Direct Action

SOLIDARNOŚĆ

"The Iron Curtain Can't Divide Us" —— Page 7

The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism | Nº 49 | June/July '88 | 25p

SCABS FALL OUT





By September Britain may well have a new "TUC". Eric Hammond's scab union, the EETPU, is engineering its way into being thrown out of the existing TUC and intends to set up a rival made up of right wing bosses' unions.

The roots of the TUC split lie at the very heart of union organisation. Although supposedly elected to represent their members' interests, union bureaucrats are more interested in building their own political empires. To them their members are a tool to be used or abused to gain this power. Their constant sabotage of militancy has, however, sown the seeds of their own defeat. Without militancy bureaucrats have nothing to bargain with and the their constant back-stabbing has helped to destroy militancy.

Thatcher realised the TUC "leadership" had lost its power and instead of the old consensus of consulting them she told them where to go. The TUC tried to respond with a "Day of Action", effectively a 1-day general strike. This failure proved once and for all that union bureaucrats cannot create militancy, only destroy it.

They were therefore forced to adopt "new realism", selling out their members with "flexibility", "new working procedures" and "rationalisation". The bureaucrats now sell themselves to management by being bosses' unions, and to workers with cheap insurance. The ultimate upshot of new realism is the single union, no-strike deal. The TUC do not oppose this. They are only angry with the EETPU's blatant selling out, breaking the TUC's "gentleman's agreements" not to poach members. The T&G (and the GMB) want the electricians punished so they can sign all the single union, no-strike "sweetheart" deals.

Hammond knows that only by leaving the TUC can he have total freedom to sell out his members and build a bosses' TUC with members from the EETPU, AEU, UDM, the Professional Association of Teachers and UMAST (the ships' officers' union). This could have 1.5 to 2 million members compared with the TUC's present 9.5 million, and would have strong financial backing from big business.

This will force the TUC 2 ways. They will go further down the road of new realism to compete with the EETPU, and encourage rank and file militancy with an anti-EETPU campaign to prevent them poaching more members. The TUC will want to control such militancy so it remains just an anti-EETPU campaign. Although it is important to fight the Hammond TUC we must not be side-tracked into a negative anti-EETPU campaign, especially one controlled by the TUC.

The only way to fight Hammond, TUC bureaucrats and the bosses is militant unionism built from, and controlled by, the grass roots - ie anarcho-syndicalism.

Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

WEAKNESS EXPOSED

The seaman's dispute has, once again, shown the weakness of traditional trade unionism when faced with a government and ruling class determined to break the organised working class in the pursuit of even greater profits.

The thirst for more prof. has led P&O to disregard proper safety levels and insist on less crew working longer shifts with shorter breaks. Even after the disaster of the "Herald of Free Enterprise" they've shown that the safety of passengers and crew is a poor second to profit. Recent fires on cross-channel ferries have highlighted the case for proper staffing levels and the need for an alert, well-trained crew. To this P&O remain oblivious.

Another aspect to be considered is the channel tunnel which will mean less demand for ferry travel. P&O have decided that by acting now, with a sympathetic government and judiciary, they can break the NUS with the added bonus of forcing their main rivals, Sealink, to follow suit or be forced out of business. P&O believe they have more resources than Sealink to ride out the strike.

Secondary picketting which had earlier been successful in spreading the dispute to the majority of Britain's ports, was halted by the sequestration of union funds. Since then Sam McCluskey, the NUS general secretary, after calling off secondary action, has attempted to purge the union's contempt of court. But it should be obvious that after nine years of Thatcherism, the judges know what is expected of them and now the question of the legality of picketting even at Dover has been raised.

LIMITATIONS

The NUS has lacked imagination up to now. Selective strikes and picketting on P&O operations would focus attention on the reasons for the strike while Sealink and other companies could have been forced into accepting the union's demands. More fundamentally the limitations of trade unionism have been exposed when it is faced with a buoyent and openly hostile capitalist class using economic conditions to tighten political control and destroy working class gains. The TUC is unwilling and unable to mobilise any effective support while the Labour Party with its abhorrence of breaking the law, however unjust, and its desperate attempts at moderation and respectability, is worse than useless.



Today's political climate means that disputes are being settled in the High Court, not on the picket lines. The rank and file are being sacrificed while lawyers argue over the legality of their actions; general secretaries run from courts to committee rooms and the basis of a dispute is obscured behind a smokescreen of legal doubletalk.

This dispute can only be won by stepping up working class solidarity, making a concerted effort to black all P&O operations at every level at every port. The question remains - can this ever be achieved within the present set up of working class organisation? The answer is it cannot. Only the self-organisation of working people defending their interests can progress be made. In the meantime solidarity is the only answer.

SCABS GET THEIRS!

PROMISES MADE BY the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) that they would protect jobs and pits in the Nottinghamshire coalfield by "moderate negotiation" with British Coal once again lie in tatters.

The UDM sat dumbstruck as British Coal announced in early March the closure of Mansfield colliery which employed 950. The pit, in the heartland of UDM territory, was to be shut within two weeks, despite not being considered by UDM officials to be at risk in British Coal's closure programme. British Coal claimed that remaining reserves at the pit were too difficult to get at, and that claims for mining subsidence damage in and around Mansfield cost them too much. A few days after the closure announcement, the 900 or so UDM members at the pit voted to accept the closure without a fight. Many took redundancies. Others were "re-deployed" at other pits.

The closure of another UDM controlled pit in Nottinghamshire clearly shows that the UDM's "special relationship" with British Coal is over. The UDM have, as far as British Coal are concerned, served their purpose - to help undermine the strike, to divide the pits, and to weaken the power of the miners. But now that's been done, British Coal have no reason to "look after" the UDM. UDM leaders won't accept that their cosy little friendship with British Coal is dead. They will continue to be "surprised" and "dumbstruck" when British Coal decides to decimate another community by shutting down its pit. Some UDM miners though, as they stand in the dole queue, might just realise that the whirlwind romance with British Coal is over.

Source: Nottingham Agitator

ABANDONED BY ASLEF

THE FOLLOWING is a letter which has been circulated to by the King's Cross branch of ASLEF to other railway union branches concerning the victimisation of one of their activist members.

Dear Brother/Sister,

Following a decision by the King's Cross branch of ASLEF to take a day's strike action in support of the Health workers' campaign to defend our National Health Service, BR management obtained injunctions in the High Court against six King's Cross ASLEF branch officials. The proposed strike was quoshed by court order on the 10th of March.

Not content with that "victory" BR suspended the ASLEF LDC (shop stewards' committee) Chairman, Steve Forey, on the 15th March and the following day he was sacked. His "crime" was to distribute the branch's official newsletter to ASLEF members explaining the reason for the strike. Management admitted at his appeal hearing that Steve Forey was sacked for trade union activity.

The remaining five branch officers are even now under the threat of a permanent court injunction. None of them can be seen to be promoting or encouraging action of any kind by King's Cross branch members. To do so would place them in contempt of court and lay them open to heavy fines, even imprisonment. Three of the five are still on "final warnings" from the management, handed out without a Form one (formal disciplinary hearing).

Threats of legal and disciplinary action have extended to all branch members at King's Cross. A legally constituted ballot for strike action to achieve Steve Forey's reinstatement was also attacked by management. Drivers were informed by letter that they would be held personally liable for damages to the Board's business. On top of that all Drivers at King's Cross were told that they would be sacked.

BR's jackboot tactics created a climate of fear in which the ballot for strike action was narrowly lost. But the fight cannot stop here. What BR have done at King's Cross is a direct attack on every trade union branch on the railway. What the management have done to Steve Forey they can do to others. the law can be used to gag other trade union branches who stand up to management.

The attack on King's Cross and the sacking of Steve Forey cannot be separated from BR's attack on all railway workers' conditions and jobs. They are trying to intimidate and soften up the opposition. The new train-crew proposals; the open station concept and the abolition of the machinery of negotiation are all in the pipeline. BR are playing for high stakes to make the railway more profitable. But if we cannot defend trade union representatives and organisation, what chance is there of a fight against these attacks?



THE SACKING OF Steve Forey and the use of court injunctions against the other 5 branch officials are indicative of the atmosphere that British Rail are trying to create against any resistance by railworkers. In the run-up to privatisation they are planning yet another massive round of redundancies; a restructuring of the workforce and a scrapping of the already pitiful machinery of negotiation which would virtually do away with shop stewards. On top of this BR have recently introduced 2 clauses into the general rule book which would make it a sackable offence for employees to make public statements or take any action which may damage their business - in effect a no-strike clause.

THORN

Needless to say, the reformist unions have been ineffective as usual. In Steve Forey's case there is little doubt that ASLEF bureaucrats were as glad as management to get rid of an activist who has been a constant thorn in their side. He was one of the main people behind the move to force ASLEF to withdraw their investments in South Africa which was passed at an AGM 2 years ago. This led to the embarrassing scene of ASLEF recalling an unconstitutional emergency conference to overturn the decision, showing the nature of union bureaucrats in their true light. With the no-strike clause the ineffectiveness of the NUR/ASLEF federation was shown up once again. On hearing about the clause, a joint delegation rushed to BR headquarters to threaten them with court action. Of course, after BR had stopped laughing, they told them to piss off.

