There is enough money around to provide work and resources to meet the needs of everyone. But at the moment, after over fifteen years of all out attacks on services, the government and the bosses are happy to keep it for themselves and for us to fight over the few scraps that they throw us. They will keep taking away our services as long as we let them get ORGANISING OURSELVES

SCRAPS FOR

exploit us and the users of our services for their own ends. It's vital that we defend the right for genuine, free community-based services providing for people's real needs.

tal that we
start, in small ways at first,
to get our confidence back.
Our starting point in
getting together must be that
we are completely opposed
to the disastrous direction

Workers are l guilt-tripped into not

ourselves. U

e ground, and conse-ently more insensitive d heavy-handed, it's of-hard enough keeping ur job let alone thinking

bosses a e. We c

be increasingly untrained, unmotivated, low-waged, or even voluntary.

350 3

FREE OR DONATION

NEW SERIES - ISSUE NUMBER ONE SUMMER 1994

Paper of the Solidarity Federation - The British Section of the International Workers Association

BANGLADESHI GARMENT WORKERS APPEAL

In Bangladesh the independent, militant union, the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF), has in a poor country like Banglalaunched a grass roots campaign to win better wages and union organisation.

Initially the campaign will focus on getting a "Festival Bonus". In the past workers received a bonus equal to a month's pay in celebration of the holiday of Eid, but this is being ignored in the textile industry. Last year the NGWF won a fight over payment of May Day as a national holiday and they want to repeat this success.

The campaign will be based on demanding the bonus from the bosses, mass publicity, expanding the campaign to other workers, students, women activists and holding demonstrations and meetings. If this is successful, a general strike of garment workers will be called.

To make this a success the NGWF needs \$2,000. This sort of money goes a long way desh. To help in this international appeal Lewisham Solidarity Federation is collecting donations.

The NGWF recently won a dispute at Flint Garments in the capital Dhaka using sitins and other direct action tactics. We can offer our solidarity, but we can also learn from their uncompromising stance. Workers here in Britain have lost much of the gains won by generations past in the same way as the NGWF are winning them now. We need to get back on the same track.

Send donations to: NGWF Appeal, PO Box 574, London, SE4 1DL (please make cheques payable to "Deptford DAM").

NORWAY - SAS HOTEL WORKERS FIGHT BACK

The hotel and restaurant sector in Norway is dominated by part-time, short-time and flexible working and has a low level of organisation. An important exception is the Scandanavian Airlines System (SAS) hotel in Oslo which has the most active and strongest workplace organisation of the Hotel and Restaurant

Workers Federation. Last summer SAS wanted to bring in an outside contractor and fire 120 workers but this met with a massive reaction from the workforce. They prepared for an illegal strike while other workers threatened to boycott the hotel if the plans continued. These measures forced SAS to back down and to agree not to use outside contractors in the future.

However, after a mere 6 months management were at it again. This time they intended to use a famous gourmet cook, Bent Stiansen, as a tool to crush the union and to flexibilise working practices. By opening a new restaurant under Stiansen, the hotel

plex was severely reprimanded

for organising a 400-strong un-

ion meeting and for distributing

leaflets and the SMOT paper,

Basta!, while other workers are

suffering a campaign of intimi-

dation. The management at "In-

tegral" are aiming to establish a

joint venture with Bosch-Siemens

and other German firms but first

they have to meet a number of

restaurant would be forced to close down and many union activists would lose their jobs thereby weakening the union substantially. Shop stewards were told that this time the employers' association would use huge resources in an effort to smash the

They answered mobilising all 210 members and elected a strike committee. Other workers were mobilised too and stop alcohol deliveries and lift repairs. All this activity led Bent Stiansen to withdraw his plans for a new restaurant saying he would not be a victim of a struggle between the employers and the local union. One important reason for the success of the SAS Hotel workers is that their union is functioning from the bottom up. There are no full-timers and all decisions are taken by the members at assemblies. Another reason is that they show no respect for the official trade union structure in Norway choosing to approach other workers directly to inform and mobilise them rather than relying on official channels.

