

DIRECT ACTION



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PAPER OF THE DAM/IWA...THE VOICE OF ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM.



The miners' strike has been defeated, not by the strength of the state so much as by reformist trade unionism, which has forgotten how to fight.

The members of other unions could not render practical industrial assistance to the miners due to the very structure of the unions they are in. Trade unions have been emasculated by 100 years of bowing to legality, bowing to the Labour Party, bowing to arbitration and conciliation, rather than fighting.

Faced with a resolute Tory government they are powerless. From 1979--1983 the TUC hung around waiting for their "pals" in the Labour Party to be elected. When that didn't happen they hadn't a clue what to do.

The unions have shown their weakness and it has been noted by the Tories during the miners' strike. Now it will be the turn of the teachers, healthworkers, dockers, railworkers, etc and they will all be picked off one by one, their huge fortunes sequestered, their actions ended by the waving of a writ.

UNLESS workers organise inside their unions in rank-and-file groups, independent of all parties, contemptuous of the law and committed to direct action and solidarity. If this is done they can begin to turn the tide.

It is the only realistic option.

STORM CLOUDS GATHER

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

ENERGY: oppose thatcher's no-future policy **BOOKS:** albert camus

HEALTH: the real killers **SOUTH AFRICA:** workers fight back

WHAT NEXT? the rank-and-file organise

Plus Lots More...

A DISARMING WEAPON

Most people have very definite views on the nuclear issue. There is much public debate between those who want to be rid of nuclear weapons and those who profess to see them as a necessary evil. In general, however, the two broad bodies of opinion do share a common area of belief—a very significant one.

Listening to celebrities of church, showbusiness and politics preaching to the converted may be a pleasant way to spend an afternoon, but what people think and do in their day-to-day lives is more important.

As long as the energies of those people most committed to getting rid of nuclear weapons (and conventional ones too, for that matter) are diverted into relatively futile activities, the peace groups are fulfilling the role of a safety valve, easing the pressure created by peoples' anger, which would otherwise vent its full force on the government, and providing a means of soothing confused middle-class consciences.

Awareness of this gives rise to another idea which merits consideration. Consider the possibility of a "stitch-up". To be more specific, the idea that the governments of the world use the idea of a nuclear holocaust as a threat to hold over the heads of ordinary people. Understandably concerned, activists get involved in campaigning against nuclear weapons. Their energies and anger are directed into the nuclear issue and the numerous areas of debate arising from it. Consequently, pressing everyday issues are set aside. "Yes, it's terrible the way people at the lower end of the economic scale are treated, but let's concentrate on saving the world before we set about making it a better place". Of course this is not a conscious attitude, but it is descriptive of what happens.

Too cynical? Overly pessimistic? Possibly. After all, there are a lot of things about the ways world politics function about which we are never likely to know the truth. But it would be stupid to discount totally the idea of the nuclear arms race being a piece of global theatre to distract people from mundane issues of economic, social and other kinds of oppression—in other words, from issues which might make them begin to question the logic and rationale of the status quo.

This kind of questioning, logically leading to the pursuit of a complete change of society, poses a far greater threat to the state than any number of GND supporters harmlessly demanding the abandonment of weapons no-one really wants to use.

G. Kirkman.

It is widely accepted that nuclear weapons are the products of the Cold War: that the global division between two groupings of states each clustered around one of the two "superpowers", has evolved into a situation where East and West are in a perpetual state of rivalry, trying to protect and promote cherished ideologies. This, it is argued, has led to the stockpiling of horrific nuclear weapons, to protect each bloc's interests from encroachment by its enemies. These views form the broad context in which the nuclear debate takes place, in the mass media and at other levels. The purpose of this article is to offer a few ideas to challenge the "conventional wisdom" and broaden the scope for debate.

It goes without saying that peace campaigning groups, such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, are a thorn in the side of the government, diametrically opposed in attitudes and aims... or does it? As an organisation, CND appears to have neither the ability nor the inclination to do any more than propagandise. This alone is no reason to criticise. Many political pressure groups are limited by circumstances to a position where, in the short term, to attempt anything other than effective propaganda is to court disaster. Many people involved in peace groups are very dedicated characters, whose concern and commitment to their ultimate goal is to be applauded. The problem arises from the fact that so much of these peoples' time and energy is channelled into activities which often result in no more than expressions of their aims.

A rally in Hyde Park may be a good morale-booster, and a chance to meet like-minded people, but in relation to the effort put into it, little is achieved in the way of awakening people to what is going on. Standing among a good-natured crowd of kindred spirits



MINING DISPUTE fighting on the job

Despite the strike being called off, all the issues remain. Pit closures kill communities and throw workers on the scrapheap. Now there is the issue of the 700-plus miners sacked and victimised by the NCB: they must be reinstated. We owe it to them and to Joe Green and David Jones who died for this strike on the picket lines, to continue fighting.

That the strike lasted so long and remained so solid is a tribute to the determination and bravery of the miners. The strike may have been lost but the struggle goes on; we change our tactics but not our principles. The fight must now continue in the pits, so that the battle to keep them open and the communities intact is won.

*The return to the pits of a mass of militant workers committed to the destruction of the NCB's plans is a tactic the government fears. A policy of go-slow, disruption, work-to-rule and the inevitable damage to machinery linked with snap wildcat strikes of particular sections or trades is effective even in pits where it is only a minority who are involved. Such a strategy embraces not only those who have stayed out on strike for its full duration, but also those who have been driven back through hardship and in shame, in the dying weeks of the strike. Obviously these latter are different from the hardline political scabs. We can reunite our union and redress the division and humiliation Thatcher has tried to create.

*Each pit needs to create its own council of action, including sacked NUM members, which can co-ordinate its actions with others, to protect those who have been or may be sacked. We need to be flexible and farseeing in our strategy, to advance again in the future so as to tighten the screw on the government.

TUC

*Of course this strike could have been won, but for the betrayal and inaction of the TUC. Their promises of solidarity were never delivered. Most unions made no real effort to organise effective industrial action. No real work was done to convince rank-and-file unionists of the need for action, to protect their own unions from attack as well as the NUM.

*The lesson is that we cannot depend on the TUC to do other than to sell us out, and sabotage any efforts to build solidarity. At the anti-rate-capping demo in London on March 6th, Norman Willis, TUC leader, ran away from angry miners and anarchists, and into the protective arms of the police. It is ironic when a so-called TUC leader seeks protection from the very same police thugs who have rioted in mining villages and injured and abused so many miners, in order to protect himself from the justified anger of decent trade unionists, disgusted at his spineless behaviour during the strike.

*We cannot depend on the Labour Party to do other than make half-hearted statements of solidarity supported by inaction, particularly from corpses like Kinnock.