Thankfully, not all is doom and gloom on the railways. The last few weeks have shown the beginnings of a rank and file fightback. In the on-train catering department, workers took action when management tried to implement a two-tier contract system whereby new starters would receive far worse pay and conditions. The NUR was forced to act. A ballot was organised which resulted in a 94% majority in favour of strike action, forcing the management to back down. In London and Glasgow management attempted to replace "guards" engaged in ticket duties on driver-only trains with staff on a lower grade. This was a move, which if successful, would have had a profound effect on the pay and conditions of thousands of guards. Again, after a ballot, the guards took action and forced a management climb-down.

A BURNING ISSUE

Poll tax registration started in Scotland on the 1st of April, the day after anti-poll tax groups organised demonstrations against it. In Glasgow, members of the APTU (Anti-Poll Tax Union) occupied the City Chambers and flew the red flag. In Edinburgh a demonstration was called by Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax (which includes Scottish DAM) and the APTU. Other anti-poll tax groups were contacted in order to attend and give their support, such as Labour Movement Against the Poll Tax, Citizens Against the Poll Tax and the claimants unions. About 60 demonstrators picketted the Scottish Office and burned government booklets.

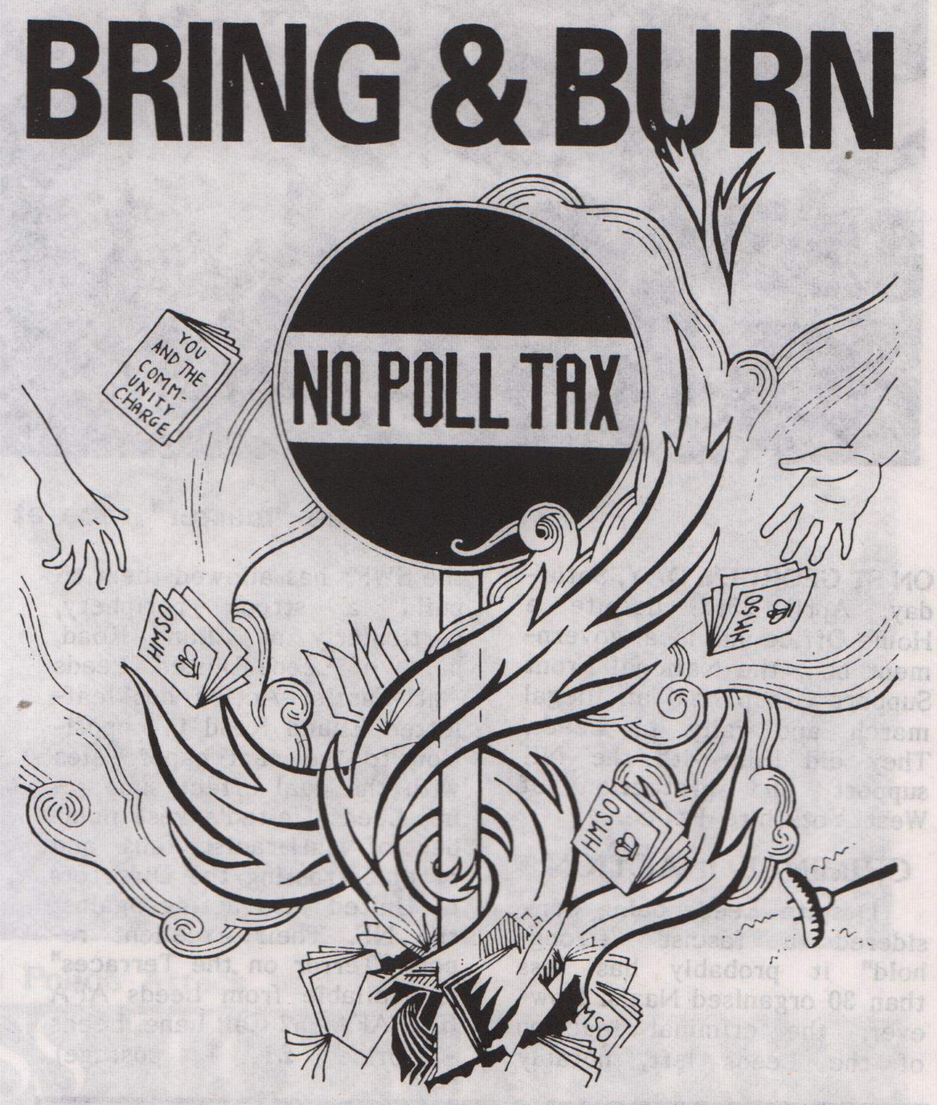
On the 2nd of May government booklets and registration forms were burnt on top of Carlton Hill, Edinburgh, as well as on other hill tops across Scotland. Although the elements were against the demonstrators 100 people attended the Edinburgh burning. This demonstration was called by the Citizens Against the Poll Tax with other Anti-Poll Tax groups giving support.

The APTU and Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax have been, and continue their strategy of, organising area by area in a campaign of non-payment. In many areas a stall is now a Saturday fixture where leaflets are handed out, with window posters saying "NO POLL TAX". In some areas there are whole streets with these in the windows showing people's commitment in opposing the tax. Another feature of the stalls is people queueing up to sign a non-payment pledge sheet, published by Edinburgh Trades Council.

LUCKY STARS

The Labour Party leadership, on the other hand, has launched the "Stop It" campaign and have ruled out a non-payment campaign. They prefer staging highly publicised meetings with celebrities from football, film and pop music - the idea being to show how the Labour Party is opposed to the Poll Tax, but are doing nothing to "Stop It". The leadership believes that having thrashed the Tories in Scotland at the last general election over the issue, it should be allowed to get through to England and Wales and so Labour win next time. Meanwhile we have to take the medicine and thank our lucky stars as we are going to have a Labour Party government by 1991 at the latest.

This strategy isn't accepted by the whole of the Labour Party. Labour Movement Against the Poll Tax support a non-payment campaign and lobby the Labour Party and the Trade Unions to initiate such a campaign, while giving support to groups like the APTU and Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax. They rightly see non-payment as the only way to defeat this unfair tax which benefits only the rich.





The following is part of a leaflet issued by Edinburgh DAM:

SOME POSSIBLE TACTICS

As of the 1st April 1988 registering for the Poll-tax will start. Canvassers will call round with a questionnaire to fill.

1: Don't answer the door. After three visits, if the "responsible person" is not available the form will be sent to you.

2: You have 21 days to return the form. Return it unanswered after 18, 19 days, asking for clarification of a question that appears on the canvass. For example one of the questions you are asked is "Are the premises a dwellinghouse?" - ask for the definition of dwellinghouse.

3: Remember, send only one question at a time as you can repeat this. In every instance you will have 21 days to complete it.

4: Another tactic is to use another name as this is not illegal in Scotland. If you have registered under another name then you can, after two months or so, inform the registration officer that you have recently moved in and you can start all over again. It would also get the officer wondering where the other person has gone to.

5: Return the form to the registration officer marked "not known at this address".

6: Claim you never received the questionnaire, the burden of proof is on the Registration Officer, not you.

These are only a few suggestions - the important thing is to make the Act unworkable. The end result will have to be:

CAN'T PAY! WON'T PAY!

This delaying registration strategy has suffered a setback as the information given to us about the questionnaire has now been scrapped by the government, this is probably due to them being aware of the planned actions. This shows that this government is flexible in its strategy too. Having said this, some of the delaying tactics are still applicable (in the leaflet shown here), only the queries are no longer applicable.

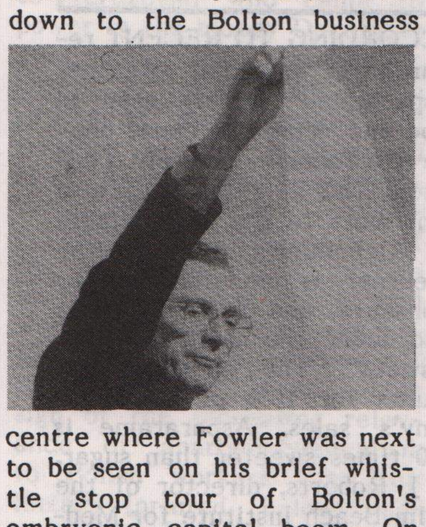
For further information on the Poll Tax campaign write to Edinburgh DAM, PO Box 516, South West DO, Edinburgh 10.

FOULBREATH HITS BOLTON

NORMAN FOWLER arrived in Bolton on the 13th of May to peruse a modest photographic exhibition of local industry and to babble out a balloon of crap on how the spirit of free enterprise is apparently booming across the country. A small group of protesters turned up to chant him down and confront him over cuts in dole and the proposed workfare schemes. This turned into a running shouting battle between Fowler and his special branch filth and the protesters. We managed to get right up to him all the time as he was bundled away as quickly as possible from the extremely embarrassing and uncomfortable position he had found himself in.

As he got safely to his car the police then grabbed one demonstrator who was arrested despite a violent dearrest attempt. The man was punched in the face and had his nose burst and was held in what amounted to an extremely brutal and unnecessary stranglehold.

