

Direct Action

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The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism

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25p

WHAT A SHAME!



I DETECT

THE HAND

OF ROME

IN THIS !

An unwelcome spectre is haunting one of the keystones of Ulster loyalism. The employment of loyalist workers depends on British state funding of its major sources, including the state-owned Harland and Wolff shipyard which has an overwhelmingly loyalist workforce of 4,000 and provides 1,500 jobs among its suppliers. But the Northern Ireland Office has responded coolly to the expected £80 million subsidy required to win the contract to build Ravi Tikkoo's "Ultimate Dream" cruise liner.

On 27th May NIO Under Secretary Peter Viggers floated the idea of the privatisation of the Shipyard in an answer to a parliamentary question, expressing concern at the £240 million paid out in subsidies over the last the 5 years. Although no decision has been made about the shipyard's future, Viggers warned that "there can be no absolute guarantee of lasting support from public funds regardless of the company's ability to compete effectively".

Privatisation is not only a threat to the future of the shipyard and its workforce - it represents a threat to loyalism. It is obviously disturbing to loyalists that a British government should place any consideration higher than providing jobs for them. Worse, a privatised company would lack the state's commitment to leave employment discrimination intact, and would also be vulnerable to commercial pressure instigated by the campaign in the USA around the MacBride Principles which stress fair employment as a prerequisite for US investment.

Although workers at the shipyard struck late in May against the NIO's latest piece of "seen-to-be-doing-something" legislation on discrimination, this indication of government unwillingness to subsidise loyalist supremacy unconditionally is more significant. Anger at the Anglo-Irish Agreement was directed at ordinary Catholics, not the state, because it posed loyalists no real threat. But unionism remains Britain's justification for being in Ireland. The consent of the loyalist working class has been bought by discrimination. This, alongside the suppression of anti-unionists, is vital to the stability of the 6 County statelet. If Harland and Wolff goes, so could much more.

Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

KNAPP OFF

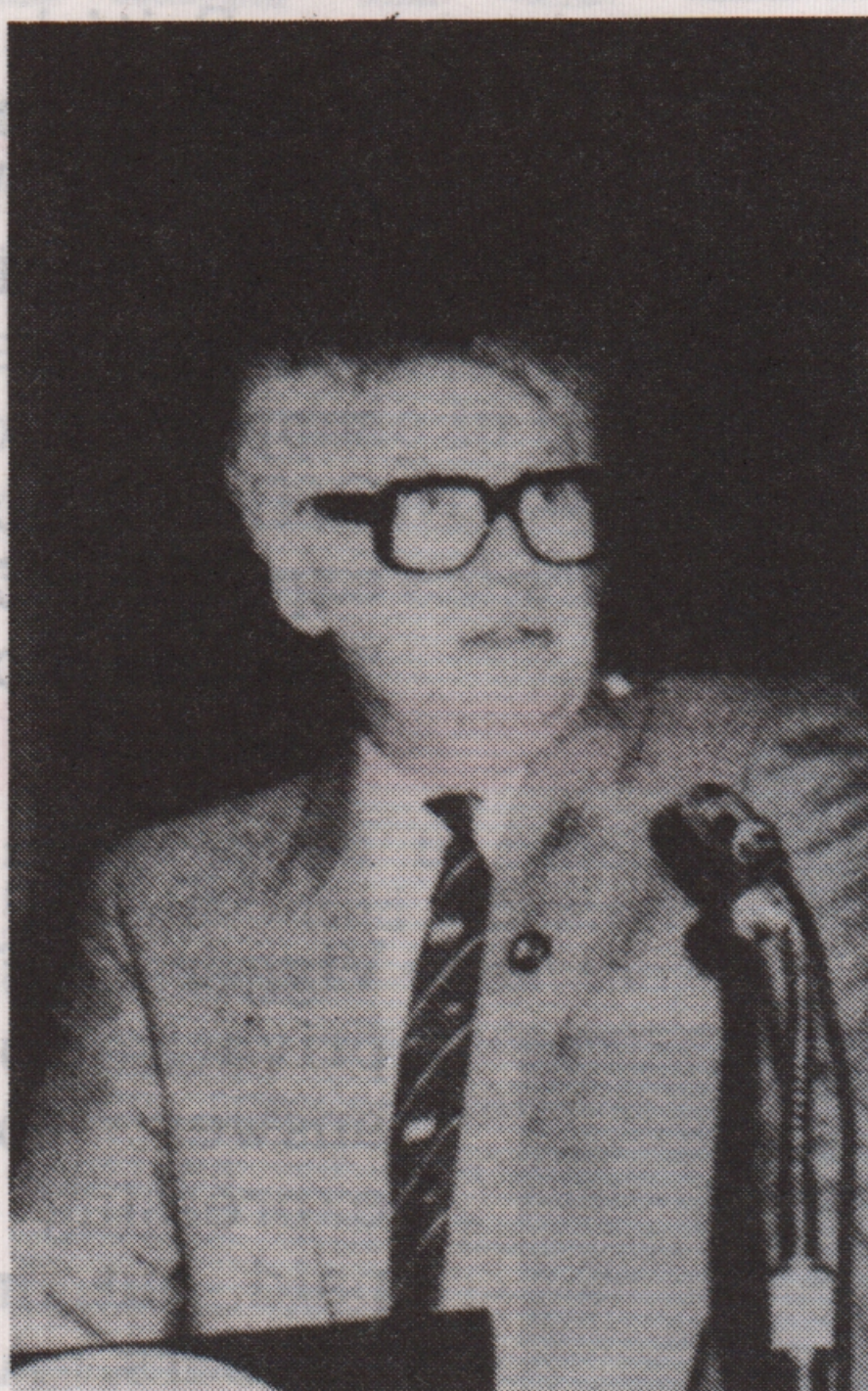
After the debacle of the 1982 2-day strike and the defeat of the drivers over flexible rostering, British Rail set about slashing the workforce in preparation for privatisation. For a long time there was little resistance. Recently, however, railworkers' confidence has begun to grow as BR, faced with the threat of industrial action, were backed down time after time in local disputes.

Against this background BR imposed a pay and grading scheme on 5,000 S&T (signals and telecommunication staff which would have meant more work for less money. The NUR leadership responded in its usual manner, making strong protests about breaking the machinery of negotiation. At the same time they prepared to do nothing by making it clear they felt any call for industrial action would be rejected by the S&T membership. It was only after a national S&T grades conference passed a resolution demanding a ballot for industrial action that the NUR reluctantly acted.

OTHER IDEAS

There then followed the usual "massive" campaign of one boring leaflet asking for a "yes" vote to strengthen the Executive's (EC) hand in the negotiations. When the ballot result was announced with 87% in favour of strike action it was a tremendous boost to activists. Needless to say NUR leaders, who only weeks before talked of doom and gloom and no chance of support for strike action, were now crowing about the tremendous victory. Of course they felt all they had to do now was call an overtime ban and, armed with the result, meet management and re-negotiate the agreement. But management had other ideas. At a meeting with the union that lasted two minutes, not only were they unwilling to negotiate, but they also informed

"brother" Knapp they would seek an injunction as they felt the wording on the ballot paper was misleading and that a circular instructing other grades not to do work normally done by S&T and to work normally amounted to calling for secondary action.



This was all it took to dispell the leadership's new-found confidence. Knapp urged yet another ballot, while a circular was rushed out to explain that the union wasn't asking other grades to take action in support of S&T. A special strike issue of the union paper was destroyed by the EC as it referred to the original circular. In the event BR didn't go to the courts. They issued a statement saying they never intended to after rank and file workers in various areas

of the country threatened to walk out.

Come the first weekend of the overtime ban (the majority of S&T staff work every weekend) the union yet again proved incapable of organising anything. The army of full-time officials, vanished into thin air. The union head office virtually shut down as Knapp & Co went on a 2-week holiday at the NUR annual general meeting. Nor was this behaviour confined to the higher echelons of the bureaucracy. The vast majority of branch secretaries totally ignored, and continue to ignore, the dispute. So the first weekend was chaos. Very few places organised pickets and highly demoralising rumours of mass scabbing in various parts of the country flew around. However, the dispute remained amazingly solid with only a handful of scabs, mainly in the East Midlands.

By the 2nd weekend workers, often with little experience, began to organise. A meeting, open to S&T staff regardless of NUR branch, was organised in Manchester. This turned out to be one of the biggest in the area in years with delegates from all over the north. A dispute committee to co-ordinate pickets and organise a strike bulletin and leaflets in the Manchester area was set up with a delegate elected from each of the otherwise isolated depots. Delegates from other areas went home to organise similarly. Dispute committees have, in one form or another, sprung up all over the country and a number of strike bulletins are being produced to counter rumours and management lies. It's also important as the union haven't produced a single leaflet since the action began.

Perhaps a reflection of the total moral bankruptcy of



your average bureaucrat is that far from welcoming the committees the union stalwarts have tried to undermine them, spreading gossip and misinformation. The assistant secretary, Dodds, for example, in a drunken speech (for a change) claimed that at the meeting in Manchester 50% walked out in disgust at what was being said by mindless militants. Thankfully this back-stabbing hasn't undermined people's enthusiasm. When the dispute was escalated to a series of one-day strikes the committees organised not only pickets for their own areas but also sent flying pickets to the weaker areas like the East Midlands, thus reducing still further the number of scabs.

With no sign of a drift back to work and the strike beginning to bite, BR have shown the first signs of cracking, offering a small pay rise, albeit over the heads of the union directly to workers. Needless to say, on hearing of this, Knapp rushed out a letter to the board asking them to re-open negotiations. There is now a real danger of Knapp negotiating a small pay rise and claiming it as a victory. This fear is reflected in the fact that lists of demands are now appearing in strike bulletins along with calls for the EC to consult the S&T

membership before any settlement.

It is becoming clear that to move the intransigent BR further the one-day strikes must be escalated to all-out strike action. There's also a need to build support for S&T in other grades because, as BR are well aware, if they give in to S&T and grant a major pay rise it would boost the confidence of all railworkers and other grades will soon be queuing up to get the same.