BYELORUSSIA - WORKERS UNDER ATTACK

During the last 2 decades of the Marxist dictatorship in the ex-Soviet Union, SMOT, the independent union, constantly and consistently stuck up for workers' rights and as a result suffered heavy repression. Since the much-vaunted fall of "Communism" things haven't changed as the events described below in Byelorussia demonstrate. In fact, there is still a pro-Communist majority in the Byelorussian par-

liament. In January of this year at the "Zenith" factory in Vileyka,

management had 14 workers put on trial after a wildcat strike demanding fresh national elections and the formation of a "government of the people's confidence". At the "Transistor" factory the local president of SMOT was sacked in February and other workers faced harassment for organising a legal I hour warning strike and a mass meeting both in protest at the company's disregard for the few laws governing workers' rights. In the capital, Minsk, the SMOT president at the "Integral" com-

conditions including ridding the complex of unions, especially At the end of February, at the "Belvar" complex, also in

Minsk, a worker was detained and interrogated by the police for organising a strike committee and distributing its leaflets and Basta! The management have also achieved, after 8 years of trying, the sacking of the SMOT president for participation in a demonstration and mass meeting in February and for organising strikes for decent wages in December and January.

In the eastern city of Mogilev 2 workers, including a SMOT activist, are facing charges after organising mass meetings and demonstrations in January and

FREE OR DONATION

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When the Italian government fell apart last year in a huge wave of corruption scandals, the right wing press in this country had a field day. The clean-cut image of British

politics was held up as [something for all the world to admire and for us all to be proud of, not like these cheating continental types. No-one should be fooled by this and a glimpse behind the headlines will show

Britain is increasingly being run by a whole series of quangos stuffed full of Tories and their friends. Over 40,000 unelected appointees spend £12 billion while an additional £38 billion is handled in the same way in the National Health Service and a further £2 billion by the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). This represents about 20% of total government spending. These bodies are not accountcodes of conduct and are havens for the incompetent and corrupt as the following examples show:

* At the West Midlands Regional Health Authority investigations revealed that £10 million went to waste, including £81,000 on redundancy pay and a pension for a director who was to be dismissed. * At the Wessex Regional Health Authority £20 million went down the drain with the installation of an information system that turned out to be useless.

* At the Department of Employment incorrect payments

of £69.5 million were made to Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) while another £48 million was squandered on a "Field System

Computer" that didn't work. We in the Solidarity Federation believe that all states are corrupt.

* At the Welsh Office £37 million is unaccounted for in road-building contracts while a further £6 million went missing in payments to Welsh

* Taxpayers were robbed of £3.6 million when 3 businessmen used contacts in the Scottish Office to buy thousand of houses despite the fact that higher bids were being made

The Welsh Development Agency had an unauthorised redundancy scheme for senior staff worth £1 million and also wasted £300,000 in an abortive attempt at privatisa-

These and many other examples which can be quoted only go to show that the decisions which affect our lives are being made by a bunch of freebooters who are only out to line their own pockets. And, of course, all this money has come from the wages that we working class people struggle so hard to earn only to see an ever increasing portion disappear in income tax, national insurance, VAT and a whole host of other taxes.

We see a government that is holding down our pay with one hand and taking larger

amounts away with the other while at the same time turning a blind eye to the inflation-busting rises the top bosses are awarding them-

selves. With the massive cuts in public services in the last 15 years a number of questions need to be answered - what has hap-

pened to the savings from these cuts?; why are taxes constantly being increased?; who is really benefitting? One thing is for certain, it isn't ordinary working class people who are reaping the ben-

We in the Solidarity Federation believe that all states are corrupt. They only serve to perpetuate a ruling class of power hungry parasites that feed off the efforts of us, the working class. We stand for a way of life where all of us has a say in the decisions that affect us, not like in the current system where we get consulted once every four years and only then to choose who will maintain corruption and exploitation that is part and parcel of the capitalist sys-

> DON'T MOAN, ORGANISE!

