

DIRECT ACTION



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The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism

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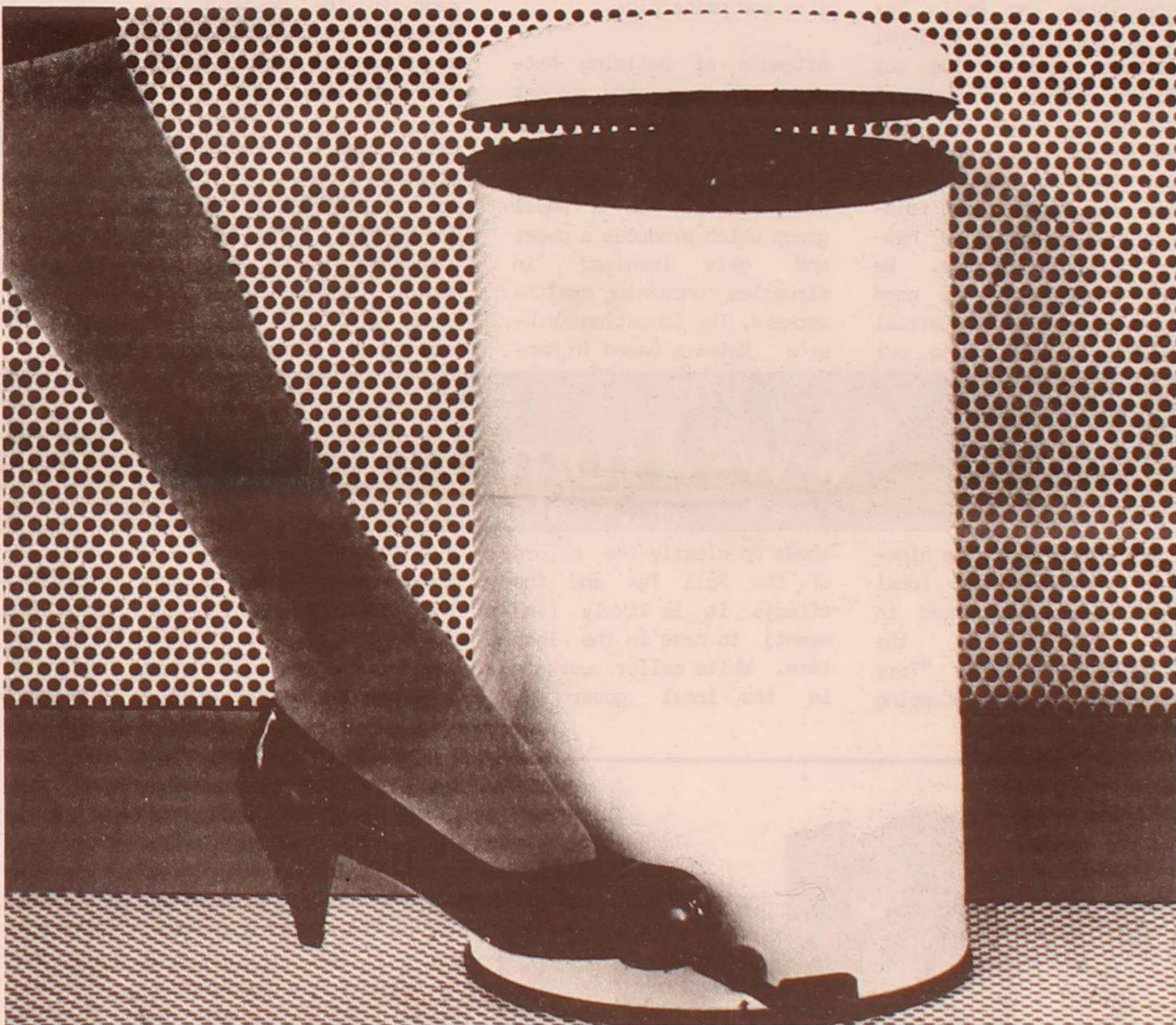
BIN THE BILLS

The Poll Tax is a right-wing political dream meant to free the rich from the burden of their last remnants of social responsibility. This makes us, the working class, wholly responsible for financing any socially useful services and as such the Poll Tax is a direct attack on the whole of our class. It is a brazen attempt to take a small step backwards in history to when the productive forces in society laboured for a pittance and could expect nothing in return from those who benefited from such labour.

In 19th Century Britain, workers fought, amidst squalor and starvation for the right of working class men to vote. Seventy years later (eighty for women) that right was won. As the State takes one thing after another from us, it is clear that though we have minimal rights to participate in State machinery, we are losing the right to share in the wealth. It is time we saw clearly that the parliamentary road to socialism is a dead end street. The interests of the working class and those who reap profit and power from our production can never be reconciled.

The Poll Tax can be defeated. Mass non payment and direct action, from the highly organised to the spontaneous, is spreading. Through building a movement against the Tax we are empowering ourselves, but for what? It must not be so that our rulers can come back, licking their wounds, but more vicious than ever. We have it in our collective power as a class to set an example in the new Europe by taking back the world that we built, running it by ourselves, for ourselves. Let the working class destroy forever the class system and let the rich eat their money.

As the Poll Tax hits our pockets to sustain the wealth and privilege of the ruling class, demands for outright law breaking increase. It is mud in the eye for those who say 'you can't beat the system' or other such excuses to avoid questioning the role of present society. The political parties in parliament are in chaos - they want to cash in on the



anti Poll Tax vote but can't cope with the demands of the people they are supposed to represent - NON PAYMENT.

It is no longer simply a struggle against the Poll Tax - it's about the rule of law. Those implementing the Tax (from all parties) know their loyalty is in maintaining the status quo. The working class has a long and proud history of law breaking that has secured many of the "rights" we enjoy today. As the politicians refuse support for our tradition, the fight against implementation is fought where we can win - in our communities and workplaces.

In Scotland, where the Poll Tax was launched over a year ago, people are organising by using CB's, by public

meetings - by neighbours just taking the time to talk to one another. Three hundred angry people defending just one home against the bailiffs is proof enough that when we stand united we have the power to do anything.

We must spread our organisation to our workplaces by setting up Anti Poll Tax Unions in the factories, offices, hospitals, schools, sites, etc where we work. Let the bosses dare dock our wages when we stand together on this!

Organised and united we can beat the Poll Tax and destroy the system that continually throws such attacks at us. Let's vote with our feet and kick them out,

M.C.

Direct Action Movement — International Workers Association

Our Conference

This year's annual DAM National Conference was held in Norwich on the weekend of 25 May. It was well-attended, with delegates from 14 groups. The National Secretary of the CNT-F (French Section of the IWA) was there as well and gave us an inspiring talk about the situation in France and the pressing need for Internationalism and solidarity between workers.

Our business was largely concerned with sorting out internal matters, ie hearing reports of the year's work from Commissions (groups of people mandated to do specific tasks, ie Publicity Commission to look into printing material, Poll Tax Commission to coordinate information on Poll Tax etc), electing new National Officers and sorting out 'Direct Action'. Much of this sort of thing is quite tedious and it was generally felt that in future more time should be spent discussing strategies and having political debate. We did, though, have a good discussion on our Industrial Strategy, reconfirming our

commitment to building Industrial Networks. Industrial Networks are anarchosyndicalist workplace groups which put forward revolutionary perspectives and methods of organising. Our aim is for these to be active bodies which are a focus of workplace militancy alternative to the union bureaucracies. In the short term (given the non existence of a revolutionary union tradition in recent British history) their main role is likely to be educational. In the long term we see them as being the basis for the foundation of an anarchosyndicalist union federation. These Networks are organisationally independent of the DAM but are based on anarchosyndicalist aims and principles.

Attempts at building Networks have been made amongst DAM members who work in health, education and local government. Sheffield Healthworkers is a small group which produces a paper and gets involved in struggles concerning healthworkers. The Education Worker's Network based in Man-

chester is another group. And another initiative is the newly-formed Council Worker's Network which has contacts in London, Manchester and Doncaster.

DIWU

Somewhat different than the above groups is the DIWU (Despatch Industry Workers Union) which has taken off in London. This group, which is mainly non DAM members, is working toward becoming a fully-fledged union in a mainly ununionised industry. DIWU is growing rapidly and has already attracted the attention of the T&G and the bosses, neither of which wants any militant workers' organisations on their territory (the T&G has only seriously attempted recruitment in the despatch industry since the DIWU became a potential force to be reckoned with).