On the wider aspects of the dispute, it has already shown that workers, with little or no experience of strikes, can quickly organise themselves into an effective force and gain the confidence necessary to mount flying pickets, produce leaflets and so on. It has also shown the total bankruptcy of reformist trade unionism. The NUR is little more than a fancy office block staffed by overpaid bureaucrats, with an empty shell for an organisation. There's little doubt that when this dispute finishes any informal structures thrown up will disappear. What is needed is more permanent organisation and the time to start building that organisation is now.

P&O And RCP Join Forces

P&O CONTAINERS, part of the P&O Group, is one of 30 companies or "charities" that helps fund the right wing group "Common Cause", a trade union and labour monitoring group which, in 1985, published the expensive though inaccurate "Far Left Guide". Common Cause is run by top company directors, including Lord McAlpine. It's activities are advising "any person, firm or company, trade union association, local authority or any other body on...the employment of any person or persons and in particular to give assistance in the screening of those who by their conduct or associations might reasonably be expected to be engaging in activities detrimental to the welfare of the state". Common Cause has admitted that it keeps blacklists of such people.

In 1986-7 P&O Containers gave £1,500 to a "charity" called The Industrial Trust. In the same period P&O gave £7,000 to the "charity" which itself has given Common Cause £15,000. And what are the "charitable aims" of The Industrial Trust?...to promote the efficiency of industry, commerce and the public services for the public benefit, by among other things, the improvement of industrial relations." Tell that to the sacked Dover seafarers.



COLLECTIONS FOR the sack-P&O seafarers by members of Hackney's Seafarers Support Group have drawn opposition from the bosses, the old bill and some Bolsheviks. Not content with earning a reputation for stealing money from strikers by using their name to collect for the party, the Revolutionary Clotheshorse Party have intimidated collectors outside Safeways in Stamford Hill, claiming it as their "patch" and that collections for striking workers got in the way of building the party. The next week a number of working class militants, mostly DAM affiliates, responded to a call for aid, but the RCP never showed. More predictably, Safeway's management objected to collections on "their property", and 3 people have been charged with "conducting a street

collection without due permission, and related offences", by the police. We're not yet in a position to settle accounts with the bosses or their lackeys but we would like to remind communists that they operate on suffrance, so they shouldn't push their luck.



FREEDOM SOON

EAST LONDON DAM reports that Russell Shankland was moved to the "C" category Channing's Wood prison in June, and that Dean Hancock was due to join him there by the first week of July. The move from Gartree maximum security prison to this "open" prison means that, all being well, they should get parole at the next board. Although the regime at "open" prisons is very strict, the greater opportunities for sports and courses are appreciated. We'd like to wish the lads good luck for their next parole board, and hope they enjoy the change of scenery. Write to: A83752 Russell Shankland; and A99410 R D Hancock at HMP Channing's Wood, Denbury, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6DW. Remember, more than 3 years after the end of the miners strike, they're still inside and deserve your support.

THATCHER'S SCAPEGOATS

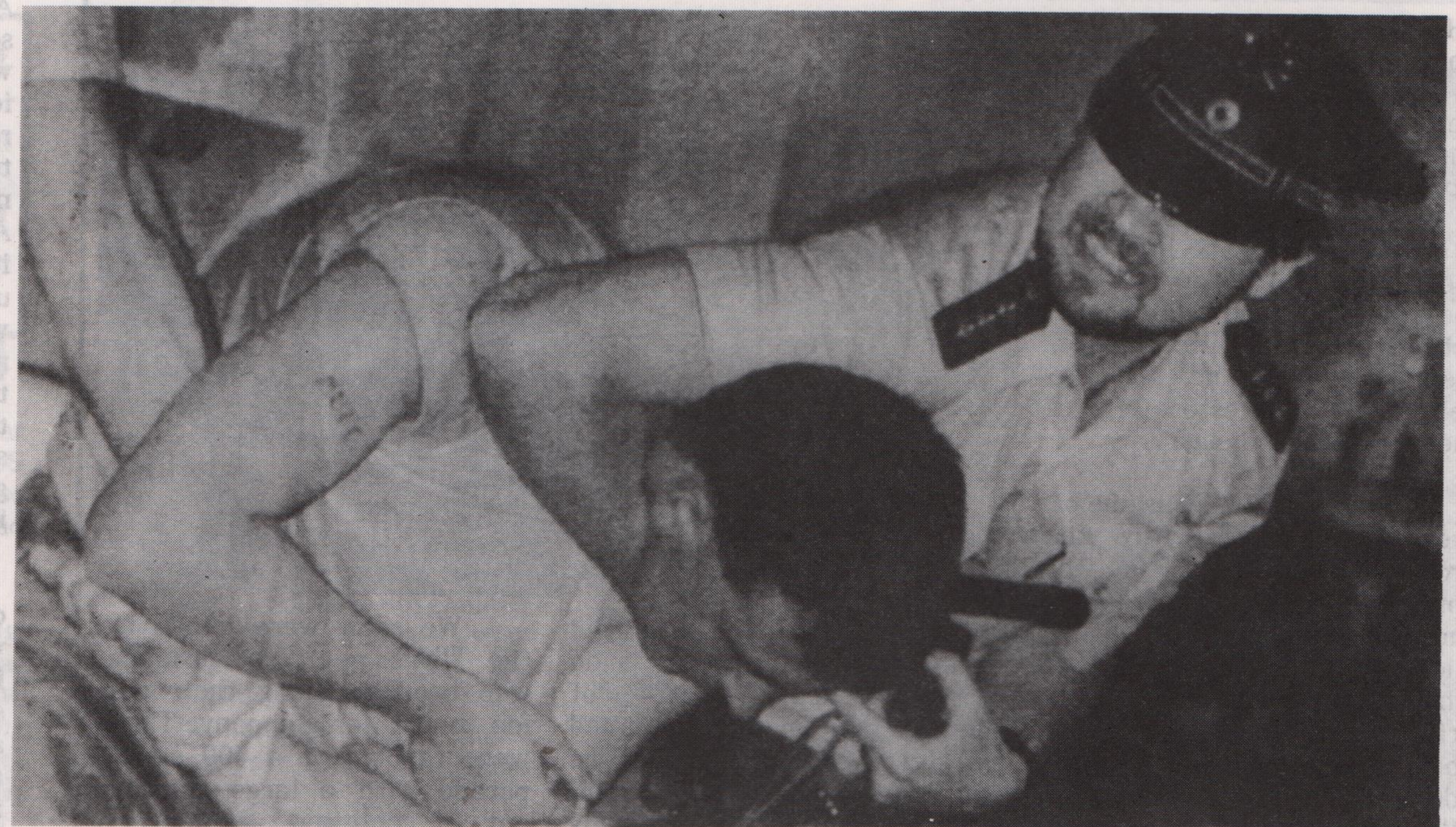
The recent European Nations Cup and the trouble which accompanied it were the signal for yet more hackneyed pronouncements on football hooliganism from the powers that be. And once more the "experts" and politicians were talking through their arses.

It's always seemed incongruous to me to see chinless wonders like the Sports Minister, who'd be more at home at the Henley Regatta, try to come to terms with the phenomenon of football hooliganism. Similarly, when Thatcher and her like jump on the bandwagon and start proposing identity cards for football supporters and god knows what else, football hooliganism is obviously being used as a scapegoat by the establishment, for their own political ends. That said, football hooliganism is not a very pleasant phenomenon. Trouble is, none of those who have so much to say on it ever hit the nail on the head.

Now it's not a peculiarly English problem. In Germany this June for instance there is evidence that local boneheads provoked the English. And curiously enough the reaction of the German media and public was nowhere near as hysterical as that of papers and politicians back in England. But if football hooliganism isn't a peculiarly English phenomenon, it is nonetheless most deeply

rooted in this country. When, for example, was the last time you heard about German football fans trashing a bar in this country? Like it or not, when English fans go abroad some of them at least go to take over a local bar, singing "God Save The Queen", wave the union jack and give nazi salutes (not that the phenomenon is restricted to football. Much the same thing happens in Benidorm every summer). Point is, who has produced these deficients? This is a question Thatcher and the "experts" can't answer, because these are their children.

Until quite recently (and even now sometimes) it was usual to hear that the English game was the "best in the world". This despite the fact that England haven't won a championship in years, and that the game as played in England is the most mind-numbingly boring kick and run and hussle imaginable, with the least skill ingredient of any style employed in the world. Perhaps the calibre of the game in England is best typified by 2 clowns masquer-



ading as commentators, the amazingly witty "Saint and Greavsie". While commentating on one of the games in Germany and discussing Spanish midfielder Michel's lucrative contract, Ian "Saint" John managed to come up with: "that'll buy a lot of paella" ...really earned your money there, Saint.

Meanwhile, back at home, the faithful fans continue to be herded into dilapidated, grey stadiums, where you're lucky to get a toilet and refreshments. In fact next to no money has been spent for

the benefit of supporters in England in 100 years, in comparison to the millions that have been made from the game. We continue to be treated like cattle. And if you treat people like animals, they'll act like them. Just before the Bradford disaster in '85 there were calls for electric fencing in football grounds. If the idea had been taken up hundreds would have perished in the fire instead of fifty.

Every time an international championship comes around "the Sun" and Co. build up England as the great white

hope and of the less intelligent fans go expecting to conquer all. And when the team gets beat or the fans find other "sport", the same shifts wring their hands about the "animals" who've "brought shame on England", or the knives come out for the unfortunate manager, or excuses are trundled out about cheating foreigners. So Thatcher and Co. spare us your sermons next time union jack clad morons make some corner of a foreign field forever English. You created them. Now the chickens have come home to roost.

Teabreak Tribunal

Tricia Jennings' industrial tribunal began in Edinburgh on the 29th of June. Across the country her supporters picketed Burtons' shops and an all-day picket was held outside the tribunal office in Edinburgh. Inside things went equally well for Tricia but since there is still another witness to be questioned the tribunal is continuing on the 25th of July.

Burtons' case depends on insinuations, twisted facts and downright lies. The official Burtons group lawyer made a series of "suggestions" about Tricia's character and behaviour which culminated in the unsubstantiated "hint" that she stole her own file from Burtons' office. They are relying quite heavily on proving that Tricia had a worse rate of absence than any other worker who had been sacked for absenteeism. So Burtons' personnel manager compiled a chart of the absenteeism of other sacked workers. This looked impressive on paper but turned out to have little relation to Tricia's case - as one member of the tribunal said: "This is not much help to me in deciding anything".

