

# Direct Action

Election supplement  
**why vote?**

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The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism

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**Tory, Labour, Alliance...**

**IT'S TIME TO**

**WRECK THE**

**PARTY**

**AND**

**BUILD A REAL WORKING**

**CLASS ALTERNATIVE**

Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association



# Strikers Drop Weak Kneed Union

The Ardrbride strike enters its 8th month with the T&GWU having attempted to cut the feet from under the strike. The story is one of a trade union movement out of touch with its membership and the reality for the working class in Britain today. In case they need reminding, the age of the sweatshop, far from belonging to the 19th century or the far reaches of Asia, is a growing feature of British industry. It is clear that the only way to change the situation is by organising and taking action. You might expect then, when Ardrbride workers joined the T&GWU to take action against appalling and illegal health & safety conditions and to better wage rates, that the union would mobilise to win the wage demands and to force legal action against the death trap factories. If that is what you expect then you are wrong.

From the start the T&G, after encouraging strike action, have done all they can to halt militancy - taking 9 weeks to make it official, refusing strike pay, and only offering hardship pay grudgingly after the strikers gate-crashed union discussions on the strike to which they weren't invited. Such is the story of trade unions in the '80's - a TUC content with preaching "social realism" which to them means being nice to the Tories and to us means increased poverty and worsening living standards. Yet the latest twist would surprise even the most cynical among us. It stresses the need for the rank and file to take control of the running of their factory organisation. The message is clear - the union bureaucracy can't be trusted.

## ROSS ON THE RUN

After months of the T&G refusing to spread solidarity action, the international picket of Laura Ashley started to take its toll on their commitment to sweated products. In late March Ross offered £700 to give up. This was rightly refused even though the union recommended acceptance. Ross said there would be no further negotiations. With pickets

being stepped up the firm-minded Ross came slinking back in a show of panic - either he was about to lose the contract with Laura Ashley or his marbles. Ross was a man in a hurry - on the Tuesday he had an offer of £1000 - refused; Wednesday £1500 - refused; Thursday £1800 with a rider that refusal would mean him clearing the table of all previous concessions, closing the factories within 2 weeks and taking legal action. This was refused but the promised action didn't materialise. Chemists in the vicinity of the Ross household reported a run on valium that week.

The end of April saw Ross again at the table offering re-engagement and partial union recognition. This was strongly recommended by the T&G but refused by the strikers who feared they would be paid off shortly after returning. (see letter from strike committee) After this offer, which in reality amounted to a negotiated defeat the T&G turned on the threats for the first time though Ross wasn't on the receiving end but incredibly, the strikers.

these negotiations". The strikers and the DAM, after praise at a council meeting, were the next week criticised for jeopardising jobs. There was no mention of lives in jeopardy as a result of working in the place! At a later meeting of the local Labour Party which reaffirmed its support for the strikers and the international campaign, the DAM was pilloried by O'Neill, a union bureaucrat and the only one to vote against the strikers, as being: "a bunch of anarchists who are against the government and the trade unions". Well, we've no argument with the first part of your statement, Mr O'Neill, but we take issue with your belief that we're anti-union.

As part of the International Workers' Association we are proud to be associated with affiliated unions such as the COB (Brazilian Workers' Confederation), the French and Spanish CNT's (National Confederation of Labour) who - unlike the T&GWU - are run by the rank and file without full-timers to sell out strikes. Our unions are fighting unions. To answer your anti-government jibe;



Nottingham Anarchists, Notts. DAM and Notts. ACF picket Laura Ashleys.

## STRIKERS GO IT ALONE

The T&G, unwilling to publicly desert the strikers who have widespread support in Ardrbride, said: "If they turned down this recommendation we would have to put it before our lay committee and that there was a possibility that they would decide to take no further action." In other words call off the strike or we'll do it for you. The full-timer threw in the blackmail: "you're letting us down after all the work we've done for you". He was reminded that the T&G did absolutely nothing, that it was the strike committee and support network set up with the help of the IWA that brought Ross to the table. The strikers' response was one of defiance and determination to carry on aiming for full re-instatement and the establishment of healthy and safe working conditions. The dispute will now be carried on through the strikers' own organisation. As Anna Druggen said of the T&G: "The union can turn its back as well as its coat. We have found it out for what it is. I am very bitter. The union promised us this,

well, we believe people can govern their lives well enough without people like you interfering and if you think that's a utopian pipedream look at the Spanish CNT which in 1936 not only won health and safety reforms but overturned the whole system of government. Mr O'Neill, you may have heard of the Spanish Civil War in which the CNT, an openly anarchist, therefore anti-government and anti-bureaucratic union helped institute free people's government over industry and agriculture. Mr O'Neill, that's the aim of our unions, not just to put an end to the cheapskate, get-rich-quick merchants like Ross but to rid the world of the system that creates them and allows them to flourish. That system, in case you've forgotten, Mr O'Neill, is capitalism and we consider it time you got yourself out of your full-timer's office and back into the workplace - where all our union negotiators are - maybe then you'd learn to fight a bit harder with your fellow workers to defeat that system.

## SUPPORT NEEDED

Laura Ashley have put it about that as the T&G have been dropped that somehow the strike is over. They couldn't be further from the truth. As we go to press we've heard that the IWA section in Denmark are picketing Laura Ashley's in Copenhagen. Furthermore the French CNT, have written to the strikers offering full support promising to continue picketing Laura Ashley shops across France. The international campaign firmly established in Europe and America is about to stretch into Asia and Australia where our sections are to picket shops in Tokyo and Melbourne. On the day of action called for May 16th there were pickets all over Britain - Brighton, Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, London (5), Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, Stoke included.

Again we call on all DA readers to support the strikers in their struggle against the sweatshop trade. Call on your union branch, trades council or community centre to support the strikers. Remember, by picketing the Laura

Ashley shops you are not only giving the strikers badly needed support but also warning all would-be sweatshop bosses everywhere of the consequences of opening such factories. A victory for the Ardrbride strikers is a victory for us all and the generations behind us in the battle against all profit mongers. For information on Laura Ashley pickets in your area contact local DAM groups (see contact list in DA 39) or contact DAM National Secretary, Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

## 62 Sacked

Forty nine full-time and 13 casual staff at the Moat House hotel, Paradise St, Liverpool, were sacked on April 2nd for joining the T&GWU. Management refused to talk about working conditions, so the 62 workers - maids, barstaff, waiters & waitresses, cooks, laundry and office workers, porters and cleaners - decided to strike. Management sacked them saying they'd broken their contracts but strikers find this new-found respect for the sanctity of contracts somewhat laughable. Since taking over from Holiday Inn management have ignored existing contracts. They refuse to give holiday pay; reduced one workers' hours from 40 to 24; reduced sick pay entitlement from 15 days a year to 5 and then only at the boss' discretion; cancelled the annual free weekend's holiday in another hotel in the chain that staff enjoyed previously; and they have failed to replace worn uniforms with new ones. Management's attitude towards allocation of work was that if staff didn't like it then they "knew where the door was".

Strikers have had to put up with intimidation, threats, insults, arrests and violence. In the first week a picket had a bucket of water thrown on her from a bedroom by a scab as she stood on the picket line. Once a manager came out with two cronies, looked to see what was going on and laughed. One of the morons then threw 5p at us. We threw it back singing "I would rather be a picket than a scab". Management often phone the scabs in blue, trying to get pickets arrested; supporters have been threatened with arrest under the anti-union laws and the Public Order Act; placards have been stolen; a video camera watches pickets from a bedroom. The scabbiest thing happened when a few strikers went to an LPYS conference in Blackpool over the Easter weekend. They were told it would be absolutely free and that they could collect money. But on the Saturday they were asked to pay £400 for costs! This is an absolute outrage - They were asked the next day and 3 times since being back. These so-called socialists have been told to piss off.

Despite all this, support is good in terms of money, pickets and most important of all solidarity from other workers. Bin workers refuse to cart the shit away - the skips are full and spilling over. T&G taxi drivers refuse to pick anyone up outside the hotel and the fire brigade send more fire engines to the Moat House than necessary if there's a false alarm which means they have to pay more. Donations and messages of support to Moat House Hotel Strikers, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool 3.

## FLEET ST - ATTACKS CONTINUE

Since the end of the News International dispute the confidence of the press barons has never been higher. The "Street" has completely changed - many of the papers have moved to the East End or are being printed outside London. Long established working practices such as the thirty two and a half hour week and the 9 day fortnight are under attack. Recently a member of the SOGAT RIRMA chapel at the "Express" was suspended for failing to say "Good afternoon, Sir" to the chairman. Elsewhere, other militants are being victimised, and redundancies continue. Dean and Dubbins are continuing to wait for the return of a Labour government. On a more optimistic note, the Fleet Street Support Unit which evolved during Wapping as the only real opposition to the bureaucracy, is still going and is now producing a bulletin. Only time will tell whether or not the rank and file will fight back to save their jobs and conditions.

Dear Comrades,

Now we are no longer members of the T&GWU we badly need the solidarity of your organisation. We were being forced by the T&GWU to accept Stuart Ross' proposals. The proposals were:

Re-engagement, not re-instatement.  
All sacked strikers to return to work between May 1st and June 1st.  
Not all at once but one by one at his discretion.  
Partial union recognition.  
The 2 supervisors on strike were to go back and work under those they had trained.

We refused these proposals. We told T&G officials present that re-engagement was of no use to us - Stuart Ross could sack us in a matter of weeks simply by saying he did not have enough work for such a large workforce. Therefore under re-engagement he could terminate our employment and there would be nothing we could do about it. The T&G accepted this was a possibility but it was a chance we were going to have to take. As to the 2 supervisors going back to work under those they had trained, this we said was out of the question. We were then, told by Willie Queen who was acting on behalf of David Shout, Scottish Secretary for the T&GWU, that the T&G would vote to withdraw from this dispute. Angry words followed this announcement. The meeting ended when we told the T&G officials that if that was the extent of their solidarity and support then we would continue to fight alone. We also told them that it was not through their actions that Stuart Ross had started negotiations but through the International Workers' Association and Direct Action Movement. Pressure placed by them on Laura Ashley has resulted in Stuart Ross' fear of losing his very lucrative contract. This has brought him to the negotiating table. We will not compromise, nor will we stand by and let this union sell us out for partial union recognition within these factories. The strike goes on.

Yours in solidarity,

Anna Druggen (Ardrbride Strike Committee)



David Shout, Scottish T&GWU bureaucrat and back-stabber!

that and the next thing if we would join. We did and now it will do nothing. I am disgusted."

## RANK AND FILE UNIONISM

With the strikers on their own out came the careerists and politicians to attack them. Brian Wilson, prospective Labour candidate, criticised them for "not responding more positively to the settlement which the union(?) secured in



# Production-line Education

For the vast majority of school leavers the Youth Training Scheme is a brutal but unavoidable feature of mass youth unemployment. Of course it has critics but most see it only as "slave labour" (which it is). Few seem to have realised that it is part of a current that could destroy education and job prospects for years to come.

The "raving right" has many scapegoats for Britain's economic decline; trade union power, "unfair" foreign competition, etc; but one target is the education system. For over a century it has been claimed there is over-emphasis on "useless arts subjects" rather than sciences and other subjects relevant to work. To these people youth unemployment isn't caused by a lack of jobs but by lack of the right training. Their answer is therefore to replace education by a crude system of training for work. This thinking has led to the massive rise in vocational education in school as well as such schemes as YTS and also the new Job Training Scheme which is supposed to give even more training after the YTS training has failed to create a job out of thin air.

