

ORGANISING AN ANARCHIST-
SYNDICALIST TRADE UNION

SPANISH INFORMATION NETWORK, 37, SOUTH TCE, ESH WINNING, CO DURHAM, DH7 9PS.

INTRODUCTION:

This text was originally published in 1983 as an A5 pamphlet which is now out of print. The details apply to both factions in the CNT, except that the CNT-U altered it's method of electing the national committee at it's tenth congress in July '87. This will be explained as part of the main text. (See page 5.)

ORGANISING A CONGRESS:

As a basis for further investigations the first part of this pamphlet details the way a congress of the CNT is organised, according to the union's statutes. The information was given to me by a long standing member of the metalworkers' union. My own personal investigations, and the tendency for congresses such as the sixth one of the CNT-AIT to reach overwhelming decisions in the face of significant differences of opinion, suggest there is a need to expand on the basic information given here using first hand reports from people who have actually attended such events and can say to what extent it conforms to reality

The process of organising a congress begins long before the actual event and develops as follows:

1. The national committee proposes an agenda for the congress based on it's understanding of the situation in which the organisation finds itself. This is sent to all regional and local federations, and through them to each union in their area.
2. Each union organises a meeting to decide if they want to expand or alter the agenda.
3. The national committee makes any alterations which seem necessary to the agenda in the light of what it receives from the unions and sorts out where the congress will be held.
4. The agenda is published at least one month before the congress starts, after which each union calls a meeting that is open to all members so as to decide it's attitudes (with minority reports if necessary) and choose it's delegates.

Once decided upon at this point, the attitudes of each union are not open to alteration at the congress, whose only function is to synthesise the positions put forward by all the different unions. In this context, delegates only attend to make sure that their union's point of view is respected and to do the actual work of synthesising the resolutions which set out each unions' positions on all the item of the agenda. [It seems that the national committee also sends out it's position on each item and many unions support this on most positions by default unless they are particularly interested in that subject.]

Under this system the delegates' only function is to transmit the will of the members of their union, so power is organised without being handed over to a clique of union bureaucrats. This is in stark contrast to 'representative democracy' where representatives are free to put their own interpretation on decisions reached by the mass of members, or even completely alter them if they see fit.

5. A congress table is elected for each session at the beginning of the congress which consists of a president (chairperson?), recorder of the proceedings and recorder of speeches.

6. Various committees are nominated to analyse the CNT's financial situation, establish which unions are present, note who their delegates are, decide where each session will be held, etc. Each union delegation is then given a certain number of votes for the session which will accept or reject the various synthesis. This number depends on how many members it represents and is in accordance with the following system:

Up to 500 members...	1 vote...	(1 vote/500).
Up to 1,000	2 votes...	(1 vote/500).
Up to 3,000	3 votes...	(1 vote/1,000).
Up to 6,000	4 votes...	(1 vote/1,500).
Up to 10,000	5 votes...	(1 vote/2,000).
Up to 15,000	6 votes...	(1 vote/2,500).
Up to 25,000	7 votes...	(1 vote/3,500).
More than this	8 votes...	(?).

The obvious conclusion from this is that smaller unions get a bigger say in proportion to their size than larger ones. This is an attempt to favour committed activists over block votes from anonymous masses... a system which has various pros and cons.

7. The papers each union has sent on the single topic it considers most important are read out.

8. The process of synthesising the attitudes of each union, as expressed in their resolutions, is done by 'report back committees' (comites de ponencia). A union delegation can put one of its members on each of these committees, but this is limited by the number of members it has in its delegation, so they tend to choose the ones they consider most important.

These synthesised reports (which should include a minority report if there is any dissent of significant proportions) are presented to the congress for it to decide by voting if it accepts them. Any delegate who considers them to be inaccurate can say so. If this occurs the point is discussed with a vote on an amendment if necessary, but this process is very laborious, so it would only occur in very extreme cases.

The final result of this process becomes the resolutions of the congress. Though these resolutions are seen as only a basic outline of the CNT's guiding principles, which are open to interpretation by each union on a day-to-day basis, contravention of their central points can lead to expulsion from the organisation.

9. When each point has been debated a final meeting is held with the new general secretary. The person who will be general secretary, and the place of residence of the national committee, is decided by a simple assessment of the name and place each delegation brings with it to the conference.

'NOMINATIVA ORGANICA' :

Basically this translates as 'how the union is structured'. It is the title of a section of the resolutions of the sixth congress of the CNT-AIT from which the following information is taken. It is not an exhaustive account, for example it does not explain how meetings are conducted (ie the standing orders) or how delegates can be recalled, though all are (in theory at least) subject to instant recall.

MEMBERSHIP :

The CNT is open to any worker (except those in the police force, or professional soldiers) who agree with it's principles and tactics. By the word 'worker' we mean anyone who is salaried or self-employed and does not economically exploit others [ie not small employers]. They should join at their place of work, but if this is not possible, according to where they live.

A member's politics or religion are not a bar to entry, but those who are members of any political party or religious sect cannot represent the union or hold positions of responsibility. Members are also liable to be expelled if they stand for parliament or in local elections.

GEOGRAPHICAL vs INDUSTRIAL :

The various unions in the CNT are organised simultaneously on the basis of geography and by industries.

The geographic links, which are federations of unions which represent different industries in a given area, give the CNT it's 'organic' nature. In other words, through these organisation it is possible to respond to all aspect of a situation which arises in a specific area. On a day-to-day level they give workers in different industries the chance for direct contact with each other and encourage discussions on social questions within the union. They also prefigure the aim of regions becoming as autonomous as possible [after a revolutionary change in society, for which they are also preparing their members by such things as studies of the local economy, etc.]

The aim in organising unions nationally in terms of their industry is to provide solidarity, with this being most relevant to workers who face the same boss in different workplaces. These industrial unions also collect information and prepare reports, but it is through their regional organisations that members make their views known at plenums or conferences.

If the CNT only had industrial organisations it could become a narrow based, reformist trade union, but to rely on geographical organisations alone would turn it into a psuedo political party.

In fact the level of industrial organisation on a national level is quite low at the moment (*), but an improvement in this area was one of the major points at the CNT-AIT's recent Monographic Congress.

(*) Industrial unions have always been the 'poor relation' in the CNT because of a long standing fear that the large distances involved tend to give rise to faceless functionaries and a passive membership.

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS:

These organise the workers in their industry by means of professional sections [ie by trade] which are autonomous in matters which only concern them, such as calling meetings, resolving disputes with their bosses or improving their working conditions.

Nevertheless, they should co-ordinate with the general committee of the union which will cover expenses for premises and meetings. Also, in exercising its autonomy, a professional section should not come into conflict with its union and it should not go on strike without the prior agreement of its union unless it is a question of defending its basic dignity.

The secretary and treasurer of the union are elected at a general meeting and the secretariat consists of a delegate from each professional section.

The minimum number to form an industrial union is 25.

FACTORY COMMITTEES: these are made up of delegates from each professional section involved and will normally handle any dispute whose importance does not require the involvement of the union. The committee's aim is to assert the workers' legal and collective personality without interference from the bosses and to become involved in things like production control, etc. Obviously the destruction of capitalism and the state will be made easier if the workers have trained themselves in this way to take over the production and distribution of social wealth.

