

What lies behind the poll tax?

IN APRIL THE fight against the Poll Tax - the Tories self-proclaimed flagship - will enter its most crucial phase yet.

As registration for the Tax begins in England and Wales, the first demands for payment will be being sent out in Scotland, and as the "can't pay, won't pay" campaign begins to bite north of the border, a similar strategy of working class community resistance backed up by industrial action by council workers will start to grow throughout the rest of the country.

Fight

The Tories are well aware that the struggle against high Poll Tax rates - centred on a non-payment campaign - will not last more than a couple of years.

Not because people will surrender the fight, but because within that time Poll Tax levels will begin to fall back to something approaching the current rates levels, and fewer people will find themselves unable to pay.

Why will the Poll Tax fall?

Because local councils levying high Poll Tax rates (to finance a reasonable level of service provision) will find themselves unelectable. The people who rely most on council services (from meals-on-wheels and bus passes, to libraries and refuse collection) will simply be unable to afford to vote in councils offering to provide these services. Which is, in essence what the flat rate Poll Tax is all about.

The Tories objective in doing away with the rates

system is far more sophisticated than simply wanting to rob the poor to give money to the rich.

The Poll Tax is the lynchpin in a strategy that is setting out to destroy the political and financial power of local councils, decimate local council services, axe tens of thousands of council jobs, break up and sell-off council housing stocks, and - most importantly in Thatcher's eyes - eradicate the possibility of a return of "municipal socialism" of the likes of the GLC and the Metropolitan Councils.

One of the most important - and often ignored - elements of the Poll Tax legislation is the taking out of local authority control the power to levy rates on local businesses and commerce.

Burden

In the past, higher spending local councils have been able to raise much of their revenue through upping rates on local industry, shifting the burden of any increases away from domestic rate payers. But no more.

Now the Tories will be able to set a national Business Poll Tax rate - and they will pitch it as low as possible, particularly in those areas least likely to be Tory controlled, supposedly to encourage the growth of local "enterprise".

Come the introduction of the Poll Tax and the drop in revenue generated through the business rate, rates levels will have to soar simply to maintain current levels of services provision. Come election time, all political parties in local govern-

ment will be falling over each other in the rush to promise how they will cut back more services, privatise more work, axe more jobs, and thereby offer a lower Poll Tax than their opponents ...

Power

And as the struggles against rate capping have shown, Labour councils - like that in the London borough of Brent - will be second to none in attacking the working class in the struggle to remain in power.

The Tories have armed themselves with a whole battery of legislation in their war on local councils: the compulsory "tendering out" of council services; the forced offering for sale of council houses; the block on using the money from these sales to build new houses; the selling off of whole council estates through the new Housing Bill; encouraging schools to "opt out" of local authority control - the list goes on and on.

Most recently, they have announced plans to force councils to fund housing benefit payments to council tenants, solely from rents paid by other, wage-earning, tenants. This particularly insidious move aims to sow seeds of division among tenants, and, as rents go up to cover the housing benefit costs, make a private landlord cheaper in the short term than staying with the council.

The move by Bradford Conservative Council, under its leader Eric Pickles, to slash the councils workforce, sell off its assets and axe its services

is not then some one-off by an over eager group of local Tories.

Pickles' £6 million package of cuts - fully endorsed by Tory Central Office - are designed, firstly, to test out public reaction in the run up to the introduction of the Poll Tax, and, secondly, to see just how little resistance will be mounted by local government unions and Labour councillors to the changes.

The Tories have deliberately chosen a traditionally Labour controlled town in the North of England for this first experiment. As 1990 approaches, Bradford's experience will be repeated throughout the rest of England and Wales.

Fightback

We need have no faith in the notion of "defending local democracy" to see that the Tories all out assault on local councils represents a major attack on our class. Our interest is not in defending the powers of top Labour bureaucrats in council offices, but the jobs, housing and services needed by working class people.

The battle against the Poll Tax will become the cutting edge in the fight to turn back the tide of attacks. We should recognise the wider strategy that the Poll Tax is central to, and go all out to encourage an effective fight against it in the workplace and the community. The time to organise is NOW.

(For details of the ACF's agitational pamphlet *The Poll Tax and How To Fight It* please see page 19).•

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IRELAND Twenty years on



THE
MYTH OF
LABOUR'S
'SOCIALISM'

PAKISTAN
UNDER
BHUTTO

THE
POWER OF
RANK AND
FILE
ACTION

POLL TAX
FACTS

REVIEWS



Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

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THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. It's structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the following areas:

Bradford, Birmingham, Chesterfield, Coventry, Co. Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Kent, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Northampton, Nottingham, Reading, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Tameside, Wokingham and York.

We have internal groupings around the following industries and interests:

Health, Education, Unemployed, Postal, Students, Local Government, Community Youth Work and Women.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist communist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

Write to: P. O. Box 125, Coventry, CV3 5QT.

ORGANISE

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). It was formerly called Virus, but it was decided to change the name as our last National Conference. Since A.I.D.S. the word "virus" has developed different, negative connotations to when the magazine was launched.

Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and

initiate in depth debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and other open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to Organise!, and as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles, we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all). The deadline for the May issue is March 31st.

All contributions to the next issue of Organise! should be sent to: ACF, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham.

Want to know more?

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If you want to take bundles of Organise! to sell, write to the same address, stating how many copies you'd like to receive of each issue.

PRESS FUND

TO ENSURE THAT the ACF's production of printed material is placed on a stable footing we are launching a Press Fund. A successful fund will ensure a safeguard against printing costs, shops percentages, postage, distribution costs etc. It will also mean we can produce more copies of Organise! and other material, thus ensuring that anarchist-communist politics are getting across to more people.

In the near future we hope to produce a larger and more frequently published

Organise! and further A.C.E. pamphlets. The Press Fund will help facilitate this.

We appeal to all of you able to do so, to contribute as much as often as possible: our first target is £250, and we have set a deadline of April 3rd for reaching this. We would ask all readers to get us off the starting blocks as soon as possible by making a donation (Payable to the 'ACF') to:

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Will Bush be uprooted?

THE RECENT AMERICAN election has highlighted the general disillusionment of many Americans with the electoral system. Almost fifty per cent did not bother to vote, seeing little difference between Bush and Dukakis.

Erwin Knoll, editor of The Progressive, was quoted in the New York Times as saying that he would not vote because "I find the system is so corrupt and deceptive in perpetuating the illusion of choice that to participate helps to extend and amplify that illusion".

Differences

There is no perceivable difference between Democrats and Republicans over how to rule the world,, and there would have been little change in policies towards, say, Latin America if the Democrats had won.

The stay-away from the poll-booths is not, in general, a question of apathy. Many do not vote because they see no change will come about in their lives in the inner cities, or the assembly lines, or the farms. In this light, the comments of some American radicals are significant.

Plague

Brian Wilson, who suffered horrific injuries after he sat on the railway tracks to block a nuclear warhead shipment leaving the naval weapons base at Concord near San Francisco, recently voiced the need to build a

movement of opposition. And Laurence Ferlinghetti, the poet and novelist who has been influenced by anarchist ideas, says that he wants to "re-invigorate the spirit of 1968 - it's needed today, especially in the United States with its two rightist-military political parties - a plague on both their houses as far as I'm concerned. They're both in the same boat, in tandem, like a good crew, rowing towards ecological disaster." (from an interview in City Limits).

There is a dawning realisation that the struggle to transform society cannot be tied to the Democratic Party, even if it is sweetened up by the "liberation" rhetoric of Jesse Jackson.

In New York last year a gathering in Tompkins Square protested against the gentrification-inspired closing of the park after midnight: a typical example of the gentrification process, whereby neighbourhood areas and communities - often with a high ethnic population - are broken up, their inhabitants "re-located", and the area then "renovated", making it too expensive for people to move back, thus removing the "problem" (as perceived by the authorities) of inner-city areas.

Park

The crowd was attacked by the police, who then took to the streets beating anyone and everyone in reach of their clubs. On August 6th,

200 people gathered at the entrance to the park. While several hundred people spoke on gentrification and police violence, about one hundred police gathered. The crowd grew to 700 and the police called for re-inforcements of 350.

They formed a wall in front of the main entrance to the park, and then proceeded to attack the crowd, beating many severely - hundreds were injured, and the clash has been called the most violent between police and the community since the Vietnam War.

In the aftermath of the incident, one anarchist noted that the "official" community leaders immediately attempted to take over the struggle. For years they had been calling for greater police presence! On the other hand, various Leninist groups have been jumping on the bandwagon. "For years, they have ignored this and criticized squatting, the fight against gentrification and the homeless organising themselves as being 'bourgeois' issues because they do not address factory workers or the 'need' for a 'revolutionary party'".

A further demonstration took place the following weekend. Now the police had to restrain themselves as the media turned up in large numbers. All the same, twelve people were arrested. The demonstrations in the park continue against the gentrification. The events in New York may be a sign of a growing radicalisation among the dispossessed in America.●

Down the plug hole?

THE TORY GOVERNMENT'S privatisation plans have ridden roughshod over many of our industries in the last nine years. We have seen "rationalisations" which have resulted in mass job losses, wholesale attacks on workers organisations, and most galling of all, the subjection of almost every area of working life to the oppression and exploitation of Capital and the Capitalist ruling class.