*We have to win this battle largely on our own: we will not achieve victory in the boardrooms of the NCB, nor the Houses of Parliament, nor through the benevolent offices of ACAS. This fight started in the pits and there it shall end. I.S. LEEDS



THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT!

The syndicalist COB (Bolivian Workers' Central, membership 800,000) victoriously concluded a 16-day general strike against the "socialist" government of Siles Zuazo on March 25th. The fruit of their victory—a 350% wage increase to keep well ahead of Bolivia's inflation rate.

COCA-COLA BOYCOTT

The Coke boycott continues (see DA 23) until the workers at the company's Guatemala plant get union recognition and job security. These workers are lit-

WOBBLES STILL OUT

The IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) are continuing their struggle for union recognition at Keller Fish, New York (see DA 23). The strikers have been out since October 25th faced by scabs armed with iron bars and local cops out for the their arrest. Fellow workers have raised \$1,400 for the strike fund. Donations to: Keller Strike Fund, IWW, Box 183, New York 10028.

erally fighting for their lives—officials of STEGAC, their union, have been imprisoned and tortured. Support for the boycott can help them win.

RANK & FILE CONFERENCE

will be held at Kellingly Miners' Welfare on 20-21 April at 10 am. A creche and overnight accommodation will be available if required. Registration is £3.00—free to strikers and unemployed.

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ESPERANTO the language of CLASS STRUGGLE

In establishing communication between groups in this country and those in other parts of the world, a problem exists in language. Some groups are fortunate in having the use of a French, Spanish or Italian speaker to help them keep in touch abroad but others are limited in their communication by being unable to write to other than English speakers.

An alternative is to learn Esperanto. Although it has never achieved great popularity, especially in England, it has maintained a certain amount of interest amongst socialists and libertarians around the world, and the magazine of the libertarian faction of the Workers Esperanto Association is sent to thirty countries including Japan.

Esperanto is easy and cheap to learn, you can pick up the first part of a free ten lesson correspondence course at your local library or from the British Esperanto Association.

After that various magazines and books are available and through the magazine LIBERECANA LIGILO contacts can soon be made.

It doesn't take a great deal of effort to learn Esperanto, in fact a lot less than any other language and it will enable easier contacts with libertarians everywhere.

M.P.

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ESPERANTO CENTRE,
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ESSEX

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There are few modern French writers as well known as Albert Camus (1913-1960). The Penguin editions of his novels are reprinted nearly every year--and books such as *The Fall* and *The Outsider* have had a great influence on contemporary youth. What is less well-known here in Britain is his political commitment which evolved toward syndicalism.

Unlike many of the French left-wing intellectuals, Camus came from a solidly working-class background--the Belcourt district of Algiers, vividly evoked in *L'Envers et L'Endroit* and *The Outsider*. As he wrote in 1953 "Almost all French writers who today pretend to speak in the name of the proletariat were born of comfortable or well-to-do parents".

Was his a deprived childhood? The sun and the sea were free, but it did not take long for the awareness of the cultural silence he faced to come about: "A poor childhood--essential difference when I went to see my uncle. At home objects didn't have a name. We said the soup plate, the pot on the mantelpiece, etc. At his house: the Vosges glazed earthenware, the Quimper service, etc. I awoke to the idea of choice." (Carnets 4)

He emerged from this milieu not only with contact with his uncle Gustave Acault, whose job as a quality butcher enabled him to have time for political reading and discussion, but also with the help of teachers Louis Germain and Jean Gernier. He played goal for Racing Universitaire Algerois and might have made soccer his career, but at 17 was struck by TB which put a stop to this prospect and would affect him for the rest of his life, as in those days sophisticated drug therapy was unavailable.

After hospitalisation he joined in cultural pursuits, writing, theatre etc with lycée and student acquaintances. As with so many well-meaning but naive young intellectuals in the 1930s he joined the Communist Party, no doubt influenced by the writers Gide and Malraux but he was soon to be disillusioned over the French CP's about face on Algerian self-determination. With the signing of the Franco-Soviet pact in 1935, any support to anti-colonialism was opposed as weakening the capacity of the French to confront Nazi Germany. This resulted in the expulsion of Camus.

The outbreak of the Second World War found him editing the

leftish paper *Alger Republicain* rigorously anti-Stalinist with Pascal Pia, as a campaigning outlook of the emigres naturally appealed to Camus. Their struggle proved that one could fight for anti-fascist principles without falling into the hands of Stalinist totalitarians, that one could be a man of the left without being a Communist".

An abortive attempt to set up an aid committee for victims of the Cold War brought Camus into personal contact with French syndicalists, and he later came to help with a small magazine *Temoins*, published by Jean-Paul Samson, friend and publisher of the Italian anti-fascist Silone. The magazine's French editor was the proof-reader Robert Proix, through whom Camus also met Giovanna Berneri and Pierre Monatte. Camus was also linked with Maurice Joyeux, who ran *Le Libertaire* and *Le Monde Libertaire*, and they collaborated in public events for Spain.

In 1957 Camus was awarded the Nobel Prize. An article in *Révolution Proletaire* entitled "Albert Camus: Un Copain" (a mate) commented, "Camus is a man of life, thus of contradictions; susceptible to error and weakness... What we know of Camus is his solidarity toward the militants of Spain, Bulgaria, Hungary, not only on the occasion of meetings or of manifestoes but when there are no other witnesses than anonymous ones."

Others besides ourselves know this. The old rebels and aliens of the United States... the students of Montevideo, who publish him in their mimeographed bulletin, the young workers of Prague or of Warsaw and the unknown person from Barcelona who sent Camus a postcard with the simple word: Gracías."

world in which there is no more room for human beings, for joy, for active leisure, is a world that should die." (Carnets 4)

The time after the Liberation saw a period of hope that was not to resurface until May '68. This hope for a better future was lost--in the Communist/Gaullist struggle for power in France, and in the Cold War internationally. Camus' allegorical novel on the Nazi occupation brought him more popularity, but his refusal to join Satre in following the CP and the USSR, whilst not backing capitalism and the USA, made him enemies on the left and the right. In his major political work, *The Rebel*, his position was seen to be evolving towards the syndicalism of Pouget and Pelloutier, whose eclipse in the workers' movement by the authoritarian socialism of Lenin, was by this time complete. It was a lonely position, but it proved prophetic, for towards the end of his life the otherwise intelligent Satre was to see the error of his support for the Soviet Union. Only a few others among them Orwell, shared Camus position at the time. In reply to criticism from a communist Camus stated that he had not learnt about freedom from Marx, but from poverty.

In 1948 he began a friendship with Spanish Anarcho syndicalists, through his acquaintance with the actress Maria Casares. He gave support to the campaign of the Spanish Federation of Political Prisoners to release Spanish republicans locked in camps in the USSR. He also began an association with the CNT in France's paper *Solidaridad Obrera* (later closed down by de Gaulle to avoid giving offence to Franco), and with its editor Fernando Gomez Pelaez. Herbert Lottman in his biography of Camus comments, "The left-syndicalist, but

Albert Camus died tragically in a road accident in January 1960.

