DIRECT ACTION

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Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

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Direct Action is the newspaper of the Direct Action Movement, British Section of the International Workers Association, which has sections in France, Spain, Italy, Norway, Germany, Japan, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, U.S.A, and Finland.

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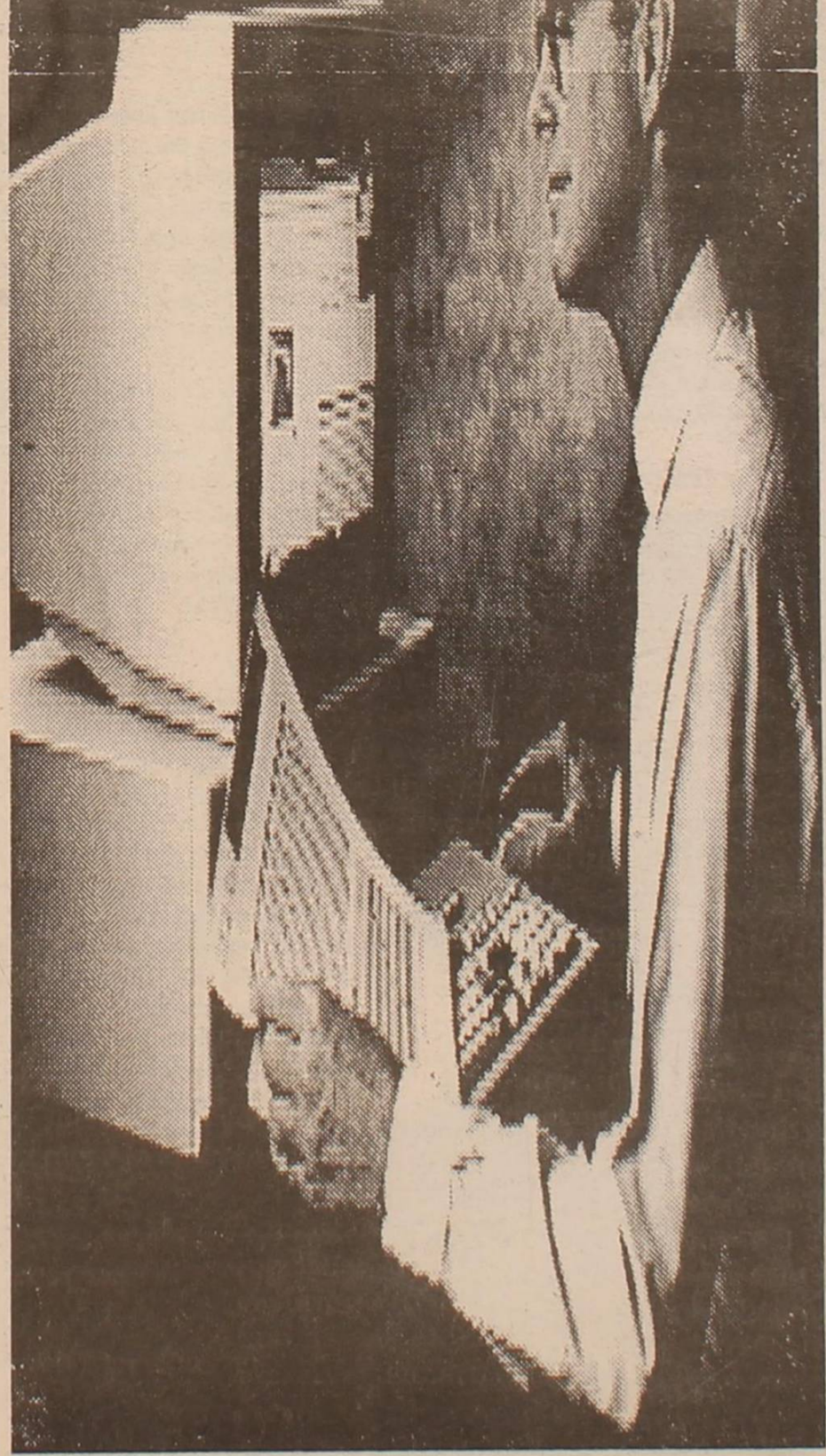

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BACKCHAT

EDITORIAL COMMENT

OPS OUT!

The Tories bleating about how they have no intention of privatising the NHS may be a preamble to them doing precisely that. Goebbel's propaganda machine partly depended on strongly denying an intention in order to raise it as a possiblity.

Whether or not the Tories have an opportunity to sell what's left of our health to their friends in commerce is of little practical concern to health service employees.

The ethos of the NHS, introduced by the new business school management, is already one based primarily on financial considerations. Clinical decisions are made by accountants, regardless of health needs.

The 'internal market' and the 'opt in, opt out, shake it all about' debate means that in reality no one in the health service knows what the hell is going on from one moment to the another. Job security is practically out the window and resources for patient care have sunk to new depths. In London, patient choice means choosing which hospital you can't get into because they have no beds.

The current state of the NHS is nothing new, it has been underfunded since its creation. The Tories' destruction of the NHS is also bringing into focus its inherent inadequacies. The main cause of ill health is poverty. The welfare state never intended to eradicate poverty, merely keep a reserve labour pool so other workers keep their mouths shut.

The one thing that neither Tories or Labour would ever recognise is that the best people to run a health service are those that work in it and the communities they serve.

DIRECT ACTION
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For a revolutionary Anarchist (Non-governmental) society through Syndicalism (the struggle for workers control) to free communism (common ownership and no state).

LETTERS

Dear DA

It is worth giving more consideration than a hasty response to the question of unionising the armed forces. An anti-militarist is not just one who doesn't join the armed forces when not called upon to do so, it needs more than that. By calling for unionisation one is not encouraging people to join the Army. (Calling for unionisation of prisoners won't make people clamour to get inside so they can be in a really good union; it may make their demands to get out more cogent.)

It is rubbish (other than geographic) to say Catterick is not Kronstadt. The soldiers' councils formed in Egypt in 1946 were largely composed of people who came through Catterick. They got the troops out of Egypt - lots of nebulous bodies today call for a Labour Government to get them out of Ireland. They couldn't do so then (a Labour Government was in power) so they went on strike. Nebulous soldiers' councils indeed!

The bogey is that because disciplined troops behave badly in Ireland, troops organising and able to act in their own interests will do so. Those who want to be there are unlikely to organise. Those who don't want to be there have no other effective way of pressing their views.

OK, so no unions in the armed forces, no soldiers' councils; if you're in, it was of your own free will and if you're opposed, you should have kept out. Surely on reflection, Dino and others should worry that the Government supports this point of view wholeheartedly?

Sincerely, Albert

Dear DA

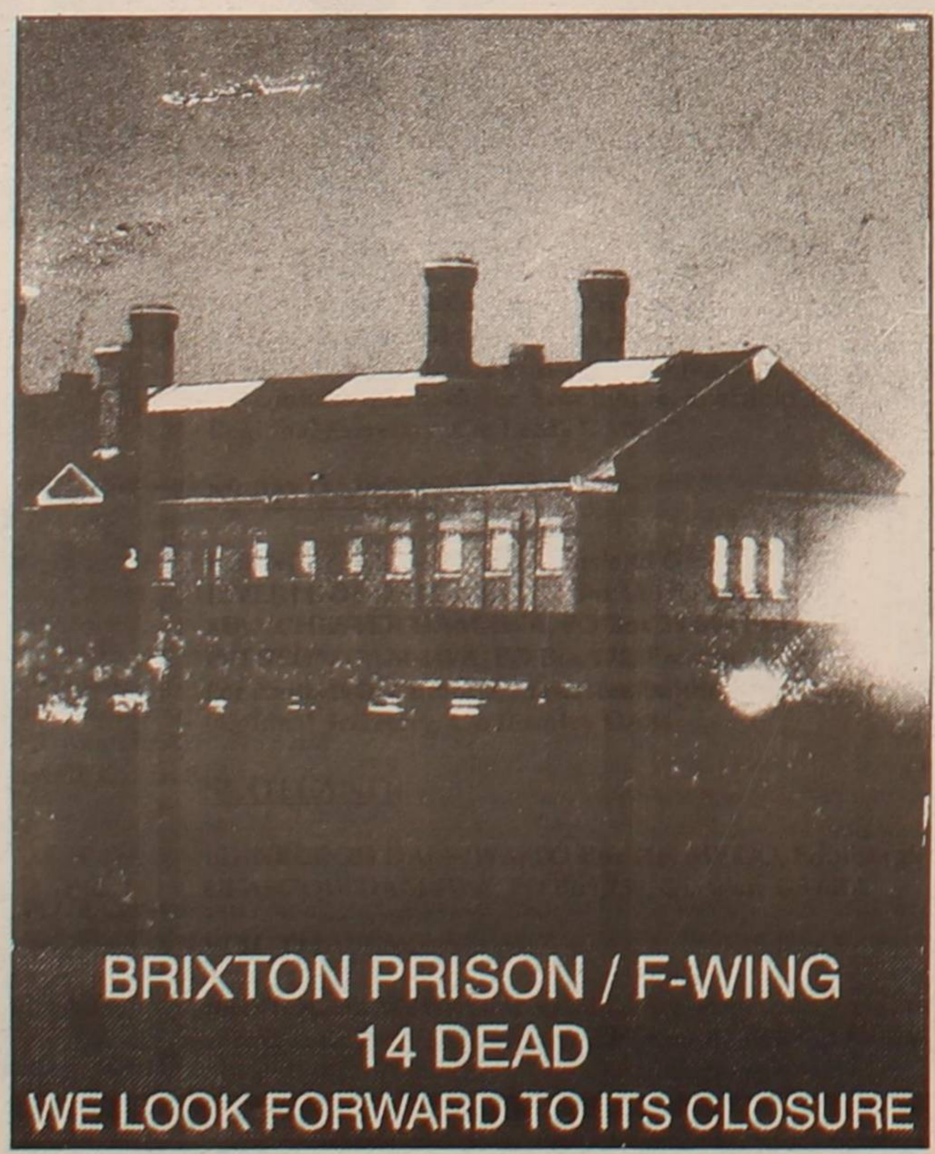
Whilst I agree with the whole principle of Direct Action, I find it surprising that nobody seems to have had the obvious thought that the first action that people like us ought to take is action to put our own personal lives in order.

Just a few hundred people who think like we do could, for a few hundred pounds sterling each, quite easily form an Organic Farming Co-operative and, with the price of agricultural land depressed as it is, buy a small farm.

Those who wished to do so could live there permanently (there is no problem with planning permission for 'employees' accommodation on agricultural land and we would all, of course, officially be 'employed' by the co-operative) and those who, for whatever reason, could only spend a part of the year there would be free to do so.

