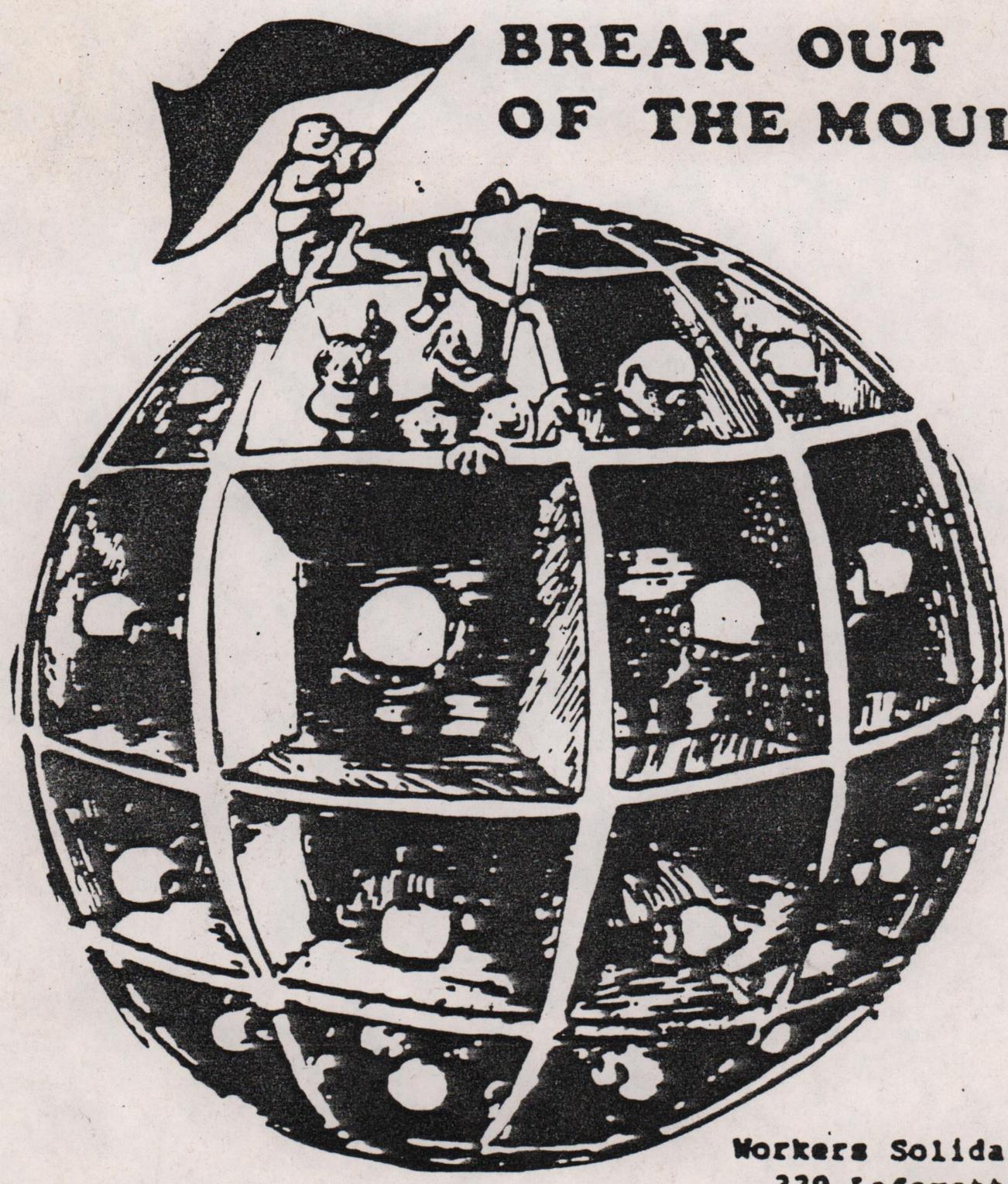


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ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST FEDERATION  
DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT  
WORKERS SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE I.W.A.  
DISCUSSION BULLETIN  
NUMBER 6



**BREAK OUT  
OF THE MOULD!**

Workers Solidarity Alliance  
339 Lafayette Street #202  
New York, N.Y. 10012, U.S.A

# W E L C O M E ! ! !

To the sixth issue of the I.W.A. English Language Discussion Bulletin.

The concept of this Bulletin is to provide the English speaking I.W.A. Sections with a forum in which they can exchange ideas, views and news that would not normally be found in I.W.A. Circulars and other Secretariat mailings. The idea of this Bulletin is also to provide a forum in which individual members of the ASF, DAM and WSA can exchange views and communicate, rather than leaving such discussions and so forth on an official level between the various national officers.

This issue is produced by the Workers Solidarity Alliance. All correspondence for the next issue should also be sent to the W.S.A at the following address:

Workers Solidarity Alliance  
339 Lafayette Street, Room 202  
New York, N.Y. 10012 U.S.A.

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-- c o n t i n u e d --

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URGENT

To all workers of the IWA. We ask for your immediate support and action for the tram workers of Melbourne.

On January 1 the Victorian Government demanded that the tram workers sign a contract accepting a new ticket system that will cost many of them their jobs. They refused and decided to run the trams themselves and not sell tickets. On the first day of 1990 there was WORKER CONTROL of the tram system.

The Public Transport Corporation and the Government could not tolerate this and turned off the electricity to the system - completely shutting it down. But before they could do this the tramworkers ran all the trams into the centre of Melbourne. 10 days later they are still sitting there.

The workers then occupied all their depots and over the last week have set up committees to coordinate, food, money, media, security, etc. Support Groups of passengers are assisting their local depots so the workers can continue to resist the Government's pressure. This dispute is being run by the workers themselves. They are making direct links with other workers. If we can win it will be an important victory.

We ask all Sections of the IWA to:

- (1) Send telegrams/electronic mail and money in support to tram workers to: The Delegate, Brunswick Tram Depot, Sydney Rd, BRUNSWICK, 3056, Victoria, AUSTRALIA.
- (2) Carry out publicity and protest action against Australian Embassies or Consulates and Australian businesses (eg: Qantas, Bond Corporation, BHP-Utah, News International, etc.)
- (3) Send telegrams/electronic mail letters demanding the Government of Victoria drop the new ticket system, retain all tram conductors and allow workers to again run the transport system for the public, to: Minister of Transport, Jim Kennan, and/or, Premier of Victoria, John Cain, Parliament House, Spring St, MELBOURNE, 3000, Victoria, AUSTRALIA.

Please mail the ASF copies of your telegrams/electronic mail to the address above for our reference.

Copies to: CNT-AIT, CNT-F, DAM, WSA, IWA Secretariat (for forwarding to other Sections).

P. S. International Secretary, ASF-IWA.

10/1/90

Dear Comrades,

Here is some information for the ELDB. Here is some information about the current tramway workers dispute in Melbourne. As at 15/1/90 the dispute continues - although there is always a chance that the reformist union types will sell out. On the facing page is an appeal issued by the ASF Int Sec on 10/1/90. Beginning below are two articles from Sparks No. 21, published on 6/1/90, giving the ASF view of the dispute so far. These are followed by the first issue of Tram Support News, a paper produced by the passengers' support groups.

The new ticketing system which will take conductors jobs is also incredibly unpopular with the public. They will have to buy tickets 'off system' at shops or pay much high prices for tickets on trams and busses. They have to choose between greater inconvenience or greater expense, at the same time as being delayed by drivers checking tickets and not having conductors to provide information, assistance and security. At a time when some European cities are re-introducing conductors, Melbourne has decided to get get of them claiming they don't have them in North America and Europe!

This has been, and is, a remarkable dispute: in terms of the workers running the trams on Jan 1, on the same day as union disaffiliated from the social-democratic Australian Labor Party (ALP), along with the blockading of the city tramlines with trams, sabotage (eg: trammies welding iron bars to the rails in 5 locations to ensure the trams could not be moved), and the level of local control at the tram depots that have also become the second home to many members of the Support Groups.

ASF members have been active as transport industry workers, in the support groups and with the ASF-Melbourne's special issue of Sparks. We will keep the Int Sec's of the DAM and the WSA informed of developments.

Paul S:

ASF Int Sec.

P.S

15/1/90.

## ALL POWER TO THE DEPOTS!

### JANUARY 1st 1990

The first day of a new ~~depot~~ and trammies showed that bosses are redundant. A sign was put up outside the Brunswick Depot saying, 'UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT: WORKERS' CONTROL'. And at Essendon they raised a 'CON-NIES FOREVER' flag. On that day workers' control stopped being an idea and became a reality. Sure it was sabotaged by management when they turned off the power and opted for a lockout, but it had created a feeling of strength. It felt good to be in control. It felt good to run the system as a service. It felt good to see other trammies as fellow workers with a common bond. People came from all over the place to midnight depot meetings and drivers couldn't get out fast enough to take trams out of the depots. It was amazing to take the trams in and blockade the city and to fight for something worth fighting for.

January 6:

Trammies can be proud of themselves the way they are conducting this dispute. The trams are still blockading the city giving the dispute a high profile. At least 6 depots are now occupied, including some of the managers' offices. At most of these depots there are committees that have been set up to carry out various responsibilities such as security, finances, rosters and the like. Sign-on books are being kept- after all it's a LOCKOUT not a strike.

Despite the fiasco with the buses and the feeling of being kept in the dark by the union, morale is still high and if support continues to come in it will stay that way. Support groups are vital to all this- and the more communication between workers and supporters the stronger we get.

There's still alot of trammies who think the union will sort it all out and that the answer is negotiation. Well that's falling right into the Trades Hall Council trap. The question of keeping connies is not negotiable- I've heard too may drivers say they'll resign if the connies go - to think otherwise. Kennan has to back down and that's all there is to it. Walking a mile to buy a ticket is a stupid idea and he should have to wear it.

Now the union officials will be under a lot of pressure to back-down. In most disputes that's what happens. But if the depots stay solid then they can't go in and bargain away jobs 'cos they know they wont be able to go to another depot again. And by depots we don't just mean the delegates and proxies but everyone. A lot of people are still sitting around thinking that someone else should do the work, someone else should raise money or go and speak or whatever- it's time you lot got off your arses.



# SOLIDARITY



This dispute is the make or break for all concerned. Either Kennan wins out or we do. A 3 month trial of anything is just a trick, and has any worker been told yet what the 8 points of the peace plan were? That's how things run from Trades Hall - the full-timers work it out, sell it to the Government and then try and back the workers into a corner so they've got no choice but to give in.

So it looks like we are digging in. They'll try and take the depots when they realise that we aren't going to break easily so we should be very wary of leaving the depots short of numbers. They might try and get people to the city on false alarm first or even a sizeable diversion. But let's face it where will they take the trams if they can move them? The best they can do is block off the suburban streets and then they'd have to guard them to stop them being moved again. No, first they have to get the depots - so we have to stay put.

And it's a good time to go to the surrounding shops and ask for support and to keep a record of which ones give and which ones don't, so when it's all over people buy at the shops that backed us up. That's what solidarity is all about. And what about the local job sites, factories, offices: it's time to walk in and ask to see the delegate and see if some money can't be raised- don't be put off by some scumbag telling you to piss off, ask to see someone else. Already the CSR workers who remember the solidarity they got during their recent dispute have offered money.

And support is coming in from other workers in the industry- train drivers collected \$100 and Guards \$600 with more to come. Station assistants have raised \$100. The dispute still hangs in the balance and we still say: ALL POWER TO THE DEPOTS.

SPARKS MOB

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This dispute is one small part of our self-defense as working people wanting a life free from bureaucrats, bosses, pollied fucking up our lives 'for our own good'. Some disputes can lead to victories but many do not and we should have no illusions that victory is inevitable. After all, what is victory? Going back to long hours of shift work, the same old incompetent management, having to take shit for a rundown, over crowded 'system'? A victory is something where you are better off when you come out than when you went in. So, of course no stupid ticket system. No job losses. No standing in the rain selling tickets. No being a pseudo-inspector. But if the Met wins this one what are the chances for no D.O.C.'s, no split shifts, better maintained trams, better services? The very idea of a 'service' is poo-pooed by the corporate megabuck managers. They don't give a shit about some old worker who has to walk a km to buy a ticket, or who is attacked or who falls off a moving tram or who collapses in a crush. If you are on a tram you must be a nobody - whether passenger or worker!

If this dispute is to be won what trammies are doing now needs to be well organised plus we need tactics to take it further.

## KEEPING IT GOING

If workers are to stick it out to the end then there's a lot that needs to be organised: meals for workers and families; money for bills and mortgages, etc.; handling the media; cleaning up; rosters for the depots and blockade pickets; social occasions for trammies, families, friends, supporters.

Many depots - Essendon, Brunswick, South Melbourne, Preston (at least) are already doing most of this.

There is a need for clearly accounted for trammie support funds to be distributed by trammies for trammies at the depots.

The pickets need better communication - using mobile phones or radios, and continually roving cars covering areas not covered by regular pickets, eg: Domain Road.

## MAKING IT STRONGER

\*Regular, probably daily, depot meetings to discuss the running of the dispute and make the decisions about where it should go.

