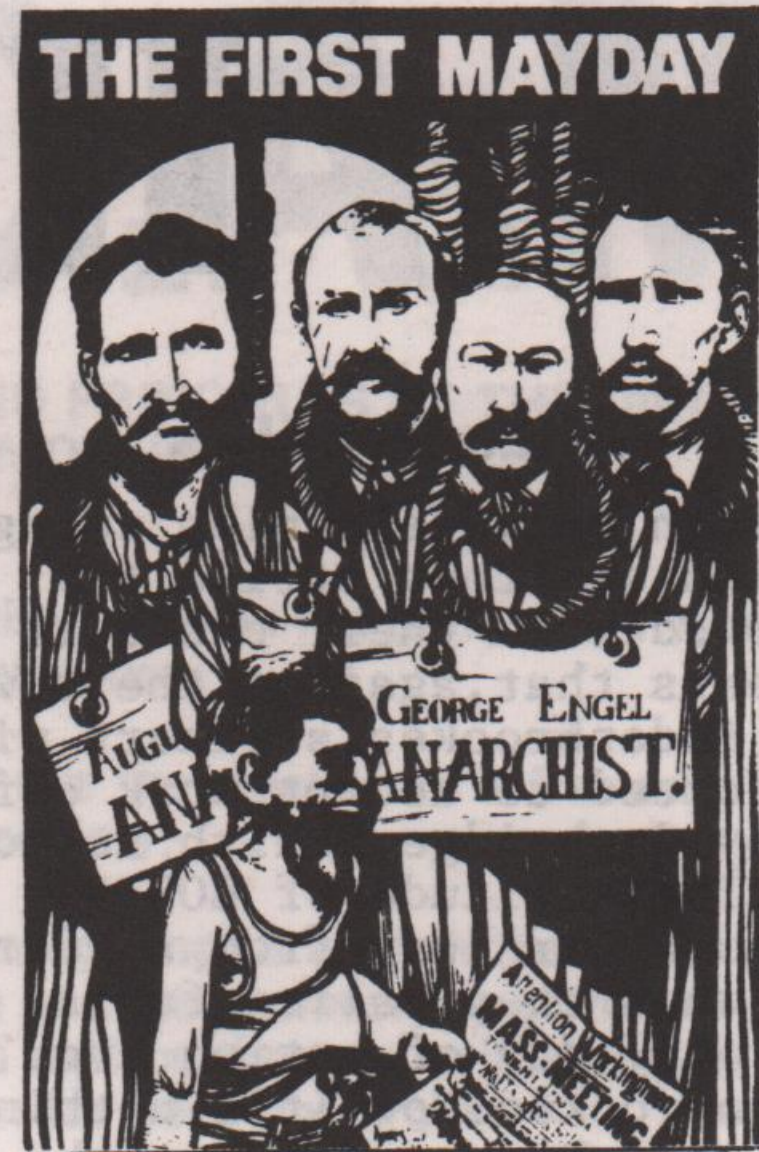


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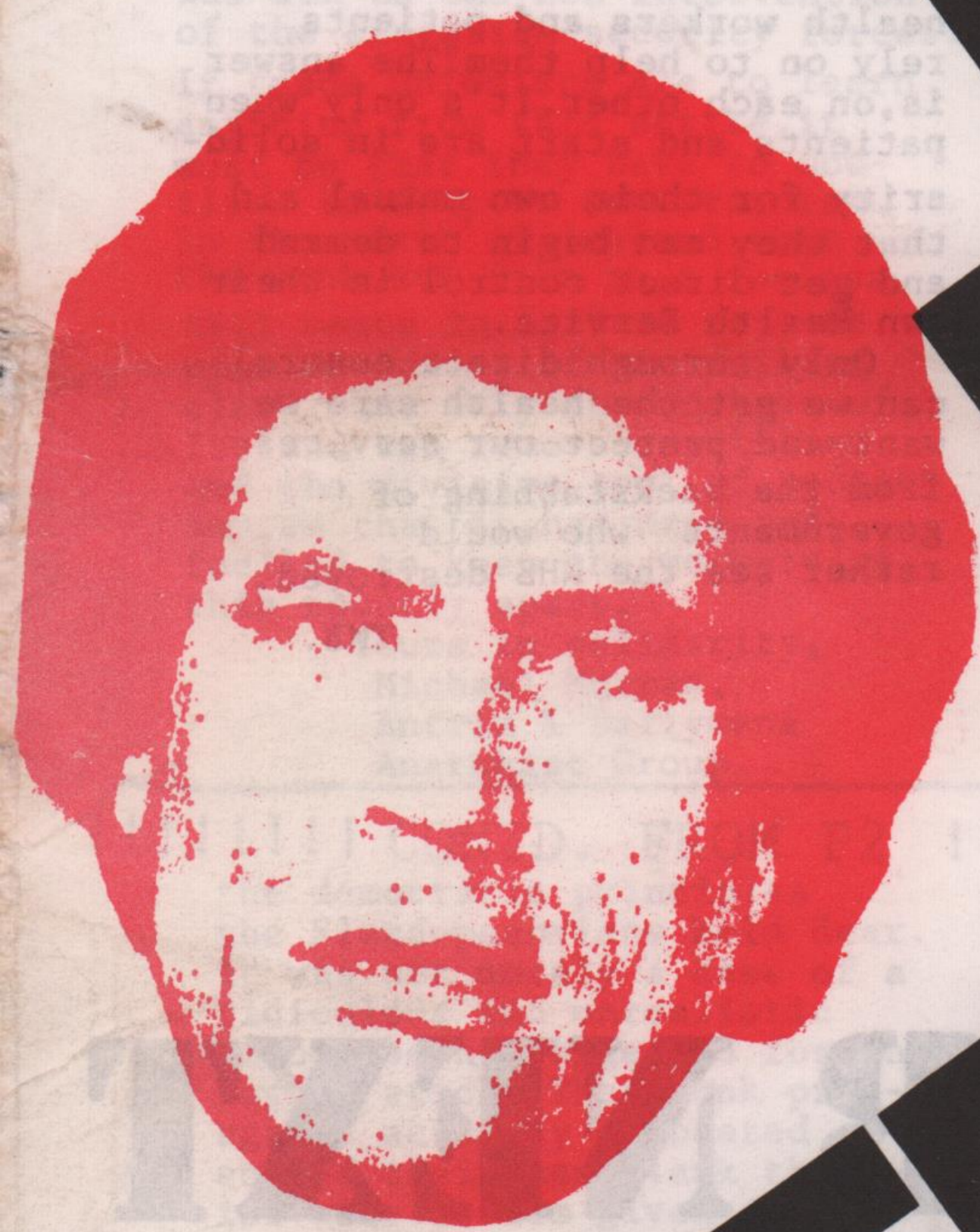
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NO 31

MAY 86

20p

INSIDE
your free
mayday poster



THE REAL TERRORISTS

it's pretty absurd to paint him any worse than other, pro-Western dictators, especially when the West has been happy to buy his oil and make fortunes from Libyan development projects. Surely the assumption that Gaddafi is "mad" (while Reagan and other world leaders are presumably sane?) is basically racist.

Just as Idi Amin was despised chiefly because he was a loudmouthed black who loathed the British, not because he was a dictator and a butcher.

Of course there are terrorists. There are the little terrorists who hijack airliners or bomb Xmas shoppers.

But there is another, much more murderous terrorism — State terrorism. Every state in the world practices this, and the foremost among them is the USA. Before the San-

CONTD BACK PAGE

Reagan in the white hat, determined to run Gaddafi in the black hat right out of town.

If only there was a straight gunfight between "Rambo" Reagan and "Mad Dog" Gaddafi — no great loss for humanity would be in prospect. But each is at the helm of his respective state, which means that when the shit hits the fan they are the last people in danger.

SOME OF THE "TERRORISTS" WHO BIT THE DUST IN THE TRIPOLI BOMBING WERE YOUNG CHILDREN.

As regards Gaddafi,

The word "terrorism" is bandied about so much now it's beginning to lose all meaning. The media present us with a picture of

MAYDAY

May Day for anarcho-syndicalists is not just another holiday or excuse for peaceful protest marches. For us it symbolises worldwide workers' solidarity. A day for workers' actions against the capitalist system and to work towards a general strike in pursuit of major reductions in the length of the workday.

But this year 1986, is of special significance for anarcho-syndicalists throughout the world. Exactly 100 years ago today a chain of events started which led to the execution by the State of the Chicago Martyrs.

On 1 May 1886, 800,000 workers from all trades and factories

throughout the US went on strike in support of the eight-hour work day. In Chicago, a stronghold of immigrant labour and anarchists, 300,000 workers struck and marched through the city streets in a huge display of proletarian power. Before the Chicago May Day strike action began, the management at McCormick Machine Co. (now International Harvester) had locked out 1,500 workers over a wage dispute. On 3 May, when pickets attempted to prevent blackleg labour entering the plant, the Chicago police opened fire on the workers, killing four and wounding many more. Outraged at this act of naked aggression, radical

CENTENARY

newspapers called for armed resistance against the bloodthirsty Chicago police, and a protest rally was called for the following day (4 May) at Haymarket Square. Speeches condemning police violence and capitalist oppression were given by three leading anarchists: Parsons, Spies and Fielden. As the meeting came to an end, 200 police moved in on the crowd. Suddenly, a bomb was thrown and exploded in the midst of the police, who immediately opened fire on the assembled workers. Several police and many workers were killed.

