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Direct Action

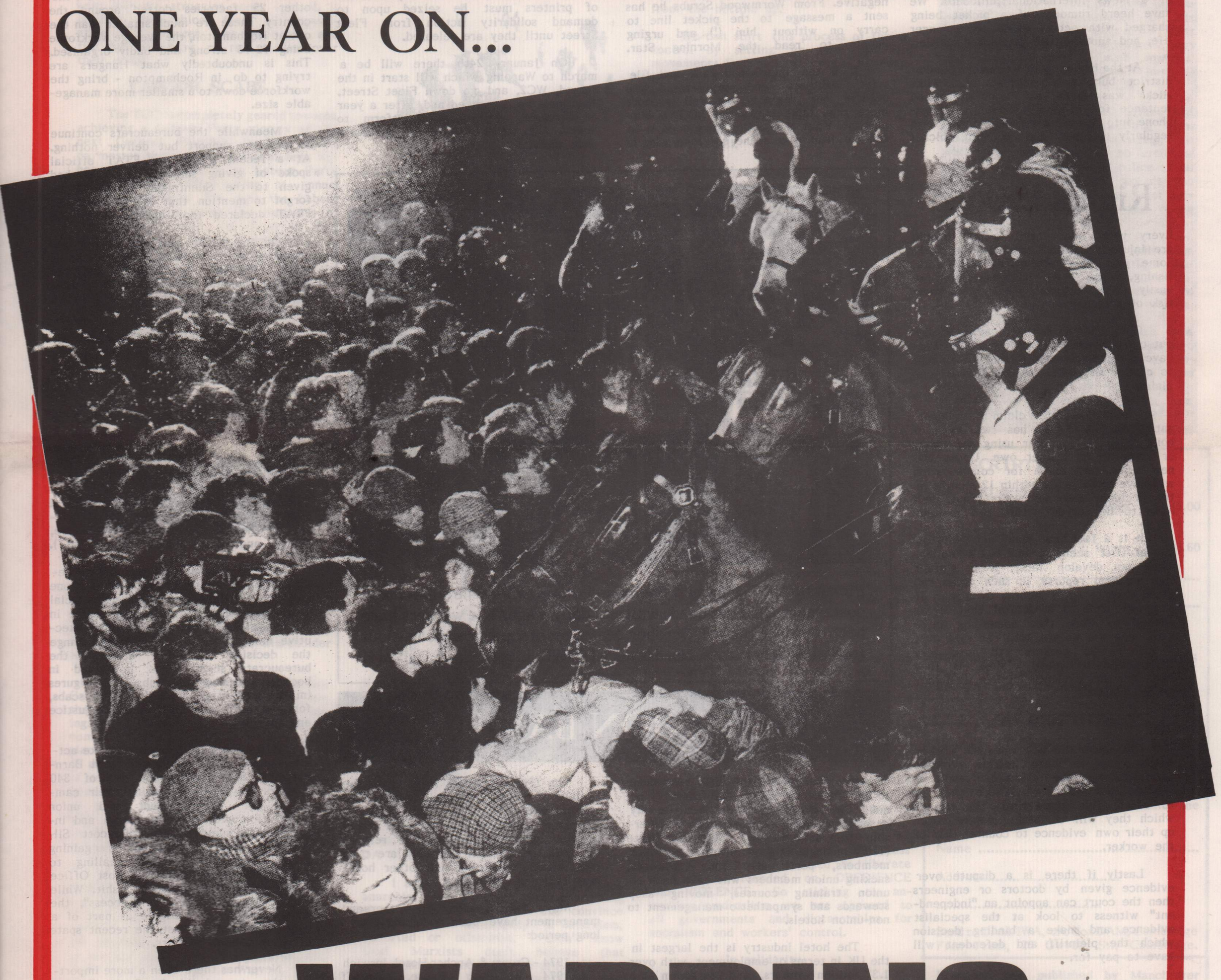
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The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism № 36 January/February 1987 25p

ONE YEAR ON...



WAPPING -

ONLY RANK & FILE ACTION CAN WIN

Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

WAPPING: Support jailed printers~ Support the picket !

After twelve months of struggle News International strikers are as determined as ever to win back their jobs and union recognition within Wapping. This refusal to give in has been met by an offensive from the police and courts which has led to the imprisonment of striking printers. Bob Tetaur and David Payne were both released in November, and Steven Savage in December, having been jailed for fighting for their right to organise.

The imprisonment of workers is obviously an attempt to break the spirit of the strikers. At present two print union members are in prison - Bob Shirfield (NGA), 9 months, and Michael Hicks (SOGAT), 4 months with a further 8 suspended. Two SOGAT members are being charged with the arson of Convoys Wharf in Deptford, and another charge of arson is pending for the setting alight of a News International billboard. We have heard rumours of a picket being charged with action liable to endanger life, and another with attempted murder.

At the beginning of December London district bureaucrat and stalinist, Mike Hicks was given a 4 month prison sentence for allegedly shoving a megaphone into a copper's face. Anyone who regularly attends the Wapping picket line will know how absurd the charge is - it should be remembered that Hicks is despised by many Wapping pickets. Just when the mood hots up and people are prepared to have a crack at the scabs or the police Hicks would get on the megaphone and do his best to diffuse the situation.

He behaves just like the police if he sees any pickets throwing anything. He has announced anti-gay jokes despite the fact that one of the most consistent supporters of the printers has been the Lesbians and Gays Print Support Group. His general attitude to pickets who are not in a print union tends to be negative. From Wormwood Scrubs he has sent a message to the picket line to carry on without him (!) and urging people to read the Morning Star.

It is the imprisoned rank and file print militants and supporters who deserve our respect and full support more than Mike Hicks the SOGAT bureaucrat. What the police have done is to remove from the scene someone who is seen as a leader, in the hope that the strike will crumble. They have badly miscalculated - the printers' desire to release their jailed comrades has only increased their determination.

However, this determination has largely manifested itself in the form of small bands of pickets physically attacking the trucks in the vicinity of Wapping on a Saturday night. While this may be the most effective form of action in the absence of a genuine mass picket, it puts forward no strategy for winning the strike in the long term. The mass picket must be rebuilt through appeals to other workers, and the imprisonment of printers must be seized upon to demand solidarity action from Fleet Street until they are released.

On January 24th there will be a march to Wapping which will start in the Strand, WC2, and go down Fleet Street. This must be supported and, after a year of struggle, used as a platform to launch the strike on to the offensive once more.

HANGERS

The dispute at J E Hangers, artificial limb makers, has now entered its 4th month. The latest offer from the company has been rejected and the strikers seem prepared to stick it out. The offer consisted of re-employing 80 full-time workers (300 were originally sacked), and another 60 on a temporary basis until March 1987. This is obviously to help clear the backlog of work which has built up. Mass meetings and pickets are still well attended, whilst about 80 of the original 300 have found new jobs.

What needs to be done is to build the mass pickets and change them from demonstrations to blockades. At the moment they are far too passive. Striking printers who were on a recent picket couldn't believe their eyes as 15 police held back 200 workers!

Solidarity action must come from the other 25 factories dotted around the country. These are much smaller than the one at Roehampton, the average workforce being 12-15 strong and badly organised. This is undoubtedly what Hangers are trying to do in Roehampton - bring the workforce down to a smaller more manageable size.

Meanwhile the bureaucrats continue to promise support but deliver nothing. At a recent picket an FTAT official spoke of giving support like they had given to the Silentnight strikers - he forgot to mention that the previous day FTAT declared that dispute unofficial!

On the bright side the pickets are becoming more militant, links are being made between the strikers and the Wapping pickets, and as the work piles up the company might be forced to settle the dispute.

Send donations and messages of support to: Hangers Strike Appeal, c/o TASS, Wessex House, 520 London Rd., Mitcham, Surrey CR4.

Rights Eroded

Every year, over three million people are injured, disabled or killed at work. Some jobs like mining, building work, fishing, etc. have hazards that are easily seen, but all jobs carry some risk of personal damage.

Companies do not like having to pay out compensation to workers and so they have got their friends in the government to change the rules on how workers can claim.

A worker making a claim for compensation for an injury has two ways of going about it - either using the union or doing it on his/her own. Under the new rules, any claim for compensation will have to be made within 12 months of the accident and any writs issued will have to be served within two months.

It is a fact that many accidents do not at first seem serious but complications can develop later; it is a fact that medical reports in such cases can often take up to 4 months to appear. If a report from a structural engineer is needed to show that something in a workplace was unsafe, that can take over 9 months. So workers will have very little time to make claims. If they don't get the evidence in time then they cannot claim.

STITCHED UP

Also under the new rules the worker would have to make her/his evidence available to the company and its insurers and solicitors before they go to court. This gives them the chance which they will certainly take to stitch up their own evidence to counter that of the worker.

Lastly if there is a dispute over evidence given by doctors or engineers then the court can appoint an "independent" witness to look at the specialist evidence and make a binding decision which the plaintiff and defendent will have to pay for.

JUST LIKE THE RITZ !

Now the law in this country has always been open to all - just like the Ritz - in other words if you have the money. This mean little piece of legislation will put up the cost for any worker trying to get compensation for an accident caused by a boss. It will cut down the time in which a claim can be made and will make the boss' case easier to prepare.

It is another small attack on workers' rights that, added to the rest of this vicious government's actions, shows clearly that they want to do away with the few rights that workers have to act individually or collectively to protect themselves.



Pickets at the THF owned Shelbourne Hotel, where the main course costs more than the head waiter's daily wage. The workers have been out since the 4th October. Messages of support and donations to: Strike Committee, No. 4 branch ITGWU, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1.

THF: UNION BASHERS

On April 16th 1986. Lord Forte announced to the House of Lords that "there is no need for unions in our business. In my business we have reduced union membership from 36% to 3%." Trusthouse Forte (THF) manage this by intimidating union members, particularly shop stewards, sacking union members who have been on union training courses, moving shop stewards and sympathetic management to non-union hotels.

The hotel industry is the largest in the UK in terms of employment, with over 1.37 million workers, and has grown at a rate of 3% per annum over the past few years. But the workers suffer from low pay - half of all waitresses earned less than £77 per week in 1985 and half of women kitchen hands earned less than £81 per week. There are poor conditions of service, poor health and safety provisions, dubious hiring and firing procedures and very poor employment practices. Labour turnover averages 70% per year, with as high as 283% in some establishments. This can be "credited" not only to the above, but to the poor esteem and status of workers in this area. This is not the case in other parts of Europe where hotel and restaurant workers have near craft status, are well trained and relatively well-paid in comparison with their UK counterparts.

The THF Group has three times the number of hotels and hotel rooms of the next nearest hotelier. But its pre-eminence means that it exerts a lot of pressure and influence on the rest of the industry, so that not only are their own workers suffering, but other hotels may take up THF's practices.