\*Direct permanent rank and file links with other depots to ensure solidarity, communication and unity. The bosses will try and split us up - depot from depot, connie from driver, buses from trams, passengers from workers.

\*Use Community Radio for regular dispute updates. It worked really well during the Nurses dispute.

\*Making contact with other workers and getting their active support - workplace meetings to explain the issues have always been a good way of raising interest and funds. In other big disputes workers have introduced voluntary levies to aid fellow workers. During the '65 Mt Isa lockout the equivalent of \$2m was raised!

\*Encourage friends, supporters, family to get involved in - or start - a community/passengers' support group. There are at least 2 up and running. Every depot should have one!

Page

## TAKING IT FURTHER

\*Taking control of the rest of the depots, and hold them, so that everyone has a place to meet, discuss, socialise and plot! After all they've got Transport House (for now!)

\*Making links with the sparkies to get the electricity back on and then taking control of the trams to run a service. It would be easy to print tickets to cover wages (and no money to the bosses!)

\*Talk to railworkers - at the moment Met management is forcing them to force the scratchies and 'emergency' tickets onto the commuters. It is important to break the Met ticket at the stations as well as the depots. And if trammies can run the tram service and bus drivers do the same what is to stop the rail workers? And if transport workers can do it, why stop with the transport industry...?

As we write this Melbourne's biggest tourist attraction is stationary in the city's streets. Kennan can't look out his office window without realising that he doesn't have the situation under control.

For weeks now the media and politicians have applauded the workers of Central and Eastern Europe who have taken matters into their own hands, taken over their industries and rebelled against their repression. It's OK if it happens somewhere else, but not here. When trammies try to provide a service to the public, to oppose an expensive and discriminatory ticket system and try to defend working conditions and jobs, they're branded as irresponsible hijackers. The trammies have shown they are willing to fight for themselves and community services. The fightback for independent unions, free from political control, has begun here too.

SPARKS MC.

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# TRAM SUPPORT NEWS

Number one - 9th January, 1990.



## MARKET TRADERS GET BEHIND TRAMMIES...

The government lockout of the tram workers, which shut down Melbourne's tram system from Tuesday January 2nd, has badly affected trade at Victoria Market. But a lot of market traders realize that this is the fault of the government and not the workers and have shown their support for the trammies by donating food.

"We were amazed by the level of support we got from the traders." A member of the South Melbourne Passengers' Support Group said. "On Saturday, we came away with a whole combi full of fruit and vegies. South Melbourne depot took what they needed and we distributed the rest around other depots. The trammies thought it was great."

As well as Vic Market, there has been a good level of support from other markets. Brunswick, Preston, South Melbourne and Coburg markets, as well as shops in Brunswick and elsewhere, have contributed to the locked-out workers.

Market traders and shopkeepers realize that they depend on tram passengers for a lot of their trade. Without conductors, tram travel will become much harder for everyone and impossible for some, so their businesses will be badly affected in the long term.

Although the dispute is hitting business now, if the trammies do not win, traders will lose a lot more money in the future.

## ... AND PUBLIC SUPPORT IS OVERWHELMING.

Support group members have been impressed by the amount of people who have shown their support for the tram workers over the past week. Handing out leaflets and collecting donations, they've had plenty of opportunity to gauge public opinion.

"I'm fully behind the trammies." One passenger told us. "I think it's outrageous that the government has locked them out and is trying to remove connies from the trams."

An elderly couple at Vic market said they'd hate to see trams without conductors. It takes so long to get anywhere on a bus because there's only a driver. They were right behind the tramway workers in this dispute.

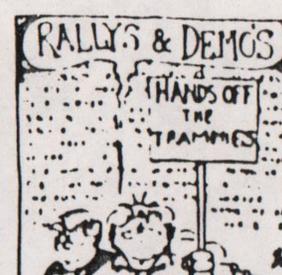
More than three quarters of Melbourne people seem to be strongly in favour of keeping conductors and only a very small minority

want to see them go. Most people can't see the point of it. They provide a great service, the trams run more efficiently and the passengers feel much safer with them there.

Hundreds of people have donated money and food to the tramworkers since the government locked them out. And with the passengers' support network growing all the time, a lot more people should have an opportunity to show their appreciation of the service they get from connies during the rest of the dispute.

If you want to find out how you can help, go and see the support group at your local depot. If there isn't a group operating, ask the workers there how you can start one up.

**MELBOURNE NEEDS TRAM CONDUCTORS AND TRAM CONDUCTORS NEED YOU!**



Tram passengers have begun to organise to show their support for the trammies. We have formed passenger support groups and are trying to work with the local depots to show our trammies that we appreciate them.

Since the government shut down the system by cutting the power at 4a.m. on Tuesday January 2 - tramworkers haven't been able to work.

Tramworkers have responded by occupying their depots and are ready to return to work.

Show your support for public transport; keeping the tram conductors and your opposition to the stupid scratch ticket system by joining one of the support groups.

Groups were formed in Brunswick and South Melbourne on Tuesday night and have been meeting nightly since then at local depots.

The idea is catching on and groups are being formed at Preston and Essendon depots.

So far there are no support groups in Kew, Glenhuntley, Camberwell, Malvern or North Fitzroy.

Support group activities include raising funds in the local shopping cent collecting donations of food from the local shops and markets; printing stickers; organising benefit gigs; collecting workplace donations; street theatre; helping out at depots in any way; backing up pickets and helping stimulate more public support at meetings, social occasions - or whatever.

There is plenty of room for good ideas, energy, enthusiasm and good will. So far the groups have raised over \$1500 between them.

If you can't get actively or regularly involved, take a donation to your local depot and send letters to the news papers supporting the trammies.

### SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

South Melbourne - Daily, 7pm. South Melbourne Depot, cnr Kingsway and Dorcas St.

Brunswick - Daily, 7.30pm. Brunswick Depot, Sydney Rd (near Moreland Rd.)

Essendon - Daily, 7.30pm. Essendon Depot, Mt Alexander Rd.

Preston - Daily, 7.30pm. Preston Depot, Plenty Rd (near Bell St.)

This newsletter was produced by the Passengers' Support Group Network. If you support the tram workers and would like to contribute to future issues, write to the passengers' support group at your local tram depot.

Dear Comrades,

I welcome Donna's (Sheffield DAM) contribution to ELDB no. 3. It is good to have an opportunity to debate some real issues within our movement. I will try to reply to the issues raised in the same spirit I am sure Donna's views were put.

### LIBERAL?

The description of the ASF publication, Whitewash, and the 'Black and Blue' article in DA as 'liberal' I find worrying. I feel it is a common problem in our movement to tend to label those who we don't agree with. Many non-class struggle anarchists see anarcho-syndicalists as dangerously economistic, workerist and even as 'Marxist'. An Australian anarchist paper a few years ago labelled the Melbourne Anarcho-Syndicalist Group (a precursor to the ASF) as just that. Similarly most Marxists would label our concern over genuine democracy in or organisations as extremely 'liberal'. Given the attacks on the quietist Freedom Press wing of the anarchist movement as liberal, by such people as the Black Flag collective, using the liberal label is a particularly potent label to use for others in the anarcho-syndicalist movement! Does it mean that any attempts to deal with complex issues in ways that do not simply repeat the usual anarcho-syndicalist formulae will be described as liberal? I am not suggesting that attaching this label to the ASF is Donna's intent, but labelling is a risk we must remain aware of in our debates.

### DEPRESSING?

As for the question of whether the material is depressing - well the whole situation of Aborigines in Australia is depressing. One of the most materially prosperous countries in the world has within it a community, separated by race and culture, that lives in so-called third world conditions.

I disagree, however, that the 'Black and Blue' article lack information about positive developments within Aboriginal communities and movements. It states, for example, that "Confronted with all these problems, a growing number of Aborigines are working within their communities to provide Aboriginal run and controlled services. Health, housing, childcare, legal and social services, as well as youth and education programs are being run by and for Aborigines. Also, in the Northern Territory, the Aboriginal media service runs both a radio station and the new satellite television station 'Inparja'." At the end of the article we find, "Already the advances made by the Aboriginal communities in self-determination show that the way back to health is through regaining of personal and collective autonomy and identity. Each step towards this goal is a step forward for humanity". I would have thought statements like these were unambiguously positive.

The Whitewash pamphlet likewise mentions these developments and also includes the following: "One positive development is the 'out-station' movement - where

Aborigines have left towns, missions, stations and settlements to return in small groups to their traditional lands that they have obtained through land claims, or in some cases, land they have bought back! Here they can live in semi-traditional ways - teaching bush skills to their children, eating some bush tucker (food), and dealing with white society more on their own terms. For instance, eating some store-bought food, banning alcohol and access to petrol (drinking and petrol sniffing are problems in some settlements) and calling in white teachers, health workers, linguists and anthropologists on their terms." (Whitewash, p. 30.)

### OUR AIMS: AUSTRALIAN HISTORY/AUSTRALIAN REALITIES

The aim of Whitewash was very much an historical one. Even after 200 years most Australians are woefully ignorant of the situation of Aborigines and the real causes of this situation. Until 20 years ago school history books, books used by most Australians in their schooling, put forward social-Darwinist views of Aborigines as socially, culturally, politically and technologically inferior. They propagated the myths that, somehow, the Aborigines in coastal areas simply withdrew into the interior of the country. In fact they were killed or driven onto reserves that served as models for South Africa's treatment of its black population. Alternatively the school history books tried to ignore the original inhabitants of this continent altogether. The standard history text I studied in 1971 has a total of 3 references to Aborigines - all in the above terms!

Until very recently the dominant view of Aborigines was that they were solely responsible for their own situation - that their high infant mortality rates, low life expectancy, illness, suicide, housing problems, unemployment, etc. were all to do with 'drunkenness', 'laziness', 'stupidity' and 'racial inferiority'. That is, the very social Darwinist attitudes that have marked Australian racism toward Aborigines right from the beginning.

In recent years different views have begun to emerge, and in 1988 Aborigines and white Australians, like many members of the ASF, saw the opportunity to hammer home the real historical causes of the oppression of Aborigines and racism in Australia. It was an important first step for us to identify this history. As it turned out 1988 did provide a major opportunity for many in this country to re-evaluate the history and the currently reality of the treatment of Aborigines. We didn't know this would be the case when we planned Whitewash and the anti-Bicentennial campaign. I am glad, for one, that the ASF did make a contribution to this debate.

### AUSTRALIAN HISTORY - BRITISH HISTORY

Similarly, we felt it important that this history be communicated to our comrades overseas. The history of Australia, for example, is part of colonial history, particularly British colonial history. We thought our comrades in the DAM might

be interested. It is a part of British history I found very few people living in Britain, including many anarcho-syndicalists, are familiar with. It is quite right for Donna to remind us that the destruction of American Indian societies was carried on in much the same way. Yet, I suspect many, many more people know about the oppression of American Indians than they do about Australian Aborigines, or for that matter, about the current destruction of indigenous people and their cultures in Brazil, Borneo and many other places.

#### ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM AND THE POST-COLONIAL WORLD

The fact is that the issue of the destruction of indigenous peoples, both historically and in the present, is something that we anarcho-syndicalists need to come to terms with. This is especially true now that anarcho-syndicalism is reviving and growing in places like North and South America, Australia and Japan that have distinct indigenous populations. Not that it is irrelevant in 'post-colonial' powers such as Britain! Just as members of the DAM have to struggle with this issue of how to respond to the situation in Northern Ireland - the IRA, nationalism, sectarianism, etc. - so the ASF is and will continue to have to come to terms with the Aboriginal situation in Australia.

Unfortunately there is little in anarcho-syndicalist literature, that I am aware of, dealing with these issues. This is despite a long history of revolutionary syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist activity in such places as North and South America. There appear to be few specific responses to indigenous people's struggles in our literature. So, necessarily, the ASF's responses to the Aboriginal situation in this country will be experimental. There may be some difficulties relating the ASF's anti-racist, anti-colonial sentiments to the realities of the Aboriginal movement in Australia. In the end we can only refer back to our principles. This, however, for me doesn't mean just relying on simplistic anarcho-syndicalist solganering, eg: 'the economic struggle is primary and after the workers control the means of production we will all be equal', 'the capitalist basis of racism will be eliminated and the Aborigines/Indians/other indigenous people will be freed'. Such revolutionary ahistorical reductionism does a disservice to our struggle. This is why Donna's letter is important. It is important that we debate these issues.

#### IT IS A LONG WAY TO AUSTRALIA/FROM AUSTRALIA

But, at the same time it seems to me that Donna's distance from the situation in Australia will necessarily colour her understanding. It was interesting to me, for example, that the group within the DAM that undertook the organisation of the International Day of Action in support of Australian Aborigines was the Brixton DAM. This is a group that included a number of members who have lived in or visited Australia.

