6459
D
1

# Direct Action

Mujeres Libres - Women Organising in Spain 1936 - Video Tour - see page 9



The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism Nº41 July/August '87 25p

# TOGETHER WE STAND




# Against the Racist British State!

see page 3

Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

# SUPPORT!

With Thatcher's re-election the Tories have returned to intensify their attacks on the working class. They've already announced legislation severely limiting workers' ability to take effective strike action.

This is just part of a general offensive to break resistance and introduce a low wage economy, with working conditions usually associated with the Third World and reminiscent of Thatcher's much vaunted vision of Victorian Britain.

This return to sweatshop conditions has provoked many small poorly publicised localised strikes. Workers in already low-paid jobs seek to defend their already bad working conditions by organising and joining a union - only to find themselves sacked and replaced by young inexperienced people often on YTS schemes.

The unions, ever ready to increase their membership, have been unable or unwilling to organise effective support. Have been all too prepared to enforce a sell-out over the heads of the strikers. When this has been rejected, they have cynically withdrawn support, leaving the workers isolated and demoralised.

Given this background, strikers have increasingly turned to Support Groups that lie outside the official union structures. These groups, first established during the Miners' Strike, have provided the backbone of support, taking on the basic but vital work of standing on picket lines, collecting much needed funds and spreading the message of solidarity to ther workers.

In strikes like Silentnight and Ardbride, by picketting retail outlets they not only gave direct support but helped to provide much needed publicity in other areas. Though this work has been and continues to be important, Support Groups suffer several weaknesses. All too often it is months into a strike before such support is organised. even then it is often confined to the locality lacking the strength of a nationally coordinated campaign. Often the Support Group then disappears along with all the experience gained when the strike ends.

Workers on strike now face a myriad of problems. It is vital that they have somewhere to turn to at the onset of the strike. Even workers in unions lack access to basic equipment and resources needed in the day to day running of any dispute. Why should workers have to spend months building up contacts when such a network could exist on a permnanent basis? Why is it that vital information on the movement of goods relies so often on hearsay and rumour? Instead a national and international network could be used to coordinate and act on information so crucial to the blacking of goods.

There is a crying need for a permanent nationwide strike support network, one that is properly coordinated on 3 levels - national, regional and local. This would build up lists of contacts both in the workplace and the community. It would share the experiences of workers in struggle, ensuring that workers are not left isolated against the onslaught of bosses and the state. Fortunately this is more than an idle dream. The "SUPPORT" Conference called for July 25th in Manchester should be the first step in building such an organisation.

# COLEMAN STRIKERS —FIGHT ON—




Senior Coleman is a Manchester engineering firm which makes air disribution equipment. It is part of Senior Engineering Group, which has extensive South African links. A month after buying the factory in October 1986 a new "efficent" management team was sent in, no doubt reflecting Thatcherite, anti-trade unionist group chair, Roland Smith.

Within weeks they tried to impose new conditions. After union officials referred them to agreed procedure a meeting was arranged for January 22nd between the union (AEU), management and Engineering Employers' Federation. It never took place. The week before management imposed new time-sheets. The next day 4 workers were sacked within 4 hours for refusing them. On January 19th a secret ballot voted 110 to 2 for strike action unless the 4 were immediately re-instated. Management immediatly started an intimidation campaign - threatening phone calls and letters telling strikers they would all be sacked. On January 21st all strikers were sacked, a scab workforce recruited from local job centres started work the next day.

For 4 weeks successful mass pickets intimidated scabs so much some wore masks and helmets to avoid recognition. It stopped when writs were served on 10 pickets. In 3 days the high court limited pickets to 8 per gate. A Legal picket is kept up 24 hours a day. Also the strike committee tours the country urging other workers to boycott Senior products and publicising the dispute.

Six months later there are now 66 workers out, most of the rest getting other jobs. Boycotting has been fairly successful with some workers refusing to handle Senior products. Manchester City Council has cancelled contracts worth £250,000 and blacklisted them as have 60 Labour-controlled authorities. A lot of work has been returned as faulty, due to unskilled scab labour. The company is feeling the pinch. ACAS talks produced cash offers turned down by the strikers.

As usual full time officials have been obstructive, the last to be seen when work is to be done, first to claim glory or credit. To them and Senior Coleman the strikers are a thorn that just won't go away. At present the strikers are confident. Roland Smith dearly wants the chair of British Aerospace and doesn't want this put in jeopardy and wishing the strike over as soon as possible. He has sacked two managers and asked for further talks. The AEU can't be relied on, terrified of sequestration and not interested in "small fry" like Senior Coleman. The desire for an easy life and the wish to retain the tiny influence they still have with bosses means bureaucrats are willing to sell out strikes. This means insecurity, no safety, and low wages for workers.

The Senior Coleman strike is important locally with both management and workers keeping a close eye on it. A defeat may mean an onslaught against workers in the North West. Positive aspects are the keenness of strikers to link up with other disputes and the emergence of a support group. Together with others the picture is rosier. Donations and messages of support should be sent to: Senior Coleman Strike Committes, AEU House, The Crescent, Salford.

# Do Overtime or you're Sacked!

For over 4 years at HFW (High Frequency Welding) Plastics in Gateshead there has been no pay increase, last year workers took what amounted to a £10 a week pay cut to help get the company "back on its' feet". But even this was not enough for the owners, father and son-in-law team, Paul and Keith Jackson.

The order books were full, new machinery had been bought and the workers asked for a pay rise. The Jacksons refused and at a joint meeting the workers voted to carry out an overtime ban. The owners issued what amounted to a loyality oath, demanding that the workers sign an insulting letter that said "Do you want your job? If you don't agree to do overtime your sacked." The company might have been on its' feet but the bosses wanted the workers on their knees!

8 workers, including the Father of Chapel (SOGAT shop steward) were immediatly sacked. The remaining 41 workers voted unanimously to take all out strike action to support them and they to were sacked. Immediatly recruitment for a scab workforce started. Interviews were held at a local hotel until union pressure bought that to an end. However dispite this success a scab force of 60 was recruited. The scabs really sold themselves cheaply, for about half what the original workers were getting. In addition the inexperienced scabs have been working



**Police thugs protect scab drivers**

with dangerous equipment, one has already had his hand crushed by a guillotine the old workers condemed as "too dangerous".

The early success of mass picketing, the gates were locked on April 9th and factory closed down on 10th, caused the bosses to bring in the police, who turned the up til then peaceful pickets into much more dangerous affairs. A visiting German trade unionist was punched in the face by one "up-holder of law and order" and then arrested. The police have turned a blind eye to scab lorries racing past pickets at high speed. Several pickets have been knocked down but these near fatal incidents have been ignored, the Police prefering to arrest pickets for such dangerous acts as throwing tomatoes.

Support for the strikers is strong locally, regular collections are held at near by factories and at the local government depot. A support group has also been set up which regularly attends the daily picket, collects money etc. However the Union buracrats have not taken kindly to this spontaneous support, one hack told strikers to have nothing to do with the support group as they were all "Anarchists and Trotskyists.." of course if they were **COMMUNIST PARTY** members like **HE IS** they would be alright.

Strikers have been asking why SOGAT have not called out their members in 2 other factories that are owned by the Jacksons (Crawfords and Mawsons). Support for the strikers is high at Crawfords workers knowing that if the HFW workers lose the bosses will turn on them next. The 2 factories are still making profits for the Jacksons to use in their union smashing exercise at HFW, as one striker said "the only way to win is if all SOGAT members in the area come out on strike". The union wont call out its members because it is scared about the governments anti-union laws. Our class didn't get the limited rights we have today by obeying such laws designed to oppress us, we got them by fighting. It used to be illegal for workers to form unions, to strike or even to vote, we won these rights by challenging these unjust laws. If we arn't to return to the "bad old days" we are going to have to do it again. That fight isn't going to come from the union bosses however, they are too interested in keeping their fat salaries and whatever influence they still have with the bosses, the fight is going to come from the average union member who have to suffer bad wages and conditions. Victory will be ours when we relearn the basic principles of Solidarity both in the workplace and the community.

# The Racist British State

The ruling class' greatest fear is united working class action - they recognise that united we would topple them. It is by promoting divisions in our ranks that they've managed to retain power so long. One of their greatest weapons is **racism** which all states have used throughout time. In mediaeval times Jews were the scapegoats - last century it was Irish people. anti-Jewish and anti-Irish feeling is still never far below the surface, but today the scapegoats are black and Asian people.

Every part of the state is used as a racist tool - education, health, employment, popular humour etc. But more than anything the racist police are used to keep black people down. The last few years have increasingly seen provocation, assault and murder by police. So far this year Clinton McCurbin has been strangled to death in Wolverhampton; Paul Davis beaten unconscious in his own home by Tottenham police and then, to cover up, charged with assaulting two cops; Trevor Monerville beaten half to death by Stoke Newington police, paralysed on his left side and with a blood clot in the brain. This is the tip of the iceberg. There are other well-known cases, and many more besides that have received no publicity whatsoever. For every black person murdered or maimed by police, many more are ill-treated, verbally abused, or have reports of racist attacks on them ignored.

## COVER UP

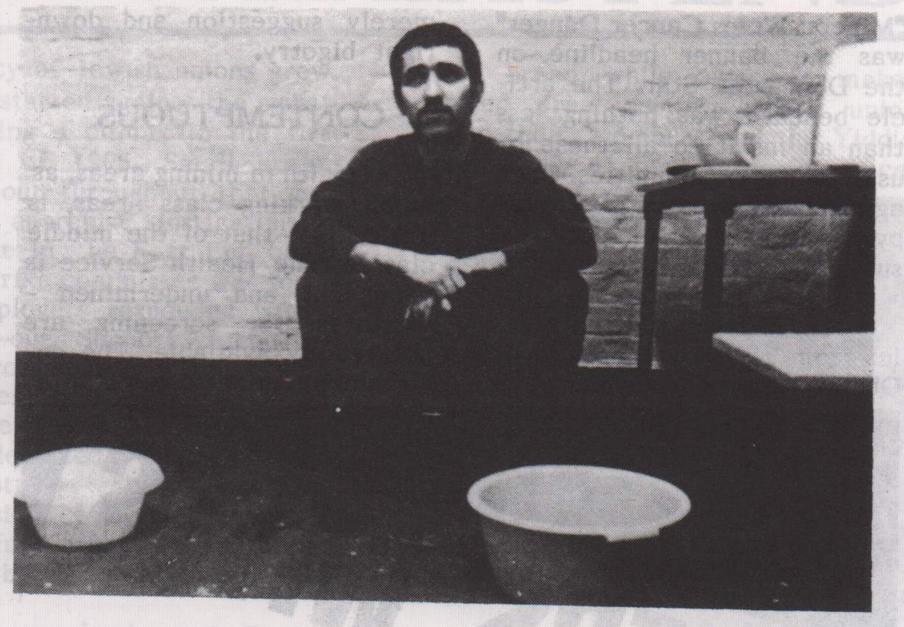
The British police are racist through and through, and attempts to hide it only highlight it even more. Black police officers suffer racism from white ones while community coppers are also trained in riot control. Police brutality is always covered up by the legal system. Police victims are themselves charged with crimes - Jackie Berkely, raped by Manchester police, was found guilty of wasting police time. But cops, guilty of blatant brutality get off scot free - Insp. Lovelock who shot and crippled Cherry Groce was found not guilty after the judge virtually instructed the jury to do so.



