

Direct Action

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The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism

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Tax cuts for the rich

Bene-

fit

cuts

for

us!



Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

Decisive Action or Wasted Anger?

The health service dominates the current political agenda. Thousands of healthworkers have been stirred into action despite Tory propaganda and the back-peddling of their own unions. More significantly, perhaps, is that other workers have been prepared to take illegal political strike action in support of healthworkers. On March the 5th one of the largest ever anti-Tory demonstrations took place in London when over 100,000 trade unionists took to the streets on a TUC march.

However, the march and the campaign around the NHS high-light divisions within the labour movement over how to address the issue, what to demand and how to win. The TUC refused to allow any health union speakers on the rally; the no-strike RCN had a large contingent; the SWP and Militant called for a one day general strike to coincide with budget day whilst NUPE and COHSE called for days of action on different days with NUPE organising lunchtime protests instead of strike action.

RANK AND FILE ACTION

The willingness of healthworkers to take action has taken many union leaders by surprise. The 24 hour nurses' strike in Manchester on January 7th forced the government into backing down over the abolition of special duty payments. This prompted stewards in some London hospitals to push for a day of action on February the 3rd. Nurses started leaving the RCN in droves; at Frickley 4 nurses picketed 1000 miners out and car workers walked out at Vauxhall. At the same time strike committees sprang up in the most militant hospitals in London and in other cities and towns. Such rank and file organisation immediately cut across the inter-union divisions which plague healthworkers and, furthermore, pointed to an organisational framework to challenge the weak-kneed approach of union bureaucrats. When the newly-formed London Hospital Strike Committee called for a 1 day strike for budget day, the COHSE bureaucracy, in order to restore its authority, called a day of action for the day before.

The refusal of the health

union leaders to organise effective action has disgusted many rank and file healthworkers. NUPE bureaucrats instructed ambulance drivers not to strike on February 3rd although the drivers strongly favoured action. Again, NUPE refused to call for strike action on February 15th and

who wanted to take action were warned about breaking the anti-union laws. However, the Tories have only used the laws when they are confident of not provoking a reaction. If thousands of workers go on strike it's unlikely that injunctions will be taken out. Any serious challenge to the Tories' plans to restructure the health service must necessarily bring workers into conflict with the law.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Opinion polls show that something must be done about the health service, but what exactly this something is, is again the subject of division in the labour movement. The Labour Party has called for 2p on taxes to fund the NHS

ing slave wages. Rank and file healthworkers must draw up a list of demands for better conditions based on their own needs, including increased staffing levels, reduced hours, abolition of student/auxiliary rates, and large increases in overtime for unsocial hours.

FREE HEALTH CARE

Secondly we must demand free health care for all. The NHS was supposed to embody this principle but it's clear the Tories want free health care only for those at the bottom of the pile while most workers must increasingly pay for it. To this end we must campaign around the abolition of private health care; oppo-

realistic but it's more utopian to believe that public sympathy and selective action will force the Tories to cough up.

The strike committees must play the leading role in taking the dispute on to the offensive. Healthworkers' anger must not be frittered away on a long drawn out campaign of one day strikes. The 1982 health service dispute, the 1982 and 1987 civil service dispute and the teachers' 3 year fruitless guerrilla campaign must have shown us that selective action only wears down the workers' fighting spirit and bank balances not the Tories. Only a national health service strike bringing hundreds of thousands of healthworkers into open conflict with the government can win what healthworkers need. To do this healthworkers must use every meeting, demonstration and day of action to argue for a national all out strike. A significant minority are willing to fight and this new mood must be capitalised on. On the other hand to abstractly call for all out action without having won the arguments first may lead to health union bureaucrats calling a ballot they know they will lose to show that members aren't interested in striking. They know union organisation is almost non-existent in many hospitals and that the vast majority of healthworkers have not taken action yet.



Only a National Health Workers Strike Can Win What We Need

officials sent circulars to Yorkshire NUM branches asking them not to come out on March 14th. Both NUPE and COHSE see strike action as merely a show piece in a campaign to win public sympathy. Other union leaders have stifled initiatives for solidarity strike action. When Kings Cross ASLEF branch voted to strike the union came down heavily against any action. Nonetheless on March 14th bus workers from 23 London garages paralysed London's bus service; in Bristol doctors took strike action. Workers

but doesn't mention healthworkers. We, however, start from the needs of healthworkers which are a pre-requisite to a decent health service. We call for a decent living wage for all healthworkers be they nurses, porters, cleaners, catering staff or clerical workers and regardless of whether they are caring directly for patients or working in health authority offices. Inter-union strike committees are essential for organising a united campaign and all out national strike action is essential for end-

sition to competitive tendering of services; an end to hospital waiting lists; abolition of prescription charges and for the opening of private drug companies' books to inspection by workers. In the present such a struggle must begin with a defence of existing services but if we want the health service which serves our needs we must be clear that the bosses must be made to pay and that healthworkers cannot fight all on their own. What is needed is little short of a general strike. This may sound un-

BUILD EFFECTIVE ACTION

Strike committees from the militant hospitals must send delegations to weaker ones to address union meetings and argue for action. When days of action are called pickets must be built so they are as large as possible and must be effective in stopping people going in. Emergency cover must be determined by workers, not management and set at lower levels than at present. Even the small strikes and demonstrations of recent months have been inspiring. While we seem a long way from an all out national strike we are clear what healthworkers need, what health care we all need and what is needed to win.

SCOTS TAKE TO THE STREETS!

ON THE SCOTTISH day of action some 80,000 took to the streets in protest at the Tories' attacks on the Health Service. In Edinburgh, among the 15,000 who marched in the largest demonstration of its kind for many a year, were miners from Bilston and Monktonhall pits, postal workers, homeless action groups and council workers, who took a half day strike in defence of the NHS. The scenes in Edinburgh were repeated across Scotland and not only in the

traditionally militant urban areas like Glasgow and Dundee but also in towns such as Inverness where 1000 came out, including workers from the McDermotts oil platform yards. Local services workers also took a half day strike here. Protests were not confined to the mainland but stretched out to the islands. Orkney saw demonstrations as did the Shetlands where some 3-500 people marched through Lerwick in the biggest demonstration of its kind since

the war.

EMPTY POSTURING

The numbers show that people are not prepared to wait 5 more years for a Labour government to break its promises; many cannot wait 5 months, never mind 5 more years of Kinnock's empty posturing, for a return to a decent health service. Thatcher has whittled away at all the advantages the working class has gained in the 40 years since the introduction of

welfare provision. She has managed to cut around the edges of the system - charges for prescriptions, etc - with little open opposition.

OPPOSITION

However, now that she is cutting, at the insistence of big business, the very fabric of the health service she is meeting with the greatest opposition since the mass unemployment rallies of the early '80's. She would be as well

to take note of the fact that people are willing to take to the streets in defence of basic living standards when she plans to make her next cutbacks. With the introduction of the starvation level social fund people are going to be ground down even more. Thatcher and her cronies are as well to remember that desperate conditions require desperate solutions, just as much here as in any other country. The defence of the NHS is just the beginning.

SOCIAL INSECURITY

When the government announced its bonanza budget with a 20% cut in tax for the rich, many people were thinking "who's going to pay for it?" - well, now we know. The Tories are taking away from those who have next to nothing and giving it to those who already have too much. Britain's top businessmen and women will be thousands of pounds better off each week while the millions who are forced by circumstances into relying on benefits will be pushed way below the poverty line.

On April 11th Income Support replaced Supplementary Benefit. Under the new system millions of people will lose out, with the severely disabled losing most - up to £46 a week. There will be no more one-off single payments for essential items like cookers, fires, new shoes, etc - instead claimants must rely on the Social Fund for loans for such items which have then to be paid back out of subsequent benefit payments. Family Income Supplement has been replaced by Family Credit, under which most families will lose out, some by as much as £13 a week. And on top of all these cuts claimants now have to pay 20% of their general rates.