In the hysterical aftermath of the Haymarket tragedy five anarch-

ists were convicted and sentenced to hang by a specially constituted tribunal. On 11 November, Black Friday, it murdered Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engels. Ling had committed suicide the previous day. They were later shown to have had nothing to do with the bombings.

On 14 July 1889, on the hundredth anniversary of Bastille Day, an American AFL delegate attending the International Labour Congress in Paris proposed that 1 May be officially adopted as a workers' holiday. This motion was unanimously approved and since then May Day has served as a date for international working class solidarity.

HEALTH TODAY...

Addenbrookes

With official union recognition and thus strike pay removed from their cause, it appears that, against their will, the Addenbrookes strikers will be forced to accept work offered by Cambridge Health Authority. The attitude of COHSE seems a far cry from a year ago when they called for a national day of action over Addenbrookes. Now it's nothing but an embarrassment to the Union officials and Labour politicians who once stood on the Cambridge picket lines.

But Addenbrookes is by no means the only example of privatisation in action, and the history of the dispute is full of incidents that could have happened in many other hospitals all over Britain.

What it means

Privatisation — taking work from Health Service workers and giving it to private firms — can take two main forms.

One way is to give a contract to a private hospital to carry out treatments on NHS patients. This often happens where there are long waiting lists, where the NHS has the money to pay for the treatment, but not the facilities to carry it out.

The government claims this cuts waiting lists and saves money, but in practice private hospitals can choose not to take old or otherwise difficult patients. This means that NHS hospitals have longer-staying patients and increases the length of waiting lists.

More than 80 Health Authorities in England and Wales have more than 40% of their patients on waiting lists a year or more long. This exposes the Government's claim that "the only thing in the Health Service they will cut is the waiting lists" as a lie.

And an independent study suggests that private hospitals keep their charges artificially low, to make the NHS dependent on them in order to charge inflated prices later on.

The other way privatisation is carried out in the NHS is when particular hospital services, like laundry, cleaning or catering, are offered out to tender. The Health Authority considers offers from private

firms and also the hospital's own management and staff (called an "in-house" tender), and awards the contract to the one it feels offers the best value.

But the decision can be and is over-ruled by the Health Minister. In January 1985 Norwich health Authority accepted four in-house tenders and the Junior Health Minister intervened and gave the contracts to a private firm.

Contracts usually go to the cheapest offer, no matter how poor the service it will provide. But in South Cumbria, where the in-house tender was the cheapest, Health Minister Kenneth Clarke ordered the authority to check its figures — which has never happened to a private firm's tender. When the check showed the in-house offer was still the best, Clarke insisted that the contract should still be awarded to the cheapest private firm.

In practice

At Addenbrookes, only two months after privatisation a report by the Borough Council and the Health Authority said, "Standards of cleaning have plummeted." And a letter from the District Administrator spoke of deteriorating standards, inadequate training, levels of supervision and quality control.

An operation had to be cancelled when an operating suite was found to have blood and bone on the floor. Kenneth Clarke tried to cover this up by saying this part of the hospital was "not included in the specifications of outside cleaners". But a spokesman from the Health Authority pointed out, "It is hardly likely that we would leave out of our specifications one of our main theatre suites". The fact is that with the government's implicit support private firms are saving themselves money and making bigger profits at the expense of you and me, the patients.

All over the country firms like OCS and Crothalls are employing inexperienced staff sometimes as young as 14, and telling them to skimp on cleaning by doing only the most visible parts, like hallways, while vital areas like kitchens and theatres are filthy.

Its effect on NHS staff has been equally devastating. Often they are sacked when a private firm takes over, then some are often re-employed on new contracts, with shorter hours, less or no holiday and sick pay, and wage rates cut by up to 45%. As hospital ancillary workers already earn up to £70 less than the national average, they can't afford this pay cut.

Union apathy

Conditions are no better if an in-house tender is accepted. Cuts in staff and in their pay and conditions are just as bad, as hospital management try to be competitive with private firms. What are the unions doing to protect their members?

The answer seems to be nothing. Mostly they support the change to in-house tenders — in February last year both NUPE and COHSE suggested members accept either pay cuts or redundancies in order to prevent a contract in the Victoria Health Authority going to a private firm. This is the sort of tactic you would expect from management, not unions!

What explains this attitude on the part of union leaders? The answer is simple — in-house tenders employ union labour. Private contractors often don't.

The union bosses would rather see a cut in their members' wages than a cut in their unions' numbers and hence in their own power.

In fact in some Health Authorities, it is the management that have done the most to protect employees. Some have introduced "fair wages" clauses into contracts. Kenneth Clarke denounced these as an "unreasonable interference in the relationship between contractors and their employees", and the Authorities were forced to withdraw these clauses, under threat of losing funding. For example the Trafford Authority was threatened with the loss of £130,000 earmarked for a drug abuse treatment centre (after all this government says about the drug problem!).

The future

So far 222 contracts have been awarded, 67% to in-house tenders. The Health Minister wants this figure to rise by another 2,000, but this will no doubt be increased again if the

plan to privatise NHS management goes ahead.

Kenneth Clarke has threatened to make it compulsory for contracts to be awarded to private firms.

Right-wing Tory MPs want private health insurance to be tax-deductible, to drive more of those who can afford it into the private sector. It seems to be working — BUPA have their highest membership ever and private medicine is now 7% of all British medicine.

Jewel in the crown?

The NHS is often proclaimed the shining achievement of the post-war Labour government. But they had no idea how much it would cost, particularly after the post-war baby boom and the increasing numbers of old people. Big business interests were happy enough to pay through taxation for a service that provided large numbers of healthy workers when the economy was expanding. But now there is no need for a large British workforce, due to cheap foreign labour and massive mechanisation. Now the NHS has become a burden they no longer think worthwhile.

What can be done?

Certainly it's no good appealing to the government, as the staff of the Royal Sussex Hospital did when they were faced with a wage cut of 25%. These were the people who nursed Norman Tebbit and other Tories after the Brighton Bombing and they got nothing for their pleas.

Nor is there any point in waiting for a Labour Government — Labour has an appalling record on health.

The unions are back-peddling and it seems clear they care more for their own interests than their members', so who can health workers and patients rely on to help them? The answer is, on each other. It's only when patients and staff are in solidarity for their own mutual aid that they can begin to demand and get direct control in their own Health Service.

Only through direct control can we get the health care we want and protect our services from the backstabbing of governments who would rather see the NHS destroyed.

TMB.

PRIVATISED! ...WATER NEXT

The Tameside experience

The authority's corporate plan published every year reports a "widespread problem of poor (drinking) water quality and low pressures". Many of the Lancashire mill towns were built with common supply pipes that channel water from the mains in the street to several houses. That worked well when most houses needed water only for a single tap indoors and a toilet in the yard. Today, central heating, fitted bathrooms, washing machines and the rest have overloaded the system. Two thirds of the complaints about bursts and low pressure come from people with common supply pipes.

But there is also a hidden hazard. Most of these common supply pipes are made of lead. Water lying in them dissolves the lead, leading to concentrations in tap water that are unhealthy and will from this year be illegal under EEC law. "Well over 600,000 properties" are served by such pipes, and the water authority wants to spend 3 million per year solving the lead problem.

The authority says that 40% of its water mains "suffer from an unacceptable degree of corrosion and internal deposits. 35% of water is of an unacceptable standard". Last year, it's engineers scraped out the rust and poured concrete linings into 200 kilometres of mains, reducing the backlog of repairs to water mains by just 4%. Work has hardly begun on plugging the leaks that cause the loss of more than a third of the water that enters the system.

Meanwhile, up in the hills, the authority is responsible for some 200 reservoirs that supply most of the water to the region. Many, it says "are in need of remedial work to bring them fully up to the most recent safety requirements". That is to say, engineers fear they may collapse.

The collapsing sewers of Manchester have gained a world-wide reputation. The image of the heartland of the industrial revolution crumbling away physically as well as economically is compelling. There are currently 600 major collapses of sewers in the North West each year — a quarter of all the collapses in Britain. Last year nearly 15 kilometres of sewers were renovated in the North West. Taken together with the 50 kilometres abandoned and 125 kilometres built from scratch, that amounts to just 0.5% of the region's total sewerage system. Today's new sewers are designed to last perhaps 60 years and renovation work, such as re-lining, is expected to prolong that for no more than 20 to 30 years.

Along the Mersey estuary the contents of most of Merseyside's sewers are dumped straight into the river. A former secretary of state for the environment, Michael Heseltine described the pollution as "an affront to the standards of a civilised society". It will cost hundreds of millions of pounds to bring fish back to the estuary.

Upstream, the sewage works in dozens of North West towns are hopelessly overloaded. Everytime it

rains, sewage overflows into the rivers Roch, Irwell and many others. The authority says it has 700 "unsatisfactory storm overflows" — half the national total.