**Trevor Monerville, beaten half to death!**

This is only one way the legal system is used to uphold the rule of racism. The threat of deportation hangs over all black and Asian communities. With 50 deportations each week most families have had relatives and friends affected. This all-too-real threat is a damper on black people's political activity due to the fear of coming to the Home Office's attention. So the state fobs them off with low wages, second rate housing, health and education. For all the stress laid on the family immigration laws are used to keep many black and Asian families separated. This can be seen in the more frequent use of the "Primary Purpose Law" where an individual has to prove that the primary reason of his/her marriage is <u>not</u> to enter or remain in the country. This is hard enough to prove at the best of times, let alone when you're under stress, perhaps unfamiliar with the language and <u>automatically</u> under suspicion from the Home Office.

As the British economy worsens the state is intensifying its racism. Immigrants are kept in cages at Heathrow and army barracks, with little access to friends and families and poor health facilities. This has been taken a step further with the use of the Harwich ferry prison hulk. Proposed changes to immigration laws are designed to make it harder for people to enter Britain and easier for the Home Office to deport those who already live in this country including those born here, making this one of the few countries that does <u>not</u> give automatic citizenship).



**Primative conditions in immigrantion centres**

## CLOSE RANKS

The worst aspect of state racism is how we, the working class become tied into it, not just as victims but as active spreaders of its foul message. White workers are taught to fear and hate black ones and black people, sick of being treated as 3rd class citizens, see white people as the enemy. We are so busy blaming each other we don't see the real enemies - the **RULING CLASS AND THE STATE.** While blatantly racist groups like the National Front remain pathetic and small there is a racist attack once every 26 minutes (Home Office statistics). As the country continues declining the state will use racism more and more to divide and rule. It's up to us to unite <u>now</u> and fight this. By closing ranks and defending all its members our class can re-inforce itself to fight other state attacks as well as strengthen its commitment to solidarity with workers of all countries and their **right** to travel, live and work wherever they choose.

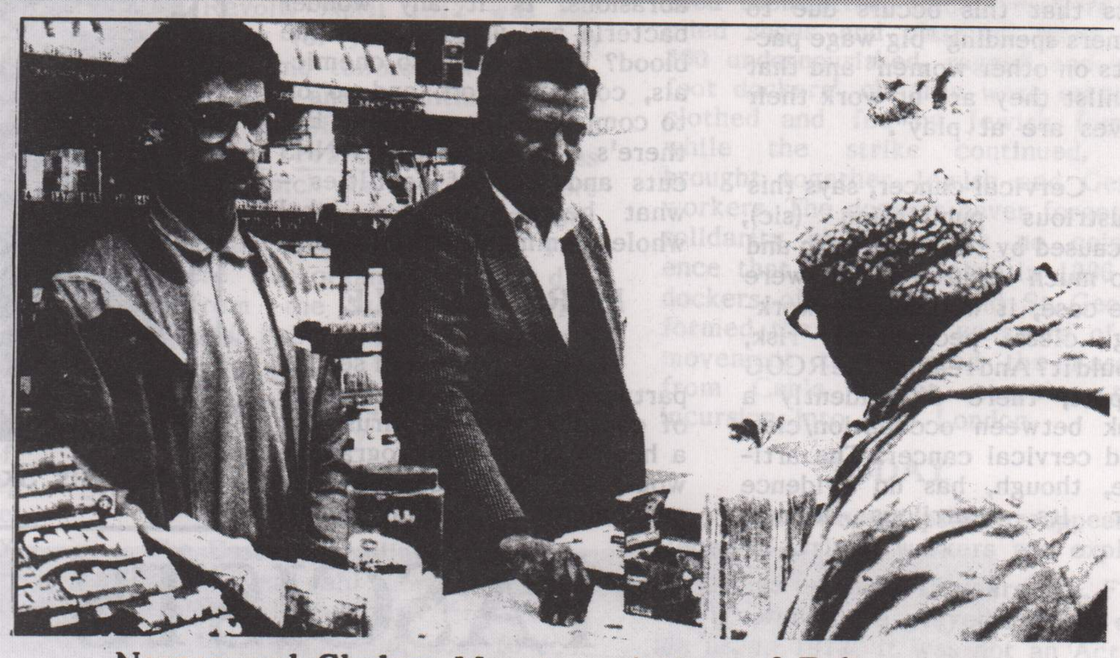
# "I Used to Believe in British Justice"

**"I used to believe in British justice" said Ghulam Mertzer, Leeds shop owner. He has good reason to. On July 6th last year his son was assaulted by 2 suspected National Front members, but it was Ghulam who got 18 months for going to his rescue.**

Ghulam Merzters' life in Britain has reflected the the British state's racism. Arriving in Britain with a valid teaching qualification in 1963 he was "strangely" unable to gain employment with local education authorities. He was forced to take a series of menial jobs until he opened a shop with his sons. Hard work and long opening hours gained the respect of the largly white community but as usual there was a vocal, violent and racist minority. Attacks and broken windows, although reported, went uninvestigated by the police. However after July 6th they acted with unexpected speed, and arrested him!

At 3pm that day 2 white men walked into the shop and asked to "have a word" with Ghulam's son, Naseer. Ghulam was alerted by a noise. The 2 men had Naseer trapped in the doorway, viciously beating him - he was bleeding and his clothes were torn. Ghulam rushed to his son's aid and when a crowd gathered the thugs ran off. The family called the police but they were told not to take it any further or they would arrest Ghulam for hitting one of the men. They grudgingly accepted this but the next day the police returned and arrested Ghulam saying that yesterday was yesterday but today was different.

Ghulam was charged with assault but his case did not come to trial until April this year, the delay causing distress to the whole family. He was found guilty and sentenced to 18 months in prison (although he has appealed). Of the 2 attackers 1 was found guilty and discharged, the other simply denied the assault and wasn't even charged. The Merzter family fear reprisals from the men's National Front connections but it seems the police and courts have done the dirty work for them.



**Naseer and Ghulam Merzter, victims of Police racism**

# STATE MURDER IN LONG LARTIN?

Martin Foran is languishing in a British jail, framed for a robbery he didn't do - he is dying as a result of brutalities against him while locked up. In court the man who was robbed stated that Martin wasn't the one that did it; there was no ID parade at the police station; neither were there witnesses to the incident - he was convicted on the word of one policeman with no evidence to back this up.

Once imprisoned Martin protested his innocence with rooftop demonstrations, resulting in solitary confinement where he has remained. His health deteriorated but treatment was refused until he was so ill he was rushed to an external hospital where for a colostomy. To get this treatment Martin took a prison hospital officer hostage - he has a trial coming up at the Old Bailey for this. Three weeks after the operation, and back in solitary, 6 screws beat him up and wrenched his colostomy bag off. They claimed in the official report that Martin did this himself.



Since transferral to Long Lartin, Martin's health has become so poor he is in serious danger of dying. His colostomy is severely infected with running sores across his stomach and the infection travelling into his leg. He can't eat any food except Complan. His wife, Valery, was kept in the dark about her husband's health as he did not want to worry her more than necessary. Then she received a letter smuggled out of the segregation unit, signed by 8 inmates concerned at Martin's health. He is in such pain he has to apply daily for analgesics which are frequently refused; the smell of his infection pervades the entire unit and is compared to putrefying flesh. The inmates believe there is a very real chance he will die soon unless given the treatment needed, which has so far been denied. If this happens he will be yet another victim of state murder.

We cannot sit back and allow the state to kidnap people and kill them off. There are plans to bring out a booklet detailing Martin's case to publicise the atrocities he has suffered. However, donations are needed to cover the printing costs. If you can help please send contributions to: Leeds Prisoners Support Group, Box ASS, 52 Call Lane, Leeds 1.

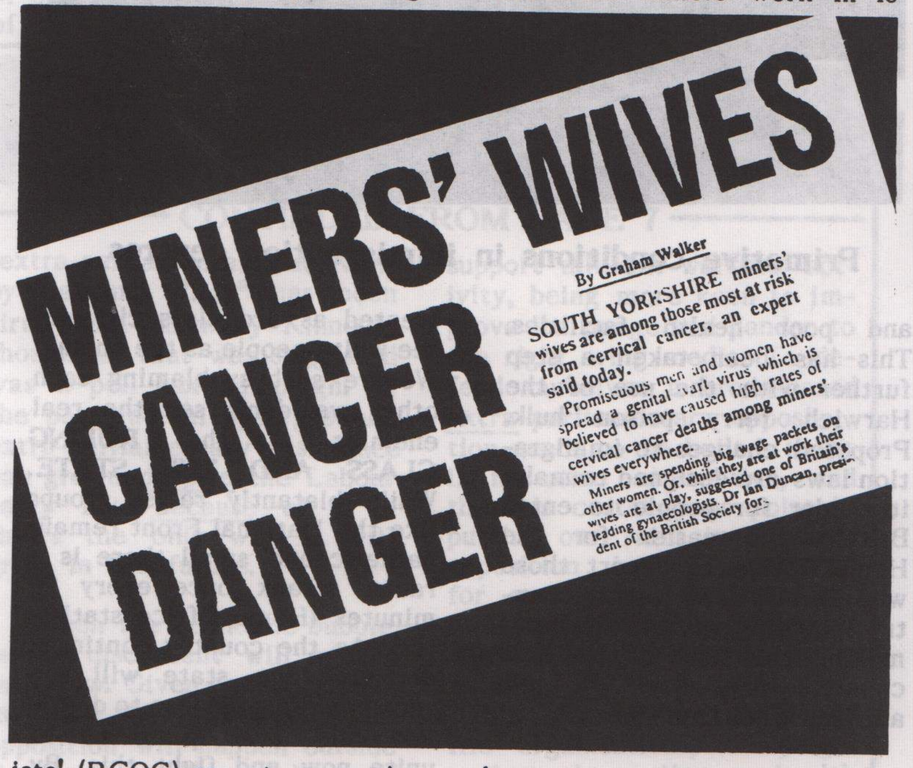
Martin would also welcome correspondence from anarchists everywhere. You can write to him at the following address: CS 1796 Martin Foran, HM Prison Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs.