DISTRICT COMMITTEES: These provide a way for larger unions to organise themselves on a regional basis and thus create links between the various professional sections in an area.

PROVINCIAL COMMITTEES: If needed these can be organised on the same basis as district committees.

UNIONS OF MIXED PROFESSIONS: These are used to organise workers in small towns where an industrial union would not be practical. The minimum number of members required is 5.

LOCAL FEDERATION OF UNIONS: These facilitate relations between the various unions in a town by co-ordinating actions and solidarity. The general secretary of the L.F. is elected at a general meeting of unions and it has a permanent secretariat made up of one delegate from each union. ['Permanent' in this sense means a standing committee, rather than an 'ad-hoc' committee, not that it cannot be recalled or rotated.]

The L.F. can decide on its own structure and functions, but should study the following questions:

- a. The economic basis of the town.
- b. The level of development of local industry and agriculture.
- c. The average wage for each industry in its area.
- d. The rate of increase in the cost of living.
- e. A census of the working class population and local unions.
- f. The cultural level of workers and the organisation's local provisions in terms of schools, libraries, etc.

CANTONAL FEDERATION OF UNIONS: (Cantons were originally the area around a market town which could be covered in a day's walk, ie a small region.) These group together the unions of mixed professions in an area and have a similar structure to the local federations. The least number of unions needed is 2.

Local or Cantonal federations with sufficient numbers should adopt for their secretariat the structures we propose for the regional or national committees.

REGIONAL CONFEDERATIONS: These consist of various local or cantonal federations for a particular region and organise propaganda as well as co-ordinating solidarity. The general secretary of the regional committee is elected at a regional plenum of unions, which also decides the town where the committee will be drawn from and reside. The unions of this town then elect the following secretaries: organisation and vice-secretary; educational and archives; propaganda and culture; papers and information; treasurer and economic matters; legal matters and prisoners' aid. These comrades, who serve for one year [maximum], are joined by the general secretaries of the local and cantonal federations. They organise matters internal to the region autonomously.

NATIONAL CONFEDERATION — CNT:

CNT stands for 'Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo' - National Confederation of Labour. The CNT unites the various regional confederations with its city of residence and general secretary (not necessarily from that city) decided at the regular congresses. After this the unions of that city elect secretaries for the same posts as at regional level, plus one for external relations. [At its tenth congress the CNT-U changed this system so that the members of the national committee are nominated from individuals who belong to any city in Spain. In some ways this broadens things out and is more democratic. More significantly, it is a negative step, as under the original system the limited numbers to choose from (ie those in one city) meant it was impossible to establish a certain clique in control as the make up of the national committee was forced to roughly follow the general make up of the CNT. Now a dozen well organised bureaucrats scattered throughout the country could stitch the whole thing up... or is this too cynical?] These secretaries are joined by the regional general secretaries.

The functions of these secretaries are:

GENERAL SECRETARY: Represents the CNT and co-ordinates or stands in for other secretary posts. He (sic) attends conferences only to give information, unless chosen as a delegate from his union.

ORGANISATIONAL SECRETARY: Stands in for the general secretary and keeps records of membership and addresses, defends the CNT [?] and looks to its internal relations.

EDUCATION AND ARCHIVES SECRETARY: Helps to develop members' awareness and safeguards the archives. The former involves organising talks, study days, courses, etc and preparing documents in close liaison with the...

PROPAGANDA AND CULTURE SECRETARY: Keeps in touch with groups such as free radios, cultural clubs, etc, organises public events and represents the CNT in the Anselmo Lorenzo foundation [whatever that is...]

PAPERS AND INFORMATION SECRETARY: Deals with the media and collects anything which appears in the press about the CNT, as well as being responsible for the CNT's newspapers.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Prepares economic analysis in close co-operation with the education secretary and manages the CNT's finances.

LEGAL SECRETARY: Co-ordinates relations with sympathetic lawyers, provides legal information to the education secretary and contributions from committees for prisoner's aid.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS SECRETARY: Maintains relations with similar groups, eg anarchists, environmentalists, anti-militarists, and others such as trade unions or political parties. Also deals with international matters.

These various secretaries are elected as are those of the regional federations, ie by the unions in the town of residence. The appointment of the national secretary must be confirmed by a national plenum of regions, who elect a new secretary in the case of resignation or recall. At least 2 months before the election of a regional or national secretariat unions should submit the names of members they support and who are willing to take such posts. There will be no electioneering associated with this list of names. Offices in the standing secretariats last for 1 year maximum, are unpaid and require those filling them to report in writing to their unions about the subjects discussed.

MEETINGS:

UNION MEETINGS: These are called by the union committee and the decisions taken are binding unless they contradict those taken at a higher level. There will be a chairperson, recorder of proceedings and recorder of speeches. Decisions which are properly arrived at by a quorate meeting cannot be opposed.

PLENUMS: These are local or regional meetings of union delegates, called by the relevant committees, whose decisions are binding.

'PLENARIAS': These are meetings of the permanent secretaries from the unions, local, and regional federations. Their role is to decide how best to implement decisions taken at plenums. Only in an emergency can they take decisions and these are not valid unless immediately communicated to the unions and accepted in a referendum.

'CONFERENCIAS': These are meetings of militants to 'take the pulse of the organisation' and report their conclusions to the unions. They do not take decisions.

GENERAL CONGRESS: These are the top level of decision making in the organisation and consist of the delegates duly mandated by their unions. Congresses can be called by a national committee 'plenaria', and should occur at least every 2 years.

End.

SUPPLEMENT NO. 1

SPANISH INFORMATION NETWORK, 37, SOUTH TCE, ESH WINNING, CO DURHAM, DH7 9PS.

SIXTH CONGRESS OF THE CNT-AIT:

The real reason for this congress (held in January 1983) was to decide the CNT's attitude to the works committees once and for all, so there was a real air of apprehension surrounding the question of union strategy - point 8.1 on the agenda - especially as the Metro workers branch in Barcelona had just won the elections to its committee. Some people wore stickers against the committees and had put them up around the building. The atmosphere was basically one of division.

Those of us given the duty of drawing up the report which summarised the various mandates on this subject only reached a consensus after many hours of discussion. Although visibly tired, the comrade who read out the report gave a brilliant lecture, explaining that we had summarised the range of opinions held, analysed the situation as it was, set out the way in which it could develop and created a framework in which both sides could work. We hadn't exaggerated the claims of either side, but drawn them together and opened up the possibility of dialogue.

The comrades at the congress had the opportunity to give their opinion on the report, then there was a vote which resulted in 174 in favour and 168 against (in part or as a whole). Immediately a large group of comrades left the hall and congregated in the passage, returning in an angry mood to say they did not accept the result. Then the chairman said that the vote had been fixed. How could this be when it was counted by comrades chosen by all present? Why wait until they had returned to say so? Was it all pre-arranged?

Eventually the paragraphs causing offence were removed from within the report, changing it in favour of the minority (intransigent) point of view. The look of anguish on the face of the comrade who had to return to read out the new version expressed exactly how we felt to see such effort on our behalf come to nothing.

To prevent further scenes of disunity in front of the press photographers, someone suggested we put off a final decision till a special congress.

Although our branch kept the same attitude when it came to this second, Monographic (*), congress, no-one was willing to accept the aggression they would receive as our delegate if they supported this line, so in the end we were not represented.

