

Where We Stand:  
 Rebel Worker Group  
**ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM**

- Anarcho-syndicalism is a libertarian workers' movement based on the class struggle against the double yoke of Capital & the State. It aims to unite all workers in economic combative organisations (revolutionary syndicalist unions) with the conscious goal of the reorganisation of social life on the basis of libertarian communism.
- Anarcho-syndicalist organisations have a twofold function. Firstly, the revolutionary struggle for economic and social improvement within existing capitalist society, and secondly the workers' self-education towards complete self-management of production and distribution through the socialisation of all wealth.
- Anarcho-syndicalism stands completely opposed to all economic and social monopoly. It does not seek the conquest of political power, but rather the total abolition of all state functions in the life of society. Hence it rejects all parliamentary activity and other collaboration with legislative bodies. It stands for fighting organisations in the workplace and community, independent of, and opposed to all political Parties and Trade Union bureaucracies.
- Anarcho-syndicalism has as its only means of struggle Direct Action in all its forms- occupations, strikes, boycotts, sabotage, the General Strike, etc. To ensure the full participation of all in both the current struggle and the future self-management of society, it opposes centralism in its organisations. It organises on the basis of libertarian Federalism. That is from the bottom up without any hierarchy and with full freedom of initiative for local and regional groups. All co-ordinating bodies of the workers Federation consist of recallable delegates with a mandate of action determined by local workers assemblies.
- Anarcho-syndicalism rejects all arbitrarily created political and national frontiers. Standing against Nationalism and all Nation-states, it raises the banner of revolutionary Internationalism, both in spirit and in concrete global action and mutual aid.
- Anarcho-syndicalism opposes 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 their environment.

ABOLISH THE WAGE SYSTEM. ABOLISH THE STATE.

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 TO EACH ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS

FOR A LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST WORLD  
 - A GLOBAL FEDERATION OF FREE PRODUCERS.

**PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS  
 ON  
 ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM**

Organised by Rebel Worker Group

**14th FEB :** THE STATE,  
 COORDINATION & PARTICI-  
 PATORY ECONOMY-  
 Catalan collectivisation Decree  
 (1937) & Yugoslav Statutes on  
 Workers' Self-Management.

**14th MAR. :** SYNDICALISM &  
 U.S. LABOR MOVEMENT

**11th APRIL :** FROM CAPITAL-  
 ISM TO LIBERTARIAN  
 COMMUNISM-The syndicalist  
 program of economic  
 transformation.

**16th MAY :** THE BEGINNINGS  
 OF ITALIAN SYNDICALISM

**13th JUNE :** PEASANTS &  
 RURAL PROLETARIANS:-  
 Syndicalism in the Spanish  
 countryside 1931-39.


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Sydney, Australia  
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**ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST PAPER 30c**

**DIRECT ACTION!**

CNT p6 AWU p8 Syndicalist Unions p14 British Miners p15



An injury to One is an injury to All

# Rebel Worker

Direct Action Federalism Self-management



The Rebel Worker is an independent bimonthly paper for the propagation of anarcho-syndicalism in Australia. Unless otherwise stated signed articles do not necessarily represent the position of the Rebel Worker Group. Any contributions, criticisms or comments are welcome.

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before you see  
the writing  
on the wall....

# NEWS & NOTES

With this issue you will notice a dramatic change to our layout and design of the paper. This comes out of the fact that we are using a new typesetting facility. We have a few new ideas about column size and layout- if you would like to make comments please send them in. We might have to change things around for a while until we settle for a particular format.

\*\*\*\*\*

We have received a further acknowledgement of monies sent to England for the striking British coal miners. It's reprinted in this issue, as the letter contains a lot of interesting and current information about the situation of the miners.

A correction has to be made regarding money received for the miners. If you counted up the various amounts stated as having been received, it doesn't equal the amount we say was sent over. One lot of money received was deleted by mistake there should have been included an amount of \$60.00 from various anonymous donations. The amount so far which has been sent over was correctly stated as \$659.50. We are well on the way to sending another \$150 over, with about \$80 on hand at the moment. The fund is still open: The miners and their families still need our support.

\*\*\*\*\*

As we announced last issue, the discussion evenings have begun again for the new year. The next topic (14th of February) will be about a comparison between some aspects of the collectivizations in Catalonia (Spain) during the Revolution (1936-1939) and the Yugoslavian experience, post WWII. It should be obvious, that instead of just living in our past (whether you consider it glorious or inglorious) anarcho-syndicalists- and all revolutionaries- must take the time to examine our revolutionary experiences and be prepared to learn from them. This is the whole point of the discussion series- so that we can learn from our own and other

revolutionary experiences and also, hopefully, so that newcomers to our ideas can learn something of our history, theory and practice in a convivial atmosphere. Every-one is welcome to come. (Please note that the Jura Books Collective also run a monthly series of discussions, so we end up with about one meeting each two weeks.)

\*\*\*\*\*

Below is a financial statement for the paper. It should be pretty obvious that we are poor, which is the point, of course, of publishing the report. Most of the costs of the paper are borne by members of the Rebel Worker Group- if you can help in any way we would appreciate it.

CASH ON HAND 1/11/84 :119.93  
SALES & DONATIONS : 362.00  
481.93  
PRINTING & POSTAGE : 339.87  
CASH ON HAND 1/1/85 : 142.06

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## Libertarian Aid

### SUPPORT THE BRITISH MINERS

All donations gratefully acknowledged. Please make any cheques or MO out to REBEL WORKER.

**"Direct rank-and-file control of the struggle is the road to workers' self-management of society"**

# Smash The Wages Accord

As demonstrated many times before in other parts of the world, the current Australian Labor Government gives yet another example of the complete bankruptcy of Social Democracy as either a force for social change or as a defender of workers' interests. This is particularly evident in the areas of its economic management in the interest of Capital's onslaughts and its role in the suppression of working class struggles.

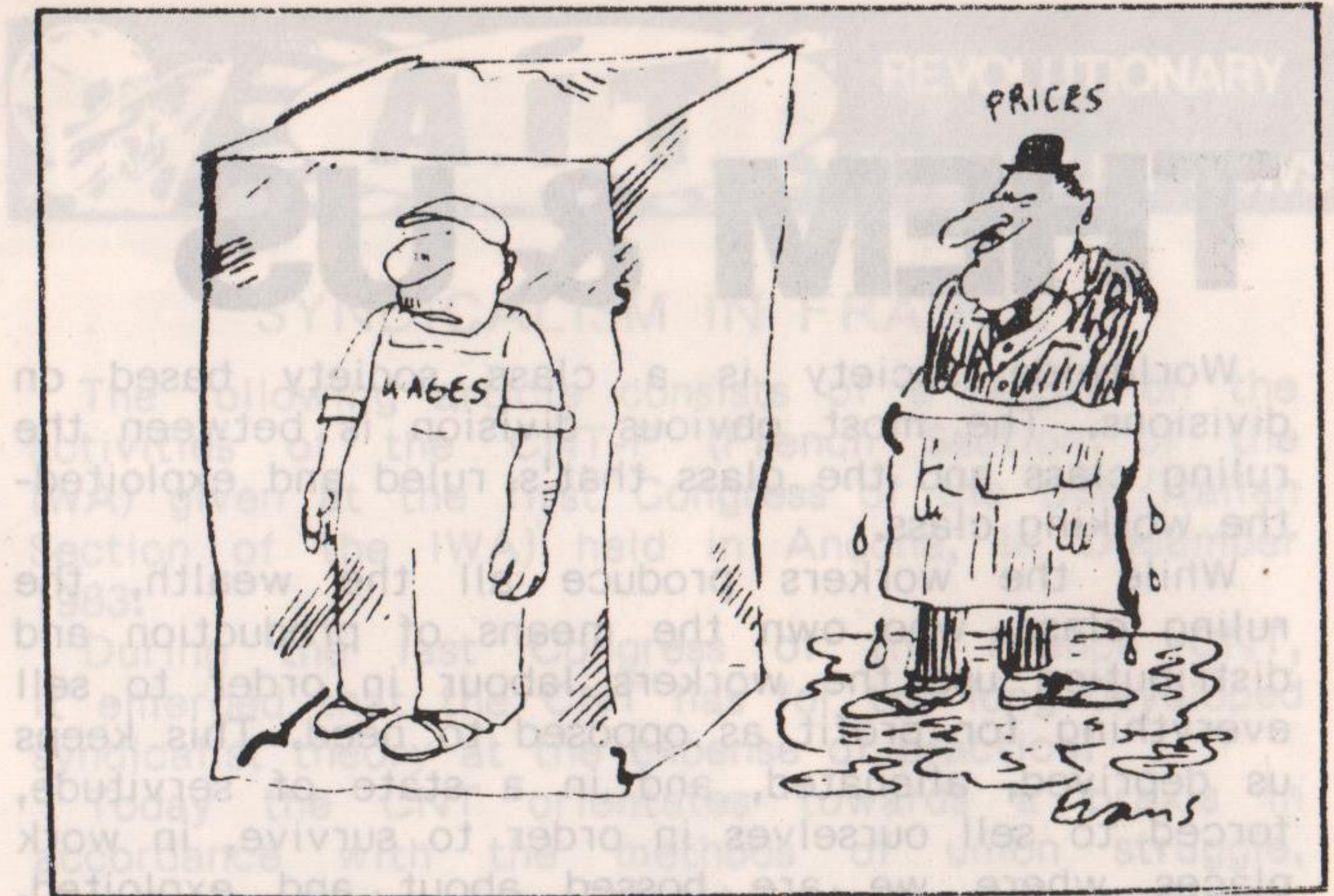
With nearly the entire Union Officialdom locked into the so called Prices-Incomes Accord, workers everywhere are now facing the social consequences of two years of frozen wages. Meanwhile despite the mystifying juggling of figures by ALP bureaucrats, unemployment continues to rise.

