

Direct Action

IN THIS ISSUE

- Lessons of —
Wapping — p2
- Strip Searches — p3
- DHSS Racism — p6



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SOLIDARITY IS STRENGTH

The last ten years have seen a massive attack on the working class. As the drive to create a low-waged economy continues, so does the need to roll back the gains made by organised labour. One group of workers after another - from steelworkers to printers - have been lined up and defeated. It has become obvious that the sectionalised, reformist unions are incapable of organising the solidarity needed to resist these attacks on our class.

We can no longer remain divided according to trade and union loyalties. What a different story it would have been if groups of workers had taken action together instead of allowing themselves to be picked off one by one.

It is time that basic principles were re-established. Workers must re-learn that we don't cross picket lines not just when instructed to by the union or when the dispute is connected with our own industry, but any picket line; that solidarity just doesn't entail passing empty resolutions of support at branch meetings or giving the odd pound or two in collections but also physical support. Physical support in terms of the blacking of goods, refusing to handle work normally done by strikers and of course sympathetic action.

As rank and file workers we must take the initiative in disputes right from the very start - democratic strike committees directly controlled by the strikers must be organised. It's no good waiting till the strike has already been stitched up and sold out by bureaucrats. It is up to strikers themselves to go out to other workplaces to demand the support and solidarity needed instead of sitting back in the vain hope that the likes of Willis, Hammond, Dean, etc will do it.



By once again returning to that most basic working class principle - the need to organise against the bosses - we can begin to fightback. We are not talking about an organisation controlled by bureaucrats but one controlled by ordinary workers based on solidarity and

mutual aid, united together against the common enemy - capitalism and the state.

TUC GET OFF OUR BACKS

turn to p.6

DON'T CROSS PICKET LINES

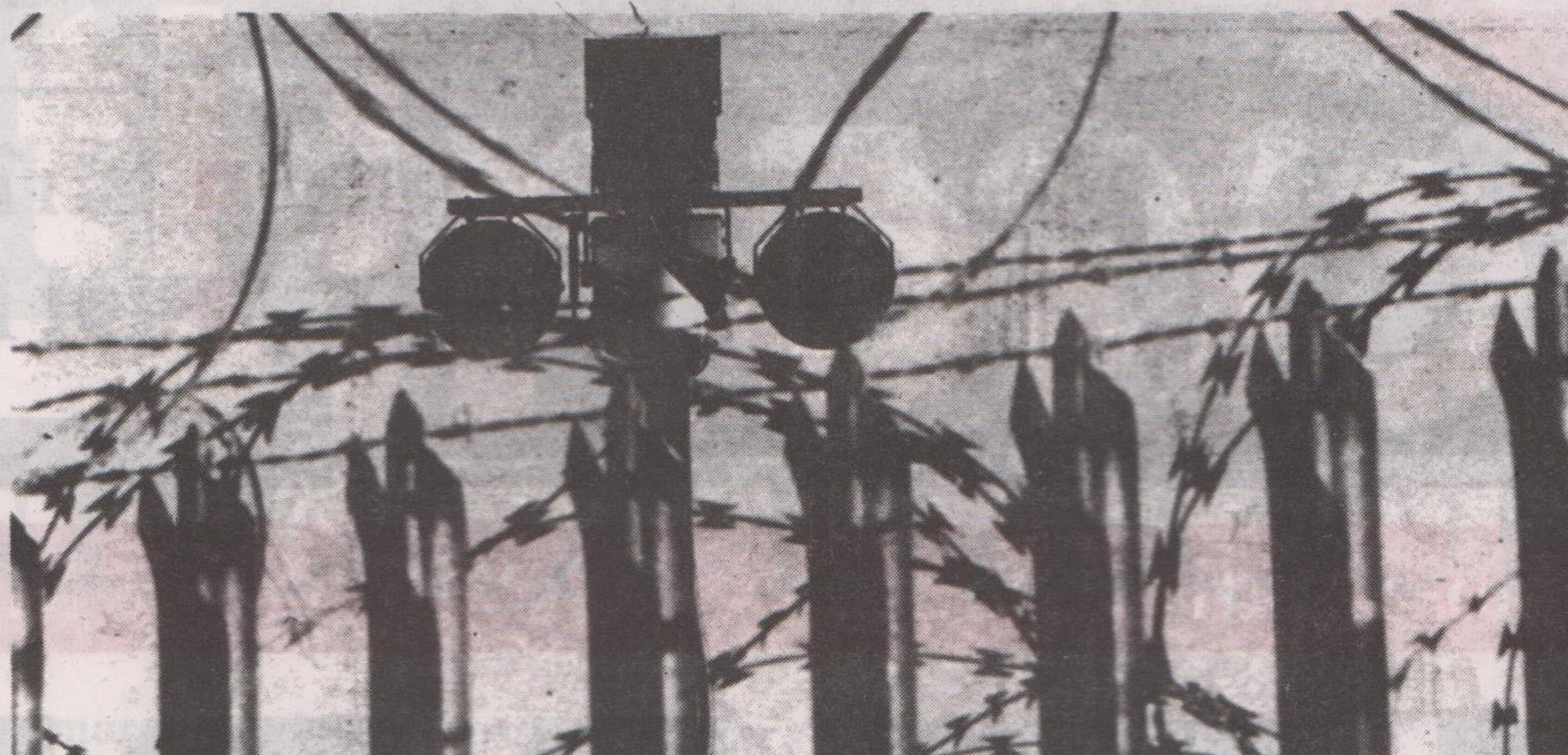
Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association

A YEAR OF STRUGGLE ~ THE LESSONS OF WAPPING

On Thursday, February 5th, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of SOGAT '82 decided to withdraw all support for the year long struggle at Wapping for jobs and union recognition. The NGA, whose leaders have allowed the SOGAT bureaucrats to do the dirty work throughout the dispute, thus maintaining a degree of credibility for themselves, followed suit the next day claiming they could not continue the strike alone.

From the start it was clear that only one thing could win - solidarity. This would take two forms. Firstly, a regular and massive picket of the Wapping plant to stop the trucks bringing out the papers, or at least to delay them if this was not possible. Secondly, action at other workplaces in the form of blacking of News International, and ultimately the closing down of the other Fleet Street papers in support of the Wapping struggle, and in defence of their own working conditions which were coming under vicious attack at that time.

Wapping was not an isolated case, it was merely the most clear-cut representation of what has been happening across the whole of Fleet Street and the print industry nationally. The background to this offensive by the bosses has been a sickening lack of will to fight on the part of the trade union bureaucracies. At Warrington in 1983 the TUC refused to honour its conference resolution to defy the Tories' anti-union laws and failed to give the support that was necessary to the NGA who were in dispute with newspaper boss Eddie Shah. This was compounded by a pathetic capitulation by the SOGAT NEC which saw general secretary Brenda Dean boasting on television that she had already negotiated away thousands of jobs on Fleet Street, so why was Murdoch being so unreasonable? A united struggle against the newspaper barons would have freed enough printers from work to shut down Wapping by sheer weight of numbers and would have placed immense pressure to settle on Murdoch from the other paper bosses.



The cameras at Wapping may not lie but the Sun often does.

From the start the only strategy the NEC put forward was the highly expensive but largely ineffective consumer boycott, whilst the Stalinist dominated London District Committee (LDC) who had real control of the strike refused to call for Fleet Street to come out.

What was necessary was for the rank and file to take control of the dispute through regular mass meetings with a strike committee elected by and accountable to these meetings. At the high point of the strike Dean was booed off stage by a mass meeting of 4,000 printworkers, yet the opportunity was not seized to organise a rank and file alternative. The only focus for these ideas, the Fleet Street Support Unit (a small rank and file propaganda group - see DA 32) was unable to turn its demands into reality. This meant there was no organised expression of the strikers' militancy which had the authority and the guts to put pickets on Fleet Street. The strikers often had control at street level (despite the machinations of those who wished to put

a brake on effective picketing), but this largely spontaneous and ad-hoc activity took no coherent form.

PASSIVE ATTITUDE

A turning point in the dispute came at the SOGAT biennial delegate conference, where the NEC, supported unconditionally by the LDC, succeeded in getting a motion passed committing the union to stay within the law in order to avoid its funds being sequestered for a second time. SOGAT had already had its funds sequestered once because it had not balloted its members in the provincial wholesale trade before asking them to black News International titles. The result of this passive attitude towards the courts was that all blacking was called off and the mass pickets of Wapping became token demonstrations, allowing the trucks to leave on time. Any SOGAT member breaking the injunction was informed by the executive that s/he would be disciplined. Hence the union put itself in the position of policing its own members.

