of reformist unions (TUC unions in ions leaving them defenceless. An Britain) has been because they con- entire generation of trade unionists cerned themselves solely with 'eco- thought 'political unions' meant the nomic' issues (pay and conditions) block vote at Labour Party Conferleaving 'politics' to the Labour ence and 'beer and sandwiches' at Party. SF is totally opposed to this 10 Downing Street. artificial division between political The future clearly does not lie with and economic responsibilities. The social democratic trade unions. two are inseparable; all disputes be- Capitalism, though constantly in tween bosses and workers are po- state of flux, will always rely on litical struggles.

of the tiger economies of south-east to failure. union power aimed at breaking what trade unions, one involving militant Federation. they perceived as the high wage, low action for better pay and conditions productivity practices and militant now, while also stressing the need culture of the labour force, and re- and organising for the implementaplacing it with casualised, non-un- tion of a new society. Above all we ionised, low-paid workers and a job must learn from the mistakes of the market based on high unemploy- reformist unions which separate ment which favours bosses and in- politics and economics and only ortensifies competition amongst the ganise in the workplace. We must divided working class. Only a highly look to build a union movement politicised trade union movement based both in the community and the could have stood up to this on- workplace, which offers assistance slaught, one willing to stand by its in all aspects of working people's members and committed to a clear lives, in addition to essential agenda involving both short- and workplace organisation: A union long-term aims leading to the re- which is a living expression of the placement of capitalism with a so- class it represents rather than a cial system run by and for the work- bunch of old men in suits.

working people by involving them- have more strings to their bow than down class consciousness and poli-strikes, consumer boycotts and profruits of their labour, was replaced sive tactic of the boss class. of the capitalist cake.

The severe and prolonged ecoboom and bust in capitalism had

that forty years of class collabora-The principal reason for the failure tion had depoliticised the trade un-

Political unions with the kind of Unfortunately, far from defending structure and purpose we need will selves in class conflict, the social the essential labour strike, with ordemocratic (reformist) trade unions ganisation outside the workplace alsought class co-operation, playing lowing for actions such as rent tics in the workplace. Social democ- tests against poor public services.

tions of and for the working class struggle.

EDUCATION WORKERS' NETWORK

Who are they?

The Education Workers' Network is one of the three industrial networks currently active within the Solidarity

Federation. Where did it come from and where is it going? EWN has been around for five years now and apart from steadily building contacts of like minded people in Education and producing and distributing its bulletin Education Worker (formerly General Assembly) it | ferent people. It is popularly assohas also had some success over the years through becoming involved in | ciated with protests like that at workplace disputes. The EWN is open to all involved in Education, Greenham Common against the including teachers, students, cleaners, caterers, administraters, research- siting of cruise missiles, and in ers etc. For some reason we have historically had a disproportionately high number of workers from further and higher education involved, roads campaigners. To some peoand one of our current objectives is to rectify this by making ourselves more accessible to workers in other sectors of education.

Organisation

The structure of EWN reflects its anarcho-syndicalist outlook - open competition to cut costs by increas- and ultrademocratic. It is controlled by its members, with unpaid offi-This is the lesson the trade union ing productivity and driving down cials accountable to and recallable by the membership. So far we have movement has repeatedly failed to wages. This is the source of class had several changes of secretary and treasurer, and the regular bulletin learn. Faced with an economic cri- conflict and is a central reason why is a forum for all members to use for the development of the Network sis in the West and the rising power social democracy is always doomed and its ideas. It is hoped that all members will continue to participate in these duties, and this combined with organised self-education will al-Asia, the boss class in Britain con- SF believes the future lies in a revo- low each member to fully understand their organisation and the reasons ducted a systematic assault on trade lutionary alternative to the current for its existence. Nationally, the EWN is federated to the Solidarity

Old Solutions

Similarly to other public services the education system is in an advancing state of decline, a process which has accelerated with the education reforms' of the last decade. Academic standards, pay and conditions, workers' morale, student support and job security are just a few areas where all of us involved in education have experienced this worsening to sort out on our behalf is not. situation. Government policy to recreate a two-tier system; one for those | Similarly, if a number of people who can pay and one for the dregs to keep them off the streets, has organise a public meeting to discombined with a move towards a mass higher education system reminiscent of the United States, with profit-orientated student-marketing that is affecting their community, institutions, huge student drop-out rates and the destruction of the grant a toxic waste incinerator for insystem leading to the current 'whoever can pay, can play' approach to stance, they are taking direct ac-

