

MERSEYSIDE
ANARCHIST
NEWSLETTER 20p

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NUMBER 27

MAY 91



National Direct Action Movement Conference, Ambleside.
Details from National Secretary, P.O.Box 29, SWPDO M'cr M15.

Newsletter deadline - final.

FIGHT FOR JOBS & SERVICES

Welcome to issue 27!

At last we have an article from Class War (the only one of the national groups not to have written something for the newsletter in recent issues,) with a report on the recent Class War national conference.

There's also an article on racism, and a review of the excellent new magazine "Captive Voice", produced by Irish Republican prisoners.

But the biggest issue locally now is the planned redundancies of 1 000 council workers in Liverpool, and 700 in Sefton, because these local authorities have decided they need to make "savings" in their budgets.

As anarchists, we fully support the council workers fight for their jobs, and although the two articles on this topic are short, there is bound to be more news in future issues of M.A. Watch this space!

We also continue the debate on the national anarchist organisations with a further contribution from a member of Liverpool DAM. Read on!

AS EVER, THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AUTHOR AND NOT NECESSARILY OF LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP AS A WHOLE.

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DEADLINE JUNE ISSUE (no.28)
Monday 27th May.

BASIC ANARCHISM.

Anarchism is revolutionary anti-state socialism. In practical terms, anarchists aim for the destruction of the power of the ruling class and of all relationships based on domination and submission. This means taking over our industries and communities and changing them to meet the needs of all, as well as the ecological needs of the environment. Without this takeover we can struggle within capitalism but never replace it.

Anarchism will be created by millions of people, not a dictatorial elite (we are not marxist-Leninists), and all will have their part to play in shaping it. Power will lie with the organisations thrown up by and for the revolution, not with the political parties who will try to dominate and destroy them.

The new society will not be born through abstract ideas, but will come out of the realities of struggle and the need for working class people to unite. Such struggle doesn't just involve resistance to ruling class power (strikes, mass protests and other forms of direct action), but also construction - the building of new, locally based federal organisations (examples of which go from the original soviets of the Russian Revolution to the Miner's Support Groups of the 1984/5 strike), plus the forging of solidarity and the willingness to go further.

There is no truce in the class war. The answer to ruling class power is continual and ever-widening struggle - for social revolution and anarchism.

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP.

LIVERPOOL COUNCIL STRIKE

PICKET LINE FURY

13 arrests in strike siege at city offices

STRIKE fury erupted in violence today when council pickets clashed with police escorting workers into the municipal buildings in Liverpool.

Missiles were thrown and threats made as workers tried to get into the education offices in Sir Thomas Street through a police cordon.

Angry pickets ran at council workers, shouting abuse and trying to stop them entering the building.

Thirteen people were arrested for public order offences.

The picket began peacefully at 7am when about 50 strike workers took up their positions outside the Municipal Buildings in Dale Street.

Smaller groups were outside the education offices, and back street

By Janet Tansley and Chris Walker

entrances to the council buildings.

Later more pickets arrived.

As council workers began arriving at 8am they were met by pickets shouting abuse.

The workers formed a group in nearby Cheapside, waiting to get into work.

Trouble flared at 8.35am when police tried

BINS WAR FEAR
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to escort a group of around 20, including council personnel director Pat Archer-Jones, treasurer Phil Kelly and his deputy Roy Williams, through the education office entrance in Sir Thomas Street.

Pickets surged from Dale Street and ran at the police cordon.

Objects were thrown into the air as pickets shouted abuse.

Police struggled to

● Turn to Page Three



Picket line anger ... a demonstrator is hauled out of the way by police
Picture: Eddie Barford

LIVERPOOL COUNCIL STRIKE

Liverpool City Council is in financial trouble, as a direct result of the poll tax. Last week, "moderate" Labour councillors, Liberals and Tories agreed to make 1 000 council workers redundant to save money. Those to be sacked include drugs unit staff, security officers, housing repairs staff, grounds maintenance staff and gardeners, teachers and binmen. A large proportion of the workers to be made redundant are members of the GMB - a union regarded as particularly militant (Militant Tendency once had strong influence within the GMB) and union activists suspect they have been singled out for redundancies by Labour councillors who want to weaken their Liverpool branch.

Council unions held a three-day strike on the 16th, 17th and 18th April with a mass picket outside the Municip-

al Buildings on the 18th. At this picket, 13 workers were arrested on public order offences after the pickets tried to physically stop the senior council officers - including the city treasurer, his deputy and the personnel director - from entering the building. The senior officers later whinged in the local press about the pickets' "violence". But how can they be surprised at the workers' anger at these redundancies? In a city with so few job opportunities, 1 000 job losses is an appalling prospect. Some of the sacked workers might never find work again. Most of the redundancies are among workers who are relatively unskilled.

Local press reports on the strike and the financial crisis have (as can



Angry scenes... as police remove a picket from outside the Municipal Buildings in Dale Street today

only be expected) been narrow, biased and have tended to trivialise the whole issue. The binmen have a continuing dispute, they have refused to work overtime to clear the backlog of refuse left after the strike, and the council has taken a hard line, threatening loss of bonus payments, even wage cuts, after giving refuse workers an ultimatum that all rubbish must be cleared within two weeks.

The 'Liverpool Echo' has printed numerous readers letters complaining about the state the city centre is in; but not one word about the causes of the dispute, except for a belated letter from a council binman who said that for five out of seven weeks he has not had a working refuse waggon, and that recent forced changes in working arrangements mean that his refuse collection team now take five weeks to do a round that previously took two weeks.

SEFTON COUNCIL JOB CUTS

Liverpool City Council isn't the only local authority on Merseyside to be in financial crisis. Sefton Council (which covers Bootle, Crosby, Maghull, Formby and Southport) seems set for redundancies, strikes and industrial action.

Sefton has a hung council, this means that if the Liberals and Tories vote together, they can defeat the Labour group. In February the three parties all produced different revenue budget proposals. The Liberals and Tories combined to put together a package which involved £9 million worth of reductions in the revenue budget. This obviously affected jobs but the council-

As always, the implication is that the workers are to blame for the dispute - but the possibility that management might be incompetent is never admitted.

In fact, the council unions have been negotiating with the council for months over the financial crisis. The unions have suggested adequate budget savings may be made through abolishing overtime, strict monitoring of the budget to cut wastefulness, several ideas for extra income generation, bringing work in house, and savings can be made from the expected poll tax reduction. But the unions will not negotiate compulsory redundancies.

Following the three-day strike, there have been a number of selective strikes in different council departments, including the environmental services, housing, social services, libraries, engineers and cleansing. It seems this is only the beginning of a long fight.

lors refused to identify specific jobs to be axed. They also went back on a previous redundancy agreement which meant that enhanced redundancy payments would be made to compulsorily sacked staff. The Tories and Liberals suggested staff working half their normal contracted hours. The unions responded with a half-day strike the week after Easter. The politicians also announced that a further £2million had to be saved through administrative efficiency, and sale of council land. Departments have stood firm and these savings are to be made by reductions in things like photocopying and any further job losses have been avoided. The Liberals have

