

Dockers prepare for battle

A FEW MONTHS ago, Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) boss Ron Todd was being dismissed as a "dinosaur".

He was slammed for being resistant to change, blind to economic realities, and for being unable to cope with a new era in industrial relations.

But in the days immediately following the government's announcement that they planned to scrap the hard-fought-for National Dock Labour Scheme, all that changed.

Union

Todd found himself winning the praises of both Labour and Tory front benches for his handling of the dockers' angry reaction to the news.

Shadow Employment Secretary Michael Meacher applauded Todd's "responsibility, courage and restraint". Former Tory minister Michael Heseltine echoed these sentiments, adding that "we should welcome Todd's calming influence on events".

Dockers have long realised that an attack on the NDLS was inevitable. With the government determined to abolish "restrictive working practices" as part of its attempt to overhaul the British economy, it was simply a matter of time before attention was turned on the registered dockers.

As dockers in ports throughout the country responded to the news by staging immediate stoppages and walk-outs, most confidently expected the issuing of a national strike call within days to defend the scheme.

But the leadership of the TGWU had other ideas.

Todd stepped in to reassert union control over events, by endorsing the unofficial action and immediately ordering strikers back to work, promising that a

national dock strike would follow an immediate ballot.

Having successfully subordinated the strike action, Todd won the backing of the Executive to postpone a ballot while he sought talks with the Port Employers, aimed at seeking an agreement "at least as favourable" as the existing NDLS.

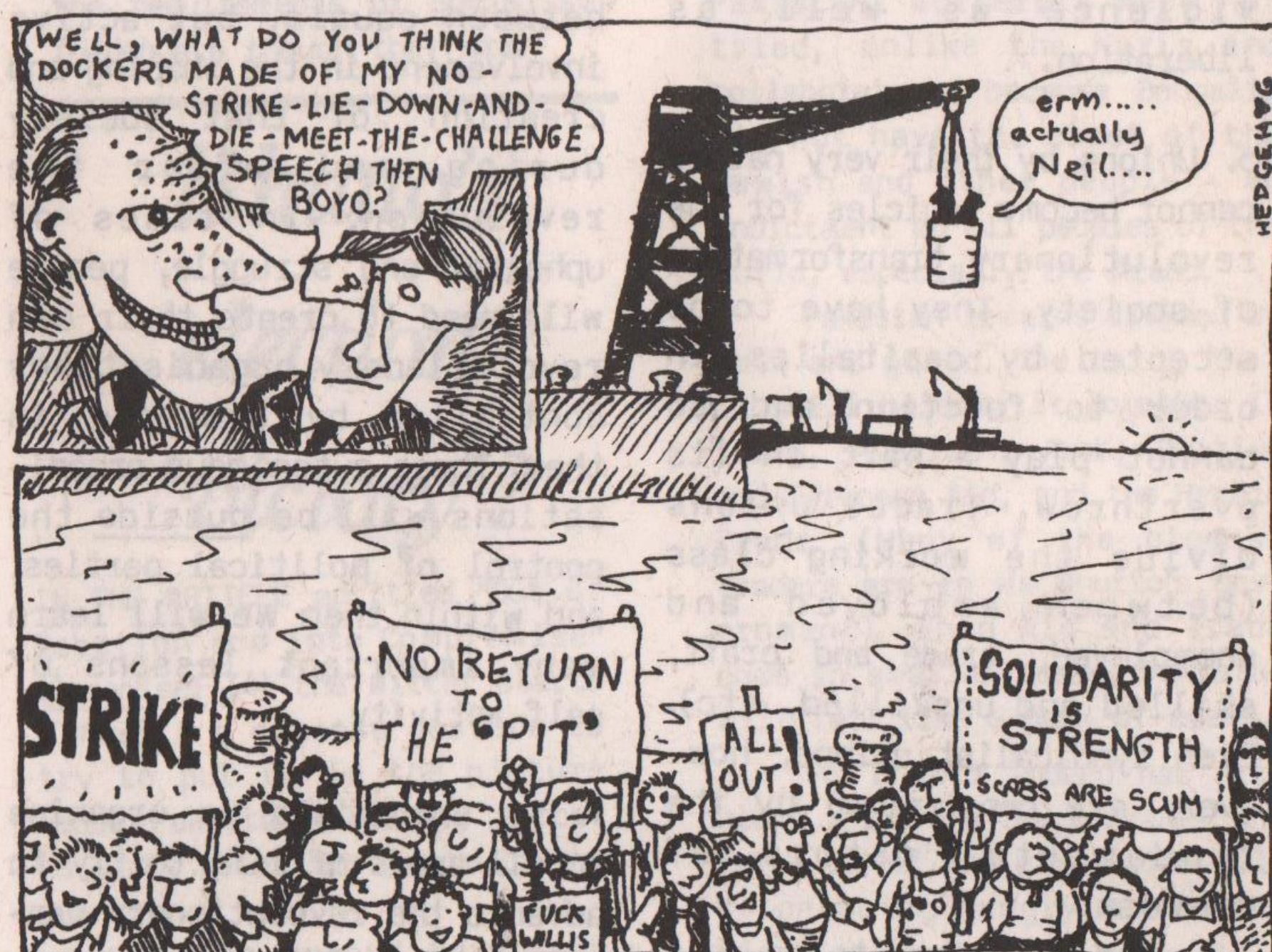
This was a clear admission that the fight to save the Scheme had already been abandoned, and that the union was now looking to salvage what it could from the wreckage.

The Port Employers seemed genuinely surprised that this first round in the battle had been won so easily. They readily agreed to open-ended talks with the TGWU's

of the union were at odds. The dockers concerns are to protect their jobs and defend their working conditions. They realise that scrapping the NDLS would herald a whole host of other attacks.

The union's fear is in losing a stable and secure arrangement with management, that weakens their mediating leverage and weakens their negotiating role. The union's real concern is to protect their "right to be consulted" over management reforms.

Any action that may be illegal could invite sequestration or punitive fines—threatening the union's existence. And because (as former TUC boss Lord Murray once observed) the



negotiating team, hoping to string the union out for several decisive weeks, allowing confusion and despondency to spread throughout the docks.

In typical form, the Left decried this "sell-out" denouncing Todd's "capitulation", "backsliding" and "refusal to lead a fight".

In fact, Todd performed remarkably well in defending the union's interests. The mistaken belief that Todd had "sold-out" only makes sense if we equate the interests of the union with the interests of the workers.

From the start, the objectives of the dockers and

first job of a union is to protect itself, it's in the union's own interest to police its membership and sabotage effective and illegal independent action.

It is for that reason—and not because of some abstract "cowardice"—that, if a ballot over strike action is held in the coming weeks, the TGWU will only involve the 9,500 dockers covered by the scheme, will not sanction mass picketing, and will try to stamp out any attempts to spread the action to unregistered ports.

The difficulty the Labour Party bureaucracy faces in offering even token

"support" to the dockers struggle, is that they agree that scrapping the NDLS makes sound economic sense. As 1992 and the Single European Market approaches, British industry needs to push down port costs and remove obstacles to the flexible management of the workforce, if it is to compete efficiently in the international market place.

Mealy-mouthed Meacher admitted that a future Labour government would not reinstate the Scheme, but would examine the "new realities" in work practices in the docks.

Kinnock took issue, not with the threat to dockers jobs, but to the confrontational manner in which the Tories announced their plans. "Their are far better ways to achieve the necessary changes", he said, "than by provoking the dockers".

A Port Employers' secret strike-plan leaked to the press details the preparations they have made to weather what they describe as an "inevitable" strike. They count on action lasting a maximum of six weeks; and on the 35 non-Scheme ports—which currently handle around 30% of the total volume of trade—working normally.

Trade

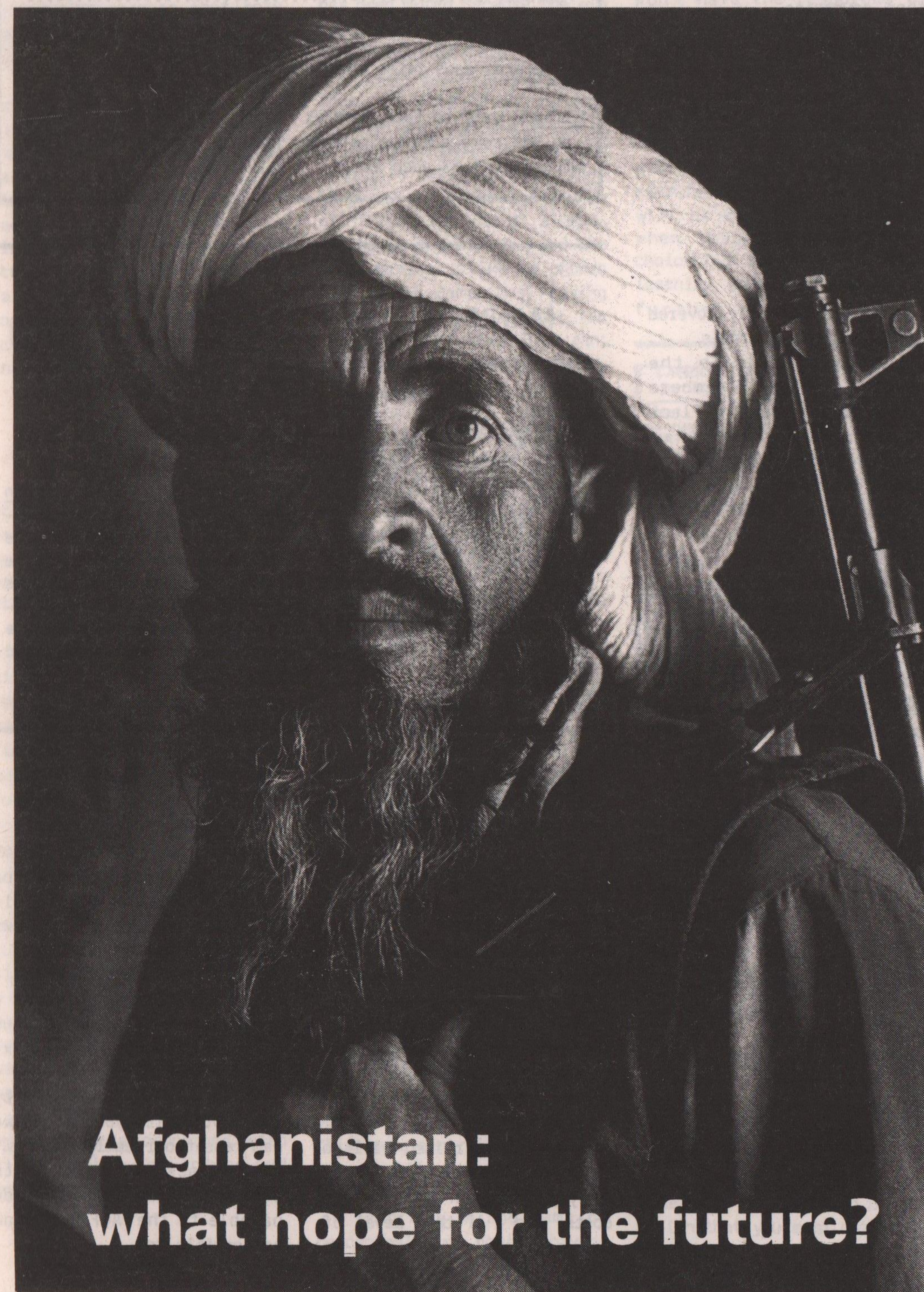
They admit that if the strike were to last longer than eight weeks, or, if the non-Scheme ports or rail and road haulage networks were affected, it would "quickly start to bite". Priority-lists of goods essential to industry have already been drawn up, including plans to "maintain an adequate supply of newsprint" to ensure no interruption in the media propaganda war that would be waged against striking dockers.