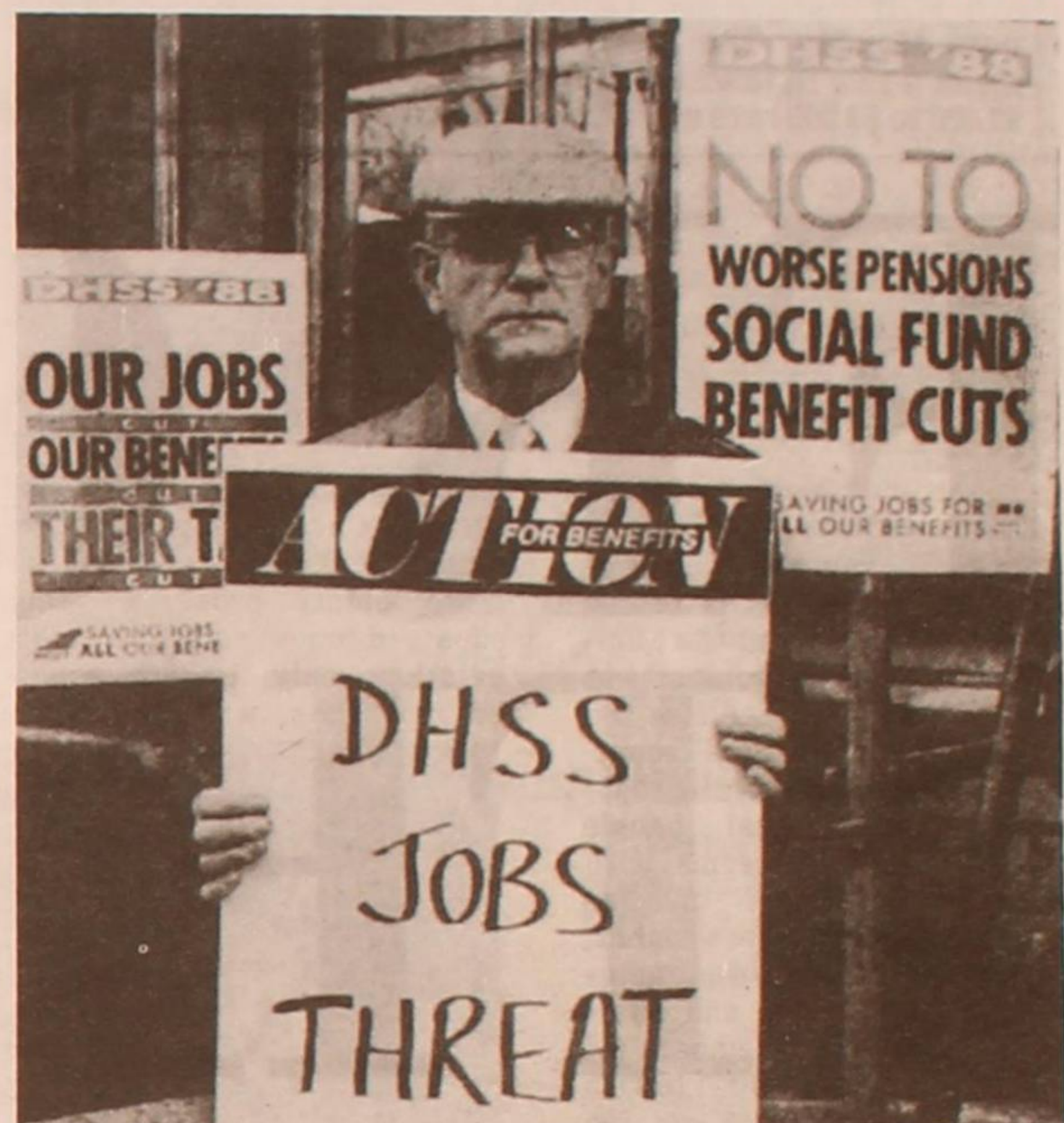
The Tories claim it's only a case of simplifying the system and that there will be as many gainers as losers. But we know this is rubbish. The government's own figures

show that only a minority of claimants will gain, and what they gain is almost nothing compared to what most will lose. The message is clear - if you're poor, tough luck! Claimants will now increasingly be forced to turn to money lenders or charities, meaning increasing debt, intimidation and humiliation. Some will turn to petty crime such as mugging and burglary. Then the government can step in with more laws and more police to enforce them, ever keen to be seen to stamp out the crime it helps to cause.

Alongside these attacks on claimants there are the attacks on those who work on MSC schemes. Sixteen to eighteen year-olds who are unemployed will not receive any social security other than a bridging payment of £15 a week for a maximum of eight weeks a year while they are

looking for a place on a YTS scheme. In other words this makes YTS compulsory for those school leavers without either a job or a place in further education. Also in the pipeline for later this year is the merging of the Job Training and Community Programme schemes into the New Adult Training Scheme. This will mean that those currently receiving £50-£60 a week for 3 day's work on a CP scheme will instead be working 5 days a week for their dole plus a £10-£12 top up. Refusal to take a place on these new schemes is likely to mean that your dole will be cut for 26 weeks. Again, such schemes are in reality compulsory.

With the Tories' anxiety to reduce the unemployment figures, new "employment" is largely low paid, part-time and temporary. What we seem to be moving towards is an increasingly low-waged economy. No longer is the mere threat of unemployment the only weapon employers can use to force wage cuts. If the Tories have their way they'll be able to set up "training" schemes on to which the unemployed will be forced. In this way wages can be undercut. This may well happen in the privatisation of local services since, by law, the only criteria councils can



use are economic ones - ie they must accept the cheapest tender.

The new DHSS and MSC changes are an attack on the whole of our class and must be opposed by claimants and workers, especially those in the DHSS and MSC, alike. The system stinks as it is, but those who rule our lives

want to make it even more of a winners' and losers' game, with few winners and many losers. We, the working class will always be the losers unless we get our act together and begin to organise and fight back - and to begin with we must organise to make the new DHSS regulations and the new MSC schemes unworkable.

Going for a Burton?

THE PICKET OF BURTONS' in Edinburgh over the sacking of Tricia Jennings (see DA 46 and 47) has now been going for two months. So far it has only taken place once a week but we now have sufficient numbers to start doing a second picket. Our regular presence outside the shop is having a direct effect on the volume of trade Burton's is doing - this is prided by the increasingly hostile and aggressive attitude of the management towards the picketers. Their response to the damage that is being done to their "good name" seems to be to try to blacken Tricia's reputation among the other workers by telling them lies about her character and the reasons for her dismissal. In order to counter this, we are producing a letter to staff telling them the real facts of Tricia's case and urging them to support her.

The picket has already spread to other places across the country - pickets have been held, or are to be held in London, Norwich, Leeds, Hull, Manchester, Leicester, Bolton and Southampton. It is important that this pressure is maintained and increased as Tricia's industrial tribunal will probably take place about the end of May. Therefore all DAM members and groups should try to organise a picket of Burton's in their area and urge any other women who have been treated in a similar way to join the campaign.

For more information and a



sample leaflet contact: Edinburgh DAM, PO Box 516, South West Post Office, Edinburgh, EH10

or: The Tricia Jennings Defence Committee, c/o Citizens Rights Office, 43 Broughton Street, Edinburgh.

EDINBURGH SCHOOL students, fed up with being trained for a job that doesn't exist and then being forced on to YTS at the end of more than a decade of "education" are organising resistance, not only against YTS but also the system that demands it. The feeling is that the YTURC campaign, calling for a minimum £55 an end to "slavery", is not enough. They'd like to hear from any school students interested in setting up a national anarchist school students network. Contacts via Edinburgh DAM.

LAST YEAR ACCORDING to official figures nearly 500 people were killed at work. 78,000 were reported to have been injured at work, badly enough to require at least 3 days off. In addition, there are something like 20,000 deaths from occupational diseases every year. Under-reporting of accidents and injuries is widespread. It is thought the true figure is at least twice as high. Thousands of workers become victims of skin diseases, back and joint pains and deafness.

The Health and Safety Executive has the responsibility for enforcing the relevant safety legislation. Between 1980 and 1986 its resources were cut in real terms. It lost more than 200 inspectors, some 15% of the total. The Health and Safety Executive has therefore concentrated its resources into certain industries in high profile areas - eg nuclear industries, pesticides and genetic engineering. This has been at the expense of work on the

occupational problems that affect thousands if not millions of workers - dermatitis, repetitive strain injury, occupational asthma, back pain.

The boss class can see little advantage in having a healthy labour force. Safety brings little commercial advantage when there is mass unemployment with hundreds applying for every job! 1988 is the 10th anniversary of the introduction of Safety Representatives, and Safety Committees. These committees have done some good work, but now there is a rising toll of death and disease as the government encourages greed and exploitation. Only direct action by the workers can reverse this trend.

THE TUC WOMEN'S Conference heard that many Filipino and Columbian women are being kept like slaves in this country by diplomatic households of Middle Eastern families. Ms Mary Tyler of the Engineering and Managers' Association told the conference that: "Slavery still exists in this country". The Home Office has abolished work permits for domestic servants from abroad. Employers often kept their passports so that they cannot leave. There is concern that these servants are denied legal protection and employment rights. In our last issue we exposed the NHS's treatment of a Filipino nurse who worked at North Manchester General Hospital for a year without wages. "Direct Action" wants to hear from you if you know of any cases of gross exploitation amounting to slavery or near slavery.

HEAVEN AND THE HILL

After a 52-hour siege police took over the Stamford Hill Estate in North London on the morning of Wednesday 9th of March. They numbered around 300 and were led by Territorial Support Groups in full riot gear. In the face of this massive show of force little resistance was offered and only 2 arrests were made (for obstruction). The object of the exercise, a mass eviction, was then carried out. Ninety six squats were evicted as well as one tenant by mistake, as the reactionary workers involved let their hatred of squatters run riot.