The regions rivers, already the dirtiest in the country, have been getting dirtier still since 1982. The region currently has 301 kilometres of "grossly polluted" rivers and canals that are likely to be a health hazard. That figure is an increase of 42% since 1980 and amounts to a third of the national total.

'Public ownership' has not safeguarded the environment (reduced the level of pollution). Nationalisation is no nearer to satisfying peoples needs than private ownership. However, this does not mean that we should stand idly by while the government sells the Water Boards off to its political friends with the resulting loss of jobs. The return from State capitalism to private capitalism offers the working class no gain, any more than did the nationalisation of railways and the coalmines.

"Privatisation means jobs lost", — this slogan must be both the rallying call and foundation of the new campaign to satisfy human needs and create jobs. The only way our living and working environment can be safeguarded is by the socialisation of industry and workers' control. The Tories' plans for the water industry should make this need clear to everyone.

Earlier this year, the junior environment minister, Ian Gow, wrote to the ten regional water authorities in England and Wales saying that he wanted to "make early progress" in selling them off to private owners. Gow's letter has gone largely unremarked, but it represents a sudden and total reversal of government policy. It will also be the biggest "privatisation" that the government has yet attempted — dwarfing the flotation of British Telecom in terms of the total value of the assets put up for sale.

The water industry's assets are valued at 26 billion, and would cost twice that to build from scratch. Giant national enterprises such as British Rail and National Coal Board pale by comparison. Now it seems that these assets could be in private hands by the end of 1987. (Water and sewage in Scotland are run directly by local councils and will not be affected. In Northern Ireland they are run directly by the government; but there has been no hint of a plan to privatise them there).

Despite the political attractions, the exercise could prove an embarrassment for the government. For it is bound to reveal the dreadful state of much of the industry. Potential buyers should beware. Since the mid-1970's, government strictures have halved the water industry's rate of investment. Sewer collapses are leaving holes in the road everywhere. Anywhere between a quarter and a third of the water put into Britain's water mains leaks from corroding pipes.

SINCE BY-ELECTIONS ARE WITH US ONCE AGAIN WE THOUGHT IT APPROPRIATE TO PRESENT A PIECE OF FICTION!

club colours

BY GEORGE FLASHER

It was stick-colouring time in Flasdeposoria, the quaintly-named little state which prided itself on its democratic system. "Stick-colouring" was the name given to the election in which, every five years, the adult citizens of Flasdeposoria were entitled to cast a vote for a colour. The colour receiving the most votes would be used to paint the large wooden sticks which were used in the much revered and respected institution known as the Vogren process. To the Flasdeposorians the Vogren process was democracy in action, and the beauty of it was that it was so simple. One morning each week, before going about their daily business, the citizens would go to their neighbourhood control centre, where they would be clubbed on the head with the Vogren sticks. Though somewhat painful at the time, the good citizens of Flasdeposoria were generally appreciative of the necessity of the Vogren process for, as they well knew, and were constantly reminded by the newssheets it was the means by which the stability of their society was maintained.

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The period leading up to the stick-colouring election brought with it the usual stew of ideas and controversies. Each colour had its staunch proponents, prepared to defend their claims for the necessity of Vogren sticks being painted in the colour of their choice, with cleverly thought-out arguments and theories. "Brown — the sensible way forward" was the simple statement borne by the posters put up by the advocates of Brown, while an article in one of the newssheets carried an interview in which a leading Purple propagandist spoke of the "destructive and demoralising effects of five years of Brown Vogren sticks" which he said could now be remedied by a majority vote for Purple. Yellow always obtained fewer votes than Brown and Purple, and it had been many years since the Flasdeposorians had been struck by Yellow Vogren sticks. Nevertheless, in the run-up to the election the Yellow advocates were allowed considerable space in the newssheets, in which to put forward their views — which were based largely on the notion of the desirability of Yellow Vogren sticks as a moderate alternative to the equally deplorable extremes of Brown and Purple.

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The people of Flasdeposoria were proud of their stick-colouring elections, as a symbol of all that was good about their system. They knew that as long as they were able to decide collectively the colour of the Vogren sticks with which they were clubbed, they could be secure in the knowledge that freedom and the right of the individual to pursue prosperity and happiness would be safe in Flasdeposoria. It was hardly rising that attacks on the system, infrequent though they were, were always profoundly disturbing to the Flasdeposorians. There was a widespread distrust of people who proposed radical changes to the system. Some people supported a bizarre variety of colours for Vogren sticks; in fact, scarcely credible though it was, there were people who advocated Grey Vogren sticks, and even some who favoured Pink. The vast majority of the people recognised the potential danger of this type of deviance, and were happy that the promoters of the major colours realised it too. In fact, differences of colour support were set aside when unacceptable extremism reared its ugly head. This was another reason why the people of Flasdeposoria felt sure that the integrity of their cherished democratic system was safe from unhealthy influences.

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It was difficult for most people to understand why anybody should want to intro-

duce some of the ideas that were put forward. Sometimes there were enough problems caused by the antagonism between Brown, Purple and Yellow, without adding the ridiculous ideas of the Grey, Pink and Turquoise groups, and others like them, to the general confusion. It was widely held, though, that one of the strongest aspects of the Flasdeposorian system was the fact that these people were allowed to put forward such unacceptable colours for Vogren sticks, and that any citizen was free to stand up and say that they wished to be struck with a Grey stick, or to vote in favour of being bruised by a Pink stick. Though people naturally tended to be hostile towards these minority colours, there were few who would deny the right of others to promote them. Similarly the Flasdeposorians were, on the whole, tolerant even of the "Lunatic Fringe" who not only favoured absurd colours for the Vogren sticks, but went so far as to propose ludicrous moves such as instituting the clubbing of people on the arms or chest, instead of the head. Fortunately a sense of humour was one of the most notable characteristics of the people of Flasdeposoria, so such eccentricities were not so much feared as treated as a huge joke. This fact was very effective in helping to ensure that wild and dangerous ideas did not take hold. The Flasdeposorians were able, by and large, to look after themselves.

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Not long before polling day, a previously unseen newssheet appeared. What was immediately remarkable about it was that it carried no indication of support for a particular colour, being printed simply in black and white without the use of coloured inks or paper common to the other newssheets. This was thought by many to be an oblique reference to Grey, and people who heard this theory tended to accept it as there was much about the new newssheet that was somehow reminiscent of Grey propaganda. Many people who rejected proffered copies of "Blank Voice" as the sheet was titled, did so with such comments as, "I don't want to read that Grey rubbish" and "You Greys are living in a dream world". This view prevailed despite the assertions in "Blank Voice" that the people involved in its production had nothing to do with the Grey movement, and the frequent articles rejecting Grey propaganda.

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It was not long before the leading lights of the colour groups had had their attention drawn to the small Blank movement. "Blank Voice" caused a degree of mild consternation in these circles, but this soon gave way to a more rational approach. To overreact to Blank propaganda would be to unwillingly give credibility to Blank ideas. Better instead to calmly show up the Blank protagonists for the crazed characters they were, and then to ignore their future activities as far as possible. All the major colour groups agreed to this and settled on a policy of a carefully orchestrated but low-level propaganda operation, which would soon discredit the entire Blank philosophy.

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The propaganda was subtle and generally effective. No hysterical headlines appeared in the colour newssheets. Criticism of the Blank movement was kept low key, generally consisting of sneering editorials and opinion columns, or scornful references to Blank ideas in other articles. Blank supporters were portrayed as destructive agents of chaos and disorder. The citizens of Flasdeposoria needed little encouragement to see Blank supporters as either zany eccentrics, or inherently wicked strife-mongers. After all, Blank ideas went against all

What Syndicalists Think About...

GUNS AND BOMBS.

Disgust

Without an effective union movement the anarchists turned to desperate individual acts of resistance, assassinations,



NOT THE ANSWER

bombings etc. They became isolated from the working class, for bombings disgust ordinary people and also sometimes kill them.

When anarchists like Pelloutier and Pouget realised this they led the return to union action which, as terrorism was outgrown by the movement, heralded the most successful period of French syndicalism so far. Since the mid-1890s terrorism has not been an important part of anarchist tactics.

Dictators

Armed struggle just isn't effective. Faced with a bunch of poorly-armed amateurs the state, with its highly-trained professional army will root out and kill them. Faced with a unified, revolutionary working class, on the other hand, in a revolutionary general strike, the bosses are powerless.

It is for these reasons that we don't support armed struggle, not "moral" grounds. We don't mourn for the dead of the ruling class. Shooting this or that boss will not get what we want — the most profound social change.

Even in times of repression armed struggle is not the way to unseat dictators. It was striking transport workers in Barcelona who gave Franco sleepless nights in 195, not the exciting but fruitless activities of guerrillas like Sabate or Facerias.

A dead end

Armed struggle is often no more than terrorism in scale and effect. The Arab gunmen emptying their machine guns into a crowded airport terminal or the IRA bomb blowing up a pub or crowd of Xmas shoppers — these do not differentiate between classes. There is a similarity with the methods of the state, and it is not surprising that statesmen such as De Valera and Begin began their careers as terrorists.