ILLEGAL STRIKE WINS The Merseyside postal dispute in April has proved once again that determined, concerted action organised at a grass roots level can take on any amount of anti-union legislation and win. The action began on Tuesday April 12th when a union member on the night shift was intimidated by a supervisor who then had him up before the floor manager for attempted assault resulting in suspension. Immediately the whole shift walked out and after management refused talks, the next shift followed suit. The Royal Mail applied for a High Court injunction but a mass meeting decided that, illegal or not, the

action would carry on. By this time the strike was spreading despite the UCW general secretary instructing a return to work and supporting the anti-strike laws by repudiating the action. After a weekend of negotiating the strike committee voted narrowly to recommend a return to work after getting the suspension lifted. This was the longest illegal strike since the legislation was brought in. It defied the High Court and the national union. It is only actions like this, controlled directly by the workers affected, not by full-time sell-out merchants, that not only get results, but also inspire those of us who believe strong workplace organisation is the key to real gains for working class people.

ORGANISINGRESISTANCE IN THE CARE INDUSTRY CONFERENCE FOR CARE WORKERS RESISTING CUTS - DIRECT ACTION ORGANISING WITH USERS MANCHESTER TOWN HALL SAT SEPT 10TH - 11.00PM TIL 5.00PM Public Service Workers' Network

POBOX, 1681 London N87LE

THE SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

A GUIDE

or union for common ac- also belong to one of the be independent of political does it mean for us? that we could all be ex- HOW FAR HAVE

to them the idea of working sise industrial organisation the class war by every means work in the class people controlling the dual structure of the SF at our disposal. their workplaces and lo- allows for other means of calities on a day to day ba- fighting back. We will sup- with enough resources, sarily in the sis with-

of local or politi cians or bosses of any de-

trying to build.

International Workers As-

sociation. The SF has a dual structure, being organised around where you live and where you work. The networks form the industrial strand of this structure and provide us with a focus for organisation and activity in the workplace and are the stepping stones to the formation of revolutionary

our structure is based on geographical area. Local groups consist of SF members who live close enough

The Solidarity Federation is therefore, above all, a working class organisation. Its politics, structure and outlook are aimed specifically at working class people. Our immediate and long term aims have no other purpose than to be of benefit to our class.

The Solidarity Fed-

While we seek revo-

and you have the outline of port, encourage and initiate sources are not being used all over the country as to us anyway. the sort of society we are all activities that help to to this end is down to the the situation elsewhere in

eration (SF) was formed in agement of workers. March 1994 when the Di- A WORKING rect Action Movement CLASS merged with the Education ORGANISATION Workers Network (EWN), the Public Service Workeration is therefore, above ers Network (PSWN) and all, a working class organithe Transport Workers Netsation. Its politics, structure work (TWN). It now forms and outlook are aimed spethe British section of the

cifically at working class people, Our immediate and long term aims have no other purpose than to be of benefit to our class. We reject elitism and do not claim to be the "leaders", real or imagined, of all workers, nor do we think we have all the answers. lutionary changes in soci-

ety - and not just a change in rulers - we believe in fightunions in the future. ing for immediate improve-The other strand of ments at all levels of our lives and our environment. We are both political and economic in outlook and are to each other to hold regu-



Solidarity - the unity lar meetings and therefore between them. We are open and more nowadays by all the social democratic unof interests within our class: organise local activity. to all, whether waged or sorts of people and with all ions will not tolerate the once the focus of the strug-Federation - an association These various members may unwaged, and will always sorts of meanings. So what activities of networks and gle has moved.

cal, over them.

A FREE SOCIETY

means of production and

distribution, organised di-

rectly by workplace organi-

should benefit everyone.

which deny our right to self-

well as being a co-opera-

tional link between work-

eplaceable imme-

iately. All posi-

ions of responsi-

ility are for a lim-

sexism,

nomophobia, na-

tionalism and all

her attitudes

which divide and

ppress working

jury to one is an

class people. An

njury to all.