Major disputes among THF workers and management have been occurring over a long period:

1974 - Crown & Anchor Hotel, Ipswich
1974 - Post House, Cardiff
1975 - Pendragon Hotel, Southsea
1977 - Grosvenor Hotel, Sheffield
1977 - Randolph Hotel, Sheffield
1977 - Night Out, Birmingham

(all of these strikes concerned the dismissal of shop stewards)

1978 - Cafe Royal Restaurant, London
1978 - Talk of the Town Restaurant, London
1979 - Grosvenor House Hotel, London
1979 - Post House Hotel, Coventry
1980 - Heathrow Airport, London
1982/3 - Grosvenor House Hotel, London

In the last dispute, THF dismissed 27 workers, some of whom had worked for THF for 19 years, simply for asking for contracts of employment.

SILENTNIGHT SABOTAGED

Tuesday 16th December saw the final stab in the back for Silentnight strikers by the executive of the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union (FTAT).

The first warning of the dispute being officially dropped came in a phone call the previous day from a Financial Times journalist to the strike centre in Barnoldswick. A picket of the FTAT executive meeting next day failed to change the decision of their "betters": the bureaucrats seem more interested in boosting membership subs and figures (maybe recruiting the Silentnight scabs, for example?) than principles of justice and fair pay.

After some 18 months of strike action against mass sackings at both Barnoldswick and Sutton, 88 out of 340 workers are still continuing their campaign for reinstatement and union recognition with growing British and international support. The "Boycott Silentnight Beds" campaign is gaining ground and the Freepost mailing to Tom Clarke filled the local Post Office with packages of bricks and shit. While FTAT see no chance of "success", the strikers see their struggle as part of a wider fightback against the recent spate of attacks upon workers.

Never has there been a more important time to rebuild the Strike Support groups and the various Rank & File Groups on an open and syndicalist basis first of all to rid workers of the illusion that reformist unions are run in the interest of anyone but the bosses themselves.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

1. **Continue to give financial assistance**
2. **Send food parcels**
3. **Adopt a striker' family**
4. **Help send their children on holiday**

DON'T BUY SILENTNIGHT

Porn on Sunday

In September 1986 a new Sunday newspaper was launched marking a new level of cheap sensationalism and misogyny in British journalism. The paper, "Sunday Sport", is little more than a pornographic magazine, the "sport" being provided by numerous photographs of topless women.

The publisher, David Sullivan, is a well known porn impresario who has already made a fortune from the exploitation and degradation of women. He has published no fewer than 20 different porn magazines and at one stage in his illustrious career he owned a chain of 140 sex shops.

In a recent interview with the London magazine "City Limits", Sullivan summed up the paper's advanced marketing strategy in the following manner - "boobs sell papers, you mark my words." Sullivan goes on to stress his "liberal" political opinions and opposition to all forms of violence(!!) and assures us that "ordinary pornography does not do a lot of harm" - especially not to his bank account.

This paper portraying women as mindless sexual playthings and the object of men's "sport", is readily available at newsagents and must have already insulted and degraded thousands of women across breakfast tables throughout the country. The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and the National Council for Civil Liberties have launched a campaign against the publication, challenging its image as "harmless fun". Corrine Sweet, the NCCL's women's officer, accurately described "Sunday Sport" as "an incitement to sexual hatred". Complaints have been made to the various unions involved in producing the paper, and women members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) have responded by picketing the offices of Sunday Sport at Eagle Wharf Rd., London N1.

Sullivan finds the animosity his activities generate refreshingly surprising, dismissing an attack on his home as the work of nutcases. It's time he realised that women who object to pornography are not mad - just angry.



Women members of the NUJ magazine branch picketed the offices of Sunday Sport on October 18th. Along with other women they were protesting at its claim to be a newspaper, when in fact it is pornography

The State's Right to Choose

Two cases, one in the US and one in Britain, concerning "foetal rights", have just gone through the courts and have grave repercussions for women.

In the US the case involves a women who gave birth to a still-born baby. Eight months later she has been charged with causing that still-birth by not following "doctor's advice" while she was pregnant. She is being charged with causing the death of the foetus.

In Britain, according to the Children and Young Persons Act, 1969, proceedings may only be taken in relation to a living child. However, in March 1986, magistrates at Reading put a one year old child into care because the council claimed that the woman was an "unfit mother", based on what she did while she was pregnant. This decision was appealed but in December 1986 the House of Lords decided that the decision as made by the magistrates was the correct one and as a result the child is now up for adoption.

Decisions can therefore now be made about whether a child can be taken into care or not based on the mother's actions while the foetus is in the womb. The woman involved in the Reading case was a heroin addict who continued to take heroin during her pregnancy - if she hadn't she would have miscarried. But as a consequence her baby was born addicted and went through withdrawal.

This case could now set a serious precedent. Anti-abortionists could use it as "proof" that the foetus has independent rights. Also, now that the foetus can have the rights of a child, then anything a woman does during pregnancy which may harm that "child" can be a punishable act. So what will count as mal-treatment? Women who have poor accommodation and diet, or who drink or smoke.... and what about the woman who attempts to or gets an abortion? It also means that women will be open to even more scrutiny and official sanctions as the state agents who spy on us while we are pregnant now have the law backing them. What this case really means is that the patriarchal state has yet again taken away women's control over our own bodies and also means that they now have a very easy mechanism for controlling the parental rights of "undesirable" people such as the poorly housed, drug addicts and lesbian mothers.

TERRORISTS WITH TYPEWRITERS !

Twenty one typists at the army ordinance depot in Bicester, Oxfordshire, have gone on strike against army plans to put their jobs out to contract. Most of the women have worked there for years and are angry at being forced on to the scrap heap. On November 26th the typists presented a letter to Thatcher introducing themselves: "we are 21 civil service women who are doing something they never dreamed they would one day have to do. We are on strike." The typists are not only concerned about losing their jobs but also, because they type details of personal movements, transport movements and army supplies they are worried about the threat of terrorist infiltration! Privatisation seems to be putting rather a lot on the line - anyone know how to type?

Compensation for Discrimination

A record compensation of almost £25,000 for racial discrimination was recently awarded to Lucille Guichard, a black kitchen worker employed by the Social Services Department of Camden council in London. Lucille took up employment at the Greenwood kitchen centre as a kitchen assistant 15 years ago. In 1986, she was still on the same grade while other colleagues had been promoted and upgraded. Lucille found herself isolated as one of 3 black workers from amongst a staff of about 50.

Complaints to her union, NUPE, bore no results as they seemed reluctant to acknowledge the racism, discrimination and victimisation that she was undergoing. She then approached the Camden Black Workers Group, who put pressure on the council to launch an enquiry into Ms Guichard allegations. Eighteen months later the enquiry found that she was one of the most experienced cooks at the centre, and that others considerably less experienced had been upgraded. Lucille was also constantly harrassed about her work practice while others were not. Consequently compensation was awarded.

Meanwhile, another victory was won when an industrial tribunal in Cambridge ordered the Great Northern Hotel in Peterborough and its housekeeper to pay £3,770 compensation to an Asian woman for discrimination against her. Ms Bhanu Newton had worked at the hotel on a casual basis during 1985 and had applied for 3 vacancies there in the hope of getting permanent employment as a chamber maid. Each time she was unsuccessful, with a white person with less experience being appointed instead. The tribunal came out in Ms Newton's favour declaring that she had been racially discriminated against.

It is unacceptable that black people are having to use the legal framework to gain equality in the workplace because of the reluctance of trade union bureaucrats to defend and assert their rights as workers. Instead they seem more content to ignore such complaints in the hope that they will go away when the worker concerned gets fed up of waiting for signs of progress.

PUPPET REAGAN

What a can of worms was opened up with revelations of recent U.S. arms shipments to Iran! For a while it seemed that all there was to the story was that Reagan had sent former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane to Iran. Armed with gifts of a bible and a cake, McFarlane was supposed to be doing nothing more than establishing friendly relations. The truth it seems is far worse. America had supplied Iran with nearly $100 million worth of arms with which to fight its 6 year long war with Iraq. Worse still, this was done against Reagan's own banning of shipments to Iran. Congress which is supposed by law to receive "reports" from the Executive was actively misled for 18 months and part of the money (if not all) for the arms has been given to the Contra terrorists.

So what possible reason was there for this action which has drawn shock from the Western world, outrage from America's allies and ridicule from the Iranian regime? Certainly it wasn't the desire to release a few American hostages, after all the U.S. government is willing to allow thousands of its citizens to live in dire poverty so what do a dozen or so hostages matter? No, far more important is the strategic position of Iran. After 6 years of costly war Iran requires arms and if they don't get them from Washington, they will go to Moscow and that's something the U.S. could not stand. Israel was of course willing to do anything America said. Not only are they totally dependent on the U.S. for financial and military aid for their survival, but as far as they are concerned the longer Iran and Iraq fight each other the better.

However the Iran crisis has cost Reagan dearly. Rather than simply relying on Thatcher's toadying, Reagan had to throw her a little crumb (his actions against Syria) before she would toe his line. Of course it would be hypocritical of Thatcher to condemn arms shipments to Iran. In true capitalistic cynicism Britain has been providing arms to both sides for years. Iraq has received equipment to aid it with the production of chemical warfare and training for its airforce pilots. Iran has received a supply ship, 2 landing craft and spare parts for tanks, hardly the defensive weapons they are claimed to be.

However, what Iran has shown to the American people is that Reagan, the man they voted for is not actually in control of the country. It is obvious that while he plays the puppet president, Donald Regan (Whitehouse chief of staff) and George Bush (vice president and ex-CIA boss) have been pulling the strings. However, so deceptive were their actions that they even lied to the secretary of state George Shultz. If these people are willing to lie to each other over arms deals to Iran why should we believe that they would tell us the truth about Star Wars?

The true power behind Reagan is the so-called "Kitchen Cabinet", a secretive collection of Californian politicians and little-known millionaires. They are angry with the mistakes made over Iran and are rumoured to have drawn up a hit list of people that will have to resign or be sacked. These include George Shultz, Donald Regan and Admiral John Poindexter (McFarlane's successor as National Security Adviser). Poindexter has already been forced out - how long will the others last?

Anarchists have always pointed out that politicians are not really in control of the countries they are elected to rule. At best they act like Thatcher or Kinnock, simply carrying out the wishes of banks, big business and other capitalists. At worst they are nothing more than figureheads which exist to distract attention away from the true seat of power. Voting can never solve the problems of the working class, only the formation of our own mass organisations run by ourselves and based on the principles of direct action can ever do so.



FRANCE ERUPTS

A spectre is haunting France, the spectre of 1968. All the old political power brokers have been shaken out of their complacency, scared shitless at the prospect of an independent rank and file movement of militant workers who are prepared to fight the government austerity measures.

The French working class has suffered a long line of defeats in the 1980's, leading to great disunity and weakness in the labour movement and a massive growth in racism and fascism. At the same time, the very rich have received enormous tax cuts. At last, workers' organisations are appearing, prepared to by-pass the backstabbing Socialist and Communist Parties and go straight for the government's jugular - the economy.

