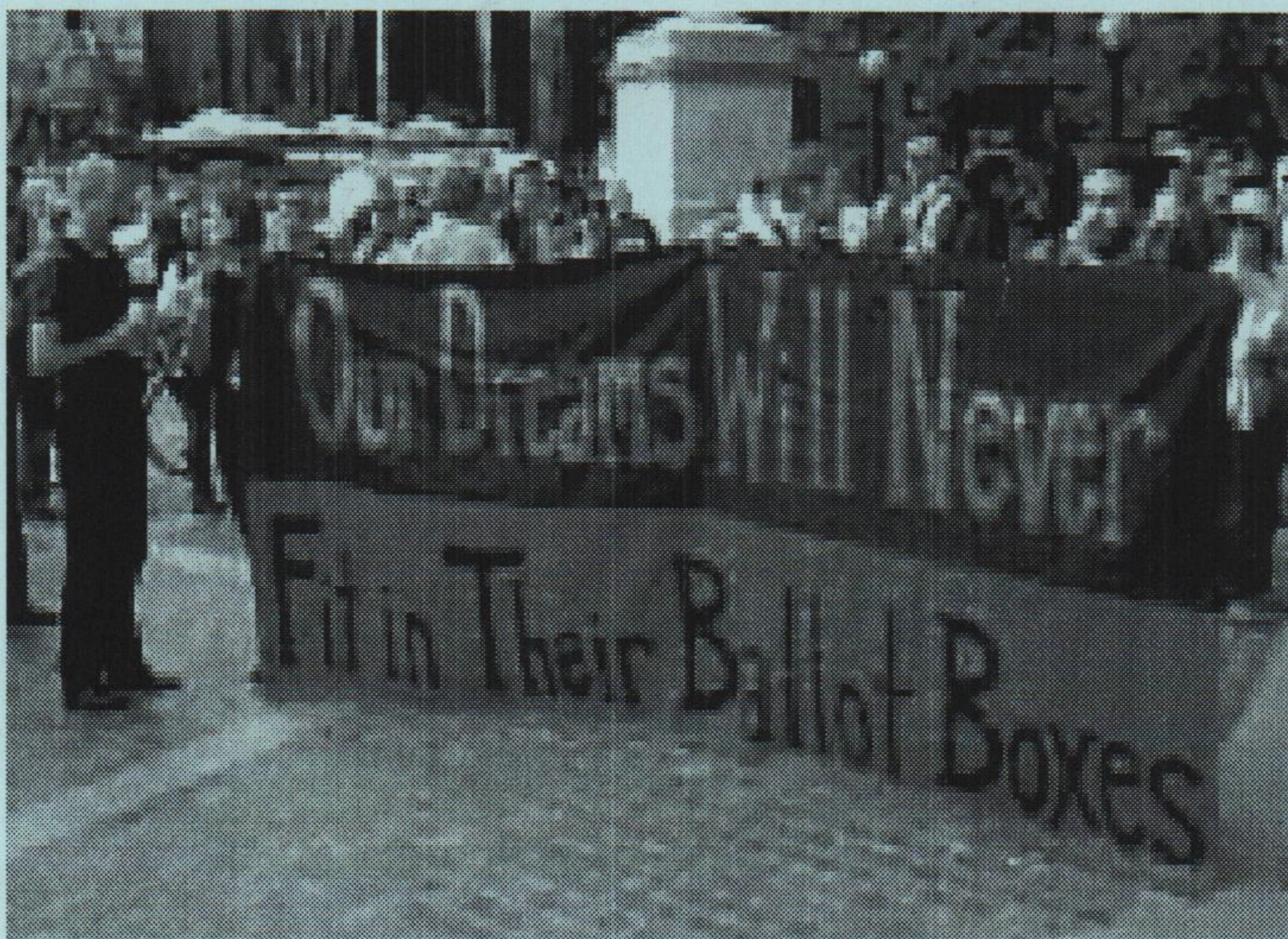


Western Approaches

Bulletin of South West Solidarity Federation-IWA



Who'd credit it?

The "credit crunch" and continuing state bailout of boss-induced failures are examples of system failure. So much for private industry taking the risks (the 'free marketeers' remain silent). Millions of words have been and are being written to 'explain' this and the consequences arising from this epitome of greed. Yet the bourgeois media is unlikely to analyse the reality: an economic system that espouses exploitation, careerism and individual wealth as the criteria for social advance will inevitably lead to such debacles.