The rank and file dockers attempts to defend working conditions must be supported by active solidarity in all areas. The role the TGWU plays in keeping the lid on initiatives it doesn't control will prove once again the need for a revolutionary alternative to fighting the State by its own rules. •

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ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism



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HOUSING
UNDER
THREAT

ITALIAN
WORKERS
ORGANISE

EDUCATION
AND THE
'MARKET'

DOCKERS
STRIKE

LETTERS

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

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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 August issue is June 30th.

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

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The Libertarian Communist Manifesto

ACE No 3 The Libertarian Communist Manifesto: a translation from the French of the Fontenis document outlining the need for coherent class politics and a strong anarchist organisation to influence the revolutionary process. (60p inc p&p).

PRESS FUND

THANKS TO AN excellent response to our first Organise! Press Fund Appeal, we've easily reached our £250 target within our three-month deadline!

What a brilliant way to kick-off our Fund. Many thanks to all comrades, friends, readers and subscribers who gave donations.

The money raised will go a long way towards meeting our many production and postage costs, and - if this level of response can be kept up - we can begin to think about increasing the size of Organise!, and publishing it more frequently.

Between now and next issue, several fund raising

events and benefits will be taking place - which should all help us reach our next £250 figure.

If you think Organise! - and other ACE publications - are worth supporting, help us by donating to this next appeal.

We want to raise £250 by July 20th. With your help, we can repeat our early success.

We ask all readers to send their donations (made payable to the 'ACF') as soon as possible to:

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The schooling business

IN APRIL THE main provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 came into force - part of the Tories' strategy of claiming to 'decentralise power and remove bureaucratic control', whilst in reality introducing changes that only benefit an already privileged few.

Schools will be able to "opt-out" of local education authority control and will instead get a State grant for each child plus money from rich parents and business investors. Schools in middle class areas will thrive, attended by kids from well-off families including those no longer needing to pay private school fees to get "the best" in education.

Recruit

The schools' business orientation will ensure that local capitalists will queue up to recruit the well-trained brainwashees as technicians at all levels.

Young people who stay on after 18 can go to the privatised Polytechnics which sell courses to employers as investments. The money Polys get from the State will have far more strings attached and business won't be thrilled at the prospect of funding the Polys - so the State ends up with more control.

Teacher-training will be more geared to the "enterprise culture" - so much for education being "child-centered". Well, it never was particularly, but now market consciousness alone guides decisions. Headteachers and principals in schools and colleges become no more or less than managers concerned with disciplining workforces and meeting budget targets.

Failed

Comprehensive Education may have failed miserably to meet the needs and desires of working class people, but the changes contained in the Act,

will only increase the extent to which children are turned into just more commodities for capitalism.

As with the privatisation of the Health Service, power industries, etc, resistance has been muted because the old monolithic bureaucracies which ran things alienated everyone who came into contact with them, as "clients" or workers. The Tories play successfully on the reluctance of ordinary people to defend systems they have had such bad experience of. "Fight the Cuts!" sloganeering is not enough, and the left parties strike no chords with their campaigns, giving no sign that they oppose the rigid bureaucracies that ran, among other things, education.

Youth are not going to like the idea of fighting to keep schools the way they are! The idea of giving parents power over schools and limiting that of local officials seems, to many, no stupider than defending what's gone before.

The irony is that local authority control will be replaced by that of central government and business. Parents may have more say over minor matters but Boards of Governors will be dominated by investors, ie rich parents and companies, who - along with the State - will have the real say.

Economic

The overhaul of education is an example of the Tories starting from proposed changes everyone knew were needed; then planning and administering them so that virtually the opposite goals are served - in this case central control and the specific economic aims of the government.

And all in the name of de-centralising power, giving choice, lifting restraints, increasing freedom. But only for middle class parents who favour a reactionary model of learning, don't mind turning their children into value for capitalists' money and who

don't care what happens to those who are less "fortunate".

Poor schools won't attract rich parents, business cash or enough kids to get by on government money. They won't have the resources to gar-coat the National Curriculum and GCSEs with more teacher-attention, morale, good equipment, books, etc.

Testing at ages 7 and 11 and publishing the results will be a punitive, arbitrary exercise: continual assessment will be continual alienation when teachers have little choice but to police children learning that they are to be further excluded from



Poll tax crunch point

THE FIGHT AGAINST the poll tax in Scotland is at the stage where its strengths and weaknesses are becoming apparent to those involved.

A Glasgow ACF comrade here reports on the political and tactical effectiveness of the different campaigns, as demands for the first payments arrive in Scotland:

"The 'Stop-It' campaign was the 'non-political' brain-child of the Labour Party, created to give the impression that they were actually doing something. It was based on the notion that you must not break the law.

Their position of being prepared to 'break the poor, but not the law' is held because they think they can work within the capitalist state to get realistic improvements. They cannot break the law

"affluent" society, with working-for-dole (or less) waiting on the other side of the school gates. Freedom and choice?

The ideals of Comprehensive Education will no longer be even a pretence, and resistance can't be aimed at protecting them. The struggle to improve wages and conditions needs to be combined with teachers developing tolerable environments within schools - necessarily opposing the system - as well as in action against the employers.

The interests of teachers and pupils may begin to converge - to the extent that they are placed in an impossible situation, asked to achieve impossible goals. When this kind of awareness can grow, so too can ways of resisting and fighting.

Party

'Stop-It' advocated that people send their poll tax registration forms back uncompleted and queried, three weeks after receiving them. Its primary objective was to slow down implementation, and it comes as no surprise that

It failed. The register can be compiled from all available records - the form itself is just a formality.

The lesson from Scottish groups is to form a local anti-poll tax group, collectively bin the forms and refuse to pay. Community group organising in their locality that have only followed the 'Stop-It' tactic have been sent back a small booklet with answers to all the questions you would ever think to ask about your form.

Group

The local 'community' groups have been in existence for about a year and a half now. There are two types: the 'group' and the 'union'. The union is based on card membership and public meetings. The group operates on an open committee basis. Organising meetings are open to all and have no power as such (as well as no permanent office bearers). I think that some sort of union with an open committee may be best.

The union organisations are dominated by political parties since their structure makes them easy to take control of. The more community based groups were either set up by anarchists or at least influenced by libertarian ideas. On the east coast, anarchists started forming community groups first, based on local, direct control from below. Trotskyists organisations could not make headway in these and set up rival groups under their control in the same areas. Watch out for these people, their authorita-

rian politics will alienate people and destroy effective action.

The creation of federations in Glasgow and Edinburgh was an attempt to co-ordinate activity. Unfortunately, they were quickly dominated by 'politicos' - particularly Militant members. The delegates conferences are controlled by parties on the executive council. They do not involve free discussion and delegates vote according to party allegiance, not in the interests of the locality. The best way to ensure local control is to organise along anarchist lines.

The important message to get across is that only collective action will win. Try to organise street committees against snoopers and set up good communication networks. In Scotland we have found that such organisations must be self-managed or these will just be new bosses to overcome.

Industrial activity is also important. A mistake made here in Scotland was in failing to get council and other workers involved right from the start.

Boycott

Local government workers should be persuaded to boycott poll tax work. This will cause problems with implementation and can destroy the tax, with community and industrial solidarity.

The poll tax is a class issue, and only the working class can beat it - no political party will do it for us."•

Health 'shake-up'

COMPARED TO OTHER health services, the NHS delivers some of the best medical care available. It could not do this without the care its staff put in, from domestics to consultants. The NHS helps millions of people to have a longer and more pleasant life.

However, there is a lot of room for improvement. The NHS is run by a vast and inefficient bureaucracy, most workers having little say in its running. Many of its patients feel that they are treated as objects. Alternatives to traditional medicine, such as

osteopathy, homeopathy are largely unavailable. Counselling services, too, are much needed, and, of course, there are still problems of understaffing, shortages and waiting lists.