Last year's Industrial Strategy Commission presented the pamphlet it wrote to Conference. This will be published in the next few months (see article in this issue of DA on Industrial Strategy). Also to be pub-

lished is our pamphlet on Ireland, which will be for sale shortly.

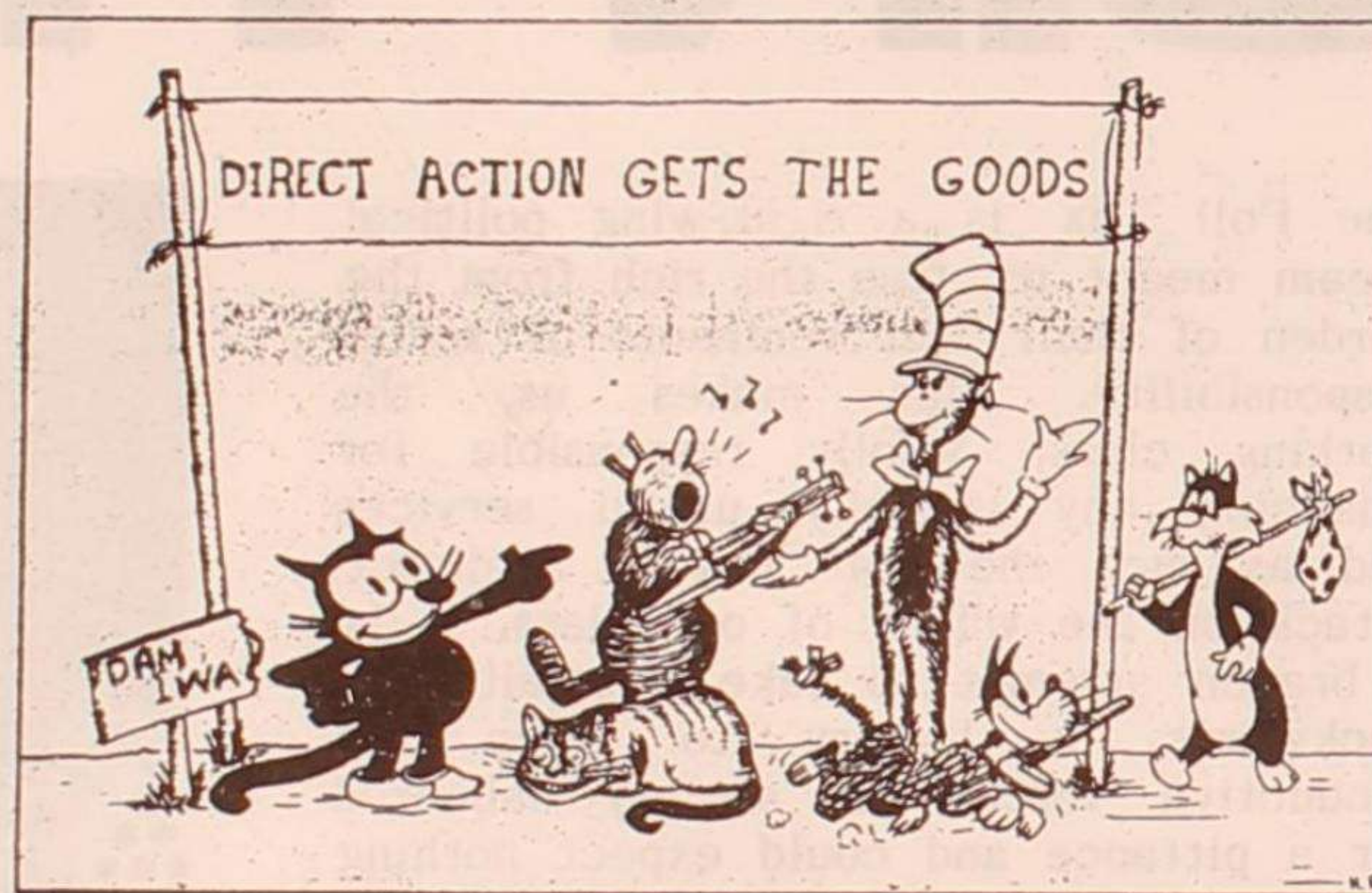
The other major topic of discussion at Conference was Poll Tax. Debate centered on the question of DAM member's attitudes toward the All Britain Federation and on generally working with the Left. Many felt valuable time and energy are wasted arguing with trotskysts, that time is better spent working 'on the ground'. Others felt that we must use the Federation, expose Militant and others for what they are, and work toward making the Federation into a proper federation. In the end it was generally decided that the heart of the matter was that situations vary and that what was best in one

area might not be useful in another.

In sum, Conference was quite positive, with a general feeling of the need to press ahead and to consolidate. The need for internal education and to publish more pamphlets and local propaganda was also stressed. And lastly, the highlight of the weekend was the annual North vs South DAM football match, an annual event which would inspire many to conclude that anarchy is indeed chaos!

In closing, best wishes to the next National Secretary as I now thankfully retire to other equally stressful and exhausting tasks!

In solidarity, Donna



News From The Poll-Capped Zone

Council workers in the nineteen Poll Tax capped local authorities were pushed to the forefront of the struggle against the "Tory flagship" in June. Capping

shows up clearly the nature of the Poll Tax and the effects it is likely (and meant) to have in the long term. White collar workers in the local government

union, NALGO had just received a pathetic 8% pay offer at the end of May and were gearing up for a fight on pay, but, particularly in the capped councils, the ground shifted. The employers craftily offered between 9.2 and 10.4% (the higher rises being for the lower paid). This still ignored demands for a flat rate pay rise to help the lower paid and better hours and holidays. But the offer did seem to achieve the desired confusion among workers by seeming generous compared to the previous offer (in fact only just approaching the inflation rate for most).

CUTS

At the same time, workers in Councils like Doncaster were distracted by local bosses' plans for poll tax capping cuts. In Doncaster the council announced sweeping and vicious cuts proposals "due to" poll tax capping. The question many wanted to ask was why were these cuts worked out and proposed BEFORE the final legal judgement on the councils' challenges to capping? Wasn't doing this just giving ammo to the government who could now say 'look - they do have room to make cuts'?

Details of the proposed cuts in Doncaster were issued at the beginning of June and amounted to over £15m of cuts over two years. It soon became clear that these cuts were to be in addition to cuts brought about by the failure of the legal challenges to poll tax capping.

Despite assurances, there is no doubt that the cuts will mean redundancies. For example, some voluntary sector bodies getting council funding are to be cut. It was not made clear in the cuts paper, but some voluntary bodies have to have 25% council funding - if they don't get this they get nothing from the government and will be forced to close.

Loss of services will mean more hardship for the worst off people on top of the hardship caused by having to pay the poll tax in the first place. It is also clear that the proposals will give more power and excuses to the more arrogant and bullying managers with such things as stepped-up "sickness monitoring" and increased "efficiency" ie harassment of individuals and more work for the same pay.

While the Doncaster proposals paper details big cuts in social services, education, and environmental services (at least the rats will be happy!) a further report is requested before announcing cuts in Christmas decorations! Obviously neon father Christmases are more important to our councillors than children's education or public health...

The major cuts are to fall in education - Council Leader Gallimore suggested in the local press that "we need a large number of people to look after poll tax- there is probably room for teachers there". A council worker at a NALGO meeting likened Gallimore to Marie Antoinette - it's not 'let them eat cake' but 'let them collect poll tax'!