Another prominent feature of Burtons argument is a list of pregnant women who have not been sacked. This was introduced by the cheap trick of getting one of their workers to be a witness to say how well she was treated when she was pregnant. But this also proved dubious since the other women named had been employed by Burtons for over two years, and none had suffered pregnancy complications like Tricia. The rest of the

Burtons case is built on re-writing facts - re-scripted phone calls and events transferred to different times. It's obvious that Burtons' witnesses are terrified of losing their jobs and are either being very selective about their evidence or telling downright lies.

Some interesting facts on Burtons' treatment of their employees were revealed. They make a lot of the fact that Tricia was only a "trainee" and therefore on trial to see if she was suitable. However, her contract makes no mention of this probationary period. In fact it contains the Burtons-USDAW agreement providing for disciplinary, grievance and appeal procedures. However, Burtons claim that only the grievance procedure applies to trainees, and that puts the onus on the worker to take action. The end result of Burtons "picking and choosing" of the bits of the contract which suit them is that probationers have virtually no rights - as the Burtons personnel manager put it "for the first 6 months probationers are on a tight-rope".

The situation is further complicated because special

rules applying to probationers are not written down. This has been "company practice" for the past ten years and has, according to Burtons, been accepted by both management and the union. When asked how probationers could find out their rights during probation, the personnel manager stated that they would probably be told by their fellow workers "during tea-breaks". When the tribunal room burst into laughter, he indignantly claimed this was how he - the personnel manager - had got to know about this "company policy".

On the question of how Tricia's pregnancy relates to her sacking, the personnel manager stated that he gave "special consideration" to pregnant women. However, he also said: "at the end of the day absenteeism is absence from work for whatever the reason it is". It is difficult to see how "special consideration" can be given to women who are off work due to pregnancy-related illness under this rigid system.

The tribunal received good press coverage with fairly favourable articles in most of the local newspapers and also in a few national papers. Lots of people now know about Tricia's case and it is vital that we keep the action going with continuing pickets of Burtons shops and another national day of action on the 25th of July. It is important that Tricia wins the tribunal and gets compensation from Burtons but it's also important that the public are made aware of what has happened to Tricia (and many other women) and that Burtons and the rest are shown that they can't get away with it!

Self-defence, No Offence



THREE MEMBERS of a Leicester family who defended themselves against a late-night racist attack have found themselves in court on serious assault charges - while the three thugs who set on them have gone scot free.

The attack on the Singh family happened in mid-March, just after they'd closed their chip shop for the night. Three white men arrived outside, demanding to be served, then started hammering on the glass, chanting racist slogans. One of them smashed in the front door. Jit Singh, and his two sons, Jagtar and Narinder, went outside to defend themselves and in the struggle that followed one attacker fell and hurt himself and another ran off. The Singhs then called the police who promptly, arrested Jit, Narinder and Jagtar, and let the racist thugs go. Police held the Singhs for nine hours while, despite police assurances, no-one was sent to repair the front door of their shop and home. Mrs Singh and her daughter were left with no way to lock

themselves in - knowing all too well that their attackers had already been released.

As news of the attack and assault charges spread, anger erupted in Leicester's Asian community. The Singh Defence Campaign was formed immediately, calling for all charges to be dropped and demanding to know why the racist attackers got off scot free. At the first court hearing in mid-June, the police dropped all the charges against Jagtar, as well as those of "possessing an offensive weapon" against Jit and Narinder. With this initial victory behind them, the Singh Defence Campaign is now pressing to get all the remaining charges dropped. Jit and Narinder were due in court again as we go to press, on charges of "wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm". Demonstrations outside the court were being planned.

Contact: Singh Defence Campaign, c/o Racist Attacks Monitoring Project, 6 Seymour St, Highfields, Leicester.

I-I-IRA?

THE ORANGE ORDER, a by-word for bigotry, were allowed to parade through Chesterfield on Saturday 18th June. Three hundred years ago a plot was hatched in the town to remove the Catholic king James II and replace him with the Protestant Mary II. So the Labour council in Chesterfield permitted the Orangemen to march and rally to celebrate the restoration of the protestant dynasty.

The Orange Order is one of the main reasons why the protestant workers in the north of Ireland were persuaded to support the partition of Ireland in 1922, and why the north became a sectarian statelet. For a Labour council to allow them to parade is a joke, but then we all know the Labour Party is full of jokes, most of which are sick, not funny.

The day started with the obligatory counter-demo when some anarchists bayed for blood with chants of "kill, kill, kill" and "burn, burn, burn" everything and anyone. Violence is an inevitable part of the revolutionary process - the glorification and lusting for it is part of the counter-revolution. An unusual chant for "anarchists" was "I-I-IRA", hardly appropriate when all the political differences are submerged in the provos for



maximum unity for a united Ireland. Armed action by such as the Defence Committees of the CNT in Spain, controlled by a workers' movement, we endorse. The IRA Army Council is still regarded by many Republicans as the legitimate government of Ireland.

OBLIGATIONS

At the end of the march there was the obligatory rally with the obligatory Labour Party speaker who opposes the Labour Party, and the waiting around for the Orangemen. The obligatory "we have no leaders" anarchists charged off after the first leader with a megaphone to "get the fascists", the real thing and the militant anti-fascists organised a march to where the loyalists were to hold a rally.

We soon were joined by the "let's get 'em" brigade, who brought along their police escort for company. There were reports of a 500 strong parade with a large contingent of children and only a handful of fascists. Rumours, counter-rumours and rumours of rumours spread around but it was eventually accepted that the loyalists had been turned back by the police, so everyone went home.

A small victory in a small town, which in its way formed common cause with those fighting sectarianism in the 6 Counties, and put pressure on at least one Labour council. Perhaps most importantly, it raised the issues with the many locals who came up to talk about what was happening.

Lost Clause

THE GOOD NEWS - Section 28 of the Local Government Act is legally toothless. In schools where its main thrust was expected, local authorities have no influence on curricula as that was restricted to teachers and school governors by the 1986 Education Act. Also, the legal definition of "promoting homosexuality" means doing something which actually increases the number of homosexuals and, though this is possible in the fevered imagination of sexually-repressed right wingers it is virtually impossible to prove.

The bad news - This will do very little to stop what would have been the real impact of Section 28 anyway - stimulating a climate of reaction. Self-censorship remains a danger though individuals were never legally liable under the section and it will give reactionary workers and managers encouragement to go easy on services to gays and lesbians. Harassment of workers providing services by managers, workmates and members of the public is still on the cards. If some bastard thinks a Lesbian Line poster, say, is illegal and wants a row the legal position makes no odds.

In a certain north London borough the first reaction to the Clause was to display lesbian and gay material to show the threat. From David Rees and Valerie Taylor to Oscar Wilde and Shirley Corv-

an's "Savages", we got a favourable reaction. Now, after a by-election in which Labour lost 2 of 4 seats contested (due to abstention up to 70% in protest at Labour's cuts) and one defeated "favourite" was a gay activist, comments by avowed Labour voters as well as Tories are well out of order.

In the midst of the attack on jobs, services and workers' rights in local government and education we mustn't forget the fight for lesbian and gay rights. A supportive atmosphere for gay workers and service users is needed now more than ever, we must take the opportunity afforded by Section 28's raising of their profile to build more support for equal rights.

LAMBETH COUNCIL, those well-known progressives, were recently dismayed to find that a community group they had been funding was really a bunch of loony fundamentalist Christians, who spent their time (and Lambeth's money) pushing rabid anti-homosexual literature through people's letter boxes. And strangely enough, they hadn't implemented much of an equal opportunities programme either - in fact they only employed other members of their sect. If you think this sounds familiar, you could notice the number of ex-WRP'er employed by Lambeth.

STILL FIGHTING

Despite the depressing tone of the coverage in DA 49, all is not lost in the fight against library closures and re-deployment in Hackney. After the rigging of the Labour Party annual borough convention there was a mood of depression among the occupiers and union activists, but a summons to the High Court put an immediate new target on view. After a special branch meeting to decide on industrial action over the libraries and a dispute in housing was declared inquorate by district organisation officer, Andrew Jack, shock began to turn to anger.

The protests of branch officers, intent on spending a week on the piss at the NALGO annual conference and a further week recovering were stifled by the 50 signatures necessary for an emergency branch meeting to debate one motion. "Persons Unknown" were in court on Friday June 24th - we were meeting on the 23rd to vote for a strike. So we leafleted every major workplace in Hackney the 3 days before and bit our nails for the quorum. On the Friday there was a stayaway which shut down almost every white collar intensive service. Not bad on less than 24 hours' notice. Around 150 trade unionists and library occupiers from the community lobbied the High Court. Inside the council got re-possession but we got 2 weeks' notice instead of the usual one and "a prima facie case for judicial review". But like the walk-outs and lobbies earlier in

the dispute most of us saw this as a means of building for effective direct action.

ANGER INTO ACTION

The real joke - you've gotta laugh or crack up - was that the inquorate special branch meeting had been reconvened for Tuesday 28th and virtually no one had received notice and agendas. The contingency plan to drag members screaming from the canteen remained a fantasy - 101 voted for action with none against and 11 abstentions. What the 3,000 other NALGO members are now contemplating is non-co-operation with evictions; walking out in support of anyone victimised; striking on eviction day and turning out to stop the bailiffs.

While we are still determined to win re-instatement for 6 services and 21 jobs,



Occupiers And Trade Unionists At High Court

the issue now is the council's refusal to recognise a dispute; to negotiate with our union and their use of the courts against workers. It's this issue which we hope will crystallise the anger into action and we have won the vote to hold a ballot of all NALGO members on all-out indefinite strike action. Labour, the scab party, has come out in its true colours. The honeymoon when the Labour left used local government to push radical policies is over. Some might winge that Hackney Council is "ex-left" but it is the character of Labour as a power structure which counts, not the politics of a minority trying to restore a socialism there never was.

The unofficial motto of my union is "negotiate at all costs", even this, the fundamental right to stitch its own members up is being denied as Labour moves to crush this most troublesome resistance, which has taken the fight for jobs and services out of the workplace and into the community. We know that only direct action will stop them but NALGO's NEC is withholding the approval for a ballot. The chief argument is that a ballot lost is worse than a ballot never held, citing the case of the collapse of Camden branch's resistance to their employer's jackboot tactics when they lost one.