The Tories present their new "NHS review" as a solution to many people's dissatisfaction. In fact, it is merely one more step towards their goal of privatising health care. The tragedy of the NHS for the Tories, is that it is not business like. It has a turn-over of £26 billion yearly, and is one of the largest em-



Caring for pensioners health will eat into GP's budgets.

ployers in Europe, yet hardly anyone makes a profit out of it. The real tragedy is that there are many health needs the NHS does not cater for.

The "NHS review" aims to create an internal market within the NHS which would include the private sector. Health Authorities receive money to pay for health care and in future they will pay it directly to the hospital where the patient is sent. They will be forced to comb the country for the cheapest deal they can find, to make the best of limited funds.

All NHS hospitals will have to price all their services, employing more bureaucrats and creating even more paperwork. Hospitals may have to advertise their services. Fewer hospitals will attempt to give a comprehensive service, as specialisation will increase.

Objective

The specialisation will be in profitable areas of health care, mostly those that are high in technology and turnover of patients. Care for the chronically sick, the disabled, and preventative measures such as cancer screening and care for the elderly will be dropped by any hospital that can get away with it. This will mean the running of the NHS's most prestigious hospitals by businessmen. They will be able to turn these hospitals into little more than health farms for the wealthy. They will have no obligation to provide any care but emergency treatment, their prime concern will be profit.

The new GP practise budgets are a key part of the new NHS market. GPs will receive a fixed budget, and will choose health care according to cost, and not according to need. GPs will be discouraged from referring patients to hospital or specialists. They will be en-

couraged to prescribe drugs only if they life-saving or absolutely necessary. GPs will have to avoid patients who are often ill, or who are elderly, or who have a disability.

Cuts

The NHS market is the first step towards selling the NHS bit by bit. The private sector are already making plans to do deals with the NHS trust hospitals, GPs and Health Authorities. They hope to see more of the taxes of the working class put into their own pockets for the treatment of the wealthy.

Patients are the last to benefit from these new reforms, if you can afford to supplement your GP's budget, you might get a better deal. Whilst you are young and healthy, things might seem to have improved, however, the centralisation of treatment could mean having to travel many miles in different directions for different treatments.

Care for the elderly, disabled and chronically sick, has been run down by the Tories since they got into power. Community care has meant no care for some people. The present plans will worsen this. The government has offered tax relief on health insurance paid by relatives for their elderly. This is to help the middle-class and wealthier working class to opt out of a decaying system.

We do not want a bureaucratic health service unable to meet needs, nor do we want a profitable health service that over-treats the rich and under-treats the poor. Only when we have a health service run directly by those who work in it and under the direction of the community it serves, will we have a health service that is truly human, and that really puts patients first. •

AFGHANISTAN: forwards, backwards or sideways?

MANY PEOPLE EAGERLY await the development of events in Afghanistan. Will the Mojahedin displace the Soviet backed Kabul regime? Would this be progress? What form would the new regime take?

Although the longest invasion by Russia, this was not the first. The Czars had an interest in the area and there were brief Soviet invasions in 1925, 1929 and 1930.

Afghan

The reasons for the 1979 invasion are complex. The Kaalqi (masses) faction, the majority wing of the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) had seized power through an army coup. The regime then found itself in trouble, ill prepared and with limited support in the countryside.

The "Brezhnev doctrine" was put into action, to ensure that a "communist" power should not revert back to capitalism. Bases in Afghanistan were of strategic importance to the Soviets—overlooking the Straits of Hormuz, the oil highway, and acting as levers on Iran, Pakistan and the Baluchis. Such a success would also act as a lesson to Muslims in Central Asia.

Kabul

Although the PDPA made serious mistakes, only a minority of the population supporting the coup which installed them, the Khalquis alienated people still further. They were heavy handed in their attempts to impose reform on a conservative society and met with much resistance.

Following the Russian invasion the more "moderate" Parchami (Banner) faction was installed. This

was an attempt to create a broader political front, to give itself a wide power base and so rescue the situation.

The damage, though, had already been done. Whichever faction was in power was seen as godless and communist, despite Parchami protestations to the contrary. The Khalquis had imprisoned, tortured and executed too many for the Parchamis to escape the blood feud. Each regime was closely identified with "infidel" Russian invaders.

PDPA attempts at reform, particularly concerning the position of women and land ownership, fell foul of the conservatism of rural areas. As in any society, such things are part of a complex structure and cannot be changed by legislation imposed from above.

Islam

Social change, to be effective as well as meaningful, must come from the people themselves, not from powers outside them. Outside of the towns, attempts to change people's lifestyles and values met with resistance.

The anti-PDPA forces are properly united only upon this opposition, not

upon any vision of the future. Mojadidi leads the moderate, more traditionalist Afghan National Liberation Front.

Karim Kalili leads the eight pro-Iran Shia groups, known for ambushing Sunni rebels as well as government troops. There are the monarchist "Gucci guerillas" of Pir Gailai's National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, who look to the re-establishment of the king, Zahir Shah.

Hekmatyar leads the pro-Pakistan fundamentalist Hezb-e-Islami, a group which looks towards a totally Islamic society.

Pakistan

Jamiat-i-Islami, the largest group, lead by Rabbani Sayyaf's Itihaf-e-Islami, Saudi funded, applies a stricter fundamentalist line upon women and a harsher view of society as a whole. Even the moderate groups wish to see the imposition of Sharia (Islamic) law.

There are over 3 million Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan, mainly in the North West Frontier Province. This influx has caused many problems. The amount of weapons moving through the area has made Pashawar another Beirut. Many of the Pakhtuni refugees have en-

tered commerce in the region, increasing pressure upon an already depressed area.

The reactionary Pakistan military, channelling US aid and acting as its "puppet", has a real interest in the conflict. The Ojhri massacre, where hundreds died, was the result of US supplied missiles. Equipment sent for the Mojahedin was blown up to hide its sale from US investigators. Pakistan's Inter Service Intelligence has been hard at work trying to influence events in its favour.

Soviet

What does all this mean to the USSR? The Empire of the Bear was stung repeatedly and beat a retreat after 9 years. Its attempt to use Soviet muslim troops was an abject failure as they had no desire to fight other muslims.

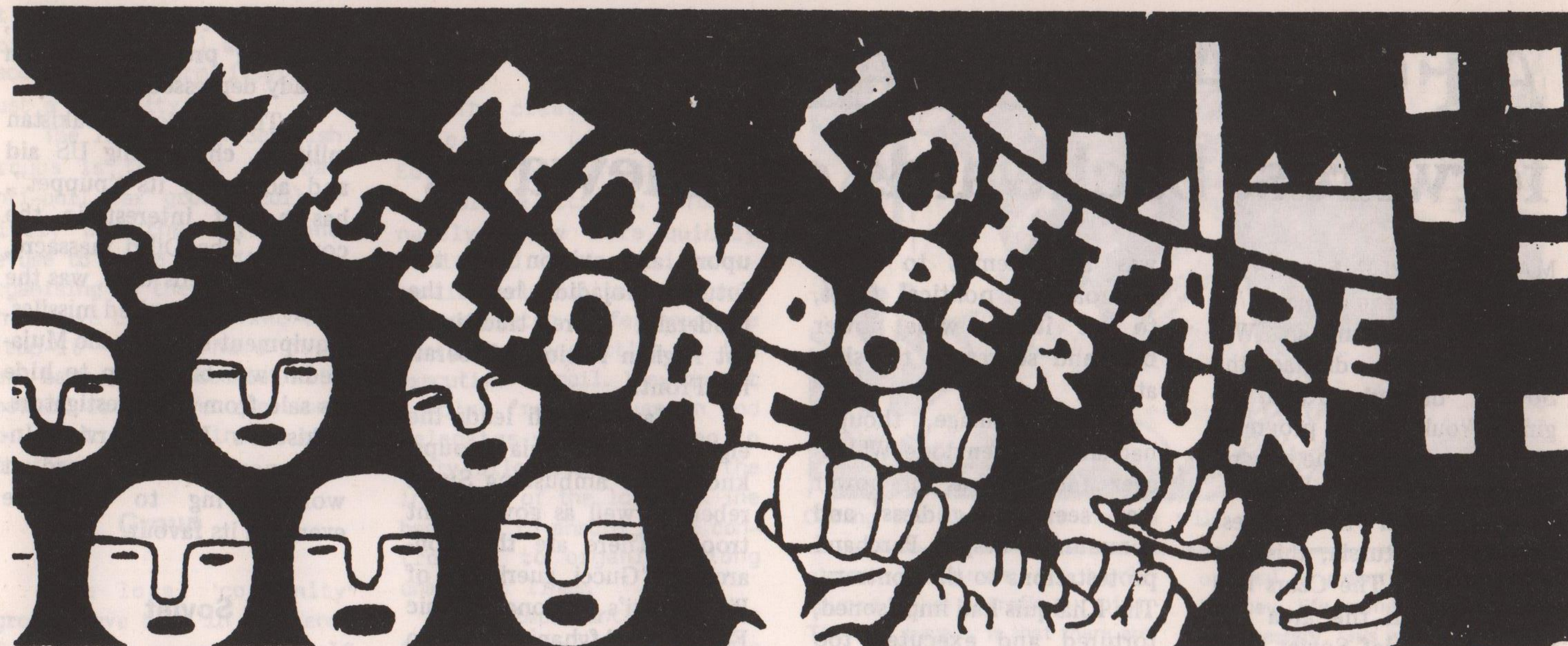
Not only do people in the Central Asian republics of the USSR have their own mullahs, many listen to the broadcasts beamed from Iran and are closely watching the rise of nationalism around the Baltic and in the Caucasus. Back in the 1920s the Basmach rebellion united muslims against the Bolsheviks. Could this happen again?

Whoever gains power, the losers will be the ordinary people of Afghanistan. US imperialism and the Pakistan military will attempt to hold Islamic Afghanistan up as an example. India, rival with Pakistan, will try to keep the PDPA regime afloat with airlifts of supplies. When and if the Mojahedin take power, then rivalry and dis-unity will continue. The conflict between Shia and Sunni, monarchist, moderate and fundamentalist will carry on.

