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# LONDON WORKERS GROUP

## Bulletin No. 7

DEC - JAN 1980

THE BEST THING ABOUT THE  
 1980'S IS THAT THEY WONT BE  
 AS BAD AS THE 1990'S.

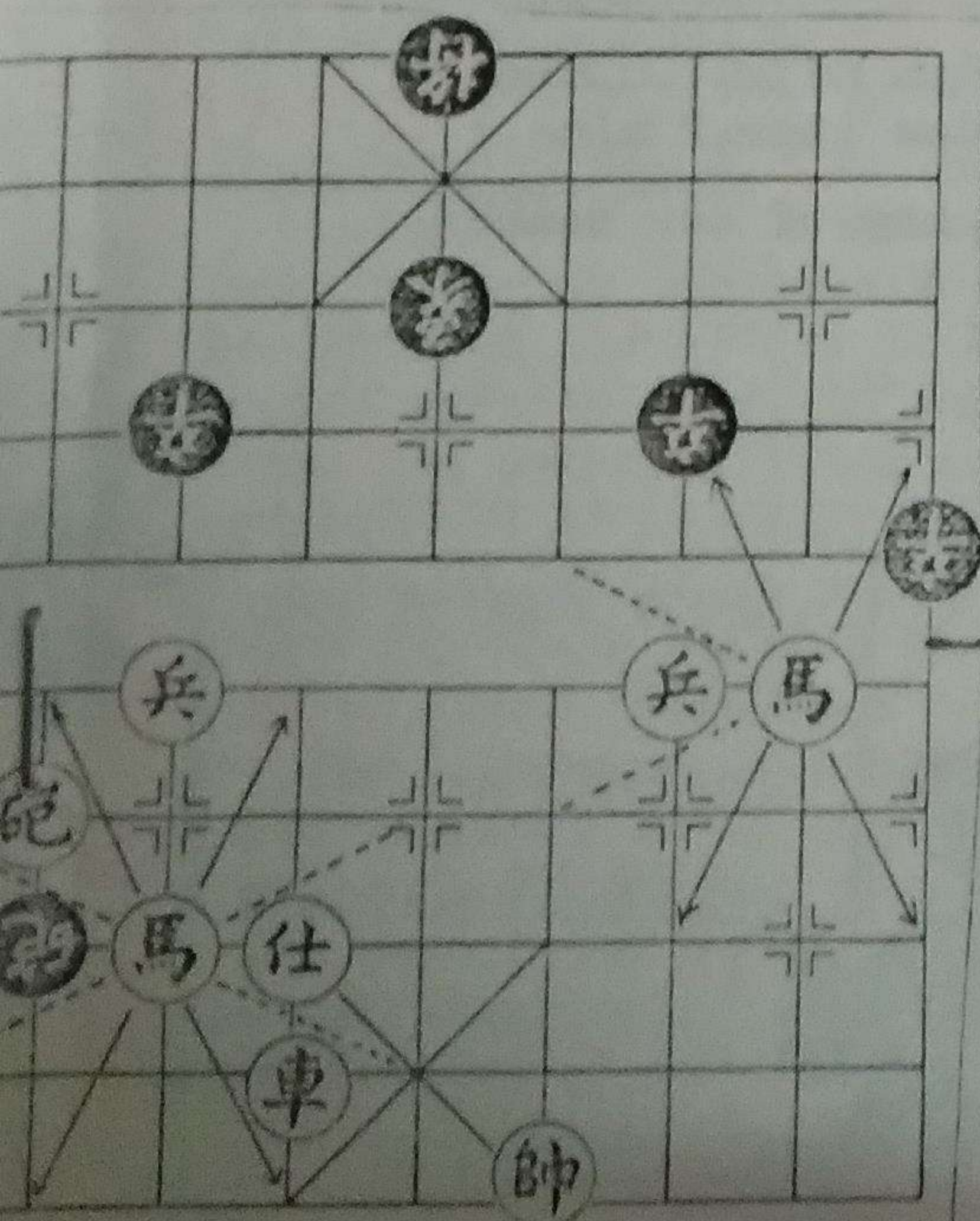
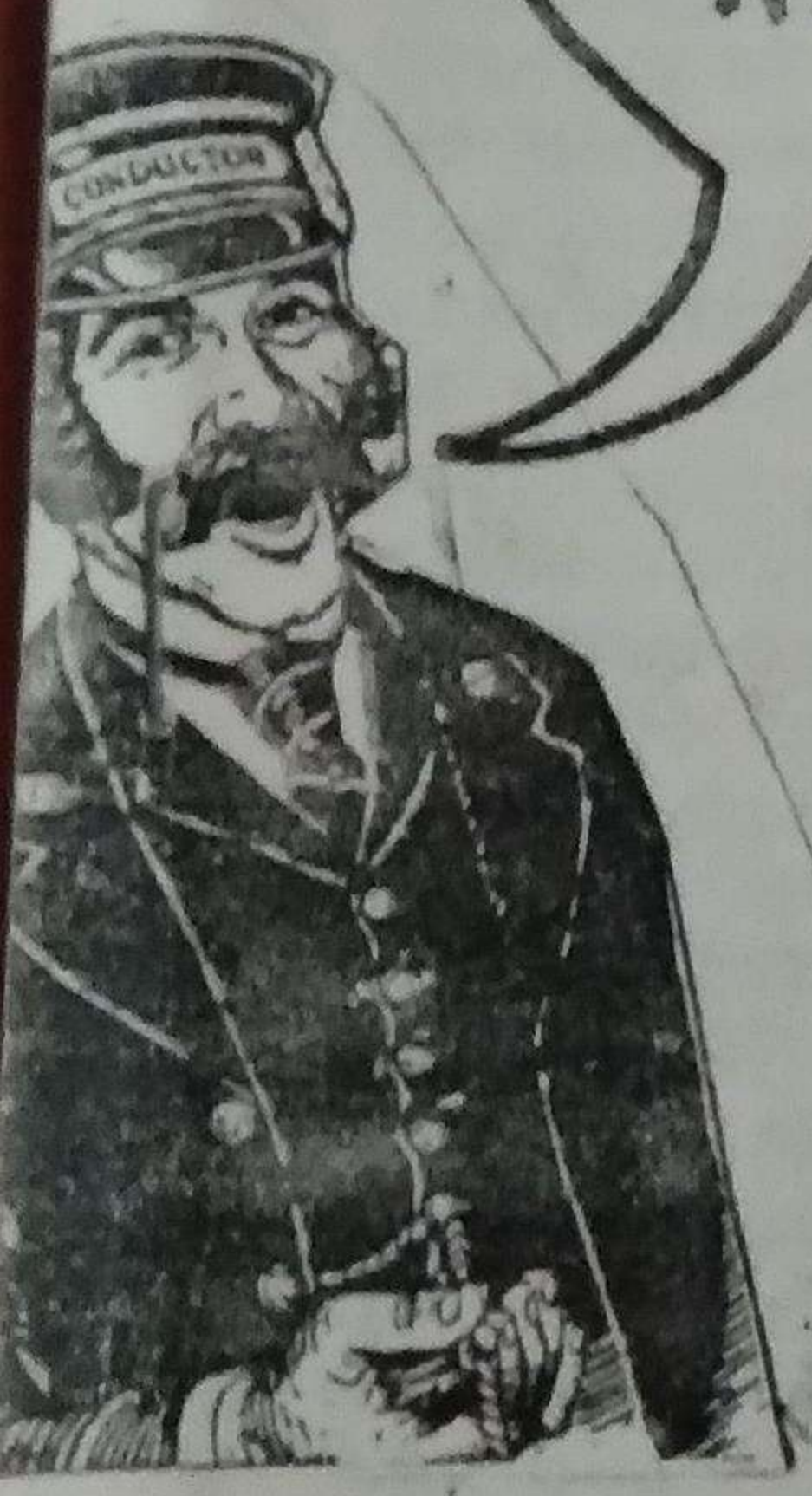
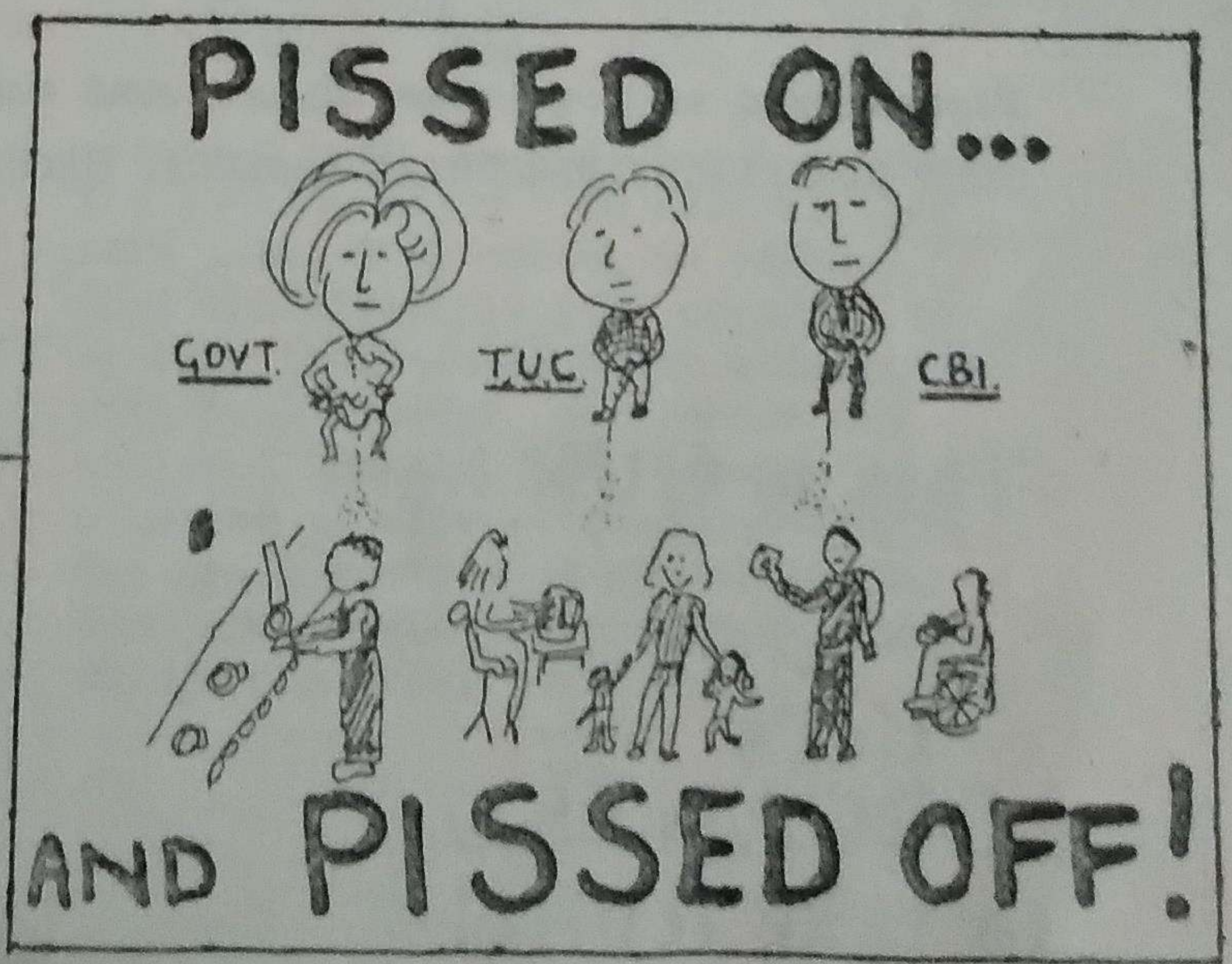


