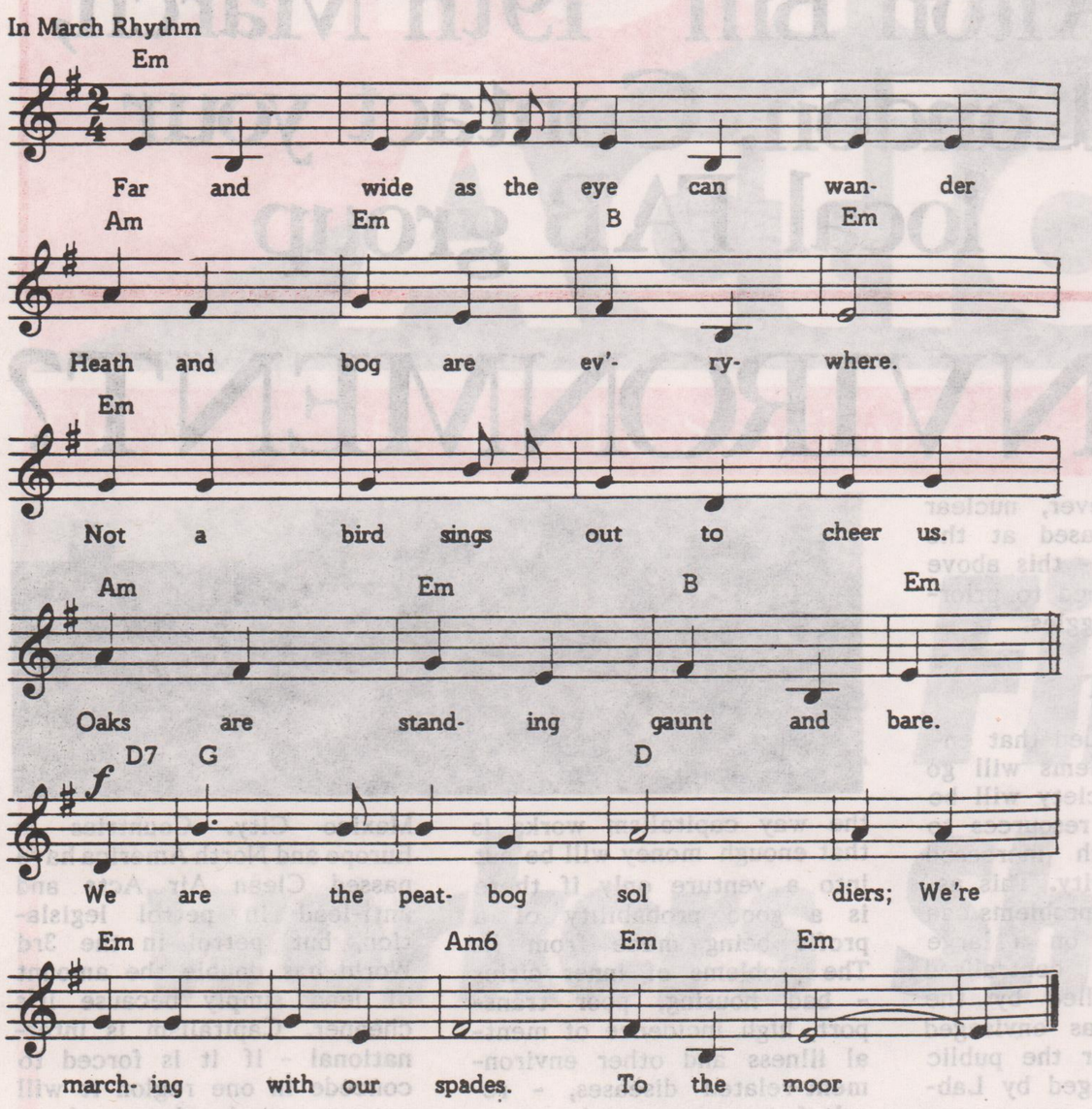
In solidarity, PH.

—International—
—Speaking Tour—

SPEAKER FROM THE C.O.B (BRAZILIAN IWA SECTION). FOR DETAILS OF MEETING IN YOUR REGION CONTACT PO BOX 96, DONCASTER, S YORKS, ORGANISED BY DAM-IWA.