# Let Them Eat Condoms! — More Media Lies...

**"Miners' Wives Cancer Danger"** was the banner headline on the Doncaster Star. The article beneath was nothing less than an insult to all those of us in mining communities. Once again we are being portrayed by the media as some sort of sub-human life!

The article takes statistics from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' (RCOG) report on cervical cancer and alleges to quote a consultant. It claims that South Yorkshire miners' wives are amongst the most at risk from death from cervical cancer. The risk, however, does not arise from the nature of work, but from "promiscuous men and women" spreading a genital wart virus, believed to have caused cervical cancer deaths amongst miners' wives everywhere. The article suggests that this occurs due to miners spending "big wage packets on other women" and that "whilst they are at work their wives are at play".

Cervical cancer, says this illustrious publication (sic), is caused by too much cash and too much leisure. If that were the case, it wouldn't be working class people at risk, would it? And reading the RCOG report, there is evidently a link between occupation/class and cervical cancer. The article, though, has no evidence for its scurrilous attack, merely suggestion and downright bigotry.


MINERS' WIVES CANCER DANGER

By Graham Walker

SOUTH YORKSHIRE miners' wives are among those most at risk from cervical cancer, an expert said today.

Promiscuous men and women have spread a genital wart virus which is believed to have caused high rates of cervical cancer deaths among miners' wives everywhere.

Miners are spending big wage packets on other women. Or, while they are at work their wives are at play, suggested one of Britain's leading gynaecologists. Dr Ian Duncan, president of the British Society for...

## CONTEMPTUOUS

Health in mining areas, as in all working class areas, is worse than that of the middle classes. The Health Service is being cut and undermined - facilities for screening are not readily available. The environment miners work in is dangerous and dirty, like most industrial jobs. That does not make us a lower lifeform to be vilified and pilloried by the local media. To wave a banner of morality and claim our alleged "promiscuity" as a cause of death is contemptuous. Perhaps this organ of the British free press does not understand pit facilities. No lavatories, no washing facilities, no pristine clean canteens underground, unavoidable cuts and abrasions. Is it any wonder bacteria and viruses enter the blood? There are also chemicals, coal dust, oil, and so on to compound the problem. But there's a need to justify NHS cuts and lack of facilities - what better than to label whole communities unworthy.

## MORE SENSIBLE

Having a number of sexual partners increases the chance of contact with the virus, but a health education programme would be more sensible than condemnation. People understanding the risks could then take precautions. But to describe whole communities as "promiscuous" - a highly emotive and derogatory term - is extremely dangerous. Women and men who have had, or have, only one sexual partner will believe they are safe, considering smear tests unimportant and irrelevant; women found with abnormal or pre-cancerous cells will be afraid to tell their partner, sowing seeds of distrust and doubt. This irresponsible "journalism" is denigration, not education.

What are we doing about it? Plenty! South Yorks NUM Panel has called for a full retraction of the article and an apology, or the paper will be boycotted; a group has formed to campaign for a mobile screening unit for men and women in communities and workplaces; the NUJ is to discuss the article, and work out what to do; unions have been contacted for information and support. So far the response is excellent. There will be a public meeting to launch a campaign of health education.

The links between work and community, the mutual support, is something we welcome and support. We, as a class, must work together for any improvement or change in our communities and workplaces. The article, whilst being a slur, has mobilised us into working together for the benefit of all.

For further information, messages of support, information you have on setting up screening facilities, contact us at PO Box 96, Doncaster, or telephone Elaine on Doncaster 844446.

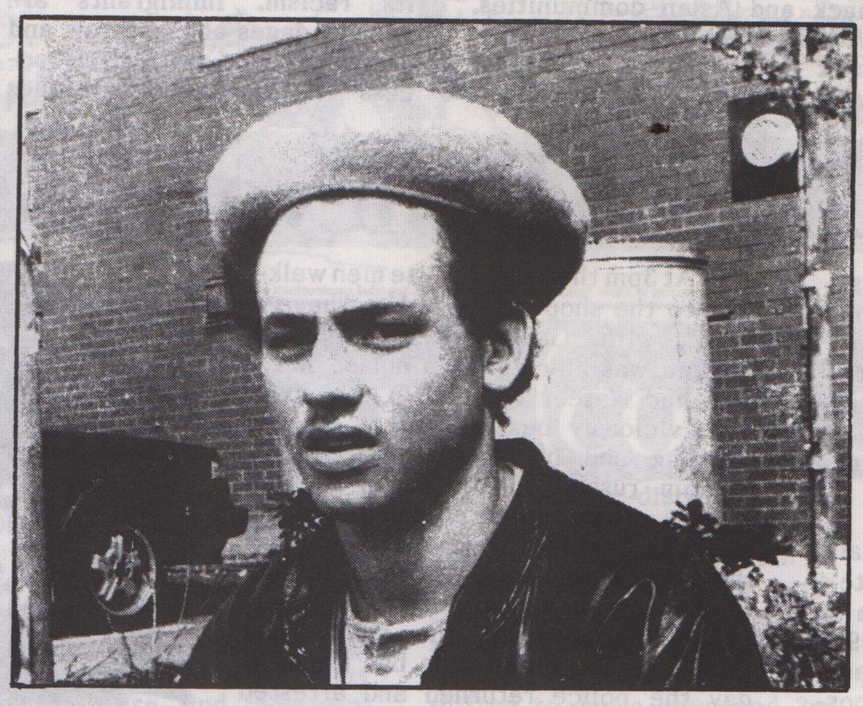
# POLICE PROVOKE RIOT

"I saw the marks on Marcus' face. He'd been beaten up, and that appals me because these people are supposed to be trained, supposed to be the law and order" - Angela Skellington, whose son, a young black resident of Chapeltown, Leeds, was beaten up by police sparking off rioting on the night of June 21st/22nd.

That afternoon Marcus was walking along Grange Terrace when he saw some friends among a group outside a house where police had been called to a domestic dispute. As he was walking away someone kicked a police car - he turned to see what was going on and was grabbed by police. A struggle resulted, as Marcus was forced into a cop car - he was punched in the face, truncheoned and had his genitals grabbed. Unsurprisingly this assault provoked local youths into some stone and bottle throwing at the police cars.

## CRUELTY

This had died down when Marcus returned home at 9pm on police bail, charged with damaging 2 police cars. He had been beaten by our "brave boys in blue" at Chapeltown police station. This cruelty is further heightened by the fact that 17 year old Marcus is asthmatic and had not long been out of hospital after an appendix operation.


Marcus Skellington, victim of police racism

When the news got around, passing police cars came under attack with bricks and bottles. Police reinforcements further provoked the situation by shouting racist abuse. There were 20-30 arrests and disturbances occurred again on Monday night. Local Tory media portrayed it all as an orgy of indiscriminate violence by "troublesome" blacks. However, one "indiscriminate" target was a much hated "sex" shop. This "commercial property" has been the scene of many attacks and has been used many times by the police to spy on inhabitants of Chapeltown.

As Marcus' mother asked, how could well-trained police blatantly provoke this incident? Well for each plod trained in "community" policing, more are trained in riot control, strike-breaking or are simply racist thugs. Like any state institution, the police reflect the race and class divisions in our society. Thatcher has promised help for the inner cities. This basically means giving them to property developers to turn them into housing estates for the rich, throwing out locals - as is already happening in London's docklands and Tower Hamlets. No doubt the police will have many chances to use their training as residents object to this particular "help".

# FASCISTS ROUTED!

The National Front has targetted Grays in Essex as a potential growth area. In February the local press announced their re-forming in Thurrock (where Grays is) after a 10 year absence. They started selling papers in the high street and have been doing so regularly since. It became obvious to anti-fascists that fascists from surrounding areas - Barking, Havering, and Newham - were sustaining a small base of local skinheads who had joined the NF. A number of incidents came to light - black kids chased out of town, white girls "warned" not to talk to black boys, grafitti and posters, Indian women insulted on the street.

An anti-NF demonstration was called early in May. A small number of anti-fascists, mainly from outside the area turned up to stop their paper sale. It was marginally successful, the fascists being forced off their pitch and failing to sell more than a couple of papers. It brought the NF presence into focus locally and set the scene for a much better, much more locally-based action later in May.

## NO TO FASCISM

When the NF turned up on the 30th May a large crowd of anti-fascists had already gathered. Their scouts had failed to anticipate the reaction against them. As they settled to begin selling they were surrounded by 50 or 60 anti-fascists - many were local kids who hadn't done anything like it before. Bright yellow stickers saying "No To Fascism" were given to all passing shoppers and soon hundreds of people were walking around with them on and were still doing so several hours later.

The closeness of the demonstrators prevented them from selling any papers. It took them half an hour to even summon up the courage to get their papers out! Having been told in no uncertain terms they weren't going to sell any, they planted a couple of stooge passers-by in a desperate bid to make things appear normal. No-one was fooled. Anti-fascists negotiated with the police to disperse if the NF were prevented from selling. The NF jumped at this chance and off they went leaving local people cheering and clapping as they slinked off down the street.



The NF were successfully defeated this time but they returned in force the following week. We expect this situation will continue and may demand new tactics. The local anti-fascist campaign, Thurrock Against Racism And Fascism will be calling on comrades in other areas for support if this proves to be the case.

## NOTE OF OPTIMISM

The skinheads who were the regular base for the NF paper sales have stopped selling since the demonstration. Locally their life was made a misery - they were ostracised, kicked out of their regular pub and generally given a hard time. They have told other youths they no longer want anything to do with the NF and apologised to a black man they had previously assaulted. They now know that living in Grays and being actively involved in the NF don't mix, which only shows that direct action works.