We now know what the result of this congress was: 'no' to the works committees, a victory for division and a defeat for the CNT. Obviously these events give us nothing to be proud of, but I have passed them on so you will know what really happened.

Fraternally,

Jose.

(*) Monographic: only dealing with one subject.

THE MONOGRAPHIC CONGRESS:

When the Barcelona metalworkers' union, to which I belong, came to debate it's attitudes in advance of the sixth congress there were about 30 comrades present out of a membership of about 1000. Obviously this opens up the possibility of manipulation by small groups. The debate quickly polarised into two groups who were not very interested in listening to each other - those in favour and those against the ideas of standing for election to the committees. Surprisingly, the final vote was 20 in favour and about 10 against. So, the mandate which was sent to the congress on this subject was roughly the same as that which was recently adopted by the founding congress of the CNT-U.

When it was decided to hold a second, Monographic, congress on this subject in the June of 1983, we held another assembly. This time there were about 50 people present, many of the extras being 'vote fodder' whose decisions were based on loyalty to a prominent comrade in their factory. Although this in itself would have no doubt been enough to secure a vote against standing for the committees, they also brought along various heavies from the construction union, with whose help they shouted down anyone who opposed them.

So, the group that have been trying to control the CNT in the name of anarchist purity got the decision they wanted, a resounding 'no' to the works committees. But their victory was soon shown to be a hollow one by the number of members who left the CNT-AIT soon after this through apathy or disillusionment, or to join the other CNT.

I'll finish by saying that I personally am against the tactic of standing for the works committees, and voted against it, though I can see circumstances where it might be justified. More than this though I am an enemy of manipulation in all it's forms and, above all, of those who want to stuff their ideology down our throats.

Salud.

Carles.

CONGRESS OF UNIFICATION:

The article printed below comes from an editorial in a recent issue of 'Accion Libertaria' (the CNT-U's paper for Asturias, in northern Spain), and deals with the congress in which those branches which split from the CNT -AIT after it's 6th congress joined those who had left earlier to form the CNT-U.

It is clear proof that a lack of patience with the process of fully discussing the strategy of standing for election to the Works Committees is not confined to the CNT-AIT. Obviously a dogmatic 'yes' to the committees is as bad as a dogmatic 'no', but this kind of attitude does not go unopposed. As one comrade in the CNT-U said when he saw this editorial, 'Look at that, they think they've won.' Let's hope the final victory is for participation and open discussion.

cont.

'The unions from Asturias did not attend this important event [the congress of unification]. After 8 hours of debate in the national meetings which preceded it we decided against re-opening the debate on union strategy, the AIT [anarcho-syndicalist international], our internal structures, etc. For us these points are already quite clear. Nevertheless, the congress seems to have reached conclusions which agree with how we have been working in Asturias since the split with the CNT-AIT.

We now have a CNT whose tactics are up to date and which takes part in the worker's struggles without worrying about the AIT (an international which only exists in a few people's imaginations), etc. the decision to participate in the Works Committees was unanimously ratified, so now we can come in from the cold and acquire the strength we need to change the rules of the game without worrying about dogmas.

The final decision was to recuperate the title 'CNT' without such extras as AIT. We'll leave that for the residual group who, for the good of anarcho-syndicalism, will now hopefully disappear without too much disturbance.

METRO COMMITTEE PROBLEMS:

From an editorial in the bulletin of the CNT-U's metro workers branch in Barcelona.

A few days ago we put out a circular to all metro workers, saying why we resigned from the works committee. We did so because of various actions on behalf of the management (such as arbitrary transfers of workers) and by other members of the committee. We had hoped to bring these out into the open in a series of assemblies, but they were badly attended.

We do not accept that this is what you have to expect in the Summer when the Metro is working at half strength - that's exactly the time when the bosses will attack us and an easy victory now will just lead to pressure later. Anyway, the telephone section was working at full capacity and this is where most of the transfers took place.

The other factions on the committee did their best to make these assemblies fail with the aim of discrediting us, but we can hardly be blamed as - even though we are the majority union - we still have less than half of the seats on the committee. Throughout all this our aim has always been to benefit the workers, not just to advance our own union.

On the 26th of July we used the position of president of the committee [held by the CNT-U] to call off the meeting for that day, as the CCOO were trying to change the agenda and take over, rather than stick to the original subjects. These included the new hours that were being pushed on the ticket sellers.

We have accordingly kept hold of the position of President to stop these vipers making a complete takeover(*), but as a result of our resigning all the other positions, there will now be elections in November. We could have held on for another two years under the new law (LOLS), which extends the original two year mandate to four, but elementary manners prevents us from doing so.

(*) The two people who put out the CCOO's information sheet are the real cause of all this friction. The others are more willing to work together in a constructive way.

After this mailing your sub stands at...

SUPPLEMENT NO. 2

SPANISH INFORMATION NETWORK, 37, SOUTH TCE, ESH WINNING, CO DURHAM, DH7 9PS.

READERS' WRITES:

Dear **Sinews**, two comments in issue No.3 seem to contradict each other, namely the claim in the CNT-U's statement on p.2 that the elections to the works committee are not like those to parliament, and the claim later on that the maoist trade union, the SU, won extra seats on the Barcelona Metro's committee by spending loads on publicity. Why no editorial comment on this? - **Gerry M.**

Dear **Gerry**, The simple answer is that it didn't occur to me. Anyway, I try to limit my comments on translated articles because I don't want to suggest that I can say if something is right or not. This also means that just because something appears in **Sinews** that doesn't necessarily mean I think it's true... just interesting.

On the specific point you raise, it does seem to show that they are not totally different, though they may still be significantly so. It struck me they were claiming a lot when I first translated that comment, but also I wouldn't say it was a central point in their argument. Still, thanks for pointing it out. Further comments are welcome. - **Mick Larkin.**

Dear **Sinews**, It seems to me that both CNT are pragmatic if you follow the definition in **Sinews** no.3. Where they may differ is in the principles they appear to have sacrificed 'so as to achieve others they consider more important'.

The CNT-U have sacrificed the boycott of the works committees so as to maintain membership, but the CNT-AIT may have sacrificed organisational integrity at the 6th congress so as to maintain the principle of boycotting the works committees. - **Tom Jennings.**

Dear **Tom**, I would disagree that the CNT-AIT's actions at the 6th congress should be described as 'pragmatic'. I would see pragmatism as a conscious policy decision that is openly acknowledged, whereas the CNT-AIT's line on the 6th congress is presumably that no such 'deviousness' occurred. - **Mick Larkin.**

Dear **Mick**, I suggest that 'pragmatism' and 'deviousness' may sometimes only differ in their emotive connotations - positive for the former and negative for the latter. I suspect that you are confusing the intention behind behaviour with the effects or inferred meanings of that behaviour. The two may be completely different.

Unless the supposed ends and means, intentions, motivations and rationalisations surrounding alleged pragmatism are made clear, I think it would be best to avoid the term. Irrespective of someone's 'line', I am much more interested in their real reasons and actual behaviour. - **Tom Jennings.**

cont.

Dear Tom, I can certainly agree with your last sentence. In fact the CNT-AIT's 'militancy' is interesting to consider from this point of view, in that at times it does seem to just be a matter of show.

