

Direct **Action**

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No.1

**BULLYING,
VIOLENCE
AND
CHILDREN
WITHOUT
CHILDHOOD**

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**Solidarity Federation
Direct Action
PO Box 1095
Sheffield
S2 4YR**

**SF Hotline;
0161 231 8177**

Editorial

The world is violent. It is becoming increasingly so. Society is moving in the wrong direction. What are the root causes of violence? Can it simplistically be summed up in the word 'oppression'? And what use is violence to those of us wishing to bring about a society where there is less violence?

Despite much study and consideration more questions than answers seem to have been produced on the subject. A contribution to the debate lies within these pages, the first issue of Direct Action in magazine format and the first periodical publication of the Solidarity Federation. Despite these firsts though, Direct Action has a long history going back as far as the 1940's, it being predominantly a newsheet or broadsheet format newspaper for fifty years give or take a few gaps.

The last edition of Direct Action appeared in 1992, numbered 80 (of the then current series) and bore the headline "500 Years of Resistance", the headline article relating to the anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Direct Action was always hard hitting, invariably critical of the status quo, and, unusually for anarchist publications, not afraid to foster discussion about what practical action we can take to create a better

world, both right now and in the future. It contained the broad spectrum of views of its readers and specifically not of any narrow political line or grouping. The tradition continues apace... Having said this, readers familiar with the broad anarchist periodical press may detect a slight departure from the accustomed starchy slightly lop-sided formats complete with recycled cartoons and endless red and black flagwaving.



There is nothing wrong with recycling (witness the odd reprinted article within these pages) but you have before you a departure from tradition. A mass media publication? The current mass

media is a creation of those in control, those who hold the purse strings and power. We as individuals all oppose this, and we can and must change it by our deeds. So don't hate the media, *become* the media of the future.

Convenor,
Direct Action Collective.

MAKE CONTACT

Bring out your Views!

Readers' views are welcome on all aspects of Direct Action Magazine. If you have something to say, help yourself and help us by saying it. Whether it is good news or otherwise, opinions, additional information or letters responding to articles or raising issues of interest, we want to hear from you.

Notes for Contributors

If you would like to contribute more than brief opinions, we request you send articles (between 500 and 2000 words if possible) in hardcopy and on disk in either Word for Windows PC version not greater than 6 or ASCII format. Contact us for electronic mail addresses or alternative formats. While unsolicited articles are welcome, they can only be returned if an SAE is enclosed.

Know More!

If you have questions for the DA Collective, would like to know more about us or the Solidarity Federation, do not hesitate to drop us a line at the address/phone number above. Do not expect high pressure sales, paper-selling requests or demands for this or that, do expect a reasonably prompt reply.

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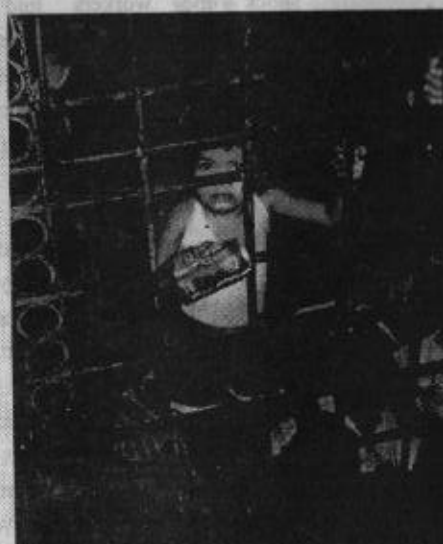
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By any means appropriate

Political violence, anarchism and talking tough

This is an attempt to (re)start the debate amongst anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists regarding political violence. It was brought about by frustration at the tendency of anarchist to evoke images of bombs and bricks, molotovs and machismo at, what seems, every possible opportunity. It seemed that anarchist publications relished the media role assigned us as caped bombers or masked hooligans.

To anarcho-syndicalists means and aims are integral parts of the process of transforming society. The end does not justify the means regardless. An end of a society based on collective free organisation of individuals based on mutual aid, tolerance and understanding needs to be struggled for on those very principles. This is by no means to take a pacifist position. Pacifism can only be a 'moral high ground', a purely individualistic, selfish attitude. The refusal to dirty oneself with violence allows oppressors to attack and harm others unable, rather than unwilling, to effectively defend themselves against the aggression of the state or to defend themselves from attacks from bigoted sections of society. This is a complete abjuration of responsibility.

To condemn violence of self-defence is to tar those who inflict the attacks with the same brush as those who suffer them and seek to defend themselves

and others. "To treat victims and oppressors as morally the same is moral nonsense." Having rejected pacifism, but refusing to give carte blanche acceptance to the use of violence it is necessary to examine what could be seen as appropriate.

Most articles and pamphlets when addressing violence tend to deal almost exclusively with terrorism, and/or propaganda by deed. For this reason I don't intend to deal with it in much detail. Another reason being that propaganda by deed, or the use of violence; bombings, assassinations etc. to promote and ferment revolutionary fervour is not much of a topic in Britain at the moment. The few groups and individuals who do seem to be quite keen on a bit of bombing to shock the workers into action fortunately appear to be unable to deliver, whether this is a case of all mouth and no trousers or the lack of ability is of little relevance to this article.

Whilst the destruction of sections of the ruling oligarchy may seem attractive in terms of giving them what they deserve, there can be little to be said for what can be gained in political terms given the current situation. The capitalist system rarely relies to any great extent for its power and coherence on individuals. Whilst it may be true that a few dozen individuals could be said to have a

major controlling influence of the world's economies, and thus in capitalism all other aspects of life, in terms of their position in major corporations, they could be easily replaced. Even more so politicians in the social democracies. The assassination of major figures in a dictatorship and especially of a dictator may well create enough instability for social and political gains to be made. The assassination of a Prime Minister or a President is only likely to lead to an offensive against 'politically subversive' groups and individuals (that is you and me).

Attacks on targets other than political or military personnel generally appear to refer to either major shopping areas, or transport terminals, usually involving either the potential loss of life of members of public or the requirement for the forces of the state to clear the public out the way before the bomb goes off. For anarchists to be happy to rely on the police and the military bomb disposal squads to stop them slaughtering members of the public is absurd. For anarchists who claim to be trying to create a fairer better world to be happy to blow up members of the working class in order for the working class to become sympathetic to anarchism seems, to be as polite as possible, illogical. Finally on this, it may be acceptable for authoritarian left, and hierarchical national liberation organisations to

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work, as is necessary in this line of action, 'undercover' and out of communication with the wider movement, and thus accountable to it, it is hard to see how the same can be said for democratic accountable anarchist organisations not forced underground, which in Britain, at least in the present, we are not. What I would now like to consider is the more day to day, as it were, type of violence. What the media would call 'yobbishness' or 'hooliganism'.