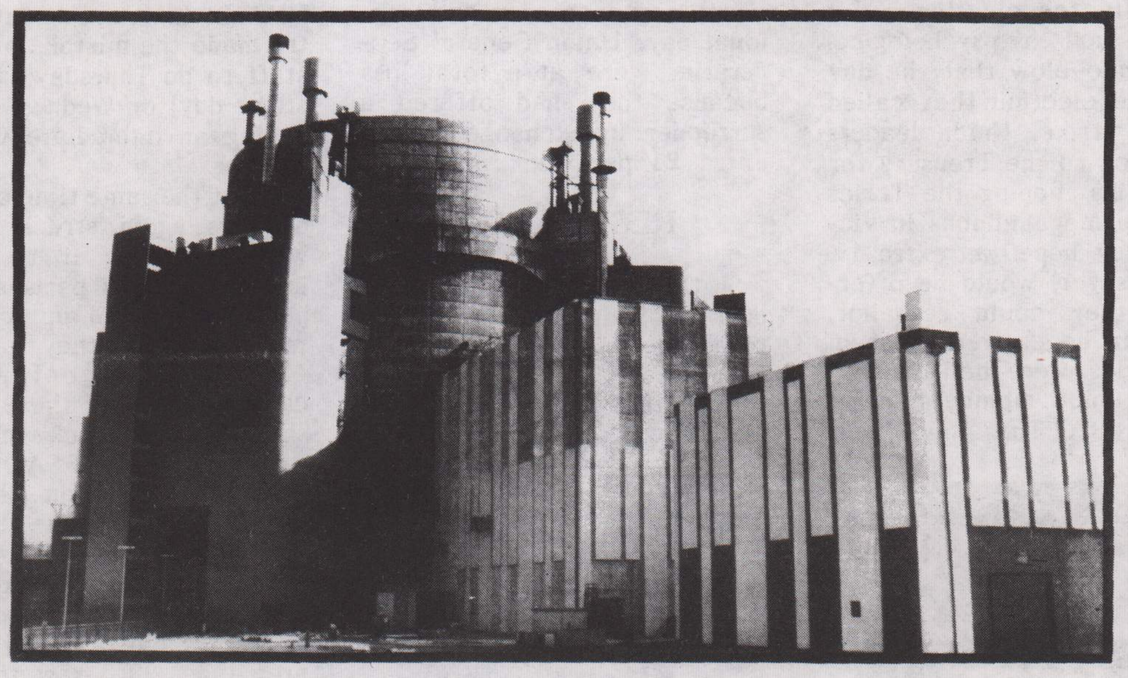
Member of Thurrock Against Racism & Fascism.

# —NUCLEAR NIGHTMARE—

The British government, who point to the French nuclear programme as a way forward for this country should look more closely at the safety record of France's nuclear industry.

Last December, at the Nuclear Study Centre, Grenoble, engineers discovered that the water supply used to cool down the Siloe reactor was leaking. Radioactive water was found in a nearby well registering a dose of 17,000 becquerels (20 times the "acceptable" dose. In January, during the big freeze, temperatures of -10 degrees centigrade froze the water entry ducts which are used to cool the reactors at Chinar and St Laurent des Eaux. Explosives were used to re-open the ducts and break the ice, avoiding a very probable disaster. On March 29th, at Tricastin, one of the reactors was closed as the safety of the whole plant was threatened by a defective water gate.

On the 5th of April, in Grenoble again, a storm cut the electricity supply of the Melusine reactor. The emergency generator failed to start for a whole hour, during which the on-site technicians couldn't verify the good working of the plant. During the night of 11th-12th April, a defective duct releases some gas, which although only slightly radio-active, is chemically very noxious. Employees working in the vicinity experienced burns. A few days later a similar leak, although less important, occurred at the Canega plant (Canpagnie Generale de Matiere Nucleaire) at the Tricastin site.



**Creys-Malville nuclear poison station**

But the accident most covered in the French press was that at Creys-Malville where sodium in fusion was discovered in the outer layer of the container. The leak was occurring at a rate of 20 litres per hour - FOR A WHOLE MONTH! Despite this situation the EDF (Electricite de France) still refuses to shut down the plant for reasons of profitability. What an example for this government to emulate!

# DIRECT ACTION in Puerto Real

The Spanish shipyard workers' strike against state imposed redundancies in Puerto Real (see DA 40) continues. Their struggle, initiated by the metalworkers' syndicate of the CNT-IWA in May, has reached a level of activity similar to the recent Reinosa conflagration. The CNT have successfully promoted decision-making in assemblies as well as direct action such as the regular blocking of access roads to the town and cutting telephone and rail links with the outside. This has led to a great deal of police violence that has been given widespread media publicity - naturally, what has gone unmentioned is the role of the anarcho-syndicalist workers of the CNT who began the fight and succeeded in drawing in the other unions and the local people. Puerto Real, without the state-owned shipyards is nothing. This has shown itself by the fierce commitment to the strike shown by everyone in the town.

## RESISTING ATTACKS

The Puerto Real strike is the latest act of resistance in a long list of attacks on workers in state-owned industries mounted by the socialist government. This rationalisation or "reconversion", as it is called, is an attempt to show international capital that it, too, has the power to drive down job and wage levels and increase profits.

The shipyard workers, like their comrades in Reinosa, have developed new forms of struggle and a fresh determination to win - in contrast to the dismal Sagunto steel-workers' campaign 5 years ago when the rank and file were led into a dead end by the bureaucratic UGT and CCOO unions. Not only are the Puerto Real strikers fighting for jobs, lower hours and a fair distribution of available work but they are also challenging the control that automated technology exerts over people, as in the British miners' strike.

For this reason their struggle should be supported actively by working people here. The Direct Action Movement (and the International Workers' Association to which it belongs) asks for your support in one or more of the following ways:




**CNT-AIT in action, resisting attacks**

* Send strike donations to account number 3300002235 of the Savings Bank of Cordoba (Caja de Ahorros de Cordoba) in Puerto Real held by the Federacion Local de Sindicatos CNT-AIT, Puerto Real.

* Send telegrams and letters of protest against the state's repression and its unwillingness to find solutions to the shipyard workers' problems to:

President of the Spanish government, Felipe Gonzales, Palacio de la Moncloa, Madrid.

The President of the National Industrial Institute, (INI), Plaza del Marquez de Salamanca, no. 8-28006, Madrid.

Ministry of Industry, Paseo de la Castellana, no. 16.28046, Madrid.

Director de Astilleros Espanoles de Matagorda, Puerto Real, Cadiz, Andalucia.

* Protest at Spanish embassies and consulates.

# Domestic Bliss?

Launched nationally 3 months ago, the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) is preparing for action to increase pressure on the government to extend trade union rights to its' members. Domestic workers, like farm workers are excluded from legislation governing labour relations and workers' rights.

Margaret Nhlapo, the unions Transvaal secreatary stressed that the untested militancy of domestic workers shouldn't be underestimated. Although faced with the major problem of having to organise domestic workers into strong structures the union has shown its capacity to organise workers at a rapid pace. Membership in the Johannesburg area increased from 16,000 to 18,000 in 3 months.

SADWU has managed this by consolidating its street committees, in almost all regions. The major task of these street committees is to monitor working conditions and take up grievances with employers in a particular street. "Our aim is to make every worker a union organiser", says Margaret, herself a former domestic worker.

The determination to organise workers under the most difficult conditions has won the union recognition from administration boards and manpower commissions in various areas.

The newly formed National Executive Committee is expected to draft a set of national demands around domestic workers rights to form trade unions and to be covered by other labour legislation.

From Outwrite, information from CUSA-AZACTU Women's Digest.

# All Around the World THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Most people will have read or seen the recent news coverage of what has been happening in South Korea. Yet this is only one of the vital struggles which are taking place outside of, and against the imperialism of, Europe and the USA.

In Haiti a general strike was called, aimed at forcing the resignation of the military government who have dissolved the country's main trade union federation. The government has refused to recognise the validity of the independent electoral council dealing with the new constitution. Police have shot dead 10 people in the most intense violence since the "Baby Doc" Duvalier dictatorship was overthrown last year.

In Brazil the centre of Rio de Janeiro was turned into a battlefield as rioting broke out over a 50% rise in bus fares. Although the fare rise was dropped the rioting represents a deep anger at the austerity measures being pursued by the government, which will not dissipate with the granting of one or two concessions. The workers and peasants of Brazil know what the people of the Philippines have found out - that the stamp of democracy does not change their place within capitalist exploitation.

Appearances suggest that bourgeois democratic reforms will also be introduced into South Korea in an attempt to diffuse the growing tide of discontent. Workers and students will have to carry their demands past these illusions if they are to achieve anything concrete for themselves. Otherwise they too will learn the hard way that parliamentary concessions are merely a mask for continued class oppression and that, ultimately, true freedom will only be won by the complete overthrow of the capitalist state itself.



**Samurai police**

# DISUNITY CAUSES CONFUSION

On June 23rd the fragile unity between 2 of the civil service unions fighting for a 15% pay rise collapsed. After 12 weeks of rolling action and selective strikes the National Executive Council of the SCPS (representing middle management) suspended industrial action. CPSA (clerical and typing union) chose to ballot members on all-out strike action, in the belief that selective action had ran its useful course and that an all-out strike is the only way forward.

N. Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) voted 53% to 47% against further action. They were the only union besides SCPS & CPSA to even propose action. Earlier this year IPCS (scientists) accepted a 2-year staged deal including merit pay - such pay being at the behest of management without even minimal union involvement. CSU (messengers) "bottled out" in the words of some members, accepting the original 4.25% offer. Next were IRSF (tax officers). Their members voted against action as they didn't believe other unions would fight. That left 3 unions who, in April, began a 6 week campaign of rolling area action, unsurprisingly resisted and virtually ignored by the government. The union conferences in May decided against an all-out strike but to continue intensified rolling action backed up by a 2 day strike in the general election week. At this point NIPSA bowed out.

## GUERRILLA ACTION

The national strike went well, though not as well as union leaders claimed. Of 238,000 members 160,000 struck for the full 2 days against government claims of 95,000. It was preceded and followed by guerilla actions in ports and airports. Customs officers called for an all-out indefinite strike of customs officers. Sadly the election result landed such a psychological and morale blow that the day after the election they called off the strike. Union leaders went back to the Treasury for more talks, hoping the Tories would be magnanimous in victory. They hoped an extra 1% (a face-saver) would be offered so they could re-ballot. But their hopes were dashed. The Tories were hell-bent on rubbing union members' noses in the dirt. The only "concessions" they would make were merit pay increases and regional pay. Union General Secretaries were at a total loss because they had offered a surrender in exchange for an extra £1 per week.




## RESISTANCE

On June 18th and 19th members in Scotland struck. The response was reportedly higher than before. Scottish members proved that resistance to the Tories was not just at the ballot box. Management at the DHSS Livingston Computer Centre made the mistake of asking staff to do Thursday's work (a strike day) on Wednesday, provoking an immediate walkout.