These are the watch- ing on their work situation. aim to promote solidarity consist of those SF mem- be it. This is unlikely to

> same indus-We live in a world try, not neces-

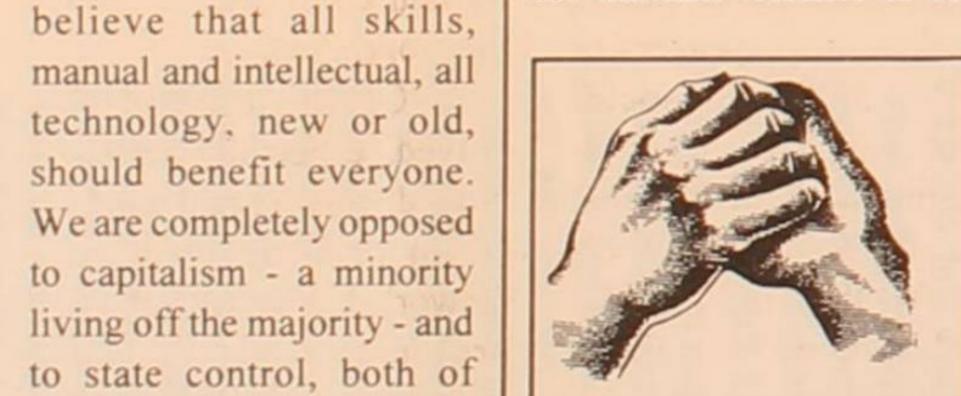
al and workplace or for the same happen until the unions manufac- employer. They spread in- themselves feel threatened. tured, to formation on workplace is- To present such a threat provide sues and promote the ideas would mean we have alfor every- of anarchosyndicalism. ready been successful, imon e's They tackle both local and plying that workplace miliwell-be- industry-wide issues, tants had found an indeing. That | thereby aiming to break the pendent voice, thereby makthese re- isolation felt in workplaces ing the unions less useful to increase the confidence, fact that the vast majority | their industry. To take ef- port social democracy, but The Solidarity Fed- politicisation and self-man- of people have virtually no fective action workers need to show it up as irrelevant control, physical or politi- reliable information such to the working class. We

> We believe a free so- ing dubious sources like the reformist unions, we may ciety must entail the com- media and the reformist fight for union rights, but mon ownership of the trade unions. we are totally against the SETTING THE

as networks produce and make no bones about this.

distribute, rather than us- We may be members of the

Industrial networks sations and local/district also provide a framework councils or committees. We for militant workers to set



their own agenda. This A system of volun- means we can choose our tary federation maintains own issues and demands the power at the base as without always having to react to the whims of the union bureaucracy or maners' organisations at local, agement. All in all, indusregional and international trial networks have a key level. Persons or commit- role, not least of all during tees delegated to carry out a dispute, by encouraging plecisions and tasks workplace organisation, will be recallable | holding local meetings and nd, if necessary, promoting solidarity, independence and flexibility of

Although industrial networks, with their comted period and are bined economic and political outlook, may appear to We actively be a new idea, this is not so. fight against rac- In fact this form of organisation dates from the days before social democracy entwined itself around and strangled working class ideas and organisation. Our ideas were effective then and can be more so now that social democracy has shown itself for the bank-

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

The word "net- rupt system that it is.

various networks, depend- parties and the TUC. We Industrial networks pelled and thus isolated. So WE COME?

democracy, but to show it up as

irrelevant to the working class.

Our aim is not to sup-

present unions, their lead-

ership, their structures and

their aims. We will use the

unions to suit our own in-

terests, so we defend union

rights solely to fight for

positions within unions. To

become absorbed within a

union, particularly its hier-

archy, is to nullify mili-

tancy and flexible thought

with endless meetings that

bear no relevance to the

workplace or to union mem-

bers. To us the only organi-

sation capable of represent-

ing workers' interests has

to be workplace and indus-

trially based. That is, we

see organisations control-

led by workers as the only

workers' opinions and in-

terests. Bureaucrats and

intermediaries are surplus

to requirements as they only

serve to control militancy

and preserve their own du-

work idea is a break from

cial democratic organisa-

struggle and displayed

healthy methods of organi-

sation but as a consequence

The industrial net-

bious positions.

legitimate bodies to express

We will not fight for

workers' rights.

of their purely reactive nawork" is being used more It may be argued that ture and limited political

An industrial net-Our aim is not to support social

with, a political aiming to build a less reactive but

positive organisation within the industry. The long term aim of industrial networks is, obviously, the creation of an anarchosyndicalist union. So, how far have we come? There are now three wellestablished networks each organising, building contacts and actively spreading anarchosyndicalist ideas in workplaces in their The Education