YTS was introduced in '82 replacing earlier YOPS and TOPS schemes introduced by the last Labour government to cut the already rising youth unemployment. YTS is supposed to give young people the training for work they are supposed to have missed at school. The fact it gives employers a source of cheap non-union labour is a bonus! At school vocational education is mainly being introduced by the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). This system (not yet in all schools) is designed to give education for jobs while at school. Where it has been introduced it has had the effect that many brighter pupils who would in the past have done O- or A-levels are doing it instead (of course the less bright kids, those that don't get jobs anyway, haven't done any better out of it).

Both YTS and TVEI are run by the Department of Employment through the Manpower Services Commission - a clear move away from the Department of Education and local councils which in the



## HAPPY NOW: BUT FACING A LOW-PAID FUTURE

past had almost a monopoly. More importantly employers have got a bigger say in education than ever before - the review board of the commission for vocational education has 4 employers out of a total of 9 members. Some might say: "But why shouldn't the employers have a say in education? After all it's them who give out the jobs." Well, for a start, education shouldn't just be a factory for training workers but a way of developing all our natural skills whether or not they are useful for capitalism. Secondly it also assumes employers are educational experts who can predict what skills workers will need in up to 5 years' time - they aren't and they can't. Most of Britain's top employers are ex-public school boys to whom a balanced education means rugby, Latin and a flogging in the head's office. Thus kids are trained for jobs that simply may not exist when they leave school. And because the MSC defines vocational education as that "directly relevant to work", kids get such a narrow education they may not be able to get work in any other field.

Vocational education has other bad effects - more pupils leave school early because they have the mistaken idea that YTS will continue training they got with TVEI and also give them a wage. Children from less well-off families are conned into taking a 2nd rate education while those whose parents can afford to keep them at school do A-levels. As the National Union of Students put it: "young people will divide like sheep and goats....at 16, or more likely at 14. ...The process has already begun in some

cases with the introduction of TVEI." It is clear that education is being sabotaged by "over-emphasis on skills that derive from others' often mistaken view of what the economy needs". (Professor Pring, Department of Education, Exeter University and an assessor for TVEI in four areas.)

What can we expect from the parties? The Tories are obviously committed to vocational education and training courses but so are Labour. It was Labour who first tried to hide rising youth unemployment with phoney schemes. Their only answer is work disguised as training schemes in exchange for the dole. All we can expect from them is an expanded YTS/JTS scheme (possibly under a different name) and a further expansion of so-called vocational education.

Some have suggested the way out of the problems of the education system lies in alternatives - educating your children at home or via "free" schools. These present many problems for working class people. Perhaps this is why those that advocate such ideas often aren't working class themselves. Education at home is a partial solution for those with enough time and money and have the education themselves to do it, ruling out a lot of us for a start. At the end of the day, however, children still need qualifications to compete for work. Increasingly these are polluted by the ideas of TVEI and YTS. Also teaching kids at home is dependent on the agreement of the government and education authorities. If they began to see it as a threat to the established order they could soon make it illegal or unworkable, as they have almost done with the free school movement.

The problem we must face is not one of trying in vain to produce a system that works within capitalism - no system can because capitalism itself is an unworkable system. What we must do is build to overthrow capitalism so that all people can have the education they need and want, not the crude training for work that capitalism wants.

## VDU Workers' Rights

The findings of the most extensive British survey yet on VDU workers and health, were presented to the 1987 conference of the VDU Workers' Rights Campaign, held in London. The research shows that VDU workers, mostly women, take more sick leave and complain of more muscular aches and pains, headaches and stress than other workers. Over 80% of VDU workers reported eye and vision problems.

The conference, attended by 120 trade union representatives and VDU workers, heard that a direct correlation has been found between the incidence of health complaints and the amount of time spent on a VDU. The research backs the VDU Workers Rights Campaign's demands for a statutory limit on the amount of time VDU workers spend on the machine. The campaign is calling for a maximum of 50% of the working day to be spent on a VDU, the right of prospective parents to transfer off VDU work and for changes in the design jobs, machinery and the office, to protect workers' health. The campaign's demands have the support of four white collar unions (CPSA, NCU, NGA and SCPS) as well as women's and community groups.

Meanwhile, the Department of Employment's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has given VDU's a clean bill of health in guidelines for computer operators recently. The guidelines warn of the known and well established problems, like eyestrain, but they see no scientific grounds for attributing radiation and unsuccessful pregnancy to VDU's.

The HSE consults expert bodies such as the National Radiological Protection Board which insists that any radiation generated by a VDU is well below the levels considered harmful. Their leaflet dismisses the use of protective devices like screen shields with a simple "no". There is no cause to worry about the effects of VDU work on pregnancy and the leaflet puts the occurrence of clusters of reported birth defects down to "statistical chance".

More about these issues and the research findings can be found in the report of the conference - available from: City Centre, 32-35 Featherstone Street, London EC1 - price £1.00

## accidents will happen!

The reactor at Hartlepool nuclear power station, shut down last March after a "minor incident", is to remain closed for at least 4 months longer than at first announced. Crippled by a burst boiler tube, the Central Electricity Generating Board said originally the station would be generating power again by the end of April. Not for the first time, it seems the incident was more serious than was at first revealed. A spokesperson has now said that the reactor would be closed until "about September".

hampering repairs would appear to be the reactor's design. (Remember that during the Chernobyl emergency apologists for the British nuclear industry tried to make out that the Russian reactor was of a primitive design and that the same thing could never happen here, etc.)

The cost to the CEGB of replacing the output from nuclear stations with "more expensive" coal and oil-generated electricity is supposed to be £100,000 a

expected to run to £16 millions. The Hartlepool station is a standing joke and has been plagued with problems during and since construction. According to figures compiled by Nuclear Engineering International earlier this year it has been producing electricity for only 17.2 per cent of the time since it was commissioned. So much for their brave new world.

The Tories' plans to privatise the electricity industry would presumably include the nuclear power stations. Labour's policy pledges not to build the Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) at Sizewell, to invest in alternative energy research and to undertake an energy conversion programme. But that's hardly surprising since there's votes in ecology at the moment. People should know by now how much a politician's promise is worth. Meanwhile there's a cold wind blowing from the Ukraine....

## OR THEY MIGHT HAVE HELP

A conventional war would spread radioactivity over a wide area of Europe, making it uninhabitable for generations. A conventional invasion of West Germany would result in a dozen "Chernobyls", as nuclear plants were destroyed by bombing. A report by Dan Plesch of Bradford University studies the effects of such an attack on the 1.2 megawatt plant at Geesacht-Kreummel near the East German border. The report states that in the event of an attack a reactor half the size would require an immediate evacuation of some 750,000 people from the area, which would be uninhabitable for years to come. There are 30 reactors in Germany, 38 in Britain and 120 in Europe as a whole. The effects should be one tenth, say, of these be attacked by conventional weapons don't leave much to the imagination.



After Chernobyl will this be next years fashion for us all ?

The accident, in which about a tonne of water escaped is the most serious to have taken place in one of the Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactors (AGR). The CEGB has said locating the leak took longer than expected and claims it also intends to take advantage of the shutdown to make improvements. But the main thing

day. This of course is based on the official comparative figures for nuclear and fossil fuel generated power - figures which are systematically fiddled in order to justify the dangerous and very expensive nuclear programme. Nevertheless the cost of the incident at Hartlepool must be considerable and is now

## Conservatism Run Amok

The inauguration of Republican governor, Evan Mecham, described "as perhaps the most conservative major office holder in America today" in January has made local politics, if little else, a reliable source of entertainment. Mecham's very first act as governor placed Arizona in the national headlines when he revoked Martin Luther King's birthday as a state holiday. This is consistent behaviour in a man whose friends belong to such organisations as the arch-conservative John Birch Society and the far-right Unification Church (moonies) of Korean Reverend Sun Myung Moon. One of his own quaint beliefs is that the US constitution is the direct work of God, now under attack by a socialist conspiracy led by bankers with "foreign entanglements".

And this ignorance of things foreign is pervasive. The average Arizonan vacations in California, occasionally venturing into Mexico (which, after all, is closer to home than Montreal). This lack of worldliness can lead to some amusing misconceptions, as witnessed by the following advice in the Phoenix Metro magazine: "Even a small-time businessman travelling in the danger zones of Europe and the Middle East is a potential target. Unless it is absolutely necessary avoid the trouble spots. Don't go to the Middle East or Greece or Italy. Stay out of France. But if you must go keep a low profile. Never eat in a sidewalk cafe. Use side entrances where possible. Make your reservations under a false name, make dual reservations and never use your company credit card to make reservations. Never allow your room to be cleaned in your absence. Look for escape routes. Leave your lights on at all times. Avoid waterbeds and balconies." Something to keep in mind when you're abroad and feeling slightly paranoid!



# Enough of Dictatorship

"We call on our comrades of the IWA and Chilean comrades in Europe, not to forget the Libertarians that are still in Chile, people that are fighting for libertarian ideas. Don't leave us isolated. In these times of struggle against the Dictatorship, we need the solidarity of all."

Grupos De Accion Directa.

The following is adapted from a statement issued by the Grupos de Accion Directa (Direct Action Groups) after a meeting they held in Buenos Aires at the end of January in the presence of comrades from the FORA (Argentine Regional Workers' Federation, section of the IWA) and the IWA General Secretary. At the end of March news came through to the IWA that the Chilean comrades had made it back safely to Chile. Contacts with the IWA are now formalised.

The situation in Chile worsened after '76 when unemployment increased and hunger, the major problem for Chilean people, began to strike - neither the dictatorship, the Catholic Church or the political parties have solutions - not even the Marxists, they are too busy caught up in power struggles, forgetting people's problems. To fill this vacuum the Direct Action Groups, who are trying to form the FACH (Anarchist Federation of Chile), are involved in the popular struggle of "Los Campamentos" to combat hunger with dignity. "Los Campamentos" (or seizure of land) is a movement looking to group together all those most affected by the dictatorship's economic plans, by creating workshops as the industrial answer to economic problems. Cars and houses are repaired, clothes made, etc. These are exchanged with goods from the countryside co-operatives and ports in a self-managed way. Direct Action members in the Santiago area direct their efforts toward re-constructing the co-ordinating groups and defending the right to organise.

Direct Action members do not support the "Focistas" (Focos - armed struggle based on Che Guevara's ideas) which they see as suicidal and a failure. However, many young Anarchists have fallen into this trap and some have died - their bravery is respected, but not the form of struggle. Basic human rights must be established such as the right to see

hidden prisoners. The dictatorship must be brought down from inside Chile, but international pressure is needed to allow the return of the 3,500 comrades prohibited from entering Chile. Entering secretly is no better than giving up to the military to be arrested and possibly killed. The strategy consists of exiles presenting themselves to the military tribunals, now acting against the dictatorship. Divisions within the military are very real, witness the case of those comrades in the MIR, who the government wanted dead for actions in 1982. They presented themselves before a tribunals which rejected the death penalty. With such divisions in mind we say **"enough of this dictatorship"**.

As Anarchists, unlike the Marxists and Christians, the Direct Action Groups do not struggle to seize power but so the needs of all the people can be met. They follow the libertarian traditions in Chile, not presenting themselves as leaders or a vanguard, even when circumstances mean they could. Theirs is the hard struggle against the dictatorship, in the "Roof Committees" (the movement for the right to housing and to seize the land, occupying the wealthy minority's property). In an occupied area a "policlinico", schools, work co-operatives, libertarian centres and homes are set up. All organising is horizontal - the whole community decides everything in assemblies. The government, however, cracks down on this positive work heavily - such a camp set up in 1969 (the Magali Morato camp - named after a dead comrade) ran until the dictatorship took it over - they now call it "New Dawn".

