



DIRECT ACTION

THE VOICE OF ANARCHO SYNDICALISM

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IWA

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DON'T MOAN!



ORGANISE



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.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The dream ticket has failed, Kinnock and Hattersley failed to despatch the most inept government this century, despite the Tories' reputation being damaged by the recession.

It has been said by many working class Labour supporters that if they couldn't beat this lot then they couldn't beat anyone.

The purging, the witchhunts, the sacrifice of principles (those that were left), the appeal to the middle class — have all failed.

In the aftermath we hear talk of an alliance with the Liberal Democrats, the importance of proportional representation. Yet again we hear calls for socialists to "knuckle down", get started on 5 years hard work to ensure that next time the party is voter friendly and electable.

The consequence is not hard to see. Let's not forget Wapping, the miners strike, the poll tax struggle and the Trafalgar Square riot. During these and other more localised struggles the Labour Party

asked the working class to put up with the shit and wait for a Labour government to come in and sort it out.

The "party of the working class" scabbed on us — supported attacks on the working class in order to preserve its electoral credibility. The plain fact is that we have to fight and struggle, there are so many attacks on our living standards that we have no choice.

For those who still have some faith in the Labour Party, we say that we can't afford to keep our heads down. Labour has consistently failed to deliver, indeed have often joined in the attacks; it's time that workers gave up the idea that Labour can defend us.

Whilst Labour can't defend us, solidarity can. We don't have some narrow sectarian view, we simply want unity in action. Voting changes nothing, the struggle continues. Join us in maintaining and promoting real class solidarity, organising in the workplace, the Trade Unions, the anti poll tax groups; places where working class people can defend themselves and hopefully begin to go on the offensive.

After the election — Don't moan, Organise!

DIRECT ACTION

is the paper of the
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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,

In a backwater like Hull DA isn't on sale so I only just got to see your debate on Trades Councils (DA74). Can I make a few comments as an Anarcho-Syndicalist and Trades Council secretary? Which Trades Councils do your two writers attend? There is no rule demanding Labour Party affiliation and most Trades Councils remain unaffiliated. Since when have active Trades Councils taken a blind bit of notice of Norman Willis and co.?

Our Trades Council acts as a forum for militant workers in our locality supporting all major national strikes (and many minor ones). It has also given practical support to a list of unions abroad, including SMOT (former Soviet Union), CGT and CNT-AIT (Spain), Turkish miners and now produces an international Union Bulletin going to over 70 unions worldwide. It has worked closely with non-TUC unions and organisations such as the Blue Union (60's & 70's leftwing docks union which broke away from the T&G) and still has a close relationship with the OILC.

No one tells an active Trades Council who it can or can't invite to speak. Last year 70 Trades Councils heard Tony Toplam speak on the Syndicalist upsurge of 1911. Other speakers have included the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign while Hull TC was the local campaign against the Gulf War.

There's nothing special about Hull. If Syndicalists got stuck in in other cities we'd have a similar situation. If you are content to grumble that your Trades Council is an elephants' graveyard for Stalinoids, that's how it will stay. Trades Councils are one of the few areas of the existing labour movement with potential for solidarity and democracy. Inside Trades Councils we have the opportunity to put across Direct Action unionism to thousands of workers. This could complement DAM members work in branches or forming industrial networks.

It may surprise DAM members but Anarcho-Syndicalists are practically the largest single faction in the Trades Council movement, which Trotskyists tend to ignore. If you are a delegate, why not drop us a line to see if we can co-ordinate our efforts in the Trades Councils?

Guy Cheverton, Hull Syndicalists, PO Box 102 Hull.

REPLY: As the author of one of the articles concerned, there are a number of points in your letter I personally agree with, (although I suspect the author of the other piece will not). I believe that where existing labour movement structures can be used to increase solidarity they should. But I'm not about to make a fetish of it, because I know that in many cases they cannot be used in this way. I chose not to stand for re-election as delegate (nor did anyone else as far as I can gather). The local Trades Council managed one meeting last year, and none have happened since. I can honestly say that more local trade unionists would show up to a DAM meeting than a Trades Council meeting. Only four unions and the Pensioners' Association managed to send regular delegates, all of them local political activists. I can tell when I'm wasting my time.

This is a realistic opinion based on my own experience locally, not a point of principle in rejecting activity within Trades Councils which I thought I had put across in my article. If the situation changes locally, I expect that we would look at getting involved again, but at the moment I've got better things to do with Monday evenings.

Martin, Deptford DAM

Dear DA,

The replies to my letter regarding the Irish liberation struggle published in DA78 only confirm the theoretical and organisational weaknesses that prevent anarchists from having any meaningful input into this aspect of the class struggle.

Dan of Barking has apparently con-

fused my simple argument that anarchists should be enthusiastic about selling their literature and developing their powers of analysis with a defence of the specific politics of the RCP. It is precisely because I am not satisfied with the ghetto mentality that continues to haunt not just anarchism but much of the left, that I raised the issue in the first place. I agree entirely that libertarians should produce literature "that reflects the development of socialist thought". This however is hardly the current situation where weakness of content goes hand in hand with poor sales and a virtually nonexistent political profile.

Steve's letter is based on the common anarchist confusion of equating support for national liberation struggles with support for nationalism as an ideology and for the emergence of a new "liberated" nation state. He therefore raises the spectre of an independent Irish state full of bureaucrats and police and correctly points out that working class freedom would be incompatible with such a system. This however is a red herring. Republicanism is an insufficient political force to remove British interests from Ireland. It will take no less than conscious revolutionary socialist struggle, both in Ireland and in Britain to secure that gain. It will only be secured by the establishment of an Irish workers' republic (by which I do not mean a state but simply an area under direct working class control). The question for us is how to contribute to that process.

The key is anti-imperialism. In Britain that means winning workers to the view that the British state alone is the cause and guarantor of the violence in Northern Ireland, maintaining its interests through the tactic of institutionalised sectarian division. To portray Republicans who have resorted to a defensive armed struggle as contributing to the oppression in Ireland completely misunderstands the nature of the situation there and lets the British state off the hook. The point is not to defend nationalism as an idea but to

uncompromisingly support the right of Irish workers to defend themselves against an invading power no matter what their ideological illusions.

Yours for libertarian communism,
Alan Robertson, Anarchist Workers Group.

Dear comrades,

Once again from this side of the Atlantic. Thank you for continuing to send us your publication, which is quite good. And a further thank you for running articles on the US.

I would like to comment on DA78 "The International: Workers Solidarity Alliance". At the time when South London published "The IWA Today" (1985) we noted some inaccuracies in regards to the WSA, particularly in regards to the IWW. Similarly, but not identically, DA78 repeats such a mistake.

It is incorrect to write that "the IWA...is presently negotiating with the IWW following their recent application to join the IWA." The fact of the matter is that the IWA, WSA and IWW are not having such negotiations. While it is true that there has been a resolution passed (1989) directing the IWW to explore possible affiliation to the IWA this point is now moot and made so at the IWW's 1991 convention. As in the 1930's there's much confusion in the IWW about what it means to join the IWA, such as adopting the "Aims, Principles and Statutes of the IWA". An additional problem, and one the IWW believes is not subject to negotiations, is allowing its members in other lands (such as Britain) to affiliate as the IWW to the IWA. Obviously, this does not take into account the standing of already established sections in, say, Britain and Australia.

It is additionally unlikely that there will be merger between the IWW and the WSA in the foreseeable future but there is some overlap in membership (not a lot but some). Regardless of our differences the WSA tries to maintain

cordial relations with the IWW. The WSA stands ready to work with the IWW on matters of mutual concern and interest to the American and the World's working class. That's what solidarity and the class struggle are all about.

Best wishes comrades and keep up the good work!

Mitch, International Secretary, WSA-IWA

Last issue's article on the Newham council poll tax strike received an angry response from an anonymous poll tax prisoner. S/he sent it back to us circling the following paragraph:

"Poll tax workers must be supported even though we may not like their job. A strong workplace organisation will enable the workers to demand and get jobs in other sections when poll tax is finally abolished"

The response accused the article of being trendy lefty. The best way to reply properly is to say why we printed and support the article.

Lots of us do crappy jobs in places that we'd rather not, our work contributing to something with which we disagree. The poll tax is an emotive issue but still falls into the same category. It is not always possible to choose your job, obviously none of us want to work for such things, but to ignore pressure of family, bills and mortgages which lead people to take such jobs is to be elitist and purist.

As syndicalists we aim to move forward, to organise workplace action where ever we can. Poll tax units are no exception. The lack of Trade Union members in terms of non-implementation and non-collection meant that the poll tax struggle was harder and took longer than it should have done. Now, when workers are taking action we should support them, build their confidence to take on the bosses, so that past mistakes don't happen again.

Our starting point is that these places exist, people do work there, and we cannot simply wish them away. We either get involved in supporting such struggles or we leave workers isolated. Solidarity doesn't just materialise from nothing, it has to be built and worked at.

SADISM AND MASOCHISM

A number of men in a gay sado-masochist (SM) ring recently had their convictions for assault charges upheld. This added to the absurd situation of the willing participants in these 'assaults' being cautioned as accessories in assaults on themselves! Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, told the men that consent was no defence. Even though the injuries were superficial, and were carried out in private, assaults involving "the satisfaction of sado-masochistic libido" were illegal. The ruling will apply both to gay and straight sex. It could, in theory, lead to prosecutions for inflicting love bites.

However, there has been no discussion of the deliberate infliction of pain without consent. Parents regularly assault their children, and it still goes on in schools, although not in the ritualised form of caning since corporal punishment was supposedly abolished.

This case has brought into play a lot of the media's distorted view of SM, with jokes in some papers about recognising the men's "need for punishment" by giving them jail sentences. In truth, most SM sex is based around mutual consent, and variety rather than degree of pain inflicted. The sub knows full well that the dom will stop as soon as asked to. The trust inherent in such a relationship, however temporary it might be, far exceeds that of many 'conventional' relationships (step forward, Paddy Ashdown).