For example, they get rid of their union solicitor because 'Anarchists don't employ solicitors', but when someone has a problem with unfair dismissal, they direct them to '...someone we know who will give you sympathetic legal advice.' Similarly, they are as eager as the CNT-U to be legally recognised at the real CNT (for which we can't necessarily blame them) but it does seem to contradict their 'principled approach' to bourgeois legality.

As far as the CNT-U is concerned, 'pragmatism' can indeed just be a cover for unscrupulousness, as I've said before.

I'll end with a couple of definitions taken from the Oxford English Dictionary. Pragmatism: Judging a theory by its practical results.

Dogmatism: Constructing a theory solely on the basis of deductions from first principles.

On this basis I still think the two words are useful labels for describing the differences between the two CNT. - Mick Larkin.

UGT? NO THANKS:

As a result of being a door mat for whatever anti-working class policy the Socialist Party (PSOE) cares to think up, the 'socialist' trade union, UGT, has seen its membership plummet from 2 million in 1979 to 0.8 million now. Where it would be without all the money it gets from the Spanish government (and the TUC originally) nobody knows.

During the PSOE's four years in office, unemployment has risen from 14% to 21%, according to official figures.

SHIPYARD STRIKES IN NORTH:

The government has decided that 20,000 of those working in the shipyards of northern Spain are in excess and will have to go. Almost three times this number will be lost in associated jobs and the shipyards will then be working at only 45% of their capacity.

These developments have not gone unopposed, in fact there have been several general strikes on a regional basis, and national ones in specific industries. These have often been accompanied by burning barricades, street battles with police and the severing of rail and even air links in the region.

The governments 'solution' is something called FPE (the fund to promote employment) which attempts to buy people's jobs with a three year guaranteed income, though the prospects when this runs out are bleak. Although the UGT refused to accept the same scheme from Spain's previous 'centre-right' government, the UCD, it is backing this scheme and has opposed all calls for strikes, etc.

A recent round of bitter struggles came to a head on November 23rd, 1984, when police in armoured vehicles and waving pistols, invaded the shipyards at Bilbao (which were under occupation) and began wrecking various union offices - except those of the UGT of course. In the process Pablo Lafrazabel was killed, and this caused a wave of outrage and further strikes.

Although a campaign to boycott the FPE had to be called off on December 28th, the area still simmers on the verge of 'total anarchy'...

Source: Etcetera no.6, a council communist periodical from Barcelona.

WORKERS' CO-OP IN TROUBLE:

Metallergica Baix Llobregat, a metal workers' co-op near Barcelona which is connected to the CNT-U and which featured in the first issue of Sinews, has been having a spot of trouble recently. Due to the usual problem, lack of capital, money has been very tight and it was decided recently that wages could not be paid for 3 months! Some of the workers claimed the shortage of money was due to the President (a title which exists for legal purposes) fiddling the books. They said that the co-op should dissolve itself, and the capital - a lot of which was originally redundancy money - should be redistributed.

After some angry scenes, an assembly of workers decided to sack 30 members of this faction. Even if this process was correctly carried out it violates the basic concepts of solidarity and job security, so obviously all is not well. The co-op has close links with the entertainments (ie cinema projectors') union in Barcelona, which is a semi-separate group within the CNT-U with its own offices in a different building. A lot of people consider it to be over centralised.

Anyway, the co-op recently got some orders to make precision cut screws, with is their speciality, so they're up to half wages now, as of March '85.

STATE OF THE NETWORK:

As from this issue Sinews is going annual, with a print run of 500, and there will be occasional supplements between issues. The main reason for this is that it makes distribution a lot less difficult and is less of a strain on the bloke who prints it for the cost of materials in his free time. Occasional bits of news will also be appearing in papers such as Freedom from time to time.

The idea of a readers' meeting was put forward in the first issue of Sinews, but I wonder if people would really be interested in travelling to, say, Sheffield, just to discuss Sinews. Your comments on this, or any other matter, are always welcome. The definition of a member of the Network is anyone who subscribes and I would be happy for any of you to have more control over what happens to the Network's publications.

FISH SUPPER FOR FASCIST:

[The following item was originally published in Supplement no.4. There wasn't room to squeeze it in when I transferred the copy to the word processor, but I thought it was too good to leave out...]

On the 18th of April, 1985, Colonel Tejero, the man who led an attempted military takeover and held the Spanish parliament at gun point for 17 hours in February '81, was invited to a fish supper at the castle near Gerona where he is the only prisoner. He was there as the honoured guest of the governor who was dismissed when all this came out into the open. Tejero, however, still enjoys a sauna and video in the prison and is able to carry on selling signed oil paintings for £240 a time to sympathisers on the outside.

After this mailing your sub stands at...

SUPPLEMENT NO. 3

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BLACK FLAG — MORE FUNNY FACTS:

What follows is the text of an unpublished letter sent to Freedom about two articles which recently appeared in Black Flag (paper of the Jesuit tendency of the DAM, the British section of the same international the CNT-AIT is in). They now have a new correspondent, known as M.T., who sends them stuff regularly. As he, like the rest of them, refuses to enter into debate with anyone who disagrees with him, his reports must be taken with a pinch of salt... and answered via other publications such as Freedom.

Two recent issues of Black Flag (nos.132 & 133) give their view of divisions within the CNT. Almost all the information in this 'expose' of the CNT-U in Catalonia (referred to as the CNT-C) which actually relates to reality will already be known to readers of Sinews, though in the context of a less biased analysis. As for the rest... read on.

The burden of the first article is 'detailed figures' of the membership of the CNT-C in 1979. Given that this was 6 years ago and they have since been joined by another split from the CNT-AIT, such information would not be very significant even if it was accurate. In fact, it doesn't even mention members of the entertainments union which was by far the largest sector at this time.

By the way, a careful reading of the figures given to Black Flag by the CNT-AIT shows that in 1985 they claim a national membership of about 10,000, which is the same as the CNT-U.

Black flag tells us that the CNT-U pay 60% more in rent for their offices in Barcelona than they do (it's actually 125,000pts - £625 - per month) and have moved them in 4 years earlier than the actual date, which was 1984. I'd like to see the proof they claim to have that the government is paying this rent, especially given the recent imprisonment and torture of CNT-U militants in Vitoria by this same government. In fact the money is raised within the CNT-U itself and, as readers of Sinews will already know, some members reckon it's a bit of an unnecessary strain on resources.

Black Flag say there were 325 people at the CNT-U's May Day rally, both Spain's main national papers say 1,500... I could go on, but I reckon that's enough to show that M.T.'s 'facts' need to be thoroughly chewed, rather than swallowed whole.

The second article answers the question 'Who are the CNT-U?' by slagging off a few of it's leading militants. Most of these are ex-general secretaries of the CNT-AIT, so that must be an own goal. Their main target, Jose Cases from the entertainment workers' union in Barcelona, has already been thoroughly criticised by members of the CNT-U itself (see Sinews no.2, p.3). He's basically a syndicalist rather than an anarcho-syndicalist and his outfit is in many ways separate from the rest of the CNT-U. [Note: Cases has come to play a central role in the CNT-U in Barcelona since the elections to the Works Committees in 1986.] Though their dismissal of him is too simplistic, I expect he will 'have to go' at some point.

Finally, their claim that the CNT-U has officially renounced anarchism is rubbish, as can be proved by the resolutions of their founding Congress of Unification.