Such a move would do more for the environment than would handing out a million leaflets or appearing on a demo every week for the rest of our lives. Anyone prepared to put their money where their mouth is and help to organise something on these lines should drop me a line at PO Box 29, Lancaster, LA2 9RR.

Tim Hebberd



Dear Tim

Whilst we are pleased that you agree with the prinicple of Direct Action, we feel that you have little idea of what that means.

People's personal lives are not 'in order' because of the social environment that surrounds us. A happy hippy farm might be nice for a summer holiday, but Direct Action and anarcho-syndicalism are not about being 'nobly poor' or turning your back on all the shit that goes on in this world.

Direct Action is not about 'a few hundred people' with 'a few hundred pounds' growing organic tomatoes while Rome burns, but about creating revolutionary structures within this society. Structures that are capable of organising society through self-management and SOLIDARITY.

Dear Comrades

The blurb/appeal for Phoenix Press in DA seems a bit out of place, to put it mildly. Their track record is publishing crap — when they got round to anarcho-syndicalist reprints by Tom Brown they didn't exactly cover themselves with glory in their introduction. I'm not saying they should never be supported, maybe one day they'll do something right, but Joe Jacobs' 'Out of the Ghetto' seemed to me best forgotten. Bet you never read the first edition. His political position could be summed up as anti-CP Stalinism. The CP expelled him (later he crawled back) for his industrial activities, but he was forever a Stalinist. He was a nice guy and a good union agitator, but his politics stank. Pheonix wouldn't bother, DA should.

Bern

Dear Comrades,

Over a few years I got a bit of a local reputation as a propagandist against fascism, whether deserved or not is another matter. As many young white males on my council estate, whether working or unemployed, were being led astray by race division, I put the case for working class solidarity, it's as simple as that. It led to many a punch-up in the process.

Perhaps hearing a hyped-up version of this, a journalist — out of the 'alternative culture' if you please, not a 'Sun' type, but with that mentality — contacted me last week. He had heard that a well known, though hardly famous, actor who originated locally was "an NF member in his youth". (I didn't know him then, so don't know if it's true — he must have been under seventeen. I do now know him to be an active supporter of anti-fascist causes for the past fifteen years.)

"I don't want to malign him unnecessarily," says this investigator smugly, but he's preparing an "exposure" and wants his facts right.

Why does the bum think I waste my time bringing them over if it's going to be a slur all their life, no matter how they atone?

Kev

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE (No. 77)

23RD NOV 1991

COMMENT

SYNDICALISM REVISITED

"I fancy we shall hear less of syndicalism from now on". — Philip Snowden (theTU boss and leading parliamentary socialist opponent of syndicalism - later a Tory Minister with MacDonald) - on the formation of the first Labour Government.

In the twilight of trade unionism as we have known it, we should reassess not only its proven failings but its undoubted benefits, and fail to do this at our peril. In the pre-Thatcher era, trade unionism had more power in some industries than others, built up by the sacrifices and solidarity of ordinary members. Its success can be judged by the response of its enemies. For years legal restrictions were placed upon it to prevent its effective force. One by one those restrictions went, and then in the last decade they came back.

When the great syndicalist campaign swept British trade unionism, the pros and cons were hotly debated — first between syndicalism and socialist trade unionism — later between the two aims of syndicalism, whether it was power by the trade unions as distinct from the party, or whether it was to be what was later called anarcho-syndicalism, a total alternative to government at all. The arguments of those who put their faith in Parliament are ironic when you think one of them was that industrial unionism or even inter-craft solidarity were outlawed. That has come back in one form or another with the new bans on secondary picketing and legal responsibilities of officials. One argument was that if one party legalised trade unionism, this would stay forever and would not be undone by another.

The negative side of trade unionism is well known, how it subordinates workers' interests to political considerations and acts as a brake upon their struggles, But for all that, one only has to look at the unorganised, or those whose organisation has been reduced to impotence, to see both the need for trade unionism rather than nothing, and the contrast of syndicalist effectiveness.

THE UNEMPLOYED

The total hopelessness of the position of the unemployed worker, totally dependent on the State and — even if when at work a trade unionist, unable to organise except (it would seem) in an ineffective political way — shows the negative side of trade unionism.

The capitalist system requires a percentage of unemployed to the working population. There is no incentive to working hard for low pay if this does not exist. The calculation as to how many are needed is a purely political decision, like the decision by a military dictatorship as to how many people need to be shot or imprisoned. The first is presented as economic necessity, the second as military necessity but both are artificially created, like war, inflation or recesssion, and are not natural catastrophes (as pretended), like earthquakes are and famine, flood or drought can be.

It was the Parliamentary socialist conception of trade unionism in the British labour movement that caused it to think of the problem of unemployment with its attendant misery to be left to the State. which nowadays perpetuates it. The Communist Party idea of alternative 'red' unions led to the unemployed workers movement which provided publicity by demonstrations for the unemployed but offered no immediate solutions. Today there has grown up a widely-spread 'libertarian' approach which idealises not-working, seems to regard unemployment as its utopia and dependence on the State as defiance of it.

Had the syndicalist movement had its way and not been rejected by the majority of workers seeking the easy way out, it would have been the unions that controlled the fallback against unemployment. The parliamentary socialist idea, originally pressed on the Liberal Party, was that employers' and workers' contributions should insure against unemployment. This was controlled by the State, making a profit out of it, and paying back what it regarded as largesse (and called 'dole'). The State 'doling' out money intentionally made people feel dependent on it. Had the unions handled the scheme (as they did in Sweden), collecting both sets of contributions, it would have been different. Even the worst bureaucratic union, however undemocratic, would be better handling unemployment insurance, even if through an insurance company, than a department of State, and people would not feel humiliated, any more than car owners do when picking up their insurance claims.

However bureaucratic a union, it could hardly refuse to regard its own officially called out (at least) striking workers as unemployed of their own accord, and not entitled to benefit, thus solving the problem of strike pay, which is the very reason capitalists dislike the idea. A union which stood by its members and saw no distinction between 'official' and 'unofficial' strikes would be enabled to do so.

This basic syndicalist proposal — which went at the heart of the unemployment problem under capitalism though nowhere near its solution under workers control — was derided by socialist politicians with faith in the State.

THE HOSPITALS

However, many of the more advanced unions adopted exactly this system as regards health insurance. They took advantage of the fact that when it was introduced, contributors 'on the panel' paid into friendly societies, hospital trusts, co-ops and the like. In mining areas, for instance, the miners clubs acting as a friendly society collected the subscriptions and employed their own doctors. (Medical officers coming from the middle class hated the system, as can be supposed). The National Health Service was an advance on private and charitable medicine, but it wasn't as good as the other system it replaced, it simply got more money from more contributors (which now is taken back to subsidise income tax). The drawbacks of the old system (normally covering only gainfuly employed) were remediable. They were due to the fact that it got no funding, whereas the NHS was State supported. Now almost every one the benefits the State gave the State has taken away, and even if one government gave them back, another can sacrifice them.

THE CATERING TRADES

Nothing illustrates the difference between trade unionism as we know it and syndicalism more than the catering trades. In some industries trade unionism in its heyday made great strides, in some approaching self-management. Never has it made the least inroad into the catering trades, beyond some token attempts by the Transport & General Workers Union. In the main these remain casual, unorganised, exploited and of course symbolise the difference between trade unionism at its worst and not being organised at all.

Yet in the heyday of syndicalism in Spain the catering trades were the best organised of all industries, so much that it was the Sindicato Gastronomico that launched the resistance in Barcelona to the fascist uprising in 1936. How come that it was so strong? Waiters, cooks, casual kitchen staff, above all, hundreds of small bars which are still make up Barcelona catering trade, do not appear to the trade unionist to be ideal material for militancy. But being organised on an industrial basis, by which even strikes affecting two or three people could paralyse the trade if tied up with solidarity by van drivers, brewery workers, food suppliers, they allowed both for individual action and class solidarity, which is the unique mixture that makes for anarcho-syndicalism.

SHOREDITCH CLASS WAR RIOT... ...TURNED INTO A CONFERENCE

The last week of September saw a very ambitious conference take place in Shoreditch, East London. Subtitled 'Our Time Has Come', it was organised by Class War Federation (CWF). In the introduction to the programme, CWF said "This conference is just part of the new revolutionary movement that is .... growing throughout Europe." It being the Conference season, it attracted a lot of media attention. All of it was widely off-beam (some more than others, of course — take a bow 'The Star'). Many of the overseas participants were interviewed by the press.

Given that it was their first attempt, it was surprisingly well organised. Some things will have to change if it's going to happen again, though. The lack of simultaneous translation effectively excluded the non-English speakers, and made the debates very slow. The days were too long when the fringe meetings and socials were included. And it was hell for those there with kids, as with the late starts (after 11 am most days) and the 12 to 1.30 lunch breaks when the crèche was shut, they became difficult to amuse quietly. At any such conference there needs to be a permanent crèche, including lunch time.

If you'd been expecting a load of drongo 'soap-dodgers' there, you'd have been in the wrong place. Most of the British delegates were ordinary young working class women and men, although they weren't all young. Conspicuous amongst the more articulate were former members of Militant, used to a lot more workplace-oriented activity.

Of the overseas delegates there was a large contingent from Germany, who effectively had their own conference due to language problems. There were also activists from Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Poland, Italy, Greece, France, Ireland, Spain, the USA and Canada. The promised representatives from Israel, the Phillipines or Russia didn't show.

Most of the workshops and sessions were basic libertarian socialist revolutionary politics. CWF have identified reformism as being the biggest obstacle to revolutionary consciousness. The world situation post the Warsaw Pact, 1992, the New World Order, and their effects on the working class were all discussed. However, the analysis of a lot of subjects, like 'World Capitalism', was stale. It is clear that CWF have not reached any concensus on a lot of issues. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it is a bit unreasonable to present ideas to other working class militants when they're not fully worked out.

'Women in the Revolutionary Movement' and 'Black Struggles' were run parallel to each other. This caused some criticism, particularly from the women who organised a separate meeting, which made a statement to the Conference.

The sessions on workplace organisation were particularly interesting. Generally CWF, influenced by London council communist members, will dismiss Anarcho-Syndicalism. However, CWF do support syndicalist methods, particularly those who have worked in unions, and organised at work. The session I was in was led by a postal worker who spoke of the need for autonomous working class organisation in the workplace.

The highlight of the speakers was Dave Douglass of Hatfield Main NUM. Dave contrasted the big set-peice battles of the miners' strike as advocated by Arthur Scargill, and the left, with the miners' own tactics. The miners used guerilla warfare, drawing on their own organisation and solidarity. Hit squads, flying pickets, the wom en's organisations all came from the rank and file miners' experience of direct action.

Overall, the Conference was a success in as far as anything like this can be. Plenty of comrades met each other, and many good contacts were made. Most participants undoubtedly learnt something. However, in terms of anything concrete, such as a new international movement, nothing much was likely to happen without a clear programme in advance.