With all this going on, a special NALGO Branch meeting was held in Doncaster. The meeting voted to accept the national pay offer despite good arguments for fighting (eg it might be easier to fight capping cuts alongside other workers fighting over pay rather than on our own). However, despite this re-

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Not A Lot Going On

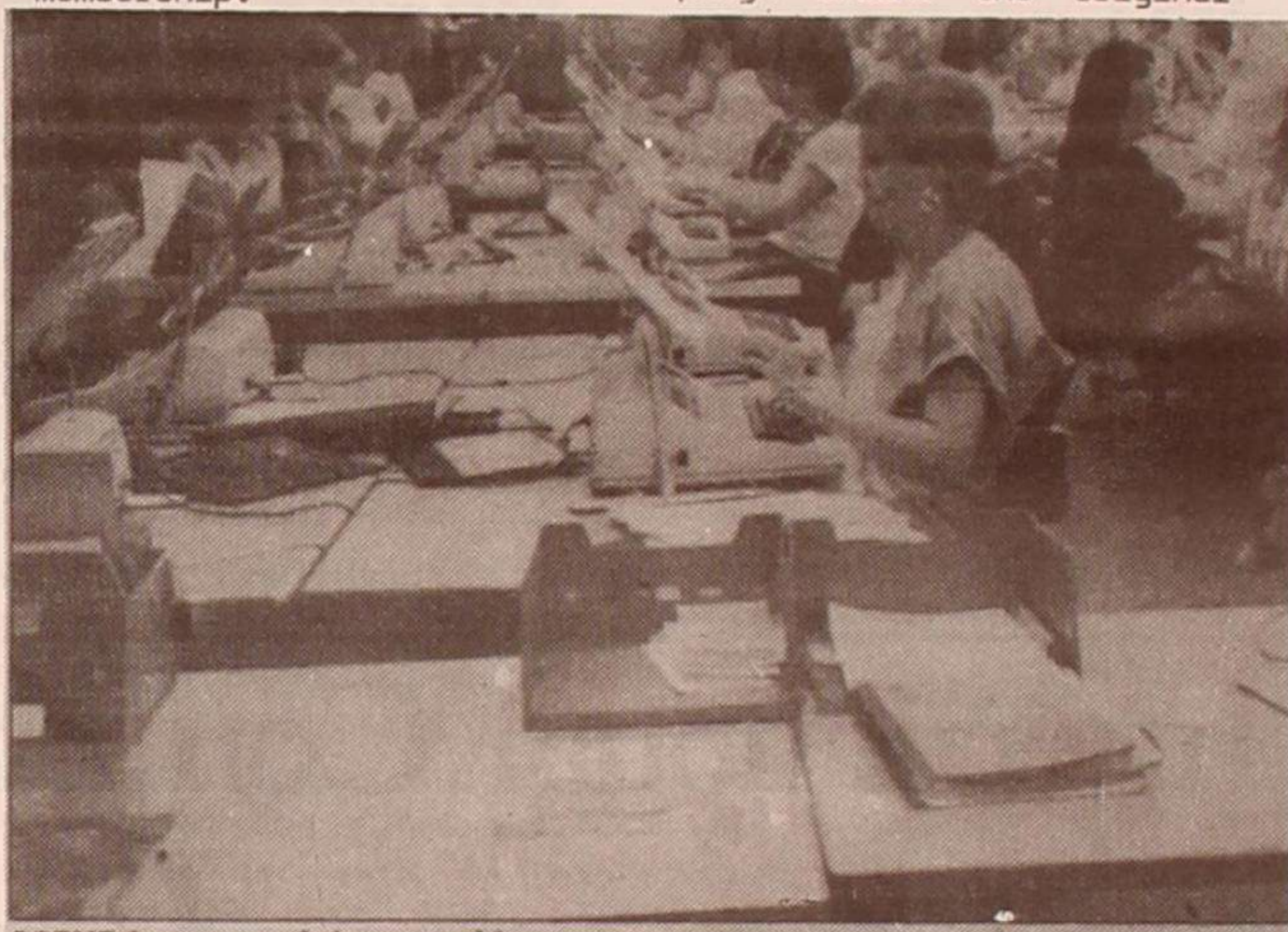
NALGO's acceptance of the 9.25% average offered by the employers was a predictable response by a union eager not to upset the applecart as the Labour Party ride high in the opinion polls and push forward their new policy review. No doubt, on the employers' part, they pitched their offer at a level that made it attractive to those NALGO members unsure at the prospect of industrial action.

It is around the official inflation figure and the union's response is that in the present circumstances it is the best possible settlement that council workers are likely to achieve. Yet what are these "special circumstances"? They see a government reeling from one crisis to another as Thatcherism enters its decline. Inflation is rising, there is an unworkable, unpopular Poll Tax, and a growing mistrust of government.

Last year, in an inferior position, NALGO workers voted for, and carried out a series of rolling strikes that won them a partial victory. Then, the claim was two-fold. A 12% increase or £1200 increase, specifically to help the low-paid, plus the removal of any strings that threatened national pay bargaining. From the outset it became clear that it was the strings that the union was most concerned with and that any offer over 8% was acceptable.

That the NALGO membership was actually prepared to

strike surprised everyone, union, employers and government. It also worried them and this is reflected in this year's settlement. The government wanted to avoid any action that could disrupt the already chaotic Poll Tax collection. The employers, backed into a corner by their actions, could little afford any disruption. The union did not want a repeat of last year's action that generated militancy and saw them in danger of losing control of the membership.



SCENE from one of the new videos.

This year the claim put forward was for a flat-rate increase of £1500, a 35 hour week and an increase in annual leave entitlement. All were specifically designed to help those caught in the low pay sector. Yet the settlement does nothing for the low paid who see the settlement - with basic food bills increasing and rises in rents and the Poll Tax - in terms of a pay cut.

Yet the union, from their

viewpoint, are certainly correct in saying that the deal was acceptable to the majority of the membership. By recommending acceptance they were reflecting the reality of the situation, no matter how unpalatable that is to many. It is no use arguing, as some rank and file and Broad Left activists have done, that a vote for strike action could have been won on the basis of a flat-rate claim if the National Executive had rejected the offer and built a campaign around the original

claim. A strike vote would still have been lost.

The basic reason for this is that NALGO represents a wide variety of council employees from those on low pay to higher and middle management. It, like other unions, builds its membership by the appeal of fringe benefits, cheap insurance, etc. The old ideas behind union membership, namely solidarity and mutual aid, have all but disappeared. Some NALGO mem-

bers don't like the idea of the members being low paid but are not prepared to take action to end the situation, especially if they feel their own jobs could be put at risk. Others frankly don't give a damn and look after number one. The employers know this and usually state that pay rises will have to be met by cuts in services and/or jobs, thus splitting the workforce.

The usual response is to build up the rank-and-file that will oppose the union bureaucracy and either replace it or force it to change. This is the stance of the Broad Left that seeks to "recapture" the union for its members, many of whom are not interested anyway. What it is really after is the capture of the union for itself, the "activists" seeking to promote their own political ideology through a wider organisation. Other rank-and-file militants reject "electoralism" while arguing for a stronger role for shop stewards committees and the building of independent rank-and-file groups that can take control of disputes through the formation of strike committees.

Both these approaches ignore the fact that the weakness of NALGO and other reformist unions lies in their structure and their very nature. They operate outside the workplace, divorced from their membership where it counts. Once a worker becomes a union "activist" s/he enters the world of meetings, committees and conferences, only making contact with the majority of the membership when a specific need arises. For the activist the important work is done within the union structure where positions are taken, deals struck, tactics worked out, and only then do the members become involved, faced with a limited number of options.

So the reality of the union activists' life is one of fighting each other to get certain positions adopted

within their union on issues that are often far removed from the day-to-day reality of the workplace. Only when forced to will they become involved in workplace disputes, then only to direct it through union channels.

It does not matter what the political direction the rank-and-file group is, it will still become enmeshed in a trap of its own making and only be able to reach any of the wider union membership in times of dispute. What is needed is the building of workplace militancy, not false and based on trendy causes, but militancy that specifically defends workers' rights where it counts, face to face with management, in the workplaces.

In many ways this will mean ignoring the official union structure and building a parallel one on specific militant lines that carries its work on in the day-to-day environment of the workplace. This is a much more demanding task but one that, if successful, would seek to eventually develop an alternative form of union structure that stands not for compromise and accommodation with management, council or government, but for hostility and militancy, based wholly in the working class and whose ideas are the old union ones of solidarity and mutual aid.

Of course, as has been stated, this is not an easy task. It will have to be built slowly with small groups of workers in an industry forming networks, linking their workplaces. That is why the Council Workers Network has been formed, open to workers from all council unions, through which, by coming together and fighting for our common interests as workers, we can gain the confidence to carry our fight forward ourselves and not be dependent on professional union activists or politicians whose primary interests lie elsewhere.