Water

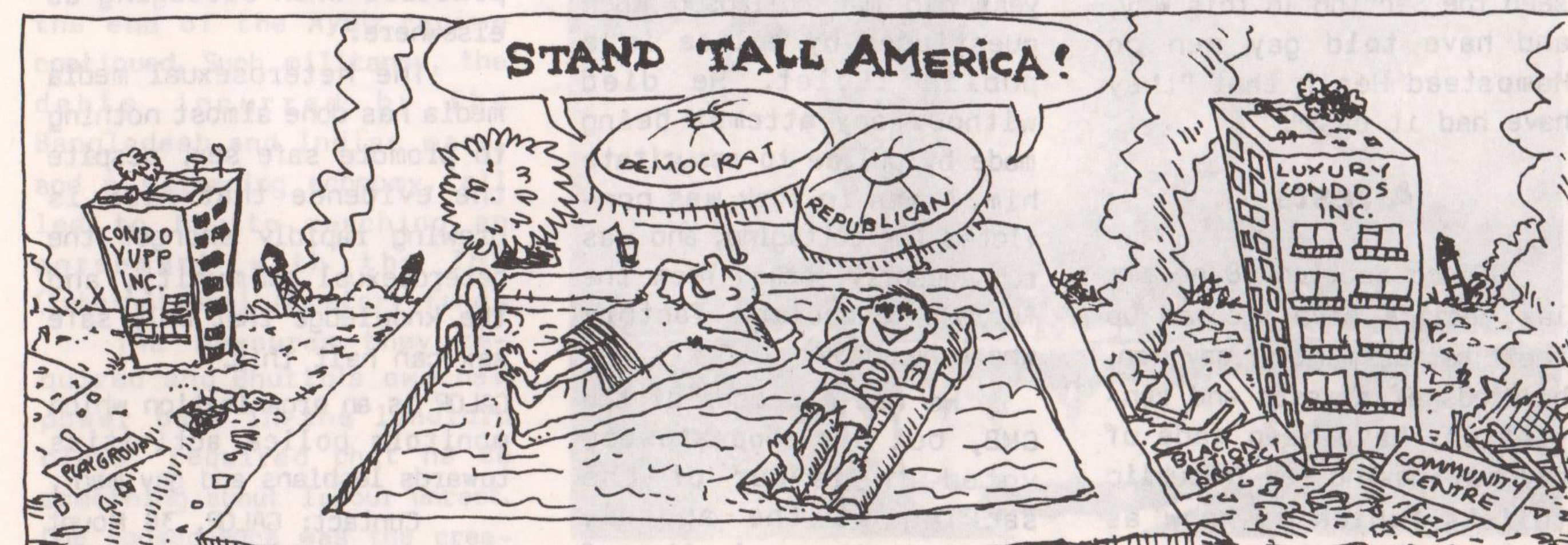
The latest in this series of dogmatic and destructive privatisations comes with that of the Water Industry.

In an attempt to justify their oppressive measures, the Tories have claimed that it is necessary to have greater Capital investment to protect the environment, and competition to ensure greater quality of product. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Pollution

We need look no further than the devastation of the world's forest by acid rain, the pollution of our seas by nuclear and chemical waste and the destruction of the ozone layer by CFCs to see how caring Capital is of our environment. The only use capitalism has for our world is to exploit it for profit, and the Tories' so called "green" policies are nothing more than cynical lip-service to placate and mislead those of us who feel real concern for these issues.

The Water Industry provides us with a microcosm to examine the whole rationale



Down the plughole?

Continued

of Capitalist production. Once privatised as a profit making and exploitative enterprise, the water companies will be free to charge whatever they choose: prices will soar, hitting the working class most harshly, the companies will be under pressure from industrialised concerns to provide the services they need and so environmental concerns will be neglected, for there is no profit to be made from sewerage disposal and keeping our seas and waterways clean.

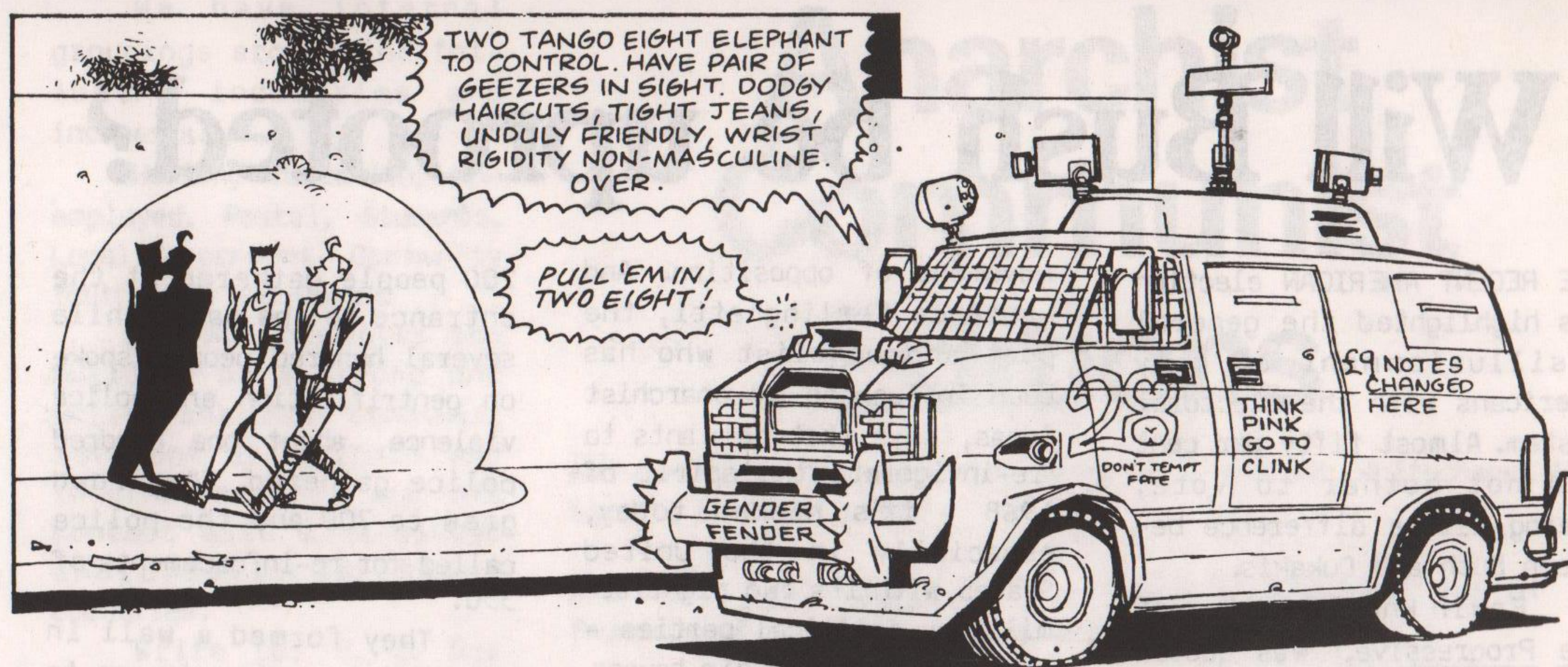
Private

Workers will be divided among themselves because of the fractured nature of the industry and basic union agreements on pay, hours and safety will gradually be eroded as they have been in many other privatised industries under the Tories: working practices will slip into those that workers had to endure in the nineteenth century.

It is even possible that our drinking water may suffer contamination as standards slip before the onslaught of Capital, and even if public outrage were to demand better standards, we would be told that "it all costs money" and have further price increase forced upon us.

Safe

Whatever our criticisms of nationalisation, we have a need for a clean and safe water supply and a non-polluted environment, with fair working conditions for those within the Water Industry. If we do not secure these it will be the working classes that will have to live with the price increases, the pollution and the oppression, not the ruling class who inflict them upon us.



FIGHTING THE BIGOTS

IN THE WAKE of outrageous hysteria created in the press about A.I.D.S., a small group of far-right Christian Tories were responsible for the creation of Clause 28.

Clause 28 is an amendment to the Local Government Bill which prevents local councils from having any part in the "promotion" of homosexuality. Lesbians and gays, supported by many sympathetic heterosexuals, organised a large amount of protest against the Clause. Whilst the Clause was passed in Parliament, the mass mobilisation of lesbians and gays was a great success, containing some of the most creative protest seen in Britain for years.

Section 28 is in itself legally ineffectual, it being almost impossible to prove in court that anything promotes homosexuality. The danger lies in that it has given bigots the encouragement to abuse and attack lesbians and gays. The police have also seen the Section in this way, and have told gay men on Hampstead Heath that "they have had it easy".

Arrests

Since Section 28 became law, police have stepped up their harassment of gay men, hundreds of arrests and convictions have been made of gay men having sex in public toilets (which is known as cottaging), and instead of

using the usual 'sexual offences' legislation, many police have used local by-laws and the Public Order Act (a recent piece of Tory legislation in which just about everything the police don't like is illegal).

Court

This prevents gay men access to legal aid and a jury trial. Police have also used agent provocateurs: policemen who seduce gay men in public places and then arrest them - a number of convictions have been secured by this method because few gay men will fight their cases in court.

One such case, involving an agent provocateur on Dartford Heath was dropped by the Director of Public Prosecutions when it was discovered what the police had been doing.

In Hove, Sussex, a 72 year old man collapsed when questioned by police in a public toilet. He died without any attempt being made by police to resuscitate him. A man in York was convicted for cottaging, and was subsequently sacked from the Terry's chocolate factory where he worked.

He was a member of the GMB, but his shop steward voted in favour of the sacking at the appeal, although the majority of

Terry's workers were against it.

The lesbian and gay community in York, along with students, are organising around the issue, and this case demonstrates that lesbian and gay workers need to organise to by-pass the union in such cases.

The press have co-operated fully with the authorities in attacking gay men for cottaging. They have printed the names of men arrested - the effect of which can completely destroy a man's life, alienating him from friends and relatives, losing him his job, and setting him up as a target for verbal and physical attack.

Media

Claims that cottaging could spread AIDS are disgraceful, but typical of the media. Gay men are in the forefront or promoting safe sex, and put this into practice when cottaging as elsewhere.

The heterosexual media has done almost nothing to promote safe sex, despite the evidence that AIDS is growing rapidly amongst the heterosexual community, and the knowledge that only safe sex can halt this.

GALOP is an organisation which monitors police activities towards lesbians and gay men,

Contact: GALOP, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP.

Out of reaction and into compromise?

ELECTIONS HAVE TAKEN place, the future of Pakistan is in question. To have any idea of the coming era, something of the past must be understood.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto came to power in December 1970 with the only freely elected majority in Pakistan's history. His organisation, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was elected upon promises of reform and a change in the situation of the impoverished.

This reformist movement was built around the discontent created under the previous Ayub regime.

Ayub's 'developmentalist' economics had begun to create an industrial and manufacturing base, but had increased the already abject poverty of the urban and rural majority. The poor had had to bear the brunt of the greed of the landlords, merchants and the emerging group of industrialists who generally demanded 50-100% profits.

Reformist

Bhutto used a variety of slogans - bread, clothing and shelter; the call for Islamic equality (masawat); the end to landlordism. By means of early land reforms, pro-worker labour laws and the nationalisation of a variety of businesses, the hopes and aspirations rose.

The factory takeovers and strikes which characterised the end of the Ayub regime continued. Such militancy, the debts incurred by the Bangladesh and Indian wars, and a worsening economy, all led to Bhutto reaching an agreement with the IMF (International Monetary Fund).

The measures they required and Bhutto's own new power base in the landlord class, required that he do something about labour unrest. One consequence was the creation of the Federal Security

Force (FSF), a sort of political police. From 1972 onwards hundreds of workers were killed and thousands arrested by the FSF.

Bhutto has accurately been described as a Bonaparte. He continually sought more and more power. The FSF was used to destroy or silence political and labour opposition. His working class and other radical allies were soon dropped in favour of those with more useful power - the landlords.