Squatters claim the length of the siege as a partial victory. They overturned cars to barricade entrances to the estate around 4am on the Monday morning. An argument was soon made to let tenants use one entrance. Masked squatters stood guard at the barricades while local people tried to come to terms with the massive police invasion and its attendant harassment. A good relationship was maintained with tenants and passers-by, including members of the large Chassidic Jewish community, and local opinion is generally in favour of the squatters. Tenants have complained that the squatters were good neighbours and that by evicting them the council have set the estate up as a "muggers' paradise".

CHEAPER

The ever popular London Borough of Hackney has argued all along that it needs to evict squatters to re-house

families currently in bed and breakfast accommodation. Local people know there are far more empty properties than squatted ones and that most evictions only lead to boarded up flats with expensive

steel doors. Doing up the empties would have been far cheaper than hiring bailiffs from Reading and 300 police for 3 days. These flats undoubtedly will be renovated (a task facilitated by squatters as empty flats deteriorate quicker) and used to re-house B&B families but the reason for the evictions is clear. According to Chair of Housing, Brynley Heaven, only half the properties in a habitable condition are squatted - this leaves 1,300 suitable flats.

ORGANISED

The Stamford Hill squatters had to be punished as

they were organised and the organisation, around Stoke Newington Housing Action, has worked very well. For the last 6 months council meetings, beginning with the Borough Conference at which the cuts were decided have been occupied or severely disrupted. In most cases squatters and supporters held their own meetings to discuss the housing situation in the Borough and how to fight back. After an initial clash with DLO building workers at one meeting to see their consolidated pay deal voted through, the squatters waited for the vote before occupying the chamber. In return DLO stewards helped set up a delegation to the

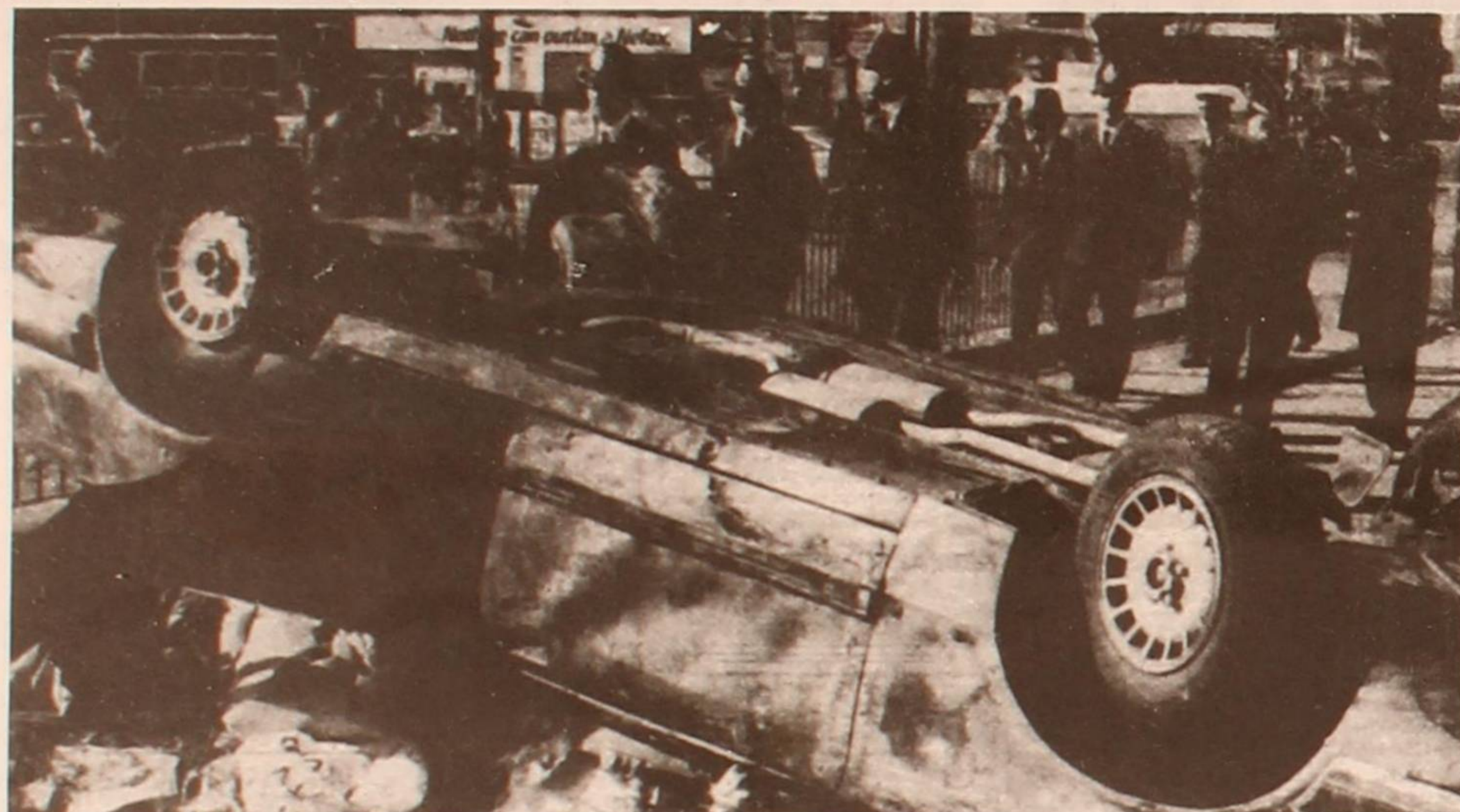
have dropped housing workers "in the shit" over this situation. On Tuesday night, before the eviction, the Directors of Housing and Legal Services stitched up a deal with a solicitor representing some squatters. According to this deal squatters would be given tenancies if there was no violence on Wednesday. Early on Wednesday morning Director of Housing, Janet Jones, went round the allocations section of the central housing office picking out tenancies which were allocated to homeless families and rushed up to the estate to dish them out and lure squatters off. Housing workers had no warning of this and refused to deal with the tenancies.

The Shared Singles scheme hasn't previously been implemented and no procedure has been agreed with the unions for this. Housing workers see this as partly an attempt to undermine the unions - the latest in a series of such attempts recently. In spite of a reactionary minority in NALGO, members were instructed not to take part in the evictions and NUPE officers (who have poached reactionary workers from NALGO in the past) did the evicting. The position of the NALGO stewards is that they can't allow the council to arbitrarily allocate housing to anyone and that it must adequately address the problems of the single homeless and not play them off against homeless families. While not opposed to evictions in principle, they oppose evictions purely for the sake of control.

BRICK

Hackney Council's real attitude to housing can be seen from some of the attacks the unions have beaten off lately. These include £1.5 million in cuts, involving the closure of 6 housing bases and conversion of the Central Housing office into merely a homeless reception centre. That centre has been closed by a unilateral decision of the Director of Housing and the Information Bureau in the Town Hall has had a brick through its window. At the same time management tried to re-introduce a plan involving the creation of 2 Assistant Directors, with PA each, at a cost of £60,000. A housing association was set up to take over the management of 2 estates.

The chair of the Eastway Housing Association turned out to be none other than Brynley Heaven - so much for opposition to privatisation! Both the cuts and privatisation were stopped by well-attended joint-union mass meetings and half-day strikes. The Council's deputy leader has recently tried to withdraw recognition from some stewards, including the convenor of NALGO, while the chair of NALGO has bureaucratically tried to tie the hands of workers who take swift action. With it being implied recently that anarchists oppose the left because we are reactionary, we reply that it is state power, which the left seeks, that is reactionary.



Same Old Shit!

For many years a sickening aspect of the political scene in Britain has been organised fascist groups. Organisations like the National Front have been behind some of the worst cases of racist assault and murder. Through their publications they incited angry white youth to take out their frustrations over unemployment on black people and Asians. But today the National Front claim not to be fascist or racist, condemning the crude racist British National Party "comic", Bulldog, and calling for nazi-ism to be smashed. What is behind this? Has the "change" from nazism to national revolution brought about a new radical NF, a "third way" beyond capitalism and communism as they claim? Not likely!

The NF was at its largest at the time of the last Labour government when they attracted considerable electoral support. Then, they played the racist card with sickening skill, claiming to be "responsible patriots" while encouraging racially motivated attacks. However, just before the 1979 election Mrs Thatcher stole their clothes in an infamous TV interview, when she spoke of Britain being swamped by "foreigners". So the Tories became the party of overt racism. This, combined with a strong street movement determined to defeat the NF, caused their support to collapse.

The loss of support led to massive internal power struggles and the search for a new identity within the NF. Many of the old leadership were purged and new figures rose to the fore while the new identity became "national revolutionism" - a bizarre mix of crude nationalist pride,

pseudo-green politics and apartheid-like racial separatism wrapped up in a phoney revolutionary package which mimics many left groups. Much of this has been developed under the influence of foreign right wing terrorists like the Italian NAR (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei). They believe that the only conditions under which they can gain are those of total chaos and disorder. They want to turn Britain into a situation like the Lebanon, a country in permanent civil war run by hundreds of fanatical political armies. This is to be achieved, they believe, by the "strategy of tension" - basically terrorism. For this reason they encourage their members to become "political soldiers" and retain links with loyalist paramilitaries in the north of Ireland, even going as far as gun-running

ANTI-WORKING CLASS

for them.