#### LAND RIGHTS?: YES, REALLY!

Donna raises the issue of the aims of Aboriginal movements in Australia, particularly the statement that all Aborigines "agree on the urgency for the rights of Aboriginal control over traditional lands, with compensation for the lands now used by non-Aborigines". This statement is difficult for us as anarcho-syndicalists in terms of the issues of equality, sovereignty, etc. It also is quite literally true. Even urban Aboriginal organisations, who's main concerns are to do with health, housing and education, strongly support the land rights struggle. This may be unpalatable, as the nationalism of the IRA is for the DAM, but this is a reality with which we live. We could pussyfoot around and pretend to our comrades overseas that this was not the case. But it is. Our response to it may vary. Indeed there is a variety of views within the the ASF on these issues. There is, however, no reason not to state the Aboriginal view of land rights as a fact of the Aboriginal movements in Australia.

#### INDUSTRIAL RIGHTS/LAND RIGHTS/HUMAN RIGHTS?

It is important to note that the modern land rights movement traces its beginnings to two strikes by Aboriginal pastoral workers and domestic workers on cattle stations in Western Australia (WA) and the Northern Territory (NT). On May Day 1946 (this was no coincidence) a strike began in the Pilbarra region of WA - a strike that has never ended. Aboriginal pastoral and domestic workers walked off the stations and never returned. They were demanding wages rather than payment in sugar, flour, tea, meat and tobacco. In fact Aborigines would not receive the right to equal wages for another twenty-three years (one year after their gained citizenship!). They supported themselves for years on 'bush tucker' and by prospecting for minerals. These people finally won a land rights claim in the mid-1970's. Despite this they still had to put up with the further violation of their land by a mining company in the late 1970's even though they actively blockaded their land.

In 1966 Aborigines in the NT also walked off a cattle property and squatted on a portion of it. The property at Wattie Creek (or Dagaragu as the Aborigines call it) was owned by Lord Vestey - from one of Britain's three wealthiest families. As in WA twenty years earlier, the Aborigines were demanding equal pay with white workers. The Aborigines not hired to work on the station were fed by the state with the cattle stations administering the handouts and making a nice profit out of it. When the workers threatened industrial action the bosses threatened to cut the rations of the older people who were dependent on state provision. The Aboriginal workers were trapped - unpaid workers on land that was once theirs to live on. De facto feudalism in mid-twentieth century Australia. In this situation a walk-off was one of the few options open.

At the same time the organised labour movement had done little or nothing about this situation. For example, the Secretary of the North Australian Workers Union turned up to the first arbitration case for equal pay for Aboriginal workers in the NT with nothing but a packet of cigarettes and a box of matches. He claimed that was all he needed to fight the case. The rich pastoralists brought in anthropologists, priests, white foremen, and others who all testified that the Aborigines were not as good workers and should be paid less. The Union was 'done like a dinner' and a special lower wage for Aborigines was introduced for at least the next 3 years. It was shortly after this decision that the Dagaragu Aborigines walked off the station.

They received support from the Communist Party, especially those in the Waterside Workers Federation, but very little assistance from the rest of the labour movement. In the end they decided to fight for a portion of their land to live on. The industrial struggle had soon become one of human rights and self-determination closely linked to the desire to return to their traditional lands. They chose land rights as a resolution to their industrial and their cultural issues! The Dagaragu Aborigines were the first to receive part of their traditional lands back under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

Many groups of Aborigines in the NT and WA now run their own cattle stations on parts of their traditional lands as a way of providing their own income and some independence from welfare funding.

### SURVIVAL

The critical thing to understand about the Aboriginal land rights movement is that it is a movement for survival. As we pointed out in Whitewash, land is the very basis of Aboriginal culture, economics, society, etc. This is not a 'psuedo-spiritual' need as Donna suggests, but a very practical one. Mostly the land that Aboriginal people want is not any old land from which we are all 'alienated' from in a general way, but very specific pieces of land linked with local culture. The local culture provides very specific knowledge about how to survive on that particular piece of land, what food to eat, what plants can be used as medicines, etc, as well as social norms, etc.

This is why are land rights are so pressing an issue. In recent years a large number of Aboriginal elders, in central, western and northern Australia, have died. In many cases with them has died is the knowledge of unique Aboriginal cultures. They chose often not to pass on their traditional knowledge because of the demoralisation

of their people, the western influence on the younger people (especially alcoholism) and their removal from their traditional lands. With the return of some traditional lands and the 'outstation' movement, some of the surviving elders have decided to again teach the language, culture, songs, etc. of their culture and land. If this process of regaining and returning to traditional lands does not continue to occur then these unique cultures will continue to disappear. I agree with Donna that, "If Aboriginal people - or any people, 'westernised' or not - choose to live their lives as their ancestors did, freely and voluntarily, then that is their right". This, I believe, is much of the real basis of the Aboriginal land rights movement, and is why many anarcho-syndicalists support it. It is a question of cultural survival and self-determination. Anarcho-syndicalists have always supported local and regional cultural autonomy in an internationalist context. It would be absurd for us to support Catalan cultural autonomy but not independent Aboriginal cultures in this country.

### OWNERS OR CUSTODIANS?

The Aboriginal attitude to 'ownership' is also very different. Most Aborigines don't feel so much that they own land so much as the land owns them. They are merely custodians of the land, much as a collective is the custodian of a piece of social or industrial capital which is 'owned' by everyone in a society (and those yet to be born into it). This concept of land is very different to that of ownership under capitalism and this difference has been one of the major sources of conflict in Australian history. Many Aborigines do not want to own land in the capitalist way. They do want the right to live on and look after that land. But, living as they do in a capitalist, property-based law they have inevitably become involved in legal notions of land ownership.

### SOVERIEGNTY?

It is true that there is a growing call for Aboriginal sovereignty. It is unclear how widely this is supported or what it would mean in the long run. This call seems to be largely linked to Aborigines desire that the the legal fallacy of Australia being "terra nullius" (or empty land), as it was declared by the British invaders in 1788, be destroyed. Ending this fallacy may provide the basis for compensation. As many Aborigines see it, compensation of a guaranteed basis would allow them resources on a guaranteed basis to deal with the life and death issues of diet, health, drug and alcohol abuse, on their own terms, without being subject to the bureaucratic controls and political dominance that the current dependence of funding has them stuck in.

I have never heard an Aboriginal person demand that white, Asian or other people be excluded from Australia - although this may be more from pragmatism than ideology! On the other hand, for example, after the bitterly fought land rights claim by the Jaywon people in the NT for the Catherine Gorge area (a major tourist attraction), one Aboriginal elder said very clearly that she was glad they had won the case because now the area would be preserved for all people and that she hoped that non-Aboriginal people, especially young people, would come to learn about the area and the culture linked to it.

#### NOT ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST

Concepts of land rights, sovereignty, etc. are not solutions anarcho-syndicalists could support. However, not, as a movement, being able to offer actual solutions to the pressing problems of Aborigines, we need to be able to acknowledge the desires of Aboriginal people. It is a case of accepting the right of others to choose different courses of action. Many Aboriginal activists, having experienced the reality of state subsidy and support have come to an understanding of the state similar to ours. After all, their communities have suffered at the hands of the state and the church for a long time. However, they also recognise the need of their people to certain essential resources in order to survive. It is a situation not unlike that of an anarchist living on the dole in a capitalist society - lacking the resources to live independent of the state but still claiming the right to live.

Because of the terrible problems facing Aboriginal communities and the lack of resources to deal with them some Aboriginal communities have been pressured to accept mining, including uranium mining, on their traditional lands. They have no legal right to veto, they can only delay on the basis of negotiating a royalties deal. Is it better for Aboriginal communities to claim sovereignty as the basis for a compensation claim, to claim royalties from uranium miners or rely of government handouts with strings attached in order to survive in the present? Who can answer a question like this? Can anarcho-syndicalists answer it for Aborigines?

#### THE IDEALISATION OF OTHER CULTURES?

I too am wary of the simplistic idealisation of non-western cultures found among western anarchists - especially as seen in a number of publications from the North American anarchist movement. But support for land rights does not necessarily reflect this attitude at all. Aboriginal cultures are living cultures. We may not support all aspects of them, but there may be great value to all of us in their survival. At a time in world history when the relationship between the capitalist industrial system and the natural environment is becoming critical, the understanding of the land in general, and particular ecosystems, found in many traditional societies may become vital to a new understanding we may need in order to survive.

At the same time I would hope that many traditional societies will take on board the best aspects of 'western' societies, eg: appropriate technologies, attitudes to personal and sexual freedom, gender equality, etc. This is not something that can be forced. It is something that must be promoted.

9.

While there is a lot of evidence that many Aboriginal people see links between their oppression and the oppression of workers, women, immigrants, homosexuals, etc. in this and other societies. It is sad, but true, however, that many urban Aborigines are culturally very similar to the white working class people they live next to. This means they often share the attitudes of many members of the white working class, including sexism and homophobia. Things are never as straightforward as we would like them to be!

#### CLASS, RACE, ETHNICITY AND OTHER COMPLEXITIES

Donna points out that class is not mentioned in the DA article. True. But it is in Whitewash. We attempted in the pamphlet to point out the oppressive role of the bourgeois and the state in Australia against Aboriginal people and militant workers. However, we also wanted to point out that many working people in Australia have actively participated in anti-Aboriginal and anti-Asian racism. I agree with Donna that the founding of Australia was based on the oppression of large numbers of English, Irish, Scots and Welsh working people sent to this continent as slaves to build the Empire. We do point out in Whitewash that the colony here was one of the most brutal penal regimes the world has seen. It is also true, as we also mention in Whitewash, that many transported convicts participated in the rape and murder of Aboriginal people. Such are the real contradictions of Australian, and therefore British, colonial history.

#### MIGRANTS AND RACISM

While many of the post-war immigrant groups in Australia have identified the treatment of the Aborigines as having the same source as their own exploitation, it is also quite common to find immigrants that hold the same attitudes to Aborigines as white, Anglo-Saxon racists. Many of the post-war migrants come from former colonial powers - Britain, Italy, Germany, France, etc. and many were selected for their political and religious conservatism (Catholicism, anti-communism, etc).

The dispossession of the Aborigines and the exploitation of immigrants may have the same source - the capitalist state - but this does not mean that they will have the same experience of exploitation or that there will be automatic solidarity between these groups.

#### WORKERS AND RACISM

In Whitewash we attempt to point out that some of the material prosperity of Australian workers is based on the expropriation of Aboriginal lands, the exploitation of Aboriginal labour, as well as racist immigration policies that kept out 'coloured' labour. These were for long time either condoned, or actively supported, by most of the organised labour movement and many rank and file workers as well. This is our history. It is time we recognised it. Acknowledging this history will, I believe, provide a stronger basis to ensure that we do not let the interests of the capitalist state divide the working people of this country like it has in the past. It means having to deal with the tricky issues of the relationship between the industrial (and post-industrial?) working class and indigenous peoples, and with the racist attitudes in our own class.

## GUILT, PREJUDICE AND STRUCTURAL RACISM

I agree with Donna, also, that this is very dangerous for us to take on collective guilt, as white people, now, for the actions of the British Empire in the past. It is dangerous to portray the world in simplistic terms of Whites versus Blacks, Us versus Them. This was certainly not my intention when I contributed to Whitewash. I agree that, "The people who oversee the oppression of Aborigines in Australia are, as we all know, the same people who lord over racism and oppression in Britain, In America, in Japan, in the USSR...". We must always oppose the structural racism that benefits capitalism all over the world. We must also oppose the racial prejudice and racist attitudes that have allowed the capitalists to continue this structural racism for so long. Unfortunately this kind of prejudice has been rife in the working class in Australia for a long time. This turned out to be one of the most important messages of the Whitewash pamphlet.

## INDEPENDENCE

The Bicentenary of European settlement here provided an excellent opportunity to re-evaluate Australian history. It also provided as opportunity for members of the ASF to really look at the history of the working class in Australia.

Many links were built in 1988 between white activists of all sorts and the Aboriginal groups and communities. I believe that the ASF generally is very wary of entering into coalitions with liberals, marxists, christians, etc. in organisations that have objectives and tactics very different to our own. Therefore the ASF, as an organisation, did not participate in any of the Aboriginal support groups. Instead we decided to independently produce a publication that looked at racism and state repression in Australian history. Also, through our membership of the IWA, to initiate an international education and solidarity campaign. These were actions, I believe, that were consistent with our principles and that did not compromise the ASF as an anarcho-syndicalist organisation. These actions, I believe, have definitely established the ASF's credibility with some Aboriginal organisations while retaining our autonomy of action and thought.

I have taken a lot of space to make this reply. These views are, of course, my own, but I hope this clarifies a lot about Australian history, the Aboriginal struggle and the thinking of some of us in the ASF in the Bicentenary year, as well as raising issues about anarcho-syndicalism, indigenous peoples' struggles, class, race, etc. I look forward to responses, criticism and debate on these issues of importance to our movement world-wide.

In anarcho-syndicalist struggle,  
*Paul*  
Paul (ASF - Melbourne local).

## Dear Comrades,

Apart from the tramworkers dispute, Australia has also seen another major lock-out in the last few months. Domestic airline pilots demanded a 30% wage increase - which is what most workers have lost in the last 8 years of 'The Accord' between the reformist Australian Council of Trade Unions - (TUC/AFL-CIO equivalent). They were locked out whilst maintaining work bans which meant they only worked 9 to 5. They subsequently resigned under threat of being sued individually for damages to the airlines. As it is the Australian Federation of Air Pilots (AFAP) was sued and damages, yet to be set, were found against them. Trade Practices and Common Law damages cases have been used a number of times in recent years in Australia to bust industrial disputes and to attempt to cripple unions.