FIG. 2.



LONDON WORKERS' GROUP - AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

The LONDON WORKERS' GROUP is an organisation of non-party militants working in the London area. Our aim is to establish and encourage communication between workers in all industries in order to:

- (1) learn from each others experience and increase our understanding of industry and trades unions within capitalist society;
- (2) seek out and maintain links with other anti-capitalists and anti-authoritarians. While recognising the importance of organised struggle in all areas of life, we choose to concentrate on the workplace struggle. We believe that the formation of autonomous workers' groups within each industry is vital. The function of these groups is to spread revolutionary ideas and create solidarity among fellow workers. We also would encourage the formation of local workers' groups all over London, to complement the industrial organisations.
- (3) Devise and produce effective propaganda including a bulletin covering industrial news, workplace reports, analyses and theoretical articles,
- (4) and provide support where asked for.

Our aim is the establishment of a non-governmental, classless society of producers/consumers in free association. It is clear that unions and left wing parties serve to perpetuate capitalism, not destroy it. We are opposed to all hierarchical organisation and political dogma, hence our opposition to all political parties. We support all actions that tend towards complete workers control and autonomy as has been experienced through WORKERS' COUNCILS.

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We apologise for the delay in bringing out our latest contribution to 'The Cause'. More importantly we regret the unforeseen delay in the social revolution, which by all predictions should've happened at least 50 years ago....we're doing our best.

LWG meet weekly at The Metropolitan Pub, 95 Farringdon Rd, EC1...8pm.  
( Farringdon tube, 2 mins.)

Please send us your news, ideas...and come along to any of our meetings.  
FORM WORKPLACE, INDUSTRIAL and LOCAL GROUPS.

This is OUR town . . . .

Let's  
**ORGANISE**  
to take it over!