*"What you did does not make sense."
"It does not have to. It just has to get noticed. They have got to understand, oppressing people costs"*

Rioting may be a blast, it may give an adrenaline buzz, but it does little more in political terms than get people noticed. Now, getting people noticed isn't a bad thing. The meek will always get shat on. A basic of anarchism is taking control of your life, and working with others to stop people shitting on you. However, if you limit your strategy to glorifying pleas for recognition from frustrated angry people, you are going to go nowhere and offer them nothing of use except instructions in how to make a molotov.

Riots, or mass violent civil disobedience are not being condemned outright. When I talk to people about being in Trafalgar Square on the anti-Poll Tax demonstration, a large proportion of them can sympathise with what happened and what people did, but if I were to discuss having gone out the night before and whacked some copper for being a copper, the vast majority would think I was a nutter who ought to be locked up. Anarchists should not condone random acts of violence against minor individual representatives of the state. Defending a demonstration, strike or picket against attacks is not the same as blind useless attacks. I am not saying anarchists do condone such attacks, but there is a seeming obsession with highlighting the confrontational side of political action. This concentration of attention detracts from the hard work,

long boring hours and less sexy work which goes into political action. If you only present the haring around lobbing

glorify our ideas of co-operation, solidarity and mutual aid, not the fact that we 'done the fash'. It is all too

"...while it may be true that 'theory without action equals nothing,' it is equally true that action without theory means you do something stupid. Revenge is not a political ideology.."

bricks side, you only attract people who are interested in haring around lobbing bricks.

Anarchists and anarchosyndicalists have often been involved in violent confrontations, whether with the state, fascists or the authoritarian left. Again these really do not generate much in the terms of political gains. Self defence is essential. Defending ourselves and others is something we must be prepared to do, but without glorifying it. When confronting fascists you need to be organised and prepared for physical confrontation. The fact that fascists exist and can operate is an example of our failure to get our ideas across. To concentrate on physical concentration without addressing political issues is to compound that failure. Lets not get it the wrong way round, we need to

easy to get carried away and get the purpose of what we are doing confused. Physically keeping the fascists off the streets does just that, but it doesn't defeat them. We need to do that by spreading our ideas to win the political arguments. Much the same could be said for the state and the organised left, though in Britain at the moment the need to confront the organised left escapes me. We should work with them where its useful, criticise them where they are harmful and ignore them the rest of the time. If the only way you can deal with an argument is by hitting people, you are not ready for anarchism yet, but hang in there you will hopefully get the point.

Finally there is the biggie. The social revolution. The thing is that for an anarchist social revolution to succeed,

Violence and Money

Most violence is in fact perpetrated by the same governments and media barons who accuse anarchists of being violent. The World Bank only lends money to countries who 'adopt favourable wage policies' and thus participate in violence and oppression of workers worldwide. Also, loans and debts are good for business, and they lead to more violence. During Victorian colonialism rich countries like Britain were 10 times wealthier than poor countries. This disparity reached 38 to 1 in 1960 and 52 to 1 in 1985. Far from alleviating poverty, the World Bank and the IMF depend on rising poverty for business, and so promote it through their policies, unleashing a rising tide of violence in their wake.

See also *Children without Childhood*, p. 29.

FEATURE: Violence

for it not to be crushed by the force of reaction or taken over by some self serving new elite for the left, most of the work needs to be done beforehand.

It's no good just blowing away the state in a bloody struggle and expecting libertarian communism to fall into its place. People have to be ready and willing to run their own lives. The violence of a revolution should be seen like violence anywhere, only justifiable in self-defence. Revolution should not be viewed as a great cathartic blood letting ritual, or an opportunity for bloody revenge. Unless the majority of people want a social revolution and are prepared to work with and for the changes required, no amount of well trained disciplined and effectively murderous revolutionaries can create libertarian communism.

If the working class cannot be convinced by ideas and by example, then any revolution is a failure. It's not very libertarian to offer someone the choice of utopia or a bullet in the head. "...while it may be true that 'theory without action equals nothing,' it is equally true that action without theory means you do something stupid. Revenge is not a political ideology, and those who want to use anarchism to release their rage would be better advised to pound a mattress with a tennis racket."ⁱⁱⁱ

Violence is a heavy tool. It can do a great amount of damage and needs to be treated with the utmost respect, used sparingly and only appropriately. Violence can end a social revolution before it has begun, especially when used indiscriminately by the very people supposed to be propagating revolution. Bashing a copper, or bricking a toff because they are there should not be seen as an objective of anarchism. Getting rid of the need for coppers and eliminating privileged classes is the aim of anarchism.

Being an arsehole doesn't necessarily stop you being an anarchist, but it should not be seen as an entry

requirement. If you want to beat people up and get beaten up go hang out at one of the pubs in most towns and cities where like minded people go.

violence is a heavy tool. It can do a great amount of damage and needs to be treated with the utmost respect

If you want to make a better world, starting now, become an anarchist. Violence is never glorious, it is never great, it is however regrettably needed on too many occasions in the form of self-defence.

RAC

Postscript

And a final note for those looking in. Whatever violence has been committed in the name of anarchism, it vanishes into nothing when compared to that committed by states. Not just the dictatorships of the Bolsheviks and the fascists and their ilk, but also the social democracies. Read the newspapers. What are standing armies for if not for the threat and enactment of violence against not only external 'foes', but foes from within, the people themselves. "For two people to live in peace they must both want peace; if one insists on using force to oblige the other to work for him and serve him, then the other, if he wishes to retain

his dignity as a man and not be reduced to abject slavery, will be obliged, in spite of his love of peace, to resist force with adequate means."^{iv}

ⁱ 'Violence and Anarchism: a polemic' Freedom Press 1993. The quote comes from an editorial in Freedom, 30 April 1960.

ⁱⁱ Sample at the end of "Guerrillas in the Mist" Consolidated featuring Paris, on "Play more music". Network/Play It Again Sam 1992

ⁱⁱⁱ Carter Hill, Violence and Anarchy from Open Road (Vancouver, Canada) winter 1988 republished in Red and Black no. 19, winter 1989 (NSW, Australia)

^{iv} Errico Malatesta

"Whatever violence has been committed in the name of anarchism it vanishes into nothing when compared to that committed by states"



Workers Win at White Arrow

After the victimisation of 17 parcel delivery drivers at White Arrow Express' Liverpool depot for refusing to enter an unsafe warehouse, the workforce emerged victorious after a successful 2 day strike.

The company caved in after articulated lorry drivers at Wigan threatened to spread the dispute when it became clear that their depot was to be used to divert Liverpool's work to other depots at Burslem (Stoke-on-Trent) and Blackburn.