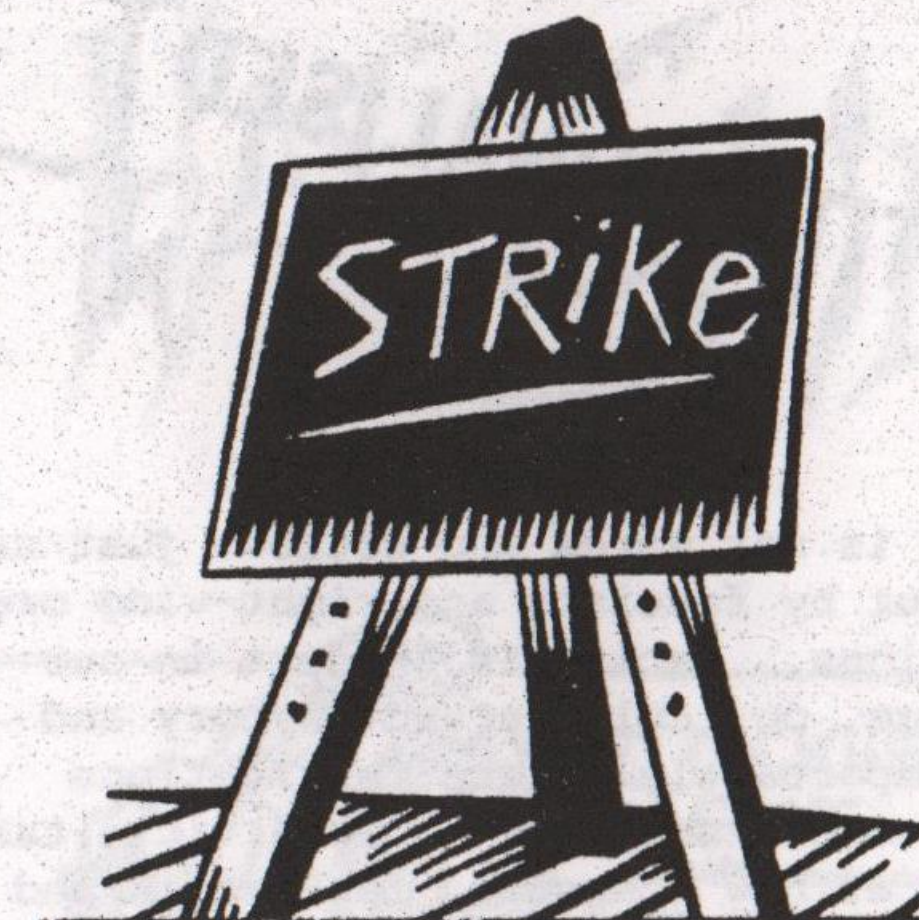
now agreed to reintroduce the previous redundancy policy but cash-limiting it to £200 000. This would mean about 75 people would benefit.

746 redundancies are proposed. All council unions have said that there should be no compulsory redundancies and they are balloting their members on strike action.

The redundancies relate chiefly to scrapping the council's school meals service. Cooks, canteen workers, cashiers, drivers, 362 in all are to be axed with a replacement sandwich service for children whose parents are on state benefits. In Southport the Fairholme old people's home is to be closed, losing 24 jobs. These people require 90 days statutory notice before their redundancies. The notice period is based on the size of the establishment, the bigger it is, the longer the period of notice required. But the council has interpreted this to refer to the size of the building, not the size of the social services department, so these workers will only get 30 days notice.

The recreation department is losing 12 posts, the education department 8 and the property services division is losing their energy efficiency officer, one of the few people whose job it is to try and save the council money! The only good news is that one senior solicitor is to go and the mayor's budget is down by £15 000. Other changes include an increase in the cost of meals on wheels and the cutting of discretionary awards to students (though these were usually piss-all in any case.)

It is essential to fight these redundancies, not just for the sake of those about to lose their jobs, but because the losses will have knock-on effects on



other departments and workers, putting further jobs at risk as there will be less need for admin and support staff. The loss of staff will also make it harder for council departments to bid for contracts under the compulsory competitive tendering legislation. Up to now, all tenders have been won by council departments.

The Liberals and Tories have removed the option of redeployment or retraining of staff - they want job losses.

The unions want any redundancies to be voluntary, further administrative efficiency, short term freezes on vacant posts, and redeployment and retraining to meet the debt crisis. A negotiated settlement was preferred by some union officials and eight NALGO branch executive members were asked to resign after they refused to take strike action. Also union members are known to have been involved in identifying jobs to be axed. Further strike action, particularly from the manual unions, now seems inevitable. Watch this space.

Meals staff near the boil

UNION leaders are warning Sefton Council that school meals staff are a step nearer to industrial action.

Dinner ladies voted to reject the management's latest offer at a special meeting on Saturday.

Sefton is cutting £1m from the school meals budget, but has offered an extra £200,000 in redundancy

payments, which the unions must accept in the next three weeks.

Staff were outraged at a select pay-off list which includes experienced kitchen and counter heads in favour of other employees.

Nalگو union leaders want the redundancy offer made open to everyone and warned staff were heading towards serious industrial action.

INSTITUTIONALISED RACISM

Racism is not words and actions just carried out by fascists and right-wing organisations. Racism is evident in our language, our culture and history and more importantly in the institutions that run our society. This article takes a look at how the state in Britain and Western Europe uses and reinforces racism in our society.

State racism in Britain and the rest of Europe takes different forms. In France and Italy racism forms part of the political agenda. In Britain the issues are generally suppressed and avoided in party political debate. The continental western European nations have a history of poorly paid migrant workers, chiefly from north Africa but also from Turkey. Although these workers generally take the worst jobs and have few

rights they are blamed for unemployment and instability in their "host" countries. The right-wing in the form of Jean Marie le Pen's 'Front National' in France has played on these issues and unlike the British National Party and National Front in Britain the FN has the overt support of the state. In April last year the FN held its conference in Nice at the invitation of the city's mayor, who also called on FN councillors to join his administration. The Front National already controls thirty town councils and opinion polls show that 75% of French voters back them on the issue of immigration. In France, racism has become politically acceptable. In Clichy-sous-Bois, a suburb of Paris, the mayor has prohibited any-one of North African origin from renting accommodation or owning shops in the town centre. Francois



Mitterand declared in December 1989 "We are not facing a human tide but there are too many of them".

The situation is not much better in Italy, where the parliament has passed a law fixing the ceiling on immigration, depending on the needs of the national labour market. The right wing Lega Lombarda Party calls for expulsion of all foreigners without jobs. The party has come a close second in recent local elections in the north.

In Britain, the far right is electorally insignificant by comparison, but this is more than made up for by the consistent racism, in less explicit ways, of state institutions. The racism of the police, judiciary, housing institutions, employers, immigration officials are well documented. Racist rhetoric is not confined to the likes of extremists such as Enoch Powell, but also comes from the mouths of Tory politicians. Norman Tebbit said last year: "because these islands are already overcrowded and in the belief that great waves of immigration by people who do not share our culture, our language, our ways of social conduct, in many cases who owe no allegiance to this country, was and is a destabilising factor in society." This kind of speech is particularly dangerous coming from a man who has helped shape the dominant political mood of the last decade.

A Home Office report last year showed that more than half of young black men in London have been hauled through the courts. In 1989 five black men died in police custody in London alone. Last year police and immigration officials broke up a wedding at Hackney registry office and took away the bride and two witnesses to the cells, as part of an investigation into alleged bogus marriages arranged for illegal immigrants. The government is also fostering segregation by allowing parents to choose their children's school on racial grounds. We cannot rely on "democracy" to deal with racism. All through the debates on Hong Kong the four Black MPs stayed conspicuously silent.

Racism has intensified during the reign of the Tory government. Young blacks have become increasingly frustrated and angry, but this has not resulted in an increase in the membership of established anti-racist groups. In East London, the Asian community have

organised themselves. Young blacks have come to feel isolated and so have come to look after their own. In other areas, in the absence of their own movement, blacks have given up on politics altogether. Instead they have concentrated on reactionary causes such as the Satan-is Verses. Militant Asians should be fighting the racist class enemy, not

**DON'T LET
NAZIS
ORGANISE
IN YOUR
AREA.**

some middle-class hack. Together, we need to fight prejudice, police brutality and racist attacks.