The Labor government also ordered the Air Force in to fly passengers in Hercules transport planes and gave the airlines a handout of about \$A50 m to ensure there were no stand-downs or sackings of ground staff - effectively undercutting support by other workers or unions in the industry. A few overseas pilot have been recruited, but the international air pilots body actively campaigned against this.

The pilots were particularly vulnerable - lacking community support (they were seen as bourgeois by the public) and industrial support (they were not members of the ACTU - which virtually said, 'got for it' to the government). What price free unionism in Australia now that it is so highly regarded in places like Poland by the likes of Margaret Thatcher?

The dispute was used as an excuse to remove the existing unionised workforce and replace it with one on contract as part of restructuring the airline industry which is to be deregulated in 1991. The 'Labor' federal Treasurer, Paul Keating (who fancies himself as the next Prime Minister), whilst speaking in Japan, approvingly compared what had been done to the airline pilots here with what Regan had done to the air traffic controllers in the USA!

Australia in the last 8 years is the proof, if we needed it, for anyone wondering about life under a so-called 'social democratic' system. Tell your friends who waver! The agenda in the capitalist world economy is the same with with a Reganite/Thatcherite or Social Democratic face.

Enclosed is some information from the AFAP 9if there is room to include it in the ELDB).

## HISTORY OF THE DISPUTE

Over many years pilot industrial matters have been decided directly between the pilots and the companies. This has been a successful system which has helped to build a great industry. The current dispute developed when pilots found that after submitting their claim, they could not negotiate directly with the airlines. It should be noted that the pilots' five year agreement to work within the accord expired on the 30th June 1989.

## THIS IS A LOCKOUT!

The airlines and the government have locked out the Australian Federation of Air Pilots. At no time have the companies agreed to talk with the Federation during this dispute. The airlines have denied the pilots the right to be represented by their democratically elected and registered association.

*The companies want the pilots to work with no say in their contract of employment and without the backing of the association of the pilots choice.*

## THE PILOTS HAVE NEVER BEEN ON STRIKE!

The Companies took out writs against individual pilots resulting in all the pilots taking legal advice to resign to protect their families, homes and superannuation. If the pilots had not resigned when they did, they could all have been served with writs and risked losing substantial superannuation entitlements.

## IS MONEY THE PROBLEM FOR A RETURN TO WORK?

No! The pilots have publicly stated that they accept the pay and productivity contained in the company contracts. The pilots have consistently said they are willing to negotiate all aspects of their work conditions. In return the companies have held to a fixed position that their contracts are non-negotiable.

## THE KEY ISSUES OF THIS DISPUTE.

### 1. DENIAL OF THE RIGHT OF FREE ASSOCIATION.

The airlines and the government are openly attempting to destroy the Pilots Federation. In his own words, the Prime Minister "declared war" on the A.F.A.P. which has only used accepted industrial steps and not broken any law.

### 2. DENIAL OF BASIC DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS.

The airlines and government are attempting to bludgeon the pilots into accepting downgraded work conditions over which the pilots have had no say.

### 3. AN ATTACK ON THE PROFESSION OF AIR PILOT.

Pilots have been accused of working only 8 stick hours per week, when typically they spend 50-60 hours per week away from home at the employers disposal. It is well known that much of the pilots unproductive time results directly from the companies policies of last minute aircraft schedule changes.

The Prime Minister also purposely misrepresented pilot training requirements. Australian pilots are tested and put through recurrent training four times every year. Twice a year their jobs are on the line as they have to demonstrate the high standards necessary to renew their licences. Every few years they typically undergo about six months of rigorous training to upgrade their equipment capabilities.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING TO SAFETY?

Civil Aviation Authority experts are telling us that vital safety standards are being compromised in this dispute. Current airline crews include newly hired and foreign pilots who cannot match the training and experience of the Federation pilots. Other safety matters are under investigation.

Australian pilots have played their part in building up the safest airline system in the world. *Not one person has ever been killed in an Australian airline jet aircraft.* Our pilots are not willing to see this achievement put at risk by commercial pressures overriding safety and operational standards.

Federation Pilots have been active in contributing to the development of technical and safety standards which have been accepted around the world. For example they have been instrumental in establishing security standards at Australian airports. Many other vital safety advances have been achieved through the input of the AFAP.

## PILOTS ARE ORDINARY AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS STANDING UP AGAINST THE BULLY BOY TACTICS OF THE AIRLINES AND GOVERNMENT.

At no stage during this dispute did the airlines talk with the AFAP. The opportunity to discuss the pilots pay claim was never provided. Throughout the dispute the pilots made numerous concessions: they offered to go back to work first on a restricted basis and then on an unrestricted basis to allow talks to commence. This was denied. They went back to the Industrial Relations Commission. Here they were never able to argue the contents of the company contracts.

Even though the pilots announced their acceptance of the companies pay and productivity levels, there has never been any conciliatory reciprocation from the employers.

## THE COMPANIES ACTIONS

The companies, with the full backing of the government and the ACTU persisted with only one tactic in this dispute: to attempt to destroy the AFAP. This included:

- Serving common law writs against individual pilots following union work bans.
- Application to the IRC to cancel pilot awards.
- Shutting down the airline system.
- Threatening pilots termination benefits and superannuation.
- The use of the Air Force and foreign carriers.
- The import of foreign labour.
- The advertising of the pilots jobs around the world.
- Government use of \$100m of tax payers money to support the airlines, thus prolonging the dispute.
- Releasing to the media mis information about the number of pilots who have signed contracts and the claimed return to "normal services".
- The use of writs inhibiting pilots and the media from discussing air safety issues in this dispute.
- Psychological warfare including threatening letters and mis-information.
- Rejection of genuine offers to resolve the dispute.
- Rejection of any third party involvement in talks, including the suggestion of an eminent independent Australian, Sir Lawrence Street, to assist with conciliation.

The Industrial Relations Commission went along with the companies contracts as an award, supported by the government. This meant that the wishes of the vast majority of pilots were denied.

# DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT



INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY

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The (TUC) unions involved have contented themselves with a public opinion-orientated campaign, with 4,500,000 names collected for a petition, high street collections for the hardship fund etc. In the meantime the strike is dragging on at the usual low key level. On the positive side, several attempts by management and the Health Minister to divide the workers have failed miserably. The latest stunt from the government was an offer to reinstate full pay for normal working over the Xmas period. With the government seemingly intent on holding the line on pay rises this dispute looks set to smoulder on. Some at least of the ambulance workers are calling for escalation. In the meantime January will see another round of pay bargaining, and doubtless strikes in other industries...

The biggest issue of the year has been and will remain the Poll Tax. This will replace the previous rates system based at least in part on ability to pay with a uniform taxation for every adult, whether millionaire or low-paid worker. In Scotland, where it was introduced a year earlier, a mass movement of opposition has developed. This mass level of non-payment has meant that the authorities have to date been unable to carry out a single warrant sale of the property of a non-payer. In England and Wales anti Poll Tax groups have been established in most areas and the movement looks set explode here too when the bills go out in April 1990. On 25.II.89 a conference was held in Manchester to establish an All-Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation. Unfortunately the Federation is dominated by Militant Tendency, trotskyist entryists in the Labour Party. The DAM and other libertarians have been the main opposition in the anti Poll Tax movement to the domination of this particular sect, who are sometimes little more than political gangsters.

On the industrial side, DAM members are striving to build industrial networks in the health, education, railways and civil service sectors, as a step towards the building of unions independant of the TUC monolith. In addition DAM despatch riders have in 1989 been instrumental in establishing the Despatch Industry Workers Union (DIWU), of which they expect great things as a positive example of the relevance of anarcho-syndicalism in Britain today. The DAM Industrial Strategy has been developed over the last two years, though of course much will be worked out in the light of practical experience in the years to come...

Our National Conference in 1990 will be held in Norwich over May 25-28. Hopefully the Conference will set the course for the DAM into a new decade of struggle and building the anarcho-syndicalist alternative. Only in this way will our ideas gain wider acceptance in our class. The end of the Cold War and tne unfreezing of the Stalinist Empire opens up new vistas for libertarian communism, the only school of socialism which can go towards the 21st Century without its hands dirtied by the total failure of State socialism in the 20th Century. The prospect of a speaking tour with Russian unionists in 1990 at present being organized by the IWA is something to look forward to. At the same time a great challenge faces us as Europeans and internationalists in the shape of 1992 EEC integration (whatever Maggie says), and the development of a European super-power in the nineties.

I take this opportunity to wish the ASF and WSA all the best for the new year and the next decade. It's a cliché (but nonetheless true) that we live in exiting times. Now more than ever there's a world to win comrades! -Dino M: (I.S.)

British section of the International Workers Association

# INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

The following report was originally presented to the 1989 Annual Conference of the Direct Action Movement by the Industrial Strategy Commission. This commission came into being after the conference the previous year decided that it was needed to draw together the different strands of thought & policies that the DAM had developed over the years. The general long term strategy of the DAM was to move away from being a political organisation and to take Anarcho-syndicalism into the workplace, to be politically organised but in the sphere of economics, the aim being an Anarcho-syndicalist Union. With this in mind the following report was drawn up after a years debate and investigation by the Industrial Strategy Commission.

It was decided after being accepted by the 1989 conference that the IS commission use it as a base for a pamphlet. However in the meantime it has been decided to reproduce the report in *Direct Action*. As the DAM, if it is to achieve its aims, has to become more outward looking it was felt that we had a duty to the readers of *Direct Action* to inform and involve them in what has been taking place within the DAM, and to stimulate debate on the matters arising amongst a wider audience.

It has to be borne in mind that this report was originally an internal document and consequently makes many assumptions and appears as a result superficial. In some ways this is true. However since this report has held a day school on Industrial Organisation and the debate around this subject. Two points in particular, our relationship with the Social Democratic Unions & Industrial Networking were discussed in detail. A report of the day school will be published at a later date.

In this issue two parts of the Industrial Commission report have been included, the Situation and Principals of Anarcho-syndicalism. In coming issues we will also be printing the sections: The Community, Rank & Files and Industrial Networks, which made up the rest of the report, the latter being the backbone of the DAM's industrial strategy.

## THE SITUATION

The proposal to build an anarcho-syndicalist union in Britain cannot be seen in isolation from the present economic-political-social situation existing in Britain and the world. For that reason we have attempted to outline a few points, however inadequately. That more work needs to be done in this area goes without saying.

The world is in turmoil as capitalism responds to the economic crisis it finds itself in. This has led to a global restructuring of productive (and non-productive) forces, involving mass layoffs, flexibilisation within companies (making workers work harder, ending restrictive practices etc.) and a general lowering of living standards for most of the working class, leading to greater and greater class differentials.

At the same time, the economic crisis has been the crisis of State Socialism, Welfarism, Labourism. Faced with the choice of defending the workers or defending the system (or 'the nation') the socialist and Communist Parties have inevitably chosen the latter, as have the Unions they control. That the Left Parties and the Unions had more and more become a part of the system that they were supposed, in their rhetoric, to oppose, was only given final confirmation in the last 20 years. (Consider Labour's 1969 'In Place of Strife', an attack on working-class wage militancy, and the 'Social Contract' between the last Labour Government and the TUC).

Socialist Parties like the French and Spanish that have easier been able to jettison their 'socialism' in favour of (Thatcherite) authoritarian neo-liberalism, have been able to govern in this situation. However, the contradictions have so

torn apart organisations closer (through the Unions) to the working class, like the Labour Party, that they have been obviously unable to govern, leaving that job to the new Tory breed of authoritarian neo-liberals. In this way, they retain some ability to criticise the 'excesses', as well as possibly being able to take over when the Tories push things just too far, returning to Labour's prewar role as a party of crisis.

The coming to power of the Thatcherites came after progressive failures of the Wilson, Heath and Callaghan Govern-

ments to make the working class pay via incomes policies and attempts to contain the 'British Disease', the unofficial strike. The Peter Wright revelations are a reminder that the British Ruling class was genuinely worried about the prospect of *nobody*

being able to govern Britain, and with British Army activity closer to home than '69, it seems that some sort of military coup was being considered in some circles.

At the same time Thatcher was engineered into the Tory leadership and eventually to power with authoritarian populist politics and Thatcher's 1979 racist comments, her imperialism and jingoism as with the Falklands War, struck a chord with many British People) and liberal economics, determined to break the rules of post-war political consensus, all for

the benefit of capitalism.

The Thatcher Tory Party is an outspokenly Capitalist party (championing the market, attacking the welfare state as never before) and has genuinely carried out a political revolution, throwing the other parties into crisis, since Thatcher has drawn the dividing line quite clearly. Real opposition to Thatcher is thus opposition to Capitalism (hence the often-mentioned lack of opposition from the 'Opposition'), so that Thatcher has been able to taint anyone that disagrees with the party with subversion. Given worker's abdication of *self-government* it is not surprising that many choose to be ruled by people who are hard and give the strong impression of knowing what they are doing.