There are attacks from all sides - by capitalists and marxists, stealing slogans, shamelessly using words like rebellion, comrade, libertarian..... to fool people, though they have no real belief in the ideas behind such words. These people are authoritarian through and through like in Russia and Nicaragua where parties, not the people, have the power. The Direct Action Groups will not make the same mistakes as in Allende's day, when they warned of the repression, but were accused of childishness and wanting to divide the struggle, but the repression came and they were all nearly destroyed. Therefore they don't align themselves with anyone, even Marxists.



## Anarchist Exile Held Under P.T.A.

At Liverpool, Roberto Torres, a Chilean exile, about to start the Irish leg of a European speaking tour about resistance to the Pinochet dictatorship, was told by Special Branch officers: "If you attempt to board the boat you will be arrested". This was after being held for 2 hours on entering Britain before speaking at a number of well-attended meetings. The Branch confiscated notes for his speech as well as a video about current events in Chile. After 2 hours he was told that an exclusion order under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which he wasn't allowed to see, had been

granted barring entry to the 6 counties. With one of the meetings to be held in Belfast, the British authorities didn't want the links between the situations in Chile and the 6 Counties to be made too obvious. The planned meeting in Dublin on April 14th was turned into a protest at the exclusion. After a brief talk about what happened and the use of repressive legislation in Britain and Ireland, the meeting was adjourned to the British Airways office where a picket was placed calling for the scrapping of the PTA and expressing solidarity with Chilean libertarians.

## Spanish Working Class Fights "Socialist" Con-tricks



### "Socialist" government send the troops in to suppress Renosia

There have been well over 300 anti-government demonstrations in Spain since the start of January. Since the "Socialist" government lurched one step further to the right this year, many sectors of industry - airline staff, teachers, day-labourers, miners, car workers, farmers, dockers, doctors, steel and transport workers - have come out on strike. The main grievances centre around wage freezes (a "Socialist" minister, Carlos Solchaga, recently told the bosses not to grant workers more than 5% pay rises!); redundancies (the so-called government's "reconversion" programme) and mass unemployment (around 3 million and rising despite government promises before the elections to create 800,000 new jobs).

One struggle the CNT-AIT (National Confederation of Labour, an anarcho-syndicalist union and Spanish section of the IWA) has a real influence in is the ship-builders' strike in Puerto Real (in Andalusia, one of the most depressed areas of Spain). Anger has been rising ever since 1983 when unions and management signed an agreement to ensure enough work for the 3,500 or so workforce. Since this agreement was made just one ship has been built and more redundancies are threatened. Understandably, feelings are running high. Already over 100 hundred people have been injured in clashes with the Guardia Civil (Spain's paramilitary police) and many more have been arrested, including 8 CNT-AIT members. As with Wapping and

the miners' strike "outside agitators" are being blamed for all the violence yet no evidence has ever been produced.

Even more bitter is a steelworkers' strike in the northern town of Reinosa, near Santander. When management threatened to lay off some 1200 people a strike was called and, to underline the fact that the strikers meant business, the President of the company was taken hostage. Since that day, in mid-March, Reinosa has been under a virtual "state of siege" as most of the town's population (some 13,000 people) clash almost daily with the armed police and civil guards (backed up by the way with tanks and helicopters!). Tension heightened further on 6th May when a 32-year old worker, Gonzalo Ruiz, died in hospital after inhaling an excessive amount of police tear gas.

The intensity of the strikes has caught both the CCOO (Communist) and UGT (Socialist) unions unawares although it is true to say that the CCOO is doing its best to manipulate anti-government feeling in the hope that this will lead to more Communist votes at the next election. The UGT, linked to the ruling Socialist Party, is understandably in crisis. Interestingly many of the strikes have by-passed the union bureaucracies of the UGT and CCOO in favour of general assemblies. This can only be good news for anarcho-syndicalists and the CNT-AIT in the future.

## review

REVOLUTIONARY UNIONISM IN LATIN AMERICA  
P YERRIL & L ROSSER - ASP £1.50

South America is a continent in turmoil which should be studied by all Libertarian revolutionaries. The development of the situation there will before long have an immense effect on the course of the world. This pamphlet despite its title is about the heroic union confederation of Argentina, the FORA (Federacion Obrera Regional Argentina). The FORA was founded in 1901, and was for 30 years the main focus of working class action in Argentina. The pamphlet gives a clear outline of the FORA's history and organisation, although it's a little light on analysis. It provides a useful introduction to one of South America's and Anarcho-Syndicalism's important labour movements. If this pamphlet whets your appetite we can recommend the following reading on Argentine anarcho-syndicalism and anarchism:

\* "Reminiscences of Pampas Life, The Tragic Week of 1919 Argentina". This appeared in "Anarchist Review" No 4.

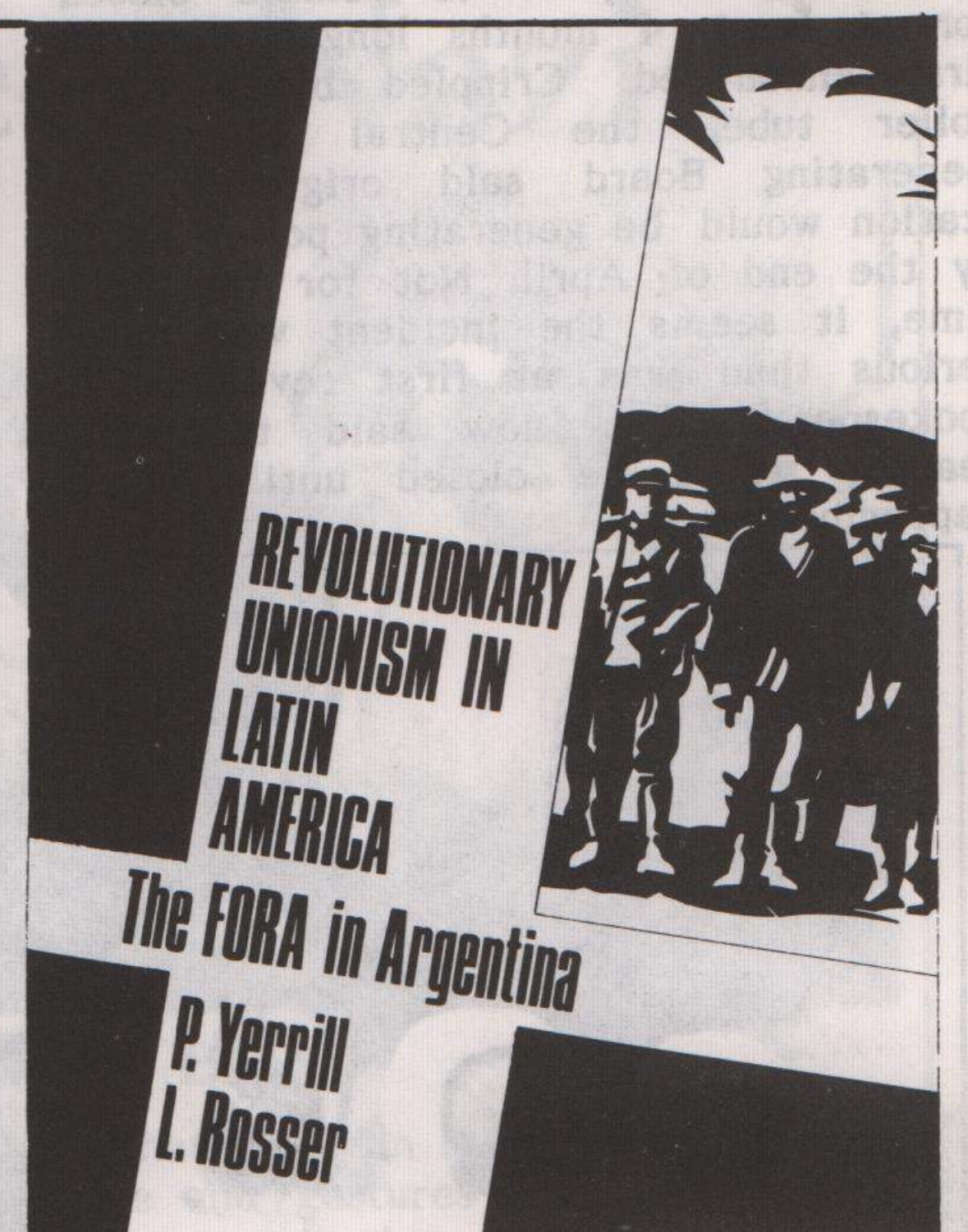
\* "Syndicalism in Practice" No.2 (still available from A.S.P.)

\* "In Patagonia" by Bruce Chatwin. This deals in passing with the movement in Patagonia but also refers to "Los Vengadores de la Patagonia Tragica" by Osvaldo Bayer, vols. 3, Buenos Aires 1972 (which should be interesting to those who read Spanish).

Write to: ASP, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX. or

### STRIKE WAVE IN YUGOSLAVIA

In March the Yugoslav government ordered a partial pay freeze despite 85% inflation. The response of workers was a wave of wildcat strikes building up momentum in late April and early May. These included strikes at the country's biggest steel complex, Smederovo near Belgrade, the capital; at a rolling stock plant in Kratjevo in Serbia and many smaller plants near the capital. Coal miners struck in early April demanding a 150% pay rise and the removal of several managers. At the Rasa coal mines 1700 strikers were joined by white collar workers. The miners returned to work on the 11th of May after 33 days out, winning a 46% pay increase and the resignations of a number of managers.





# Direct Action Supplement WHY VOTE?

## The Myth of Electoralism

In the last 8 years Thatcher has headed a vicious assault on the working class. Hospitals have closed; a legal straight-jacket placed around the trade unions; wages cut; whilst the unemployed bear the brunt of the squeeze. Yet what alternatives are now presented to us? The Liberal/SDP Alliance are recognised as 2nd rate Tories. But Labour offers a raw deal too: only a million "jobs" (largely places on government schemes) in 5 years; Cruise to stay whilst arms talks drag on; and more bobbles on the beat. Considering Labour's past sell-outs, if this is what they offer before they get in what can we expect if they get there?

To answer this, look at the "radical" Labour councils like Lambeth who are now voting for cuts and Ealing, Islington and Camden who are attacking their workers in a way which will gain in intensity whatever happens in the general election. Even the Militant-controlled Liverpool council threatened to lay off workers. Despite minor gains for the left at the beginning of the '80's, Labour has moved back to the right with the left capitulating at every stage. The truth is, Labour has always acted to the benefit of the bosses and to the detriment of workers. A Labour Premier introduced nuclear weapons to Britain without even consulting the cabinet, let alone Parliament. Labour introduced the first racist immigration laws; it sent troops to Ireland and introduced the repressive Prevention of Terrorism Act; it has used troops in strikes more than the Tories. Who could really believe Labour will reverse the Public Order Act or anti-trade union laws?