Many socialists dislike SM because of the distorted power relationships inherent in it. Or because they see it as something only indulged in by the upper classes, who had it beaten into them at Eton and Harrow. This isn't the case, and working class people are just as likely to want a bit. However, if anyone is to be sexually liberated, it means everyone must be, within the bounds of consent. Throughout history, the State or the Church has interfered in our sex lives. This still goes on. Most obviously this is in discrimination against lesbians and gays, and outright criminalisation in many countries. This prudish bigotry extends, in some American States to making oral and anal sex illegal. The ruling class has been screwing us for too long, it's time we told them to bugger off!

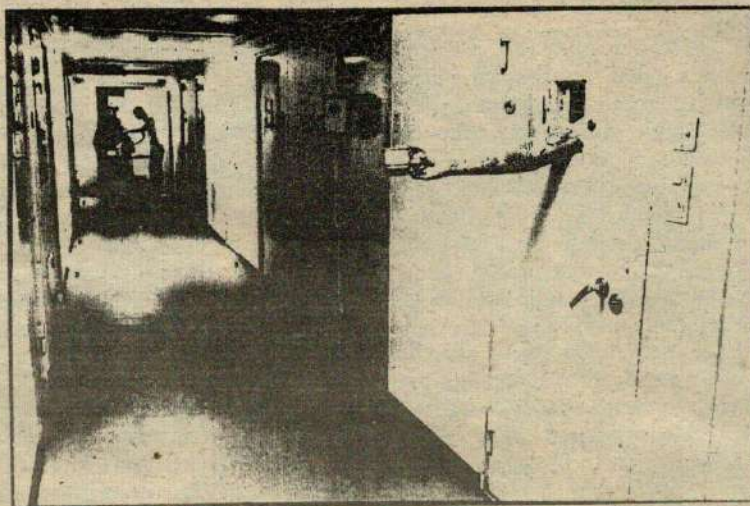
Whitemore Prison is designed for maximum control. Built at a cost of £34 million, it incorporates in its design and structure the principal of constant observation and surveillance, as well as the 'new generation' ideas of small manageable units of prisoners that are allowed no contact or interaction as groups.

Whitemore is obviously the latest 'big idea' of the home office as regards security, and also shows their total contempt for the Woolfe report. A report commissioned by the home office. At present Whitemore is being used as a dumping ground for so called 'problem' prisoners; basically this means any one who wants to know their rights or demands them. At present the management are adopting a 'Mr Nice Guy' approach through a therapeutic regime, however, this could change at any moment. Prison officers have been relegated to operators of switches. They know and properly hope to see the day they are called into action. Perhaps even provoking such an event. If prisoners do not organise themselves, they will be denied any shred of human rights or dignity. They will be manipulated by those in charge. A regime such as at Whitemore must be resisted in order to preserve one's sanity — otherwise the next stop will be Rampton!

If prisoners take the space that is rightly theirs through prisoners' representation committees, then they have a good chance to take some control over their lives. The committee must meet and negotiate regularly with management. This is not because of some liberal idea that negotiation equals co-opting.

First impressions of Whitemore are of total control. A gate officer > a metal detector > two screws > bags are searched > onward through an air lock and out into a fenced in space — even the grass is fenced in. Into the visiting centre > another metal detector and one for bags. Into the room — large industrial type of room with

WHITEMORE



curtains. At first seemingly casual arrangements of comfortable chairs and low coffee tables. On spotting a number on the table the casual/comfortable ambience disappears. It feels like a cross between a factory and a hospital — a processing plant. Video cameras add the finishing touch.

On 2nd March prisoners held a peaceful work strike. In response the riot squad were called in at midnight and prisoners were harassed and forcibly removed under threats of violence to the punishment block. They were not given the reasons for their removal. Twenty four prisoners were taken that night and shipped off to Pentonville, Lincoln and Albany prison segregation units. More prisoners were moved in the days following. Whitemore was officially in a state of "controlled-unlock" (Which of course means permanent lock up for the prisoners?! Newspeak or what?).

One of the prisoners moved was John Bowden. He has long been a campaigner for prisoners rights and as a consequence has suffered constant abuse and persecution from the prison

authorities. He has been moved from prison to prison, often kept in the isolation block, not for any 'offence' he may have committed, but merely due to his reputation.

John's case exemplifies the Home Office attitude to all prisoners who stand up for their rights — they are regarded as trouble makers and, as with the Whitemore incident, suffer blatant harassment and discrimination. At Whitemore it is clear that the prison authorities panicked in the face of a strike that was solid in C Wing and totally supported by D Wing. The authorities couldn't isolate a few ring leaders as there was so much support for the strike — so they decided to move everyone.

At the time of printing 30 prisoners are still being kept locked in segregation units. The governor of Whitemore has no plans to take them back. They are not being segregated for any offences or for breaking prison rules. The Home Office prefers that no questions are asked about its handling of prisoners. Please write to: John Bowden B41173 Seg unit D108, HMP Pentonville Caledonian Road, London

THE ELECTIONS: AN INQUEST AND ANALYSIS

We have long been saying that Parliamentary politics have nothing to offer our class. The results of April 9th merely confirm this. So it is fitting to hold an inquest into the slow death of reformism.

The Left in Britain have long neglected many of the areas that matter to their natural constituency, the British working class. Instead, they have become involved in the politics of the lobby. Different groups of workers and other oppressed groups are sectioned off, each with their 'own' professionals to manage things on their behalf. Working class people are no longer seen as people, but as clients, who must be represented, even listened to, but never allowed to make any decisions. A whole new bureaucracy has grown up around such 'clients'. This emphasis on 'client groups' rather than class interest has led to a massive decline in terms of the nominally socialist forces in this country, particularly outside the big cities. And because we anarchists have followed their agenda at times, we too have suffered, and are at times tarred with the same brush.

Many workers, deluded by the reformism of the Left, be it the Labour Party, or their unofficial left wing, the SWP and Militant, put much faith in a Labour victory at the polls, or even a



hung Parliament, as offering a hope election in their history. Even had they for a light back. This is an easy answer, got in, the real power lies in the boardrooms, the City and Whitehall, their hearts that it isn't true. Labour as it always has, were less distinguishable from the Tories at this election than at any other. The real answer to the defeats of the

last fifteen years (yes, they began under Labour!) lies where our strength has always been greatest. But work in the unions has been deliberately neglected in favour of political campaigns where the odds are stacked against us. Our

strength has always been at work — it's where we can hurt the bosses, yet Labour and the left take militants out of the workplace and tie them up in an endless web of committees and meetings. Valuable time which could be spent organising in the workplace, which is where it matters. This systematic neglect of workplace organising has led British unions to have a huge paper membership, which can hardly ever be mobilised for any action. Contrast this to the European unions, with relatively small memberships, but when they fight, they fight. If more time and energy was put into the unions at a rank and file level, rather than wasted in the Labour Party and the sects which orbit it, perhaps class consciousness would be greater. The result of the election was not as surprising as many Labour Party people felt. Elections don't change governments — people do. Every change of government in my lifetime has been on the back of a surge of working class militancy. Yet at the moment as a class we are weaker than we have been for decades. The lesson of this election is clear — the Labour Party cannot defend us (it never could), only unions can. We must organise and re-organise, for now, more than ever, solidarity is not a luxury, it is a necessity for our survival.

NUPE AND AFA

The following article has been written by a healthworker who is a member of the DAM.

Recently I was 'censured' by NUPE branch officials in the hospital in which I work, under Rule 18, paragraph 11, points (a), (b), (c) and (d). In lay language, I have been dismissed as a shop steward and barred from attending any union meetings for a year. My 'offence'? That I used branch-headed notepaper to publicise an AFA benefit gig and that, in advising union members of their rights when asked by hospital managers to attend for interviews with the hospital's Occupational Health department, I made "veiled attacks on certain hospital managers".

The sheer laughability of the latter aside, I believe the fact that a coalition of interests involving right-wing branch officials, neurotic and paranoid hospital managers, and sharp-suited area and divisional full-timers, formed itself against one shop steward over the issue of my support for AFA, provides proof that active opposition to fascism and racism attracts the attention and counter-opposition of not just the fascists. In my own case, an offer on my part to put out a written statement to union members to the effect that AFA is not affiliated to NUPE nationally was met, on the first occasion when I put it to the Branch Shop Stewards Committee, with a call for my resignation by the Branch Secretary and Branch Chair. On the second occasion when I

put it to the following full branch meeting, with a call from the union Area Officer present for a further vote on my dismissal.

AFA, as NUPE Area Officer Alison Waylen informed the above branch meeting, "is an organisation which believes in direct action". Once upon a time, not so long ago, even the most right wing of trade union leaders advocated the use of 'direct action' in the case of industrial disputes (when it suited them). Is Britain in 1992 such a more enlightened and equitable society that workers no longer need to take strike action or resort to other forms of industrial action and sabotage in defence of jobs and living standards? Are the fascists of today so much more timid than waving Socialist Worker placards at them and shouting "Nazi Scum" will send them scurrying back down their holes? Britain in 1992 is less equitable. The potential threat from fascism is greater.

Connivance between the unions and the management is nothing new. These days any trade unionist to the left of Kinnock in terms of politics or integrity should expect it as a matter of course. Trendy anti-racist statements or manifestos are never more than an effective smoke-screen for those who wish to be seen to be doing something but do next to nothing. Anarcho-sindicalists are not the only workers to see through you.



SMASH FIGHT RACISM FASCISM BERMONDSEY RECLAIMED

A regular BNP and NF paper selling pitch in Bermondsey, East London was recently occupied by Anti-Fascist Action supporters, including a large DAM contingent, which effectively prevented the fascists from selling their hate filled racist rags.

After arriving bright and early AFA began leafleting local shoppers with a specially produced leaflet exposing the true divisive and anti-working class nature of fascism, and urging people not to vote for the BNP candidate in the area.