Workers Network (EWN)

has members from all lev-

els of the education system from primary schools right through to the universities and is open not only to teachers and lecturers, but to students and anyone else who works in a school or college, no matter their job. The Public Service Workers Network (PSWN) organises in a whole range of services provided by local and national authorities as well as voluntary agencies, including the health service and the civil service and services that were once run by local government which have now been contracted out. The Transport Workers Network (TWN) has a presence in various branches of the transport industry, including the railways, the buses and road

Within this set up there is scope, for example, for health workers or railway workers to come together to discuss issues and plan actions that are relevant to their own particular section. Clearly there

the recent past where rank anarchosyndicalists who do and file efforts to organise not work in any of these have been within the conthree industries and steps straints of the existing soare being taken to set up additional networks. The tions and practices. There SF as a whole has an imhave been others that have portant role to play in this grown up mainly out of task, as part of its work in promoting the spread of industrial networks.

LOCAL STRATEGY

to the development of in- bine both support for industrial networks are the dustrial disputes and agitaactivities of local groups of tion on local issues as twin the Solidarity Federation focuses and the establishment of anarchosyndicalist groups ·locals or "Solidarity Cen- based in the localities where

for action. issues, SF groups and mem-self, it needs an organisabers are involved in issues tional base to spread it. Inwhich affect working class dustrial networks are our people beyond the answer to the inadequacy workplace because the class of trade unionism, but if war also takes place on they are not tied into an working class streets and active solidarity movement housing estates. A local SF they will only be in a posigroup organises members tion to argue from the point of the industrial networks of view of their own distogether with SF members putes and industries. The who are in no network into reverse of this is that unless one unit which can work the solidarity movement is locally. This type of broader tied to industrial networks local organisation comple- geared to mobilising real ments the industrial net-solidarity, it will be reduced works, especially with in- to what amounts to charity creasing flexibilisation of work. the workforce with a decreasing number of work- dustrial issues and the net-

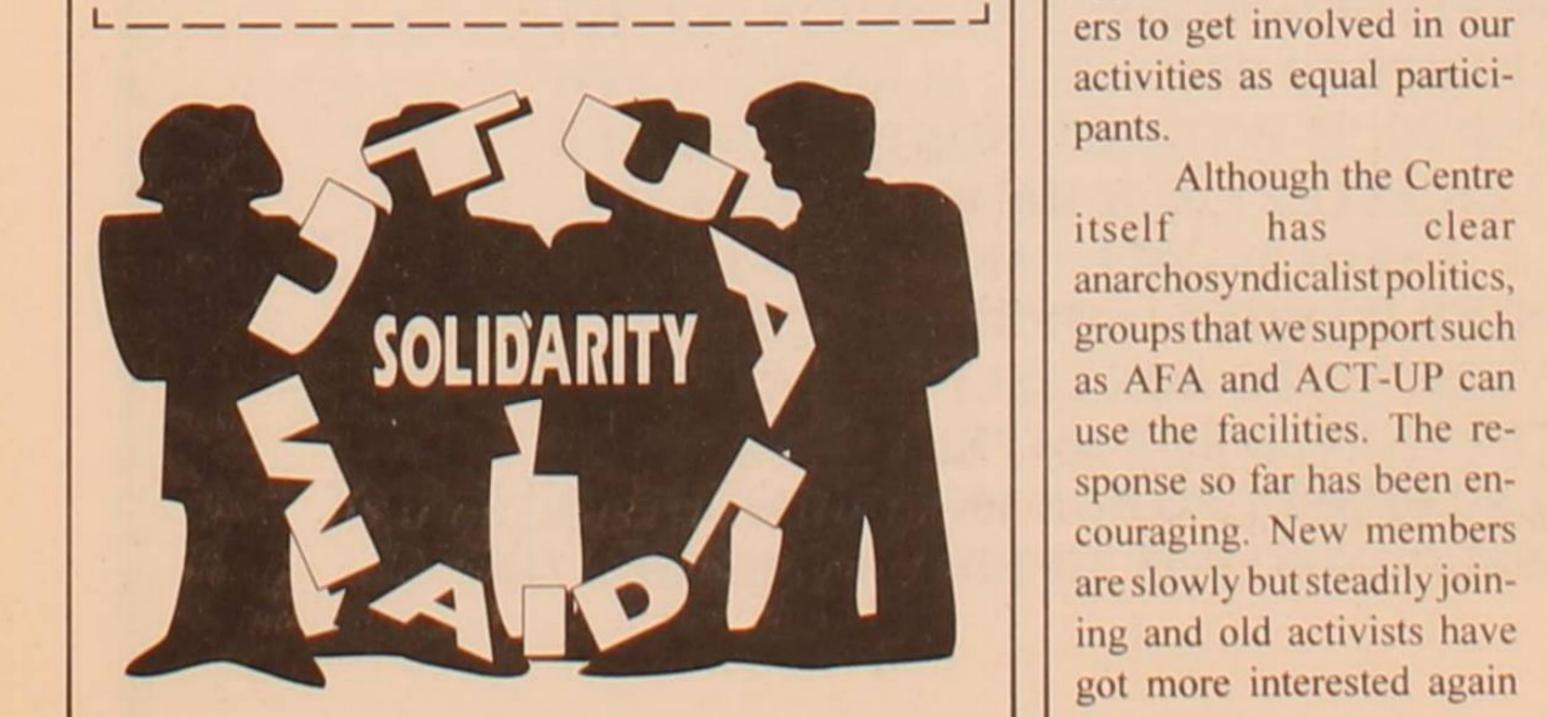
one industry. single issue groups, how- it is best way for working to struggles which affect tablishment of locals, or