Steve, Council Worker

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treat, the mood of the meeting was angry and ready for a fight over cuts. Speaker after speaker from the floor spoke about the devastating effects the proposed cuts would have. The meeting voted unanimously to declare "total resistance" to the proposals. Certain NALGO executive members and NUPE officials were slagged off for talking about "making recommendations" on cuts. They seem to have forgotten that an injury to one is an injury to all! However, some bureaucrats' attitudes showed what anarcho-syndicalists argue to be the case - social democratic unions tend to degenerate towards becoming merely a part of the management structure. On the positive side, the meeting showed the will of the rank-and-file workers to fight the cuts and the way in

which illusions in Thatcher's Labour Party lackeys are being ditched.

The situation in Doncaster area could come to the boil as people face a variety of attacks at the same time - pit closures, poll tax, capping cuts, harassment of claimants, and the threatened opening of a toxic waste burner. The way forward lies in linking up the struggles that are going on and making common cause with other working class people. Anarcho-syndicalists will argue in the struggles to come for direct democracy, accountable delegates, and direct action. Council Workers interested in a long term fightback to overcome "new realist" ideas and bureaucratic forms of struggle in favour of revolutionary ones might consider contacting the Council Workers Network (see inside back page of this DA).

Leo Rosser

As a friend, Leo was always good natured, generous and never critical (even when frequently woken up early for a chat). Over the years, these qualities never failed him.



As a comrade he was equally invaluable, lending support and assistance in every project (which were many and varied, although usually entailed his fluency in Spanish).

Leo will be greatly missed, not only by us, but by all his friends and comrades in the IWA and the wider inter-

Poll Tax Hidden Costs

A number of London councils are refusing to pay housing benefit to people not on the Poll Tax register. Several others will delay payments while the Poll Tax register is informed. This will hit private tenants, many of whom have high rents. Land-

lords will not tolerate rent being overdue and many tenants could be evicted. Barking & Dagenham, City of London, Merton, Westminster and Redbridge are believed to be considering this measure. The Association of London Authorities have called the practice 'punitive and probably illegal'. This is just one of the many anti-working class attacks concealed in the poll tax.

national anarchist movement, of which there are many.

Judith, Burnley DAM/IWA

International

CNT CONGRESS

April 1990 saw the Seventh National Congress of the Spanish CNT, the first having taken place in 1911 in Barcelona. This Congress took place after a gap of seven years.

The atmosphere of the Congress was one of consolidation and, to some extent, rebirth of the CNT which has been plagued with problems over the last years since the change of regime from Franco's dictatorship to bourgeois democracy. Although the upsurge in anarchist ideas was great after 1975, to some extent these failed to crystallise into coherent class struggle politics. The situation was not aided by the CNT, FAI and FIJL (Federation of Iberian anarchists and Federation of Libertarian Youth - anarchist organisations which work closely with the CNT) being severely repressed and by the creation of a split in 1984. It was that split, organised perhaps by some militants in good faith but by many as a means to usurp and destroy the anarcho-syndicalist CNT that was to sap the strength of the Spanish Section of the IWA. The question of the split is almost resolved though the ex-split, now officially called the CGT still at times uses the name CNT or CGT-CNT or CGT(CNT). This can cause great confusion and undermine disputes and struggles. However, on the positive side, the CNT should shortly be able to get the millions of pesetas locked up by the Banco Madrid which, because of the split, claimed it did not know 'which CNT' to return the money to (this money is part of the Historical Patrimony, ie money and property seized by Franco after the Civil War).

The Seventh Congress certainly represents an 'upturn' for the CNT and for Spanish anarcho-syndicalism. Among the topics discussed at Bilbao were: Historical Patrimony, relation of the CNT to other libertarian and non libertarian organisations, the International situation, social issues, union activity and workplace strategy.

The International situation was discussed in meetings with members of other IWA Sections. Included were: USI (Italy), NSF (Norway), WSA (United States), FAU (East and West Germany), DAM

(that's us), Swiss anarchists, the IWA Secretariat (coordinating body for the IWA, presently located in Germany) and some observers from the East German independent union, the IUG. The necessity of a strong International was stressed and more industrial links on an International level are of paramount importance. On the social front, several delegates stressed the need of the CNT to address itself to the questions of women's and sexual liberation and homosexuality beyond a simple recognition of their existence. In an evening talk by Mujeres Libres (Liberated Women) these questions came up once again.

Lastly, point 10 on the agenda, union activity, was discussed in an all-night session. A very detailed analysis of union strategy and activity took place. One major conclusion was that although the CNT had managed to create Union Sections in workplaces in opposition to the Workplace Committees (elected bodies inherited from the Francoist system), the overall national plan had lacked coordination. Also, the CNT has failed to define the role of the Union Section, some of which are very small, isolated and hence ineffective against more 'professional' experienced reformist unions (CCOO, UGT, etc).

In order to remedy this situation, several unions put forward motions to stand members for workplace elections. They would do this not, they said, to gain positions on the Workplace Committees, but to gain rights for the Union Sections. They thought that by standing for election anarcho-syndicalism would gain greater prominence in the workplace. They also thought that by becoming legally elected representatives they could enjoy the same legal provisions as other unions standing for places on the Workplace Committees. But Spanish Labour Law states that negotiating rights will be denied those Union Sections created expressly to channel negotiations through the Workplace Committees. The law also states that if elected delegates don't participate in the Committees (which is what the CNT members intended to do) the delegates can't disclose information

they receive or vote in the Committee meetings. It is therefore incorrect to suppose that participating in the union elections can mean that the Union Section has negotiating rights because it does not. However, a Union Section that has not stood for elections does have the right to negotiate. The question seemed to be solved after a long discussion and, as far as I could tell, the matter was dropped. It seems to be quite clear that the only way forward is through the Union Sections which is a stony and much more difficult path, but the only one which will build anarcho-syndicalism in the workplace.

Despite the often heated arguments, even when obviously opposing opinions were expressed, at all times during the Conference the feeling of belonging to the



same family of thought and to the same revolutionary organisation prevailed.

Richard, Manchester DAM

International Communication

A Conference of postal and telecommunications workers in the European IWA took place last December in France. Present were members of the Spanish CNT, the FAU in Germany, the DAM (more specifically, a DAM member from DIWU - (see DAM Conference report), and the French CNT. Members of the Corsican union federation, the STC (not affiliated to the IWA) were unable to attend but sent a telegram of solidarity and expressed a wish to participate in the future.

The Conference's objective was to have an exchange and comparison of experiences and struggles in each country, to discuss approaches taken and to form common ideas toward the development of demands and actions in upcoming years.

Faced with the bosses' and states' politics of a single Europe, anarcho-syndicalists of the IWA must act to defend established rights and broaden them to excluded workers. In Britain, British Telecom operates a blacklist of activists. In West Germany it is illegal to organise in the postal/telecommunications sector, hence German anarcho-syndicalists having to act secretly to avoid the sack. In France, syndicalists at the sorting office at Lille Lezennes are threatened with dismissal.

To strengthen coordination between IWA postal/telecommunications workers, an International bulletin is to be sent to all sections. This was seen as an essential step to taking Internationalism beyond just strike solidarity.

Throughout the Conference there was unanimous understanding of particular local differences, helping to strengthen the unity of an International organisation.

Those present decided on the following priorities:

- * Struggle for equality of union rights, notably the discrimination victimising German workers (ban on public sector workers unionising).

- * Action against low pay and for equal wages.

- * Reduction in work hours.

- * Increase in workforces.

- * Opposition to the destruction of improvements gained in working conditions.

- * Strike solidarity.

The International bulletin agreed upon is to be distributed by the Spanish CNT^o Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo

FSP Seccion Sindical de Correos y Telecomunicaciones
Calle Magdalena 29
2 Izquierda
28012 MADRID
Espana



We can can communicate

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Conclusion

THE FOLLOWING IS THE THIRD AND FINAL PART OF OUR SERIALISATION OF THE 'INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY' PRESENTED TO AND ACCEPTED BY THE 1989 DAM CONFERENCE. (ANYONE WHO MISSED THE FIRST 2 PARTS IN DA'S NO.62 & 63 CAN SEND A LARGE SAE TO P.O. BOX 106, ROTHERHAM, S YORKS S60 1NW). THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THIS STRATEGY WAS DISCUSSED AT A SPECIAL WEEKEND CONFERENCE IN MANCHESTER IN DECEMBER OF LAST YEAR AND THE OVERALL STRATEGY WAS REAFFIRMED AT OUR RECENT 1990 ANNUAL CONFERENCE ALTHOUGH DIFFERENCES CONTINUE TO EXIST AS TO THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT IN RELATION TO THE INDUSTRIAL NETWORKS.