Looking to the future, the Class War Federation needs to address the conflict between its public face and the everyday politics of its members. Its dismissal of anarcho-syndicalism as a means of fighting the class struggle is contradicted strongly by the fact that CWF members who do attempt to organise in the workplace use syndicalist methods and tactics to do so.

It is unfortunate that the Class War Federation has slipped into making the same basic mistakes as the Anarchist Communist Federation. Firstly they both support the idea of workers organising independently in the workplace, but do not have any particular strategy or tactics on how to do this. Secondly, they are both too often found chasing the coat tails of the Socialist Workers Party, their activities and politics being a reaction to the agenda set by the left.

Anarchists in Britain need to realise that our primary activity must be to organise in the workplace, that this is a difficult and lengthy process, and that we need a strategy to achieve it. Anarcho-syndicalism has such a coherent strategy. Join us and the other sections of the International Workers Association in building for the future.

URGENT FINANCIAL APPEAL FOR TANKS & DRUMS STRIKERS

115 TGWU members at Tanks & Drums at Speke in Liverpool have been sacked for taking official strike action in support of a pay claim. The workers have been on official strike now for nearly 4 months and have been given support for their dispute by the T&G Solidarity Group. Before the strike, members were being paid £2.69 per hour, and management offered a 5.5% pay rise! Having balloted for industrial action, and got the sanction of the general secretary, the members came out on strike.

The company have attempted to use the courts and the 1990 Act — through to the Court of Appeal — to get the action declared unlawful, but have lost at each stage. They have now applied to take the case to the House of Lords. Having issued an ultimatum to return to work within 2 weeks, which was rejected by the strikers, the company sacked all 115 members on strike. They are now threatening court action to prevent picketing at the plant, and are bussing in scabs daily to do the strikers' jobs. The strike caravan also got 'mysteriously' burnt out within 24 hours of being there.

Tanks & Drums have several plants in Britain, but the only unionised factory is at Speke. They are refusing to meet with the strikers and have threatened closure before negotiation. They are clearly intent on breaking union organisation within the company.

Despite the strike being official, it has had little or no publicity from the Union, and the strikers are desperately in need of financial and physical support. They are determined to win this dispute, even if it means closing the factory down, but they need the solidarity of other activists to do it. The strikers are mounting a weekday picket at the plant from 7.30 am each morning, with mass pickets being held every Monday. If you can make it the factory is on Goodlars Road, Speke, Liverpool 24 (next to Liverpool Airport).

Send donations and messages of support to: Vinny Tuzio, Senior Steward, Tanks & Drums Dispute, c/o TGWU, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool (cheques payable to 'TGWU(Tanks & Drums)'.

If unable to express your solidarity in a more direct manner you could pass the following resolution at your next union branch/other organisation meeting:

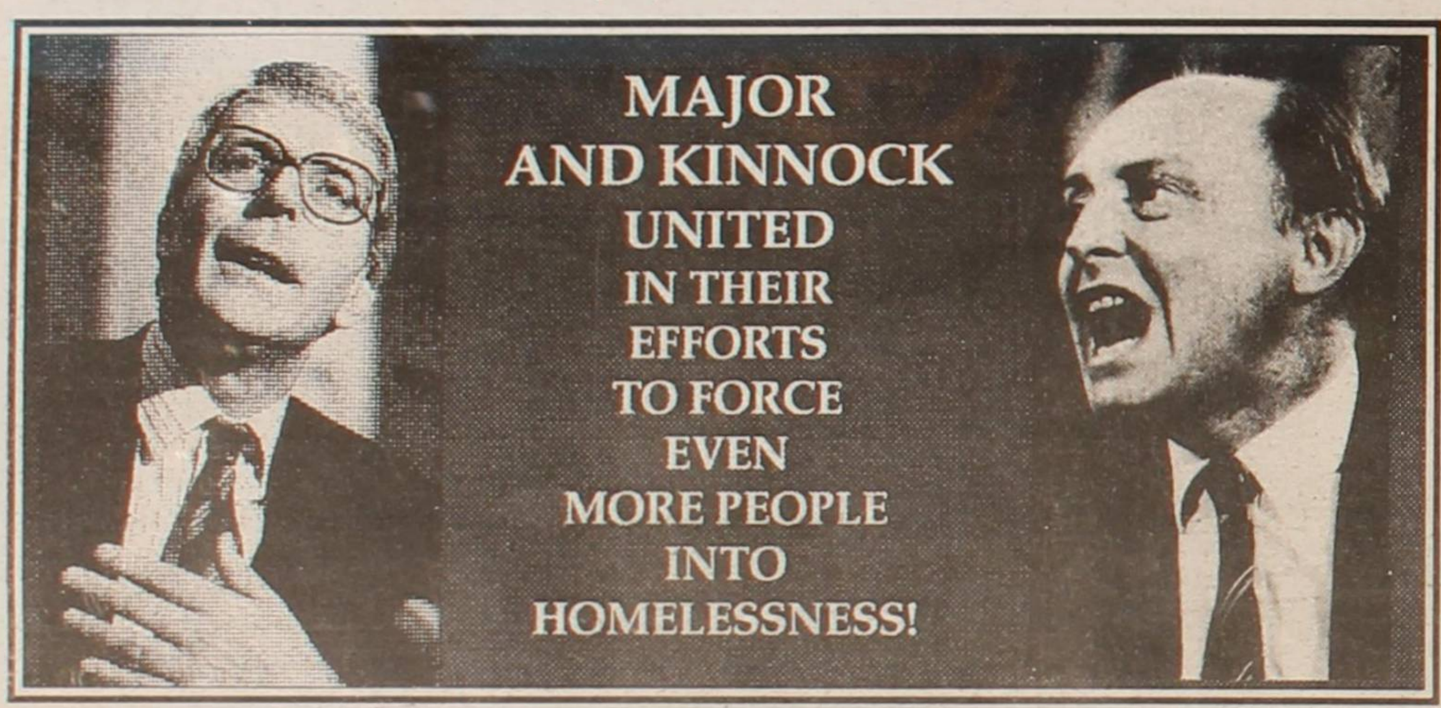
"This branch/organisation notes the current strike by workers at Tanks & Drums in Speke, Liverpool. It applauds the courage of workers who have been on strike for over 6 months. We agree to donate £_____ to the strike fund".

As anarcho-syndicalists we must support the actions of the strikers, we must encourage solidarity actions, be they fundraising or more direct support. The strikers are keen to contact any one who wishes them to speak at meetings, be they branch, stewards or workplace meetings. The strikers will also speak at any public meetings or community group meetings. The strikers are planning to picket a number of Tanks & Drums suppliers and will need as much support as possible to make the action effective.

It's vital that strikes like this one are won. The 'right to strike' does not exist unless we fight for it. Other workers should be urged to boycott any products or materials connected with Tanks & Drums. We need to work hard at grass roots level to encourage solidarity aciton wherever possible.

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE — SUPPORT THE TANKS & DRUMS STRIKERS!

(Information from T&G Solidarity Group bulletin)



CRIMINALISING SQUATTING

It had to happen eventually. Considering the other reactionary laws passed by the current Tory government they've actually taken a surprisingly long time getting round to it. All housing legislation passed by this and past Tory governments has been of the 'landlord's best friend' variety. The Labour party has generally behaved in a similar if not so brutal way. This time however, they are very keen. Since they decided to compete with the Tories for the title of 'the party of law and order', they have sanctioned every bit of anti-working class brutality which has come along. The opportunity of being seen as assisting this government in getting rid of 'all these awful hippy types' is an opportunity they can't miss.

Squatters are being portrayed in a somewhat stereotypical fashion. The state sees squats as hotbeds of subversism, squatters as selfish layabouts who people's homes. It's about time the powers that be were shown what we think of such shit. The portrayal of squatters as people who break into other people's homes the moment they nip out to the shops or go on holiday is a pathetic lie. Most squats originate in buildings which have been lying empty for some time, usually in a state of disrepair due to the fact that no one has lived there for many years, never mind the last five minutes or so! Squatting is usually people's last resort in terms of housing; it is insecure, leaves you open to police harrassment, and most importantly, it is only temporary.

Quite simply, if there was enough safe, secure and affordable housing to rent, people would no longer be forced into the position where they had to squat. One of the government's claims is that lawful occupiers have to wait a long time and spend a lot of money in trying to get back into their home. This 'lawful occupier' situation almost exclusively applies to situations where a council house has been pre-let to a named prospective tenant, but the property has then been occupied by squatters. In such situations it is possible to get into court within days and regain possession of the property within a week or so. This process is neither lengthy nor expensive. The government is merely throwing up a smokescreen to cover up the real problem — homelessness. Squatting is merely a symptom of homelessness, an attempt by people to regain some control over their housing.

Homelessness is at an all time high in Britain. In 1990, 145,800 households were accepted as homeless by councils in England (This probably represents over 400,000 individuals). These figures are only the tip of a very large iceberg because they only include those homeless households defined as being in 'priority need' for rehousing. This does not, for example, include single homeless people.

The national housing charity, Shelter, estimates that there are currently 3 million people without housing in Britain.
Shelter states that "a decent, affordable home should be available to everybody as a basic human right." DAM agrees with this statement, but also realises that the only way such a position can be attained is by removing a system which treats housing as a commodity to buy and sell on the market place.

In the long term we need to build organisations to fight against landlords, be they council, housing associations, or private landlords, to take back our land and our housing to distribute it as WE see fit. In the short term we need to get homeless people the best deal they can get, ensuring people realise what rights they have, meagre though they may be. We also need to defend the right to squat.

If this law is passed, we'll need to confront the bailiffs in a changed position, no laws to protect us; the need to build solidarity action starts now.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER...

Single parents on benefit now face punitive cuts in their income if they refuse to assist the DSS chase up maintenance payments from absent parents, mainly fathers. Benefit penalties for non-compliance with regulations in the recent Child Support Act will lead to single parents on income support losing more than £400 of benefit over an unprecedented 18 month period - 20% of personal allowance (about £8 per week) off the first six months and 10% (around £4 per week) for the remaining twelve. These penalties can be enforced regardless of any other benefit deductions a claimant may already be suffering.

Single mothers will bear the brunt of the state's search for ex-partners and the onus will be on them to prove to DSS Child Special Unit officials why they should be exempt from naming anyone on certain grounds, such as "genuine fear of violence" from an absent father.

The majority of single parents are on income support at present, and most of them co-operate with the DSS, but they will not see any increase in their subsistence income even if maintenance is paid to them, because it is deducted from benefit. They can only remain caught in the Government sanctioned poverty trap. None of the estimated £400 millions these measures will carve from the Social Security Budget is to find its way to support single parents and their children.