Labour is the political expression of the trade union leadership

To understand this behaviour we must understand the capitalist system and its electoral process. The myth of electoralism lies in the belief that capturing the existing capitalist political institutions is sufficient to bring change. Parliamentary democracy separates political power from the economic sphere - the workplace, the point of production wherein lies real working class power. Anarcho-syndicalists argue that even in the event of a Labour government elected on a "socialist" programme the real masters would be company directors, bankers, law lords, top civil servants, security chiefs and army generals - the ruling class. For these puppet masters the public school old boy network operates, rather than the limited elective principle of bourgeois democracy. These

General elections and the nature of parliamentary democracy throw up the need for an alternative to the ritual placing of a cross on a ballot paper every four or five years. Here, we show that the whole sham of elections does not act in the interests of our class but in the interests of the elite who profit from this society of inequality and economic exploitation - the ruling class. Parliament stifles real pressure for change by the working class and protects the privileged positions of the elite. While we recognise that all parties are anti-working class we make no bones about concentrating our attack on the Labour Party for that party has been built on the backs of the working class by the reformist trade union leaders. It is the Labour Party that channeled working class militancy and direct action into the parliamentary cul-de-sac, taking political power out of the work-places and communities. Yet when it comes to representing our class Labour governments have replied by attacking us just as viciously as the Tories. When in opposition Labour seeks to keep the lid on working class militancy as shown by its denunciations of striking miners and printworkers. It is now clear, more than ever, that our class must build its own organisations to take control of our own lives, an organisation that doesn't hand political and industrial power over to professional politicians, and trade union bureaucrats.

ernment. French workers on the railways and in other sectors showed the way forward through militant class struggle run by workers' assemblies and councils.

Meanwhile Spanish workers have borne the brunt of Gonzalez' "socialist" austerity measures and have fought back. Countrywide strikes have culminated in pitched battles with police in response to a government 5% pay rise limit. There are also cuts in social security and employers are allowed to lower pensions. More flexibility and productivity are demanded. Workers in the northern steel town, Reinosa, disarmed the hated civil guard and chased them out of the community after being attacked for protesting against large scale redundancies. In contrast to this the Socialist Party led UGT (General Workers' Union) makes major concessions to the bosses.

In Australia, the Labour government, recently announced a mini-budget, cutting public expenditure by over £420 million. It is cutting back on unemployed benefit and employing more "snoopers" while public assets are being sold off and real wage levels have dropped by 2% since gaining power.

So whether Labour, Tory or Alliance govern the boss class is still in power and parliamentary democracy remains a sham. Many people are alienated by a process which they realise can give them nothing. Across the country the abstention rate is 25%. In some inner city areas only around 30-35% of those eligible actually bother to vote. A large proportion of these come from the most exploited groups - black youth, the unemployed and women. For them especially, the alternatives on the ballot paper are no real choice. Parliament is nothing but a farce and a charade!

## Militancy Diverted by Labour

Parliament has always been the preserve of the British ruling class. After the industrial revolution the bourgeoisie demanded political power to go with the economic position they had attained. When the working class in its turn demanded equal political rights this was rightly seen as a revolutionary demand.

Chartism, the first British working class political movement, wasn't simply a struggle about parliamentary representation but about the whole question of democratic control in the work-places and communities which had come under pressure with the increasing state intrusion into working class life. Slowly the right to vote was extended but only when the ruling class knew they could retain control. The rules of the game were changed; power was transferred to the state bureaucracy and the vote became a method of diverting pressure for change into acceptable channels - an alternative to revolution. Democracy was grafted on to capitalism but was confined to the political sphere - economic exploitation continued. This produced a passive electorate with workers treated as cogs in the wheels of production, encouraged to believe that only by handing the responsibility of running society to an elite group could it be saved from chaos. Apathy is good for capitalism!

Since the Labour Party was formed, as Bevin put it, "out of the bowels of

the TUC", to give the reformist trade union leadership a voice in parliament, it has accepted the basic principles of capitalist democracy. From the start it wasn't a workers' party but the vehicle of people who want to maintain capitalism. The trade union bureaucracy is a mediator between the bosses and labour force so, although its power is based on the workers, it has a vested interest in a healthy capitalist system. Anyhow, once the parliamentary road was chosen opportunity for change was lost. In the years up to 1914 Labour had no socialist policies and was recognised by the Liberals as the "best weapon against the syndicalists", who were at the heart of the massive upsurge in working class militancy.

During the years 1910-14 the British working class showed the alternative to parliamentarianism. Wave after wave of strikes occurred with whole communities taking to the streets to fight pitched battles with the police and army. Gunboats moved into the Mersey, guns trained on working class areas, after workers took over the docks (firms such as P&O had to ask for dockers' dispensation to move goods). All over, workers fought for control of their own lives. Striking miners dynamited the managers' houses; striking railworkers sabotaged signal boxes; women set up burning barricades to stop intrusions by mounted police into working class districts. "Direct action" was on everyone's lips; the co-

alition representing the Labour Party was falling to pieces with the reformist leadership becoming more and more divorced from the syndicalist-influenced rank and file.

During World War One those militants not imprisoned led the shop stewards' movement. Labour and the TUC were totally incapacitated, joining the war fever. As war weariness grew, rank and file discontent erupted, so that by the end of the war Britain was in turmoil again with another wave of crippling strikes coupled with soldiers' revolts.

After the war a new "socialist" constitution was adopted by Labour including the (in)famous "Clause Four", the

blueprint for nationalisation. This did not reflect any new-found belief in socialism but the radicalisation that had taken place before, during and after the war. The Labour Party had to divert the revolutionary upsurge and to channel militant working class self-activity into parliamentary democracy and the deadening passiveness that goes hand in hand with it. It was a victory for Fabianism and especially for the TUC who, through their block votes, could control the party executive and therefore its organisation and policies. This has proved decisive in the years since as the Labour Party sought to present itself as respectable and responsible enough for government.

## How Labour Governed

Your candidate "knows and understands. There is no doubt that he knows and understands the problems that are of concern to the vast majority of people in the town." So says a Labour leaflet from a North West town where Labour has held the seat since 1945, and the council since 1935. It goes on to say that amongst these issues are: unemployment, housing, the health service and education. We are then told that "Labour has the policies to deal with our problems." Well that's good, but we can't help thinking that if they have the policies now, why hadn't they used them during the last Labour government? Yet a look at the record of that government tells the whole sordid story.

It's not that Labour didn't understand working class people's problems - Labour's manifesto had said back in 1974: "for the vast majority of families the economic crisis takes the form of fear for their jobs, ever rising prices (particularly food prices) and ever rising housing costs (particularly council rents and mortgage rates), coupled with the most drastic cuts in their income that people have experienced since the '30's." Again you only have to look at the record to see Labour was no better able to hold prices down or reverse the decline of wages in real terms. We cannot escape the fact that under Labour

continued over



inequality between the classes grew - as the top 5% became richer, the bottom 50% grew poorer. Do we seriously want them back? Will they be different now?

Now the Labour Party under Kinnock and Hattersley try to put forward a new brighter image. The "socialist" image of nationalisation and a strong bureaucracy has been discarded. As Tony Benn said on May Day, 1979: "The time has come for the whole labour movement to face the harsh realities, take up the challenge and reorganise its own role, party structure and organisation." He can't say that they didn't listen.

The fact is, Labour is a prisoner of the system. Instead of seeking a change to socialism, it is part of the state, seeking "corporatism" where union leaders, the state and employers co-operate to run industry. "This allows the working class organisations, the unions, to become part of the state control apparatus working against our class. In the past, Labour tried to contain workers with "social contracts" protecting both the position of the trade union leadership, and the bosses' profits. Last time this ended with the "Winter of Discontent" as the whole lot collapsed under the weight of workers' militancy. Labour has no choice but to attack workers like the Tories do. The last Labour government agreed to enforce cuts to get an International Monetary Fund loan. Now there is a crisis and the world of commerce and industry prefer their friends in the Tory Party to govern.

The crisis is very real. It extends through the whole of the industrialised world, both the "Socialist Eastern Bloc" and the "Capitalist Western Bloc". Any government whether Alliance, Tory, or Labour, would penalise the working class as much now as at any time. Over the last 20 years there have been rumours of the extreme right's doubts about Lab-

our's ability to perform the tasks - they haven't hesitated to use all means, even plotting coups, against the state. Now with the recession biting deeper the economic climate is sharper and a "left wing" government would face greater pressures.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT

Under the last Labour Government unemployment hit two million as jobs disappeared at a rate of a thousand a day.

#### HOUSING

By 1978 fewer council houses were being built than at any time since 1945.

#### THE HEALTH SERVICE

The first 2 years of the Labour Government saw 25,000 hospital beds lost. The building of new hospitals to replace the semi-derelict stock presently in use virtually dried up.

#### EDUCATION

Labour made cuts in education putting teachers on the dole for the first time since the '30's.

#### PRICES

These doubled between 1974 and '79. Gas, electricity, postal charges, transport fares all soared as Labour withdrew subsidies. Food prices went sky high for the same reason.

#### WAGES

Under Labour the then financial secretary to the Treasury said that on January 30th, 1979: "A family of 4 on average earnings were worse off in real terms than 1972 under Heath." Living standards generally were also worse than in 1972.

## THE LEFT'S IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

The left in the Labour Party often blame Kinnock for pandering to the press, ditching "socialist" policies. This rightward gallop cannot be denied. The party's Public Relations department has worked so hard to moderate its image that they often outflank the Tories. The leadership scapegoats the Militant Tendency and so-called "loony left" for their policies on racism and lesbian and gay positive images. But we cannot agree with the left's conclusion that socialist policies and a socialist programme are necessarily vote winners. Although Labour's promises have often become indistinguishable from the Liberal/SDP Alliance's, this alone can't account for Labour's declining popularity since 1945 when it had the clear support of over 50% of the electorate.

While many activists are appalled at Kinnock's witch-hunts and attacks on rate-capped councillors they swallowed their disgust and have canvassed tirelessly in the interests of unity. And it is precisely this ideology of "electoralism" which is the root of the problem, leading to the disintegration of the Labour left. The Tribune group and Labour Co-ordinating Committee with Ken Livingstone prominent have both moved sharply to the right, breaking ranks over rate-capping, often welcoming the witch-hunts. They put a Labour victory before all else. The consequence of this "don't rock the boat" policy are obvious - after years of defeated strikes and mass redundancies there is widespread demoralisation and susceptibility of the working class to right-wing ideas. Although Labour's traditional vote has not fallen away there is some shift to the Alliance but more significant is the increase in abstentionism.

Neither Red Wedge, Black Sections, nor the proposed Ministry for Women have inspired significant sections of the class to join Labour. The left did enjoy some gains in the early '80's, however, managing to force through compulsory reselection of MP's in 1981; Tony Benn narrowly lost the deputy leader contest; the GLC's "fares-fair" policy was very popular; and the left Labour councils initially defiant stand over rate-capping was their political high-water mark. But with the backlash by the union bureaucracy the logic of electoralism gained the upper hand. Council after council capitulated before the law, averting confrontation through the use of "creative accountancy" and "deferred payments schemes". This has only meant massive rates bills the following year and the implementation of cuts in council jobs and public services.



