

SYNDICALIST BULLETIN

Welcome to the New World Order!



THE WAR CONTINUES...

For the British the Gulf War's over, the troops are coming home and the companies going out to fight over the few contracts to "rebuild Kuwait" not snapped up by the Yanks.

But really we're only waiting for the call up for the next adventure that the U.S. decides to launch (and launch it they surely will).

How do we make sure that "next time" the British Labour Movement behaves in the same honourable way that some Italian workers (see below) did this time around? We Syndicalists say that it is through a sustained anti-militarist propoganda carried out in and by the Trade Union Movement that meaningful action in times of war can be built.

In union propoganda, information about the arms trade, anti-militarist actions - at home and abroad, and the terrible lot of the squaddie should appear regularly.

Remember the British army is used most often against workers in this country to break their strikes (some 27 occasions since 1945 - mostly under Labour Governments).

We advocate building anti-militarist groups on whatever foundations exist locally whether through the few active C.N.D. groups, Trades Councils or ex-Anti-Gulf War groups - as local conditions dictate.

We also advocate workers in the arms industry campaigning for conversion to peacetime production as a means of safeguarding their precarious jobs. Trades Councils and Union branches should have relations with unions abroad to increase international understanding.

In the years before the First World War the Spanish and Italian workers Syndicalist movements launched successful General Strikes against colonial adventures in Morrocco and Libya. It will be a long time before we in Britain can attain that "1911" consciousness, but its time that we started working for it.

ITALY

**General Strike Against
The War**

Receiving no coverage in ours- or the Italian media, 70-80,000 Italian workers showed the world labour movement how to oppose war when they came out in a General Strike against the Gulf Conflict on February 22nd.

The official unions all opposed the action which was carried out by the many Syndicalist-inspired rank and file movements and unions, C.O.B.A.S. (Rank and File Committees), U.S.I. (Italian Syndicalist Union), the base committees of the Communist union

UNFAIR COMMENT

By Thought Afore Malice

Sixteen and a half years past and as every leftist said at the time, the evidence against the Birmingham six is shewn to be totally flawed. But what of the other matters that we knew at the time, and which did not get published nationally? The points that - if they were noticed at all, when they appeared in small journals, - were merely repeated as examples of the paranoia of the Left.

The two bars which were bombed in Birmingham were normally both by the Irish community and leftish students, - indeed I have been told by Irish Republicans that of the 21 dead, two were in - sub rosa - contact with the I.R.A. and two were openly members of the campaigns against penal laws (such as the P.T.A.) passed against the Irish; why would the I.R.A. have chosen these?

The Coventry I.R.A. cell had previously been picked up by the Special Branch, a new cell had been formed surprisingly quickly and it was in the name of this body that the I.R.A. headquarters took responsibility for the bombing.

At least some I.R.A. men believed that the new cell was an example of the I.R.A. being penetrated by the security services; (it was after all around the same time as the Littlejohn bombings, when two English brothers, - both members of M.I.5 - joined the I.R.A. and started leaving bombs in Southern Ireland in its name.

I'm not a gambling man, but I think I might safely bet that the Royal Commission won't look at that possibility.

POST SCRIPT

Talking of possibilities that one might not expect to find aired in front of the Commission. It would be interesting if the Commission set up as it will be to examine the actions of police and courts were to look at the failure to make any serious investigation of the Hilda Murrell murder.

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C.N.D. Gaining New Principals And Losing Old Members

During the recent war in the Gulf, the C.N.D. leadership - without any mandate from any conference, decided that it was invariable C.N.D. policy that the campaign to stop the war should nevertheless support continued sanctions against Iraq. These sanctions, unlike those against South Africa were to be enforced by military means.

So, while overt war was to be opposed, covert military action was to be accepted by all war resisters. There was an attempt to expel from the Committee To Stop War In The Gulf any groups that did not support such sanctions, and even though that was dropped, eventually, groups that failed to endorse sanctions were refused adherence to the Committee.

This was done regardless of the fact that the very existence of Kuwait was a product of British Imperialism, that the country now exists for the benefit of U.S. oil interests, that no such sanctions had been used when Israel invaded the Lebanon, (let alone when the U.S. invaded Grenada) and seemed in consequence to be a departure from the Campaign's general commitment to non-alignment.

Naturally, for many members of C.N.D. - either pacifists opposed to all wars, or any sincere unilateralist who takes the non-aligned stance seriously, this arbitrary decision was objectionable. Given that it was at a time when sub. renewals fell due many of the most active members will have reconsidered their membership.

The bureaucracy wasn't worried at first, because the impact of the war also meant that many people who hadn't subscribed for years rejoined the campaign; and they were crowing about how their new realistic policies were bringing in new members. They seem to have had to re-think given that they called a special conference on the way forward last weekend (March 17-18) and the attendance was derisory.