The other people involved immediately went down to the station where he was being held and the SWP members present began selling papers there. After inquiries proved futile the demonstrators went down to the Bolton business



centre where Fowler was next to be seen on his brief whistle stop tour of Bolton's embryonic capital boom. On arrival we were separated from the building by police whose numbers had swelled to 30 or more. Two more arrests were made after people had refused to move. One woman there, who was heavily pregnant, was also grabbed but later let go as it's obvious bad press to arrest a 6 month pregnant woman for doing little but holding on to someone who is getting dragged away.

Fowler then appeared, was abused by those left, and promptly disappeared. The 3 arrested are in court in June charged with obstruction under the Public Order Act. Benefit gigs are being organised to cover for them.

NO OZONE ZONE?

THE OZONE LAYER screens the Earth from the harmful effects of the Sun's ultraviolet radiation. Without it there would be no life on Earth. Although present in very small concentrations, it is most abundant in that part of the atmosphere called the stratosphere. This is situated between 15 and 50 kilometres above us. Ozone is destroyed by a number of chemicals which react with it. Nitrous oxide and methane can destroy ozone, but the major damage has been done by the manufacture and release of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's). Global concentrations of ozone in the stratosphere have declined by approximately 5% between 1979 and 1986 according to measurements made by instruments on the satellite Nimbus 7.

In the early 1970's, three quarters of CFC's were in aerosol sprays. CFC's provided the propellant for these sprays. Now, the major uses of CFC's in "foam blowing" for the manufacture of takeaway cartons, fire fighting equipment and cavity insulation in cavity walls. One type of CFC is widely used in refrigerators as a coolant and in air conditioning systems. An agreement to reduce CFC's was made at the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer in March 1985. By a series of stages the worldwide consumption of CFC's is to be reduced by 50%. A 50% cut in the world's consumption of CFC's won't be enough to save the ozone layer. As the agreement stands there will be an increase CFC in the stratosphere to about 3 times the present level by 2020 - or to 10 times the amount before CFC's became widespread.



ACTION AGAINST FASCISTS



The "master" race at Leeds Town Hall

ON ST GEORGE'S DAY, Saturday, April 23rd, despite a Home Office and local government ban, the National Front Support Group held an illegal march and rally in Leeds. They did this with the full support and protection of West Yorkshire Police.

CRIMINAL INACTION

Despite Leeds being considered a fascist "stronghold" it probably has less than 30 organised Nazis. However, the criminal inaction of the Leeds left, notably the SWP, has allowed them to build a strong periphery, particularly at Elland Road, home of Leeds United. Leeds Anti-Fascist Action has leafletted Elland Road in opposition to the nazi paper sales with the dual effect supporting Leeds United's vast number of anti-racist fans and of embarrassing the Directors of United into acting against the NF. Their excellent report "Terror on the Terraces" is available from Leeds AFA (Box AFA, 52 Call Lane, Leeds - price £1 + postage).

AFA planned one last leaflet of the season on the 23rd, convinced that the fascists were planning something big. Only days before, in a routine meeting with AFA, a Leeds police chief accidentally let it slip that the NF Support Group had asked for permission to march through Leeds nearly a month before. This was denied and was banned by the Home Office under the Public Order Act. On the Thursday evening AFA got wind that the march was a national mobilisation. Assurances were gained from the police that there would be no march and from the local authority that there would be no rally. Both were worthless. On the Saturday, around 150 NF members complete with flags, banners and drum band, and outnumbering the anti-fascist presence, marched through Leeds hurling racial abuse. They held a rally on the town hall steps and were then escorted by police to a pre-arranged meeting in a local hotel.

The main question is why the fascists were not arrested as the march was illegal under the Public Order Act. The police claim that there was no march, just that small groups of fascists walked along the pavement. On-lookers disagree but the police have refused to show videos, which prove a march took place, to members of the police committee. They claim that the committee is sympathetic to AFA. It is clear from this and many other incidents that, in practice, the West Yorkshire police support the NF.

PATHETIC

Despite the march taking place it was encouraging that in a "stronghold" and on a national mobilisation the NF Support Group (the largest fascist group) could only manage a pathetic 150 people. It shows how low their support is. The well-attended AFA demo in London on the same day forced the NF to go to Leeds. They just can't mobilise in London any more. Fascism is not a major problem in Britain today but we must make sure it never is. The next major "set piece" meeting is likely to be the annual BNP Remembrance Day march in York.

IN NORWICH on April the 16th, the fascist British National Party attempted to gain respectability for their candidate in the local council elections. They were able to hold a public meeting in a school in South Norwich under the Representation of the People Act 1984 because they are a "bonafide" political organisation. (What degenerate decided that?)

It was a public meeting only in the sense that the counter demonstration drew people from all walks of life including a sizeable DAM contingent. The actual participants in the meeting were all invited and escorted into the school under police protection. The action started as the fascists tried to leave. John Tyndall, BNP Fuhrer, got bricks through the windscreen and back window of his Citroen as he tried to screech off with one tyre flat. A car and transit van belonging to the fascists came under a hail of stones, receiving instant ventilation - the reptilian occupants looked shaken to say the least. April 16th was a fine example of "Rock" against Racism.

THOUSANDS of London civil servants took strike action on Thursday May 26th to demand the sacking of DHSS worker, Malcolm Skeggs, a member of the British National Party, who once stood as a National Front parliamentary candidate. He had been working in the Hither Green DHSS office.

Skeggs shot to fame while working for Lewisham council as a librarian in 1986. He was sacked for photocopying BNP newsletters on council property. NUPE defended him at an industrial tribunal where he was awarded £14,000 for unfair dismissal. It was assumed he'd never again work in the public sector. Working in the DHSS he has access to addresses of Black and Asian people claiming benefits, and can pass them on to his fellow thugs. He also has the power to delay their claims.

DHSS workers in Tottenham supported the campaign to sack Skeggs, but then realised that regular contributor to "The Flag" Paul Nash worked in their own office. Nash, a member of the NF Support Group, had worked there for 9 years while a Trot shop steward who knew about him had done nothing about it. So now they have decided to try and get him sacked too.

We believe the campaign to get management to sack Skeggs is wrong. It will give them a blank cheque to sack people because of their political views and it won't be fascists who get the boot first. The best policy is for the workers at Skeggs' office to take the matter into their own hands and make it impossible for him to work there.

Technicians' Troops Out Call

THE MEDIA UNION, ACTT passed a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland at its 54th annual conference in April.

It was the first time since the troops were sent in in force, almost 20 years ago, that the union has taken such a position, and almost the same length of time since they last discussed it. It came as a surprise to most activists, but was passed comfortably with no need for a count, after a show of hands.

Coming shortly after the violent events in Gibraltar, Milltown Cemetary and Andersonstown, the delegates were obviously impressed by arguments that the violence of the last 20 years will continue so long as the island of Ireland is divided and the sectarian statelet of Northern Ireland remains propped up by the British state.

Opposition ranged from the threat of a "civil war" if the troops were withdrawn, to not wanting to join the "medieval" south of Ireland, to a comparison of the Provos to the Nazis, to a concern about camera crews being attacked by loyalists if the motion was passed. Each of these were dealt with and the delegates were more persuaded by the arguments for withdrawal.



The issues covered by the movers of the motion included the creation of two artificial states where in one case the Catholic church had a monopoly and in the other the Protestant churches; the division of the working class north and south as well as within the north itself; discrimination and the inadequate response from the northern Irish unions; the moves within the British unions to campaign for withdrawal; censorship and racist stereotyping in the media; imperialism, sectarianism and the roots of violence; and the need for a stronger withdrawal movement.

The need for self-determination for Irish people was compared to the union's already existing important support for self-determination for Palestinians, Nicaraguans, and South Africans.

It is expected that within General Council, a unique union structure where all shop stewards meet every six weeks, opposition will again surface, but it is hoped that enough support exists for work to carry on throughout the year to increase awareness and to campaign both within the union, and with other like-minded unions, to increase the pressure on the British government for withdrawal.

ACCORDING TO RECENT research an artificial sweetner "asparatame" widely used in food and drink can cause people to become severely confused. The sweetner may also contribute to the development of Alzheimer's disease. The sweetner is manufactured by Monsanto, and in the USA is sold under the name of "Nutrasweet". The chemical accounts for 10% of the company's sales. Asparatame is 200 times sweeter than sugar. H J Roberts, director of the Palm Beach Institute for Medical Research in Florida, has studied the effects of Asparatame. Severe problems were reported in 28.5% of people studied. One third suffered from severe dizziness, and half from incapacitating headaches. Eleven persons suffered temporary loss of vision. Roberts reports that asparatame has "bizarre" and "bothersome" effects on people. An 18 year old male who drank 2 litres of soft drink a day with asparatame in it could not find his way home in his own locality! There is evidence that other food additives can effect brain chemistry, and cause disorders of perception, thought and behaviour. Be careful what you eat - capitalism can damage your mind!

DIRTY BUSINESS is going on in the East End at the London Hospital. The strike committee, organised during the recent NHS dispute, is being victimised both by management and the Tower Hamlets NUPE (Health) branch officials. They did grand work publishing leaflets for the one-day strikes but management have now presented an extortionate £1,369 bill for photocopying. The NUPE hierarchy, who control the shop steward's committee, never even queried the huge bill, let alone stood by the strike committee. Instead their lackies in the steward's committee voted to hand over the names of each strike committee member to the management to be billed individually. As a result, some now have their jobs at risk. NUPE branch officials are also using the affair to create ill-feeling between nurses, domestics and porters. With a union like that who needs enemies?