Government motives in the Child Support Act are underpinned by the usual mercenary economics, the fundamental goal is to save money at the expense of the poorest families in British society.

RECLAIM THE LANE!

Anti-Fascist Action held a successful demonstration against the fascist British National Party and National Front on October 20th. Under the banner 'Reclaim the Lane', hundreds of anti-fascists assembled in Brick Lane, East London, to oppose the nazis' continued presence in the area.

Despite a national mobilisation by the BNP (it was their Annual Conference that weekend, so all the scum were there) they were heavily outnumbered. They moved off after noon, under police protection. Unfortunately for them, their favourite watering holes had all been shut down. The landlords obviously weren't prepared to risk opening for the motley crew of fire-bombers, boneheads and cowardly bullies that make up the 'master race'.

'Reclaim the Lane' is part of East London AFA's continuing strategy of physical opposition to the nazis, as well as arguing politically with the white working class who the fascists try to recruit. Keep up the fight, and support the **National Demo Against Race Attacks on Sunday 10th November** in London (see page 10 for details).

ORGANISING, EDUCATING AGITATING

"Behind you! Behind you, mister!"

On 3rd October the Offshore Industry Liasons Committee (OILC) set up an independent union. Its initial target of a membership of 3,000 will make it by far the largest offshore union in the UK. The decision to do this came after the failure of talks with unions such as the AEU, EETPU and MSF to come to an agreement where offshore workers would be represented by the OILC.

The large TUC unions have consistently failed to offer any thing to offshore workers, whereas OILC over the last 3 years has been a militant rank and file movement doing far more than the TUC bureaucrats ever could. The final straw came with a new hook-up agreement between tha unions and employers which did virtually nothing for offshore workers.

Predictably reformist bodies such as the Labour Party/SWP have attacked OILC for setting up an independent union, Preferring to see the status quo maintained. In contrast the Norwegian Oil Workers Union (OFS) have welcomed OILC's decision. The OFS is also independent of the LO (Norway's Version of the TUC) and has had considerable success in improving working conditions on the rigs. As a result Norwegian oil workers' conditions are much better than those in Britain. It's unclear as to how the union will be structured, but according to the editorial in *Blowout* (OILC's paper), they prefer to use strikes as a last resort, prefering to concentrate on improving legislation. Considering that the government has, over the last ten years, brought in laws to attack workers rights and working conditions this seems very unrealistic. Direct action has always proved a far more effective way of achieving workers' aspirations. After all, laws are only effective if they are obeyed; bosses openly flout legislation and get away with it. Likewise workers should openly break recent anti-worker legislation to make it unenforcable.

On the plus side OILC want to organise all the workers into an industrial offshore union (this would include catering, construction and drilling workers), a strategy that syndicalists have always supported. There is also talk of letting workers' families join, an idea thrown up by striking miners during the '84/5 strike but rejected by national NUM bureaucrats. Freed from the dead hand of the TUC and Labour party, OILC should be able to go forward as a militant and democratic union. Freed from any ties to a political party, the interests of the workers can be put forward first rather than trail a poor second to those of the party.

If OILC were to have a structure where officials served limited terms of tenure and were instantly recallable by the membership they could avoid going down the same dead end as the TUC unions — whose major concern is to please the employers.

That OILC have been forced to go it alone should come as no surprise. As the TUC declines in membership and influence (not to mention militancy) it is likely that more independent unions will be formed. Not scab unions like the UDM and EETPU, but fighting unions like the OILC. We wish them every success for the future in their fight against the bosses and for safe working conditions on the North Sea.

NOW, JUST WHAT SORT OF UNION IS IT TO BE?

The message to oil workers from this years TUC in Glasgow had all the freshness of a rancid fart in a four-person cabin. Last year the talk included how they would "stop the oil" to support the OILC. This year it seems to have been about how they would stop OILC supporters getting into the hall.

But one good thing did come out of it all. It became clear that we'd been 'unshackled' by the unions. There's little room anymore to kid ourselves on that they are going to come up with any solutions for us. They've done no more in the three years since Piper than they did in the 25 years before it. And that was precious little.

Any gains we've made offshore we've made ourselves. We went out and won support from rank and file trade unionists throughout the country. But in the main it was offshore workers and our families that financed and built the OILC, the Offshore Information Centre, and Blowout. And it was OILC supporters who paid the price in sackings and blackings. Two summers of strikes, and occupations made the employers, the government and the public sit up and take notice of our legitimate grievances about safety and representation offshore. Now we're faced with raising the stakes or, as some prominent trade unionists would advise, jacking the whole thing in.

At recent meetings there has been a strong and united feeling among OILC supporters about the way forward. Opinion has been overwhelmingly for the setting up of an independent offshore union. Great! Now, what kind of organisation will this new 'union' be? The traditional unions have failed us. They've failed to recruit and mobilise anything like a majority of offshore workers. Many people just think that they're irrelevant. And frankly it is no wonder. What have they been offering potential recruits? What do they offer their loyal members for that matter? They can't deliver a single-table approach. And now the hated Offshore Construction Agreement has been signed while union members remain sacked and blacklisted.

If the new union was just going to be for offshore construction workers then it might be OK to debate the issues and take the necessary decisions at routine OILC Standing Committeers are pretty well represented there. But only a few catering workers attend and even fewer drilling workers. Production workers are not represented at all. But if our new union is going to truly represent the offshore workforce then it's surely going to have to break the mould and recruit widely from these groups. So what kind of union are we going to build ? And who's going to make that decision. What do offshore workers want? What kind of organisation will they join? We're going to have to ask them. We're going to have to convince them to tell us.

And then we're going to have to listen. The other way is just to give tham the kind of organisation thats "good for them". And that doesn't sound much different from the union I've been in for 15 years.

Here's a few of the many questions that I feel need to be discussed:

What are the aims and objectives of the new union going to be?

Does it matter or not whether we call ourselves a union? (Does it matter what anyone calls us?)

Isn't it possible to unite both members and non-members of traditional trade unions in our new organisation?

Would our families be eligible to join? Anything we do will affect them. Shouldn't they have a say?

Would our constitution just be a copy ofan existing union constitution?

There are no doubt more important questions than these to be discussed. But surely the job of a new union is not to mimic the old ones. What we need is an effective organisation that will fairly represent our interests and find ways of defending those of us who fall foul of the bandits that run the industry. Not an easy job! But one that would be alot more difficult if we spent our time and energy competing with the old unions. They've already demonstrated their irrelevance out here. We should just let them get on with whatever it is they think they're doing. They're only dangerous offshore as long as anyone takes them seriously anyway.

So can we afford to take this leap without at least trying to find out where we are going to land? We've a great opportunity but we also have serious responsibilities. It's true that time is not really on our side. Every day the installations get older and another catastrophic failure becomes more likely. But if we don't have time to do this thing properly we don't have time to do it at all.

The discussion about what kind of union must get everybody involved. At the end of the day, the success or failure of a new union will be decided by whether or not it captures the imagination of the majority of the workforce. What better way to do that than to make sure the issues are well aired and everybody has their say? That's exactly what Blowout is designed to do. Tell every offshore worker that we're going to go ahead and build a new union. Organise the venues and invite them all to join in the discussion that'll shape that organisation. A proper offshore workers alliance.

The above article was reprinted from Blowout #20, Criterion buildings, 52 Guild Street, Aberdeen, AB1 2NB.

WHO CARES?

New care in the community plans for health and local authorities come into operation in April 1992.

With the emphasis on 'client consultation' and cost effectiveness, managers of social services departments have been discharging a flood of American marketing jargon. The picture we're supposed to get is one of 'clients' shopping around for and choosing the most appropriate service.

Of course the reality is very different. It is insulting rather than 'empowering' to call someone who has been discharged after years on a back ward of a psychiatric hospital a 'customer' or a 'client'. It is fatuous to claim that they have any choice, if indeed they have any service available to them at all. The only people with any choice are those rich enough to pay for private services.

The idea behind client consultation is that people are asked what sort of service they would like. This should not be confused with any sort of real participation in decisions. A pilot 'quality assurance' study into the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Mental Health Service consulted a carefully selected group of users. Those chosen had suffered the longest periods of institutionalisation in psychiatric hospital, were most easily intimidated by management, and were least likely to make any serious demands. On the basis of this managers were able to say that they'd consulted with 'clients'.

In contrast, Kensington and Chelsea, despite opposition from workers and hostel residents,

> **'The only people with any choice are those rich enough to pay for private services'**

have recently dismantled a procedure whereby residents interviewed prospective staff. No one could be taken on unless they'd been okayed by residents.

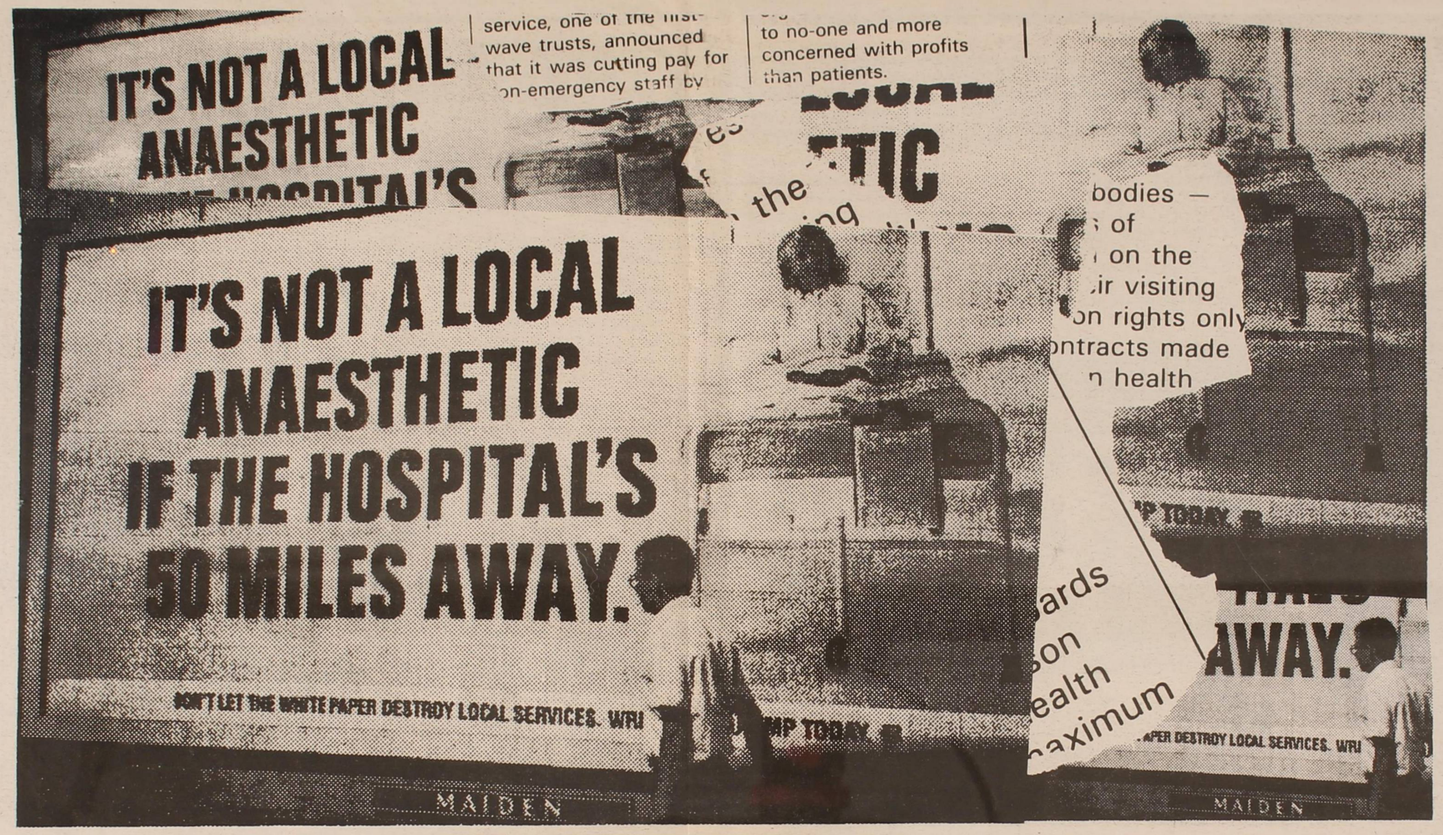
The real aim of all this is that, under the false guise of giving choice, resources will be contracted out to charities, private companies and newly formed trusts. At the moment management are assuring workers that the changes will not affect contracts, but it is inevitable that, due to financial pressure from the funding borough and the need to make a profit, there will be an erosion of working conditions, negotiating rights and pay levels. This is clearly shown by the situation facing workers employed by voluntary organisations.