The media reinforces racist stereotypes by the portrayal of blacks as ignorant criminals. The immigration service who are deporting 6 people per day, operate without compassion and enact racist legislation. On Merseyside, the Gifford Report put into print the day to day realities for the Black community. Access only to the poorest housing, difficulty in gaining benefits, lack of awareness of Black issues by the institutions the Black community deals with.

In nearly all professions, Blacks have found it hard to gain recognition, and have been denied access to qualified positions. Attempts at Black education have been resisted by the state and there are no statutory requirements for legislation or official documents affecting the Black community to be translated.

Racism shifts with current affairs, such as the anti-Arab racism arising from the Gulf War but it is always there. Anti-fascists need to combat not only racism at its source in terms of fascists but also state racism. Historical analysis must not be used to cloud the racist attacks that the Black community

8 faces now. In France for example, the desecration of Jewish graves at Carpentas brought people out on to the streets to demonstrate in their thousands. But the death of a Moroccan student mowed down by a car in March 1990 and then repeatedly driven over backwards and forwards, received little attention. Over the last four years, 19 North Africans have been killed in racist attacks. The leaders of anti-fascist movements talk of the nazi threat without seeing the growth of new forms of racism. Each cultural group - Black, Arab, Muslim, Jew - has a different history of oppression, but they all face institutional racism together and we all need to stress our common purpose. The emphasis may need to change with circumstances but we must work together to defeat bigotry and discrimination which are international.

Police in Belgium have stood by as fascists disfigured North African youths with swastikas. In Britain, the Cardiff Three is a case which highlights the racist nature of the police, and should form a campaign for all anti-racists. On Valentine's Day 1988, Lynette White, a Cardiff prostitute, was brutally murdered. She was stabbed over fifty times and had her throat cut. Eye witnesses saw a white man covered in blood in the area at the time. After nine months searching, the police drew a blank, but arrested five Black men and charged them with the murder. Three of the men, Yusuf Abdullah, Tony Paris, and Steven Miller were convicted without forensic evidence and despite Abdullah having 13 witnesses that he was eight miles away at the time. Miller has retracted his confession, and no account has been taken of doctor's evidence that he has a mental age of 11 and an IQ of 75. They remain in jail serving life sentences.

The anti-racist movement needs to be realistic. Racism does not just mean white hatred of Blacks. Racism exists in all communities - most noticeably, there is antagonism between Arabs and Jews, but also between Asians and Blacks. Anti-fascists need to be realistic on both fronts: first, to combat fascists and racists both verbally and by direct action and propaganda. Secondly, to re-educate people of all races to respect cultural differences. Thirdly, to combat institutionalised racism, whether by the courts, by the police, by the council or by your bosses. Get involved.

CAPTIVE VOICE
Spring 1991
32 pages
£1.00

Captive Voice, for the benefit of the uninitiated, is a quarterly magazine produced entirely by Irish Republicans imprisoned for fighting against British rule. Whether you're into working class writing, revolutionary literature or want an insight into the thoughts, feelings and motivation of IRA volunteers, this is a publication that can't be too highly recommended.

Containing politics, comment, humour, short stories and reviews, all issues of Captive Voice have been good but I'd venture to say that this one is the best yet. Each one has a theme running through it which some (but not all) of the articles concentrate on. This time it's the media and all forms of censorship which come in for the prisoners' timely scrutiny. I say timely because the magazine dovetails well with the programmes on Ireland screened recently in Channel 4's 'Banned' series and BBC 2's repeat of 'Enemies Within', the documentary from the Inside Story team which int-

SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

TROOPS OUT
MOVEMENT



VIDEO : 'THE LONGEST HUNGER STRIKE'

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The CAPTIVE VOICE

An Glór Gafa



interviewed Republican and Loyalist inmates of the H-Blocks. (The Daily Express said it should never have been shown because it "gave the articulate Provos an hour long TV commercial"). Indeed, one of the best articles gives a prisoners-eye-view of the making of this programme.

Before filming could begin, the BBC producers had to meet with representatives of the Republican prisoners and agree to their terms for participating - no quoting prisoners out of context, no distortion and no unnecessary editing - the BBC obliged. This is not only a testament to the high level of organisation amongst imprisoned Republicans but also gives the lie to the British claim that these people are 'ordinary criminals' without political status.

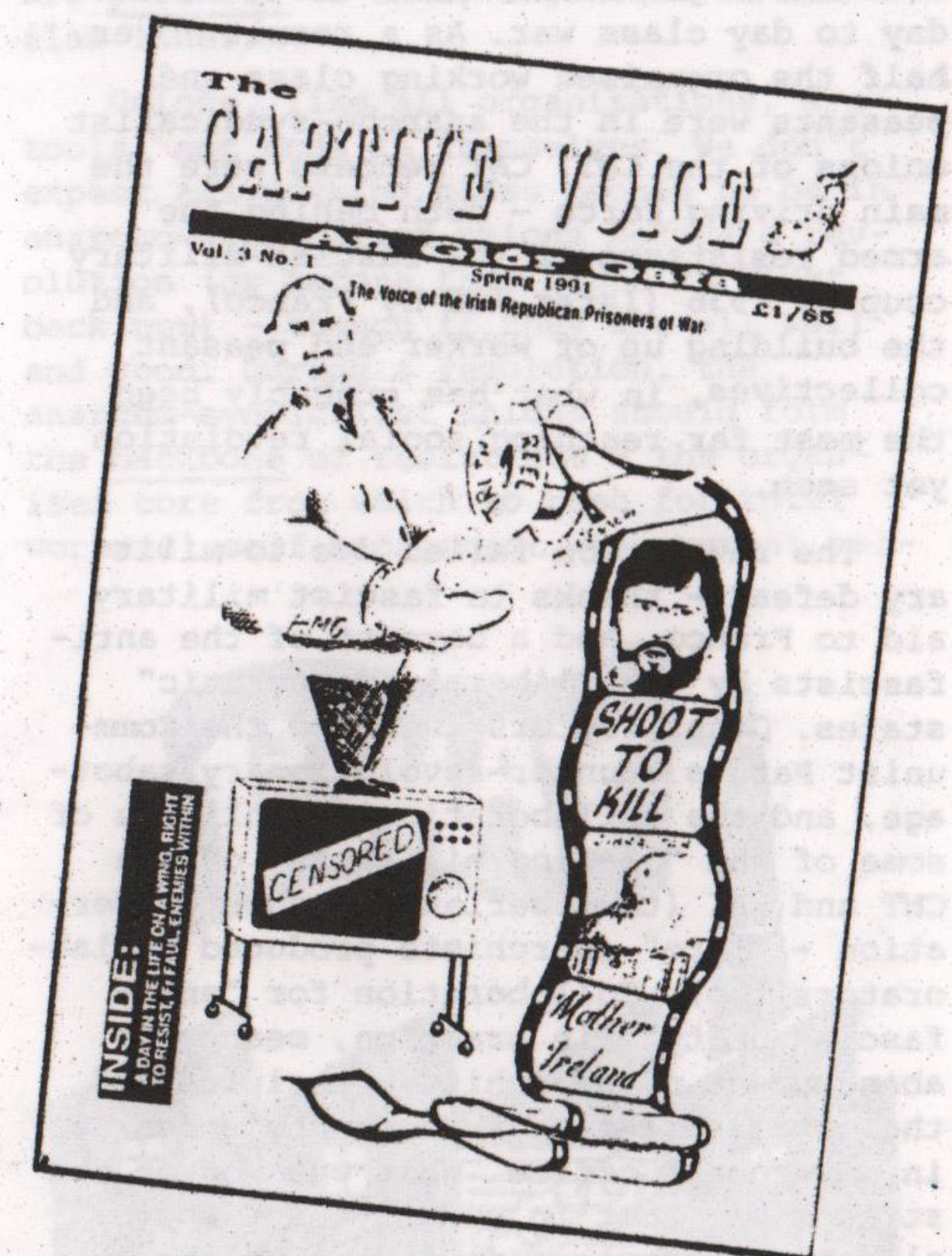
By and large the prisoners were pleased with the final programme though they would have liked more emphasis on the strip-searching of Republican women prisoners and the struggle against enforced integration with Loyalist prisoners which is going on in Crumlin Rd jail. They also wished to stress that the relatively relaxed regime in the H-Blocks today is the result of a successful struggle by Republicans within that jail and is not representative of Britain's overall prison policy.