An ardent supporter of the sanctions and new C.N.D. line rang me (on another matter) regretted how few people came to the weekend meeting and while stressing that C.N.D. had gained far more members

THE ROLE OF TRADES COUNCILS

One of the main problems with the Trade Union Movement is that, for the person who's views aren't 'straight Labour' or similarly easily categorised in a mainstream political sense, there is a difficulty in justifying involvement with a bureaucracy that is often flawed, usually ineffective and from time to time corrupt. As an office rep, I frequently find myself agreeing with the cynical response of those who I attempt in vain to recruit - "it's not worth the exorbitant subs, which only go to pay officials unnecessarily high salaries", "it's so boring", "there'd never be a strike in this office" etc etc.

So, from a cynical point of view, it can be argued that a large part of the purpose of union activism is to make use of the infrastructure of the union movement in as constructive a way as possible. Trades Councils offer such a channel for ones energies. Clearly, this can to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the political complexion of the particular TC, but it is generally true to say that, at TC level is where are to be found the most dedicated and probably the most genuine activists.

In my experience the most useful aspect of this is in the single issue campaign. The most interested are obviously likely to be the people who get involved in a

particular sub-committee, so from the start it is usually true that there is less likelihood of getting diverted from the issue in question. In my Trades Council, the Low-Pay Sub-Committee has just been revitalised and we are staging a publicity campaign to try to encourage people who have been victims of illegal low payment (e.g. in the catering trade) to take action against the guilty employers. This is being done with the support of the local Benefits Advice Centre who will advise and help anybody requiring assistance. It is in a campaign like this that the value of the Trade Council is shown in practical terms. The people with an interest in the issue do the groundwork, preparing publicity, liaising with the necessary contacts and so on, but the Trades Council as a whole is there and provides back-up, whether simply by being a known organisation that the campaign can be linked to, or by the bread and butter stuff of being a pool of people who can be called on every now and then to help with leaflet drops etc.

This has been quite a simple view of TC's, but it is easy to overlook the potential value of getting involved. Apart from anything else, despite the jaundiced view of unions and the like, held by many of the general population, it has to be said that a Trades Council carries a greater air of respect (perhaps because of peoples' traditionalist outlook, but that's another article) than any fringe political grouping. The danger to Syndicalists or anyone with a non-mainstream outlook is the possibility of wasting potential resources that are TCs.

GK - Cambridge Trades Council

Cont. from P1

- C.G.I.L. and other independent groups and unions.

They shut down many important enterprises, with over 10,000 striking workers demonstrating in Rome.

Certainly in Europe the most serious opposition to the war (i.e. industrial action) has occurred in countries where Syndicalism has a significant presence in the labour movement, C.G.T. and C.N.T. (Spain), C.O.B.A.S., U.S.I. (Italy) and the C.N.T. and certain C.G.T. unions in France.

A Syndicalist influenced labour movement is one that can seriously fight war, British comrades go to it!

Cont. from P2

than it had lost let fall that 1,500 people had resigned. No doubt the Campaign headquarters is about to learn the lesson so common with such campaigns (and indeed the Labour Party) that watering down policies may attract the inactive and temporary support of a middle-of-the-roader; but alienating hard-core support and all activist members, is no way to build an organization.



the man who thought it would help the country if he tightened his belt

STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL

SYNDICALIST CONFERENCE

I attended this conference hosted by the SAC of Sweden, as a delegate of Hull Syndicalists, also giving a report for the OILC.

It was well organised, enjoyable and constructive. Some of the practical results were:

*The proposed production of a regular union bulletin to acquaint workers in different countries with struggles which need support, whether strikes, boycotts or solidarity with persecuted trade unionists, to be carried out by ~~the French CGT Proof Readers' Union.~~

*An international day of action against the war drive in the Persian Gulf.

*An international co-ordination of rail workers, with a first congress held in Madrid

*Links between members of the SAC at Volvo and Spanish CGT members at the FASA Renault car plants, which have been bought out by Volvo.

