

# DIRECT ACTION

NEW SERIES - ISSUE NUMBER ONE SUMMER 1994

*Paper of the Solidarity Federation - The British Section of the International Workers Association*

## GOVERNMENT DOESN'T WORK

When the Italian government fell apart last year in a huge wave of corruption scandals, the right wing press in this country had a field day. The clean-cut image of British politics was held up as something for all the world to admire and for us all to be proud of, not like these cheating continental types. No-one should be fooled by this and a glimpse behind the headlines will show why.

Britain is increasingly being run by a whole series of quangos stuffed full of Tories and their friends. Over 40,000 unelected appointees spend £12 billion while an additional £38 billion is handled in the same way in the National Health Service and a further £2 billion by the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). This represents about 20% of total government spending. These bodies are not accountable to the public; have no codes of conduct and are havens for the incompetent and corrupt as the following examples show:

\* At the West Midlands Regional Health Authority investigations revealed that £10 million went to waste, including £81,000 on redundancy pay and a pension for a director who was to be dismissed.

\* At the Wessex Regional Health Authority £20 million went down the drain with the installation of an information system that turned out to be useless.

\* At the Department of Employment incorrect payments

of £69.5 million were made to Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) while another £48 million was squandered on a "Field System Computer" that didn't work.

**We in the Solidarity Federation believe that all states are corrupt.**

\* At the Welsh Office £37 million is unaccounted for in road-building contracts while a further £6 million went missing in payments to Welsh TECs.

\* Taxpayers were robbed of £3.6 million when 3 businessmen used contacts in the Scottish Office to buy thousand of houses despite the fact that higher bids were being made for them.

\* The Welsh Development Agency had an unauthorised redundancy scheme for senior staff worth £1 million and also wasted £300,000 in an abortive attempt at privatisation.

These and many other examples which can be quoted only go to show that the decisions which affect our lives are being made by a bunch of freebooters who are only out to line their own pockets. And, of course, all this money has come from the wages that we working class people struggle so hard to earn only to see an ever increasing portion disappear in income tax, national insurance, VAT and a whole host of other taxes.

We see a government that is holding down our pay with one hand and taking larger

amounts away with the other while at the same time turning a blind eye to the inflation-busting rises the top bosses are awarding themselves. With the massive cuts in public services in the last 15 years a number of questions need to be answered - what has happened to the savings from

these cuts?; why are taxes constantly being increased?; who is really benefitting? One thing is for certain, it isn't ordinary working class people who are reaping the benefits.

We in the Solidarity Federation believe that all states are corrupt. They only serve to perpetuate a ruling class of power hungry parasites that feed off the efforts of us, the working class. We stand for a way of life where all of us has a say in the decisions that affect us, not like in the current system where we get consulted once every four years and only then to choose who will maintain corruption and exploitation that is part and parcel of the capitalist system.

**DON'T MOAN,  
ORGANISE!**

**ORGANISING RESISTANCE  
IN THE CARE INDUSTRY  
CONFERENCE FOR CARE WORKERS  
RESISTING CUTS - DIRECT ACTION  
ORGANISING WITH USERS  
MANCHESTER TOWN HALL  
SAT SEPT 10TH - 11.00PM TIL 5.00PM**

Public Service Workers' Network  
PO BOX, 1681 London N87LE

## ILLEGAL STRIKE WINS

The Merseyside postal dispute in April has proved once again that determined, concerted action organised at a grass roots level can take on any amount of anti-union legislation and win. The action began on Tuesday April 12th when a union member on the night shift was intimidated by a supervisor who then had him up before the floor manager for attempted assault resulting in suspension. Immediately the whole shift walked out and after management refused talks, the next shift followed suit. The Royal Mail applied for a High Court injunction but a mass meeting decided that, illegal or not, the action would carry on.

By this time the strike was spreading despite the UCW general secretary instructing a return to work and supporting the anti-strike laws by repudiating the action. After a weekend of negotiating the strike committee voted narrowly to recommend a return to work after getting the suspension lifted.