While the NEC caved into the courts the rank and file turned to more militant forms of action - secret flying pickets aimed at exacting high damage levels on the regional depots, ambushing the trucks as they left the area around Wapping, and "spontaneous" stormings of the main gate in the early hours of the morning. Whilst this was the most effective form of action in the circumstances, it represented a retreat. The failure to see this activity as a rear-guard strategy whilst building for wider solidarity resulted in the isolation of the dispute. The LDC for its part was prepared to turn a blind eye to what was happening as it did not threaten its political control of the strike.

On the anniversary of the strike, 25,000 workers besieged the plant and directed their anger at the police. Whilst an attempt to close off all the exits would have been tactically more constructive, the battle that ensued represented a year of frustration with the uniformed scabs who had protected Murdoch from day one.

From that day also, the SOGAT NEC had been looking for a chance to ditch the dispute. But twice the strikers had rejected compromise deals, the second time by an increased majority. However, the second round of court applications from News International which co-incided with the anniversary provided the excuse the bureaucrats had been looking for. Seizing upon the conference decision they argued that they could not risk sequestration a second time through "mass and intimidatory" picketing. Quoting solicitors' advice that the court action would leave them bankrupt, SOGAT pulled out, with the NGA running behind them. No mass meeting of the strikers was called, and through their individual chapels they voted to end the dispute. The lesson of a year of struggle is clear - only direct rank and file control can provide the vehicle which is necessary to mobilise the solidarity needed to defeat the bosses

LAURA ASHLEY - made in a sweatshop

Twenty one women from Ardbride Products, in Ardrrossan, Scotland, have been on strike since September 1986. Conditions in the 2 factories - one making lampshades and the other pottery - are appalling. In the lampshade factory there are no guards on the machinery and workers have fainted due to glue fumes as the extractor fans don't work properly. There have been worries that this could affect babies carried by pregnant women. Meanwhile in the pottery factory dust levels are 12 times the permitted limit.



The workforce, largely women and YTS trainees, have complained for years about these conditions while the top wages are £1.70 an hour. In March 1986 three young men who went to the TGWU were sacked. When the owner, Stuart Ross (once described as a "model entrepreneur"), found out that other workers were joining the union he stopped a 10p an hour pay rise. The TGWU called in the Health and Safety executive, who amazingly weren't even aware of the existence of the factories! As a result the working conditions were declared illegal. However the only effect that this had on Ross was to harass the workers even further, making their lives hell. So on September 15th they voted for strike action demanding that conditions be made safe, that they have the right to join a union, and an hourly rate of £2.50. On September 17th they were all sacked.

At first the T&G gave some support but refused strike pay because they had only been in the union for 26 weeks, not the 32 weeks required in the rule book. Besides the DHSS has also refused to pay any money meaning that two strikers have since lost their homes. The women organised their own pickets despite being repeatedly harassed and threatened by Ross. Not surprisingly the police have taken Ross' side and have arrested 3 pickets while 2 people picketing a Laura Ashley shop in Edinburgh have been arrested.

Ardbride supplies the Laura Ashley chain of shops, its largest customer, with lampshades. They are sold as "handmade" for between £15 and £80 each, but in fact they are nothing of the sort - they are machine-made by workers who take home just over £40 a week and cost 1-2p to make. This contract was up for renewal in February. Due to picketing of their shops Laura Ashley have threatened to cancel it. So it is important that more pressure of this kind is put on Laura Ashley to increase the chances that the workers will regain their jobs and win better wages and conditions.

Because of the deplorable lack of union support, police harassment and no state benefits these strikers need the support of ordinary working class people. You can make a start by boycotting Laura Ashley products; complaining to Laura Ashley Management, explaining why you've stopped buying their products; organise or join pickets of Laura Ashley shops; send donations and letters of support to: Anna Druggen, 28d Montgomerie St, Ardrrossan, KA22 8EQ, Scotland.

If the wealthy Ross wins this dispute it will be the green light for other bosses to get richer on the backs of workers. If the strikers win it will be a blow against exploitation everywhere. For more information contact the address above or Edinburgh DAM, Box 83, 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh, Scotland.

—SWEATSHOP VICTORY—

On January 21st most of the 115 strong Turkish and Bangladeshi immigrant workforce walked out of a Hackney sweatshop owned by Ertugrue Tekin. The action was prompted by Tekin's attempt to make the workers pay their own tax and insurance without the compensation of a wage increase. Their response was to join the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. Up till then they had never received holiday pay, sick pay and had no agreed overtime rates (sounds familiar, doesn't it) - one worker reported that they had often worked 13 hours a day.

Of those that remained inside the premises after a picket was set up on the 21st, twenty Bangladeshi garment cutters were offered a measly 10p extra on each garment. They rejected this and

along with 35 Turkish women workers joined the picket outside. The demands of the strikers were a 10% pay increase, an agreed overtime rate, holiday pay and full union recognition, all of which they won at the beginning of February when Tekin conceded defeat.

Other sweatshop workers in the area have been watching the dispute with interest. The favourable outcome should be encouraging to them and to all workers in the clothing industry, especially immigrant workers who have traditionally been the most underpaid, un-unionised and exploited of all workers in the rag trade. The dispute also shows that it's in no-one's interest to cross picket lines giving the bosses the opportunity to divide and rule.

FTAT Make Strike Impossible To Continue

On February 9th the Silentnight strikers voted at a mass meeting to end their dispute. Whilst acknowledging the part played by the Tory anti-union laws the strikers have stated: "...we can in no way minimise the fact that since the General Executive Council of the Furniture, Timber & Allied Trades Union withdrew official backing from our dispute on the 19th of December 1986 it has become impossible to continue with the strike, although we were having great effect up until that date. We feel strongly that a grave injustice has been done, not only to Silentnight Strikers, but to the trade union movement as a whole when a group of workers fighting for basic trade union rights can then be deserted by their own union and the TUC."

But the selling out of the Silentnight and Wapping disputes are only the

latest in a long line from Grunwicks in the '70's. At best the TUC passes resolutions of support which are then ignored by the bureaucrats. It should now be quite obvious that relying on the TUC for support is almost as useless as relying on the police and the courts!

The strikers wish to pass on thanks to those who gave solidarity and support during the dispute. Discussions are underway to set up a campaign group, aiming to pass on support, solidarity and assistance to other workers in struggle. The setting up of such groups should be encouraged and should be seen as one way to lessen the reliance of strikers on the trade union bureaucrats who will use the first opportunity they can find to sell out workers struggling for their rights.

STOP STRIP SEARCHES!

Psychological War in Maghaberry

"You are alone in an atmosphere of hostility, you are stripped not only of your clothing but every attempt is made to strip you of your self-respect. Your body is scrutinised inch by inch, hands are run along the sides of your feet and the back and palms of your hands, around the neck and through your hair, every action meticulously and slowly performed. If menstruating your sanitary protection must be removed and given up for inspection - you must stand therefore throughout the procedure without sanitary protection. There is no degree of decency preserved throughout a strip-search. It is simply a debasing and revolting practice." - Statement from Maghaberry Prison, September 1986.

Over four years ago, on November 11th 1982, systematic strip-searching of women prisoners was introduced in Armagh Jail. Prior to this, regular and extensive strip-searching had not been used. Women prisoners are strip-searched on entering and leaving the jail. This means that remand prisoners (ie women who are held in custody awaiting their trial) are particularly affected as they often make regular court appearances and are strip-searched on leaving and entering the prison. During their trial, women prisoners may be strip-searched

twice daily, five days a week, for the duration of the trial.

Women prisoners are not strip-searched for security reasons. On a court appearance a remand prisoner is strip-searched before leaving prison. She goes to court in a van where she is locked up in a cubicle on her own. At no time is she in contact with any member of the public. On her return to prison, maybe thirty minutes later, she is strip-searched again. A woman who refuses to remove her sanitary pad or tampon will have it forcibly removed.

Strip-searching is an act of violence against women prisoners. It is a tool of repression and state control designed to psychologically "break" the women. The sexism which pervades our society is heightened in a prison where a woman is isolated and vulnerable and her sex can be used against her. Levels of violence against women in society generally are very high - rape, incest, wife-battering, etc are all everyday occurrences which women are fighting against in many different ways (as should men). Strip searching is yet another form of this violence towards women - but with a difference. It is directly and consciously sanctioned by the state.



Over 3,500 strip searches have been carried out on a prison population not exceeding approximately 30 women over the past 4 years. One strip search is a violent and traumatic experience for a woman. And women never become "less affected" by, or "more used to" such acts being perpetrated against them. One woman, Pauline McKinney, has been strip-searched 230 times. Nothing to endanger security has ever been found during these strip searches.

In March 1986 the women prisoners in Armagh Jail were moved to Maghaberry Prison. Over £5 million has been spent on security alone for this new prison, making it the most secure in Europe. Yet women prisoners continue to be strip-searched in Maghaberry.

The vast majority of strip-searches are carried out on political prisoners. It is done for political reasons and is obviously an attempt to force the women into submission by attacking the one thing the prison authorities otherwise cannot touch - the psychological well-being and solidarity of the women.