The other major consequence of the Accord is the nearly complete strangulation of the union movement and its ability to mount any kind of challenge to the drive of capitalism to rationalise whole industries with the introduction of new technology and subsequent mass sackings. The handful of unions and groups of workers who have taken steps to fight back have found themselves isolated and vilified by the rest of the official union movement. The traditional channels for mustering trade union solidarity and support: the various Trades and Labor Councils and the ACTU itself are closed. Fully occupied as junior partners with the ALP in the management of capitalism, they all stand fully exposed as complete labor fakirs.

However, a number of cracks have begun to appear in this rotten ALP/ACTU Accord. The two most prominent are the recent anti-Accord victory by the Food Preservers at Rosella-Lipton and the ongoing industrial actions by Public Service Unions for an 8.3% wage rise.

## VICTORY FOR FOOD PRESERVERS

After 16 weeks of militant struggle by 140 workers at Rosella-Lipton in Melbourne, the workers have come out on top with a settlement in their favour. Originally in reaction to some sackings the insurgent workforce then put in a 5% pay claim and mounted a mass picket of the plant. Besides taking on the violent assaults on the picket line, they also had to contend with ceaseless attacks in the media and from the State ALP machine and the ACTU. As this victory was in total defiance of the wage guidelines of the Accord it should give heart to workers elsewhere that a properly organised on the job struggle can successfully break through the straitjacket they find themselves in.



WORK BANS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Also in defiance of the Accord is the current widespread campaign of industrial action within the Public Service. At various mass meetings around Australia in early January, workers increasingly embittered with their low wages and the worthless entanglement of their union officials within the Arbitration Commission, voted overwhelmingly for campaign on the job actions. This includes various 'work to rules' and total bans on major government revenue collection.

So far they have followed their union leaders and have staged only a token one day protest strike. Lacking confidence and perhaps knowledge of the full potential of their power, they have yet to take the necessary step of launching a militant struggle of mass strikes and pickets. The struggle is far from fizzling out and is sure to give many headaches to the ALP Bosses in the coming months as they attempt to deliver a docile workforce to their capitalist masters.

## LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

As the Union Officialdom continues to move to the right and becomes more fully entrenched and is reduced to a mere disciplinary arm of the capitalist state, increasingly groups of workers as they attempt to fight back will have to fall back on their own resources, namely themselves alone. Properly self-organised on the job, ready to engage in many and varied forms of mass rank and file direct action, they will take the first steps necessary for the reorganisation of the class resistance and the ultimate destruction of capitalism and state power.

One important aspect of any struggle must be the realisation that the struggling workers themselves must initiate and quickly organise solidarity and support from fellow workers in other industries. Bypassing when necessary the official union channels, they must immediately send delegates to as many large workplaces as possible, organise lunch time mass meetings, put their case directly and make appeals for solidarity etc. Many recent defeats were caused by the struggle being completely isolated from the always necessary solidarity and mutual aid, due to the class-collaboration currently rampant within the labor movement.

An everwidening split must develop within the labor movement. On one side the Labor Party hacks, the various state socialist sects and the ACTU machine, must be isolated and left promoting their increasingly irrelevant reformism. On the other side a movement of direct action must be built, committed to creating a real labor movement, based on real industrial and community solidarity.

J.M.



# THEM & US

Worldwide society is a class society based on divisions. The most obvious division is between the ruling class and the class that's ruled and exploited-the working class.

While the workers produce all the wealth, the ruling class, who own the means of production and distribution use the workers labour in order to sell everything for profit as opposed to need. This keeps us deprived, alienated, and in a state of servitude, forced to sell ourselves in order to survive, in work places where we are bossed about and exploited. In return workers get a worthless handful of paper called a wage.

These legal robbers need an organisation to protect their power, which is found in the institutions of the state; the legislature, police, courts, prison, civil service, armed forces, school, religion and the media. The state is founded on compulsion, fear and violence, to repress the working class from thinking for ourselves, from controlling our own lives and environment, and from threatening private property- that is capitalism. The only way the ruling class can rule and deprive us is to divide us. That is where the state steps in to control our minds through the education system and the family unit. They preserve divisions in the working class. The state destroys our development as human beings, squashing the growth of our individuality, and tries to smash the growth of solidarity. With their values and morals we are forced to compete and dominate each other and to conform to a uniformed life

style. Obedience to those in authority is essential to the state in order for them to exploit us, make profits out of us, and to go to war to murder and be murdered by setting one group of workers against another.

The bosses have other means of repressing us: that is parliament and reformist trade unionism.

Parliament is part of this system of domination and exploitation. Parliament is part of the problem - POWER of this class system of inequality. Instead of working class people organising themselves using the tactics of DIRECT ACTION to bring about our demands, it's all left to political parties. Parliament is full of opportunist power mongering careerists who are totally incapable of satisfying our needs. If voting could change the system it would be illegal! They say we have a choice, a choice of who kicks us in the teeth, that's about all. Big business simply wouldn't allow a bunch of politicians to fundamentally change class society even if they wanted to, (remember Chile). It is the big capitalist enterprises who run society, along with top civil servants, police chiefs and generals! Cabinets may come and go but society remains the same- a mess.

Reformist trade unionism is also a problem, the loyal servants to the establishment and a reformist washout. They attempt to control and divide up the workers, run by leaders and bureaucrats. Workers are divided up by trade, factory, area by area and on the grounds of race and sex. The results are obvious, a weakness and isolation when fighting back at the bosses. Reformist trade-unionism never questions the class society and POWER which causes the class struggle between the bosses and the working class. The 'unions' ignore all other areas outside the workplace where people are oppressed, deprived and struggling against the system. The 'unions' have no interest in abolishing the state and capitalism, only to see that capitalism runs smoothly acting as pimps dealing only in wages and conditions.' The bureaucrats negotiate with the bosses on how much the workers sell themselves. Workers like everything else in society are seen as commodities. Reformist Trade-Unionism is all about sectionalism and ignore that the fact that economic fights are all political fights. To tackle the bosses over conditions you must tackle the whole system of POWER we exist under, the state and power/submission relations. Is it any surprise when workers struggles are constantly sold out? Revolutionary anarchists are opposed to these reformist 'unions', to all political parties, leaders and governments. We recognise that we need to build our own autonomous organisations in the workplace and communities, for one big union without a rank structure.

Working class people need to take direct control over our struggles with delegates subject to instant recall to co-ordinate struggles. These have no decision making power, decisions rest at the base. When workers are fighting back, mass assemblies at the workplace elect their strike committees to co-ordinate, informing and reporting back on what's going on and federating with other workers. Organisations outside of the workplace also federate for a united class force. These revolutionary unions practice direct action to win demands that unites the whole of the working class throughout the world. The ways in which we fight the system today should reflect our aim of a free society tomorrow.

G. From Direct Action (DAM)



## International News

### SPANISH WORKERS PROTEST CUTBACKS

Left to itself, Spanish officials fear, inefficient Spanish industry would be overwhelmed by cheap imports from European Economic Community countries when the tariff walls fall on Spain's entry into the Common Market. So the Socialist Government of Prime Minister Gonzalez has begun to implement an industrial-reconversion plan to streamline the country's economy that involves the loss of some 60,000 jobs in private and State steel, textile, home-appliance, and shipbuilding industries by 1986.

Ten years ago, Spain was the world's third-largest shipbuilder. But then supertankers grew extinct, the world went into general recession, and the big five State owned Spanish shipyards, unable to keep up with Japanese and South Korean competition, lost \$213 million. The State conglomerate which includes steel, airlines, and other industries lost \$1 billion. So the Government fired several thousand steel workers, and workers in other industries are also scheduled for dismissal. About 17,000 shipworkers have been laid off for one year, after which their jobs will be eliminated unless shipbuilding somehow miraculously revives.

In protest, the country's communist and independent regional unions throughout 1984 led a national wave of strikes of escalating violence that turned into almost daily confrontations with police. In late fall one person was killed in a clash between shipbuilders and police in Gijon, a port town near Oviedo in Northwestern Spain.

