

Syndicalism;- after its first century.

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1. why syndicalism

It is understandable that many non-syndicalist anarchists react when a syndicalist identifies her/himself as such by saying "I think that being human is more than being a worker and therefore I don't like a political identity that is only concerned with industry."

Understandable; but nevertheless erroneous. Certainly Syndicalists argue:

that ultimately all political power stems from the control of industry, and that therefore anarchism can only triumph if it has a strategy for wresting that control from the capitalists;

that industrial organization on the basis of federalism, & of direct rank & file democracy, working to bring about social change by the direct action of the workers themselves organized at the point of production is the natural application of anarchism to that struggle;

that something approaching an industrial unionist pattern is practically the best form of this, though having said this it must be stressed that in Britain the major syndicalist movements have been geared to the shop stewards and similar movements and not to dual unionist experiments;

And they also say:

that rank & file industrial organizations spring up spontaneously from the intrinsic and natural needs of the working class, they are therefore the one form of organization in which feel naturally at home; (other organizations tend to have a middle class flavour and the worker is at a disadvantage in them;)

that while certainly the working class can only make an anarchist revolution, (whether on the syndicalist or any other pattern,) if its members look at more aspects of society and class power than those that are purely to be found in industry, and that therefore a more generalised anarchist consciousness is necessary, it is nevertheless true that to expect workers to join a movement that is not primarily industrially based, is to expect them to move into what the class sees as alien millieux;

that many non-syndicalist variants of anarchism are openly elitist, and that even where there is no elitist intention, there is still a danger of elitism in those variants that insist that workers must join a general union of anarchists rather than a syndicalist movement.

But that said:

There are certainly many political areas in which an anarchist must be active, and in which indeed syndicalists have always been active, which are not situated primarily at the point of production. It might be said for instance that anti-militarism (except in so far as one might wish to have union within the armed forces) is no obvious concern of the syndic-

alist, that indeed for munitions' workers and many others there may well be a material interest directly countering anti-militarism; but from the earliest days of continental syndicalism there have been direct links with the anti-militarist movement and it is no accident that in Japan, Austria and elsewhere the sections of the War Resisters' International and of the AIT were, between the wars, identical.

Similarly in days when industrial work was predominantly male; there might have been - in purely economic terms - a working class interest in preserving differential conditions favouring men; but from very early days and in all countries there was direct involvement of the syndicalist movements in the struggles for women's rights, & in turn, many noted feminists rank amongst the most noted militants of the syndicalist movement.

Whether it is in the field of anti-imperialism, civil liberties, concern for the ecology or whatever, (all certainly aspects of struggle situated outside industry and not primarily bread & butter issues,) syndicalist record of involvement has always compared favourably with that of any other brand of radicals, including those of non-syndicalist anarchists.

There are an host of less fundamental issues in which anarchists are rightly involved since together they add up to the pattern of interests that make up a libertarian programme; but - with the possible exception of Bakuninism - anarchists are gradualist (which is by no means the same as reformist, except in the sense of "reformism by blows",) & the necessary yardstick to distinguish between anarchism and Liberal Reformism, (or Utopian Humanism,) must lie in the provision of a realistic programme for social transition.

The syndicalist takes to such issues a concern to give each and every on all issues as far as possible an industrial dimension; to win industrial support for the libertarian campaign, and to take the campaigning back issue into the field of production. The syndicalist also takes a pattern of organization, based on vital democracy, as the norm for all radical organization; takes a commitment to direct action, as the basis of all meaningful politics. There may be little difference in activity on demonstrations between the syndicalist and the liberal who shares in the same campaign, but the fact that the syndicalist has tried to put the campaign in context will make the message quite different.

2. spontaneist objections

In an article frequently reproduced, (part of an argument with Monatte, though Monatte's counter-arguments do not get the same exposition,) Malatesta accused syndicalism of being a reformist movement, though a natural reaction of the working class to capitalism; and in doing this he went on to argue that if the same anarchist effort was put into building a general union of anarchists, we would have gained a revolutionary movement. Those parts of the argument that are logical would apply equally to the Kronstadt demands, to the Zapatista and Makhnovist movements; and the fact that Malatesta did not so apply this argument to them is significant.