The gloves have been taken off, the ruling class are fighting with few holds barred. The time, then, has come for direct working-class action from our own perspective, as opposed to that of Capital's. This will not come from the Trade Unions (even if they make some sort of 'left turn'). The time is right to build an alternative unionism that takes as its starting point the defence of the interests of the working class as a whole (going beyond sectional concerns), which necessarily contains a critique of the whole capitalist system.

Given the increasing internationalisation of the world economy, and within that the move towards the Single European Market, the fates of the world's workers have become more intricately linked than ever. The need to build strong union sections of the IWA throughout the world is pressing.

least!) that, given the weight of bourgeois ideology upon our class, that all workers will be in the Anarcho-syndicalist Union. If they are, all well and good!

There is also the question of how an Anarcho-Syndicalist Union *now* relates to other workers. Again, in line with 1988 Conference, we believe that the DAM now and any future Anarcho-syndicalist Union should give its full support to independent workers' self-organisation, but that we must not fall into 'councilism', since we recognise that such an organisation is only ever temporary, relating to the specific needs of sections of the working class at a specific time. Workers who organise themselves in general assemblies and recallable strike committees are certainly waging the class war but it doesn't make them revolutionary. Without an anti-capitalist perspective any attempt to make such organisations permanent would tend to degenerate leading to bureaucratisation and accommodation to capitalism.

This is why there is a need for a permanent workers' organisation committed to class war and libertarian communism, that can solidly resist the incorporation of workers' struggles into the system as well as internalising the lessons of periods of major struggle. An Anarcho-syndicalist Union is a voluntary association of working-class people, which helps to spread combativity, solidarity and revolutionary consciousness throughout the working class, through its own practice and its support for those other workers practicing it.

As far as the *tactics* of an Anarcho-syndicalist Union go, we will just say that they depend on anarcho-syndicalist principles and the details of the specific situation faced. We believe that the developing Industrial Networks will give us a clearer idea of any appropriate tactics for the Union than we could lay down here.

# ROAD TO REBELLION

Over the last 15-20 years the despatch industry has mushroomed in Britain and now employs 5-10,000 people. The reasons for the growth of this industry are many but include the decline of same day postal services, the growth of yuppie service industries such as advertising, the 'big bang', and the spreading out of offices away from city centres. There are now hundreds of despatch firms which have a fleet of motorcycles, pushbikes, vans or cars ready to deliver urgent documents and small parcels. Most firms are in London.

The despatch industry is a classic product of the Thatcher era. The firms are engaged in a cut-throat war to undercut each other, or to win clients by providing the 'most professional' service which is just so much bullshit. There are millions of pounds to be made for the bosses who are ruthless enough. But the days of the young entrepreneur setting up and 'making good' are numbered, as the big firms such as TNT and Federal Express buy out the small concerns. This process will probably accelerate after 1992. Incidentally, the bosses organisation, called the Despatch Association, is one of the main bodies pleading for the abolition of the Post Office monopoly.

From the workers point of view, the despatch industry is not all a bed of roses. If you liked cycling or motorcycling before, then the novelty will soon wear off. True, you can earn £3-400 per week. Some riders and drivers earn even more than that but those people are the voluntary slaves who work from early morning until eight at night, then collapse until the next day. More common are the school leavers who risk their lives every day racing around town on a moped for £100 per week.

The wages at first seem reasonable until you consider that you are 'self-employed' (read self-exploited) and have to pay out for your vehicle, your running expenses, your income tax, and put money aside for sickness, holidays, etc. So £400 per week is only really worth about half that.

Even clearing £500 per week hardly compensates for the job. Despatch riders have to work in all weathers. Most work 9-10 hours each day without more than a few minutes break. The stress of riding or driving in heavy traffic is exhausting and dirty. There is no job security. And last, but not least, despatch riding is probably the most dangerous job in Britain in terms of fatalities and serious injuries.

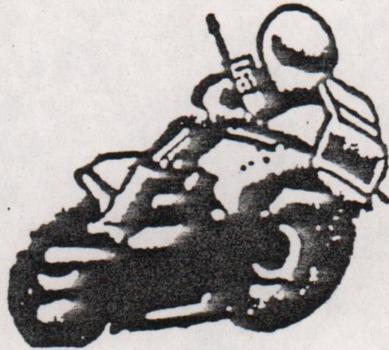
In response to the low pay, in relation to the terrible conditions of work, there has been a significant amount of industrial militancy. Usually this has taken an individualistic form, i.e., the despatch rider/driver has a go at the boss and then jacks the job in straight away. But there has been organised militancy, in the form of strikes, at Capital Par-

cels, London and City Couriers, Greater London Cars, Southbank Couriers and First Courier. Of these, only the strike at Southbank was lost. The strikes are usually only for a few hours or even minutes. Undoubtedly there have been many, many more strikes that have not been reported.

The Transport and General Workers Union have tried at least twice to unionise the despatch industry but have failed miserably because almost nobody wants anything to do with a mob like them. Besides, it is acutely embarrassing trying to recruit people into a trade union which you know yourself to be a pile of shit. The TGWU was largely to blame for the scabbing drivers at Wapping and for the collapse of morale and resistance during this summer's dock strike.

But fortunately there is a light at the end of the (Rotherhithe) Tunnel. The Despatch Industry Workers Union was started in March 1989 by just four despatch riders (three DAM members) and has since had some steady success in recruiting people and defending members. The DAM members are now in a small minority.

Union meetings are the life and soul of the DIWU and the place where all the decisions are made. This might sound obvious, but if you have been a member of a traditional trade union you will know that all the major decisions are not made by the workers but by the higher-ups in the union. Therefore, the participatory democracy of the DIWU meetings gives us all a sense of responsibility, satisfaction and a belief in ourselves and what we can achieve.



The Constitution of the DIWU is, for want of a better word, anarcho-syndicalist. All workers in the industry are welcome to join, but no management. The DIWU aims to improve pay and conditions today, but also plan for a better society tomorrow. The Constitution has a healthy wariness of trade union bureaucracy and political parties, instead stating that collective direct action is the best way to achieve its ends. And significantly, point four of the Constitution states that 'Union members should never cross picket lines, unless the strikers consent'. This is the age-old basis of working class solidarity, and a point that has been forgotten by virtually all of the trade unions in Britain today.

The DIWU has attracted a lot of attention from the media which is a mixed blessing. There have been enquiries, articles or

interviews by LWT, Capital Radio, a video company, City Limits, Ride Magazine, Moving Target magazine, the in-house newspaper of the NUR, and a free-lance journalist. The DIWU now has a policy that any journalist who wants an interview must write their questions down, which will then be discussed, and a reply sent in writing. This seems to be the best way to avoid them twisting what you say.

The DIWU is a new union in the despatch industry, and hopefully it will grow and grow until all workers in the industry become active members. But there is more to it than that. The DIWU is the first attempt in Britain to start a union along anarcho-syndicalist lines. Admittedly the despatch industry is a marginal and expendable section of the British economy, but nevertheless the idea that anarcho-syndicalism can work in this day and age will hopefully spread to other industries by the DIWU's good example.

If you work in the despatch industry, or you know someone who does, put them in touch with the DIWU at PO Box 574, Brockley, London, SE4 1DL.

DAM Despatch Riders

# DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT



INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY

P.O. BOX 122  
DONCASTER  
DN4 7AT

FOR 'DIRECT ACTION', THE I.B., AND MEMBERS EVERYWHERE

12.2.1990

The last National Committee meeting in Liverpool agreed that we should start to raise money for the proposed East European speaking tour. Unfortunately it now looks like we won't be able to get anyone from Russia in the foreseeable future. But it seems certain that we'll be hosting a speaker from East Berlin, in late April. Our German sister organization, the FAU, apparently now has a group in East Berlin. Anyway, since everyone in the DAM seems keen to go for it, this letter is designed to get people to start looking into possible venues in good time. Also, if we're going to organize this well we'll need money. So an appeal is being launched to finance a national speaking tour with the comrade from East Berlin. Cheques should be made out to the "International Solidarity Fund" and sent to me at the above address. (Please put this appeal in 'Direct Action' and the Internal Bulletin.)

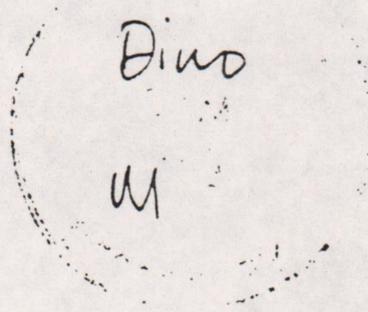
## AN APPEAL FOR POLAND

There has been a lively anarchist scene in Poland for several years. In October '88 the Polish anarchist federation (Miedzyniastowka Anarchistyczna) was established. But they have a big problem - printing. The anarchist press in Poland is badly produced and irregular. This is not a reflection of the actual strength of the libertarian movement, but is due to the fact that access to printing facilities is limited. There are only the State printing offices and the printing machines owned by the Catholic, pro-capitalist opposition, and neither are especially interested in furthering the anarchist cause! An appeal was launched in 1989 to purchase a printing machine for the M.A. anarchist federation, but it came to a standstill due to the difficulties of importing a printing machine into Poland. This problem no longer exists, and the appeal has been relaunched. The international anarchist movement has an opportunity to help the Polish anarchist movement at a crucial time in its history. Send donations to the account:-

CCP Rey 306404 G  
Nantes Cheques  
44000 Nantes  
France

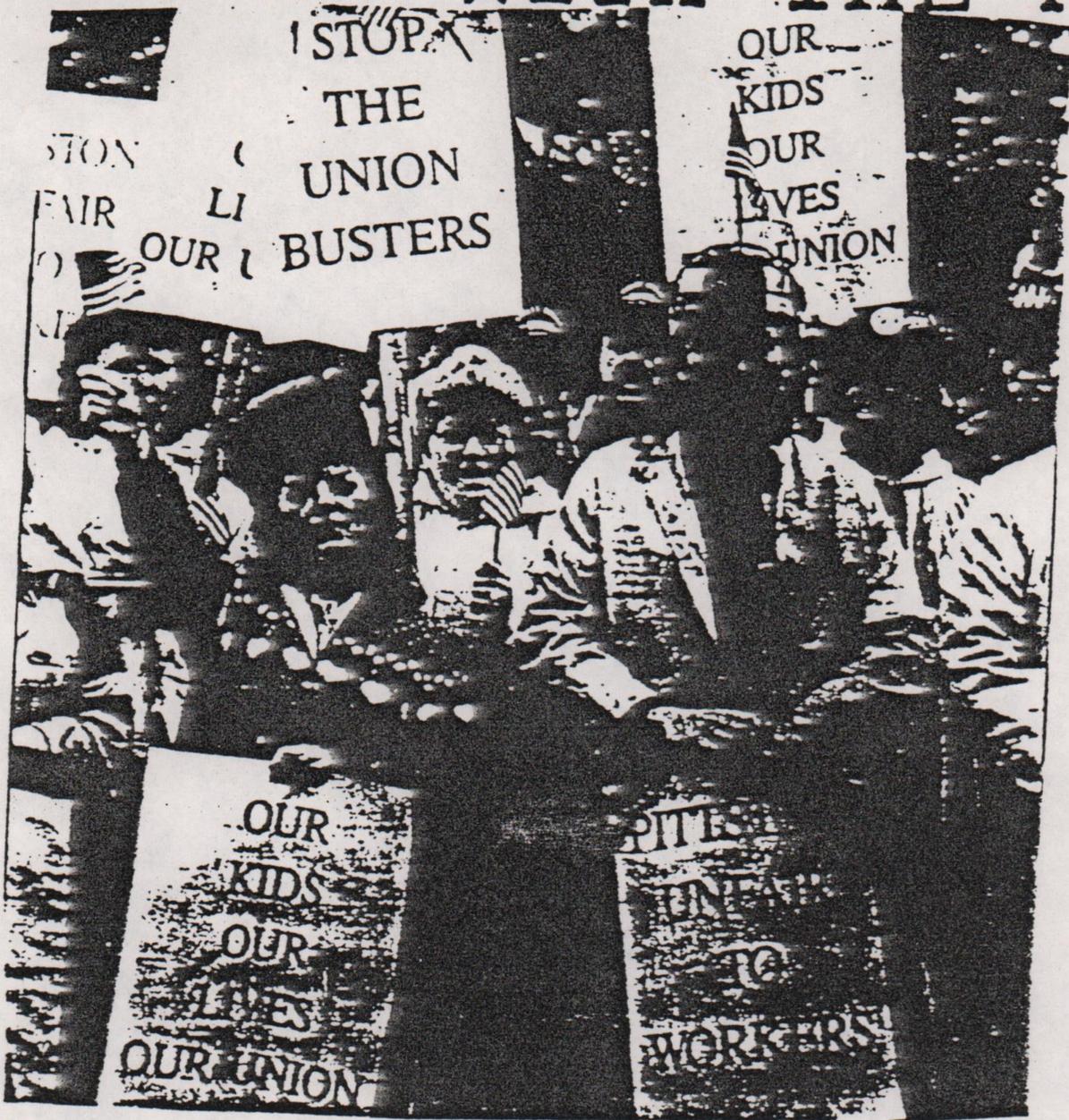
Or money orders can be sent to the M.A. representative in France, who can also provide further information:

Marcin R.  
c/o Christian Veron  
6, Rue de Hauts Pavés  
44000 Nantes  
France



british section of the International Workers Association

# SOLIDARITY WITH THE MINERS



The miners of Virginia and West Virginia are locked in a life or death battle with the Pittston coal company, an international corporation. Pittston has forced the miners union to go on strike by cutting off retirees' pensions and healthcare benefits, and by demanding that the mines stay open seven days a week (like they are in Poland). The company is attempting to break the United Mine Workers Union, and lower the miners living standards to that of the Third World. The mine workers have responded with picket lines and sit-ins in front of mine entrances to block scab labor. One miner has been killed, and thousands arrested, with bail set as high as \$10,000.