He broke the back of bureaucratic power by removing some of its higher institutions and by installing his own supporters into the civil service, etc, at all levels.

Coercion was used whenever necessary to bring trade unions, bureaucrats, tribal leaders into his sway. It was impossible for him to continue playing the social democrat.

Eventually he was brought down by the July coup of 1977 because he could not rely on working class support against the middle classes he had alienated.

What followed Bhutto was the Zia dictatorship. He took

on the Presidential mantle and continued in the manner of the army officer that he was. He was the key advisor to King Hussein when the Pakistani Army aided in the killing of Palestinians in the Black September events.

He was the officer who said he was answerable only to Allah. He carried on until August 1988, when his plane exploded in mid-air, also killing two representatives of US imperialism in the process.

The massive repressive apparatus of the state which Bhutto has built up, was then used by the new Junta in its rule by Danda (truncheon).

Islamic punishments were instituted, such as public floggings, amputations, and the throwing of acid at 'immodestly dressed' women. There was the promise of televised executions. The country was being brutalised in the name of Islam.

Coercion

The Zia regime with its allies, Jamaat-i-Islam (proto-fascist, Islamic fundamentalist) and the Muslim League have pushed for the Islamisation of the country. This has involved the establishment of 'Shariah courts' (where people are tried according to narrow Islamic law). Also the introduction of the Haddood and Zinna Ordinances: changes in family and evidence law.

This means a life of total oppression for women, inhumane punishments (stoning,

etc), no form of equality before the law at all. It is virtually impossible for women to defend themselves against rape, acquire a divorce, or even give evidence in a court.

The survival of the dictatorship depended upon a number of things. Initially good harvests gave the regime a boost - most of Pakistan's exports are agricultural.

Secondly, the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia have given huge loans and grants, and they also employ a large number of those Pakistani workers who work abroad, and who send back around \$2 billion.

Thirdly, the US has pushed through loans and grant for its favourite ally.

Like her father, Bhutto, Benazir is bourgeois, educated and commercially rich. Throughout the present elections she has made compromises just as her father did. The PPP has ignored much of its peasant and working class support in favour of the landlords, industrialists and religious leaders.

She has already affirmed that she will not endanger the interests of the US nor big business. Her manifesto is significantly less 'socialist' than her father's.

Economic

It is to be remembered that economic life is still largely controlled by two social groups. There are the 22 big families who control the majority of industrial and commercial activity. Also there are landlords who often still operate in a semi-feudal manner, although accepting some aspects of modernisation and capitalist practices.

The question is this - which power bloc will acquire some say in the political process? Shall it be the urban and rural poor, or the oppressed immigrant Mohajirs? or the religious right wing?

The army and the rich will undoubtedly have a big voice. It is only when the workers and peasants of Pakistan shake off the leadership of the landlords, the mosques and the merchants, that they will be able to get rid of the repressive army, and then perhaps make Pakistan their own way.



The dictator Zia.

From imperialist war to class war

THIS YEAR SEES the 20th anniversary of the re-introduction of British troops into Northern Ireland.

This was in response to attempts by Loyalists, with the support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), to pogromise the Catholic community.

This offensive was the culmination of the suppression of the Civil Rights Marches - peaceful demonstrations for basic democratic rights which were viciously attacked by the RUC, 'B-Specials' (an all-Protestant police reserve force unit famous for its sectarianism) and Loyalist gangs.

Barricades

The Orange (Loyalist) marches of August 12th 1969 saw the start of the attempt by these forces to systematically crush the Catholic ghettos. The reponse of the Catholic working class in these areas under seige was the building of barricades and the declaration of 'Free Derry' - a no-go area for the forces of the Orange State.

Defence was organised spontaneously and thousands of rapidly produced petrol bombs showered down of the RUC's Shorland armoured cars from the flats on the Bogside estate.

The British Labour government sent in the Army initially to keep the Loyalists under control and to suppress the Bogside uprising (after gaining the trust of the insurgent population).

A civil war in Ulster would not have sat well with a Labour government and would not have been beneficial to British ruling class interests.

So where did the Irish Republican Army (IRA) figure in all this?

The Civil Rights Movement was in no way dominated by the IRA, which has been dormant since the defeat of their 1950's campaign. During the initial insurrection/defence of the Bogside, the IRA took

no leading part - indeed graffiti on the estate read 'IRA - I Ran Away'. The organisation was not there to take over and neither was the popular support. However, as the repression increased, the call went out for arms - and who had these?

The IRA, seeing this opportunity, stepped in, as best they could, as defenders of the Catholic working class. Their credibility and popularity regained, they have never looked back.

So here we are in 1989, with troops still on the streets, Ulster the training ground for Britain's counter-insurgency techniques, the sectarian Orange State still in tact. Twenty years of an undeclared war against the 'nationalist' community of opposition. Twenty years of armed struggle by the Republican Movement, and twenty years of defeat for the proletariat.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement, an attempt to stabilise the situation, has changed nothing. Enraging the Unionists, who see it as the first step towards Dublin/Rome rule, and failing to undermine popular support for the armed struggle.

Capitalists

So what do we as Libertarian Communists see as the solution?

The troops must go and the Orange State be smashed. But how? Only through mass, conscious struggle. The elitist Armed Struggle can, at best, only secure a victory for the bourgeoisie. Sinn Fein, despite its turns to the left over the years, has nothing to offer the working class as a whole. Sinn Fein, whose 'stages theory' of 'socialism' - through National Liberation and the unification of Ireland on a capitalist basis (be it state or private) - offers a Green boss-state rather than an Orange one.

Both would oppress the working class in the name of the nation.

Libertarian Communists are opposed to the unification of Ireland on any basis other than in the context of international socialism. The

object of the boss class everywhere is to divide the working class so as to maintain its domination - nowhere is this more obvious than in Northern Ireland.

Therefore we struggle for working class unity. However, we don't see this as a simple slogan to throw at the problem so as to renege on our revolutionary responsibilities to defend the Catholic working class against reactionary Loyalist workers. Protestant workers will only be broken from loyalty to the Orange bosses by the building of a revolutionary secular socialist movement, which is as opposed to the Green as to the Orange.

The essentially petit-bourgeois republican movement, tied to nationalism, cannot create this movement. It is the task of revolutionaries in Ireland to build this, North and South. This, like workers unity, will be a hard struggle for our Irish comrades, but there is no alternative.

Revolutionaries

The task of libertarian revolutionaries in England is to oppose British imperialism; its bloody repression in Ireland, and its media propaganda war against the community of opposition in the North. We must win support amongst British Workers for the call for Troops Out and Working Class Unity.

Essentially the struggle against British Imperialism is the struggle against the logic of capitalism, which is everywhere imperialist. There are no solutions outside the solution of the proletarian revolution, and this is as true for Ireland as for anywhere else.



There are several anarchist groupings active in Ireland: Workers Solidarity Movement, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8; who publish Workers Solidarity magazine.

Just Books, 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast 1; the anarchist run bookshop, who've produced different journals in recent years.

Ballymena Anarchist Group, c/o Just Books; who publish a newspaper called Organise!

Warzone, PO Box 148, Belfast; who produce various magazines and who are currently setting up an anarchist resource library.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL OF RANK AND FILE ACTION

THESE ARE A few notes on the nature of unions and the types of challenge which rank and file action can pose. The basis of this article was written in March 1988 as a contribution to an internal debate within Communication Worker (the rank and file postal workers group). It was also a contribution to the ACF conference debate on the unions held in April 1988. A lot more needs to be said on the question of anarchist activity amongst the rank and file, this is only the start.

The Union

The traditional form of workplace organisation is the union. Unions evolved in order to defend workers' interests in the here and now. All unions aspire to legality, or recognition, because this makes their day-to-day job possible.

Unions die if they are not accepted to a certain extent by the bosses and the State. If they don't disappear they tend to turn into political organisations. Recognition is accepted by the bosses when the workforce becomes too unmanageable without it. However, the argument for recognition in a larger sense (outside of the membership's reasons) rests on humanitarian grounds (middle class sentiment) and better management of the workforce (happy workers are better workers!).

Management

The union must fulfill a management role by its very nature at all levels. The bosses will only negotiate with a union if they are pretty sure the membership will follow the union. That is, the union has to be able to control the membership in order to make deals with management. Having accepted the "legality" of capitalism (in return for capitalism's recognition of their legality) the union largely helps keep workers in line and

basically argues for a "better" management of the workforce. Differences of opinion between management and union over work practices will usually end up in terms of efficiency. The union will argue that management has it sums wrong, is forgetting larger issues, or eventually that if they carry on in such a manner then the discontent they'll face will make their plans unviable anyway.

The unions' only purpose on a day-to-day basis (apart from legal aid, insurance, etc) is as negotiators between workers and management, their long-term aim may be to prove that they are better managers of the economy than the old bosses. In both instances, the whole existence of the union depends on the existence of a capitalist economy.

Unions have never tended to become revolutionary, they have

always gone for the other way - incorporation into the State. This goes for all unions, even anarcho-syndicalist ones. Unions become part of the array of ideological forces used by the State against workers. Unions in any circumstances would rather see struggles lost than for them to get beyond the control of the union. For these reasons unions can never support the destruction of capitalism.

The Rank and File Movement

What I want to examine here is the basic formula that has underlined all the rank and file movements in Britain this century, and with this to look at the philosophy of the militants involved with regard to the union.