Occupational Therapy

Have you ever considered how many vital services are provided by public libraries? If not, you probably take them for granted, so think about it while there are still some left. The government's Green Paper on libraries' funding, derived from the Adam Smith Institute's paper "Ex Libris" - "From Books" (they certainly didn't get it from going to libraries) - is the ideological basis for an attack on libraries as a community service.

Your caring sharing Tories have determined that libraries are used by the middle classes to borrow pulp fiction, which is all they want you to read. They also reckon that there's no need for mass literacy in the kind of labour market they are creating, and Clause 28 of the Local Government Act indicates how they want to limit access to anything challenging their ideological drive. I mean, can you think of an idea more vulnerable to attack than self-determination of an individual's sexuality.

Apart from basic(?) reference services they reckon the rest is a luxury, so its' OK to charge for Audio-Visual materials; most periodicals and reference materials; Information and Enquiry work; and put them out for tender. Development of Business Information services is already happening or being planned, as part of income generation schemes, and what is profitable will get tendered for by private contractors - the rest will suffer. The "Organ of the Book Trade" has already welcomed the demise of Information services, seeing it as a fetish of public librarians that diverts funds from their own products.

CLASS HATRED

Equally-warped thinking is ruling the minds of Hackney Council's Labour leadership, but then I always say that whatever their politics are, class hatred will out. Tommy Sheppard, Chair of Leisure Services, is apparently under the impression that working people, especially those of us who belong to an ethnic minority or are black , don't use libraries. Who's to blame for this? - you've guessed it, working people ourselves. It is alleged that library use in Hackney is lower than elsewhere because workers are out-dated and inflexible, and that there are people "without a cultural background of library use".

Now, I can count middle class borrowers at my library on my fingers, and in the Caribbean, for example, education and library services are often better-used and maintained than in Britain. Library workers in Hackney are overwhelmingly working class and local. We also work bloody hard to try and provide a service to meet the needs of the whole community. We have to cope with inadequate staffing; frequent closures due to a high vacancy rate; lack of resources like new books; lack of publicity or thanks for the services we provide; lack of support services; and of course, a history of incompetent management.

PREJUDICES

The management is exclusively white, middle class, and does not live in Inner London. So their solution is to cut services and jazz them up a bit. Under-use is the justification for the cuts, though the reason for under-use has never been examined. The reasons given are merely the prejudices and assumptions of management and councillors. They proposed to cut 4 branch libraries; 2 out of the 3 reference libraries; and the Schools' Project Loan Service. Their closure on March 12th would have hit four working class communities; knackered reference services for 2 thirds of Hackney's people; and sabotaged the only effective library service to Hackney's schools.

When the council finally decided the cuts in December it had a galvanising effect on union organisation which, spread over 17 sites, is not usually capable of a swift response. Activists got backing for an action committee to start leafletting and petitioning against the closures, more to build support for action than in any belief that such methods would work. Inspired by Haringey workers' success in saving 4 branches by a 24-hour occupation, and the reprieve of one of ours due to public outrage, we built up support for an indefinite occupation of the 3 branches to be cut.

After a partially successful half-day walk-out and lobby of the borough conference, and a deputation to the special council meeting to set the rate, the time came for action. On the 11th of March we walked out in the afternoon again, and established a round-the-clock occupation to beat the closures due the next day. The locks of the 3 branches were changed by NALGO members from another directorate, and a series of cultural events and public meetings were held in the buildings to build up wider support and publicity. Leafletting of nearby estates was done regularly and after 5 weeks people were beginning to accept that the libraries would stay open.

At first management only issued threats and got 2 of the 3 phones cut off, and seemed to be hoping to let us go away without too much adverse publicity. However, it soon became very much a no-win situation and although up to half the frontline workers in libraries were involved, support was largely passive. Striking was not an option for us as it would have meant closing down other branches to keep these 3 open. We had to play a supporting role to local residents running the libraries and were somewhat overburdened in trying to conduct a dispute while still working our normal jobs.

LAUGHABLE

Not only were we unable to put in the time and effort strikers can in order to raise support, but our union branch failed conspicuously. With over 3,000 members administration is difficult, but we have 4 full-time officers and a string of others. There was little done to raise support, only laughable "mass" stewards' meetings (2 trots with party line, and 1 genuine supporter at the last one), though it is full-time leaderships, not particular individuals which are redundant. The real work could only have been done by us going direct to other workers for aid. With us over-burdened it showed up just how useless the full-timers were. The vertical structure of the branch means there aren't the good, well-used links between departments necessary for any effective solidarity. Established unions like Hackney NALGO are geared to negotiation, not action.

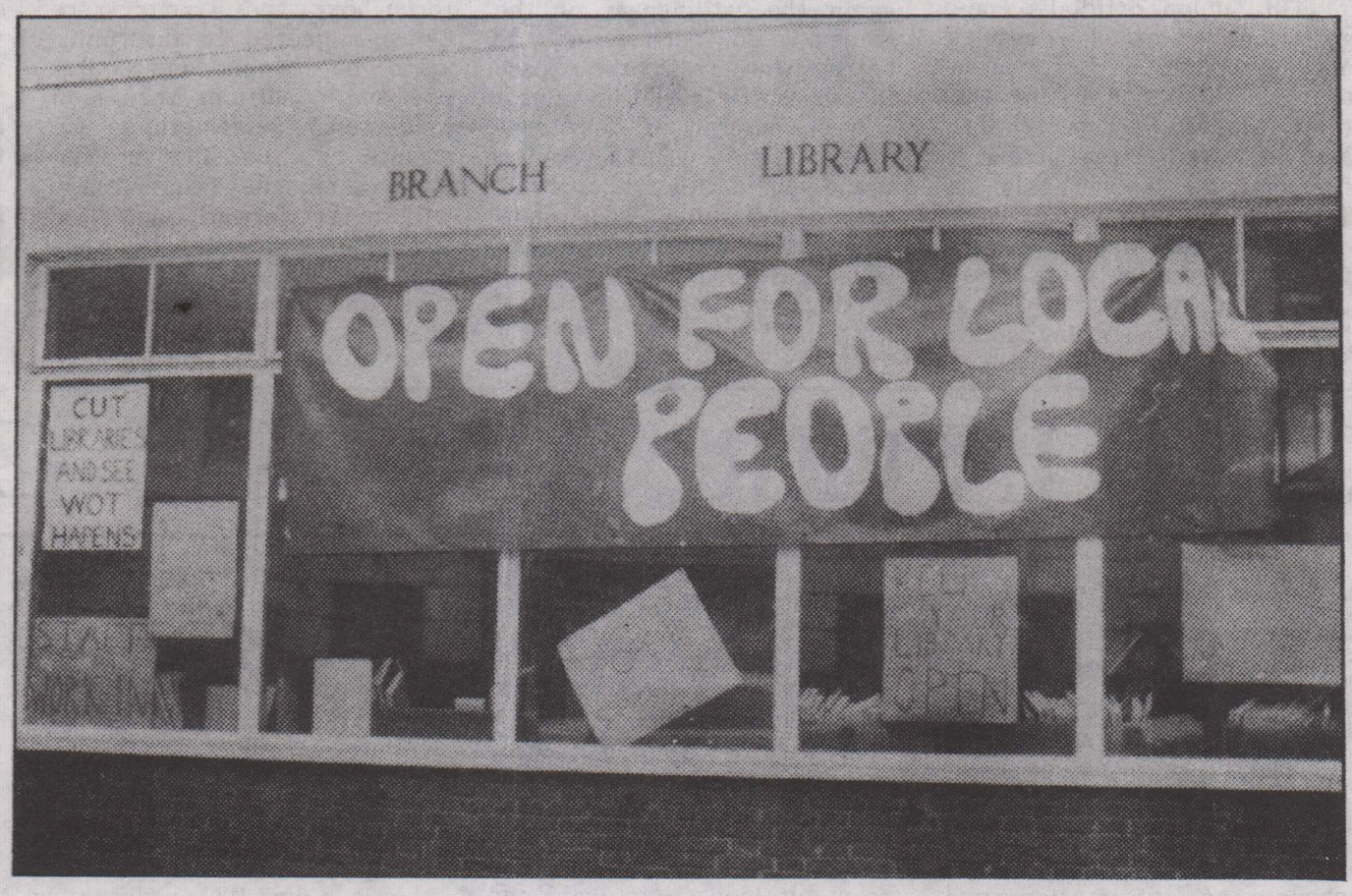
DLO (Direct Labour Organisation) building workers and NUPE manual workers in our department did nothing to undermine our action, like boarding up the 3 libraries. Low morale, poor organisation, "professionalism", etc, hampered solidarity from other library workers. We tried to raise the profile of the dispute in our department and outside, by showing how much we'd achieved, and by putting pressure on the council by making it impossible for them to ignore us. We also discussed how to escalate and win the dispute, though we've probably stopped any further cuts in the department just by showing resistance.