There has been much speculation, both within and outside of the DAM as to our intentions once the DAM decided to put its best foot forward and started to talk in terms of an anarchosyndicalist union.

We arrived at this position after years of experience within rank and file groupings and acting as part of the broader anarchist movement, and as such is part of a continuing development of our policies and not a radical new step.

Anarchist ideas and forms of organisation have to be made attractive and useful to the working class - it is no good sitting on a utopian dream hoping that one day the mass of the population will stumble upon this dream. This path has led anarchism to a position of isolation and glorious irrelevance. It has also, due to this, diluted anarchism. The anarchist movement in its isolation has tagged behind the peace/animal/green movements so much so that it has lost its own identity and become nothing more than a vocal militant liberal minority and comedy act. Though these ideas may not be unimportant, they have no foundation unless they are based within the working class.

WHAT TO DO?

Recognising this, the DAM developed to a point where we joined strike support groups and even supported small strikes on our own. Again, however useful and worthy this kind of action, an organisation such as the

DAM cannot survive and expand and our ideas cannot take root when we are solely concerned in a supportive role. Picketing shops and embassies and collecting money is neither anarchism, syndicalism or even particularly far-reaching solidarity when it exists in isolation and is the sole level of activity.

However, if more formalised it would constitute a major step forwards and act as a positive growth factor for our ideas. Industrial Networks should be organised so that they can grow and assume identities of their own. Initially, it is conceivable that they would consist of DAM members only, but they should be open to

level, we feel it would be far more constructive to operate on local or regional levels and federate when appropriate. For this reason we would recommend that Industrial Networks operate on a regional basis initially, this being the more likely catchment area of three people in a particular industry. These regional Networks should forever be looking to expand downwards into more and more

there as official representatives of their Network. This relationship between DAM and Networks is potentially a thorny one and will be discussed a bit later on. However, it must be stressed that membership of DAM and Networks are and should remain autonomous, likewise they are autonomous of any and all existing unions.

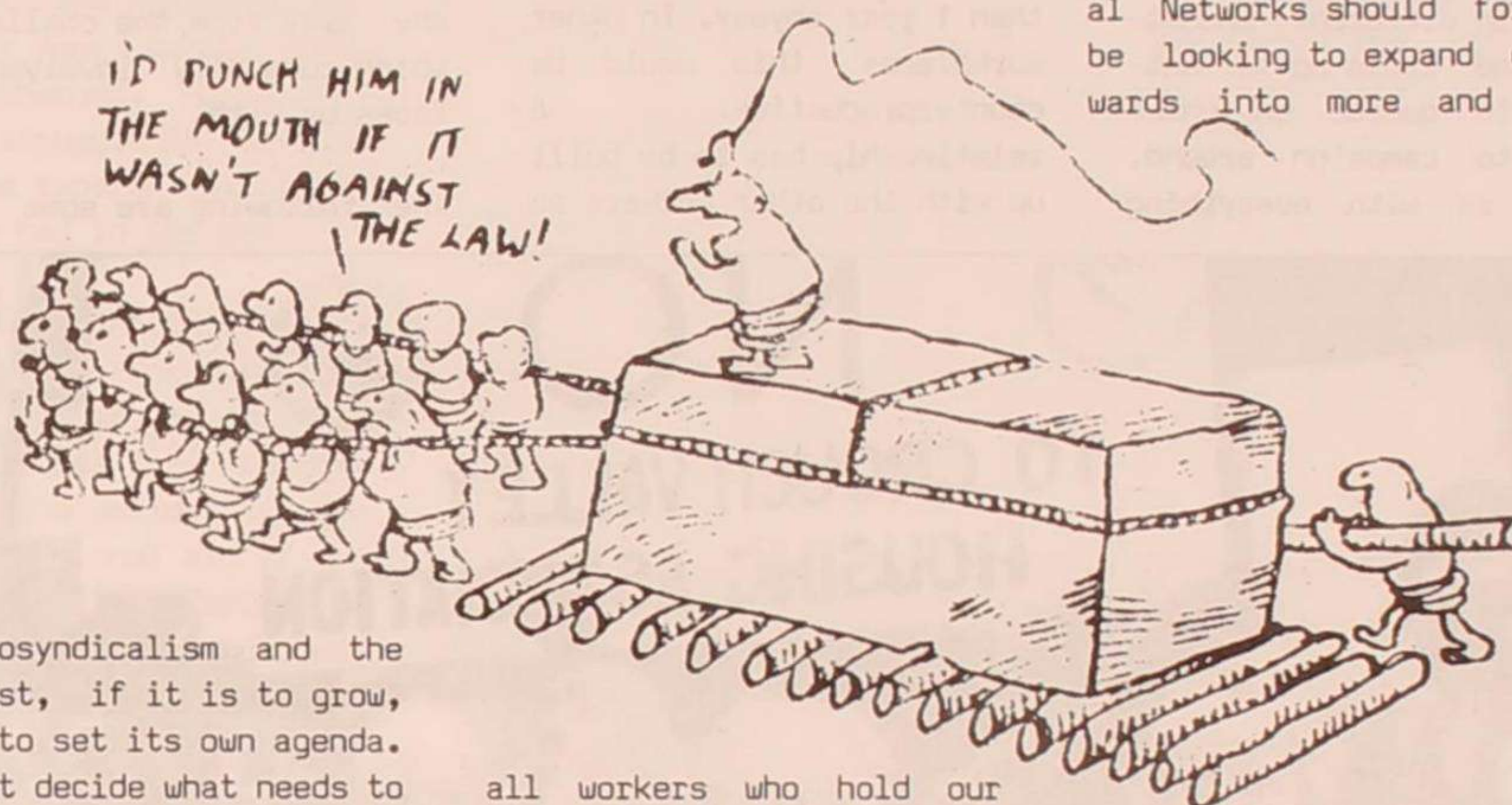
AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

Obviously, with the eventual growth and development of Industrial Networks and with various Networks federating in different ways and directions, with the organisational cross-fertilisation developing, the obvious step would be the formation of an anarchosyndicalist union. This is, however, an organic process and needs to be seen as such, but it should be born in mind by each Network and stated as such in its constitution, for without direction and aim, without searching for ways forward towards a direction, any organisation will wither and die and divest itself of all purpose. But, as has been said already, this is an ongoing process, and a union will exist in practice long before it does on paper.

This particular question aside however, the question must be raised: What is the difference between previous forms of organisation ie Rank and Fileism, Propaganda Groups (ie Healthworkers Action Group, Communication Worker Group etc) and the Industrial Networks? The fundamental difference is tied in with the aim of an independent anarchosyndicalist union, but also relates to how Networks operate and relate to each other. Previous Rank and File initiatives have always limited themselves by the way they see themselves. At best they operate as negative opponents to the union bureaucracy and company hierarchy, with the occasional call for independent action by the workers. This is, in itself, a dead-end but a safe bet for the unadventurous.

THE DAM

The DAM has an important part to play in the construction of these Industrial Networks. In the early stages of their development the DAM with its existing national network and organisation can act as a skeleton on which the Industrial Networks hang. It would also provide the framework for a support network and help forge links between the different networks and bet-



Anarchosyndicalism and the DAM must, if it is to grow, begin to set its own agenda. We must decide what needs to be done and how. We can no longer afford to toddle behind bureaucrats, politicians and other groups of workers before we can act. To do this we must spend our time building an organisation capable of taking on a more assertive role. Now, with a relatively low level of activity, would be the time to start. We have spent a long time talking and formulating our ideas, but we need to give them an expression in practice so that we can grow and gain experience and translate these experiences into viable forms of organisation for the working class. Just as we see an anarchosyndicalist union as being the building-block toward a new society and a means of bringing it about, then the steps the DAM and other anarchists take to help construct a union can also be seen as building-blocks, part of an organic and practical process, not a stagnant form overburdened with inflexible theory. We shouldn't be frightened of confronting the numerous problems facing us - we shouldn't be frightened of failures, we should learn from them and forever move forwards, for without trying and living in fear of mistakes we stagnate and disappear.