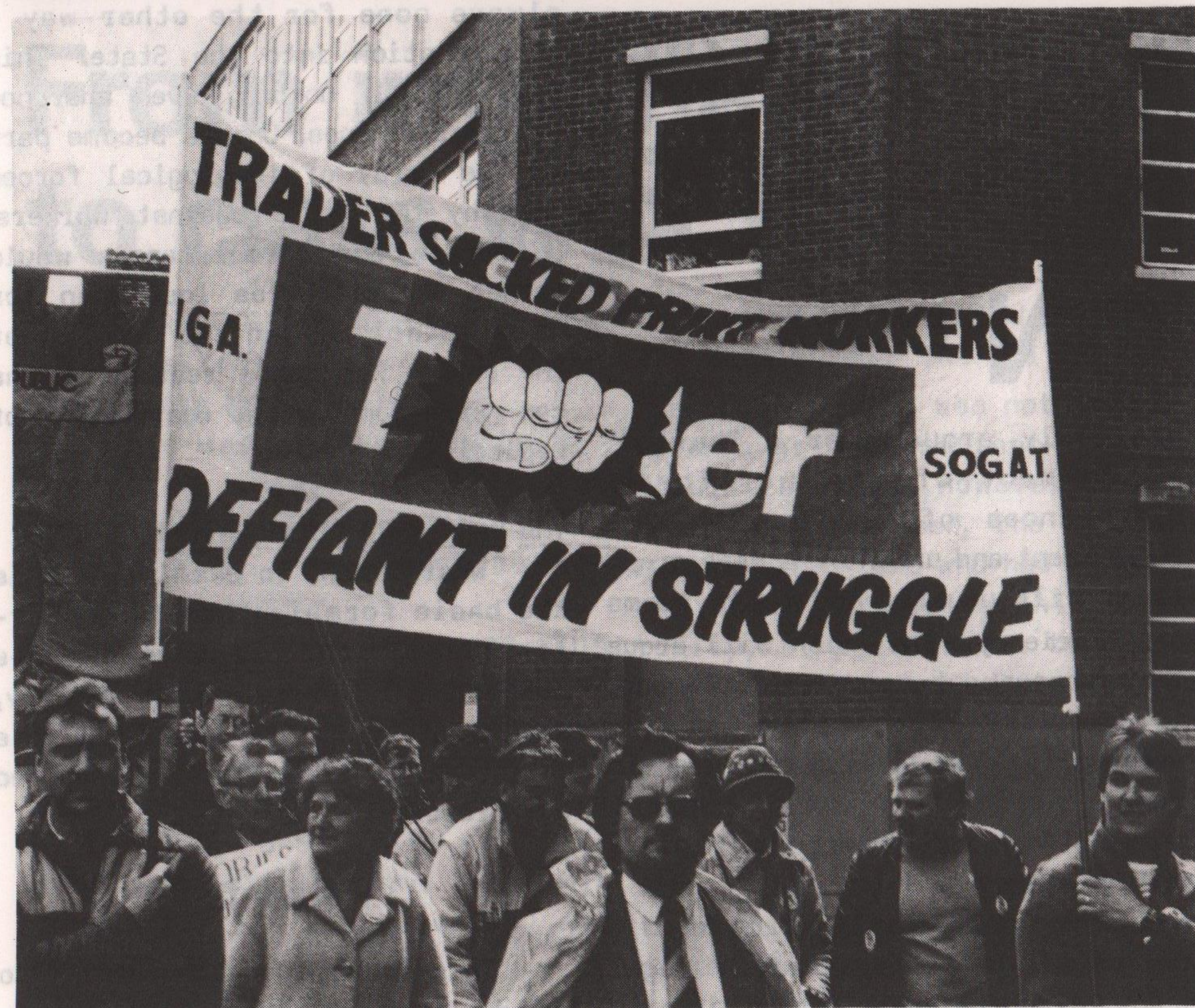
Formula

This formula has been to try to build a movement which puts pressure on the unions, which links up the rank and file of all unions, "democratises" them, and turns the unions, or the resulting new unions, into vehicles for revolutionary change.

Broadly speaking, these were the aims of the Unofficial Reform Committee (URC), who produced The Miners' Next Step, in 1912; the



Health unions have done their job in containing workers' anger.



Rank and file printworkers in dispute.

Communist Party-sponsored National Minority Movement (NMM) of the 1920s-'30s; and the Socialist Workers Party's (SWP) rank and file organising efforts in the 1970s.

Of these three movements, the work of the South Wales miners' URC is the most important. The Committee emerged during the Cambrian Combine dispute of 1910-11 and consisted of the leaders of the strike, who were not union bureaucrats and who constantly fought the conciliation tactics of the South Wales Miners Federation leadership. The Miners' Next Step was, to all intents and purposes, a revolutionary syndicalist or industrial unionist document and it contributed much to the already growing syndicalist tendency in the working class at the time.

Militancy

It was this tendency, and the growing militancy of the British working class, that led to the Shop Stewards Movement during and after World War One.

The other attempts at uniting the rank and file emerged after long periods of struggle had ended. The NMM emerged in the mid-1920s, three of four years after the shop

too. But before we move onto these initiatives I want to look, in abstract, at a couple of tactics that are still favoured by those politicians who wish to set up their own rank and file bodies.

These are the ideas of the 'transitional demand' and the 'united front', they were the tactics of the NMM and the SWP.

The Transitional Demand

A rank and file movement may try to exert pressure on the union (eg. making demands for reductions in hours, or wage rises, etc) in order to show the rest of the membership that the current structure of the union and the current leadership need to be replaced with something more militant and responsive.

Extended

This tactic can be extended, however, into a challenge to the union as such. The demands on the union to take up struggles made from below could be used to prove to workers that something other than a union is needed, something revolutionary and all-embracing socially.

This tactic of "enlightenment" would therefore involve encouraging workers to believe the union can be changed and letting them keep pushing it until they learn from their own experience that the union cannot radically change society in the interests of the working class.

This is dishonest and manipulative. Even as an occasional tactic it is dodgy. It would lead to confusion, people wouldn't know if we were trying to reform the union or go beyond it. Militant union members, who still had faith in the unions' ability to change, would soon become tired of our seeming prevarication. It is our duty to try to draw these people away from the union "mentality" - to do this we have to be consistent. Also, one demand on the union bureaucracy would lead to another, eventually there would be constant demands (eg. over hours, wages, and "democratisation" of struggles). It is easy to become a full time lobbyist (on the union leadership) as it is such a time-consuming

occupation, and also if you're keen on a bit of fame. This is what happened to the NMM, who started out with set demands.

Personally, I'm not going to tell people to pursue such a path, and waste my own time pursuing it, and then when it fails turn round and say now is the time to start doing something else; something I knew we'd have to all along anyway.

Apart from anything else, people's energies would have probably been used up by then and the moment would never come. Also, what if I was pushed into a union post - it would make no sense not to accept, so I'd end up being a low level union bureaucrat who believed the union stands in the way of our struggle. It would be about as stupid and deceitful as a revolutionary becoming an MP while believing that Parliament needs to be smashed by the mass action of the working class!

The approach is actually Marxist. It is the kind of politics that plays with peoples' lives, and it's not for anarchists.

The United Front

Tied up with the transitional demands, the idea of the united front is to aim to unite reformist and revolutionary workers around the transitional demands. The united front can never work for revolutionaries. Bearing in mind that before a revolution, reformist workers are always going to outweigh revolutionary workers, it is easy to see who is going to dominate any such united front organisation.

Contradiction

In practice if Communication Worker Group went in for a united front approach we would probably be taken over by the Broad Left (they already stole our logo during the recent national strike!)

The Shop Stewards Movements

Now I want to look briefly at rank and file initiatives that have emerged during struggle and the contradictions they have come up against.

The background of the first shop stewards movement lies in the

tremendous militancy of the period of "Labour Unrest", 1910-14. It was during this period that the ideas of syndicalist unionism (as a counter to the sectionalism of the trade union movement and the conciliatory practice of union leaders) really took off.

People realised that all workers need to support each other and that the policy of conciliation which the union bosses loved so much, and always do of course, didn't work in the interests of the workers. The period was becoming increasingly revolutionary and the union leaders were swiftly losing control and credibility when World War One came along and put an end to it all. However, it wasn't long before it all started up again.

To increase output during the war and break the hold skilled workers had over the engineering and

syndicalist union, which would have given it considerable power in the State, heralding the arrival of State Capitalism. Or it could have spread the struggle and transformed the Committees into workers councils and soviets, thereby crippling the state.

Industrial

These answers are perhaps too easy. It is important to remember that the movement never got out of its industrial setting, other struggles were going on too, like the rent strike in Glasgow. But things weren't linked, and for this reason I think the second option did not in fact face the shop stewards movement itself but the working class as a whole. The shop stewards movement remained an alternative,



shipbuilding industries the "dilution" of labour and all kinds of speed-ups were introduced. This was the spark that led to the forming of the shop stewards committees. These bodies had such support that they were able to lead strikes which were illegal and against the wishes of the union leaders.

Lloyd George (the prime minister) sensed an approaching calamity and desperately tried negotiation. However, the Committee movement was not yet ready for the power that was thrust into its hands and didn't know what to do.

I believe two choices faced the movement. Either it could have swept aside completely the old union leaders and apparatus and set up a

radical, union movement. It couldn't go any further.

The next period of rank and file activity I want to look at is that which occurred in the 1960s-early-70s. Thanks to Huw Beynon's book Working For Ford we have a really good description of the philosophy of the workers who found themselves as shop stewards and led the struggles of that period.

These stewards entered their posts with a good perception of the "corrupting" nature of the union bureaucracy, however, many of them were eventually drawn higher up into that bureaucracy. This is not to say that the movements should have had

Continued on page 12

THE MYTH OF LABOUR'S 'SOCIALISM'

THE LABOUR PARTY has carried off one of the greatest illusions in history, namely that it in some way represents the interests of the working class.

As we shall see, this fundamental lie is easily exposed, and it is becoming increasingly obvious to working class voters themselves, who, if they are going to trust a bourgeois party, might as well vote for the Tories or the Democrats.

The purpose of this article is to show that, for a variety of reasons, the Labour Party is in terminal and irreversible decline. Not least of its problems is the contradiction between its main supporters - the working class - and the anti-working class ideology that espouses.

System

The Labour Party has never been a socialist party. It was largely created by unions to gain trade union representation "within" the system, through parliament. Indeed the history of the Labour Party is part that of hounding, isolating, and, if necessary, expelling socialists from its ranks. The purging of the Militant Tendency is just the latest phase of a long and shameful tradition. The doctrine of the Labour Party is best described as "Labourism". In its essentials, Labourism means knocking a few sharp edges off capitalism, whilst preserving it.

First and foremost, the Labour Party is wedded to the traditional British methods of the rule of law, constitutionalism, parliament and gradualism. These four features effectively tie down the Labour Party and prevent it from carrying out truly radical measures. By sticking to the rule of law, for example, the Labour Party can never engage in radical extra-parliamentary action. Thus, on the

issue of the poll tax, it has been outmanoeuvred by the Scottish Nationalists who do claim the right to illegal protest.

While Labourism is supposed to reflect the interests of the trade unions and the existing economic system (capitalism), there are often difficulties associated with this, as the two are to a great extent, contradictory. Thus Labour has on occasion proposed anti-union legislation, eg. Harold Wilson's "In Place of Strife" proposals. In reality Labour is not committed at all to ordinary working people, but to the trade unions as bureaucracies which it will defend if it can. The Labour Party does not take a class approach, but, like the Tories, aims to appeal to all classes. The absurdity of "socialist" millionaires like Robert Maxwell causes no problem whatsoever for Labour.

This non-class approach is a natural consequence of Labour's commitment to capitalism and its anti-socialism. Clause 4 of the Party's constitution is often invoked as evidence of Labour's socialism. In reality "socialism" for Labour is anything that Labour governments do whilst in office.