When a van containing four dismayed BNP supporters turned up they wisely decided to carry on driving and were not seen to return to 'their' paper selling pitch. Three NF 'Flag' sellers, proudly carrying a large union jack showed

somewhat less common sense than the BNP (no mean feat as you can imagine) and attempted to sell papers whilst surrounded by AFA.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a few minutes later three slightly bruised fascists were escorted away by the police, minus a large bundle of their papers which ended up in the bin.

One anti-fascist, from Norwich AFA was arrested and charged with us: of threatening and abusive behaviour which could result in a fine. Donations and messages of support would be appreciated, send to Norwich AFA, P.O. Box 73, Norwich NR1 2EB. Any cheques payable to Norwich Anti-Fascist Action. Any spare dosh will go to pay other AFA fines.

March 3rd saw 400 people turning up at Liverpool docks to demonstrate against rainforest clearing. A load of Malaysian hardwood was arriving and a number of environmental groups, including supporters of the newly launched Earth First! organisation where there to take direct action against an activity which is further depleting the world's rapidly disappearing rainforests. Banners were unfurled from dockside cranes and gates were blocked by activists. What made this action all the more positive was the support given to protestors by dockworkers. Work-

ers refused to unload any ships until some activists who had been locked up were released. An activist who had spoken to a docker was told they would have like to do more to help.

It is this sort of action and solidarity between activists and workers which can drag the environmental movement out of its middle class, reformist ghetto and genuinely have a chance of changing things. Building links between workers and environmental groups should be a priority, as should taking effective direct action against environ-

mentally damaging industries. In the future the DAM hopes to strengthen links between ourselves and groups such as EF! and we invite any interested groups and individuals to get in touch with a view to building an effective and revolutionary environmental movement.

PS: Earth First! recently caused an estimated £100,000 of damage (official estimate) to Fissions Peat extraction operation which is being carried out on a site of special scientific interest.

Earth First!

COLCHESTER 16 — 4 JAILED

On Monday 6th April, four people, two charged with riot, two with violent disorder, were sent down for taking part in an anti-poll tax demonstration in Colchester over two years ago.

Terry Frost got 2 years, A. Hester got 18 months, Christine Hammond 9 months and P. Tyler 6 months youth custody. As with all jailed poll tax protesters and non-payers they should not be there. It is not important whether they are 'innocent' or 'guilty' of what

the state prosecution has claimed they did, but that people have once again been jailed for standing up against the poll tax.

The decision of the court has nothing to do with justice, nor has it any relevance to those of us who see the whole legal system as fundamentally corrupt, fit only to be destroyed as soon as possible. Anyone with any remaining faith in the legal system who has followed the trial has certainly had these

illusions shattered, as will anyone who attends the second part of the trial. Seven remaining defendants are to be tried starting Monday 18th May at Norwich Crown Court, Bishopgate, Norwich. There will be a demonstration at the court at 9.30am on the day, and on the Monday of each week following the trial.

One of the acquitted defendants made it clear that support and solidarity had made a great difference throughout the case, this must continue for the second trial. Write to the prisoners and send a message of support to the campaign.

Colchester 16 Defence Campaign, c/o AEU Branch Room, 7 Magdalen Street, Colchester, Essex.

Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign, c/o Brixton Law Centre, 506 Brixton Road, London SW9 — for up to date prisoners lists.

GUNS & HAMMERS — ALL PART OF THE JOB

Albert Dryden, the man who shot dead Derwentside planner and Nalco member Harry Collins in a horrendous scene watched by millions of TV viewers was jailed for life. The jury found Dryden guilty of the attempted murder of council solicitor Michael Dunstan. Dryden is a right wing survivalist, an American anti-communist movement.

Nalco news 7/2/92 reports in creasing attacks on Nalco housing workers, Attacks with hammers and machetes, and attacks on their homes. What Nalco intends to do about these attacks remains to be seen. Nalco News speaks of "launching a campaign on workplace violence and drawing up a modal procedure for Nalco shops to us in negotiations."! Something stronger is required if council workers are not to be severely injured or killed.

We extend our deepest sympathies to the relations, friends and workmates of Harry Collinson.

ROOF-TOP SECURITY



The disgusting standard of safety in the roofing industry has been highlighted by a national campaign recently launched by the Health and Safety Commission. Anyone who has ever worked in roofing will be well aware of the dangerous working conditions and non-existent safety guidelines; you more or less have to be a human fly to survive in the industry.

In the last 3 years 109 have been killed and nearly 1,500 serious accidents were reported in the industry, which the HSC says "attracts more than it's fair share of the 'get rich quick' brigade."

In what is a poorly unionised industry it is essential that workers get their hands on useful information and pressurise their employers to put it into action.

As part of the campaign there is a freephone hot line on 0800 300 363 for roofworkers to get a free info pack containing practical safety advice. The pack includes info on protection against falls from pitched, flat and fragile roofs, revised sheets on the safe use of ladders, general access scaffolds and tower scaffolds.

SUPER-UNIONS — DO WE NEED THEM ?

Nalco, the National & Local Government Officers Association, is one of the few major unions that is not affiliated to the Labour Party. (The others are the Teachers and Civil Service unions). Nalco does however, have a political fund, which the vast majority of members contribute to. This fund is currently used for non-party political propaganda, usually at election time, in defence of public services. With the merger between Nalco and Nupe (National Union of Public Employees) and Cohse (Confederation of Health Service Employees) that political independence is threatened, because both Nupe and Cohse are affiliated to the Labour Party. However closer examination of the uses made of the political fund, and statements made by members of the NEC, show that political independence to be shallow. Nalco's propaganda doesn't tell people to vote Labour, just to vote against the Tories. It encourages people to believe that elections can change anything, and the obvious conclusion from is that a vote against the Tories is a vote for Labour. My bosses are in the Labour Party — it's bad enough with them furthering their careers on my back, without voting for them, and indirectly paying for the privilege of being told to vote for them.

Anarcho-syndicalists are against affiliation to any political party, not just the Labour Party, because of the class nature of political parties. Unions, by definition, only include workers. Their appeal is on an economic level, and workers join out of necessity and solidarity. Parties, on the other hand, make their appeal on the basis of ideas, and so attract cross-class support. They develop an intellectual elite (if they didn't already have one) and that elite comes to dominate the party, in its own interests. This happened early on in the Labour Party, with the Fabians, and is the core idea of Leninism.

The merged union is proposed to have two political funds, representing the different traditions of the three unions. One will be 'independent', like Nalco's is, and one will be affiliated to the Labour Party, like Nupe and Cohse. The hope of the reformists after the union merger is that they will overturn this ridiculous situation. Assuming this happens, it would lead to serious exodus of many Nalco members from the new union. Many of these will be right wingers, but some could also be socialists depressed at the pathetic Labour Party and the tail ending of the left. So much for increased unity! The dual system proposed for the political funds means that members will pay into either or none, but that members who have paid into the Labour Party fund will get to go on all the useless committees that these bureaucrats love. But will they be accountable to the whole branch, or just themselves? Do they even know what accountability means? The whole scheme is absurd. Nor are there any changes proposed to the operation of the non-affiliated fund. Those who believe that Labour councils respond to affiliated unions are living in cloud cuckoo land. Just look at Liverpool, where Militant spent ages joining up dustmen to the GMB and the Labour Party. The Labour council still privatised the bins.

As anarcho-syndicalists, we would say that ideally, all funds should be under direct control of the members, for them to decide what they wanted to use them for. This would almost certainly include political campaigning, but it would be on working class terms, not those of the bureaucrats. As a basic demand, a good proportion of the political fund should be kept at branch level, for use in local campaigns, including fighting against Labour councils. The rest should be spent campaigning on national issues, which reflect the real needs of Nalco members and the working class as a whole. It shouldn't be spent on thinly disguised Labour Party propaganda.



The first moves are afoot in yet another possible merger between the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), which has a membership of 1.2 million and the general workers union the GMB with 900 000. This merger may happen within 2 to 3 years. So three super unions; Nalco-Cohse-Nupe, TGWU-GMB, and AEU-EEPTU with a total membership of some 5 million would dominate the TUC, if they remain within its ranks. The general tendency seems to be towards greater centralisation with a further distancing of the unions from the workplace. This means that workers will be even more alienated from their unions than they are at present, even more will they see the union as being something separate and external to themselves.

If the 'super unions' are to be so dominant it raises the question why does the TUC exist? Why should members pay £10 million to keep it going? The new AEEU will be larger than some trade union centres in the EC where there is often a number of confederations, each based on political complexion. Under the Tories the TUC's power and influence has declined with dwindling membership, the recession

and the political hostility of the government.

The Tories have already announced, before they were re-elected that they will introduce a bill that would outlaw one of the TUC's main functions, that of adjudicating and policing the 'Bridlington Agreement' rules in quarrels between unions concerning membership and demarcation. This of course will be presented as expanding the right of workers to choose which union they will join. Before the Tories were re-elected, members of the executive of the TGWU had questioned whether the Bridlington Agreement was strong enough to protect it from poaching. With the election result the question has become extremely relevant. It could be argued that the TUC still has a vital function to perform like providing training for officials and negotiators. There is a national college and an education department at Congress House. The TUC is however currently cutting it's staff by 20%.

The TUC is part and parcel of how the social democrats (Labour Party) keep their hold on the unions. It is now possible that with the victory of the Tories and the advent of the paper

unions, major restructuring of the labour movement will soon be upon us. The 'Networks' we advocate could prove to be a focal point for working class struggle and resistance. It is necessary to go back to basics and start again from the workplace. The more the unions become divorced from the workplace, the more useless, futile and corrupt they become. The super unions upon us, big, fat, flabby giants which will no more be able to defend us than the mini-unions of yesteryear. They'll be just another burden, another albatross for the workers to carry and pay for. The Thatcher years have played havoc with the unions and social democracy. Politicians have not had a smell or whiff of power let alone seen the inside of 10 Downing Street. The trade union leaders must have forgotten what cucumber sandwiches and beer must taste like.