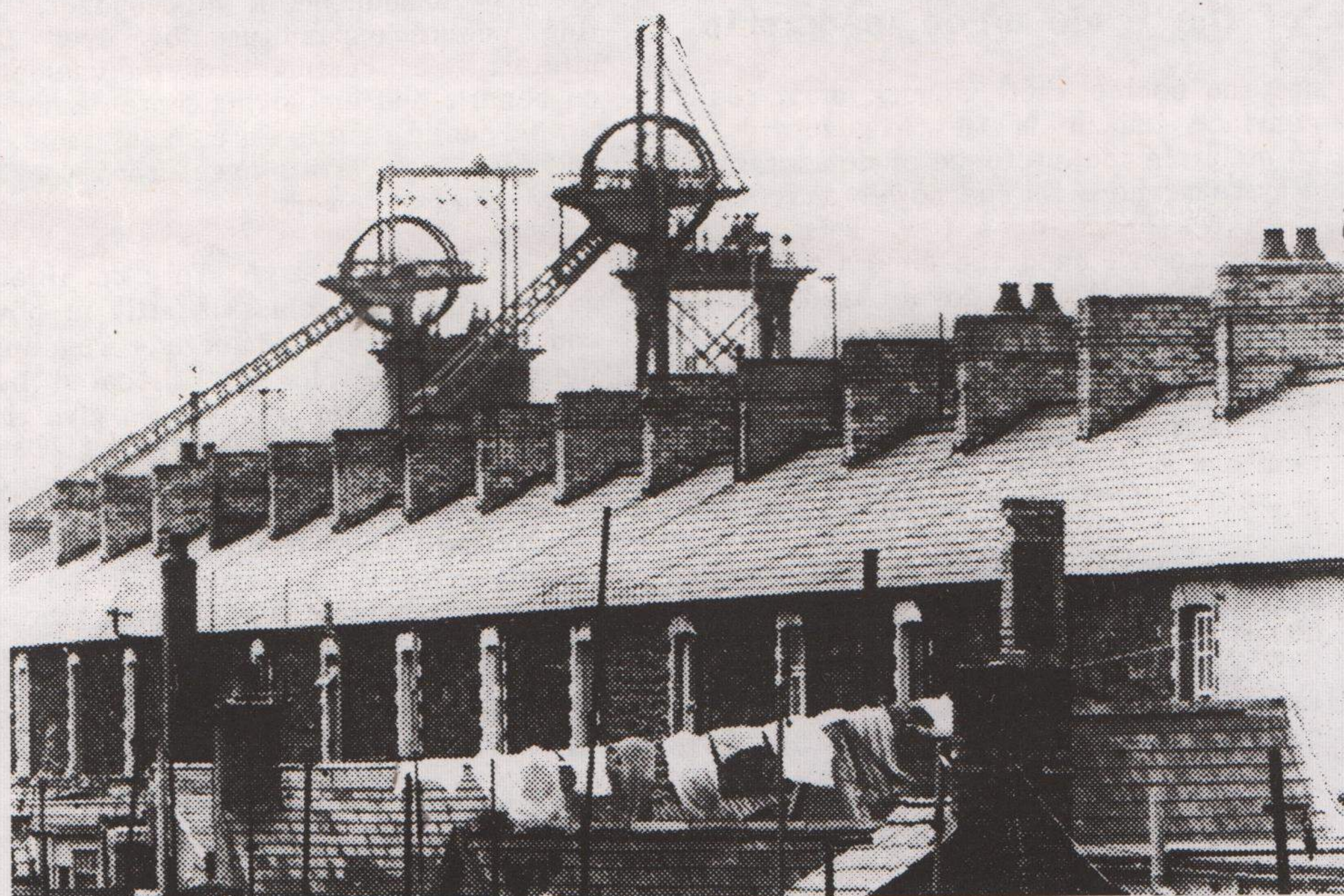
### Kinnock blames the left for Labour's declining popularity

The left didn't stand a chance. To force through even the limited reforms they offered, the support of rank and file workers was needed, but given the economic climate workers fear for their own jobs more than anything else. In 1983 union leaders shifted to the right following Thatcher's re-election in line with Len Murray's "New Realism". As unions exist to negotiate the price of labour within capitalism, "New Realism" was a concession to the Tory idea that greedy workers must pay for the crisis. Union leaders argued that only Labour could regenerate the economy. Since the Labour Party was created by the trade union bureaucracy to represent their interests it must come as no surprise to revolutionaries that the Labour left were bound to bow to their strength.

The Labour left's power is in the Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs). But at the 1985 conference they had 614,000 votes compared to the 5,871,000 block votes of the unions. The unions have the largest single block of representatives on the party's National Executive Council (NEC). The unions elect 12 members on to the NEC while CLPs elect 7. Apart from a Socialist Society representative there are 5 women elected by the union-dominated conference. The NEC and the party's Parliamentary Committee draw up the election manifesto and are not necessarily bound by conference decisions. Labour's rightward drift follows inevitably from the "New Realism" due to the in-built power of the trade union bureaucracy.

The future looks bleak for socialists in the Labour Party. Those who still see radical, even revolutionary, change if the left becomes dominant are living in a dream world which is as old as the party itself. The fate of these activists is always the same - either forced out, absorbed or just bought off. In the end they are trapped by Labour's electoralism, the need to be elected at the next election or the one after that.

## THE FUTURE.....



For many communities capitalism now offers no hope

Does anybody really believe that any government can re-build the steel mills in Corby and Shotton? etc? Can they reopen the coalfields? The problems are far greater than they can manage. The declining economy has meant the run-down of the NHS, increasing homelessness and the massive rise in unemployment.

Which ever party gets in will make little difference. The government of the day is tied to international capital. It has to keep down wages to attract multinational investment; crush the unions and organised labour as demands to improve wages and conditions damage the capitalist economy; keep public spending low (meaning the poor suffer) otherwise it will get into debt. Capitalism has always been prone to crises and it's always the working class who are forced to bail out the system by massive cuts in living standards, not to mention people in the 3rd world who pay with their lives. All three parties are committed to this system.

Britain's economy is the least likely among the leading developed countries to recover fully, and at an equal pace to others such as France, Germany, and Holland from the present recession. The UK share of world trade in manufacturing fell from 20% in 1955 to under 9% in 1976. Conversely the percentage of imported finished manufactured goods rose from 8% in 1961 to 21% in 1976. Given

the British economy has declined faster than its major rivals and that there is little sign of the so-called hi-tech (Sun-rise) boom which was supposed to replace heavy industry, we see just how limited Britain's chances of recovery are. The economy is kept afloat by North Sea oil, but what will happen when it runs out in the '90's? Britain is becoming a second rate economy. Under capitalism full employment and decent public services won't return.

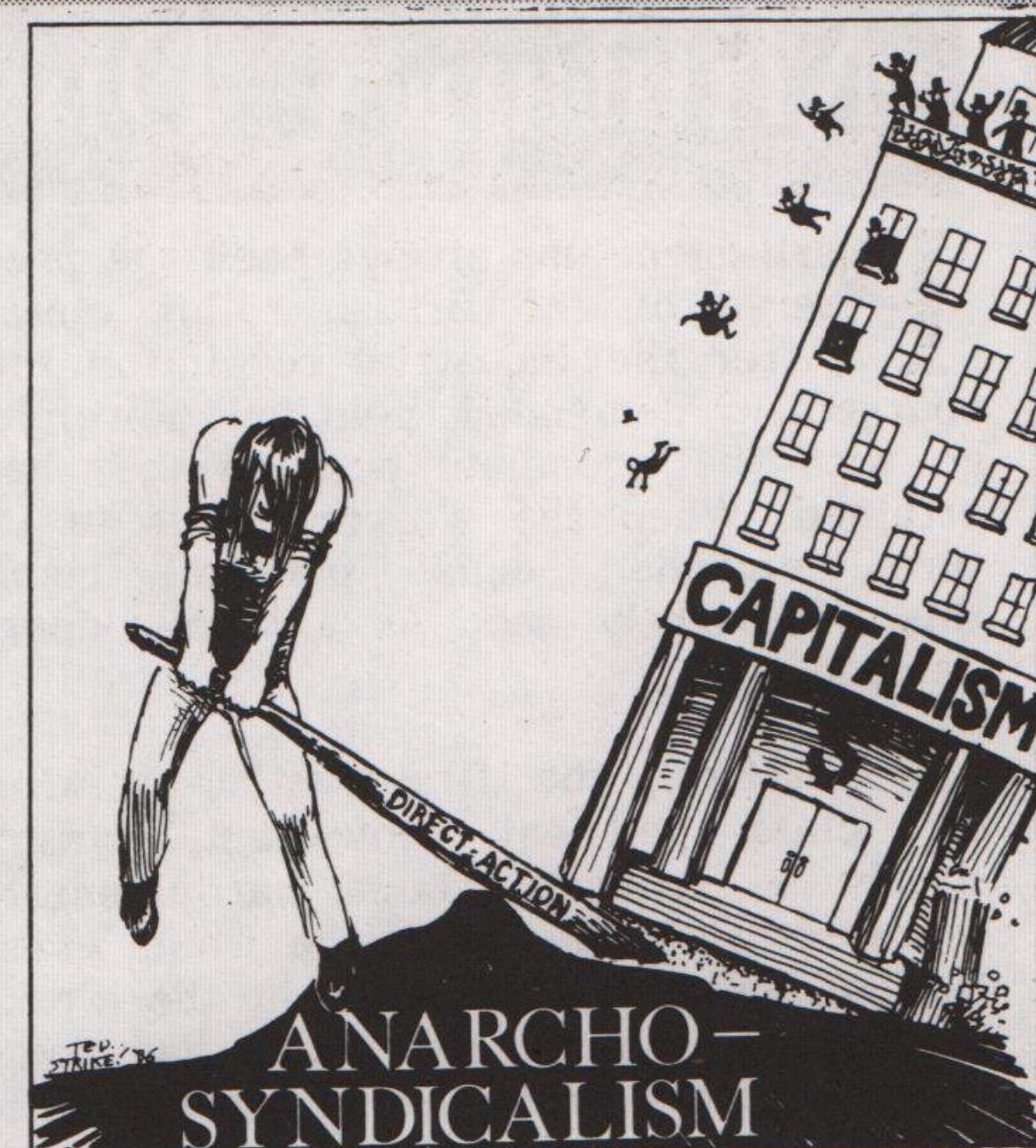
The only jobs being created are in the low-paid, often non-unionised, service sector. And in a desperate attempt to lower unemployment figures (and provide cheap labour) many of us are forced into various CP and YTS work-for-the-dole schemes which are supported by all parties. The Tory-proposed JTS scheme, to be administered for profit by the private sector instead of job centres, means people having to work for what they get on the dole. The scheme is also to be compulsory amounting to industrial conscription. Such a mobile, unorganised cheap labour force is also an ideal strike-breaking weapon.

The future looks bleak - a low waged economy, often based on temporary and part-time workers, many on government schemes. This is not to say that everyone will be poor - but there will be a greater degree of division between the classes and a lowering of the average standard of living.

## The Struggle Continues

It is therefore clear that the priority for the British working class is not the ballot box but surely the restoring of confidence at a rank and file level which means building an organisation that is run and controlled by its members, based on the shop floor and on the streets as an alternative to the social democracy of the Labour Party. Such an organisation would be a defence against the inroads of capitalism on our already low living standards; it would carry the fight forward so that we as a class can challenge capitalism's hold on society and would be a vehicle for its overthrow; it would be the means whereby, following our successful takeover, we can run society as a class, taking back responsibility for our own lives. This type of organisation is a revolutionary union which we must begin to build now, forming rank and file and community action groups. It is essential to be well prepared for a future escalation in the class struggle. To demand what the capitalists say is impossible must become our new realism.

Another priority for our class is to overcome the issues that divide us - racism, sexism, anti-gay and -lesbian bigotry, British nationalism and in some cases religion. These divisions aren't necessarily unchangeable but they do exist, cutting across class lines and eroding class solidarity. The whole parliamentary system helps to sustain them. They must be overcome for the working class to carry out its emancipation. Only by organising as a class in our workplaces and communities can they begin to disappear.