At the same time customs officers again struck without warning timing it to precision. Convoys of perishable exports were held up and then released after they had gone off. The calling of and the calling off of these short, sharp strikes took many by surprise. The CPSA General Secretary was then quoted in the Guardian of June 19th saying he was prepared to discuss a 2 year deal including all the things CPSA are opposed to - merit pay, regional pay, etc. June 23rd saw the final split with CPSA left to fight alone. SCPS said all along they would not support all-out action. Not only this but they also suspended further action hoping the government would make another offer without "the duress" of industrial action. CPSA National Executive Committee decided to continue the rolling action until the national ballot. On June 25th and 26th CPSA members in London and southern England struck. Demoralisation was in evidencet with only about 50% support and much confusion. Many complained about lack of information and some left-wingers campaigned against further selective action but called for an all-out strike.

## LOST CONFIDENCE

The confusion and demoralisation destroyed the strike in some offices. Battersea UBO workers were led into work by union officers. Many wanted to strike but lost confidence after local leaders told them to work, defying the national ballot. These leaders still expect members to vote for and support an all-out indefinite strike. Other DHSS and Unemployment Benefit Offices also worked. Pickets were few and far between and were banned from Whitehall by the police due to parliament opening. A festival in Battersea Park had to be switched to Kennington Park after Tory Wandsworth Council cancelled it at a few days' notice. Eventually the rally and festival were cancelled due to the wash-out and lack of support.

CPSA

Prospects for a vote for an all-out strike are grim - CPSA has'nt mounted a campaign. The Broad Left in the union, controlled by Militant and SWP, while calling for an all-out strike haven't produced a single leaflet. SWP have restricted their actions to calling upon the NEC and the right wing General Secretary to organise the strike. Despite claiming massive support for an all-out strike no Broad Left-controlled branch has initiated a walk-out and tried to spread it.

The Civil Service Rank and File Movement has continued to make progress and its London supporters have begun weekly meetings. A draft programme has been produced and will be circulated widely once finally agreed. Details of meetings and programmes can be obtained from SW London DAM or from Kevin - 01 680 8026.

DAM Civil Service Workers.

# Whose Conspiracy?




For most people the Wapping dispute between Murdoch's News International and the printworkers is over. With the backing of the police and the courts the print unions were defeated. Jailed printworkers have been released and many cases arising from the dispute have been dismissed - a half-hearted recognition of the political nature of the charges.

But 2 trade unionists active in Leicester Printworkers Support Group now face 3 year prison sentences due to their support for the workers at News International. Sue Faulkner, a NUPE shop steward, and Ross Galbraith, a TGWU branch secretary, were arrested and charged with causing damage to a TNT lorry. This has now been changed to "conspiring with person or persons unknown to cause damage to TNT Newsfast Ltd, in Leicester and elsewhere in England and Wales". "Conspiring" implies that action was planned or discussed - not that it took place. The charge is just as serious but shifts the burden of proof from the prosecution to the accused.

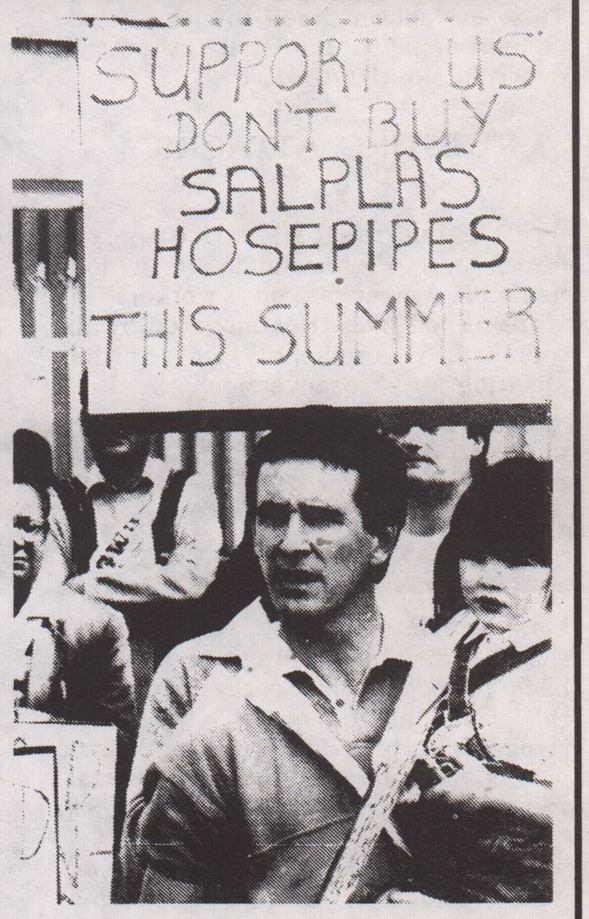
This is not the first time that conspiracy charges have been used against trade unionists. If Sue and Ross are convicted it could set a precedent for widespread use of the conspiracy laws as a political weapon against unions activists. It affects everyone involved in trade unions or in supporting industrial disputes. A defence campaign has now been set up to publicise the case and get the charges dropped. The campaign is asking for union branches and other organisations to affiliate. Messages of support and donations towards legal costs and publicity should be sent to: Leicester 2 Defence Campaign, c/o Leicester and District Trades Council, 138 Charles Street, Leicester.

# FRIDAY THE 13th

**Friday the 13th** February was an unlucky date for workers at Salford Plastics Ltd - 6 of their number were laid off indefinitely. The dispute began in January when a wage claim was followed by a totally unreasonable demand for increased production. Workers rejected it and a meeting was arranged for Friday the 13th. Management told union reps that 6 workers would be laid off indefinitely for "not working hard enough". Another meeting broke down and union officals were ordered to leave company premises. A mass meeting the next day, February 17th, decided in a secret ballot to walk out in support of their workmates. But in the usual fashion recently the 43 workers were then sacked by Boss Barry Chapman.

The original 6 decided to resign in order to appeal to an Industrial Tribunal to claim "constructive dismissal", the other workers are claiming unfair dismissal. In the meantime scabs have been employed. However, production appears to have been affected with the company bringing in hosepipes from the continent. Scabs have been repacking and distributing these - other work has been sub-contracted to other firms such as Eagley Plastics, Bromley Cross near Bolton.

Support has come from the National Union of Seamen who are boycotting imports and exports, but unfortunately unorganised transport has been




crossing picket lines. Salplas products (mainly hosepipes) are sold in DIY stores, B&Q and Texas, and in Woolworths under their own "Cuthberts" label. Write for information, or with donations or letters of support to: Jim Billington, 43 Abingdon Road, Urmston, Manchester, M31 1GW.

OUR HISTORY...OUR HISTORY...OUR HISTORY...OUR HISTORY...OUR HISTORY...OUR HISTORY...OUR HISTORY...OUR HISTORY

# JEWISH ANARCHISTS IN THE EAST END

Seventy-five years ago in London's East End in the same sweatshops recently discovered by the national press after Prince Charles' visit, a different group of immigrant workers were fighting for their rights - the Jewish workers who had fled persecution and pogroms in Tsarist Russia and Easten Europe. The journey was hazardous - local police chiefs and provincial governors demanded bribes, frontier officials fleeced them further, then on reaching a port they were transported in cattle boats, crammed in horrific conditions.

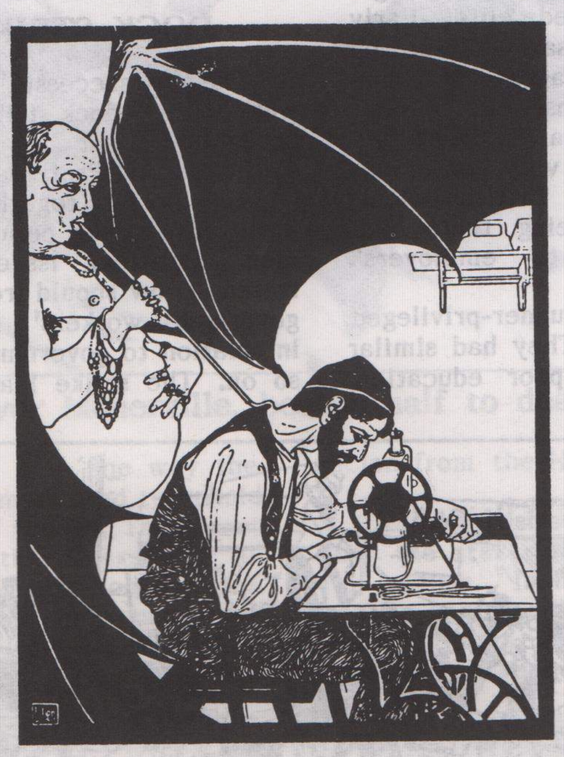
Once in Britain there were still dangers, especially for young women, many ending up in brothels. The "Greeners" or newcomers were often "befriended", promised shelter and a job only to be cheated out of what little money and possessions they still had, then thrown out onto the streets. Those who acquired work inevitably ended up in East End sweatshops. The reasons were simple - high seasonal unemployment, while language and cultural differences created suspicion and hostility. Also rigid union rules restricted entry into certain occupations. They also lacked experience of factory work, so were forced back into their old skills. This caused a mushroom growth in small workshops with a cut-throat struggle for existence, dependent ultimately on the cost of the most vital factor of production - Labour.

At first the Jewish workers had difficulties in organising - many still thought in religous, not class, terms. It was difficult to break old bonds. There was always a fresh influx of "greeners" besides a steady exodus to the US. But slowly, during the 1880's, alongside the general socialist revival trade union and socialist ideas began to spread.

## THE WORKERS FRIEND

In July 1885, a monthly non-sectarian socialist paper, "Arbeter Fraint" (Workers' Friend), appeared, immediately attacking sweatshop conditions. A workers' club was established and soon became associated with the paper. Both were attacked by the Anglo-Jewry, bribing printers to prevent publication. This was overcome by acquiring their own presses after an appeal. Anglo-Jewry religious and lay leaders had always shown hostile attitudes towards the new immigrants seeing them as a threat to their standing in polite British society. Initial sympathy for the Jews' plight quickly changed. The Tory MP for Tower Hamlets set the tone to be repeated ad-nauseum ever since calling for selective immigration controls. Other Tory MPs took this up and soon there were demands for mass deportations.