Council leaders agreed to

talk the union's national officers about negotiations because our NEC was persuaded to intervene in the dispute. While recognition of the dispute by the NEC and the council is a minor victory, the union's basis for negotiation assumes no further industrial action is possible. Not only is this a position of weakness, but it reinforces the lack of consciousness and confidence among union members which made it probable the ballot would be lost. However, we are still campaigning for a "yes" vote, despite the possibility of a ballot disappearing, and rank and file militants are fighting to raise consciousness of our power, and of the need for direct action.

STEEL BLUES

I was born within spitting distance (well, not quite) of a steel works furnace and was brought up thinking the sky was actually orange at night and the earth hummed naturally while I slept. I remember being completely shattered when this proved not to be true! My first visit to the countryside knocked me back. It was silent... nearly. All I could hear was them stupid white animals (that crapped everywhere) baa-ing, and at night it was pitch black when the moon wasn't out.

As I got older and travelled around more and saw other places I realised that I lived next to a massive steel-producing complex. It didn't matter about the noise, pollution and accidents - it just went on and on doing the same, not stopping even on New Year's Day. I grew up in a community of shift workers. We knew whose houses not to play in front of if the curtains were shut and there was murder in your own house if you made a noise upstairs where your dad was sleeping after a night shift...and if you rang a door bell - well, you had to be careful! You often heard of accidents - many people told stories of hot cables through jaws and of burnt bodies; lots of workers had small burns on their hands from splashing bits of molten steel. Safety was, and still is, a total joke with everything sacrificed for production - a mill never stops. In accidents what happens if you were working against the rule - but then nobody works to the

rule. The employers have you in the catch 22 they want - want to settle out of court?

EMPLOYMENT

The steel towns have seen a change - employment in the mills dropped from 15,000 to less than 4,000 in under 4 years. And does the workload drop? Does the mill ever slow down? Never! Towns were decimated and mills closed down and cleared like they never existed. Has this all been rational? The Northern Economic Review criticises the need for closing mills on Teeside, but then economics doesn't make sense or take into account the needs of people and communities. Consett only ever survived on steel - now its mills have disappeared. The decimation has gone on with towns and communities suffering and dying. To walk through an empty useless industrial wasteland is frightening. Its affect on those who must continue on in its wake can be catastrophic, with often no way forward and no escape.



Here Today Gone Tomorrow?

British Steel is about to be privatised. To counteract the image of its miserable and murderous past it has commissioned clever adverts. Remember the man getting fit and trimming down to be in "shape for things to come"? All I can say is think of the countless steel workers and families who have been sacrificed. Think of the countless injured recovering, trying to get fit after another accident. This is how British Steel's "health" has been achieved - the fitness fanatic carries dark secrets - decimation. Viability of plants is being questioned again - will Ravenscraig remain open? As a question of balance

sheets it's quite academic - being in the red means the threat of closure. Communities watch and wait while unease spreads. Privatisation means jobs hived off, re-negotiated or redesignated with only the communities around to suffer. After lifetimes of appalling conditions, poisoning, burning and killing the privatisation of British Steel is ominous and frightening.

It's up to the communities and workers to take it into their own hands. After all, as the current advert says "we all need steel" and it most definitely has to be the workers' right to decide at what price.

Now Pay For The NHS

THE HEALTH and Medicine Bill is expected to become law later on this year. It'll allow hospitals to charge for services like tests. By giving the wrong advice Greenwich Health Authority gave us an example of things to come. So in April, the Brook Hospital near Woolwich started to charge £3 for pregnancy tests, which is at the moment illegal for NHS hospitals to do. This led to one patient becoming very distraught because she had no money and was refused a test. Needless to say the charge hits the poorest - under 16's, the unemployed and low paid - delaying ante-natal care and abortion advice, all because they can't afford tests. The hospital withdrew the charge, refunding all of the 20 women that had paid. A manager said the charge was a good business move that could raise £10,000 a year. Still, what a nice example of things to come and the effects it will bring!



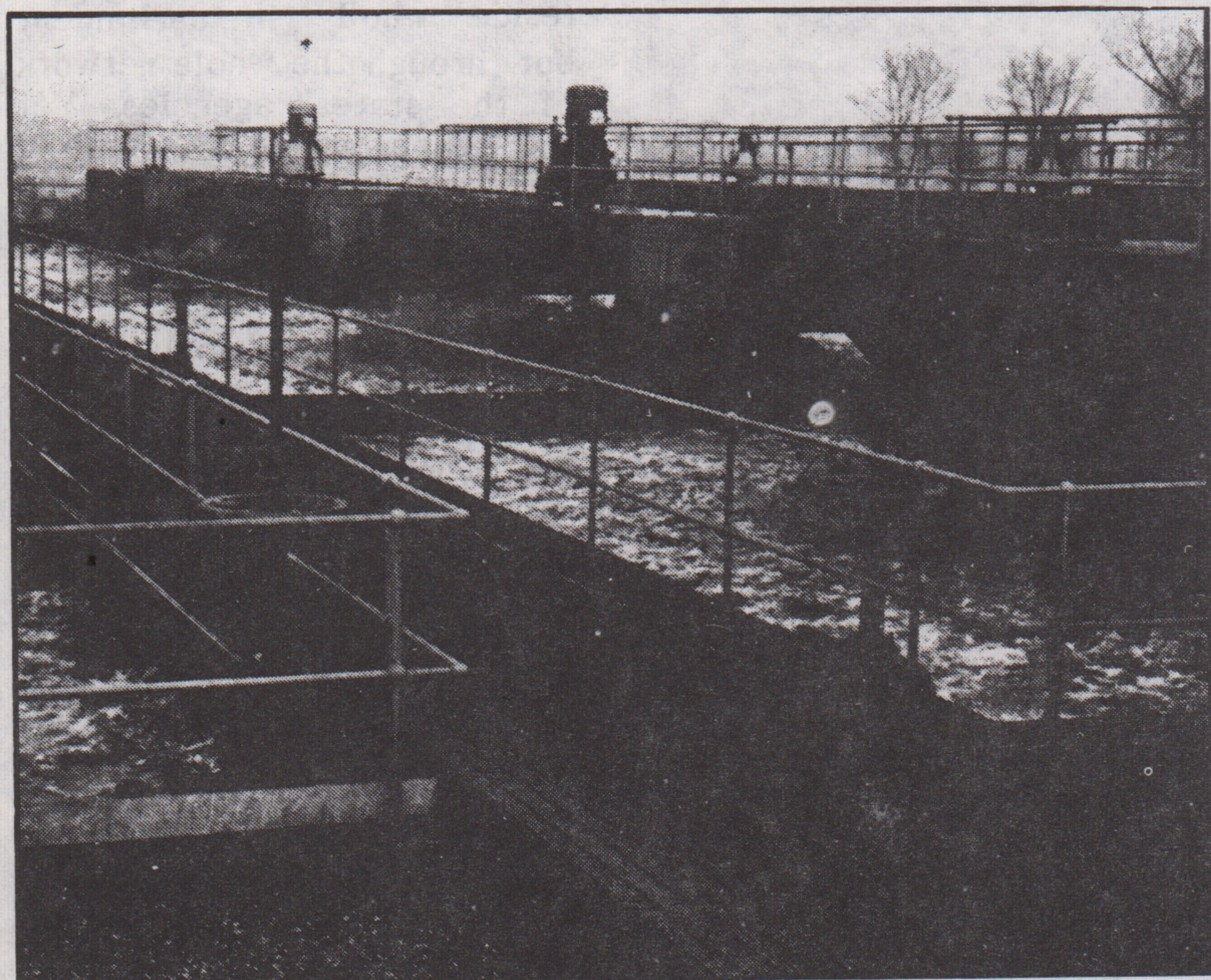
"All they think about is money..."

of the National Rivers Authorities, which is to be the regulatory body of the industry. Starting in the summer of 1989, the Tories intend to sell off the 10 water authorities. Unions representing water industry workers have called on Lord Crickhowell to put the defence of water purity and quality before private profit. The water industry financial expert, Stanley William Hill, has sent 150 financial institutions a detailed paper warning them against investing in privatised water boards. He argues that there needs to be massive investment to meet EEC standards, and to stop the crumbling of the industry's infrastructure. In his document, Hill says that it is far from certain that investment in private water authorities will yield a profit.

Marxists at the beginning of the century responded to the syndicalist critique of nationalisation by attempting to take the mickey out of our demands for workers' control - "The mines to the miners and the railways to the railworkers" - by suggesting that sewer workers take over the sewers. Seventy years later, how hollow that joke sounds. It is true that nationalisation or public ownership has not satisfied human needs, safeguarded workers' conditions or protected the environment. However, privatisation will mean a loss of jobs, and therefore we cannot just monitor the situation while the boards are sold off at giveaway prices. Neither privatisation nor nationalisation offer the working class anything - only direct workers' control can do that.

PURITY NOT PROFIT

The water industry's assets have been valued at more than £26 billion and if they were to be built up again from scratch it would cost twice as much. The assets of British Rail and the National Coal Board would be cheap in comparison. Water is the very stuff of life itself, so no matter what the social system it must be administered for the public good, not abandoned to private profit. Since privatisation of water was first broached there has been an unanswered question - how can the maximisation of profit be reconciled with the provision of safe drinking water?



Private Profit = Dirty Money

In 1849 13,000 Londoners died of cholera while in the same year a London physician, John Snow, proved beyond all reasonable doubt that cholera was spread by water. Although it was for different reasons, municipal authorities built sewers which put an end to cholera epidemics. Britain's main drainage system dates back to the 1840's and 15% of the sewage system is over 100 years old with around 5000 sewer collapses each year. The ten regional water authorities spend in the region of £8 million for sewer repairs out of a total budget of £205 million.

It is possible that, with falling standards of water purity, the installation of water meters will reduce the use of water for hygiene purposes while the reduction of pollution controls will lead to the reappearance of diseases such as cholera. Already, however, millions of people are drinking contaminated water containing levels of nitrates which fall below EEC standards. Nitrates are widespread in drinking water in agricultural areas, where they are used to preserve meat and give it a red colour. They are also present in vegetables due to the use of fertilisers. These nitrates then find their way into our drinking water. In Britain five million people drink water which is heavily pol-

luted by nitrates. Scientists believe that this is a cause of cancer.