Welfarism

Labourism can be confused by the unwary with socialism since it sometimes involves nationalisations and the maintenance of welfarism. The reality is that Labour virtually exhausted its state ownership measures in its "greatest" period, ie 1945-51. Many of the nationalisations carried out then were emergency measures to revive inefficient capitalist enterprises like the railways. Nationalisation reproduced, under state ownership, many of the capitalist management practices. State industries, as a result, have had their fair share of strikes. Indeed, the most



"Support the working class in struggle!", that's a good one Roy!"

spectacular strikes in our history have taken place in the nationalised sector.

The "welfare state", what is left of it, is not particularly socialist either, being based upon the Liberal ideas of Lord Beveridge. The universal and free welfare benefits have been gradually eroded since they were first introduced by the 1945-51 Labour government, by both subsequent Tory and Labour governments. The National Health Service was, to a great extent, created to maintain the interests of the medical profession. Whilst we should defend the welfare state, we should also be aware of its defects and understand that it is a myth which helps to sustain capitalism in Britain.

The so-called left-wing of the Labour Party is carefully controlled by the Party leadership, and "Bennism" has been rendered impotent. It seemed a few years ago that Benn might mount a challenge to the leadership and possibly move the Labour Party towards his brand of "socialism". It should be realised

that Benn only differs in terms of degree with the leadership. Like Kinnock, Benn's "socialism" is a mixture of Christianity and welfarism. Unlike Kinnock, Benn views the 1945-51 Labour government as a model to be emulated. The Party leader sees this as a recipe for electoral disaster (ha!). Benn is an elitist. Benn is a parliamentarian and reformist. Benn sees "socialism" as something which is given to the poor, for whom his heart bleeds.

Imperialist

Finally, Labourism involves the patriotic defence of British capitalism and "British interests" abroad. Since it was founded, the Labour Party has, with very few exceptions, supported British wars and adventures overseas. The Falklands/Malvinas War was only the latest episode of Labour's backing for imperialist interests. Labour has been consistent in its support for the 'anti-communist alliance' NATO, has helped put down colonial revolutions and has gone along with

racist immigration measures here in Britain.

Whilst many features of Labour's doctrine do enjoy popular working class support, there is a growing realisation that, in crisis-torn Britain, the Party can no longer even pretend to be able to deliver the goods. The Labour Party has lost its way, hence the tailing of Thatcherism on, say, defence, council house sales, and the family.

Ideology

If Labour's ideology won't stand up in the face of reality, other factors external to the Party are much more devastating.

In line with its love of the British constitution and its methods, the Labour Party supports the "first past the post" electoral system. Though undemocratic - for it grossly under represents minority parties - it did/does have the advantage of ensuring a two party system which in the past gave Labour the possibility of governing. Unfortunately, growing disillusionment with Labour, has led more and more of its supporters to drift away to the centre parties.

The former Labour vote is split in many areas, ensuring Tory wins often on the basis of minority support. Given that Labour support is often very heavy in traditional Labour areas, often there is a surplus of votes in certain constituencies which Labour could dearly do with elsewhere.

Given the difficulties faced by Labour in securing another parliamentary majority, the British ruling class feels extremely confident. Thatcher is redistributing wealth from the poorer sections of society towards the rich. They have become smug and complacent, believing (with good reason) that Labour can never win again.

But should the unthinkable happen, what would the bourgeoisie's response be to a Labour victory? Would they allow an even mildly radical government to survive? There is every likelihood of a flight of capital, an investment strike, leading to a run on the pound, followed by a grave economic crisis and more unemployment. A Labour gov-

ernment would at best be immobilised. At worst a military coup might be considered on the lines of that hatched against Wilson's government in 1975.

The greatest nail in the Labour Party's coffin is Thatcherism. The post-war consensus up till Thatcher's leadership was for the so-called 'mixed economy' - in reality, a fairly large state sector which serviced the dominant private sector.

Thatcher is truly breathless in the pace and scope of her destruction of this consensus. Root and branch she is returning the British economy to its nineteenth century purely private capitalist origins. Steel, coal, gas, oil, electricity, communications, water and other state sectors are all grist to her mill. No Labour government could ever afford to renationalise those industries. Thatcher's tax cuts could not easily be reversed - who has ever voted for increases? Sold off council houses can never be recovered - where would the money come from? The National Health Service has been pared to the bone and great changes have been made in education. Where would Labour get the resources to change all of this?

Bleating

In contrast to the Tories, the Labour Party is seen as weak, divided, and - thanks to the Tory controlled mass media - unpopular. Thatcher's culture of "me first", tax cuts, patriotism, barely disguised racism and authoritarian government have attracted a lot of support. Labour can only tail behind bleating pathetically.

This is not an essay on Thatcherism and so I will not comment at much greater length on that subject. Suffice to say that we are sliding into an ever more authoritarian political system based upon the strong coercive state and increasing economic exploitation and social inequality. For the reasons mentioned in the article, Labour has no hope of winning an election. The constitutional road to change is blocked, only the revolutionary option remains open. Labour is finished. •

Continued from page 9

» better, more perceptive, leaders. The point is that radical shop stewards do not emerge on their own, they come out of a militant and fighting workforce.

It seems, despite their reservations about the union, that the best way of fighting is to use the resources of the union machine as much as possible. This certainly appears to be an easier prospect than neglecting the union altogether and going it alone. The problem these stewards faced was that they were already on the first rung of the union apparatus and although they saw their first duty as the voice of the rank and file they also had a problematic relationship with the ordinary workers, the management and the union through the actual job of stewarding that they were doing.

Negotiators

Shop stewards are negotiators, and despite their best instincts have to play a similar role, albeit on a much lower key, as top union officials.

A steward that goes wild in the manager's office, threatening to slit the bosses' throat everytime they act unfairly is no use to the people s/he is representing on the shopfloor. Management will only listen to a steward if they respect his/her opinions and knows the steward can rely on the back-up of the workforce. A shopfloor will only want a steward who they think can defend them in everyday injustices.

A steward who is a revolutionary cannot last - either they will be drawn into the union apparatus through the day-to-day accommodation with management that they have to negotiate for. Or they will "go too far" for the members and lose the ability to do a good job as a steward.

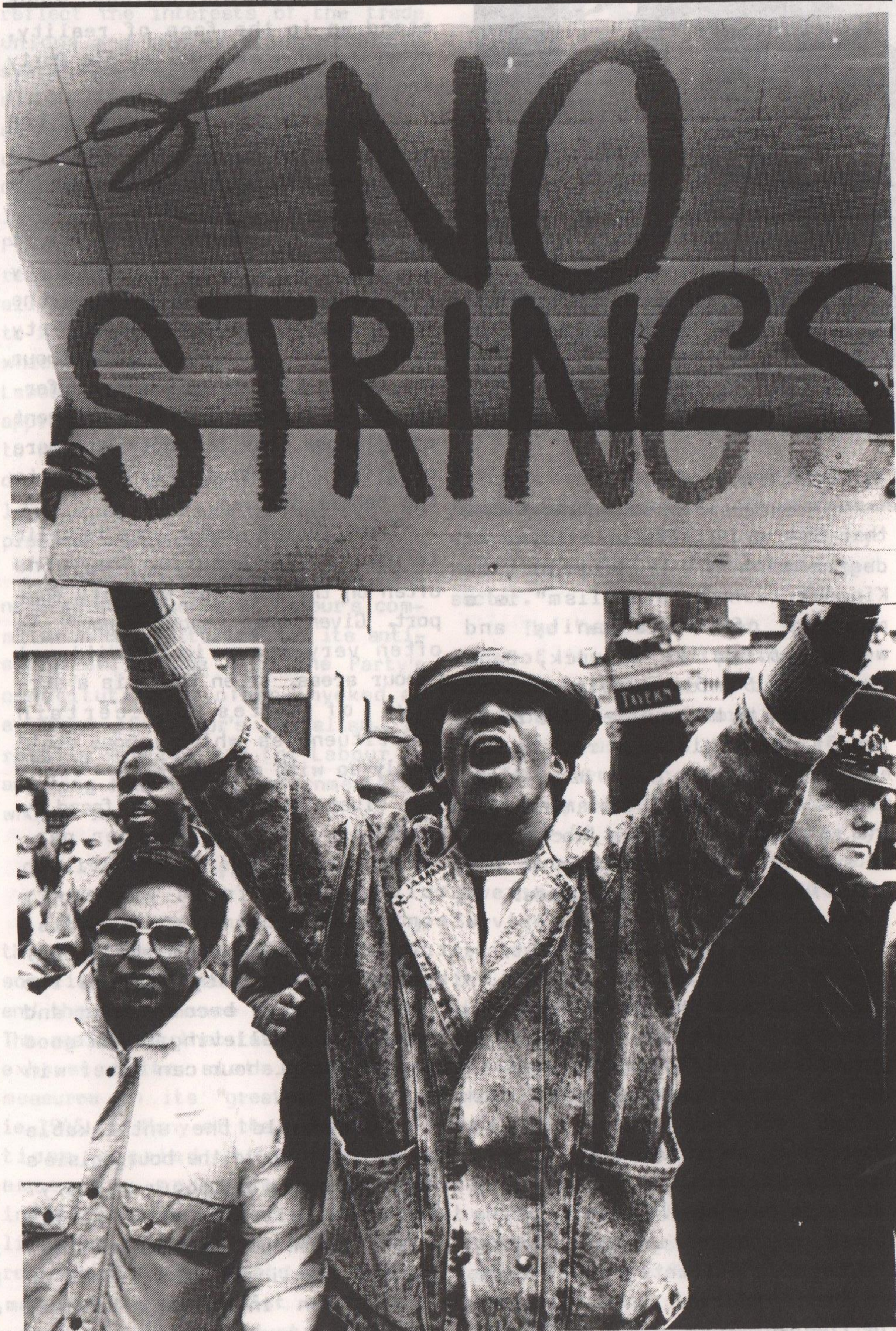
For revolutionaries the real problem with all these movements is in their critique of the union. Whether they aim for the creation of new unions (syndicalism) or whether they try to reform the existing unions and give the power to the base, they do not break from the necessary "logic" of the union,

which, ultimately, is to preserve capitalism.

All the rank and file movements in Britain have been alternative union movements, they have never gone beyond trying to make better unions. Part of the reason for this is the basic belief that the idea of the union can work for us in a revolutionary sense if it is modified, "democratised", or the unions become one big syndicalist union.