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182 UPPER St.  
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Report:PRINT UNIONS FACE NEW TECHNOLOGY

Although the printworkers unions are facing very serious problems with the employers who are seeking to introduce new technology, the reformist leaderships simply because they only operate within a reformist context, have no long strategy to deal with the situation and protect the jobs of their members. As we have already reported, they have tacitly accepted the need to introduce the technology and the consequent reduction of job availability. Even with contingent demands for a shorter working week, longer holidays and other fringe benefits, the technology will, long term, mean the positive abolition of jobs. In this the print workers unions are in no different position to unions in other industries where, indeed, the technology combined with the world wide recession is literally wiping out whole industrial sectors, e.g., steel industry, shipbuilding, wool and cotton textiles, etc.

Reformism Since the overwhelming majority of workers are themselves reformist in ideological outlook, they are in no position as yet, to challenge the control of industry by the boss class. And as the process of technological advance is an irreversible tendency, the union leadership must, of necessity, compromise with the bosses at the expense of the workers. So far as the revolutionary elements of the working class exist, they have been in existence now for at least 150 years and have failed to win the class for a fundamental change in the system of society, where we would have production for use and not for profit. We, as revolutionaries, have not done our job until we have worked out a long-term strategy in terms which are understandable to the majority of workers, and have built viable alternative structures capable of getting the message across and winning that majority for action.

From Here to There In the meantime, the class struggle goes on and we cannot afford not to be involved, if we are to have a meaningful role to play. In our industry there are potentialities for the development of at least the beginnings of independent class organisation, providing those holding the same or similar ideas to us, can be induced to play a positive role in the day to day struggles. It is not so much propaganda in general that is required - the demand for a "free society" - but our libertarian ideas must be specifically applied to the current

problems. Unless we show initiative in these current struggles, when and if the class begins to move, they will not listen to us - but to others with their nostrils.

Initiative Some months ago, a few individuals, on several newspapers, decided to get out a policy statement on the new technology, publicise it and, on the basis of a series of resolutions moved by various chapels (staff organisation) submitted for propaganda purposes to our branch meeting (10,000 members). Three chapels actively participated, after in-chapel discussions - The Guardian, The Financial Times, The Observer, Reuters (news agency). Each chapel took a number of worked out resolutions, had them discussed in some detail with the members, and then submitted them to the branch delegate meeting. It was, as far as I can remember, the first time there had been such co-ordinated activity. However, the attack on the current union policy was not broadly based enough, with the result that although there was an appreciable vote for them, most were referred back to the branch committee for consideration - in effect, they were lost. This meant, in effect, that the officials will continue to operate traditional union reformist policies. However, sufficient was achieved by this first attempt to mobilise an effective opposition at the grass roots - at chapel level. From such small beginnings, bigger things can grow.

Nat Soper.

Report:

GPO - More of the Same.

After five years I am beginning to get fed up with my job. This is a combination of many things - the lack of change in a small workplace, ( 70 colleagues ), lack of collective opposition to management, a feeling that I have explored to the limit relationships with the others I work with. This last particularly has brought out my frustration, to a point where I only see the negative side of my colleagues - the passivity, conservatism, reactionary attitudes etc. Maybe it is time to move on - to a bigger office, or one outside London, to a different industry, or something entirely different.

The Union. Since myself as secretary, and my friend as chairman, resigned our positions, the union branch has been taken over by two former committee members who dominate in the traditional way (union room locked, no information, no meetings etc.). Few people seem concerned. As for myself, I am now cut off from the official information channels and with no alternative network am unaware of disputes around London. An important battle which affects us is the Paddington Railway workers against staff cuts in their parcel section ( which by the end of October had spread London-wide on the railways ). The local sorting office is giving the usual solidarity without actually taking action. Conditions on both EE and the PO are very similar.

Wages The wage situation is as pathetic as ever with any amount of bits and pieces, increases, bonuses, back pay, rebates etc. arriving in dribs and drabs, hypnotising us all, but amounting basically to fuck all ( gross wage now 80 pounds ). However, the action last May against "efficiency" procedures is still keeping the attack on conditions and staffing levels as a mere threat which the GPO is unable to carry out.

is, you can never tell when postal workers are going to get a new bee in their bonnet.

Hiving Off The latest brilliant idea is the splitting of the GPO into a Tele-communications section and posts. Basically the tory party aims to convert any profitable business into private capital rather than State capital. The unions are divided over this with the POEU engineers hoping for increased importance and maybe a few more crumbs, but the UPW are totally opposed. UPW leader Jackson is making ultra-militant noises on this subject to cover his consistent smashing of any wage or industrial militancy of the last five years. I can't get excited either way at the moment.