Compared with the state's terrorism in war the violence of the illegal armed groups is slight, but that does not excuse it. Terrorism is a dead end for revolutionaries; it only brings greater repression for all, whether or not it is successful. Syndicalism rejects it.

GC

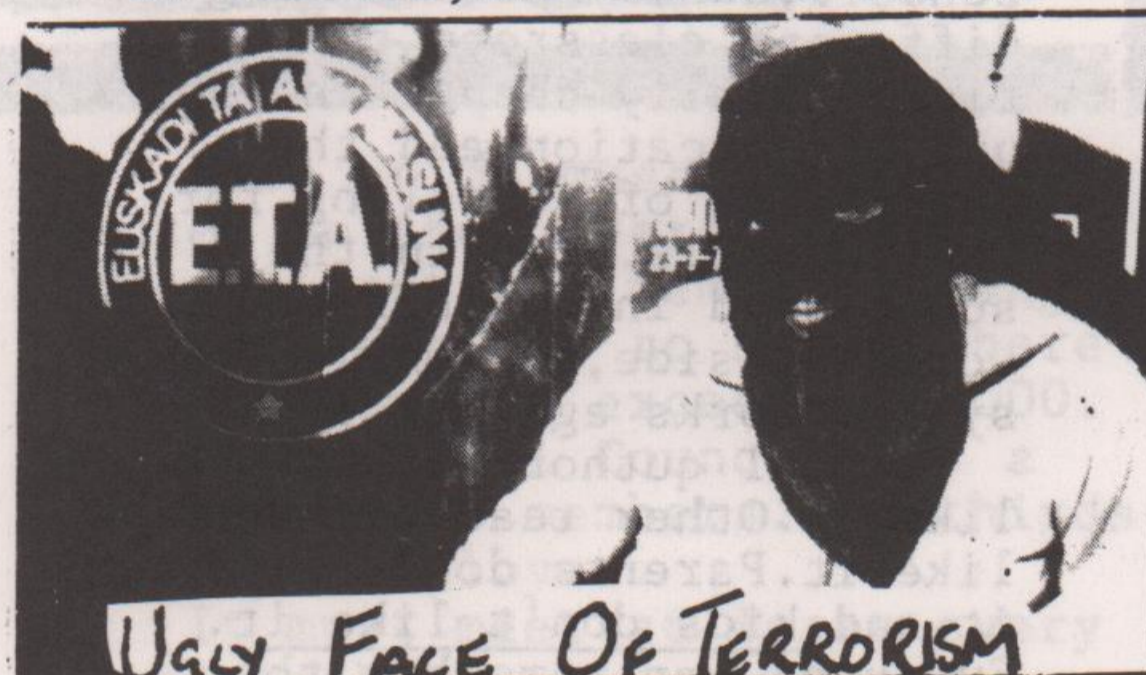
Terrorism is very much in the news these days, whether it's the Libyans, the IRA or the Euro-terrorists of the red Brigades, CCC, Baader-Meinhof etc. For many, the Anarchist is the evocation of the mad bomber, an image that some anarchists actually encourage. What do syndicalists think of terrorism and armed struggle? Can it lead to a free society?

Syndicalists think not. The future society will take on the characteristics of the organisation that overthrew the old order. Thus the Spanish Revolution of 1936 animated by the anarcho-syndicalist CNT expressed itself through workers' self-management of industry and agriculture because these workers were used to working in a self-managed union organisation.

Likewise, the Bolsheviks in October 1917 brought about a society which mirrored their party organisation: dictatorial and centralist.

Elite

It is clear what sort of society a vanguardist armed struggle group, if successful, would bring about. It would be an elitist, militarised one. We



see this best where small guerrilla bands have seized power in countries such as Cuba.

The use of armed struggle echoes the state's methods of action. Clandestine armed struggle groups act in the name of a working class they often don't belong to, and whose problems they don't experience. Syndicalist Augustin Soucy Bauer described the Baader-Meinhof group as "spoiled middle-class sons and daughters". When Marxist or libertarian armed struggle groups seek to lead the working class it is a lead we should ignore.

Power

Syndicalists believe the power of workers lies in collective, union struggles, which raise the consciousness of workers as together they face the power of the state. Learning to run our own struggles and through that our own lives is a far cry from the example of bombings and assassinations, which are merely passively consumed as a spectacle by ordinary people.

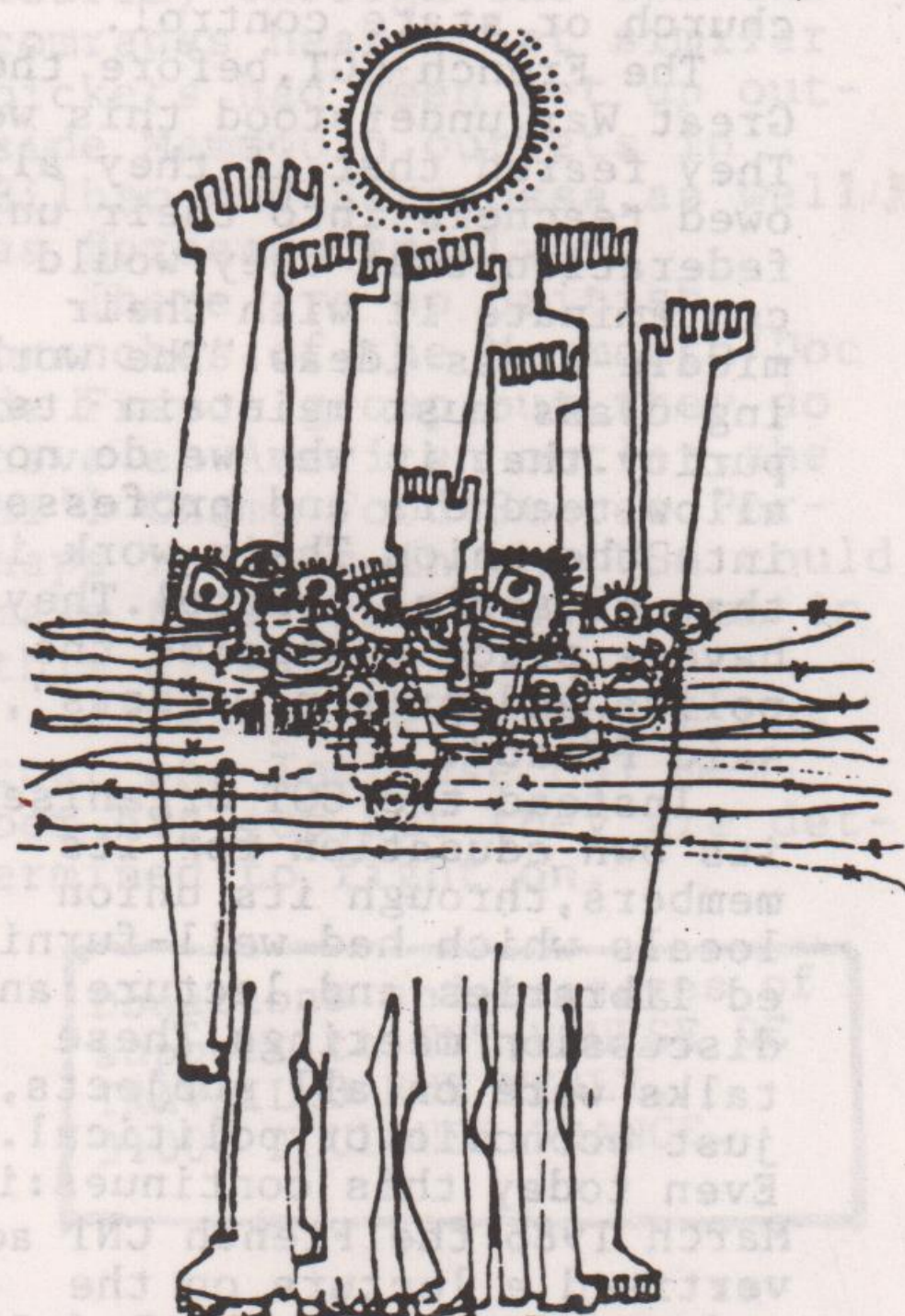
The syndicalist seeks to build a combative union organisation which can create a new world in the shell of the old. For the stateless society at which we aim to function, workers must play an active role in their organisation and its struggles.

If we say this, how is it that anarchism has been so

AS SEEN BY OUR DETRACTORS



closely associated with bombings? The answer is historical. The anarchists who made the First International of the 1860s a force to be reckoned with realised that industrial struggle was the workers' best weapon and only hope of achieving revolution. But by 1872 the international had been destroyed by the manipulation of Marx and his henchmen and in France the labour movement had been crushed in the wake of the Paris Commune.



OUR REAL POWER

EDUCATION: THE LIBERAL LIE

As — I think — a libertarian parent (credentials: three kids, none of them school-goers, and an active part in my local DAM group), I recently had quite a surprise. Listening to a discussion about "libertarian education" I realised that those present were talking exclusively about teachers, and teachers in state schools at that. When someone asked what part children took in the deliberations of these "libertarians" the simple answer was "none at all".