The Spanish Government tentatively supported by business and its own socialist union organization, the General Union of Workers (to which about half of the country's small unionised workforce belongs)- has now promised to build new industries in the affected areas and to revitalise the lean ones with credits, tax breaks, and increased privatization. Local socialist mayors and political and union leaders, however, are left in the uncomfortable position of having to justify these cutbacks in the face of 18.6% unemployment.

### SOUTH WALES SYNDICALISTS

Some miners in South Wales are currently circulating a leaflet arguing the case for rank and file syndicalist type action. They urge that strike committees should include militants from all sections of the local community and that it was a mistake not to adopt offensive actions earlier. Too much emphasis on support work and not enough on actual mass picketing is another criticism that is raised against current strategy. 'We as grass roots members need to take control of the strike', the union bureaucrats have been 'short sighted', mistakenly concentrating on conducting 'negotiations with leaders of other unions in talks where promises of support come cheap'. The leadership is accused of using the rank and file as 'picket fodder'. The leaflet concludes that the strike should be run directly at the rank and file level.

Coming from the most solid striking area, this initiative is yet to be realised. More than any other mining area South Wales can justifiably boast that the Miners Lodges are the centres of community life, organising local activity in the class interest. This syndicalist approach is part and parcel of the whole Welsh mining tradition and is still very much alive.

### PORTUGAL

Prior to WWI the Portuguese labour movement was solidly anarcho-syndicalist. It went down fighting against the dictatorship. Later its whole programme was ridiculed by the 'orthodox' trade unionism: it was 'utopian', 'adventurist' and 'did not take into account the practical possibilities of unionism in modern capitalism'. Now, since the dictatorship has ended, orthodox trade unionism has had its own way- a practical, down-to-earth approach? The unions can elect a Socialist government to protect their interests; they themselves are meanwhile led by Communists and even the opposition within the unions calls itself Marxist-Leninist.

And what do we find...? At the end of 1984, 150,000 Portuguese workers faced unpaid wages, some for a whole year. Companies with a cash-flow problem, who are forbidden to sack their workers (thanks to a closed shop agreement and government backing in the form of a ban on redundancies). So they work on unpaid. The companies in the meantime refuse to pay out until court orders can effectively compel them, and that can be a whole year or more. Debts to workers are so far around \$90m in total for unpaid work, and the unions say, rightly, that it is a 'situation worse than slavery- at least slaves have to be fed- the employer has no obligation to feed the workers.'

The Socialist government- surprise, surprise- doesn't pay unemployment benefit, even though it claims some unpaid workers could receive it (a small number). It is facing up to the fact that it may be 'utopian' to press for workers' control, but it is even more utopian to suppose that the crisis of capitalism can be solved by legislating against unemployment.

### GM WORKERS' MEETING

General Motors workers from 13 countries met in Amsterdam in September as a first small step toward building international solidarity against the giant multinational corporation. Delegates attended from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, the US, and Yugoslavia.

By comparing experiences, the delegates found out how similar GM labor strategies are world-wide. These include pushing Quality of Life programs, introducing 'labor-saving' new technology, and shifting production to poorer countries. The contrast between the small size of this initial gathering and the resources of GM was obvious to all, but even these few contacts were a beginning. The four Mexican delegates, from three different plants, had never met before. The Brazilian delegate did not know that the United Auto Workers in the US had been on strike against GM. "We would like to know about these strikes in advance so we can slow down production," he said, pointing out that GM Brazil makes engines for export.

The British delegation volunteered to host a second conference in 1985. A follow-up committee produced a tabloid (in five languages) called GM Workers Voice to report on the conference. Copies can be obtained from Labor Notes, PO Box 20001, Detroit, Michigan, 48220.

- From Black Flag Industrial Worker



# The CNT & The Secessionists



This article was originally published in Direct Action Movement Internal Bulletin (British section of the IWA-International Workers Association) No.33 Dec. 1984. It provides an account of the events that led to the split in the CNT-AIT in 1979, and to the so-called 'CNT Reunification Congress' held in Madrid last June.

The death of Spain's fascist dictator, Franco, in 1975 coincided with the re-emergence of the CNT-AIT, much to the surprise of the bourgeois press and political opponents of anarcho-syndicalism who had confidently predicted that the CNT-AIT was a 'corpse' and would never resurrect itself. In the beginning (1975-1977) only genuine anarcho-syndicalists bothered to join. Those who had been separated from the CNT-AIT because of their involvement in Francoist unions during the dictatorship or because of their involvement in groups hostile to the CNT-AIT in exile were 'allowed to join or not, depending on the branch decision of their respective local union branch'.

(This decision was taken at a National Plenum held between July-Sept.1976.)

Interest in the CNT-AIT from other trade unions, the State and numerous 'left-wing' groups began immediately following mass open air meetings organised by the CNT-AIT between March-July 1977 (San Sebastian de los Reyes, Valencia, Montjuich etc.). These massive shows of strength were supplemented by a high level of CNT-AIT activity, a series of successful CNT-AIT strikes and a membership of approximately 300,000. Large scale infiltration into the CNT-AIT also began.

Accion Comunista, Accion Catolica and Liberacion are just three examples of the numerous Trotskyist, Marxist, and political Catholic groups who infiltrated the CNT-AIT at this time. Liberacion surpassed other Trotskyist groups doing the same thing by 'dissolving itself' at a national level, entering the CNT-AIT 'en masse' and then forming 'anarcho-syndicalist pressure groups' within the CNT-AIT.

Carlos Ramos, former General Secretary of the so-called 'CNT-Congresso de Valencia' (a.k.a. the 'Renovados' or 'Secessionists') was a member of Accion Catolica, and a jesuit. Accion Catolica supported the destruction of the IWA and affiliation of the CNT into the CMT (the Christian International). Ramos is now 'Secretary of Patrimony' (?) in the so-called 'reunified CNT'. Luis Altable, once a leading figure in Accion Catolica, has now also joined the 'reunified CNT'. Jose M. Berro, second General Secretary of the 'CNT-Congresso de Valencia', was a member of Liberacion. Antonio Perez Canales (ex Secretary of the National Committee of the CNT-AIT) was an ex-member of Accion Comunista and later joined 'an anarchist pressure group' while belonging to the CNT-AIT. He has since been expelled. Jose Bondia, ex-secretary of

the National Committee of the CNT-AIT was also eventually expelled for maintaining secret contact with the CNT-Congresso de Valencia and the Socialist Government. He stole micro film of the CNT-AIT archives sent to him by the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam) and failed to return videos of a CNT-AIT National Plenum. He also left the CNT-AIT with a \$61,000 debt when he stood down as Secretary of the CNT-AIT National Committee in January 1983. He is now also a member of the 'reunified CNT'. Finally, Carlos Martinez, first General Secretary of the 'CNT-Congresso de Valencia', has now joined the UGT (Socialist trade union) and the PSOE (Socialist Party) along with other ex-members of the 'CNT-Congresso de Valencia' in Valencia.

Needless to say, all these internal activities within the CNT-AIT were supplemented by hostile activities from outside. The countless number of CNT-AIT militants arrested, beaten up and, in some cases, murdered are too numerous to mention here. Perhaps the most damaging act of State provocation against the CNT-AIT at this time was the infamous 'Scala' incident. On January 15th 1978 a bomb exploded in the Scala Exhibition Hall, Barcelona, on the same day as the CNT-AIT had organised a march through the city. 150 CNT-AIT militants, and anarchists were immediately arrested. Three of those arrested (all CNT-AIT militants) are still imprisoned serving 17 years sentences each despite the fact that the real culprit, Joaquin Gambin Hernandez, a self-confessed police agent, got a 7 year sentence. As a result of the hostile media campaign, which followed the bombing, thousands left the CNT-AIT.

The split finally came during the CNT-AIT's Fifth Congress, held in December 1979. Having been defeated over their proposal to participate in 'union elections', 53 delegates abandoned the Congress and immediately set up their own rival organisation called the 'CNT-Congresso de Valencia'. They rejected IWA aims and principles, showed no solidarity with the 35 or so CNT-AIT and anarchist prisoners, formed close relations with anti-IWA organisations like the SAC (a Swedish trade union) and reaffirmed their decision to take part in 'union elections'. They represented less than 10% of the CNT (90% remaining loyal to the CNT-AIT).

'Union elections' are State-sponsored elections held in all factories/workplaces where there is a union presence. Once elected, representatives are not immediately recallable and enjoy certain privileges. They also have an exclusive right to negotiate with management, thus depriving the shop-floor of their right to direct negotiations with management. All this contradicts anarcho-syndicalist aims and principles, including those of the D.A.M. The CNT-AIT regards participation in these elections as tantamount to integration into the capitalist

system. They stand alone amongst all the other reformist trade unions who are willing to participate in them:

At the Sixth CNT-AIT Congress (held in January 1983) a majority decision over whether or not to start participation in union elections wasn't reached. To avoid a further split, the Transport Union (Malaga) proposed that a monographic (one issue) Congress be held at a future date (within three months). This monographic Congress would deal exclusively with future CNT-AIT syndicalist strategy (including the problem of 'union elections'). The proposal was accepted and led to the CNT-AIT Monographic Congress, held at Torrejon de Ardoz (just outside Madrid) in April 1983. At this Congress 70% voted against participation in 'union elections'. It was also agreed to allow those CNT-AIT unions who had been participating in these elections (for example the metro workers' union in Barcelona) fifteen months to withdraw from them... after which they would be expelled.