Agitation As far as opposition and resistance inside the GPO is concerned, it is very much a day-to-day, place by place affair, with little enthusiasm for any widespread activity. The various attempts by left-wingers to create their front organisations have failed so far. The rank and file ( now dominated by SWP ) is reduced to holding poorly attended meetings at conferences to agitate for "election of all officials" and other union type activities. The anti-nazi clique has managed to sell thousands of brightly coloured badges, but created no organisation. Gay PO still survives on a mostly social level. The NF seem to be getting nowhere. The thing

Dave.

LETTER FROM MANCHESTER DIRECT ACTION MOVEMENT

Dear London Workers' Group,

The DAM has a federal structure, it is not a unitary organisation contrary to a recent report in your bulletin. The DAM is a federation of groups of members, and individual members. We did reject the affiliation of 'external' groups but this does not make us a unitary organisation.

Yours fraternally, (for Manchester DAM)

Ron.

Report:Direct Action Movement - Autumn Conference

On 29th and 30th September two of us in the London Workers' Group were at the DAM conference in Manchester as observers/non voting participants.

Re Cap

The DAM is a national organisation with about 60 members and at the previous conference in June had decided on a system of individual membership. There had been 8 of us from the LWG present then and we proposed group membership, including control of all funds at a local level and autonomous decision making of both policies and tactics. After much debate in London on this subject, where we also differed with

the majority of DAM on their "recruitment" attitude and their undiscussed tacit acceptance of the eventual setting up of Industrial Unions, we resolved to continue independantly but to work closely with DAM groups where possible. Some of our group have since joined DAM, and other DAM members come to our meetings to keep up communication. Anyway, back to the conference.

The Conference

Recruitment 23 people were there, many from the greater Manchester area, others from London, Sutton, Leeds and Hull. The discussions were chaired efficiently and decisions made by resolutions and voting after debate. In this way a lot of positive activity was agreed, although some questions were glossed over. It was agreed to mount a recruitment campaign amongst the Anarchist movement, in Left and community newspapers and amongst working class activists. A publications commission of three members was set up to co-ordinate the bringing out of national literature (local groups to do their own localised material). A poster and badge were planned, regional day schools suggested.

Free Association Another important discussion was acknowledging the principle of 'free association' - i.e. women ( and many other specific groups, industrial, age, ethnic etc. ) could organise independantly within DAM whenever they wished.

Youth Commission The final decision was to set up a 'youth commission' to prepare leaflets aimed at young people.

All in all The conference went smoothly, with a lot of enthusiasm and energy. It was practical rather than inward looking. However, there needs to be a great deal of discussion on where DAM is going, what strategy for social change is being developed, or the initial energy will either evaporate in confusion or solidify into bland organisation-building for its own sake ( a sort of Anarchist version of the SWP ). However, it is obvious that there's a great potential and need for both DAM and LWG type activity on a much wider scale than at present occurring, which is why we're working together.

"Bread and Roses" The Anarchist Communist Association had invited DAM to help produce their paper "Bread & Roses". The general view was that they were wary of the ACA and also that a paper would take up too much time and money, better spent on leaflets etc. More information was going to be sought.

Dave.

Exclusions Then there followed a discussion on who should be excluded from DAM membership. All agreed to exclude agents of the state (Police, army etc.) and members of political parties, but after much argument it was decided to admit followers of religious groups.

N.B. It is hoped that members of groups and individual members will take part in a discussion on the development of the DAM, both locally and nationally. We have had one such discussion in the LWG and no doubt others will be held. ....  
(cont.pg.5)

A CRITIQUE OF SYNDICALISM

The Inevitable I approached my working life in an attitude of bowing to the inevitable, and went through all the political reforms to better my lot, accepting the inevitable until I discovered the anarchist movement (!?). Now I refuse to accept the inevitable but work simply for money. Obviously I have no objection to joining a union and bettering my lot that way, but that is not emancipation ( just a breathing space ).

Counting Heads I feel that the syndicalist, ( particularly membership organisation ) approach falls into the lefty trap of counting heads and not effect. We should leave that to the TUC and discuss how we as working revolutionaries can best make our workmates more aware of their situation, and eventually willing to do something about it.

Revolutionary Gospel This will not be achieved by spouting the revolutionary gospel because most working people have the good sense to assess a person as an individual and not as part of an organisation

Living is or sindicalism The only way I can think of to get across to our workmates is by living as closely to our situation as we can given our situation. ( I mean the business as far as we can, but not sabotage e.g. Inebriety, forgetfulness, militant-reformist-trades unionism ), while always being prepared to argue for what we would like to see, criticised by words and action the tendency of all anyone as objects of fun and derision. ( women, gays, Blacks - this can be difficult as criticism is often taken as a personal insult which makes arguing together difficult ). I'm so stupid, as far as sexism is concerned, they keep me in line with their retorts - perhaps we can learn together. My point is that awareness comes from living experience and not baracking with words.