Existing charities and voluntary organisations are expected to expand to take up the flood of 'customers' thrown onto the market by the closure of psychiatric hospitals and the contracting out of services by local authorities, creating plenty of jobs for care workers. Over recent years jobs in this sector have been lost, due partly to the recession and partly to the financial crisis facing councils, causing many of them renege on their promises to pay top-up funding. We even have the bizarre situation of organisations making workers redundant whilst at the same time recruiting more staff.

With this fragmentation of local authority services, workers are facing a new reality. More than every before, unions like NALGO are incapable of defending our interests. Links must be made between workers employed directly by town hall and those in the voluntary and private sector. In these sectors workers are organised (or unorganised) in a variety of ways. Some are in unions like MSF(Manufacturing, Science and Finance), desperate to pick up members in any 'expanding' sector; other workers are in voluntary sector branches of more traditional unions, like NALGO. The majority of us struggle along with management-led staff associations, or no formal organisation at all. The appropriateness of the Industrial Network model of organisation that the DAM proposes is easy to see.

However, as anarcho-syndicalists, the organisation of social and care workers, imperative as it is, is only the beginning of a wider issue. Not only workers but all of us must start to challenge the system of social services and the care industry. This system is still fundamentally a form of charity, albeit ran by bureaucrats rather than the philanthropic rich. The rights that are given to those of us who depend upon services, including the wage rights of workers, are illusory.

It is in the nature of this system that it can leave us feeling powerless and frustrated. As workers we need to build our confidence by organising industrially and finding our strengths, which includes most of us in some way or other. Then we can begin to turn around the sense of powerlessness and challenge this demeaning system of care.



IN SICKNESS & IN WEALTH

After WWII there a large wave of discontent throughout the working class in Britain. This led to a series of long running strikes and occupations in major industries. People felt they had fought and died in the war for a 'better world' free of the poverty and unemployment of the 30's. The election of a Labour government by a huge majority showed the ruling class that workers wanted change.

This, allied with the inevitable reconstruction after the war and the need for a large healthy workforce allowed the government to set a minimal welfare state encompassing comprehensive education, social security and the National Health Service. The actual NHS bill (The Beveridge Report) was the work of a Liberal Lord, but it was presented as the work of the 'caring' Labour Party, even though they were the first to introduce health cuts in 1976.

People talk about the understaffing and underfunding of the NHS as if it were a new thing invented in the last 10 years. This is rubbish, as the NHS has always been underfunded and understaffed. There have always been waiting lists for treatment and inadequate resources. It's only since the mid-70's that the economic recession has forced the ruling class to squeeze even harder than before. One of the reasons our hospitals are crumbling now is because of a lack of long term investment in buildings and maintenance since the NHS was formed.

Another common misconception is that at some point in the past we had enough nursing and ancillary staff to do our job properly. We never did. The recent cuts in staffing levels have turned a minimal staff into a skeleton staff. This and the contracting out of ancillary services such as catering and laundry has helped to reduce the status and pay of healthworkers, even though this has always been low status because of healthcare's traditional role as 'women's work', (much of women's work having been of low status for some time).

The current reorganisation of the NHS is nothing but as transfer of power from old style bureaucrats to the insane world of money-for-nothing yuppydom. As the infrasructure of the NHS collapses, managers no longer expect resources to patch it up but draw up contracts that they can't deliver upon.

One thing we haven't mentioned so far, and which shouldn't be forgotten, is that the NHS is based on the ideas of 'secondary healthcare', ie, treating things that have 'gone wrong' by treating the individual symptoms that the person has. This method doesn't take into account most of the social causes of ill health, nor does it treat a person as a whole, but rather as a series of systems, one of which has gone wrong when illness appears. If government was interested in efficiency, then they'd develop a primary healthcare system based on preventative methods. Talk of CAT scans and laser surgery is all well and good but uesless if an illness is caused or aggravated by poor housing, poor nutrition, pollution, etc.

Private healthcare is also based on these methods but to make matters worse it is also run to make a profit and not as a service. This is why you have to pay to use the facilities, as it puts profit before human need. Basically, private hospitals are hotels with a health facility built on. Often this leads to an inability to provide good general healthcare. If a patient's treament involves a great deal of personal care over a long period they are dumped back onto the NHS. If they manage to receive private care at all — private insurance companies are notorious for rejecting people with such long term problems as diabetes, schizophrenia, etc. And forget it if you are male and gay, as being gay is equated with AIDs in the minds of insurance brokers. Private healthcare is a massive drain on the NHS with a lot of good staff poached from the NHS after being trained by it, and chronically ill patients having to be cared for after being rejected by private hospitals.

Obviously any change in healthcare can only happen alongside profound changes in the way society as a whole is structured and run. This is because our interests as a class are in conflict with those of the bosses and the state. We see the basis for a public health service stemming form the creation of a socialised economy, ie, an economy run collectively by and for the working class. This health service should have an open democratic structure controlled by workers' organisations. In a society organised in this way the emphasis is obviously going to be on primary health care, that is, removing the conditions that make people ill — bad housing, poor diet, meaningless work, social stress, etc.

We want to see a decent health and sex education programme with the aims of demystifying peope's bodies and illnesses, as ignorance and fear are major reasons why people become ill and/or don't seek help. A population that is educated about these things will have real control over their bodies and will be able to take responsibility for their health away from the so-called 'experts'. We believe in getting away from the idea that only doctors and nurses can deal with illness. Rather, we want to see highly trained health workers assume a role of 'helper' or 'guide' in the healing process of the individual, working with the patient, not just dictating to her or him.

These two articles are written by health workers. Although they work in different fields of 'healthcare', the conclusions they reach are the same. As workers are increasingly divided, not only by the number of reformist trade unions, but by becoming employees of different organisations, it is all the more important that links are made across these boundaries.

WHITE PAPER WHITEWASH: A VIEW FROM THE FRONT LINE

Cuts and lack of adequate resources have been part and parcel of the National Health Service since its introduction. Things worsened from the time of the Labour government of 1974 -79. The effect of the current government's white paper — the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 — has been to increase the rate at which cuts take place. It is not a thunderbolt out of the blue.

How has the white paper affected the hospital where I work, one which to date has not chosen to 'opt out', but to remain within regional and national structures? Prior to April 1st this year, before the introduction of the 'reforms', all health authorities had to ensure that no surplus on spending was carried over from the previous financial year.

In my own hospital — a special health authority — the effects were: vacant posts, especially among porters and clerical staff, were left unfilled; the use of agency staff to cover vacancies was substantially reduced, and eventually cut out all together; overtime earnings of very poorly paid canteen ancilliary staff were taken away, and hospital staff working nights and at weekends were deprived of a canteen facility; patients attending the hospital were, and are, given prescriptions only covering a fourteen day period (shifting the financial burden onto GPs).

The result was increased staff demoralisation, and patient confusion. Strike action over the removal of overtime earnings from canteen staff resulted in some financial compensation, but did not reverse the cuts.

More recently, citing Section 60 of the white paper, hospital management have announced the doubling of rents for staff resident in hospital accommodation. Staff effected were given two weeks' notice of the implementation date. Now that they are landlords, as opposed to administrators, of hospital accommodation, managers can charge a 'market rent' (in Central London). The concepts of subsidy, and retention of staff, have gone out of the window. It is clear that the intention is to sell off the property as soon as possible.

What can be done? The left say "move the union to fight!" Accordingly, Charing Cross Hospital Joint Shop Stewards Committee invite Mssrs Bickerstaff of NUPE and McKenzie of COHSE to speak alongside the local tory MP for Fulham, to 'protest' at recent announced job cuts of 500 plus. This 'everyone and the nextdoor neighbour's dog against the health service cuts' approach is reminiscent of the vicars, tea, and sandwiches days of left involvement in campaigns such as the Anti-Nazi League and CND. We still have fascists, we still have nuclear

> **'We want to see a decent health and sex education programme with the aim of demystifying people's bodies and illnesses...'**

weapons, and we will continue to face attacks on the living standards of our class if class conscious workers continue to tail-end the useless antics of people who seek justification for themselves in being a permanent oppostion.

Links need to be made across union and occupational boundaries, independent of the union branch/Joint Shop Stewards Committee structures. Ancilliaries need to be involved, not just medical or clericals. These networks of health workers, need to include not just NHS but local government and private as well. They must be clear about what they are — the embryo of the fighting workers' organisation of the future, which can be an example in practice of future working class control of health provision and of wider society. This is syndicalism.

I would urge fellow health workers to become involved in the Health Workers Federation, which has been initiated by health worker members of the Direct Action Movement.

The Health Workers Federation can be contacted at PO Box 761, Camberwell, London SE5.