There have been half-hearted attempts in the past to organise the DAM on an industrial footing. Recently, however, the idea of Industrial Networking has begun to take shape. This has been happening fairly slowly and with limited success only.

all workers who hold our industrial perspective.

An Industrial Network is constituted once there are three or more workers in a particular industry in an area of convenient size, ie an area which enables them to meet regularly. All workers in an industry, ie production, clerical, maintenance, administration etc should ideally be in the same Network. However, due to our size, at present a great deal of flexibility is needed and the Industrial Networks reflect this by being of a fairly broad nature. However, workers within the same workplace should definitely be in the same Network, regardless of section or area of work rather than affiliation across workplace with the same trade.

HEALTH WORKERS

In 1988 an attempt was made by anarchist healthworkers to form an organisation. In many ways this was similar to the DAM's ideas on Industrial Networks. We are not bothered in the slightest that the initiative came from outside the DAM, the fact that an attempt was made to arrive at a critique and plan for an industry and to form an organisation is a positive sign. We feel, though, that this attempt never reached its possibilities due to its starting point. From their Conference the contacts present should have returned to their own areas of work and made contacts there. Rather than organise straight away on a national

localised areas with the eventual aim of workplace Networks. When there is more than one area operating effectively, ie meeting regularly, they should federate together and eventually form a nation-wide Network. Likewise, different Industrial Networks within the same locality should join together to form regional federations of all networks to aid greater solidarity. Once a Network is formed on a national level it should draw up a clear constitution so that it can maintain its anarchosyndicalist structure and nature.

THERE MUST BE MORE TO LIFE THAN WORK WORK WORK!!!



Although these Networks may be initiated by DAM members, they have as their basis an anarchosyndicalist perspective rather than a purely political one. That, as well as the desire to attract workers outside of the DAM means that the Networks must be and remain autonomous of the DAM. This means that although as DAM members they will report their activities to group and regional DAM meetings, they will not be

CONTINUED

between Networks and community organisation. It is in a unique position to be able to do this and would be vital to the continued growth of the Networks.

Each Network should eventually have its own research department but until it is able to do this the DAM should set up Regional research groups to investigate particular industries and problems that may need to be solved. It would also be beneficial if there was a physical base for Networks to meet and carry on their business. The DAM could help by carrying out its policies on the creation of Regional Centres. These should be set up and made available to Networks. The DAM should also publish organisational pamphlets setting out the ideas that have been formulated on how to organise. It should also continue with its revolutionary propaganda, showing up the uselessness of reformist practice.

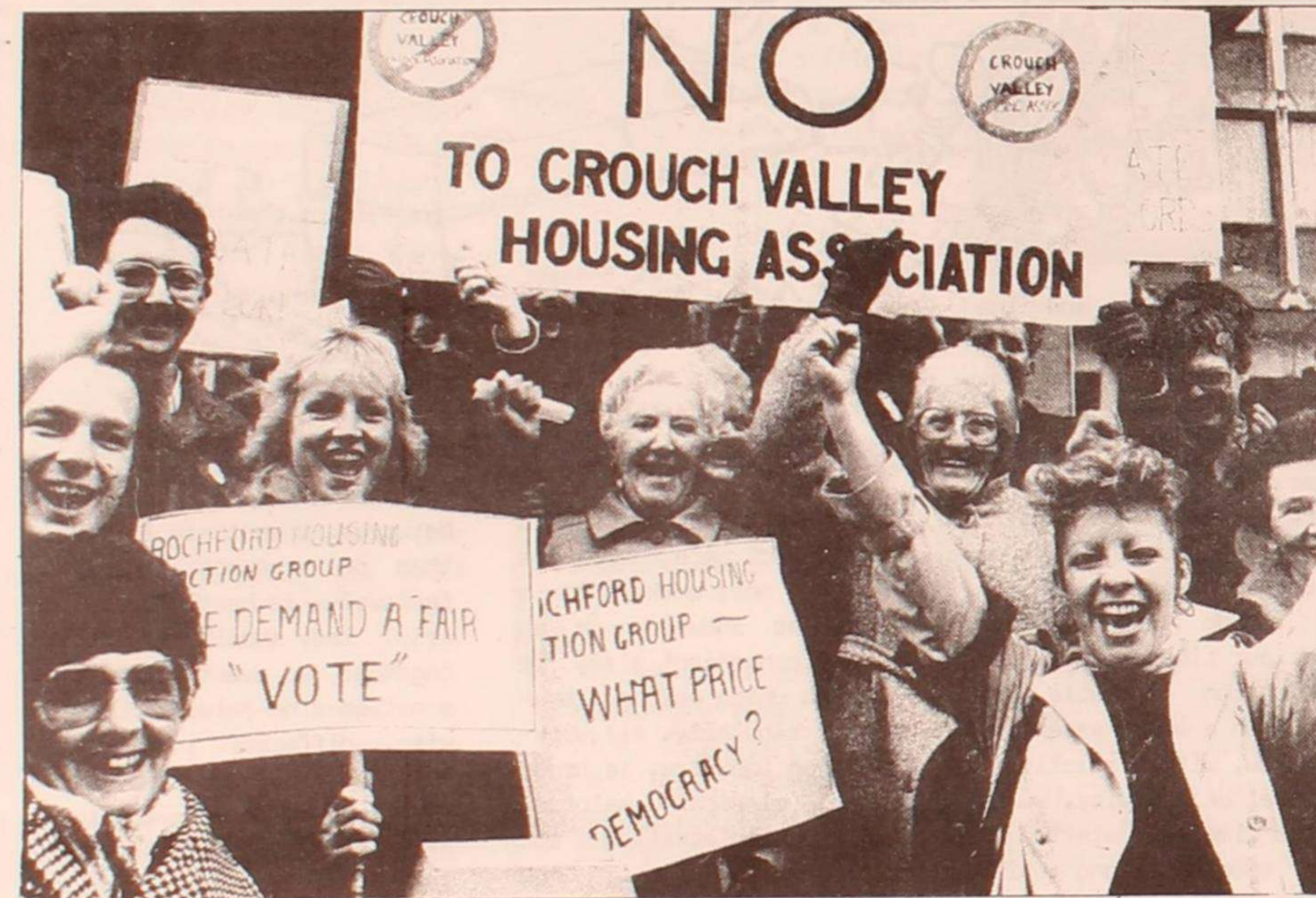
As can be seen, we have cast the role of the DAM into a purely supportive task. We believe that all organisation is best if it is organic and recognise this and also recognise its own limitations. Organic organisations come into being when there is a need for them, change when that need changes and disappear when they have served their purpose. Anarchists will probably always have a need to meet together, but should not consider any organisation they build to be an institution that is forever useful. We see industrial organisation as an overwhelming need among Anarchists at this particular moment in time. We would like to see Industrial Networks becoming the foremost area of activity, and with their growth the declining importance of previous political forms of organisation such as the DAM.

CONCLUSION

With the growth of Industrial Networks on a local level we would hope for a formation of links between community groups and the Industrial Networks. This would be of mutual benefit to both organisation whose membership might well overlap in any case. Strike support and workers' help in protecting the community would both be tremendously boosted by such organisations joining together and would be the fundamental base for any working class resistance and onslaught against capitalism and the State.

The aim of Industrial Networks is a radical change in workplace politics and organisation. For this reason, Industrial Networks should be fighting organisations, in the forefront of raising issues at work, inside and outside of the union and any existing structures. A relatively good area to get started on would be Health and Safety issues as this provides common ground with other workers and is usually ignored by management and unions. Obviously there are differences in different industries and it is up to Networks to decide on which areas to campaign around. This, as with everything

else, is of little worth in isolation. Networks should endeavour to learn as much about their industry as possible and the issues that affect it. They should then present a clear anarcho-syndicalist outlook within their industries. This should be both short and long-term. There have been many examples of unions and workplaces drawing up alternative economic analyses and outlooks for unions, eg Lucas Aerospace Shop Steward Combine and the NUM's Plan for Coal, etc.



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These have obviously been drawn up from the perspective of their authors. Industrial Networks should endeavour to do the same within their industries. Leafletting and flyposting are often better mediums of exchanging ideas as it brings a closer contact than solitary paper-selling outside workplace gates. Solidarity action and collecting money for other workers inside workplaces are also good means of raising ideas and issues.