Yes, the working class has the power to create a living, breathing form of society which will involve ordinary people at the level of their everyday lives in the workplace and community. We advocate a society run through mass assemblies in which everybody in a given workplace or community can participate. Administrative functions and co-ordination with other assemblies would be through workers' councils with all delegates mandated and subject to immediate recall through their respective assemblies. This sort of society is not just an ideal but a reality which can only come out of the class struggle between the workers and bosses. For the working class there is only one alternative - we must organise as a class to fight back against the attacks upon us and ultimately to smash this stinking system.



# —Build All Out Strike Action—

During the first rolling strikes by civil service workers in support of the 1987 pay claim, the issue of emergency payments caused considerable arguments amongst activists. The question was whether NALGO members in town halls should make the emergency Sections 1, 12 and 138 payments or the so-called "blanket payments". The first type are limited to those with dependant children, pensioners and disabled people while the second would be made to any claimant providing adequate identification.

Opponents of blanket payments argued that for NALGO members to indiscriminately pay out money to claimants amounted to doing CPSA members' work. In Hackney and Southwark, for example, the Labour councils refused to make blanket payments saying it was strikebreaking. In Lambeth, matters were further complicated when a mass meeting of mainly DHSS and Unemployed Benefit Office workers voted for restricted emergency payments only. However, Lambeth leader, Linda Bellos, declared she'd make payments of £14 to every adult and £10 for each child, regardless of what CPSA and NALGO members wanted. She was also quoted: "I'll f..... cross their f... .. picket lines.... I'll get private security guards to f..... pay the money" (Guardian 11.5.87). Bellos has since claimed she was misquoted but her intervention only caused more confusion amongst strikers. Although NALGO members blacked the work, payments were made by volunteers.

## INADEQUATE

This disarray can only enable a wedge to be driven between civil servants and unwaged workers. The union's pathetic "We're on the same side" leaflet was completely inadequate to combat this, only apologising for the strike. The union must be blamed for leaving its members completely unprepared for the ensuing arguments. The problem is how best to win claimants' support without undermining the strike. The first point to be made is that while DHSS and UBO workers are traditionally more militant there are other strategic civil service sectors. Workers in Customs and Excise, the Passport Office, Air Traffic Control and the Treasury can equally cause administrative chaos. To concentrate on the DHSS and the UBO's as CPSA shock troops is to make the emergency payments issue more important than it should be.

Secondly, events have often overtaken wranglings over what constitutes scabbing. Councils have made blanket payments and more significantly claimants in Camden and Hackney occupied the Council chambers demanding money. In the event of an all out indefinite strike, surely the key to victory, it would be difficult to argue that any claimants should go without money. For revolutionaries it is necessary to support such actions as town hall occupations and not to end up arguing against them. With Tory ministers suddenly finding sympathy for claimants and the likes of Linda Bellos openly electioneering, strikers could well lose the argument. NALGO members in particular would find enforcing a policy which is unpopular amongst claimants and Labour councillors alike very difficult.



Striking civil service workers in Nottingham

CPSA activists should draw NALGO members into the dispute by trying to control how blanket payments are made. We should demand that NALGO members refuse to do means-tests as this amounts to the assessment work of a DHSS worker. We should demand that payments made should not be deducted from benefits after the strike. Linked to this is the demand that no information about claimants is given to the DHSS after the strike. New government regulations mean that payments by local authorities are not necessarily recoverable from the DHSS. Thus instead of councils confronting the government for re-imbursement, they will inevitably try to restrict the blanket payments, which are especially prone to fraudulent claims, by trying to introduce means testing. If NALGO members are then forced to take action they will be siding with claimants rather than appearing to obstruct them. We must press for a strategy of uniting with claimants by putting an impossible strain on town halls to pay out money.

## THE FIGHT CONTINUES

Two of the three unions involved debated the "way forward" at their conferences. The Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) re-affirmed their disapproval of all out action. After a lengthy debate at the Civil and Public Servants Association (CPSA) conference the vote was 531-300 against an all out strike. A motion was adopted calling for further action in June and July along the selective regional strike lines. There may eventually be a ballot on all out strike action if this strategy fails.

The action chosen was as much to preserve the fragile unity of the union coalition and the government, which authorised talks between the unions and Treasury. This only produced a woolly promise to review wage levels at some indeterminate time in the future. The

Treasury have sought to continue the divide and rule policy, recently buying off senior civil servants with a 12.5% pay rise giving them (and MP's whose pay is linked) a rise of £40 a week - twice what the unions are demanding. The surrender of South Eastern civil service workers with a £10 a week "regional allowance", was also attempted.

The strike is the most important in civil service history. A defeat would see the introduction of regional pay, merit pay, and the formation of public corporations, instead of departments, offering their own pay rates - an obvious recipe for chaos and wage-cutting. An all out strike will be the only guarantee of success, but lack of confidence and local co-ordination will hamper efforts to build it. Many on the left are already sounding the bells of doom saying we should work for the election of a Labour government.

## RANK AND FILE CONTROL

For an all out strike to take place the rank and file membership would have to take control. We must encourage such initiatives as the mass meeting of activists in Lambeth Town Hall which cut across the union's sectional divisions whereby DHSS workers have no contact with UBO and Job Centre workers. Local inter-union strike committees must be set up to administer strike funds, as done in a number of offices. Activists must demand area strike committees elected by mass assemblies to replace present regional and town committees which are appointed from above, composed of bureaucrats and a mystery to most civil service workers. The very nature of this top-down approach is stifling rank and file initiative and action.

A rank and file steering committee is being formed and in early June intends to call its first meeting in London. Already contacts have been made

## CPSA Conference Almost Sacks NEC!

The Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) held its national conference in Blackpool. It was a typically stormy week, both weatherwise and on the conference floor. 1000 delegates and many observers combined to give the occasional air of a civil war. The union is divided into 4 political groups - the National Moderate Group, including Tory, Liberal and SDP members; the Democratic Moderate Group, almost insignificant, who disagree with the autocratic leadership of the NMG; Broad Left '84, under-Communist and Tribune (Labour Party left) domination; and Broad Left, a combination of Militant, SWP and some other Trotskyist sects. Some Broad Left activists are members because there is no rank and file organisation.

All the groups are electoralist and the largest cannot muster 1000 members in a union of 152,000. Heated debates saw groups disagreeing on policy for no other reason than their opponents were arguing for some political policy. However the result of the week's debating was for the union to campaign for the Labour Party on election day and to mount a campaign to affiliate to the Labour Party. The conference agreed a policy to fight racism, to support members with the AIDS virus and generally to seek better terms and conditions.

Discussions will continue with other unions to form One Big Union of civil service workers. There was much wrangling over a £52,000 pay out to the former general secretary who now has a £25,000 a year job with the Trade Union Bank, Unity Trust. A known right winger, the decision to pay him the equivalent of 10 year's wages for the average union member probably resulted in the right wing losing the election to the Broad Left. The right wing, however, have delayed announcing the result of the election, alleging postal delays (denied by the post office) and problems caused during the strike. They are hanging on to power for as long as possible.

A constitutional quirk almost arose which would have rendered CPSA as the only union without a leadership for the foreseeable future. A motion was put from the floor which would have sacked the entire National Executive Committee including the National President before the announcement of new election results. Under the constitution only the President can announce the results. Such are the lost opportunities - the motion needed a 2 thirds majority but failed by a narrow margin.

in London, the Midlands, South Yorks, and South Wales, with members of both CPSA and SCPS involved. Its first tasks as a committee will be to establish a programme, a bulletin and to build its strength locally. Readers of DA interested in a rank and file civil service workers' organisation can write to South West London DAM, c/o 121 Railton Rd, Brixton, London, SE24.

Civil service workers (CPSA)

## BOSS "HAPPY" TO LOSE MONEY!



NO SURRENDER! Keetons workers spell things out to Doyle

As reported in DA 39 thirty members of the AEU (Amalgamated Engineering Union) have been on strike since July last year when management broke agreements on staffing and safety. The workers were sacked within 5 minutes after they voted 2-1 in a secret ballot in favour of strike action.

Since then ACAS officials agreed to mediate between strikers and management but talks never took place as Keetons refused to meet a 3rd party. They seem happy losing money - Doyle, managing director, admitted losing £3,500 a week since the strike started - he still believes he can force the strikers back. Management have contacted all firms who are boycotting them, trying to win back orders lost due to the strike but the boycotts remain and letters pledging support are flowing in. Individual mem-

bers are still approached with tempting offers to break the strike but strikers tell each other, and management are treated with the contempt they deserve.

Information received from a supporter reveals that one scab is the landlord of the Nag's Head at Shalesmoor, Sheffield - this information appears to be true. The following is a list of scab hauliers working together to supply a base for Keetons: S&H Motors, Tinsley; A&E Transport, Ecclesfield; Fesswick Steel Stockholders; a green lorry, reg NWB 513K; T Roberts, Aston. All work is coming and going via their stockyards. The strikers require maximum pressure to put a stop to them. Continued support is vital to win - donations to: Keetons Strike Committee, AEU House, Furnival ate, Sheffield. (phone 769041)



# SAS Killings Highlight Repression in Ireland

At Loughgall, County Armagh, on the evening of Friday 8th May eight IRA volunteers and a civilian were killed in an ambush by a large force of heavily armed SAS, backed up by the RUC Special Support Unit's elite murder squad E4A. The IRA was in the process of an attack which demolished the RUC post in the village, Anthony Hughes was killed in his car 200 yards from the barracks and his brother Oliver was seriously wounded. The IRA operation was one of a long series of attacks aimed at preventing the sectarian RUC from operating effectively outside the range of its most heavily fortified bases.

Although the number of deaths is almost unique in the IRA's history (12 men were killed at Clonmult, County Cork in 1921, the third year of the Black & Tan War), the outcome of the ambush and the methods used come as no surprise. On 23rd February 1985, Charlie Breslin, Michael and David Devine had returned their weapons to their arms dump near Strabane, County Tyrone, when a large force of SAS and RUC opened fire on them from a carefully prepared ambush. They were mown down unarmed and shouting: "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!". As well as being riddled with machine gun bullets, each man had a single pistol bullet in the head.

## EXECUTION

The Loughgall ambush was similarly designed to leave no survivors, although the IRA claims that some of the unit escaped and witnessed the execution of comrades who had been wounded or arrested. It was also designed as a propaganda coup in the face of a very high level of effective IRA operations. In particular the killing of Lord Justice Maurice Gibson, a pillar of the no-jury "Diplock" courts, and more valued by the establishment than your average squaddie or peeler. These courts ran the notorious "Supergrass" trials and have a reputation for leniency towards loyalist sectarian murder gangs.

The context of Loughgall has been one of sustained attacks by the RUC and the British Army on the anti-unionist community in the six of Ulster's nine counties occupied by Britain. Three IRA volunteers have died this year before Loughgall. The last, Finbarr McKenna, was killed in a premature explosion during an attack on an RUC fort in West Belfast. The funerals of the IRA's dead



Funeral of Finbarr McKenna

have been occasions of protest against the British presence and expression of mass support for the IRA by the entire anti-unionist community. Local Sinn Féin councillors and senior Republicans such as Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are usually present.

Such scenes are reminiscent of the funerals of Blacks killed by the police in South Africa, so is the RUC's response. The RUC, backed up by the British Army, have besieged the houses of bereaved families while the latter have tried to negotiate a private funeral with them; they have tried to separate coffins from the mourners; and to hijack funerals to prevent them being the focus of anti-British demonstrations. Their excuse is the traditional appearance of the IRA at funerals to pay tribute to their fallen comrades with volleys of shots over the grave before disappearing back into the crowd, often in the teeth of a very heavy RUC and British Army presence.