Moreover on another occasion, referring to the dangers of ivory tower abstentionism amongst anarchists, he says: "what matters is that now and every day I walk and act in an anarchist direction;" in the current circumstances as in those of Malatesta's day this can only be done by someone prepared to engage in piecemeal and gradualist activity. Nor does it suggest, if as Malatesta both did and said, that one engages in continuous propaganda, that one believes that spontaneity can be relied on as the sole force. If it is inevitable that workers will spontaneously act and liberate themselves, then it hardly helps for workers to act in the meantime, nor for anarchists to bother to propagate our views. Malatesta took great trouble to do this himself, & so one must assume he did not mean to suggest abstention from such activity.

Malatesta is not of course the only advocate of spontaneity, who has criticised anarchism. Probably the most trenchant criticisms have come from Pannekoek and other council communists. (Perhaps it is strange that Pannekoek should be the most adamant in this when his close co-thinker & comrade, Gorter, retained a belief in industrial unionism, sufficient to make Wildcat denounce this aspect of him in its introduction to a new edition of his answer to Lenin. Though there are also a number of subcouncilist groups that at one or other time have seceded from Trotskyism or its derivatives; Korsch & Mattick, (though these like Gorter believed in working within industrial unionist movements,) Castoriadis, Johnson-Forrest, & Marlen.

Their objection is two-fold, one believing that all organizations have the seeds of their own corruption within them, anarchist & syndicalist organizations included, & so they oppose creating industrial unions in principle; (one such went so far as to call the syndicalist concept of industrial unions a cross between bureaucratic-reformist unionism & the vanguard party;) & secondly they believe that a town or other locality federation of workers councils should be the basic level of organization between the shop floor one & national organizations, whereas syndicalists organize nationally.

That all organizational forms are corruptible is obviously true & goes without saying. But if one is to draw from this the conclusion that any attempt to build any organization on the basis of liaising between rank and file workers' organizations, does more harm than good, then nothing can be built. No form of socialist agitation can be valid. For those who think that revolution is inevitable; that one day without any prior warning, preparation or propaganda, the workers will suddenly & simultaneously decide to throw off their rulers, (and certainly such a belief is given some verisimilitude by current upsurges in Eastern Europe,) that is ideal. But by definition any group - however small, and however organized - that sets out to propagate socialism, must think that some propaganda and some organization is necessary &/or desirable; so the councilists are no more absolute in believing this than are we. But they preach a truth that syndicalists certainly need to remember.

It is certainly true that syndicalist unions can grow reformist; in France, the once anarcho-syndicalist CGT has sired both Stalinist & Natoist federations of the same name. (The latter broke from the former under the leadership of a former anarcho-syndicalist.) It is certainly also true

that within the CNT in Spain, in the Thirties, the FAI acted on the model of a vanguard party & that this reduced the self-confidence of the mass of CNT members. It is certainly true that CNT & FAI compromised totally with statist politics; even to the extent of the FAI having in Jose Mafe, an inspector of prisons, & the betrayal of this is no way lessened by the fact that personally Jose was of an admirable character and deeply committed to the syndicalist aims.

Moreover the vanguardist element survived the Spanish civil war, and thereafter infected the whole of the AIT, (the syndicalist international,) which in the Sixties was full of small & somewhat inactive industrially organizations claiming to be the mass unions of the revolutionary workers. In France, the CNTF, while attacking the CGT in ultra-revolutionary language, and hectoring those anarchists who worked within it, was quite content to entrust the safe-guarding of its members economic interests to the right-wing CNT-FO. While in the Argentine the FORA was split at least six ways, two rank & file union federations having over ten thousand members apiece were excluded from the AIT, they and two others publishing viable papers, but a purist but totally inactive faction with perhaps half a dozen members proclaimed itself the official FORA and was recognized by the AIT.

But unless the councillists take their argument to the extent of saying that all work for socialism is self-defeating and to engage in it is always counter-revolutionary, then it is no more valid to criticise syndicalists on these grounds than themselves. For it is equally true that given suitable circumstances they would attempt to create liaison federations of workers on a basis of geographical connection rather than industrial links, & it is equally certain that when circumstances became no longer opportune that such organizations could degenerate in the same way.

3. other criticisms

It is true again that propagandist syndicalist groups can degenerate and become bureaucratic; that syndicalists preserve - however modified - the concept of decisions made on the basis of majority voting and that this carries all sorts of risks. However the risks pale into insignificance when one looks at any other form of organization. For, - be it said softly & sub rosa, - there are organizations preaching ultra-libertarianism and condemning syndicalism as bureaucratic, which, examined, turn out to be mini-despotisms, where only one person's views count for anything.