It is also important to mention that strip-searching has been systematically used against Irish political prisoners in jails in Britain. Recently two Irish women, Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson, spent 10 months in Brixton Prison on remand awaiting trial on "conspiracy" charges. While in Brixton, Martina was strip-searched 248 times and Ella 227 times. Occasionally strip-searching has been used against political activists - for example the women at Greenham Common, anti-apartheid protestors, etc.

The British state has employed a number of repressive measures in the north of Ireland over the years to break opposition to it by various anti-imperialist groups - internment, Diplock courts, "supergrass" trials, etc. Strip-searching of women prisoners is another weapon in their arsenal.

This article first appeared in the January/February issue of Ainriail, the Belfast anarchist paper which is available from: Ainriail, c/o Just Books, 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast 1, N. Ireland.

HANDS OFF OUR BODIES!

The recent court case, in which an Oxford student attempted to prevent his former girlfriend from having an abortion, represented a direct attack on the right of women to control their own bodies.

It was also the latest attempt by the so-called "moral majority", that has grown alongside the new right, to reverse the 1967 Abortion Act.

The student was trying to force the woman to have a child against her will. Even though he would have been under no legal obligation to support it. The entire responsibility would have been hers alone.

If he had succeeded it would have meant that rapists, incestuous fathers, or, as in this case, an ex-boyfriend, would have the final say in the birth of a child.

When a woman gets pregnant it is her health that is potentially endangered and her life that faces disruption, not just for nine months but for many years to come. The decision on whether to have an abortion must be the woman's without interference from the state, the church or the would-be father.

The "right to choose" is meaningless though unless it is backed up with resources enabling women to have real control over their bodies and their lives. Whatever the legal situation wealthy women will always be able to have abortions privately, or pay other women to look after their child.

Working class women though are often caught between being unable to pay for a termination, (abortions are only provided on the NHS during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy) and knowing they might not be able to afford the child. A real woman's right to choose means working class power with such things as communal child care facilities and the development of safe reliable methods of contraception as well as free abortion on demand.

DEBATE

WORKER'S CO-OPS: ————— How Socialist are they?

Many of you were probably wondering what sense there was in the "Co-ops Not The Answer" article in DA 36. We must apologise for the way it was laid out. Therefore we have published it again along with one reply that we've received so far. More comments are welcome as indeed are comments on any of the articles that appear in DA.

In a recent Guardian article ("Clarke Is Converted To Co-ops" - 4/11/86) Kenneth Clarke, the Paymaster General, is reported in a speech to have voiced approval for worker co-operatives.

It might seem strange to some that a right wing politician should favour an apparently socialist form of ownership. This seems less strange when you consider that nationalisation was first introduced by the conservative Bismarck in Germany before the first world war. Nevertheless some explanation is required.

True socialists should be opposed to co-operatives for the same reasons that Kenneth Clarke approves of them. Firstly, as Clarke asserts, co-ops are not plagued "with old-fashioned distinctions between management and shop floor". Yes, the division between the workers and bosses is blurred, inhibiting the development of working class organisations to combat the system.

Secondly, Clarke mentions that the Spanish co-ops that he visited recently were "fiercely competitive and innovative as any business run along traditional lines". Hence workers are set directly against other workers in capitalist

competition thereby fracturing class solidarity.

Thirdly, he suggests that co-ops "are merely one method of corporate organisation which could trade in a market economy". If capitalism could sanction co-ops then the reverse is true or, more accurately, co-ops are simply collective capitalism. As such they are prone to the ups and downs of the market economy, just like any other company. Commercial failure for co-ops may cause workers to blame themselves instead of the system. Commercial success can lead to a middle-class mentality even leading to the Rochdale Syndrome (the latest consequences of which was the Co-op's refusal to stop stocking Silentnight beds).

Even viewed from a practical short-term perspective it has to be admitted that co-ops exist within a capitalist market framework and so have to play the market game, a game at which they are mere amateurs. Most of the time the workers are going to lose.

Socialism can never be a reality inside a capitalist system. It is the complete destruction of that system which is the essential pre-condition to the construction of an anarchist world. By hiding the real enemy - the system - all perversions of true socialist ideas such as nationalisation, worker participation and worker co-operatives put back the day when we will see a free world. Even Labour die-hards must question the "socialist" nature of a form of ownership approved of by the Paymaster General - they surely wouldn't believe that he's turned socialist?

Dear Direct Action,

I'd like to comment on the letter in DA 36 suggesting that co-operatives are not a viable means of organising work. The writer goes on to extend Kenneth Clarke's reasons for approving of co-operatives, which basically boil down to the fact that what he calls co-operatives can work quite sufficiently in the capitalist system, to conclude that co-operatives are simply "collective capitalism".

It is important to recognise that inside a capitalist system governed by capitalist relations of profit and power all forms of labour organisation can and will be put to the service of maintaining it, as the writer argues. But to me co-operatives involve the collective non-hierarchical organisation of people to serve the people in them on a non-profit making basis and as such are a positive move to realise an anarchist form of organising. Basically Kenneth Clarke's ideas of what co-operatives are, are a "perversion of true socialist ideas" as the writer said, simply blurring the same old capitalist relations between bosses and workers but they are not co-operatives as anarchists would see or live them.

I'm not sure I'd think anarchy was such a good idea if I took Kenneth Clarke's view of what it meant as a definition.

In solidarity,

Robin (London).

Poll Tax

The government has proposed to abolish the rating system in Scotland and to replace it with a community charge. This will be payable at the same rate by all adult residents of a local authority. The level of the charge will be decided by each local authority and will affect all residents - including students - and not just householders as in the past. In fact the only exemptions to this charge are children under 18, prisoners, and hospital patients. The proposals take account of the Social Security review so the unemployed, pensioners, single parents, etc, who are entitled to housing benefit will be expected to pay at least 20% of this charge. Business rates will be retained but the bill will prevent them from rising faster than the general inflation rate.

That this bill is to be tested in Scotland before being introduced in England and Wales is no accident. The same was done with the criminal justice bill. The Tories have nothing to lose - their support has declined constantly since 1979 and declined even further after a mandatory rates revaluation last year which pushed rateable value far higher than in England.

The community charge is designed to punish the poor for voting for "high spending" councils. It is designed to check local authority spending through the ballot box. What it does is to further erode the Scottish economy and worsen the conditions of the Scottish working class. It must be resisted now before it is implemented. A campaign to refuse to register or to pay the charge can stop it if enough people take part. Waiting for the return of the Labour Party after the general election to abolish the bill will not suffice. Only mass action by those directly affected can stop it.

News from Italy....

GENOA DOCKERS

During January and February there has been widespread unrest at the port of Genoa, north west Italy. The rank and file have been in struggle against an agreement made between their "leaders" and the port authority which involved "re-organisation of the work crews", i.e. cuts in numbers. At various times the port has been closed and wildcat actions have thrown port activity into disorder. The union confederation (CISL, UIL, CGIL)* has been severely attacked by rank and file workers for its collaboration.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

Up till now illegal immigrants have not been punished by the Italian government but in the spring there will be a census of these clandestine workers, and those without the proper papers will be deported to their countries of origin (mainly North African states). There are reckoned to be one million non-EEC immigrants in Italy, mainly in Milan, Naples, Perugia (where there is a

university for foreign students) and Rome. In Rome there are 105,000 foreign workers with papers, plus an estimated 55,000 working openly without papers and another 50,000 completely clandestinely. It is part of USI-AIT (Italian Syndicalist Union - International Workers' Association) policy to contact and unionise these workers, who until now have been marginalised by the union confederation (CISL, UIL, CGIL)*.

SECURITY

The latest six-monthly report by the Italian state security services continues to identify the Red Brigades (BR) as the biggest threat to the state. Not surprising as the mass workers' movement has been made harmless by the union confederation's "no strike" deal with the government last year. (see D.A 33)

* CISL - Catholics
CGIL - Communists and Socialists
UIL - Republicans and Social Democrats

MILITANTS ARRESTED

On February 10th the Bolivian government arrested 20 members of the militant Bolivian Workers' Centre (COB) and threatened "tough action" to break the latest wave of strikes sweeping the country. In recent months government troops have broken up strikes and protest demonstrations while hundreds of unionists have been jailed for fighting government-imposed austerity schemes that have slashed real wages and cost thousands of workers their jobs.

Oil workers struck on February 6th, demanding wage increases to compensate for Bolivia's raging inflation and were joined four days later by health service workers. Teachers have also joined the strike refusing to prepare for the school year which begins in March. In-

terior minister Fernando Berthelemy then ordered the arrest of 18 leaders of the oil workers' union and 2 teachers' union leaders on charges of inciting workers to strike and insulting the authorities.

International solidarity is urgently needed to free these class war prisoners. Letters of protest urging an end to the repression of Bolivia's labour movement and the immediate release of our fellow workers should be sent to:

President Victor Paz Estensoro, Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza Murillo, La Paz, Bolivia.
Minister Fernando Berthelemy, Ministry of the Interior, Avda Arce, La Paz, Bolivia.