However, the old power struggles have not been left behind. The NF has split between the "official" NF and the NF "support group", between the "distributists" and the "strasserites", but both ideologies are just old forms of fascism and nazi-ism. Far from coming up with a new "third way", the NF have just found new names for the same old reactionary anti-working class shit. Their actions and politics have changed little and much of the membership are just the same old moronic skinhead thugs who couldn't spell "national revolutionism". The NF's anti-capitalist line is just a stance they hope will win them support in working class areas - it's something they can't and don't believe in.

Fascism only gains when it has the support of capitalism. The NF is only tolerated by the capitalists because they will need it for use as death squads and "unofficial" troops when the class struggle intensifies. So it's vital that we smash fascism now when it is weak and divided so it can't smash us later. Workers must unite and drive fascist paper sellers off the streets and out of the football grounds where their encouragement of thugs is destroying our game. Links must be forged in the community between black and white and unions must be encouraged to actively take up the fight against racism and fascism. All of this will help us to unite as a class so we can fight not only fascism but the bosses as well.

next council meeting and talks with Heaven, described by one UCATT steward as "Mr Ego".

At the Council Meeting on 9th March, when the cuts budget was passed, a delegation of borrowers from threatened community libraries was supported by hecklers. When next business was moved a well organised attack on Brynley Heaven was launched by youths outside the chamber but he was led away, shaken rather than hurt, afterwards. A mild kicking doesn't compare with the violence this megalomaniac and his cronies have inflicted on homeless people in Hackney. It is the state's violence we condemn, not the holding of those in power accountable for their actions.

SEARCHLIGHT

It is ironic that Searchlight should try to smear the squatters by associating them with fascists, as the use of state power against what political bosses considered anti-social (ie uncontrollable) elements was a prominent feature of fascism. The allegations they made are untrue; Steve Martin (UDA) is a tenant; and a small group of skinheads shunned by the squatters does not make them fascists. Apart from insulting black and Jewish squatters, it is a convenient belief of social democrats that fascism simply equals racism. They forget the crushing of independent movements of the working class and opponents of state control because they do it themselves.

The post-eviction situation is unclear. Many squatters now have tenancies and nearly all the others have re-squatted. It has been complicated by how the Council

Thin End of the Wedge

OVER COMING WEEKS we shall see an industrial battle develop with a union ill-equipped to defend itself. ACTT is the technicians' union in the non-broadcast and broadcast TV sector. Its members crew all the TV stations in Britain except, that is, TV-AM. There the union is in dispute with management leading to the recent sacking of those on strike. Secretaries and management and anybody else they can find have done the dirty work since the lock-out and we've been culturally entertained by various classics such as never-ending Batman, news from America and celebrations in Australia. The cameras have still been working, but certainly not to the experienced standard of those sacked. TV-AM is kept on whirring despite the internal wrangling and dodgy connections with Saudi Arabia.

Sympathy and support from workers outside and inside the union has been miserable, partly due to the union's sluggishness. It has relied on its negotiated strengths and agreements and is about to see it all washed away. Its working practices have been extreme, with demarcation lines seeming ridiculous. Wages have been high for

those able to achieve the technical grade. As a result the union has a strict policy on admission to its ranks - 4 months' application processing and 2 years' restriction to grade and company if accepted and then it costs 1% of earnings a year. In some ways it's no wonder sympathy is a bit lacking. Yet the restrictions must be seen in a good light too. The union has achieved a technical excellence and has sought to maintain standards by its agreements and practices. Workers have earned high wages but TV companies have also benefited enormously.

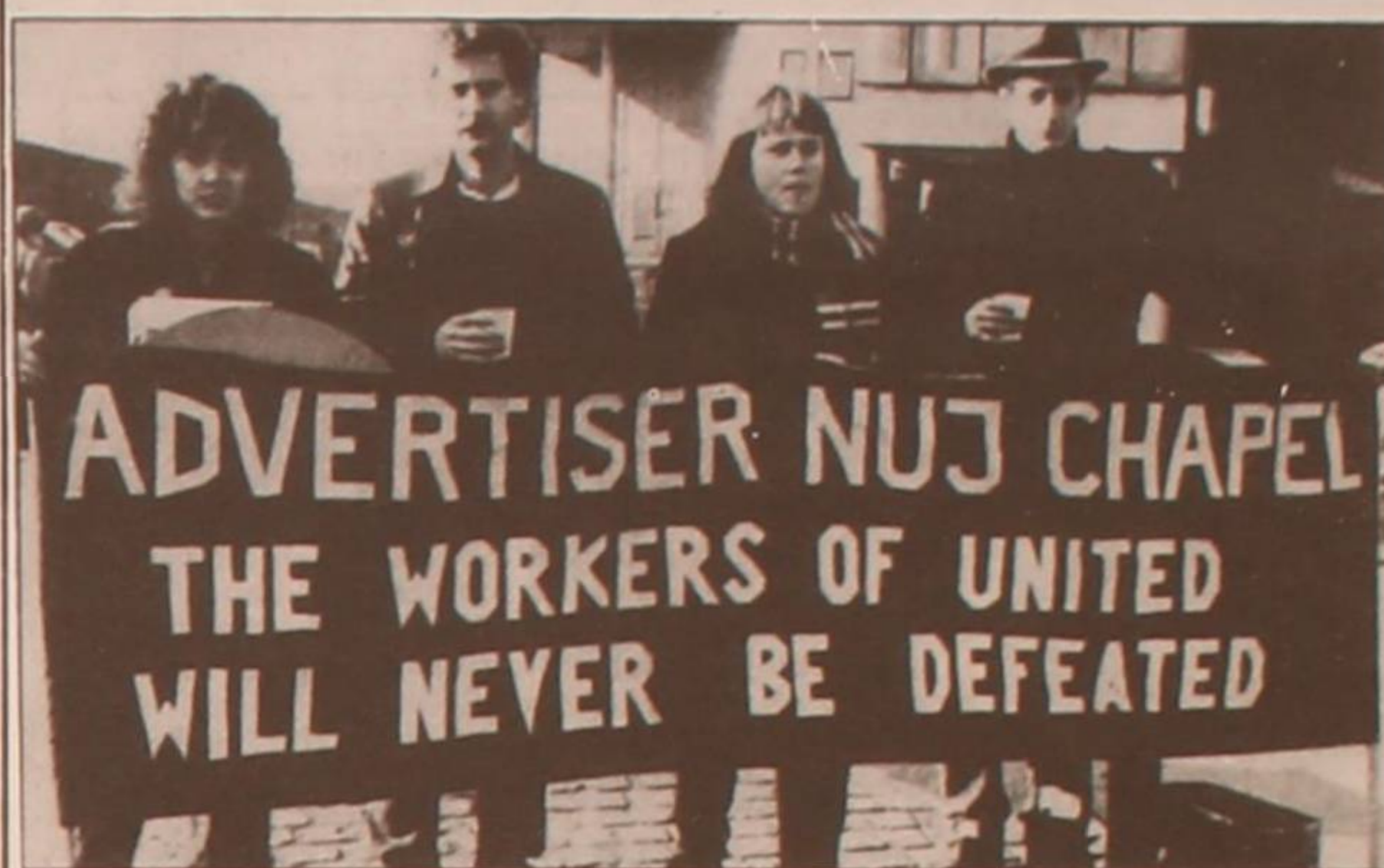
We have then a repeat of the printing industry's history. The ACTT has been compromising, and changing its practices, all in the face of "new realism". TV-AM has proved to be the thin end of the wedge with the union in no mood to fight it. Now London Weekend Television is set for massive staff reductions. This could be the standpoint for the union. TV-AM's transmission time and coverage is limited so it can successfully get around broadcasting by importing its news and programmes. But LWT broadcasts everything - its contingency plans and back-up would have

to be extreme and massive in the event of a union withdrawal. Should the unions involved at LWT fail to respond successfully many of the 2400 workers' jobs there will be at risk - so also throughout the rest of Britain's media industry.

It is vital that broadcasting workers at all levels including BBC and ITV should respond. Only total committed action by these workers, who are in a most powerful position will prevent the slow picking off of all those involved. But they cannot afford to rely on idiots like Sapper, the ACTT General Secretary, and his pleas that the IBA should withdraw TV-AM's broadcasting contract. At this stage there can be only one action - it must be all out; there must be a shut down in the television network.

Requests for further information and donations to the TV-AM strikers can be (in theory) sent to: ACTT, 111 Wardour Street, London, W1V 4AY. The union's paper Film and Television Technician in its March issue contains a diary of the dispute so far, available from the above address for 50p plus an SAE.

Victimisation



INFORMATION IS POWER and control of information is control of power. It is for this reason that the ruling class has always kept control of the media and kept it out of the hands of the workers. The current wave of attacks on workers in the media industry (TV-AM dispute, Wapping, as well as a number of smaller disputes) must be seen as an attempt to reassert control over the media - it must be fought!