Oil prices have shot up as capitalist opportunists rush to cash in on the general fuel angst and the biofuel (biofuel?) phenomenon. Poverty among the poor and children increases at home and hunger in the 'third world' intensifies as this rabid exploitation demands its customary rewards.

A Tory economic spokesman said that if elected the Tories (like Labour, another disaster of a political idea in action) would introduce measures to force people to behave in an environmentally responsible manner in order to conserve oil resources. Force is regarded as the prerogative of the state and politicians love nothing more than exercising it.

"Ah, but the next election might change things..." It'll throw up more of the same self-serving incompetents with social promises hiding their rabid individual ambition. All that changes is the rosette. After the latest elected cock-up laughably described as the "Labour" Party this is clear to all

Self-organisation is the answer: employers organise officially as in the CBI or unofficially with a nod and a wink from government to obstruct workers' rightful demands. Orthodox trade unions are no answer, we need to build organisations that unite the working class whether employed or unemployed, homemaker or casual. An end to division. Join Solidarity Federation and help.

First Class

A couple of post offices in Bath were won from closures earlier in the summer. Angered at bureaucrats' "difficult decisions" people demonstrated that the elderly and disabled would have difficulty reaching the proposed alternative. The bureaucrats climbed down. Local party politicians puffing claims of success and foretelling future wonders were evident.

These small victories are welcome in the ongoing struggle against the bureaucratic manipulation of our lives.

Elsewhere in the south west post offices are falling like grouse on the moors despite similar community actions. Our needs are irrelevant in the perpetual drive for profit.

The postal service, education, the NHS and other vital services are being handed to the vultures. Governments of whichever hue enable this greed..

This usually means a poorer service and increased costs. We need genuine public services run by the community for the community; a completely self managed system which we create by building such new structures within the decaying bones of the old. That's what we are all about.

The longer we delay the worse it gets.

The more things change

"They [Manpower] sent me to offices all over Manhattan. From nine to five I sit at desks and type lists, invoices, addresses and envelopes, bills of lading. Supervisors tell me what to do and talk to me only when I make mistakes. The other office workers ignore me because I'm only a temporary, a temp they say, and I might not even be here tomorrow. They don't even see me. I could die at my desk and they'd talk past me about what they saw on TV last night and how they're getting outa here fast on Friday afternoon and heading for the Jersey shore. They send out for coffee and pastries and don't ask me if I have a mouth in my head."

—from "Tis" by Frank McCourt. He was writing about the 1950's and of course we have progressed remarkably since then!

South West SolFed's Health & Safety Tips for Workers

#1: Hazardous Substances at Work

There is an ever-increasing number of hazardous substances to which workers are regularly exposed. As well as more high profile hazards such as asbestos, these substances include many widely-used cleaning agents. Substances hazardous to health can lead to a range of conditions (such as asthma and dermatitis), as well as terminal illnesses (including many cancers) and sudden death. In terms of commercial chemicals, commonly used by cleaners and other manual workers, hazardous substances should be identifiable by a warning label on the packaging.

Employers are required by law to: assess the risks presented by hazardous substances; prevent, control and monitor exposure levels; undertake health surveillance of affected workers; prepare plans & procedures to deal with accidents and incidents; and to ensure that employees are properly informed, trained and supervised. Anyone who has worked in a workplace where hazardous substances can be found,

Try Freedom

With the downturn in the economy induced by the banks a leaked report recently predicted a growth in crime (which will affect the working class most of all, as usual) with fundamentalists and right-wing opportunists gaining recruits to their ideas and organisations.

Reactionary ideologies thrive on insecurity and fear and offer simple, authoritarian state solutions which demand equally mindless patterns of obedience. Such idiocies lead only to deeper oppression. Let's try freedom for a change and create social structures in society that can deal with problems that inevitably arise. Problems created by capitalism cannot be solved by it nor by variations like fascism and religion.

"...A competitive economy pits nation against nation, stimulating conflict in the remorseless drive to feed the fortunes of all the powerful elites. Total global military spending now equates to an amount of money less than half of which could comfortably alleviate world poverty and hunger. With western superpowers waging a 'War on terror' to conceal their true aspirations to acquire control of world oil supplies, marginalised groups turn to religious fundamentalism, and are provoked to commit horrible acts of terrorism. Without question, the 'war on terror', and the proliferation of nuclear, biological and conventional weaponry have made modern times very dangerous ones in which to live..." (*Direct Action* No. 43)