INDONESIA

NIKE TRAMPLES ON WORKERS

Indonesia has long figured strategically in the West's plans, as has been demonstrated by the deafening silence over human rights abuses and the invasion of East Timor and West Papua. Some commentators pointed out the similarities between Indonesia's occupation of these countries, and Iraq's annexation of Kuwait. However, the diffenece is that Indonesia is still acting as America's police in Eastern Indian Ocean, and the peoples of East Timor and Papua are poor, and cannot buy themselves a voice.

The military have been allowed a free hand in these countries, and military influence pervades Indonesian society. In 1965 General Suharto carried out a military coup with American backing. Hlaf a million people were slaughtered, the Communist Party of Indonesia was crushed, and three quarters of a million people thrown into jails and concentration camps.

The situation of Indonesian workers is also very grim. Although the right of workers to organise is a clause of the Constitution, the reality is somewhat different. Only one union is recognised, the SPSI (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia — All Indonesia Workers Union). Management have the right to forbid union activity. The government is constantly involved in SPSI, it provides funds, distributes workers' dues and appoints union officers — usually businessmen or military officers. Indonesia's role in the world market is as a provider of cheap labour, cheaper than its South East Asian competitors.

To fulfil this, SPSI needs to control the workforce rather than articulate their demands.

There is much legislation on workers' rights, environmental health, etc. But, as is so often the case, it is not enforced. There is a legal minimum wage, but a 1989 survey in Jakarta found over 50% of the factories surveyed were paying less. Many workers, particularly in the textile and garment industry, are paid less than subsistence, but attempts to organise are usually met with the sack. In 1989 the Tae Kwa shoe company dismissed seven organisers after a strike against illegally low pay. In 1990, nine organisers at Firma Pollen & Co were sacked for trying to form a branch of SPSI.

Because of this, an independent union, Setia Kawan (Solidarity) was formed in 1990. It has faced constant harrassment and repression from the government and employers alike. In June this year the secretary-general, Saut Aritonang, was arrested and held for two days as he was on his way to a demonstration. The demonstration was outside the International Labour Organisation (ILO) office in Jakarta to protest against the Indonesia Labour Minister, Batubara, being elected ILO President.

The number of strikes has been rising since 1985, and rose by 200% last year. In mid-April 1990, 600 workers at Wintrad Jaya and 100 at Sinar Dunia Kristal staged strikes. A day later, 400 at Junjim Rama Indonesia and 250 at TA Ltd went on strike for holiday pay. 2,000 textile workers also demanded holiday pay.

Many of the worst abuses are by shoe companies. An investigation into Nike, the sports shoe company, found it had granted manufacturing licenses to six companies in Indonesia. Of these, five were South Korean owned, the other was South Korean managed. Nike link their shoes with personal success and self-expression in their advertising. But their subcontractors in Indonesia pay below subsistence wages. The hundreds of mainly female workers at Tae Hwa Ltd went on strike against wages as low as 44 US cents a day! Despite being half the legal minimum, seven organisers were sacked.

In February this year, nearly 3,000 workers at Pratama Abadi occupied their facotry for three days. Wages were as low as 47 US cents a day, and any worker who tried to organise was instantly sacked.

The subsistence wage for a married person with a child is assessed at US$3.23 a day. Yet the average basic wage at Nike factories is 82 cents a day. Nike can certainly pay more, as is shown by a comparison with other wage rates. For example, Unilever — no friend of the workers — pay US$248 per month, and Bata shoes have recently agreed to $65 per month. Nike have claimed they can't affect their licensee's wage policy. This is utter crap. Nike personnel are on hand every day at the factories, and Nike can revoke the licenses at any time. By tendering the orders between licensed companies, Nike actually encourage low wages. The only area of flexibility the companies compete on is wages.

Obviously it's not just Nike who are ripping off Indonesian workers for expensive trainers. But sooner or later, desperation or starvation will force the Indonesian workers to fight back on a grander scale. In the meantime we need to be clear about the solidarity we can offer, and target those companies, like Nike, that are the most blatant abusers of workers' rights.

Source: Labour Report, June'91

STOP PRESS

In August two major strikes occured at the PT Gajah Tunggal tyre factory. The Gajah Tunggal Group (GTG) has connections with the Indonesian ruling Suharto family and called in the military. Although the strikes, over wages, national insurance and lodging allowances, were unsuccessful, they attracted a lot of international support, which has boosted the workers' confidence for the next time.

ARGENTINA:

A RAILWAY WORKERS' VICTORY

For nearly two months, from 12th February, thousands of railway workers were involved in a general strike that practically paralysed the whole of Argentina's railway network.

The origins of the conflict are distant. Firstly the colossal delay in salary readjustments. Hyperinflation reduced real wages by 200% since the days of the Alfonsin government. Furthermore, the present government has just embarked on a rationalisation programme for the railway network (numerous line closures thoughout the country) that led to hundreds of redundancies. All this in preparation for future privatisation of the industry. Low wages and staff reduction are preliminary measures that private capital insist on in order to 'salvage' the railway network. The conciliatory attitude of the leadership of the national union 'Fraternity' (with clear pro-government positions) aggravated the situation.

Despite Fraternity's oppostion, some local union sections decided to launch an engineers' strike. Very quickly dozens of sections followed and after a few days the strike was total. It was further strengthened by other workers like signalmen, technicians, etc, joining the strike. The Menem's governement economics Minister, Domingo Cavallo (an ex-military dictatorship official) called the workers in struggle anarchists. And the President had threatened that "a line closed will remain so forever".

The 'Madre' (Mothers of the Disappeared) have actively supported the railway strikers from the onset. Menem complained: "What have the 'Madre of La Plaza de Maya' got to do with the railway strike?!" Workers contradicted these words by participating in large numbers on a march organised by the Madre in support of the strike, all shouting "Dear Madre, we will carry on your children's struggle." The Madre's offices hosted many strikers' activities. A big 'Fiesta' was organised in solidarity and in support of the strikers with the participation of workers, students and artists.

After two months of struggle, the demands were vindicated and the government promised to re-adjust wages and re-employ those made redundant. However, despite this retreat, the government maintains its sell-off plans. It announced privatisations including the creation of a metropolitan company and public sales of various sectors. Such initiatives will inevitably lead to line closures.

The railway workers' victory is, of course, not definitive, but their experience of the struggle is an exceptional event. The rank and file have taken charge of their own interests, democratically. They have broken the bureaucratic settlement monopoly and fractured the traditional pact between government, management and union bureaucrats.

Source: Le Combat Syndicaliste

POLL TAX PRISONERS LIST

(UPDATED OCTOBER '91)

Paul Jacob RA0711 EPD Oct '91 EDR Nov '92
HMP Coldingley, Bisley, Woking, Surrey, GU24 9EX

Brian Tavares MC3239 EPD Nov'91 EDR Nov '92
HMP Camp Hill, Clissold Rd, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5PB

Timothy Donaghy MW0105 EPD Feb'92 EDR Feb '93
HMP Downview, Sutton Lane, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 5PD

Darren Healey RA2183 EPD Nov '91 EDR Sept '92
HMP Wandsworth, Heathfield Rd, Wandsworth, London SW18 3HS

Neil Bremner MW0216 EPD Dec '91 EDR Oct '92
HMP Coldingley, Bisley, Woking, Surrey GU24 9EX

Matt Lee MW1054 EPD Jan '92 EDR Nov '92
HMP Featherstone, New Road, Featherstone, Wolverhampton WV10 7PU

Simon Russell ND1666 EPD May '92 EDR 6 June '93
HMP The Mount, Molyneaux Avenue, Bovingdon, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP3 0NZ

Robert Wray MW1242 EPD Nov '91 EDR Jul '92
HMP Feltham, Bedfont Road, Feltham, Middx, TW39 4QN

Keith Wray MW1241 EPD Sept '91 EDR Mar '92
HMP Feltham, Bedfont Road, Feltham, Middx, TW39 4QN

Michael Dalley PF3098 EPD Nov '91 EDR 4th May '92
HMP Wandsworth, Heathfield Road, Wandsworth, London SW18 3HS

Mark Hutchings MW2737 EPD 24/4/92 EDR 22/1/93
Please send all mail via the TSDC-PSG until further notice.

IMPRISONED NON-PAYERS

James Lee JJ1320 EDR 29/10/01
HMP Lincoln, Greetwell Road, Lincoln LN2 4BD

Chris Howles NV0401 EDR 29/10/91
HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Road, London N7 8TT

Anita Hill TT2600
HMP Holloway, Parkhurst Road, London N7 0NU

Richard Northover WJ3395
HMP Dorchester, 7 North Square, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1JD

Paul Chamberlain
C/o TSDC

Note: EPD means Expected Parole Date. EDR means Earliest Date of Release (Remission Date)

INTERNATIONAL

WOBBLIES WOBBLE BUT THEY DON'T FALL DOWN

After a lengthy period of stagnation, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) are beginning to move forward by using industrial networks to reactivate Industrial Unions. The original purpose of such unions was to unite all workers in a certain industry in the same fighting organisation. These unions then federated together under the umbrella of the Industrial Workers of the World.

The ultimate aim of the IWW is the same as our own, to build a democratic organisation run by working people, which will not only fight to seize the means of production from the capitalists, but will also be able to ensure fair and efficient organisation of production and distribution. The effectiveness of this idea is shown by the lengths the US state has gone to to destroy the IWW; many wobblies have been either arrested, deported, tortured or even killed to prevent them from organising.

As well as attacks from the state, the IWW has also had to put up with attacks from the authoritarian left, who saw in the idea of socialism from below (syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism) a threat to their own plans for seizing state power in the name of the working class.

So, as the years went by and the attacks grew, the IWW was reduced from a federation of Industrial Unions to a mainly political organisation with no substantial industrial base. Moves are now being made to put this right (much as DAM in this country are trying to do). Three of the IWW's industrial unions are in the initial stages of reactivation. Hopefully this will not mean simply an increase in membership, but also a refocusing of the union's attention on the daily lives of working people, and away from the various causes and issues that have traditionally confused leftist politics.

