



KOWTOWTONE



WYSF. PO Box 75, Hebden Bridge, HX7 8WB
wysf07@gmail.com www.solfed.org.uk

Volume 1, Issue 1

April 2008

Who are we?

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of workers which seeks to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Locals, which support the formation of future revolutionary unions and are centres for working class struggle on a local level.

Our activities are based on Direct Action - action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership.

We welcome all working people who agree with our Aims and Principles, and who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions.

We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide, & are affiliated to the International Workers' Association, whose Principles of Revolutionary Unionism we have adopted.

Fair Wages in a Fair Trade Town ?

Recently the Labour Party in Hebden Bridge has started a campaign for "Fair Wages in a Fair Trade Town". Taking its cue from the Fair Trade status that Hebden Bridge enjoys, the local Labour Party is trying to instigate a campaign whereby employers would put a "Fair Wages" sticker in their shop windows to indicate that they pay at least the minimum wage. While almost any initiative of this type is good, anarcho-syndicalists would say two things. First, do they not realize that it is the Labour Party, i.e. the party in government, that has done so much to casualize labour and force down wages and benefits? Secondly, is the minimum wage a fair wage for a day's work? We don't think so. The employers are creaming off the profits while the workers slog on at minimum pay.

The Solidarity Federation began a campaign years

ago to highlight the casualization of labour and the exploitation and bullying that most workers suffer at the hands of their employers. This campaign, "Stuff Your Boss", publicly denounces employers and advocates pickets of stores and shops where minimum wages aren't paid. But nothing will beat organization in the workplace and the building of a culture that doesn't allow bosses to get away with it. Talking to the business "community" and stickers don't go far enough. Direct action and workers' control of production is what we want.

Meanwhile, Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells has been in Colombia having his photo taken with members of the mountain brigades of the Colombian army. This brigade has been accused of massive human rights abuses and the murdering of many trade unionists. General

Mario Montoya, head of the Colombian army, is in charge of a military operation that has been held responsible for the murder of trade unionists, peasants and human rights workers and has even prompted the United States to suspend some military aid to the present regime. So, while Labour here campaigns for better wages akin to slave wages, in other parts of the world its top brass is having photo shoots with murderers of trade unionists.



British Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells with troops of the High Mountain Battalion. Some of the men from the Battalion were involved in torturing and executing three trade unionists.

Photo : Justice For Colombia website

PUBLIC MEETING

What is Anarcho-Syndicalism?

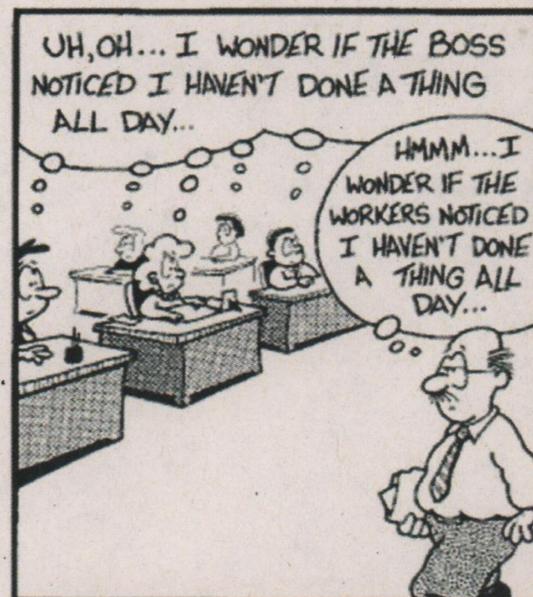
Free Public Meeting and discussion

Friday 2nd May 2008

Meeting Room 2

Bradford Central Library

Time 7pm



offthemark

Putting theory into practice

Some time ago in the dismal land of 'local government' a lone Anarcho-syndicalist found themselves as usual eating lunch surrounded by tedious talk of shopping bargains, TV updates and relationship traumas.

But suddenly their ears pricked up as they heard a faint rumbling of discontent amongst some of their fellow workers: Dissatisfaction at union representation was the name of the game and our intrepid comrade decided to seize the opportunity to put some theory into practice.

Gathering together a small group of the discontented, discussions were had about what action could be taken and the tiny embers began to grow. The Anarcho-syndicalist felt a surge of hope as talk turned to petitions and

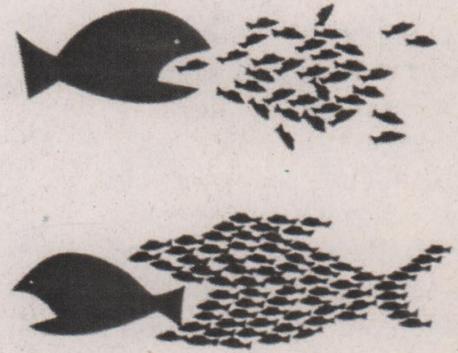
boycotts at the local union office. But the local union rep was informed (it was the fair thing to do!) and she huffed and puffed and intimidated the small group – excluded the Anarcho-syndicalist from all discussions - and made the small group of workers feel guilty about daring to speak out against the union.

However, further solidarity and support began to re-emerge and suddenly the branch secretary was desperate to come and have a meeting with the workers. A small victory! The usual flannel, cajoling and guilt tripping ensued, laced with promises of special groups to be set up to ensure increased representation.

To date no such group has emerged. But the union bulletin board is at last

been kept updated and the workers are suddenly getting frequent news emails from the union rep.

We believe that workers can and should organise themselves and work in co-operation to build mutual aid. That's why we are building Anarcho-syndicalist unions.



REMPLOY

Remploy factories employ over 5000 disabled staff in specially adapted premises, receiving 111 million pounds in funding from the government. In May last year the government announced the closure or merger of many factories, with the loss of at least 500 jobs (perhaps as many as 2000).

These factories provide a safe place to work for disabled people who are unlikely to find fulfilling work in "mainstream" employment. The government's reason for closing the factories is simply cost, but it is pretending that it is because it is (now) opposed to segregated workplaces for disabled people.

Local Remploy union activists decided to take a stand and called for industrial action. Virtually all Remploy workers are union members, and in the subsequent ballots 80-100% voted in favour of industrial action!

WYSF members joined a noisy demonstration at Bradford City football ground on 29 January, where Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People at the Department for Work and Pensions, was speaking at an employers' conference on employment and disabled

people. McGuire was loudly heckled upon arriving and eggs were thrown at her upon departure.

There have also been blockades and pickets of factories across the country, including York, where strikers blocked lorries from taking away factory equipment before the factory was due to close.

Recently some charities including MIND and Mencap have supported the Remploy factory closures, stating that disabled people should be working in mainstream

employment. However, the barriers faced by disabled people in mainstream employment are many, ranging from access to discrimination. Take a look around and see how many disabled people you know who are in "mainstream" employment? Nobody asked the workers what they wanted, or how they felt!

Many Remploy workers feel unable to even move to the merged factories due to the disruption it would cause, so how would they "fit" into mainstream employment?

While what rights workers have are being ignored and wages forced down, it is obvious that many Remploy workers feel they are being dumped on the scrapheap.



Thanks to Kat for photo