As syndicalists we see the role of the individual in history as a symbol of collective struggles. Just as there would have been an anti-authoritarian current against Marx in the First International without Bakunin powerfully articulating it, just as the people of the Ukraine would still have risen against Bolshevik and Tsarist dictatorship without the military genius of Makhno, in the same way it was the spirit of Camus the rebel, rather than Satre or Althusser, that best represented the aspirations of the worker-student uprisings of France in May 1968 towards freedom and self-management.

TC BAIL LEEDS DAM

albert camus syndicalist

The self-emancipation of exploited and dominated humanity requires unity of action on an international scale across all military blocs, all national and language boundaries. Such unity requires direct communication amongst equals without any intermediaries. World Labor needs an international language.



LEARN ESPERANTO NOW!

WHEN POVERTY IS THEIR ALLY...

Like the other infectious diseases of childhood, whooping cough has been in decline for the past 80 years. Its prevalence is cyclic, with peaks just under four years apart. The last of these was in 1978.

The DHSS and the medical profession have reacted with repeated exhortations to parents to have their children vaccinated; the vaccination rate has declined since 1974, to about 50 per cent, mainly because parents are understandably reluctant to expose their children to the risk of vaccine-induced brain damage.

This implies that the epidemic would be less widespread and few children would die if parents would comply. The evidence suggests, however, that the course of illness and the number of deaths caused by it are only partly affected by the rate of vaccination. Five per cent of unvaccinated children are likely to develop whooping cough, but 3 per cent of vaccinated children will also suffer from it. Overall, more than 30 per cent of those who develop whooping cough in England and Wales have been vaccinated against it.

Whooping cough can be an unpleasant disease at any age, but it is particularly dangerous for babies in their first year. In fact, most deaths are among infants under three months old—most often death happens around 30 days.

The incidence of permanent brain damage from the disease—about one in 300,000 cases—is believed to be about the same as the incidence of brain damage caused by vaccination.

However, vaccination would not necessarily protect these children.

In the 1979 epidemic, Swedish doctors notified a similar rate of cases to their colleagues in England and Wales. However there were no deaths, whereas we had 27. There has been no death due to whooping cough in Sweden since 1979, yet this was the year vaccinations ceased.

Comparison of mortality rates between countries, and between social groups within countries, shows a characteristic pattern. Death rates are directly related to income—the association between low income and high mortality is strongest for infants under the age of five.

In the third world diarrhoea and measles—conditions that usually take a mild course here—are fatal to millions of babies. The differences in diet, social and environmental conditions that produce the contrast between affluent northern countries and the poor south is a more obvious step in the progression that differentiates Sweden from Britain, and their patterns of whooping cough mortality.

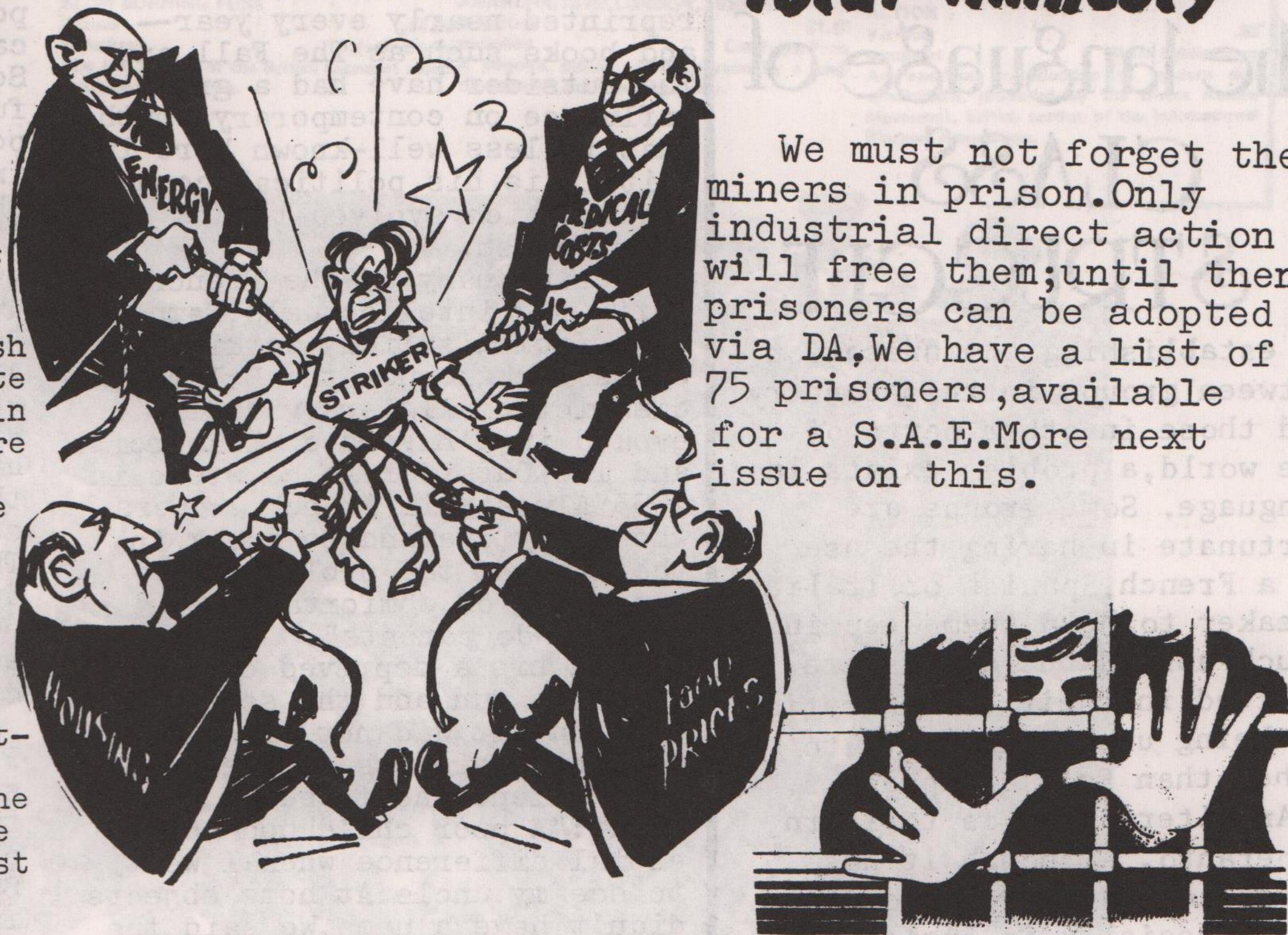
By emphasising the importance of vaccination, the DHSS deflects attention from the factors that underlie the growing severity of infectious diseases—all are now increasing. Medical intervention can offer little other than hope against social forces. At times of stress in the social fabric, our old enemies the infectious diseases seize their opportunity, and emerge once more, with poverty as their ally.