New Republic? New Dictatorship!

Some copies of D.A 36 had a leaflet attached detailing the struggle of the railway workers' section, the LTO, of the COB (Brazilian Workers' Confederation, the Brazilian section of the IWA). The LTO organised a series of strikes bringing urban transport as well as the country's railways to a standstill. In attempting to repress the strike the so-called "New Republic" which came to power proclaiming workers' rights has used the laws of the former military dictatorship in the most authoritarian way possible. The workers held mass assemblies at stations all over the country and demanded improvements in pay and conditions promised 10 years before. The strike wave was declared illegal by the Brazilian Labour Court. Leonardo Morelli, COB general secretary and other members of the COB have been accused of sabotage and organising illegal strikes and stand to receive up to a year in prison as a

result. In December more arrests took place when a second strike was called this time joined by the reformist unions. Regular troops in the Brazilian army were used against railway workers with extreme severity. The COB has appealed for protest and solidarity actions; financial assistance and letters of protest which should be sent to:

Presidente Jose Sarney, Palacio do Planalto, Esplanado dos Ministerios, 70.160 - Brasilia - DF, Brasil.
Engenheiro Jose Reinaldo Tavares, Ministro dos Transportes, (same address as President)
Engenheiro Stenghel Guimares, Presidente da Rede Ferroviaria Federal, Praca Procopio Ferreira, 89 20221 - Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brasil.

Send donations to: Direct Action, Box DA, Raven, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2BU.



Striking Brazilian Workers

South Africa:

Unemployed Organise



Sarmcol Workers T-shirt Co-op

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has supported the idea of organising a union for unemployed workers since it was formed in December 1985. It took a step towards making this a reality at a meeting in Johannesburg in January. Delegates from unemployed workers' groups linked to worker advice centres in Johannesburg, Capetown, East London and Port Elizabeth met to plan a national meeting of the organised unemployed and the launch of an unemployed workers' union later this year.

The pressure to organise the unemployed reflects the level of unemployment among black South Africans and the effects of the current recession. Black unemployment has always been high but the last few years have seen a catastrophic rise in the figures, much of it as a result of factory closures and redundancies. The Port Elizabeth - Uitenhage area, scene of some of the most militant community organisation and unrest, has been particularly hard hit by a recession in the motor industry with Ford closing its plants in the area - unemployment is running at 50%.

SACKED

Most members of existing unemployed workers' groups are former union members who have been made redundant or sacked. The groups have been involved in union activities including the organisation of co-operatives. For instance Metal and Allied Workers' Union members sacked in the long running BTR-Sarmcol dispute in Natal set up the Sarmcol Workers' Co-

operative whose activities include a tee-shirt and badge making co-operative, a purchasing co-operative to buy goods at wholesale cost, an agricultural co-operative using land donated by local churches and a health-screening project for the workers' children.

One reason for COSATU's support for an unemployed workers' union is that the organised unemployed are less likely to be recruited as strike-breakers. COSATU also has the wider aim of organising workers as a class rather than on the basis of sectional interests helping to break down the divisions between settled and migrant workers. According to a COSATU official "If we don't start organising the unemployed, we leave them vulnerable to the enemy, which is already organising the unemployed in some areas into vigilante groups, which become weapons against the working class".

COSATU still faces a number of practical problems in organising the unemployed. These include the difficulty of monitoring a less clearly defined membership than a conventional union and of developing democratic and accountable structures of control. One solution that has been suggested is to limit membership to unemployed workers involved in union activities such as co-operatives and educational projects.

COSATU is already starting to answer the question of what it can do for its unemployed members by campaigning for overtime bans and a 40 hour week in an attempt to create more jobs.

Dutch Dockers STRIKE BACK

The 15,000 strong Dutch syndicalist union, the OVB, were involved in the strike of 5,000 portworkers in the Rotterdam docks on the 19th of January. Thousands of other workers attended a mass meeting called the same day protesting against the bosses' announcement of 350 redundancies with a further 500-600 jobs having to go up to 1990. The bosses' action contravenes an agreement made only a year ago which promised no further forced redundancies until 1990. To get this agreement the workers, also represented by the reformist FNV and CNV (Christian) union federations, had to hand back their Christmas bonus plus 7.6% of their wages thereby paying for shorter working hours. The bosses also want so-called "flexibilisation" - the introduction of compulsory night shifts and weekend shifts, etc.

The dockers, who through past struggles have won 100% pay if there is no work during slack periods, are also facing a struggle against the bosses who point to the nearby Belgian port of Antwerp where workers only get 70% and have to work harder for less money. Dockers are determined to fight until victory. FNV leaders have organised a series of lightning strikes with up to 1300 workers on strike every day over a period of 3 weeks. In fact the militancy

and determination of the workers has been such that the FNV has said it has been more difficult to keep the workers at work than to get them out.

The government has intervened with a so-called arbitration proposal which FNV leaders have accepted sabotaging for the present the efforts of militant workers to carry on the action. The present peace is only temporary and sooner or later the bosses will proceed with their "streamlining" programme.

There is a clear case for all out strike action with the 5,000 other dockers in the bulk and container sections of the docks involved in their own actions. And with work stoppages in solidarity taking place at the Amsterdam docks there is the possibility of the strike developing into a national port strike. The example of a national strike in the Dutch docks along with the magnificent actions of the Spanish dockworkers organised by the anarcho-syndicalist Co-ordinadora and the recent strike by the rank and file in the ports of the east coast of the USA shows how the rank and file internationally are combatting the attempts by port bosses to impose massive cutbacks in wages and conditions.

Wheeler-dealing Bureaucrats

Since November 10th four Chinese chefs have been picketing Wheelers fish restaurant at Market Street in Brighton, which is franchised from Kennedy-Brooks, a large catering firm, by Dennis Bailey, a wealthy stockbroker. On taking over in February 1985 he imposed rapid new conditions. Despite the fact that the 4 chefs had worked for Wheelers for over 50 years between them Bailey insisted that they serve a probational period of 13 weeks. He altered shift rules without consultation; refused to pay for overtime and bank holidays; began to pay fortnightly instead of weekly; refused to pay holiday pay he was responsible for when he took over the franchise; cut holiday pay; asked chefs and other kitchen staff to redecorate the restaurant; and insisted they serve stale food or food that was not what the customers thought they were getting. In response the chefs held a one day strike.

Last October workers in some of the other Wheelers restaurants in London were offered their annual pay rise. Bailey refused even to negotiate over a pay rise. Subsequently when he attempted to add items to the traditional menu without consulting the chefs they refused to carry out his instructions unless he agreed to negotiations over pay. One of the chefs was sacked and the three others walked out in protest.

Although the strike is an official TGWU dispute the union has provided little support either nationally or locally. The union delayed paying strike pay for 6 weeks and has repeatedly refused to spread information to local branches without going through tortuous formal procedures.

Instead the strike has been sustained by the determination of the 4 chefs and those who have supported them on the picket line including other rank and file catering workers.

SUPER-EXPLOITED

The strike has implications in a number of areas especially for the Chinese community as well as other immigrant and black workers, who are often the groups in Britain most exposed to this kind of super-exploitation and harassment. It is important that they see Chinese workers standing up for their rights and being supported in their actions. The support of the Chinese community has been essential to continuing and expanding this struggle with many Chinese restaurant and super-market workers have pledged weekly donations to support the strikers.

It is important too that workers in the catering industry have begun to fight. In Britain 64% of catering workers earn less than the EEC poverty line. One in ten of the lowest-paid workers are in catering. With the weakening of the wage councils minimum wages for bar and club workers have been cut from £2.10 per hour to £2.04 p.h.; for hotel and restaurant workers from £2.15 p.h to £1.85 p.h. Employers are making full use of recent legislation to cut wages and conditions - like employing young people for "training" on barely more than the dole under YTS schemes.

These bosses use fear, victimisation and poor wages to keep workers down. The period for which a worker has to have

been employed before qualifying to bring an "unfair dismissal" complaint has been increased from 6 months to 2 years. The average staff turnover in the catering trade is 300% per annum! With only 6% of the industry unionised and many of the workers coming from groups who are most desperately trying to get jobs (black people, recent immigrants, women, single parents, "illegal" immigrants, students, young people), fighting back is very difficult.

DON'T TRUST YOUR UNION LEADERS

LATE NEWS

Transport and General Workers Union bureaucrats, never overkeen on allowing this strike to have the support it deserved, have now negotiated a £22,000 redundancy deal behind the chefs back. This means they won't get their jobs back, the only consolation being the redundancy money. Once again the reformist unions have allowed the class enemy to get away with murder. However, the dispute continues in London where 2 Chinese kitchen workers have recently been sacked and contact is being attempted with other workers sacked recently from premises linked to Wheelers. For more information contact Wheelers Support Group, 152-6 Shaftesbury Ave, WC2 (836- 8291).