Within the fundamentalists, those pro-Iranian, pro-Palestinian, pro-Saudi will vie for power.

Throughout all this, the peasants, women and poor will remain exploited while the wealth in gas, oil and minerals will be reaped by those struggling to gain or maintain control. •





Self-organisation Italian style

Lessons of the workers' Base Committees (COBAS)

THE ITALIAN WORKING class has created new forms of organisation within the last few years.

In the winter of 1986-87 self-organised structures developed throughout the public sector: particularly amongst teachers and railway workers.

These 'Base Committees' (COBAS) are still present today in many strikes and mobilisations. This article will give a brief analysis and history of a very interesting and useful experience.

The COBAS of the Teachers

The Teachers COBAS were first set up, principally in Rome and Naples, as a reaction to a 'National Convention of Work' that the four unions in teaching had agreed to. These were the GCIL, (Socialist and Communist); UIL, (Socialist); CISL, (Christian); SNALS, ('Corporatist').

Neither the teachers as a whole or the members of the signing unions had been consulted.

Unsatisfied

The tiny pay rises, and the greater intensification of work, did not satisfy the teachers. Even before the Convention was signed, the COBAS emerged.

Although they began as a typical product of the 'left fractions' within the unions, the

discontent of the teachers soon made the COBAS develop into something much larger.

When the Convention was signed, strike action began, and the following demands were made:

1) A substantial pay rise; 2) An equal share among all school workers of the money needed for the intensification of work apparatus; 3) A maximum of 20 pupils per class; 4) Union rights for all (the Convention gave only those unions signing the right to hold workplace meetings).

The strike spread from Naples and Rome to the South and centre. It was not so strong in the north.

Even the COBAS were surprised by the spontaneous movement. For many years, teachers had been passive and now they showed all their discontent.

Provincial, regional and then national assemblies sprang up. Debates developed on the forms of organisation, working conditions and strategies for the schools.

In May 87 a huge demonstration took place in Rome in with 50,000 teachers on the streets. This (Italy's largest ever) set off a further mobilisation as other less advanced teachers joined the movement.

The delegates had to rigorously stick to their mandate under

instant recall, if necessary, ensuring that power stayed in the hands of the workers.

The government fought back trying to break the strike with non-striking teachers. These refused, and themselves went on strike. They tried again by partially accepting one demand - the reduction of classes to 25. This allowed the government to appear as having made important concessions to the strikers. The media whipped up public opinion against the strike - claiming that only extremists now wanted it to continue.

Faltered

In addition, the school holidays were imminent, and the strike faltered.

Within the COBAS there were also problems. There were those who wanted a relationship with the institutions and those who wanted to take the struggle further. With no solution being found, the COBAS became divided: some wanting to end the strike, and some to continue it.

In the meantime, a new government had been elected. The debate was now on forms of organisation as much as on the demands for a new Convention.

There was an intense debate between those seeing themselves as

professionals and wanting status, and those looking for alliances with other public sector workers.

For anarchists the central question was not so much whether the COBAS should become a union, but how best to improve the co-ordination of the movement and safeguard the gains of self-organisation and direct action.

The National Co-ordination of United Railworkers

At the beginning of 1987, railworkers founded the January 11th Movement, which inspired massive strikes in marine and air transport.

The movement, though younger than that of the teachers, had been prepared and preceeded by the Committee Against the Transfers and the Union of Anarchists and - the workers' group - Libertarian Railway Workers.

The drivers were the spearhead of the COBAS, capable of blocking more than 80% of the network during the strike. They struggled for a real reduction in hours (they work 38 hours plus regular overtime) and against a reduction of staff levels.

The drivers were isolated, however, causing many problems and the GCIL bureaucrats attempted to break the movement by singing the praises of the next contract of work.

Profit

The union bureaucrats didn't oppose the state demand that the railways ought to be run at a profit, and supported reform and the deficit run up by management.

The drivers were not totally alone and were aided by other railworkers. The trains that the management could put back into action had to be driven by soldiers or managers, thus putting passengers lives at risk.

Although the drivers, being skilled, were fighting to maintain a wage differential, their strikes set off strike movements among other railway workers.

The United Assembly of COBAS

On 15 December 1987 the first assembly of all the COBAS met at Rome, together with other struc-

tures, including Democrazia Consigliare - a left current in the CGIL. The main concerns were the defence of the right to strike and the struggle against the work laws in the public sector.

In fact, the strike issue was a key part of the offensive of both the ruling class and the union bureaucrats against the workers. The General Secretary of UIL welcomed a limit on the right to strike.

As a result the union bureaucrats, saw their main task as breaking the COBAS, and beyond that, all workers self-organisation, and bargaining their monopoly of negotiation and calling strikes with the State and the bosses.

Historical

This is the result of a very important historical process. The union bureaucrats reply to the crisis of confidence of the rank and file, and the progressive destruc-



tion of delegation, by an increasing integration into the capitalist system of command. It's as a result of the deepening divide between the rank and file and the bureaucrats, that independent organisations - opposed to the institutionalised structures - have been created.

An important element is the profound transformation of the union structures within the framework of the restructuring of capitalism. It is impossible to capture or hold or transform these bureaucracies even

from a reformist point of view. As a result the COBAS have great importance in developing workers' self-organisation.

Several organisations and many militants of a libertarian outlook work inside the COBAS, and played an important role among the teachers' and traindrivers' COBAS.

Militants

Alongside the comrades of the FAI (Italian Anarchist Federation), and a section of the USI (a small syndicalist union similar to the Spanish CNT), we find the libertarian communist militants of the FDCA (Anarchist Communist Federation), the OCL (Libertarian Communist Organisation) and the PAI (Italian Anarchist Party).

Despite the fact that many differences do exist amongst class struggle anarchists in Italy, it is equally true that there are strong similarities - the defence of self-organisation, workers' democracy, and direct action.

The libertarian organisations and militants lack structures and opportunities for debate and exchange of ideas. This can often aggravates differences.

The proposition by the FAI comrades to open a dialogue between libertarians active in the COBAS should be taken into account by Italian libertarian communists.

Unity

Differences should not be fudged, but brought out and discussed - so that different strategies can be considered, and possible areas of unity examined.

Libertarian workers have an important role in the COBAS, but they cannot rally it entirely to their position in the short term.

But the libertarian contribution can be decisive in the difficult recomposition of the workers' movement. For that, there is need for clarity, dialogue, exchange and unity between all those libertarians who wish to develop the class struggle.

THIS ARTICLE FIRST appeared in the Italian anarchist paper La Lutta.

HOUSING UNDER THREAT

"IT'S ALL ABOUT tenants choice", is how Tory environment secretary Nicolas Ridley summed up the essence of the new Housing Act which came into force in January this year.

Under the guise of increasing that 'choice' the Tories have launched an all-out attack on public sector housing; threatening council tenants, council workers, and offering nothing to the growing army of homeless people.

The threats contained in the Act have led to an explosion in the number of active and militant tenants organisations nationwide. From Edinburgh to Gloucester, from Torbay to Tower Hamlets, mass meetings hundreds strong have met to plan campaigns of resistance.

The new legislation could scarcely have come at a worse time. Soaring house prices, combined with the virtual standstill in council house building programmes, have created a crisis in housing. As the demand for housing has increased, the supply of affordable private rented accommodation has, in many areas of the country, all but dried up.

Homeless

Homelessness has doubled since 1979, and, according to the housing campaign group Shelter, now stands at over 112,000 in England alone. The situation in Birmingham - where the 25,000 people on the council's waiting list will have to compete for the dozen new homes the city plans to build this year - is typical.

Working class families with mortgage commitments have fared little better. A government who came to power pledging to spread home ownership, by encouraging a mortgage credit boom, has relentlessly forced up interest rates. Many of the

thousands of families and young couples who were forced to 'over-commit' themselves to heavy mortgages just to get a foothold on the housing ladder, are finding themselves increasingly unable to meet their repayments.

It's against this background that the seriousness of the latest attacks on working class housing can be measured.

The key element of the new Act is the drive to push council housing into the hands of the private sector, through the selling off of whole council estates. Linked to this is the abolition of 'fair renting' (through which a tenants could get a fixed rent

the Tories hope to encourage thousands of small private landlords onto the market.

In the public housing field the Tories claim their objective is "to get people off that most deadly of all social drugs - the drug of dependence on the state".

In reality their goal is to destroy the last major obstacle in the way of giving the 'market' free reign in the housing field: large scale council housing.

Their objective is all the more clear when seen in the context of the war they are waging on the power of local government. With the destruction of public sector

their own demands - tenants may simply become the pawns in this power struggle.

The plans to sell-off council estates directly threaten working class people in a number of ways. For tenants there is the threat of rent rises, increased evictions, the loss of repair and maintenance services, the fear of being forced out by landlords eager to 'redevelop' prime building land.

For council employees, working in housing departments and the Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs), there is the threat of sweeping job losses. And for the homeless, those still living with parents, and those on council waiting lists, such sales can only spell disaster.

But in fighting to repel big business landlords, we must go beyond an uncritical demand of 'defend council housing'. We have always opposed the centralised, bureaucratic and paternalistic way in which council estates are - by definition - run. And we don't see corporate housing provision as some 'bastion of socialism' that is under threat.

When council housing first appeared it did mark a significant improvement on much of the slum dwelling it was meant to replace.

Confirm

But a walk round any large city in Britain will confirm what has become of these 'homes fit for heroes'. Badly designed, run-down and decaying estates. Vandalised tower blocks no-one wants to live in. 'Problem estates' where councils dump 'difficult' families. And, increasingly, demolition work to pull down houses put up twenty years ago, and already uninhabitable.

As anarchists we recognise this as the inevitable result of capitalist social policy, which sees working class people as so many units to be housed as compactly and cheaply as possible.