Many French people can't help hearing echoes of May 1968 in recent events. Then, huge riots by Paris students were supported by up to ten million workers going on strike against the orders of their trade union bosses, forcing the President to leave the country before his return to power, nearly bringing the government to its knees.

On the 17th of December widespread disruption of the French railways (SNCF) started. This followed immediately in the wake of the week of strikes and demonstrations in Paris by students protesting against the government's attempts to make the system of university education much more exclusive. During the strike, the school and university students re-discovered direct action principles, general assemblies and controlled delegation. The government's police group CRS raised the violence, hurting numerous students with horizontal smoke grenade shooting and special motorbike brigades, hitting every human being in the street. Two students are still in hospital and one, Malik Oussekine, was killed. The proposed changes were cancelled after this assassination. The last day of the students' protest saw a one-day strike by workers of the CGT (the Communist led trade union confederation) in solidarity with the students and a mass demonstration of some 500,000 people in Paris.

ANGRY RESPONSE

The railway workers' action started as a protest against wages and conditions - a driver, after thirty years service can still only be earning low wages even with bonuses. The bad hours and conditions mean that it has the highest divorce rate of any job and an average life expectancy of 58. The government, who want to block wage rises, suggested a pay deal with a much lower ceiling on increases for the lower grades of workers. This was clearly a tactic to divide the workforce and received the angry response it deserved. The SNCF soon agreed to have another look at the proposals but were told by the strikers that they must be scrapped altogether. While the SNCF evaded the issue, Prime Minister Chirac, announced that the proposals would not be withdrawn.

One of the main reasons for the new wave of militancy sweeping France is that the workers have avoided the official avenues of protest - the unions run by Communist or Socialist Party bureaucrats. The present wave of strikes started quite spontaneously. Outside the official union structure the workers have created rank and file strike committees, with the election of dismissable delegates is based on precise points decided by the workers' assemblies. A national co-ordination of strike committees was formed to force cancellation of the new "merit" wage scale, to end degrading working conditions and to integrate all "bonuses" into the base wage.

Union membership on the French railways is much lower than in Britain. This is because of the deep suspicion with which the workers regard the unions and the political hacks who run them. No wonder when you consider that union officials have jobs for life (they cannot be sacked, only moved to different posts in the bureaucracy). Thus, when workers are ordered to go on strike by union bosses, as they often have been, for the sake of some left-winger's political career, they face losing their job and wages (there is no strike pay in France) while the union hacks face no such threat. In addition, the system of bonuses for the top echelons of the union bureaucracy is extremely generous - bonuses add up to 10 times of their basic salary in many cases. These parasites are just as scared as Chirac is by the anti-political mood of the strikers. It reminds them too of 1968, when they got shown up for the political careerists that they are.

SOLIDARITY

The lightning spread of sympathy strikes in 1968 took all the political "experts" by surprise. The biggest general strike in French history took place and it was completely outside the control of the officials. This time the CGT has tried to redeem its reputation by calling for strikes in solidarity with the railworkers, but it will have its work cut out keeping control of them. In the words of Andre Bergeron, leader of "Force Ouvriere", the scab union confederation, the strike is "a mad machine which no-one can control". All over the country workers are organising the day-to-day running of the strike and the negotiation with the government through the general assemblies.

Solidarity is strongest amongst public sector workers who have more job security, transport workers on the buses and the underground, postal workers, workers in the electrical industry, shipyard workers, dockers and munitions workers. The effect of this action has been devastating, leading to massive economic disruption - including nationwide electricity cuts, the halving of Paris bus and metro services and the capital being choked with traffic jams, the closing of the most important docks, etc. In terms of pressurising the government, the most effective result so far has probably been the collapse of the Franc against other European currencies.



Railworkers put their jobs "on the line"...

The French workers in a few weeks have shown the power that workers' organisations can wield if they stick to the principles of solidarity and direct action. That is, if they stick together and strike hard and fast, relying on their collective strength and good sense and not on the union officials.

The National Confederation of Labour (France's anarcho-syndicalist union and section of the International Workers Association) has released the following statement:

> "We, militants of the CNT, entirely support the railworkers in their fight and encourage in particular the forms of struggle that they have adopted, methods that we have always supported ourselves. Let this serve as an example to all workers!"

Workers are now moving towards revolutionary syndicalism. CNT unions are formed in Paris stations and workers on railways, metro and freight transport have joined. The workers need international support, messages of solidarity and money (international cheques) which can be sent to: CNT Syndicat des Transports, 33 Rue des Vignoles, 75020 Paris, France.

—— Independent Union Set Up In The USA ——

The brave struggle by members of the Local P-9 of the United Food & Commercial Workers' Union (UFCW) at the Hormel plant, Austin, Minnesota continues but one phase of that struggle has ended. The national leadership of the UFCW imposed a trusteeship on the P-9 Local effectively stripping it of all its powers and rights. Since then the UFCW leadership has negotiated a 4-year contract with Hormel.

While the UFCW bureaucracy claim this as a victory the truth of the matter is that the new agreement will only put the Hormel workers 1 cent ahead of the $10.69 hourly rate negotiated in 1979!

Although the strike has been officially ended by the UFCW bureaucracy, 850 P-9 members who remained loyal to the strike have been left out in the cold as the new contract does not call for the immediate rehiring of all strikers. These brothers and sisters will be recalled when and if there's openings for them in the plant. The agreement has given concessions such as the removal of a guaranteed annual wage, elimination of the requirement for a 52-week notice before lay-offs, removal of seniority related to experience, and in areas like work standards, health, welfare and pensions.

Despite this sell-out by the UFCW, ex-Hormel workers are still fighting on. In response to the UFCW placing P-9 under their complete control, many of the workers have formed the North American Meat Packers Union. NAMPU will not only continue the fight against the Hormel company but also aims to organise unorganised meat packers and to re-organise those workers covered by the UFCW. Whether this effort will succeed remains to be seen. NAMPU will be organising as a rank & file controlled union - it has been proposed that the membership maintain strict control over those elected to positions of responsibility and that each local union remain autonomous. Some of the constitutional provisions of NAMPU include:-

* Officers may only serve 3 years and then they must return to work for 3 years before they can run for office again.
* Officers will receive pay equal to the average wage of the members they represent.
* Officers are subject to immediate recall during their 3 year term.

Every worker needs to look at the example (and mistakes) of the Austin Hormel workers. We all need to begin to discuss, union and non-union workers alike, what needs to be done to turn our situation around. We need to discuss what rank & file unionism is all about, and most importantly we should all begin the process of building a workers' movement that is controlled from the bottom up, not from the top down.

Despite the warm spirit that emanates from the hearts of those Hormel workers still locked out in Austin, it will be a long, cold winter for them. Your help is still needed. Send contributions and messages of support to: United Support Group, P.O.B 396, Austin, Minnesota 55912, USA.

Source: WSA-IWA (Workers Solidarity Alliance, US section of the International Workers Association).

SPAIN

LAND STRUGGLE GOES ON

The battle for the land in Southwest Spain continues despite attempts by reformist leaders of the S.O.C (Agricultural Workers Union) to back down.

In one town, El Arahal, loss of jobs and lowering of wages have accelerated over the past year with the almost total loss of export markets for the town's olive crop. As a result, the "senoritos" who control most of the local land, have ploughed over many of their estates to sow cereals, thus saving labour in both cultivation and processing. This has put 90% of the workers (jornaleros) out of work for 11 months per year and 5% for 10 months.

Despite a long intense campaign of direct action in the region with 600 trials under public order laws still pending, the S.O.C. has now been manipulated by outside Socialist and CP politicians, who have patched up a deal **on behalf of** the jornaleros and in which the latter have had no say. Their deal with the state has resulted in a share out of reduced work levels, lowered wage rates and more unemployment.

The CNT-AIT in El Arahal, 7 of whose members are up for trial this year for blocking the main Seville-Grenada highway (along with 200 others), has been consistent in its opposition to both the landowners and the politicos. They demand collectivisation of the land by the community who they consider to be the best judge of what the land should produce. They want negotiations with the senoritos to be based directly upon local assemblies. They regard the land occupations of the past 2 years as symbolic and pacifist; the CNT argue that not only have these tactics failed to confront the bosses or mobilise the communities as a whole but also that the S.O.C. leadership has ceased to be anything but another pawn of the Socialist and Communist unions.

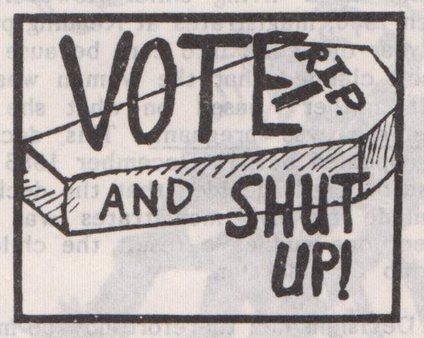
A recent protest at the local town hall finally ensured a fair share-out of State money to both men and women workers. The struggle goes on against both local and state bosses. Future actions are being planned.

Messages of support/money can be sent to:

Casitas de los Maestros No 8,
CNT-AIT Apartado No 12,
El Arahal,
Sevilla,
Spain.

VICTORY FOR ELECTION BOYCOTT

The results of the Spanish union elections came out in January with little cheer for the reformists in either the UGT, CCOO or the splitters from the CNT (Renovadas). The first two unions as usual took the majority of votes and the ex-CNT 1.4% (down from 7.8% in 1985). the overall vote is well down on previous levels: a straw poll by the CNT-AIT showed a voting turnout of roughly 30%.



The success of the CNT-AIT boycott and the fact that most Spanish workers care little for their political masters was clear in the low publicity given to the result, the government's refusal to let out the overall voting figures and the low showing by Socialist & Communist union members. The frustration of ex-CNT reformists was shown in their attack upon a CNT-AIT office in Sabadell. This time the cops set upon them - 2 years ago they were turned upon CNT-AIT members protesting against the hijacking of their name & symbols by the splitters.

DHSS Outstationing - Whose Benefit?

In November and December DHSS workers in London were involved in a series of walk-outs and strikes over the "outstationing" of single payments claims to provincial offices. Following strikes at Battersea, Oval and Streatham, and solidarity action involving over 25 offices the vast majority of clerical workers in London supported a one day strike call on December 11th.

Low pay, chronic understaffing, high staff turnover and daily violence from frustrated claimants are common to all DHSS offices in London. Massive backlogs of work have built up as a result of an overloaded system. Furthermore local councils have launched "take-up campaigns" encouraging claimants to apply for everything they are entitled to. Consequently thousands of single payments claims have been gathering dust in the benefit offices while demands from the unions for more permanent staff and decent rates of pay to retain those staff, have fallen on deaf ears. Instead DHSS management have imposed "outstationing" as a solution.

WHAT IS OUTSTATIONING?