Now teachers are supposed to be very clever folk. They often mention the years of study they spend preparing to become teachers. They should know better than I do the meaning of the word "libertarian", and should be capable of analysing both their personal power in relation to individual children, and their own insignificant role in the wider institution of the school. So possibly the few observations I have to make on the subject will seem to most teachers merely to be stating the obvious.

My point is that in the context of state schools the term "libertarian teacher" is rather like "army intelligence": a contradiction in terms.

Consider the two-fold function of the classroom. Firstly it provides day-care — custody of everyone between four and 15, keeping them off the streets and out of mischief, while "real" people in the "real" world carry on the important business of being economically active. The assumptions underlying this are obvious.

Secondly, the school functions as a production line, turning out docile workers and obedient citizens, well-trained to turn up on time, take orders, uncomplainingly undertake meaningless and repetitive tasks, speak only when permitted, fall into the socially pre-determined slot in the hierarchy and recognise the position of others above and below... Compared with this the few educational skills most school-goers pick up seem merely coincidental.

It could be argued that schools are not like that now. Children are allowed to talk, wear what clothes they like, select in what order they do their work, which is, for the younger ones at least, a tempting business of enticing pictures, exciting bright colours, relevant readers, learning through fun.

Yes indeed. They are allowed. The liberal teacher has been at work here, softening the rough edges of school discipline and smiling benignly as s/he gently moulds the intractable children into tomorrow's good citizens.

The liberal teacher is a liar — a dangerous liar, because s/he confuses children as to who is the real enemy, while all the while remaining firmly in charge. As an instrument of social control s/he takes their place along with the gutter press, the pop industry and advertising — velvet gloves on the iron hand.

At this point the "libertarian" teachers break in with a chorus of "No, no that is precisely what we wish to avoid. We want the children in our classrooms to have real freedom and develop true self-control".

But it won't do. They are either hopelessly Utopian or downright dishonest (neither of these are good things for a teacher to be) if they imagine that individual teachers, isolated in their various schools, can, by introducing different classroom practices, totally change the nature of education and the experience of schooling for their pupils. Both in the school, and in the big bad world outside, the whole system works against it.

School authorities don't like it. Other teachers don't like it. Parents don't like it and kids don't like it. Everyone can remember the contempt and irritation

they felt when forced to deal with a wet liberal teacher at school.

I remember reading an article by just such a teacher, a young failed infant teacher. He related how, after being asked to leave, he explained to the 6-7-year-olds that he "didn't like making them do things they didn't want to do".

The reply was "If you say you don't like doing that to us, why do you still do it?"

This teacher's liberal conscience would have meant more to the children if it had resulted in him acting honestly instead of pretending his presence in the classroom was turning Schooling into Libertarian Education. In any case, they saw through it.

What then is the answer for teachers? I would suggest the only thing they can do is be honest with themselves and with the rest of us.

Traditionally, teaching has been the "way out" for bright working-class youngsters to escape a lifetime of dirty menial work. Teachers come, therefore, from a wide variety of backgrounds, but nine times out of ten they regard themselves determinedly as middle-class, and regard their "professional" status with real pride. There is little likelihood that a majority of teachers will ever attain a revolutionary class-consciousness, given the upwardly-mobile image of the job.

The minority who do would do well to recognise that their job is largely to do



with social control. Like everyone else they must earn a living as best they can. So what is wrong with the honest workhorse teacher, free of illusions about how they will change the system and the lives of everyone in it, but prepared to offer practical help to the kids where it will do some good?

Far more to the point, what answer is there for the kids, for tomorrow's society? If today's schools, under-funded, the very buildings decaying, the playgrounds full of violent, neurotic children and adolescents, are incapable of reform, how are they to be educated?

I'd offer a simple answer. Don't send them to school at all. In lively, interested adult company, with freedom to find out what they like, they can hardly help getting educated.

Why not? When more and more people are on the dole, they don't need to send their children to school to keep them out of the house and off the streets.

Children are interesting and interested. Anything their parents have forgotten from their schooldays probably wasn't worth learning in the first place, and the rest they can easily teach their kids themselves, just as they taught them to speak (a more difficult skill than reading), eat and keep clean.

We can share the skills and resources necessary to do this. It doesn't have to be expensive. It isn't even illegal.

But it is an important challenge to the system. For children who experience freedom are not only capable of coping with it (unlike the confused and miserable creatures raising merry hell in the classrooms of the liberal teachers). They like it, and they grow up demanding more and more.

AR



... AND THE SYNDICALIST TRADITION

"EDUCATION IS FAR TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT TO THE STATE". It is this realisation that has traditionally led syndicalists to form educational movements outside church or state control.

The French CGT, before the Great War, understood this well. They feared that if they allowed teachers into their union federation that they would contaminate it with their middle-class ideas. "The working class must maintain its purity, that is why we do not allow teachers and professors into the union. Their work is that of social control. They have a place alongside the police and prison warders", said Pataud.

Instead the CGT organised its own education for its members, through its union locals which had well-furnished libraries and lecture and discussion meetings. These talks were on all subjects, not just economic or political. Even today this continues: in March 1986 the French CNT advertised a lecture on the undersea world of the Red Sea

at their Paris local.

What of children? In Spain also the anarchists were in favour of education independent of the state and church. The CNT built its own rationalist, libertarian schools and popular university. They realised that children indoctrinated by the state and church are less likely to be revolutionaries than those brought up by workers.

In this country alternatives to state education, like Summerhill, have been for rich kids only. There is no syndicalist movement which is large enough to form independent free schools, as there is in France and Spain. Instead we must look to home education.

At home learning can take place in a sane environment, unlike the hurly-burly of the classroom. Here children can be taught by people they respect, not by a member of the middle class who will poison the children with their odious values, children they can't relate to and whom they see, rightly, as enemies.

The claim that a child

learns best when herded into a room with 35 others makes little sense. Children flourish in adult company. The unnatural lumping together by age-group of children in school acts as a fast breeder for phobias, aggression and mental ill-health.

Schools can't be reformed along libertarian lines from the inside. 20 syndicalist teachers in one school would still behave like 20 little policemen. That is the role

What did you learn in school today?

The strong are admired,

The clever belong,

Sir must be right,

Questions are wrong.

That was the truth I learned today.



the state dictates for them.

In a syndicalist society there will be no full-time teachers, for there will be no parasites. After the engineer has completed her four hours daily work she may instruct the young in her skill. Likewise the agricultural worker, or those who have special skills outside their profession such as artists and musicians. Education will not end at 16 or 18, but will continue throughout life.

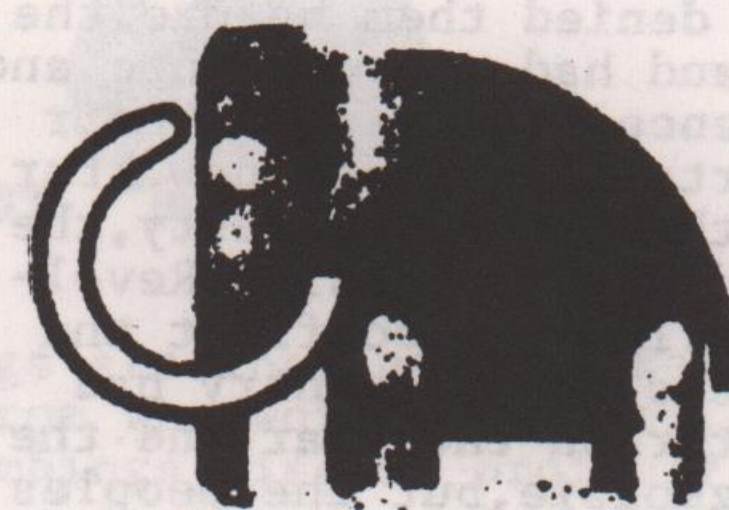
Until that happy day and until there is a syndicalist movement it is up to working-class parents to educate their children at home, to think for themselves, especially for the child's first 10 years when they are at the most risk from the state's lie machine. Lack of facilities can be overcome by collective efforts with others who educate at home.

It is a small start in building human material fit to run a self-managed society and it is a start which syndicalist parents can give a lead in now.

GC.



C.N.T. in Mammoth struggle.



Our comrades in the French IWA affiliate, the CNT, have taken on a Mammoth — literally. Since late last year the huge and highly profitable Mammoth department store in Toulouse, one of a chain of stores in SW France and Spain, has been trying to cut down on staff, starting with the union militants, while forcing those who remain at work to do more work than before.

This process, disguised as "flexibility", "early retirements" and "voluntary redundancy"

dancies" has met with practically no resistance from the servile bosses unions, the CGT, the CFTD and the FO.

But this is not the case with the CNT. Instead of signing an agreement with the bosses "doing away with all we have struggled for over 15 years", they have fought back.

In spite of the bosses' attempts to have them arrested by the police, CNT members have been leafletting shoppers at Mammoth, letting them know about lay-offs in the store and urging them to shop elsewhere.



CNT MEMBERS IN TOULOUSE

DEMONSTRATE

After appealing for solidarity through the IWA the comrades heard that similar pickets had been set up outside Mammoth outlets in Bilbao and Saragossa, as well as Bordeaux and Lyon.