Every now and then I come across a piece of writing which is so good and clear in its reasoning that it should be put into leaflet form and delivered to every house in the land. One such article spans the centre pages of the latest CV. Called 'Right to Resist' it is as good a justification for the IRA's armed struggle as you are likely to read. It slams the institutions, conditions and inequalities which drive people to take up arms and in the process charts the failure of non-violent attempts to change the Six Counties. The article exposes the pro-British views of those who condemn the

IRA on grounds of 'morality' and concludes, "The British soldier on the street can stop, search and detail for hours anyone he meets and, in the final analysis, he can shoot them dead without suffering the consequences. And all to uphold a society rotten to the core and which absolutely needs his violence in order to exist. To resist within that oppressive society is an expression of human dignity, an entirely moral act".

Captive Voice - compulsory reading for revolutionaries.

Captive Voice can be obtained by sending a £1 cheque or postal order (made out to 'Mutual Aid Centre') to P.O. Box 110, Liverpool, L69 8DP. Please include an A4 sae.



This is a reply to Martin's (AWG) article on "anarcho-syndicalism" in the last issue of the M.A.N. ("New Chips for Old").

First, Martin raised a few points - but also a lot of rubbish. For instance, we - ie anarcho-syndicalists in the DAM - have, according to Martin, "failed to learn from (anarcho-syndicalism's) mistakes". We "look back with rose-tinted spectacles" to the Spanish CNT (anarcho-syndicalist union confederation), and "any idea of smashing the capitalist state machine" is "amazingly absent" from our view of revolution....

If Martin wants to fool himself that's his problem. He certainly didn't get these "facts" from the DAM.

The points that are worth replying to include:

"ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM HAS FAILED"

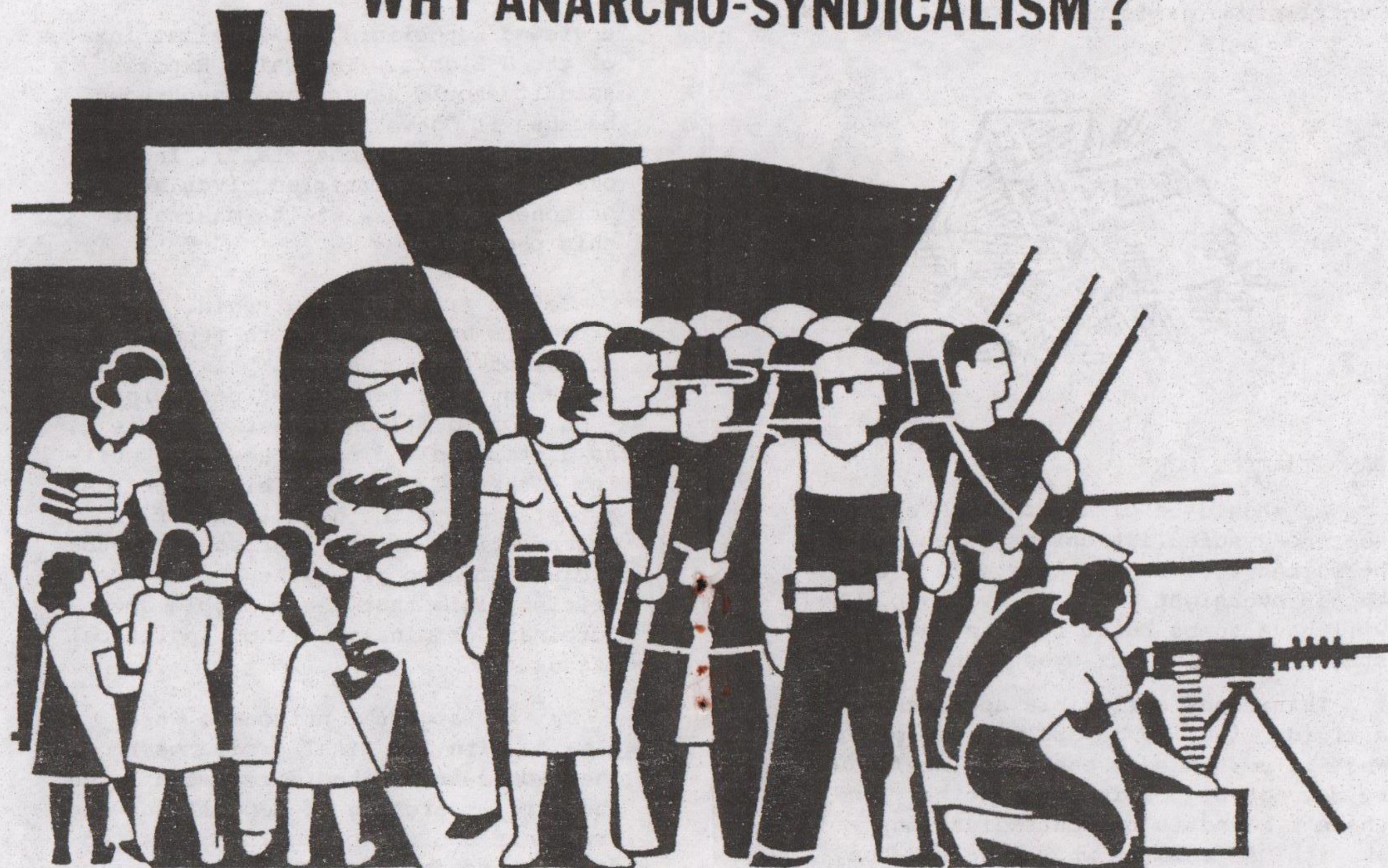
What is usually meant by this is that the Spanish Revolution of 1936 was defeated - which is true. So therefore anarchism (according to marxists), or anarcho-syndicalism (according to the AWG) is wrong.

A bit of background is needed here: In the 1930's Spain had the largest anarchist movement in the world. Rather than retreat into ideological "purity", anarchists got their hands dirty in the day to day class war. As a result, over half the organised working class and peasants were in the anarcho-syndicalist unions of the CNT. CNT members were the main driving force - both behind the armed resistance to the fascist-military coup of 1936 (later led by Franco), and the building up of worker and peasant collectives, in what has probably been the most far reaching social revolution yet seen.

The revolution failed due to military defeat - thanks to fascist military aid to Franco, and a boycott of the anti-fascists by the "liberal-democratic" states. Other factors included the Communist Party's counter-revolutionary sabotage, and the collaborationist policies of some of the "leading militants" of the CNT and FAI (the Iberian Anarchist Federation - "pure" anarchists produced collaborators too). Collaboration for "anti-fascist unity", in practice, meant the abandonment of anarchist principles and the total sell-out of those who ended up in government office. What was won on the streets was lost in committees - where all the compromises were made by the anarchists...

ANARCHIST ORGANISATION

WHY ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM?



Anarcho-Syndicalists today aren't blind to this. In any revolutionary situation we must rely on our own organised strength - in the workplaces, streets, and militias. Unity with other working class organisations must be on our terms. Revolutions must be pushed as far as possible. The counter-revolution must be smashed.

Spain aside, it's true that all forms of revolutionary socialism have fallen far short of their goals - so far. This is as true for marxism as for anarchism. Nowhere is socialism a reality (if we ignore the fairy tales of hacks). The mass movements of yesteryear were smashed between fascism and state communism, or diverted into reformism by the "success" of consumer capitalism.