A few months later, a false and provocative statement signed by 12 CNT-AIT unions in the Catalonia region (north eastern region of Spain, capital city Barcelona) was circulated amongst other CNT-AIT unions in the area. It was also sent to the CNT-AIT Regional and National Committee. As a result of this statement, at a decision taken at the CNT-AIT Regional Plenum in October 1983, it was decided to visit the 12 unions involved and to urge them to reaffirm CNT-AIT agreements and ask them to attend future CNT-AIT Regional meetings.

The visits weren't successful. Those visited refused to attend future CNT-AIT Regional meetings, refused to stop participating in 'union elections' and refused to reaffirm CNT-AIT agreements. At the same time, these 12 unions issued various statements to the press calling for a 'reunified CNT' with the secessionists/CNT-Congresso de Valencia. These statements also received the blessing of the postal section of the CNT-AIT Barcelona transport union, one of whose members was Jose March, now General Secretary of the 'reunified CNT'. The 12 unions also refused to show interest in the CNT-AIT/anarchist prisoners support work because 'it wasn't a union problem'. Meanwhile, at the same time, news of the formation of the formation of the so-called 'CNT-PP.CC' was published in several bourgeois newspapers. The 'CNT-PP.CC' was a 'Catalan anarcho-nationalist' group who also called for a 'reunified CNT'. They are now incorporated into the 'reunified CNT'.

Finally, having received no reply to a request to the CNT-AIT Barcelona metro workers' union to reaffirm CNT-AIT agreements (this union had been the first to break CNT-AIT agreements by participating in 'union elections'), a decision to expel the 12 unions (plus the postal section of the CNT-AIT Barcelona transport union) was taken at a Regional CNT-AIT Plenum on 28th-29th of January 1984. The vote was as follows: 28 votes to expel; 5 votes to expel within a fortnight if there was no change; 5 votes to expel certain individuals and cut relations; 12 votes not to expel.

15 CNT-AIT unions were also chosen to carry out the expulsions at this plenum (premises and materials had to be reclaimed from those unions expelled). It was agreed to visit the expelled unions, ask them to hand over the keys to the premises, then call a meeting involving those expelled and ask them to remain in the CNT-AIT- so long as they respected CNT-AIT agreements.

These visits all had a common denominator. The expelled unions would always end up phoning the police who would arrive and bar the entrance of the CNT-AIT militants. One expelled union (in Santa

Coloma) not only called for the police, but also wrecked the premises and then left with police protection! It was therefore decided to force entry into some premises (at Rubi, Manresa, Cornellà). After the expulsions, elements in Cornellà organised and held a meeting on February 19th 1984 denouncing their expulsion and made a request to the CNT-AIT National Committee to overturn the expulsion decision or they threatened to form 'opposition unions'. A press statement issued by them after this meeting exaggerated the number of unions at the meeting. As a result of these expulsions several CNT-AIT militants have since received anonymous threats and a woman belonging to the CNT AIT has been beaten up by two 'persons unknown'.

It was these 13 expelled unions plus a handful of expelled CNT-AIT unions from outside Catalonia and the nationalist 'CNT-PP.CC' who recently staged the so-called 'CNT Reunification Congress' along with secessionists in Madrid in June 84. They now represent 15% of the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Spain (85% remaining in the CNT-AIT). The 'Reunification Congress' was protected by around 200 National Police from beginning to end.

The damage caused by the 'secessionists' is immeasurable. The bourgeois press have been only too willing to print their statements ever since 1979. The refusal of the secessionists to drop the 'CNT' initials from their name has led to widespread confusion. (The reason being that without calling themselves 'CNT' they can not exploit CNT-AIT history.) It has also given an excuse to the Socialist government not to return \$18.4 mill. owed to the CNT-AIT as compensation for the 260 offices belonging to the CNT-AIT but stolen from them by Franco at the end of the Civil War in 1939. (The Government says there are 'two CNT's' and claims not to know which one to give compensation to.) It has also enabled the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam) to hold on to CNT-AIT archives deposited there by CNT-AIT militants in 1939.

T.R.





# THE RANK & FILE MOVEMENT IN THE AUSTRALIAN WORKERS' UNION

Mark McGuire

The advent of the Hawke Federal ALP (Australian Labor Party) Government is another manifestation of the ALP's historic role in shoring up Capitalism in Australia during times of crisis, at the workers' expense, and the bankruptcy of so called "workers'" political parties. The key policies of the Hawke Government apart from Medicare have been the "Wages Accord" and tariff reductions.

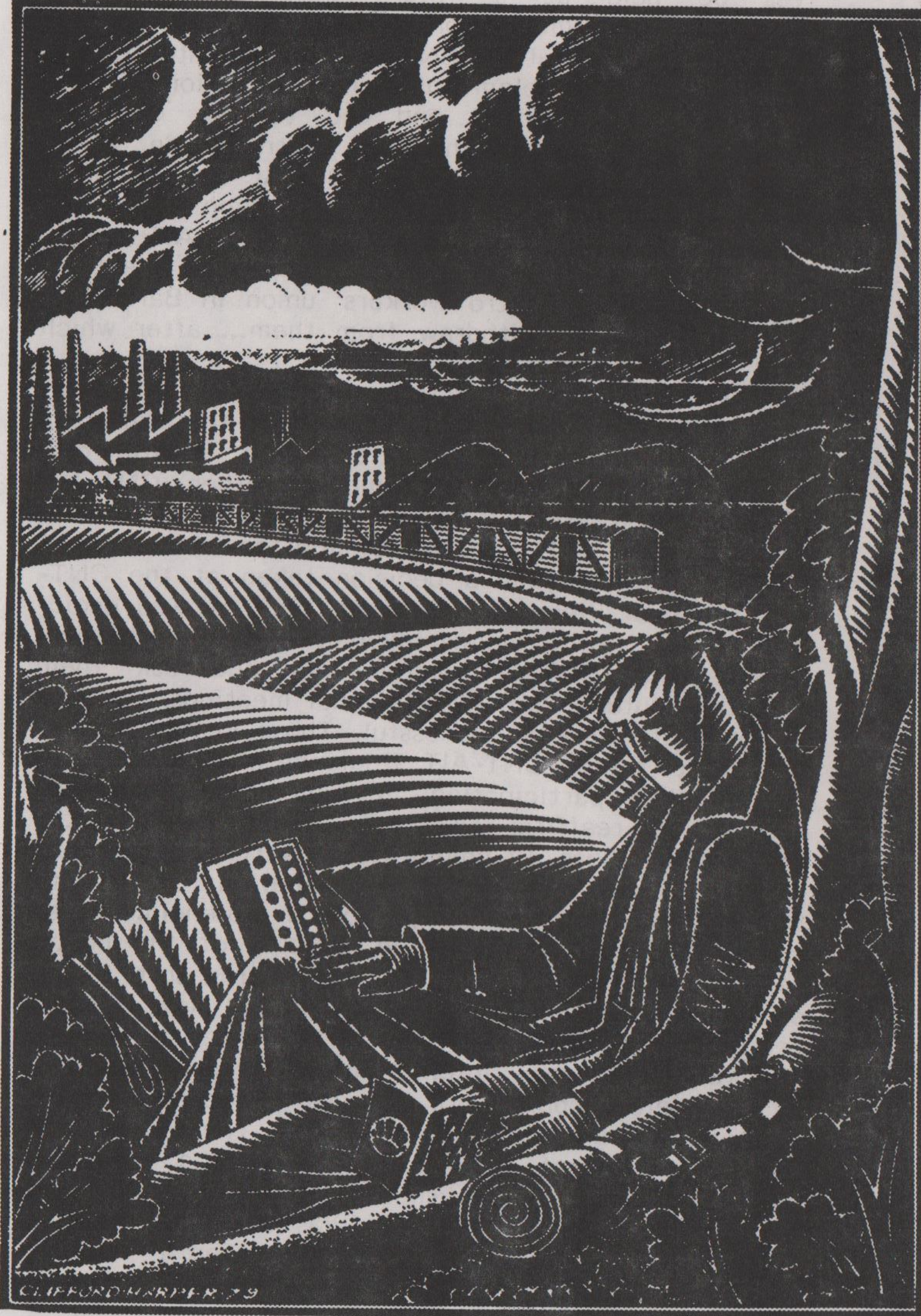
The "Accord" entails Government provision of wage fixing via national wage cases in the Arbitration Court and usually partial wage indexation according to rises in the cost of living, in exchange for the union hierarchies' support of industrial peace. By means of the "Accord" Hawke has been able to prevent workers catching up for real wage reductions caused by the Fraser/Hawke wage freeze of 1982-83 and has significantly reduced the number of work days lost in strikes. Thus Hawke has sought to assist capitalists to reduce costs of production and facilitate their competitiveness with overseas capital.