A small but important part of this battle is the fight by 14 sacked journalists who worked for the Finchley-based free paper, The Advertiser. Last November 6 journalists were given just 2 hours to leave the building after being made "redundant". Management cited the usual "economic reasons" but since those who were sacked included the NUJ Father of Chapel (FoC) and other union activists, the transparent lie was seen. Eight other journalists came out in support and were sacked. The management have used strong arm tactics to keep the 14 out, calling in locksmiths and security guards and even refusing the 14 access

to collect personal belongings until 3 weeks later!

SOLIDARITY

The Advertiser is owned by United Provincial Newspapers who own many other local papers (as well as being in the same group as the Express and the Star). The Finchley 14 have sought and gained a good deal of support from other chapels in those papers, notably in Sheffield and Leeds despite threats of legal action. On March 30th a picket was held of UPN Headquarters at the Yorkshire Post building in Leeds. Despite threats of sacking, the whole NUJ chapel took a simultaneous lunch break and marched to join the picket behind their banner. Builders, electricity workers and a British Telecom van all refused to cross the picket line. Unsurprisingly, neither the Post or Evening Post printed a word about the incident.

Besides this, local residents in The Advertiser's area have sent letters asking for the paper not to be delivered to them - some have even threatened legal action over trespass if it is continued.



End of Scottish Coal

WITH THE PROSPECT of privatisation of electricity, the SSEB (South of Scotland Electricity Board) announced early in March that it was negotiating contracts to import coal and that it did not plan to burn any Scottish coal from April onwards. This would represent a death sentence to Scottish pits which have already seen the number of miners drop from 14,000 to 5,000. Senior British Coal executives warned that most of Scotland's deep mines would be closed with the possible exception of Bilston Glen if the SSEB plan went ahead.

Scottish miners fear that BC wants to close the 4 deep mined pits in Scotland and put the responsibility on the SSEB. An NUM spokesperson at the Solsgirth mine, which supplies the SSEB's power station at Larganet stated: "British Coal have said already that they might have to close their peripheral pits in Britain and that could include Scotland".

Although an interim interdict to prevent the burning of foreign coal was granted to BC, the SSEB chair, Donald Miller, announced that contracts had been signed for the delivery of one million tonnes of coal from Australian, American and Chinese

sources. The SSEB plans to bring the Kincardine power station back into full production to burn the imported coal and may also plan to revive Inverkip as the interdict only prevents the use of imported coal at the Cockenzie and Larganet plants. It intends however, to burn only coal already stockpiled at these power stations and none other.

As we go to press the SSEB has been forced to re-open negotiations with BC after pressure from the Energy Minister, Cecil Parkinson, and Secretary of State for Scotland, Malcolm Rifkind, but the results aren't known. The SSEB wants to negotiate an order for up to six million tonnes of coal over the next two years while BC wants a 12 year deal which the SSEB has rejected so far. The actions of the SSEB are difficult to understand as they make no economic sense. Chinese coal is subject to lengthy delays in processing and transport; coal from Australia involves high transport costs while BC believes it is cheaper than US coal. There is no doubt that these actions are undertaken with the knowledge if not the sanction of the Scottish Office. It therefore can only be seen as a further attack on miners' livelihoods by a vindictive government.

Preparing for Battle

COUNCIL WORKERS in Doncaster staged a 1 day strike on Thursday 10th March as a first step in a campaign against attacks by the local Labour council on the conditions of their own workforce. Councillors stated their opposition to the flexi-time scheme and had agreed a deal with local brown-nosing NUPE officials to cut the amount of the day covered by the flexible working. They also agreed to abolish flexi for some senior staff (who do not have much sympathy from the rank and file, but are nevertheless NALGO rather than NUPE members. The council propose to "review" the new scheme after 3 and 6 months - and it's obvious what that means!

The struggle in Doncaster is yet another example of a Labour council trying it on with its workers before a vicious cuts programme decreed by their political masters. Once again, the Labour Party in power and their "useful friends" in the trade unions are shown to be the spineless anti-working class hypocrites that anarcho-syndicalists have always said they were. The Doncaster campaign moved on to a ballot on non-co-operation with councillors, but rank and file

activists are arguing for a stepping up of action to force the council to withdraw its proposals. The battle must go on - fighting for flexi for more council workers and preparing for the battles to come over cuts, "re-deployment" and "competitive tendering".

One thing council workers

A Doncaster council worker

Industrial Network Formed

ON SATURDAY 20TH February of industrial organisation. DAM Council Workers organised a conference for local authority workers. Attendance was small but keen and, although it included a core of DAM affiliates resolved to organise on a broader basis. The bulk of the day was taken up with reports from authorities and discussion of the experiences detailed with analysis of the battles fought and the tactics used. These were chiefly in the London Labour Boroughs, particularly Hackney and Lambeth, and ILEA where big cuts are being made. It was agreed that those present should form a Local Authority Workers Network and that the network should not merely be a rank and file network but should work for the transformation

London meetings will be held every 4 weeks or so with an open invitation to workers from other regions. We are looking for a functioning organisation meeting regularly on a regional basis to discuss threats and tactics and organise support and links between groups of workers. With a functioning network in London we will be producing a free "paper" for news, analysis, comment and propaganda (available from the address below). If you work for a local or county council or education authority we want to hear from you.

Contact: Local Authority Workers' Network, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

Britain's Dirty War

The "Stalker Affair" brought not only good book sales but also the issue of Britain's shoot-to-kill policy into the limelight. The Stalker/Sampson investigation into shoot-to-kill incidents in late '82 showed evidence "of the commission of offences of perverting or attempting or conspiring to pervert the course of justice". These were the words of the British Attorney General, Patrick Mayhew, but despite this he decided there would be no prosecutions of RUC members as this would have been against "national interests". Since this cover-up, events have proved, if indeed any proof is needed, that shoot-to-kill is a day to day reality whether it is "legal" or not.

The shooting and murder of Aidan McAnespie, a member of Sinn Fein, by a general purpose heavy belt-fed machine gun as he walked towards a shop near a border checkpoint emphasizes this reality. The RUC has claimed that the shooting was the result of an accident and that McAnespie had been hit by a ricochet. His family, however, has maintained that he had been continually harassed by the "security" forces and have engaged a ballistics expert who they expect will confirm that the wounds on Aidan's body could not have been caused by a ricochet or "tumbling bullet". Undoubtedly the RUC and British army will conspire to sweep this murder under the carpet. But for the anti-unionist population in the 6 counties it is yet one more incident that shows the true role of the British forces - to silence and intimidate those who oppose British occupation.

As if to emphasize the point, on March the 6th three

unarmed members of the IRA, Mairead Farrell, Danny McCann and Sean Savage, were shot dead in Gibraltar by British special branch officers when they could have been arrested. These events like many others, notably Bloody Sunday in 1972 in Derry, make a mockery of all the covering up that has gone on over the years by British politicians and the British judicial system.

HYPOCRISY

Shoot-to-kill shows the hypocrisy of the British government's words and actions concerning what is going on in the north of Ireland. They refuse to publicly recognise that the British "security" forces are engaged in a war, hence the policy of criminalisation of those involved in the struggle to rid Ireland of British rule once and for all, and the withdrawal of political status of IRA and INLA prisoners in the '70's that led to the blanket protests and hunger strikes in



The Gibraltar Three

Long Kesh and Armagh Gaols. At the same time, however, the policies of shoot-to-kill, harassment and threats of violence and death against republican sympathisers, and the mass raids on and smashing up of anti-unionist housing estates all point to an unofficial war against resistance forces in an occupied territory. That war has the backing of the British government (and the government in Dublin) but is not publicly admitted to.

That a war exists in Ireland is a direct result of the establishment by Britain of the artificial unionist majority in the six counties. This led to the political, economic and social discrimination suffered by the anti-unionist minority that was part and parcel of Orange rule. That state of affairs was setback with the emergence of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and the taking to the streets of large numbers of people, not all of them from Catholic communities, to demand equal rights. From the moment that

British troops were sent on to the streets of Belfast, Derry and elsewhere, after the RUC had lost control of the Bogside in Derry to anti-unionist rioters, there was no going back. The sectarian statelet had been shown up across the world for what it was - a bastion of bigotry kept afloat by the British state.

TROOPS OUT

While anarcho-syndicalists do not agree with the narrow political aims of republicanism or with basing the struggle to end British occupation on armed struggle and nationalist sentiment alone, we do recognise the need for withdrawal of British troops and an end to partition to create the conditions favourable for the future of the Irish revolutionary class struggle. We recognise too that as long as troops remain in Ireland the war will continue as will shoot-to-kill deaths. This is not to say that we must ignore that issue, even if the British government are neither likely to admit that it exists nor to stop its opera-

tion. Issues like shoot-to-kill are an opportunity for us to keep the whole matter of what is going on in Ireland under discussion among the British working class. It is our role in Britain to take part in and help build working class pressure for a withdrawal of British troops.