Also attacking syndicalism in sometimes spontaneist terms, though more often for being a blueprint, ("to which workers are expected to conform at the very time when they are breaking the bounds of conformity and deciding to make their own decisions,") is the SPGB. It seems curious that a party that is still nominally committed by its Principles (however much most of its members insist that those Principles do not mean what they actually say) to taking over Parliament by elections and either enacting or decreeing socialism, should condemn anyone else for having a blueprint. But one has to concede that if syndicalism was indeed such a blue-print, dreamt up by some intellectual theoretician divorced from actual struggle, that that would be valid reasons for condemnation.

It is not the case. Syndicalists advocate the industrial union pattern because they have observed that when workers act spontaneously this is the form of action that most frequently occurs. One further critique made by the SPGB needs to be taken into account, and it is one that implicitly is also found in De Leonist attacks on syndicalism, that we are "reformist, reformism by blows certainly, but reformist nonetheless."

For most revolutionary socialists reformism is distinct from gradualism. The reformist is one who advocates panaceas which may well have the result of strengthening capitalism, whereas the gradualist or "long revolutionary" accepts that the workers will gain power piecemeal by direct action, but in the process of a single continuing struggle. (Trotskyist and other Leninists add the concept of "transitional demands", demands which appear to be mere reforms but which cannot be met within the context of capitalism, & they see a workers' party coming to power on the basis of such demands and then implementing socialism. It will be easy to understand why we, as much as the SPGB, consider that that theory is elitist and cannot possibly lead to socialism.)

The SPGB & De Leonist case that even where won by direct action all piecemeal gains can be nullified, that the state and class system are capable of adapting and that even these gains may actually strengthen capitalism, like the councillist criticisms, carries an important kernel of truth. In economic terms it is certainly true that inflation renders gains valueless in real economic terms, (though one has only to contemplate what would be the effect of inflation, if there were no balancing gains, to see the falsity of the argument that one should not pursue such activity.)

That wage claims should be seen as purely defensive struggles in the face relentless capitalist pressure to reduce the standard of living of the working class is obviously true; (and to give it its due the SPGB, unlike the orthodox De Leonists does insist that its members take part in such defensive activity, though refusing to allow the members to use the spontaneous activism and organizations of the workers' movement as a framework in which to argue the socialist case and as an illustration of what is meant by workers' self-activity. Insisting that there can be no comparison between what workers who are not conscious socialists do in self-defence, & what the workers will do when they become socialist will do to change society.)

Not only do the SPGB & De Leonists in this fail to see the instinct for socialism as routed in normal class consciousness and that even the most politically unconscious workers, (indeed even politically right-wing ones,) constantly resort to forms of action and organization that testify to the fact that the mutual aid and solidarity that are the rational justification for socialism spring naturally from the conditions of the class; but their over-emphasis on the power of the ruling elite to tamper with the economy and nullify working class gains credits the capitalist system with being more rational than it is and also ignores basic psychology.

A first necessity of any revolutionary socialist propaganda is to make the inherent understanding in the working class that it lives in a class divided society conscious, that workers should be able to articulate the knowledge of their class position, should be able to see that this is not inevitable, not decreed by God, fate, or some scientific determination, but

is the product of an economic system created by men to suit the interests of those who held power at the time, and that each such ruling class throughout history, has wrested power by force for selfish ends, has introduced new modes of production, which in turn have thrown up new elites, & produced new forms of exploitation. But this involves showing people they are wage slaves; & human self-respect can only accept the knowledge that people live in slavery, not through divine ordinance, nor through scientific inevitability, but because the greed of others has enslaved them, if with that knowledge comes the hope that through struggle they may change things. To ask people to know they are slaves and do nothing about it is to ask them to lose all self-esteem, and those who have lost this will never make a social revolution; for how can the solidarity and mutual aid that are essential arise if workers respect neither themselves nor their workmates?