Today isn't yesterday. The USSR - the marxist-leninist dream for over 70 years - is collapsing. The apparent triumph of western capitalism cannot hide its own

failures, or headlong rush towards ecological disaster. New opportunities are opening - and new possibilities for the creation of a new, effective, revolutionary force. This is what anarchists should be working towards.

Building from the best elements of revolutionary working class socialism, while fighting to seize the future. This is anarcho-syndicalism today.

"UNIONS ARE NEVER REVOLUTIONARY"

Anarcho-Syndicalism has two aims - to prepare for social revolution, and to resist ruling class attack in the present. If there's a lesson in history, it's that a small, disorganised anarchist movement, with no roots in the working class, will be swept aside in any revolutionary situation. To survive - and win - we need a strong base in the workplace and community - a class base. We need organisat-

ion, numbers, technical preparation (in economic self-management, revolutionary defence, etc.), and decisive action.

Spontaneous organisation - thrown up by struggle - obviously exists and should be supported. Modern anarcho-syndicalist unions - like the CNT of Spain, and the USI of Italy - support workers assemblies when they exist, and promote them when they don't. But spontaneous organisation isn't enough. All too often they disappear without trace, leaving reformist unions to re-establish control. Organisations thrown up by revolution, again, are no guarantee of success. The soviets (workers' councils) of the Russian Revolution were taken over by the Bolsheviks/Communists, as was the factory committee movement. It's worth noting that one of the foremost anarchist activists in the factory committees - Maximov - later admitted that "the lack of purely revolutionary unions hastened the destruction of the anarchist and syndicalist movements"... (1)

Anarcho-Syndicalist unions aim to be long-term, concrete alternatives to social democratic trade unions, to resist periods of retreat, and to maintain and develop rank and file control. They are not "competition" against spontaneous grassroots movements, they are parallel to them, organised on similar lines.

Unions, like all organisations, are tools, not ends in themselves. We don't expect all working class people to be in anarcho-syndicalist unions before a revolution (or before they begin to fight back now) - though if they are all well and good. During a revolution, the anarcho-syndicalist unions should form the backbone of resistance - the organised core from which to push for total workers' self-management, to prevent pol-



itical parties exploiting any power vacuum, and to organise revolutionary defence to break the counter-revolution.

No-one says this is a "perfect" strategy. By fighting in the here and now we risk "contamination" from the real world - as opposed to remaining "pure" in the talking shops of the left/anarchist ghetto. There are dangers, and they have to be faced head on.

First, anarcho-syndicalist unions are unions of workers - class unions - not unions of only convinced anarcho-syndicalists. As unions grow, revolution could be dropped - or kept to empty words in a constitution - in favour of reformist "realism", bread and butter issues alone, and compromise. The need to negotiate with bosses and councillors, and the contact this involves, can push even the most militant activist towards bureaucracy and class collaboration ("workers and bosses have the same interests"). The need to operate reasonably openly can lead to legalism - putting the survival of the organisation before principles in order to avoid repression. This can range from toning down resistance to stay within the law, to out-and-out corporatism - the absorption of unions into state arbitration machinery.

The means to avoid these dangers are first, a politically aware activist base, and secondly, a structure that avoids bureaucracy - ie federalism. All decisions affecting the struggle must be made by the base, and all delegates must be subject to recall. The task of the activist minority within the organisation is to make sure the union remains controlled by the base,

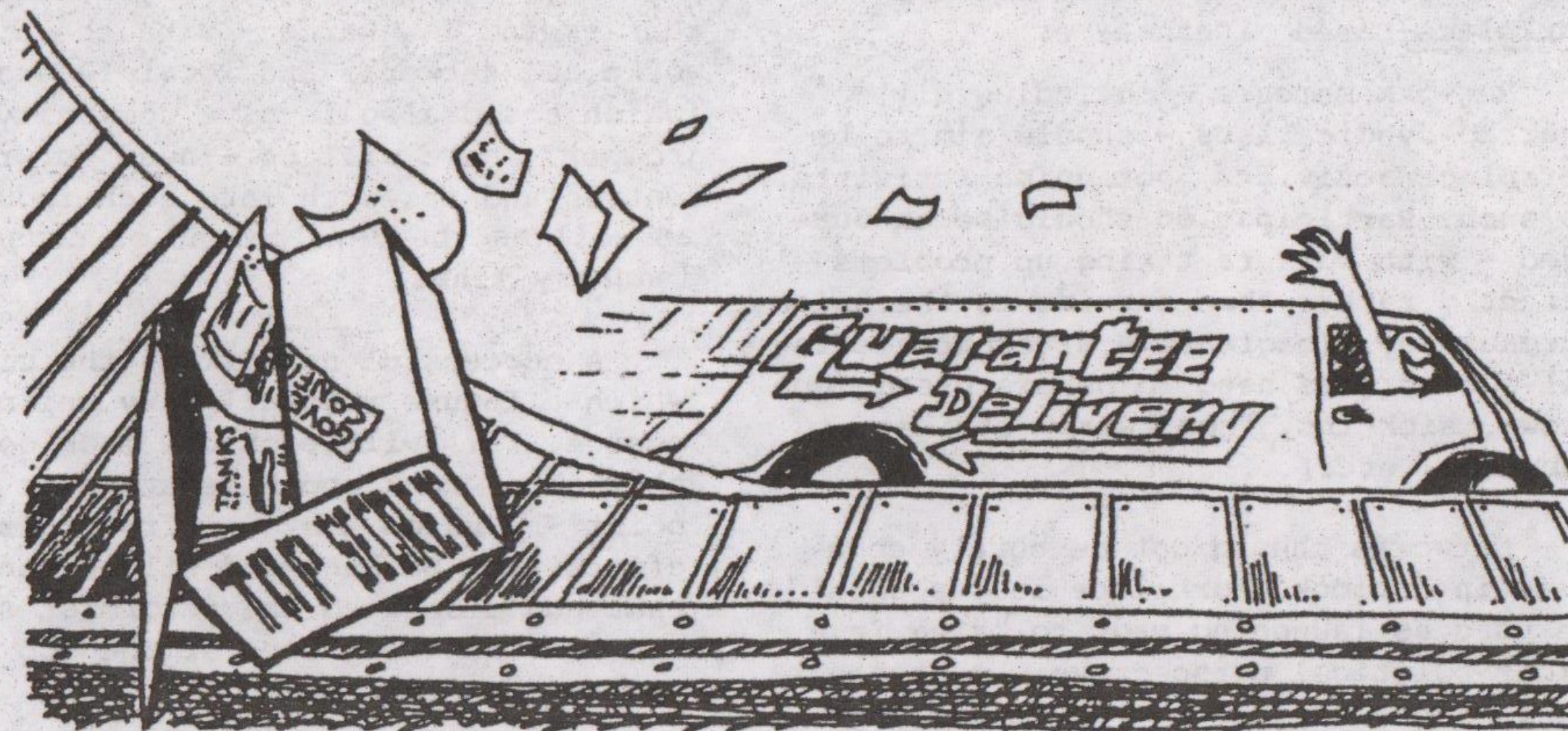
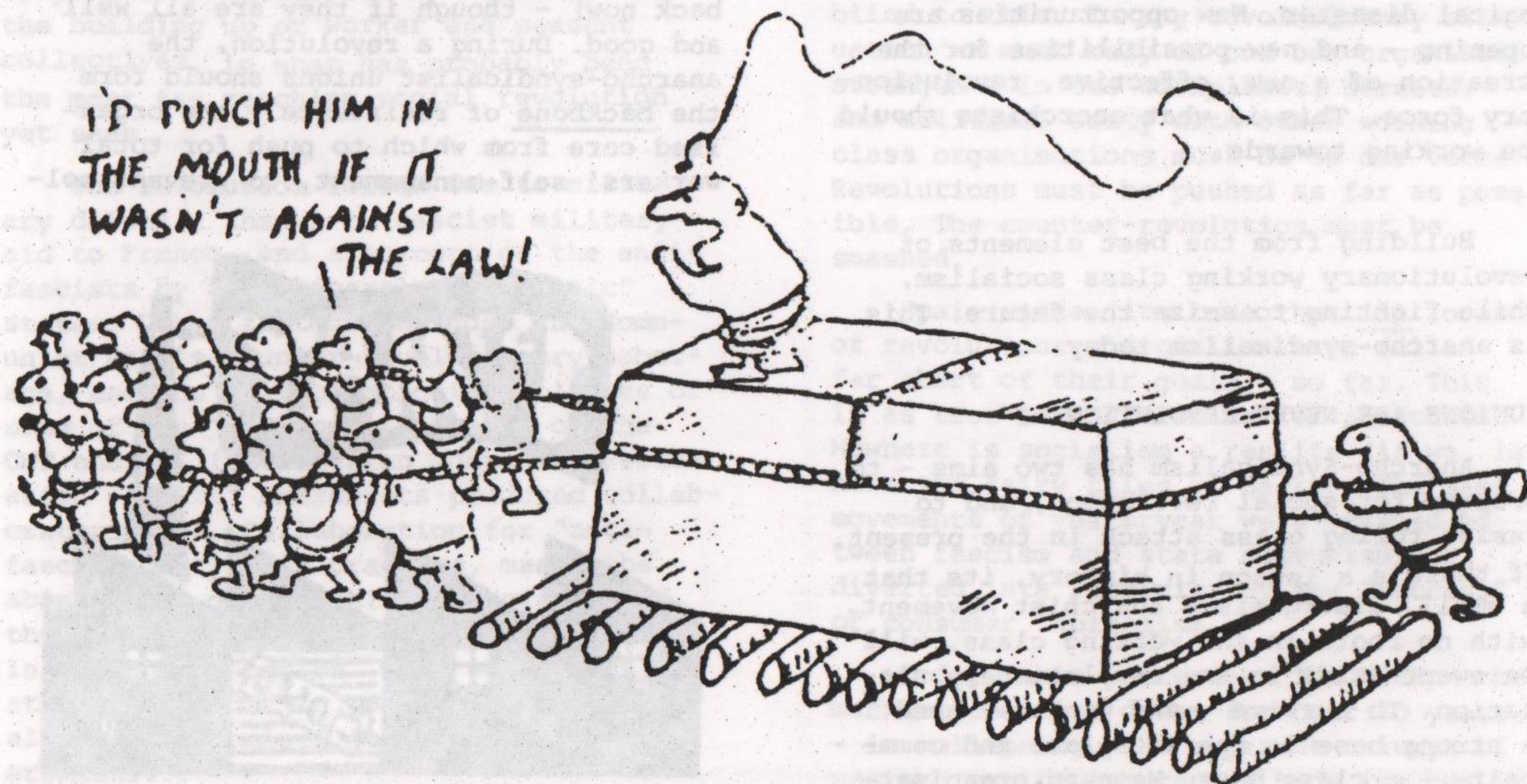
that all delegates do what they're told, and that no-one remains in official posts longer than necessary. No-one should be indispensable. Corporatism, obedience to anti-union laws, no-strike deals, social contracts, etc. must be fought, and direct action reaffirmed. If this leads to repression, militants must be prepared. In extreme cases, this may include keeping the organisation going, underground, until new organising opportunities arise.