If the coal miners are defeated, it will be a blow not only to the Mine Workers Union, but to the liberty and well-being of working people across this country. The miners, like the Eastern airlines strikers, like the workers of China, Poland, South Africa and other lands, are fighting for dignity and democracy against tyranny and corporate greed.

THEIR FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT!

Send donations and messages of support to the following;

JUSTICE FOR PITTSTON MINERS  
UMWA District 28  
PO Box 28  
Castlewood, VA - 24224

**WSA** WORKERS  
SOLIDARITY  
ALLIANCE

The Workers Solidarity Alliance is the American affiliate of the International Workers Association. We're fighting for rank and file power - on the job and around the world.



WSA  
PO Box 1753  
Cambridge, MA  
02238

## LABOUR RELATIONS WEEK

01-17-90

### Mining

#### **VOTE ON UMW-PITTSTON PACT AWAITS SEVERAL CONDITIONS**

Projections that striking miners would quickly begin the process of ratifying the proposed agreement between the United Mine Workers and the Pittston Coal Group Inc. appeared overly optimistic last week as union and company representatives reported that negotiators were continuing to work out contract language to reflect their agreements.

Three other conditions, meanwhile, must be met before the proposed agreement to end the nine-month-old strike will be put to a membership vote, including approval by union and management trustees of industry benefit and pension funds, the agreement of a Virginia court to dismiss more than \$60 million in fines against the union, and resolution of unfair labor practice charges before the National Labor Relations Board, union representatives have said.

#### **Judge Temporarily Suspends Fines**

Virginia circuit court judge Donald McGlothlin Jr. Jan. 5 temporarily suspended \$33.5 million in fines against the UMW on the request of union attorneys who sought a delay to provide time to prepare motions for dismissal. The judge also will consider the disposition of another \$31 million in fines against the union for strike-related misconduct. As part of the strike settlement, Pittston officials agreed to support union efforts to overturn the fines, a union representative said. Reports have circulated, however, that company negotiators did not agree to condition a ratification vote on resolution of the fines.

Union leaders met with NLRB officials Jan. 8 to consider terms of a settlement of unfair labor practice charges brought against the firm during negotiations for a new contract that began nearly two years ago.

Although union and company representatives are withholding details of the agreement pending explanation of its terms to members, sources have told BNA that the accord would permit Pittston to buy out of the 1950 benefit fund, which provides health coverage to miners who retired prior to 1976 and their dependents.

Participation in that fund and the maintenance of health benefits have been key factors in the strike, which was called following more than a year of bargaining after Pittston broke away from multi-employer negotiations conducted by the Bituminous Coal Operators Association. The company would continue support for the 1974 benefit and pension funds and maintain health coverage under the proposed agreement, sources said.

A reopener in the fourth year of the proposed contract will coincide with the opening of the current BCOA contract with the UMW in which wage rates

have moved ahead of those covering the 1,700 unionized Pittston miners. Achieving parity with BCOA rates will be the union's objective in that reopener, BNA has learned.

The tentative pact calls for annual wage increases of 40 cents an hour in the first three years of a four-and-a-half-year term and provides for two \$500 payments to miners to cover out-of-pocket medical expenses of up to \$1,000, 4 LRW 27 (Jan. 10, 1990).

A new side letter to the proposed agreement calls for considering the development of a productivity-based profit-sharing program, and the accord would permit the company to contract out repair and maintenance work and the transportation of coal, according to sources.

The firing of miners for strike-related activities will be subject to further discussion between UMW and Pittston, with arbitration to follow if no resolution can be reached, while the company would be allowed to retain permanent strike replacements, sources said.

## LABOR RELATIONS WEEK 01-10-90

### Mining

#### **MAJOR WORK RULE CHANGES INCLUDED IN PITTSTON PACT**

The tentative contract settlement between The Pittston Co. and the United Mine Workers contains significant work rule changes that were agreed to by the union in exchange for job security guarantees, BNA has learned.

The four-and-a-half year tentative settlement, which was announced Jan. 1 and must be ratified by 1,700 striking miners, calls for three annual wage increases of 40 cents per hour, followed by an amount to be determined in the fourth year. A \$500 ratification bonus, plus a \$500 payment for health insurance, also are included. Miners would receive a second \$500 insurance payment in six months. The new payments are intended to cover the first \$1,000 of employees' out-of-pocket medical costs, a new cost-sharing feature in the insurance plan. Employees would retain any funds not spent.

In the negotiations, Pittston company officials sought relief from restrictive work rules, maintaining that it was necessary to operate the mines on a continuous basis in order to increase their output of coal. The company's proposals initially were met by strong resistance from the union, which raised objections to work on Sunday and maintained that continuous operation would disrupt family lives.

However, sources told BNA that the union has agreed to a significant modification of current work rules in exchange for contract language that ensures the company will not expand its non-union operations as long as employment at its union facilities remains below 1,900.

Pittston's 1,700 striking miners still have not received details of the tentative settlement, which was announced on Jan. 1. Union officials said the agreement will not be submitted to the membership for ratification until after the pact has been approved by the trustees of the health and retirement funds, and

after arrangements have been made with the courts and the National Labor Relations Board to dissolve litigation arising from the dispute. The latter includes seeking court approval to cancel an estimated \$60 million in fines against the union for violations of various court orders.

BONUS UPDATE

We were informed today (9/28/89) that O.E.R. has now officially "ordered" all MASS agencies to release the disputed E.P.R.S. bonus money. Therefore we should expect to receive our checks towards the end of Oct. 1989. We will keep you posted.

\*\*\*\*\*

PART TIMERS

This is to let you know of Agency policy stated by \_\_\_\_\_ at the last case load negotiations. He told us that Alternates are not expected to and should not be covering the desks of any part time examiners on days that they are not scheduled to be working.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sometimes simply telling the truth about what does on in a workplace - to the press, TV media or public interest groups - can put heavy pressure on management. "Open mouth" direct action is simply the exercise of free speech - where it will do the most good.

The mass sick-out is another familiar form of worker protest.

It has been widely used by our local police force i.e. the "blue flu". Work places have been paralyzed by the sudden absence of all or most of its employees.

These are just some of the usual types of direct action and the effectiveness of one or another tactic may vary from work place to work place and industry to industry. Unlike the strike, none of these methods mean the loss of pay or benefits. And while no particular course of action can necessarily work miracles, changing times may require the US labor movement to reconsider some of these options to the traditional strike.

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AIR QUALITY SURVEY RESULTS

We are attempting to set up and meet with \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss both the results of and the implications generated from the results of the air quality survey done here at DDS. This survey represents a 98% participation factor of the employees working here. Only managers and M.D.s were excluded. \_\_\_\_\_ of the S.E.I.U. international will continue to work with \_\_\_\_\_ who chairs our committee, to help us correct the many problems that have come to our attention as a direct result of this survey.

Results are on the next page.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you to all who attended the general membership meeting! As things continue to become worse we can only hope that more and more of you will now think of strongly supporting 509!

Please note: Massachusetts state workers do not have the right-to-strike

THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE STRIKE: DIRECT ACTION

by Martin C.

American workers have traditionally used the strike as a weapon in their hassles with their bosses. At the present time, long and bitter walk-outs are being carried on by coal miners, airline workers and telephone company employees. Strikes usually involve at least some loss of income, and although the decision to strike may sometimes be necessary and unavoidable, there are other methods that workers have made use of to express their grievances or to correct certain abuses. Successful results have often been obtained by "direct" on the job activities.

Perhaps the most common type of direct action has been the slow-down. Since it is a well-known fact that people will work best when they are happy (or at least reasonable content), a slow-down in work production is a sure sign to management that the employees are not happy.

Another tactic, popular in Europe, is the work-to-rule. Almost every job is covered by a maze of rules, regulations and procedures, many of which are unworkable and generally ignored. Going strictly by the book can mean long delays, tie-ups and backlogs. British railroad workers are especially fond of the work-to-rule. They have broken any a deadlock in negotiations by taking out their thick code of regulations and carrying out the strict letter of the law - which results in the near shut-down of Britain's railway system.

At Ohio Bell concessions were granted in the area of the lower wage rated worker, or "two-tier wage system". These lower rated workers are now taking over an increasing amount of higher paid craft workers work.

Contract rejection calls were issued by rank-and-file members across the country. Strikes took place against two local operating Pacific Telesis companies, New Jersey, Ameritech (middle western states), but the major fight took place at NYNEX.

### 101 DAY STRIKE

Although there were smaller strikes across the country the real battle against health care concessions took place at NYNEX (covering New York and most of New England). The issue here was whether or not the company was going to force 60,000 CWA and IBEW members to pay part of their health care coverage. On this score the company was defeated. But this company defeat came after 17 weeks of strike activity and the one and only death ever on strike against the phone company. The striker, a shop steward, was killed when a scab driven car hit Gerry Hogan.

Despite lower wage increases for the NYNEX workers (9.6% to 8-11% at other regional Bells), workers voted by an 85% majority to accept the agreement.

What won the day was an all out effort by the members of the CWA and IBEW to win this strike. Left-of-center trade union leadership was also behind the strike but if it were not for the all out commitment by the members of both unions this strike could not have been won.

NYNEX workers held massive rallies that included not only telephone workers but striking members of the Mine Workers (on strike against Pittston Coal) and striking members of the three unions at Eastern Airlines, plus thousands of other union members and workers who simply supported their fight. Electronic picketing, as mentioned earlier, was also carried out. Electronic and picket line harassment of scabs was carried out daily.

In time, as the strike dragged on, "mobile picketing", took place. Workers met scabs at job sites -- those who collected money from the pay phones and those who laid and repaired cable-- and attempted to get them from doing the job. Strikers followed scab operated vehicles to and from job sites. Scabs were also driven out of motels by mobile pickets. Whatever tactics that the workers could find to get scabs off their jobs and economically hurt the company was employed. according to telecommunication experts, NYNEX was hurt significantly by the strike not only in terms of profits but also in terms of maintaining service. Because of this determination by the workers, NYNEX had no choice but to come to an agreement with the strikers.

### THE BATTLE OF THE BABY BELLS

As mentioned earlier, with the breakup of AT&T smaller regional companies were formed to carry out regional and local telephone services. It was at these Baby Bells where strikes took place. It was also at these Baby Bells where the company decided to take the workers on. It was also here where the workers wanted to resist more but where the union bureaucracy used the AT&T pattern to halt such rank-and-file resistance.

The major fight took place against the regional Bell which covers New York and most of the New England states. More about this fight further below.

The settlements at most of the Baby Bells differed little from the AT&T settlement, or from "final offers" made to the unions by management prior to their strikes at at least four Baby Bells.

Wages averaged between 10-11% over three (3) years and contained the same type of lump-sum bonuses which were agreed to at AT&T. Only Bell Atlantic retained a limited cost-of-living provision.

At US West, CWA stated that they were willing to strike if a cost-of-living provision was not included in a final contract offer. A strike did not happen and there was no c-o-l provision in that agreement. In Ohio workers were particularly angered because they were willing to fight and were all prepared to fight if the new contract contained any lump-sum payments. A contract was agreed to by the bureaucrats, one day after a large "Dump the Lump" rally took place.

### HEALTH BENEFITS THE MAJOR FIGHTING AREA

Where strikes did take place it was basically over the issue of health benefit concessions demanded by the boss. The key issue was having the worker pay part of the cost of their medical insurance. At three Baby Bells this matter was resolved through the introduction of the same sort of lower medical insurance provider as exists in the AT&T contract. Despite resolving the issue of medical costs, the independent labor monthly Labor Notes stated that "... many members were shocked to discover that the union was actually advocating cuts in their health coverage...[and] this concept was never discussed within the union prior to bargaining..."

As has been the trend elsewhere in industry job consolidations have also taken place in many of the Baby Bell contracts. Naturally this was all done in the name of "flexibility". At Pacific Telesis the new position "term employee" was introduced. All this person is is a long term temporary employee.

In an effort not to repeat the disunity of the unions and again to allow worker concessions in the areas of cost-of-living, small wage increases and medical benefits, 1989 AT&T negotiations saw joint bargaining between the CWA and the IBEW. The AFL-CIO endorsed a boycott against AT&T in case of a strike. Despite the bureaucratic unity between the unions forged from above, rank-and-file members of both unions were ready to stand united.