Council tenants don't enjoy some sort of 'special relationship' with their land-

lord denied to private tenants. They certainly have no more 'say' in the managing of their homes.

On estates run down and neglected for years, underfunded and denied resources, it's hard to see why local council tenants should readily jump to the defence of council bureaucrats who have shown no interest in their housing needs til now.

That's why it's crucial that in the fight over housing we make it clear that we are fighting for our immediate class interests (ie keeping out big business) not rallying to protect our wonderful council landlords.

Potential

So what strategies should we be arguing for? The anarchist author Colin Ward has long argued that self-help can offer tenants a way forward without either public or private landlords. He argues that housing is one of the most obvious areas where the creative potential of self-activity can be realised on a large scale in the here and now.

Some anarchists involved with the present round of housing struggles have found themselves agreeing - often for very pragmatic reasons: if tenants are faced with a council determined to sell off local estates, then some sort of tenants buy-out may seem the only practical solution.

But such buy-outs are fraught with problems. Leaving aside the council workers whose jobs will be lost through such a sale, the fact remains that the estate will not be able to escape the confines of the market place.

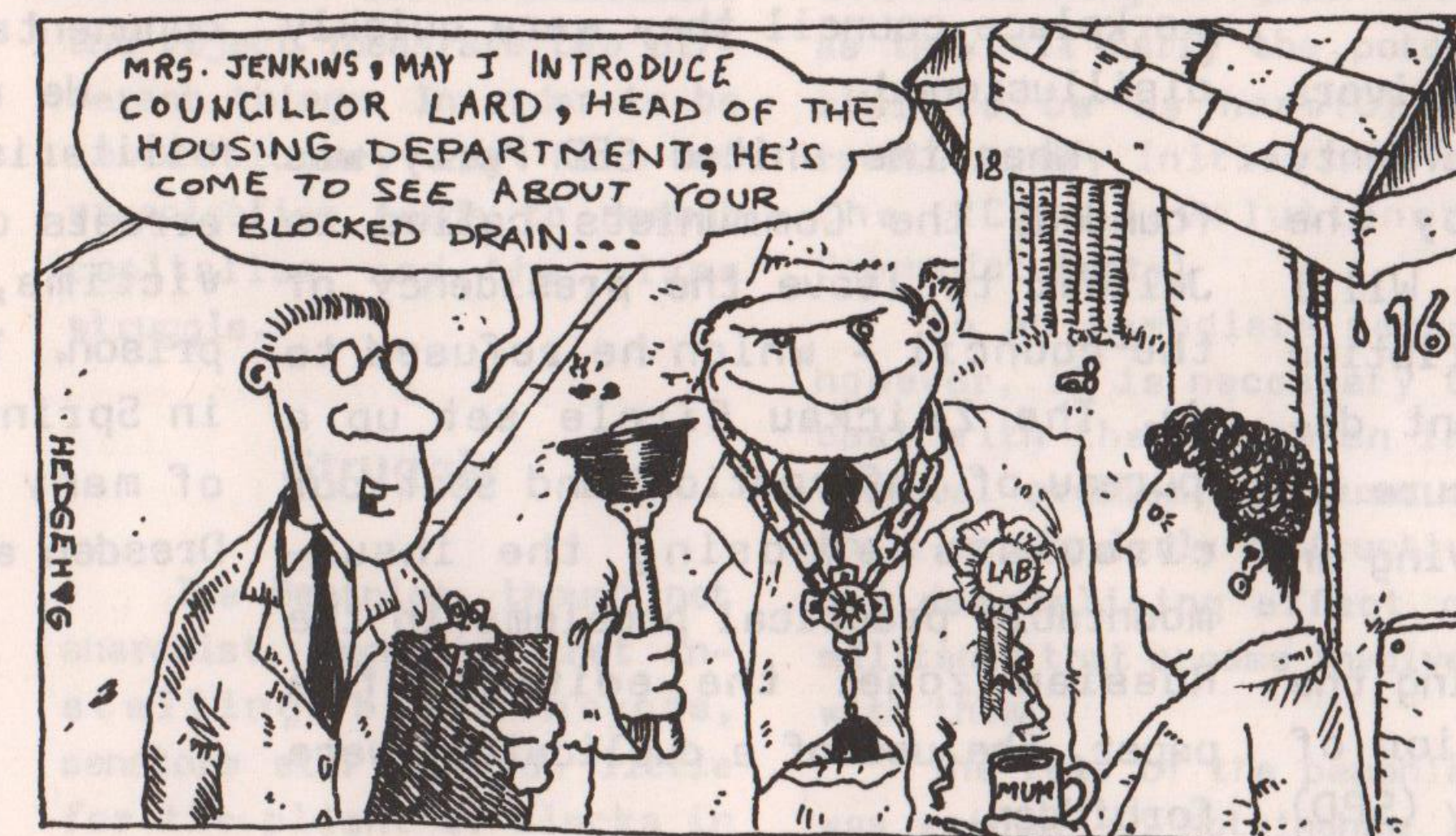
All the tasks of a landlord still have to be performed: like pushing up rents as costs rise, chasing up and evicting people with rent arrears, selecting 'reliable' new tenants (ie those who can afford to pay), and so on.

Tenants organisations can easily find themselves unable to attract the capital investment needed to maintain and repair - let alone improve - their housing stock. Financial institutions willing to invest in co-ops will naturally in-

sist on conditions - like rent increases, land sales - before releasing funds. Co-ops have little independent economic clout.

And it's a fact of capitalist-life that co-operatives running large concerns tend very quickly to end up being run by a small committee composed of the more confident (and usually more middle class) members.

It may be that on a given estate, a 'tenants co-operative' is the least worst



option. But we should not get dazzled by the prospect of self-help rented housing. For as long as the market exists, the best it offers us is the chance to be our own landlord.

We can take strength from the fact that these latest attacks on housing have rekindled tenants' willingness to fight: already the Tories have been forced to make concessions.

They had planned to enforce Housing Action Trusts (HATs) on several trial areas, earmarked for sale. HATs were to be given large budgets and sweeping planning powers, and charged with the job of smartening estates up in the run-up to the sell-offs.

At a public meeting in Lambeth late last year, a HAT consultant only uttered three sentences before being sent packing by enraged tenants. Such reaction has been typical of the way working class people have responded to the threat of being HATed.

Ubruptly, the Tories announced that all estates were now to be balloted before a HAT could be introduced.

If the tenants initial victory over the HATs issue was an embarrassing setback for the government - showing early on that tenants action could be effective - then

events in Torbay at the start of the this year compounded their problems.

Within weeks of the Act becoming law, the results of a ballot called by Tory-controlled Torbay council showed only 787 out of 5,206 tenants to be in favour of selling off their entire housing stock.

Under the rigged ballot system, those who don't vote are counted as being in favour of transfer. As 42% of Torbay residents abstained, local

hostility - with tenants blaming DLO workers over delays in getting repairs done, and DLO workers getting fed up with hostile attitudes from complaining tenants.

Many Labour authorities, keen to ensure tenants votes in the coming ballots, have suddenly found money to pay for essential improvements.

Tenants and council workers can, of course, spot such cynical electioneering a mile off. But councils' attempts at short-term bribery could well back fire on them

Labour authorities -- who for reasons of self-preservation - have encouraged the growth of tenants actions groups solidly opposed to their estates being sold-off, may learn to regret their actions, when the new found mood of confidence, militancy and organisation is then turned on the council over issues like the poll tax.

As anarchists we should oppose the sale of council estates, because in 99 cases out of a 100, such sales will result in even worse conditions than exist at present.

Direct

In fighting this threat, we should welcome and wholeheartedly encourage the forging of direct links between tenants groups, rank and file council workers, the homeless, and those on waiting lists - and highlight the growing class consciousness that underlies such developments. In such organisations we should argue for the maximum direct community involvement.

But there are wider issues here.

At the heart of opposition to the Housing Act is the central question of control. Who should control the streets, flats and estates where working class people live; who should have the real say in what happens in those communities; and who should control the resources needed to enact the decisions of those communities?

When such questions are raised, the anarchist case for real direct community control - through the destruction of the capitalist system, and the evicting of all its landlords - becomes a compelling one. •



enforced on a property they were living in) freeing landlords to charge a more 'realistic' (ie higher) market rent.

'Assured tenancies' are replacing 'secure tenancies' stripping tenants of what little protection they had against harassment, eviction, or the simple neglect of repairs.

By making the private rented sector more 'attractive' - through weakening tenants power and boosting the potential for profits -

housing, the last remaining power base for local authorities will be smashed.

The ability of councils to manage their housing stock has been under constant attack since the 'right-to-buy' legislation was first introduced in the early 80s.

Labour authorities realise the importance of the power struggle that the Housing Act represents, and are as determined to fight to hang onto their power base as the Tories are to remove it.

The danger is that - unless they are clear about

ZWICKAU IS AN industrial town in Saxe, in what is now East Germany, not far from Chemnitz and the Czech border.

Metal smelting factories and mines are in the close vicinity. From 1922 to March 1933 the Protelarischer Zeitgeist ("The Worker's Spirit") had been edited there.

It was a weekly, anti-authoritarian in character, which attempted to develop links between anarchists and the council communists.

In May 1945, only six survivors of the group remained alive. Twenty seven had been murdered by the Gestapo. One of the survivors, Willi Jelinek, had hidden the subscription list to Zeitgeist and now sent detailed letters to the most sure of these, with the view to reviving an organisation.

The Russians now occupying the area were pushing for a fusion of the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD) to create a United Socialist Party (SED) which would be a camouflage for the Communists.

Jelinek denounced this move: "The Communist Party plays the role of a fox who wants to calm the fears of the hare by making out that he is a vegetarian".

Reorganise

In another letter (February 1946) to anarchists he took a stand against any participation by anarchists in a socialist-communist bloc. He thought that the SPD-KPD union would be of short duration and then the anarchists would come into their own. Hence the need to reorganise the anarchist movement.