This was the longest illegal strike since the legislation was brought in. It defied the High Court and the national union. It is only actions like this, controlled directly by the workers affected, not by full-time sell-out merchants, that not only get results, but also inspire those of us who believe strong workplace organisation is the key to real gains for working class people.

# THE SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

## A GUIDE

Solidarity - the unity of interests within our class: Federation - an association or union for common action.

These are the watchwords which guide us. Add to them the idea of working class people controlling their workplaces and localities on a day to day basis without the interference of local or national politicians or bosses of any description

and you have the outline of the sort of society we are trying to build.

The Solidarity Federation (SF) was formed in March 1994 when the Direct Action Movement merged with the Education Workers Network (EWN), the Public Service Workers Network (PSWN) and the Transport Workers Network (TWN). It now forms the British section of the International Workers Association.

The SF has a dual structure, being organised around where you live and where you work. The networks form the industrial strand of this structure and provide us with a focus for organisation and activity in the workplace and are the stepping stones to the formation of revolutionary unions in the future.

The other strand of our structure is based on geographical area. Local groups consist of SF members who live close enough to each other to hold regu-

lar meetings and therefore organise local activity. These various members may also belong to one of the various networks, depending on their work situation.

Although we emphasise industrial organisation the dual structure of the SF allows for other means of fighting back. We will sup-

port, encourage and initiate all activities that help to increase the confidence, politicisation and self-management of workers.

### A WORKING CLASS ORGANISATION

The Solidarity Federation is therefore, above all, a working class organisation. Its politics, structure and outlook are aimed specifically at working class people. Our immediate and long term aims have no other purpose than to be of benefit to our class. We reject elitism and do not claim to be the "leaders", real or imagined, of all workers, nor do we think we have all the answers.

While we seek revolutionary changes in society - and not just a change in rulers - we believe in fighting for immediate improvements at all levels of our lives and our environment. We are both political and economic in outlook and are opposed to any divisions

between them. We are open to all, whether waged or unwaged, and will always be independent of political parties and the TUC. We aim to promote solidarity between workers and win the class war by every means at our disposal.

We live in a world with enough resources, both natural and manufactured, to provide for everyone's well-being. That these resources are not being used to this end is down to the fact that the vast majority of people have virtually no control, physical or political, over them.

### A FREE SOCIETY

We believe a free society must entail the common ownership of the means of production and distribution, organised directly by workplace organisations and local/district councils or committees. We believe that all skills, manual and intellectual, all technology, new or old, should benefit everyone. We are completely opposed to capitalism - a minority living off the majority - and to state control, both of which deny our right to self-management.

A system of voluntary federation maintains the power at the base as well as being a co-operational link between workers' organisations at local, regional and international level. Persons or committees delegated to carry out decisions and tasks will be recallable and, if necessary, replaceable immediately. All positions of responsibility are for a limited period and are rotated.

We actively fight against racism, sexism, homophobia, nationalism and all other attitudes which divide and oppress working class people. An injury to one is an injury to all.

*The Solidarity Federation is therefore, above all, a working class organisation. Its politics, structure and outlook are aimed specifically at working class people. Our immediate and long term aims have no other purpose than to be of benefit to our class.*

# INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

The word "network" is being used more and more nowadays by all sorts of people and with all sorts of meanings. So what does it mean for us?

Industrial networks consist of those SF members who work in the same industry, not necessarily in the same

workplace or for the same employer. They spread information on workplace issues and promote the ideas of anarchosyndicalism. They tackle both local and industry-wide issues, thereby aiming to break the isolation felt in workplaces all over the country as to the situation elsewhere in their industry. To take effective action workers need reliable information such as networks produce and distribute, rather than using dubious sources like the media and the reformist trade unions.

happen until the unions themselves feel threatened. To present such a threat would mean we have already been successful, implying that workplace militants had found an independent voice, thereby making the unions less useful to us anyway.