Black Flag no.137 exposes the fact that a picture used in the last Sinews, showing a CNT-U demo in Vitoria, was actually a CNT-AIT one with the 'AIT' on the banner pencilled out. I am blameless in all this as I just took it from 'Elkartasuna', paper of the CNT-U in Vitoria. This was very bad of them, it's true, the only mitigating circumstance being that most of the people who were in the CNT-AIT's Vitoria branch at that time are now members of the CNT-U.

By the way, a reliable source tells me that Textiles is the CNT-AIT's strongest, most militant union in Barcelona and that a certain Snr. Correas from Badaladona (near B.) represents their 'reasonable' tendency.

I still haven't found any explanation for the CNT-U's suggestion that they hold a joint May Day demo with the CCOO, especially as this was bound to be refused on the grounds that the CCOO, who got 600,000 on it's demo, don't exactly need the CNT-U's extra numbers [Since this things have changed, eg the joint May Day demo in Madrid in '87]

BRITISH MINERS:

To date about £30 has been collected by the CNT-U in Barcelona to help relatives of British miners in jail. The Barcelona branch of the Dockers' Co-ordinadora (the OEPB) was influential in setting up the Rank and File Miners organisation here in Britain and have been giving them financial assistance. The OEPB is now sending me their paper 'La Estiba', so just say if you want to borrow a copy.

GENERAL STRIKE: This was called by the CCOO, but supported by all the other unions except the UGT and including both CNT. Basically it was a success for the one day of it's duration, but it wasn't possible to halt transport despite a lot of militancy because of a heavy police presence. This led to a lot of arrests and incidents centring around buses, etc. The strike was called against an 8% cut in pensions.

MUJERES LIBRES: 'Free Women', the autonomous organisation within the CNT-U which goes back to the Civil War, is open to men! In fact Zaragoza and Valencia don't allow men to join, but Barcelona and Madrid do, on the understanding that they will only play a supportive role. What this means in practice is anyone's guess. It's causing some problems, for example when M.L. take men along to women's demos, and one bloke who was arrested at such an event is not being supported by the broader women's movement. Personally I can't see why the men couldn't form their own separate organisation to fight sexism and then work with M.L., but from the position of being two autonomous organisations.

N.A.T.O.: CNT-U in Zaragoza has put out a 50 page dossier on the struggle against NATO which is available from S.I.N. on request.

CASH TO UNIONS: The CCOO and UGT have both received about 1,200 million pts (£6 million) from the government since Franco's death in return for signing various social pacts - according to the CNT-U's paper for Asturias.

CASH TO SINEWS? Speaking of money, if anyone has any spare these are the details of the S.I.N. account if you're sending it from overseas:

S.I.N., Durham Co-op Bank, 08-90-70, Acc. no. 703 625 6150.

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SUPPLEMENT NO. 4

SPANISH INFORMATION NETWORK, 37, SOUTH TCE, ESH WINNING, CO DURHAM, DH7 9PS.

WHY STAND FOR UNION ELECTIONS?

What follows is an abbreviation of an article which was originally printed in Solidaridad Obrera (U) for September '85 and written by members of the CNT-U's branch in Vitoria, capital of the Basque country.

That this kind of radical self criticism can find it's way into the union's main publication is a very positive sign.

Spain has a tradition of swinging like a pendulum from one extreme position to another. In this vein, we noted at the recent Congress of Unification that some of those who used to be most opposed to union elections were now the strongest proponents of using them, having apparently forgotten a large part of the analysis that surrounds our position on this tactic. As one of the first branches to stand for election was based in Vitoria, we thought it would be appropriate for us to set out our reasons for doing so.

The union elections were created to stifle autonomous workers' organisations, not as a specific attack on the CNT. We aren't that important, and anyway it's the same tactic that is used throughout Western Europe. Given all this, the original decision to boycott them was spot on, so why did it turn out to be such a failure? Basically we were unable to establish an alternative which was both valid and viable, so the workers saw the CNT (with it's magnificent analysis) unable to represent them, whilst the UGT and CCOO were signing conventions and negotiating over conditions, etc.

The idea began to grow that if the workers did not understand our attitude maybe we should make use of the platform that the works committees could give us to slowly introduce our own alternative - the independent union branch. Both those who would use the committees and those who would boycott them have had their successes and failures. Some have got on the committees then forgotten all about trying to promote workers' participation, others have been the most ferocious opponents of committees, even though they don't even have one where they work and therefore don't really know what they're talking about. Basically we seem to be trapped between two alternatives: remaining true to our principles but eventually having to work within unions which are totally unsympathetic to our ideas (such as happens in the rest of Europe and could occur in Spain if the CNT became totally marginalised) or forgetting all about anarcho-syndicalism (except that we still call ourselves by that name) in an ill conceived involvement with the structures that the state has prepared for us.

Our aims in making use of the committees should be four-fold;

1. To increase the numbers of workers we represent.
2. To be legally legitimate, given the present situation.
3. To be able to represent our members.
4. to make use of the space the committees provide to build up our organisation.

Also, given the apathy that exists today, it important that people joining the CNT have opportunities to get experience in union affairs

The secret if success for the CNT is that it must be able to do something for the workers. If that means using the committees, then so be it, adelante.

cont...

The free time given to those elected to committees can be a useful advantage if it is used for the CNT, but we must be careful not to develop a separate class of activists. They should represent the views of the branch of the CNT they belong to (not the voice of working class unity, for the simple reason that such a unity does not exist) and be subject to recall if they do not do so. Our ultimate aim is to develop more and more branches which have a real significance and to educate the workers in the ways of participation, not just simply to win the next session of elections for the sake of it. Although the workers lack experience in union organisation they are not stupid, so we will not achieve our aims through clever slogans at election time, but by being involved with them on a day to day basis.

It is not enough to be a slightly redder version of the CCOO, with a more glorious history, or to try to organise on day to day basis tied to a high flouting global analysis. We have to adapt without becoming popularist.

NEITHER MARGINALISATION NOR INTEGRATION, BUT AN AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATION OF THE WORKERS.

PROBLEMS AT THE CASA PLANT:

As mentioned in the article in Sinews no.5, not all is well at the CNT-U's branch at CASA, Spain's largest airplane manufacturer, based at Seville, where they are the major union. Whilst emphasising that the extra power which assemblies have at the factory is a direct result of the CNT-U's efforts, the person I spoke to was so disillusioned with the way things are going that he is considering resigning his seat on the works committee there.

The fact that committee members are given time off to sort out union problems has had the effect of allowing them to discuss everything during this time, so that at branch meetings they tend to talk over the heads of the rank and file and leave them behind. As a result the branch meetings are not well attended and it is not possible for the branch to effectively control their delegates on the committee. I was told that a large number of union members owe their allegiance to certain charismatic individuals rather than to the principles of the CNT and that some of these individuals are more interested in opposing the CCOO's manipulations than promoting anarcho-syndicalism in it's own right. Also the level of passivity that prevails means that some people have held the same position on the executive of the CNT-U's branch there for years. One or two have even become full time officials and there is a general tendency for people to work on their own, rather than regularly exchanging information.