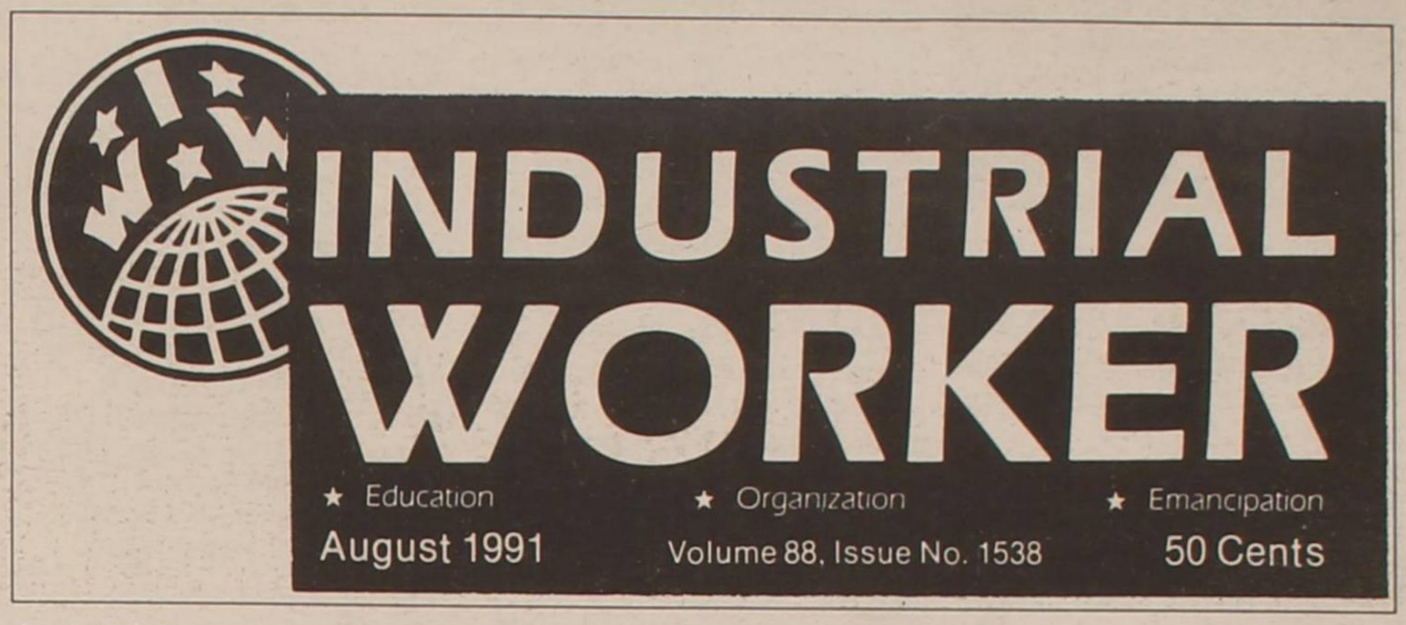
A member of the Marine Transport Workers Union is currently circulating a letter to other members with hopes of beginning internal networking.

The first issue of an education workers newsletter was published in April of this year, and a second issue has been published recently.

The People's Warehouse Job Branch are contacting other warehouse workers in the South East Michigan area, with the goal of organising a fully reactivated industrial union by the end of this year.

These, admittedly, are small beginnings, as are the Industrial Networks being initiated by DAM. But they are the vital first step on the road to the formation of fighting anarcho-syndicalist unions which are prepared to face up to the bosses, fight, and win.

Source: *Industrial Worker*



BURN THE RACE CARD!

PICKET THE GERMAN EMBASSY

Monday 11th November 1991 • 4 - 7pm

Corner of Chesham Place and Belgrave Sq SW1 * Hyde Park Corner tube

FEDS BEAT SUBS, GOD'S NOWHERE

The Second Annual Libertarian Football Cup took place in Stockholm in June. Sixteen teams participated, ranging from the anarchist magazine Brand to the postal workers union, as well as 'Hizbollah', whose origins we can merely guess at.

As it was, Allah clearly wasn't on their side as they lost 2-1 in the semi-finals to SUB/Lokalen. The winners were Federatius Förlag, the syndicalist/libertarian publishers, by 6 goals to 3.

SPAIN — The Fight Against The Blood Tax

In Spain, as in most countries in Europe, national service is still compulsory. For those who refuse to go into the army the alternatives are 'community service' for a longer period or up to six years in prison.

In 1989 a collective civil disobedience campaign (INSUMISION) began. At least 2,000 people have refused to do military service and 500 have refused to do community service. Alberto Gamarra (member of the CNT) is currently awaiting trial in Burgos for refusing to do community service and faces up to three years in prison.

Letters of protest can be sent to: Juzgado de la Penal, Noz, Avda. Del Generalisimo 10, 09.003 BURGOS, Spain
Send copies to: PO Box 1.090, 50.080 ZARAGOZA, Spain

FRAMED

BY WEST MIDLANDS SERIOUS CRIMES SQUAD
14 YEARS OF BRUTAL INJUSTICE

MARTIN FORAN
ON THE RUN
...OUT FOR JUSTICE!

Why I'm on the run...
"In prison nobody hears your cries for help...so I will spend my time on the run to publicise my case and the plight of my family.
I have no faith in the police inquiry which is not being held to find out if I'm innocent and does not have to make public any evidence they have found proving my innocence.
Also, I can not and will not pay for medical treatment - I want the treatment on the NHS as I am entitled to, but I will not have the operations whilst at the mercy of the prison wardens.
I will hand myself in when a date is set for my appeal."
Martin Foran, June '91

On 4th June framed prisoner Martin Foran went on the run with Valerie Foran (his wife) and their four children. Martin has been framed twice by the notorious West Midlands Serious Crime Squad, so far spending a total of 14 years in prison, being denied even the most basic medical care and receiving beatings from screws.

Martin was given two days 'humanitarian' parole for a relatively minor operation at the Royal London Hospital. The prison authorities agreed, after Martin's and his medical consultants' insistence that there should be NO police or screw guard on him huring the parole period. So when Martin arrived at the hospital and noticed two plain-clothed coppers watching him, he decided to run.

The ill-treatment Martin has received, coupled with the fact that he shouldn't have been in prison in the first place, is reason enough for his actions. Martin has said that he is willing to give himself up when the report into the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad is made public. Until then he plans to continue his fight for justice on the outside.

APPEAL

We need money to carry on our campaign, particularly now Martin's case has public attention and to fund Martin's appeal case later this year.
Donations: Individuals: Whatever you can afford
Voluntary Groups: £10
Trade Unions, Parties, etc £20

Please make cheques payable to: Martin Foran Defence Campaign and send to: c/o Box 7, 190 Alum Rock Road, Saltley, Birmingham B8

ODDS & SODS

REVIEW: 'This is Class War'

I don't suppose Class War really mind this pamphlet being called "thunderingly dull" by The Guardian, but if you're expecting the usual irreverant humour, you'll be disappointed.

The pamphlet gives a brief history of Class War, analysis of the current situation, and Class War's response. Overall, it seems Class War are moving toward a very similar politics as many anarcho-syndicalists, and discovering for themselves things we have been saying for a long time. This is all to the good. It doesn't matter how you get here, it's getting there at all that matters.

They distance themselves from the alternative life-style drop-outs of the anarchist ghetto. They identify reformism as the main enemy, seeing the Left as irrelevant to the working class. The pamphlet expresses a willingness to work with other working class people who don't necessarily share their ideas. **And they admit they don't have all the answers!**

But what is annoying is the way they claim all of this is new and original. For example, "Class War alone supported the direct action of the strikers" during the miners' strike. Well, what about '*Direct Action*' and '*Black Flag*', both explicit in their support for the direct action tendencies of the miners, and calling for "Victory to the Hit Squads"?

The two main areas of their analysis I'd disagree with are their breakdown of class and over-emphasis on the community. While saying there are exceptions to the rule, they take the State's definition of class as correct. Whose territory do we want to fight on? We should at least work it out for ourselves. And while the analysis of the roles of the middle class (direction, smoothing off capitalism's rough edges, control of information and opening up new markets) is good, it puts some workers into the middle class. If a technician for the BBC is a worker, why not a teacher, when they both have the same amount of control over the information put out?

The trouble with putting so much emphasis on communities is that in most places they don't exist. Apart from pit villages and places like West Belfast, there are few real communities in the British Isles. Communities are built though struggle, and having common interests. In some areas of London, 50% of people move each year. They're not there long enough to establish any roots. And high crime, lack of social venues, poor transport, etc, all help to make people feel isolated and not go out.

Given the huge task to be overcome in re-building the confidence of the working class, we can't afford to see the struggle just in terms of workplace or street — it has to be both.

'*This is Class War*' is published by
Class War Federation
PO Box 39
Manchester M15 5HN
Price £1.00

REVIEW 'An Office Worker's Guide to Repetitive Strain Injury'

This handy little pamphlet is a very useful introduction to Repetitive Strain Injury, or RSI, although it is a bit pricey at £3.

RSI is a number of different injuries to muscles or tendons in the neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hands and fingers. It is caused by continuous repetitive movements, and the booklet concentrates on those associated with typing, and particularly VDUs.

It's not new, however it is becoming increasingly recognised. The commonest RSIs are Tenosynovitis (inflammation of the sheath around the tendons) and writer's cramp. Both are prescribed industrial diseases. Most of the causes of RSI can be stopped, but it would mean slowing down, or more breaks, better work environment, etc. None of these improvements are easily won from the bosses, as they would cost them money.

The booklet covers how to deal with your doctor, and the treatments available. Many of the orthodox treatments, such as surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome, are ineffective and have damaging side effects. Also covered are your rights to sickness pay, the possibility of being sacked, compensation, and preventing RSI. This last is one of the most interesting for anarcho-syndicalists.

RSI can be prevented by improving the design and layout of the work station and by making the job more varied and interesting. Both of these are detailed demands that can be made by workers. Also interesting is the fact that the traditional 'QWERTY' keyboard may contribute to RSI. It was originally designed for much slower typewriters. The speed at which VDU operators are expected to type is much faster, and puts strain on the wrists.

This pamphlet is essential for anyone organising in offices where there is a lot of VDU work.

City Centre
32/35 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8QX. Price £3.00

SPOT THE MISTAKE!

Thanks to all the eagle-eyed readers who spotted the repetition of paragraphs in our article on Norwegian trade unionism. This was part of some market research we are undertaking; we are pleased that the avalanche of criticism we have received tells us that the article was well read (twice!). Actually, it was a fuck up, and apologies to all concerned.

There have been a few changes in the editorial group for this issue. Rest assured that this is because of everything possible apart form the splits and expulsions that accompany trotskyist groups! Please bear with us if the paper isn't up to scratch yet, or you're having problems getting it.

Lastly, we haven't heard anything from the Economic League for some time. Everything they've published before is straight from our paper, so we wonder if they're having difficulty getting *DA*. We can only say what we'd say to anyone else, the best way to ensure you get your copy of *DA* regularly is to subscribe.

SCANNER APPEAL

The production of DA is now almost completely computerised. However, we desperately need a scanner, which will allow us to input and manipulate photographs and graphics within the computer. And best of all, scan any typed text sent to us and recognise it as typed. Saving us loads of time and hassle. Allowing us to do a better paper. Hurrah.
Total needed is approximately £750.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

You can help us improve DA by taking out a 'Supporter's Sub'. We don't have any rich backers, and are entirely dependant on sales and donations. If you like what we're saying, even if you don't agree with all of it, we welcome your support.
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SATURDAY 23RD NOVEMBER
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BEATING THE FASCISTS...
...An old East End tradition

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST RACIST ATTACKS

Assemble 1.00 pm
Sunday 10th November

Aldgate East tube
Whitechapel High Street
London

anti-fascist action

NUCLEAR POWER — NO FRESH START!