DAM STRATEGY NOW

As should be clear, the DAM sees anarcho-syndicalist unions as an aim to be worked for. Such unions will not appear overnight or as if by magic. They will have to be built for, in realistic stages, and with our eyes open.

This means a flexible approach - not a rigid "line" to be applied everywhere. What is possible in one workplace/industry may not be possible in another, and there's bound to be contradictions - as with DAM members who are also shop stewards of TUC unions.



Basically, DAM strategy is a "one foot in, one foot out" approach - we aim to work within, outside of, and beyond social democratic trade unions (ie the TUC). Over half the workforce in Britain are not in unions. This means that anarchists have a 50% chance or more of working in non-unionised areas. If the possibility is there to organise independent unions it should be grasped, and all anarchists should support this.

The only working example so far is the Despatch Industry Workers Union - set up by DAM members, who are now a minority within it. Whether this was a "correct" decision or not, it exists. The question now, for people like the AWG, is do you support it? If a despatch rider joined the AWG would they join the DIWU - or try and set up a non-existent T&G branch (and so "split the organised despatch workers")?

Within places already organised, the short-term aim is anarcho-syndicalist networks. As with unions, the aim is anarcho-syndicalist organisations of workers, not organisations of just anarcho-syndicalists. They should be open, not just to DAM members, or convinced anarcho-syndicalists, but to all workers who share our perspective on industrial organisation - direct action, direct democracy, solidarity, etc. The Education Network is an example of this - set up by DAM members who (as with the DIWU) are now a minority within it.

The emphasis in networks should be on practice and the method of organisation, rather than a "pure" political content. First and foremost they should

be anti-management. Anti-TUC and Labour Party also - though this will come to the fore more during sell-outs.

The aim then, is to create a framework for militant workers to begin to set their own agenda - a fighting organisation at the forefront of raising issues at work, inside and outside of the unions and existing structures. Social democratic unions exist, and should be used for what they're worth - with no illusions about "reforming" them or trying to elect a "better" leadership. The same goes for so-called Rank and File groups dominated by Broad Lefts.



"It's a socially useful device for use on the management"

The aim of networks is not to be a "loyal opposition" within social democratic trade unions, but to build a workplace-based alternative.

Network members - including all anarcho-syndicalists - should aim to be workplace activists, not union activists as such. Participation should be encouraged - with workers taking up problems directly rather than turning to the union bureaucracy. Imaginative alternatives to all-out strikes need to be discussed (go-slows, sick-ins, "good work" strikes, sabotage, etc.)...

Networks should not be purely economic in outlook. Workplace issues should be used as launching pads to bring in a wider political perspective - management v. workers, capitalism v. the working class, working class autonomy and workers control. Networks should be the means of bringing revolutionary politics into the everyday area of struggle.

Obviously, for any of this to have any impact, activists will have to do the groundwork - to be prepared to take on responsibilities, to offer practical alternatives, to organise meetings, etc.. Respect, trust, and credibility have to be built through practice, not by preaching a "superior" line.

Barcelona 1936

WHEN THE ANARCHISTS RAN THE BUSES



AT LEAST THEY RAN ON TIME

At present, networks are still very much at an early stage. New networks will probably organise regionally at first, then expand downwards - with the aim of workplace networks and local federations (which could also involve community-based groups). There will be a need for regional centres and research into each industry, as well as the development of cross-industry links.

A successful network is the core from which a future revolutionary union may emerge. This will probably mean going through a Rank and File stage at some point - a union emerging from this would effectively be Rank and File organisations that had displaced the reformist structure and won the allegiance of the job for those who do the fighting.

The relationship between the DAM and emerging networks and unions is still under discussion. Basically though, networks and unions are, and will be, autonomous. The role of the DAM is to promote, support, and defend such organisations, not to act as a controlling "vanguard".

Reference:

- 1) "Syndicalists in the Russian Revolution". G.P. Maximoff.

If you agree with the above, or want to find out more, contact Liverpool DAM.

OUR TIME HAS COME

On Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st April, I attended my first Class War national conference, held at the West End leisure centre near the centre of Newcastle.