Another longterm function of Industrial Networks would be the provision of employment information to fellow work-

ers. This could help counter attempts by employers to blacklist militant workers. In the early stages there may be a temptation to 'on site' ie Network members all moving into the same workplace. The purpose of this would be for Network members creating a strike/organisation for propaganda purposes and so Network members can gain experience. In certain industries such as the Building Industry this may have a particular value, especially as the job length is not usually more than 1 year anyway. In other workplaces this would be counterproductive. A relationship has to be built up with the other workers so

COMMUNITY

The title 'Industrial Strategy' for this Commission is a misnomer. As anarcho-syndicalists our strategy develops beyond the workplace because what happens within our communities and the activities within those communities, are as vital as what happens in the workplace.

Currently, Government legislation and political ideology are leading to increased atomising and fragmentation of society. Any sense of community is rapidly disappearing although those

'wonderful working class communities' so beloved of 60's sociologists were hardly the norm if they existed at all.

But people are feeling a loss of some sort of community spirit. This can be regenerated and developed if people begin to extend the campaigns which are currently taking place.

As our strategy has to be to build a truly libertarian working class culture, based on selfmanagement, we cannot shy away from the challenge which community involvement faces us with.

The following are some ex-

amples of the campaigns in which we can be involved.

Activity has to be on a street by street level. This will deny access to Trots and other self-seeking left groups. It will act as a means of building 'community'. Working on a street by street basis, tenants can link up with private residents on their estates as well as with building workers etc so that their position is strengthened. This will wrest control from the hands of social democratic councils and hopefully people will begin to recognise they don't need councils after all.

As we have seen, the Poll Tax is an excellent campaign around which we can develop community strategies. If the campaign is not on a community basis it becomes diluted and controlled by left groups. Resistance to the Poll Tax may be extended to other areas or developed later. The structures which are being developed should form the basis for further activity and resistance.

ENVIRONMENT

Much activity recently has been based on a community rather than industrial level. People are becoming increasingly 'militant' about decisions which are being made about the areas in which they live and work, without real consultation with them. There is a real concern for the way in which areas are being spoiled by, for instance, luxury housing development, roads which aren't really necessary, positioning of toxic waste plants and so on.

Whilst national media focus tends to concentrate on the articulate middle classes, resistance is just as great in working class areas. However, one of the great disadvantages of many campaigns is that people put more stress on social democratic processes than on direct action, or positive alternatives. For too long working class self help has been colonised by the middle classes. The structures which were, or were developed from working class activity such as trade unions, friendly societies etc have been taken out of our hands and 'professionalised'. This is true for other activity as it is for environmental campaigns. We therefore have to develop a positive strategy and refine our 'roots' of self management and mutual aid which have been neglected.

HOUSING

The main thrust of current government legislation on housing is to end Local Authority dominance of public sector housing. Whilst the government claim that this is 'Tenants Choices' what is actually happening is 'Landlords Choice'. Tenants will have to vote whether or not to accept a private landlord who bids for their homes. Previous anarchist responses of 'Don't Vote' are futile in this case. No-one would suggest that Local Authority's are model landlords, but alternatives leave people thinking of Rachmanism and absentee landlords. Our aim is to make self-management an inherent feature of the type of society we want, therefore methods which are currently available can be used. We should not be deterred by calls of 'reformist' from leftists and anarchists. We should be involved in, for example, Tenant Management CoOps, stressing that structures should not be dominated by Party hacks and apologists, and should not be under the

CONTINUED ON P.7

CUBA

This letter was originally sent to the anarchist conference on Eastern Europe held in Trieste in April. Reprinted from "East European News" by the USA (US section of the IMA).

Dear Comrades

The Cuban Libertarian Movement, the Guangara Libertaria and the A Mayor Collectives are sending you this open letter to inform you about our present activities and our future goals. We publish two magazines, Guangara Libertaria in Spanish and A Mayor in English and Spanish. We send both magazines to Cuba.

It is well known by our comrades in Western Europe that we, the Cuban anarchists, for more than three decades have been in constant opposition against the totalitarian system of the Caribbean Ceascescu, Fidel Castro. Our goals are the total freedom of the Cuban people against the present government and when this is

achieved we will continue the struggle to reactivate the libertarian and anarcho-syndicalist effort which was started among our people more than 150 years ago and, because of the repression of the marxist-leninist dictatorship, has gone underground.

We would like to declare the following:

1) The Cuban people are in the same economic, social and political difficulties that the people of Eastern Europe before 1989 and because of the pressure applied by your people were finally changed. Our libertarian struggle is against the same type of dictatorship you had in the past.

2) The Cuban anarchists have been in exile for more than 30 years and we are still in the barricades for freedom, without the solidarity and the international aid if the majority of libertarian or anarcho-syndicalist groups, movements or individuals from Western Europe. These "comrades" never listened to our explanations or opinions regarding Castro and in many cases they refused to accept our arguments and favored the enemies of freedom. Because of this deplorable

attitude great damage has been caused to the Cuban anarchists inside Cuba.

3) Inside Cuba there is a libertarian and anarchist conscience among the young people of the new generation.

4) We would like to express our concern, as the comrades from the East and West, in relation to the nationalistic and religious movements and also the militaristic attitudes which by centuries have become the real enemies of freedom and progress.

5) Finally we thank the Gruppo Anarchio Germinal for the opportunity given to us to communicate with our comrades from the East and to use this occasion to congratulate you for the dedication to the ideals of Bakunin, Proudhon, Maletesta and others and to offer you solidarity and support for your struggle. We also remind all in the workshop of the necessity of the same solidarity, international support and respect from all of you to the Cuban anarchists in this very difficult moment in our struggle for freedom.

Salud,

MOVIMENTO LIBERTARIO CUBANO
COLECTIVO GUANGARA LIBERTARIA
COLECTIVO A MAYOR

Miami, March 1990

A Burning Issue

Saturday April 21 and over a hundred people appeared from nowhere in the Library Square, Crewe. People from all walks of life united in their determination to do one thing - to publically burn their Poll Tax bills and payment books. Considering the event was planned secretly, the turnout was double that expected.

Each of us burned our bill one at a time to thunderous cheers. This was an orderly event that took over an hour, with no one getting impatient and no trouble caused. We put this down to the fact that there were no police present.

The event passed smoothly and we enjoyed being enter-

tained by the jugglers performing in front of their 'Balls to the Poll Tax' banner. We wondered how it could be that we had such good fortune. We soon found out why - although the square where we were at was in view of the police station, the coppers (who had found out about the event) were waiting at the wrong square. Thanks for the laugh, lads!

This first bill burning ceremony in Crewe was a confidence builder for the whole town. Out of over 40,000 people eligible to burn their Poll Tax bills only 2,000 have made the first payment on time. Most of the town is organised into area unions under the umbrella of Crewe Anti Poll Tax Union. In some areas every other window displays a 'Dont Pay' poster and 'Burning the Poll Tax' has become a children's game.

Thanks, Margaret Thatcher - you've given us a winner!
Mark, Crewe,

Non accidental death of an anarchist

The following leaflet was handed out by members of South Yorkshire DAM and Steel City Anarchist Group at a performance of the Bolshoi Ballet in Sheffield last month.

On the 5th of May this year, PIETR PIETROVITCH SIOUDA was found beaten to death in Novocherkassk in southern Russia. Pietr who was 53 years old had been investigating the Novocherkassk workers uprising and massacre that occurred in 1962 when Pietr was 25 years old.

Pietr had been successful in his investigative work and had a few days before his assassination announced that he was to release the names of the K.G.B. responsible for ordering the massacre to the press.

It does not take a Sherlock Holmes to work out who his killers were.

Pietr as an anarchist and a founding member of the KAS (Anarcho Syndicalist Federation) last year, was well aware that the changes going on in the USSR are only skin deep. Despite the talk of democracy and freedom the USSR like all states will always resort to the iron fist against those who expose and oppose it.

Unfortunately Pietr paid with his life in an attempt to uncover the butchers and thugs who are clearly still part of the USSR's state

apparatus.

The Novocherkassk workers' uprising took place in 1962, when cuts in wages and price rises led to strikes and demonstrations. These were smashed by surrounding the town and sending in the tanks. Hundreds were killed and wounded and whole family groups deported to Siberia and many were executed.

We are demonstrating at this event, in order to let the Soviet state know that Pietr and his fellow comrades are not isolated people but part of an international movement.