It is patently clear that the traditional reformist Trade Unions and the Labour Party are not going to reverse the decline in our education sys- expecting something to be done tem. As in all sectors of the workforce they are supposed to represent, about it that way is not. the advice of 'wait for Blair', the excuses of having to abide by union- Government in the present hierbashing laws, and the reality of careerist men in suits dominating the archical societies is based on the Unions and spending workers' dues are all rife in the education sector, and are all equally as impotent as everywhere else.

The Alternative: Building The EWN

We see the building of the EWN as a first step towards creating a real worker-based union based upon syndicalist principles. We believe there where power is dispersed throughmust be no separation between the political and economic spheres and out society; where decisions are racy embraced ideas of social part- They will also involve workers with- we reject party politics and distinct political or economic organisations made by those who will be affected nership between employers and un- out workplaces in the traditional in favour of a single organisation consisting solely of workers. We be- by them. Today's political parties ions and accepted assurances of a sense - unemployed, unpaid work- lieve that revolutionary transformation is essential and is our funda- and trade unions, despite the higher standard of living for work- ers, self-employed etc. Issues which mental goal, however we also recognise the importance of present-day democratic pretensions of some at ers through 'trickle down'. The capitalism uses to divide workers - struggle for reform on various levels to help workers now. We reject least, are bodies that merely serve original aim of the trade union racism, sexism, homophobia to name partnership with management in favour of self-reliance, workplace and the purposes of the elite that have movement, that of securing for the a few, are just as much the province community organisation and co-operation, and direct action.

workers by hand or by brain the of political unions as any other divi- Over the past five years EWN has made practical steps towards build- top. In their place the Solidarity ing a syndicalist union in Education. Clearly, we still have a long way Federation advocates organisation by the aim of securing a larger slice In short, we need to start laying the to go before we can execute a successful strike, and we are continually based on the direct control of the foundations for a society adminis- examining our strategy, aiming to ensure that we move forward as effec- members, where office-holders tered on the basis of workplace and tively as possible. We are a growing organisation, finding our direction have no special benefits, are subcommunity control for need not the and establishing our relevance to everyday life. We aim to communi- ject to recall by the membership the social democratic premise that profit of a few, by building organisa- cate plainly and stress the need for a no-nonsense approach to class and can only hold office for a lim-

EDITORIAL: DIRECT ACTION WILL WIN

"Direct action" has become a very widely used term and it seems to mean many different things to difmore recent times with the antiple it means setting off bombs; to others it means sabotage. All of these, it could be argued, are valid forms of direct action.

To us, as anarchosyndicalists, direct action is a fundamental principle. It is essentially about taking direct action on your own behalf instead of leaving it to professional politicians, experts or other intermediaries. For example, in an industrial dispute, taking action through the use of mass assemblies and strike committees is a form of direct action since the decisions are being made and carried out by those who are directly affected. On the other hand, leaving things for a full-time official tion. Calling for the local MP to raise the issue in parliament and

concentration of power into the hands of a small minority who then decide what they think is best for the majority. We propose a system managed to barge their way to the ited period. It is only this form of organisation that can make direct action a reality.

Direct action, allied to strong organisation, is the only answer for working class people to the numerous problems that face us today. From onfronting the problems of crime-ridden estates to tackling low pay; from fighting new taxes to preventing environmental hazards in working class areas, we can only look to ourselves. In these days when many of the gains won by previous generations are being taken from us it is well to remember that not one of those gains was won without working class people first taking direct action in the streets and workplaces, forcing the politicians to give in. In more recent times we have seen the defeat of the poll tax and just a few short weeks ago the victory won by signalworkers who took determined strike action against a government that seemed set on breaking them. More and more of us need to look to these examples and act accordingly.

ANARCHO - SYNDICALISM IN ACTION

Before the end of 1994 a new pamhplet will appear on the subject of A/S in actionin a shipyard town, Puerto Real, Spain, illustrating hoe our comrades have fused revolutionary workplace activity with isues including Direct Democracy and the environment.