SACRIFICE

In the long term all our problems, and the cuts, boil down to exploitative management, which is a feature of state-run industries and services as much as private ones. As well as building their salaries by adding "responsibilities" and creating more tiers of management to raise their status, public service managers want to add things to their CV's to get even better-paid jobs. This means sacrificing existing services to fund what amounts to a flashier, worse-equipped version of the same service, which has a different name to go on the CV. Services are there not for people, but to fund bureaucrats' empires.

Politicians also exploit services for their own ends, the only real solution is to dump the lot, and the only adequate service will be a self-managed one, controlled by the workers who run and use it. But with all the will in the world there'll only be a revolution when we've organised properly to make one, and neither trades unions or political parties are instruments of class warfare. We need the unionism we call anarcho-syndicalism, the self-educating and self-managed, fighting organisation of our class. Direct Action readers who work in local government, education or related sectors, and who want to get in contact with like-minded workers should contact:

Local Authority Workers' Network, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1
or
PO Box 96, Doncaster.



Decided on Penalties

On Sunday 15th May "victory" was won by the library occupation at the Labour Party's "Annual" Borough conference (the 4th in 12 months) when delegates voted 74 to 66 to restore all 6 library services it previously decided to close. The restoration was to be funded by scrapping the "Strengthening the Centre" package, which basically involved hiring even more overpaid mandarins to control the lesser bureaucrats.

However the conference was adjourned by the leadership at this point and re-convened on Thursday 19th. In the interim period massive pressure and intimidation was put on delegates by the leadership. On the night an unconstitutional motion was submitted that the previous decision be rescinded on the grounds that it clashed with a previously passed resolution in favour of a balanced budget. This lie was backed up by a letter from the Director of Finance and the council leader claiming restoration would lead to a £260,000 shortfall. Restoration was rescinded by 98 votes to 50 - rather like being 6-0 up at full time, and the referee ruling that the match will be decided on penalties!

SUPPRESSION

With the NUPE and UCATT branch delegates all voting for cuts it must be obvious that the Labour Party and its affiliated unions bear heavy responsibility for the suppression of working class solidarity and strength of reactionary ideas. We claim a moral victory and though our occupation has no achievable objective left, and will probably collapse, we fight on.

Watch Out Burton's

In April, Tricia Jennings, the worker who was sacked by Burtons for being pregnant, received, at extremely short notice, a date for her industrial tribunal. An appeal was made for an adjournment since the date which had been set (22nd April) was less then three weeks before Tricia's baby was due. This appeal was upheld but no new date has yet been set. Incidentally, when we approached Burtons' to join in our appeal for an adjournment because of Tricia's medical condition, they said they would only do so if the pickets were called off - we should have remembered you never let people stand in the way of profits.

In her campaign for reinstatement Tricia has not only been fighting against the Burtons' bosses but also against the officials of the trade union which is supposed to represent Burtons' employees (USDAW). Tricia is not a member of USDAW - when she started work she got the impression from other workers that it was not worth joining the union until she had been there 6 months - and so, when she was sacked in November last year, she went to the Citizens' Rights office rather than the union for help and they provided her with a legel representative.

In January this year the Tricia Jennings Defence Committee was set up to highlight Tricia's case and to put pressure on Burtons' by picketting their shops. However, in early February, the local USDAW area official asked us to call off a picket because he said he was negotiating with the management to get Tricia's job back. We agreed at the time but later found out that this official was acting without full knowledge of the case and, more importantly, without ever having consulted Tricia about it (he did not know if Tricia was a union member or not; he did not even know her address).

BETRAYAL

This union official's "negotiations" bore no results and, although a letter was sent to the union asking for their support, no reply was ever received. Apart from a five minute phone call to Tricia's husband, in which more interest was expressed in getting the pickets called off than in getting Tricia her job back, nothing more was heard from the union until 31st March. On this date, the same USDAW official sent out a letter to all his members in which he stated: "USDAW disassociates itself from the Tricia Jennings Defence Committee and instructs all Burtons group employees to cross any unofficial picket line associated with Tricia Jennings." This betrayal of the basic principle of unionism is made all the more disgusting by the USDAW slogan which heads this letter - "UNITY IS STRENGTH".

Since sending out this letter, the official has said he will "see what her can do" for Tricia if the pickets are called off. She is not very impressed by this offer and is determined to keep the pressure on Burtons by having pickets of their shops as often and in as many places, as possible.

COSY RELATIONSHIP

The reaction of USDAW officials to Tricia's sacking and her decision to fight back in the most effective way possible shows up once again the willingness of the trade union bureaucracy to betray workers if their case is not sufficiently high profile or assured of easy success. Trade union officials would much rather keep their cosy relationship with management than risk it for one woman. However, they are forgetting two important things: firstly, Tricia is not just "one woman" - women workers throughout the country are being subjected to discrimination, harassment and poorer pay and conditions than men (and this is something we should be stressing in the campaign so that other women will come forward and join Tricia) - and secondly, they have forgotten the meaning of trade unionism, "an injury to one is an injury to all".

KATHY CURL, an office supervisor for Air UK at Norwich Airport, asked for 6 weeks leave to have a baby. Her employers refused and said that she had resigned by taking time off to give birth to her child. She went to an industrial tribunal and was awarded £3,000 compensation for unfair discrimination.

Watch out, Burtons!

—INSULTS...!—



"The Arms Trade: the Macabre, Filthy and Corrupt Business of the Power Elites"

THIRTY PORTUGUESE people, mainly anarchists, face imprisonment and heavy fines after exercising their right to protest at the "Defence '87" arms fair in Lisbon on September 15th last year. The same date, incidentally, was the UN World Day of Peace. Seeing the inherent contradiction and hypocrisy in the system, the 30 comrades decided to do something about it but were immediately told to move on under the threat of violence from the police and security forces. Shortly after moving to an area specially designated for the demonstration, they were surrounded by the police and forcibly moved to a local police station for "identification" which just happened to last five hours. Charges of "demonstrating illegally" and "insults to the armed forces of the state" were initially dropped due to insufficient evidence. However, the thirty have still not been cleared as the Portuguese police are still seeking "proof of the crime".

WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL GROWS

The 18th Congress of the International Workers Association was held in Bordeaux during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of April. The Direct Action Movement sent a delegation of 14 members who were accompanied by a number of observers and they were pleased to see that all the sections of the IWA were well represented at the Congress.

The Congress itself was a well-organised affair, being held in a flash hall. The provision by the German comrades of high-tech translation equipment meant that for the first time the Congress could proceed with simultaneous translation. The two hour French meal breaks were well-appreciated by all, especially when the work of the Congress meant comrades staying up to 2 or 3 in the morning.

The work of the Congress covered many things ranging from the organisation of the IWA; the relationship of the IWA to various organisations internationally; support for international campaigns such as the case of Omori a Japanese comrade on death row; and a day of action in support of the rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. The discussions on such topics as the flexibilisation of working hours and conditions; ecological matters; militarism; and the position of women were inconclusive as it was felt that further exchange of information and ideas was needed rather than the production of "right-on" slogans.

For those of us attending the Congress the most interesting aspects were the reports from the various sections and how internationally our struggles and strategies are taking similar paths, whether they are in Europe, the Far East or Latin America. The Congress heard reports and letters of support from Ireland, Portugal and the Polish Solidarity underground as well as the International of Anarchist Federations. The resurgence of anarcho-syndicalism on an international level was proved by the acceptance of two new sections to the IWA - the COB from Brazil and the ASF from Australia.

One of the most important things to come out of the Congress was the fact that this is a new IWA maintaining the principles of anarcho-syndicalism, inspired by the past, not rooted in it, but developing and growing out of present situations. The coming together of the "old" and continuous sections such as the FORA in Argentina and the CNT in Spain with the new sections such as the DAM and the COB from Brazil provides a good mixture for education and inspiration that isn't stifled by inexperience or tradition.



After the IWA congress the DAM was lucky enough to take part in a Europe-wide speaking tour by Leonardo Morelli, the present secretary of the COB from Brazil, who is presently sacked from his job as a railway worker and is awaiting trial for his part in organising a rail strike. The DAM was able to organise four meetings in London, Bristol, Liverpool and Sheffield in the time Leonardo was with us, all of which were successful as well as educational. Besides the four meetings there was a picket of the Brazilian embassy in London in support of Leonardo and his fellow workers who are awaiting trial. Leonardo was also able to give an interview with the Brazilian section of the BBC World Service about his case and the corruption concerning aid meant to go to people suffering from the recent mudslides in Rio de Janeiro.

Polish Workers Fight On

The recent wave of strikes, sit-ins and protests across Poland in response to government-imposed price rises and wage cuts marks not only the resurgence of Solidarnosc but the coming to the fore of a new, younger generation of militants less willing to compromise with the authorities than the old guard gathered around the fading Lech Walesa.

The nationwide strike wave which was sparked off by the occupation at the traditionally militant Nova Huta steel complex, south of Krakow, had been building steadily since the imposition of massive price rises - up to 40% for basic goods - in the early months of this year. By the end of April thousands of workers in many of Poland's key industries - coal, steel, transport and shipyards - were out in sympathy with the Nova Huta strikers in what was the biggest demonstration of working class strength in Poland since 1981. In the militant mining areas of Silesia pressure from the Solidarnosc underground was so great that the new official unions, which replaced the more obviously corrupt state unions, were forced to declare a "collective dispute with the government over pay" in a wasted attempt at saving face and retaining influence in the mines.