Whilst tariff reductions have been designed to force employers to rationalise production via the introduction of new labour saving technology, plant closures, staff cuts etc and has allowed capital to re-organise production on an international scale. The most significant of these "international" strategies has been GMH and other firms "World Car" projects, - the specialization of different countries in car component production and the "Machano Set" construction of whole plants ie parts of plants are built overseas eg Korea, Japan and are transported to Australia in containers and assembled at sites in Australia (doing away with any Australian plant manufacture). The consequence of these policies and strategies has been major cutbacks in Australia's manufacturing industries. In the case of metal industries they have led to the loss of 94,000 jobs since 1982.

The origins of this collaboration between the union movement and the ALP in the form of the "Wages Accord" and a myriad of other linkages lies in the late 19th century. At this time present day centralized craft/occupation based unionism underwent major growth and a caste of fulltime union officials formed. It is this stratum of labour functionaries which have played a decisive role in forming the ALP and controlled the party via financial support, membership of key posts, delegates to party policy making conferences and union officials becoming ALP members of parliament.

The AWU (Australian Workers Union) was formed in this period of major union growth in the late 19th century, as a general union recruiting mainly semi and unskilled workers from mainly rural industries, with the ambition of becoming the "One Big Union" enrolling all workers in all industries. As a consequence of its numerical size and financial resources (until the 1970's it was the largest union in Australia, and presently has a membership of 140,000) it played a dominant role in the ALP from its early years, most significantly in the case of QLD, NSW and WA.

In relationship to the tasks of establishing a revolutionary industrial union confederation in Australia organised on the basis of workers direct action on the job co-ordinated by delegate meetings



from the shop floor; abolishing the labour "civil service"; and sweeping the ALP onto the dust heap of history, it is essential that the AWU is eradicated from the industrial landscape. This union is represented in strategic industries eg mining-iron ore, nickel, copper, gold, etc, civil engineering subsector of building/construction, oil and chemicals. It is in these key sectors that a direct action oriented combined unions delegate committee movement organised on the regional/state/national scales must be built. The formation of these movements in such sectors, would influence similar direct action movements in other industries. In the framework of the practice of direct action sponsored by these organisations, a new revolutionary industrial union confederation would be built- The One Big Union.

In this article, I intend to analyse the development of the AWU and so-called rank and file movements which have emerged to oppose its hierarchy. I will show that these movements due to the influence of ambitious individuals and political parties have been drawn into reform and takeover bids of the AWU apparatus, and thus have sought

to preserve this major buttress of indirect action in Australia and major obstacle to industrial unionism. Consequently these movements have been unable to pursue a coherent strategy based upon building combined unions delegate organisations co-ordinated on the regional and national scales, committed to direct action. Finally I will show that, since the late 1960's, important advances have occurred in the growth of these structures in industries in which the AWU is represented, and increase the feasibility of an anarcho-syndicalist industrial strategy.

The origins of the AWU lie in the formation of regional shearers unions in the late 1880's. The first of these unions was the QSU, Queensland Shearers Union, formed in 1886. In 1888, regional shearers unions in Vic., NSW, and SA, amalgamated to form the ASU, Amalgamated Shearers Union. In 1894, the ASU became a pastoral industry union, enrolling pastoral workers other than shearers eg shed hands, with branches in NSW, SA, Vic and NZ; and in the same year, it amalgamated with the QSU to form the AWU.

Associated with the development in the 1880's 1890's of the AWU's predecessor unions, was the formation of an elite of full time paid officials invested with executive powers. In the case of the ASU, its executive was empowered to negotiate independently with pastoralists, engage in discussions toward joint action with other unions etc. This feature of officials possessing a wide measure of independence of the rank and file, and dominance of union affairs was greatly expanded in the AWU.

The AWU's constitution provided its national executive officials with power, between annual conventions to implement policy, vary or suspend any rules, sack any officers and expel members. On the branch level, these executives were provided with similar powers. The supremacy of the rightwing ALP machine which controlled the national and branch organisations was buttressed by this machine's control over the AWU's annual convention-supreme policy making body within the union. This domination was secured by the AWU constitution which allowed the officials to effectively appoint organisers (they had to prove they were of good character to nominate at an election for the job-should such an election occur at all and they could be sacked at any time by officials). In comparison to the rank and file, organisers had a better chance of being elected as delegates to the annual convention (elections for delegates being based on district electorates rather than industry) due to their wide travelling on union business. Consequently they would be better known to the electorate than rank and filers. Thus organisers would predominate as delegates at annual conventions- and these bodies would be effectively orchestrated by the right wing machine. Further entrenching this machine's power were other repressive features of the AWU organization:- AWU officials had power to appoint the returning officer for AWU elections and control the distribution of ballot tickets. This situation greatly assisted incumbent officials in rigging ballots. This phenomena of "ballot adjustment" continued unchecked until 1973, when State controlled ballots were imposed. Other rules, which success-

ive right wing AWU regimes introduced to tighten their control of the union were, the prohibition of candidates canvassing at AWU elections (1919), restrictions on nominations for AWU offices eg members who nominated for ballots for AWU positions had to provide proof of their good character to the incumbent officials (1927), etc.

With the major growth of state ALP's, state Arbitration/Wages Boards in the late 1890's, culminating in the formation in 1900 of a federal ALP and in 1904 the Federal Arbitration Court, the AWU hierarchy began to become deeply entangled in indirect action and collaboration with Capital and the State. A key reason underlying this entanglement, apart from the existence of an elite of full time officials, was the series of major strike defeats experienced by the shearers unions in the early 1890's. In particular, the 1890 Pastoral/Maritime Strike, the 1894 shearers strike. The major issues behind these strikes being employer opposition to closed shop practices eg shearers union members having preference of employment at stations, and the existence of unions. The reasons accounting for these defeats were disunity amongst unions, police protection of strike breakers and rising levels of unemployment in the 1890's. In the context of these industrial defeats, AWU officials were facilitated in pursuing the unions close involvement with forms of indirect action, in the shape of support of Arbitration and the ALP.

To maximize the AWU's bargaining power in these two arenas- the Arbitration Court system and the ALP, its officials have engaged in empire building based upon an amalgamation strategy and coverage of diverse groupings of workers. This program attained its greatest success in the period 1900 to 1913. The most important "merger" negotiated by the AWU hierarchy was in the case of the AWA, Amalgamated Workers Association in 1913. This union which was formed in 1907 was also a general union recruiting semi and unskilled workers. Its major bases were among miners and sugar workers in QLD. It had a higher level of centralization than the AWU. As in the AWA, its branches had little autonomy and paid the bulk of dues to the all powerful national executive. Following the AWA amalgamation, the AWU introduced some of the AWA's centralised features eg the national executive acquired a greater share of union finances. Other unions drawn into amalgamation with the AWU were the Federated Mining Employees Union (metaliferous miners), Amalgamated Railways and Tramways Service Association etc. Facilitating these mergers, was the success of AWU officials in bribing the officials of these unions with ALP seats in Parliament and positions in the highly paid AWU hierarchy (union officials being the major obstacles to union mergers) to agree with AWU terms for amalgamation.

Also assisting the AWU's expansion was various "sweet heart" deals arranged between employers and the AWU hierarchy. These arrangements were based upon employer acceptance of AWU coverage of workers in exchange for the guarantee of industrial peace eg in the cases of BHP, Pt Pirie Lead Smelters etc.

see page 10



Accompanying the expansion of the AWU empire was its acquisition of multistorey buildings in most states to house its officials, newspapers eg West-ralian Worker, Australian Worker, Maoriland Worker, Northern Worker, and investments in business ventures, most notoriously investment in a joint venture with pastoralists to manufacture shearing combs in the 30's.

The rightwing machine's hold over the AWU labour empire and its policy of close collaboration with the Arbitration Court system was facilitated in the post WWI period by important changes in the pastoral industry, private ownership of cars, and the petty bourgeois character of sections of the AWU's membership. These changes in the pastoral industry centered upon the introduction of the contract system of shearing employment. By means of the contract system, a private contractor arranged to supply a pastoralist with shearing labour (previously shearers directly solicited pastoralists for jobs). Consequently, the labour contractor played a key role in selecting shearing workers. Thus contractors could blacklist militants or only employ them on low paying work. Whilst shearers ownership of cars minimized their congregation in towns adjacent to sheep stations and the possibility of militants agitating amongst shearers. Regarding the social composition of the AWU, significant sectors consisted of small farmers who engaged in seasonal employment in rural industries. The overall effect of this phenomena was a general passivity amongst the AWU membership until the 1930's.