Very closely linked ingly, it is possible to com-

tres". Locals can be seen as rather than solidarity action. a place where like-minded It had no agenda to set light workers can gather both to an explosion of militant politically and socially action against the bosses which would be a space for and capitalism. If class condebate and a springboard flict on the shop floor is to Apart from industrial challenge to capitalism it-

Thus we can link inand class people to organise. participative, however radi- Not only can we make our | ing much-needed funds, ployed workers and workcal and militant, but groups own specific contribution also allow newer members ers in industries with no which will actually tackle to disputes, but we can also to meet others in a less for-network, has been the main issues from a working class make sure that win, lose or mal situation than a meet-problem. perspective. By occupying stalemate the lessons and ing. This social or "club" anarchosyndicalism isn't space experience get put to good aspect is vital in maintain-solely concerned with ecoanarchosyndicalism gives a use rather than being wast- ing interest and attracting nomic or political issues, class character and a point ed. And, of course, the es- new contacts and members. but with both, activities can working class people. By "Solidarity Centres", can general advice or informa- lems can be sorted out with

for this work. running it are expected to area or topic they can set up CONTACT: NATIONAL SECRETARY SOLIDARITY FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION PO BOX 384 PRESTON LANCS PR1 6PQ



NETWORKS AND HOW THEY CAN WORK

ers Network has been tributed by SF groups and where we have many con- long term, in keeping with around now for just over 3 members, and by one-off tacts. Meetings like these, the industrial strategy of the years. It was set up when a mail shots to workplaces, a following up clusters of SF our aim is the formation small number of method which has gained enquiries and bringing them of an anarchosyndicalist anarchosyndicalist activists us many of our contacts. together offer us our best union in the transport inin the rail, bus and road Apart from TW, we bet in slowly but surely es- dustry. While this may be haulage industries came to- have also produced and dis- tablishing ourselves as a some way off yet, we are gether with the aim of pro- tributed a number of leaf- concrete presence prepared nevertheless encouraged ducing material that could lets relating to specific is- to address social insecurity, not only by the growing be distributed throughout sues and disputes. These degenerating working con- influence we have which the whole of the transport have also been well received ditions and put forward the belies our present small industry. Our bulletin, and, again, have led to new alternative to misery and numbers, but also by fact Transport Worker, now on contacts, as well as annoy- exploitation. its eighth issue, has dou- ing officials in the reform- In the short term our letins have already wound bled its circulation to 4,000 ist transport unions. copies, many of which are distributed directly by a able to organise public results which will mean ions.