In the beginning it would seem that such changes make unions poten-

tially revolutionary, but as the union becomes a mass organisation and its delegates, or representatives, enter the managers' offices, the practicalities of the day-to-day organisation of the union take over. The initial slogans become meaningless as the union becomes the negotiator for a fairer form of exploitation. This is the sole purpose of a union, and it has no time or inclination to overthrow the State as it has a mass membership to look after and an economy to keep an eye on. (This is certainly



Lobbying union officials during the 1988 Fords dispute. Union bosses soon ensured that defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory...

not to suggest, of course, that the mass of the membership are constantly hoping the unions will start smashing the State - far from it!)

Anarchists and Rank and File Initiative

So where do we go after we have recognised the principles that underpin all union organisation, and we've lost our naivete about rank and file movements?

As class struggle anarchists we must operate, and eventually organise, in all areas of life, and this includes the workplace. What form of organisation should we aim for here? What follows is the perspective and methods that I feel Communication Worker is working towards, however, since it is only me speaking it must be regarded as only my opinion and not that of the group as a whole.

The Bulletin

Once you've decided an alternative is needed in your workplace or industry the next step is probably to attempt a bulletin or broadsheet. It only needs two people to produce a bulletin and sympathisers will help distribute it. It may cost a lot of time and a bit of money, but that's the price being a revolutionary!

Anarchists

It doesn't matter so much how it looks, although good graphics and eye catching headlines will obviously help. What does matter is that the politics contained within it are consistent and clear.

We are anarchists, who believe that our class must control its own struggles and not abdicate its responsibilities to leaders, who ultimately always have different interests to our own. It's no good in one article to say that the union is always going to try to limit our activity in struggle and come up with a compromise that ends in our demoralisation - and then in another article to demand that the union takes the lead in a struggle.

This is the kind of confused propaganda lefties might come up with but we should know better.

It is a fact that most strikes begin unofficially, also that if a

union goes for industrial action it is against a background of unofficial actions and deep resentment amongst the workforce. In either case the union tails behind the feelings of the workforce and gets in on the act to control the struggle and lead the workers to a deal that suits the union and the management.

Sell-out

How many times do we hear management saying they've won, and the union saying that they've won? And in 99% of these cases I think they're both speaking truthfully, anyone with a bit of common sense realises that only the workers have lost.

Usually this is called a "sell-out" by the workers, but it's not.

A "sell out" can only be the action of someone who is on our side and then betrays us. They may con us (like management do), they may, for example, demoralise the majority by making it look as if a particular

Ford: Behind the sell-out

THE CLIMB-DOWN has very serious implications for both Ford workers and for those in the rest of the industry. The Ford workers needed a victory not just to stop this particular agreement but to reverse the management onslaught which has been going on for several years. This sell-out has robbed them of victory and put management back in an even stronger position.

The implications are the same for the rest of the working class. A major victory would have been a focus to mount a fightback throughout industry. This has been denied them, but the present wave

which came strongest points plants closing; hundred per cent. The deal v management from a three means that it tices will be period of fir money and same.

The accep duct of both blatant lies l even claime removed fro knew that th that a m. achieved, ye knew full v There is eve the trade ur implementa

Sellout? But they weren't on our side to begin with!

struggle, or strike, is over - saying that most other workers are ready to call it a day, etc. But as I think I made clear above, the union stands against us by the simple fact of the job it has to do, and therefore can't sell us out. It is only our ignorance of the role of the union that leads us to this inadequate answer.

If we are to avoid falling into the traps which previous rank and file militants have fallen into, then we must be clear on the role of

the union. We must also be aware that any national rank and file movement we create must and will only become an alternative union movement. Either through its inevitable united front reformism, or of it is supposed to be the basis of an anarcho-syndicalist union.

Perspective, Aims and Practice

What is the perspective of a rank and file group that does not aim for the creation of a permanent national rank and file movement or a new union?

Obviously, it's first duty is as a propaganda organ that attempts to expose the truth about all union organisation, that argues the best ways to win struggles in the workplace, that inspires people to fight, and tries to engender the practice of class unity amongst all the working class. The group will remain small during periods of relative quiet and it is only during a struggle when the group may have its greatest measureable influence. It is for this reason that the original militants must keep churning out the propaganda. Bits of it will sink in and become relevant to people during a struggle - and consistency and intelligence (which is only basic common sense) will mean that workers are much more likely to be impressed by our propaganda when it is produced in the run-up or during a dispute. Keeping the group going will also help develop our ideas, our agitational skills, and our political unity as anarchists.

Propagating our ideas in the workplace is only one aspect, however important, of our general activity as anarchists. We should not expect too much from industrial struggle on its own.

Organising

Anarchists should naturally be involved in rank and file activity and anarchists should form anarchist groups in their place of work, or across an industry, but this should not be a substitute for organising together politically on a much larger scale.

The revolution is about destroying the bosses and the State and seizing everything, not just taking over our workplaces. It will be

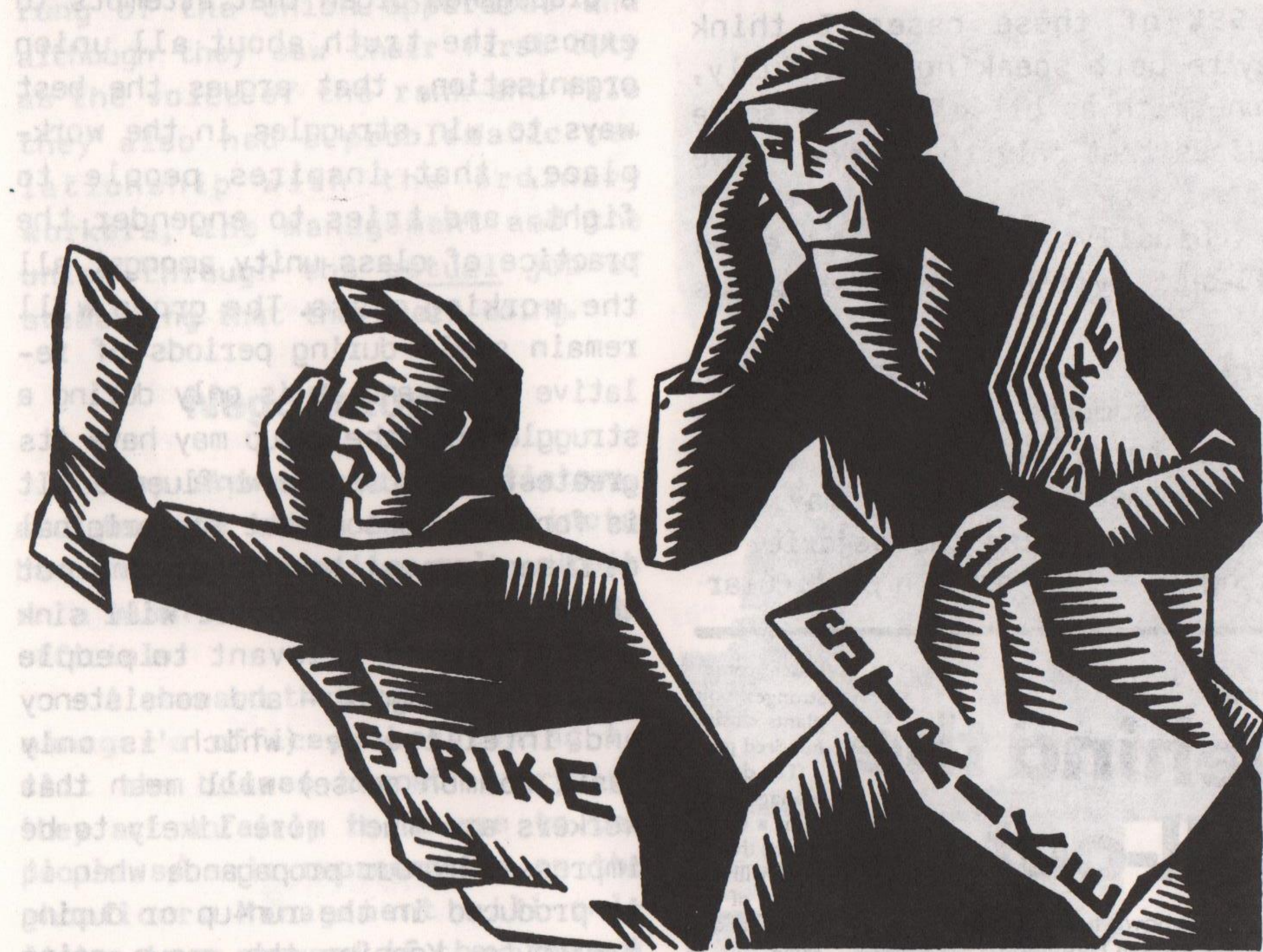
about coming out onto the streets and defending a region, not just organising a better way of producing things.

We should stay in the unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. Firstly, because we will be treated suspiciously if we try to influence struggles but are not members: like the same workplace, the union is a point of common departure between us and other workers.

Secondly, if we advocated leaving the union then we would have no other choice but to attempt to

should not become shop stewards because of the difficult position they occupy, which has been outlined above. However we should favour the forming of unofficial strike committees, which help coordinate actions but which do not try and take on any negotiating role. We should favour the forming of action groups which try to extend the struggle by example, eg flying picketting or sabotage.

We should not have a set of reformist demands, like a demand for



set up another union organisation. This is the ultimate aim of British anarcho-syndicalism. Ordinary members aren't going to leave their old union to join a revolutionary group in non-revolutionary times - they will only do so to join an apparently more effective union. This new union may be more radical but with a mass membership and recognition by the bosses its tasks are the same as all unions. Its original revolutionary intent will disappear. The best it would be able to do would be to seize control of the economy through a revolution that ended in State Capitalism, which is what several anarchists believed was happening to the CNT in Spain in 1936-7.

We should not take on any permanent low-level union posts: it makes our politics ambiguous. We

a 35 hour week. This does not mean that we shouldn't fight for minor, or major, improvements in working conditions or wages when the rank and file feel it is right to do it. But we argue the tactics needed to win and we go further. A 35 hour week will not appease our class interests, a demand like this is really a demand for better, or more humane, management of the workforce and the economy (ie a union demand).

As Errico Malatesta (it's always nice to end on a quote!) said in 1925, the task of the anarchists is not to negotiate or compromise with the bosses even if it is necessary, leave that job to others. Our "role is that of pointing to the insufficiency and precariousness of all improvements which can be obtained under a capitalist regime, and of pushing the struggle always to more radical solutions".

WHAT IS CHANGING IN THE WORKPLACE?

THE CLOSURE of the North-East shipbuilding yard in Sunderland announced late last year will lead to the loss of hundreds of jobs, both inside the docks and in the service industries that rely on money from the yard.

Shipyard workers reacted angrily to news of the closure - the latest in a seemingly relentless series of shutdowns in the industry that have seen the workforce cut to a fraction of that employed in the hey-day of British Shipbuilding.