As a result of these factors, until the employer offensive of the depression, there had not been a widespread organised opposition movement to the rightwing AWU machine. In 1930-31, employers and governments in collaboration with Arbitration Courts, made major cuts in the award payments of pastoral workers, most notorious being the Dethbridge Act. These cutbacks and the acquiescence of the AWU to these reductions, sparked wild cat strikes by pastoral workers in NSW, QLD, SA and WA. This insurgency was met by the AWU hierarchy with a determined campaign of opposition, in the case of the QLD strike of 1931, it recruited scab shearers from NSW and paid their transport expenses to QLD so as to break the strike. The combination of this AWU sabotage, rising unemployment and police protection of scabs led to the defeat of these strikes. As a byproduct of these defeats and AWU sabotage, a breakaway union was formed in NSW in 1930 by pastoral workers, which became known as the Pastoral Workers Industrial Union.

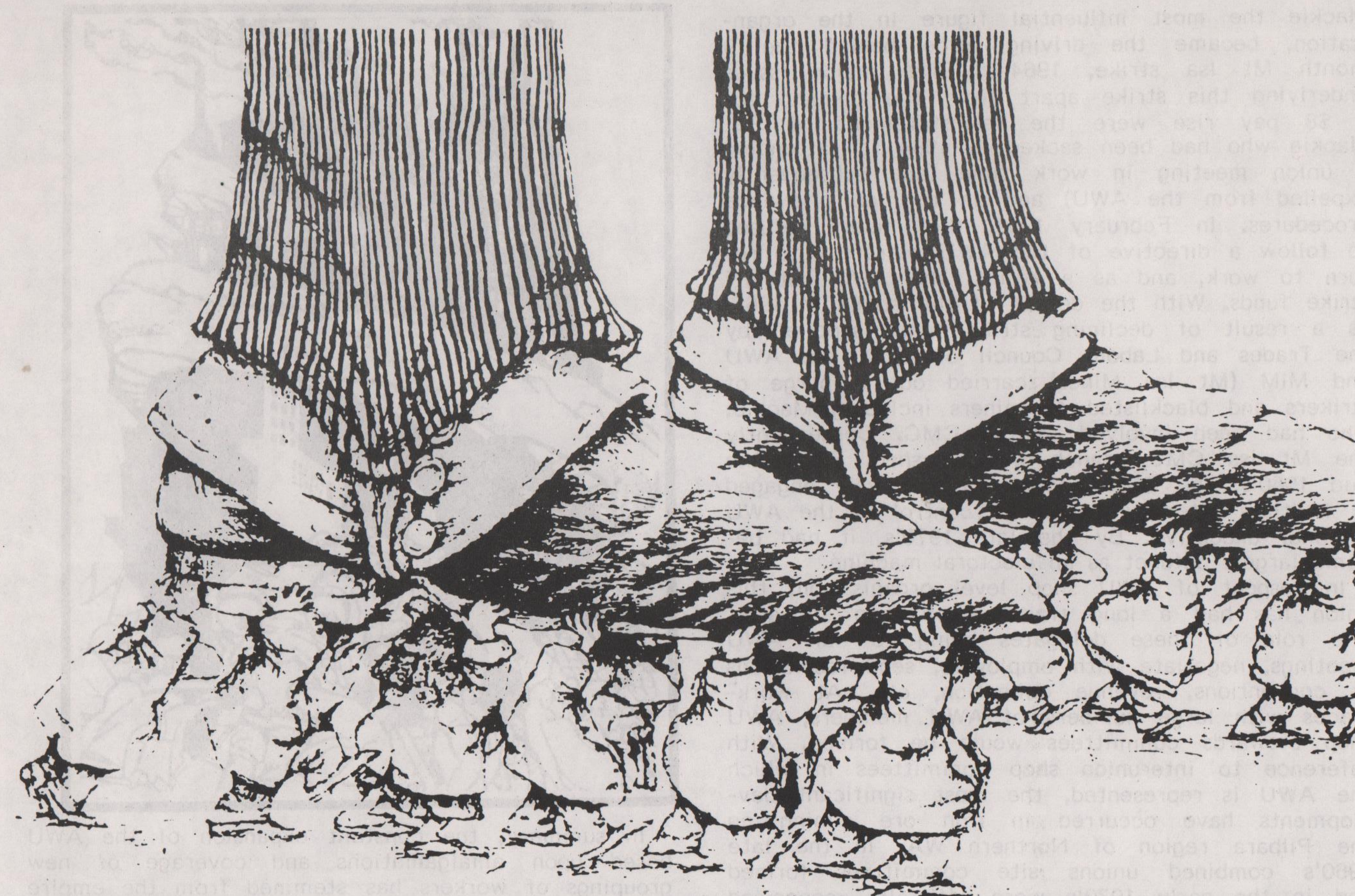
Prior to this time, the most significant opposition to the AWU hierarchy stemmed from IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) activists and the Bush Workers Propaganda Group. The latter organisation which was active in QLD during the 20's was formed by Arthur Rae, who had been sacked by AWU officials from the position of editor of the AWU paper "Labor News". Its basic orientation was reformist in that it did not question the centralised and "crowd" nature of the AWU and its entanglement in forms of indirect action, and merely sought to eliminate certain obnoxious features of the AWU eg official nomination of ballot returning officers, official domination of annual conventions etc. It sought to achieve these reforms by means of pressuring AWU officials via AWU members sending resolutions to protest repressive rules to AWU conventions and the distribution of literature criticizing AWU officialdom. In the 1928-29 period it became the AWU Rank and File Movement and in the 1930's it dissolved into the PWIU.

In relationship to the formation of the PWIU, the Communist Party (CPA) played an important role in setting it up, and it successfully acquired control of its executive from early on. Consequently the PWIU became a component part of the CPA controlled industrial front the Militant Minority Movement. The CPA's support of the breakaway PWIU differed from its normal strategy it pursued in other unions. This approach entailed the takeover of the apparatuses of these bodies by means of MMM organisations acting as electoral machines. This differing approach stemmed from the seemingly impregnable position of the rightwing AWU officials, originating from the vast array of repressive rules and corrupt electoral practices. Such a well defended position was recognised as frustrating any CPA takeover/infiltration bid.

The PWIU was unsuccessful in achieving its objective of becoming an industrial union and displacing the AWU, its peak membership being 2,000 at the most, whilst it averaged below 1,500. Its ineffectiveness in terms of realising its aims and its dissolution in 1937, was accounted for by a number of elements; QLD Government provision of preference of employment in the pastoral industry to the AWU; The PWIU's failure to acquire in its early stages a substantial base in terms of membership- its initial membership being around 1,000; CPA control of the PWIU via party cells (or fractions) and its executive, meant that the PWIU had to follow the zig-zags of CPA policies. Initially it opposed collaboration with the Arbitration Court and encouraged the formation of "Bush Workers" committees- delegate structures elected by AWU/PWIU members and nonunionists on stations and in regions, so as to undermine the AWU hierarchy and create the basis for the expansion of the PWIU by these bodies joining the PWIU. However by 1936, the PWIU had registered with the Arbitration Court. In 1935 it advocated unity with the AWU hierarchy in industrial campaigns. Finally, in 1937, the CPA leadership ordered the dissolution of the PWIU, and decided to have ex-PWIU members infiltrate the AWU and setup rank and file AWU area committees to conduct ballots for AWU elections (nominate returning officers etc), so as to engage in an electoral strategy to capture the AWU organisation.

To cope with the new CPA strategy, the AWU hierarchy increased its armoury of repressive rules eg it lengthened the years of AWU membership before a member could stand in an AWU election from 3 to 5 years, it eliminated the rule that an AWU area committee could appoint a returning officer for an AWU ballot, it made the rule that no member who advocated the overthrow of a government could be nominated for an election, and it engaged in extensive expulsions on trumped up charges of suspected CPA members eg the expulsion of CPA members active in setting up an AWU area committee in 1938 in North QLD to conduct a ballot. As a consequence of this situation the CPA was unable to make any progress in capturing the AWU.

In relationship to the post WWII period important changes occurred in the trajectory of the AWU. An important feature of this change was the AWU move into secondary industries in the 50's 60's, and tertiary industries in the 70's. This development was caused by a number of factors; the mechanisation of agriculture, resulting in a decline in the workforce eg the introduction of mechanised sugar cane harvesting equipment in the early 1960's; closer settlement policies causing the break-up of properties; defections of disgruntled AWU members to other unions. To overcome this decline



in the traditional rural membership bases, the AWU commenced a program of expansion in such industries in the 50's 60's as cement, chemicals, fertilizers, oil, civil engineering subsector of building and construction, and food.

Facilitating the AWU's growth in these sectors was the convergence of major growth in employment in them, since WWII caused by favourable government policies eg subsidies, provision of government services for new projects, growing foreign investment in mining and industrial projects. In the case of the oil industry, the State played an important role in its development via its policy of subsidizing the conversion of industry from coal to oil as fuel, the provision of roads, electricity, etc, to facilitate refinery establishment. Associated with the establishment of oil refineries was the location of chemicals/fertilizer/plastics plants adjacent to them eg at Altona in Vic.. Connected with the establishment of these new projects/industries was the awarding of preference of workforce coverage by the State to the AWU and sweet heart deals between employers and the AWU favouring its coverage of workforces.