On the other hand, the CNT-U's delegates are more resistant to the various perks that are used to manipulate union delegates (for example they do not claim overtime for 'union work' which is one way of making extra money) and many ordinary affiliates use the assemblies to maintain a strong anarcho-syndicalist tendency in the factory - even to the extent of being willing to criticise the CNT-U itself.

Nevertheless the situation does not look good. The local federation of the CNT-U could, in theory put pressure on the 'leading militants' at CASA but they would basically be told that they didn't understand the situation at first hand, and if it came to it CASA could go it alone without too much trouble whereas this would be a big blow to the CNT-U as a whole in Seville (eg in terms of dues.)

One conclusion from the above could be that the Works Committees should be avoided at all costs, but to say this is meaningless unless there is another alternative apart from total marginalisation. Obviously the CNT-U at CASA needs to develop more committed militants and the only way to do this is by a programme of development based on debates, the union's leaflets, etc. In short this means the growth of a general anarcho-syndicalist culture which could have long term, subtle but significant effects. How to get such an operation off the ground is another question.

The situation at CASA could have been avoided by making the rotation of delegates obligatory, rather than just desirable, but in practice this would cause huge problems due to the lack of people willing to get involved as activists and the time it would take them to develop the necessary practical skills. Nevertheless, one of the main things which differentiates anarchists from leninists is that we claim to take participation seriously rather than dropping it at the first whiff of a 'historical necessity' which makes 'efficiency' more important.

My personal opinion, as an ignorant and cynical outsider, is that the situation at CASA has gone too far and it is just living off a legacy of militancy from the struggles at the end of the Franco era. Of course, a major strike could change all that. The CNT-U in Seville generally (by which I mean it's activists) seems to be aware of the possible pitfalls associated with the committees, and it is to be hoped that the series of discussions mentioned in Sinews goes well as a first step towards keeping the organisation on it's toes.

BLACK FLAG — THE FACTS?

The Barcelona correspondent of this paper (organ of the Jesuit tendency in the DAM, the English section of the same international as the CNT-AIT), a bloke known by the initials M.T., gives the national membership of the CNT-AIT as about 10,000 in issue no.136, but changes this to 55,000 in issue no.145. Does this represent an amazing level of recruitment or an amazing level of naivety on his behalf? This quote from the same article (in no.145) provides us with a clue - 'Absolutely no-one in the CNT-AIT is more important than anyone else.'

WORKS COMMITTEES — THE FACTS:

Some background data - well it might come in useful one day...

The workforce at firms with less than 6 employees does not get to be represented by a works committee. Neither do agricultural workers.

6-30 workers elect 1 delegate, 31-50 get 2, 51-100 get 5, 101-250 get 9, 251-500 get 13, 501-750 get 17 and 751 to 1000 get 21. For every extra 1000, or part of, after that 2 more are added, up to a maximum of 75.

SAC: FACTS, BUT NO MOTIVE...

'SAC Kontakt', paper of the SAC (Sweden's syndicalist union) wins this year's Murdoch award for journalism for an article in no.6 which explains that the CNT-AIT refused to recognise the CNT's Congress of Unification in 1985 'for no reason at all...'

75th ANNIVERSARY: Both CNT celebrated this in '85 with a week of cultural events, talks on historical subjects and political debates, nationwide.

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SUPPLEMENT NO. 5

SPANISH INFORMATION NETWORK, 37, SOUTH TCE, ESH WINNING, CO DURHAM, DH7 9PS.

WHAT WAS CNT LIKE IN THE 30'S?

During the Autumn of '86 I had a chance to talk to two veterans of the CNT before the Civil War, Marco Nedal who was a railway worker in Valencia and Jose Costa who worked in the Barcelona textile industry.

What struck me most was their boundless energy, even though both are in their 80's. A small example of this was when I showed Jose a copy of Sinews. 'Let's see what this says' he said, despite the fact that he doesn't speak English, 'An annual paper...on CNT and...Spanish anarchist organisations? No? Well what's that word mean then?, etc'

Such an attitude is typical of these old militants (a view confirmed by members of the present CNT), they're not afraid to take on problems, quickly grasp the essence of what's involved and start organising themselves. In short, despite very little formal education, they are very intelligent in the true sense of the word and always ready to get actively involved.

Understanding the formation of the CNT's militants is, I would say, central to understanding how the CNT really worked as a mass organisation. First though, let me nail a couple of myths about what the CNT was like. Neither Jose or Marco had much time for the concept of equality. the CNT was never an organisation in which everyone was equal, but it was an organisation in which people could, and did, participate. Also, though the immediate response to Franco's coup was largely spontaneous, the interventions of the CNT's militants during the years before was highly organised, even contrived, with militants meeting beforehand to decide who would say what, when, etc.

Although various elites did develop in the CNT, it nevertheless managed to achieve a very high level of participation by the mass of workers. The point I want to make here is that it's impossible to understand how this participation worked if we ignore the whole cultural dimension of the project and just concentrate on the organisational structures involved. Also these structures would never have held together without a large body of militants who were self activating and totally dedicated. In other words, we have to look at the culture the CNT moved in and helped to create, both externally and within itself.

It would be ridiculous to deny that, in any group of people, some are more confident than others, etc (ie not everyone is equal). As a result it is never going to be enough for the structures of a meeting to give everyone the theoretical right to say what they think. Let's face it, total (ie perfect) participation is an ideal we are aiming for but which, taken literally, can never be achieved. My point is that these 'gaps' in participation left by the structure of meetings, etc were to a large extent covered by a process working on another level - the cultural one.

if we look at the cultural formation of the CNT's militants we see that they were totally 'of the masses' (at least when they remained at local level) having been brought up in typical working class families and working a full week alongside everyone else as well as staying on after work for union activities.

If we give this process of cultural formation it's due recognition it becomes unlikely that (generally speaking) militants of the CNT would see things in such a way as to be alienated from the people who they lived amongst. Also, the whole outlook of the CNT's militants would have been moulded over the years by these 'ordinary workers'. As a result, I reckon that many people felt their ideas and aspirations were controlling the assembly not so much because there was a structure which allowed them to speak up (something which I'm sure many of them seldom did) but more because the more active, articulate workers (mainly organised through the CNT) spoke their language and put forward ideas which everyone (including the more passive workers) had had a hand in forming on a cultural level over the years. For them the CNT was not so much an external object which they could influence, as something which their individuality had blurred into to a certain extent.

I'm not suggesting we shouldn't try to get people to speak up at assemblies and can forget all about structural safeguards, in the hope that a small elite of 'decent' workers will do what's right by the masses. No-one is incorruptible as no culture is without certain aspects which can lead to individualism. What I am saying is that a strong, communal culture was an essential ingredient in making the CNT what it was, so to ignore this and only consider the dry bones of the structures involved is to only see half the story.

This analysis begs the following question: Can organisational structures use by the CNT (open assemblies, etc) work to the same effect in a situation like our own where they don't have anything like the same cultural support? For example, are they not far more open to manipulation by vanguardist cliques. Answers please, on a postcard, to...

AND IN THE 80'S...?

In terms of the modern CNT, I was told that being a militant (whether of the radical or moderate wing) is still 'a way of life, rather than a hobby', ie not something you can give a strictly limited amount of your free time to.