Shipyard workers are not alone in seeing a "traditional" British industry decline sharply in recent years. Steelworkers, dockers, miners and workers in whole sections of manufacturing and production have suffered similar massive cutbacks.

Combined with job-losses in these and other industries have been other changes too:

- * The rise in temporary, casual, part-time and "home" working has led to the creation of a large pool of transient, dispersed and often unorganised labour.

- * New management practices have seen the introduction of such techniques as "team-working", complex individual bonus schemes, and attempts to foster a "family-company" mentality at work - all designed to atomize the workforce and put workers in the same factories and offices in competition with each other.

- * The growth of multinational and transnational companies able to switch their operations around the globe to best exploit their massive workforces is another recent development that has emphasised the truly global nature of capitalism, and the need to internationalise struggles in the workplace.

While none of these changes in the composition of the British workforce have done anything to lessen class-distinctions (if anything they have intensified them) they do have implications on the way in which working class struggle in the workplace should be waged.

Starting in the next issue of Organise! we are launching a series of articles looking at different aspects of the changing nature of work. Amongst other things we will be examining the rise in homeworking, looking inside the workings of a multinational, and examining plans in several specific industries.

Just what changes have been taking place, and what lessons do they hold. As ever, we welcome your contributions to the debate.

Russian lessons

History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918-21): Peter Arshinov, Freedom Press. £5.00

THIS PAPERBACK IS the first British printing of Arshinov's work on the revolution in the Ukraine, and far cheaper than the original American printing and first English translation. Though the book has now been out for a while, it is still well worth reviewing.

Arshinov himself was a metal worker in Ekaterinoslav who educated himself through strenuous personal effort.

He joined the revolutionary movement in 1904 when he was seventeen, becoming a member of the Bolshevik Party. In 1906 he became an Anarchist because of the minimalism of the Bolsheviks which did not respond to the real aspirations of the workers and contributed, with the minimalism of the other political parties, to the defeat of the 1905-6 Revolution.

In the reaction after 1905, mass political activity was impossible, and Arshinov took part in attacks on the Tsarist authorities. He spent some years in exile in France, and was arrested in 1910 on the Austrian-Hungarian border whilst transporting arms and anarchist literature.

He was sentenced to twenty years hard labour and

was incarcerated in the Butyrki prison in Moscow. Here he met Nestor Makhno, a young Ukrainian anarchist who had received a life sentence for attacks on the authorities. They became close friends and in March 1917 they were freed by the Revolution.

Army

Makhno returned to the Ukraine where he organised a powerful peasant detachment which fought the German invaders and the local landlords. From 1918 to 1921 the Makhno groups fought the Russian reactionary White Guards, and later the Red Army. They defeated the armies of the White Generals Denikim and Wrangel.

The Makhnovist movement attracted many anarchists fleeing from repression by the Bolsheviks in the North. The movement itself had a high level of political consciousness realising that the salvation of workers and peasants was the task of workers and peasants themselves.

Geographically, they covered a region of a hundred and fifty miles in diameter holding seven million people. Wherever they held sway, the land was collectivised voluntarily and shared out among the agricultural workers.

The Bolsheviks, seeking to consolidate their rapidly growing bureaucracy, finally acted against the Makhnovists.

They were aware of the essentially anarchist nature of the movement in the Ukraine, which was totally opposed to their position. They crushed the insurgent movement by force, and after a great deal of heavy fighting, Makhno fled into exile, dying a few years later in Paris.

This book tells in detail of the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian peasants and workers and their achievements in organising society on anarchist communist lines.

Intelligentsia

Arshinov, through bitter experience, is clearly aware of the class character of the Bolsheviks, with their base in the social-democratic intelligentsia:

"The peasants and workers, whose name was invoked millions of times during the entire Russian revolution, are the only bridge to power for the new caste of rulers... It (Bolshevism) is not only a social, but also a psychological authoritarianism... It lacks even the shadow of what will constitute the essential trait of the real working class social revolution of the future, the ardent desire to work... for the good of the people.

All the efforts of Bolshevism, at times enormous and persistent, are nothing more than the creation of authori-

tarian organs, which in relation to the people, represents only the threats and brutality of former masters."

Militants

At the same time Arshinov realises the shortcomings of many Russian anarchists:

"The masses urgently needed militants who formulated and developed their ideas, helped them realise the ideas in the grand arena of life, and elaborated the forms and direction of the movement. The anarchists did not want, or did not know how, to be such militants. As a result they inflicted a great injury on the movement and on themselves. An even more important aspect of the helplessness and inactivity of the anarchists is in the confusion in anarchist theory and the organisational chaos in anarchist ranks."

Arshinov points out the need for anarchists to organise themselves, to establish links among all those who genuinely strive for anarchism and are devoted to the working class. The disruptive and arbitrary elements will then disappear.

This book should be read by everyone who wants a detailed insight into the real nature of the Russian revolution, the role of the Bolsheviks, and the case for organised class anarchism.



DEFINING SEX AS BASE, AN OBSTACLE TO FAITH, ST. PAUL NAMED SAME-SEX LOVE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, AS SIN.

AH, SIN. WAS THAT ITS NAME, THAT STOLE A KISS BEHIND THE INTERLOCKING SHIELDS OF WAR? SIN THAT MADE SAPPHO WEEP AND WRITE "I HAVE NOT HAD ONE WORD FROM HER"?

WITH BABY-BLOOD UPON THEIR HANDS THEY SAW OUR LOVE AND NAMED IT SIN.

AARGH, it's Section 28!

THE ABOVE IS an extract from AARGH (Artists Against Rampant Government Homophobia). AARGH is a book of really good comic strips drawn by well known left wing cartoonists, and compiled and published by Phyllis and Alan Moore. The strips are all anti Section 28. Some are funny, some sad. Most are defiant (except Posy Simmons!) and some anti-State. No one got paid for their work - instead all profits are going to OLGA, the Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action. AARGH costs £2 and can be bought at most comic shops.

Comic relief

CRISIS; Fleetway Publications. 65 pence fortnightly.

WHEN MOST PEOPLE think of comics they think of macho superheroes, female victims whose clothes keep falling off, and xenophobic portrayals of crooks and villains.

However there are a few well-drawn and scripted comics on the commercial market presenting a clear understanding of capitalist exploitation, and portraying strong characters fighting against a dehumanizing and degrading society, with clear anarchist overtones.

One of the most interesting to be published recently is *Crisis*, containing two serials "Third World War" and "New Statesmen". Third World War portrays earth a couple of decades hence, dominated by multinationals and world wide warfare.

The capitalists have discovered that the risks of nuclear war are unacceptable

to them - as it might wipe out the workforce on a global scale. They therefore opt for long term "low intensity conflict", similar to the war the US wages against Nicaragua - crippling and demoralising to the population, but leaving them potentially exploitable.

Through the central character - Eve (a Black anarchist/feminist conscripted into the war) - the story explores the role of multinationals and liberal organisations like Live Aid in keeping the "third world" populations poor but fit for work.

Resistance

But the capitalists have not bargaining for the resistance they meet from the people they try to exploit, or the dissent in their own ranks!

Although it is set in the future, TWW is written about global capitalism and the growing militarisation of the world in the 1980s, and what it will lead to. It's analysis is in depth and accurate - "a picture speaks a thousand words".

How to fight?

IN PLACE OF COMPROMISE - Why we need a rank and file movement; pamphlet by the Anarchist Workers Group, £1.20.

THIS PAMPHLET looks at the failings of reformist trade unionism and established union leadership, and goes on to outline the potential of rank and file organisations in initiating action most likely to win disputes.

Although the examination of previous rank-and-file initiatives in Britain is detailed, the writer seems to have learnt little from their failings. The pamphlet is also confused in its analysis of the role of the unions.

The pamphlet describes the three periods of extensive rank-and-file activity that have occurred this century. Firstly, there was the rank-and-file movement that culminated in the first Shop Stewards Movement during World War One. Secondly there is the Communist Party sponsored National Minority Movement of the mid/late 1920s.

Appallingly, I feel, it gets the third period wrong. This period it describes as the mid 1970s, when the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) tried a couple of times to create a national rank-and-file committee. In fact the real period of rank-and-file militancy has just passed by the time the SWP decided to get in on the act.

This was a period of at least 10 years where once again it was the shop stewards who came to the forefront in many struggles. It is indicative of the underlying politics of this pamphlet that it ignores this particular period of struggles and chooses instead to analyse the SWP's rank-and-file involvement in the mid/late 1970s. The SWP's irrelevance is clear to see even in this pamphlet, but the Anarchist Workers Group (AWG) seem to fail to notice it.

The two periods of greatest rank-and-file initiative in Britain were the movements up to 1920 and the late 1960s and early '70s, not

the Minority Movement or the SWP's efforts. These were movements that came from below, movements that threw up radicals and presented the most serious challenges to the union bosses and the State. If we really want to learn anything about the possibilities of rank-and-file movements in Britain, it is to the shop stewards' movements we must look.

Traitors

These movements showed that it is very difficult, even for revolutionaries, to break from the limiting practice of the union. Simply, the union must fulfill a management role by its very nature at all levels. Revolutionaries must not let themselves be caught up in this process.

This leads us on to the second problem. The AWG are confused about the unions, much of their analysis is flavoured by trotskyism.

At one point they say that union leaders are not simply "traitors who should be replaced by better leaders". Then they talk about "sell-outs", which is surely the action of a traitor? They argue that the early syndicalists should have "mounted a challenge to the reactionary trade union leaders". Does this mean that they shouldn't have challenged "progressive" union leaders? It criticises New Realist union leaders, but I see nothing new about their "realism".

Throughout it criticises union leaders for "selling-out" and seems to attack their strategy, rather than exposing the task which unions have to do: which is to manage the workforce and help manage the economy.

Myth

The myth we have to break is that unions are really on our side, or that they should be on our side. They aren't and they never will be, they have to perpetuate capitalism in order to survive.

There is a need for the rank-and-file to begin to control their own and struggles, and it is going to be difficult, but despite the "clever" writing in this pamphlet it gives us no real clues as to how this is to be done.

How do we fight for abortion provision?

IN REPLY to your "beyond abortion rights" article in Virus Number 13, I would like to point out some serious contradictions in your arguments.

You start off by correctly criticizing the 1967 Act and pointing out its limitations. As David Steel has recently stated, it never intended to give women the right to free abortion on demand. It was passed at a time when there was a boom in the economy and the labour market was expanding, giving increased opportunities for women, especially those of the middle classes.