Now is the time for a new extra parliamentary opposition, outside the parties and critical of the existing unions. The industrial networks DAM advocate and propagate must provide the active resistance and opposition to the Tories, capitalism and the state.

65 MINERS STILL SACKED FROM 1984/5 STILL NEED YOUR SUPPORT

To give you an idea of the nature and the scale of British Coal's victimisation, here are the stories of just two of the remaining 65 sacked miners and the circumstances surrounding their victimisation and subsequent punishment by British Coal.

JIMMY LEES, sacked Notts miner. Jimmy is 38 years of age. He has a wife, Kate, and three children. Mary, now 18, was just starting secondary school in 1984 when the strike started. Graham and Tracey, now 14 and 12, were just starting primary school. They have grown up without their dad earning a wage because of government and management vindictiveness. Jimmy started as a miner at Pennyvennie colliery, Ayrshire, Scotland, before moving south to Nottingham in 1979. His crime for being sacked during the strike? He supposedly threw a brick, five miles from his place of work, and lost his job - despite the legal charges being thrown out of court. But let Jimmy tell his own story: "I worked at Ollerton colliery where a couple of hundred of us joined the strike. I was sacked for 'gross industrial misconduct'. I was supposed to have thrown a brick at a scab's house five miles away from the pit. Nobody was hurt — there were not even any

broken windows, but that didn't stop the colliery manager and the police from victimising me.

I was arrested even though I had six witnesses to say I was somewhere else at the time. The damage was so small that my plea for a jury trial — where I thought I would get a fairer trial — was rejected. A magistrate found me guilty of 'criminal damage' and 'intimidation'. The case was then remanded for two weeks before sentencing — and during that time the colliery manager called me into the office and sacked me. Then I was given two two month prison sentences in Lincoln prison to run concurrently. On a barrister's advice I appealed and after I had been in jail for 12 days the Nottingham Crown Court, this time consisting of a jury of my peers, quashed the conviction.

It was on Xmas Eve 1984 that I returned home from jail, innocent in the eyes of the law at last but still guilty in the jaundiced eyes of British Coal. That year the local Strike Committee put on a Xmas Party and the children were given presents. All this was made possible by the work of the miners' support groups.

My whole family was affected by that strike. My lad, then seven years of age, has a friend whose father worked during

the strike. He gave a 'Coal Not Dole' sticker to his friend while they were playing. The next thing I knew I was under arrest again, this time for 'intimidation' — a charge that was thrown out of court."

Jimmy has applied for literally hundreds of jobs but British Coal's spiteful refusal to release records of his qualifications and work records are a major hindrance. And also, it can only mean that they don't want Jimmy to get a job anywhere, let alone get his old job back as a miner.

GEORGE BROOKS — Jimmy's fellow victimised Notts miner, 50 years old George Brooks, has had even more bitter disappointments. Geordie, like Jimmy, moved to the Nottingham coalfield from another area, in his case the North East.

At one stage after being sacked Geordie was even ready to start work, with a mining contractor, but lost the job when his medical records were mysteriously 'lost' at British Coal's medical centre in Stoke on Trent.

Contact: National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, c/o North East NUM, PO Box 6, Red Hill, Durham DH1 4BB. Tel (091) 384 3515.



We have a world system today that exists primarily to suit the needs of a range of killer industries, earning billions for multinational companies that literally span the globe. Those who are poor are made poorer and subjected to numerous preventable 'social disasters' by the media. Big business and governments thrive on exactly the things least likely to produce a sustainable and decent life for the mass of the world's population.

Throughout the 80's, despite the Live Aids, the charity efforts, the oh so noble overseas aid, the gap between rich and poor in 'underdeveloped' countries and the west has increased. For the world's poorest peoples, incomes dropped by 10-25% and today almost 900 million people — or one in every six — live in a state of absolute poverty.

The charity do-gooder approach to solving global problems may get a lot of TV and media attention, but realistically it is pissing in the wind, and worse, forms part of the diversion from the fact that the multinational killer industries operate in clear social and political ways to undermine the health and well-being of the world's population. If we look at the profiles of some of the world's killer industries we can see how charity and Aid has been accommodated and used by them. Where any conflict of interests has appeared government and industry have stood firmly on the side of profits against the welfare of ordinary people. The picture remains of the noble west trying to help these 'backward' countries to develop, doling out charity to the helpless, incompetent victims of natural disasters. This is an important lie and apart from being built on racism and ideas of western superiority it is part of the tendency of the media and so-called experts to represent what is really a social or political problem as a natural or technical one.

A general example is the problem of starvation; millions threatened in Africa and many other parts of the world. This is presented in a variety of ways as lack of rain, poor soils, over-population, poor agricultural techniques, but over the last 25 years world food production has outstripped population growth by 16%, and nearly all countries even in times of famine, produce more crops than their people require. The problem is one of distribution; goods, land and wealth in the hands of a few. There is no 'shortage' of these things, just a social and political problem of unequal distribution. It is also the case that poverty forces many families to have more children as a survival strategy; more hands to work and earn and to provide security for old age/illness. Poverty actually causes population growth, not the other way round.

...900 million people — or 1 in 6 — live in a state of absolute poverty.

There is a large body of evidence that major long-term improvements in people's social, economic and political changes that lead to improved standards of living, fairer distribution of resources, more adequate returns for what people do and a fuller assurance that their basic needs will be met. This is as true in the history of the west as anywhere else, where medicine had little impact on most of the major disease epidemics of industrialisation (except for smallpox), which were affected mainly by improved living conditions, sanitation and nutrition.

In the end, our health is not some 'natural' purely biological thing, but intimately tied to how we organise our social and economic life. Governments prefer technological solutions (or curative ones) to ones that need social or political changes (or preventative ones) because technological solutions may remove the symptoms of a problem, leaving the underlying set up of society the same, whilst making a good deal of profit in the process. Of course technology has its role, but it can never be the complete solution.

If we look at the problem of malnutrition we can see this process of avoiding the real problem illustrated. Malnutrition is known to be caused by a combination of poverty, diarrhoea, and infectious diseases. So what happens? The aid agencies and local governments ignore the social cause — inequality in distribution of resources and poverty — and go for the biological cause. Of course both should be treated, but by selectively focusing on the disease a lot of money is made from so called 'Oral Rehydration Therapy'

Health is not a 'biological' thing, but tied to how we organise our social and economic life.

(ORT), which is a treatment for diarrhoea, one of the main factors in malnutrition. What's more, studies have shown that the best remedy for diarrhoea is a home-made cereal based gruel that is produced in many areas. It is used as a weaning food, is cheap, locally available and more effective than the World Health Organisation (WHO) sugar formula that is used in ORT. But the WHO's ORT formula comes in aluminium foil packets and the making of these packets is a multi-billion industry. People's reliance on ORT packets created a dependency on an outside product and getting supplies could involve hours travelling, reliance on distribution and extra cost for something of questionable efficacy. What's more, the packets were originally provided free by aid agencies, but with the cost of providing more and more packets going up, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) demanding cuts in public spending from Third World governments as part of debt related 'adjustment' measures. This gave agencies like the IS Agency for International Development (USAID) the perfect chance to persuade health ministries to go commercial, ie, charge for the packets. They are now sold at a profit; in Bangladesh the packets cost 15-20 cents each, over half a day's wage, which means people end up even poorer in an attempt to fight disease.

So by focusing on one aspect of the problem with a technological solution, the social and political problems are ignored and in fact made even worse, increasing poverty, one of the main causes of malnutrition in the first place. If we now turn to look at the profiles of the world's largest killer industries, we can see that the pursuit of profit at the expense of people's lives and health is more blatant.

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS £170 Billion per year

In some of the world's poorest countries, manslaughter, accidents and cirrhosis, mostly related to drinking, are among the biggest cause of death for ages 15-50 (especially in men). Both in underdeveloped and developed countries alcoholism is especially high in

communities where poverty and unemployment are high and it is very often high in indigenous minorities, such as American Indians and Australian Aborigines who have been dispossessed of their land and way of life by colonial invaders. More generally, alcohol has a role in domestic and social violence, can be the cause of chronic illness or early death and absorb meagre incomes already stretched beyond providing basic daily needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

Recognising the damage caused by alcohol, communities have taken ac-

keting practices of the alcohol producers and the economic interest protected by major WHO funding states, and thus could not be tolerated.