### SETTING THE AGENDA

Industrial networks also provide a framework for militant workers to set



their own agenda. This means we can choose our own issues and demands, without always having to react to the whims of the union bureaucracy or management. All in all, industrial networks have a key role, not least of all during a dispute, by encouraging workplace organisation, holding local meetings and promoting solidarity, independence and flexibility of action.

Although industrial networks, with their combined economic and political outlook, may appear to be a new idea, this is not so. In fact this form of organisation dates from the days before social democracy entwined itself around and strangled working class ideas and organisation. Our ideas were effective then and can be more so now that social democracy has shown itself for the bank-

rupt system that it is. It may be argued that the social democratic unions will not tolerate the activities of networks and that we could all be expelled and thus isolated. So be it. This is unlikely to

of their purely reactive nature and limited political content have faded away once the focus of the struggle has moved.

### HOW FAR HAVE WE COME?

An industrial network is, to begin with, a political grouping in the economic sphere, aiming to build a less reactive but

positive organisation within the industry. The long term aim of industrial networks is, obviously, the creation of an anarchosyndicalist union. So, how far have we come? There are now three well-established networks each organising, building contacts and actively spreading anarchosyndicalist ideas in workplaces in their industries.

The Education Workers Network (EWN) has members from all levels of the education system from primary schools right through to the universities and is open not only to teachers and lecturers, but to students and anyone else who works in a school or college, no matter their job. The Public Service Workers Network (PSWN) organises in a whole range of services provided by local and national authorities as well as voluntary agencies, including the health service and the civil service and services that were once run by local government which have now been contracted out. The Transport Workers Network (TWN) has a presence in various branches of the transport industry, including the railways, the buses and road transport.

Within this set up there is scope, for example, for health workers or railway workers to come together to discuss issues and plan actions that are relevant to their own particular section. Clearly there are many anarchosyndicalists who do not work in any of these three industries and steps are being taken to set up additional networks. The SF as a whole has an important role to play in this task, as part of its work in promoting the spread of industrial networks.



## LOCAL STRATEGY

Very closely linked to the development of industrial networks are the activities of local groups of the Solidarity Federation and the establishment of locals or "Solidarity Centres". Locals can be seen as a place where like-minded workers can gather both politically and socially which would be a space for debate and a springboard for action.

Apart from industrial issues, SF groups and members are involved in issues which affect working class people beyond the workplace because the class war also takes place on working class streets and housing estates. A local SF group organises members of the industrial networks together with SF members who are in no network into one unit which can work locally. This type of broader local organisation complements the industrial networks, especially with increasing flexibilisation of the workforce with a decreasing number of workers being tied to one industry or one employer. By fighting around issues of interest to all working class people strong local organisation will prevent any tendency to concentrate on the "parochial" concerns of any one industry.

What we need is not single issue groups, however broad and participative, however radical and militant, but groups which will actually tackle issues from a working class perspective. By occupying this space anarchosyndicalism gives a class character and a point to struggles which affect working class people. By focussing on solidarity, and naming ourselves accord-

ingly, it is possible to combine both support for industrial disputes and agitation on local issues as twin focuses for anarchosyndicalist groups based in the localities where rather than solidarity action. It had no agenda to set light to an explosion of militant action against the bosses and capitalism. If class conflict on the shop floor is to become a revolutionary challenge to capitalism itself, it needs an organisational base to spread it. Industrial networks are our answer to the inadequacy of trade unionism, but if they are not tied into an active solidarity movement they will only be in a position to argue from the point of view of their own disputes and industries. The reverse of this is that unless the solidarity movement is tied to industrial networks geared to mobilising real solidarity, it will be reduced to what amounts to charity work.