THE PEAT-BOG SOLDIERS

Music: Traditional



CONTINUING WITH our occasional series of working class protest songs, we include here a sad but defiant song first sung in 1933 by the inmates of nazi concentration camps. It is believed to have originated in Borgermoor or Dachau when those camps contained large numbers of political prisoners. The song is a cry from the past reminding us that we must never again allow fascism and racism to gain the upper hand. If you have a song and music to go with it that you would like to see included in this series, please send a copy to: SRR, c/o Doncaster DAM, PO Box 96, Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

Up and down the guards are pacing;
No one, no one can go through.
Flight would mean a sure death facing,
Guns and barbed wire greet our view.

Chorus:

We are the peat bog soldiers;
We're marching with our spades
To the moor.

But for us there's no complaining,
Winter will in time be past.
One day we shall cry rejoicing,
Homeland, dear you're mine at last.

Final chorus:

Then will the peat bog soldiers
March no more with their spades
To the moor.

DAM Contacts

Midlands

Corby/Kettering --------- c/o DAM National Secretary, Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir St, Cambridge.

Mansfield & Ashfield ---- 28 Lucknow Drive, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire.

North East

Doncaster ------ PO Box 96, Doncaster 4, South Yorkshire.

Huddersfield --- PO Box B20, Huddersfield 1.

Leeds ---- Box DAM, 52 Call Lane, Leeds 2.

Newcastle ------ c/o Tyneside Free Press, 5 Charlotte Square, Newcastle 1.

North West

Bolton ------ c/o Bolton Socialist Club, Wood Street, Bolton, Lancs.

Burnley ----- 5 Hollin Hill, Burnley, Lancs.

Crewe ------ c/o National Sec, c/o Cambridge DAM.

Liverpool ----- Box DAM, 82 Lark Lane, Aigburth, Liverpool 17.

Manchester ---- c/o Box DA, Raven, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester.

Scotland

Glasgow -- Box DAM, c/o Clydeside Press, 37 High Street, Glasgow.

South East

Brixton ---- c/o 121 Railton Road, Brixton, London SE24.

Cambridge ---- Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

Central & North London --- c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

Deptford --- c/o 121 Railton Road, Brixton, London SE24.

East London -- c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

Norwich ------ Box DAM, The Greenhouse, 48 Bethel Street, Norwich.

Oxford --------- Box A, EOA Books, 34 Cowley Road, Oxford.

South West London -- c/o 121 Railton Road, Brixton, London SE24.

Other Groups

Bristol ---- Box DAM, 37 Stokescroft, Bristol 2.

For contacts in S. Wales, Midlands, East Anglia, Kent, etc, write to the National Secretary, c/o Cambridge DAM.

Industrial

DAM Building Workers --- c/o East London DAM.

DAM Civil Service Workers --- c/o South West London DAM.

DAM Council Workers ---- c/o Central & North London DAM.

DAM Despatch Riders ---- c/o Deptford DAM.

DAM Education Workers ------ c/o Bolton DAM.

DAM Healthworkers ---- c/o Cambridge DAM.

DAM Postal Workers ----- c/o East London DAM.

DAM Railworkers -- c/o Manchester DAM.

DAM Unemployed/MSC Workers -- c/o Manchester DAM.

Other Contacts

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Anarcho-Syndicalist Publications - (ASP) ----- BM Hurricane, London WC1N
and
PO Box 96, Doncaster, South Yorks.

Black Flag ---- BM Hurricane, London WC1N.

Ford Workers Group ("The Combine") ------ c/o 634 Green Lane, Ilford, Essex.

Luton Class War --- Box CW, Europa House, Vicarage Street, Luton 1.

Organise ------ c/o Just Books, 7 Winetavern Street, Smithfield, Belfast 1.

DAM - IWA

1. The Direct Action Movement is a working class organisation.

2. Our aim is the creation of a free and classless society.

3. We are fighting to abolish the state, capitalism and wage slavery in all their forms and replace them by self-managed production for need not profit.