Despite the usual anarcho-syndicalist criticisms of bureaucratic unionism, it was impressive to see the creativity and massive unity (from all workers) that went into the AT&T negotiations. In the age of high speed technological transmissions/directing of phone calls, electronic picketing (in which crucial company lines would be jammed by workers continuously calling them) was employed. As well as massive picketing, consumer boycotts, multi-union rallies and basic education prior to the expiration of the contract of both the membership and the public.

Despite all of the right rank-and-file approaches the negotiations were still carried out by bureaucrats and the ultimate AT&T-CWA-IBEW settlement was one which fell far short of the members expectations, desires, needs and ability to fight for. In essence, the bureaucrats were willing to make a tactical "left turn" in order to win their agenda.

The final AT&T-CWA-IBEW settlement consisted of a three (3) year labour agreement that allowed for certain concessions in the health care provision area, yet made improvements in other medical areas. Wages were increased by a total of 9% and a profit-sharing program, which may total--at the end of the third year--\$2,100. These profit-sharing payments would be lump-sum payments not rolled into the base rate. This wage package covered 115,000 non-manufacturing workers. Approximately 60,000 manufacturing workers did not receive a wage increase the first year, they got an 8% lump-sum bonus. In the next two years of the contract manufacturing workers will receive 6.5% wage increase.

An area hailed by the unions and management as the most "progressive" aspect of the contract is a new child care and eldercare program. The cornerstone of this program is a union-management administered \$5million Family Care Development Fund to support the development of child care facilities and programs for the elderly.

Pensions were also increased by 12% and some contract language was agreed to on the use of temporary workers but the area of job sub-contracting and the complete elimination of a second class workforce (temporaries) was not addressed

# TELEPHONE WORKERS STRIKES AND NEGOTIATIONS

BY: MITCHELL M

WORKERS SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE

This past Spring, Summer and Fall saw major negotiations and strikes in the U.S. telephone industry. Unlike many continents around the globe, telephone companies in the U.S. are privately owned and, therefore, workers have the right to strike. Government workers in the United States do not have the right to strike.

## BACKGROUND INFO ON TELEPHONE COMPANY

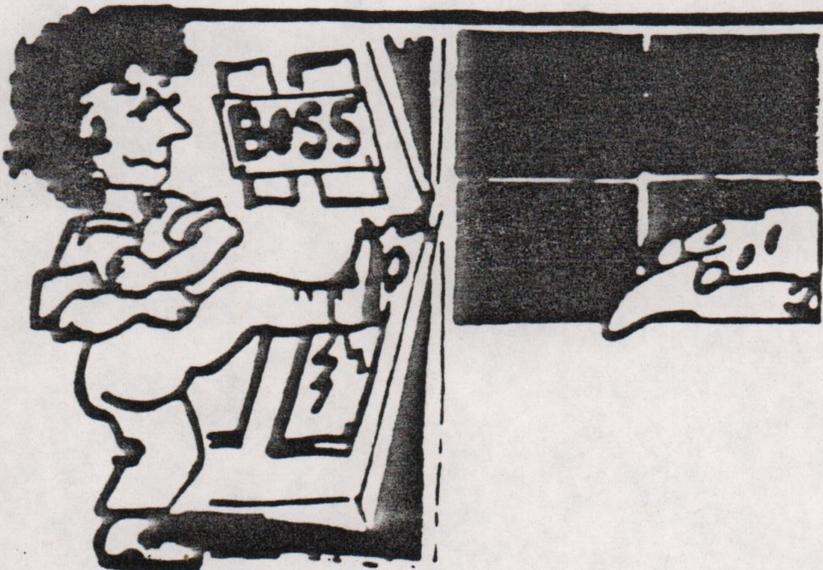
In 1984 the American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T) was ordered by the government to break-up as the sole monopoly telephone company. During this break-up into smaller regional systems, or "Baby Bells", AT&T was left with long distance service, installation and maintenance of business phone equipment, while the 22 Baby Bells were given the operation of local phone lines. During the monopoly years of AT&T the two unions which had collective bargaining rights with AT&T, the Communication Workers of America (CWA) and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), enjoyed the benefits of two separate national collective bargaining agreements governing wages, hours and terms and conditions of employment. With the breakup of AT&T so too were the national agreements broken up.

Even with the breakup of AT&T, AT&T's profits were up 50% since 1984 (\$1.7 billion in the first 9 months of 1988 alone). There have also been 78,000 non-management jobs eliminated and the issue of job loss has not contractually been addressed by either union.

## THE 1989 AT&T LABOUR CONTRACT

The first non-monopoly contract with AT&T was negotiated in 1986.

This contract represented a major retreat for AT&T workers. With national bargaining eliminated the ability to truly hurt AT&T with an economic strike, and the disunity of the CWA and IBEW, allowed the company to walk away with an agreement that was more in their favor than the workers.



-- P.T.O. --

# Australia Day. Celebrate the ~~Progress~~ *Struggle!*

Australia--a nation-state founded as the world's largest open-air prison. A place where the poor and displaced of 18th century Britain, who had been forced outside its laws and labelled 'criminals' could be sent for good.

Australia--a place where native peoples were thrown off their land, wiped out and where those who remain struggle for their basic identity as a people.

Australia--a modern nation with a modern capitalist economy where working people are pushed, squeezed and finally thrown on the scrap heap for the sake of 'progress'.

Australia--a place where clean, safe public transport which would help preserve the environment is systematically scrapped for the benefit of the owners of the auto industry.

Australia--in short, a place very much like the U.S.A.

As you read this, the tram (trolley) workers of Melbourne are engaged in a bitter struggle with the Government of the Australian State of Victoria against a system of 'rationalization' that would have cost many of them their jobs. They want to maintain their standard of living and preserve the public transit system. To the government of Victoria they are like old machinery to be cast aside.

On New Years Day the tram workers of Melbourne, instead of walking off their jobs, took over the tram system and stopped charging fares. The next day, the Victoria Government shut down the system, but the workers responded by taking the trains into the depots and are even now sitting in there, and other working people are assisting them with food, money, publicity, security and so on. It's a good lesson in how to fight that working people here could learn from.

As working people here in the U.S., we should be reminded how much we have in common with working people everywhere in the world, much more than we have in common with our own bosses and bureaucrats who suddenly become our 'fellow Americans' when they want to dupe us. We should reject the phony patriotism of the Australian government as we should reject the so-called patriotism of our own when it is used as an excuse to rob us, throw us out of work and destroy our environment. What class you're in, not what flag you live under, is what matters in the world today.

We call on all working people and sympathetic people to join us in:

- 1) Sending messages of support (and donations where possible) to: The Delegate, Brunswick Tram Depot, Sydney Road, Brunswick, 3056, Victoria, Australia. If you can, please send copies of the messages to us at the address below.
- 2) Send protest messages to: Minister of Transport, Jim Kennan, and/or Premier of Victoria, John Cain, Parliament House, Spring Street, Melbourne, 3000, Australia.
- 3) Join with us in expressing your concern at Australian government offices and businesses.



the International Workers Association

Workers Solidarity Alliance  
New York Area Group  
339 Lafayette Street--Room 202  
New York, NY 10012  
Tel. (212) 979-5353

EASTERN EUROPE:

# AT THE CROSSROADS

While we celebrate the developing struggles in Eastern Europe, let's also keep in mind a few points:

- 1) The destruction of Stalinism is only a first step. Whether the new societies and economic systems that arise will be merely a reproduction of Western capitalism or a new kind of free, worker self-managed society will depend on the outcome of struggles which are only beginning.
- 2) Only working people organized in their own interests, allied with students, intellectuals, farmers, ecologists, feminists and other like-minded groups, can achieve truly free societies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Self-proclaimed leaders and aspiring rulers, like Walesa and co. in Poland, can only derail these movements into new forms of class rule.
- 3) Nationalism, ethnic and religious prejudice in Eastern Europe, as anywhere else, can only serve to weaken the struggles for freedom and put new masters in power. If the decline of Russian imperialism (which is hardly dead yet) is replaced merely by a group of little warring states, ready to be swallowed up by Western imperialism, then who has gained?
- 4) Any revolution that stops half-way, and leaves the basic structure of the old bureaucratic state in place, is as good as dead. If this were to happen in Eastern Europe, or if a new state bureaucracy were simply to replace the old one, it would be a tragedy parallel only to the tragedy of the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the Bolsheviks seized power away from the popular struggle and imposed their own dictatorship.

Now we don't mean to dampen anyone's enthusiasm for the movements going on in Eastern Europe today. But if these are societies at the crossroads, we must recognize both the possibilities and the risks. Knowing what we want means also knowing what we don't want.

For us in the Workers Solidarity Alliance, real freedom means a society without bosses, bureaucrats or rulers of any type. It means a society without classes or a state, without standing armies or false ideologies. Only a self-governed movement of working people, based on direct democracy and a fighting spirit, organized across political boundaries, can achieve this. If you agree, or just want to talk more about it, get in touch.



Turner/Irish Times/Dublin

Workers Solidarity Alliance  
New York Area Group  
339 Lafayette Street--Room 202  
New York, NY 10012

Tel. (212) 979-8353

W.S.A. is the U.S. section of the  
International Workers Association

were carried out with "no preparatory meetings in the factories or in the regions where the issues on the table could be discussed by the workers."<sup>13</sup> Oppositionists intend to return Solidarnosc to its original program, which demanded the common ownership of the means of production by the workers themselves.

The strike wave in the spring and summer of 1989 that proved so bothersome to the Walesa faction and the government appears to be only a prelude of what is to come with the full implementation of economic reform. Confrontation is inevitable. Within Solidarity it will pit the small group around Lech Walesa who favor economic restructuring against an overwhelming majority of the rank and file who oppose it. In Polish society at large, the mass of the Polish workers are head to head with the same enemy, the Communist ruling elite - now aligned with Western financial interests. There is no visible middle ground,

"Not a single trade union in the world can accept a decrease in living standards. That is why we demand wages be indexed to prices. Neither can we accept the liquidation of social security in any form. There is no way that we can accept an increase in the number of working hours per week. And we can not tolerate unemployment being used as an economic tool of the government. Such a position is unacceptable."<sup>14</sup>

"Polish workers receive only 5 percent of the riches they produce. In this context any strike is good....What is actually needed is for the workers themselves to take over their firms and...elect their managers. By this I mean a process of genuine socialization."<sup>15</sup>

The underground editor and pamphleteer David Warszawski notes that Article 282A of the Polish penal code, specifying that any activity "with the intent of provoking social unrest" is a serious crime, remains on the books. He is pessimistic about the prospects for a peaceful resolution of his country's internal contradictions:

"The economic crisis can only deepen in the immediate future, and we know from Tocqueville what happens when aspirations are aroused, and not met....It is hard to prevent a revolution in a poor and desperate country."<sup>16</sup>

Martin C

12-89

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Milovan Djilas, "A New Form of Dictatorship: An Interview with Milovan Djilas", Telos (New York), Summer 1989.
2. Zgmunt Bauman, "Poland: On Its Own", Telos (New York), Spring 1989.
3. "Opposition to Walesa Grows in Solidarnosc", Socialist Action (San Francisco), November 1989.
4. Jacek Tarkowski, "Old and New Patterns of Corruption in Poland and the USSR", Telos (New York), Summer 1989.
5. "Opposition to Walesa", op. cit.
6. Franek Michalski, "Strikes and the Round Table", Across Frontiers (Berkeley), Summer 1989.
7. See Footnote 3.
8. Andrzej Slowik, "Opposition to Walesa", op. cit.

9. Marian Jurczy, ibid.
10. Anne Applebaum, "Polish Protest with a Twist: Solidarity Faces a Worker Challenge", Boston Globe, Nov. 21, 1989.
11. Jadwiga Staniszkis, "The Obsolescence of Solidarity", Telos (New York), Summer 1989.
12. Bronislaw Geremek, "Solidarity and Polish Youth", Across Frontiers, op. cit.
13. See Footnote 8.
14. Ibid.
15. See Footnote 5.
16. "Too Little, Too Late", New Politics (New York), Summer 1989.



NORWICH  
DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT  
INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION

c/o The Greenhouse (Box DAM), 48 Bethel St.,  
NORWICH.

15/9/1989

DEAR COMRADES,

THIS IS OUR SECOND APPEAL THAT YOU HELP US WITH A PLANNED EXHIBITION OF POSTERS FROM EACH SECTION OF THE I.W.A. / A.I.T., ILLUSTRATING THE STRUGGLES THAT SECTIONS ARE ENGAGED IN ACROSS THE WORLD.

COULD YOU PLEASE SEND US COPIES OF YOUR POSTERS AND ANY ADDITIONAL MATERIAL THAT YOU HAVE PRODUCED.

THE EXHIBITION THEY WILL BE USED FOR, WILL ALSO INCLUDE VIDEOS AND DISCUSSIONS ON ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM AND REVOLUTIONARY CLASS-STRUGGLE BOTH PAST AND PRESENT.

WE URGE YOU TO SEND US YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS STRAIGHT-AWAY, AS WE NEED A LOT OF TIME TO PREPARE FOR WHAT WILL HOPEFULLY BE A SUCCESS AND HELP TO SPREAD OUR IDEAS AND ACTIONS.