However, unlike 1980, when the largely spontaneous wave of strikes took the government by surprise and indeed was used by the "reformist" tendency within the Polish Communist Party to unseat the controlling "stalinists", the recent strike wave has met with brutal repression. Television viewers across the world watched scenes reminiscent of Belfast or the miners' strike as police and troops using tear gas smashed their way, in an "order-restoring operation", into the Nova Huta plant lashing out at the strikers with truncheons and batons. Similar scenes were witnessed at many of the unofficial May Day demonstrations called by Solidarnosc across the country where plain clothes police attacked the crowds.

By the second week of May the stage was set for a bloody end to the mass occupation of the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, seen by many as the birthplace of Solidarnosc, as time and again the riot police, in a sadistic demonstration of psychological warfare made practice attack runs up to the shipyard gates in an attempt to terrorise the workers into submission. Perhaps the key factor in the peaceful and bloodless end to the Gdansk occupation was the fact that Lech Walesa, as an international figure and Nobel peace prize winner, remains largely immune from a Polish government keen to keep favour - and thus loans - with the West. If the shipyard had been attacked, with Walesa inside it, it's likely that Poland would find it difficult to gain further loans. Therefore the Gdansk occupation ended peacefully along with another chapter in Solidarnosc's history.

LITTLE INFLUENCE

But what of Walesa? His role in the recent strike wave was almost purely as a media figure - which, of course, had its uses in the final defence of the Gdansk shipyard. His political comments, apart from the wild "bloody revolution" rhetoric, were confined to berating the strikes for being "spontaneous" and "premature". It must be said that Walesa these days cuts a lonely and confused figure with little influence at the activist heart of the underground. One sign of Walesa's declining influence among the activists was his absence "on sick leave" from the shipyard at the start of the occupation. He was, he said, "needed to co-ordinate strikes elsewhere". This is indeed debatable as the underground has enough experience and organisation to co-ordinate a nationwide strike without the help of outside leaders. Later, in a contradictory statement, Walesa said: "The strike caught me when I was on sick leave with lumbago". This is unlikely - he would have known when the strike was due to start. Perhaps closer to the truth is the possibility that Walesa, defeated in some kind of power struggle within the shipyard Solidarnosc committee over the timing of the strike, turned to "sick leave" as some kind of face-saving device. This makes his talk of "spontaneity", which he knew to be false, all the more hollow.

Walesa's demise is a sign of the growing militancy of the Solidarnosc underground. The wait-and-see policies of the old guard have only led to Jaruzelski who came to power in the bloody December 1981 coup. Past articles in Direct Action on the Polish resistance have shown how sections of the underground have moved towards a near-syndicalist position, re-discovering the traditions of the syndicalist ZZZ, active in Poland before the second world war and, in a clandestine form, in the wartime resistance. There is no better sign of the increasing relevance of anarcho-syndicalism to Polish workers than the letter (printed below) addressed to the anarcho-syndicalist international, the International Workers' Association, at its recent Congress in Bordeaux. The letter from the Lower Silesian region of Solidarnosc, an area which suffered brutally for its militant opposition to Jaruzelski, is a sign that Solidarnosc is far from dead.



Polish Police Attack May Day March

ADDRESS TO THE IWA

In the name of the Lower Silesia region of Solidarnosc, I send cordial greetings to your Congress.

For eight years we have fought in our country, first as a legal union and since December 1981, underground, for the same ideas as you: solidarity, justice, liberty and self-management.

Precisely, for us as for you, syndicalism and self-management are the principal methods of workers' emancipation. We have expressed it clearly and neatly in the Solidarnosc programme adopted democratically at our 1981 Congress.

Our union has solid origins, the double tradition of Polish and world syndicalism. Let us recall the ZZZ, a union which the second world war prevented entering the IWA in 1939. Let us recall the struggle, that for 65 years your organisation has waged against injustice, terror and the persecution of individuals or social groups. We are certain you will continue your struggle and support you with all our hearts.

Similarly we hope you will continue to support Solidarnosc and its struggle.

We don't believe the Iron Curtain can divide us. No, it can only reinforce our co-operation and international solidarity. I am convinced I am expressing the feeling of all members of Solidarnosc in telling you:

Long live international workers' solidarity!

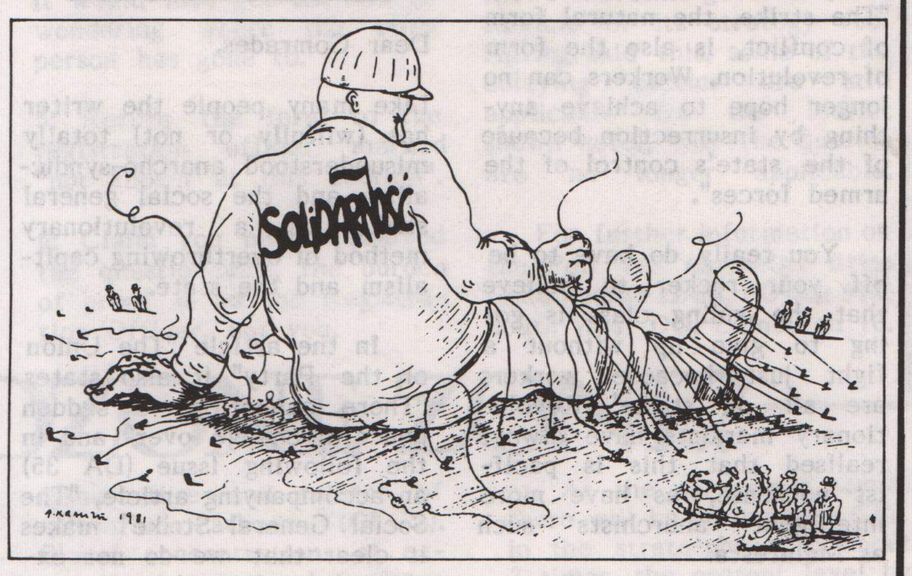
Long live the IWA!

Long live Solidarnosc!

Terror, injustice and dictatorship - no pasaran!

On behalf of the Lower Silesian region of Solidarnosc,

Wladyslaw Frasiniuk. (Member of Solidarnosc national committee; representative of the regional committee, Lower Silesian Solidarnosc).



March Against Le Pen

MORE THAN 2,000 people answered a call from the French Anarchist Federation and took part in a May Day demonstration against "LePenism" and the electoral games that favour it. The success of the demonstration was certainly not due to the media, which didn't announce it the day before. It wasn't even reported on television, unlike the pitiful demo organised by Force Ouvrier the previous night.



This didn't stop the libertarians from showing themselves - from the leading banner ("The voting booths are impotent before the extreme right") to the slogans shouted along the march ("Le Pen or Pasqua, the same fight"; "Chirac or Mitterand, we lose"; etc). Others called for active solidarity with immigrant workers and with the Kanaks fighting colonialism in New Caledonia. There were also, of course, banners and slogans against capitalist exploitation and the use of the economic crisis for anti-working class ends.

At the end of the march, the participants were invited to meet again in the afternoon at a big demonstration organised by the whole of the French left. This call was also answered and about 1,000 comrades met up at 2pm and took part in the day's second demonstration. However, Le Pen cannot be defeated by demonstrations alone. It is with day to day activity in the street, unions, associations, workplaces and schools that Le Pen and the cops can be isolated and defeated.

Source: Le Monde Libertaire

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

ANIMAL RIGHTS

Dear Comrades,

I think it only right that any reply to criticism of an article in DA be written by whoever wrote the article in question. Members of the editorial group should not abuse their position - they can write letters in reply like the rest of us! I'm saying this particularly because I don't agree with elements of PH's reply to the letters concerning my review about animal liberation (in DA 48).

Against the protests of those comrades who have written in, I maintain that the fight for animal liberation is a "side-issue" as far as the revolutionary destruction of State and Capitalism and the creation of a libertarian communist society is concerned. John's equalisation of animal rights with other "single issues" like women's rights or the rights of racial minorities is mistaken. The overcoming of sexual and racial prejudice is vital to the revolutionary process since the sort of revolution we are talking about is a mass affair, necessarily involving working class women, blacks, gays, etc. Animals will not be with us on the barricades! Moreover, our revolution is not about the granting of "rights" but the taking of them - and animals can only be granted them.

I, personally, am disgusted by the exploitation and torture of animals. This exploitation is symptomatic of a society based upon the profit motive and a morality of exploitation (of other people, of animals and nature itself). I believe that an anarchist society which has removed the profit motive and the alienated, amoral individual that capitalism tends to create, will lead, to a greater or lesser extent to the liberation of animals.

For me, the veganism of a minority of young working class people has a positive moral aspect which is intrinsically anti-capitalist. Unlike PH, I, although I don't agree with it, wasn't arguing against the personal philosophy that "all living creatures on this planet have an equal right to live out their natural lives". The DAM is an organisation with a particular aim: the liberation of our class through the destruction of Capitalism and the creation of a truly human community of free individuals. We have no "party line" on animal liberation. Unlike the Marxists, an anarcho-syndicalist organisation has no intention of policing the personal philosophy of its members or of other libertarian revolutionaries. It's not a question of being for or against animal liberation but rather of seriously considering how to move towards an anarchist society, which is not a utopian pipe-dream but an urgent necessity.