There are no British branches of the Mammoth/Doc de France group, but they do have an American outlet, the Li'l Champ Food Stores. Perhaps readers in the USA could make their feelings known in this direction?

Already the struggle has cost one Toulouse CNT member his job, but they are determined to fight on.

Donations and messages of support to CNT, BOURSE DE TRAVAIL, 3 RUE MERLY, 31000 TOULOUSE, FRANCE.

O.V.B.

(Onafhankelijk Verbond van bedrijfsorganisaties).

HOLLAND'S SYNDICALIST UNION

READERS OF DA MAY REMEMBER DURING THE COAL STRIKE SEEING PHOTOGRAPHS HERE AND IN "THE MINER" (paper of the NUM) OF A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OVB, HOLLAND'S SYNDICALIST UNION, HANDING OVER THOUSANDS OF GUILDERS TO THE NUM.

THE OVB ROTTERDAM DOCKERS ALSO MANAGED TO BLACK COAL DUE

FOR EXPORT TO BRITAIN DURING THE STRIKE, UNTIL THEIR ACTION WAS WEAKENED BY THE "SOCIALIST" UNION.

HERE WE SHOW HOW THIS SYNDICALIST UNION FEDERATION, 15,000 STRONG, FUNCTIONS. WE THANK "COURANT ALTERNATIF" FOR INFORMATION FIRST PUBLISHED IN THEIR PAGES.

THE BACKGROUND

After World War II the Dutch union movement had to be rebuilt. A prominent initiative was the creation of the EVC (the United Union Congress), instigated by the Communists along similar lines to their other European union strategies. This attempt soon collapsed and the union movement dispersed into several union organisations. The three largest are —

- the NVV (social democrats)
- the NKV (Catholics)
- the CNV (Protestants)

Three years ago, the NVV and NKV began to link up. Certain parts of them actually joined officially, and more recently the entire organisations have fused under the name FNV (union federation of the Netherlands). Politically the FNV is similar to the old NVV — an extremely reformist social-democrat organisation.

The CNV remained apart, and constitutes a real bosses union.

On the 1st April 1948, union militants, shunning both Communist control in the EVC and the reformism of the social democrats and churches,

created the OVB (independent union of workplace organisations), which stood as that part of the labour movement which refused all forms of class collaboration, along with the control of any party, ideology or religion. However, it did define itself as "a left-wing, anti-capitalist workers' organisation".



THE OVB, HANDING THOUSANDS OF GUILDERS OVER TO THE NUM

AIMS OF THE OVB

"The defence of the material and spiritual interests of the working class, particularly at the place of work..."

...Therefore the OVB opposes all forms of domination over the working class, whether material or ideological.

...The OVB believes that all workers are perfectly capable of deciding, individually and collectively, on their own future.

...Naturally this means that each must take part in decision-making not only in the workplace but also in the neighbourhood, as a pensioner, a consumer, a claimant, etc.

...But the right to decide for oneself their own life cannot exist in a capitalist society like ours...only in one where all the forms of production and administration are organised by the workers themselves. The OVB is in favour

of workers' self-management.

...The OVB believes also that the liberation of all workers cannot take place in a single country...it requires a totally new world order, embracing all nationalities...

...In the world we seek all the interests of workers will be safeguarded and there will no longer be any restraint on the most total liberty and democracy."

According to the OVB, all organisational forms, to be truly democratic, must be capable of complete control from the base. Delegates must always be instantly recallable and serve on a rotational basis.

IN PRACTICE

OVB members are organised according to the workplace they work in, and according to their jobs, belong to differing industrial sections.

There are ten of these in the OVB:

- Metal industries
- Textiles and clothing
- Graphical industries
- Building trades
- Factories (general)
- Agriculture
- Banking and commerce
- Docks and transport
- Government employees (including nationalised industry, railways, power, education and civil service)
- Fishing and seafaring.

These organisations can judge of themselves their own problems and make their own decisions.

Each has its own administration elected by its own conference and sends delegates to the General Council of the OVB.

This forms the vertical structure of the OVB. A horizontal structure, based geographically rather than industrially, also exists wherever there are several union branches in one town. In this case the members elect a local council to run a local office.

THE CONGRESS

This is the supreme decision-making body of the OVB. It meets at least once every two years and is composed of delegates mandated by the membership and by the General Council.

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

This is composed of delegates from each organisation in the OVB, and from the national Executive which is elected by the Congress.



Each union must be represented on the General Council by at least one member, rising proportionately to seven where the membership exceeds 10,000.

The General Council has a quorum of 15 members. Two-thirds must be employed.

It must meet at least every two months.

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

This is elected by the Congress. It enforces the rules of the OVB, and is responsible for finance. It may take urgent decisions after consulting the General Council or the Congress.

Its members may be recalled instantly by the General Council if they act against the will of the membership or oppose the interests of the OVB or workers in general. If there is serious disagreement an extraordinary Congress will adjudicate.

The members of the Executive are mandated to carry out precise tasks by the Congress (such as propaganda, fund-raising etc). It cannot comprise more than five persons.

THE CENTRAL FIGHTING FUND

Financed by a proportion of the dues and by donations, this fund exists to make day-to-day payments to any OVB members engaged in disputes, strikes, etc. In some cases it may be used to assist non-members of the OVB.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Through its National Legal Assistance Bureau and its local branches, the OVB gives advice and cash help to all members of over three months standing who are up to date with their dues. This covers problems with pensions, social security, wages, unfair dismissals, etc, etc.

OVB AND THE OTHER UNIONS

In Holland the NVV/NKV and the CNV are "recognised" unions which can make collective agreements with the state and bosses, and receive subsidies from them.

On this question the OVB states, "The official unions seek to play a part in the running of capitalist society and thus expect "recognition" from the state and the bosses. But the OVB only seeks recognition for workers themselves and seeks it only through the class struggle."

IN THE TRADITION

THE GENERAL STRIKE 1926

The 1926 General Strike was the end of an era that had commenced two decades earlier with the rise of syndicalism, when for four years Britain experienced class warfare on a scale hitherto unknown. Many informed observers felt that only the advent of the First World War saved the ruling class from the revolutionary masses.

After the War things were different. Syndicalism had rejected political organisation, but now it was in decline and two new stars had come into focus: the Labour Party and its trade union allies through their participation in the war effort had achieved a prominence denied them before the war, and had a confidence and eminence well beyond their deserts. The second new star was the Communist party, the child of the Russian Revolution. In this conflict the workers and peasantry had overthrown the Tsar and the bourgeoisie, but the peoples' revolution had been upstaged by the Bolshevik Coup, and the consequences of this had yet to be understood. Nevertheless most people felt that the former misgivings felt by many about political parties had been misplaced, and that the achievements of Russia could be repeated here.

STORM CLOUDS

By 1925 the ruling class had a policy of deflation. The Tory Prime Minister Baldwin declared on July 30th "All workers in this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet."

An attempt was made to force a reduction of 13% in the already basic wages of the miners. The rest of the working class, in solidarity with the miners, and conscious of the fact they could be next in line prepared to resist. Transport unions and others issued instructions to black the handling of coal if the owners carried out their threat to lock out the miners.

"WAGONS CONTAINING COAL MUST NOT BE ATTACHED TO ANY TRAIN AFTER MIDNIGHT ON FRIDAY JULY 31st. AFTER THIS TIME WAGONS OF COAL MUST NOT BE SUPPLIED TO ANY INDUSTRIAL OR COMMERCIAL CONCERNS", said the official instructions to all railway and transport workers.

Taken aback by this fierce response to their attack on workers' living standards, the government paused. They were not ready for a fight, even though 300 of their backwoodsmen in Parliament moved a resolution protesting against government policy.

On July 31st, they announced a subsidy to the coal industry of £25 million to extend over nine months, while the wage cuts and other owners' demands were put off until April 1926.

Meanwhile, as a propaganda exercise the government appointed a commission under Samuels to go into the question of the mining dispute. After nine months, this recommended increased hours, lower wages and district agreements, a policy the miners had already rejected.

PREPARATIONS

It was obvious that the government were buying time. They prepared an "Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies" (OMS) which was simply a strike-breaking body. Many British Fascists joined this. Special Constables were recruited and an elaborate network was set up for each county to face the workers' fightback.

But at the TUC the preparations for the coming struggle were almost non-existent. At a Minority Movement conference the miners' leader AJ Cook said "we are in danger. A united enemy is knocking at the gates... My slogan is — 'Be prepared'." But the TUC ignored him and nothing was done at all.

In April the coal owners announced that unless the miners accepted the employers' demand a lockout would take place on May 1st. On the 20th April George V proclaimed a State of Emergency and the Special Constabulary were mobilised.

London became a huge military camp; some 40,000 troops

were encamped there. Hyde Park became an open-air barracks, while troops in full gear paraded through the streets with tanks and armoured cars. Warships sailed up the Thames, the Tyne, the Clyde and the Mersey.

At last, on April 29th the executives of the trade unions were called to a conference of the TUC. But next day, even as the conference sat, the craven leaders of the TUC, panicking at the thought of what was happening, called at Downing St in the hope that Baldwin would get them off the hook.