TOBACCO £35 billion in US

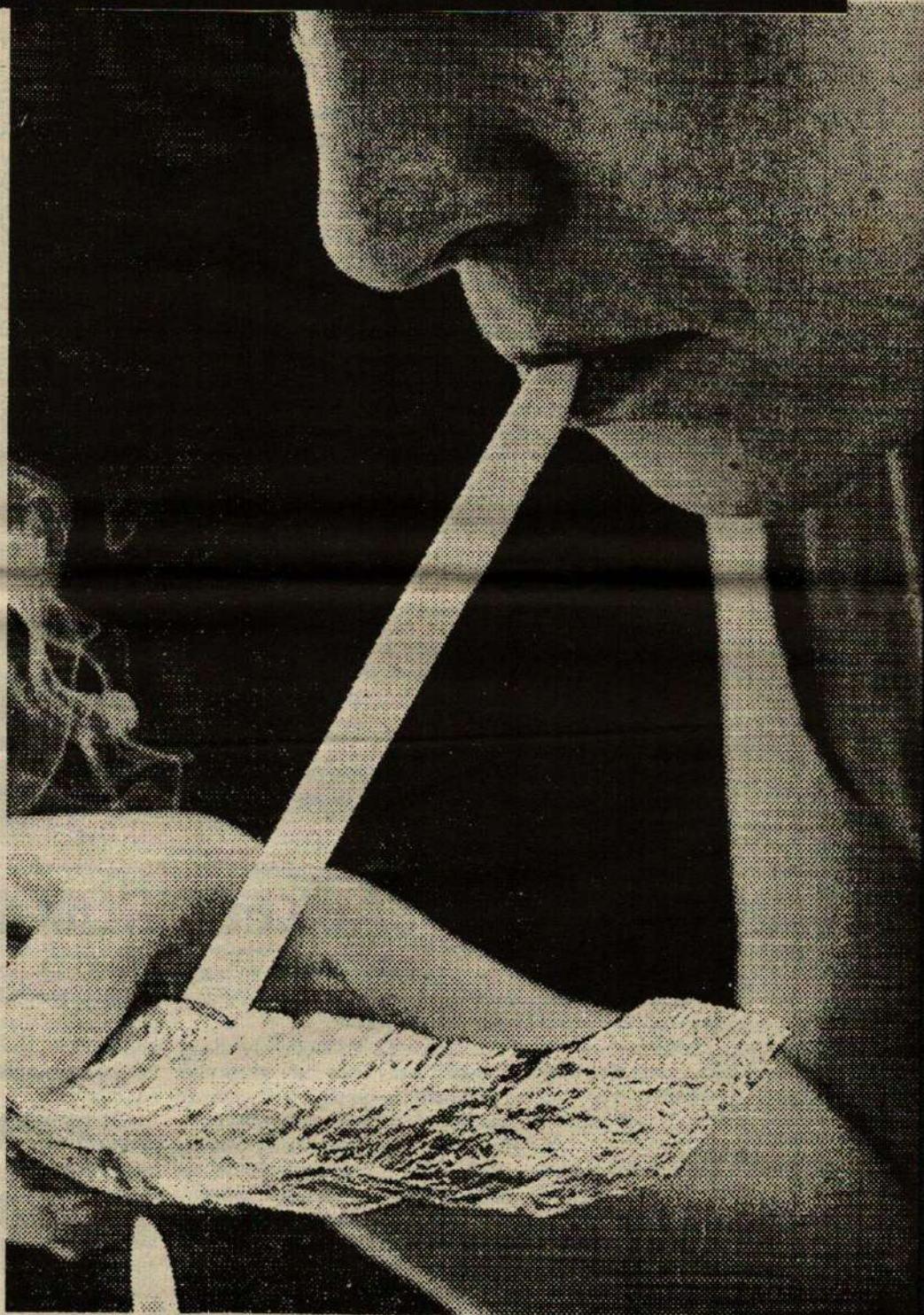
As addictive as Heroin or Crack and more dangerous to the overall health of populations, tobacco is one of the world's biggest health hazards, responsible annually for more than 2.5 million deaths worldwide, and is a main factor in heart disease and cancer. Of course, despite the feeble health warn-

development projects, they could cancel the initial loan. Along with the cigarettes came the high power marketing techniques which saw cigarette consumption growing by 3% a year by the early 80's.

Here we see a familiar pattern, that of Third World governments going along with the game for their own profit, often claiming they are given no choice, while the mass of people living in that country pay the price. Where governments attempt to resist the multinationals it is more often because they are protecting 'their patch' rather than

KILLER INDUSTRIES

This month we start a series of articles examining the harmful effects of some of the world's biggest industries, where the profit rolls in but the price paid is often widespread suffering.



tion to try and deal with the problem but the giant companies often bend the law and pay off corrupt officials to maximise sales. In Mexico community health workers were jailed when they organised against the opening of a bar in their town.

In the early 80's the WHO did a study on the harmful effect on health and role in social problems of alcohol abuse, finding a direct link with the practices of a few major corporations. In 1983 the study was cancelled by WHO high level administrators against the recommendations of its own legislative committee and international experts. The study flew in the face of the mar-

ings on packets and advertising the tobacco industry receives massive government subsidies.

After World War II, under the so-called 'food for peace' program, US tobacco companies began large scale penetration of Third World markets, a pattern repeated in many killer industries in order to find new, less regulated or restricted markets. Over 25 years the US exported nearly £1 billion of tobacco, with countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia being given long term, low interest, government loans to buy the tobacco and with the additional promise that if they used the profits for US approved

out of any concern for the local population.

In 1985 the US threatened trade sanctions against countries that were resisting imports of US tobacco. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea were forced to yield and let US companies in, but to compete with the imports they began to employ the same hard sell techniques, just like US manufacturers, resulting in a dramatic increase in the numbers of smokers within the first few years. Here we see the wonders of free market competition at work. Multinationals and local capitalists battle it out to have the chance to destroy the health of the local population.

Meanwhile, the WHO predicts a global pandemic of lung cancer by the year 2000 and in the Third World tobacco contributes to more deaths than Tropical diseases. More Columbians die from smoking than Americans do from Cocaine and the US tobacco companies sell cigarettess with much higher levels of nicotine and tar than are contained in the same brands sold in the US.

Add to this direct contribution tobacco has to undermining the world's population the indirect factors such as a drain on people's finances, the fact that

unemployment who suffer. Not only does the use of drugs damage health and sometimes cause death but the sharing of needles often leads to the spread of fatal diseases such as Hepatitis B and more recently AIDS. Also, the combination of addictiveness, high cost and illegality of hard drugs leads users into escalating patterns of 'crime' and self-destruction.

Meanwhile in the producing countries such as Colombia and Peru, drug lords are powerful and the police, military and government all come under their influence, with any opposition being intimidated or killed. Hardest hit are the small mountainside growers — poor farmers with children to feed, who as the world markets dictate, turn to drug growing as one of the only options for survival. These same farmers are periodically busted, beaten and jailed and further impoverished (through extortion) by the narcotics control police, who induced them to grow drugs in the first place and who move in and out of the gangs of big drug lords. In the US the so-called 'War on Drugs' conceals the fact that it

The US government provides protection and legal immunity to many of the world's biggest drug dealers.

was the CIA who escalated the once small trade in drugs in order to finance its 'covert operations' all over the world with 'off the books' funding. During the Vietnam war the CIA was deeply involved in organising the drug trade in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, known as the 'Golden Triangle' region, exporting drugs to the US, Canada and Northern Europe. More recently, in the Afganistan war, the lands controlled by the US supported guerrillas quickly grew into one of the world's largest supply centres of Heroin for the US and European markets. Again in 1987 the Iran-Contra scandal saw the Reagan/Bush administration involved in arms for drugs trade to supply the Contras in Nicaragua.

Despite the so-called war on drugs, the US government provides protection and legal immunity to many of the world's biggest drug dealers. In January 1989 the Costa Rican government arrested John Hull, an American farmer who was proved to have been providing his ranch as a transit point for the arms-for-drugs supply for the Contras. In response to his arrest a group of 19 members of Congress, led by Lee Hamilton of the Iran-Contra investigation, wrote to the Costa Rican President stating that "It is our hope that Mr Hull's case can be concluded promptly and that it can be handled in a manner that will not complicate US-Costa Rican relations." More recently, the US government turned on General Noriega of Panama, calling him an evil drug dealer, while in the early 80's his drug dealing was well known and tolerated, since Noriega supported the US destabilisation of Nicaragua.

So not only is the 'illegal' multination drug industry causing harm to the consumers of drugs, but it is being used to pay for covert operations to destabilise peoples who are very often struggling the hardest to overcome the economics of inequity. Meanwhile, for countries such as Mexico, Columbia and Bolivia, the drug trade accounts for at least 75% of their export earnings, most of which goes to pay interest on foreign debts.

PESTICIDES £14 billion per year

Again a technological solution, often presented as a great triumph of science over nature, has actually resulted on the whole in an increase in poverty and poisoning for large numbers of people.

Much was made in the 1960's of the so-called 'Green Revolution' that took place in many Third World countries and particularly in South East Asia. Certain High Yield Grains were introduced in an effort to boost crop production and reduce food shortages. But these new grains lacked the resistance of local varieties and they needed fertilizers, pesticides and irrigations to supplement their growth. Poorer farmers could not afford these extras and were thus forced off their land and into being landless labourers for the bigger farms or into the ever expanding slums of the cities in search of work. The Green Revolution saw a four-fold increase in the number of landless farmers and by the mid 70's 50% of rural inhabitants in at least 20 Third World countries were landless. Again, a massive failure due to pretending the problem was one of food shortage and not economic organisation and distribution.

The biggest problem from pesticide production, however, is poisoning. Pesticides cause illnesses, birth defects and poisonings, and 10,000 deaths per year are inflicted, mainly on farm workers. Pesticides sold to the Third World may be unregistered or banned in the West (figures for 1976 show 29% of pesticides sold to the Third World were in this category) and in many countries ground water is dangerously polluted. In Guatemala levels of the notoriously toxic chemical DDT were found in cows' milk that were 90 times the legal US limit.

Attempts by the UN to set up an international registry of potentially toxic chemicals were blocked in 1984 by Reagan, who feared that this might "hinder American trade". Another remarkable feature of the pesticide saga is that the more you use the more you need (a capitalist's dream). Since pesticides destroy the 'pests' natural predators and destroy the ecological balance, new, stronger 'pests' need newer, stronger pesticides, and it is a fact that since the 40's crop losses to insects, disease and weed plants have actually increased from 32% to 37%.

The most sustainable and useful method is small-scale farming, using a variety of mixed crops including hardy traditional ones with pesticide-free techniques — precisely the opposite of modern trends to large scale mechanised high technology farming of 'mono-culture' single crops for export profits. Along with large takeovers by agribusiness and the concentration of farming into fewer hands, this is very much in keeping with the 'adjustment policies' of financial institutions like the IMF, who want to see production of cash crops to service foreign debts. Again, it is the undermining of the sustainability of local food production that has left many Third World populations with nothing to fall back on in times of 'famine' and when cash crop prices drop and outside food sources have to be relied upon.

Next month we look at two more of the industries that play such a large part in maintaining worldwide poverty and hardship: the Arms Trade and the Pharmaceuticals Industry.

RSI A WARNING TO VDU OPERATORS

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) is a term to cover various types of musculo-skeletal disorders to which workers performing numerous rapid, repetitive movements are vulnerable. VDU operators have been identified as a high risk group. Below, a TGWU member suffering from RSI divulges the harsh realities of this new industrial plague.