4. early forms of syndicalism

Through the century since it first emerged as an identifiable form of socialism, (& the main framework of anarchist activity,) syndicalism has taken many forms. Of course, in prototype, many of its outward characteristics can be found back in the schemes of Owen and Utopian socialists, those schemes were what middle class reformers thought workers should do, to organize. They lacked the essential and distinguishing ingredients of syndicalism; - the insistence on full, rank & file, face to face, democracy, direct action as the sole important vehicle of change, and organization at the point of production. It is for this reason that though the concept of the one big union of all workers, and an indeed an attempt to found this, dates back more than a century and an half; though the impact of this idea can be seen in several pre-IWW attempts to improve American unionism; and though one of the other major aspects of syndicalism, - the objective of the Social General Strike, - (an idea attributed to the French Socialist Allemani,) dates back a decade or more before the emergence of the CGT; that Syndicalism's birth is usually equated with the struggles that brought that into existence.

Syndicalism arose first in France where the union movement was weak and what there was was divided, each of six marxist parties had its own industrial section, and there was also a sort of cooperative labour exchange launched by utopian reformers. Syndicalism arose out of the desire for unity, and the rejection on the one hand of the political interference of the political groupings and the limited objectives of the utopians.

In the states, though political control was not a major issue at first, the union movement was equally divided, split into miniscule Brotherhoods of Labour, there were two early attempts to inject militancy and unity, the Molly Maguires, (crushed by private detectives hired by the owners, who acted as agents provocateurs, involving militants where they could & pretending that they had done so where they couldn't in somewhat pointless acts of violence and then arresting them for these,) & the Knights of Labour (which never really amounted to much.) There arose the American Federation of Labour which was little improvement on the old Brotherhoods, the remnant of the Knights came under socialist influence and there was a short-lived Socialist Trades' & Labour Alliance; at a time when there was

an heroic strike launched by a new American Railway Union, (an attempt to unite all railway workers, also under socialist influence.)

Eventually a similar attempt to unite mineworkers in the Rocky Mountains led to major revolts within the AFL and from this, with the backing of various labour and socialist papers the IWW arose. A more structured movement than the French CGT, the IWW similarly moved beyond the socialist and labour political that gave it birth; so that within a short time it had broken with the leadership of the two Marxist parties that had played a part in launching it; though it was not anarchist, & contrary to marxist mythology it never excluded members of either party (though the De Leonists were later to expel those of their members who persisted in belonging to the IWW instead of their rival WIIU.) But nevertheless a number of marxist splinter parties were formed within the IWW, and until 1917 the bulk of the left-wing of the major socialist party, consisted of IWW members.

There is evidence that the first Petersburg Soviet of 1905, in some measure drew inspiration from De Leonist (Socialist Trades & Labour Alliance) & anarchist (later IWW) American sailors; & that the even earlier soviet in Baku, also was initially sparked off by a movement of oil workers who had previously worked in Iran and there come under the influence of British workers influenced by the ideas of French syndicalism.

This American model was repeated, (adapted to suit local conditions,) in Australia, in Scandinavia, & in Latin America. In the latter continent, naturally, since it was industrially less advanced there was a large admixture of peasant anarchism, partly the effect of the Magon Brothers & the Zapatista, partly of the growth of the Tierra y Libertad movements that had a philosophy (as well as name) resembling Michael Davitt's "Land & Liberty" movement in Ireland.

In Spain there was an already existing, and sizable, Spanish anarchist federation, (it had initially been the rank and file of the Left Liberal "Federalist Party",) & this embraced syndicalism as an whole; the FAI - the anarchist federation that achieved fame in the civil war - being a later movement, created within the syndicalist CNT, by people influenced by the Russian exile anarchist movement in the 1920s.

The British syndicalist upsurge of 1909 to 1913 followed a distinctive pattern, though there had been earlier attempts to build British equivalents of both the IWW & the CGT. Syndicalism in Britain was primarily manifest in the creation of the shop stewards' movement; though it was not without impact on the official trade union movement, (the old AEU's constitutional commitment to workers' control stems from this.) Perhaps even better known is the impact of syndicalism amongst South Wales miners, the creation of the Irish T&GWU & the Dublin dockstrike of 1913, and the wartime Clyde Workers' Council. It was an upsurge that for a time transformed the left of the trade union movement, it was reflected in the political arena by the Maxtonites, who subsequently took over the ILP, & in intellectual circles by the short-lived Guild Socialist Movement.

5. sorelian myth.