As a newcomer to Class War (though not a member at the time of writing), I didn't quite know what to expect or what kind of people I would meet. After all, if you pick up a paper like Class War and see it plastered with cross-headings like "bollocks", "shit" and "crap" you could be forgiven for having a few misgivings. Mind you, you only have to read "The Heavy Stuff", Class War's theoretical journal, to realise that these people are thoughtful, serious and mean business.

There were between forty and fifty delegates in all (though only members were allowed to vote). They came from Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool, Luton, London and various other places. Although most of them were in their twenties there was a fair representation of older people in their forties (like myself). I looked in vain for a green- or purple-haired punk with the arse hanging out of his/her jeans.



There was a mood of determination to get on with the business in hand. What impressed me, as a Class War supporter but not a member, was that non-members had an equal say in any of the debates. Having been a member of two lefty parties - the Communist Party and the New Communist Party - and having just left the Labour Party, I noticed a distinct absence of the normal atmosphere that fills such conferences. You know the kind of thing I mean - the experts on the platform showering us with the droppings of their great minds,



other self appointed "experts" or cadres in the body of the meeting making long, balls-aching speeches, showing off their knowledge to any-one who will listen.

The main business of the conference was the discussion and amendment of a pamphlet outlining Class War's politics to replace the previous pamphlet, "This Is Class War". It is a criticism frequently levelled at Class War that they offer no real alternative to the status quo, other than a mindless rebellion against it. The new pamphlet, when it is ratified by the next national conference and printed for distribution, should dispel the image of Class War as a bunch of directionless piss-artists who revel in violence for its own sake. Class War does, of course, recognise that any change to a better society must

involve violence, both as a defence against the violence of the capitalist state and in recognition of the fact that the rich will not voluntarily give up their opulent lifestyles.



The pamphlet deals with capitalism, the state, class and the class system, class struggle, revolution, revolutionary organisations, the new world, and appendices on several subjects, including Northern Ireland. What it amounts to is a sober clear-headed appraisal of where we are now, how we got here, and what we need to do to get us where we want to be. There is none of the simplistic sloganising and plain wishful thinking you find in much of

the left parties' propaganda. Class War is obviously prepared to learn from the past without being hampered by it.

In his article "Turning Chips Into Money" in the March newsletter, Keith from Liverpool DAM wrote about people re-inventing anarchism, ignoring the past, and "pulling a squeaky-clean anarchism from out of thin air." There may be people attempting that, Keith, but I don't think many of them are in Class War!

The pamphlet deals at length on how to get our politics out to the working-class, and how to rebuild a working-class culture and identity, after the erosion of the values of community and solidarity by the syphilitic ravings of "greed-and-self" Thatcherism. It did not underestimate the problems posed by revolutionary change, or promise some kind of "nice" liberal utopia. It did point out that a world shorn of capitalist greed and envy, a world where people have enough to eat and live in peace with their neighbours, is only going to be built with a lot of hard slog and self-discipline.

The section on Northern Ireland did not cause the controversy expected. Briefly, what emerged from the debate was the fact that, while Class War could support the IRA's and the Republican's armed struggle against the British state and support any peoples' right to self-determination, we could not give unqualified support to the IRA (or indeed to any other organisation which seeks power.)



A discussion on Class War's forthcoming international conference in London in September provided what little friction there was at the conference. A levy of all the membership was proposed, regardless of whether they could attend the London conference or not, along with the proposal that members would undertake whatever tasks assigned to them by the London comrades organising the conference (eg participating in workshops etc.) Although there was no disagreement in principle with the proposals, the manner in which they were put to the members - more or less as demands - raised a few hackles. It was finally agreed though that such an ambitious and costly project (nearly 5 000 quidsworth)

could not be left to vague goodwill and woolly-minded commitment. If everything goes according to plan, the 500-delegate national conference, with people coming from all over Europe and further afield, should be a momentous event.

The Newcastle conference confirmed everything that I have long suspected - that people can find a coherent political direction and organise themselves without power-hungry leaders. Such efforts do, however, need to be co-ordinated and presided over by some-one to



keep a little order and we were very fortunate in having a brilliant chairperson for the part of the conference involving the pamphlet. He did a job that would certainly have scrambled my brains.



All in all, it was a weekend I wouldn't have missed. We congratulated the Tyneside comrades on a well-organised conference, with a good social on the Saturday night and excellent food on both days.

Although only a young organisation, Class War is growing in numbers and influence. It's progress towards a more organised, "together" approach to its activities can only be a cause of anxiety to the wealthy scum who have profitted vastly from the previous decade of human misery. (Will they ever forget Trafalgar Square 1990?) The class enemy might very well tremble in his favourite night-club or massage parlour.

OUR TIME HAS COME!



UNIONISM or ANARCHISM?

A Contribution to Debate

After reading the article on the Direct Action Movement in the March issue of M.A. I felt that the points it makes needed responding to.

Having been a member of the DAM in the late 1980s, I think I can speak with confidence about anarcho-syndicalism.

Firstly, in the section "Why organise Anarchist Unions?", the author tells us that the "process of struggle is held back by the bureaucratic nature of the TUC unions", and that it is the "absence of an alternative" which is holding workers back.

This is only part of the picture. Sure, the TUC bureaucrats want an easy life mediating between workers and bosses. Yes, they are frightened of sequestration of their salary-giving funds. But is it really the case that the mass of workers are revolutionary, or even "militant"? Are they only held back by bureaucrats?

The author comes near the truth when s/he says that "unofficial action by workers has not compensated for the refusal of trade unions to initiate official action". While this blanket statement conveniently glosses over events - like the '89 Dockers' Strike, the London Underground unofficial stoppages, and the totally unofficial Offshore Industry Liaison Committee-run strikes on the oil rigs - it does hold an element of truth. In general, unofficial action has not challenged the bureaucrats. But why is this?

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I would argue that it is because of the dominance of the political ideology of the bureaucrats - the ideas of collaboration and co-operation with the bosses for the sake of the company, or the economy, or the 'nation' - the ideology that workers have common interests with their bosses, and that workers should have 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay' rather than what workers really need in terms of income, or the necessity of a socialist society. The lack of unofficial action is a political problem, a problem of the attitudes of workers, not simply the product of a conspiracy of bureaucrats to keep workers from exercising control over their unions. The fact that workers allow bureaucrats to run their unions is part of this political problem. If this was not the case, then why didn't the NALGO workers go ahead and organise an anti-Poll Tax non-implementation policy by themselves? Why didn't the P&O sympathy strikes continue in defiance of the bureaucrats? Why aren't workers organising themselves to get rid of the bureaucrats?

As for the issues of the anti-union laws: this isn't some kind of 'smart' legislation which would only allow prosecution of bureaucratic Trade Unions. Are anarcho-syndicalists somehow immune to anti-working class legislation? Don't you think that if 'unofficial' secondary picketting by masses of workers had become widespread the Tories would have targetted that with legislation? The bureaucrats bowing down to anti-union laws is only the surface of the problem - the deeper issue is the fact that workers have not politically challenged the right of the state to interfere in their unions.

It follows from this analysis that simply a change of "structure" is not enough. It is not simply a choice between bureaucratic (TUC) unions and 'alternative' ("anarcho-syndicalist") democratic unions, but a choice between a collaborationist/reformist and a politically combative/revolutionary working class.

For anarchists, on the level of organisation, it is a choice between simple "unionism" (which is what 'syndicalism' is) and political organisation: between 'structure' and 'politics'.

Take, for instance, the example of the Dispatch Industry Workers' Union (DIWU). The author says that it would be "difficult" (understatement) to organise "a workplace if we ask prospective members to accept all the aims and principles of the DAM". So what does the DIWU do? It enshrines the "principles of militant action" in a constitution (wonderful!) whilst recognising the need for anarchists to organise separately, within the DIWU, as "anarchists" to "draw attention to the political implications of strikes and to argue our line in general".