Role of TWN

Another factor which led to the White Arrow management's capitulation was the spread of news of the strike to other depots. This was achieved through

the publication by the Transport Workers' Network of a newsletter which was mailed to depots up and down the country. SF members also handed it out direct at many White Arrow depots where it got a good reception from

It is not often in the present climate that disputes end in a decisive victory for workers. This makes the success at White Arrow all the more important and satisfying

workers.

This sort of practical intervention by an industrial network can only bode well for the future. It helps to increase influence and respect in the very place where it is most needed - in the workplace itself.

We all know that unions like the T&GWU have no interest in letting workers know what is going on in other parts of their company. It is in this area that the Solidarity Federation, through industrial networks, solidarity centres and other initiatives which encourage self-organisation, can move ahead with the important work of laying down the foundations of future anarchosyndicalist unions in this country.

No Such Thing as Free Advice?

The Solidarity Federation and the various industrial networks it contains have members who are experienced in a wide range of disputes. Some are even middle-aged!

For truly free no obligation, no strings advice or even updates on disputes we are involved in (Postal Workers, BR etc) contact us at DA and we'll forward your specific request to the appropriate individual or group.

SUCCESSFUL PSYCHOPATHS

Now it's official! - people in high-flying careers where they can wield so much power are psychopaths.

Research at the Caledonian University in Glasgow has claimed that successful careerists like politicians and stockbrokers share many of the 20 characteristics associated with psychopaths. These include being selfish, callous, remorseless, a pathological liar, a con artist, anti-social and

parasitic. Sound familiar? The difference, we are told, between the criminal psychopath and the "successful" psychopath is that the latter stays within the law.



But then, if the law is made for your benefit then that task should be easy. Even then, we can all recite countless times when the powerful and wealthy have ignored their own laws.

PREVIEW

Over the next few issues of *DirectAction* we will be featuring a wide range of articles as well as the Regulars including roundups of direct actions. Just a few of the currently commissioned articles include:

Laissez Fairyland

**Media and the Culture of Resistance
Working Hours, Safety and Conditions
Primitivism**

**Sex, Social Hierarchy and Personal Politics
The Concept of the 'National Interest'
Child Labour in Pakistan**

Don't miss it! The easiest way to get DA is to fill in the form on page 10 and send it directly to us.

Sold Out Shut Out and Put Down

There are hard lessons to be learned from naively trusting our modern day reformist unions to back their members

The strike at JJ Fast Food Distribution between October 1995 and March 1996 was possibly the most important industrial dispute in north London for many years. Forty five, mainly Kurdish, workers struck in the face of police and scab violence and intimidation, hardship, and sabotage by T&G officials. The dispute exposed the exploitation of immigrant and low-paid workers as well as the failure of trade union bureaucrats to support them. It also gave us a glimpse of 1990's grassroots and community-based class struggle at its best.

JJ Fast Food workers work 60-70 hour weeks for around £130 in intolerable conditions. A working day can last from 5am to 5pm without proper breaks; there is no overtime, holiday or sick pay; and drivers have to pay from their own pockets for any counterfeit money they're given, parking fines and damage to trucks. Against this background a group of workers joined the Transport & General Workers' Union (T&G) and elected a shop steward. The management refused to recognise the union and the shop steward was subsequently sacked. The next day the entire union membership refused work.

Organising Support

The JJ Fast Food Locked Out Workers' Support Group was set up in the first week of the strike to organise boycotts, pickets, collections, flyposting and speakers for union meetings. It

produced the *Tottenham Picket*, in Turkish and English, which was distributed on the street and at union meetings. JJ's main outlet is Jenny's Burgers. Thousands of "Boycott Jenny's" leaflets were produced and pickets were held around London leading up to Xmas. This added to the boycott by local fast food and kebab shops organised by the workers themselves.

Role of the T&G

From the start T&G officials encouraged the hope that an industrial tribunal would win concessions and re-instatement. This completely missed the point of the dispute - to improve



working conditions and low pay. The T&G wanted recognition at any cost even if this meant worse conditions. They also wanted to avoid sequestration of union funds and continually tried to bully workers into calling off the pickets.

Workers had demanded that the union organise a mass demonstration. This never materialised and, in the end, it was organised by the Support Group

and the workers themselves. Of course T&G officials openly attempted to sabotage it. They told the police that it was unofficial, basically giving them the OK to ban it. In the face of this legal observers, stewarding and speakers were organised. In the event, the T&G backed down and the demonstration and rally went ahead successfully, organised completely independently of the T&G.

By Xmas a disciplined and effective unofficial strike was bringing JJ's to its knees. If the sacked workers had negotiated on their own at this point, with their own demands, they would surely have been re-instated with better pay and conditions. Unfortunately, this was not to happen. By the New Year a tribunal date was set and, from here, things went downhill. Very quickly a situation arose where the union controlled strike meetings and the tribunal became the sole agenda item. By February crucial time had been lost. The scabs were learning the job while the sacked workers were simply waiting for the tribunal.

Tribunal

The tribunal ruled that the workers had been sacked for union membership and ordered re-instatement. Those who returned were told there was to be no union recognition and they could be made to work from 5am till midnight if required. The tribunal brought in ACAS who directed JJ's to re-instate the workers or face further court action. ACAS also directed workers to sign

new contracts based on conditions at the time of the sackings. T&G officials offered only vague assurances to negotiate future improvements. This was a huge slap in the face for workers whose struggle was against crap pay and conditions in the first place. Ironically, in documenting their grievances over "existing conditions" to the tribunal it was used against them to draw up contracts containing those same conditions only now in writing. The T&G could have challenged this but instead told the workers to sign or have nothing.

Hardly surprisingly the workers were completely disillusioned with the T&G officials and the tribunal. They agreed a number of conditions under which they would go back. The T&G district officer flatly told them that the contracts were all that was on offer. The strike ended on March the 18th when 12 of the original 45 workers reluctantly went back.

In the end, the sacked workers found themselves worn down by a tribunal process that was always stacked against them and by a union that was interested only in securing recognition rather than in fighting to improve the lot of its own members. While the outcome can only be viewed as negative there were many positive aspects which should not be forgotten. These include the clear recognition by the workers of the need for direct action to bring JJ Fast Foods to a halt (a goal which was almost achieved within 2 months); the way the workers met independently of the union, encouraging the widest possible participation in decision making; and the amazing solidarity shown between Kurds, Turks and Cypriots despite the company's attempts to split one group from another.