In Ireland we must see the development of a united anti-sectarian and anti-imperialist working class movement north and south of the border capable of forcing the end of the occupation. Republicanism can only ever appeal to anti-unionists in the six counties and as such can never mobilise wide enough support. The Sinn Fein leadership with its insistence that "socialism in Ireland is not on the immediate political agenda" ignores this. If the working class in the southern 26 counties, as well as small numbers of the unionist working class, are to be drawn into a movement that will end partition and British occupation then it is clear that socialism must be on the immediate political agenda.

Dear Friends,

On the 1987 International Women's Day picket of Maghaberry Gaol a young woman, recently released after ten years imprisonment, spoke out against the injustices suffered by women, especially the practice of strip-searching. Therefore, it was with great sadness that, one year later, in the midst of the joy of our celebrations for International Women's Day 1988 and our protests in support of all women, we heard of the murder of Mairead Farrell, the woman who spoke at last year's picket.

As we stood in peaceful protest outside the gates of Maghaberry Prison Mairead and her 2 comrades, Danny McCann and Sean Savage were assassinated by state forces in the streets of the British colony of Gibraltar.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families, comrades and friends of Mairead, Danny and Sean.

"You have touched a woman
You have struck a rock
You will be crushed."

Statement from anarchist women in Belfast.



THERE WAS THE USUAL expressions of horror and disgust from the British government after a lone loyalist gunman attacked the funeral of the three IRA Volunteers killing 3 people. Yet what he was doing was following the logic of the British government's attitude demonstrated so vividly in Gibraltar where three people suspected of a potential crime were executed. Everyone at the funeral could be suspected of republican sympathies and so, by that logic, became a legitimate target for execution. But what worries the government, of course, is that like any state it needs to be the only legitimate source of violence; violence has to remain under their direct control.

Three days later, during the funeral of one of those killed by the loyalist attacker, a car containing two armed British soldiers drove at the procession at 40mph, mounting the pavement and injuring several mourners. As they attempted to escape they were caught and attacked by the angry crowd. At first the media reported that two unknown men had driven at the funeral, were attacked and that there were attempts to calm the situation. However, as it became known that the men were in fact British soldiers the reports became more biased in the best trad-



The Coffins of the Gibraltar 3 en route to Milltown Cemetery

ition of the British media's self-censorship. Official explanations that the men were "lost", "confused" and drove into the funeral procession "by mistake" do not stand up. The driver of the car was a "veteran" of the occupation, having been in the north for four years, and knew his way around Belfast.

A more likely explanation is that they had decided to scare the republican mourners as part of some sick joke and that it went wrong. The media reaction was one of disgust that a group of people could turn on two men and beat them to death. Yet only three days before there had been the loyalist attack on the funeral of the Gibraltar three.

None of the crowd who attacked the soldiers were active members of the IRA but simply normal people pushed too far by recent events.

OCCUPYING FORCE

The fault lies squarely with the British state - firstly through the fact of maintaining an occupation of the six counties; secondly by adopting a shoot-to-kill policy against the anti-unionist community. To the IRA the two British soldiers were members of an occupying force in the same way that Nazi Germany occupied France. The French resistance movement was labelled "terrorist" yet was supported by the British

state. The consequences of the Gibraltar killings have not yet run their course and many more people may yet die. The blame will be firmly attached to the Irish themselves by the British state and media as further "proof" that only the presence of British troops prevents a bloodbath.

Two men have now been charged with the murder of the soldiers. The evidence is flimsy - they have been picked out of the crowd to be made an example of, in much the same way as the Sharpeville six in South Africa. After the recent appeal of the Birmingham six, Irish opinion of British justice is sceptical to say the least.

FOR WORKERS CONTROL

Fighting for a Better World

The following article has been translated from "Lotta di Classe" (Class Struggle), paper of the Italian Syndicalist Union (USI) which is the Italian section of the International Workers' Association. It analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the Comitati di Base (the Rank and File Committees) referred to in DA's 46 and 47.

Events over recent months in the struggles of the Comitati di Base and the development of the whole Italian political/union scene make it necessary to appraise the situation (in the light of our experiences, old and new); the role of revolutionary syndicalism, and therefore of the USI. In previous issues of "Lotta di Classe" comrades have talked of the positive elements and the limits of the Comitati di Base (COBAS). We must go beyond these first considerations to construct a more articulate strategy for the phase we are now going through.

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The COBAS developed outside the orbit of the 3 reformist union confederations. They have shown again that there's no space within the confederations for genuine grass roots struggles and movements. It's an important rejection of the discredited union entryism strategy and of the manoeuvres of those who preach it. The confederations' logic is increasingly revealed as collaborationist with the system of exploitation; an integral part of the power structure; and an apparatus of bureaucratic control over workers. The rejection of entryism by itself, however, is insufficient because we mustn't underestimate the reformist unions' capacity, once the initial wave of struggle has passed, to regain most forces and movements outside their control. To open the floodgates of grass roots structures means going beyond the "movementist" phase; combatting corporatist tendencies and laying the basis for a real alternative which can endure.

The breakdown of class cohesion (for which the confederations are responsible) is such that the disease of corporatism stalks the struggles breaking out in various sectors. This can lead to autonomous unions but also back to the confederal unions. Also in this mould are those, like the tendency in the

COBAS co-ordinating body in the schools, who want a "5th union" in that sector, transforming the COBAS into yet another corporatist and bureaucratic structure. This divides the workers and destroys the real class content of these struggles. It should therefore be opposed and defeated. The workers must defend the autonomy of their rank and file structures and not allow them to fall prey to new ruling cliques.

STAGNATION

The movementism of these struggles, refusing to become submerged in the rigidity of traditional unionism, is genuinely positive and anti-authoritarian, but is negative when it becomes an ideology in itself. Years of experience teach us that after the climax of struggles a 2nd phase of stagnation emerges during which the opposition regain ground; the movement suffers a dangerous haemorrhage and grass roots structures become depleted. What remains is easy prey for the confederal unions or becomes the private domain of parties, or grouplets. Those who remain apart are easily criminalised by the authorities.

The most significant events since 1969 show a repetition of this. During the "hot autumn" in '69 and the early 1970's the movement seemed capable of sweeping away the old bureaucratic union apparatus. Grass roots bodies, collectives and committees sprang up everywhere and the hierarchical Workers Commissions were cancelled out by the spread of Factory Councils, assemblies which gave workers in the factories real power. But much of the movement was later re-absorbed by the confederations who managed ride out the tiger of dissent and bring it under control. They accepted the Factory Councils by working to remove all rank and file power from them and put them under the control of executives, filled with confederation loyalists.



This development, which throttled the growth of workers' power in the workplaces, was made easier by those groups of the "new left" (as well as by the traditional parliamentary parties) which managed to capture various parts of the movement and lead them to entryism into the confederations. We remember with anger those who in those days (and still today) theorised about the need to enter the confederations to substitute the bureaucracy with a "revolutionary leadership". It is an old leninist myth (nevertheless adopted by some "libertarian" activists) which led to a mass of new bureaucrats of a so-called "far left" persuasion which to this day is the mainstay of the official unions' hierarchical structure.

Other movements, like the Comitati Unitari di Base (United Rank and File Committees), also submitted. They went from hard struggles to recapture by the reformist unions or ended up under the control of organised groups. For those who refused to join the game, who didn't want to fall under the control of the various "churches" there lay state and boss repression. Reformist recapture and criminalisation began a macabre dance around the movement, courting it when it could be deviated and controlled, attacking it when it escaped control.

FURIOUS STRUGGLES

The pattern was repeated after the 1977 explosion of the movement of the unemployed, low paid and young workers. This time it was even more disastrous. From furious struggles; the barricades in Bologna; the demonstration of 100,000 in March in Rome, in a few months there was a frightening retreat which destroyed that wave of class opposition. Once again there was criminalisation; plundering by those calling themselves the "leadership" and "vanguard" of the movement, reformist recapture and mass disillusionment. Other episodes in following years confirm our position. One case is the healthworkers' movement that seemed to overwhelm the confederal unions but which later evaporated, with a consequent regaining of militants by reformist unions and the proliferation of corporate "autonomous" unionism.

Hence there's a need for a structure parallel to spontaneous grass roots movements - a revolutionary syndicalist structure (which is itself rigidly rank and file and assemblyist) that aims to be long term, resisting phases of retreat and representing a concrete alternative to the official unions. It is no coincidence that the idea of reviving the Italian Syndicalist Union gained ground in 1977-8. Certainly the USI is an organisation with a strong historical tradition, but it was reborn mainly due to the need of groups of today's workers for a fighting structure linking struggles and defending working class interests to the death without compromising or conceding to the state and bosses. The USI springs then from a number of experiences - from that of comrades active inside the confederations who realized they were working in vain, only to strengthen the union hierarchy and its collaboration, to that of health and transport workers, for example, who lived through struggles involving various rank and file bodies and finally asserted the urgent need to build an organisation capable

of putting into practice in a self-managed way the debate they had started.