Single payments claims from the "take-up" campaigns have been sent in hired vans to outstations (i.e offices outside London) where the work is done by specially recruited and hastily trained clerical officers. The outstations are situated in areas like Broadstairs and Chatham where staff are easier to recruit and the unions less militant. Although management claim that outstationing is a temporary measure, the indications are that these initial moves are testing the water before a major restructuring of local office organisation in the south. Chris McDonald DHSS South London group manager in a meeting with Lambeth councillors and welfare rights workers was minuted as saying:

> "there might be a radical move in that much of the work of a local DHSS office could be moved to another area where experienced, good quality staff could be employed..... He did not see the need for this operation to be at a local level, but that there would be a requirement for a small complement of staff at local level to deal with the crisis payments."

The result is what many are now calling the "doughnut effect" with the bulk of assessment work being done in outstations while the remaining London Offices are closed or amalgamated into "crisis" centres. The growing militancy in London DHSS offices obviously poses the major obstacle to the social security "reforms" and the introduction of "income support". Outstationing must be seen as a way of by-passing a militant group of workers in the same way that scab coal and scab newspapers have been transported by road rather than rail.



Strikers outside Oval DHSS office.

The government have always played off poorly paid DHSS workers against impoverished claimants. However recent statements from the civil service unions correctly blame the run-down of services and understaffing for the violence of claimants. They have stressed that outstationing not only represents a threat to jobs in London offices but also a worse service (if it can get any worse!) to claimants. Outstations rule out the possibility for most claimants of phoning in or visiting their local offices. Staff on the counters will continue to bear the brunt of claimants' justifiable anger. The vicious circle seems set only to become more vicious.

THE STRUGGLE MUST CONTINUE

Claimants groups have been supporting the recent London strikes which is a good sign. Similarly the civil service unions have promised to oppose any future outstationing of work. It may be possible to link action over outstationing up with the CPSA 1987 pay claim which includes a demand for a £20 a week cash increase. It is essential, should more strikes break out, that unwaged revolutionaries mobilise claimants groups to turn out on CPSA and SCPS picket lines. Similarly DHSS and Unemployment Benefit Office workers should produce leaflets explaining their industrial action to claimants. We must also warn against the "hand of friendship" offered by the Labour Party who will not want their election campaign damaged by a national civil service strike. Labour have promised to cut the unemployment register by a miserable one million. We instead argue that the restructuring of Western capitalism requires a large reserve pool of labour to undermine any defensive struggles by workers. We don't want the alleviation of poverty - we want its abolition.

FIGHT FOR WHAT WE NEED, NOT WHAT THE SYSTEM CAN AFFORD

A DHSS worker.

KGBeeb!

The government's attacks over recent months on "bias" in the BBC was the beginning of an attempt to gain even more overtly political control over the media. A capitalist media in a capitalist society will obviously be pro-capitalist. But where this fails on specific political issues (e.g Ireland as in the case of the "Real Lives" program which featured Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein) the government will resort to simple censorship. As the flaws in the capitalist system become more obvious we are seeing an attempt to gain more direct control of the media as part of the general clampdown.

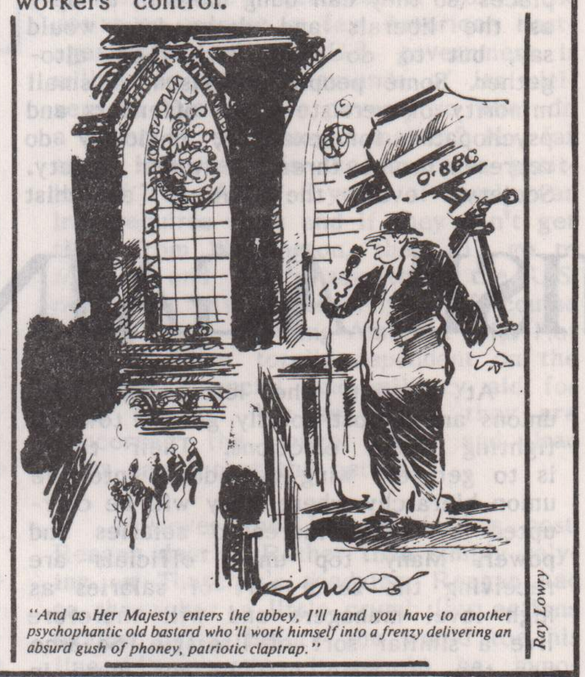
The allegations were launched under the name of the Conservative Party Central Office (particularly by Norman Tebbit) to try to head off the charge that the government was using improper pressure to influence the BBC which relies on government funding. This is absurd - considering that the Tories are the party in government, it makes little difference.

Specific programs targetted include the drama series "Casualty", "Question Time", and the radio programs "World At One" and "Women's Hour". Of "Casualty" it is said "there are no health service cuts"; of "Question Time" they say "every week they have one conservative against three people opposed to the government". When the most "left wing" person on the panel is some treacherous Labour Party politician it's pushing it a bit far to call this left wing bias!

Even BBC news programs are accused of "bias", specifically over the Libyan massacre. The anger this should provoke from decent people is clear. We are subject to hour after hour of capitalist propaganda and are then told it has a "left wing bias"

These allegations were purposefully timed to come just after the BBC agreed to fork out thousands of pounds to two Tory MP's, who had taken it to court over allegations of their extreme right wing connections in a **Panorama** programme on fascist infiltration of the Conservative Party. However, despite the BBC's climbdown, it turns out that witnesses in the case had been put off by Conservative Party Central Office previously, and that one of the MP's later tried to drop a case against the former chair of the Young Conservatives who had also made the allegations, and admitted that he had given a Nazi salute (which he had formerly denied). Whether these two particular MP's do have fascist connections is largely irrelevant, as fascist connections with certain parts of the Tory Party have already been sufficiently exposed in other places.

The real issue, however, is the Party's own internal rightward drift (which Kinnock is copying), and the "creeping fascism" of the State under the present government. The new chair of the BBC himself, Mr Marmaduke Hussey, was appointed by Mrs Thatcher specifically to "sort out" the BBC. The only practical answer to the tightening grip of State control over the media is direct action by workers within the industry. Where necessary workers must refuse to transmit programmes that have been tampered with by the government. This should be seen as the prelude to the sort of action which can establish open access to a free media under workers' control.



"And as Her Majesty enters the abbey, I'll hand you have to another psychophantic old bastard who'll work himself into a frenzy delivering an absurd gush of phoney, patriotic claptrap."

Ray Lowry

CO-OPS NOT THE ANSWER

In a recent Guardian article ("Clarke Is Converted To Co-ops" - 4/11/86) Kenneth Clarke, the Paymaster General, is reported in a speech to have voiced approval for worker co-operatives.

It might seem strange to some that a right wing politician should favour an apparently socialist form of ownership. This seems less strange when you consider that nationalisation was first introduced by the conservative Bismarck in Germany before the first world war. Nevertheless some explanation is required.

True socialists should be opposed to co-operatives for the same reasons that Kenneth Clarke approves of them. Firstly, as Clarke asserts, co-ops are not plagued "with old-fashioned distinctions between management and shop floor". Yes, the division between the workers and bosses is blurred, inhibiting the development of working class organisations to combat the system. "are merely one method of corporate organisation which could trade in a market economy". If capitalism could sanction co-ops then the reverse is true or, more accurately, co-ops are simply collective capitalism. As such they are prone to the ups and downs of the market economy, just like any other company. Commercial failure for co-ops may cause workers to blame themselves instead of the system. Commercial success can lead to a middle-class mentality even leading to the Rochdale Syndrome (the latest consequences of which are the Co-op's refusal to stop stocking Silentnight beds).

Even viewed from a practical short-term perspective it has to be admitted that co-ops exist within a capitalist market framework and so have to play the market game, a game at which they are mere amateurs. Most of the time the workers are going to lose.

Socialism can never be a reality

Secondly, Clarke mentions that the Spanish co-ops that he visited recently were "fiercely competitive and innovative as any business run along tradition-lines". Hence workers are set directly against other workers in capitalist competition thereby fracturing class solidarity.

Thirdly, he suggests that co-ops inside a capitalist system. It is the complete destruction of that system which is the essential pre-condition to the construction of an anarchist world. By hiding the real enemy - the system - all perversions of true socialist ideas such as nationalisation, worker participation and worker co-operatives put back the day when we will see a free world. Even Labour die-hards must question the "socialist" nature of a form of ownership approved of by the Paymaster General - they surely wouldn't believe that he's turned socialist?

(The author of the above is not a member of the DAM. However the subject is worth discussion. We would welcome readers' views on this issue.)

in brief

Sisters, have you ever been caught short, dying for a pee and not a public loo in sight? ('cos as we've noticed, there are far more male public conveniences than female - we're supposed to be the weaker sex, so how come we're expected to have stronger bladders?) Well, we need suffer no more. Apparently there is an old law, which has never been repealed, which states that any woman needing to relieve herself in a public place may approach a policeman and demand the shelter of his cloak.....

The government have launched a full scale propaganda campaign against the spread of AIDS. This is because they have realised that AIDS is not restricted to gays and drug addicts having now broken out into the heterosexual community. Since October 1983 when the government's Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre first started collecting the statistics for AIDS, the disease has spread and spread. At the time of writing the Centre knew of 548 cases of AIDS and 278 of these people are now dead. Another 30,000 people are thought to be infected with the disease.

The government's "Don't Aid AIDS" campaign has been looking over its shoulder trying not to offend the Mary Whitehouse brigade. We give the quote from Alex Comfort, anarchist, medical writer (author of "The Anxiety Makers", editor of "The Joy of Sex", etc.) which we feel will be essential if this generation is not to be decimated - gay, straight, man or woman:-

> "The public is, however, used to contraceptives, some of the spermicidal types are capable of killing not only sperms, but the HTLV3 virus which causes AIDS.... The spermicides which also kill the AIDS virus notably nonoxyl-9 have been widely tested in continuous use. These, or improvements on them, would have the added benefit of limiting not only AIDS, but of the papilloma virus" (see article on cervical cancer in DA 35)

After being sentenced to 1 week in jail for non-payment of a parking fine, a woman lost her baby as a result of 3 strip-searches conducted during her imprisonment at Maghaberry Jail. She was previously known to be in good health and not facing any difficulties with her pregnancy.

PRISONERS FIGHT BACK

Prisons, and the squalid conditions inside them, have once again been in the news. The roof-top protests in recent months at Saughton and Peterhead gaols in Scotland follow the widespread prison riots at the end of April last year. Northeye low security prison near Lewes in Sussex was razed to the ground and many others sustained heavy damage. Just when the dust had settled the Scottish prison system erupted once more when prisoners at Barlinnie took to the roof.

The revolt broke out on the 5th after tension rose when Sammy Ralston was attacked by the screws on New Years day. This was what sparked the uprising when the screws jumped another prisoner 4 days later. Thirty four screws were injured and 3 hospitalised after being struck by slates, bricks and masonry hurled from the rooftops by some of the 200 prisoners originally released in the revolt. The tender egos of those fine servants of HM Government were further damaged when their specially trained anti-riot squads, armed with the finest technology Thatcher's money could buy, were defeated by a group of largely unarmed prisoners. The trophies of that victory - riot shields, helmets, truncheons and gas masks - were then used by the prisoners to defend themselves from further attack from the cops and screws.