Role of Anarchists

The considerable input from anarchists to the dispute deserves a mention. It included consistently encouraging and supporting the workers to take full

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Dispute Diary

- 30 Oct Shop steward sacked
- 31 Oct 45 union members refuse work and are attacked by Turkish fascists and police
- 1st Week Support Group is set up and begins boycott of Jenny's
- Nov-Dec Daily marches and lively pickets; police harassment is compounded by immigration status threats
- 29th Nov Workers reject JJ's financial offers despite strong union recommendation
- Xmas Deliveries down to 30% of the level before the dispute
- New Year JJ's refuse to take back Kurdish workers while trying to bribe Turkish & Cypriots, with connivance by T&G
- Jan-Feb 96 Industrial tribunal is set; it dominates the rest of the dispute and the T&G gains control of strike meetings
- 26 Feb Tribunal rules that workers were sacked for union membership and orders re-instatement; workers refuse new working conditions & the case is referred to ACAS
- 18 Mar 12 of the original 45 sacked workers return to work

control of the dispute and not to rely on the T&G. The Support Group was initiated by anarchists. An anarchist-controlled shop-front building was given over for use as a strike centre. This was important in establishing the need for self-organisation of the dispute by the workers themselves and enabled workers to meet regularly to decide on strategy without union officials being present. Haringey Solidarity Group, a community organisation involving anarchists, provided hundreds of pounds for the production of bulletins, leaflets and posters. Anarchists within the Support Group consistently argued against relying on, or even having anything to do with, the Industrial Tribunal. This was not through any purist "don't use

the courts" approach, but through the direct practical experience that tribunals do not serve workers' interests, even in clear cases of discrimination like the JJ sackings. Anarchists arranged legal support on immigration issues and with monitoring of pickets and demonstrations.

A lot of this work went unnoticed. However, it is both a strength and a weakness that anarchists, as usual, were undertaking much of the practical work, but failing to put a strong enough case for breaking with the courts and the T&G in favour of building a completely independent organisation.

READ



For Views, News and Anarchism!

Contact:

Black Flag, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX

Subscriptions (4 issues); £6 (Europe), £8 (World), £12 (World-airmail)

Fit for the Fight

In Chiaravalle, Ancona province, a mass movement has developed against the closure of the local hospital. This movement spawned an important strike which saw the comrades of the USI (1) in the Marche region (2) in the front line...

March 5th 1996 in Chiaravalle was a day of struggle for grassroots unionism and of mobilisation by an entire population around the defence of an essential public service -the hospital- which the State wants to close with the complicity of political parties and confederal unions (3). The health workers here have chosen the road of self-organisation and constituted themselves into a Base Committee of the Chiaravalle Hospital workers, with a platform (non-negotiable) for an open and functioning hospital (with its wards, operating theatre, and its ambulances, pharmacy, radiology and laboratory analysis services), to strengthen the service and make use of the already built new wing.

The population of the lower Vallesina (the area is one of the most industrialised and populous in the Marche region with a catchment of about 60,000 inhabitants) has drawn close to the Committee, participating actively in the struggle to defend a right which is everyone's, both of the health workers and the citizens. The hospital (like others across Italy) was supposed to be closed down by February 4th because it has less than 120 beds (a valuation which takes no account of the effective work done by the structure). In January the popular

**health
workers here
have chosen
the road of
self-
organisation**

response made itself felt increasingly strongly: "permanent assemblies" at the hospital, information campaigns amongst the population, contacts to create solidarity links with the workers in other workplaces and with the students.

A petition quickly collected 16,000 signatures. Notwithstanding the continued boycott on the part of institutions, political parties and confederal unions, a large demonstration of more than 4,000 took place on January 27th.

The USI and CUB (4) were the only unions present with their own banners and a leaflet fully endorsing the Committee's platform. The closing address by the Committee's representative, Giordano Cotichelli, was an act of accusation against politicians and an invitation to intensify the mobilisation, from below and self-organised, until the total accomplishment of the platform's objectives.

On February 4th the struggle started to bear fruit: the hospital's closure was suspended. Thus we arrived at the general strike of March 5th, an "historic" strike which really frightened the powerful and bureaucrats: the workers and townspeople organised themselves and bypassed political and confederal (3) bureaucrats and sell-outs. It was the USI, the Italian Syndicalist Union, which assumed the responsibility of "covering" the strike and put its provincial and national

**The campaign
against hospital
closures in Italy is
a solid, well
organised and
carefully
co-ordinated affair
involving both
workers and
community**

structure at the service of the Committee and its fight.

In the days immediately leading up to the strike it was becoming obvious that it would be a big success, and only then did the CGIL-CISL-UIL confederations (3) give a sort of "support" so as not to be completely side-lined, though continuing to question the Committee's platform and trying in practice to undermine the strike (stopping workers in other workplaces from striking at the hour proclaimed by the Committee and thus being able to take part in the rally).

Both the Committee and the Ancona USI Provincial federation carried out unceasing and thorough activity, plastering with propaganda the affected area of Ancona, Falconara, Chiaravalle and Jesi in the days preceding the strike.

On March 5th from the small hours Chiaravalle was a completely shut-down town. The strike was general. None of the shop shutters were raised. At the Sports Centre about 2,000 people attended a public assembly. The hospital workers and the townspeople took the stage themselves.

For the USI, Giovanni Santinelli (of the USI Self-managed Syndicate at the San Carlo Hospital, Milan) expressed the solidarity of the USI Health workers

Direct Action: Fighting Hospital Closures

national secretariat, and other comrades of the USI Marche Federation emphasised, to the general consensus, that these types of struggle must be co-ordinated at a national level and must remain self-managed so that nobody can manipulate or exploit them for the ends of politicians or union bureaucrats.

The Chiaravalle episode is an example of a difficult but exciting road; that of building a mass movement of workers and citizens capable of defeating the

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plans of those who want to hit the weakest classes with health-spending cuts, privatisations, and by depriving them of their rights; a struggle in which service workers and all citizens, finally united, become the sole protagonists of their own story.

USI-Marche Regional Federation

Notes:

- (1) Italian Syndicalist Union, Italian Section of the IWA
- (2) The Marche region is in central

Italy, on the Adriatic coast side of the peninsula.

(3) The CGIL, CISL and UIL union federations are confederated - they are the reformist, "official" unions, the Italian TUC more or less.

(4) The CUB is a rank and file union, arising out of the "base committees" (COBAS) dissatisfaction with the official unions in the late eighties.

Translated out of "l'autogestito" (April 1996)



Flashback to the Summer of Discontent: 21.6.96.. Bernard Cliff from Mersey Docks & Harbour Company issues a statement saying "the company can survive this", after the announcement that ACL, the biggest company using Mersey port is to pull out. MD&HC shares have been dropping for some time because of problems caused by international action in support of the Liverpool Dockers. After the

announcement they plummeted a further 39p, 10% of their value; no doubt Cliff got in very serious trouble with shareholders. LabourNet, UK

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Talk About A Benefit Rip-Off!

And it's not just talk. Implementation of JSA is upon us; what does it mean for you, unemployed or not, and how can it be best opposed?