Traditionally, the pollution authorities have sought to reduce pollution to the minimum practicable level. However, the process of improvement has suffered under government spending cuts, but it is still recognised as the objective. It would be abandoned altogether under a privatised water industry. Indeed the Littlechild Report reveals the shape of things to come by suggesting polluters be given "property rights" in the form of "tradeable discharge permits". In other words, firms could buy the right to pollute! - and would be free to sell this right to other polluters. The report asks: "Who might be interested in taking over a water authority?" Candidly, it supplies the devastating answer: "construction companies and chemical firms". Chemical companies already have their people on the boards of water authorities. For the polluters to take over the agencies of pollution control completely would be the bizarre but logical outcome of privatisation.

The water "Paving Bill" which will prepare the way for privatisation, received the Royal Assent on the 10th of May. Lord Crickhowell was straight away appointed Chair

—VICTORY—

HOUSING ASSISTANTS at the Dalston-based New Islington and Hackney Housing Association struck in April in support of a grading claim. The 15 workers, members of the white collar union, MSF, took action after 14 months of fruitless negotiations. Despite a strong case for regrading from C to D grade, due to increased workload and responsibilities, and comparability with workers at other housing associations, management refused to concede. Resistance boiled down to management's right to manage but objections included the claim that if the job was advertised at D rather than C grade, no one from ethnic minorities would apply as they would think it too highly-rated for them. Low pay and status justified on equal opportunities!

Morale was maintained by a regular strike bulletin and making sure everyone got out

to address meetings of other unions to raise support. By the eighth week negotiations had reached an impasse after, first the D grade for all existing workers was won, then the reduction of the management demand that all workers start at C grade. Management tried to limit the union's negotiating rights over this post, and the issue of union recognition brought all the other union members out on strike after a ballot. In under 2 weeks this was successful when, for only minor concessions the D grade for the job was won as well as further negotiations on the existing union recognition agreement. It should be an example to us all that direct action in defence of union rights can work if well-organised and supported by other workers. What we need to do is raise the confidence of our class and break the stranglehold of bureaucrats over our solidarity.

FASCISTS OUT!

STRIKING CIVIL servants at Hither Green DHSS gained a partial victory when BNP member, Malcolm Skeggs, was transferred to Hinchley Wood office. A DHSS spokesperson said Skeggs was transferred at his own request. However, Hinchley Wood has very few CPSA members, and the union have accused management of deliberately choosing an office where the union is weak. The campaign to get rid of Skeggs unless he retracts his fascist beliefs is likely to

continue.

In the meantime, in Tottenham, high-up nazi, Paul Nash, was forced to take the day off sick when the local claimants' union organised a picket. Nash has worked at Tottenham DHSS for over 9 years, but came back into the limelight after Skeggs was discovered. His journey to work has been made a bit more exciting and he's had black paint thrown over him and his glasses smashed. After this

THE TORIES are going to introduce identity cards for us all. They appear to believe all football fans are hooligans so they are bringing in membership cards for all fans and certainly it believes all young people are drunkards - witness the identity cards introduced in Chard, Somerset for over 18 year old drinkers. A DHSS experiment is underway in



Devon with so-called "care cards" that carry medical records to be read by computers. Such cards may be seen as a pilot scheme for a national ID card. Tory MP, Tony Favell, recently tabled a bill to introduce computer-readable ID cards, and though it was defeated more than 100 MP's voted for it. Following this the Metropolitan Police commissioner suggested coll-

ecting "genetic fingerprints" of the entire nation and that ID cards would be compulsory by 1992 when all barriers to trade in the EEC have been pulled down.

However, the National Physical Laboratory, in Middlesex has developed a system called "Veincheck" that scans the blood vessels at the wrist with infra-red light to produce a crude equivalent of a fingerprint. This is checked against the pattern stored in the card to prove identity. This isn't foolproof as the chance of 2 people having the same pattern is only one in several thousand whereas with fingerprints the chances are one in several million. Resistance to identity cards must start now and should be linked to campaigns against the poll tax. Tory rhetoric on "rolling back the state" must be shown up for the sham it is. The state's attack on working class youth must be answered.

A FESTIVAL against the poll tax took place on June 12th on Blackheath in London to commemorate the Peasant's Revolt in the 14th century. However, government weather control and poor publicity meant there was less than the 20,000 people predicted. The anarchist presence, though, was noticeable and there were favourable responses to leaflets produced by Deptford DAM and Brixton DAM about the poll tax. Perhaps the local councils might do a bit more groundwork if they intend a repeat performance (and they could get some better bands, too)!

THE SCOTTISH TUC has called a 15-minute strike against the poll tax. In this time people all over Scotland are supposed to "participate in a variety of activities". STUC believes that the question of non-payment is not an issue until there is a massive campaign against the poll tax. Meanwhile, Labour MP Robin Cook, has called for a Committee of 100 style campaign of civil disobedience with 100 Scottish Labour MP's, union leaders and so on who won't pay. That'll frighten Thatcher to death!

WAKE UP AND FACE REALITY

In the final episode of the 3 part political thriller on Channel 4, "A Very British Coup", left-wing Labour Prime Minister, Harry Perkins, decides to "let the people decide" by calling a snap General Election after attempts to make him resign. Helicopter blades are heard over an ominous news broadcast. The implication is clear - if a left-wing labour government is ever elected, if it actually carries out its election promises and if attempts by the CIA/MI5 fail to force a compromise then the military will do its duty to Queen and country.



tests. Even these will not be feasible as the leaders power becomes enhanced. How different the reality is to the fiction.

There is a more fundamental problem for the Labour left. If a Labour government is elected, does not compromise and attempts a radical transformation of society the whole weight of ruling class power and privilege will be brought against it. One way or another it would be forced from office. Here lies the contradiction. Power does not reside wholly in parliament but through the whole network of the states' agencies. Yet the Labour party is committed to change through the present system, a system built to prevent it.

The answer can only be the complete destruction of the system as it stands. Leninists would have it that the state system is seized and used to destroy the state - a contradiction. The only way must be to build an alternative structure to challenge, destroy and then supplant the state. If there are any potential Harry Perkins out there - "a simple steelworker from Sheffield" - they would be wise to remember the old saying "the union makes us strong". Dreams of radical Labour governments have always turned to nightmares - let's wake up and face reality.

Chicken Coup ?

say that he will not follow the unilateralist line - appears to, because he's not the sort to use one word when a paragraph will do - then he seems to change his mind and it is up to conference. But hold on - later, it appears that conference decisions can be changed if the policy review or the leadership see fit. Anyway, Kinnock knows

the union bureaucrats desperately want to get their feet under the table at number 10, so he can rely on that highly democratic mechanism, the union bloc vote, to force through changes. Much the same process will be repeated in the next few years with the left's only answer being to offer futile challenges in the form of leadership con-

powers in the hands of the leader.

Labour government's are renowned for ignoring conference decisions but Kinnock is going further. With his Policy Review he hopes to change tack while still in opposition. He relies on continuing support from party activists on the basis that anything is better than Thatcher, while squeezing the SLD/SDP vote by stealing their policies and placating the middle classes. The most recent example is the debacle over defence. As argued before (DA 43), Labour's defence policy has been a shambles based on CND's moral opposition to nuclear weapons, itself based on a fundamental contradiction of attacking a basic cornerstone of the state while wanting to preserve the status-quo.

Firstly Kinnock appears to

The series was well-acted, well-directed and very watchable, comparing very favourably with most of the dross served up as political thrillers. The scenario was written by Chris Mullin, now a Labour MP. It represents the dream of every left-wing Labour activist, having lived with betrayal and disappointment since the formation of their party. Curiously Mullin's original book ends with Perkins' resignation, forced from office by media and MI5 pressure - a bit nearer to reality. The book was written a few years ago and how bizarre the whole idea seems today. Before, and especially since, the last election we have seen the Labour Party follow its traditional path to the right faced with a dominant Tory Government. Neil Kinnock is no Harry Perkins, as shown by his attempts to put even more decision-making

COB MILITANT SPEAKS

In DA 49 we mentioned that Leonardo Morelli of the COB (Brazilian Workers Confederation), conducted a speaking tour of Europe after the Bordeaux IWA Congress in April. While Leonardo was in France, Le Combat Syndicaliste, paper of the French CNT, interviewed him. Here we reproduce this interview:

Q: What is the present economic and social situation in Brazil?

A: Brazil is a country of enormous paradoxes. You see great poverty beside great technological advances; sophisticated arms factories next to shanty towns. The country is currently devoting itself to heavy industry and tending towards a big "Hong Kong".

Advances in technology have brought major changes in capitalism. For example, ten years ago Brazilian capitalism sought to use automation in heavy industry. But today it proves most useful in the banks, commerce and other services. So, in class struggles, certain sectors have seen radical struggle while in others, with more modern conditions, the conquest of new rights is all that can be fought for. Every day workers fight to win back what they have lost to inflation but never catch up as inflation is established and controlled by the government. The struggle for purchasing power is caused by social democratic propaganda, notably Spanish. Despite what you may think, relations with the EEC aren't gained through Portugal, but through Spain. Thus products which would have been made in Europe are made in Brazil and then exported to Europe.

CHANGES

Everything in Brazil is changing from one minute to the next. For example, for years economic policies have changed every 3 months. This isn't to say Brazil is backward. It is necessary to put it into a context of experimentation. International capitalism is experimenting in Brazil with new and different forms of exploitation. Some say capitalism is decaying - we don't think so. We believe capitalism can permanently adapt itself and create new forms to survive, due to the working class not adapting its culture to the struggle against it. It is a different situation from European workers who have certain capacities for struggle and some tradition of struggle.

The Brazilian state now funds new firms itself, Fiat, for example. The state bought a large number of its shares. When Fiat began making profit the state sold its shares back to them at a loss. This is also the case with the electronics firm, Light.

Q: What is the aim of this?