"OUTSIDE AGITATOR"

The siege at Saughton, the subsequent burning of Peterhead, and now Barlinnie - the Scottish prison service is now almost literally in ruins. The only explanation that the government's spokesperson Rifkind, can give for the revolts is that they were a result of the violent nature of the prisoners themselves (it would be difficult in this case to drag out the old Tory "outside agitator" story). His solution is to make the regime harsher and more punitive - as if the 20 cell punishment block completed at Barlinnie in 1985 was made out of Wendy houses. The root cause of this revolt is the frustration of living in a regime in which beatings and harassment go unpunished, not the desire to get a better view of the sunset over the Clyde. Indeed any prisoners complaining are subject to further abuse. The vicious circle of state-sponsored brutality under the administration of Governor "Squarego" Gallagher went unheard and unanswered until the outbreak of the revolt. It is not surprising to anybody but Gallagher and the Scottish office that the man himself should be pointed out in the slogan "Gallagher is brutality" as a central feature in the revolt.

Once again, overcrowding and brutality from the screws have been highlighted:



"A prisoner sent to the solitary block to await adjudication for an offence may be cheeky to an officer. Prison officers intent on "sorting him out" usually go into the cell and lay into the man giving him heavy bruising. In many cases prisoners don't even bother to complain as they know what the answer will be. Those prisoners who do complain are usually informed that unless they can substantiate their allegations, they will be charged with making false allegations against officers."(1)

Prisoners at Peterhead have complained of being thrown in the silent cell or the punishment block for offences such as shouting out of their cell window in frustration (2). In Northeye, where according to a recent report by the liberal Prison Reform Trust some screws apparently encouraged prisoners to riot to further their own ends in their dispute with the Home Office over staff levels, boredom led to frequent fighting between prisoners themselves (3).

LITTLE HITLER

The concept of bunging people up in such hell-holes as punishment is an affront to human decency. The solution isn't to reform them, to create more places (so they can bung more of us up?) as the liberals and do-gooders would say, but to do away with them altogether. Some people in prison, a small minority of persistent sex offenders and psychopaths for example, obviously do represent some threat to wider society. Society, even the future anarchist society in its early days, would need some protecting from this small minority but is it any solution to punish people by locking them up in a completely unnatural and inhumane environment, denying them basic human needs such as freedom of association and conjugal rights, and subject to the personal whim of some little Hitler who calls him or herself a "Prison Officer"?

"We are all hostages"

Obviously not. While such a system of dealing with members of society who've gone astray based on the concept of "punishment" exists, resentment and anger will always be there, beneath the surface or above it - and naturally so. It's a small wonder anyone manages to reform themselves in such an environment.

Society needs no protection, however, from the vast majority of people bunged up inside - whose "crimes" were that they kicked back against a society based on inequality and injustice in ways the ruling class define as "criminal". For many working class people, shop lifting and fiddling the dole and lecky, for example, are necessary ways of surviving - but it is us and not the rich tax evaders who get stuck inside. The issue of prisoners and law and order generally is therefore a class issue. Prisons are a reflection of the society we live in. In a classless society based on equality and providing for people's needs, we wouldn't need to struggle to survive. Real anti-social acts such as rape and incest are caused by the positions of power held by men over women and adults over children - in a true socialist society based on equality between all individuals, they would die out.

Prisons then are no solution to the problem of crime. In the long run, their main function is not even the misguided one of punishing the real criminals, but of keeping the working class in line. The numbers of Irish Republicans in various British gaols is ample evidence of this. If ever there was a threat of serious civil unrest in this country, the government of the day would have no hesitation in flooding the prisons with "politicals" - this has always been the case. Chile in 1973, Poland in 1981 and South Africa today are only the more recent examples of mass repression - and the better known. The current prison building programme has to be seen in this light. Already Britain locks up a higher proportion of its population than any other European country. Since when have governments ever been genuinely concerned about the fate of those it locks up in its prisons?

SOCIAL PROBLEM

We can't moralise about the feelings felt by the victims of the acts of real criminals such as rapists or murderers - personal feelings of revenge and hatred are perfectly understandable. In the long run, however, it is clear imprisonment based on the concept of punishment is no solution. Crime is not the product of evil individuals (although real acts of crime are comparitively rare, contrary to screaming newspaper headlines and sensational TV reporting), but a social problem. There is only one answer - do away with the social conditions which cause most crime and create a free, equal and classless society where anyone who may continue to commit anti-social acts will be helped in a fair and humane way to reform themselves and overcome their inadequacies. Punishment and imprisonment in hell-holes are concepts of dealing with crime which we as anarcho-syndicalists wholeheartedly reject.

In the here and now, however, Barlinnie has proved that direct action is the only way to win anything. Sammy Ralston would never have been allowed to appear in court, bloody and bruised from the beating that sparked off the revolt, nor would his mother have been allowed in to visit him, and none of this would have been reported to the media if the prisoners had not taken to the roof. This, the longest of the present bout of revolts will not be the last to protest at the brutality of the system.

(1) Jimmy Boyle, letter to the Guardian, 19th Sept. 1986.
(2) Observer, 16th November 1986.
(3) Guardian, 18th November 1986.

ORGANISE AGAINST LABOUR-TUC SELL-OUTS

Recent years have been very demoralising for the working class of this country. Millions have been thrown on the dole, the NHS is under attack and privatisation has been used as a weapon to reduce our wages and give us poorer services. People who are lucky enough to still have a job have been frightened by mass unemployment into accepting low wages and doing almost whatever the bosses demand.

Confidence is very low. True, there have been several major strikes, usually provoked by management at the ideal time for them. More often than not, strikers have been left to fight alone for people fear losing their own jobs. The labour movement hasn't exactly put up much of a fight, preferring to wait and hope for the election of a Labour government - which, from experience , we know will only kick us in the teeth just like the Tories are doing now. The present reformist and bureaucratic unions have proven themselves to be inadequate for defending the interests of their members and this is reflected by the fact that membership of the unions has been falling. Many unions seem to have given up the struggle altogether. We have seen the setting up of scab company "unions" like the UDM and the acceptance of no-strike deals by the EEPTU. The 'New Realism' of the TUC and the unconvincing promises (i.e. lies) from the Labour Party offer nothing for the working class but calls for compromise and collaboration with those who exploit us.

At present, the left within the unions are almost totally geared towards fighting union elections. Their tactic is to get left wing candidates into the union hierarchy where they will be corrupted by their increased salaries and power. Many top union officials are receiving the same sort of salaries as high level managers and will therefore live a similar sort of lifestyle. So who has the full-time official got more in common with, the boss or the worker? Many such people use the left as a vaulting horse to lucrative careers (e.g. Lord Chappel, Lord Scanlon, Lord Brigginshaw, ad infinitum).

Even if an elected union official was not corrupted by their position they would still be incapable of increasing basic working class solidarity. Solidarity comes from the ground level when ordinary people recognise their common interests. It cannot be imposed from above by full time officials outside the workplaces who are totally divorced from the reality of the shop floor struggle.

The problem with the unions is not that of leadership, it is much deaper than just a simple matter of being able to replace right wing leaders by left wingers. It is in fact a crisis of organisation. The present reformist and bureaucratic nature of the unions prevents them from even maintaining today's low living standards, let alone offering a challenge to the present economic system.

WEAKNESS

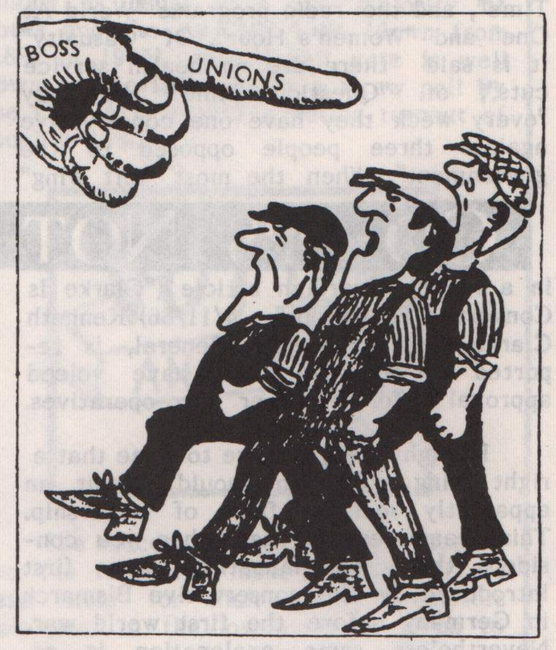
If we consider the trade union movement as a whole in Britain we find that around 40% of the working population are "organised". The numbers are there, but the weakness lies in the nature of this organisation.

The movement consists of many separate organisations which encourage sectional differences. Even within a given trade there are usually several unions.

Most unions actively discourage contact between different branches without it going through the central executive. Sometimes it is no wonder that workers feel that disputes not directly affecting them are not their concern. It is obvious that so long as workers are divided in such a way then the working class will always be weak.

The union structure exists largely outside the workplace, yet experience tells us that it is here that the power of the working class lies. And power there is, if it were not constantly sabotaged by union bureaucrats.

When Moss Evans (a left-wing leader) was asked why the TGWU had made



the lorry drivers' strike official, he replied that it was easier to control this way. During the Grunwick Dispute, the solidarity action of Postal Workers in blacking postal traffic to and from Grunwicks was sabotaged by the union leadership who threatened to withdraw their union cards. Without a union card they could not work, without their support the strike was lost.

continued on p.7

Organise contd.

Having slagged off the trade unions it is necessary to stress that we should not be opposed to unionism, which after all, just means workers uniting to defend their common interests. What we should be opposed to is the way that they are organised and the fact that they are integrated into into the capitalist system. National officials are permanently represented on government committees and QUANGOS. District officials are involved in a constant round of meetings with representatives of different employers and management organisations.

This regular and intimate contact between full-time officials and the bosses (and their representatives) and the fact that they are isolated from their membership teaches them to accept the bosses' point of view. They understand that their position and their chances of climbing further up the union hierarchy depends on their ability to keep workers struggles under control. It is this hierarchical form of organisation that ensures that the rank and file members have no real control over their union.

LABOUR SCABS

The TUC is completely geared towards achieving a Labour Party victory at the next General Election. It is Labour's paymaster through the political levy and has a strong influence on Labour Party policy through block-voting at annual Party Conference. But does the Labour Party really represent the interests of the working class? Far from it. The record of past Labour governments is disgraceful. Under the last Labour government wages fell sharply (remember the 'Social Contract' and the Winter of Discontent?), unemployment doubled, public spending was slashed and hospital and school building programmes were reduced to almost zero. Previous Labour administrations were no better.