R.M.



Total Amnesty

We must not forget the miners in prison. Only industrial direct action will free them; until then prisoners can be adopted via DA. We have a list of 75 prisoners, available for a S.A.E. More next issue on this.



OUR SICKNESS: THEIR WELFARE

The miners' strike has highlighted some of the most unsavoury aspects of the social security system. The 1975 Social Security Act laid down that anybody who is unable to work because of a trade dispute at their workplace will not be entitled to receive Unemployment Benefit. Partners of strikers can claim Supplementary Benefit, but the assessment of their claim will take into account a reduction of assumed strike pay. This provision, a thinly disguised form of financial punishment for the families of people who go on strike, was introduced in 1980, and the amount was raised from £15 to £16 during the miners' strike. Even after the sequestration of NUM funds, striking miners were "assumed" to be receiving strike pay.

The myth of pickets being paid sizeable sums was spread by the government's Fleet Street pals—a move no doubt meant to detract from the indignation ordinary people would feel at this example of "benefit" legislation.

The social security regulations are extensively used to exact economic revenge from strikers and workers affected by lockouts, and their families. The regulations applying to people involved in "trade disputes" even extend to those who, by their actions, identify

with strikers—for example, by agreeing to the requests of pickets—and to those whose terms and conditions of employment stand to be affected by the outcome of the dispute.

As well as the "strike pay" deduction from the benefit paid to families of those concerned people involved in trade disputes are not entitled to receive single payments for necessary items, as other claimants are. Only in limited circumstances will an urgent needs payment be granted.

If somebody is in a position whereby they would normally expect to receive statutory sick pay, they won't get it if, at the beginning of what would otherwise be their period of entitlement, they are affected by a stoppage of work at their place of employment due to a trade dispute—unless they can prove that they are not participating or do not have a direct interest in it (refusal to cross a picket line counts as participation). A strike at your place of work on the first day of a period of sickness means you won't get statutory sick pay at all, for the whole time that you are ill—even if the strike ends the next day.

The social security system, held up as an advantage of the "welfare state" plays its part, like any other legislation, in maintaining the welfare of the state.

The real killer – CANCER or CAPITALISM?

Meanwhile, we've all witnessed the publicity over the case of the Oxfordshire women who were not informed that tests for cervical cancer had had positive results, with the consequence that one is dead and the others seriously ill. The government has admitted that the system of smear testing is "a shambles", which means that these women represent only

the tip of an iceberg—this form of cancer kills over 2,000 women a year, although if detected early the survival rate is high.

Much less publicity was given to the comments of a senior epidemiologist from Liverpool in a radio interview a week or two before the Oxfordshire case made headlines. This individual had the arrogance to suggest that the lives saved by

testing for breast and cervical cancer were not worth the cost of screening large numbers of women and that the service should no longer be available on the NHS. Instead he advocated that women pay for tests—about £100 every two years. No doubt the good doctor is well aware that women whose partners have manual jobs are more susceptible to cervical cancer; their relative inability to pay

for treatment seems to be of no concern to him. It certainly didn't seem to have occurred to him that if less money was lavished on expenditure for arms or policing, the NHS would have less trouble affording treatments to prevent the needless deaths of women still in the prime of life.

A.R.

SAAWU-fighting union of SOUTH AFRICA

The social struggle in S.Africa has recently intensified. It is good that S.African workers are challenging the state via the union action of the SAAWU rather than via guerrilla struggle which only leads to a new dictatorship (eg Zimbabwe, Nicaragua). SAAWU has contacted the IWA (the Revolutionary Syndicalist International) in Madrid. In response this has formed a S.African commission in New York.

SAAWU, which has its main organisational base in East London, is the fastest growing of the unregistered independent black trade unions in South Africa. It refuses to register under the South African government's labour legislation. According to a SAAWU spokesperson: "We believe that if we go and register, we will be embracing all those Draconian laws which amount to a genocide against the working class and the black worker in particular".

In August 1982, concerned at the power of unregistered unions, the South African government tried to draw them into "established channels" by permitting unregistered unions to use the state mediation and arbitration machinery. But SAAWU continues to reject any involvement with government-created institutions.

SAAWU STRATEGIES

Its tactics are to build organisation and awareness by taking up the most pressing problems facing particular groups of workers on the shop floor. When it has the support of over 50% of the workers it starts collective bargaining, directly with the management. As workers in an industry become better organised, they sometimes decide to form their own "sub-unions" or affiliates of SAAWU. SAAWU itself is thus a general workers' union. But it is also an umbrella organisation for sub-unions and affiliates such as the Chemical & Allied Workers' union, the Road-Sea Transport Workers' union and the South African Blind Workers' union.

SAAWU emphasises the importance of active mass participation, with the workers making decisions themselves at mass meetings. It also believes in collective leadership. By these means it builds grass roots support among workers which enables their organisation to survive repeated harassment, intimidation, arrest, torture and banning of organisers.

COMMUNITY LINKS IMPORTANT

SAAWU also believes that trade unionism must extend beyond the factories to the terrible conditions in which the workers live, in the locations and community. High rents, squalid housing, destruction of families by enforced migrant labour: such grievances are as much part of exploitation as low pay and poor conditions in the factories. East London's black townships are mostly within the neighbouring Ciskei homeland and SAAWU supports worker and community organisations opposed to the repressive puppet government of the Ciskei. SAAWU thus disagrees with union bodies such as FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions) which believe that labour action should be confined to industrial issues.

Although nearly all SAAWU's members are black, its policy is non-racial. SAAWU sees apartheid and racism as major enemies of workers, especially black workers. But it points out that apartheid is also closely linked to the development of capi-

talism in South Africa, ensuring a constant supply of cheap and powerless labour for capital. SAAWU sees the struggle against racism as part of a wider struggle, against all forms of oppression of workers, black and white.

THOZAMILE GQWETA: A MAN IN FEAR OF HIS LIFE

A headline in the Johannesburg based newspaper City Press once declared: GQWETA 8: CISKEI 0. The ironically bitter reference was to Thozamile Gqweta, the young trade unionist whose harassment at the hands of the South African authorities has seen him detained eight times in the last three years.

One of the most persecuted men in South Africa today, the softly-spoken but highly articulate Gqweta has two sets of torturers: the South African security police and their hirelings in the poverty-stricken Ciskei, his official "homeland".

What bothers the authorities and has led to the "unprecedented onslaught" on him (as the increasingly self-censored Rand Daily Mail put it) is Thozamile Gqweta's success in organising the SAAWU. Originally asked by his supporters to form a blacks-only union, in the days when Steve Biko's black consciousness philosophy had caught the imagination of some of the country's intellectual youth, Gqweta believed that any kind of racism was counter-productive. He studied trade unionism by reading books in the East London library and, putting into practice what he learnt, pressed ahead with SAAWU.