Appearing from October at a DSS office near you is HM Government's latest horror story for the unemployed - Job Seekers' Allowance. With Unemployment Benefit entitlement already slashed to 6 months, unemployed people are now to be bullied off the register and into low paid and degrading jobs, in a further effort to massage the unemployment figures. However, it's not just the unemployed who are under threat. Unscrupulous employers, especially where no meaningful shop floor organisation exists, will no doubt be encouraged to take on unemployed people pushed their way by the Employment Service thereby undercutting existing wages and conditions.

PILOT SCHEMES

A look at 2 pilot schemes will give us a taste of what we can expect under JSA:

Project Work in Humberside and Kent involves all 18 to 50 year olds out of work for over 2 years being forced into Job Club places, 1-2-1 courses, Training for Work, etc., for up to 13 weeks. Refusal means suspension of benefit for at least 2 weeks. If still unemployed they're then forced on to Project Work for a further 13 weeks. This involves 18 hours' work a week for benefit + £10 and 3 hours a week on Jobsearch. Failure to start the job, or finish it, or being asked to leave, means loss of 2 weeks' benefit (4 weeks for a 2nd offence).

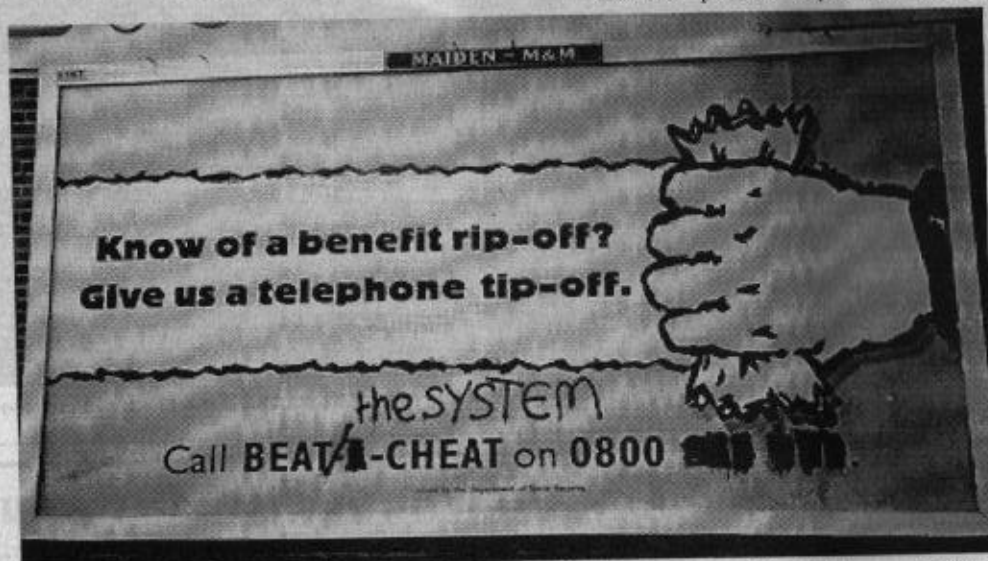
The Stricter Benefit Regime in Reading involves "Back to Work" teams getting those out of work for over 6 months off the figures by making them take crap jobs at crap wages which no one else wants. Refusal or non-co-operation means a cut of 40% in benefit.

BEHIND JSA

The Government has tried to present JSA as a simple exercise in making the benefits system fairer as well as saving

section of the workforce. JSA offers the chance to take this much further.

Of course, the rampant right have little need of excuses, economic or otherwise, to stick the boot into the unemployed. JSA satisfies that ideological desire to punish such "undeserving poor" who are portrayed as being deliberately out of work, deliberately draining precious resources. But unemployment is an essential part of capitalism and to



Some people have even called the freefone number (0800 854 440) from a public telephone and left the phone off the hook, or even come up with more imaginative games...

money from the welfare bill. However, the real reason lies in British economic policy and its drive for competitiveness in the new global market. In order to attempt to match the low waged economies of the Far East, the argument goes, British workers have to be forced to accept that their wage levels are going to have to be made competitive. Over the last decade or more, with relaxed legal safeguards, employers have taken the opportunity to significantly extend the low paid

support capitalism is to support the idea of a permanent pool of unemployment acting to dampen wage inflation and thus working class militancy. Those who look towards a panacea of full employment but who are unable to break with capitalism are sadly misguided. It is only the disappearance of capitalism forever that can ensure a sensibly organised economy where unemployment is a thing of the past.

ORGANISING AGAINST JSA

GROUNDSWELL describes itself as a National Independent Network resisting Job Seekers Allowance. It links together many anarchist, claimants and other groups up and down the country and has held a number of national meetings to exchange ideas and experiences and to plan actions. The local groups carry out various activities from occupations of Job Centres to leafletting claimants on how JSA will affect them.

NORWICH UNEMPLOYED ACTION GROUP, which is part of SF, is one such example. It publishes a local bulletin, *Unemployed Action*, to spread information and advice on

UNEMPLOYED ACTION

ISSUE 2 FREE



THE LITTLE GREEN FORM
ACTION AGAINST THE JSA
On April 19th Norwich Unemployed Action Group (NUAG) held a meeting to discuss the new Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and how it will affect claimants. The group decided to take action against the JSA and to set up a 'little green form' to be filled out by claimants who are not getting the JSA. This form will be sent to the Department of Social Security (DSS) and will be used to challenge the JSA. The group also decided to set up a 'little green form' to be filled out by claimants who are not getting the JSA. This form will be sent to the Department of Social Security (DSS) and will be used to challenge the JSA. The group also decided to set up a 'little green form' to be filled out by claimants who are not getting the JSA. This form will be sent to the Department of Social Security (DSS) and will be used to challenge the JSA.

Contact Norwich for free information like this (address at bottom of page)

developments in the Employment Service. It has also made a joint appeal with the Public Service Workers' Network, to Employment Service/DSS workers, pointing out how they will be affected by the advent of JSA. It asks: "Why are management going back on national agreements and forcing people to administer the new system, on the front line, under unacceptable conditions? Is it in order to create a climate of fear and insecurity amongst ES and Benefits workers that will allow a continuing cycle of lower wages and greater workloads?"