The Transport Work- contacts. TW is also dis- in Bristol, both being areas have already done. In the

growing list of workplace meetings in Newcastle and continuing the work we

that the our leaflets and bulaim is to consolidate and up the hierarchies of the We have also been build on these encouraging established transport un-

LOCALS A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Norwich Solidarity and come out of hiberna-Centre has been open since tion. Having a centre, even May 1992 and is run by the a small one, gives us an local group of the SF. The important focus. It shows Centre has books, pam- we mean business, gives us phlets, posters and badges a lot of credibility and has ers being tied to one indus- works to local issues and at for sale; information on sub- been a unifying factor in try or one employer. By the same time make strike jects from anti-racism to the activities of fighting around issues of support a function of groups industrial law; a small but anarchosyndicalists in the interest to all working class with a far broader class per- growing library as well as a area. Ideally we want the people strong local organi- spective and range of activ- small but shrinking stash of Centre to be a place where sation will prevent any ten- ities than a single issue | booze for when meetings all sorts of activities can go dency to concentrate on the group. This can only broad- drag on too long. We pro- on and to act as a place to "parochial" concerns of any en the base of duce the local Solidarity rekindle some real solidaranarchosyndicalism by Bulletin; organise public ity and confidence within What we need is not spreading acceptance that | meetings with speakers or the working class. videos and hold social Getting people inevents which, besides rais- volved, especially unem-

We do not wish to see this

The Centre isn't a be varied and such probfocussing on solidarity, and only provide a greater im- tion centre, a set-up which a little imagination. Also if naming ourselves accord- petus to and a greater focus | can lead to a producer/con- a number of members wish sumer scenario where those to work on one particular advise those who call in. a working group.

To summarise then, sort of divide being set up having a local centre, even between working class peo- if it's just a single room to ple. We don't see ourselves start with, has many advanas experts, we simply offer tages. It immediately takes practical solidarity and the us a step away from being opportunity for centre us- just another abstract politiers to get involved in our cal group, and shows we're activities as equal partici- doing something real. We now have a centre open at Although the Centre certain advertised times clear when someone can be found anarchosyndicalist politics, there. And of course it has a groups that we support such political role to play in proas AFA and ACT-UP can moting revolution. We'd use the facilities. The re- say give it a go in your area.

> Norwich Solidarity Centre, PO Box 73, Norwich, NR3 1QD.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION:

THE IWA The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the nternational Workers Association, which was founded in

1922. The IWA has sections all over Europe, in South America, Australia, Japan, the former Soviet Bloc, the USA and Africa. Why organise internationally? As capitalism has become increasingly international, always looking for new markets to "exploit", so it is essential to stress the need for internationalism among all workers. Capitalism relies on divide and rule tactics. It therefore preaches rabid nationalism and patriotism. The Labour Party and the TUC go along with this and continue to use similar slogans whenever the opportunity arises. A genuine workers movement must completely reject this.

Our movement is based on the principle of solidarity. We embrace internationalism and reject nationalism and patriotism, just as we reject other reactionary attitudes and divide and rule tactics - like racism and sexism - all of which split workers and weaken any possibilities for action. Workers are exploited everywhere - that is our common link. We have far more in common with French railway workers, Polish miners or South African street cleaners than with any boss or politician, British or other-

So where has the IWA been for the past 72 years? Until the second world war it had over 5 million affiliates worldwide, consisting of revolutionary and anarchosyndicalist unions. A combination of war, fascism, state-capitalism and communism all but destroyed it. But with the death of Franco in Spain and the subsequent rebirth in the late '70's of the CNT (Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo), the IWA had a new lease of life. Although nowhere near its previous strength, there are sections in over a dozen countries, ranging from propaganda groups to functioning unions. In Britain, the SF is in transition between these two forms of organisation - the industrial networks will become active revolutionary unions once they have enough members and influence.

One thing is certain; the SF will always look to build internationally with all anarchosyndicalist organisations through the IWA. This strong international perspective will play a critical role as we take on capitalism across the world, and win.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION: THE IWA The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the International Workers Association