When the Labour Party is in opposition it has to try to convince us that next time things won't be quite as bad. Ex-Labour ministers admit they made "mistakes" when in power. Tony Benn says he was "wrong" to support the Social Contract. But how can we be sure that they won't act against our interests next time? We can't. All politicians are liars and all they want is our votes so they can rule us for five years. We have no control over them once they are in power. THEY CAN DO WHAT THEY LIKE ONCE ELECTED, SO THEY CAN SAY WHAT THEY LIKE IN ORDER TO GET ELECTED.

It's obvious that all Kinnock cares about is the opinion polls in the capitalist press. He doesn't even pretend to be on the side of the workers - he made his position clear when he condemned the striking miners and praised (and still does) the bosses Law and Order. Life under the next Labour Government will be no different than it is now. The same police will be used to beat up pickets and poverty and inequaliity will be the order of the day. After all, the Labour Party in government must defend the interests of British capitalism.



The Labour programme when in office is one of partial State-capitalism; that is, they are in favour of nationalising certain industries. Such State-capitalist measures offer little or nothing for the working class. Nationalised industry operates as an inseperable part of the capitalist economy. The workers are still wage-slaves with no say in how their industry is run. Nationalisation just means a change of bosses with the State being the owner, not society.

The Labour Party is a necessary part of capitalism in this country. It is an instrument by which the ruling class is able to effectively safeguard its position while the working class is fed the delusion that that something is being done on its behalf. When the Tories are in power it gives the Labour Party a breathing space when it can refurbish its image as the party which represents the working class.

Don't believe their lies and don't give them credibility by supporting them. The Labour Party will not, and cannot, act in our interests.

RANK & FILE ACTION

It was pointed out earlier that workers have no real control over their own unions - well it is time the rank and file took control, and if this is not possible then it is necessary to build our own organisations controlled from the bottom up.

We can start this process of taking control by setting up rank and file movements. Such movements must be independent of all political parties and groups and any officials should remain as shop-floor workers and should receive no more than their normal wages. All such officials must be subject to instant recall.

Such organisations should be based in the workplace, opposing sectionalism of the trade unions and should extend throughout the industry as the organisation grows. These rank and file organisations in different industries should aim to to link up with each other and also with working class organisations in the community such as strike support groups and claimants unions. A united working class is much stronger than a divided one.

We should be opposed to the standing of left candidates in union elections. Instead we should be promoting the principle of control from below. Once the working class is in control of its own destiny , then it will have the confidence and ability to take on the bosses and then the State.

DAM - IWA

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 by 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 the 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 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.

LETTERS

Dictatorship? No Thanks!

Dear Friends,

Your article (in D.A 33) on British Gas really exposed the sham of so-called employee control of a company through share ownership. Non-employees, unless institutions, will also have a miniscule stake, and realising this very few actually bother to go to shareholder meetings.

I have bought 100 shares in British Gas and will be going along to the first shareholders meeting to express my feelings about the legalised theft of a company we all part-owned in the first place. However, as I only need one share to do this, not 100, I am in the process of selling off the remaining 99 to like-minded people. Also, as each share can be jointly held by up to four people this means that up to 400 dissident shareholders could get into the first meeting this way....

Anyone who wants one of these shares should send me their name and address and 50p and preferably also the names of 3 other interested people by February 10th at the latest. I will then arrange the necessary share transfers. If I end up getting more than 99 applications the extra money will go to War on Want.

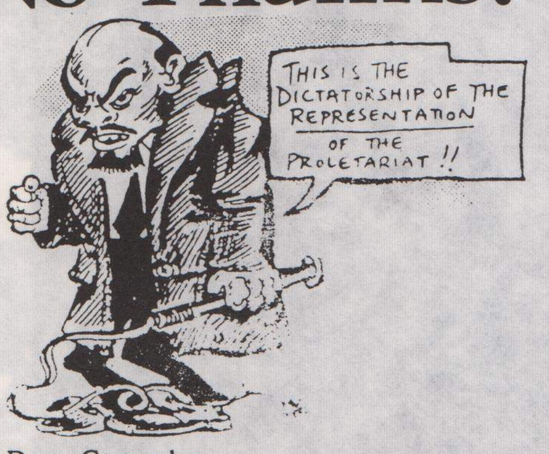
While I am selling these shares I am not intending to "organise" people. If a group wants to buy 3 or 4 shares between them it is then up to them to decide how to make their protest, whether they take banners, etc.

Yours,

Peter Lennard,
44a Arlington Road,
London,

DONATIONS

Manchester DAM	£31.00
Huddersfield DAM	68p
East London DAM	£5.00
Bolton DAM	£10.00
Cambridge DAM	£10.00
J.H (Leicester)	£2.50
J.P.F (Kent)	£2.20
N.H.F (Newport)	74p



Dear Comrades,

I would just like to reply to the letter from South West London in DA 35.

I agree, otherwise I wouldn't be an anarchist, that we must convince working class people of our ideas and convince them of the bankruptcy of marxism, distorted or otherwise. I didn't know most Marxists don't believe that communism is inevitable or pre-determined. As far as I'm concerned that was part of, or is part of, marxism, but this isn't the point. What I found surprising was that the letter stated "Anarcho-syndicalists should have nothing to fear from "dictatorship of the proletariat" if by that we understand the establishment of unitary and self-managed organs of power (mass assemblies and councils of workers' delegates)...." I think anarcho-syndicalists and our class have a lot to fear from the idea of "DICTATORSHIP". Because in practice it means dictatorship OVER the working class by the vanguard that has seized political power, the fundamental problem. The whole idea of DICTATORSHIP, VANGUARD PARTY, LEADERSHIP and STATE are alien to socialism and our class. Those are ideas of the middle and upper classes, of those who rule and those who want to rule. Marx advocated and predicted centralisation of the means of production/distribution into the hands of the state which he called dictatorship of the proletariat. This has nothing to do whatsoever with workers' control and, as the letter says, mass assemblies and councils. While we can split hairs over words, these are fundamental matters - it has led to workers being shot and imprisoned, revolutions being sabotaged and smashed by the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Maybe I'm splitting hairs on the question of self-managed organs of "power" but I think it's a term that we shouldn't use - instead of "power" it should be self-managed organs of co-ordination or something. We shouldn't use Marxist terms to describe revolution and socialism as they are based on power/submission relations. Marx thought the only problem was the profit-making economy and that the state would end profit-making and so end class struggle and class society. This is all wrong - the state will NOT end class society, it cannot be used to liberate us, it is founded on OBEDIENCE and VIOLENCE. So sticking to anarchism/syndicalism we are opposed to all governments and dictatorships for socialism and workers' control.

In solidarity,

Ged (Liverpool).

Our History

A number of DAM members are setting up a history study group "Looking at Anarcho-syndicalism". If you are interested please contact: Barry, c/o DAM National Secretary, c/o Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

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POLAND

SOLIDARNOSC: FIVE YEARS AFTER MARTIAL LAW

The 5 years since the imposition of martial law have seen the transformation of Solidarnosc from a semi-legal organisation aiming to be a second force in Polish politics, to an underground network of clandestine resistance groups. Despite Norman Willis' absurd proposal that Solidarnosc be admitted into the ICFTU (international fraternity of class traitors) and Walesa's grovelling acceptance, the fact remains that Solidarnosc no longer exists as an organisation able to negotiate in the traditional union style. The Solidarnosc of today is a far cry from the heady days of 1980-1. Walesa may still be the media figurehead but the active movement is no longer content to play games with rosary beads or indeed to bow at any altar be it that of the Catholic Church or the new God in the Kremlin. Solidarnosc has now entered a period of re-alignment. It is likely that in the next period of mass struggle the new movement will have dispensed with the apologetic mumblings of the old moderate leadership and will have a world free from political, spiritual and economic oppression as its goal.

UNDERGROUND

Solidarnosc in 1987 still suffers from the fringe of nationalist and religious groupings who hampered the progress of the more militant factions. However the period of martial law and the subsequent underground existance saw a painful re-alignment. The more moderate factions were seen to make conciliatory gestures toward the authorities. In the towns, factories and colleges, meanwhile, the active militant sections at first became resistance organisations and then coherent groupings with a political programme based on workers' control and self-management. It is these movements that are important to the future of a fighting Solidarnosc in Poland.

Many of the clandestine organisations are able to maintain a surprisingly active existence. One of these, Solidarnosc Walczaca (Fighting Solidarity) calls for a "free and independent Poland" with the overthrow of the present system and its replacement by a society neither communist nor capitalist but based on workers' management. Fighting Solidarity has its own radio station and publishes papers in 10 centres.

GENERAL STRIKE

Wolny Robotnik, the organ of the Union of Workers' Councils of the Polish Resistance Movement (ZRP-PRO) based on the clandestine groups in the factories, has operated in Upper Silesia since 1982. It calls for a general strike led by the workers' councils. Other groups calling for self-management are the Front Robotniczy and Sprawa Robotnicza. The latter considers itself "a link in the international working class community" and is anti-capitalist as well as anti-bureaucratic.

In the spring of 1985, 4 editorial groups - Front Robotniczy, Sprawa Robotnicza, Wolny Robotnik, and the "Glosno" group (representing the Provisional Solidarnosc Co-ordination of the mines, also operating in the Upper Silesia region) - came together to organise the Alliance of the Workers' Opposition (PROR). The PROR is described as a "left socialist current in favour of self-management and a working class revolutionary struggle against the Communist Party bureaucracy. Recognising the threat from supporters of the free market, the PROR note that the "preponderance of pro-capitalist currents in the opposition outside Solidarnosc is becoming more and more clear" and state that only a workers' movement that rejects both bureaucratic and capitalist exploitation will clear the way to victory.

As we have seen the Polish underground movement covers a broad ideological spectrum from left to right. The importance to anarchists is that the majority of the left-wing movements in the industrial areas have a position which is reasonably close to our own - workers' control of the means of production and distribution, self-management, etc. While the overt anarchist presence in the workers' movement is small, groups such as the Emmanuel Goldstein and Sigma do have a certain influence. Another factor in the possible growth of a fighting libertarian tendency within the Solidarnosc movement comes from the independent youth movements, in particular, the rise of the Western-styled Movement for an Alternative Society (RSA).

The public emergence of the RSA at a Mayday rally in Gdansk in 1985 has been described in an eye-witness account as "several hundred people, pink and green hair sticking up, black banners with slogans written in blood red saying "Solidarnosc is fighting". Their get up is generally with elements borrowed from Solidarnosc and the black anarchists." They come mainly from the working class districts and are either young workers or students from the technical or "occupational" colleges. The April issue of "Voice of Solidarity" described them as anarcho-pacifist, though clearly this does not mean passively resisting the paramilitary police force, the ZOMO. The "pacifist" tag comes from RSA involvement in the anti-conscription movement (see later). The RSA have also been active in producing and distributing anti-election leaflets as well as producing the libertarian review "Homek" which maintains a harshly critical attitude towards the Solidarnosc leadership. They are described as "indolent" and "yesterday's men" and generally mocks the ritual, almost tokenistic, gestures of resistance that the Solidarnosc leadership likes to indulge in.