REACTIVATION

We have proceeded on this road, seeing the reactivation of the USI in 1983 and the setting up of industrial networks and workplace and local structures, with active participation in working class struggles which have broken out this year. Certainly we are few (though the organisation has seen real growth and increased intervention), but this doesn't frighten or surprise us in a union/political scene characterised by years of compromise, betrayal and dispersal of struggle by the confederals; the spread of corporatism; and the "I'm alright, Jack" syndrome. Forward then to build this new force which intervenes in struggles with a correct relationship to the movement and rank and file structures, to maintain and develop their autonomy and prevent their manipulation by anyone. But at the same time we have to start building now the revolutionary syndicalist alternative capable of fighting in the continuous battle against all power and exploitation.



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NEWS FROM SPAIN

THE INFORMATION HERE is taken from the press of the CNT-AIT (National Confederation of Labour - Spanish section of the International Workers' Association).

In October last the CNT-AIT issued a call to activists in the "CNT-Renovada", formed after a number of splits in the CNT-AIT in the early '80's, and to those outside of union structures. The disenchantment of activists and delegates from workplaces like Ensidesa, Fasa-Renault, Casa, the Barcelona metro and the Michelin factory in Vittoria, now returning to the CNT-AIT signifies the defeat of a strategy based on a presence in the works' committees (joint committees including management and union representatives). The loss of purchasing power and the massive increase in company profits could not be checked. By its practice the "CNT-Renovada" contributed to the weakening of the perception among workers of the role of union action. CNT-AIT sections, like that in Puerto Real, on the other

hand, have been at the forefront of a coherent defence of the principles of revolutionary syndicalism.

The CNT-AIT's call is addressed to those activists who have convinced themselves that they made a mistake, so they can return with the same rights and duties as other activists. Contrary to rumours, they won't have to suffer "humiliation". This corresponds to the only tradition the CNT knows - that of acknowledging that on the road to working class victory, new mistakes will occur, but that sincere activists will always need each other.

The lawsuit concerning redistribution of the patrimony acquired through workers being forced to subscribe to the Falangist unions (CNS) when Franco was in power, has seen an interesting new development. Now the Supreme Court has declared void the re-distribution of the patrimony earlier carried out to the benefit of the UGT, the Workers Commissions (CCOO), and ELA-STV, while keeping

the CNT-AIT out. The CNT-AIT's National Committee considers this as a first acknowledgement of the popular and historical base of the CNT. But it will have taken 5 years for the Supreme Court to confirm the original decision of the Constitutional Council. The "socialist" government shows it only wants to recognise the constitutional rights of those unions

engaged in the maintenance of social peace.

The National Committee also sees this as proof that representation can be achieved without having to participate in electoral games in companies' co-management bodies (works committees). Indirectly, this judgement is the beginning of a positive solution to recovering the historical patrimony impound-

ed by Franco's dictatorship, the return of which the Spanish government is delaying. But here again the CNT-AIT remains the only example of revolutionary syndicalism. So they acknowledge that the patrimony is for the use of all workers, unionised or not, and will open all centres distributed to it from the patrimony to workers as a whole.



Letters

Dear DA,

March 1988 will probably go down in history as the month of one day strikes. On the 8th there were the ILEA/London Bridge Day of Action, which has a really dodgy history. Originally, London Bridge - a semi-official cross-authority shop stewards' body for London Boroughs - called a day of action for March 9th. Immediately the Stalinist/Labour coalition which controls my NALGO branch started to undermine it as Militant were pushing it and linking it to opposition to the cuts the bureaucracy was collaborating with. Then ILEA Joint Unions called a day of action on the 8th, in competition with the 9th, so eventually London Bridge called their day for the 8th. The 8th was then sold to us as a joint ILEA/London Boroughs Day of Action but not without another hurdle to overcome.

Come the Branch Meeting, SWP have an amendment in to scrap the 8th and go out in support of the NHS on the 14th. When asked to amend the amendment to make it the 8th and the 14th, which had general support in spite of the sinking pay packets, they declined. The 2 nurses who had spoken to us earlier were then subjected to the spectacle of us voting against their Day of Action so we could show some support for our own jobs. A special Branch Meeting was supposed to be called to discuss the 14th, but I think the branch has temporarily sunk under the weight of all this. On a lighter note, our tame Tory Trade Unionist suggested that instead of striking we should organise a mass petition in support of the NHS, and I got elbowed in the ribs by a colleague for adding "don't tell

Willis, he's not thought of that one". Not quite the same ring to it; TUC get off your knees - organise a mass petition. But the worst is yet to come.

March the 8th, I'm on strike against a labour Council who are docking about a third of my week's wages - 'cos I work a long Tuesday - in support of...the Labour Party. Yup, down in Jubilee Gardens, on the Labour Party bus the leader of ILEA, bless him, is addressing us. His message is ILEA is being attacked because it's Labour Party controlled. Labour control must be retained, so you lot I've sacked to retain that control out there can bash me with your banner, but you'll get nowhere. Not a worker on the platform, no mention of London Bridge, not even in the union press. So much for politics, from the Labour leadership to the RCP and out into really weird sect land, the divisive opportunism of the left is a curse of our class and the labour movement. I remember that the revolutionary syndicalist CGT was formed because of similar activities by the French left, we should draw the same conclusions. The TUC will control and defeat any working class movement within it, the left can only divide us - fuck them both. We've got to organise now class-wide, inside the TUC and out, an independent organisation to ditch the lot, because until we do this will always happen. As an active trade unionist I can't afford to wait longer than I have to, because I'm in the middle of this mess.

Broke And Knackered, But Still Fighting, Hackney.

Dear Editor,

Abortion is oppression.

Many abortions are not a woman's unforced choice but the result of pressure from people in authority or power. Many abortions come about because of sexism and rejection of people with disabilities.

Many abortions leave women damaged, some of them will not be able to have more children.

A male-dominated society legalised abortion because they would rather empty women's wombs than men's wallets.

Above all abortion kills human beings.

Yours for life, DF.

REPLY

Dear DF,

Your arbitrary assertion of a number of, often contradictory, points makes any constructive reply extremely difficult. On the whole, however, your argument can be reduced to two main areas of concern. The first of these is that abortion, in itself, is oppression, is damaging and "above all...kills human beings". The remainder of your letter, however, argues that it is the control of abortion by a male-dominated society which is oppressive. It would seem that, in arguing against abortion and yet for women's equality you are totally contradicting yourself.

Abortion is not in itself oppression. It is its control and restriction by those in authority which is oppressive. Furthermore it is neither damaging nor murderous. If carried out correctly there is no reason why abortion should cause any damage. Indeed it is important to point out the many damaging effects of pregnancy on a woman, especially if that pregnancy is unwanted. It is only if forced into self-administered or backstreet abortions that women are at risk of damage or even death. If your statement that abortion "kills human beings" (which is extremely ambiguous) refers to this particular aspect we may be in some agreement; I suspect, however that you are referring to the life of the unborn foetus. Emotive arguments about the foetus' potential for life simply con-

fuse the whole issue. Only if a woman decides to continue with her pregnancy does this potential have any validity.

As I have said, it is the control of abortion by those in authority which oppresses women. But your argument linking this oppression purely to sexism and prejudice against disabilities is particularly oversimplified. If, as you suggest, "a male-dominated society legalised abortion because they would rather empty women's wombs than men's wallets" why then, in the eighties is that same society imposing increasing restrictions on abortion? Contrary to your argument women's access to free abortion on demand is central to their freedom and equality in society. Only through having total control over their reproduction can women hope to have equal access to the labour market and so gain economic independence.

Current legislation governing abortion dates back to the 1967 Abortion Act. The main reason behind the passing of this act was that, in such a time of economic boom it was in the interests of the capitalist state to increase women's access to the expanding labour market. In addition to this reason public concern over the horror of back street abortions and the popularity of the idea of "social planning" for "incapable" and "irresponsible" parents were also behind the passing of this legislation. The 1967 Act did not so much legalise abortion as give the state control over abortions which were already happening illegally as well as the power to decide who should and who should not have abortions. The Act states that abortion is illegal except under certain circumstances which must be approved by two GPs.

Now that capitalism in the 80's is in economic slump we are seeing this so-called liberalisation being reversed. It is in the context of generalised cuts in the wel-

fare state forcing women into caring roles and so restricting again their access to the labour market that David Altoun's anti-abortion Bill has won such popularity. Such a backlash is purely in the interests of the capitalist state and is an attack not only on women but on the working class as a whole.

Yours L (for DA Editorial Group).

Dear DA,

The article "Anarchists & Theory" (issue 46) features a pamphlet criticising the role of animal liberation in the wider revolutionary struggle.

"Animal lib cannot be considered a central task in the overthrow of this exploitative and oppressive system."

Suggesting animal lib "rebels" should "clear the mind of the debilitating ideology of the A-L movement".