Finally, on the Health Service, PH dismisses John's concerns too easily. As a healthworker I am accutely aware that there are great contradictions in fighting for the present NHS. Yes, we need the services it provides, but the NHS is a State institution which does not have the maintenance of the "autonomous health care of the individual and the community" at heart. In essence, its basis is the maintenance of a working class that is fit to be exploited by capitalism. I would say to John that we must take part in the struggle around the Health Service but that is not because we support the Welfare State or think the the NHS is wonderful, but because the starting point for Anarcho-syndicalists is reality. However, it is only our starting point - we want a different reality!

In solidarity, P Connell.

(This letter rounds off, for the time being, the debate on animal rights that has been carried on the last few issues of DA.)

Dear Comrades,

With the introduction of the Public Order Act, the likelihood of arrest on demos, etc is growing ever greater, as you know. So we feel that it is vital for a list of "good" solicitors throughout the country to be compiled. What we want is for all groups to send us information on solicitors that they know to be reliable, with, where possible, details of cases they have been involved with. We appreciate the fact that such solicitors are thin on the ground but that is precisely the reason why this list should be made.

Once the list is compiled it will be sent to all anarchist contacts.

In solidarity,

Blackberry Anarchists,
(c/o Palm Tree Box,
Sheffield Peace Shop,
5-7 Exchange Place,
Sheffield 1.)

Anarcho-Syndicalism

Dear DA,

Your review of Rudolf Rocker's book in DA 47 revealed the central weakness of anarcho-syndicalism - the dogma of the "social general strike". You approvingly quoted Rocker's statement that "For the workers the general strike takes the place of the barricades of the political uprising". Similarly in an article "The Union Or The Party?" (DA 34) you stated: "The strike, the natural form of conflict, is also the form of revolution. Workers can no longer hope to achieve anything by insurrection because of the state's control of the armed forces".

You really do have to be off your rocker to believe that the ruling class is going to give up without a fight just because workers are all on strike! Revolutionary marxists have always realised that this is pacifist nonsense, as have more intelligent anarchists such as Malatesta:

"The general strike as it is foretold to us is a pure utopia. Either the worker, dying with hunger after three days of striking, will go back with bowed head to the workshop, and we can chalk up yet another defeat. Or he will seek to take over production by main force. Who will he find waiting to stop him? Soldiers, policemen, apart from the bourgeois themselves, and then the matter cannot help resolving into shooting and bombs. It will be insurrection, and victory will be to the strongest." (quoted in George Woodcock's "Anarchist Reader")

In Spain 1936 workers in the CNT had control of the factories, but they left the capitalist state intact with some CNT leaders even joining the bourgeois government. The result was counter-revolution and bloody defeat. If anarcho-syndicalist ideas ever gain mass acceptance again it will be equally disastrous for the working class.

Obviously there's no question of a revolution without a mass strike but this in itself is insufficient. The state must be consciously smashed by a working class insurrection.

Yours, MC.

Dear Comrades,

Like many people the writer has (wilfully or not) totally misunderstood anarcho-syndicalism and the social general strike as a revolutionary method of overthrowing capitalism and the state.

In the article "The Union or the Party" it also states "There cannot be a sudden peaceful change over" and in the following issue (DA 35) an accompanying article, "The Social General Strike" makes it clear that we do not expect the ruling class to give up without a fight, and talks of the need to form workers' militias because "bitter experience shows that the state will respond to major strikes with forceful (armed if necessary) intervention...Capitalism will not passively surrender. The working class would be met by a declaration of war".

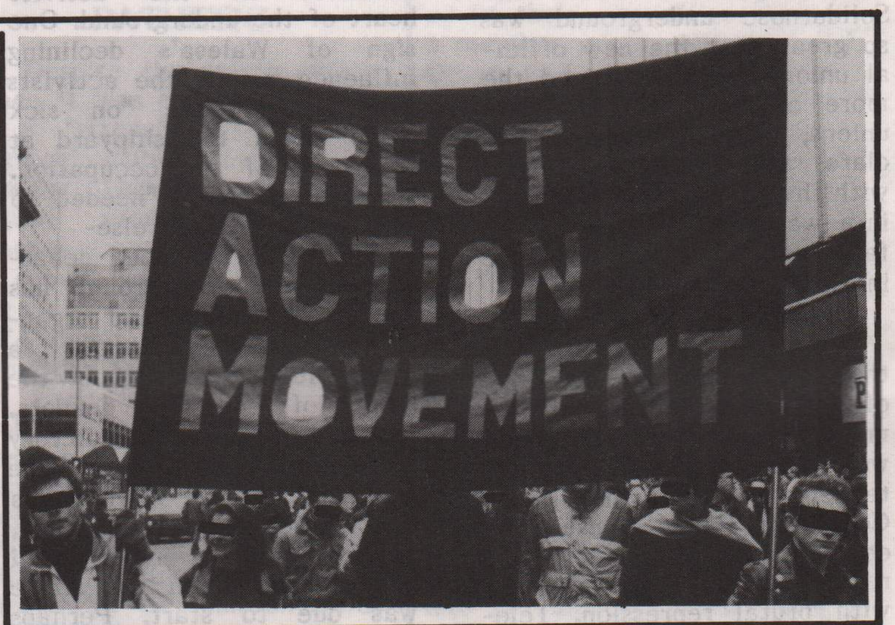
Anarcho-syndicalist unions are both economic and political fighting organisations of the working class. They break down the imaginary division, created by capitalism (and upheld by some marxists) between economic and political issues and imbue the day to day struggle between the working class and capitalism with a wider meaning.

Malatesta was, and is, a well-respected anarchist agitator and militant. The quote used comes from the debate at the 1908 anarchist congress in Amsterdam on syndicalism. At this time Malatesta, along with many other anarchists, misunderstood the nature of the Social General Strike. Later he was to modify his views and came to share platforms with British anarcho-syndicalists and congratulate them on their achievements. He also was to write in 1922: "Today the most powerful force for social transformation is the trade union movement and on its intentions depends to a large degree the course the events will take and the objectives of any future revolution.

The differences anarcho-syndicalists have with Malatesta and others who wish to see specific political organisations (anarchist or marxist) holding the consciousness of the working class is that we believe that our class has the potential and the unalienable right to emancipate itself. Otherwise the social revolution would be destroyed by a new self-appointed elite.

In Spain 1936, although there were many reasons for the defeat of the revolution (including the actions of marxists), one factor was that the "leading militants" of the CNT-FAI lagged behind the rank and file in awareness of the situation and caused confusion and crucial delays in the re-construction of society.

Revolutionary marxists use the phrase "mass strike" as a coy description of independent working class action that takes place during revolutionary moments. This is because they have always feared the concept of the Social General Strike as envisaged by anarcho-syndicalists. When fully realised there would be no room for self-appointed elites to seize power under the guise of "workers' power" or "dictatorship of the proletariat". It would see the working class taking control of economic and community functions and smashing political power completely. That is why we need the revolutionary union of the working class to be the organisational basis during the re-construction of society.



As one bitter opponent of British syndicalism once said - "while others play at the class war like a child with a toy sword, only the syndicalists have constructed from it the appropriate and logical theory of action".

In solidarity, Steve.

Dear Direct Action,

The article in March's issue of Direct Action "What Is The Environment" contained many worthwhile points but it lacked a basic understanding of ecology.

We are earthlings, for the air we breath, the water we drink and the food we eat are part of natural cycles that depend on the well-being of this green planet. It is not simply a case of gaining control of fixed resources. We have to appreciate that methods of production are killing this planet.

As the article said the environmental movement is dominated by the middle class. Their spineless liberalism stops them supporting those struggling against the capitalist system. However, class struggle is not simply enough. Many of the environmental damaging processes could be continued under an economy controlled by workers.

For instance modern medicine with its hi-tech arrogance of conquering nature with a pill for every ill is failing because it is undermining our immune system by putting alien chemicals into our biological systems. As well as ending poverty most of our present disease could be ended by preventing most of the polluting crap we consume instead of the NHS mentality of throwing drugs at a problem which is actually impairing people's health.

As the article said the battle for the environment is linked to the social well-being of the working class. It must start from where people stand and have some relevance to their life.

Ordinary people can't control their present environment, let alone stopping the massive problem of global pollution. However, we must attempt to understand the processes that cause this. This is my main criticism of the article.

Yours in solidarity, Glen.

ADVERTS

LONDON DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF SACKED P&O SEAFARERS

Wednesday, June 29th.

Assemble 12 noon at Hyde Park corner.

We will march to P&O's Headquarters in Pall Mall and picket. Called by all the London support groups.

P&O STRIKE WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP 1988 DOVER

ANARCHIST HEALTHWORKERS' CONFERENCE

Saturday 2nd July, 11am-4pm (approx).

Leicester Unemployed Workers Centre, 138 Charles Street, Leicester. (above the AA building)

Creche provided.

If you require any accommodation please contact us in advance.