Thus we can link industrial issues and the networks to local issues and at the same time make strike support a function of groups with a far broader class perspective and range of activities than a single issue group. This can only broaden the base of anarchosyndicalism by spreading acceptance that it is best way for working class people to organise. Not only can we make our own specific contribution to disputes, but we can also make sure that win, lose or stalemate the lessons and experience get put to good use rather than being wasted. And, of course, the establishment of locals, or "Solidarity Centres", can only provide a greater impetus to and a greater focus for this work.

**CONTACT:  
NATIONAL SECRETARY**

**SOLIDARITY FEDERATION  
INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION  
PO BOX 384  
PRESTON LANC  
PR1 6PQ**



## NETWORKS AND HOW THEY CAN WORK

The Transport Workers Network has been around now for just over 3 years. It was set up when a small number of anarchosyndicalist activists in the rail, bus and road haulage industries came together with the aim of producing material that could be distributed throughout the whole of the transport industry. Our bulletin, Transport Worker, now on its eighth issue, has doubled its circulation to 4,000 copies, many of which are distributed directly by a growing list of workplace

contacts. TW is also distributed by SF groups and members, and by one-off mail shots to workplaces, a method which has gained us many of our contacts.

Apart from TW, we have also produced and distributed a number of leaflets relating to specific issues and disputes. These have also been well received and, again, have led to new contacts, as well as annoying officials in the reformist transport unions.

We have also been able to organise public meetings in Newcastle and

in Bristol, both being areas where we have many contacts. Meetings like these, following up clusters of enquiries and bringing them together offer us our best bet in slowly but surely establishing ourselves as a concrete presence prepared to address social insecurity, degenerating working conditions and put forward the alternative to misery and exploitation.

In the short term our aim is to consolidate and build on these encouraging results which will mean continuing the work we

have already done. In the long term, in keeping with the industrial strategy of the SF our aim is the formation of an anarchosyndicalist union in the transport industry. While this may be some way off yet, we are nevertheless encouraged not only by the growing influence we have which belies our present small numbers, but also by fact that the our leaflets and bulletins have already wound up the hierarchies of the established transport unions.

## LOCALS A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Norwich Solidarity Centre has been open since May 1992 and is run by the local group of the SF. The Centre has books, pamphlets, posters and badges for sale; information on subjects from anti-racism to industrial law; a small but growing library as well as a small but shrinking stash of booze for when meetings drag on too long. We produce the local Solidarity Bulletin; organise public meetings with speakers or videos and hold social events which, besides raising much-needed funds, also allow newer members to meet others in a less formal situation than a meeting. This social or "club" aspect is vital in maintaining interest and attracting new contacts and members.

The Centre isn't a general advice or information centre, a set-up which can lead to a producer/consumer scenario where those running it are expected to advise those who call in. We do not wish to see this sort of divide being set up between working class people. We don't see ourselves as experts, we simply offer practical solidarity and the opportunity for centre users to get involved in our activities as equal participants.

Although the Centre itself has clear anarchosyndicalist politics, groups that we support such as AFA and ACT-UP can use the facilities. The response so far has been encouraging. New members are slowly but steadily joining and old activists have got more interested again

and come out of hibernation. Having a centre, even a small one, gives us an important focus. It shows we mean business, gives us a lot of credibility and has been a unifying factor in the activities of anarchosyndicalists in the area. Ideally we want the Centre to be a place where all sorts of activities can go on and to act as a place to rekindle some real solidarity and confidence within the working class.

Getting people involved, especially unemployed workers and workers in industries with no network, has been the main problem. As anarchosyndicalism isn't solely concerned with economic or political issues, but with both, activities can be varied and such problems can be sorted out with a little imagination. Also if a number of members wish to work on one particular area or topic they can set up a working group.

To summarise then, having a local centre, even if it's just a single room to start with, has many advantages. It immediately takes us a step away from being just another abstract political group, and shows we're doing something real. We now have a centre open at certain advertised times when someone can be found there. And of course it has a political role to play in promoting revolution. We'd say give it a go in your area.