Hospital News

The casualty unit of Ancoats Hospital, sited in a working class area of Manchester was shut until further notice on February 1st. The NW Regional Health Authority tried shutting the unit a few years back and intends to do so permanently this time. On the day of the closure the unit was occupied by local residents who have since mounted a campaign to have it re-opened. Together with the occasional shutting of Withington casualty and the closure of Salford Royal casualty last year, the result is that patients have to queue on trolleys in corridors at Manchester General. Once again, for the sake of cutting a few corners the lives of working class people are being lost.

When the NWRHA tried to close Ancoats casualty before, the struggle was won due to a massive campaign by both local residents and rank and file trade unionists working in the area (whose nearest casualty unit it was in the event of injury at work). That campaign was co-ordinated by NUPE. This time, however, apart from a small number of rank and file workers in the hospital itself the campaign has largely been abandoned by NUPE and other health service unions. Donations and messages of support are welcome - send to: Ancoats Hospital Action Group, Casualty "Sit-In", Old Mill Street, Manchester 4.

At the huge Oldchurch Hospital in Romford, Essex, management have appointed a man from Sainsbury's to vet all new admissions. Doctors have to ask him before they can admit somebody. The Sainsbury's man has a policy not to admit patients with chronic conditions or a patient who may need a bed for a long time. Who knows - perhaps the Sainsbury's man will next introduce "sell-by" or "discharge-by" stickers to put on the patients?

dispute van but seems to be doing little else while the local NGA is doing even less. The picket lines consist of the sacked printworkers, anarchists from Nottingham and other left wingers.

It is very much early days in this dispute and with both management and workers looking at the lessons they can draw from the Wapping dispute, the strikers look set for a long and hard struggle. But after seeing their unions sell out their Wapping colleagues few strikers can have any illusions about the "support" they can expect from their leadership. The task ahead for the strikers, with help from their supporters, lies in rank and file militancy, direct action, building practical solidarity locally, building the pickets, spreading the boycott and the "Send-the-Traders-Back" campaign, harassing and undermining the distribution of the papers, raising money and educating the public locally as to what is going on. If Pickering can't rely on meeting his distribution targets, then his advertisers will start to get jumpy and that's when he'll really start to feel the pinch.

For further information, to invite speakers and to send messages of support and donations, contact: Trader Sacked Workers Dispute, c/o 114 Stonehill Road, Derby.

WAPPING COMES NORTH-Traders dispute

Print millionaire, union hater and Murdoch admirer, Lionel Pickering, sacked 90 printworkers on December 4th last year after 9 months of negotiations over a wage deal (nine months of lying, going back on agreements, and refusal to go to arbitration by Pickering).

The workers learnt of their sackings when couriers arrived at their homes bearing "sack-o-grams". Immediately the main plant at Heanor Gate, Derbyshire was occupied by defiant NGA and SOGAT members who spoke angrily about their determination to fight Pickering and of stopping the printing of his newspapers elsewhere in the region. In the event the lock-in lasted only a few hours but a round-the-clock picket of the plant began straight away.

The job then began of finding out which plants Pickering was using to print his papers (including the Nottingham Trader, Leicester Trader, Derby Trader, Long Eaton Trader). It was learnt that the Nottingham Evening Post presses were being used. During a picket of the presses scabs were seen driving past the plant suggesting that printing had been switched to another plant. Since then there have been further pickets at other plants and offices connected with the "Traders" with some



workers being turned back and causing further switches of plants used.

At the time of writing printworkers were seeking out Pickering's latest plant. Not only are they confident of finding it, but they point out that having to switch plants so often is causing Pickering lots of hassle and losing him lots of money. Support locally is beginning to take off with a

support group being formed in Derby and one on the cards in Nottingham.

There's a healthy cynicism on the picket lines towards the union leadership locally and nationally. One of the sacked workers explained what happened when the first NGA rep arrived on the picket line; "He told us straight - 'Well, it looks like you've lost this one then...' The NGA has supplied a

CATERPILLAR-Resistance Carries On

The work-in at the Caterpillar tractor factory at Uddingston, Lanarkshire, near Glasgow, is continuing. The decision to close the factory with the loss of 1,221 jobs, announced on January the 14th, was taken at the multinational's HQ in Peoria, Illinois. US Caterpillar had apparently decided that world-wide they had excess manufacturing capacity and along with Uddingston would also close one of their US plants at Davenport, Iowa.

Occupation of the plant began immediately the proposed closure was announced, management being informed that unless they supported the work-force they would not be allowed back on the premises after taking their personal possessions. The occupation takes place on a 3 shift basis, with 90 men being

present on each shift. AEU shop steward John Brannan announced that 40 completed tractors each worth £75,000 would not be allowed to leave the plant. On the 20th of January, both Rifkind and union leaders had talks with senior Caterpillar management. Rifkind even offered more government aid but management again confirmed the closure of the factory.

The 26th of January saw production begin on a "token" tractor, which when completed was offered to the organisers of "Live Aid" but for legal reasons they refused to accept the offer. More tractors are now in production. A training programme was initiated by the workforce themselves so that they could learn each others' skills, with the goal of making the workforce one of the most flexible in Europe.

Caterpillar continually state that they will not reverse their closure decision and have threatened to advance the closure date if occupation does not end. On the 17th of February all telephone lines, into and out of the plant, with one exception, were cut off by management.

The struggle of the Caterpillar workforce to keep their jobs has received support from all stratas of Scottish society, from the rest of the UK and abroad. Weekly collections of money are made in Scottish cities and towns, and support has come from the Greenock dockers who have blocked goods bound for the plant. A delegation from Uddingston travelled to the Caterpillar plant at Leicester to assure the workforce there that tractor parts they normally received from Uddingston would

still be forthcoming. Caterpillar workers in the plants at Charleroi in Belgium and Grenoble in France said they would not handle any work that would have been carried out in Uddingston and offered support if management tried to end the occupation by legal action or by force. Despite white collar workers from TASS, ASTMS, and APEX calling off their support for the work-in the vast majority of the workforce remain solid in their determination to resist the closure.

Messages of support and donations to:-

Strike Committee
Caterpillar Tractor Co. Ltd.,
Factory,
Tannochside,
Uddingston,
Lanarkshire.

Racism on the Dole

For two weeks in January the Department of Employment carried out an ethnic monitoring pilot survey at 10 Unemployment Benefit Offices. Staff at offices in Leeds and Nottingham were instructed to record the skin colour of people as they signed on and assign them to one of four categories: Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Others (including White) or, refusing to be assessed. Staff were, however, not to tell claimants that they were being assessed, the only warning being posters hidden away on notice boards if they were displayed at all. In Handsworth claimants were allowed to choose which category they considered themselves to belong to.

RACIST SOCIETY

The government has failed to state clearly what it is going to do with the information. They have said vaguely that they intend to use the statistics to help black people in the labour market. It is already known that black people suffer massive discrimination and another set of figures will make no difference to the racist society we live in. The government's record on such issues does not inspire confidence; government reports have implied that black people are more likely to make fraudulent claims; Restart interviewers have told black claimants that their communities don't want to work; and passport checks have been introduced in the DHSS. Ethnic monitoring, and particularly the underhand method of visual assessment, just increases the suspicion that benefit could be influenced by a person's colour. The new Unemployment Benefit Computer has space on it designed to hold information on the race of each claimant. At present that space is not being used but some form of ethnic monitoring would be needed to use this space on the computer.

This was not the first time the government has attempted ethnic monitor-

ing in UBO's. In 1982, '84, and Jan '86 they had tried various pilot schemes, but each time they had floundered on staff opposition and adverse reactions from bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality. The CRE has now changed its mind and has decided that visual assessment is acceptable although many organisations representing ethnic groups remain opposed. The guidelines issued to office managers about the pilot scheme stated that local ethnic groups were to be consulted before the scheme went ahead and care must be taken to avoid clashing with important events. In Leeds these guidelines were ignored and the local Sikh community were angered by the lack of advance warning and the clash with an important religious festival. The insensitivity was carried further by the

displaying of a poster in Urdu about the scheme upside down.

The CPSA staff union has a national policy against ethnic monitoring in dole offices. In Leeds about 50 staff came out in a strike over the issue. Benefit Offices opened late because of staff shortage, and the strikers braved the blizzard conditions to mount an information picket informing claimants of the race checks and telling them that they could refuse to take part. They were joined on the picket lines by Leeds Claimants Union and by the RCP's front organisation Workers Against Racism who hung around for half an hour, told loads of lies and enraged everybody.

In Handsworth management were forced to suspend signing on because of the

opposition from staff and the local unemployed centre. In the second week the Department of Unemployment issued writs against the strikers saying that the strike was illegal as it was "political". After taking legal advice the CPSA members decided they had no choice but to return to work to avoid heavy legal costs and the probability of writs against individual members. Leeds Claimants Union carried on with the picket on their own and continued to inform claimants of their right to refuse to take part.