JH Thomas, leader of the rail workers and ex-Labour minister said later, "I suppose my usual critics will say that Thomas was almost grovelling and it is true... I never begged and pleaded like I begged and pleaded all today."

It was with this sort of leadership that the working class went into the biggest struggle of their life.

THE STRIKE

On Saturday May 1st, 1926, one million miners were locked out. In the TUC conference at the Memorial Hall, Faringdon St the assembled delegates voted 3,653,527 in favour of a general strike, and 49,911 against. "For once in a score of years a trade union conference expressed the mood of the workers" (Tom Brown, The British General Strike). The delegates sang the Red Flag and quietly left the hall. That May Day saw the greatest May Day demonstration London had ever seen.

Tuesday May 3rd found Britain in the grip of the strike. Railways were silent, trams and buses were stopped, no newspapers appeared.

Even then with all the massive solidarity being shown the TUC didn't cease to cower before the government and the journeys to Downing St never stopped. Frightened of the emotiveness of the term, the General Council didn't even want to use the term General Strike, which smacked too much of the dreaded and detested syndicalism. Instead they preferred to call it a National Strike.

The strikers were split up into two "waves", front line and reserves. The front line were print workers, rail workers, bus and tram workers and dockers, and were called out from midnight on May 3rd.

The reserves were engineering and shipyard workers, the iron and steel trades, the textile industry and the building crafts.

The result of these unnatural divisions was to isolate sections of the workers and lay them open to pressure from the bosses.

One example of this effect was Coventry, which did not depend on transport like London nor was it a centre for railways, so the strike was severely limited. The engineering workers — the majority — were kept at work, out of trouble.

However workers at Armstrong-Whitworth turned in to work only to find the whole place saturated with troops to protect the hangars. They refused to work under military occupation and not only decided to join the strike but demanded a meeting of the district AEU and had it made general.

Though the quiescent behaviour of the union leaders left a lot to be desired, the strikers did all that could be expected in the absence of directives from the top the rank and file began to organise themselves. All over the country working-class organisations began to spring up — the Councils of Action. In many cases these ran in tandem with the Trades Councils. Food, transport, lighting and defence committees were set up and slowly but surely the running of the strike slipped out of the hands of the leaders.

Mass picketing took place. Acts of sabotage were committed. In Middlesbrough workers made an attack on the Central Railway station, blocking the main line with heavy wagons. To put a stop to such high spirits the TUC General Council urged the strikers to stay at home, and when this was ignored brought out the old chestnut of football matches

with the police!

To the Government it looked as if their strategy had flopped. Transport committees, formed to organise food supplies, were ignored. In general the strike-breakers and black-legs were less than adequate. In many places the OMS broke down and in Newcastle the government hirelings were reduced to pleading with the Joint Strike Committee for help!

Sensing their failure the Government changed tack. Using their head start, the BBC, they began a propaganda war, talking about "the challenge to the constitution", and declaring the strike to be illegal in the House of Commons.

Arrests increased, eventually totalling over 9,000 throughout the strike. The Home Secretary met senior Army and Navy officers, saying "Use whatever force you need to — I give you carte blanche".

The TUC responded by laying low, although they could have made use of the Daily Herald. JR Clynes admitted "In common with my principal colleagues, I avoided speech making and advised against mass meetings".

Though every day the picture grew clearer, of a state of class war between workers and the state, the terror of the General Council increased. Clynes said, "The whole crux of the struggle had been skillfully shifted by propaganda... to a constitutional struggle between Parliament and Anarchism."

BETRAYAL

The Government's terror tactics increased. They broadcast this message: "All ranks of the Armed Forces of the Crown are hereby notified that any action which they find it necessary to take in an honest endeavour to aid the civil power will receive, both now and afterwards, the full support of HM Government".

The government trembled under the pressure from the establishment to come to some compromise. But as Clynes said, "Fortunately, it did not come to the worst. The Trades Unions saw to that".

For during all the momentous days of the strike the General Council sought a way out. Vague proposals from Sir Herbert Samuel were seized on, including wage cuts and re-organisation of the mines.

The TUC pretended these came from the government, although Samuel stressed, "I have been acting entirely on my own initiative... I have received no authority from the Government and can give no assurances on their behalf".

For their part the Government stressed that there would be no terms or negotiating, only unconditional surrender.

But the General Council did not hesitate to sell out either the strikers in general or the miners. At 10 Downing St their craven delegation, headed by Pugh, assured Prime Minister Baldwin, "We are here today Sir to say that this General Strike is to be terminated forthwith in order that negotiations may proceed", after only nine days of struggle.

Immediately the Police terror was renewed and the number of arrests increased. When the strikers returned to work hundreds of thousands of them were met by victimisation, demands for non-unionisation, wage reductions and dismissals — only the threat of an unofficial renewal of action curbed the employers and Government from persecuting militants even more severely.

As for the miners, they were left to fight alone for another six months, till hunger and despair drove them back to work in defeat their wages were cut, the working day increased and district agreements replaced the national agreement.

The accepted reasoning is that the General Council betrayed the working class, which they undoubtedly did. This was recognised within hours of it happening.

But if we examine this more deeply, it was only possible for that betrayal to come about because of the accepted belief of those and these days — that there are leaders and led.

This is how there came to be social democrats leading a revolutionary action they did not believe in — because they opposed the struggle they led, they were in effect agents provocateurs.

The impetus of the strike was the rank-and-file movement in support of the miners. All the General Council did was seize the initiative in order to channel the discontent into safe areas. As JH Thomas said, "What I dreaded about this strike was this: if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened. I thank God it never did".

This had been inevitable from the early years of the century, as Labour leaders had been absorbed within the State machine and begun to identify entirely with the interests of the Establishment. The so-called left wing of the General Council were simply a safety valve, there to give moribund TUC a little credibility.

The one major political organisation on the left, the Communist Party, though its members suffered imprisonment in great numbers, had little political nous. Its call for "all power to the General Council" was little different from demanding "more power to the hangman's elbow".

Just like the Labour and Trade Union leaders, the one thing they didn't believe in was that the workers should and could be responsible for their own struggle. They had no faith in the the working class as anything but foot soldiers in the fight against capital. The officer corps was to be provided by the politicians and union leaders.

AFTERWARDS

For sixty years the desperate hope of the official labour movement has been "NEVER AGAIN!" The strike itself forced the workers to assume responsibility for themselves. Dukes of the NUGMW pointed out "Every day that the strike proceeded the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible Executives into the hands of men who had no authority, no control and was wrecking the movement."

Frightened, the official labour movement (the Labour Party in Parliament and the leaders of the Trade Unions) found themselves nearly redundant as the working class built up its own organisations to supersede the superfluous official ones.

Therefore they moved heaven and earth to rubbish the idea of further sympathetic strikes — "All my life I have been opposed to the sympathetic strike", wrote MacDonald.

The result of sixty years of concentrated propaganda to this effect was seen in the actions of the socialist sects — from Labour Party through the CP to the Trot grouplets — and union leaders during the miners' strike 1984-85. They were happy to buy their way to heaven with financial help, but steered well clear of the use of industrial muscle. They learnt the lesson sixty years ago, that no power can challenge the might of a well-organised and united working class, and that might could just as well be used against a reactionary "socialist" government as a Tory one.

THE FUTURE

It is essential, in these days of especially keen reaction, to rescue the idea of the General Strike, and to propagate it. As in the early years of this century the idea of the general Strike tactic was on the lips of every working person and rooted deeply in the minds of the entire class, we should make sure, through discussing and amplifying this idea, that when the time for the challenge comes we as a class are ready and can profit by the mistakes of our parents and grandparents.

JP

REMEMBER AND RESIST

HEALTH TODAY...

Addenbrookes

With official union recognition and thus strike pay removed from their cause, it appears that, against their will, the Addenbrookes strikers will be forced to accept work offered by Cambridge Health Authority. The attitude of COHSE seems a far cry from a year ago when they called for a national day of action over Addenbrookes. Now it's nothing but an embarrassment to the Union officials and Labour politicians who once stood on the Cambridge picket lines.

But Addenbrookes is by no means the only example of privatisation in action, and the history of the dispute is full of incidents that could have happened in many other hospitals all over Britain.

What it means

Privatisation — taking work from Health Service workers and giving it to private firms — can take two main forms.

One way is to give a contract to a private hospital to carry out treatments on NHS patients. This often happens where there are long waiting lists, where the NHS has the money to pay for the treatment, but not the facilities to carry it out.

The government claims this cuts waiting lists and saves money, but in practice private hospitals can choose not to take old or otherwise difficult patients. This means that NHS hospitals have longer-staying patients and increases the length of waiting lists.

More than 80 Health Authorities in England and Wales have more than 40% of their patients on waiting lists a year or more long. This exposes the Government's claim that "the only thing in the Health Service they will cut is the waiting lists" as a lie.

And an independent study suggests that private hospitals keep their charges artificially low, to make the NHS dependent on them in order to charge inflated prices later on.