All ideologies are a handicap but the understanding of animal exploitation as part of the complex web of exploitations that make up an oppressive system, is essential. The exploitation of humans and animals is, in fact, inseparable (environmental destruction, wasted resources, the testing of weapons and dangerous drugs, etc).

The A-L movement can only be effective to the extent it branches out and becomes part of the wider revolutionary movement. The accusation of "side issue" can equally be applied to any single issue, be it fighting for the rights of workers, women or racial minorities or whatever.

Other issues than A-L are at least as shrouded in ideology. The fight for more money for the Health Service is one example. It is a dubious service that by its reliance on professionalism and high tech "cures" undermines the autonomous health care of the individual and the community, becoming little more than a front for unscrupulous

and profiteering drug companies.

All such issues must be debated without ideological bias if effective action is to be taken.

Activists concerned with whatever issues should be turning their attentions to the institutions which create and perpetuate active and passive compliance with the state. In this society the main culprits must be compulsory education (a minimum of 11 years of state indoctrination) and the media, especially television - the politician, salesman and policeman in nearly everyone's home.

The state with its well developed skill for self-preservation has avoided even making these issues for serious debate, let alone subversive action.

Yours in solidarity, John.

REPLY

As working class revolutionaries our aim is the liberation of the human race from exploitation and oppression in their many and varied forms. Animals, as far as we're concerned, come second place. Personally I don't believe that "all living creatures on this planet have an equal right to live out their natural lives" as Carl T (letter in DA 47) claims. If my flat is over-run with cockroaches then I think it is legitimate to call in pest control. In my view, some animals are more important than others, but humans are certainly top priority.

It is certainly incorrect to assert that "our meat eating is directly depriving people in Ethiopia and other countries of food" (Carl T). This illustrates the failure of A-L ideology in understanding the system we live

under. People in third world countries starve simply because the economic system that operates throughout the world is based on profit - and if you can't pay up it's tough luck. In fact a surplus of food is being produced - and then destroyed to keep prices up.

Just like CND and the Greens, the A-L movement sees something that it considers more objectionable than anything else and then attempts to build an ideology around it. But this is nothing more than moralistic liberalism because it fails to tackle the real causes of misery in our world. The fact that A-L militants are causing millions of pounds worth of damage to the same companies that exploit people as well as animals is irrelevant because it changes nothing and besides, those companies were targetted for their treatment of animals rather than people.

If workers in a meat processing factory were having a really hard time they would get no sympathy from the animal libbers who would rather see them on the dole.

As for drug companies and chemical firms, the problem here again boils down to the economic system they operate in. There is nothing wrong with producing pharmaceuticals that genuinely help people suffering from disease or illness. Also there is nothing wrong with having a chemicals industry - the important point is that industry must serve our needs rather than the drive for profit. This, of course, is only possible under a different social system.

John's criticism of people fighting to save the health service amazed me. Perhaps if he ever needs an operation he would prefer to be surrounded by amateurs using low-tech

equipment. And I'm sure that a diabetic would be pleased to know that their regular doses of insulin are undermining their "autonomous health care".

The main culprit in our society is not education, nor the media, or Margaret Thatcher even. It's the social system that dominates everything - capitalism, and education, the media and the state are there to ensure that we accept it, whether we like it or not. The solution is to organise towards a new social system that puts human needs first, with ordinary people in control of what's going on. Clandestine activity will no change anything - only a massive mobilisation of working class people towards social change can change things. To succeed we need to be organised and politically conscious without leaders.

PH.

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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 Stokes-croft, 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 East 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/MSW Workers -- c/o Manchester DAM.

Other Contacts

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

(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.

Nottingham Anarchist Socialist Group ----- Nottingham ASG, Box 1, Hixiki, 15 Goosegate, Nottingham.

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

DAM Aims and Principles

- 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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A SOUTH WEST LONDON DAM PAMPHLET

FIGHT THE BIGOTS!

In a moral climate that tries to curb women's independence and place fertility firmly under state control, it is no surprise that gains made by lesbians and gays should also be attacked. The whipped-up panic over AIDS has led to general hostility to homosexuality, making gays and those promoting sexual freedom the scapegoats. The moral guardians of the church and state are the cheerleaders for a drive back to the closet for lesbians and gays. What has been achieved over the years in the struggle for homosexual expression and acceptance has been slight but valuable, providing space for lesbians and gays to be open about their sexuality. The most serious threat to these gains lies in clause 29 of the Tories' local government bill. Under the guise of stopping left-wing councils giving money to "minority" groupings like the gay community, it aims to stop the "promotion" of homosexuality. The implications are immense:

- * No local authority support for lesbian and gay centres; withdrawal of licences to lesbian and gay venues, clubs and pubs.
- * Restrictions on support - financial and advertising - for advice centres or phone lines.
- * No right of assembly for lesbian and gay demos and rallies by restriction on permits.
- * The removal of books from public places like libraries and community centres that promote, mention or comment on homosexuality.
- * Restrictions on artistic freedom for lesbians and gays as well as on performances, exhibitions, films, etc.

NATURAL

The clause allows for wide restrictions which is clearly its intent. The justification is that lesbians and gays are not only "abnormal" but also threaten accepted social values. The few places where people, especially children, can get informed sexual education face drastic changes. We are asked to ignore that lesbians and gays can lead happy natural relationships; that we can and do sexually love people of the same sex. Ruling class ideology shuts off such choices and presents only one option - monogamous heterosexuality. The clause talks of "pretended family relationships". This conveniently ignores the fact that



real and fulfilling parental relationships exist between homosexuals and children and there's no evidence suggesting that such relationships can't work - the only problems arise from a social climate that stigmatises them.

A major casualty will be counselling services that often vitally depend on funding. Lesbian and gay teenagers have the highest rate of attempted and actual suicide. A 1984 study commissioned by

the GLC showed that out of a survey of 500 lesbian and gay teenagers 1 in 5 had attempted suicide; 1 in 10 had been thrown out of their homes and 1 in 5 had suffered physical assault from their families. This points to the very real pressure faced by lesbians and gays trying to express themselves in a hostile and prejudiced society. With the closure of advice centres and helplines where will these people turn? An increase in violent physical confrontation is a logical conclusion of this worsening climate. A 1987 GALOP report showed that physical attacks on homosexuals has increased tenfold in the last 2 years. In the first week of debate on the bill in the House of Commons, the offices of Capital Gay in London were burnt out.

"underground" out of public view. The mass demonstration and rally in Manchester which may be the last such open and legal demo, showed an impressive defiance to ensure this doesn't happen.

ACTION

To effectively fight the clause we must see it as part of the overall strategy by capitalism to roll back the ideological changes and advances made in the '60's and '70's which saw a shift in sexual attitudes which still poses a threat to capitalism. We must argue for workers' action, the key to resisting the clause, and for gays and "straights" to fight alongside each other. It needs action before and after the bill goes through, involving

The ruling class needs to shape a moral climate that is strict in its definitions and oppressive to us all. Anti-gay prejudice does not automatically arise in people and isn't just a result of irrational ignorance. Oppression of gays is part of the ideological control used to maintain the family unit and Thatcher's "traditional values". Capitalism needs to keep traditional sexual roles intact and maintain the family as the cornerstone to controlling and maintaining a convenient labour force. The family is a means for stabilising this workforce through the unpaid work of women in the home. Independence outside the home or breakdown of the family threatens this set up. Looking at other attacks on nursery and childcare facilities, abortion rights and general restrictions on women's independence from men there is a definite drive back to the family unit.

Capitalism tries to control us not only economically but ideologically and prejudice is central to this. It defines morality through the mass media to stop us moving towards sexual liberation and away from the state-controlled "nuclear" family. Homosexuality also undermines the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and is a step away from the ruling class' "natural way to be". Tying in the roots of anti-gay bigotry to capitalist morality points to a working class response. We must actively involve ourselves in the struggle for gay liberation. The working class are victims of capitalism's economic and ideological oppression. Our liberation from the profit system means gaining control over all aspects of our lives. This means rejecting the divisions capitalist morality imposes on us. We can have no complete cultural and sexual freedom under capitalism and for us to gain that freedom we must destroy capitalism. Gay liberation is central to the social revolution that will break capitalism's economic and moral constraints.

Clause 29 is now
Clause 28 again.

This will just be the start unless we can successfully counter the bigots.

Mobilisation to defeat the bill has so far been impressive. A powerful arts group has emerged to resist the restrictions in those areas. This can be valuable in the wider campaign but we mustn't let it dwarf the wider central issues. Our opposition has to draw out what we see as a moral backlash that attempts to drive lesbians and gays

workers in education and local government refusing to implement the new restrictions. We must show the bigots that opposition isn't confined to a defensive "minority" but includes large sections of organised workers. Connections must be made in our common fight for expression, organisation and all we need in our lives. With confidence and solidarity we can resist any attempts to censor or restrict our choices concerning sexuality and relationships.

FIGHT THE CLAUSE!