First indications are that a large proportion of claimants refused to take part in the survey. Together with some of the gross errors made by staff in carrying out the checks this should ensure that the results of the pilot in Leeds and Handsworth are meaningless. This is some cause for celebration but it must be remembered that it was only a pilot designed to try out the methods. It is known that Employment Minister Clark is keen on ethnic monitoring being carried out nationwide in the near future and that the claimants' choice method tested in Handsworth was designed to be a failure.

NEED TO ORGANISE

Sooner or later a scheme will be introduced to cover the whole country. It is likely that CPSA staff will be extremely limited in the action they will be able to take, and it will be up to ethnic organisations, claimants' groups and others to organise to sabotage the scheme. It is important that people prepare soon, as there is unlikely to be much warning of ethnic monitoring introduction. Leeds Claimants' Union will shortly be producing some information about ethnic monitoring and ways of resisting it. Anyone who would like more information can contact Leeds Claimants Union c/o 158 Hyde Park Road, Leeds 6.

Written by Leeds Claimants Union.



Pickets and claimants discuss the issues

TUC Get Off Our Backs

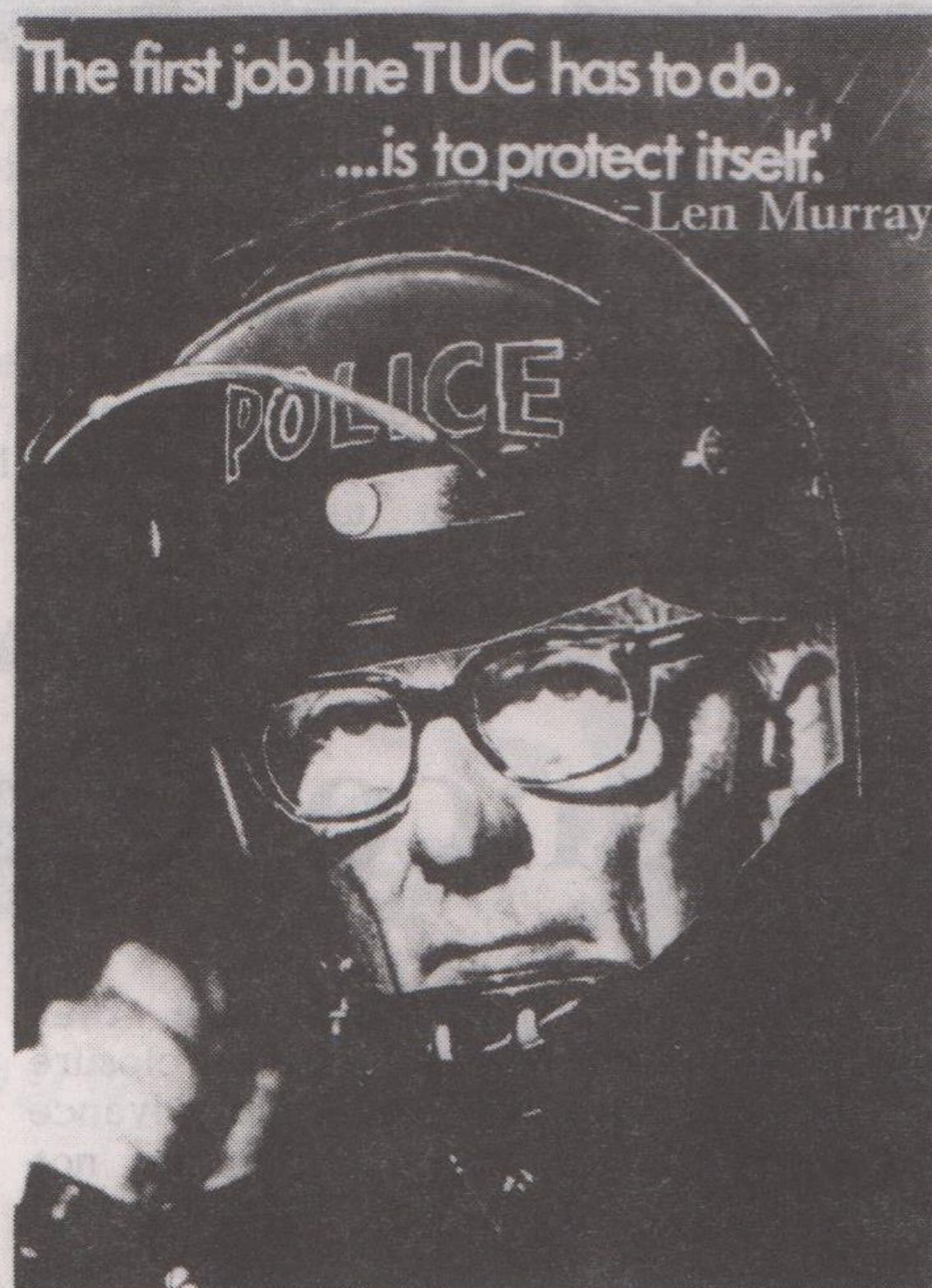
The history of the trade unions in this country is not one to be proud of - a gradual absorption into the state machinery and an endless chronicle of sell-out and betrayal of the rank & file by union bureaucrats who claim to represent our interests. The unions today are reformist, hierarchical and riddled with paid officials and professional bureaucracies. Trade and skill distinctions are perpetuated, even within the same industry. Institutionalised sexism, racism, is all too often not challenged leading to even more divisions between workers. Their links with the Labour Party and the state apparatus mean our struggles are constantly watered down and sabotaged, or channeled into acceptable and therefore ineffectual protests. The trade unions have by their own actions conceded their right to consider themselves organisations of working class unity and action.

Their reformist nature is obviously a prime reason for their inability to effectively support our struggles. It is not the job of reformists to question whose interest class society serves or to challenge the boss/worker power relationship. They aren't interested in the creation of a free and just society for all but merely in oiling the wheels of the state and capitalism to ensure everything runs smoothly. Unions rarely take disputes beyond the basic issues of pay and conditions. Obviously better pay and conditions is something we should fight for but on its own it is never enough - economic struggles must be shown to be political being part of the fight against the class enemy and the power system we live and work under.

WEAKNESS AND ISOLATION

Part and parcel of this is the dual problem of bureaucracy and hierarchy. The trade unions are institutions run by and large by loyal servants of the establishment who attempt to and often succeed in controlling and dividing the working class, which can only lead to

weakness and isolation in fighting back against the bosses. The further up the hierarchy they get the greater is the tendency to compromise, because the greater is the distance from the interests of rank and file members. The new class of union bureaucrats are cushioned from the realities of struggle by their inflated salaries and secure positions. They are eager to remain part of the



state apparatus and stay on friendly terms with the class enemy. Ever careful not to rock the boat and jeopardise their special relationships with the bosses they expend more energy controlling rank and file militancy, and stitching up "sweetheart deals" than actually advancing working class interests. It is revealing to see how during the 1984 TUC conference the Tory anti-union was described as an "attack on democracy" rather than as an attack on the class.

When sacrifices are to be made it is always our class who are called on to

make them. However, rather than use brutal repression to achieve these ends intermediaries are often used to fragment and channel resistance. This is not to say that the ruling class won't use overt repression, but rather that it is more efficient and useful to use means that ensure stability and the maintenance of the illusion of relative freedom. The trade unions are an example of this - a buffer zone between the interests of the bosses and those of the rank and file. The sabotage of the miners strike or the Wapping dispute, for example, is the assured outcome of any dispute that remains largely in the hands of, and limited by the union bureaucrats. How many times will we have to see rank and file initiatives watered down, held back by union procedure, restrictions and fear of confrontation before we learn the lessons?

A recent union circular to NALGO housing workers in Manchester following a successful NUPE-organised strike, stated that industrial action should be seen as an "ultimate weapon" and that the emphasis should always be on negotiations. But negotiations without at least the threat of action means we act from a position of weakness. Workers haven't got the time to wait while negotiations drag on - we need to force the bosses' hand. Union bureaucrats have all the time in the world, they aren't the people under threat - **WE ARE!**

It's easy for the bosses to stitch up a deal behind closed doors with paid officials who have no direct interest in the outcome of a dispute. Not so easy when they're fighting in the open with angry workers representing our own interests, with a hell of a lot at stake and a hell of a lot to lose. Look at the recent Wheelers dispute (see page 5) - rather than fighting to get sacked workers their jobs back, the union negotiated a redundancy settlement behind the backs of the workers involved, thus merely cushioning the workers' fall

rather than helping them to stand up and keep on fighting. The unions will only support strikes where they, not the workers are in control. Brenda Dean seemed more intent on denouncing militant activity at Wapping than giving real support to the pickets.