This is important for, unlike their counterparts in the West, the RSA have connections with the workers' movement. The paper of the workers in the Lenin steelworks near Krakow have published, in 2 consecutive issues, the RSA's declaration in full as well as publishing a report of RSA street actions and an interview with an RSA activist.

Outside the workers' movement are the student groups which organise their own "Liceum" classes outside the regular school or university curriculum. Within the Liceum movement students have expressed an interest in lectures on anarchism. There is also the anti-conscription movement Freedom and Peace which unites around the refusal to take the military oath and to serve as conscripts in the army. The exile journal, "Voice of Solidarity" describes them as "being distinguished by the openness of their actions, one in which several dozen people signed the declaration of the movement and sent their military ID cards back to the Ministry of Defence."

The actions of the resistance groups are all the more remarkable given the extreme repression and blanket surveillance that exists in Poland. The very existence of groups such as the PROR and RSA is a tribute to the courage and determination of the militant workers and youth of Poland to defeat the military regime. At present these groups represent a minority within the Polish resistance as a whole and the anarchists an even smaller minority. The point is though that they represent a counterpoint to the moderate and right-wing elements within Solidarnosc whose tactics of stage by stage reform and their policy of wait-and-see have been seen to fail. It is these latter elements that are now entering into so-called "consultative" bodies with the government and it is they who, come the next period of revolt, will be seen pleading for restraint and national unity and who will eventually, no doubt, support the imposition of more repressive laws as a temporary measure in the interests of the "common good".



State-Capitalist Repression in Action

ANARCHIST ANALYSIS

At present there is a general downturn in political activity. Concerted protest against the government on the 5th anniversary of martial law was reportedly low, although there were exceptions such as the demonstration by 3500 miners (government estimate) in memory of their 11 comrades shot dead by the militia while occupying the mines at the outbreak of martial law. This situation will change as in 1956, 1968, 1970 and of course the momentous events of 1980 that saw the birth of Solidarnosc. The left of Solidarnosc bears out the anarchist analysis that the working class will, by itself and through its own experience, come to a revolutionary position and will create their own organisations capable of fighting for that revolution. The left wing of Solidarnosc has a free socialist society as its goal; it has an underground movement fully capable in a time of mass unrest of reaching that goal.

MYTHS & OBSTACLES

The actual libertarian or anarchist nature of the majority of the Solidarnosc left is, at best, implied. However, given the presence of credible anarchist groups within the movement, their own bloody experience of Bolshevik methods, and the tradition of anarcho-syndicalism in pre-war Poland then the development of a conscious anarchist tendency within the Polish workers' movement cannot be too much to expect. Nationalism; Catholicism; the pull of the myth of capitalism and its pal, European social-democracy; the government sponsored apathy cult; as well as the myth that Polish state-controlled capitalism can, in the same way that the majority of the British left believe that multi-national controlled British capitalism can, be somehow reformed for the benefit of the working class, all stand in the way of the revolutionary anarchist movement. It is only when these myths and obstacles are overcome will the libertarian movement find victory. That task, in Britain as well as Poland, is a difficult one, but the example of sections of the Polish working class as well as the Chilean, South African, and indeed with the recent 30th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution, the whole of the combative Eastern Bloc working class should inspire us all in the fight towards the goal of the free society.

For more information on the workers' struggles against the state in Poland and elsewhere in the Soviet Bloc, subscribe to Volya, 83 Sowerby Close, Eltham, London, SE9 5RZ - £2 for one year, £5 supporting. Also available from Volya is "A History of Polish Anarchism" published by the Rebel Worker Group (now part of the Australian IWA affiliate the Australian Syndicalist Federation), for 30p + p&p.

SOUTH AFRICA: EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION 1



Unrest in South African townships has been closely linked to action taken by school students ever since protests against inferior education for blacks sparked off the Soweto uprising in June 1976. In 1980 mixed race "coloured" students in the Western Cape started a schools boycott in protest against what they called "gutter education" which spread to involve over 150,000 school and university students. In June 1980 70% of workers in the Western Cape took part in a 2-day stayaway in commemoration of the 1976 uprising and in support of the students. The government responded by sending riot police into coloured areas and over 60 people were killed in the following week.

The present wave of unrest started in early 1984 with a boycott in the high schools of Atteridgeville, a township near Pretoria. While the grievances that sparked off the boycott were the same as in 1976 and 1980 the demands of the students were more specific. Most significantly they included the demand for the recognition of elected Student Representative Councils (SRC's) to negotiate directly with school authorities and the government.

The boycott rapidly spread into a replay of June 1976. Over 200,000 students were involved by mid-1984 and with protests against the August elections to the new coloured and Indian parliaments the numbers involved tripled. Unrest spread to community issues, in particular to opposition to rent increases, to the community councils and to black police living in the townships. When the government tried to re-open the schools the Congress of South African Students' (COSAS) and other students' organisations continued the boycott, refusing to accept the Department of Education and Training's proposals on SRC's, and linked the boycott to the rent issue.

Against this background it's important to understand the reasons for the ending of the school boycott in January 1986. This was a major change in policy, particularly for organisations such as COSAS which are affiliated to the pro-ANC United Democratic Front. The call for the end of the boycott came from the first conference of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) with representatives from most political and students' organisations. It also had the backing of the ANC, essentially under pressure from groups opposed to continuing the boycotts. Previously ANC supporters had put forward the slogan "liberation before education", implying that the schools should be closed until white rule was ended.

WHY THE BOYCOTT ENDED

What reasons were given for ending the boycotts? According to one observer: "The effect of the long school closures was to deprive the township population of one of the few focuses of collective organisation they possessed (all significant workplaces are outside in "white" areas). The result was that mass participation in the student struggles declined, with only a small and very brave minority taking to the streets to engage in unequal battles with the security forces." While the boycotts had shown the power of the students and achieved some short term gains they didn't provide the means for creating an alternative way of controlling schools and education or help to create a situation where revolution might be possible. Arguments for continuing the boycott were based on the idea that the end of white rule was close. In fact the government is still a long way from falling or even being prepared to negotiate. If the schools were to remain closed indefinately it would mean students missing out on education altogether. The view of most groups taking part in the NECC conference was that students should return to formal classes and continue to learn the skills necessary for living under apartheid and which would also be needed in a free South Africa.

However, rather than being seen as a defeat the ending of the boycotts was seen as a sign of confidence that more could be achieved inside the schools than by boycotting them. In addition to recommending a return to the schools the NECC conference took a resolution to replace statutory parents' committees with parent, teacher, student associations (PTSA's) to give the community control over schools as a basis for a different kind of education.

PEOPLE'S POWER

Some of the achievements in the schools were described by the journalist Zwelakhe Sisulu in an address to the second conference of the NECC in March 1986:

"We are....facing....an enemy which is unwilling to reason....It only understands power and that there are two types of power. Its own power and the power which comes from the organised masses - people's power. Therefore gains we make in the education struggle depend on our organised strength, on the extent to which we establish organs of people's power.

"In the few short months since the December conference we have already seen some of the things people's power can achieve in our education struggle. We have also seen that the state will do anything it can do to reverse these gains and turn them into defeats. In hundreds of schools students have established SRC's, but the state is doing everything it can to frustrate and crush them. The state has conceded our demand for free text books, but tries to wriggle out of this by saying there aren't enough. Also, many detainees, student leaders, are being released, but then excluded from schools. These are only a few examples which show the kind of enemy we face.



Rushing for freedom: schoolchildren's resistance

"But it is also true that where we are strongest, where people's power is most advanced, we are able to frustrate the state in its objectives. For example, in the Eastern Cape, they fired one of our democratic teachers. Through being organised, the people in that area were able to simply send that teacher back to school. They employed him. In fact they raised the funds among themselves, and said this is the people's teacher. If the state can't pay him, they said, we will pay him ourselves, because this is how important people's education is to us....

"Another area where we are demonstrating the possibilities of people's power is through school committees. The December conference took a resolution to replace statutory parents' committees with progressive parent, teacher, student structures. Although these government committees continue in name, they have been rendered unworkable in many parts of the country. Our democratic people's committees have been established and are preparing to take more and more control over the running of the schools. They are the ones who are putting forward the pupils demands and negotiating with the school principals. The government committees are now being ignored. In effect they are falling away. In some areas their members have abandoned them and joined the people's committees.

"Even the Regional Directors of Education are meeting with the people's committees. And finally, of course the central government has been forced to recognise the people's crisis committees by meeting with representatives of the NECC. Therefore the government-appointed bodies are being replaced at local, regional and national level by bodies of the people. This is a substantial achievement, since what the government has enforced for decades are now being replaced by the people in a period of 3 short months....

"What do we mean when we say we want people's education? We are agreed that we don't want Bantu Education but we must be clear about what we want in its place. We must also be clear about how we are going to achieve this.

"We are no longer demanding the same education as whites, since this is education for domination. People's education means the service of the people as a whole, education that liberates, education that puts the people in command of their lives....

"To be acceptable, every initiative must come from the people themselves, must be accountable to the people and must advance the broad mass, not just the select few. In effect this means taking over the schools, transforming them from institutions of oppression into zones of progress and people's power. Of course this is a long term process, a process of struggle, which can only ultimately be secured by total liberation. But we have already begun this process.

"The apartheid authorities are unable to accept the transformation that is taking place in the schools. That is why, unlike previously when the authorities were doing their utmost to get the children back to school, they are now locking children out of schools....The response of students and parents has been to demand that the doors of learning and culture be opened, and there has been a move towards occupying the schools. People are claiming the schools as their property and education as their right. In P.E (Port Elizabeth) last week the DET locked the students out of the schools. Over 2,000 parents took their children to the schools to demand that they be opened. I understand that they successfully occupied the schools. This is in line with action workers are taking in certain parts of the country, where they are occupying factories in defiance of the bosses' attempts to lock them out. These school occupations give students the opportunity to start implementing programs - people's education."

Since the state of emergency was declared in June the government has attempted to regain control over the schools. According to a UDF leader interviewed in Anti-Apartheid News: "A set of very repressive conditions have been introduced around the state of emergency, some of them quite ridiculous, such as kids having to carry identity documents or passes, the schools fenced in, teachers being asked to do physical labour if the kids aren't there, such as painting the classrooms and sweeping the floor. This has been creating a lot of tension which has repercussions through the whole community and will inevitably lead to an intensification of struggle."

REPLACING APARTHEID

While many activists have been detained and organisation has become more difficult the situation in the schools has not returned to "normal". What control the government has depends directly on repression. In the more militant areas people are prepared and organised to take control of schools and education away from the state and collaboration with the state by teachers and statutory parents committees has been prevented.

The development of organisation in the schools has been part of a wider trend away from protest action called by political groups dominated by a minority of activists and towards a more democratic mass movement. Actions such as school boycotts, stayaways (i.e general strikes called by township-based political and community groups) and consumer boycotts have sometimes been counter-productive in relying on activists to enforce the measures on people who hadn't been consulted, with the predictable effect of alienating the less politically active majority. Structures such as SRC's and PTSA's in the schools; area and street committees in the townships; village councils in the rural areas; and unions and shop stewards committees in the workplace have developed as an alternative way of organising against apartheid. All of them operate through committees of democratically elected delegates giving control to the majority of ordinary working class people. Rather than making unrealisable demands they have been willing to use their organisational strength in negotiating with the authorities and making real gains.