A notable facet in early syndicalist theory was the view of the Social General Strike as a motivating myth. This is not to say - as some modern commentators have interpreted it - that syndicalists were arguing "better to travel than to arrive", a justification for continuous struggle by people who were not too concerned about their goals. The belief was that the vision of the social general strike was a justifiably over-simplified way of explaining the anarchist revolutionary aim. Any worker, knowing as all workers know, that the people on the job understand it better than do bosses and managers, remote from production; can appreciate the point of a revolutionary wave that occupies the factories and takes them over, telling the bosses that they are not necessary.

It is therefore simple to explain the case for workers' self-liberation in terms of such a strike. But having said this, anarcho-syndicalists know that if the mass of the working class had already achieved the consciousness, which they would need for such a strike, they would find a million smaller struggles, which collectively would add up to changing society as a whole. This is in no way the same as the Leninist concept of posing a transitional demand. They advocate a lesser-seeming demand, what appears as a moderate reform, knowing that it cannot be fulfilled within capitalism & that those who campaign for it will thereby be tricked into posing a revolutionary demand. The Social General Strike on the contrary deliberately exaggerates the revolutionary nature of the social transition.

That was when syndicalist movements were, though, outside France, smaller than the main industrial organizations in the country, nevertheless of comparable size, large enough & growing fast enough that they could reasonably hope to become the major union movements. (In France, there had never been a tradition that most workers joined unions. The C.G.T. set out, only, at first to organize the "militant minority" of the working class; and did not expect to grow into a mass movement until an immediately pre-revolutionary period.)

We have since the First World War faced a different problem. First the majority of many syndicalist movements abandoned anarcho-syndicalism to support that war, and took their organizations after the war into alliance with reformist socialist/labour parties. Then the majority of many other such supported the bolshevik revolution, and moved their organizations into alliance (if not total fusion) with the communist parties then being formed. With the result all anarcho-syndicalist movements (whether independent union federations or agitational groups within other union movements that have existed since the 1920s have had to work publicly for a form of socialism opposed to both Leninism and reformism. (What Otto Ruhle called the Third Camp of Socialism.)

At first (during Lenin's life) the IWW in America for instance or the Rosmer-Monatte faction of the C.G.T. in France were able to reconcile their insistence on the autonomy of the industrial unionist movement and opposition to its subordination to Leninist parties, with generalized support for the Soviet Union & its international policies. Though they disagreed with Lenin's vanguardism and with his capture of state power, they nevertheless

recognized that he was socialist in intention, and therefore an ally. That position did not however last long; with the accession of Stalin to power such elements of workers' control that had been gained through the Soviets began to disappear. (It was of course only under Stalin that State ownership and control of the bulk of Russian industry was introduced, & many, who had previously criticised the bolshevik government from the left, mistook this nationalization of the means of production for socialization.)

Since then, (until very recently) in consequence, it was only possible to imagine a mass syndicalist movement coming into existence as a result of a mass desire to break with stalinism & reformism. (Indeed the only new mass movement that has in the last thirty years considered joining the AIT, the Venezuelan federation, did originate in precisely such a break with the Cold War unions.) **It could be in such circumstances that the creation of a mass syndicalist movement is itself now a motivating myth, that there would be lesser ways - once workers saw the need to break out of the shackles of stalinist & reformist bureaucracy - to the same end.** That a prior essential of any syndicalist organization is the break with both stalinism & reformism is only not totally true now to the extent that the mass break with stalinism is becoming commonplace. (Though the only East European anti-stalinist movement that adopted anything approaching syndicalist organization was Solidarinosc, the threat of the general strike has been a normal weapon in the armoury of seekers of freedom.) Despite the illusions about "Western Freedom" & the glories of free enterprise, so widely held by the East European insurgents, their stress on freedom, on industrial action to achieve it, & distrust of leadership all suggests a fertile bed in which syndicalism may grow.

6. combatting reformism

One of the factors that made for the early emergence of the syndicalist movement was the need to get round anti-union legislation, specifically in France, laws that permitted declaring strike funds forfeit, & with them any funds held by any organization engaging in strikes. The early syndicalists in consequence saw a need to distinguish between those workers organizations which existed for mutual aid, (insurance schemes, legal aid, holidays for workers and their families, et alia,) & those that existed for struggle. The latter to pay no benefits to strikers, but to demand no dues, (the former might find ways of helping the families of distressed workers, the cause of whose distress was industrial struggle, but would not be involved in struggles.) When Labour is returned to power and fails to repeal Thatcherite anti-union legislation, it may be that people well outside the ranks of anarcho-syndicalism will see the point of such a division of functions.