First, let me say what RSI is not. It is not just an ache in an arm or the sort of muscular pain you get after a bout of particularly vigorous activity involving the arms, like sport, gardening, moving and carrying heavy objects, decorating, etc. My own experience is that I first became aware of a searing burning sensation in my arms in the middle of the night after returning to work after a fortnight's holiday. The pain became so bad that I couldn't lie still. At 3am I was walking around the house in agony, from time to time holding my arms under the cold water tap to try and get some relief from the tingling, burning pain. It was like have a very bad toothache extending from fingers and thumbs up both arms along the shoulders to the neck, as far as the back of both ears. And that was only the beginning.

What it meant to me was being trapped when left alone in the house, as I couldn't even turn the doorknob on the front door in order to get out. It meant only being able to carry out the most basic tasks with great difficulty. Showering, drying myself, and even just washing my face became a slow, painful process. Buttoned garments were out, as were shoes with laces. Hair and teeth brushing were attempted but not pursued with any enthusiasm. All the normal everyday movements in a morning's routine became a supreme effort.

It wasn't just the pain which made these simple tasks almost impossible, but the lack of control over my hands, arms and fingers. For example, if my nose itched and I tried to scratch it, I would poke my finger in my eyes. It meant eating with my fingers and never having a cup more than half-full of lukewarm tea incase my hands suddenly decided to give up the struggle and throw the tea in my lap.

Quite apart from work, suddenly I wasn't able to do the simple things for myself that those of us fortunate enough to have no disabilities take for granted. It meant being unable to write a cheque. Taking ages to fish coins out of my purse at a cash point while being aware of a lengthening queue of muttering people behind me. Giving up much loved hobbies — knitting, gardening, yoga, reading (books were usually too heavy to hold and if they weren't, I still couldn't turn the pages).

Worst of all, I was denied that greatest of all pleasures to new grans. I couldn't hold my long-awaited, precious new grandson in my arms. In a short time I had changed from being an independent, busy, happy person into a helpless, depressed individual.

I haven't worked now for over a year and am very much improved. The pain has subsided from my arms, but I still get quite a bit in my upper back. I still can't peel vegetables or open a carton of milk, but I can open my front door with the help of a special aid attached to my key. A towelling dressing gown dries me after a bath, dispensing with the need to struggle with a towel. I can do a little gardening, changing position frequently and never working for more than half an hour. With the help of a good consultant, specialist physiotherapy and regular exercise, I have found many different ways round obstacles which once seemed impossible.

I appeal to anyone who thinks they might be at risk to take proper breaks from any type of repetitive work. No job is worth being crippled for and no employer's work is more important than all the wonderful, intricate functions performed by the human hand. Employers would do well to remember that no machine can ever replace it.

Source: 'Labour Briefing' magazine.



'ILLEGAL' NARCOTICS £100 billion a year

It is hard to measure the toll on health and life caused by or related to 'the drug problem' but it is particularly young people, and those who are socially marginalised by poverty and

millions of acres of forest are destroyed for curing tobacco leaves, the undermining of local food production when land and free seeds or fertilizers are given as incentives to persuade farmers to switch from food crops to tobacco. Altogether we get plenty of profit at the expense of the health of ordinary people.

FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF GENOCIDE

This year, 1992, is the year that the Spanish and Latin American states are celebrating the Fifth Centenary of the 'Discovery' of America. It is a useful date for us to reflect on the kind of society that we would like to live in.

It is probably true to say that the celebration of the Fifth Centenary has entailed often bitter criticism of the like never seen, on both sides of the Atlantic. These voices intend to force some kind of critical view of what happened 500 years ago, a piece of history that has usually been dressed up in triumphalist tones, relating stories of gallant sailors and captains of the high seas. However, as anarcho-syndicalists we must go further. We must demand justice for the under-developed countries of Latin America, historically denied by the colonising developed nations of the West.

We all know that when Columbus left on his voyage of discovery he was not going on a pleasure cruise. And when all the powerful nations of the time, such as France, England and Portugal, with Spain in the lead, set off to discover the New World, the only idea they had was to squeeze the lands and communities to their maximum benefit. The arrival of the white man brought on the massive extermination of native societies, which were unable to resist the power of firearms, religion and European diseases. These societies were often perfectly structured and lived in balance with their environment.

The white man's culture destroyed their culture and customs, took their lands and their wealth and opened the way to genocide on a large scale. Let us consider some facts:

- According to recent estimates some 90 million natives were exterminated.

This process has not stopped.

- In the Potosi mines in Peru, which were exploited by the Spanish crown, some 4 million natives perished, many of whom were under 14 years of age.

- We must also remember the treatment of Africans who were hunted and used as slaves in the American colonies. Only one in three survived the journey from Africa to the 'New World'. These deaths occurred as a result of poor treatment, bad alimentary and sanitary conditions.

We could list countless other tribes and ecosystems destroyed from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego but the following will suffice:

- The Guatemalan Selva: over the last thirty years 70% of the forest has been destroyed. As a result many rivers have dried up and the local population has had to migrate elsewhere. If the destruction continues at this rate the forest will be completely gone by

the year 2010.

- The Indians of Ecuador: Native Ecuadoreans, comprising half the country's population, have refused to participate in the country's political institutions as they consider that all they have done is undermine their lifestyle and rights. This can be seen especially in the permission granted to US oil companies to establish themselves in so-called National Parks thus destroying their natural habitat.

Lucho Vargas, the ex-President of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities Of Ecuadorean Amazonia declared in Madrid that:

"All that the government does is to impose on us an alien kind of education and pass plans so that 90% of the indigenous populations abandon their nomadic lifestyles and adopt the cultural norms of the coloniser."

- Over the last decade, Alan Garcia, the then President of Peru, organised the secret sterilisation of Andean women. The aim of this is clear.

We may well ask how it is possible that countries so rich in raw materials can figure amongst the poorest Third World nations. The anarchist economist Abraham Guillen makes the following observations:

- Latin American participation in the world economy in 1960 accounted for 7.7% of all trade and fell to 3.8% in 1988 because the price of raw materials exported fell by 20% in the same period.

- The economic situation of many countries was better before the Second World War since trade was realised on a more just basis as the gold standard provided a levelling for all currencies. Now economies are far more tied to the fluctuations of oil, which is far more volatile, as seen in the oil crisis of 1979-80.

The above glimpse at the historical background of Latin America cannot possibly give rise to much cause for 'celebration'. Rather, they should provoke reflection and thought on the present and past situations. The exploitation and rape of natural resources must stop and allow inhabitants the chance to self-manage their own destinies. For this to take place anarcho-syndicalism and the IWA have important roles to play in building and strengthening sections in Latin America. Only in this way will we move towards a world based on justice and not exploitation so that we do not have any more 'Centenaries' of genocide on a mass scale to celebrate.



THE BOSSES' FRIEND

Mexico's Fidel Velazquez is a national institution. Ninety one year old Velazquez has just been re-elected for his eighth consecutive six year term as General Secretary of the Mexican Workers' Confederation (CTM). No vote was deemed necessary.

Mexico's constitution forbids the country's presidents from standing twice, but this old reactionary seems almost immovable. Without his iron hand Salinas' government could not have forced through its 'stabilisation programme' which was built on the back of a fall in the average wages of almost 50% since 1982.

The CTM, Mexico's largest confederation of unions, claims 5.5 million members (the true figure is probably between 3 and 4 million). Both it and Velazquez are central pillars of Mexico's corporate state, ruled since 1929 by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) under various labels. The unions, and the CTM in particular, are guaranteed a quota of elected offices in return for keeping the workers in check. Corrupt union leaders have been tolerated, even

encouraged, by the state, as long as they cracked down on wildcat strikes and rank and file efforts to form more democratic workers' organisations.

Although Velazquez has helped the government cut wages since 1987 as a part of the social pact, the ruling party has recently been cutting some of the CTM's perks. No longer do they get a fixed quota of candidates

for government, and control of the workers' housing fund has been handed over to money grabbing bankers. This seemed like a calculated affront to Velazquez whose CTM had been the main beneficiary of the housing fund. He complained, but shut up when the ruling party put one of his people up for a state governorship.

This power crazed bureaucrat has knee capped any attempt by the CTM to engage in militant workplace activity. We anticipate this leech's death with great pleasure, and look forward to seeing the creation of true independent unions in Mexico, run by workers, not self-seeking bureaucrats.

TANGLED

Our Milan correspondent sends news of Ettore Gagliano, 83, known as the Priest Basher of Milan, who has been charged 58 times with assaults on clerics and church personnel. His latest target was a Greek Orthodox priest who had gone to the cathedral for morning prayers when Gagliano leaped out from behind a pillar and hit him. He told the arresting policeman "I don't like priests, when I see one I just have to give him a punch in the ear".

Ettore is always acquitted because of his advanced years, but still manages to assault a priest a month on average. He is a great grandfather whose offspring are said to adore him and are proud of his reputation. At his last court appearance Ettore told the magistrates: "There is nothing you can do to save priests from me, I shall bash them all until my last breath. I hate them all."

CONFEDERACION NACIONAL DEL TRABAJO

The National Confederation of Labour (CNT) was founded in 1910. From the very beginning the CNT has had its main strength in the region of Catalonia and in particular in Barcelona, which is Spain's largest industrial city. The history of the movement is one of great hardship and struggle, their role in the Spanish Revolution and Civil War of 1936-39 is well documented and there is no need to go into it here.

At its height the CNT had a membership in excess of two million and was the largest trade union organisation in Spain. During the years of great terror under the dictatorship of the fascist Franco the CNT was totally suppressed and many of its most active militants executed. Nonetheless anarcho-syndicalist guerrillas returned to Spain and carried on the struggle against fascism. This type of action which was not always carried out with the approval of the National Committee of the CNT (in exile) did help to keep the idea of anarchism alive in Spain.