4. In order to bring about the new social order, the workers must take over the means of production and distribution. We are the sworn enemies of those who would take over on behalf of the workers.

5. We believe that the only way for the working class to achieve this is by independent organisation in the workplace and community and federation with others in the same industry and locality, independent of and opposed to all political parties and trade union bureaucracies. All such workers' organisations must be controlled by the workers themselves and must unite rather than divide the workers' movement. Any and all delegates of such workers' organisations must be subject to immediate recall by the workers.

6. We are opposed to all States and State institutions. The working class has no country. The class struggle is worldwide and recognises no artificial boundaries. The armies and police of all States do not exist to protect the workers of those States, they exist only as the repressive arm of the ruling class.

7. We oppose racism, sexism, militarism and all attitudes and institutions that stand in the way of equality and the right of all people everywhere to control their own lives and environment.

8. The Direct Action Movement is a federation of groups and individuals who believe in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism; a system where the workers alone control industry and the community without the dictates of politicians, bureaucrats, bosses and so-called experts.

The DAM was formed in 1979 from the SWF (Syndicalist Workers' Federation) and other groups and individuals believing in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism. It is the British section of the International Workers' Association. This was formed in 1922 and has national sections in more than dozen countries.

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WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I would like more information about the Direct Action Movement - International Workers' Association. Please send me information.

Name .....

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Send to DAM/IWA, c/o Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir St., Cambridge.

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Deadline - March 14th

Direct Action

March Against the Alton Bill 19th March, London. Contact your local FAB group

WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENT?

Over recent years there has been a growing interest in green or environmental issues ranging from conservationism to the recent comments by a certain Charles Windsor about pollution in the North Sea. In the process "environment" has become one of those trendy buzzwords and the softer issues raised by the "greens" have been hijacked by all the major political parties. However, they have all typically shown a reluctance to confront the real problems of this country and the world as a whole.

Environmental problems are usually perceived as things such as conservation of the countryside, pollution of the atmosphere and the sea, acid rain, the destruction of the ozone layer and so on. These are all undoubtedly environmental issues but the list doesn't end there. The environment isn't just the green rolling hills of Albion or some other mystical nonsense and is inseparable from the urban dereliction in which most of us live. So whether we live on Broadwater Farm or Emmerdale Farm, the environment is of prime importance to us all. The provision of housing, one of our most basic needs, which is currently coming under a massive state onslaught, is an environmental issue; so is the transport system many of us rely on; and the destruction of traditional working class communities by re-development and yuppification.

SENTIMENTALITY

However, most environmental campaigns are usually addressed towards and supported by middle class people. The reasons for this are pretty obvious - most working class people don't have the time or resources to campaign on behalf of seals or whales and don't see any advantage to themselves in such campaigns. Middle class types can argue that species must be saved from extinction so our children can enjoy them, but how many of you have ever seen a whale in its natural setting? Issues like this don't affect "nature", as it is idealised by some, but only bother human sentimentality - nature didn't miss the dinosaurs or the dodo. This is not to say that whales should be hunted to extinction but that priority be given to more immediate campaigns.

A classic example of mixed up priorities was the attitude of some environmentalists to the miners' strike. The miners were fighting for more than just their jobs, they were fighting for their communities. This was recognised in pit villages, where even some shopkeepers extended credit to strikers. But some "greens" were lukewarm in their support due to the connection between coal-fired power stations and acid rain. A minority of animal rights supporters even made the ludicrous statement that they wouldn't support the miners because they ate meat! Since the strike, however, nuclear power has increased at the expense of coal - this above all, shows the need to prioritise certain struggles.



PROFIT

It's often argued that environmental problems will go away or that society will be able to allocate resources to solve them with increased economic prosperity. This assumes that these problems can only be tackled on a large scale by large centralised bodies - controlled by the private sector, as envisaged by the Tories, or the public sector, as envisaged by Labour. But throwing money at a problem doesn't work, even if it's "private" money, because the way capitalism works is that enough money will be put into a venture only if there is a good probability of a profit being made from it. The problems of inner cities - bad housing, poor transport, high incidence of mental illness and other environment-related diseases, - result from poverty and poverty doesn't go away even with a booming economy. It is caused quite simply by capitalism - in fact it is necessary to capitalism as a stick concealed behind the carrot of economic prosperity. The message is clear - work hard or you'll end up poor, living in a slum and with no way out.