Available from PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW PRICE £1

DIRECT

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

SIGNALWORKERSFORCE GOVERNMENT BACKDOWN

As we go to press it is emerging that signalworkers have gained a significant victory over the government and Railtrack. This is a bitter blow to the railway privatisation plans as well as to the government's public sector pay freeze.

We understand that Railtrack has agreed a £10.8million pay out made up of the following - a 2.5% annual pay rise back-dated to April (costing £2.1million); payment for future restructuring (£2.5 million); an interim payment consolidated into basic pay (£5.3 million); and a lump sum of between £390 and £660, depending or grade, in exchange for accepting cashless pay and other changes in practices (costing £0.9million). This represents a major victory bearing in mind that the original 5.7% offer withdrawn in June would have cost £4.3million.

On top of these financial gains Railtrack have been forced to concede a 2 hour reduction in the working week to 37 hours. Importantly, Railtrack were forced to drop their demand of incorporating Sunday into the normal working week which, if achieved, they would have tried throughout the whole industry. Moreover, all other grades on the railways will now be pushing for a 37 hour week.

PRIVATISATION

Of course this dispute was never about mere pay and conditions. The government both set out to reverse its Blair's rejection of even Keynesianflagging popularity and defeat the union in order to pave the way for privatisation. The Tories had hoped to revive the floundering privatisation programme by selling off Railtrack before the next election, which would the free market must be the final also have provided revenue for pre-election tax cuts. However, to succeed they needed to break the union organisation, especially in the most powerful group, the signalworkers. This, they have totally failed to do. Not only has RMT managed to recruit over 400 new signalworkers but the confidence and morale of railworkers and workers elsewhere can only be boosted.

The public sector pay freeze now looks to be facing difficulties in the months ahead as other groups of workers will seek to match the gains made by the signalworkers. The whole settlement is somewhat ironic since it was the government that raised the stakes in June by blocking Railtrack's original 5.7% offer and diverted the dispute from the issue of restructuring to that of the pay freeze.

The disarray that the Tories now find themselves in and the signalworkers' victory only reinforces what Transport Worker Network has been arguing for several years. If the RMT would only have the courage to organise and confront the anti-union laws railworkers have the power to defeat the government's privatisation plans. It can be no co-incidence that the strike was settled days before the prospect of co-ordinated London underground and rail strikes. Again Transport Worker Network has argued consistently that rail, bus and underground workers should This idea is that as the capitalist economy goes into recession, the state join together in defiance of the law against the government. The signalworkers' dispute proves again that gains car only be made, not by the new realism of the TUC and the Labour Party, but by organisation, direct action and solidarity

BANG UP CAPITALISM

(delete at will). rein to the bandit-like individue else's labour.

press and TV. so blatant that it refuses to be racy."

bite. This is not to minimise unbiased in reacting to crime of of solidarity.

oesn't it make you laugh? attacks on individuals by vicious course. No, in the manner of the To listen to these foul- scumbags but to recognise that so best medics we need to attack the mouthed politicians and com- long as capitalist individualism is the cause not the symptom and this mentators ranting on about the guiding philosophy then some indi- means organising to remove capiincrease of crime in society and viduals will follow the example set talism from our backs. For capithe responsibility of parents/ by the power-brokers who them- talism is the crime against humanschools/videos/films/computer selves stop at nothing to achieve their ity which spawns imitators whergames/lefty councils/T.V etc. aims and who kill and maim in a ever it puts down a suppurating more indirect manner. The bank rob- foot and as those imitators develop The truth is that most of the ber is simply an aspiring capitalist - they are received into the pantheon crime we suffer is a direct re- using a more direct means of obtain- of the great and the good with past sult of policies which give free ing the surplus value of someone crimes being rewritten or ignored.

is necessary within this sick ing the number of police on the up to us to break it. The much-vaunted concern seriously about anything. Legislation removed the cancers of capitalism in the 1970's. the individual is a diversion, are already proposals to privatise cop- the cause. Organise to build a fufalse indignation exuded for the pers and for them to advertise the ture for everyone and don't forget headline and the evening sound- sponsors' products - they'll be quite to organise for the sheer pleasure

History abounds with them.