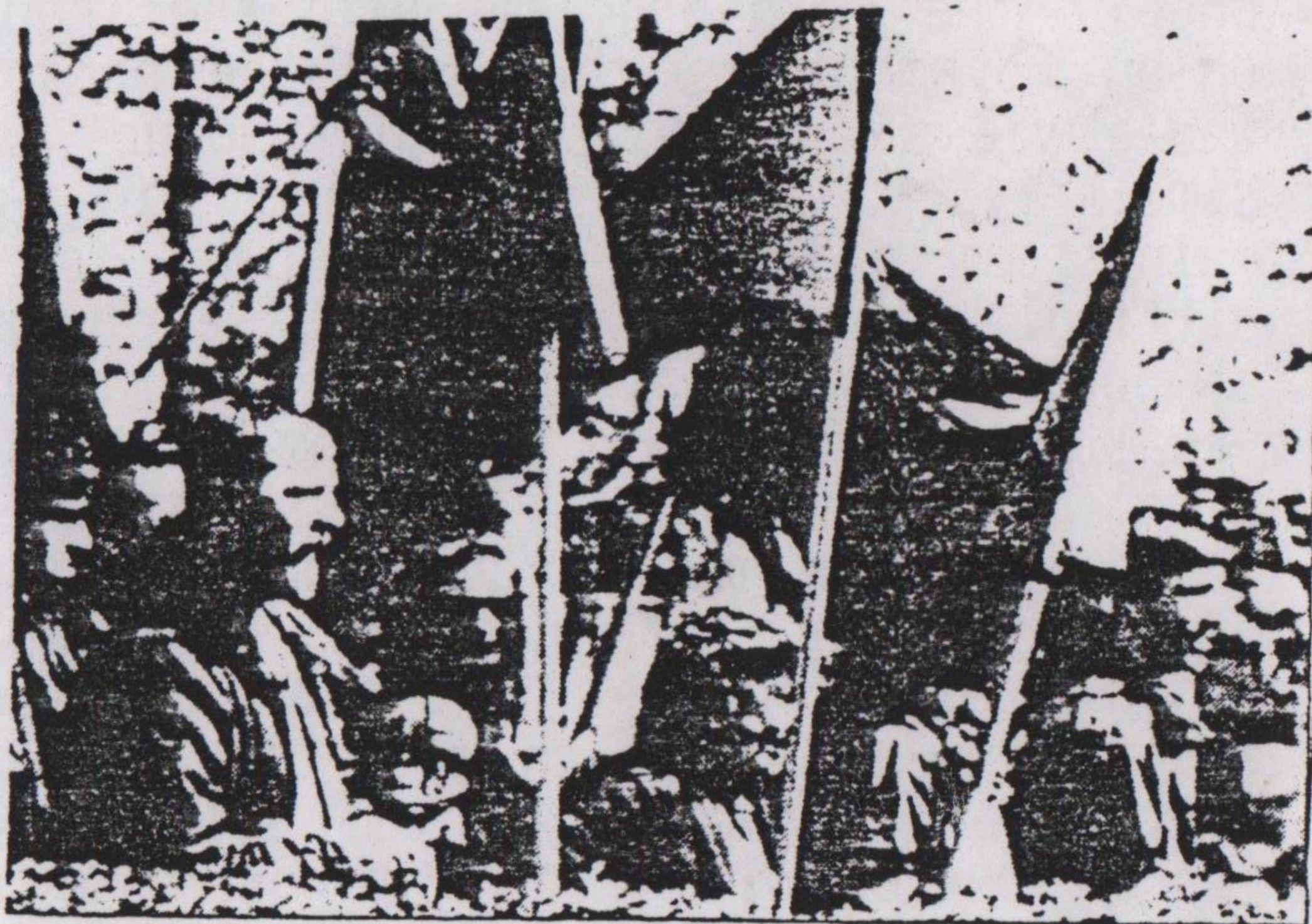
*A request from the OVB (Holland's independent union) in Rotterdam for a closer relationship with Hull Trades Council (the ball's in our court!).

Attending the conference were delegates from the COB of Bolivia, the COSI of Paraguay, the CUT of Colombia, the Uruguayan Food Industry Union, the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation, the Chilean Anarcho-syndicalists, the Peruvian Metal Workers' and Miners' Unions, ~~the Bank Workers' Union of Guatemala~~, the IWW, NACTU from South Africa, the Gambian TUC, the Spanish CGT, French CGT Proof Readers' Union, the OVB, SAC, a host of Russian and Ukrainian unions and anarcho-syndicalist groups, the Bulgarian anarcho-syndicalists, the FAU and IUG of East Germany, various Korean unions and the Korean Anarchist Federation, the Japanese Anarchist Federation, COBAS from Italy and some small British groups, to name only the majority of groups represented.

The conference discussed the future for revolutionary syndicalism; reactions to the repression of trade unionism, union action to preserve the natural environ-

ment. SYNDICALIST BULLETIN Printed and published by Hull Syndicalists PO BOX 102 HULL

I was moved by the lack of sectarianism between the different strands of the international movement -- AIT, CGT, SAC and their smaller adherents working and socialising together in a comradely way.



A Modest Proposal

Whilst still feeling the effects of the afterglow of the International Syndicalist Conference, I wondered. "Why not a British Syndicalist Conference (one day, not four, and a couple of pints rather than gravlax and caviar) to discuss our union strategies and find areas where we can all work together?"

Held perhaps in November of this year, such a meeting could comprise the widest possible range of libertarian groupings, large or small, national or local, attending not to compete with each other but to seek common ground and ways of co-ordinating our union activities.

Anyone interested? If so, write to SB at PO BOX 102, Hull.

QC.

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