It therefore cannot be excluded, especially with the example of Solidarinosc before their eyes, that elements of the Trade Union bureaucracy may come up with the idea of launching copies of syndicalist organizations, shorn of all the direct democracy and revolutionary aims, but using "One Big Union" or "national federation of labour" organizational forms, and allowing the trade unions to become a Labour Movement run equivalent of the DHSS, (with all the attendant bureaucracy.)

This would starkly pose the question as to whether we ought to enter these parodies of syndicalism; & it is worth re-examining the ways that this has been done in the past in our movement.

During the first world war the majority of the French CGT, contrary to the previously agreed views of the movement, supported the war. The minority, which included most of the old leadership, felt that the way to campaign against the war, and yet be consistent with loyalty to the movement was to resign all elected positions within the CGT, to launch a paper to campaign against the war within the ranks of the union, but nevertheless to remain as a faction of the CGT. This was the birth of Revolution Proletarienne. A minority broke away to launch the distinct CGT (Syndicaliste Revolutionaire) which set up as a rival union federation and from which the CNTF is descended.

Though the CGT(SR) had many notable militants among its founders, it never gained any significant rank and file support within the French union movement; though in the twenties its industrial involvement was creditable because its members - as individuals - still carried influence with other workers, this influence faded over the years, as did its industrial involvement & influence and its descendants were reduced to looking to the most reformist of the reformist unions for their actual industrial union needs; maintaining the CNTF to fulfill the political role, and campaigning on international issues, so that though it firmly maintained a political theory that repudiated the title of party & though its members decried the anarchist organizations as non-syndicalist it fulfilled a role midway between that of such a group and a party.

Revolution Proletarienne on the other hand though its actual membership similarly declined, though it had to maintain a precarious position within an union movement dominated by competing stalinist & reformist bureaucrats; though its members were frequently assaulted by party hacks, nevertheless was consistently able to keep its message in front of the class. This is not to say that R.P. (and its offshoots - the agitational "Combat Syndicaliste" & the theoretical study group the Cercle Zimmerwald) had mass circulations; they most certainly didn't. But despite the bureaucracies the average French worker, if R.P. was mentioned, had heard of them, knew that they had notable records in the movement as militants, and knew that they were critical of the leadership of the unions. They were still, therefore, despite the state socialists, seen as part of the mass movement, & so there was still the possibility of people taking their views seriously.

7. The record in Britain

There was a small number of syndicalists who opposed the bolshevik revolution from the first place, but its members presented no united movement and had little impact. But then in the 1920s, a number of former syndicalists learnt that their adherence to the Communist Party had been a mistake. There was still no coherent syndicalist movement, though there were then enough syndicalist activists around that they were able to keep alive the knowledge that it was possible to be revolutionary without supporting the communists. They may have been helped in this, (though not as an unmixed blessing,) by the existence of intellectual sympathizers, who

were very critical of stalinism and reliant on syndicalism, as a philosophical basis for their criticisms, but who were not themselves concerned to build an industrial unionist movement.

It was not however until the latter half of the Thirties that the impact on radical consciousness of the struggles in Spain made syndicalism a force (capable of attracting new converts) in its own right, once again. It was the circumstances of the day that recreated the British anarchist movement, as a body able to publish a worthwhile and readable regular paper. (Even though it took a somewhat reformist line and there was little or no criticism of the entry of "anarchist ministers" into the Catalonia Government.)

This of course became even more the case in the war years, particularly after Russia had entered the war, and when the Communist Party was saying it was treason to strike, (and indeed calling for the death penalty for strikers,) many, who were previously, communist or at least communist-inspired industrial militants were disillusioned and began to look for new theoretical justifications for their militancy, and so turned to syndicalism. Which was why, briefly, all the shop stewards in the Lanarkshire coal fields belonged to the Glasgow Anarchist Federation, and why syndicalism was briefly very strong amongst London busmen.