On 13th and 14th November representatives of the nuclear power industry worldwide will be speaking at a conference titled 'Nuclear Power — A Fresh Start'. It will be addressed to a select audience of "policy makers, industrialists and politicians". Described as a "key conference", this will be a chance for the moribund nuclear industry to sell its ideas and its wares to other members of the ruling class.

The Anti-Nuclear Network will be there and will be noisily and forcefully putting across the message that we are not prepared to let these businessmen and politicians play Chernobyl-roulette with our lives and our environment.

Join us — together we can stop nuclear power!

DEMONSTRATION

WEDNESDAY
13TH NOVEMBER
8.15 am -12 noon

CONTACTS

PUBLICATIONS AND SALES

CLASS WAR

"Christ, we're useless"
Norman Willis

"Not since Tom Brown's writing has a pamphlet so succinctly demonstrated all that is positive and necessary about Class Struggle Anarchism"
Neil Kinnock

There are two classes in society, those who work, and those who live off the others' labour. That these two classes have different interests is obvious. These opposing interests drive them into conflict. There are many in the last decade who have denied the existence of the class war, or of classes themselves. This pamphlet is not aimed at them. Nor is it aimed at those student revolutionaries who would 'lead' the ignorant workers to victory. It is aimed at those militant workers looking for an alternative to the paper solidarity of the TUC; who are not looking for easy answers, because they have tried too many easy answers, and found them lacking.

'Winning The Class War' — an anarcho-syndicalist strategy
ISBN 1 873605 00 5 Price £1.00

"Whaye man" Paul Gasgoine

"Why's it called 'ING THE CLASS WAR'?" Chris

REVIEW
MANO NEGRA: 'KING OF BONGO' LP (Virgin France SA)

If you like your punky reggae mixed with French accordians, Spanish trumpets, Latin American rhythms and christ knows what else, this one's for you.

Music journalists call it 'eclectic', I call it original and refreshing. Mano Negra sing in English, French and Spanish as their fancy takes them (and on their previous album had an arabic song). When it's in English it's delivered à la Antoine de Caunes (Rapido), which I have no objection to whatsoever - but it's as well the lyrics are provided.

The material ranges from hard-hitting political stuff like 'Welcome to the Occident' (about how the West is going to fuck eastern Europe like it fucks the rest of the world) to no less laudable sentiments like those expressed in the 'King of Bongo' track: "I don't like no disco, and I don't like no house, 'cause I'm born to rock, I'm born to pogo". The album as a whole is a loud, exuberant internationalist cacophony.

THIS IS THE DAM

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 work place and the 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 world wide 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 enviroment.

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

9. 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.

IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY PROBLEM RECIEVING *DIRECT ACTION*, PLEASE LET US KNOW. WE ARE SUFFERING FROM A PAST LEGACY SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTION PROBLEM, SO IT'S NOT OUR FAULT, HONEST!!!!

CONTACTS - UPDATE

NATIONAL OFFICERS

NATIONAL SECRETARY, Manchester DAM-IWA, PO Box 29,SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY, Edinburgh DAM-IWA, PO Box 516, SW DO, Edinburgh EH10 5JH

EASTERN REGION

NORWICH DAM-IWA, PO Box 73, Norwich NR1 2EB

MIDLANDS

LEICESTER DAM-IWA, c/o 70 High St, Leicester
For contacts in Leamington, Nottingham, Northants and Worcester, write to National Secretary

NORTH EAST

LEEDS DAM-IWA C/o Box DAM, 52 Call Lane, Leeds LS2
MIDDLESBROUGH DAM-IWA, C/o Leeds DAM
SOUTH YORKSHIRE DAM-IWA, PO Box 122, Doncaster, S Yorkshire
For contacts in Doncaster, Scunthorpe, Sheffield and York, write to North East Regional Secretary, C/o Leeds DAM

NORTH WEST

BURNLEY DAM-IWA, 12 Kingsland Grove, Burnley, Lancs BB11 3PY
LIVERPOOL DAM-IWA, PO Box 110, Liverpool, L69 8DP
MANCHESTER DAM-IWA, PO Box 29 SW PDO, Manchester M15
PRESTON DAM-IWA, PO Box 172, Preston, Lancs PR1
For contacts in Cumbria, Lancaster, Salford and Stockport, write to North West Regional Secretary, C/o Burnley DAM

SCOTLAND

EDINBURGH DAM-IWA, PO Box 516, SW DO, Edinburgh EH10 5JH
GLASGOW DAM-IWA, PO Box 239, Glasgow G3 6RA

SOUTH WEST

BRISTOL DAM-IWA, C/o National Secretary
For contacts in Avon, Devon and Plymouth, write to National Secretary

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SOUTH HERTFORDSHIRE DAM-IWA, PO Box 245 St Albans, Herts
DEPTFORD DAM-IWA, PO Box 574, Brockley, London SE4 1DL
EAST LONDON DAM-IWA, C/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
NORTH LONDON DAM-IWA, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE
SOUTH LONDON DAM-IWA, PO Box 761, Camberwell SDO, London SE5
For contacts in Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire, write to South East Regional Secretary, C/o North London DAM

IRELAND

There is no section of the International Workers' Association in Ireland, but we maintain links with:
ORGANISE! (Anarcho-Syndicalist group based in the Six Counties),
C/o 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast 1, Ireland

All other international contacts should be sought via the International Secretary.

NETWORK FORUM

Donations or Standing Order payments in support in Industrial Networks should be made to:
NETWORK SOLIDARITY FUND,
Acc No 12282083, Sort Code 16-16-25,
Royal Bank of Scotland, Manchester Chorlton-cum-Hardy Branch,
44 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 1AR

Send any donations, or notify of any Standing Orders, to Network Forum, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW

INDUSTRIAL

Council Workers Network, C/o Manchester DAM and North London DAM
Transport Workers Bulletin, C/o Deptford DAM, Po Box 574, London SE4 1DL
Despatch Industry Workers Union, C/o 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU
Independant Education Network, PO Box 29 SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW
Health Workers Federation, C/o PO Box 761, Camberwell, Londn SE5

OTHER

IDEAS & ACTION (US Anarcho-Syndicalist paper), PO Box 40400, San Fransisco, CA 94140, USA
REBEL WORKER (Australian Anarcho-Syndicalist paper), PO Box 92, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia
ANTI-FASCIST ACTION (North/South/East/South-East London Branches), BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX

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ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM FOR BEGINNERS

During the past few years, the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, coupled with the growing crisis in the Soviet Union, has dealt Marxism a heavy blow. Recently, a failed coup attempt in the USSR proved to be the death throes of the traditional Marxist-Leninist state. These events open up great possiblities for anarcho-syndicalists, not just in the Soviet Union, but all over the world.

In Britain a lot of groups on the left are in crisis. Anarcho-syndicalists should be filling this vacuum. Marxism is being shown to be a dead end for working class people. We must show why anarcho-syndicalism is not.

A lot of marxists are simply dropping their ideas. Some, such as the Socialist Workers Party and Militant are talking about the need for 'real socialism'. Trotskyists are disowning their erstwhile comrades as stalinists, claiming that it is they who hold the real tradition formulated by Lenin and Trotsky.

But still central to their methods is the role of the Party. As anarcho-syndicalists we disagree and emphasise the role of the union. Not social democratic Trade unions, but revolutionary Industrial unions.

Both marxists and anarcho-syndicalists have a class analysis of society, reject the reformist road of change because of its tendency to effect only cosmetic changes, and put forward a strategy of revolution carried out by an organised working class. Why is it then that marxists and anarcho-syndicalists put forward the party and the union as competing strategies, and why is it important that we choose the correct strategy?

THE PARTY

Marxist parties are top heavy, overly centralised and concentrate policy making into the hands of a few experts in the 'science of socialism'. The basis of their unity is ideological, lacking any long standing solidarity which has to be based on primary material circumstances.

The fact that it is ideas which unite the members, rather than needs, means that the organisation is open to middle class people who use their education and their confidence at public speaking to dominate meetings and debates, whilst not holding the essential material interest in changing society.

Also, since such parties see *POLITICAL IDEAS* as the main priority, it is those who are well versed in such ideas and best equipped to put them forward that wield the power and influence within the organisation. It is not the members who are experienced at organising in the workplace and fighting the class struggle at grass roots level.

Perhaps the main failing of the strategy put forward by marxists (ie, that of building a mass revolutionary party which would then lead the working class to snatch power from the capitalists), is its failure to adequately address the methods by which workers would organise production and distribution once freed from the yoke of capitalism. They put forward a simplisitic outdated 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which at best would be a semi-state overseen be a central committee of experts and 'scientific' socialists. Ordinary working class people would be able to have only a minimal input into such a set up.

So little do marxists put foward about how workers could organise society that there is nothing more to add to the subject!

THE UNION

In place of the party, anarcho-syndicalists put the revolutionary union - the *AUTONOMOUS* organisation of the working class. It unites the workers, not on the basis of some ideology or sentiment, but in their very quality as workers. The union is not concerned with questions of philosophy. The very reason for its existence is to fight the bosses, and so it stands at the very point where the class struggle arises - in the workplace.

Anarcho-syndicalist unions unite people not on the basis of their craft or the tools they use (as do the Trade Unions), but on the basis of the industry that they work within. So, be you a labourer, an engineer, or an admin worker; if you work in the construction industry you wold be a member of the Construction union. Each workplace Syndicate would federate locally, regionally and nationally, with people in the same industry, and also with people in other industries.

This arrangement of preserving local autonomy, whilst ensuring efficient organisation, is not a token move to preserve democracy but is meant to allow workers to fight the class struggle to the greatest effect; to unite rather than divide, to encourage solidarity and links between workers, rather than preserve the stupid sectionalism that exists in Trade Unions.

The union links the present to the future. It obtains concessions in the short term, whilst preparing workers through struggle, for the eventual social revolution. It is both defensive and offenisve, destructive and constructive.

By direct action and strikes, solidarity is encouraged - every strike puts the class conflict into perspective. The strike, like the union, wins concessions from the bosses in the short term, but as workers grow in confidence and learn from the struggle, demands of a much more fundamental nature begin to be made. Revolution becames not a utopian ideal, but a necessity, the social general strike the necessary tool.

Anarcho-syndicalist theory and practice presents a fully homogenous programme of action. 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.

The union becomes the cell for the new society; it already has the structure and organisation to take over the means of production and more importantly the mechanisms to ensure democratic decision making and fair distribution. Anarcho-syndicalism gives the labour movement the theory and the means to achieve the new society, independent of outsiders and sufficient unto itself.