These attitudes ran right through the political spectrum. Middle class social reformers published "objective" studies, compounding their already low regard for the poor in general, attributing "filthy habits to the Jews. This was extraordinary as their customs meant they washed and changed much more frequently than the native British. Webbs and Fabian socialists saw them as inferior, incapable of working to English standards. Some of the marxist Social Democratic Federation leaders were openly anti-semitic, reflecting Marx himself who had written: "the Jews of Poland are the smeariest of all races". No wonder there was suspicion and distrust between British and Jewish workers, played on by employers who often used destitute Jewish workers as blacklegs during disputes.



The Vampire of the Sweatshop

## The Vampire of the Sweatshop

Slowly Jewish workers organised. During the 1889 strikes Jewish unions played their part, winning some concessions, though short-lived. In the next decade agitation increased to end the sweatshops. Meanwhile, the socialist movement diverged into its marxist and anarchist wings, affecting the Jewish movement too. Arbeter Fraint was more and more identified with the anarchists, as were the unions as the SDF became hostile, seeing them as "scum" and a threat to **"honest"** labour. Around the turn of the century an anarcho-syndicalist, Rudolf Rocker, made contact with the East End Jewish movement, immediately becoming involved, starting a remarkable relationship between this German gentile and the Jewish workers lasting 20 years. He became editor of the now weekly "Arbeter Fraint" though he could not read or write Yiddish.

Militancy of Jewish unions grew. A campaign started against the sweatshops, reaching a climax in the first great strike of 1906. Small strikes had broken out throughout that year and, under anarchist instigation, a general strike in the East End began in June. A strike committee was formed. The employers responded with a general lock-out. Support came from the Jewish community, giving what it could. Rocker constantly spoke and sustained the effort. Eventually the strike was defeated - the employers were too strong. They transferred work to outside centres and the lack of a strike fund meant hunger forced the strikers back.

But this wasn't the end. Rocker and his comrades realised their weakness and resolved that next time it would be different. A club was established, open to all workers, with a library, reading room and canteen. It became a meeting place for revolutionaries from all over the world. Debates and discussions were held. Kropotkin, Malatesta, Louise Michelle and Tom Mann all spoke there. Rocker lectured, in Yiddish, on a wide range of subjects. In the corner while he spoke sat a red-haired Russian quietly making notes, his name was Lenin.

By 1910 Jewish anarchists were by far the strongest and most active in the East End - strong enough to withstand pressure against them after the Sidney Street affair when it was attempted to pin a policeman's robbery and murder on them. It turned out to be Leftish Social Democrats, their leader escaping, later to turn up as a notorious agent of the Bolshevik secret police, the Cheka.

## SOLIDARITY

Between 1910 and 1914 there was a wave of industrial unrest - the Syndicalist Revolt. April 1912 was the right moment for Jewish workers to strike. West End tailors were in dispute over pay and conditions. Work was being transferred to the East End. Arbeter Fraint urged a mass meeting at which the Jewish workers decided not only to refuse this work but to begin a general strike. This time there was organisation and direction from the start with strike committees. Arbeter Fraint became a 4 page daily keeping strikers informed. Demands were made - a fixed working day, union-only labour, higher wages and abolition of piece work, overtime and unhygienic workshops.

The East End rallied around the strikers: higher paid workers refused strike pay and even contributed savings to the strike fund; door-to-door collections were made; temporary canteens were set up providing a basic meal; the Jewish bakers' union provided bread while cigarette makers offered free suplies; other unions levied their members and the Yiddish theatre put on benefit performances.



Rocker, Architect of Victory

## Rocker, Architect of Victory

Employers responded with a 3 week lock-out convinced hunger would drive workers back. Attempts were made to divide the strikers, by claiming anarchist manipulation, then playing on women and children's fears. Women responded with a mass meeting to reaffirm their support. Rocker emerged as the architect of victory, urging on the workers, organising constantly at the mass meetings. A dock strike had begun - Rocker joined with the anarcho-syndicalist carter, Ted Leggett, to bring the workers together in common struggle. Attempts by the West End tailors' union to negotiate a settlement were rejected by the rank and file. Solidarity paid off and the employers surrendered to all the demands - a death blow for the Sweating system. In their moment of triumph Arbeter Fraint called on the Jewish tailors to aid the dockers. Immediately gifts poured in from Jewish workers, many of whom could scarcely feed themselves. Local retailers supplied shoes and clothing. More than 300 undernourished, ragged and barefoot dockers' children were taken in, clothed and fed by Jewish families while the strike continued. This brought together Jewish and Gentile workers. The dockers never forgot the solidarity shown. It is no coincidence that 24 years later in 1936 the dockers of Wapping and St Georges formed the militant vanguard of the movement that forced the Fascists from Cable Street, stopping their incursion into East London.

## TODAY

Today sweatshops have reappeared. Recently-arrived workers are exploited just as much as 75 years ago. Fear and ignorance are played upon to divide us. In 1912 it was not an Act of Parliament that ended Sweating, but the **direct action** of the workers themselves. It is the only way again!

# FORGET YOUR TROUBLES....

The Tory election win means at least 5 more years of savage attacks on working people. Basic rights will be further eroded as Britain's economic and social structure becomes more 3rd World-like every day.

The extent of their victory shocked many. With high unemployment and millions on or below the poverty line enough people are motivated by self-interest to hold up Thatcher's share of the vote ensuring her majority. Monetarist policies created 2 seperate economies - a fading domestic one based on a declining manufacturing sector and a booming international one based on the City's financial dealings. A booming economy and the maintenance of the present course was the main plank of the Tory campaign. This was never really challenged by Labour who, instead, attempted to gain the "high moral ground" of health and social welfare provision. This cut no ice with those who have prospered under Thatcher as the ideas of popular capitalism have become dominant.

Labours' slick campaign had little effect. Polls indicated that few people changed their mind during the campaign. The Tories never fell below the 40% needed to ensure victory. Any sniff of a Labour revival was met by resurrecting the defence issue and playing the nationalistic card. The Tories leaned heavily on nationalistic symbols - holding back the Russian hordes, the Battle of Britain, the Bulldog symbol and making Britain "Great" again. Thatcher was never as scared by Labour as by the miners when, despite police, legal, army and even Kinnock's support, she nearly gave in. Surely this shows our true strength lies in our own hands, not in parliament.

## EXPLOITATION

We're now faced with an increasingly repressive government combining economic liberalism - economic exploitation with market forces dominant and any restrictions including basic human rights being swept away - with with stronger central government control over our daily lives including increased police powers.

Predictably the result has led to repercussions in the opposition. The Alliance has turned in on itself and an SDP split between pro- and anti-merger groups seems likely. This will clear the way for an Owenite rump to be absorbed by the Tories.

Labour's leaders will gain even firmer control over local activists by bringing in 1 person 1 vote in constituency parties but notably not at party conferences which will remain under union bloc vote control. There's likely to be a switch with some policies being changed or dropped completely. For example, unless the international situation changes the workable defence policy looks like being shelved. There will be a general shift to the right and "new realism", trying to win support among the skilled workers. Given Labour's electoralism they can do little else. They're incapable of attacking the Tories' except through parliament. The Tory majority makes this hopeless. Talk of




Contd. page 8

# SECTARIANISM: The Workers' Poison

Loyalist triumphalism peaks in July and August. For Catholics it means, at best, chauvinism - loyalists display flags and insignia and parade their superiority through Catholic estates and streets - at worst beatings, murders, homes burned. The working class has been divided since long before the birth of the Orange statelet. This lies in the "Plantation of Ulster" - whole communities of native Irish were dispossessed and replaced by Scottish and English settlers. Their relation to landowners, merchants and administrators was one of exploitation but one they gained from compared to the evicted Irish. While successive revolts up to the late 1800's were struggles against landlordism Protestant farmers sided with those landlords and their British backers. Then, as now, privilege led them to ally with their exploiters Then, as now, it is backed up by British force.

This continued with industrialisation. Catholics were over-represented in unskilled work - 24% of Belfast's population, they were 41% of dock labourers against 7% of shipwrights. Protestants had some advantages as most employers, sub-contractors and foremen were Protestant. The practice of giving unskilled work along sectarian lines meant, for example that in Belfast Protestants worked on docks with more regular trade and in the linen industry commanded better pay and conditions. These marginal privileges re-inforced sectarian solidarity.

Skilled trades were Orange Order-dominated maintaining a Unionist skilled elite. Early labour organisation kept up high skilled wages at the unskilled's expense. It couldn't bear the idea of unskilled unions. It was very conservative supporting British colonialism and seeing their high wages tied to employers'.

So what of under-privileged Protestants? They had similar conditions - poor education, housing, health wages and work conditions, long hours, and unemployment - to Catholics. Their political aspirations lay with the status quo, so at times of tension were at Catholics' throats. Belfast was regularly torn by sectarian riots. Segregated housing appeared by the mid-1800's. Catholic attempts to move met fierce pogroms. Organising across the divide was prone to sabotage by Unionist papers and religious bigots. When a National Union of Dock Labourers Belfast organiser, a Catholic, spoke in Glasgow with an Irish nationalist the Belfast Evening Telegraph screamed: "Are the Orangemen of Belfast Going to Allow Themselves to be Led by a Fenian". Many Protestants left the union.

## DOCK STRIKE

The most successful attempt was the 1907 dock strike which brought Belfast to a halt. Catholics and Protestants faced the bosses together. But during the strike police mutinied. Political issues were raised - how should Ireland be governed; workers' interests in relation to government; and so on. The strike leaders insisted politics and union agitation were unrelated. But politics were involved and the press didn't miss their chance. The army was brought in to protect scabs. Nationalist politicians, as sectarian, anti-socialist and opportunist as Unionists, joined the act. When Catholic strikers rioted against military and police occupation it was a cue for scare-mongering. The Belfast News-Letter called the strike a Nationalist conspiracy to "inflict a blow on the Unionist and Protestant cause and on the prosperity of the city". Working class Protestants became alarmed at the rioting following the police mutiny, and at the extent of Nationalist propaganda, while strike leaders said nothing. This broke the strike and non-sectarian solidarity.

The 1907 strike showed that working class Protestants and Catholics can unite around common social aspirations. But class action will unavoidably raise political questions and leads to a catch-22 situation - raising politics alienates one from the other; failing to take a stance plays into the establishment's hands with the press and sectarian bigots as capable of playing that game just as well today. While a sectarian state remains the vast majority of working class Protestants will always side with the ruling class who will take advantage of political differences when their economic interests are threatened by united working class action. The only solution is to abolish the Orange state. To British revolutionaries this means supporting the demand for British withdrawal.