Also, while we're on the subject of culture, it's interesting to note that in a local of the CNT it's very difficult to defend a certain space so you can work in peace and quiet. Even as a total stranger I'm not challenged when I barge in and out of rooms looking for someone. Also, if you're talking to someone it's not unusual for someone else to wander in, pick up one of the documents you're talking about, look it over absent mindedly, put it down then wander out. Apart from making the CNT a less efficient organisation (eg people regularly disappear with the only copy of address lists, etc) this attitude goes some way towards preventing the formation of elite cliques and stops people thinking they're something special when they get behind their little desk.

To me this is a good example of how an organisation can be affected by it's culture in a way which you would never know about by just reading it's constitution, statutes, etc. In other words, no-one has ever passed a resolution saying people are allowed to walk into rooms without having an excuse, that the general secretary should interrupt a conversation to look for a poster requested by a total stranger, etc, but these things do happen in the CNT and if they didn't it would be a very different organisation.

THE WORKS' COMMITTEES:

In big firms 'liberados' (ie paid officials) get 1 week a month off to do union business, in small firms it's only 1 day per month. No-one in the CNT is paid by the union itself (as in the UGT, etc), rather they are paid as representatives of that firm's workforce through this system. This can sometimes lead to a tendency for them to be a bit parochial, ie only interested in subjects which concern their own workplace, but union paid organisers would be even more likely to loose touch with the people they were representing than are these representatives under the present system.

As long as these paid officials remain part-time there are some advantages in having them (though subscribers will already know of the problems which have arisen in CASA of Seville - see supplement no.4). Consider, for example, a member of the CNT-U I met in Madrid who works on the Metro all day, studies at night (as is very common in Spain) to become a journalist and then has to try and find time to be involved in union activities. It would obviously be a lot easier for him if he were given time off at work. In fact, the system of unsaid volunteers by which the CNT has traditionally been run has the draw back of giving control of the union to those who are hyper-active enough to find the time and energy for union activities (or to men with wives at home to cook and clean for them!), and so excluding other people.

Another alternative - which is apparently how they run things in 'Hostelerias' (the union for waiters, etc) in Barcelona - is that they stood for election to the committees so they could get 10% of the vote and therefore be recognised for negotiating purposes, but they don't take up the 'horas sindical' (time off work) this entitles them to except in extreme circumstances, and then never to have people doing things away from their own workplace.

A third possibility is for 'liberados' to only do clerical work, eg collecting subs, filling out forms, etc, and no organising, thereby removing one factor that could lead to them having more control over decisions than ordinary members do. This is apparently what happens in the CNT-U's Post Office branch for Barcelona, where they have a full-time 'liberado' but s/he only does clerical work and is regularly rotated.

The above examples go some way to showing that the question 'Committees, yes or no?' is possibly a bit simplistic.

DELEGATES RECALLABLE?

I recently made some enquiries about the system the CNT-U uses to recall it's delegates on the Works Committees if the branch decides this is necessary, ie by obliging them to sign an undated letter of resignation when they take up the post and leave this in the union office.

There is a rumour going round that these letters don't have any legal weight anyway, so people sometimes don't bother to ask for them. This is what I feared would be the case (ie that the system wouldn't be carried through in practice), though it's partly because 'you can always get someone to resign if necessary' using other forms of pressure.

However, it turns out that there is at least one example of a letter of this kind being used - a delegate on the Metro in Barcelona who was only taking an interest in things which affected his particular craft and finally got the push. This is not bad going for a mini survey like mine, and goes some way towards showing that the system is used in practice.

CRITICAL ANARCHY:

This is the subtitle of issue no.1 of a new magazine, 'The Future in the Present', with 68 A5 pages which is available for 80p, inc. P&P, via S.I.N., though it's actually published by 'Libertarian Organisation and Structures'.

I wrote one of the articles involved, but the connection here is more to do with a section in another article which analyses the recent history of the CNT in terms of the emotional motivations involved. While the article does valuable work in bringing this important but neglected aspect of mass politics to light and the analysis is, in itself, coherent and appealing, I personally don't reckon it relates much to what actually did happen. Also, it tends to blame the CNT-U too much for the split, rather than acknowledging the extent to which they were 'pushed' by CNT-AIT dogmatism.

Read it for yourself and decide what you think. The general gist of the pamphlet is to work towards a new understanding of anarchism, free of dogmas and wishful thinking.

ELECTION PROPAGANDA:

An analysis of the leaflets, etc put out by the CNT-U during the election campaign provides some interesting insights into what's going on in parts of the organisation. The campaign was co-ordinated by special committees set up at a national plenum and these were described to me by one comrade in Barcelona as 'a field day for the moderates'. They have used the need to be 'effective' and 'efficient' to generally water things down, eg the word 'revolutionary' is often replaced by 'transforming'.

This kind of propaganda is described by yet another English word that has passed into the Spanish language - 'light'. As an example: 'The CNT is trying to establish new relations between people based on solidarity and equality', which could mean just about anything.

The tactics of these 'moderates' within the CNT-U extended to attempting to pressurise branches into adding candidates to their election list simply because they would get a lot of votes. This happened to one branch I heard of (by phone), but in the end they held out and refused to accept the bloke concerned, despite his popular charisma, because his politics were dubious.

As a counter to these moderate elements it's possible that the 'comite local' for Barcelona will be revitalised from it's present state of only really existing on paper.

One disturbing demand put out in the CNT-U's election programme is that unions should be put in control of INEM (the spanish equivalent of MSC). Although this is visualised as the unions role being 'decisive' rather than consultative, it does sound like the sometimes subtle distinction between negotiating and collaborating with the bosses has got blurred here. Though the CNT-U still maintains it's rejection of any pact with the government this could start to look a bit like corporatism, so I will be seeking further clarification of this issue.

Finally, these criticisms shouldn't be taken out of context. In all probability equally serious accusations could be levelled at some of the CNT-AIT's activities, the difference being that they would never allow anyone access to the necessary information if they thought they were not 100% committed to presenting a positive view of their organisation.

CNT-AIT PURISM?

I was given several documents during my latest visit to Spain which suggest a certain hypocrisy on the part of the CNT-AIT. I don't want to exaggerate their importance, in fact they only have any relevance in terms of the 'whiter than white' image that the CNT-AIT tries to project.

To begin with, there was a joint communique by the CNT-AIT and CCOO (Communist trade union) informing railway workers that the CNT standing for election (ie the CNT-U) was not the real CNT. There would be nothing wrong with this if the CNT-AIT hadn't criticised the CNT-U for holding a joint May Day demo with the CCOO last year.

More seriously the CNT-AIT's national secretary for banking (Jose Valesco) wrote to the Association of Spanish Bankers (AEB) asking for members of the CNT-AIT to be given time off before the elections so they could organise a boycott campaign. In this respect they are no different from the other unions (including the CNT-U) who were given similar facilities to encourage people to vote for them. The point is that the CNT-AIT claims that it is different and that its hands are unsoiled by compromises with the bosses over the works committees. In the end 4 CNT-AIT members in Madrid and 1 in Bilbao were each given 1 month off work.

The CNT-AIT also put out a pamphlet addressed to workers in the finance sector warning that anyone who stood as a candidate on the CNT-U's slate would 'suffer the consequences', bearing in mind that 'the lists (of candidates) will appear with their full names.' This is further proof that some members of the CNT-AIT are not above physical intimidation of fellow workers.

Copies of these documents available for £1 - to cover photocopying costs.