The union soon had 90,000 throughout the country—and is still growing.

Gqweta's success and harassment—and the way they have been reported both within and outside South Africa—make an interesting comparison with Lech Walesa, the West's favourite trade unionist: whatever Walesa says or does, and whatever confrontations he has with the Polish authorities make headlines around the world yet his treatment by the Polish government is like an afternoon stroll in the park compared to that endured by Gqweta, whose plight has been largely ignored by the 90-odd foreign pressmen in South Africa.

The South African authorities seem determined to obliterate SAAWU. More than once they have swooped on the entire executive and they regularly raid SAAWU's offices around the country, confiscating records and books. And while Gqweta has been their main focus for harassment, his deputy in SAAWU, Sisa Njikelana, has suffered almost as much—he has been detained six times already.

Friends and colleagues of Thozamile Gqweta now fear that the South Africans—in their efforts to stamp out his "cheeky" union—will stamp him out too, as they did Steve Biko and Neil Aggett. Those who know Gqweta wonder how much more the man can stand—and whether he has not already suffered irreparable damage.

Proof that the SAAWU is correct in identifying capitalism as their enemy, rather than just racism, comes from the following account of the behaviour of black bosses in Zambia, where workers still face government repression.

Zambian unions call off strike

By Patti Waldmeir in Lusaka

THE ZAMBIA Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has called off a two-day nationwide strike by workers in the country's banks and several public sector corporations, after President Kenneth Kaunda took emergency powers to ban strikes in essential industries.

Banks reopened yesterday after a two-day shutdown sparked by a dispute over the abolition of a system of automatic deduction of union dues from workers' salaries. Operation returned to normal at the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation, the Railways and the Electricity Corporation after sporadic disruption on Tuesday.

Faced with an ultimatum by the Government either to return to work or suffer dismissal, ZCTU chairman Mr Frederick Chiluba had little option but to call off the strike, according to union officials.

SLOMR

PART 2

ROMANIA'S FREE TRADE UNION

Early in 1979, the Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania (SLOMR) was formed. Its founding declaration proclaimed: "...SLOMR became objectively necessary because of the economic, social and cultural situation of the country... As its name indicates, SLOMR freely carries out its own activity, not being the transmission belt of any political force."

After complaining about unemployment and inadequate pensions, the declaration called for workers' activity to "take place in conditions where human dignity is respected, in an agreeable and stimulating environment." SLOMR also proposed that participation in State activities be voluntary, and the workers' free time be increased. It further proposed that the CP's private stock of food, housing and transport be integrated into the general system of supply, and that the financial activity of state organs be subject to popular control. In a country suffering from chronic shortages and a corrupt bureaucracy these were most important demands. The declaration further requested workers

to report violations of their human rights to it.

The declaration ended by saying: "It is possible that we founders of the SLOMR will be morally and physically crushed by the perfected apparatus of repression." Sadly these proved to be prophetic words. From 1979 to 1982, 153 SLOMR members were imprisoned for "parasitism" and "hooliganism". The International Labour Organisation estimated that in its bid to smash SLOMR the state arrested up to 50,000 people.

Amongst victims of this state repression is Carmen Popescu. Having joined SLOMR, she was first arrested in 1979. After her release she was refused employment and arrested many times.

Many SLOMR members have "disappeared". One of these is Vasile Paraschiv. He joined the CP in 1946 and in the years 1963-68 made many attacks on its bureaucracy. In 1968 he was expelled from the CP and several times interned in psychiatric hospitals having been diagnosed paranoid psychotic. In 1978 he went to France where he took part in a press conference in support of Soviet Free Trade Unions together with Viktor Fainberg of SMOT, the Czechoslovak Lestinsky and the Pole Smolar. On returning to Romania he announced his support for SLOMR, after which he disappeared.

Dimitru Mircescu became a trade unionist aged 16 in 1928. In 1936 he had to flee to the USSR where he was sentenced to ten years in the labour camps on unfounded charges. Escaping from the USSR, he went back to Romania where he was again imprisoned. In 1979 he went to the West where he wrote his memoirs of the Soviet camps. Returning to Romania, he was questioned by the police, attacked in his home, beaten up and threatened with death.

Latest victims of the repression include the actor Arpad Visky who was imprisoned for "rebellion against authority", and Irma Alexe, wife of exiled SLOMR member Ion Alexe, who has been interned in a psychiatric hospital.

However, conditions including economic crisis and Communist dictatorship, which gave rise to SLOMR still exist, and a Romanian Solidarnosc may yet arise to challenge the state. TL

Syndicalism & the Miners

CONCLUDING LAST
MONTHS ARTICLE

Last month we saw how the syndicalist idea of rank and file union control, with solidarity and direct action influenced the miners (especially in S.Wales) in their struggle with the owners.

THE MINERS' NEXT STEP

Syndicalist ideas received further publicity with the publication of the pamphlet "The Miners' Next Step" by the South Wales Unofficial Reform Committee in 1911. It attacked the conciliatory nature of the South Wales Miners' Federation, and its bureaucracy: "The possession of power invariably leads to corruption...in spite of good intentions". The pamphlet argues that this corruption leads to union officials being sucked into the collective bargaining and conciliation system of the state. It also maintained that such a class of union officials led to passivity on the part of the members: "Why fight when the professionals can negotiate for you?" To combat this the authors of the pamphlet argued for the abolition of full-time union officials in favour of control by a self-reliant rank-and-file. Instead of negotiation and conciliation, they advocated a fighting union policy using direct action methods, and instead of several centralised regional mining unions, one industrial union, based on a federal structure to maximise local autonomy.

As anti-statists the Syndicalists opposed nationalisation of the coal industry. Instead, they put forward the idea of "industrial democracy" — control based on the workers' economic organisations, backed up by a central Production Board, to be arrived at by a revolutionary general strike. These are all ideas as relevant today as they were in 1912 — as a glance at the sick state of affairs in present-day unions will show.

The idea of "voting in socialism" is rejected in this pamphlet. Parliamentary action is described as "a delusion and snare behind which lurks the spectre of capitalism".

Thousands of copies of the pamphlet were sold and syndicalist speakers toured the coalfields.

STRIKE ACTION

As a result of this vigorous propaganda, and further attacks on miners' living standards there was a ballot of 445,801 to 115,921 in favour of strike action to secure a minimum wage in February 1912.

The response of the government and bosses was to deploy troops in the coalfields. Some units, like the Leeds Artillery, were even issued with swords in case of hand-to-hand fighting. Mine managers built barricades around their homes, and the territorial army was mobilised — a sign of the fear always inspired in the state by militant working-class action.