"What is wrong with that?" you may ask.

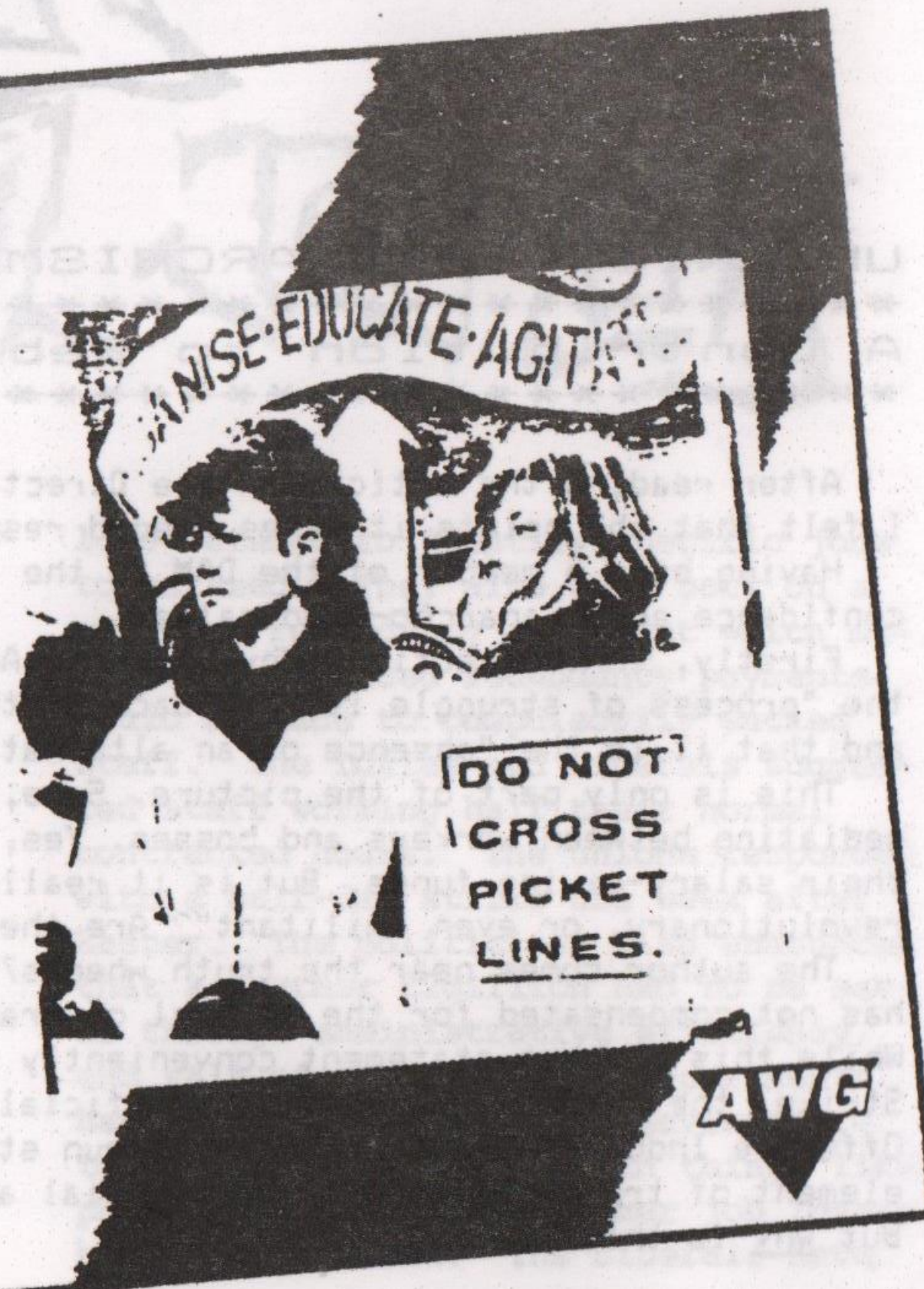
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Well, firstly, to function as a union the DIWU has to let dispatch riders join who are not anarchists or anarcho-syndicalists, that is clear. But even if the constitution 'outlaws' "collaboration with the bosses", or crossing picket lines (or voting Tory, or Labour, or perhaps even being a 'lefty'), that doesn't mean it won't happen, or that members wouldn't argue for compromise in a strike or whatever. You cannot banish an idea from peoples' heads by banning it in a constitution! And if you said to workers "if you don't agree with the politics of our constitution you can't join", then the DIWU (or whatever 'union') would not in fact be a union it would be a group of militants in a workplace.

As for the idea that, because the anarcho-syndicalist unionists have managed to find a way to by-pass the bureaucrats of the TUC unions, then confrontations with the bosses will be "more full-blooded", I think that this has a lot more to do with wishful-thinking about it being "easier than attempts to politicise workers within a TUC union" than it has to do with reality (tell it to the Miners!). I think it's a case of a 'class-struggle' ghetto-mentality: 'if we can't beat 'em, ignore 'em!'

Secondly, if anarchists are to "draw attention to...[the] line in general", then how are they to do this? As individual members of the DIWU? Or as members of an anarchist organisation which links such groups together and creates a "general line"? If it is the latter, then, if comrades are honest about it, this organisation would be a political organisation of anarchists (or what the average Jo in the street would call 'a party').

This, and it is not at all by coincidence, is what is needed in "the community", to fight the Poll Tax, to fight racism, to fight women's oppression, fight for gay rights, fight against the occupation of Ireland, for abortion rights, against imperialist war in the Middle East etc, etc, etc. And again, if comrades are honest with themselves, this is what the DAM tries to act as in tackling such issues.

To move on...what about "Industrial Networks"? I think this is a case of trying to split the TUC 'not now,...but later'. After all, what is the difference between Industrial Networks and trade union rank and file groups? If it is that they are made up of people committed to "anarcho-syndicalist political ideas" then won't they just be groups of DAM members? If they are groups of workers committed to the "principles of militant action" then aren't they simply groups of ordinary rank and file militant workers - rank and file groups? Or would they be some sort of sectarian grouplets supposedly organised on the "principles of militant action" where any worker can be involved, but where in reality the anarchists 'told the trots to fuck off out of it'? Or, finally, is one of the "principles of militant action" the idea that when the networks are big enough they will split from the TUC unions? It's time people stopped dithering - either Industrial Networks are anarcho-syndicalist entrust groups in the TUC unions which aim to split those unions, or they are rank and file groups.

To conclude, independent unions in previously unorganised workplaces are progress for the working class, but we should have no illusions that they will remain "militant" or even that they won't join the TUC, or spawn their own bureaucrats. "Anarcho-syndicalist" unions are not "anarchist unions" (my emphasis). A union is only a union if it lets 'any old worker' join (reformists, Tory voters, Labour voters, or even - gasp! - Leninists or Trotskyists!). If a so-called "union" only let anarchists join then it would not be a union - it would be a political organisation masquerading as a union. The "anarcho" - "syndicalist" attempt to fuse anarchism and industrial unionism is doomed to fail.

There is nothing 'special' about democratically structured unions, nothing specially "anarchist". Anarchists should intervene in all unions as anarchists, to fight for anarchist ideas, for democratic methods of organising strikes, to fight against reformism, against collaborationism etc, etc. and to cut across all union boundaries within the working class. This can only be done effectively if anarchists are united as anarchists in a political organisation for this purpose, and they act within the TUC trade unions as rank and file militants. This is why the founding members of the Anarchist Workers Group (AWG) left the DAM in 1988.

"Anarcho"-syndicalism (like trade unionism, or simple 'syndicalism') has a proud history of struggle; but it has had its day.

Anarchism hasn't.

Written in fraternal spirit,

— MIDGE, AWG Liverpool.