The key to scuttling the JSA would be
DirectAction No. 1 Winter 1996

you could well find your own pay and conditions under attack if your employer is allowed to take advantage of the opportunities that JSA presents

WHAT JSA MEANS

- JSA replaces Unemployment Benefit and Income Support, with under 25's and women with working partners getting 20% less.
- You have to sign a "job seekers' agreement" drawn up with your Claimant Advisor - benefit can be withheld until both you and your advisor sign it.
- "Back to Work" teams can match claimants with jobs; target them for interviews; issue "Job Seekers' Directions" ordering you to do something to improve your job chances; suspend your benefit for 2 weeks (4 weeks for a 2nd offence) for refusing work, for inadequate Jobsearch activities, or for failure to carry out a direction.
- The rules on "actively seeking work" now mean preparing CV's and providing evidence of job applications and research into potential employers.
- There will be no minimum wage below which you can refuse work.
- During periods of suspension hardship payments will be reduced dramatically and won't even be available for those who are not sick and are without children.

the obvious power an organised workforce could exert. Unfortunately, this isn't around the corner, even though some nation-wide strikes against open-plan offices have taken place and, in some areas, workers must be applauded for already slowing down, disrupting and even stopping stages of JSA implementation. There is no widespread militant shop-floor organisation willing to ignore the law in defiance of the union (CPSA). This is not to say that it is fruitless to agitate and call for such action. While the JSA may not be about to be halted in its tracks, it is to be hoped that some workers are heeding the message. Maybe next time (for to think there will be no more attacks would be naive) the chances will be so much better.

This makes the work of groups like Groundswell all the more important. If the effects of the JSA are to be minimised it will be essential that every claimant be well informed on how to avoid being disqualified from benefit without being forced into accepting a demeaning rate of pay. It is with this unglamorous but necessary work with which anarchosyndicalists are (or should) now be getting involved. Remember, even though you may not be unemployed or may not work for the Employment Service, you could

well find your own pay and conditions under attack if your employer is allowed to take advantage of the opportunities that JSA presents. So it is in your best interests to find out more about JSA and what you and your fellow workers may be able to do if you come under threat.

For further information on JSA; addresses of anti-JSA groups near you; ideas for action and propaganda; etc., contact:

Groundswell;
Claimants Action Group, c/o OUWCU,
East Oxford
Community Centre,
Princes Street, Oxford,
OX4 1HU (tel: 01865 723750).
Norwich Unemployed Action Group; PO Box 73, Norwich, NR3 1QD (tel: 01603 611072 - 24 hour ansaphone).
Solidarity Federation; PO Box 29, South West PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW (tel: 0161 231 8177 - 24 hour ansaphone).



Opus Dei

A first hand account of life with Opus Dei in Spain, and the breed of reactionary schools they are spawning in Britain.

Last April 10, the Guardian published an article under the headline "Catholic parents in Opus Dei sect to open school".

The article is about this autumn's opening in Surrey of a private school with backing from Opus Dei. As a former pupil in an Opus Dei school in Spain, my views are bound to be partly personal, but I have also done a bit of homework so I can draw some general points that can be applied to Opus Dei centres and institutions in general.

Elitism

Opus Dei is generally known to be elitist in recruiting students from high socio-economic backgrounds (my former school being one of the few exceptions). Obviously, the school in Surrey is private, so only a few privileged students will be able to gain entry. It is important to stress this point, bearing in mind that social connotations of Catholicism are quite different in the United Kingdom from Spain, where Opus Dei, a Catholic organisation, was founded in 1928.

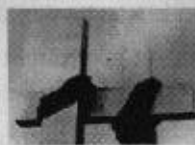
From what I have learnt in my five years in Britain, the question of being a Catholic or a Protestant is much more than a religious issue: it is a question of identity and social class. Since Catholicism has been traditionally linked with the working classes in Britain, it is important to recognise that Opus Dei is a body geared to oppress the working class.

We just have to recall the years of the Plan de Estabilización in 1959, when Franco appointed López Rodó and

other technocrats to plan and run economic development in Spain ("el desarrollo económico"). This development was based on a degrading form of exploitation of the workers, whose low salaries, any rises much

below the rise of the cost of living and inflation, were not enough even to afford them a decent meal. These are the years of the massive emigration waves of Spanish workers into Germany. The alternative: starvation. Just one of many examples of the historic antagonism of this religious organisation against the whole of the working class.

As I mentioned before, the Opus Dei school I attended in Spain is a rare exception amongst these institutions in that it recruits students from working class backgrounds. Situated on the



outskirts of Hospitalet, in one of the poorest areas of the province of Barcelona, it offers lower fees and grants, which are partly compensated

by the money they get from clawbacks such as enrolment of pupils in different clubs, institutions, leisure activities, etc. It is a very subtle, but effective, way of reaching the working classes and, at the same time, of attempting to clean up the Opus Dei image as an elitist body.

It is worth pointing out that, as the Guardian says, a distinctive feature of the Opus Dei is the fact that it is controlled by lay people rather than priests. Does this make them less elitist than, say, the real men of the cloth (*sic*)? If anything, the opposite. I can still hear them: "Oh, no, we are not a group of puritan monks isolated from society...we are a group of professionals with our own jobs who just happen to be members of Opus Dei...but we are in touch with everyday life, we know the feelings of the man in the street".

Sect Recruitment

Then there is the issue of recruiting pupils into their ideological line. John Philips, businessman and one of the founders of the school in Surrey, said to the Guardian that the school "would not try to make pupils into members of Opus Dei and that the children would not be forced to be Catholics". Bollocks. I've been there. I've heard these words so many times! Not only DO they try to make you a member of Opus Dei, they FORCE you into it. What do I mean by "force"? Their array of weaponry embraces emotional blackmail on children of all ages, psychological threats, DAILY phone calls to your parents for periods of, at least, six months, and endless

interrogatory sessions until you agree to be a member. Yes, Opus Dei schools force their pupils to join their organisation.

Quality?

The myth of Opus Dei and quality education. From the cases I know in Barcelona, Opus Dei students don't do better at all than other colleges' students in university entrance exams. Apart from this, needless to say the pupils are given an ideologically biased education. One of our History teachers was quite explicitly supportive of Fuerza Nueva, a Spanish fascist party. Of course, he had been there for years, while more liberal teachers, if recruited at all, lasted only a few months. Opus Dei education reflects all the negative characteristics of religious education. Far from being taught to think and to develop an analytical mind, you are taught NOT to think and to suppress

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any sort of individualism and creativity. You have to memorise what you are told, and not deviate from the mainstream in any way. The engendering of psychological repression, the reactionary ideology, the negligence of Humanities' subjects in favour of applied subjects, the promotion of competition and intolerance as "compulsory values"...everything aimed at getting former Opus Dei school students in the key posts in society; and in the Vatican mafia, given the interest of the Pope in making the founder of Opus Dei the world record holder as the fastest beatified saint in history!

I am happy to see that the Guardian refers to Opus Dei as a sect and not as a mere religious organisation (as it's referred to in Spain). Because IT IS A SECT, and a very dangerous one. It is not only the danger of their ideological line: racism, sexism, homophobia,

greediness, middle class values... a product of capitalism. It is also their hidden agenda, the subtle ways they have of infiltrating society and gaining influence.

As anarchists, as people committed to changing this world into a more human place, we cannot tolerate this sect and the damage it causes to human beings, directly (brainwashing children) or indirectly (spreading the "moral values"(sic) mentioned above). I was lucky: quite probably attending this school is the key reason for me becoming an anarchist. Just in case this appeals, I don't recommend this method for building the anarchist movement; I have a feeling my case is not the rule, but the exception! Reality is that Opus Dei has spread and promoted repression in Spain for decades, now it is planning to do the same here in Britain.