alism of capitalism but you will At all costs the lie must be main- Crime can only be defeated b be hard-pushed to find this be- tained that the economic system plays communities taking direct action ing debated at any length any- no part in crime and the myth propa- to deal with the causes but in do- and capitalism. where in the media, where there gated that it's all down to 'bad influing so they will come up against

LABOUR'S WORN-OUT TORY BAGGAGE

NEW SERIES - ISSUE NUMBER 2 WINTER 1994

The election of Tony Blair has surely killed off any lingering doubts that the Labour Party can be a force to

bring about even the mildest "socialism". It has always been argued by those on the Labour left that the way forward was to stay in the party and attempt to change it from within. Historically this was always an optimistic scenario since every time Labour got elected they quickly moved to the right, but style state intervention in favour of nail in the coffin of any hopes of a socialist Labour Party. Here at Direct Action we have al-

ways rejected Labour Party-style "socialism" arguing that at best it

BLAIR could only lead to an eastern block-style state socialism. It must now be

questioned what, if anything, Labour has to offer in the struggle for working class emancipation.

COMMUNIST THREAT

The dominant force within the Party since WWII has always looked to control the market through state intervention and demand management. can raise taxes and borrow money to finance spending through public works, etc to increase demand for goods and services and hence bring about a recovery. This was the cornerstone of Keynesian thinking and, it is argued, it prevented mass unemployment for most of the post-war period, but it certainly isn't socialism. Indeed Keynes himself set out, during the 1930's depression, to save the crisis-ridden capitalist system from the threat of communism.

The Blair-Brown axis made it quite clear during speeches prior to the Party Conference in October that the Keynesian approach was being dropped in favour of the dynamic of the free market. The shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, stated that Labour was no longer a "tax-borrowspend" party, rejecting any form of state regulation of the market. He went on to dismiss economic planning, the cornerstone of any form of socialist or communist system, whether anarchist or marxist-inspired. Having rejected even Keynesian-style intervention in the economy, where does this leave socialism and the Labour Party. The simple answer is nowhere. The Labour leadership has now moved to the right of the Tory governments of Heath and McMillan. They now see the only economic role of government as one of providing training and education, supplying a "modern, efficient" labour force to aid the workings of the market

FAIR-MINDED CAPITALISTS!

is an acceptance of the values ences' in a 'free' society which, ac- the desire of the State to retain It is somewhat ironic that, in dismissing the whole of Labour's ideology of capitalism as though they cording to supporters of the system, control over the limits of crime. | since the war, Blair and Brown argue that intervention and planning were as indispensable as the air is actually too free. They therefore Once the State is seen as being will not work because of the global nature of capitalism. How, then, do we breathe. Not that this is sur- divert attention from the major unable to fulfil its proclaimed role | they hope to control the effects of their new-found global capitalism? prising given the nature of the sources of crime (the inevitable greed as guardian of its subjects then one For instance, how do they intend to entice capitalists to invest in the of politicians, directors, dominant more of the props which support British economy when they can invest in Taiwan, India or Brazil, to Crime is an integral part of the share-holders, the military hierarchy it has been undermined. That's name but a few, where wages are so low they can gain a massive profit system. It is as inevitable in re- and media moguls) and insist that why the rednecks at the Tory an- on their investment in a much shorter time? Perhaps by appealing to the lation to capitalism as unem- greater curbs are required on the lib- nual knees-up are so orgasmic fair-mindedness of the capitalist!