It will be noted that this blossoming, in both its stages, came as a result of disillusion amongst a new generation of radicals with the majority (stalinist) section of the left socialist movement. Beyond our own ranks, syndicalism achieved a great deal of sympathy from the members of the ILP; (as I said earlier Maxtonism origins were as the parliamentary reflection of socialist industrial unionist shop floor struggles, so this sympathy was hardly strange; but, it should be remembered, the syndicalist sympathizers in the ILP had been through the same experience as those outside, they had in 1919 been attracted to the Communist Party, this or that minor disagreement had prevented them from resigning from their organization to join the C.P., but for several years they had worked to bring about fusion between the parties, until disillusion set in and they were forced to look back to their syndicalist-influenced past to find reasons for the communist degeneration.)

Syndicalism was flourishing by the end of the war, with a 1,000 people every week attending anarchist meetings in Glasgow; & two major London bus depots calling for the creation of a syndicalist national federation of labour. (This was to make the bitterness that arose from the 1944 split far greater than it should have been; both sides in the split blaming the decline on the other; & ignoring the fact that the whole of the Left was declining in the post war years.) Though the League for Workers' Control, in which syndicalists were active, did make its mark felt in the dock strikes of the early fifties, this was purely as a junior partner of the Trotskyists. Two small anarcho-syndicalist papers were published in the early fifties; both were defunct by the middle of the decade.

Thus by 1956 the syndicalist movement in Britain appeared to be moribund. The SWF did, it is true, publish once or twice a year, useful basic introductory pamphlets to syndicalism. P.S. still wrote good material in Freedom some of which was signed "syndicalist". Otherwise the movement was a memory. A memory that was to be revived, but revived only because new

elements from outside were to emerge. There had been - in the time of the League for Workers' Control - a new quasi-syndicalist movement; but it, too, by 56 was moribund; though only after it had launched the Third Way movement, which had inspired politicisation of the Non-Violent Resistance Group so that this launched the Direct Action Committee, and brought CND into existence. This latter, embodied enough of the "non-aligned" (anti-Nato & anti-Warsaw Pact) aspirations of Third Way, that its existence was from the start a challenge to the stalinists.

(A challenge of which the Stalinists were very well aware, as was evinced by the vicious terms in which the Daily Worker attacked the launch of the campaign, and the first Aldermaston March. Many of the marchers in 58, & even more of the CND members, were unaware that their demands directly posed the necessity for radical action, that conflicted from the start with the communists. But the C.P. leadership were fully aware of this from the beginning, and even when - late in 59 - they tried to change their line and jump onto the CND bandwagon; their hostility to the campaign's founders was still very manifest.)

It was not, initially, from the ranks of the C.P. that the new recruits to syndicalism came. (Nor from the few direct actionist pacifists who started working with the SWF, because syndicalism was a logically essential element in any coherent NVDAist perspective for attaining the political changes necessary for disarmament.) The influx that recreated a syndicalist movement in Britain came from Trotskyism. But again it was the impact of a large non-aligned movement. In the aftermath of Suez-Hungary the main Trotskyist grouping had published a pamphlet emphasizing the internationalist element in their thinking, insisting that, if the soviet state is a workers' state, it is best defended by the actions of the workers in the West, and arguing that, since Russian possession of nuclear weaponry inevitably alienated the workers of the West, it was useless for the real defence of the soviet union. (Obviously anarchists would not accept the premise that the soviet union was a workers' state; but we would, by and large, approve of the rest of the reasoning.) However a minority of the organization disapproved of this pamphlet, & later as the communist party turned leftwards and there was a renewed opportunity to orient to its rank & file; the SLL (as it had by then become) reversed itself, & came out in favour of the "workers' bomb". From the inner-group struggles that naturally had to precede this reversal, three splinters broke from the SLL, one of which - in part - survives as "Solidarity" & another fused into the SWF.

These ex-Trotskyist did not in fact stay long, but it was long enough to make it possible to revive Direct Action as a paper, & to make new links, this laid the groundwork so that we were in a position to play a major role in the industrial sub-committee of the Committee of 100. It was there that the SWF first began to recruit a whole new generation of syndicalist militants. Once again this was in a movement that was striving to find a theory to fit its role as a non-stalinist & non-reformist form of radicalism; it started from direct action, & from a stress on direct democracy; we were the embodiment of an historical movement based on these.

Anarchist Arguments - as the name implies - are intended both to argue the case for anarchism and an anarchist strategy for the wider radical movement and (within that limit of wishing to confine ourselves to fruitful divisions on the strategy of revolution) to give space for debate among anarchists.