The other way privatisation is carried out in the NHS is when particular hospital services, like laundry, cleaning or catering, are offered out to tender. The Health Authority considers offers from private

firms and also the hospital's own management and staff (called an "in-house" tender), and awards the contract to the one it feels offers the best value.

But the decision can be and is over-ruled by the Health Minister. In January 1985 Norwich health Authority accepted four in-house tenders and the Junior Health Minister intervened and gave the contracts to a private firm.

Contracts usually go to the cheapest offer, no matter how poor the service it will provide. But in South Cumbria, where the in-house tender was the cheapest, Health Minister Kenneth Clarke ordered the authority to check its figures — which has never happened to a private firm's tender. When the check showed the in-house offer was still the best, Clarke insisted that the contract should still be awarded to the cheapest private firm.

In practice

At Addenbrookes, only two months after privatisation a report by the Borough Council and the Health Authority said, "Standards of cleaning have plummeted." And a letter from the District Administrator spoke of deteriorating standards, inadequate training, levels of supervision and quality control.

An operation had to be cancelled when an operating suite was found to have blood and bone on the floor. Kenneth Clarke tried to cover this up by saying this part of the hospital was "not included in the specifications of outside cleaners". But a spokesman from the Health Authority pointed out, "It is hardly likely that we would leave out of our specifications one of our main theatre suites". The fact is that with the government's implicit support private firms are saving themselves money and making bigger profits at the expense of you and me, the patients.

All over the country firms like OCS and Crothalls are employing inexperienced staff sometimes as young as 14, and telling them to skimp on cleaning by doing only the most visible parts, like hallways, while vital areas like kitchens and theatres are filthy.

Its effect on NHS staff has been equally devastating. Often they are sacked when a private firm takes over, then some are often re-employed on new contracts, with shorter hours, less or no holiday and sick pay, and wage rates cut by up to 45%. As hospital ancillary workers already earn up to £70 less than the national average, they can't afford this pay cut.

Union apathy

Conditions are no better if an in-house tender is accepted. Cuts in staff and in their pay and conditions are just as bad, as hospital management try to be competitive with private firms. What are the unions doing to protect their members?

The answer seems to be nothing! Mostly they support the change to in-house tenders — in February last year both NUPE and COHSE suggested members accept either pay cuts or redundancies in order to prevent a contract in the Victoria Health Authority going to a private firm. This is the sort of tactic you would expect from management, not unions!

What explains this attitude on the part of union leaders? The answer is simple — in-house tenders employ union labour. Private contractors often don't.

The union bosses would rather see a cut in their members' wages than a cut in their unions' numbers and hence in their own power.

In fact in some Health Authorities, it is the management that have done the most to protect employees. Some have introduced "fair wages" clauses into contracts. Kenneth Clarke denounced these as an "unreasonable interference in the relationship between contractors and their employees", and the Authorities were forced to withdraw these clauses, under threat of losing funding. For example the Trafford Authority was threatened with the loss of £130,000 earmarked for a drug abuse treatment centre (after all this government says about the drug problem!).

The future

So far 222 contracts have been awarded, 67% to in-house tenders. The Health Minister wants this figure to rise by another 2,000, but this will no doubt be increased again if the

plan to privatise NHS management goes ahead.

Kenneth Clarke has threatened to make it compulsory for contracts to be awarded to private firms.

Right-wing Tory MPs want private health insurance to be tax-deductible, to drive more of those who can afford it into the private sector. It seems to be working — BUPA have their highest membership ever and private medicine is now 7% of all British medicine.

Jewel in the crown?

The NHS is often proclaimed the shining achievement of the post-war Labour government. But they had no idea how much it would cost, particularly after the post-war baby boom and the increasing numbers of old people. Big business interests were happy enough to pay through taxation for a service that provided large numbers of healthy workers when the economy was expanding. But now there is no need for a large British workforce, due to cheap foreign labour and massive mechanisation. Now the NHS has become a burden they no longer think worthwhile.

What can be done?

Certainly it's no good appealing to the government, as the staff of the Royal Sussex Hospital did when they were faced with a wage cut of 25%. These were the people who nursed Norman Tebbit and other Tories after the Brighton Bombing and they got nothing for their pleas.

Nor is there any point in waiting for a Labour Government — Labour has an appalling record on health.

The unions are back-peddalling and it seems clear they care more for their own interests than their members', so who can health workers and patients rely on to help them? The answer is, on each other. It's only when patients and staff are in solidarity for their own mutual aid that they can begin to demand and get direct control in their own Health Service.

Only through direct control can we get the health care we want and protect our services from the backstabbing of governments who would rather see the NHS destroyed.

TMB.

PRIVATISED! ...WATER NEXT

Earlier this year, the junior environment minister, Ian Gow, wrote to the ten regional water authorities in England and Wales saying that he wanted to "make early progress" in selling them off to private owners. Gow's letter has gone largely unremarked, but it represents a sudden and total reversal of government policy. It will also be the biggest "privatisation" that the government has yet attempted — dwarfing the flotation of British Telecom in terms of the total value of the assets put up for sale.

The water industry's assets are valued at 26 billion, and would cost twice that to build from scratch. Giant national enterprises such as British Rail and National Coal Board pale by comparison. Now it seems that these assets could be in private hands by the end of 1987. (Water and sewage in Scotland are run directly by local councils and will not be affected. In Northern Ireland they are run directly by the government; but there has been no hint of a plan to privatise them there).

Despite the political attractions, the exercise could prove an embarrassment for the government. For it is bound to reveal the dreadful state of much of the industry. Potential buyers should beware. Since the mid-1970's, government strictures have halved the water industry's rate of investment. Sewer collapses are leaving holes in the road everywhere. Anywhere between a quarter and a third of the water put into Britain's water mains leaks from corroding pipes.

The Tameside experience

The authority's corporate plan published every year reports a "widespread problem of poor (drinking) water quality and low pressures". Many of the Lancashire mill towns were built with common supply pipes that channel water from the mains in the street to several houses. That worked well when most houses needed water only for a single tap indoors and a toilet in the yard. Today, central heating, fitted bathrooms, washing machines and the rest have overloaded the system. Two thirds of the complaints about bursts and low pressure come from people with common supply pipes.

But there is also a hidden hazard. Most of these common supply pipes are made of lead. Water lying in them dissolves the lead, leading to concentrations in tap water that are unhealthy and will from this year be illegal under EEC law. "Well over 600,000 properties" are served by such pipes, and the water authority wants to spend 3 million per year solving the lead problem.

The authority says that 40% of its water mains "suffer from an unacceptable degree of corrosion and internal deposits. 35% of water is of an unacceptable standard". Last year, it's engineers scraped out the rust and poured concrete linings into 200 kilometres of mains, reducing the backlog of repairs to water mains by just 4%. Work has hardly begun on plugging the leaks that cause the loss of more than a third of the water that enters the system.

Meanwhile, up in the hills, the authority is responsible for some 200 reservoirs that supply most of the water to the region. Many, it says "are in need of remedial work to bring them fully up to the most recent safety requirements". That is to say, engineers fear they may collapse.

The collapsing sewers of Manchester have gained a world-wide reputation. The image of the heartland of the industrial revolution crumbling away physically as well as economically is compelling. There are currently 600 major collapses of sewers in the North West each year — a quarter of all the collapses in Britain. Last year nearly 15 kilometres of sewers were renovated in the North West. Taken together with the 50 kilometres abandoned and 125 kilometres built from scratch, that amounts to just 0.5% of the region's total sewerage system. Today's new sewers are designed to last perhaps 60 years and renovation work, such as re-lining, is expected to prolong that for no more than 20 to 30 years.

Along the Mersey estuary the contents of most of Merseyside's sewers are dumped straight into the river. A former secretary of state for the environment, Michael Heseltine described the pollution as "an affront to the standards of a civilised society". It will cost hundreds of millions of pounds to bring fish back to the estuary.

Upstream, the sewage works in dozens of North West towns are hopelessly overloaded. Everytime it

rains, sewage overflows into the rivers Roch, Irwell and many others. The authority says it has 700 "unsatisfactory storm overflows" — half the national total.

The regions rivers, already the dirtiest in the country, have been getting dirtier still since 1982. The region currently has 301 kilometres of "grossly polluted" rivers and canals that are likely to be a health hazard. That figure is an increase of 42% since 1980 and amounts to a third of the national total.

'Public ownership' has not safeguarded the environment (reduced the level of pollution). Nationalisation is no nearer to satisfying peoples needs than private ownership. However, this does not mean that we should stand idly by while the government sells the Water Boards off to its political friends with the resulting loss of jobs. The return from State capitalism to private capitalism offers the working class no gain, any more than did the nationalisation of railways and the coalmines.

"Privatisation means jobs lost", — this slogan must be both the rallying call and foundation of the new campaign to satisfy human needs and create jobs. The only way our living and working environment can be safeguarded is by the socialisation of industry and workers' control. The Tories' plans for the water industry should make this need clear to everyone.

After the bitter experiences at the hands of the Police during the Miners strike this was resented by the men, and to a man those working at the time downed tools and walked out. They had had no prior notification of the intended visit. Their reaction to such a visit had not been sought by the Colliery manager.