Agitate, evaluate, sorry mate

After countless changes of direction on Higher Education, this is the first year since Thatcher that annual cuts have started translating into large numbers of redundancies

I was asked to write about what's been happening in higher education recently so I wrote the title above, to which I could add Cogitate, Quantitate, Computate.... There are so many '-ates' the Government education team has been involving itself in, its not surprising it hasn't had time to take a look at the results of the mess it has created. Rather like a preoccupied 3-4 year old in a finger paint session at nursery - if there were any nursery places that is.

**the usual
blend of
gloom and
doom, ..
financial
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less
students..**

For us at big school, the past months have seen the usual blend of gloom and doom, the proposed privatisation of our pension scheme, financial cuts, more work and more courses, less students, more financial-based instead of academic-based entry selection, more supposedly external quangos measuring us in every way (wasted days on TQAs), more forms, more bureaucracy, more hassle, more paranoia, more days off due to stress, more control drugs, more losing it,

more over the edge,
aaagggghhhhhh!!!

The RAE - research assessment exercise, for those readers who haven't had it tattooed on their private parts all last winter and spring, is a crazy mechanism for measuring how many papers various groups of staff publish in a given period, as a means for deciding how much to give their employers for research. This is supposed to happen every few years

Education

and March 1996 was the second deadline since the scheme was introduced a few years ago. So, on the basis of what various departments cooked up (a 'made up' department 'journal' counts less than a book but changing the title and sending it off to two places is well worth it) to pass as published output in the 4 years to March, our RAE money is set to past the millennium. Funnily enough, last time all the 'old boy network' universities did rather well and got tons of cash - and this time the criteria was so fudgy, no-one really knew what was going to be measured - any guesses on the outcome? It doesn't take a genius (just as well because our new HE system is even more extremely unlikely to produce any geniuses than ever).

It is the way in which the first lot of cash was used which has repercussions for now and the future. Many places chose to spend the windfall on 'releasing' existing staff to write papers. This was an ideal excuse for recruiting loads of temporary staff on short term, cheap contracts to do the teaching, while permanent staff went off to write. Unfortunately, starting to write is not the overnight job some thought, and beating the RAE machine is even harder when the funding council makes the rules as they go along.

Contract? What Contract?

So now, it becomes obvious that overall funding this time is to be slashed, and many departments who got tidy sums will get nothing, despite raising their apparent research output. Suddenly permanent staff are claiming back their courses and it's bye-bye to the temporary staff, many of whom have 4 years lecturing under their belts and are better placed to teach courses which, in many cases, they have developed over the past 4 years. Many have administrative responsibilities, even in admissions and course leadership on HEFCE funded courses which are ongoing. These people are

being made redundant but their jobs still exist. And what has Natfhe done about this?

Shrouding this big scam and accentuating the effects is this year's round of funding cuts, which has been set nationally at about 7% in the

losses caused by under-recruitment. The latter is especially rampant in new universities; the Government's latest slamming on the brakes of university expansion has led to old universities lowering entry standards to let those students who would previously have gone to the old polys in to fill courses,

Today is the first day of the rest of your temporary, part-time, fixed-term contract, with waiver clause..

Government's figures (and set to continue to total 20% over 3 years). This translates into cuts of 15% or more in many departments when one takes into account the further direct

leaving nothing for the polys.

At our place, management's great idea is devolution; all the big companies are doing it so it must be good. In fact, it is turning into a nice vehicle for getting middle managers in departments to do top management's dirty work for them, sending out all those redundancy letters (or was it 'non-renewal of temporary part-time contracts?').

All in all, all is not well in the coffee room. Who is taking the brunt for the inability of managers to manage, governments to be human, and Natfhe to represent the interests of its members? Again, no geniuses required for that one.

PC

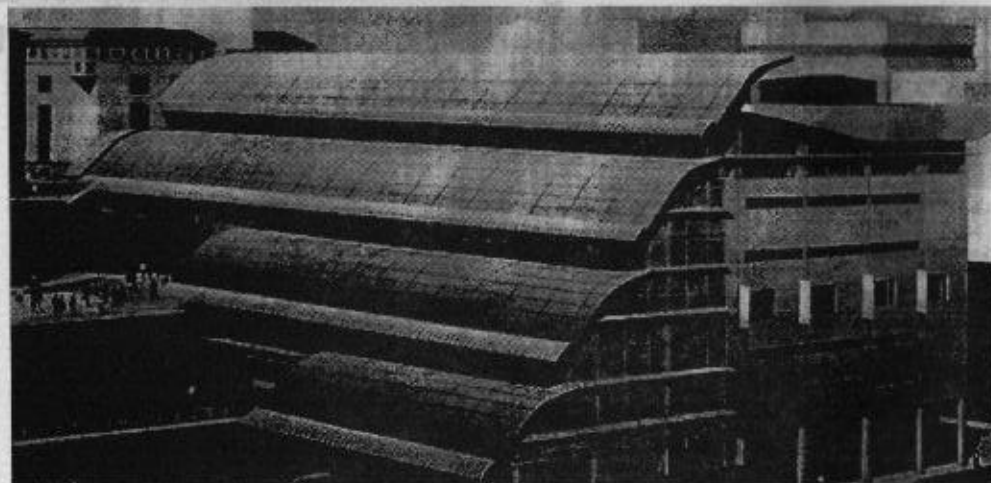
Sick of it yet?
Time to do something about it?
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EDUCATION WORKERS' NETWORK

For all workers in Education - any sector, any job (real, would-be or aspiring Vice-Chancellors and their ilk need not apply)

For details of membership, what we do etc. contact:

**EWN, PO Box 29, SWPDO,
Manchester M15 5HW**



The new Learning Centre at Sheffield Hallam University cost well over £7m and opened in time for this year's students to enjoy the quality teaching environment; shame they made 40 staff redundant at the same time.. Now, that's £7m divided by 40.. hmm, that's about the Vice-Chancellors take home wad..

Red, black and green

Albert Meltzer

Concern for ecology was brought about not by propagandists or lobbyists but by the facts. The need for a "green" or life-preserving approach spreads across the political spectrum, but green politics is something that consists of trying to marry the necessity of preserving the world with the political realities of government.

The economic realities of capitalism are to make profit, so the natural environment must be violated over and over again. One can see it in the simplest things: take for instance the fact that as increasing thousands want to go to unspoiled Devon and Cornish villages, they are now no more than a collection of "tea shoppes" and souvenir boutiques, with surrounding fields turned into car parks. What is the solution from a capitalist point of view married to a green approach? To make it profitable to maintain a field as a car park?