THE ALTERNATIVE

But is there an alternative? As anarcho-syndicalists we believe in taking the power out of the hands of the bureaucrats and that the way to do it is by active opposition to union officialdom and hierarchy; opposition to union attempts to prevent autonomy of decision making and action at branch, workplace or regional level; opposition to authoritarianism, sexism, racism and all other attitudes that divide us; opposition to election of non-recallable, fixed-term representatives in unions, to union involvement in parliamentary elections and to state-sponsored ballots in workplaces or industries. We support all workers expelled from or disciplined by unions for militant activities.

We believe that shop stewards should be delegates, not representatives, and subject to instant recall. The primary source of decision-making should be the workplace assembly which should be accessible to all workers. We call for building accountable and recallable workplace committees federated horizontally within and between industries to replace the local union branch as the main base of organisation. We believe all struggles should be self-managed, so we call for the regular mass meeting to be the decision making body; an end to postal ballots and secret negotiations. We should push for the widening of disputes by building links and solidarity with other workers and the broader community. This is the way forward for rank and file organisation, the foundations of the independent revolutionary union, and a step forward to the social general strike for the complete transformation of society.

ADVERTS

Meetings

STOKE

DIRECT ACTION IN INDUSTRY AND THE COMMUNITY - public meeting and talk with speakers from North West DAM. 7.30pm, Friday, March 20th at Cartwright House (adjacent to the ABC cinema), Broad Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

MANCHESTER

FREE OMORI - public meeting organised by Anarchist Black Cross with speaker from Black Flag. 7.30pm, Wednesday, March 25th at Manchester Town Hall, (Lloyd Street entrance).

ORGANISE No.2

Anarcho-syndicalist paper of the Ballymena Anarchist Group. Articles on the Health Service, Sectarianism, What Is Anarcho-syndicalism, Fiddled Dole Figures, News In Brief. Available for a donation/SAE from: Organise, c/o Just Books, 7 Winetavern St, Belfast 1.

RUDOLF ROCKER BOOK

Plans to get Rudolf Rocker's classic work "Anarcho-syndicalism" back in print are now well advanced. Most of the typesetting has been done and so it is time to raise the money needed to pay

the printer's bill - nearly £1000 of which almost half has so far been banked. The money is being raised by Phoenix Press in the same way that a similar sum was raised last year to pay for the publishing of Alexander Berkman's "The Russian Tragedy". We hereby ask all individuals and groups who want to see Rocker's book in print to lend Phoenix Press money in multiples of £20. Once enough money has been raised the book will be printed and everyone who lent money will get one copy of the book each for each £20 loan they made. As the print-run sells out so subscribers will be offered the return of their loan (but of course there'll be another book in the pipeline by then so they'll be asked to continue the loan.)



So that's the deal. In 1986 the same deal worked in getting the Berkman book into print. The sooner the Rocker book is published - the sooner Phoenix Press can start work on the next title (and the next). If you want to see this basic anarcho-syndicalist text in print

then please send money - in multiples of £20 - to Phoenix Press at :- BM Bookserv, London, WC1N 3XX.

PRINTERS WANTED

Cambridge Free Press need 2 new workers. We are a small, mixed printing co-op, working with local and radical community groups. Printing experience preferred, but not necessary. Commitment to collective working is essential. Further details from Cambridge Free Press Workers Co-operative, Unit 6, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge. Telephone (0223) 316 403.

LESLIES

Leslies, 17 Turners Rd, Limehouse, London E3, is an anarchist, feminist bookshop, food co-op and squatters' advice centre. We are now celebrating one year of existence. So far we have an established DAM group, a women's group and regular political video nights, but would welcome more visitors and input to help set up a cafe for example. Open Tues to Sat, 3 to 6.30.

NEW RANK & FILE GROUP

Communications Workers Group, c/o Lambeth Trade Union Resource Centre, Unit 117, Bon Marche Building, 444 Brixton Road, London SW9.

The phrase itself by definition implies that the state would be seized - dictatorship has to have a state structure to exist. This contradicts anarchist ideas that see the necessity of smashing state power.

Lenin himself in his most "libertarian work "The State And Revolution" saw the necessity of the Bolshevik Party using the dictatorship to destroy not only their enemies but their adversaries - ie those revolutionaries who were not Bolsheviks including anarcho-syndicalists.

Dictatorship of the immense majority over the capitalist minority, the dictatorship of a whole class cannot exist because it would end up as the dictatorship of a given party that claims for itself the right to speak for that class.

Yours,

S.T. (Manchester)

Produced and published by Manchester DAM. Printed by Aldgate Press, 84b, Whitechapel High Street, London. Send articles, letters, donations, etc to Direct Action, Box DA, Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester. The deadline for DA 38 is March 23rd. Please state whether or not letters are for publication.

LETTERS

Dear Friends,

After the latest nuclear disaster at Chernobyl public opinion is turning toward the closing down of all nuclear power stations. However BNFL and the CEBG will be spending millions of pounds over the next few months on pro-nuclear propaganda and the Conservative government has plans to commission 6 new PWR reactors in the life of this parliament, as soon as the Sizewell inquiry is completed.

Therefore we believe it is imperative for the anti-nuclear movement to build a campaign based on mass direct action to call for the immediate ending of the nuclear programme. At the moment our resources are small - we need to work more closely together, to share experiences and resources and to co-ordinate activities. To this end we are proposing the formation of an Anti-Nuclear Federation based on a federal, libertarian structure. The North London Anti-Nuclear Group would be interested in meeting with any other group which agrees with the idea, and would be prepared to host the founding conference

if response is sufficient. We hope to hear from your group in the near future.

Yours,

Dick Tapsell,
11a Downhills Park Rd.,
Tottenham,
London N17. (01 808 9560)

(on behalf of North London Anti-Nuclear Group)

Dear Comrades,

Concerning the question of "dictatorship of the proletariat" I cannot agree that Anarcho-syndicalists have nothing to fear.

Ever since Marx first used the phrase anarchists have recognised what it would mean - centralised, authoritarian control by a small group who would claim to represent the "best interests" of the working class.

The notion of the dictatorship comes from the Jacobins of the French Revolution. It is not a true product of the working class but was inherited from the bourgeoisie by state socialists who felt that workers could not take control of their own destiny but needed "experts" to lead them.

DAM CONTACTS

North East

Doncaster-----P.O Box 96, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN4 0QU.

Huddersfield-----P.O Box B20, Huddersfield, HD1 1RL.

Leeds-----Box DAM, 46 The Calls, Leeds, Leeds, LS2 7EY.

Newcastle-----c/o Tyneside Free Press, 5, Charlotte Square, Newcastle, NE1 4XF.

North West

Bolton-----c/o Bolton Socialist Club, Wood St., Bolton, Lancs.

Burnley-----5, Hollin Hill, Burnley, Lancs.

Liverpool-----Box DAM, 82 Lark Lane, Aigburth, Liverpool 17.

Manchester-----c/o Box D.A, Raven, 75, Piccadilly, Manchester.

Tameside-----c/o 3, Stanhope Street, Ashton-u-Lyne, Tameside, OL6 9QY.

Scotland

Bellshill, Lanarks-----c/o National Secretary, c/o Cambridge DAM.

Edinburgh-----Box 83, 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh, EH1 2QB.

South East

Cambridge-----Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

Central London-----Box DAM, 234 Camden High Street, London, NW1.

East London-----c/o 84b Whitechapel High St., London, E1 7QX.

South London-----c/o 121 Railton Road, Brixton, London, SE24.

S.W London-----c/o 121 Railton Road, Brixton, London, SE24.

Tower Hamlets-----17 Turners Rd, Limehouse, London E3.

Others

Bristol-----Box DAM, 37 Stokescroft, Bristol 2.

Mansfield & Ashfield-----28 Lucknow Drive, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts.

For contacts in S. Wales, the Midlands, East Anglia, Kent, etc, write to the National Secretary, c/o Cambridge DAM.

Industrial Network

DAM Building Workers - c/o ELDAM, 84b Whitechapel High St, London, E1 7QX.

DAM Civil Service Workers - c/o South West London DAM, c/o 121 Railton Rd, Brixton, London.

DAM Council Workers - c/o Box DAM, 234 Camden High Street, London NW1.

DAM Education Workers - c/o Bolton DAM, c/o Bolton Socialist Club, 16 Wood St, Bolton, Lancs.

DAM Health Workers - c/o ELDAM, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX.

DAM Postal Workers - c/o SW London DAM, c/o 121 Railton Rd, Brixton, London.

DAM Railworkers - c/o Manchester DAM, c/o Box DA, Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester.

DAM - IWA

1. The Direct Action Movement is a working class organisation.

2. Our aim is the creation of a free and classless society.

3. We are fighting to abolish the state, capitalism and wage slavery in all their forms and replace them by self-managed production for need not profit.