Please send items for the agenda and resolutions to: Leicester Anarchist Healthworkers, c/o 70 High Street, Leicester.



ANARCHIST WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

July 23rd, 1pm to 6pm - £1.

West Indian Centre, Laycock Place, (nr Trades Club), Leeds.

Workshops include:

- Mujeres Libres video; "de Toda la Vida"; anarcho-syndicalist women in the Spanish Civil War.

- Women & work; trade unions; initiating strikes.

- Improvisation; the role of music and theatre in revolution and social change.

- Thatcher's Britain & women.

- How to improve our direct action.

- Space to devise a workshop on the day.

plus creche, food, accommodation, poor access (help available), party on the night, women only.

Contact: Resister, c/o Box DAM, 52 Call Lane, Leeds.

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.

9. The Direct Action Movement is resolved to initiate, encourage and wholeheartedly support the creation of independent workers' unions based on the principles of anarcho-syndicalism.

DAM Contacts

North East

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

Huddersfield ----- PO Box B20, Huddersfield 1.

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

For contacts in Newcastle, Teeside and York write to North East DAM secretary, c/o Leeds DAM.

North West

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

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

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

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

Preston ----- c/o Black Cat Press, 16-18 Lancaster Road, Preston.

For contacts in Crewe and Cumbria write to North West DAM secretary, c/o Burnley DAM.

Scotland

Edinburgh ----- PO Box 516, South West DO, Edinburgh 10.

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

For contacts in Inverness write to Edinburgh DAM.

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 St, Norwich.

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

For contacts in Hertfordshire, Kent, Reading, Salisbury and Southampton write to South East DAM secretary, c/o East London DAM.

Other Groups

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

Leamington Spa ---- c/o Box 123, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

For contacts in Corby, Kettering, Nottingham and Wolverhampton write to Box DAM, c/o Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

Industrial

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

DAM Council Workers --- c/o Doncaster DAM or 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/MSC Workers c/o Manchester DAM and Norwich DAM.

Contacts

Ainriail (anarchist group and journal based in Belfast) ---- c/o Just Books, 7 Winetavern Street, Smithfield, Belfast 1.

ASP (anarchist publishing group) - for catalogues write to ----- BM Hurricane, London WC1N
or
PO Box 96, Doncaster, South Yorks.

Black Flag (anarchist journal) ---- BM Hurricane, London WC1N.

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

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

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

Organise (anarcho-syndicalist group and paper, based in Belfast and Ballymena) --- c/o Just Books, 7 Winetavern St, Smithfield, Belfast 1.

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 (IWA), the anarcho-syndicalist international, which was formed in 1922 and has sections in more than a dozen countries.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

UK AND IRELAND:

6 issues.....£2.80 _____ *
12 issues....£5.00 _____ *

OVERSEAS:

6 issues.....£3.80 _____ *
12 issues....£6.60 _____ *

* Tick where appropriate and send to: Box DA, c/o Raven, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester 1. Cheques & PO's should be made payable to "Direct Action Movement".

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I would like to find out more about the Direct Action Movement. Please send me information:

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

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

Produced and published by Manchester DAM. Printed by Aldgate Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1. Send all articles, letters, donations, orders and so on to: Direct Action, Box DA, Raven, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester 1.

Deadline ~ July 5th

Direct Action

COUNTER-DEMO AGAINST LOYALISM

SAT. JUNE 18TH - CHESTERFIELD

THE CONTROVERSIAL CONTRACEPTIVE

The following article has been included in Direct Action to provoke discussion. It does not necessarily represent the views of all members of the Direct Action Movement.

For about a decade now, Depo-Provera - just one of the many steroidal contraceptives on the market, has been thrust into the limelight, receiving much criticism from various organisations. These organisations have used the sort of tactics where just one steroidal contraceptive has been highlighted, the possible side effects over-emphasized and the risks involved distorted - all in order to get Depo-Provera banned. Not only are these tactics dubious, but the ultimate aim is ridiculous - it is control of the drug that needs challenging, not the existence of the drug itself.

There are 2 types of hormones which control both the ovarian cycle (production and release of the "egg" from the ovaries), and the menstrual cycle (changes within the wall of the uterus). These are progesterones and oestrogens. When women become pregnant the ovaries are stimulated to increase the secretion of both these hormones, thus preventing further ovulation and maintaining a thick uterine lining, unsuitable for further egg implantation.

MOST RISK

Since the 1960's these same chemicals have been produced synthetically and used as methods of contraception. The most commonly used steroidal contraceptive is the ordinary combined pill (OCP) so called as it contains both progesterones and oestrogens. It also carries the most risk, as circulatory disorders are the most common and dangerous of steroidal contraceptive side effects, and these range from high blood pressure, to thrombosis of the veins or arteries (blood clots) to heart attacks and strokes. It is the oestrogen content of the pill which is the major cause of these problems as this chemical increases clotting factors in the blood, at the same time as decreasing anti-clotting agents.

In Britain, it is the most commonly used form of birth control - used by 28% of heterosexual women (Family Planning Authority figures, 1984). Among long term users, ie over 2 years, the death rate due to circulatory diseases is increased by 4-5 times (Royal College of General Practitioners figures). For those using it over 5 years, the risk of cervical cancer is increased 2 fold and there is still much debate as to whether it increases or decreases the risk of contracting breast cancer (World Health Organisation figures, 1985).

DRAWBACK

The mini pill is a progesterone only preparation, which concentrates its action on producing a cervical mucous hostile to sperm and a uterine lining unsuitable for egg implantation. Because it does not contain oestrogen, side effects of the circulatory system are greatly reduced, although fluid retention, weight gain and breakthrough bleeding are still possibilities, as with the combined pill. The major drawback of this preparation is that it has to be taken at the same time every day, otherwise it is not effective as a method of contraception.

Depo-Provera is also a progesterone only preparation. However, it is not a pill which needs to be taken on a daily basis, but is an injection given intramuscularly to the buttocks or the thigh. An injection of 150mg is given during the first 5 days of a normal menstrual cycle and is released very slowly into the body, lasting approximately 12 weeks. As with the combined pill and the mini pill, it is not given to women with abnormal uterine bleeding or a history of cancer. Also, like any progesterone only preparation it is less of a health risk to the woman than the oestrogen and progesterone combined pill.

GOOD NEWS

However, those using Depo-Provera may be subject to side effects normally associated with the use of progesterone, such as a delay in the return to normal menstrual cycles and temporary infertility lasting up to 2 years (combined pills last up to 1 year) following continuous treatment with Depo-Provera; and temporary disruption of the menstrual cycle. This lack of periods or irregular periods are not harmful to women's health, but frequent and/or heavy blood losses which might occur in a women on a poor diet (ie low iron) will lead to anaemia. The good news is that for those women suffering from sickle-cell anaemia Depo is in fact believed to be beneficial (The Lancet, July '82).

None of the steroidal contraceptives available (and these are just 3 examples of the many in existance) are free from side effects but considering the health risks involved with the combined pill, it is surprising that it is Depo-Provera which is being called upon to be banned. The problem of Depo lies in the fact that it is an injection, which is administered not by the woman herself but by a doctor or nurse. It can therefore be very easily abused and has been. For example, white doctors working in Africa and Asia have given women Depo-Provera under the false pretences that it is a vitamin injection! In Britain women have been given Depo with the rubella vaccine without their knowledge. So the drug has been given without any explanation of its side effects and/or permission. These sorts of actions are outrageous but it is ridiculous to lay the blame on the drug itself - it is the control of the drug that is the problem.

BANNED

Depo-Provera is licenced for use in over 80 countries and has been used by over 10 million women without a reported death (Abortion, Sterilisation and Contraception - Wendy Savage). In this country Depo is only licenced for short term use to cover the period after a woman has had a rubella vaccination, or after her partner has just had a vasectomy. In 1984 America banned its use after a campaign by a Black person who saw Black women being given the drug without their knowledge in an attempt to reduce the Black population; and a Roman Catholic who saw Roman Catholic women using Depo as a form of contraception which their partners could not detect.

Attempting to ban Depo-Provera is not solving any problems - it is, in fact, doing a disservice to women. Today's contraceptive methods are still very basic and/or inadequate. None of the hormonal contraceptives are free from side effects and the pill is easily forgotten; the cap and sheath are not only inconvenient but its use depends upon whether the woman can cope with handling her own body as such (and many can't) and on whether the man is prepared to play a part in birth control; the coil carries the risk of uterine and cervical perforation as well as pelvic inflammatory disease (which in turn can cause sterility); the rhythym/temperature/mucous methods need much planning and a certain amount of self-discipline.

NOT IDEAL

The reality of the situation is that unplanned repeated pregnancies can keep women in the poverty trap; pregnancy itself carries far more health risks than any of the aforementioned contraceptives and maternal deaths are still apparent all over the world, let alone the fact that many cultures and religions do not allow birth control, hence women have to use it in secrecy, obviously Depo-Provera can be very important in these circumstances. Depo-Provera is not ideal, but might be the answer for some women after careful counselling. Women want control of the own fertility now and if their chosen method is Depo then nobody has the right to deny it them. We shouldn't be fighting Depo-Provera as a contraceptive method but the attitudes which have led doctors and governments to use this chemical in such a dangerous way.