READERS' WRITES:

Dear Sineus, there is a rather large gap in the CNT-U's rationalisations and justifications for them splitting from the CNT-AIT. It is this. If the CNT-AIT's structures were so open to being taken over by 'fanatics' and 'leading militants', how come the CNT-U has kept identical structures? Shouldn't they have at least made some attempt to tidy up their organisation in the light of how they interpreted their experiences in the CNT-AIT? - Tom Jennings, Newcastle.

Dear Tom, in my opinion one important reason for the lack of any change in the CNT-U's structures is that, from as desire to make the unification which led to the formation of their organisation as smooth and all encompassing as possible it was basically done on the basis of the lowest common denominator, so they didn't seek to confront these basic problems of anarcho-syndicalist organisation. On top of this, all organisations are bad at sorting out big problems, usually preferring to muddle through from day to day. Apart from this though, one militant of the CNT-U explained it to me on the basis that no organisational form is perfect, so as the existing structures allowed for the possibility of grassroots control it was worth giving it another go in the very different atmosphere of the CNT-U, eg. disagreements are now handled in a much more civilised and reasonable way than before. - Mick Larkin.

HISTORY OF THE LAST 5 YEARS:

Subscribers should soon receive a copy (direct from them) of the CNT-U's version of what's been going on in Spain recently. One point may need clearing up. The text refers to an extraordinary conference in Madrid after the CNT-AIT's sixth congress. This does not refer to the 'monographic congress' of the same year, but basically a conference set up to organise the Congress of Unification which started the CNT-U.

UNION FUNDS RETURNED... TO UGT.

The UGT was given over 4,000 million pts (about £21 million) just before the national elections for works committees as compensation for their 'patrimony' (ie buildings, etc stolen by Franco at the end of the Civil War). The CCOO got nothing, which is fair enough as the communists were in the UGT at the time. However the CNT (which had as many members as the UGT during the Civil War) has only been credited with 250 million pts and even this has not been paid on the grounds that on-one knows who is the real CNT.

Following the CNT-AIT's attempts to win sole use of the initials 'CNT' through the courts, a legal decision was reached which declared the CNT_U the real CNT. Black Flag reveals a very cunning motive behind this decision (before going on to drag out their usual rubbish about the CNT-U being in league with the Pope, etc, etc.), namely that, although the CNT-U is recognised as the existing CNT, the CNT-AIT is recognised as the CNT of the 30's. This means the CNT of the 30's no longer exists and so there is no organisation entitled to claim it's patrimony.

The CNT-AIT managed to get this decision overturned on appeal... and in the process gave the impression that they had been defending themselves from the CNT-U's use of bourgeois legality from the first!

OTAN REFERENDUM:

Although Spain voted by 31% to 24% on 12.3.86. to stay in Otan (as Nato is known over there), it should not be assumed that this means people are happy with the situation. For a start, only 60% voted, which is the lowest turnout in any election since Franco died. More importantly, there was a massive bias towards a 'yes' vote in the media, with all the papers (except El Pais which remained neutral) and the T.V. using scare tactics and excluding any real debate. For example there was no debate between Gonzales (the P.M.) and those opposing Nato, just separate interviews. the PSOE (Socialist party in government) spent £3 million on it's campaign, including a letter from Gonzales to every household saying vote 'yes' - this from the man who was a staunch opponent of Nato before he got elected. One of the reasons he gives sheds some light on how much technological research is linked to the military these days, as he claimed a neutral Spain would lag far behind in this field.

On the positive side, the whole spectrum of the Spanish left (including the CNT-U, but not the CNT-AIT, which urged abstention) was very effectively united in a campaign which won a 'no' vote in Catalonia and Euskadi (the Basque country). Only a week before the result the 'no' vote was reckoned to be 4 points ahead of the 'yes' vote, but then it fell 10% because of the last minute pressure applied by the media.

Shortly after the referendum, in May '86, a confidential memorandum from the Spanish government planning further integration of it's forces into Nato was leaked. Given that Gonzales had specifically promised such a thing wouldn't happen as a condition for being given a 'yes' vote, this has helped to fuel an already healthy scepticism and anti-yankee feeling.

THE MADRID OFFICES: As some people have claimed these are being bought with state funding, I got the following details when I was in Madrid. Cost of paying off loan to buy premises: 200,000 pts (£1000) per month. This is paid by contributions of 2,000pts per month from 100 members of the CNT-U throughout Spain. The building will be paid off by the year 2000. Previous rent in Madrid - 100,000 pts per month.

After this mailing your sub stands at...

NEWS FROM 'LA ESTIBA'

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT: ARTICLES FROM THE PAPER OF THE SPANISH DOCKERS

Nos. 18 and 19, September and October, 1986.

S/I/N.

PRIVATISATION:

Contenemar (a national shipping company which is being used to try out the government's privatisation plans) is using non-registered dockers and not having the minimum number of workers required by safety standards.

BARCELONA: 6.8.86. - Dockers broke through a police cordon and prevented scabs working.

NATIONAL: 29.8.86. - Rolling strikes begun in the 11 ports where Contenemar operates, mainly Barcelona, Bilbao, Las Palmas, Tenerife and Valencia.

BARCELONA: 29.8.86. - Scabs taken on with an illegal contract (new employment during a strike is illegal in the first place), but dockers invaded the ship and threw them into the harbour. This got a small note in the Guardian, but what wasn't mentioned was that the scabs were professional strike breakers and, according to Black Flag, members of the fascist group 'Fuerza Nueva' (New Force)

The co-ordinadora (C-O) put out a poster asking unemployed people not to take jobs on the docks during the strike and offering them free legal help if they were pressurised to do so. In the same vein, unemployed groups from Valencia and the Basque Country were represented at the C-O's conference in Alicante on 17&18.9.86., along with representatives from 36 Spanish ports.

An international dockers' conference to be held in Barcelona, 29-31.10.86 with delegates from Britain, Denmark, France, Italy, Portugal and Sweden.

'El Pais' falsified a communique from the C-O on Contenemar by changing such phrases as '(we are) opposed to the government's plans...' to 'opposed to the socialist's plans...' As well as this the paper has continually ignored the illegality of the company's actions, as has the Generalitat (the Catalan regional government) and the national government in Madrid.

Rolling strikes against Con. became all out on 15.10.86., as agreed at the Alicante conference.

National strike of all dockers on 16.10.86 led to several confrontations:

VALENCIA: 8 arrests, 21 injured in total.

BARCELONA: 7 arrests, 30 dockers injured.

ALICANTE: A human blockade on 17.10.86.

TENERIFFE: 3 ships prevented from unloading, 7 arrests and 1 docker was hospitalised.

The government refused to negotiate. On the 17th the C-O arranged to meet the government in Barcelona, but instead found the Guardia Civil and were dispersed.

La Estiba no.20 reports on a conference of autonomous unions, 27&28.9.86, with the C-O, the SOC and other regional or industry specific unions such as CUT, SU, CAT, CANC, FAC, etc. The subjects discussed were repression and elections to work committees, though the latter does not apply to the SOC.

The C-O does stand for these elections, which is one reason almost all of it's CNT members are CNT-U not CNT-AIT, though it must be said that it's tactics of militant direct action are pretty alien to a large element in the CNT-U, ie the more cautious types.

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