At Finbarr McKenna's funeral on 6th May the IRA had called the RUC's bluff by paying the final salute on Sunday the 3rd. The RUC presence was the most belligerent yet - 2 people were seriously injured by plastic bullets and numerous others were injured by RUC batons. These attacks are not directed against the IRA. They are designed to keep anti-unionists off the streets of their own communities and to prevent mass demon-

strations of opposition to British occupation.

## DELIBERATE KILLINGS

Funerals are family occasions when the whole community comes out with their children. Since 1969 a number of people have been killed or seriously injured by rubber and plastic bullets. Most of these killings were clearly deliberate and the victims often children. It is widely believed that this was part of a strategy of terror to keep the anti-unionist community off their streets. The distinctive sound of a plastic bullet being fired is calculated to strike fear into the hearts of parents who know that these weapons have killed children.

The response of anti-unionist youths to these attacks has been widespread rioting which was renewed when news of the Loughgall ambush was heard. The repression and violence of the British state and its allies has never been directed solely against the Republican Movement, but against the entire anti-unionist community. The campaign of random assassinations of anti-unionists by loyalist paramilitaries claimed yet another victim, Gary McCartan, on May 7th, and another man narrowly missed death in an attack later that evening. Nor is resistance to British imperialism in Ireland confined to the Republican Movement, but is conducted by the whole community.

However, the IRA's campaign is the most organised form of resistance and is widely supported - in the last election in the 6 counties Sinn Féin gained 40% of the anti-unionist vote. The superior manpower, resources and military hardware available to the British Army means that it cannot be defeated as long as the British ruling class have the political will to keep it in Ireland. At the end of the 1960's a peaceful campaign for civil rights for anti-unionists met the violent reaction of the sectarian RUC, B-Specials and other loyalists. In 1969 anti-unionist communities such as West Belfast and Derry's Bogside resisted full scale attacks by loyalists. The result was that Britain's Labour government sent in the troops to prevent the collapse of the Orange State.

## COLONIAL SITUATION

Those troops are still there and the sectarian statelet is still being resisted. British military strategy in Ireland is to obscure the nature of the conflict, repressing mass demonstrations against British imperialism and trying to isolate the IRA and to portray them as an insane gang of criminals. This has meant a front line role for the RUC in an attempt to promote an image of normality in the face of a minor law and order problem. The concentration of IRA attacks against the RUC has meant an increased role for the British Army and a more obviously colonial situation. The necessity of the Loughgall ambush for British propaganda and the sectarian brutality of the RUC at anti-unionist funerals explode the myth of normality and criminality.

Peace and working class unity will only come to Ireland after the withdrawal of British troops, the end of partition and the end of the sectarian 6 county statelet. Britain will only withdraw when our rulers no longer have the political will to wage war on anti-unionists. As British workers we must express our opposition to imperialism and educate ourselves and our fellows about the true nature of the British role in Ireland. As anarcho-syndicalists Irish unity cannot be an end for us but it is a necessary beginning. We must recognise that pressure from British workers is necessary for British withdrawal and help to build and organise that pressure.

OPPOSE BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN IRELAND. FOR THE COMPLETE BRITISH MILITARY AND POLITICAL WITHDRAWAL

## who chooses?

It has recently been highlighted to us once again that regardless of various laws in existence, it is not women who are making decisions about their own bodies. The case which has brought this phenomenon to the forefront is that of Jeanette, a 17 year old mentally handicapped woman, has been condemned to sterilisation by Sunderland City Council.

However, it is not only handicapped women who are being subjected to such authoritarian decisions. Wendy Savage revealed in "Abortion, Sterilisation and Contraception", that thousands of women each year are treated with an N.H.S. abortion, on the condition that they allow sterilisation to be performed at the same time. Not surprisingly, this blackmail is used mainly on ethnic minority and working class women who do not have private treatment as an option.

In 1977, 9,000 women were sterilised at the time of abortion, of which Wendy Savage gives two examples of typical cases: Ms J W was sterilised at 21, after the birth of her first child, because the GP, prompted by her health visitor, thought she would be unable to cope with any more children because of her "subnormal intelligence" - a subnormal intelligence which Wendy Savage could not detect. Ms A T, a 19 year old West Indian single parent, was in need of an abortion, which was only given on the condition that she consent to sterilisation, an operation which she was told would be reversible, although the surgeon involved, rather than "knot" her fallopian tubes, in fact removed them altogether.

Not only are psychological problems increased when these two operations are carried out together, but also, these women are six times more likely to die as a result of this combined operation than those receiving just an abortion. Each year, many women choose to be sterilised and for some, there may be arguments for sterilisation on medical grounds - but, it is perfectly clear that in thousands of cases, the rights of women to decide whether to be sterilised or not are being denied them. Instead, doctors and gynaecologists, the majority of whom are men, are conducting operations based on personal assumptions rather than medical.



It is about time that we got rid of a system which gives doctors and the courts the authority to select which women may retain their reproductive capacity and which may not, and instead provide women with the real freedom to choose for themselves.

## Police Protect Nazis



Gathering of Leicester BNP

On May 2nd 1987 at Newarke school, Imperial Avenue, Leicester, the racist and fascist British National Party held a meeting for the council elections. Past experience has shown that these events are merely excuses for nazi-style rallies that promote racial hatred. The protest that was organised clearly showed the anger felt by local people with over 300 anti-fascists turning out to protest. In line with their racist approach the police turned out in force to protect the pathetic band of about 30 BNP supporters and limited the size of the meeting to stop local people going inside the hall in large numbers - all the fascists were allowed in first. Several arrests were made as police singled out hecklers for violent treatment. Other arrests were made outside the hall including one person for crossing the road to a shop!

Of the 7 arrested, 6 face charges under the new Public Order Act which

states that you can be arrested for your language and gestures unless, of course, your language is that of race hatred and your gestures are nazi salutes. The 7th defendant faces serious charges of assault against police officers. All defendants will plead not guilty to all charges - fighting fascism isn't a crime. A defence fund has been set up to help the defendants and to raise the issues of racism and fascism in Leicester. The political issues are vital - racism in the labour movement must be challenged; racial attacks must be combatted; and fascism in Leicester (and elsewhere) must be stamped out. Raise these issues in your trade union branch, your workplace and community. Send cheques, etc to: Leicester Anti-Fascist Defence Fund, c/o the Trades Council Office, Leicester Unemployed Workers' Centre, 138 Charles Street, Leicester.

NO PLATFORM FOR FASCISTS



# Defiant In Struggle

Defiant printworkers involved in the Midlands Trader dispute have pledged to fight on. A chapel vote on May 15th backed a call to the NGA's national committee demanding they keep the dispute "official". It began in last December when millionaire boss Pickering sacked 90 printworkers from his plant at Heanor Gate, Derbyshire, attempting to go "non-union". Since then printing of Trader titles has been done by other firms throughout the country.

Every few weeks the NGA review the Trader dispute and, as this issue of Direct Action went to press, printers were awaiting the outcome. Many printers fear that the union officials, having done nothing to back the struggle, will now stab them in the back by trying to kill off the dispute. SOGAT officials have already sold out their Trader

members by cutting off strike pay after 20 weeks. To speed up attempts to starve their members off the picket lines one official set up job interviews for 2 sacked SOGAT women. "My husband's got no job", one woman explained, "and with my union cutting off strike pay, I'm left with no money to fight on with. What can I do? They've forced me to take this job, but you can bet we'll be back on the picket lines on our days off. You can't get rid of us that easily!" The supporters of the sacked printers also face attacks by union bureaucrats. The NGA rep on Nottingham Trades Council opposed a £100 donation to the sacked printers' support group in the town! His reason? - he is "wary of autonomous groups outside the union's control".

At May Day rallies in the region the strikers were able to argue for soli-

darity from other workers. Much money was raised and many important contacts made. But at Chesterfield the Communist Party (CP) controlled Trades Council blocked attempts by the sacked printers to speak from the platform. Workers in struggle were to be silenced so that Michael Meacher could address the rally at length. The CP would allow nothing to upset their "vote Labour" carnival, especially workers prepared to fight the attacks of the bosses.

The contract with scab firm Ad-scene which costs Pickering a fortune, is up for renewal soon. This could well be when finances force a return to Heanor Gate taking on a scab workforce. If this happens the Trader printers will build "Warrington-style mass pickets". Meanwhile picketing at Trader offices in the region has become more militant - at Leicester on May 6th scab cars were blocked for half an hour; scabs then had to contend with glued-up door locks while being yelled at by a crowd of angry printers.

The union solicitor is pursuing "unfair dismissal" claims in the courts so Pickering could well be forced to pay compensation to the sacked printers. But it's unlikely he'd be forced to give them back their jobs. "We don't want a thousand quid and a UB40", explains one printer. "That way Pickering gets to re-open a non-union factory in the Midlands which, because of the crap wages he'll pay, will be that much cheaper. It'll put every other NGA and SOGAT printing job in the region at risk. We can only win victory in one of two ways. Either we force Pickering to give us all back our jobs in a unionised factory at a decent wage level, or we make the bastard go bust."

Messages of support and donations to: Trader Sacked Workers' Dispute, c/o 114 Stonehill Road, Derby. For a copy of Dispute, newsletter of the Nottingham Trader Printers Support Group, send an SAE and donation to: c/o Box 5, 115 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.



Traders printers head the May Day march in Nottingham

## GUTTER RADICALISM?

In May 1985 the Keighley News printed a front page exclusive entitled "How Public Money Is Funding Anarchy". The entirely bogus allegations against the 1 In 12 Club and others enabled the head of Shipley CID, DI Eddie Hemsley, to raid premises and expropriate the names and addresses of people connected with a wide range of community organisations. The journalist responsible for this "exclusive", Malcolm Evans, admitted that the only proof of his wild allegations was that he had been given the information by a senior police officer - a DI Hemsley - who was investigating the activities of the 1 In 12 Club. Malcolm Evans moved in 1985 to the Daily Express. He now has a job with the new "radical" News On Sunday whose motto is "The Campaign For Real Journalism Starts Here!". And the News On Sunday has re-

cruited another gutter journalist, John Nairn, a reporter in Scotland, whose past "exclusives" include spreading lies and rumour about Clydeside Anarchists. This came to light after DAM contacted him asking the News On Sunday to cover the Ardrbride strike - nothing about the dispute ever appeared in the "socialist" alternative, Nairn being more interested in collecting gossip.

## KNEE DEEP IN SHIT SPECIAL

No 12, June 1987.

Well produced investigative journal delving into corruption in our society. Mostly devoted to masonic corruption in West Yorkshire; also articles on the Special Branch and the Economic League. Available from KDIS, c/o 31 Manor Row, Bradford 1, West Yorkshire.

# Guinness Goes Yuppy

Cranks was one of the first health food restaurants in Britain. When it was started in 1961 it lived up to its name, catering for a select and oddball crowd interested in nutrition and the ethics of vegetarianism. At the end of 1985 it was sold out to Guinness whose intention is to expand the chain from 5 outlets to sixty in five years in direct contrast with the "cottage industry" approach on which Cranks was founded. In a recent survey Cranks' closest competitor was found to be Pizzaland in line with its prospective development as a MacDonalds-type "fast food" operation. Rather than food being produced on the premises, all baking and cooking will be done in a central Kings Cross factory, then fast-chilled, vacuum-packed or frozen and carted out to the shops, thus decreasing the nutritional content. Corners are already being cut such as pressure being applied by head office to minimise the use of more expensive organic veg on which Cranks prided itself before.