*Norwich Solidarity Centre, PO Box 73, Norwich, NR3 1QD.*

## INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION: THE IWA

The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the International Workers Association, which was founded in 1922. The IWA has sections all over Europe, in South America, Australia, Japan, the former Soviet Bloc, the USA and Africa. Why organise internationally? As capitalism has become increasingly international, always looking for new markets to "exploit", so it is essential to stress the need for internationalism among all workers. Capitalism relies on divide and rule tactics. It therefore preaches rabid nationalism and patriotism. The Labour Party and the TUC go along with this and continue to use similar slogans whenever the opportunity arises. A genuine workers movement must completely reject this.

Our movement is based on the principle of solidarity. We embrace internationalism and reject nationalism and patriotism, just as we reject other reactionary attitudes and divide and rule tactics - like racism and sexism - all of which split workers and weaken any possibilities for action. Workers are exploited everywhere - that is our common link. We have far more in common with French railway workers, Polish miners or South African street cleaners than with any boss or politician, British or otherwise.

So where has the IWA been for the past 72 years? Until the second world war it had over 5 million affiliates worldwide, consisting of revolutionary and anarchosyndicalist unions. A combination of war, fascism, state-capitalism and communism all but destroyed it. But with the death of Franco in Spain and the subsequent rebirth in the late '70's of the CNT (Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo), the IWA had a new lease of life. Although nowhere near its previous strength, there are sections in over a dozen countries, ranging from propaganda groups to functioning unions. In Britain, the SF is in transition between these two forms of organisation - the industrial networks will become active revolutionary unions once they have enough members and influence.

One thing is certain; the SF will always look to build internationally with all anarchosyndicalist organisations through the IWA. This strong international perspective will play a critical role as we take on capitalism across the world, and win.

*INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION: THE IWA  
The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the  
International Workers Association*

# GET ORGANISED!

With management becoming increasingly out of touch with the work on the ground, and consequently more insensitive and heavy-handed, it's often hard enough keeping your job let alone thinking about organising resistance together. But it is vital that we

start, in small ways at first, to get our confidence back.

Our starting point in getting together must be that we are completely opposed to the disastrous direction in which things are going. Workers have nothing in common with careerists, bureaucrats and profit-mongers. They are out to exploit us and the users of our services for their own ends. It's vital that we defend the right for genuine, free community-based services providing for people's real needs.

## FIGHTING FOR SCRAPS

There is enough money around to provide work and resources to meet the needs of everyone. But at the moment, after over fifteen years of all out attacks on services, the government and the bosses are happy to keep it for themselves and for us to fight over the few scraps that they throw us. They will keep taking away our services as long as we let them get away with it.

It is vital that we start organising across our services in a massive campaign of workplace unionisation. Community care is a political hot potato and it will get even hotter. A massive campaign of resistance against the attacks on community care would mean firstly building our confidence to fight for what is ours. It would also involve re-asserting our right (along with users) to the resources to be able to care for each other. This is completely opposite to the current trend of those in power; to encourage selfishness and individualism and the survival of the fittest - they call it "self-reliance", we call it good old-fashioned exploitation. The agenda of those in power is a different one from ours. They have their own pri-

vate health schemes, paid for from the profits we have made for them.

## TAKING THEM ON

We need to take on the bosses at their own game. We can sabotage their profits and lies by

*We need to take direct action including workers' and users' occupations of services that the bosses try to close.*

"whistle-blowing" - publicising the truth about what is happening to

services. We need to resist and campaign against the many ruthless anti-union care companies now taking over services. We need to take direct action including workers' and users' occupations of services that the bosses try to close. We need to get on the streets with users, taking strike action if necessary as well as lobbying and occupying meetings where managers are making cuts. If those in power are threatening to close down and vandalise our services we need to respond in kind. Demonstrations could be targeted at head offices and we can show them what we think of their ideas of care!