Jehovah's Witnesses I'm afraid that if we follow a syndicalist line we could easily end up doing the same at work as any sincere and militant Jehovah's witness.

(cont. from pg.4)  
It may also be appropriate for members to more fully take part in this discussion by making contributions to this London Workers' Bulletin. There are a

Lot of very controversial matters raised by the DAM Conferences, and the views of all would be very welcome.

MUSICIANS WITH DISSABILITIES & THE ISSUE OF EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment for all musicians is too high. For the average person with a disability it is far higher. In order to cut down unemployment of people with disabilities H.M. Government brought in the Disabled Persons Employment Acts of 1944 and 1958 - a quota system which roughly states that any employer employing more than 20 people must employ at least 3% registered disabled people (RDP's). Since the 1944 act became law there have been only 10 prosecutions. Apart from most large musical groups breaking this Act, so are some Trade Unions, the Conservative and Unionist Party, the Labour Party, most Fleet

Street newspapers, the House of Commons, the House of Lords. The only person who can take out a prosecution is the Secretary of State. This is why the law is not upheld.

The issue of discrimination against people with disabilities will be as big as the issues of discrimination on the grounds of sex or colour. During the last war over a million people with disabilities were murdered by the Nazis in the concentration camps, murdered partly because of isolation. The isolation is some thing which musicians can really help to overcome.

THE ETHICS OF CAPITALISM (HEALTH & SAFETY)Inspection Department Privileges

Since July I have been working as an electro-plater at the small factory LPA & REM in Essex. I didn't apply to the company for the job, but was sent by the local job centre to see about employment in the inspection department. - "Employer will train" stated the job centre card although it soon turned out that they wouldn't. They did, however, offer me the job as an electro-plater at £1.40 an hour (although at the job centre it was advertised at £1.10). This was generous compared to the 95p an hour earned by a student worker who stated work at the same time as I did, and the 75p paid to other temps.

Inadequate Protection Electro-plating isn't too

hard - there is no really heavy lifting, and the boredom of factory work isn't so acute in the plating shops as say a lathe. There are some drawbacks, however, particularly the fumes given off by the various solutions - ammonia, acid and cyanide fumes among others - and there is also a possibility of contracting skin rash from physical contact with some of the chemicals, or occasionally splashing (accidentally) some of the chemical solutions into the eyes. Although protective clothing (wellies, PVC gloves and rubber aprons) was provided they were inadequate - the gloves developed holes within hours and replacements were "on order" but not available (and still not at the time of writing).

Low Quality The vats (there are two) in which the actual plating is done are both contaminated by oil and/or lead, consequently components to be plated have to be protected by mesh baskets rather than placed on jigs, to prevent discoloration of the tin-nickel finish. Consequently the components aren't properly plated - tests have shown that only .0001 in. is deposited on many components as against the usual (and frequently specified by the customer) .0003 inch. Customers simply are not getting what they thought they were paying for.

Cost Cutting Cheese-paring attempts to hold down production costs are probably to blame for the contamination - brass components are received covered with oil and ineffective cleaning agents didn't shift it - although others are available. Certainly one problem is a refusal to dump old solutions and mix up new ones. This would cost a couple of thousand pounds but would in the long term be far cheaper than the various alternative remedies attempted.

No Maintenance Staff Cost-cutting also means that no proper maintenance staff were employed, so some machinery is dangerous - one of our centrifugal driers has a sheared bolt and can only be used if someone sits on it while in operation. Something I believe to be dangerous and have refused to do - and encouraged others to refuse.

Toxic Waste Far more dangerous in my opinion is the storage and disposal of chemicals. Corrosive chemicals including rocalane, which contains cyanide, are kept in a small shed which is never locked (night or day) and could easily become a danger to high-spirited children. Periodically many of the solutions we used have to be drained and replaced with new ones - the only means of disposal at LPA is to dump the lot down the drain into the town's main drainage system. Chemical solvents containing ammonia, and cleaning agents containing cyanide and acids have all been deliberately disposed of in this way. Although water board officials are supposed to make frequent checks on samples from our drain, they have not visited the factory since I started work - (this being before the Tory cuts take effect). If they do visit, our instructions are to turn all the water taps full on so that the cleanest possible sample is obtained by officials. Now that the self-styled conservative government is getting set to place a hedge of legal restrictions around traditional methods of industrial action - (e.g. striking and picketing), and while there is a good deal of support for such methods from the TV indoctrinated and deferential workers at factories like....