4. In order to bring about the new social order, the workers must take over the means of production and distribution. We are the sworn enemies of those who would take over on behalf of the workers.

5. We believe that the only way for the working class to achieve this is by independent organisation in the workplace and community and federation with others in the same industry and locality, independent of and opposed to all political parties and trade union bureaucracies. All such workers' organisations must be controlled by the workers themselves and must unite rather than divide the workers' movement. Any and all delegates of such workers' organisations must be subject to immediate recall by the workers.

6. We are opposed to all States and State institutions. The working class has no country. The class struggle is worldwide and recognises no artificial boundaries. The armies and police of all States do not exist to protect the workers of those States, they exist only as the repressive arm of the ruling class.

7. We oppose racism, sexism, militarism and all attitudes and institutions that stand in the way of equality and the right of all people everywhere to control their own lives and environment.

8. The Direct Action Movement is a federation of groups and individuals who believe in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism; a system where the workers alone control industry and the community without the dictates of politicians, bureaucrats, bosses and so-called experts.

The DAM was formed in 1979 from the SWF (Syndicalist Workers' Federation) and other groups and individuals believing in the principles of anarcho-syndicalism. It is the British section of the International Workers' Association. This was formed in 1922 and has national sections in more than dozen countries.

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WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I would like more information about the Direct Action Movement - International Workers' Association. Please send me information.

Name

Address.....

.....

Send to DAM/IWA, c/o Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir St., Cambridge.

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P (Bradford)	£1.30
H B (W Germany)	£5
C P S (Essex)	£60
N W (Manchester)	£1
T W P (York)	70p
M M (USA)	\$3

Direct Action

AUSTRALIA

LIFE UNDER A LABOUR PARTY

Recently on one of the many Wapping marches, a locked out printworker, discovering I was from Australia said "still, things wouldn't be so bad out there eh? - you've got a Labour government." I exploded "NO!" and then started to explain. In Australia, like Britain, people still believe that Labour governments will provide salvation for all kinds of ills. The feeling in Australia was the same after 8 years of Fraserism (a slightly milder form of Thatcherism). However, the Hawke Labour government had done its best to erode this illusion, attacking the conditions of the working class and a range of community interests, in the arrogant belief that people have no alternative but to support them.

Promised national legislation to provide for land rights for aboriginals (to return small areas of the continent stolen from them 200 years ago) has been dropped. Also dropped, to support the big mining lobby, was the proposed right of veto over mining on land returned to these traditional owners.

The ban on mining of uranium as Labour policy has been overturned since they were elected and they've resumed uranium sales to France despite the fact that France still tests nuclear weapons on Australia's back doorstep in the Pacific.

Few people in Britain realise the extent of Australia's integration in the US military-political system. Satellite ground stations at Pine Gap (which houses the second biggest concentration of CIA agents outside the CIA HQ at Langley, Virginia); Nurrungar, the high frequency communications station at North West Cape; and the low-frequency Omega navigation station in Victoria are all essential to the US nuclear weapons systems. These add up to make Australia a first strike nuclear target. Strategic analysts suggest that Australian cities are also targetted to deny the US of ports, industrial and communications facilities. The current Labour government has continued this dangerous relationship. Australian cities are still "host" to US nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered ships and submarines.

CENTRALISED

One of the characteristics of the industrial situation in Australia is extensive state intervention in the form of arbitration and conciliation laws. Supposedly one of the "achievements" of the labour movement in Australia, the arbitration courts, through power over awards and penal provisions, have been used consistently to reduce wage demands and thwart rank and file action. Through this centralised, wage-fixing system the Australian Council of Trade Unions (TUC equivalent) has concluded a social contract ("The Accord") with the Labour government. This has ensured real wages have been kept down - despite record profits in many industries. Attacks on the working and living conditions of working class people have come on a number of fronts.

THE NEW RIGHT EMPLOYERS

These attacks are exemplified by the Mudginberry dispute where meatworkers refused to negotiate a separate (lower) award with the owner of the Mudginberry abattoirs in central Australia. This meant a year of being locked out, picketing in the semi-desert and a protracted court case where the abattoir owner sued the meatworkers' union. The workers lost the case and the union was forced to pay out a million dollars in costs and compensation.

In Western Australia the Robe River Iron mining company locked out its workers over a number of "restrictive work practices" (actually a number of agreements covering a range of health, safety and other conditions that make working more bearable in the harsh north-west of the state). Despite threats from the State Conciliation Commission, workers were locked out for over 2 weeks and were forced in the end to agree to negotiate on some work practices.



Pickets (former patients) supporting the nurses strike outside the Epworth Hospital

Shortly afterwards workers occupied a West Australian oil rig when workers who attended a safety meeting were sacked. The workers only gave up their occupation after threats of being removed - which probably meant by the SAS, based in Western Australia and already practiced at capturing oil rigs, having terrorised Victorian oil rig workers in a recent "surprise exercise". The sacked workers were eventually reinstated.

These so-called "new right" employers (same as the old right) have started to go outside arbitration to reduce hard fought for gains by organised workers.

ATTACKS ON MILITANT UNIONS

Most notorious of these has been the banning of the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF) - see D.A 35. The good news is that many ex-BLF members are

reorganising BWIU (Building Workers' Industrial Union) sites and many have continued to be signed up with the BLF, holding their BWIU tickets only to be able to work.

A year before, the reactionary state government in Queensland banned an electrical workers union, installing a scab union and banning picketing (along with the earlier ban on street marches - much like the new public order bill here). Individual workers can be fined and jailed for industrial action at work such as go-slows or working to rule.

Other unions pushing for wage increases, superannuation, etc outside "The Accord", such as the Plumbers and Gasfitters, have also been threatened with similar treatment while the Liberal and National Party (i.e conservative) politicians have made it clear they will be taking a leaf from Labour's book when they're next in government.

Thus basic "rights" of association and organisation have been attacked and have to be fought for (yet again).

services, increased use of private buses and the early closing of many stations.

Unwaged workers have been hit by new restrictions on lodgement of applications for unemployed and supporting parents benefits, while flying squads of inspectors are harassing beneficiaries.

The Federal government has cut funding to child care centres and tried to impose its own criteria for who gets to use them, rather than allowing communities to establish their own priorities. These measures have been rejected by the centres who are refusing to comply. This pattern is repeated elsewhere in Australia in public transport, health, education, welfare, housing, etc. with provision of services, wages and conditions of workers and what little "community control" there is all under threat.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

It is in this context that the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation (ASF) operates. The ASF was formed a year ago. Industrial and revolutionary unionism has a long history in Australia with an upsurge after the 1890's depression with much support for the call for "One Big Union" and the direct action tactics of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). For example, the shearers burnt crops and shearing sheds in a number of disputes. This movement was largely destroyed when the IWW was banned for its opposition to the first world war and the framed-up conspiracy trial of twelve IWW organisers for arson. Since then there has been a number of small anarcho-syndicalist groups active, but no national federation until last year. The labour movement this century turned mostly to reformist and parliamentary means ignoring the rank and file, women, aboriginals, immigrants and the unskilled.

The ASF is provisionally affiliated to the International Workers' Association (IWA). Its monthly paper Rebel Worker is produced in Sydney and distributed to rank and file workers, delegates to trades councils and others through ASF members and supporters. Members have been involved in "twinning" with a BLF picket and supporting the creation of Patient Strike Support Groups during the nurses' strike. The Melbourne group produces an anarcho-syndicalist transport workers' paper Sparks, and distributes it to stations as well as train and bus depots. Both groups hold regular film and discussion nights. There is growing interest in anarcho-syndicalist ideas of rank and file organisation and control of industrial struggle, as well as community support for industrial struggles and vice versa.

At the recent national rally at Wapping one of the speakers suggested that what was happening at Wapping, and with the miners' strike, was the rebuilding of the labour movement "from the grassroots up". I hope so. Other speakers seemed, however, to hold out hopes for the TUC and the Labour Party to solve the problems of the working class in Britain. The experience in Australia shows quite the opposite. The "special relationship" between Labour and reformist union leaderships means that the Labour government has been able to get away with vicious attacks against the interests of the working class. Resistance, however, appears to be growing.

PUBLIC SECTOR CUTS

The most significant dispute to come out of this process was the nurses dispute in Victoria. Hospitals are chronically understaffed while thousands of trained nurses refuse to work for poor wages and conditions. A new award promised increases but its implementation actually meant no increase or losses for most nurses. So they took the dramatic and unprecedented action of striking. The state government claimed they're outside "The Accord" and refused to negotiate while the nurses were still on strike. In Victoria, also, technical and further education teachers have been threatened with working public services conditions (9 to 5 and 4 weeks holidays) rather than teaching conditions (9 to 4 and 8 weeks holidays) as a cost cutting measure (i.e jobs will be cut if they get this through). The teachers are taking strike action in opposition. Over 2,000 jobs in railways in Victoria are scheduled to go - meaning reduced