ployment, exploitation or profit erties of the working class in order about the subject of crime. They In reality all that the new Labour Party is doing is abandoning any atand is frowned upon only when that this 'free' society can continue are not interested in searching for tempts to control capitalism and banking on an educated and trained it looks like affecting the profit- in the robbery of the majority by a the cause but in denying that anymakers, cannot be turned to minority and which (pause for a laugh thing which they pretend to be- This is a highly dubious proposition, because progress in the Pacific rim advantage by them or becomes here) goes by the name of "democ- lieve in is in any way responsible. | economies, such as Taiwan or Singapore, has been so rapid that they are They know that the ice on which already providing a sophisticated workforce, but on much lower wages. ignored by the citizenry. Crime How do we deal with crime? Increas- they are skating is very thin. It's Behind all this talk of free market dynamics lies a nasty agenda which has yet to surface. The Blair leadership strategy is based on the "tough society as a means of putting the streets is a demand made by many We don't know what form crime love" approach of the Clinton administration. In order to finance trainfrighteners on the working but this simply strengthens the buffer will take in a free society but it is ing and education without raising taxes a future Labour government class, who are the main victims behind which the legitimised criminaive to assume that it will disap- will slash the resources directed towards benefits and the welfare sysof crime. That's one reason for nals carry on even more rapaciously pear on day one. However, we will tem as a whole. Already the Labour leadership is arguing that the welthere being so much of it on the and it also mans that Big Brother have removed many of the causes | fare system has to be geared to the amount of wealth that the economy mindsucker in the corner of the State can deal with you that much once we have taken over the means can generate and that the wealth-creating sector must take priority. This easier should you start to campaign of production and distribution and is exactly the same argument put forward by the Thatcherite new right

shown by politicians and pun- like the Criminal Justice Bill mak- and the State. If you are sick of For working class people, it seems, the next Labour Party government is promisdits over violent crime against ing its task that much easier. There crime then - Organise to remove ing more of the same medicine we've had over the last 15 years. However, this should not surprise anarchosyndicalists who have always argued that Labour will merely seek to run the capitalist system better than the Tories. Now, in their eagerness to convince the capitalists, they seem to be attempting to peddle Tory ideology better. This is a lesson that the Labour Party left needs to learn.

SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION

NORTH LONDON - PO BOX 1681 LONDON N8 7LE

DEPTFORD - PO BOX 574 LONDON SE4 1DL SOUTH HERTS - PO BOX 493 ST.ALBANS AL1 5TW NORWICH PO BOX 73 NORWICH NR1 2EB LEICESTER - c/o 70 HIGH STREET, LEICESTER LEEDS - 52 CALL LANE, LEEDS LS1 MANCHESTER - PO BOX 29, SWPDO, MANCHESTER M15 5HW LIVERPOOL - PO BOX 110 LIVERPOOL L69 8PP PRESTON - PO BOX 384 PRESTON PR1 6PQ NORTH SOMERSET - PO BOX 1592 RADSTOCK, Nr. BATH, BA3 3FH

EDINBURGH - PO BOX 516 EDINBURGH EH10 7JH

DIRECT ACTION

A BRIEF HISTORY

Ithough this is issue 2 of Direct Action, as an anarchosyndicalist publication we have a history that goes back to the end of WWII. Direct Action first appeared in 1945, published by the Syndicalist Workers Federation (SWF). During the next 3 decades the SWF had its ups and downs as a national organisation but in 1979 was one of the groupings that came together to form the Direct Action Movement (DAM), Thus a second series of Direct Action was launched. After embarking on an industrial strategy based on industrial networks, in March 1994 the DAM merged with 3 such networks in the education, public service and transport industries to form a new anarcho-syndicalist organisation, the Solidarity Federation (SF). Consequently we have started this, the 3rd series of Direct Action.

DIRECT ACTION DIRECT ACTION DIRECT ACTION

DIRECT ACTION DIRECT ACTION

"ILLEGAL" STRIKE ACTION IN SEFTON

Officials of UNISON met a torrent of abuse from demonstrators when they attended Manchester High Court to give evidence in contempt proceedings brought by Sefton Council, Merseyside, against Nigel Flanagan and Martin Murphy, branch officials of Sefton UNISON. Both had been summoned for flouting an injunction which Sefton had obtained to prevent "illegal" strike action against privatisation of council services.

Although the branch asked UNISON to ballot when privatisation was first announced, the union declined, claiming it was too busy with the "check-off" campaign and that the council would take legal action. A subsequent branch meeting voted for a one day strike on June 28 in spite of a High Court injunction. Faced with industrial action, the council withdrew its privatisation plan but instituted contempt proceedings against the 2 branch officials. UNISON also declared that it repudiated the actions of the branch.

On 3 occasions around 500 supporters of the "Sefton 2 Defence Campaign" demonstrated outside the High Court. Both Nigel and Martin were determined not to apologise for carrying out their members' instructions or to give assurances that they would comply with future injunctions. Despite the fact that they faced imprisonment and unlimited fines, an Assistant General Secretary of UNISON, Keith Sonnet, told the court that Flanagan and Murphy were on their own as far as the union was concerned.