An important example of the interconnection of State/AWU/employer strategies centered around the establishment of port facilities and industrial infrastructure at Kwinana in WA during the 1950's. So as to induce investment by foreign multinational companies in Kwinana, the WA government provided such services as roads, railways, water, etc, and gave the AWU preference in regard to coverage of workers engaged in harbour construction, dredging, and industrial processes, most importantly operators at BP's oil refinery, and thereby provided foreign investors with the added attraction of a tame cat workforce.

With regard to the 1970's, the key step in the AWU's path of development was its expansion into tertiary industry via the amalgamation with the

NSW branch of the SDA (shop assistants union) in 1974.

In relationship to opposition movements in the AWU since WWII, their leadership has been chiefly characterised by disgruntled left ALP AWU officials, mainly as a result of the decline of the CPA as an industrial force since the 50's and its record of defeats in the AWU. The most significant of these post war groupings was the CMC (Council for Membership Control). This organisation was set up in 1959 by Clyde Cameron, member of Federal Parliament (associated with the leftwing faction of the ALP) and the president of the SA branch of the AWU (previously state secretary). Cameron, had been a long term dissident in the AWU and had successfully challenged through the courts a number of repressive AWU rules and his own expulsion.

Initially the CMC was oriented as a pressure group to push for reforms in the AWU eg removal of repressive rules- official control of ballot slips and appointment of election returning officers; opposition to the dominance of the national executive over the branch executives; that the AWU should become more closely aligned with the mainstream of reformist unionism, etc. This reformist activity included legal challenges against the rigging of AWU elections eg in the case of the 1961, National Secretary election; a campaign on behalf of AWU affiliation with the ACTU, which led to its affiliation in 1967; a successful legal challenge on behalf of left ALP members who had been sacked as executive officers of the SA AWU branch in 1964, etc. The central role of the CMC in terms of opposing the rightwing AWU machine in the 1960's enabled it to become a pole of attraction in terms of influencing, other dissident groups in the AWU.

This position of influence, led disgruntled AWU copper miners at Mt Isa QLD to form a CMC branch in 1964. Subsequently, the CMC branch and Pat



Mackie the most influential figure in the organisation, became the driving force behind the 9 month Mt Isa strike, 1964-65. The major issues underlying this strike apart from the demand for a \$8 pay rise were the re-instatement of Pat Mackie who had been sacked in 1964 for attending a union meeting in work time (and subsequently expelled from the AWU) and on the job grievance procedures. In February 1965, the miners refused to follow a directive of the AWU hierarchy to return to work, and as a result, the AWU cut off strike funds. With the defeat of the strike in 1965, as a result of declining strike funds supplied by the Trades and Labour Council of QLD, the AWU and MIM (Mt Isa Mines) carried out a purge of strikers and blacklisted 46 miners including Mackie, who had been involved in the CMC. Consequently the Mt Isa CMC branch was smashed. Since the mid 1960's, the CMC became progressively engaged in fruitless attempts to secure control of the AWU national executive. By the late 1970's, it had become largely defunct as an electoral machine.

In respect of AWU shop level organisation, this union has had a long tradition of shop stewards. The role of these delegates being to call AWU meetings, negotiate with employers, send resolutions to conventions, revenue collection, etc. At workplaces with large numbers of AWU members, AWU shop stewards committees would be formed. With reference to interunion shop committees in which the AWU is represented, the most significant developments have occurred in iron ore mining eg the Pilbara region of Northern WA, in the late 1960's combined unions site committees formed and in the early 1970's were officially recognised for bargaining by the Arbitration Court and employers; and in oil, in 1975 at Kwinana BP and in Bass Strait in 1982. (In the case of building/construction, combined unions site committees have become wide spread at the larger sites in major cities since the late 70's eg Sydney since 1978, however these developments have occurred outside civil engineering.)

Impeding the formation of a regionally and nationally organised combined unions shop committee movement committed to direct action in industries in which the AWU is represented, has been a combination of different factors. Most significant has been the activities of union and ACTU officials, parochial attitudes amongst workers and the impact of the Arbitration Court. The role of union officials and Arbitration in marginalising AWU site committees is most apparent in the case of the NSW branch Charlie Oliver regime. Until 1980, when Oliver stood down as secretary he muzzled AWU shop committees via such methods as:- the use of organisers to police delegates, the use of Arbitration Court intervention into plant level disputes to take control from the workers/shop committees involved, bribing "trouble-some" delegates with organiser jobs- if that didn't work having them black listed from jobs, etc. Since 1980, a "less competent" NSW AWU leadership has enabled a resurgence of shop committees. With reference to the ACTU, its policy of common negotiations in the oil industry has meant that, ACTU officials have progressively taken greater control of conditions bargaining in the industry, thus limiting the bargaining role of site committees. In the case of parochialism, these attitudes are widespread and are facilitated by centralised unionism. This situation has led in the Pilbara to meetings of delegates from the combined unions site committees to occur only as a result of employer intervention on behalf of such gatherings.



In summary, the constant expansion of the AWU based upon amalgamations and coverage of new groupings of workers has stemmed from the empire building of the rightwing ALP machine which has dominated the union and its entanglement in forms of indirect action- the Arbitration Court and the ALP. This expansionism took a major shift in its trajectory since WWII, when the AWU became deeply involved in recruitment in secondary/tertiary industries. To defend this labour empire, AWU officials have introduced an extensive array of repressive rules and have engaged in "ballot adjustment" activities.

The major groupings in the so called "rank and file" movement which emerged to oppose the rightwing AWU machine, have been characterised by their close association with political parties and ambitious individuals. This association has subverted these movements into electoral machines and vehicles of political parties.

In relationship to anarcho-syndicalist industrial strategy, it is essential that militants reject the path of AWU "reform" or AWU takeover bids, and work towards the development of combined unions delegate organisations co-ordinated on the regional, state and national scales, committed to sponsoring workers' direct action on the job, as the major step towards establishing a revolutionary industrial union confederation. Since the late 1960's, the feasibility of this program has been facilitated by the growth in individual combined unions site committees, in industries in which the AWU is represented eg mining, oil, building/construction and "less competent" AWU officials eg in NSW since 1980, which has allowed a resurgence in AWU site committees.

Thanks to:

various AWU shop stewards;  
V.G.Childe How Labor Governs.

S.Macintyre Militant

Various CMC and PWIU publications,  
Industrial Conflict, Workplace Characteristics  
and Accommodation Structure in the Pilbara  
Iron Ore Industry, S.Frenkel, JIR, Dec. 1978.  
For material for this article.



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## SYNDICALISM IN FRANCE

The following article consists of a report on the activities of the CNT-F (French Section of the IWA) given at the first Congress of the USI (Italian Section of the IWA) held in Ancona, in December 1983.

During the last Congress of the French CNT, it emerged that the CNT has for too long developed syndicalist theory at the expense of practice.

Today the CNT orientates towards a praxis in accordance with the methods of union struggle, refuting overly intransigent ideological positions. A few basic principles are sufficient to define revolutionary syndicalism: the sovereign general assembly, delegates controlled by the union, direct action and federalism.

To develop ideology at the expense of practice means depriving ourselves of numerous effective forms of union struggle.

The revolutionary syndicate must be able to use both methods of struggle authorized by the system and those outside the system, both legal means and otherwise.

The CNT is a union and not a specific organisation.

As a union it already accepts a compromise with the existing socio-economic system.

At its Paris Congress last May the CNT pronounced itself for the tactical use of the factory or work place union section, and of delegates and union representatives within the Works Committees, because these can be submitted to union control.

The CNT pronounced itself for the boycotting of the Works Committee elections, against the exploitation of workers in insecure employment and for a campaign aimed at apprentice workers.

The French CNT has experienced a growth period these last two or three years. It is multiplying its union sections: Post and Telecommunications in Paris, Transport in Arles, Seamen and Fishermen in Sete, Health, Metal industry and Entertainments in Bordeaux. It is growing also due to the discrediting of the left-wing unions paralyzed by their submission to the government.

But above all the CNT is reaping the fruits of patient and persevering union work. Two examples illustrate this well: in Bordeaux the activity of the comrades unleashed a flood, with the outbreak of many struggles in different sectors. The struggles ended to our advantage and a hospital porters branch previously affiliated to the CGT (1) joined the CNT.

In Sete, seamen and fishermen disillusioned with the CGT have created a union which is now the only fishermen's union in Sete. This situation might spread to other ports on the French Mediterranean.

The CNT is growing in a workers' milieu which is ignorant of or badly versed in libertarian ideas.

Ideological commitment was preceded by union commitment. Now the majority of the CNT's new members are assimilating libertarian ideas in the course of day-to-day struggles.

We are obliged to take note of this new circumstance for revolutionary syndicalism. Its growth is dependant on these conditions.

J-L. B.

### Note

(1) CGT- Left reformist union confederation. Communist Party led.