## ORGANISING OURSELVES

We are the ones who do the work and run the services. We have nothing in common with those who are attacking our right to provide decent services. We also have nothing in common with the leaders of UNISON, who have no intention of stopping what is happening. They don't do the work we do - they just live off our union dues, and make an occasional statement about how bad the government is. When workers take direct action to defend themselves, it is often the union leaders that tell us to get back to work or to call off an occupation. It's quite clear that we can only trust ourselves, not self-appointed leaders or politicians. If we organise together at workplace level (and decide what action to take on the strength of what we think is practical, not on what union leaders want us to do) we have the power to bring a halt to the destruction, and to start to build for a different system in which we look after each other as a community.

# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

The government's Community Care Act last year introduced wholesale competition into care. Privatised care companies, many of them profit-making, are rapidly buying up day centres, residential homes and other services.

Care organisations now undercut each other, the aim being to pay the lowest wages and to get away with providing as few staff as possible working under the worst conditions. Alongside this they present the lie that everything is going well and that services are actually improving. "Purchasers" (ie local and health authorities) collude in this conspiracy of silence by refusing to admit there is a problem. Anyone who dares to suggest that services, conditions or pay are suffering

are quickly silenced.

The term "user-centred services" has come to mean that users, or their families, now have the "choice" to pay for their

own care - this is no choice at all. Charges for old people have massively

increased and now, for the first time, people with learning difficulties and mental health problems are being told that they have to pay for day or home care. The most needy and the people with the least money are increasingly being asked to isn't done. Users are in-

creasingly forced to stay at home or are thrown on the streets while workers will be increasingly untrained, unmotivated, low-waged, or even voluntary.

agers tell us) services for users will suffer if the workers demand too much. The government and the bosses have, up to now, been able to use this situation to di-

*The reality is that community care in the present set-up is a complete disaster*

vide and rule and walk all over us. The few remaining pockets of active workplace

Most community care workers are not organised in unions. Many of us work in small demoralised workplaces and don't have an opportunity to get together like other workers.

Workers are being guilt-tripped into not complaining, because (so man-

union organisation are being attacked, and shop stewards (or anyone else who speaks out) are being "de-recognised", and/or victimised by management. The priorities of the current unions provide no real protection for workers on the ground, and often act to disempower ordinary workers in terms of actually defending ourselves. Union leaders' strategy is increasingly to rely on European law to protect us and wait for a Labour government; and meanwhile they send us a glossy magazine once a month offering us cheap insurance and holidays. This is an insult to workers who are on poverty level wages and daily fighting to keep our jobs and basic employment rights.



## SOLIDARITY FEDERATION NATIONAL CONTACTS:

N. LONDON PO BOX 1681 LONDON N8 7LE  
DEPTFORD PO BOX 574 LONDON SE4 1DL  
S HERTS PO BOX 493 ST. ALBANS AL1 5TW  
NORWICH PO BOX 73 NORWICH NR1 2EB  
LEICESTER C/O 70 HIGH ST LEICESTER  
LEEDS 52 CALL LANE LEEDS LS1  
MANCHESTER PO BOX 29 SWPDO MANCHESTER M15 5HW  
LIVERPOOL PO BOX 110 LIVERPOOL L69 8PP  
PRESTON PO BOX 384 PRESTON PR1 6PQ  
NORTH SOMERSET PO BOX 1592 RADSTOCK BA3 3FH  
EDINBURGH PO BOX 516 EDINBURGH EH10 7JH

# DIRECT ACTION

NEW SERIES - ISSUE NUMBER ONE SUMMER 1994

*Paper of the Solidarity Federation - The British Section of the International Workers Association*

## BANGLADESHI GARMENT WORKERS APPEAL

In Bangladesh the independent, militant union, the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF), has launched a grass roots campaign to win better wages and union organisation.

Initially the campaign will focus on getting a "Festival Bonus". In the past workers received a bonus equal to a month's pay in celebration of the holiday of Eid, but this is being ignored in the textile industry. Last year the NGWF won a fight over payment of May Day as a national holiday and they want to repeat this success.