TOO NOISY

The first hearing, on July 19th, was adjourned as the demonstration outside was too noisy. On July 21st the judge adjourned again to think seriously and carefully before making a decision. On July 29th Nigel and Martin were both fined £1,250 and ordered to pay an eighth of the costs. Despite efforts to disassociate itself, UNISON was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay most of the costs. An application by Sefton Council for the injunction to continue was dismissed. The judge remarked in his summing up that he had been bound to take notice of the number of people assembled outside the court.

Afterwards a delighted Nigel Flanagan hailed the decision not to imprison them as a victory and vowed he would do the same again. He added that the branch had taken on the court, Sefton Council and th UNISON leadership and had won. He called upon all working people to start fighting back with a renewed vigour and to get off their knees. Other speakers not only referred to the scandalous lack of support from UNISON, but also suggested that it was highly probable that UNISON would seek to discipline the Sefton branch.

Messages of support and donations should be sent to: Sefton 2 Defence Fund, 38 Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool,

IGNORE THE ANTI-STRIKE LAWS

(LESSONS FROM THE SEFTON 2 CASE)

The contempt proceedings against Nigel Flanagan and Martin Murphy should fill UNISON and Sefton Council with shame. The case has fight their own union officials as shown, amongst other things, the extent to which freedom has been well as management when they eroded by this vile Tory government. It is nothing short of a scandal that 2 trade unionists can be hauled up before the High Court because they went on strike. Not long ago it would have been inconceivable that strikes could be deemed "illegal". After all, British governments do warned about for years. Modern like to brag a lot about freedom. It's only slaves, they say, who cannot withdraw their labour. Similarly, if the present Criminal Justice Bill is passed then mass demonstrations like that outside the High Court in Manchester will be illegal too.

The successive Employment Acts introduced by the Tories amount to of working class people. nothing less than a scabs charter and a free hand for the bosses to screw working people. Their aim is to hamstring trade unions by making it rtually impossible to take lawful strike action. Not surprisingly the bosses are using these vicious laws and the courts to stick the boot into workers fighting back against crap wages and crap working conditions.

DIRECT ACTION

However, the existence of such laws did not prevent the Timex strike last year ing people are prepared to

But we should not delude

Many workers in this country have had enough of pay cuts and redundancies and the mood of workers is changing after having the boot pushed in their faces these past 15 years. As Nigel Flanagan said outside the High Court in Manchester, now is the time for all working people to get

GMB

GENERAL, MANAGERS AND **BOSSES? UNION**

The GMB is set to join a German-

led consortium bidding to build the Channel tunnel rail link. This raises the prospect of GMB members working on the project being bossed by their own union executive. We already have a situation where workers have to take on and have to take action. So this move by the GMB would merely confirm a tendency that Direct Action has unions are concentrating more and more on financial services while at the same time becoming more and more irrelevant to the defence

ORGANISING AGAINST VIOLENCE

Violence towards staff in residential units is, once again, on the increase. Nothing is being done to protect RSW's (residential social workers) against attacks from the young people we deal with. Mansolidarity by signalworkers agement always come up with the shows that anti-strike laws line that it is now all part of the job and these are the kind of kids we work with now. UNISON have been ineffective in combatting this and meanwhile workers are forced to either stay away from work or be forced to work with the young ters, can be beaten if work- people who have recently assaulted them. This has got to stop! RSW's have got to come together on each unit and across the service to formulate a plan of action to combat this violence. This should include immediate removal of the offender; refusal to work on the unit until it is a safe working environment appropriate support have been quick to realise from management; in the longer term a complete re-think of policy on the placement of young people. We need to come together and decide what we want and demand that UNISON gives us their full backing. We cannot rely on others to do it for us. We have to act before someone is really seriously injured or even killed.

The Public Service Workers Network (PSWN) is formed of ordinary public service workers who are trying to fight back against the attacks being made on us from all sides. We would be glad to hear of anyone who has experienced acts of violence and is looking for a change of approach. We have to stop this violence at work that makes our already difficult jobs near impossible to do.

Public Service Workers Network (Manchester Social Services),

PO Box 29, South West PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.