A: The Brazilian state is simply an agent of the International Monetary Fund and world capitalism. Economic re-structuring obeys criteria

that go beyond Brazil. Just as there are British and US multinationals in Brazil, so too are there Russian and Polish multinationals.

The COB is researching multinational activities as the problem is so important internationally. When Europeans fight to keep jobs today, it can be said countries like Brazil are taking them over. So we think European workers have a limited short term view as to what global capitalist policy really is. This restructuring, which is not only economic but political too, reflects a "transnationalisation", a globalisation. You can imagine 2 large companies like Ford and Volkswagen competing in the car market in the same country. In Latin America, they are under the same trade name, Auto-Latina. Recently, this firm announced it would pay part of Brazil's foreign debt which will re-inforce Volkswagen in Latin America. In coming years we can imagine cutbacks in German Volkswagen factories while Brazilian workers replace German ones.



Leonardo Morelli

This, according to reformist unions, is good. If such companies develop in Brazil, with its huge unemployment, reformist unions will have a larger "clientele" of workers to control. Thus the COB is compiling and analysing all this information. We'd like to exchange information and reflections and collaborate with workers of other countries. This transnationalisation in Latin America forces us to go beyond classical political visions, ie that of a national state. When it is said the Brazilian state is "weak" and non-existent, it is because no national state exists anymore. This is a new thing for workers, a confrontation with a boss who doesn't exist, one who is everywhere and nowhere at once.

Q: How has Brazilian trade unionism changed since the '70's? What is the reality of images in the western media of trade unionists like Lula, the "Brazilian Walesa"? How has anarcho-syndicalism been re-born in the last 3 years?

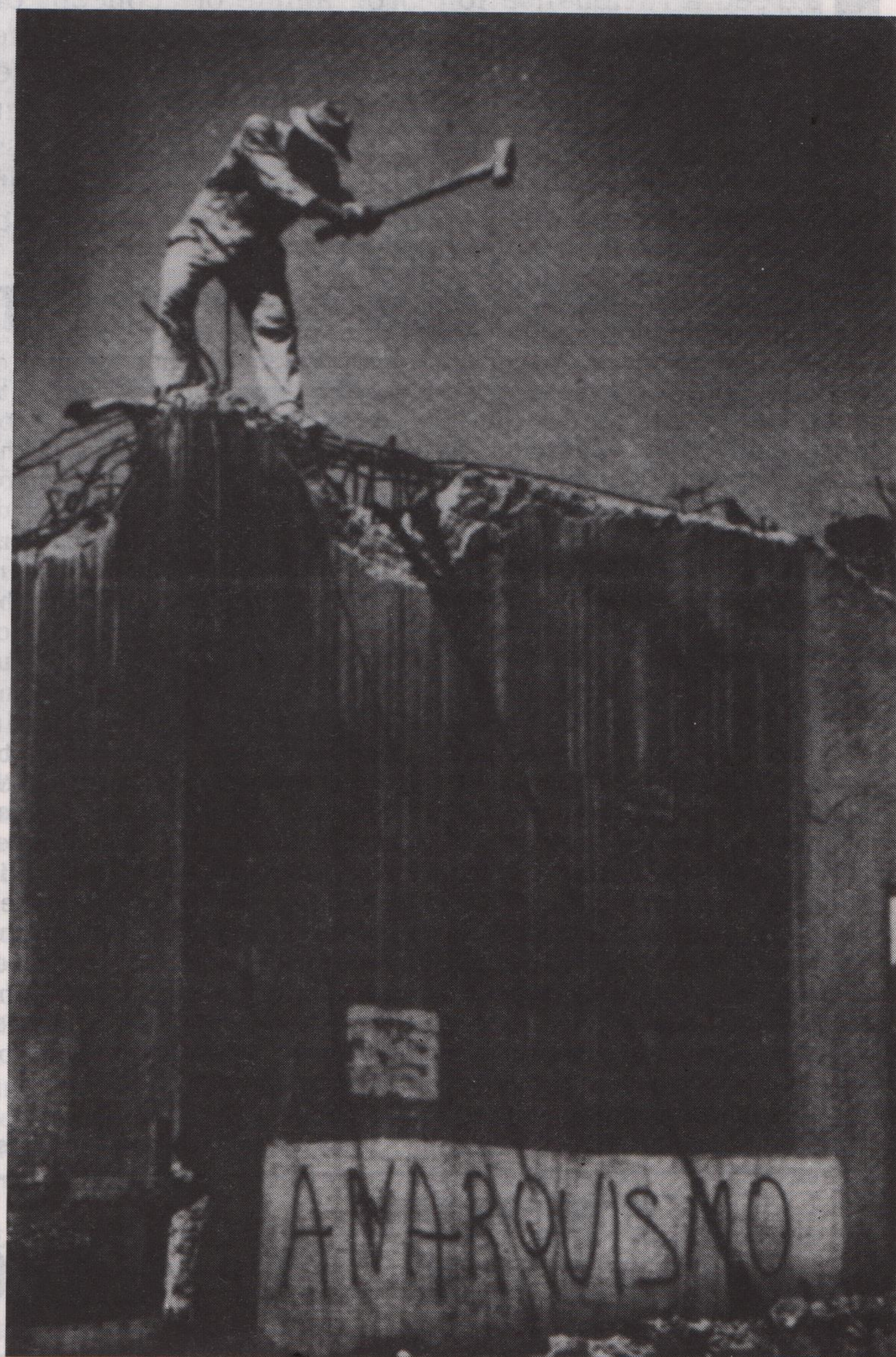
A: In the 1970's, and particularly since 1977, there have been important struggles. In 1978 there were negotiations between the bourgeoisie and military for the military to give way to democracy whilst keeping the structures of dictatorship. With the wave of illegal strikes, organised outside the unions, new unions arose. Lula and his metalworkers' union had no part and he even took a position against the strikes.

RESENTMENT

First, factory committees began to work for immediate demands then around the question of authority and hierarchy in the factories. At that time I was in one of the committees which were informal groups. Factories resemble army barracks; in Brazil they resemble prisons. Brazilian workers resent this a lot so the first struggles aimed to obtain better working conditions. The 1977-79 strikes happened after aborted initiatives in the years before. The committees were clandestine due to the dictatorship and were organised quite freely, without hierarchy and well-defined structures, on a libertarian model so reformist social democratic unions had no way of controlling them. The Church tried also with a "liberation theology" strategy. Thus there was an alliance between the Church and social democracy.

In 1981 repression was escalated. The state no longer invested in the economy; it brought in an austerity plan and the economy began to stagnate. This policy provoked a spectacular rise in unemployment and many comrades were sacked. Social democratic propaganda advocated entering the government-controlled unions so, from 1981 the struggle began to be institutionalised. From 1982 to '85 the myth of the party was re-born. Marxist-inspired social democratic propaganda led workers to think unions were only for economic struggle, the social struggle being the party's domain. The Workers' Party was then formed, with Lula as president. Up to 1985 a combination of factors contributed to make the workers distrustful of institutionalised union struggles.

From 1985 wildcat strikes, in which I took part, began, again outside the unions. Often a new generation of bureaucrats appeared, generally young and left-sounding, and proposed themselves as managers of labour. From then all strikes were condemned to failure. The wildcat strike became a trap. There was no preparation for resistance and strikes were lost which discredited the struggle. It was then that workers became aware that other forms of



struggle and resistance had to be used like self-defence committees and strike solidarity committees. So, many of us moved towards anarcho-syndicalism. My adhesion to anarcho-syndicalism dates from 1984 when the wildcat strikes first arose. We understood, then, that all the other alternatives were dead.

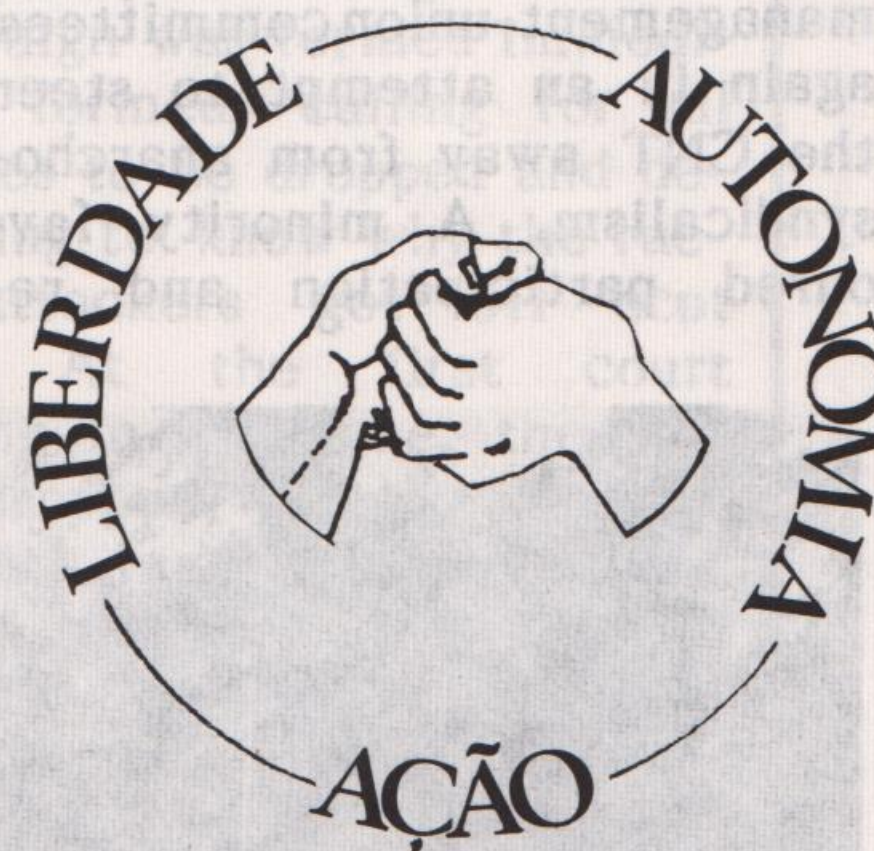
Q: What is the COB's interest in joining the IWA, which many anarchists call skeletal, and whose sections are relatively weak, contrary to your possibilities? What do you want, practically and ideologically, from the IWA?

A: We joined the IWA firstly due to its principles and statutes. The IWA was in agreement with our anarcho-syndicalist principles in the internationalist sense that it is only right to expect from any revolutionary or anarchist militant.