In 1976 after the death of Franco the CNT re-emerged from the twilight and began to rebuild the union movement. At first it was only the die-hard militants, who had never ceased to be members of the CNT, who worked tirelessly to reconstruct the union. Later, in 1978/9, under a wave of social change in Spain, the ranks of the CNT swelled to almost 150,000. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these were not prepared to work for the ideals of the union, they just wished to be able

to show a CNT membership card to prove how 'revolutionary' they were. They were no real danger to the CNT or the state. At this same time, the CNT was also to see an influx of Catholic, Maoist and Trotskyist pressure groups, each one intent on taking over the union for their own particular cause. These people caused much damage to the CNT and in 1979, after the Fifth Congress of the union a section broke away under the pretext that they wished to involve themselves in factory council elections. These elections and councils were organised by the State, and the majority of the CNT, in keeping with the traditions of anarcho-syndicalism opposed them. The State was quick to seize upon the split to claim that they could not return the CNT property that had been seized during the Franco years as they did not know to which CNT to return it to. Meanwhile, the other unions, UGT (Socialist) in particular, received large amounts of money from the state to assist them in their union work. There was little doubt that the Spanish state recognised who the real revolutionary unionists were.

Today, the CNT has a membership of about 30,000. They are organised in construction, public and private transport, both heavy and light industry, hotels, teaching, etc. In fact the union has members in most industries and regional committees in every province of Spain with the exception of the Canary Islands. At the XVII Congress of the IWA, the CNT was recognised as the one and only genuine anarcho-syndicalist union in Spain.

CONFERENCE

NETWORK

CONFERENCE

Recently DAM members, members of established anarcho-syndicalist industrial networks, as well as others interested in the networks, attended a two day conference in Manchester.

The emphasis of the conference was very much on the practicalities of organising as anarcho-syndicalists in the workplace, concentrating on the problems and success we have experienced so far. As well as many different DAM groups and regions members of the transport, council, education, health workers networks, and the Dispatch Industry Workers Union were present.

A member of the Norwegian Syndicalist Federation (the Norwegian IWA section) also attended the conference, as did a visiting CNT member from the Spanish IWA section, giving a valuable international perspective on discussions.

Some of the major points which emerged from the various discussions included decisions for DAM groups to host public meetings \dayschools in their areas pushing the idea of industrial organisation along anarcho-syndicalist lines. Also it was decided that Networks,



DAM groups and individuals would contribute towards a special issue of DA, which would particularly concentrate on both the theory and practice of organising industrially. This would include articles on Trade Unions, Reformism, effective workplace tactics and presenting anarcho-syndicalism as a strategy relevant to all workers, and a strategy which can effect the much needed revolutionary transformation of society

On a personal note I came away from the conference with a re-

newed enthusiasm and conviction in our ideas. The DAM's industrial strategy, as described in 'Winning the Class War' can and should be a real catalyst for change. The new networks need to be supported and more networks set up. We must make clear that when we declare ourselves for 'direct workplace and community control', we also have a coherent strategy for achieving this.

However we must also make clear two points. Firstly that to have any chance of success our ideas must be taken up and

used by an increasing number of people. Neither the DAM nor the current membership of the industrial networks can achieve much in isolation. As well as support we need and appreciate peoples ideas and input for networks to grow and develop.

Secondly we must ensure that in concentrating on our industrial organisation, people do not lose sight of why we must organise, and what sort of society we are fighting for - a free and classless society, where we are all able to pursue our

individual and collective interests, and where co-operation and mutual aid replace competition and greed. The fight against capitalism should be one and the same as the fight for anarchism; and syndicalism is the way to organise this.

The conference will be followed up with a meeting in late June, to take further the ideas we discussed in Manchester.

Contact the network forum (see contacts page) for more details.

19th CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION

The 19th congress of the IWA occurred over the easter weekend in Cologne, Germany. Delegates from across the globe discussed issues facing a growing world-wide Anarcho-syndicalist movement.

With European delegations from Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Britain and a new section from Finland. From the former Bolshevik states came delegations from Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Bulgaria, East Germany and the new out post of anarcho-syndicalism Mongolia. The Americas were represented by Argentinian, Brazilian and North American delegations, who brought news of anarcho-syndicalist activity in Mexico, Peru, Columbia and Chile.

Unfortunately comrades from Denmark, Japan, Australia and Ireland were unable to attend. All the delegates and observers were amply fed by a further group of Chinese comrades.

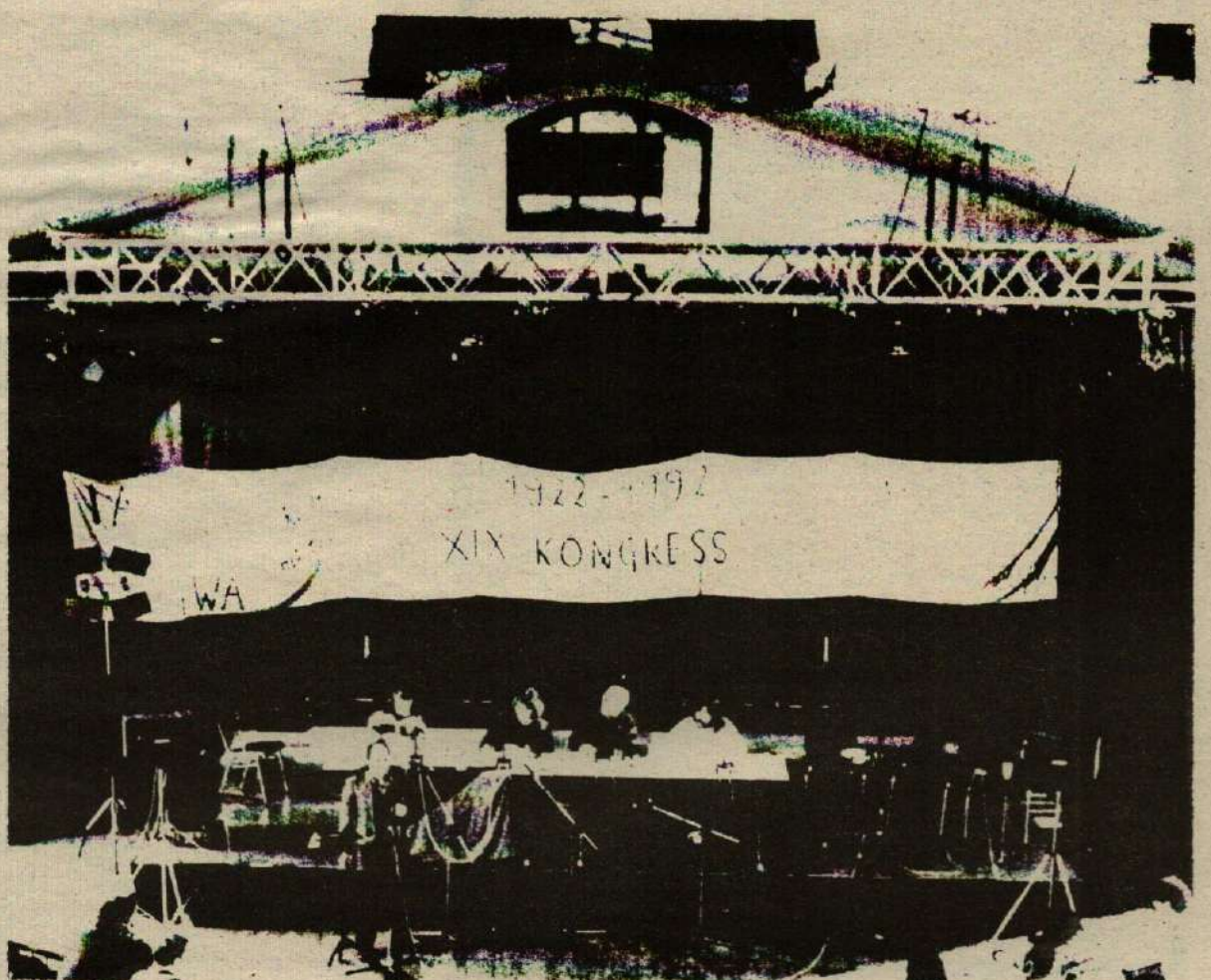
Although all decisions of the congress must be ratified by all sections three important events are occurring because of the congress. International meetings are planned for south american and eastern european commissions. While

the DAM is to host an international meeting on sexuality to discuss reproductive rights, women's rights, gay rights and HIV/AIDS. Introducing a anarcho-syndicalist and working class perspective to an important debate up till now dominated by the bourgeois class.

This congress was important in addressing the international situation facing anarcho-syndicalism. It demonstrated a constant and steady expansion of anarcho-syndicalism on a world-wide scale. It also offered an excellent opportunity for the exchange of ideas and information outside the official congress.

Further social activities included, beside the sound system and bloody minded D.J., a cultural evening which included a workers choir, an alternative cabaret line up, a Mongolian folk singer and Klaus, a fiddler to put Nigel Kennedy to shame. It certainly was a different experience from the obligatory punk band of years gone past.

I am sure the rest of the delegation would agree that the congress was an inspiration. Returning us all coolly confident and determined to play a full part in the International Workers Association.



FIGHTING TALK issue 2

Journal of Anti Fascist Action. £1 plus postage from AFA, BM 1734, LONDON WC1N 3XX. Cheques to Anti-Fascist Action.

I suppose it's inevitable that discussion amongst anti-fascists at the moment will include much criticism of the recent antics of the liberal left, as exemplified by the Anti Nazi League (see last DA) and *Fighting Talk* has not escaped this.

Obviously certain things do need to be said; the ANL has already hampered genuine anti-fascist activities on numerous occasions and this cannot be tolerated. But the best criticism of the opportunists of the left is for AFA to continue with the excellent work it has been doing since 1985. When the SWP, RCP and Militant drop their anti-racist/anti-fascist fronts (when a better recruiting issue comes along) they'll leave many bewildered activists wondering where to go. Joining AFA will be the obvious step.

This aside, *Fighting Talk* remains a positive and interesting read, including reports on recent AFA successes around Britain, articles on fascism and the persecution of lesbians and gays, book and music reviews, as well as other bits and pieces.