SON

or the wave of unofficial strikes in the Post Office is year. Nor did it prevent the strike at Sefton Counil. The massive show of cannot prevent the railways grinding to a halt. What hese struggles, and many others, show is that these laws, along with the Tories take direct action.

ourselves that it is the wellpaid trade union bosses who are going to lead a fightback - their only concern is to protect the union coffers. In fact, some union leaders the advantages of the law. They have become a convenient excuse for some unions to do nothing except fob workers off with the excuse that to take strike

action will be to invite legal action against the union. In the eyes of today's bureaucrats unions are less about defending and improving the living standards of the membership but more about damping down discontent in an effort to increase the Labour Party's appeal to the middle classes in the south of England.

If we are to make improvements in our daily lives working class people are increasingly going to have to take actions like that in Sefton in defiance of the law and the dictats of union leaders. This means more widespread organisation at shop floor and community level so that when action becomes necessary we can look to ourselves instead of union full-timers whose only concern will be to defuse the situation as quickly as possible, stabbing us in the back if necessary.

off their knees and to start fighting back with a renewed vigour.

The Tory Conference was rocked by the wizened appearance of the former premiere as it was revealed that her molars were on the rampage as a result of cosmetic dentistry performed some years ago to give a softer image. A consequence of privatised treatment.

MAGGIE'S TEETH BITE BACK!

INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

CAPITALISM AND THE RUSSIAN WORKING CLASS Economic thinking affects all of our lives. No clearer example is there than Russia where the failure and collapse of marxism led to a handful of elite western economists conducting a

social experiment adversely affecting the lives of millions of working class people. With the collapse of the eastern block right wing free market economists drew up the so-called "big bang" or "shock therapy" plan for the Russian economy. This involved privatisation; abolition of subsidies; making the rouble convertible; reduction and control of the money supply. It was planned to "drop an economic bomb" on the economy with the resulting collapse causing market forces to come to the rescue. The bomb was dropped in January 1991 and prices rose 250% in one day. By December 1992 prices had risen 2000%. The rouble plummeted; exports collapsed; output fell by 20%; and real wages by 40%. Meanwhile working class living standards nose-dived creating wholesale poverty. The whole thing was a failure.

STUPIDITY

The bulk of the economy remained in the state sector mainly due to a total misunderstanding of how the Russian economy works. There were fundamental questions against bulk privatisation. How do you sell assets when there is no market for them? Where do you sell them? How do you value them? Where does the money come from? There were massive amounts of state assets to be sold but little private wealth. The free market view was based on small firms competing, bearing little resemblance to modern capitalism let alone the Russian economy. The simplistic view that Russian firms were similar to western ones, which, once freed from bureaucratic control, would flourish under the free market, is nothing but mind-boggling stupidity.

Firms in the Soviet Union developed totally differently than in the west. Their biggest problems were shortages of raw materials and labour. This led firms to secure their own supply and distribution services through barter, resulting in a highly vertically-linked, integrated economy. Thus huge firms provided everything for their locality - housing, schools, social and welfare facilities, etc, as well as jobs. There was no labour market in free market terms where wages are determined by supply and demand. In Russia the workforce, and thus the unions, have been in a strong position due to the labour shortage since WWII. Union officials were often in senior positions in the Communist Party and used their power to oppose change. For privatisation to work it would have to confront the powerful Russian working class in order to break it.

Despite what most western analysts would tell us, there is no evidence to suggest that Russia is transforming itself into full-blown capitalism. There is merely a restructuring with a new merchant class buying and selling but still dependent on the existing structure. The old elite and the old economic structures remain; the muchvaunted market is little more than a mafia/spiv market; corruption is rife; there is little control of exports. The western view that the future depends on western technological expertise and investment looks bleak and the early promise is unfulfilled. Workers are organised and resistant to change; joint ventures have not occurred where there is no guarantee that contracts will be honoured; there is a fear of a xenophobic backlash against foreign control. Meanwhile investment pours into the Pacific rim. THE ALTERNATIVES

The Anglo-American free market is still backed by the World Bank, IMF and OECD, but more and more official trade unions and managers of large state concerns are looking to the Rhineland/Scandinavian model of social market capitalism. This combination of the free market and state intervention is appealing as it has roles for the traditionally paternalistic state sector and trade union bureaucrats and would give some kind of order to the chaos left by the big bang. Some western firms have been allowed to take over former state companies on the understanding they adopt a social market form of management. The problem remains in attracting western investment which will generally not take place without restructuring the labour market resulting in mass unemployment and further lowering of living standards.