DON'T SHOOT!

The Industrial Syndicalist Education League attempted to counter the threat of armed force with a bid to subvert the army. Fred Bower, a stone-mason, published a leaflet, "Don't Shoot", which was

reprinted by Jim Larkin in the "Irish Worker" and in the ISEL's "The Syndicalist". It argued for soldiers to side with their class and not their officers: "The idle Rich Class, who own and order you about, own and order us (the working class) about also. They own everything. You don't, we don't. When we kick they order you to murder us. When you kick, you get court-martialled and the cells. Instead of fighting against each other...help to win the world for the workers".

This article led to Tom Mann and Guy Bowman, editors of the Syndicalist to be imprisoned under the 1787 Mutiny Act. Their six-month sentence, said one activist of the time, "made syndicalism a household word in Britain".

In any case, the mobilisation was not met by violence from the miners simply because the issue of a minimum wage was so popular that there was no danger of scabbing.

The real traitors were the union full-timers who, in spite of a ballot to stay out, accepted a government formula which offered the "principle" of a minimum wage, but not the reality. A majority of the miners ignored the call to return to work, especially in the areas most influenced by syndicalist ideas. Pits in Northumberland and Durham declared that any settlement must include the release of the syndicalist prisoners, Bowman and Mann, while Yorkshire miners called on transport workers to join the strike and widen the struggle. Yorkshire full-timer Herbert Smith, at a rally during the strike, warned that sympathetic action would amount to revolution. Hecklers replied from the floor that this was the best thing that could happen.

ANTI-LEADERSHIP

At Featherstone, Rotherham and Middleton mines, miners voted for the resignation of all union officials. At Dinnington pit an anti-leadership crusade was launched, demanding regular recall of officials and periodic elections. In spite of their combative attitude, however, by mid-April the strike had ended, the return to work led by the militant but financially exhausted South Wales miners (who had only recently been on strike for a year — see last month's DA).

The miners now resorted to

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MINERS' MILITANCY, THEN AND NOW

industrial guerrilla war, as they realised just how minimal the new minimum wage levels were.

The failure of the strike strengthened the position of the syndicalists as the miners realised fully that the action of the leadership was responsible for their defeat. The Unofficial Reform Committee expanded to become the Industrial Democracy League, a specifically syndicalist organisation within the SWMF. By the end of 1912, in a mood of smouldering militancy among miners, with strikes frequently breaking out at different pits, the syndicalists formed a large and vocal minority of the miners, and perhaps a majority of those in South Wales. The campaign to implement the programme outlined in "The Miners' Next Step" continued in expectation of the next round of conflict.

THE DECLINE OF SYNDICALISM

If, as I have argued, syndicalist conceptions of unionism were so popular among the miners before the first World War, why is it that we hear nothing of syndicalism in the years after the war?

The great mass of non-syndicalist miners (and other workers) were of course caught up in the ghastly carnival of Jingoism that marked the outbreak of war. The syndicalists, on the other hand, had always laid great emphasis on anti-militarist propaganda. This had only been widespread for some four years, however, and it is understandable that it failed to contend successfully with a hundred years of state propaganda in favour of patriotism. As in so many wars, the mass of the working class were fooled into believing that they shared a common enemy (in this case Germany) with the ruling class, and that national interests must come before class interests.

The durability of organised syndicalism among the miners was also lessened by the fact that syndicalist miners sought to revolutionise the existing, corrupt miners' federation, rather than form a breakaway revolutionary union of their own. During the same period, Italian and American syndicalists formed rival unions (the Italian Syndicalist Union, numbering 800,000 members, and the Industrial Workers of the World, number-

ing 500,000). In both these countries organised syndicalism persisted through the war and subsequent government repression, both organisations surviving up to the present day, though smaller in size. In Britain syndicalists never formed lasting union structures.

A third factor in the demise of large-scale syndicalism at this time was the false image of success of the Russian Revolution. Many syndicalists joined the Communist Party under the illusion that the political action of the Bolsheviks had won socialism, rather than the hell on earth they had in fact created. Mistakenly, they put their faith in new leaders from outside their class instead of relying on their own strength.

THE RELEVANCE OF SYNDICALISM

Although organised syndicalism was extinguished amongst miners by the 1920s, many of the ideas that constituted it have persisted, for example, direct action, opposition to full-time officials, and self-reliance.

In the aftermath of the 84-85 strike, most miners surely see how reformist trade unionism sold them down the river and how the Labour Party held them in disdain. But the strike also demonstrated the potential for success of solidarity practised throughout — and even beyond — mining communities, by miners' wives and strike support groups, the value of industrial solidarity (the government was only really worried when it seemed possible that it would have to face trouble from the dockers as well as the miners), and the value of international unity among workers, in view of the generous support that came from workers abroad.

These ideas and practices are the cornerstones of syndicalism, and represent the true areas of working-class strength. It is only natural therefore that NUM branches should be among the first to sponsor the forthcoming Rank-and-File Conference mentioned elsewhere in this issue. It is to be hoped that this will lead to the building of a rank-and-file structure with broadly syndicalist aims and methods throughout the mining industry (and of course generally). The miners have as much to gain from syndicalist ideas today as they did in the early years of the century. GC



LETTERS



In his letter (DA 22) about the article "The Future Is Ours" (DA 21) Edouard Dubois fails to grasp the whole truth when he points out that "the power of the working class lies at the point of production". It is pessimistic to state that "their only sanction" is "the power to withdraw their labour". The strike is only one of the weapons we have in the struggle against state and private capital.

The Unione Sindicale Italiana sees that the methods of union tradition like the strike, self-reduction of hours, and of speeds, are in large part unuseable and have lost their efficiency in workplace conflicts, and believes a great effort to bring things up to date is necessary, as well as "the rediscovery of forms of struggle intentionally abandoned by (Italian) reformist unionism such as the rigid application of rules and practices, slowdown of production speeds where this is possible, non-programmed assemblies with the impromptu suspension of goods and services, as well as the use of various forms of civil disobedience". (Lotta di Classe, January 1984) We could add other forms of direct action to this list, for example the 'social strike', where all the workers together agree not to charge the public for goods or services, or to under-charge; other sanctions possible are sabotage and occupation of premises. These all lead to the complete takeover of the means of production.

So, what of the unemployed, the people on the fringes, the workers who are not at the point of production and never will be? They must not be pushed to the margins. As the original article stated, they have an important part to play in creating the long-sought-for social change. The British miners' strike illustrates this, with groups raising funds,

providing catering services, joining pickets and providing solidarity which other unions, at the point of production have not always equalled. In helping the miners these groups have gained vital experience of mutual aid, and have earned the respect and confidence denied to them by the system.