MEN SPEAKING OUT ON MEN AND SEXISM issue 2

35p plus A5 SAE from MASS, Box 25, 52 Call Lane, Leeds LS1 6DT

This booklet from MASS (Men Against Sexist Shit) doesn't attempt to offer easy solutions for men who desperately want to be seen as 'right on'. Neither does it present a cosy image of an anti-sexist new man which would make you want to poke him in the eye

with one of his own knitting needles!

Instead it's an honest and open collection of articles by a group of working class men who believe it's time men began to seriously examine our own sexism. A lot of anti-sexist stuff I've seen around, whilst it's good that it exists, has either been self-indulgent liberal angst, or has subconsciously shifted the burden of a sexist society onto men's shoulders — sort of — "isn't it difficult being a caring anti-sexist man in such a cruel world?" Well maybe it is difficult, but at least as men we have more choice. Women who fight back against sexism are doubly burdened by the sexual hierarchy we live in.

Anyway... this short booklet contains articles on male violence, nuclear families, children and creches and even some poetry. As I said it offers no answers, but stands as an example of what some men are doing. MASS have produced several other booklets (ask for details) and are looking for contributions to 'Men, Sexism and the Class Struggle', their next booklet.

DIRECT ACTION AND DISABLED PEOPLE - FUTURE DIRECTIONS

by Liz Cross. Published by Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, Unit 33, Carnocca Enterprises Ltd., 2 Wellidon Close, Ardwick, Manchester M12 4AH. £1 inc. P&P. Available in braille, large print and cassette, as well as standard format.

I have just returned from a picket at a local pub. The landlord had decided to ban psychiatric patients from the pub. There is a psychiatric hospital close by, and some of the patients had naturally been in the habit of going into the pub for a drink.

Capitalism and oppression generate illness and disability. The domination of the boss class distorts and alienates our lives, personality and psychological make-up. Consequently it is interesting to read a discussion paper which raises issues and questions concerning disability. The paper considers direct action, drawing on the experience of the Anti-Telethon and anti-'Children in Need' demonstrations. Tactics for future direct action campaigns are discussed, and the paper suggests the need for a basic campaign philosophy or stance.

The author does express some contentious ideas on various issues and seems to believe that 'issues' should be kept separate, whereas I feel that it is essential to link issues up. Surely this is part and parcel of developing a campaign philosophy?

THE STORY BEHIND THE STRUGGLE

"Poll Tax Rebellion" by Danny Burns

Published by AK Press, 3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, Scotland FK8 2RD. ISBN 1 873176 50 3. Price £4.95.

"They ask us for all this money, and at the end of the day, they don't want us taking no more big pay rises or nothing like that. Yet yesterday all the top people they got nice big pay rises and they can afford to pay it anyway. So at the end of the day we're left with no money. They're just trying to rob us blind. If we did anything like that, went out and robbed someone, you'd be straight in court wouldn't you. It ain't fair."

This early quote from 'The Poll Tax Rebellion' sums up the attitude that grew and grew during the Poll Tax struggle. This book chronicles the growth and remarkable achievements of the Anti Poll Tax Movement. It does



so in ordinary language, using many quotes and anecdotes. It is an inspiring piece of history, history made by working class people. It covers important issues. It looks at the struggle's beginnings in Scotland, moving through the Trafalgar Square riot to the abolition of the Poll Tax.

For me, the most important parts of the book are those which examine the strategies proposed to fight the Poll Tax, whether to have a protest campaign or to advocate community resistance. It also examines in detail the role of the Labour Party, both the self-preserving attitude of the leadership, who didn't want to risk their electoral necks, and the involvement of Militant who, although they threw themselves wholeheartedly into the struggle, risked destroying the anti-Poll Tax movement by their sectarian behaviour.

After the election there's been a mood of despondency and defeat, so many

people having put their faith in the Labour Party. No one should forget the successes of the Poll Tax struggle, we all learnt a lot and gained confidence from participating in the fight that not only got rid of the Poll Tax but also got rid of Thatcher.

For those who weren't able to get fully involved, *Poll Tax Rebellion* is an inspiring read that will restore your faith in the capacity of collective grassroots organisation to change the world.

The only criticisms that can be levelled at the book are that the emphasis on support of those in prison is not strong enough, and that the current lack of activity in the anti-Poll Tax Unions is not examined. (This at a time when more and more people on low incomes are being sent to jail for non-payment). If you have a fiver to spend on a book, I strongly recommend that this is where you spend your money.

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**THIS
IS
THE
DAM**

by the workers themselves and
must unite rather than divide the
workers movement. Any and all
delegates of such workers' or-
ganisations must be subject to im-
mediate recall by the workers.

6. We are opposed to all states
and state institutions. The work-
ing class has no country. The class
struggle is world wide and recog-
nises no artificial boundaries. The
armies and police of all states do
not exist to protect the workers of
those states, they exist only as the
repressive arm of the ruling class.

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

8. The Direct Action Movement is
resolved to initiate, encourage and
wholeheartedly support the crea-
tion of independent workers' un-
ions based on the principles of
anarcho-syndicalism.

9. The Direct Action Movement
is a federation of groups and in-
dividuals who believe in the prin-
ciples of anarcho-syndicalism: a
system where the workers alone
control industry and the commu-
nity without the dictates of politi-
cians, bureaucrats, bosses and so-
called experts.

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 ene-
mies 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 federa-
tion with others in the same industry
and locality, independent of and op-
posed to all political parties and trade
union bureaucracies. All such work-
ers' organisations must be controlled

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ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM FOR BEGINNERS

WORKERS CONTROL



Throughout the 20th century there have been many attempts to set up workers control of industry and the community. The best example was Spain in 1936, which itself was not finally successful, as well as other attempts which although brave achieved little if any success.

Workers control is a vital component of anarcho-syndicalism, without workers controlling their own lives and making their own decisions there will be no end to the exploitation we currently have. If we want true and lasting workers control we must not repeat the mistakes of the past but learn from them.

France 1968

The summer of '68 saw rising discontent throughout France but specially in Paris. Students had initiated demonstrations and protests throughout the summer, but these were too late to take a new turn on May 13th. On this date 800 000 students and trade unionists took to the streets. Demands were varied and covered a wide range of issues, from police violence and wages through to more revolutionary demands. The struggles in '68 led to many factory occupations and wide spread strikes. A significant minority of the movement called for greater degrees of self management, with

anarchists putting forward arguments in favour of workers control. Very rarely did the workers actually occupy and try to run the factories. It seemed that stepping beyond the bounds of legalism was a difficult step.

Spain 1936

During the Spanish revolution we saw a large scale attempt at true workers control. Whole areas were placed into collective ownership, both industrial and agricultural. This all happened in the face of an on-going civil war and international opposition.

Collectivization in the cities followed

one of two paths depending on whether the owner of the factory stayed or left. If they stayed then the CNT encouraged them to carry on with management functions, but they also installed a 'control committee' to ensure it wasn't a case of 'more of the same'. If they left the CNT set up a new management structure, often promoting skilled workers and technicians. Eye-witnesses reported that these techniques were highly successful and that major complex operations continued to run smoothly.

Small business combined into larger operations for greater efficiency. In Barcelona this included transport, major facilities such as the telephone and health services, the textile and metal industries, as well as thousands of smaller enterprises.

Coordination was the problem. There was an economic council to plan and supervise production, and the central labour bank to arrange credit and conduct transactions between enterprises. This did not work well and some factories were unable to obtain raw materials.

Russia 1905 onwards

The anarchists and Bolsheviks saw workers control differently. The Bolsheviks looked simply to introduce workers into the management of private enterprises. Anarchists argued for speedy but progressive elimination of private enterprises, to be replaced by collective industry. What the Russian anarchists lacked was not the ideas but the institutions to set up workers control.

Bolsheviks opposed such institutions and counterpoised the soviets. Soviets have been greatly misunderstood, they were not meant as organizations to run and coordinate a self managing and complex society. The soviets (Russian for council) were meant to keep track of events, serve as a link for workers, to inform and be a rallying point for revolutionaries. A permanent assembly of workers soviets occurred due to the absence of other workers organizations - they were a spontaneous thing, coming out of a need for workers unity, not necessarily control.

If Russia had had labour unions and a syndicalist movement in 1905 soviets would not have arisen. As a sort of workers municipal council soviets were (fatally) open to political corruption.

Italy 1919 - 20

The biennio rosso was a political crisis that finally destroyed a liberal state. During years of civil unrest and growth

in unionization, Libertarians were to make a foothold. Syndicalists recruited thousands of miners, industrial workers and landless labourers into the USI. It was their apolitical stance that allowed them to unite socialist, anarchist, syndicalist and republican workers.

The growing strength of the anarchists came through a widespread press and involvement in workers clubs. They often generated workers councils which began to grow and threaten employers.

Employers precipitated a general strike in Turin in 1920 to limit the growth of factory councils. The on-going struggle led to factory occupations throughout September. But there was a lot of sectarian in fighting and the lack of a large organized movement vying for workers control. The struggle was taken over by reformist TU leaders and became stale and defensive. Another factor was the then popular idea of the workers state which led people to believe that a political and not a social revolution was needed.

In conclusion there are several lessons to be learnt. Spain showed us that localization of production was not possible. An advanced industrial society needs a high degree of specialization, eg. it is impossible for a single factory to make TVs using only basic raw materials such as wood and iron. Each enterprise depends on the manufactured products of other factories. This demands a vast network of exchange. This coordination needs central planners as does the distribution of goods. Only a federal body can provide such coordination.

We can not leave the building of such coordination bodies to be done in the throes of violent struggle. The mistakes of Russia show the consequence of not being prepared to snatch our opportunities.

As Italy's 'biennio rosso' displays, without a mass organization self confident of itself and structured to take over the running of factories etc., workers will hesitate and may be swayed by reformism.

Anarcho-syndicalist unions are these organizations but can only become effective agents of workers control if we can attract workers into them on a mass scale. Workers control is an issue for today, not the future, we should be discussing workers control with trade unionists now, in order to avoid the defeats of the past.