Another alternative is the "Third Way" of the newly industrialised, highly successful - in capitalist terms -Pacific rim countries (Taiwan, Korea, etc). They depend on an authoritarian state steering the economy with no labour force or union involvement. They are typified by state repression of workers, low wages, little or no welfare system, etc. This again presents massive difficulties in Russia. Leaving aside how the political system would be altered, it requires confrontation with, and breaking of, the Russian working class.

All the alternatives have one thing in common. To succeed, the working class would have to pay in the form of mass unemployment and a further collapse in living standards. There is, of course, another alternative, the form of economic organisation advocated by anarchosyndicalists, attempted in Spain in 1936 where it proved highly successful by any economic criteria, but that is another story to be told elsewhere.

SPAIN

YELTSIN

THE SOBER FACE OF A RUSSIAN RULER?

CALL FOR SOLIDARITY

from: Collectif Paideia

After a series of actions taken by peasant groups in Extremadura (south western Spain) there were a number of arrests. Most of these were at a demonstration but one comrade was arrested at his home, two days after the event...maybe because he was an anarchist?

rested being freed, apart from 2, one of whom is our comrade, Jose Paredes. Now his lawyer is asking for money to continue working on his case and his trial is imminent. We believe that those charged will be sentenced for their opposition to the agricultural policies of the local governement.

solidarity from anarchists and anarchosyndicalists to help defray the costs of the legal expenses and so that our comrade should not have to pay the personal cost of a prison sentence.

You can send donations (eg international PO's)

made redundant by Lotus garments.

to: Collectif Paideia, Apartado 133, 06800 Merida, Spain.

GARMENT WORKERS UPDATE

AWARENESS LEAGUE ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN NIGERIA

The phenomenal growth of the anarchosyndicalist Awareness League in Nigeria over the past few years has continued recently despite continued oppression from the state. The imprisonment of four members, James Ndubisi (General Secretary), Garba Audu, Kingsley Etioni and Chuks Udemba following their arrest during popular national protests in May 1992 marked an important stage in the development of the League. It maintained a high profile throughout the protests which led to the indefinite closing of all federally funded Universities and Polytechnics in the country.

Though the four were released last year, they were subject to strict bail conditions and two were subsequently rearrested for apparently violating bail terms. Harassment of the Awareness League continued, with raids on homes The legal process has moved on somewhat with most of those ar- | and organised house searches being a major tool used by the police to repress members. Despite a change of government (the Babingida Dictatorship was replaced by an interim government whose leaders were hand-picked by Babingida), not surprisingly the oppression has continued in 1994.

On the positive side, the Awareness League was informed in April this year that they could become a new section of the IWA during the next congress, a move which is both a boost for the Awareness League and for anarchosyndicalism worldwide. Meanwhile, the Awareness League continues to 'hold aloft the banner of the struggle', and This is why the collectives Paideia and Los Adelfas are calling for | has joined with other activists and pro-democracy groups in condemning the governments' banning of political parties until 1995. There is clearly a long tradition of anarchosydicalism in Nigeria in the making.



TOSSERS - CHILL THE BILL

A brilliant day, a bad bill. The Criminal Justice Demo, London, Sunday October 9th 1994. On arrival in London there were people everywhere, bright colours, partying, music in the park. Almost revolting, in fact. (In the best sense of the word.)

And just as I arrived the Socialist Workers were unloading their banners -KILL THE BILL! Heading the demo in a blaze of publicity. And here is the truly revolting bit: (I mean this in the nauseous sense, mind) an army of Socialist Worker recruiters, all armed with identical clipboards picking out the prey from the crowd. Efficient, I must say. What better than to hijack a big demo and present yourselves as the True & Only Socialist Saviours (TOSSers) -infallible.

But what really makes me puke is that young people will be picked out first from the crowd, and this was a prime gathering for youngsters fighting against persecution, and here they end up being persecuted themselves. Its almost like Evangelists 'saving' people from the sinful world of the Church of England.



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