The "family atmosphere" of Cranks is also fast disintegrating. Many of the traditional staff benefits and perks are being taken away. For example, whereas before staff had a wide choice of food

to eat, now they are palmed off with reject food such as old salad sometimes three days old. Likewise new staff are not entitled to sick pay for a year as opposed to two months under the previous system. Breaches of contract and erosion of staff rights and privileges are now being introduced by the new managing director, James Fuller (ex-Trusthouse Forte).

In response a flourishing branch of the Transport & General Workers Union has emerged and forms the focus of attention in the fight for maintaining rights. The branch is currently helping in 2 cases. One where a member of staff was badly burned by boiling water spilled from a broken bertha which the union repeatedly asked to be fixed but nothing was done. The other case is where a long-serving member of staff was sacked (seemingly as an example to others) for taking food home near the end of the day. Traditionally this was common law practice and one where no black and white rules exist.

The union has been fighting for recognition for the last 6 months and is making slow progress. But our presence

## BANKRUPT UNIONISM

In March the Joint Trade Union committee (JCU) at BREL's (British Rail Engineering Ltd) works at Eastleigh near Southampton accepted the imposition of a new deal cutting pay, bonuses and overtime rates, without so much as a ballot. This is typical of NUR Head Office's collaboration with the BRB (British Rail Board). The union took Kenneth Clarke's localised pay bargaining ideas to heart, washing its hands of the negotiations, leaving it to the individual JCU's to come to their own agreements with management. Eastleigh had already accepted work flexibility last August after a ballot, manipulated to vote in favour by the local unions - one NUR steward was told that if he advised people to vote against he'd have his union card taken away. On April 1st Eastleigh, along with Doncaster, Glasgow and Wolverton became part of the British Rail Maintenance Group (BRMG), which is merely the restructuring of BREL to prepare the way for privatisation. All this shows the bankruptcy of a reformist union unable and unwilling to defend its members.

## MIDLANDS DAM

A number of DAM members in the Kettering/Corby/Leicester area are to hold a meeting with a view to setting up a Midlands DAM group on Friday, June 12th at 8pm in Leicester Socialist Centre above Blackthorn Books, 70 High Street, Leicester. Any DAM member or other class struggle anarchist will be very welcome. Enquiries to: c/o DAM National Secretary, Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

is certainly accounted for in managerial decision making processes. Keeping the pressure on and membership up is an uphill struggle though. The average stay of an employee is probably about 6 weeks and about 20% of staff leave within days because of pay and conditions. But in an industry that is traditionally under-unionised we feel that having got so far we've got to make a stand.

## 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

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## WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

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

Name .....

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

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JUNE 20TH

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# Direct Action

**VIDEO TOUR - ...de toda la vida - WOMEN IN THE SPANISH ANARCHIST MOVEMENT, 1936 - details in next month's Direct Action**

## Labour Attacks Labourers

The following shortened interview with Dave Kerin, a rank and file activist in the BLF (the Builders' Labourers' Federation), was conducted for Direct Action by a DAM member who at the time was a member of the ASF (Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation) in Australia. Readers of DA's 35 and 37 will remember that the BLF is a militant union which faces heavy-handed State repression.

### DEREGISTRATION

**D.A.** - What is de-registration?

**D.K.** - De-registration was first suggested in '83 in the Economist to advise Bob Hawke on the best way to handle the union movement. It said he should bring the unions into tow, otherwise the free market forces couldn't operate - ie people wouldn't invest in Australia - and what he should do is to de-register the most militant wing of the union movement. It also said de-registration is not enough - he must make sure the de-registered union is "cannibalised" (ie criminalised and sold out by the labour movement).

De-registration was aimed purely at getting us outside the Industrial Courts and Federal and State awards governing wages and conditions. Which is fine - it means we can negotiate direct with employers. But "cannibalisation" really hurt, as the ALP (Australian Labour Party) went to its agents in the union movement saying: "Right, there's power and a quid in this for all of us - get the BLF - we want them; you don't like them; the coppers certainly don't like them and the Master Builders' Association (the bosses' organisation) don't like them - so go for it." In that process we were also criminalised - we've been averaging 3-4 arrests each day!

**D.A.** - Does de-registration mean that you can't operate as a union?

**D.K.** - No. Even under capitalist law we still have a right to free association. Three arrests a day prove we're criminalised - but we're fighting (at the moment it's only us and the plumbers fighting at job level). In Victoria they also brought in the "BLF De-registration Act" where they've got the right to sequester union property and assets. For the working class it's nothing new. But the background is pretty unique. In the Australian union movement the BLF has always been a spearhead - we've set the pace and labourers have over the last 15 years gone from being donkeys to people who the boss both respected and feared. In our industry, with a 4-year boom/bust cycle, we were sacked at the snap of the bosses' fingers. To offset this we needed a strong union. Also, in the early '70's we were averaging one death a month - since de-registration we're back to that figure. In Sydney last year, because of this dispute, there were 26 dead in the BLF all from different incidents. One of the most expensive things for a boss is what we call conditions and they call restrictive practices (such as safety agreements, etc).

I've talked to fellow workers from Britain who couldn't believe the good conditions and wage rates labourers over here had won - they were hard fought for! But it took a Labour Government to bring in these attacks on the BLF. The Liberal (Conservatives) Government also de-registered us in 1974 during the "green bans" (work bans on projects destructive to urban open spaces, historical buildings or housing in working class areas), but we grew in numbers. However the Labour Government with its links in the unions was able to split the trade union forces at the top with their de-registration - hence the "cannibalisation". I've spent this year speaking to shop floors in other industries and we've not found opposition (to the BLF) on any of them.

**D.A.** - So is there opposition too from the ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions)?

**D.K.** - The ACTU has played a very reactionary role. They are intimately linked to the Labour Party where they got their schooling in



Police repression in Queensland

back-rooming and dirty politics in the Young Labour Associations - they admit it themselves. This is the cynicism of it. What it all means is that they could "cannibalise" us. Under a conservative (Liberal Party) government they'd have never got away with it. There'd have been total opposition from the rest of the union movement. ACTU says we're unrealistic, old-fashioned socialism doesn't fit in with modern capitalism. Their corporatism and their world view has no place for our sort of union, one that empowered ordinary builders' labourers. The ACTU find that threatening.

time left wing, designed its rules to stop scabbing and gave all control to the Executive. Now these same rules are used to prevent militant and democratic expression of the members' views. (The same situation occurred with the AUEW.)

**D.A.** - Has de-registration cost the BLF members?

**D.K.** - We've lost members who've been forced to join other unions, but a few thousand in Victoria alone have signed back to the BLF. The BWIU and the FEDFA have signed many new agreements on safety and super-annuation. To get

### SCABBING

**D.A.** - So what's the BLF trying to do at the moment?

**D.K.** - We say registration is not the issue. What is is that the employers have found two unions - the BWIU (Building Workers Industrial Union) and the FEDFA (Federated Engine Drivers and Firefighters Association) - prepared to scab and poach our members with the use of the police. I've seen this on job after job. The coppers come on to the job; the FEDFA and BWIU officials would come in with them; the boss would be there and the Department of Labour. Our members would get dragged off and arrested, including shop stewards, if they wouldn't sign over (to a new union) on a charge of trespass or assault. The boss would tell the labourers to either resign on that day from the BLF and join the BWIU or FEDFA or get sacked.

**D.A.** - Is the scabbing because of the union leadership, or is there support in the rank and file too?

**D.K.** - Every rank and file meeting in both these unions have opposed it. But under the BWIU rules, for example, the Executive is the ruling body, not the members. There's an irony in this. The National Civic Council-Democratic Labour Party (NCC - Catholic anti-communist cells in the trade unions in the 50's; DLP - right wing splitters from the ALP) formed a scab union. The BWIU, at that

super-annuation workers must wait until they're 55. Whereas in the scheme we introduced they are able to get it as soon as they're out of the industry - only common sense in our job.

**D.A.** - Do you see any way in which the process of de-registration can be subverted and is there any chance in this area of solidarity from rank and file groups in other industries?

**D.K.** - The only way de-registration can be subverted, to be made meaningless, is by the workers getting more power on the job and through the unions. Registration is a red herring. We've heard the slogan: "If you don't win it on the job you won't win it in court".

### ARBITRATION

**D.A.** - On the subject of courts, Australia has long been seen as a prime example of so-called independent arbitration dominating the union movement.

**D.K.** - Well, you've got to look at the economic background to all this. Unlike many European countries, which were made into a bulwark against communism, Australia's post-war boom was phenomenal. Here normal working people have got at least one car, they've got their house. Arbitration seemed it was giving everyone a good deal. However, the cold war destroyed the left here unlike many European countries. The European left's influence in the rank and file remained, but here the section that survived was the parliamentary left section of the ALP. And now even they've gone over to the corporatist strategy - the Accord and the Hancock Report which is corporatism embodied.

**D.A.** - Do you ever see a campaign in the union movement to get rid of the arbitration system altogether?

**D.K.** - To me the more likely thing is that arbitration would be made unworkable. People will win something on the ground and then either get it ratified in the court or tell the court to fuck off. A case in point - when the Accord came in there was this little furniture factory in Geelong who won this increase of \$12 - the bosses said fine, they'd adhere to it. And the bloody BWIU opposed it and said no, it goes against the accord! And the Court took the \$12 dollars off them after they'd won it!

You look at the next two or three years. The blues (Australian for fight - or in this case intense industrial struggle) are going to be on. The arbitration system has no future. It will either be ignored - it will just be a rubber stamp, which is what the Liberals already claim it is - or, if they try anything, there'll be an outright blue over it.

**D.A.** - What do you think the strategy will be if the Liberal Party gets in?

**D.K.** - I think it'll be win some on the ground and get it rubber

stamped and I can see blues happening when the government appeals. The main thing will be the economic climate. Australia's heading for a depression and the lifestyles that workers have won (not been given) will suffer. We're going to be thrown back on union resources that we have very little of these days: to treat each other in a comradely way, to show solidarity to our neighbours and workmates. We're not strong in that because this whole consumer push has seen to that. Unless we create cross-referencing (eg strike support groups) among ourselves, where we work and where we live, we'll go down the drain.



### COMMENT

A newcomer could be forgiven for forming the impression that Australia has one huge middle class. The reality is that Australia went through a period when advances were won on the job, to achieve a quality of living that is theirs by right and which many of us aspire to as a minimum. Overall the availability of housing, health education, etc is better than in many European countries - though many working class and immigrant communities remain disadvantaged. While the class differences have appeared to be less pronounced than in Britain this is now changing.

Under Labour Thatcherism is being applied, using the bogus arguments about world recession and market economy to justify cuts in jobs and living standards as well as attacks on workers' organisations. Already in some parts of Australia, eg Queensland, strike action has been criminalised. To enforce further control Labour is attempting to introduce stringent National Identity controls. Close strategic relations with the US and the fact that much of Australia's wealth is slowly being taken over and creamed off by "off-shore" investment companies from Europe, the USA and Japan threaten the well-being of the Australian working class.

The labour movement managers, the ALP and the ACTU, are centre stage in holding back resistance. They know that the so-called boom period helped to erode the traditions of class solidarity. The only way forward is with a revival in industrial and community solidarity, mutual aid, and the syndicalist traditions that are very much a part of Australia's industrial history. Unions like the BLF and our ASF comrades have the task of helping to revive these traditions.