IN SOLIDARITY -

PASCAL C'

( SECRETARY, NORWICH DAM/IWA )

**For Direct Workers And Community Control**

# Solidarność

functionaries to let a firm go bankrupt and then pass it on to private ownership - either directly to themselves or to one of their friends - without having to pay a cent. This has already been done in some sections of the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk."<sup>5</sup>

In planning these alleged reforms, in making these arrangements, the Communist nomenklatura has had the full cooperation of Lech Walesa's faction of Solidarity. Walesa retains great prestige in Poland up until now as the embodiment of opposition to the dictatorship, a figure who has risen to international prominence. All this will surely change very quickly. In negotiating a detente and a final collaboration with the government, Walesa's claim to represent Poland's workers became more and more doubtful.

The initial Round Table discussions with the authorities early in 1989 were conducted entirely on Walesa's personal authority, with the aid of his "Citizens Committee Working with the Chairman of Solidarity". The result -

"...the registration of Solidarity, not the re-legalization of the 1980-81 organization. Among other things, this has meant the loss of the tremendous financial and physical resources that belonged to Solidarity at that time. The state authorities have agreed to restore the flags and insignia that were confiscated by martial law, but not the substantial bank accounts (dues from 10 million members), cars, office equipment, printing presses, etc."<sup>6</sup>

The agreement between the Communist nomenklatura and Walesa have been roundly denounced by Solidarity activists:

"The group of Solidarnosc members participating in this (round-table) discussion only represented a fraction of the trade union. They share Walesa's point of view - and were appointed by him....There was no Solidarnosc delegation to the round-table agreement."<sup>7</sup>

"Solidarnosc exists. The authorities are not entitled to disband it. There is no need of any re-registration. We should have been given back our original registration, that's all. What we want is the relegalization of Solidarnosc on the basis of its original statutes."<sup>8</sup>

"Walesa and a small group of his close advisors registered a new trade union formation on April 17, 1989....The statutes of the original Solidarnosc were thrown out the window; the founding program was discarded. New officers of the union - people who were never elected by any official union body - were registered by the authorities. In many cities, parallel structures to those currently existing were set up by Walesa in agreement with the state and party authorities."<sup>9</sup>

What support Walesa's compromises with the establishment have been able to muster seems negligible. However, there may be small groups in particular sectors of the economy who may see advantages in the new reforms - at least for themselves. Workers in the Ursus tractor factory

near Warsaw have been demanding that the government allow the enterprise to charge market prices for their vehicles. Ursus is the only domestic manufacturer of tractors. According to Januz Sciskalski, Ursus Solidarity chairman,

"The workers are not fighting change. They are pushing it.... Maybe a mixture of employee ownership and state ownership would be the best solution....We are not planning a strike against the government or against the economic reform. We just think the government isn't reforming fast enough."<sup>10</sup>

Obviously the vast majority of Polish workers, large numbers of whom will lose their jobs or have their wages frozen under the new order, do not find themselves in this relatively protected position. And austerity and unemployment will hit the younger generation of workers particularly hard. A Polish economist has noted the worsening situation of young workers:

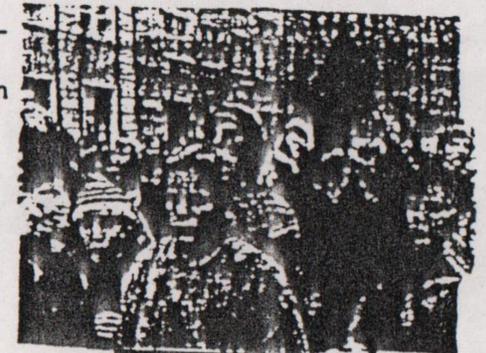
"This new generation of striking workers seems much more alienated than its predecessors....most of them came to the cities from the countryside after military service, but live apart from the cities in worker hotels....(They have) meager skills and unfamiliarity with the city, and even with the immediate neighborhood (people living in worker hotels are regarded as an undesirable element)...inflation hits them hardest. They will also be the first victims of eventual unemployment in times of crisis, while the waiting period for one's own apartment now exceeds 20 years. The market offers them no opportunities. This is why the...politics of the street...is so important to them."<sup>11</sup>

An academician turned advisor to Solidarity offers a similar view -

"These young workers are the real proletariat of our times: They have no hope, nothing to lose, and no possibility to realize their potential....Solidarity is a myth, a symbol for them....The young workers are the most important problem for the authorities...75% of these workers in factories, shipyards, coal mines, etc., have not had exposure or training to the high-tech world. They are exploited by the economic system and by the party cadres running their factories. They feel everyone is against them."<sup>12</sup>

There is some fear that the ongoing economic crisis will provide the opportunity for a revival of neo-Stalinism; that the miniscule "official" unions controlled by the Party, along with those elements of the nomenklatura who find themselves excluded from the payoffs of privatization, will launch a demagogic campaign to "defend the working class in the name of real Marxism. But at this point in time, such a development seems hardly possible.

What is for certain is the growing groundswell of opposition to the reforms that threaten to overwhelm the Polish working class. Under various names in different places - the Working Group, Fighting Solidarity, Task Force, Spartakus - the workers opposition has taken shape. The minimal demand is for the convocation of a National Congress of Solidarity to reinstitute democratic procedures in the trade union. So far Walesa's maneuvers



New Polish Opposition

# Workers Solidarity Alliance-IWA

New York Area Group

339 Lafayette St., Room 202, New York, NY 10012 (212) 979-8353

## REPORT OF THE WORKERS SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE

Dear comrades:

Belated New Year's greetings on behalf of all the members of the Workers Solidarity Alliance. We hope that the New Year will see renewed vigor, determination, growth and some good smashing victories for our organizations. And for the militant wing of the working class as well.

With the beginning of a new year so too comes changes in the W.S.A. National Committee. By now all Sections have been notified of such changes. I am no longer the International Secretary but shall remain active in international affairs. The New York Group will still produce the E.L.D.B. and will continue to assist our international activities to the best of our abilities.

With a new decade there is much hope that our organization will begin to see some real growth. In this spirit we are happy to note that a new WSA South Florida Group has been formed. This group consists of comrades (mostly in their 20's and 30's) from Cuba and Central America. Besides being active in the WSA they are the core group for the Anarchist Black Cross-Latino Americano. This group publishes the periodic magazine (in Spanish and English) "A Mayor".

In addition to the formation of this new group, we are beginning to see a growth in membership in California, with potential growth in a Deep Southern state. New membership prospects are also on the horizon in other areas as well. Although the WSA isn't large our membership stands, as of this writing, at 35 or so. We are hoping that this number will move upwards after our 7th National Convention since a number of interested folks have expressed a desire to attend. Hopefully they will see that the WSA is the type of organization that they would like to join and that WSAers are the type of people they would like to work with.

On a local level WSAers have been active in support and solidarity activities for the Pittston miners and Eastern Airline strikers. Several comrades are active in workplace organizing on various levels; from attempting to build an independent union of office workers, organizing social workers, issuing shop newsletters to participating in collective negotiations.

Other domestic activities include defending abortion clinics from right-wing "right-to-lifers" and working in the defense of the ozone layer. Comrades continue to work at various forms of out-reach through local newsletters, educational

— continued —

Jozef Pinior, a leader in the newly-formed Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution, describes the situation more starkly. The recent political re-arrangements in Poland have not altered what Pinior calls

"the complete control by the nomenklatura over the army, the police, and the means of mass communication with which to maintain themselves in power. The Walesa opposition has agreed to support this process toward the embourgeoisement of the nomenklatura. These reforms are supposed to make the economy more dynamic. In fact, they are aimed at providing the world with cheap labor and dooming the youth and the majority of the workers to destitution."<sup>3</sup>

The Communist political machine seems to have easily adjusted itself to the new economic order. According to another commentator,

"There are important new trends in Poland connected with the rapidly expanding private sector and the transformation of state enterprise into joint-stock companies. A growing number of higher and middle level functionaries of the state administration, party apparatus, police and other members of a broadly defined 'establishment' now have vested interests in freedom of enterprise and market relations. The ideological stigma which weighed heavily against the private sector has been officially removed, symbolized ...by the appointment of a private businessman, one of the richest individuals in Poland, to the post of Minister of Industry....This kind of alliance of money and power seems to have a bright future in Poland."<sup>4</sup>

Long-time union activist Andrzej Gwiazda is equally forthright: "According to the new economic law decreed on January 1, 1989, the prime minister is entitled to turn bankrupt state firms over to private individuals....through this law the party's functionaries are becoming the new owners of the companies....It is very simple for these state



## THE POLISH REFORM -

### THE WORKING CLASS OPPOSITION



Lech Walesa's recent visit to the United States was notable in several ironic respects. For one, President Bush was allowed to address the AFL-CIO convention and managed not to utter one word about American labor, instead declaring his admiration for a militant rank and file movement thousands of miles away in Eastern Europe.

Lech himself taped a short TV spot for the AFL-CIO, broadcast during the Thanksgiving Day football games, urging Americans to support their own labor movement to ensure "democracy on the job". Of course the sudden rise of a Solidarity-type movement among workers in this country would throw the AFL officialdom into a panic- an emotion currently being experienced by their counterparts in Berlin and Bucarest.

But for Poland itself the question remains: what exactly does the economic reform that Walesa has been selling to American politicians really mean?

To begin with, Poland will be opened up to Western investment, probably as a prelude to intergration into the European economic community some time in the 1990s. The International Monetary Fund will play the same role in Poland as it does in the other neo-colonial societies - that of an overseer of the national economy. The latter will be radically restructured, unprofitable industries shut down with widespread layoffs on a sectoral and regional basis. The institution of the so-called "free" market will mean the scaling back of Poland's welfare state (such as it is), and the imposition of yet further austerity upon the living standards of Polish workers: The prices of consumer staples are already soaring. With an inflation rate of better than 200% and a government-imposed wage freeze, any new measures of austerity will surely plunge Poland into the ranks of the Third World.

While perhaps allowing for more freedom of expression for dissidents, reform will do nothing to relax the stranglehold of the Communist Party bureaucracy on Polish society. The veteran Yugoslav militant Milovan Djilas has noted that the turmoil now sweeping Eastern Europe is more a crisis of ideology rather than basic power relationships, "...we are seeing the disintegration of communist ideology and the communist system...not necessarily...a disintegration of state power....The power structure is certainly more stable than the ideology."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the same state officials responsible for the nation's desperate economic plight are to be the arbiters of the new reform, either as private entrepreneurs or as agents of Western capital. A Polish sociologist observed that perestroika aside, political power rests firmly in the grip of the Communist party, the nomenklatura; "The present Polish regime has its own sources of support. The opposition's demands are accomodated in such a way that they reinforce the state managerial prerogatives."<sup>2</sup>



'ORGANISE'  
90 7, WINETAVERN ST,  
BELFAST  
N Ireland.

For the English Language discussion Bulletin

With the recent events in the 'Communist Countries' and most notably the removal of the barrier between east and west Berlin, commentators from the west have been quick to point out that the 'Wall' was the last remaining barrier between European communities. However in case you might be lulled into a false sense of euphoria about rights of passage in Europe there is still one place where the 'right' to move freely is arbitrarily controlled by the state. This place is the North of Ireland and the 'Walls', for there are two of them, are the border between north and south and the Belfast 'Peace-line' ( a twenty foot high wall that runs the length of west Belfast separating nationalist and unionist communities.) In the run up to 1992 and the opening of European borders to unregulated free travel, local residents in border areas have decided to reopen some of the roads between north and south. These 'unapproved roads' were mined and blocked by the British army in a bid to tighten up on security and divide local communities that stretched across the so-called border. These attempts to re-unite communities have been blocked at every attempt by the British state (despite their own attempts at conciliation with the Southern Government.) Along a stretch of the border in South Down, British Army observation posts ( similar to those seen on the Berlin Wall ) are dotted across the landscape peering down onto local communities with the use of high powered radio-active sensing equipment, which is 'sensitive' enough to pick up on conversations in households hundreds of yards from the posts. In the East of Europe demonstration used to be put down with force, in the U.S. and Australia the same is true. Here, however in the democratic free West, in a part of 'Britain' if you protest you are liable to be justifiably murdered by the state with Plastic Bullets, ~~if you do not~~

.....Plastic Bullets.....

If you are not protesting but happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time you can still face summary execution by the state. ( This is the case in at least half of the Plastic Bullet deaths.)

The question of Ireland affects the lives of more than 5 million people. The remaining presence of the British state and their 'armed forces' means that division remains. As long as the communities are divided by outside forces then there is no prospect for the growth of a mass revolutionary movement. The British state must go from the North of Ireland, it is up to us in Ireland first, and up to the international workers movement second to remove that presence from this country. In the run up to 1992 and the so-called 'Free Europe' it should be made clear over and over again that Europe is not free and that in Ireland the borders and the 'Wall' have yet to come down.

Michael,

'Organise' Anarcho-Syndicalists.

I hope you can print this in the ELDB and possibly aim for some debate on Anarcho-Syndicalist organisation to so-called "national struggles", it has long been a dodgy subject for Anarchism perhaps a discussion would help within the ELDB

Thanks

Yours Michael  
B