Bread-van on its rounds attacked by women. One venturesome lady got into the van and made short work of its contents. Sketched on the spot

# ...and Fight Back

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

"extra-parliamentary activity" by Labour's "left" has been firmly put down by Kinnock, though all that was suggested was a poll tax campaign. In the past radical upsurges and extra-parliamentary resistance has grown despite the Labour party not because of it - that's the only way it will grow in the future.

When the economic bubble bursts discontent will spread and grow. Given the huge Tory majority the only worthwhile opposition will happen outside Parliament. The "ship of state" floats on a sea of oil, buoyed up by credit cards and as this North Sea oil drys up more and more people will find them selves in financial difficulties. Already many families survive on credit using it, not for luxury items, but basics like food and clothes.

The Tories are hell-bent on smashing the working class. Meanwhile Labour is set on a rightward course, unlikely to support militant workers' activity, being more keen to improve its image and pander to the right wing media. To defend ourselves a broad-based extra-parliamentary opposition needs to be built - there is no other alternative, and there is certainly no point in putting our faith in Labour's opposition inside parliament for another 4, 5, or more, years. Initiatives such as a national strike support group network, black people's civil rights campaigns, rank and file organisations, campaigns against the poll tax, health cuts and so on are the basis for such an opposition. We cannot afford to carry on allowing those cut off from the reality of everyday struggle to pretend to represent us while building their own careers and salaries. No, we must take matters into our own hands. Your lifetime's supply of parliamentary democracy is 10 crosses against a candidate's name but **direct action** works every day of every year.

# Militant Unionism (cont'd)

ship. One small group in the CGT is anarcho-syndicalist - the proof-readers section of the printers. Due to their size they've no influence but are an irritation occasionally. There are some industrial sections with rank and file principles though these are also on the wane. People are either disciplined or expelled for such activities. The main battle in the big unions is for power, not rank & file democracy.

Q. Have you tried to contact these groups?

Yes, but we lack the strength for a national campaign along these lines. Also it's a difficult game to play. When people quit or get pissed off with the union, they are usually demoralised or distrusting, having little wish to go back to the fray. Defeat is never a good recruiting basis for anyone.

## PUBLIC IMAGE

A few successes come to mind. Some comrades in our Paris transport section left the CFDT 2 years ago. This was repeated in December with some railworkers during the recent strike. We've also had good news from Bordeaux where a large education union branch broke up, a good proportion of their members coming over to us. This of course goes on all the time but as yet we lack a recognisable public image to attract those who are dissatisfied with reformism.

Q. Do you try to build links between the workplace and the community?

Here we have tended to concentrate on the commercial sector. One case comes to mind where workers in a large store were fighting the bosses with the odds heavily against them. They were part-time women with little chance of spreading action to other company outlets. A good tactic that emerged was the boycott campaign they launched within the neighbourhood. It worked. They won without facing a long, difficult strike. Yes, the question of community links constantly preoccupies us.

Q. Do you have unemployed members and do you work around the unemployed?

It depends on the area - in Bordeaux 2 out of 3 are jobless; Paris is better off. About 80% of our members have work. In Bordeaux fighting unemployment is more important than in Paris. Down there comrades helped organise the jobless at meetings and assemblies with the precise aim to combat the fatalistic view that there's no solution to unemployment. The CNT set out to define its causes and a group emerged that was active as well as theoretical. Their aim was not to find solutions or search for work but to create solidarity where common problems like having electric or water cut off or rent unpaid could be fought together. The group was faced with misunderstandings, a major one being the belief that they were there to find individual solutions to individual problems. Anyway they began by holding a "Rock On The Dole" festival and publicising the mutual aid group they'd formed. From that people were brought into the meetings and a food co-op developed from contacts with peasant farmers.

Q. What do you think the future holds?

To me, our main hope lies in others' crises. During the rail strike it was noticeable that workers no longer tolerated fighting along old bureaucratic lines. They believed that decisions must be taken at general assemblies of all the workers and that the strike could be co-ordinated on a rank and file delegate basis free of union bosses. That's one important ray of hope. Within this there's a real chance for us as proved by the desertion of CGT militants during the strike.

Another aspect is the crisis of capitalism - I don't like "crisis", rather a restructuring of investment, a brutal and automatic switch in direction. This will create new victims, particularly in the working class since it will mean re-distribution of work on a global level, especially in France and Britain as we are intermediaries of world capitalism and more vulnerable to such changes. Basic industrial production is being shifted to more advanced 3rd world countries, Brazil being an outstanding example. Within this, economic pressure from the US and Japan will be stifling. Nevertheless Brazil is a far-reaching prototype for a new model of production removed from the rich consumption centres. The crisis in old industrial countries, Europe for example, will lead to a certain type of revolutionary demand, a refusal to accept capitalist structures based on new types of suffering.

## THIRD WORLD LINKS

Inside France, things are going well for us in other ways. Firstly we are seeking the growth of an international anarcho-syndicalist network that is starting to function effectively. The existance of the IWA gives each section a fair amount of power. If we can organise within 3rd world countries like Brazil as we are doing now, something else will happen - real links between us and them would be a very positive step.

Secondly I think we're on the point of creating an attractive image - that's to say the Marxist left for the past ten years has been in a state of intellectual paralysis and this dying giant is now definitely declining. Not only will libertarian ideas be able to grow more freely but they will gain greater acceptance by the workers. One can see this happening already.

Thirdly I don't think it's too far-fetched to imagine we can put ourselves forward in a fresh and positive light and use this to re-build a new militant rank and file that can fully exploit the situation here and elsewhere.

As for which particular areas of struggle will be most fruitful, that's hard if not impossible to say. It's a matter of being relevant in every aspect of what we do and think as well as putting forward direct action and clear thinking on the world we live in. At the same time, we must build a militant organisation - one robust enough to withstand the attacks we are bound to suffer.

# Forgotten Women

Women's oppression is a major obstacle to building class unity. Sexism, like racism, only benefits capitalism - workers fighting together, irrespective of sex or race, are a far greater threat than when isolated and divided. Thus women's liberation is in the interests of both sexes.

Women are not only oppressed as workers but also as women. The statement that working class women do two thirds of the world's work makes this clear. We don't agree with all aspects of today's feminist movement. Many of them see the root of women's oppression as patriarchy but we argue that capitalism, not men, gains from and is responsible for it. Women's oppression can't be seen in isolation but in its overall context - that is, all oppression stems from capitalism. Only when capitalism is smashed can women be free. A women's movement, instead of getting professional women into positions of power, should adopt a class analysis and support working class women who bear the brunt of capitalist attacks

While we support struggles for reforms we say that real change comes only through class struggle. While there's nothing wrong in consciencerraising and self-education on a mass scale this only occurs in struggle - in the miners' strike miners and supporters saw who was on their side and who wasn't, with links formed with "peace" women, lesbians and gays.

If women's liberation can only be achieved by overthrowing capitalism, this alone won't automatically secure it. In revolutionary times women will need to assert themselves as women. To defend their interests women will need to organise against sexist attitudes. If this means forming their own organisations then so be it.

In 1930's Spain women in the CNT, needed to organise outside existing structures building Mujeres Libres (Free Women) with 27,000 members and 137 groups. It aimed to "empower" deciding the only way was to organise separately to address "women's triple enslavement to ignorance, capital and men". Many Spanish anarchists didn't see womens' oppression as a separate issue assuming its end would follow an anarchist society, at best insisting women should fight from inside the existing structures. This shortsightedness & Mujeres Libres' validity is shown by examining women's position after the revolution:

1. In many areas wages were not equalised.
2. "They continued to think of women as assistants, accepted in a secondary place." - Soledad Estorach.

Womens' struggles were not taken as seriously as they might have been.

Before the revolution Anarchists had schools and cultural centres, of special importance to women to combat high illiteracy among women giving them a chance to enrich themselves and meet men as equals. In this environment women could speak of their needs and experiences as women and unorganised workers which they could not do in the union structure.

**Mujeres Libres** were labelled as feminists but hardly knew its meaning and when they did, they identified it as a middle-class movement with aims irrelevant and contrary to their own. They argued women had to organise independently of men to overcome subordination, and struggle against male resistance to women's freedom, insisting women's involvement anarchism movement must develop from their particular experience. Their struggles focussed on illiteracy, economic dependence, and ignorance on health/childcare/sexuality. With illiteracy, they had a massive literacy drive in towns and villages and set up institutes in Valencia and Barcelona with literacy, language, nursing, childcare, electricity, mechanics, economics and general education classes, and meetings. "It was almost like a school for activists...we didn't exactly indoctrinate people but we did more than just technical training... we encouraged them to pay attention to the idea of becoming activists."

**Mujeres Libres** saw economic dependence of women rooted in extreme sexual division of labour. Women had the lowest paid work and most oppressive conditions. They worked closely with the CNT, sponsoring training and apprenticeship programmes in factories. Eventually there were **Mujeres Libres** groups in most factories allowing women to talk about work-related concerns. In rural areas they sponsored agricultural training programmes for women and advocated child care facilities in localities and workplaces giving women the possibility of working and fought to equalise wages between women and men. There was no clear position on cultural subordination of women. Some criticised bourgeois morality and argued against defining women solely as mothers: "...the woman is an individual and she has worth even apart from being a mother, we wanted to get rid of the myth of the mother." Most women in **Mujeres Libres** remained committed to monogamous relationships if not legal marriage.

Health was an area almost totally controlled by the Catholic Church. Mujeres Libres trained new nurses to replace nuns & developed substantial education and hygeine programmes for maternity and neighbourhood centres, which was of great importance to revolutionary Spain. When revolutionaries were under pressure to concentrate on the civil war with the aim of destroying all gains, Mujeres Libres' commitment to social action reaffirmed the anarchist watchwords that the war and revolution are inseparable.

The advancement of women's liberation can only be achieved through revolutionary activity. An anarchist society is the only society which can free women. Mujeres Libres gives us an example of the kind of areas where women must work. No freedom is ever achieved without fighting for it.