From 'Revolutionary Unionism in Italy' published by Middlesbrough D.A.M., June 1984.



# SYNDICALIST UNIONS

HOW IN TERMS OF PRINCIPLES AND ORGANISATION WOULD THEY DIFFER FROM OUR CURRENT REFORMIST UNIONS?

Anarcho-syndicalism is a theory of workers organisation which differs from Trade Unionism in several important ways. The first and most important difference is that the final aim of Syndicalism is the consciously revolutionary one of placing the control of industry— all industry —into the hands of the workers in each industry. The Trade Unions have never pretended to be more than defensive organisations, maintained by the support (compulsory support in some cases) of the workers, for the defence of standards of living and working conditions within capitalist society.

Syndicalism on the other hand, is not content with fighting for better conditions within capitalist society, although it does offer the most effective means of so doing. But syndicalists realise that as long as capitalist society exists, so long will the worker be exploited for the sake of profit. As long as the worker is content to be a wage earner so long will he be robbed of the greater part of the value of his products. As long as industry is controlled from above, either by private owners or by the State, so long will the worker be a pawn in a game played by others.

Anarcho-syndicalism, therefore, aims at the abolition of capitalist society, all that supports it and all that it entails. It aims at the abolition of the State. It aims at the creation instead, of a society of a decentralised character based only upon the two fields of activity— economic and industrial. Combining with local communes— organisations for the administration of local amenities and affairs— syndicalism lays down the structure for the organisation of production and distribution, not for the profit of employer or State, but to satisfy freely all the needs of the community.

## INDUSTRIAL UNITY

As opposed to the craft basis of the Trade Union, syndicalism demands INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM. The many anomalies of craft organisation, whereby workers in the same factory do not necessarily support each other in strikes, for example, are only equalled by the "mixed bag" aspect of the huge general unions like the Transport and General Workers Union.

The principle adhered to by the syndicates would be "organisation at the point of production" which concentrates the workers' strength where it is most effective. After all if the aim of the workers is to be the seizure of the means of production, it is absolutely fruitless to organise according to where one may live! The effective organisation will be one created on the job, finding its expression through shop committees and revolutionary cells which, are able to rely upon the support of all workers in the factory, workshop, or mine, irrespective of their trades, is able to swing into action at any time with every chance of success. Through these committees, work-places can be linked up to form industrial federated syndicates.

## OFFICIALS

There is no need for the full-time paid official in a syndicate. One of the evils of Trade Unionism is its creation of a class of bureaucrats ostensibly working for the benefit of the rank and file but in actual fact, because of inflated salaries, out of touch and out of the class of the rank and file. Such people have a stake in present-day society. The unions to whom they are attached have their funds invested in Government stock. Their salaries depend on the security of that stock — how can they be expected to desire a change in a society in which they have such sinecures? And since the unions to-day are recognised as part of the State, the union official is more of a civil servant than a representative of the workers.

For the waging of the class struggle through syndicates, no bureaucracy is needed. When the efficient organisation of action calls for full-time activity, a temporary delegate can be chosen, either to present the workers case, make contact with other workers or any other necessary function, but remuneration for such activity should not exceed pay on the bench.

This unalterable principle would discourage job-seekers or climbers. Election by the workers would almost inevitably ensure the most capable person for any job being chosen, the rate for the job would eliminate the bait of material advancement and the job would be done for its own sake.

Another proof is that these delegates should have no power to make decisions on behalf of others. They are delegates, not representatives, and must report back any offers or moves so that a decision can be taken by all the workers involved.

## ANTI-MILITARISM

Syndicates recognise the reactionary nature of nationalism. They do not recognise the validity of political and national boundaries. Syndicalism is international in design and aspirations. It is a form of organisation which, not being directed by any political thought, is free to embrace workers of any country, colour, or creed and by uniting them under the banner of Freedom, unite them for common action against their common enemy—the international ruling class.

It follows logically that Anti-Militarism is a principle of Anarcho-Syndicalist theory and practice, since it is in the military caste that nationalism and patriotism find their greatest expression. Not only that, but the armed forces do not exist only for international attack or defence, but are most important counter-revolutionary weapons in the hands of the State. If anti-militarist propaganda can have full effect before the revolution, the task of the revolutionaries is greatly simplified.

Syndicalists oppose war as being the clash of ruling classes, never fought in the interests of the working class, who only fight and die for the preservation of capitalism under one form or another.

## METHODS

What are the methods of Anarcho-syndicalism? They can be summed up briefly under the words 'Direct Action'.

Since syndicates do not seek control of the State or any part of the political machine, it would be illogical to take part in political activity. Since the society at which they aim is a society without government it would be futile to struggle for power in government. Political activity can only divert the energies and strength of the producers away

# Letter From Britain

The following letter was recently received by us from the Bolton (UK) Miners Support Group. In this organisation the D.A.M. British Section of the A.I.T. plays an extremely active role.

Dear Friends, and Comrades,

I am writing on behalf of Bolton Miners Support Group to thank you for your generous gift of \$307, which Jim Petty from Burnley D.A.M. passed on to us. The money has been added to our weekly collector for the sixty families of striking miners we are supporting in the Bolton area.

The strike, as you know, is in its tenth month. November and December saw two main offensives by the State— the carrot and the stick, you might say. The carrot involved an attempt to bribe the strikers back by inflated holiday bonus offers (\$2454 in some cases). The sequestration of N.U.M. funds also took place with the freezing of union accounts in Ireland and Luxemburg. Both tactics have failed to make much impact— the demoralising effect of a further 6-8,000 mineworkers (2½-3% of the 190,000 workforce) returning before Xmas has been offset by the knowledge that when they return to work, they are virtually hostages of the management with no union representation or right to the same job or money they were on before the strike started.

Our area, Lancashire (N.W. England) has a relatively small coalfield based around Wigan, St. Helens and Salford and was never solidly behind the strike. At least 40% of miners are at work with 3 of the 7 pits working at almost full capacity. (Nationally 1 in 3 miners is working.) Lack of direction from the conservative regional leadership (strikers had to occupy the area headquarters for 8 days in May for recognition!), the red herring of the ballot issue and many scabs working simply because they don't want to decrease whatever redundancy money they might be able to take when the axe falls on their pit— all these have played a part in a rather sad story. However those out are resolute. Another factor is that unlike the strong areas like Kent, S.Wales, Yorkshire, Durham and the Scottish pits, there is little community solidarity here; the pits draw their men from a wide area.

The immediate future is a grim one. No doubt more will return during the cold months of January and February. The fight to shut the power stations continues. Some in our area are closed or running at token strength but few power cuts have taken place. Some power stations have dual oil/coal burning capacity while the nuke ones are running flat

from the direct path to freedom, and in the labyrinth of political opportunism and intrigue the final aim is inevitably lost and forgotten.

Direct Action means making the full use of such weapons as the strike with all its variations (lightning, work to rule, stay in etc.), boycott and sabotage, finding their full expression in the Social General Strike wherein the workers lock out the bosses and commence to work the means of production for the benefit of all. The most important action now, however, is the task of education and enlightenment, to make the workers realise their strength and responsibility and to inspire them to prepare now for the final struggle.

Philip Sansom



out. Apparently it is also possible for us to patch into Continental power supplies. Coal is being imported in large quantities from Holland, Poland and South Africa and handled through non-registered ports. Some of the large reserves of pithead stocks are being slowly moved but not in significant quantities. Many power station workers are refusing to handle scab coal which is being moved by road (little coal is being moved by rail) but while the Transport and General Workers Union is making some effort at the power stations (it is failing miserably with the truck drivers), the key power workers union (the EPTU) is refusing any solidarity action.

The only solution to the current stalemate is the resumption of mass picketing of power stations and pits as well as a determined attempt to build solidarity action by other workers. Sabotage and occupation unfortunately seem to have been ruled out as weapons in the fight despite media scare stories of pit violence, those on strike have been amazingly gentle towards the scabs. Our next move is to take our collections to the factories where there are still untapped reserves of support though it must be said that the numbers in the support group are small and irregular, boycotted as we are by the Labour Party mafia which rules our town and which makes our collecting as difficult as possible. The posturing of union bosses and party puppets is a hindrance not a help because, as you know, they give the worker the illusion that all the worker has to do to put the world to rights is to leave it to them. But the miners are fighting for us all and your contribution has been a magnificent reminder of this.

You may like to know that there are a few of us in D.A.M./A.I.T. in Bolton, myself included. Though we have no syndicalist unions in England, D.A.M. has established quite a presence during the miners' strike particularly in the support groups (most D.A.M. members are unemployed). Some success in working with unemployed unions has been achieved particularly in Burnley. In Bolton we are no more than a propaganda group though we are planning on forming an Unemployed D.A.M. Union when the miners' strike is over. We hope that now this contact has been started, it will continue whether because of your concern with the miners' struggle or because of our mutual anarcho-syndicalist "beliefs". If you can, let us know what you are up to at the other end of the world and we will continue to send news of ourselves. Thanks again.

Yours in solidarity,  
R.B.