Where action has been controlled by political groups the tactics used have often been geared more towards extending their influence than developing wider organisation and making short term gains. The ANC's original position on school boycotts is a case in point. Although action by students has never been directly controlled by the ANC, the ANC has a great deal of influence through organisations such as COSAS and the UDF. The idea of an indefinate boycott was linked to the ANC's policy of "making the townships ungovernable", a policy aimed at forcing the government into negotiations with the ANC rather than creating the basis for township residents to govern themselves. The ANC's backing for the NECC was a recognition of reality, that it would be left behind by the mass of township residents if it didn't change its policy.

It would be possible to overstate the changes that have occurred. A lot of opposition in the townships is still controlled by a few activists rather than the majority of people and committee structures can be open to manipulation by political groups. What has happened is that many people who consider themselves supporters of the ANC and UDF have seen alternative ways of achieving change. Any remaining illusions about reform or compromise have been swept away while the organisations that can remove and replace apartheid have begun to develop.

EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION 2

The Western Cape Teachers Union

School students have played an important part in the current unrest in South Africa - through school boycotts, the formation of Students' Representative Councils and involvement in community issues. Until recently most teachers failed to join students in challenging the system but this is starting to change with the development of teachers' unions willing to support the students, in particular the Capetown based Western Cape Teachers' Union (WECTU). WECTU has taken a radical stance both politically and over the nature and content of education. Its criticisms of the South African education system go beyond the demands for equal opportunities and the integration of schools to a general challenge to state controlled authoritarian education that could apply to schools in Britain as well as South Africa.

WECTU was formed in September 1985 in response to the schools boycott in the Western Cape. It's unclear how the current state of emergency has affected the union but earlier last year it had about 2,000 members. Teachers who supported the students saw the need for a teachers' union opposed to the South African education system and collaboration with the state. According to a report in Azania Frontline:

"In past and present student struggles, students have been critical of the hesitant support that they get from teachers, of the concern that teachers show for protecting their jobs, and of the extent to which teachers have been "bought off" through promotion, higher salaries and housing subsidies. It is important that students do not see teachers as necessarily oppressors, and that they be made aware that WECTU is far from insensitive to the excruciating problems which students are trying to solve"

As an independent South African union WECTU is in an unusual position in that it is organising "professional" workers who are often seen as part of a black middle class with different interests from the majority of black workers. WECTU's stance on politics and union organisation suggests that many teachers reject this view. WECTU is also unusual in being organised mainly among the mixed race "coloured" community, the majority population in the Western Cape. Independent black unions affiliated to the Congress of South African Trades Unions have succeeded in organising many of Capetown's African workers but have failed to attract many coloured workers away from the collaborationist Trades Union Council of South Africa. Although teachers from Capetown's African townships have shown interest in WECTU there are practical difficulties in breaking down the divisions between the communities. In addition to differences in culture and language the Coloured and African communities live in segregated areas and face different political and social problems. In particular the living standards of the Coloured community are closer to working class living standards in Britain and Europe than to the desperate poverty of Crossroads and Guguletu. Coloured and African teachers have to deal with different education departments and educational policies. Despite the problems it faces WECTU is committed to non-racialism and the organisation of teachers from both communities in one union.

Politically WECTU appears to be fairly close to the views of the Cape Action League (CAL) a Capetown based federation of left wing political and community groups opposed to the policies of the pro-ANC United Democratic Front. WECTU has stated that it aims "to strive for a non-sectarian approach at all times". This is an important issue as there are deep political divisions in the South African opposition, divisions which have sometimes led to conflicts between supporters of the UDF and the National Forum Committee to which the CAL is affiliated. It remains to be seen whether these differences will affect WECTU's aim of organising a national teachers union.

WECTU has raised the question of how education should be controlled, rejecting co-operation with the state education authorities and supporting community control of schools by teachers, parents and students. It has also raised the question of what form education should take in a free South Africa and has rejected authoritarian forms of education. As a union trying to organise teachers over issues of pay and conditions rather than just political issues there will inevitably be disagreements over the control and nature of education but the following extracts from an address given at WECTU's founding conference give an idea of the views being discussed:



"In 1984 the state allocated the following amounts for the education of different children for one year "White" R1385; "Asian" R871; "Coloured" R593; African R192. In other words "Africans" received about 13% of what was allocated to "Whites". These figures do not apply to the Bantustans. Here per capita expenditure per annum was ± R85. If we look at the teacher-pupil ratio in our schools, we find that in "White" schools the ratio is 1:18; in "Coloured" schools 1:26; in "Indian" schools 1:23 and in "African" schools 1:42."

"Not surprising then that only 10% of "African" children matriculate and overall, large numbers of the oppressed do not complete 12 years of schooling. If one looks at the qualifications of the teachers it is horrific to note that approximately 80% of all "African" teachers have standard 8 as their highest qualification. To understand why this situation exists today in the schools of the oppressed we need to begin asking serious questions about those schools. We, as primary, secondary and tertiary level teachers, operate in very specific contexts. We operate within schools in a very specific society. Any consideration of possible strategies for progressive teachers, requires us to ask questions about the schools themselves. Why have schools been established, and why do they exist and persist in the forms in which we find them? These are political questions because schools are fundamentally political institutions. Education can never be neutral. By its very nature education is always intended by the ruling class to preserve the status quo in our society.

SCHOOLING FOR CAPITALISM

Schools are political in the way they allocate people to different jobs in the labour market. In our racist, capitalist society we are ruled by a small elite who control the major industries, the schools, the media and the government. Key economic decisions in our society are not made on the basis of human needs but on the desire for profit for the wealthy few. Schools contribute significantly to the maintenance of this stratified social and economic order. Schooling is the essential mechanism which allocates individuals to economic positions. It provides a stratified labour force for the capitalist system."

"Students learn in school the habits that will make the subordinate and diligent workers of the future. By the time the student leaves school she has learnt through her experience that it is normal for other people to organise her life. She will know that she must expect to be governed by other people who know better than she does. Eventually she will have learnt that she must fit into the situation as it exists - and never imagine that she might be capable of changing anything.

A more equal school system cannot create a more equal society. Working class students get working class jobs. This is not to say that upward social mobility does not occur for a few individual working class students, but the role of education in providing middle class status for more than a small minority of the working class, is strictly limited. We must reject the liberal notion that equalising educational opportunities will equalise people's incomes. Education cannot serve as a remedy for poverty. We need to realise that any attempt at educational change must fail unless it calls into question the basic structures of property and power in economic life. The root of inequality lies not in the schools but in the workings of the capitalist system. So, far from providing a mechanism of social mobility for the majority of students, schools act to crystallise class divisions and preserve the interests of the ruling class. The effect is that a large majority of the children of the oppressed are brought into schools in order to fail and be taught that they are not good enough."

"In the context of our schools and classrooms we must stop hiding behind the statement that we can do nothing because somebody else decides policy, formulates syllabuses etc. We do have a choice as to whether we will teach our students to be programmed or prepared to be free. We, primary, secondary and tertiary level teachers can choose to create in our classrooms, an environment in which the students we teach can develop their ability to critique the world in which they live or we can choose to prepare students to fit into the dominant view of things. As progressive teachers it is obvious where our choice lies.

A first step must be for us to look critically at <u>what</u> we teach and <u>how</u> we teach it. We need to realise that the same old rigid and abstract teaching methods cannot fit students for the running of their own lives, however correct the contents of the subject we teach. We must abandon that style of teaching which Paolo Freire calls the "banking" system. The teacher "deposits" subject matter in the student. This must be received, memorised and repeated by the students. The student is robbed of his/her creative potential and becomes an uncritical consumer of teacher-directed knowledge. The classroom is authoritarian, control rests solely with the teacher. Not surprisingly, if we teach like this, most children will fail to develop more than a tiny part of their tremendous capacity for learning, understanding and creating. It is essentially dishonest to teach children what we think they ought to know and then to bolster our position with corporal punishment and other "unofficial" violence towards students."

DEMOCRATIC CONTROL

"What we teach and how we teach must become a part of the struggle. We must teach our students analytical skills. They need to learn to think, analyse and draw conclusions independently of teachers. The goal of inquiry - analytic teaching should be the development of autonomous learners, working collectively in democratically organised classrooms in which respect for our students is inherent. Students can learn through a critical education to regard an oppressive situation not as inevitable but as a <u>condition that can and must be changed</u>."

"There are other ways too that we can engage in the liberatory struggle with schools as our particular site of struggle. We need to be in the vanguard of the fight, together with our democratically elected Parents' Teachers' Students' Associations, for democratic, <u>community</u> control, not only of our classrooms, but of our schools. We need to mobilise teachers at our schools to question, oppose and fight the directives, the regulations, the bulletins, the suggestions that emanate in ever increasing volume from principals, from subject advisers, from inspectors, from the department. We must not only demand the right to have a say in the running of our schools and in the curriculum but we must put these demands into practice whenever and where we can. We must recognise that we as teachers are the best critics of our own teaching practice, together with other teachers. We do not need a subject adviser or an inspector to arrive once a term to grade us on some arbitrary scale from 1 to 7. We know only too well that these advisers are least qualified to advise us on how to teach or what to teach. They after all dance to the tune of their masters and the very generous salaries they receive from them. We need to oppose the hierarchy in schools where the student occupies the lowest rung, the principal is at the top and the rest of us are ranged in between. We need to oppose a situation where decisions are made at the top and then we as teachers are simply informed. We need to oppose those heads of departments who have been bought off with high salaries, who dance to the subject adviser's tune in their quest for further promotion and even higher salaries. If we stand together in our union we can and we will succeed in winning control over our schools.

In conclusion, we believe that teachers in all apartheid schools, including "white" schools, <u>cannot be neutral</u>. They are either on the side of <u>progress</u> and <u>liberation</u> or they support the forces of <u>oppression</u> and <u>exploitation</u>. Those teachers who profess to be neutral are on the same side as the National Party and its junior partners in oppression like the Labour Party, the National People's Party etc.

We must translate our verbal rejection of oppressive education into reality by <u>actively</u> engaging in progressive activities in the schools and in the broader community. As teachers, however, our <u>primary site</u> of struggle should be the school.

Teachers must not pay lip service of allegiance to the working class, when by their very actions at school towards the children of the working class, they contradict this allegiance.

FORWARD TO AN EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION"

The full text of "education crisis and teachers' tasks" was published in Azania Worker vol.2 no.3. Information on WECTU and students' struggles is mostly taken from Azania Frontline no.13. Both Azania Frontline and Azania Worker are published by the Azania Liberation Support Committee, BM Box 4863, London, WC1N 3XX.



School students demonstrating at a funeral