There was an increase in public concern over backstreet abortions and their horrific consequences. The state decided that it was preferable to have control over abortions than have them continue illegally. The 1967 Act then, effectively gives the doctor the right to choose, and therefore any campaign to fight off attacks on this Act must also recognise its inadequacies.

You then go on to argue that abortion is a class issue. I entirely agree that

working class women need easy access to abortion in order to participate equally in the class struggle. However I have serious disagreements with your means to achieving free abortion on demand.

Your advocacy of self-help do-it-yourself abortion centres has more in common with life-stylist drop-outism than with the politics of revolutionary class struggle anarchism.

As revolutionaries we have to offer the political arguments and practical strategies needed to fight these attacks and to argue for free abortion on demand.

In this present period when the state is making extensive cuts in public service spending and launching a massive moral offensive, it is a cop out to say don't fight, and to somehow take over the state's responsibilities.

We have to fight for the complete decriminalisation of abortion and for adequate facilities for these abortions to be carried out. We counterpose the moral arguments with the needs of working class women: ie. the right to con-

trol our own fertility which inevitably includes the right to free abortion on demand.

In your article you correctly argue against state interference in women's lives. The fight for abortion rights must be linked up with the fight for free contraception and free pregnancy testing. If women are to have the choice of whether or not to become pregnant we need full maternity rights and the provision of 24 hour nursery facilities.

For the state to provide all these services would mean a massive increase in public spending which is something that capitalism is unwilling and unable to do. It is our task as revolutionaries to point out this contradiction and show the necessity of the destruction of the system that keeps women enslaved.

In solidarity
SR

(for London Anarchist Workers Group)

AUTHOR'S REPLY: We agree that abortion is a class issue. Where we differ is on the revolutionary approach that anarchists should adopt to the issues of abortion provision and women's liberation.

Your strategy - placing what you know to be impossible demands on the State in the hope that this will 'expose' its contradictions - is a straightforward copy of the Trotskyist 'transitional demand'.

Trotskyists use it in two ways. Either, as you have, to accompany a list of demands for state provision (minimum wage, crèche facilities for all, etc) or, as a way of calling on labour and union leaders to 'take the lead' in organising working class action (TUC - Call a General Strike, etc).

It is not a strategy that revolutionary anarchists should be mimicing.

Trotskyists pose the demand in the hope that people - through being disillusioned when their demands aren't met - will conclude that what's really needed is a better run state, with better state provision, or that what we need is union and party leaders that are really on our side.

People are hardly likely to draw anarchist conclusions from a debate about what sort of services we think the State and the ruling class ought to be providing us with.

And to talk in terms of the 'state's responsibilities', as you do, only serves to confuse people even more as to what anarchists think about the State.

You describe the ACF's position on the Alton Bill as a 'lifestyle' based 'don't fight' cop-out. In fact our position as revolutionary anarchist communists was clear throughout: fight the Bill, whilst realising that women's liberation can only be achieved through the destruction of the State and capitalism.

To go on to dismiss, as you do, examples of autonomous working class initiatives in providing immediate, safe, free, abortion facilities for other women as 'drop-outism' is absurd and insulting.

We agree that women need control over our own fertility, including free abortion on demand. But our goal is not - as you say - the 'complete decriminalisation of abortion', it is the destruction of the system that criminalises it.

As anarchists, we see that the state is irreformable, and we should say so. To pretend in our propaganda that we think it is reformable, and so argue that we should fight to reform it, is dishonest, manipulative and ultimately counter-productive.

Anti-Zionist or Anti-State?

IN VIRUS 13 an article appeared which described the creation of the Israeli state. Most of the blame for this and the oppression of the Palestinians was placed upon Zionism. The role of the British state is ignored in the main, presented as merely an ally of Zionism.

Consider the following quotes from the article:

a) "In order to understand the current situation in Israel, it is necessary to understand its philosophic basis."

b) "The reality of Zionism has always been based upon European racism, and Imperialism."

c) "Zionism, from its earliest days allied itself with the ruling classes of Europe and America. This policy finally paid off with the Balfour Declaration of 1917 in which the British government promised Palestine to the Jews."

d) "...the true nature of





the Zionist state - a mixture of racism imperialism and militarism".

In these quotes the author equates racism, Zionism, and the Israeli state. In the third quote, Zionism is equated with being Jewish. Whilst the author is not intending to be anti-semitic, this is the impression given, that the Jewish people in Israel.

The Left in Britain have squabbled like kids over Zionism. In place of developing an understanding of Israel, anti-Zionism has been equated with anti-semitism; and Zionism with racism. Neither is true, disagreement with Zionism is only anti-semitic if Zionism is equated with racism.

When Herzl wrote "The Jewish State" at the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish people in Europe faced, often, vicious oppression. There were pogroms against Jewish people mainly in Russia, but also in Spain and Poland. There was widespread discrimination throughout Europe.

This is the basis upon which Herzl developed Zionism.

Herzl saw expansion of Jewish settlements in Palestine as a sanctuary from oppression. Herzl did not argue for the forced eviction and repression of Arabs.

Up to World War Two, Zionists were a socialist minority. The kibbutzim during this period worked in co-operation with Arabs, until the creation of the Israeli state.

There may have been troubles between Arabs and Jews, but these were an aberration from Zionism. The kibbutzim were set up on socialist ideals, the "day to day indigenous opposition" did not exist.

In the Balfour declaration of 1917, the British state conceded the right for Jewish people to live in Palestine. Arabs and Jewish guerrillas had been fighting the British before this, and after it they just sent more troops in. The war with the British armed forces continued until 1948. Jews had to fight their way into Palestine, whilst the British state was keeping refugees from Germany seeking sanctuary in Europe.

At a time when and Arabs and Jews were fighting each other and well as fighting the British state together and independently, Britain was declining as an imperialist power. The Arab states were making moves to unite. The British Foreign Office developed a plan to overcome this.

The British Army began throwing Arabs out of Palestine. At the same time they gave assistance to those Jews with anti-Arab feelings and helped them create an Israeli state in opposition to other states in the Middle East.

This was the same divide and rule tactic used in Africa, India and Ceylon: using the promotion of racism to suit Britain's foreign policy. The British sold Palestine for the price of an anti-Arab state.

Today in Israel, extreme Zionism is a minority view. Zionism started as a vision of sanctuary. What the Israeli state might describe as Zionism today is thinly disguised racism.

It is irrelevant to oppose the ideology of Zionism. It is the ideology of the Israeli state that should be opposed, in particular its practice. Many Israelis, whilst opposing the actions of the state, agree with its existence.

Many Jewish people in Israel want to work with Arabs. Most of the soldiers on the West Bank are professionals because conscripts won't go there. The Israeli state maintains the oppression of Arabs in much the same way that the British state maintains repression of the republican community in Ireland: by lies, manipulation and violence.

It would be much more useful for the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) to develop an understanding of the various forces at work in Israel, in the state, the ruling class, and in the organisations of protest movements and class struggle.

PH
York ACF

AUTHOR'S REPLY: PH can try and rewrite history as much as he likes. This does not detract from the fact that Israel is the fulfillment of Jewish nationalism which is commonly known as Zionism.

All Jews are not Zionists, such narrow and exclusive cultural and religious nationalism is rejected by some Jews as a matter of principle.

Zionism and its realisation, the State of Israel is racist. Zionism is the philosophy that Jews (and Jews alone) have the so-called "right of return" even though they may have never set foot in the region. The whole basis of Zionism is that Palestine should form the national geographical homeland of all Jews. The problem is that the territory they claim is also inhabited by indigenous Arabs who have systematically been expelled, repressed and humiliated for 40 years. If this is not racism then I don't know what is.

And as for the fact that there are some progressive Israelis, there are also some radical white South Africans, who, despite their liberalism, benefit directly from institutionalised racism.

Anarchists have a duty to fight militarism, nationalism and racism and this applies even when the perpetrators have suffered, and continue to suffer, racism themselves.

PH might also note that the article criticized the PLO (the Palestine Liberation Organisation) as well.

'Third World Debt'?

JUST A FEW jottings on Virus no 12. The short 'Third World Debt' article was lacking a basic perspective. Yes, the "West" and its capitals are major lenders to the third world, but then "capitals" within the third world are also at it.

For instance, Bolivia, whilst owing 10% of its debt to the World Bank, 14% to the International Development Bank, also owes the rest to Brazil and Argentina...

Within Latin American "countries" owe to the "West", but also to Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. I mean Cuba is in debt to Argentina.

What it comes down to is, by putting yourself against the creditors (perceived as the West) the third worldist view defends the debtors who in effect have received the dollars to carry on their business as usual - that is to say exploiting the working class.

Anyway, enough of that! In the 'State of Health' article there seemed to be some confusion over who "healthworkers" are. Sometimes they are only nurses, and some time all those that work in the sector. The 'way forward' bits also had some confusion about the fact that workers are workers first. The fact that they are in "trade unions" must be secondary.

So to say "other trade unionists" seems to imply that other trade unions are "better" than the health sector ones. Do you believe this?

Yours
P, Bristol

Re-examining our politics

SINCE THE ANARCHIST Communist Federation (ACF) founding conference of March 1986, we have continually re-examined our ideas. To reflect the developments in our perspective, we have recently expanded and modified our "Aims and Principles", and we hope that they are now a clearer indication of our analysis and goals.

* We have dropped the reference to other social systems to emphasise the global nature of capitalism.

* The statement on violence and the revolution has been changed to make it

clearer that while we don't glorify violence, we are in no doubt that it will be necessary to achieve and defend human liberation.

* We have abandoned the use of the term self-management, as this could imply a form of self-managed capitalism or "workers' control". The anarchist-communist goal is not to transform the means of production, but to socially transform production (for need) into something that is no longer a separate and alienating activity.

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which

claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in the face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and economic and political colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist communist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

4. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism.

* Reference to the term democracy has also been dropped. We work to achieve the total involvement of everyone in the running of their lives: representative democracy is a barrier to this. Similarly, democracy in "working class organisations" (eg. the use of ballots) can hold back class action. The anarchist-communist revolution will destroy the politics of rule by anyone, including any "majority".

* We have expanded the section on the role of trades unions to clarify why we think

Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

5. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions, however, are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours, so it is vital that we organise ourselves collectively.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we many achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this, although rank-and-file initiatives may strengthen us for the battle for communism.

that working within them can never achieve our goal. Discussions continue as to whether unions have no part to play in the overthrow of capitalism.

* Internationalism is vital for a successful revolution, and we have included a statement on national liberation struggles and nationalism as major forces which prevent this.

* We have made it explicit that ecological issues, allied to a class analysis, are a necessary and integral part of the revolutionary process.●

6. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creation of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

7. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.●