LPA (cont. overleaf)

The Ethics of Capitalism (Health & Safety) cont. from pg.6

LPA, it might be a useful idea to review variations on the "good work" strike. Campaigns by workers concerned with environmental damage to the wider community could lead to much closer links between industrial and community activists ( even resulting in "green bans" as in Australia where some unions refused to work in jobs that threaten the environment ), especially if issues are first taken up within the factories concerned.

Vital Issues For Anarchists there are two important reasons why environmental and safety issues are vital : firstly because they are primarily local issues ( even if duplicated on a national and international scale ) and as such encourage autonomous organisation independent of the national or regional union structure & the initiative starts and remains in the hands of people on the factory floor ( whereas, for example,

wage negotiations <sup>are</sup> implemented at a national level by the union hierarchy). Secondly they represent a significant measure of assertion by workers over the productive process as a whole. Because the factory floor is the "frontier of control", employers and management have deliberately shaped the nature of production and developed technology as a means of insuring their continued duration ( see Braverman "Labour and Monopoly Capital" and G.Brown's "Sabotage" for highly readable accounts of this trend ). Yet anyone who has ever worked in a factory knows how dependant its continued operation is on the willingness of workers to co-operate in their own exploitation. Demanding a healthy and safe workplace goes some way towards giving people an awareness of their ability to control production and leads a little way towards complete workers control of industry.

M.E.

..Cont. from pg 5

NOTES FROM AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER ON MOTION No. 56 ( PASSED ) OF THE  
18th BIENNIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE OF THE MUSICIANS UNION  
JULY 1979

People - Not Disabled People

"Recognising the value of the Unions' declared policy of opposition to discrimination on grounds of sex, colour, race or creed, Conference further declares its' opposition to discrimination against people with disabilities, on social grounds, and against musicians with disabilities."

Except for quotes I will use the phrase 'People with Disabilities' because a person who has a disability is not that disability : e.g.- If you break a leg you are not a broken-legged person, you are a person with a broken leg. You are more important than your disability, nor are you your disability.

UN Declaration On the 9th December, 1975 the British

Government signed the UN Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons. Par. 3 of the declaration states: "Disabled persons, whatever their origin, nature and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities, have the same fundamental rights as their

fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and full as possible."

Mecca Ban An extract from the Guardian (13/12/75):- "An ex-soldier who was blinded by a bomb explosion in Belfast has been banned from his local night club by the Mecca organisation - because he is disabled. Mr. Peart, an active man of 30, who has been chosen to represent Britain in the paraplegic Olympics ( he won a gold medal for swimming ), has been turned away from Tiffany's in Gloucester several times and says, "I felt degraded as a human being, and I don't deserve this treatment." It is Mecca's policy to ban people with disabilities from all of their venues ( even when privately hired ) and is still applied in 1979.

Isolation & Oppression People with disabilities have the same need for entertainment as everybody else. One could say that they have a greater need. There are many venues where they are barred. Banning people with disabilities from venues.....  
cont.pg.9)



THE CNT'S PROBLEMS ARE OURS

Misleading The article on the CNT (LWB No.6), though containing some bits of information, was very misleading when it purported to describe difference. It was clearly the viewpoint of one of the fractions trying the entry tactic in the CNT, (and moreover, some expressions were not adequately translated).

False Analogies To understand the CNT one must bear in mind that the pseudo-Marxist, or even genuine Marxist, analyses do not help. False analogies are made of the old CNT, which was not the 'mass movement', nor was the FAI 'the anarchist movement', like the TUC and the Labour Party, or a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party.

"The Mass Movement" The anarchist movement was the mass movement (corresponding to the way 'Labour Voters' are). The CNT represented those who were industrially organised, which was far from the majority. Huge districts in Barcelona, for instance, were solidly anarchist, but the only CNT membership was that of the Gastronomic (and this was the strongest union in Barcelona, representing the bars, hotels, bakeries, butchers in a way incomprehensible by TUC standards). The FAI was a small part of the anarchist movement, a link-up of the affinity groups. The lack of any bureaucracy meant that there was a large number of unorganised and independent groups, held together only by acclaim. The trots talk about 'CNT FAI bureaucracy' means that they are trying to translate Russian experience (as usual) into Spain. During the civil war 'anti-fascist' pressures - to sacrifice sectarian differences - was general amongst the workers, not just among the (mythical) bureaucracy or (barely existant) leadership. But because of it liberatrians found themselves in the government bureaucracy (though hardly the leadership).