The campaign will be based on demanding the bonus from the bosses, mass publicity, expanding the campaign to other workers, students, women activists and holding demonstrations and meetings. If this is successful, a general strike of garment workers will be called.

To make this a success the NGWF needs \$2,000. This sort of money goes a long way in a poor country like Bangladesh. To help in this international appeal Lewisham Solidarity Federation is collecting donations.

The NGWF recently won a dispute at Flint Garments in the capital Dhaka using sit-ins and other direct action tactics. We can offer our solidarity, but we can also learn from their uncompromising stance. Workers here in Britain have lost much of the gains won by generations past in the same way as the NGWF are winning them now. We need to get back on the same track.

**Send donations to:  
NGWF Appeal, PO  
Box 574,  
London, SE4 1DL  
(please make cheques  
payable to "Deptford  
DAM").**

## NORWAY - SAS HOTEL WORKERS FIGHT BACK

The hotel and restaurant sector in Norway is dominated by part-time, short-time and flexible working and has a low level of organisation. An important exception is the Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS) hotel in Oslo which has the most active and strongest workplace organisation of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Federation.

Last summer SAS wanted to bring in an outside contractor and fire 120 workers but this met with a massive reaction from the workforce. They prepared for an illegal strike while other workers threatened to boycott the hotel if the plans continued. These measures forced SAS to back down and to agree not to use outside contractors in the future.

However, after a mere 6 months management were at it again. This time they intended to use a famous gourmet cook, Bent Stiansen, as a tool to crush the union and to flexibilise working practices. By opening a new restaurant under Stiansen, the hotel

restaurant would be forced to close down and many union activists would lose their jobs thereby weakening the union substantially. Shop stewards were told that this time the employers' association would use huge resources in an effort to smash the union.

They answered mobilising all 210 members and elected a strike committee. Other workers were mobilised too and stop alcohol deliveries and lift repairs. All this activity led Bent Stiansen to withdraw his plans for a new restaurant saying he would not be a victim of a struggle between the employers and the local union.

One important reason for the success of the SAS Hotel workers is that their union is functioning from the bottom up. There are no full-timers and all decisions are taken by the members at assemblies. Another reason is that they show no respect for the official trade union structure in Norway choosing to approach other workers directly to inform and mobilise them rather than relying on official channels.

## BYELORUSSIA - WORKERS UNDER ATTACK

During the last 2 decades of the Marxist dictatorship in the ex-Soviet Union, SMOT, the independent union, constantly and consistently stuck up for workers' rights and as a result suffered heavy repression. Since the much-vaunted fall of "Communism" things haven't changed as the events described below in Byelorussia demonstrate. In fact, there is still a pro-Communist majority in the Byelorussian parliament.

In January of this year at the "Zenith" factory in Vileyka,

management had 14 workers put on trial after a wildcat strike demanding fresh national elections and the formation of a "government of the people's confidence". At the "Transistor" factory the local president of SMOT was sacked in February and other workers faced harassment for organising a legal 1 hour warning strike and a mass meeting both in protest at the company's disregard for the few laws governing workers' rights.

In the capital, Minsk, the SMOT president at the "Integral" com-

plex was severely reprimanded for organising a 400-strong union meeting and for distributing leaflets and the SMOT paper, Basta!, while other workers are suffering a campaign of intimidation. The management at "Integral" are aiming to establish a joint venture with Bosch-Siemens and other German firms but first they have to meet a number of conditions including ridding the complex of unions, especially SMOT.

At the end of February, at the "Belvar" complex, also in

Minsk, a worker was detained and interrogated by the police for organising a strike committee and distributing its leaflets and Basta! The management have also achieved, after 8 years of trying, the sacking of the SMOT president for participation in a demonstration and mass meeting in February and for organising strikes for decent wages in December and January.

In the eastern city of Mogilev 2 workers, including a SMOT activist, are facing charges after organising mass meetings and demonstrations in January and February.