RE-CONSTRUCTION

The fact that the IWA is considered skeletal has never been for us a pejorative thing since we too are building an organisation that was strong in the past but which is now weak. For us, it is necessary to re-construct an instrument which was strong and must be so again, so it seemed indispensable for us to contribute. We don't seek a ready-made IWA, to which we can give nothing and we expect solidarity as far as its possibilities allow. We did not expect an organisation that is all ready, finished and perfect. We think it more valuable to participate in the creation of something than to find it all done.

Previously we had the idea that the IWA was an organisation of old men - we thought of the anarchists from the Spanish revolution. When we received the material for the preparation of our first Congress, it was a surprise to see the material from the Italian USI, with very concrete and important discussions, and very good texts. We have had contributions on quite different countries demystifying the image of a skeletal IWA. It is an organisation with its roots and existence in very different countries. We know there are sections in Japan, North America, Australia, Latin America. So, little by little, we are laying the basis in the whole world, and we can verify that an IWA Congress has much more participation than many anarchist congresses.



If the IWA is weak, it is due, it is fair to say, to the errors of anarchist militants. We think we've chosen a good path. What we expect the most is exchange of solidarity and information, notably on the evolution of industry in all countries, to have the best view possible. That will improve our militant action.

THE FIGHT FOR RHEINHAUSEN

The Krupp steel company and the factory committee agreed a rationalisation programme or "concept of improvement" last summer, which guaranteed the existence of the Rheinhausen steel plant at the cost of another 2,000 of the 6,200 jobs. In November, however, news leaked through the press that Krupp wanted to close down the whole plant by the end of 1988. The next day was the start for the "fight for Rheinhausen".

In front of three thousand angry steelworkers demonstrating at the factory the company chair, Cromme, advocated closure as "the best economic solution". The answer was moderate - only some eggs and punches! Nobody worked the whole day, which was rounded off by a 5,000 strong demonstration through Rheinhausen. Up to Christmas there were various demonstrations which, for West Germany, showed remarkable militancy like the blockading of important Rhine bridges; visits to other steelplants in the area; wildcat strikes; and the storming of Villa Huegel, the former manor of the Krupp family. This tendency appeared through the whole struggle but had no consistency.

In January the conflict flared up again. The factory

committee planned weeks of action to force Krupp to abandon their plans - and, on the other hand, to keep the workers' fury under control. Militancy and direct action mingled with piteous begging and alternative economic concepts "to keep at least the factory", even at the cost of another 2,500 jobs - all usually supported by the same workers! The factory committee's strategy - supported by the metalworkers union, IGM, and the ruling Social Democratic Party in Northrhine-Westfalia - was successful in that, for the most part, they didn't lose control over the workers, despite a spontaneous factory occupation in the last week of the struggle. However, the plant will be closed in 1990.

Krupp's interests in clos-

ing down Rheinhausen is obvious. They stand to gain about 1,800,000 Deutschmarks (£566,000) from EEC funds and the sale of contracts. The interests of the social democratic union bosses were also clear. They didn't really support a fight for the maintenance of all the jobs at Rheinhausen. Their strategy is one of not hindering the



End Of The German Steel Industry

re-organisation of capitalist industrial structure in West Germany. On the contrary they support the EEC plan to "modernise" the economy by destroying traditional industries like steel, shipyards, and mining and replacing them with high-tech plants.

NEGOTIATION

Rheinhausen is a good example of this. In other cases closures brought resistance only on a more symbolic level. Despite the militancy of the Rheinhausen steelworkers, the IGM refused to take up their demand to link the fight to preserve all steelplants with the negotiations on wages and the 35-hour week. This was very important because the union leaders wanted a three year agreement - one year is normal for wages. In this situation the strike was not wasted. The result of negotiations was: six months with no wage rise, then a 2% rise after 15 months and another 2% after a further 15 months, as well as 36.5 hours a week from November 1988. This wasn't the result of the union's "struggle" - it was what the steel bosses offered to see the end of the Rheinhausen action.

The factory committee's role was to divert resistance and support the union's position. Radical minority positions were denounced in the press, at factory meetings, and at public support meetings for the workers.

Although the Rheinhausen struggle was the most militant for 15 years in West Germany it ended in defeat. At times the workers developed their own actions without waiting for instructions from above, but they always came back to trust the union, not their own strength. The majority accepted social democratic "solutions" - earlier pensions, indemnities, and jobs in other Krupp plants. There were no sackings but promises, promises, promises...that's the way it still works in Germany.

Comrades in the FAU (Free Workers Union, German section of the IWA) working at Krupp-Rheinhausen, supported by the local FAU group, Moers, were very active in the struggle. They tried to push it towards self-organisation and direct action. Due to their small number their influence wasn't very significant but they reached a number of workers.

CNT - Illegal?

THE SPANISH anarcho-syndicalist union and section of the IWA, the CNT-AIT, could soon be made illegal due to a lawsuit over who the initials "CNT" belong to.

After the death of Franco in 1975 the CNT saw a massive growth in membership which frightened the Spanish state so much it tried, through the use of infiltrators to divert the CNT from anarcho-syndicalism. Thus the first half of 1979 saw the emergence of a parallel structure and at the 5th Congress of the CNT about a tenth of the delegates walked out. The splitters then held a conference in Valencia which rejected libertarian communism.

Then in 1982 at the 6th Congress, infiltrators and traitors proposed participation in elections to the workplace committees (joint management-union committees) again in an attempt to steer the CNT away from anarcho-syndicalism. A minority favoured participation and re-

signed. The next development was a "Re-unification Congress" of the 1979 and 1982 splits, who claimed to be the real CNT or "renovated CNT" (CNT Renovada). This phoney organisation went on to adopt a strategy of participation in workplace committee elections - a strategy which many of the Renovada rank and file are now coming to see as the failure it was always doomed to be.

However, the real importance of the split is over the question of the CNT initials, because whichever organisation proves it has the right to the initials will also have the rights to the "historical patrimony" - buildings and other assets confiscated from the CNT by Franco after the Civil War, and union dues which should have been paid to the CNT during the Franco era. Although the lawsuit is not yet complete it seems certain the state will favour the Renovadas, because, after all, the split resulted from state infiltration into the

CNT. Moreover, evidence suggests the socialist union, the UGT which has close links to the government, plans to merge with the Renovadas once it has regained the patrimony. Already the state has given the Renovadas some of the buildings in strategic areas, like Granada, where the CNT-AIT national committee is currently based, or Puerto Real where the CNT-AIT has made great gains in the last 2 years during the shipyards dispute.

If, as seems likely, the Spanish state decides the Renovadas are the "real" CNT, then the CNT-AIT will become illegal if it uses its name in public. For this reason, the recent IWA Congress called on all IWA sections to carry out pickets and occupations of Spanish embassies around the world on June 15th. In Britain we picketed the Spanish consulate in Manchester and the embassy in London.

PROTEST ACTION

In London, an occupation was attempted by comrades of the DAM and the CNT-in-exile group. Having been met by a security guard, we refused to leave until we'd handed a letter of protest to the ambassador. On being told he wasn't there we entered another part of the building insisted on seeing an official. Eventually, when one came to see us we explained that unless the patrimony was returned soon to the CNT-AIT then action would escalate. Afterwards press statements were given to the British press; the Spanish press agency; representatives of El Periodico, El Pais and Diario 16 and international press agencies.



DAM members protesting outside the Spanish Embassy

Unions Put The Brakes On

AT ROME AIRPORT, on August 31st 1987, the ground crew's contracts came up for renewal. The unions presented a package, vaunting it as breaking new ground. In fact it contained only 2 points - a barely adequate wage rise for workers who've seen their wages cut by previous contracts; a reduction in working hours to 40 a week including half hour meal breaks in line with other Italian airports.

NO SELL OUT

The workers approved this thanks to a quickly called and unpublicised ballot, and because the union promised there'd be no sell-out. However, the Alitalia airline rejected it. In mid December a ministerial proposal arrived halving the wage demand and proposing 10 lieu days throughout the year and over the duration of the contract which was to be extended by a year. Union delegates tried to put a brake on the workers' anger and initiatives to the point of leading wildcat strikes in defence of their proposals.

After this negotiations broke down and the unions were forced to call assemblies but couldn't convince the rank and file to accept their limited platform. Some delegates, together with the Alitalia/Rome Airport Co-ordinating Network, presented a motion mandating the union to pursue negotiations on the original proposals but with the following firm demands - a 3,200,000 lire (£1,390) pay increase, 100,000 (£40) immediately and the rest in 3 instalments; maintenance of

contract duration at three years; - a 40 hour week with half-hour meal breaks. This was approved and the union promised to act upon it without making concessions.

In the following months the workers only heard news of the negotiations from the press but remained solid up to mid February when they were told a good contract had been agreed. Immediately the Co-ordinating Network called a strike. Fiumicino Airport ground to a halt as the firm demands in the proposals had been changed a "little" to a 152,683 lira pay rise in 5 instalments without holiday and overtime rates; a contract of 3 years 10 months; 10 lieu days to be taken from March '89 to the end of the contract - for one shift the lieu days would come in in 1993, to be taken only in accordance with the company's needs - in other words, no reduction in hours; the drawing up and putting into practice of contracts to be the prerogative of the company.

BALLOT

In March the union delegates accepted the contract with only 5 out of 200 against. There were no assemblies except meetings called by activists. Without further information from the union, except to vote yes, a ballot was called to approve or reject the contract. Against the official union's recommendations, the majority of workers at Rome airport voted against acceptance.

- USI Airport Workers Section (Rome), from Lotta di Classe, paper of the Italian Syndicalist Union (USI).

Dear DA,

Referring to the article in DA 49 about the civil servants strike over the employment at Hithergreen DHSS of fascist Malcolm Skeggs.

The article states "The campaign to get management to sack Skeggs is wrong". This is clearly daft. It is true that we cannot appeal to management to not employ fascists and that they would sooner sack rank and file union activists than active fascists. However we must force management to sack

fascists by making the workplace unworkable until they cave in to our demands. The technique is the same as with any other demand - collective economic action. This does not create a precedent dangerous to ourselves because we are forcing management to do what we are demanding. No management has ever needed a precedent to sack militant rank and file activists anyway!