Ossification Since the civil war till the fall of the dictatorship - if it did fall - there was a lack of discussion in the Spanish movement, and an ossified bureaucracy grew up in Toulouse. But this has little

relevance to before or after. Its supporters are too old to be effective now. Federica Montseny, the only leading figure left of the Ministerial team, is greatly admired for her (and her parents') oratory, her part in the women's struggle (though she is scarcely what people here would call a feminist) etc. But that is all.

Same as Before, but Weaker The CNT has been reconstructed quite spontaneously, but in exactly the same form as heretofore with no thought whatsoever having been given to it. Thus nothing has been gained from 40 years struggle. As it was in 1936, so it has been reconstructed, except that it no longer has an overwhelming mass support (knock that by our standards!) Originally the CNT consisted of locals of workers who changed round from job to job, building their organisation on the job itself. Only after long controversy, and never entirely accepted, was the idea of trade union differentiation introduced - and this too on a craft principle, precisely when the Western world was turning to industrial unions. (This is the form of organisation of which it was said, sarcastically, that it was 'smuggled in in a berreknof beer' - i.e. from Germany).

Organisation & Aims Perforce this tendency towards craft unionism has not been re-introduced, and the hall has once again become the primary form of organisation of the CNT, where the various unions get together, receive their separate contributions from factories, and in times of action, e.g. strikes, provide facilities for their members in those factories. (For the benefit of some readers, what is described by the CNT as its aim is Libertarian Communism, what they mean by Anarcho-Syndicalism is that form of organisation. Communism to them means as much as 'the commune' as common ownership, which are two different meanings of the term).

Penetration As the CNT is a remarkable prize to be won, a genuine working class organisation with a revolutionary tradition, penetration may in this day and age be expected. In the past POUM members joined the CNT ... but in the (cont. overleaf...)

CNT contd.

but in the main did so only because they objected to the reformism of the UGT and saw it correctly as a Statist minority schism. They did not try to penetrate except under their own colours. The trots tried to penetrate the POUM under false colours ( unfortunately all Spaniards, especially of the older generation, are totally unable to distinguish the POUM from the trots ).

Last Years of Franco The trots, during the last years of Franco, tried to not penetrate but BE, or be accepted as, the UGT. They could not hope to be accepted via the CNT, then reduced, in exile, to a Toulouse controlled council of veterans who would not admit any new converts, or in Spain underground and impenetrable ( anyway for them it was too risky to indentify with in Spain! ). The workers' commissions were speedily controlled by the CP in alliance with the Christian Democrats.

Middle Class Threats! This then explains the present "differences" in the CNT, more particularly in Catalonia. The infiltration of the trots is on a scale never previously envisaged in Spain though common enough in the Labour party. The CNT has always had points on which it could be criticised and which I have strongly criticised, but any criticism by trots is on a false basis because it is coming from outside the class, and is an attempt to take over by non-working-class elements. Not to mention that basically these elements are also authoritarian.

Another middle class threat is from the Catalan Nationalists ( no problem with the Basque Nats. who are prepared to sail under their own colours, no problem with anyone prepared to admit what they are; problems only arise with masters of political disguise, the cuckoos in other people's nests ).

Yet another is with the bourgeois elements posing as Anarchist and full of the sort of boloney with which we are only too well acquainted in the Anglo-Saxon countries to repeat here.

CNT Congress This is the reason why the CNT has decided to put off its congress till December ( and even now not announced the place ) to keep the representation from people on the job, and not have phoney representation from a load of political and libertarian odd bods outside industry! There is nothing to prevent them from organising as they please outside the Confederation of Workers.

Working Class Organisation It is remarkable that any working class organisation remains at all considering the cross-currents. But it is too deeply ingrained to be ~~broken~~. Alas, this does not apply to our movement in any other country. The problems faced by the CNT are ours too.

Workers' Councils Finally, despite some meanings given a new shine in the London Workers' Group, do not get confused about anarcho-syndicalism and workers' councils. "Workers' councils" - taken out of context is being freely used as a description of the Comisiones Obreras and the fascist type of organisation introduced into post-Franco Spain ( councils representing all the unions, who elect their members on a political basis to the works 'commission', and who have signed the Pact of Moncloa = social contract. The CNT boycotts this ). These are not Workers' Councils as we have known them - more the sort of thing beloved in the Labour Party ( except that they don't fancy the idea of different political unions being represented! ).

A.M.

People with disabilities (cont. from pg. 7 ) creates further isolation and oppression on top of the other oppressions from handicapism which people with disabilities have to struggle against every day.

Venues which bar people with disabilities include:-- 100 Club, The Royal Albert Hall, The Cottesloe Theatre (part of the National Theatre), and many others.