The point is that only the oppressed class as a whole can make the needed changes in society, not just one, employed section. The change to "a free and classless society" is one to benefit all of us, wherever we live. The lowest social groups, the world's poor and starving, the small peasants and sharecroppers of the third world who every day struggle to have enough food, the unemployed and the exploited of the 'developed' world, the old and the handicapped, the young who have no future, these are the people with the most to gain. The revolution has to be by, and for, all.

The system wants us as consumers but not as producers. As the authors of "The Future Is Ours" rightly state, "Our job is to promote liberty and equality through the acts of ordinary people themselves." We must ourselves organise 'alternative enterprises'. There is a space prepared for us by the failure of the left and the trade unions to do so. We must fill it. We must develop methods to help ourselves become more productive, creating projects controlled by the workers while continuing the struggle against the bosses for the control of what already exists.

Almost everywhere it is possible to find alternative enterprises already in existence, small collectives involved in bookselling and printing, in catering and craft industries, in agriculture and in education. Many of these groups in the west at least, are already consciously libertarian or anarchist, but they have problems due to their existence in a capitalist world. While proclaiming mutual aid they have the problem of making ends meet in a competitive market. Where co-ordination exists it is generally co-ordination of specific trades or groups, producers, distributors or consumers. Outside a wider, class-based co-ordination these projects remain isolated and temporary. The IWA/AIT has existed since 1922 as an organisation for all types of workers, employed or unemployed, in both big and small industries. It alone could co-ordinate on a wide enough scale to ensure the survival of alternative enterprises, constructing an interdependent network of producers, distributors, services and consumers, a network beyond the state and the marketplace. Everyone would gain if the existing projects were drawn in and new, complementary ones initiated. Then we could give real examples of what workers' control is all about, not just historical references or isolated examples.

Frank Richardson
USI Agriculture
Ascoli-Piceno
Italy

PS I hope this is of interest to comrades in DAM. A thoughtful analysis of the present situation is vitally necessary. I am glad to see Direct Action printing articles like "The Future Is Ours" as well as industrial news. I hope the response to it continues the debate in a positive fashion, and results in practical policy.

and...

Dear Direct Action,
The Edouard Dubois letter (DA 22) makes some interesting points: that working-class power lies at the point of production; that the unemployed are powerless; that the only sanction we have is to withdraw our labour; that in the proposals in our analysis "The Future Is Ours" we are victims of "wishful thinking".

Let me say from the start that I am trying to give up the word "syndicalism". While I know it is still taught as a subject in our English Universities; it is nonetheless a French word which today means less than nothing to most English workers. The words "direct action" are much clearer and more meaningful in English working-class ears.

The direct action methods workers use at the point of production to control their working lives—via restrictive practices, job control and industrial action—are part of a tradition which we will never ignore. Witness our DAM Industrial Policy. This is the lifeblood of our movement, and nothing we on the Policy Committee have said is intended to undermine this basic shopfloor strategy.

The fact that we have a sound Industrial Policy however, in no way reduces the need to devise a related social policy or a policy which is complementary in so far as it takes on the responsibility for organising the unemployed and the many people in "dead-end" jobs.

What I most want to dispute is the implication by M. Dubois and others, that members of this underclass are "powerless". The concept of "powerlessness" is a difficult one for me to accommodate into any anarchist analysis of any social arrangements in any society I know or might imagine. My point is that the strategies of power and control are available to all members of all societies, and the "underclass" are no exception.

The Policy Committee feels its considerations on this matter are based on practical reasoning, but others will decide if this is "wishful thinking". What no-one will deny though is that as a responsible movement we have a job to do in putting up alternative strategies for action. And this is the case whether we be talking about the "underclass", or about the miners running the mines, or even about the shop stewards' committee organising the works' canteen.

The Policy Committee and the North West Regional DAM looks forward to any practical proposals from readers.

Best Wishes,
Brian Bamford,
Rochdale.



AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT

- (1) The Direct Action Movement is a working class organisation.
- (2) Our aim is the creation of a free and classless society.
- (3) We are fighting to abolish the state, capitalism and wage slavery in all their forms and replace them by self-managed production for need not profit.
- (4) In order to bring about the new social order, the workers must take over the means of production and distribution. We are the sworn enemies of those who would take over on behalf of the workers.
- (5) We believe that the only way for the working class to achieve this is for independent organisation in the workplace and community and federation with others in the same industry and locality, independent of, and opposed to all political parties and trade union bureaucracies. All such workers organisations must be controlled by workers themselves and must unite rather than divide the workers movement. Any and all delegates of such workers organisations must be subject to immediate recall by the workers.
- (6) We are opposed to all States and State institutions. The working class has no country. The class struggle is worldwide and recognises no artificial boundaries. The armies and police of all States do not exist to protect the workers of those States, they exist only as the repressive arm of the ruling class.
- (7) We oppose racism, sexism, militarism and all attitudes and institutions that stand in the way of equality and the right of all people everywhere to control their own lives and the environment.
- (8) The Direct Action Movement is a federation of groups and individuals who believe in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism; a system where the workers alone control industry and the community without the dictates of politicians, bureaucrats, bosses and so-called experts.

I would like to know more about the DAM/IWA. Please send more information. I enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

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DIRECT ACTION

NUCLEAR POWER IS BOSSES POWER

At the end of January the government announced that the plans to dump nuclear waste in the old ICI anhydrite mines under Billingham, on Teeside, had been abandoned.

In Billingham, where opposition to the plans was almost total, the news of the climbdown was welcomed after 15 months of waiting. Billingham Against Nuclear Dumping (BAND) had demonstrated, lobbied and petitioned against the proposed dumping, but the popular pressure was only indirectly responsible for the plans' withdrawal... the death blow to the scheme was ICI's decision in March '84 to refuse access to the mine entrance on its land. This move wasn't prompted by a concern for the

point is that nuclear power itself is the evil, not just the dumping of its toxic wastes. And it's workers' power rather than pressure group style politics that can halt the nuclear programme.

The government's energy policy involves the run-down of the coal industry and the increased use of oil- and nuclear-generated power. This can only be described as criminal and lunatic. Nuclear power is much more expensive than coal-generated power ("uneconomic" in fact), and oil is twice as expensive to burn as coal. The big advantage for the bosses is that both will reduce their reliance on mine-workers. And that's what the miners' strike was all about really.

North sea oil is the only thing that enables Britain to pay its way internationally, now that we are a net manufacturing importer, and the oil won't last long, so our energy needs will be provided either by the cheap and plentiful coal reserves, or by expensive and environmentally disastrous nuclear power.

Nuclear power holds advantages for capitalists only. It is expensive and the working class will be made to pay for it. It will require a small workforce, closely controlled under the pretext of necessary security, rather than potentially troublesome miners and power station workers. Thus the working class will lose a vital element of its power.