In June 1946, the Zwickau Circle - made up of old readers of Zeitgeist and union activists - was set up and sent out bulletins to anarchists in the Russian zone and in West Germany.

In Saxe, five or six groups were set up, the same number in Thuringia. Links were set up with anarchists in Hamburg, Mulheim (in the Ruhr) and Kiel.

In the factory where he worked, Jelinek had been elected by 95% of the workers as president of the workplace council and he worked

THE DARK NIGHT OF WILLI JELINEK

The FDGB union of the Russian zone. The Communists, who had known Jelinek for a long time, thought that he had modified his ideas, but from the first meetings of the workplace council they were quickly disillusioned.

When the united SED Party was founded, the Communists called on Jelinek to leave the presidency of the council - which he refused to do. The Zwickau Circle set up a 'bureau of information' and sent out circulars exposing the insurmountable practical problems in the Russian zone: the editing of a paper, the use of a duplicator, were forbidden.

Nevertheless, they resolved to continue. They decided to forget about the anarchists who had joined the SED and address themselves to the new generation, and to the workers, showing them the nature of Stalinism. At the end of 1947, Jelinek wrote a pamphlet which was refused circulation. He denounced the dictatorship of the proletariat "which signifies the authority of the leaders. Where there is obedience, there are leaders who command". All dictatorship meant the rule of a minority. Distribution of leaflets and letters became more difficult. The police kept a constant watch on Jelinek.

Jelinek still had some illusions that the regime in the Russian zone would 'liberalise' a little, allowing for the open circulation of an anarchist paper, and he wrote that things would be better for anarchists under Ulbricht than under Hitler!

On November 10th 1948, he was arrested by two Russian officers accompanied by an interpreter and by an official of the German criminal police. His wife and son-in-law were also arrested - and the latter disappeared without trace.

After a long interrogation Mrs Jelinek returned to a flat which had been completely emptied of furniture. The anarchists in the Russian

zone were summoned to a bogus meeting in Leipzig and arrested. Jelinek himself was sent to the former Nazi concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, which now housed opponents of the Communists!

He was accused of "fascist and militarist activities". The wave of arrests of November 1948 claimed 45 victims, condemned to 25 years in prison. The second wave of arrests in Spring 1949 led to the arrests of many other anarchists - 100 in Dresden alone.

Anarchists

In Sachsenhausen, Jelinek met up with other comrades and they set up a secret group. Jelinek's ration was reduced, and then because of his continued association with other anarchists, he was sent on to the concentration camp at Bautzen.

Here prisoners suffered from hunger, and many died of TB. On March 13th 1950, a revolt took place and a Commission of Russian officers, and members of the German 'people's police' promised better conditions. In fact, they became worse, and a new uprising took place on March 30th.

Jelinek managed to smuggle an appeal to West Germany on the miserable conditions of thousands of prisoners at Bautzen and Torgau. This appeal appeared in the Hamburg Echo of May 15th 1950.

For this Jelinek was rewarded by worse treatment. At the beginning of 1952, two anarchists at Bautzen died of TB. On March 20th 1952, Jelinek was still in reasonable health, when visited by his daughter. But on March 24th, he died in conditions that still remain mysterious.

The little known story of Willi Jelinek deserves to be repeated, not just for the courage of a devoted anarchist militant, but as an example of what anarchists can expect under a Communist regime. •

Industrial hardcore

THE BEATNIGS, The Beatnigs; (Alternative Tentacles).

THE FACT THAT groups like Public Enemy are getting their views across to a lot of young black Americans, highlights the disillusionment and bitterness that is spreading throughout the States. The ideas of separatism are growing amongst the urban black communities, with Louis Farahkan as its main spokesman, and rap music as its messenger.

The Beatnigs are a black band from San Francisco and their self-titled LP was released at the end of last year. Enclosed with the album is the "aural instruction manual" through which they inform us of the importance of shortening the word "nigger" to "nig" is that it serves as a constant reminder that things have not and will not change, until we change them.

From "C.I.A." and their covert international affairs, to "a report from South Africa" where the South African government racially reclassifies those of intermediate skin colour, but "no whites applied to become black, and no blacks applied to become white".

Drugged

The recent single "Television" is an analysis of American culture where the whole nation is under the influence of one drug - T.V. It is through songs such as this that the bands humour becomes apparent - "T.V. Is the place where self cancelling phrases like Pop Art, Fresh Frozen, and Military Intelligence have become standard".

With the use of powerful percussive patterns, interwoven with chainsaws, axle grinders, and almost any industrial hardware they can lay their hands on, The Beatnigs forge an energetic and aggressive sound. Mixed into this is a battery of sampled speeches and statistics. But unlike

"most industrial bands who use metal in a nihilist way, we're taking the waste from our community and are trying to make a noise that is meaningful".

It is understandable why the ideas of separatism are growing when you think that it is unlikely that many urban young blacks come across whites except those who are in positions of authority, e.g. policemen, teachers, social workers etc. But to understand and reject ideas are two different things. In order to be revolutionary any form of organisation needs to combat capitalism and the class struggle.

Struggle

The Beatnigs, though not anarchist, recognise that installing black mayors, senators etc. will do little for the plight of blacks in America. Instead, they recognise all forms of oppression while focussing their attention on racism as this is what they have direct experience of. •



The Beatnigs.

Let's wreck the Party

ONE STEP BEYOND or SMASH THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY; Pirate Press/Phoenix Press, 45p.

AS THE BACK page of this pamphlet points out, it is not intended to provide other authoritarian left groupings with something to 'gloat over' as they all carry the potential to be as harmful to revolutionary initiatives as the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party).

In an immediate sense, however, it is necessary to deal with the RCP as an individual problem, because of their particularly destructive and demoralising effect on militants that become involved with them.

The text of the pamphlet was written in Nottingham in January 1988 as an article for Nottingham Anarchist News, at a time when the RCP were gaining members (although they have never had much political influence) in the town. They

had always been a bit of a joke locally - a bunch of middle class "angry young men and women" from the Polytechnic telling an established and active political community (including many anarchists) how it really was.

Then the incidents of physical violence against women by party members increased and were actively condoned by the organisation as a whole. Their file on local potential recruits was allowed to fall into police hands, and they began to be perceived as rather more of a problem.

The RCP are not a problem politically - their theory is even less logical or consistent than most Leninist groupings, and they come across as so 'upstartish' that they will never gain the kind of influence in trade unions, local politics or campaigns that more dangerous organisations like the Workers Revolutionary Party(s) or the Stalinists do.

But the slick packaging and 'youth appeal' of the Party enables them to recruit endless 'supporters' - nearly all young students and literally work them till they drop, like some fanatical religious grouping.

The Party elite keep a tight reign on the 'supporters' indoctrinating them with the Party line, but more importantly, with the need to 'win over the working class' (you can watch them 'targeting' people they perceive to be 'working class' when they are street selling the next step). Like all Leninists they seek to destroy working class self activity and replace it with party leadership - an ideology that consistently stifled revolutionary initiatives throughout history.

The strength of the pamphlet is that it is not simply an academic expose of Leninist theory - that has been done better in other places. But it is based on first hand observation and accounts of the dangerous tactics of this arrogant political hierarchy.

Anyone who has had contact with the RCP - especially if they are 'interested' in you - should read it. •

Working class resistance

ORGANISE! IS MILES better than Virus. And the new Aims and Principles are a lot sharper too: like the article on the limits to rank and file action, it's a good kick up the arse for the syndicalists!

But now a moan. The purism of your article on Ireland really pissed me off. I reckon you just squashed the reality of the Six Counties to make it fit your "Anarchist" (Capital "A") framework. First off, you said that the last 20 years have been "twenty years of defeat for the proletariat". OK, so there been no working class revolution in Ireland, but I don't need to read Organise! to know that. I'd say that the last twenty years have been two decades in which the republican working class hasn't been defeated. Twenty years of the working class organising itself and fighting back...

Similarly, I agree that uniting Ireland without a working class revolution is a total waste of time. You rightly say that the Orange state will only be smashed by "mass, conscious struggle". What the hell do you think the Republican Movement is? Gerry Adams and a few mates in balaclavas? That's a typically bourgeois way of seeing history: you should be looking at the class, not the organisation...

You're right again to say that armed struggle in the abstract is elitist. But you're wrong to say it of Ireland. Armed struggle in the Six Counties occurs in the context of working class resistance to British imperialism. That resistance isn't just military, and nor is it solely organised by Sinn Féin. Where do IRA volunteers come from? Out of thin air? They come from the Republican Movement which is much wider than organisations involved in military actions. It's absolute bollocks to say that the Republican Movement is "essentially petit bourgeois". It is a working class and secular movement.

Your analysis of the Six Counties is basically too abstract to be useful. You've decided that because the Republican Movement defines itself as "nationalist" (in that it fights for a united Ireland free from British imperialism), it is therefore petit bourgeois, and can only work to the advantage of capitalism. It would have been much more interesting and useful if you had looked at the

working class socialist elements in the Republican Movement, and to hell with your anarchist prejudices.

Your alternative strategy leaves a lot to be desired as well. You reckon that Loyalist workers have to be won over from Loyalism by "the building of a revolutionary, secular socialist movement". If you've learnt anything since 1969, you'll know that this is a total non-starter. Or do you imagine the Orange State will just sit by and let it happen. They'll do what they did when it happened in 1932: kill it dead. The power of Loyalism doesn't rest in the reactionary beliefs of Loyalist workers: it lies in the Orange State. If that is smashed, then the ideology of Loyalism will look like the pile of bigoted shite that it is.

Love and solidarity

Ed

Attack International
London

AUTHOR'S REPLY: Whilst agreeing with us that uniting Ireland without a working class revolution is a non-starter, comrade Ed fails to offer us an alternative strategy for bringing this about.