This doesn't just apply to living conditions - working conditions have been improved in the past in Britain regarding aspects like pollution. However, the pollution and its effects have been transferred to poorer countries - good examples are the Union Carbide plant at Bhopal in India and the smog of Mexico City. Countries in Europe and North America have passed Clean Air Acts and anti-lead in petrol legislation, but petrol in the 3rd World has double the amount of lead simply because it's cheaper. Capitalism is international - if it is forced to concede in one region it will cut corners elsewhere and export problems to the 3rd World. Environmental problems cannot be reformed away - the symptoms may be alleviated but the best method would be a cure.

The best way of tackling such issues is invariably from a grass roots level. Environmental issues are often not perceived as "politics" and people are more willing to get involved when an issue is clearly relevant to their own lives. Such local campaigns can often be dismissed by political activists in this country but this is an integral part of people taking back control of their own lives and neighbourhoods.

Housing: A Political Football

IN DECEMBER Flats Fight Back - an Edinburgh tenants organisation that fights for for radical change in housing policy - issued a report on the effectiveness of a code of conduct drawn up by them, which was adopted by the council some months earlier. Flats Fight Back has the support of all high rise tenants groups in Edinburgh. The report shows little has changed but the council's acceptance of the code does mark an important victory for tenants, not only in Edinburgh but all tenants and those who believe freedom can only be achieved through working class action and the natural coming together of people demanding control of their own lives.

Tenants in Edinburgh have shown by constant pressure they can, bit by bit, break through the system and start to imprint demands more successfully on the twisted corridors of state power. Flats Fight Back have had many successful local campaigns and have recently completed a video of tenants' action to be used to help existing tenant activists and encourage new ones. They run workshops for tenants to share skills and ideas to gain a stronger front against sub-standard housing and non-tenant participation in policy-making. The workshops also help to make contacts with other tenant activists nationally.

It was at such a workshop that the code of conduct between council landlord and tenant was drawn up due to tenants' anger at the council's practice. Tenants were not being informed of work on their homes; there was no consultation with tenants on the priorities of the work; tenants had no means of getting their views heard; councillors and officials made promises that turned out incorrect; contractors did work with no notice given to tenants and so on. The code of conduct was a 13 point plan to change this. Tenants demanded that a liason person be "charged with the responsibility of responding to all tenants groups enquiries on implementation of policy decisions"; that "tenants within any block should be consulted as to the priorities within that block"; when officials attend public meetings they should know the current position in detail and "tenants should be given at least 2 weeks notice of work on their homes".

BLOOD RED WINE

Acceptance of the code met a declaration of "a historic deal" by one councillor. As with many other such deals all too often the state only eats what it can chew and then spits it out, or worse, drinks it down with blood red wine - the monster needs destroying, not feeding! Flats Fight Back demand the council to state clearly its policy on tenant consultation. "All they do is dictate the terms and say they've consulted" says one tenant in the report which concludes: "We have done all the co-operating so far, now it's the council's turn" and: "Tenant involvment is at best piece-meal and at worst non-existent". It calls for the code not to be merely a paper exercise and demands positive action with it.

But as usual, housing is a football used to score goals in the game politic where everyone loses and some vote for the referee but can't be heard above the din - the game won't stop until the spectators run on the pitch. Flats Fight Back should be applauded - the code of conduct is something to hold up against the council when they fail to carry out promises. This can only rouse support from tenant activists for direct action when the council fail to stick to the code. Many tenants could become very angry if the council continues breaking promises in the code of conduct. The report clearly shows this anger. Flats Fight Back also argue that tenants be allowed to improve the housing all round by making decisions on how money should be spent on their homes and the means of contributing to policy and planning - after all it's they who have to live there. Who is a better expert on housing than a tenant?

However, no matter what the council agree to give tenants, where there's power there's control. Until that control is taken by us power will remain with the state. Any working class victory can be seen only partly victorious until there is no state - only workers and community control.