However, it appears that the shrewdest capitalists realise that burning coal still makes sense in economic terms. On Teeside ICI are converting part of their Wilton power station from oil to coal burn, which it is said will safeguard the jobs of a thousand Durham miners. They seek the best of both worlds: cheap coal, with a submissive and malleable workforce, and strategically useful nuclear power.

Their plans must be resisted. But a marginal anti-nuclear movement based on pressure-group style politics will prove as ineffective as it has to

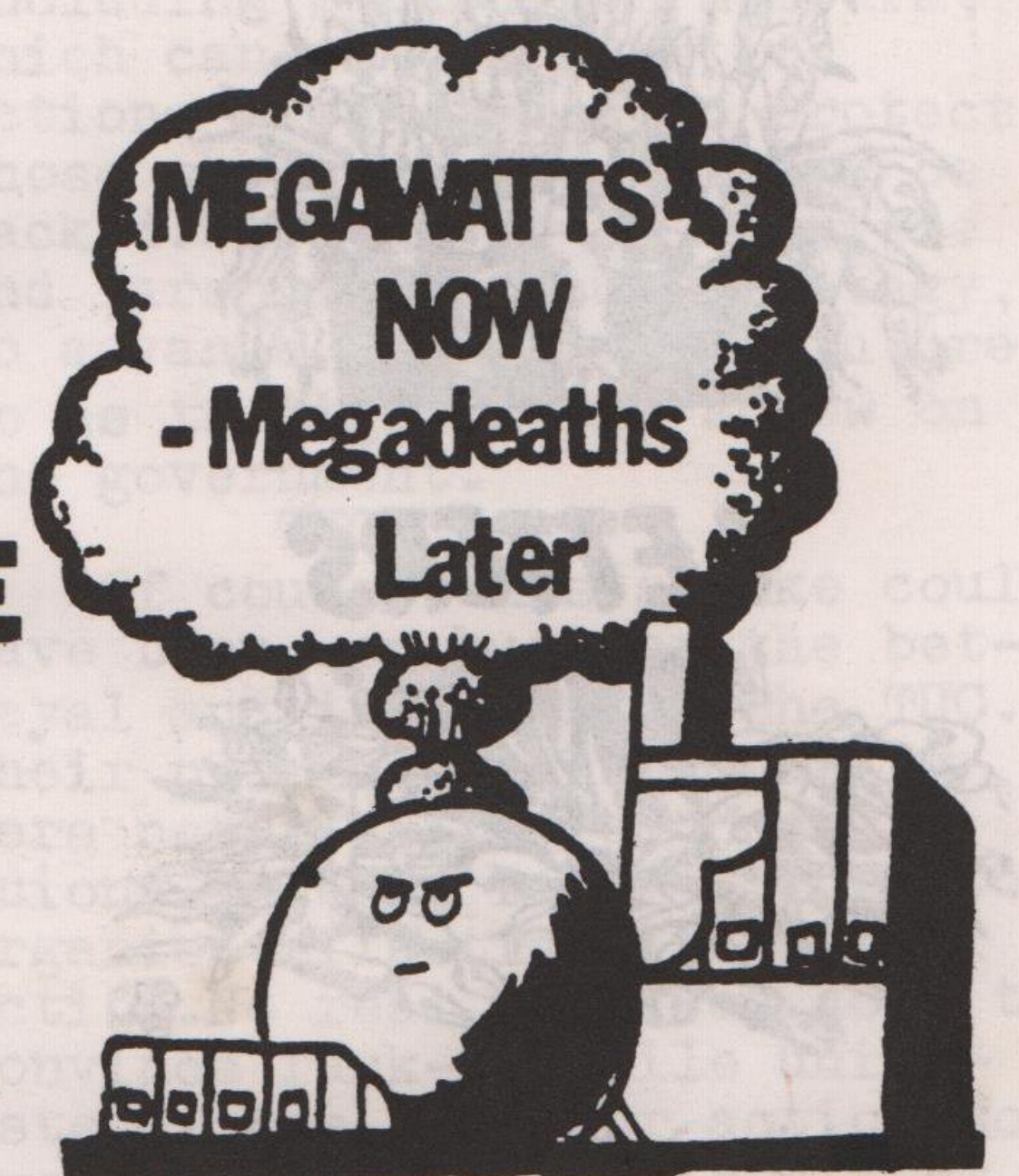
THATCHER'S SURCHARGE

The government intends to pass on the cost of the miners' strike to the consumers, through a so-called "Scargill surcharge". This is what it will be called on our bills, and no secret will be made of the reason for the price increase.

The main item of extra cost in keeping the electricity supply going is the vastly increased use of oil at the power stations. City stock-brokers Laurie Milbank estimate that the four-fold increase in oil prices in recent months has cost the Central Electricity Generating Board an additional £45 million a week.

As far back as October it was reported that Treasury ministers were committed to raising the cost of electricity to help meet the cost of the coal dispute. To cover this, it's estimated that the average bill will have to rise by £15 this year, but all-electric households will face a £40 increase.

The government has two motives for imposing this surcharge—not only to pay the massive bill incurred by its strikebreaking policy, but also to put across what the Chancellor believes is a valuable public message: that we have to pay for the miners' strike. By distinguishing the surcharge from the rest of the bill, they hope to get public opinion on their side against the NUM.



We must organise against this surcharge. THE PRICE OF ELECTRICITY IS ALREADY TOO HIGH. This is not a Scargill surcharge, it's a THATCHER SURCHARGE. It reflects how expensive electricity will become if the government's policy of less coal, more oil and nuclear power becomes a reality, and will cause many working people hardship as a direct result of Thatcher's monetarist policies.

A mass consumer boycott of this charge would turn the tables on the government if we can demonstrate the links between government policy and its effect on people's pockets.

When the quarterly bills go out in April they should be met with an organised refusal to pay the surcharge. Community groups, tenants' and housing organisations, strike support groups and union branches could all organise such a refusal, and a well-co-ordinated campaign could develop and spread across the country.

DEMAND THAT THE THATCHER LEVY IS SCRAPPED!



environment or altruism on ICI's part, but was a response rather to the overwhelming opposition in Billingham. ICI is the biggest single employer on Teeside, with 14,500 workers half of them at its Billingham complex. So in the interests of calm industrial and community relations the company had to come out against the proposal.

BAND has pledged itself to support any other community to resist a similar threat. But the

local contact



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date (not one nuclear missile or power station halted). It has to be realised that nuclear power is a class issue; it affects both the miners and the wider working class. And the only thing capable of halting both the nuclear programme and the missiles (whose materials it supplies) is an organised and militant working class. This must be the last time a government can sit out a year-long strike by running nuclear power plants flat out, regardless of safety requirements, as the Tories did this time. We must put a stop to their limitless programme of investment in this lethal and extravagant technology.

NUCLEAR POWER IS BOSSES' POWER—WE STILL DEMAND COAL NOT DOLE!

Teesider.

Our thanks

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