There is nothing wrong in principle in using intimidation and violence against fascists at work, but col-

lective action is always better than individual action. That is a basic tenet of anarcho-syndicalism. The most likely result of beating up Skeggs would be him nursing his wounds on full pay at home while the activists get victimised by management.

DA should always give its full support to rank and file workers taking action against fascists.

Yours in solidarity,

DF.

DAM Aims and Principles

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 re-

call 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.

9. The Direct Action Movement is resolved to initiate, encourage and wholeheartedly support the creation of independent workers' unions based on the principles of anarcho-syndicalism.

Meetings

ANARCHIST WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

July 23rd, 1pm to 6pm - £1.

West Indian Centre, Laycock Place, (nr Trades Club), Leeds.

Workshops include:

- Mujeres Libres video; "de Toda la Vida"; anarcho-syndicalist women in the Spanish Civil War.

- Women & work; trade unions; initiating strikes.

- Improvisation; the role of music and theatre in revolu-

tion and social change.

- Thatcher's Britain & women.

- How to improve our direct action.

- Space to devise a workshop on the day.

plus creche, food, accommodation, poor access (help available), party on the night, women only.

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DAM Despatch Riders --- c/o Deptford DAM.

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DAM Healthworkers ----- c/o Cambridge DAM.

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DAM Railworkers -- c/o Manchester DAM.

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Ford Workers Group ("The Combine") --- c/o 634 Green Lane, Ilford, Essex.

Luton Class War --- PO Box, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU2.

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Many thanks to all contributors

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Manchester DAM

THE CONTROVERSIAL CONTRACEPTIVE

I am no expert on contraception and do not pretend to have any great knowledge on the subject. However, I have read a fair amount and feel able to make a few comments on the article in DA 49 on Depo Provera. The author of the article seems well informed but I question his/her emphasis and conclusions.

1) There's just too much controversy about DP to recommend its use. Hazards ranging from severe uterine bleeding to cancers are attributed to DP and, considering that you must wait for 3 months or longer for DP to leave your body (whereas if you have problems with the pill you can stop using it immediately), this seems an unacceptable risk.

2) There is no argument that when choosing between the combined pill and the mini pill that the latter is undoubtedly a safer choice. Why then is this not also true when comparing the mini pill with DP? The only objection the author raises to the mini pill is that if you forget to take 1 or 2 pills in succession it is no longer a reliable form of contraception. Is this such a great hardship? If this happens then you just need to wait until your next period and start the cycle again - and in the meantime use something else. For me there is only the choice of either kind of pill - caps are not an option because I, like 1 in 3 women, have a reversed cervix and can't use a cap (so it's not simply a question of women being unable to cope with their bodies - though this is true for many). And, obviously, the IUD, with all its many hazards, is out of the question.

ACCEPTABLE

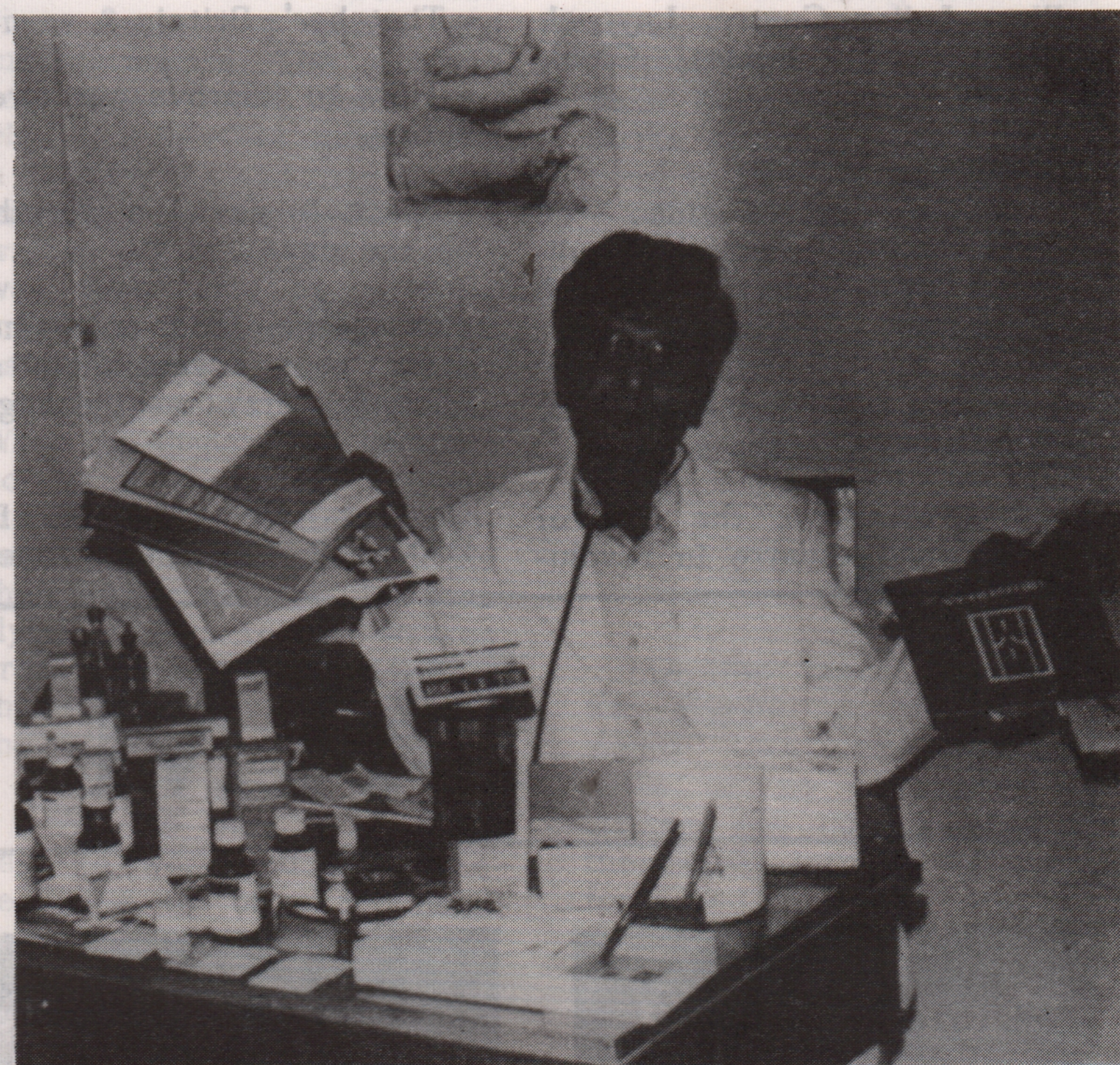
3) The author reckons that DP is an acceptable form of contraception because, since it is an injection, it can be used secretly by women who don't want their husbands (I assume it would be husbands in this situation) to discover they're using contraceptives. Therefore, it is reasoned, this will free women from having children they don't want. I don't follow this line of thinking at all. Surely women who come from a background/society where they

are expected to produce babies will find themselves in deep trouble when they don't produce, whether it's because they're taking contraceptives or because they're infertile (or because their husband is). This is simply not acceptable to many cultures and the woman is likely to find herself tossed out on the street (infertility is grounds for divorce in many societies) and in the very poverty trap which the author reckons might be avoided if she takes contraceptives. Obviously, this situation can hardly be called a choice - the woman is stuck between a rock and a hard place, but DP is not a solution to this problem. Some women in this fix might decide to take a gamble and hide the fact that they're using a contraceptive - but surely such women could be provided with something - perhaps the mini pill - which is far less dangerous. And if

it is Third World women we are talking about, then DP is certainly far from acceptable - anything causing bleeding in women who might already be malnourished is not simply an inconvenience, it is potentially life-threatening.

ARROGANT BASTARDS

4) DP was specifically created as a means of population control by Upjohns, a multinational pharmaceutical company, one of the world's leading lights in the "family planning" field. DP was created with the idea that it would be quick and efficient to use and that the doctor/nurse administering it would have the minimum amount of "nuisance" from the user. Indeed, as the author points out many doctors/nurses do not tell the women what it is they are being injected with! This is a point that I believe needs stressing because it is central to why DP was developed. It is a form of population control created by the arrogant bastards who decide who is to have children and who is not. There is no escaping this, and given the reality of who funds most clinics - and not just in the Third World - and who, there-



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fore decides policy implementation, then to advocate the use of DP is to give these people free rein. If a doctor/nurse hands a woman a packet of pills then they must explain - at least to some extent - what the pills are for and how they work. With an injection they can just jab you in the butt and tell you anything they like. And if a woman reacts badly to the drug, she has to wait three months-plus for it to leave her body. Again, if this is taking place where medical facilities are poor or hard to get to, then giving a woman a substance with potentially very negative effects could be disastrous - women who do take DP should be carefully monitored.

BAN?

All this isn't to say that a ban on DP would be a good thing - that's just liberal wishful thinking. We all know that capitalists will dump any dangerous product on the market - especially drugs and especially in the 3rd World. Such products range from toxic chemicals to seemingly beneficial products such as powdered baby milk. The problem with powdered baby milk in the Third World is similar to that of DP (if, and it's a big if, DP weren't dangerous in itself) ie it's the context of the thing which is unacceptable. In other words, perfectly fine powdered baby milk is shipped to the Third World with heaps of good

intentions - the problem is that a) the water in most poverty-stricken countries is contaminated and thus when the water is added to the powder, the resulting formula is often lethal and b) in places where disease is rampant a baby stands a better chance of survival if it is breast-fed and thereby receives the benefit of the mother's immune system. The point here is that one must look carefully at the reality of the situation in which something is used, whether it be DP and population control or powdered baby milk and unsanitary conditions.

EDUCATION

In closing, I just want to say that it seems to me that there is just too much medical controversy about DP and that, linked with its gross misuse, prompts me to condemn it as a contraceptive. For now we have to fight for widespread education on contraceptives so women - here and everywhere else - can make informed decisions on what little choice they have. Hopefully in the near future a safe and reliable contraceptive will be developed and we will see a world where such a development will be welcomed and freely distributed. Until then, women will continue to have to choose (those who are allowed to choose at all) between the burden of unwanted children and the dangers of hazardous contraceptives.