S/he claims that the last 20 years have seen the working class in the Six Counties orga-

nising itself and fighting back. But does he s/he consider the campaigns - military and political - of the IRA and the Republicans to be examples of genuine self-organisation by the class, for its own interests? Surely not.

Ed's claim that the Republican Movement is "a working class and secular movement" is also at fault unless we are prepared to consider the Labour Party a working class party, simply because it contains a large percentage of workers. Because the support for Republicanism (in the North) comes from large sections of the Catholic working class, proves nothing. It is class consciousness and political (communist) ideas that defines a proletarian movement, not simply the economic backgrounds of its participants.

The Republicans are essentially petit-bourgeois in terms of politics, even if they use violent means and espouse radical views.

As far as we are concerned there is little evidence of socialism (as opposed to leftism) in the Republican Movement. Any groups(s) moving towards a libertarian communist perspective would soon have to leave the Republican camp if they were to develop an independent, class politics.

Ed is right to say that the power of Loyalism lies in the Orange State itself, but the power to overthrow this bastion of bigotry lies in the hands of

the working class of Ireland - North and South - and at least a minority of Protestant workers will have to be won to revolution to do this.

Finally I would repeat that Ed's letter doesn't offer a strategy to help bring about the destruction of the the Orange dictatorship and British imperialism. What does s/he suggest we do? Support uncritically or critically the IRA? Surely we as anarchist communists have something more positive and revolutionary to say than this? If not then we run the risk of simply tail-ending nationalism (a job best left to Trots et al) and writing off the possibility of independent working class organisation and action.

CORRECTION: A typing error slipped into the Ireland feature in the last issue - 'From imperialist war to class war'. The paragraph which started:

"The Civil Rights Movement was in no way dominated by the IRA, which has been dormant since the defeat of their 1950's campaign", should, of course, have read:

"The Civil Rights Movement was in no way dominated by the IRA which had been dormant since the defeat of their 1950's campaign". Our apologies.

'Rank and file' debate

THE REVIEW OF the Anarchist Workers Group pamphlet In Place of Compromise and the 'rank and file action' article in Organise! 14 reveals an analysis of trade unions which is far too one dimensional.

It is borrowed from the politics of 'left-communists' who also see unions as "part of the array of ideological forces used by the State against workers". Unions, however, do not simply exist as the 5th column of capital within the working class. They exist to defend the interests of workers within capitalism, and as such they are a contradictory social phenomenon.

The contradiction is essentially between the interests of the rank and file - which are anti-capitalist - and the interests of the bureaucracy

which are to maintain a permanent mediation between labour and capital.

This contradiction has during certain periods of mass struggle manifested itself as a rank-and-file revolt. The important point for anarchists in Britain, is that unions are still capable of defending the members interests to a significant extent.

This is why the Tories have abolished quangoes and abandoned the 'beer and sandwiches' of the corporatist 'Social Contract'. This is also why Thatcher spent £26,000 per miner to defeat the NUM and has built a battery of anti-union laws. Unions represent an impediment to the bosses' plans to restructure British capitalism, which in the final analysis is why anarchists should advocate a rank-and-file movement which can act independently of the bureaucracy.

The author of the article concedes that the First World War shop stewards committees could have been transformed "into workers councils and soviets thereby crippling the state" indicating their revolutionary potential. They then go on to contradict this by saying: "a steward who is a revolutionary cannot last".

True, stewards are negotiators, but it is not the act of negotiating which mysteriously corrupts. The steward's own livelihood is at stake when they are negotiating, unlike the paid official whose job and whose salary is not directly affected by their negotiation.

We are advised that anarchists "should stay in the unions" and pay their dues but should completely abstain from the struggle to control how this money is spent. This is bad logic. Why is it alright to fight for "minor, or major improvements in working conditions or wages" but wrong to fight for any improvements in union democracy? Unlike syndicalists we do not confuse democratising unions with revolutionising them. We say that if workers have the potential power to take on the capitalist state, they also have the power to exercise greater control over their own unions, and they should do so.

The author says "we should not have a set of reformist demands" but "we argue the tactics needed to win". This in effect allows the bureaucrats to determine the political content of the struggle and restricts anarchists to 'tail-ending' struggles "when the rank and file feels it is right to do it".

In reality you cannot separate demands from tactics. If the bosses want redundancies then any demands which concedes the need for profitability will tend to lead to ineffective action.

The AWG says that rank-and-file groups should argue for demands which are based on what workers need, not what capitalism can afford. This must necessarily involve a political struggle over what they are fighting for. To win this 'political independence' anar-

chist ideas must be taken into all forums where workers are organised, which means working within the existing unions "until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event".

As the Dielo Trouda group understood clearly over 60 years ago: "We must seek to exercise our theoretical influence on all trade unions and in all its forms." (Organisational Platform of Libertarian Communists)

Yours in struggle
Duleep
Branch Secretary
London Anarchist
Workers Group

AUTHOR'S REPLY: You say "unions are still capable of defending their members interest to a significant extent". I'd like to know what you mean by this. You seem to be confusing the union with the members.

The most 'powerful' unions operate in industries where militancy and solidarity is relatively strong anyway. Unions may initiate token protests but this is always because the membership have forced them to do something. Most strikes, for example, begin as wildcats. Unions seek to contain strength and militancy.

It is true that the government is attacking union leaderships, but only as part of their general attack on old style business practices. The real target, as always, is the working class.

There was revolutionary potential during World War One, and the formation of the Shop Stewards Committees expressed one aspect of it. I argued that the Committees failed because they were only radical union bodies. Workers councils/soviets would have sprung up due to a generalising of the struggle, if it had taken on an insurrectional nature. Something the Committees were unable to propose.

The Movement was not revolutionary. It's not, therefore, contradictory to say: "a steward who is a revolutionary cannot last". I suggest you read Huw Beynon's Working for Ford for a useful insight into the nature of a shop steward's job.

Revolutionaries cannot accept the 'legality' of capitalism or negotiate with the bosses for a fairer form of exploitation, stewards must do this.

Why should we waste our time trying to 'democratise' the union? Rather than continually debating with the union bureaucracy, it is better to operate amongst the ordinary workers.

Controlling our struggles collectively, in all areas of

life, is political. What encourages a revolution is the method of our struggles. Various union type 'demands' will not take us as far as struggles which we control, and thus have a better chance of winning. We must encourage any actions that go beyond the control of the union now, not later.

The Anarchist Workers Group obviously adheres to the theory of the 'transitional demand' - see my article for more about that kind of politics.

Lesbian and gay network

SINCE CLAUSE 28 became law it seems there has been a decline in political lesbian and gay activity. We would like to make contact with lesbians and gay men who want to continue radical political activity and fight for lesbian and gay liberation.

We know that there are many lesbians and gay men fed up with boring respectable middle class campaigns, who don't like endless meetings, and who see racism, sexism and class oppression and disability as central issues to changing society.

Despite the many faults with Stop the Clause campaign, through it we heard of, and met, lots of lesbians and gays into creative ideas and actions.

We would like to hear from lesbians and gay men (especially anarchists, greens and non-party socialists and communists) who are interested in working together and building a network, newsletter and education / campaigns.

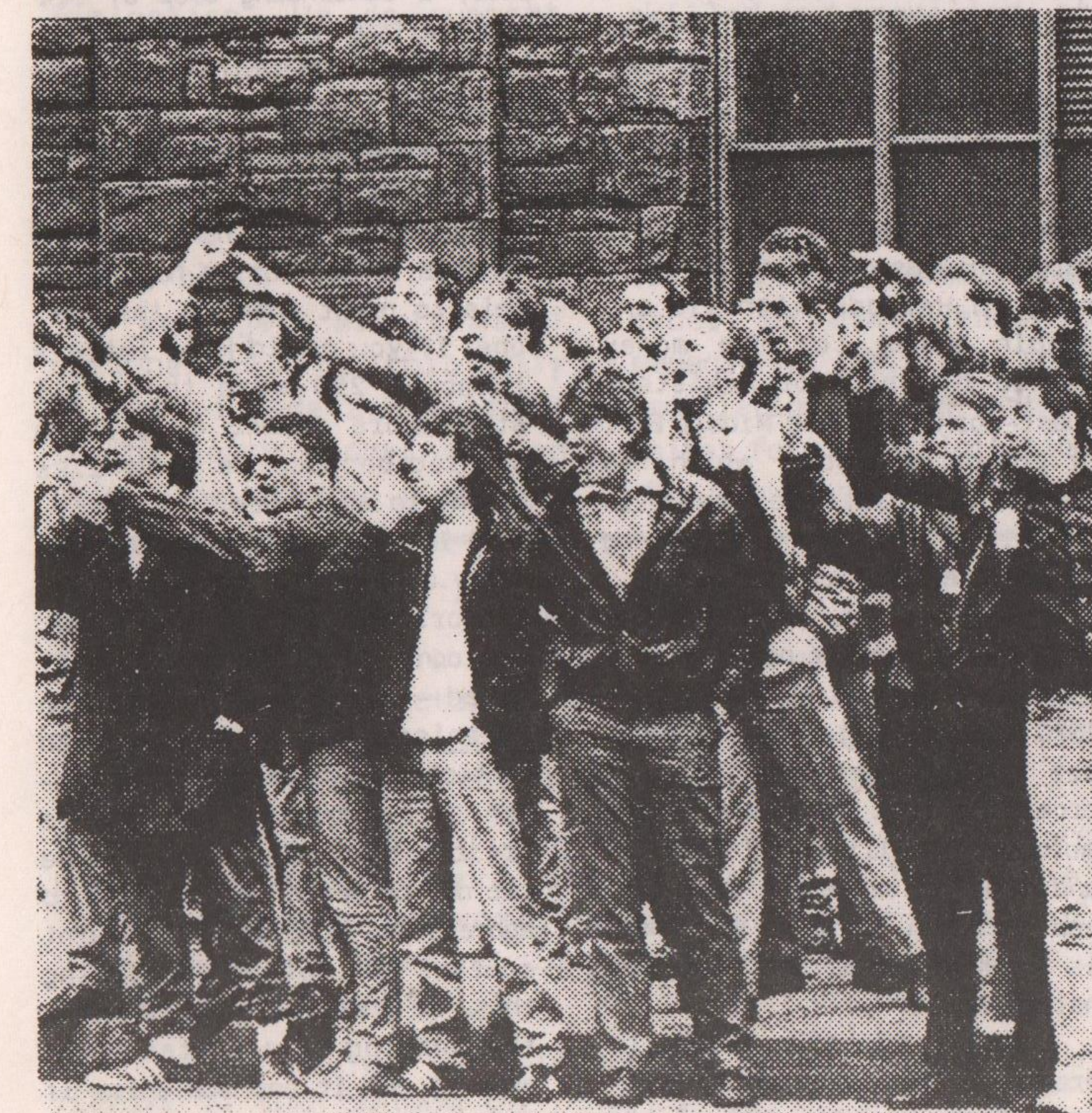
If you're interested please write to me at the following address: c/o 24 South Road, Hockley, Birmingham, B18, West Midlands.