We do not expect those going into this event to boycott it as the vast majority will no doubt be middle class and of the opinion that the massacre of the Novocherkassk workers was a good thing and its a pity it wasn't done here, to the miners, poll tax demonstrators, etc.

We do not demand an enquiry into this killing or the convictions of the minions who carried it out as there is only one thing we wish to see of all state security services and that is their total destruction.

We do not mourn our comrade Pietr Pietrovitch Siouda but we will not forget him, or his killers or those who are vocal in their support of his death.

GUANGARA LIBERTARIA

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY CONTINUED

One of the examples which is frequently put forward as successful community activity is the role of the Womens Support Groups during the 1984/85 Strike. Whilst no-one would deny the fantastic work done by some groups and individuals, plus the tremendous solidarity and support shown by the working class internationally, the groups ultimately failed. They did not bring about permanent change within the communities because they failed to challenge the social democratic structures of labourism.

Many groups were not independent of the NUM and were dominated by the politics of the NUM and Labour Party. Many men (and women) resented the women who went on picket lines, or who left villages for 'foreign' parts - these women were leaving not only their allotted roles but were discovering life outside the suffocating confines of acceptable behaviour.

A further problem for many of the groups was that they were set up quickly and without the benefit of existing structures or experience. So they were caught between the ineffectuality of spontaneity and the bankruptcy of social democracy.

LOCALS

We will definitely need 'locals', actual physical buildings if we are to develop our community strategy. These would be centres for meetings, socials, creches, research, ie co-ordinating centres. But how we develop them, fund them and what comes first, the building or the activity are questions we have to address. This section does not claim to be the definitive answer to our community strategy. But it is imperative that our community activity is taken on with the same enthusiasm and will that the Industrial Networks are expected to generate. Tradition

ional British anarchist responses to community activity are no longer viable. We must work within our working class communities, in the campaigns that are taking place so that we can put forward alternatives to insipid social democratic structures which we know are bound to fail, and to press for longterm positive approaches which will help to build our goal of a libertarian working class culture.

It is the importance of community as well as industrial work which gives anarcho-syndicalism its uniqueness and separateness from left groups. It is our strategy in the community which we have to thoroughly discuss and find answers to. Yes, workers live in communities and we should end the false division between producer and consumer. The crossfertilisation of activity within industry and community will generate the sort of strategies and activities necessary for us to influence and win the hearts and minds of working class people to an anarcho-syndicalist society.

DIRECT ACTION

NEW ADDRESS
P.O.Box 106
Rotherham S60 1NW

Murphy's Law

The people knicked in the West End the evening of the 'Battle of Trafalgar' are not the only scapegoats for the State's inability to force the Poll Tax on us, even by naked police violence. Class War Federation spokesperson Andy Murphy was found working in Hackney Council's Housing Finance department. Not to be outdone by the Tories when there's a reactionary cause to embrace, an order went out from the highest level of the Labour Party to the Council Leadership to get rid of this agitator who thinks 'rioters' are heroes.

Andy is the Federation's established spokesperson, and it has never been a secret where he works, but when 'anarchists' were blamed for the trouble by everyone from Militant rightwards, and he defended the people who fought back, the stakes rose. On Tuesday 3rd April, when the All-Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation were giving out a statement blaming anarchists to the TUC's 'secret lobby' outside, Andy came up at Prime Minister's Question Time. A Tory MP invited Thatcher to agree that Hackney Council should sack Andy, and she rabbit on about people ignoring the 'democratic process'.

So Andy was suspended on the Wednesday, supposedly while allegations of 'potential gross misconduct' were investigated. NALGO, Andy's union, responded that his comments were unrelated to his employment, did not mention the Council and took place in his own time (he had taken advice from Personnel, who said that interviews were OK as long as they were in his own time). The decision to suspend him was clearly political, and reliable information says it came from Kinnock's private office.

Easter and bad organisation kept a collective response off until mid April, when

the biggest Branch meeting since last summer's pay strikes voted to withdraw from the 'Code of Official Conduct' under which Andy was being done, to call an immediate 24 hour strike and ballot on further action if Andy was disciplined. One week later on the 26th a further meeting voted to strike on 2nd May unless the suspension was lifted, because the 'investigation' had not yet begun and the suspension was clearly punitive.



Since the local elections were on 3rd May, and NALGO refused to exempt election workers from strike action, this achieved some movement from the Council. On the Monday an agreement was reached lifting the suspension, saying that there would be no charge of 'gross misconduct' for which Andy could be sacked, although a minor charge might arise from the investigation, which was continuing. The strike was called off (it would not have been sustainable), and Andy was not to make public statements until discussions had happened between the Council and the unions over employee conduct.

This was widely hailed as a victory, by NALGO and by Thatcher, who responded to a planted question on 1st May by condemning NALGO, Hackney Council workers, and the Labour Party (for caving in). On Wednesday it was obvious that we had been conned, when a new 'investigation' was announced: into 'what Class War stands for'.

The investigation consisted of eight questions to Andy about the contents of the latest issue of the paper, which he declined to answer on principle.

The Council disciplined Andy on 8th May, for having unauthorised contact with the media in circumstances which indicated he worked for the Council (misconduct); for supporting the Class War Federation, the 'aims and principles of...which are incompatible with the responsibilities of the Council and its employees' (gross misconduct). The second charge amounted to political vetting.

The union response to that was twofold. In the first instance NUPE got a resolution unanimously passed through Hackney Labour Party's Borough Conference, the body which makes Council policy, supporting the right of Council employees to freely express political views and support organisations other than fascist ones. The second charge against Andy is in direct breach of this policy. The second move was to vote at a Branch Meeting to ballot on all out indefinite strike action to get all charges against Andy dropped.

Council officials ignored the first move with the support of the Council Leader, and pressed ahead with a disciplinary hearing. The result of the hearing, given on 14th June, was that there would be no punishment of Andy. Although this is a partial victory an attempt is still being made to gag Andy. The reason given for no action is that he had not been shown the Code (which NALGO is supposed to have torn up) and since he should now 'know better'. He will be done for 'gross misconduct' if he talks to the press again.

There is a difference of opinions within NALGO about

the current status of the Code. Some of us believe we decided to tear it up, and only agree to a replacement if it contains guarantees against political vetting. Others think we have decided to negotiate its withdrawal and replacement. It is vital that the first view wins out at this stage, for if the Council gags Andy they will have won and also set a precedent for political vetting of council workers.

Political vetting currently takes place in the BBC and for higher civil service grade, carried out by MI5, the secret police. It also happens in much of private industry using the Economic League, where it is used to victimise and blacklist union activists. In West Germany there is the 'Berufssverbot', under which members of proscribed organisations are banned from employment by the state at any level.

RASH

There is a rash of victimisations going on in local government at the moment, especially in London, to curtail resistance to cuts and policy changes forced by the Poll Tax on Labour Councils. But Andy's has the most serious implications, as it suggests that the Labour Party will use vetting as a weapon to crush dissent to its left when it comes into government on a right wing programme. The 'democratic process' That-

cher values is not an exercise of choice by the electorate, it is an exercise in defining the boundaries of acceptable political dissent by the ruling class.



This has implications for the strategy of radical movements and working class organisation. Militant blame a 'minority of extremists' for the violence on 31st March because to admit that the police attacked a demo is to admit that their strategy of 'peaceful' lobbying and Labour entryism is bankrupt. Similarly, the Socialist Workers' Party claimed that a massive vote for Labour on 3rd May would make it easier to fight the Poll Tax and Andy's victimisation, unable to see that the Council would see it as a mandate to stomp on radical opposition. The threat of industrial action was the only thing between Andy Murphy and the sack. It is by direct action that we win 'rights'. We must defeat political vetting which is aimed at weeding out those of us who recognise this.

NR (N.London)

Students Lose Out

From September, most students will be excluded from getting housing benefit. As part of the loan scheme, all students except those with children, pensioners, people with disabilities and those on income support will be removed from the benefit system. In high cost areas such as London and the South East the effects will be particularly hard. Currently, students get benefit if their rent is above £29.19 a week in London and £18.67 elsewhere. Grants have

fallen in real terms and students will no longer get housing benefit during the holidays. It's already nearly impossible for working class youth to go on to higher education. It's not getting any easier under a government who truly believe that 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing'.