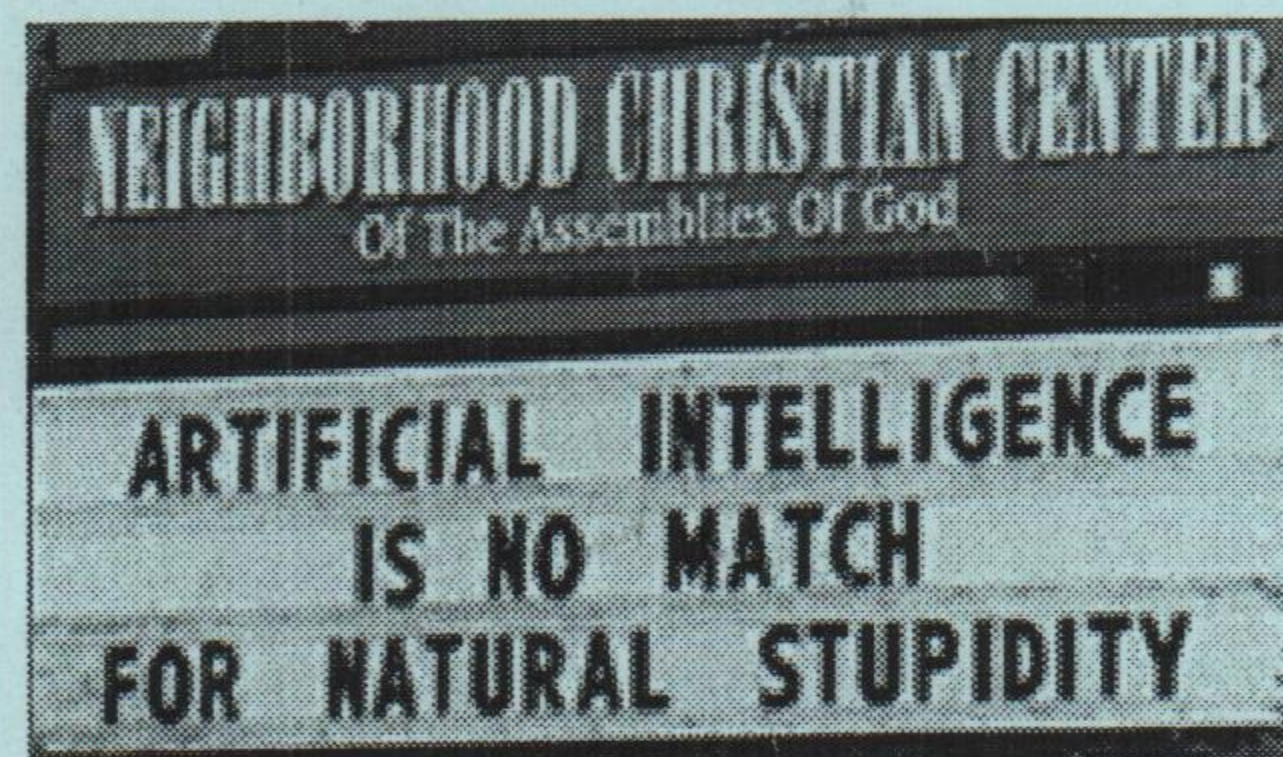
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and this covers nearly all workplaces, will know that these requirements are rarely met. How many shop workers and cleaners are fully aware of the risks posed by the chemicals they are given to use at the start of each and every shift? When was the last time your boss conducted a health survey or took any interest at all in your health?

Health & safety costs bosses money and if they can get away with ignoring the law and placing workers at risk as a consequence, then all but a few will jump at the chance. It's naive in the extreme to expect the authorities to protect you. Factories and shops are the responsibility of the Health & Safety Executive, a mainly advisory government agency who recently managed to smash their already appalling record on inspecting workplaces and investigating major injuries. The only way workers can protect themselves against the very real risks presented by hazardous substances at work is by self-education, organisation and collective action. If you have a union safety rep at work then speak to her / him about your concerns. If you have no union presence at work or if you do but they don't seem to be doing much, then contact South West SolFed and we will try our best to provide you with relevant information and to support you. solfedsw@yahoo.co.uk

Holy Smoke!

Weston-super-Mare's pier went up in smoke recently and so distraught were local Christians that they held a service in memory of the structure. No wonder the Jesus myth is losing adherents.



Who we are

South West SF is a local of Solidarity Federation. Our activities are based on direct action - action by ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians or union officials - our decisions are made through full participation of the membership.

We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide and are affiliated to the International Workers Association, whose Principles of Revolutionary Unionism we share.

Contact: www.solfed.org.uk or write to the national address for further information and a free copy of our quarterly magazine *Direct Action*:

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