The process of recording history is one controlled by men, so it's not surprising that the roles of women in such events as the Spanish Revolution have been neglected and ignored. The video **"de Toda la Vida"** ("All Our Lives") is a series of interviews with 4 of the founders of **Mujeres Libres**. It is an attempt to redress the balance and put women, especially anarchist/anarcho-syndicalist women, back into history. The Direct Action Movement has organised a tour with the video, visiting the following venues:

**London:** July 15th, 7.30pm - 4 Corners Club, Roman Rd, Bethnal Green. (East London DAM)
- July 16th, 7.30pm - basement of St Matthew's Meeting Place, opposite Lambeth Town Hall. (Brixton DAM)

**Bradford:** July 19th, 7.30pm - Metropole Pub, Town Centre.
**Huddersfield:** July 20th, 8pm - Hudawi Centre, Town Centre.
**Nottingham:** July 22nd, 7.30pm - International Community Centre, Mansfield Road.
**Leeds:** July 23rd, 8pm - Trades Club, Savile Mount.
**Crewe:** July 20th, 7.30pm - the Meredith Centre.
**Liverpool:** July 21st, 7pm - Liverpool Poly Students Union, Hague Building, Maryland Road.
**Manchester:** July 22nd, 7.30pm - Manchester Town Hall, Committee Room 5, creche in Room 7.
**Bolton:** July 23rd, 8pm - Bolton Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street, off Bradshaw Gate.
**Burnley:** July 24th, 7.30pm - Tudor Room, Burnley Mechanics Institute, Manchester Road.
**London:** July 29th, 8.30pm - Stoke Newington Squatters Centre, 20 Northwold Road, Finsbury Park - Finsbury Park tube and 106 bus. (Tower Hamlets DAM and Brixton DAM)
- July 30th, 7.30pm - Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park. (Central London DAM)

**Bristol** - July 30th, 7pm - Shepherds Hall, Old Market.
**Newcastle:** August 1st - details from Newcastle DAM, c/o Tyneside Free Press, 5 Charlotte Squ, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

**ORGANISE No.4 - articles on: JTS, Maternity rights, Rank & file alternative, Civil service strike, Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Subscription for 6 issues is £1.50, postal orders only, payable to Michael Murray. "Organise", c/o Just Books, 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast 1.**

## 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.

**The DAM was formed in 1979 from the SWF (Syndicalist Workers' Federation) and other groups and individuals believing in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism. It is the British section of the International Workers' Association. This was formed in 1922 and has national sections in more than dozen countries.**

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UK AND IRELAND:-
6 issues £2.80 .... 12 issues .... £5.00

OVERSEAS:-
6 issues £3.80 .... 12 issues .... £6.60

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Send to Box D.A, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester.
Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to DAM.

## WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I would like more information about the Direct Action Movement - International Workers' Association. Please send me information.

Name .....

Address.....

.....

Send to DAM/IWA, c/o Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir St., Cambridge.

Produced and published by Manchester DAM. Printed by Aldgate Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, london. Send articles, letters, donations, etc to Direct Action, Box DA, Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester. Please let us know whether or not letters are for publication.

**Deadline - August 22nd**

BLACK FLAG

Regular Newspaper 30p

**Where else can you find...**

- strategies for and news of workers' defence: mutual aid at the workplace and in our neighbourhoods
- letters from prisoners and news of their struggles and international support actions by the Anarchist Black Cross
- investigative reports of the state fascists in our midst

**For unique coverage of revolutionary Anarchist ideas, news and comment; and international feedback.**

*'It's a riot'*— N. Willis, Gen. Sec. TUC.
*'Should be banned'*—Various MPs.

**Annual Subscription:**
12 months: £12 inland, £15 surface, £19 air.
6 months: £6.50 inland, £8 surface, £10 air.
Prisoners free on request.
Unwaged/unemployed/low income for postage: 13p inland, 25p surface, 56p air.
Giro Account No. Black Flag 58 552 4009
**Write to: Black Flag, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.**



# Direct Action

## SUPPORT!
## Conference of Strikers and Supporters

SAT. JULY 25th, MANCHESTER TOWN HALL
12.00 NOON

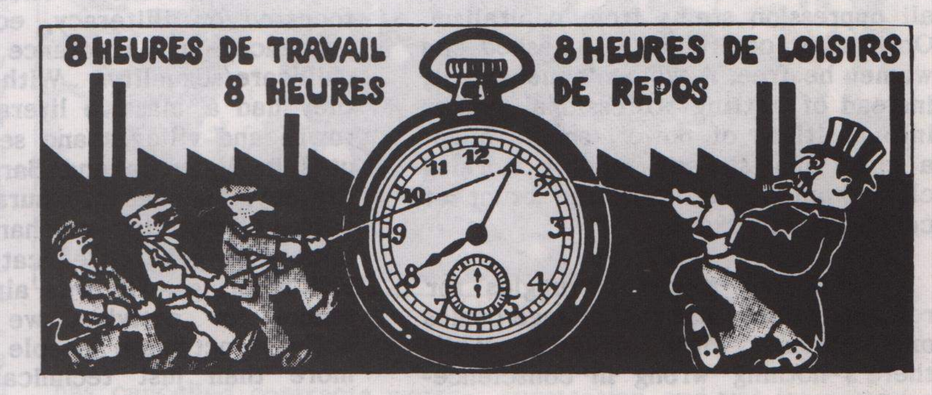
# Building Militant Unionism

**The CNT was formed at the end of World War 2 when only the Communist Party-controlled union, the CGT, survived, whose strength was an important reason for the creation of an alternative. Added to that was the presence of large numbers of Spanish anarcho-syndicalist exiles. The CNT, then mostly based in construction and metal/car manufacture, was large and active enough to be considered a real threat by other unions.**

**But this was short-lived due to internal disputes between anarcho-syndicalist principle and party political games. One important aspect of this was the emergence of Force Ouvriere (FO), an ultra-reformist alternative to the CNT and CGT created and funded by American Intelligence. With FO absorbing many CNT dissidents, it declined after 1949, helped by the US-backed Marshall Plan and resulting economic expansion. So the reformist unions claimed credit for the rising living standards brought about by US investment, and their collaboration with it.**

**The CNT barely functioned until the 1968 crisis that saw a new direction for investment capital and an end to Stalinist domination of the workers' movement when they were seen as incapable of effective struggle. This brought new opportunities - unemployment, wage cuts as well as revolutionary syndicalism were back on the agenda now the honeymoon was over. Militants slowly reappeared in the CNT's ranks.**

**In the following interview a member of the CNT's Confederal Bureau discusses its present state - how it organises, the problems it faces, its relationship to the other union confederations and the militant sections of the French working class, and comments on the future for anarcho-syndicalism both in France and internationally.**




**Q. Where is the CNT located?**

We are based in Paris. Elsewhere, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseilles and Lyons are the most important cities we organise in. There are also small clusters of groups in the central region around Tours and Le Mans. Industrially one fairly strong area is education, health and social services. Postal workers form another section federated throughout France. More recently, some railworkers have joined. Our weakest point is manual industries where, despite militants in many factories, they tend to be dispersed and separated. This is one of the problems we are now trying to solve.

Organisationally the base of the union is the local branch syndicate. For example, in Lyons there are metalworkers', postalworkers' and trans port workers' sections. These federate together within the union locale - when they wish, that is. Anyway these local federations are in turn federated regionally and nationally. Every 6 months, the Confederal Committee meets, composed of the Confederal Bureau and delegates from every region, and deals with day-to-day problems while the main issues are left to conferences. The Confederal Bureau meets more regularly.

**Q. Is it possible in France to have dual membership?**

It's possible not to belong to any union - after all they don't give automatic protection. The advantages of organising aren't given, they come with struggle. In the case of dual membership, it's again possible. There are no legal obstacles to such an arrangement. There are problems, however. If it's a temporary necessity it's perfectly understandable. The risk is that being in a reformist union becomes an excuse for doing nothing - on one hand you can moan that the union is rotten, on the other you can hide participation and commitment to revolutionary organisation. The danger of being radical in ideas and reformist in actual practice is very real. In the case of a CNT member working at a place that's already organised and where the repressive climate makes it difficult to declare their politics, dual membership is not only necessary but also advantageous. It can also happen that the reformist union is working well, giving management aggro, in which case the question arises: is there any point in creating another CNT branch, come what may?




**Striking French railworkers organised outside the bureaucratic unions**

## VICTIMISATION

**Q What sort of victimisation does the CNT suffer from?**

Of course, for isolated militants that get known in unorganised factories the rule is dismissal. However, it's relatively easy to find work elsewhere, in Paris at least, and there's no blacklist as such against the CNT. That operates more in the provinces where one's face gets known more easily. A greater threat is pressure other unions exert on the boss to get rid of us - that's quite common. Such pressure doesn't usually involve sacking, it's more subtle. Instead a militant is prevented from carrying out normal tasks by both bosses and unions. Sometimes it's the union, as in the case of a Lyons engineering firm recently. There the CGT looked as if it would stab us in the back but, when they realised they were going to lose because their militants wouldn't support their moves, it backed off. However, when they can, the unions don't hesitate.

Often said is: "The CNT is not representative of the whole workforce so you have no right to exist". Recently at a large cinema complex where about 45% of workers supported us, the CGT tried to put a spanner in the works, pressurising the boss to legally question the CNT's right to represent its members. You must remember there are 2 sorts of union in France - those automatically entitled to organise (CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC, UGT) and others like us who must prove they represent enough people in a particular workplace. That means anything. 64 members we had at a Bordeaux factory were not considered enough though the other unions with far less members were given automatic negotiating rights. Any single individual affiliated to the "Big Five" can claim to be a syndicate section with full recognition by management.

In our Lyons postal section, there's a real paradox at a postal centre where we're fairly strong. Of 80 workers, over 70 recognised the CNT. Despite this, management declared us non-representative. This is annoying. Of course we must fight at all levels, both bosses and other unions, both legally and through direct action. Legal moves against such victimisation are both long-winded and costly, nor is there much chance of success. The main solution is to get de facto recognition due to our strength in the workplace. In Bordeaux where we are strongest we had a successful strike for recognition.

## TOO RIGID

**Q. How do you get on with the vertical unions otherwise?**

It depends on the union. With autonomous industry-based unions, mostly in banks, metal and transport industries, relations are fairly friendly, if distant. On the other hand, there is absolutely no chance of improving or changing relations with the big unions. Their size, influence and top-heavy structures are far too rigid. Also their militant bases are fast disappearing. The only possibility of change will be rank & file pressure from the bottom upwards but the present situation prevents this happening.

There's only a small number of militant sections in the large unions - instead the huge top-heavy structures have forced thousands, if not tens of thousands, of genuine activists to leave in disgust. The metalworkers section of the CGT recently lost some 3 to 400,000 members not simply because of unemployment but due to their strategy of centralisation and weakened accountability of officers. Possibilities of growth for such unions is non-existent, divisions between top and bottom are too wide.

**Q. Do rank and file opposition groups exist within the vertical unions?**

Yes, but they're not very strong. They're small knots of resistance usually in particular industrial sections at loggerheads with the leader-

**Contd. page 8**