Nik

Labour's 'socialism'

WHILE THE ARTICLE "The Myth of Labour's 'Socialism'" was generally good, especially in the explanation of what 'labourism' really means, I think it was vague over the meaning of 'socialism'. Is the Labour Party socialist or not, and what is socialism? Is socialism a good thing or not?

You say: "The history of the Labour Party is part that of



Working class fightback or petit-bourgeois nationalism?

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 Labour Party is a party that supports capitalism and offers a slightly different plan for capitalism's success to,



say, the Tory Party. It will of course expel extremists from its ranks, if it believes they will adversely affect its chances of electoral success and/or support from sections of the bourgeoisie.

For us, the expelling of Militant isn't 'shameful', it's about as important as, say, the expelling of the Monday Club from the Tory Party.

You're right with "Tony Benn and his brand of 'socialism'". But I feel you should have made it clear that, while Militant may be more extreme than Benn, they offer as little to the working class as both Benn and Kinnock.

At the end you say: "The constitutional road to change is blocked, only the revolutionary option remains open". What does this mean? What sort of 'change' could be got from following constitutional means if it weren't blocked? Has this road ever been unblocked? Surely the idea that we can change things in any meaningful way by constitutional means has always been a myth?

The implication of the article is that a real 'socialist' leadership of the Labour Party would mean we wouldn't have to have a revolution to achieve the changes we need. Surely some mistake?

Pete

ACF (Thames Valley)

AUTHOR'S REPLY: IN an otherwise prejudiced and ignorant article entitled "Socialism and

Anarchism" (1905) Lenin managed to make one accurate observation, namely that "a wide gulf separates socialism from anarchism".

Anarchists could not agree more! I raise this point because some people have assumed that my condemnation of Labour's treatment of the Militant Tendency somehow implied approval of that organisation. (*Organise!* 14 - "The Myth of Labour's Socialism").

Nothing could be further from the truth. Socialism of all varieties implies state ownership, a large degree of centralisation, governments and authoritarianism. These are all rejected by anarchists. The Militant Tendency advocates all of the above, though in an ever more dogmatic and grotesque form than is usual for Leninist-Trotskyists.

However, the solving of Labour's internal political problems through the administrative means of expulsion rather than argument, shows it to be equally repugnant. The point of the article was to show that the Labour Party cannot even meet the requirements of Socialism - inadequate though they are.

Bhutto's election 'victory'?

IN THE ARTICLE entitled "Out of Reaction and Into Compromise" (*Organise!* 14) the writer starts off with a sincere gesture to try to put us in the picture about Pakistan's history before he talks about the future of the country.

In the second paragraph he/she states "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power with the only freely elected majority in Pakistan's history". What a dispicable lie.

In the general election of December 1970, Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) won only 85 seats and Sheikh Mujib's Awami League won 167 seats! The Awami League had an absolute majority to form a government. But Bhutto, a Sindhi tribal chieftain, was not going to have any of it. He had won 85 seats and less than 20% of the vote, but was all ready to 'celebrate the PPP victory'!

And during the general elections, when the Awami League had the majority to form the government, Bhutto and the Punjabi Army got cold feet because the Bengalis were going to

to to create a more balanced nation - every one of the races (Baluchis, Pakhtoons, Bengalis, Punjabis, Mujahirs - Urdu speaking immigrants from India - and Sindhis) was going to have equal opportunities under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman!

They got frightened and took to killing unarmed Bengali demonstrators while the negotiations were going on between the Parties and the Army. Punjabis killed millions of innocent Bengalis and ran like cowards when faced with Mukhti Fouj ('Freedom Fighters').

Then on the 23rd of March 1970, Bengalis tore down the Pakistan flag and unfurled the flag of Bangladesh. The rest is history.

When Bangladesh was finally liberated, its whole industrial infrastructure had been destroyed. The day before the surrender, the Pakistani Army collected some 300 of the leading Bengali intellectuals and technocrats, led them to a dug-out, and shot and buried them. They did this to try to decimate the Bengali intellectual base. Unfortunately, the Pakistani murderers were not tried, unlike the Nazis and collaborators, because Bengalis did not have the clout of the Jewish and other people - an indictment on all peoples of the world, especially the Arabs.

Pakistan remains divided by hate and greed. The thing that is still holding it together is Islam, American, Arab, British and European Aid, and the Heroin Trade. (Many of the biggest Traders are in Ms Bhutto's government). When Aid and Trade come in smaller doses, Pakistan will fall like a pack of cards.

Ms Bhutto indeed has problems a plenty. The peasants who form 79% of the population will go on being hungry while the middle-classes, 2%, will build larger houses or do their shopping in Harrods with aid and heroin money, or the money earned by the poor Pakistani guest-workers in the Middle East or Europe. Pakistan, which has the lowest literacy rate in Asia, will go on being illiterate. What can be done?

For a start, don't pretend that Bhutto came to power with a majority in the elections in 1970 because - it is a lie (what are the author's motives for promoting it?). Commemorate the murder of millions of Bengalis and rape of mothers, daughters and children. Examine why there is so much racial and religious hatred and envy.

Most of all work to eradicate the class which benefits from keeping 80% of the people illiterate, ignorant and

hungry. Get rid of the Islamic facade and kiss Pakistan good-bye!

Yours

Nazira B

AUTHOR'S REPLY: TRUE it is incorrect to say that Bhutto achieved an elected majority in 1970. I am sensible enough to admit to my mistake in stating such in that article.

I wholeheartedly agree that Pakistan has always suffered under a mainly Punjabi oligarchy, the most seriously exploited and oppressed being the Bengali population prior to the creation of Bangladesh.

The atrocities of the West Pakistani forces during the war of secession are well known: countless killed, maimed, raped, industries destroyed, etc. I most certainly do not want to dismiss or try to ignore the murder of Bengalis, nor was there any 'motive' behind my genuine mistake.

I should like to see the whole of Asia free: free from the Bhuttos, Ershads, Ghandis, Zias and all the rest; free from all the landlords, exploiting bosses and murdering military and police.

What motive could there be for supporting any Bhutto? The Bhuttos have always been and always will be the symbol of exploitation under a "democratic" facade.

At present Benazir is doing nothing for the poor. The military and the 22 families continue to hold the power familiar to them. She is just a more "acceptable" face of exploitation and oppression, a sop to the wounds of the Pakistani poor, a continuing tool of U.S. imperialism, the landlords, and the rich of commerce and industry.

WE HAVE BEEN unable to include all the letters we have received in this issue, but we hope to be able to print them in the next one. If you could keep letters to about 250 words they will stand more chance of getting printed because we don't like having to edit them.

In future, letters must carry a name and address if the authors want them published. (We don't - unless specifically asked - print your address in *Organise!*, but we may need to contact you ourselves). The letter in response to last issue's article on Pakistan had to be cut due to space, but because no address was supplied we couldn't contact the author concerning this. We endeavour not to alter the meaning of a letter if we have to cut it and apologise if it occurs. Edited letters will be marked with *.

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. 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 may 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.

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.

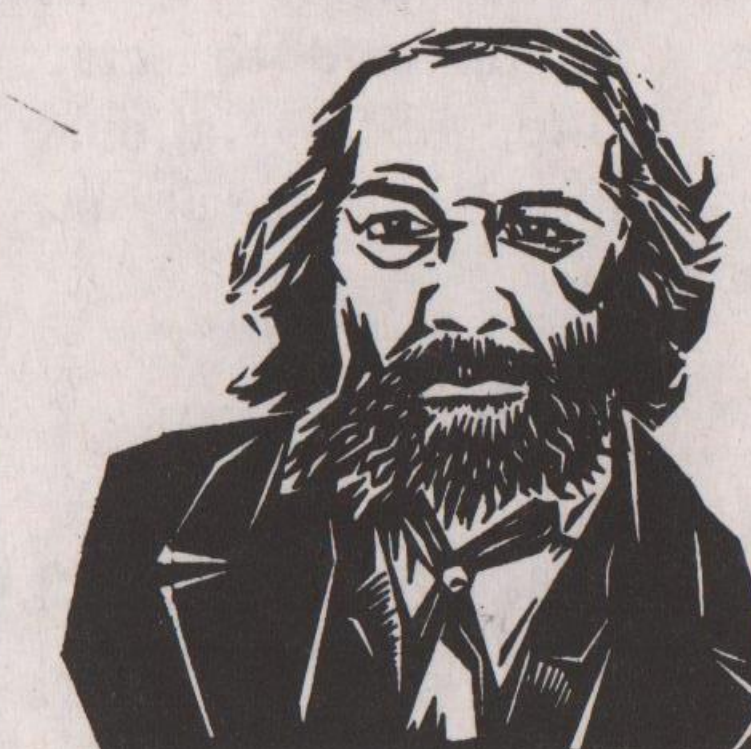
7. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the 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. •



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