Why are so many cars polluting the atmosphere in the high street? The occasional limousine of the capitalist wouldn't have caused it: there are so many cars because a large number of people can afford them.

The greenest solution to preserving the natural environment is the most reactionary; the feudal lord enjoyed the unspoiled beauty of the fields, with the peasantry in picturesque poverty and the urban population confined to their work benches for as many hours as

possible a week and unlikely to go out and drop cans on Snowdon. Well, as the saying goes, lucky for some.

as anarcho-syndicalists we accept that to struggle to achieve workers control is not the whole answer

These two approaches - capitalist and feudal - aren't all that different from Green Party thinking of the present. People living in leafy suburbs or tranquil countryside, where they can dispense with transport to get away from the smoke, draw their dividends from industry or quaker-style, sell them and re-invest, earnestly vote green and call for ancient slums to be preserved.

The percolation of these attitudes into Labour and the Tories' sloganising does not make them a whit more practical. The planet isn't being destroyed by ignorance and malice, but because of economic (capitalist) necessity.

It is not enough to think green. The Green Party and its imitators urge us to cut down on people - which would have made Hitler an ecologically minded leader, as indeed he thought he was. The issue for non-authoritarians must surely be how to combine concern for the planet with concern for people; to maintain the maximum number of people, with the highest concern for individual quality of life and therefore with technological progress, with equal

Instead of an Obituary.

Albert had a stroke at the Solidarity Federation '96 National Conference, shortly after a motion was passed to relaunch the magazine you are reading. Needless to say, he supported the motion. This is an article found on his computer after he died, probably unfinished.

concern for the effects on the environment. Those who think these aims are incompatible really mean that they are impossible to maintain together with a class divided capitalist society. But that's what has to be scrapped.

As anarchosyndicalists, we accept that to struggle to achieve workers' control is not the whole answer. If the planet is to survive under the many as well as the few we have to take into account concern for the earth; workers must find out how to preserve what is worth



preserving. At present, whole areas of the earth are being destroyed, not to feed its inhabitants but for profit. It is easy for a dictator to decide to cut down on people rather than on profits, but for us, people first every time.

Bully for you

Harassment and bullying have apparently become a modern pastime at work. How can it be effectively opposed?

Generally it is presented as something which can be guarded against, and eliminated if unions and employers get together and formulate the right kind of policies and machinery for dealing with bullying. In many firms and organisations anti-harassment policies have been in place for years.

Harassment is any conduct or action that is unwanted, or that affects the dignity of the individual or group at work. Bullying is more or less identical to harassment, but it is more physical or violent (see box opposite). Usually, harassment and bullying are directed at anyone who is perceived as being different in some way, or in a minority or less powerful position.

Bullying can take place anywhere. At work, this means the office, factory, farm, oil platform or mine - anywhere with more than one person. Given that there are a wide range of bullying situations, bullies, and bullying types there are obviously various possible effects on the victim. Generally it undermines their position at work. It may deter them from seeking promotion. Many people dread going to work, suffer stress, and become ill. In some cases people leave the job, or even commit suicide.

Why harassment?

Frequently, bullying or harassment is called horseplay or "only a joke" when someone complains. The person in question may be subjected to racist or sexist jokes which, if challenged, is met with "Can't you take a joke?" However, to be on the receiving end of

these "jokes" is to be turned into a butt or figure of fun. The person is devalued and not taken seriously; the person is a laughing stock.

Bullying and harassment maintain the "pecking order" which, in turn, supports and reinforces the official hierarchy. Workers who, in some way, (even inadvertently) challenge the status quo, will be bullied, harassed, excluded, especially if they are perceived as getting above their station, want more skilled, better paid positions or question way of doing things, or suggest management is not the font of all wisdom. In short, anyone who doesn't make every effort to conform and not question is a potential victim.

Bullying and harassment are not to be seen as a form of deviant behaviour in the workplace which can be eliminated by having correct policies. Far from it, bullying is part and parcel of the hierarchy of the plant or office. It is a hidden and unofficial tool which forms part of the managerial prerogative within the capitalist enterprise. While 'traditional' slavery has now gone in the Western world (though it survives elsewhere), naked coercion has been replaced in modern industrial societies with wages and incentives. However, the stick still remains along with the carrot. Just as the bosses and the State who usually depend on persuasion and propaganda to get their way still have their riot police and tear-gas for the occasions when this breaks down, so the same system in the workplace calls upon an unofficial parallel hierarchy when managerial rights are challenged. Nowadays, things are much more sophisticated than when slavery and

serfdom ruled the roost. We are not to assume just because bullying can be violent that it is all physical. Much harassment is very subtle. Frequently fellow workers don't see or realise what is going on, or abuse is not perceived as abuse but as joking or horseplay. Often the abuse takes place when the recipient is on his/her own, or it is disguised as a compliment, stroke or pat. Sometimes it takes the form of "mind games".

A recent incident springs to mind where a worker was called into the office to hear a complaint about his work, to be told later that it had been a joke. This type of behaviour has an extremely unsettling effect on workers, causing a high level of anxiety. At the same time, real disciplinary interviews are taking place which are "serious" and not a joke! It would appear that tricks like these are the product of the kind of mind that thought up the idea of the mock execution. The Tsarist secret police made a speciality of this type of terror. Undoubtedly some managers read history and psychology and are capable of drawing lessons from the past, but most rely on their imagination to come up with their own schemes.

Usually, the cases that make newspapers are those where there is a strong element of racial or sexual abuse. A number of recent surveys have tried to quantify the amount of sexual harassment, both in Britain and in other countries. The statistics vary from country to country; however, they do show the widespread nature of the problem. According to a BBC/Mori Poll, of 686 working women one in

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victim**

three had experienced sexual harassment at work, and over half of those had told no one about it. The Industrial Society's survey of over 1,700 male and female employees found 54% of working women suffer sexual harassment at work. Yet another survey conducted for the Labour Research's Department's negotiation magazine "Bargaining Report" in December 1987 found that the most common forms of sexual harassment were "suggestive remarks and other verbal abuse" (mentioned by 48% of replies), "sexist or patronising behaviour" (45%) and "unnecessary touching/unwanted contact" (34%). A tenth of all replies recorded physical assaults.

Managers (surprise, surprise!) are the most likely harassers, with 45% of the workplaces reporting complaints of superiors harassing their subordinates, compared with a quarter complaining of fellow workers. Managers see this sort of behaviour as a perk of the job. It illustrates not just their attitude to women but to subordinates in general; it is part of the managers prerogative.

So managers derive personal benefits out of harassment. Meanwhile, the lives of those who experience it are devastated, and workers lose their jobs through absenteeism; it is used consciously as a way of getting rid of someone. In such cases the person often presents a perceived threat to the work status quo; you don't behave in the required manner; it may be enough to be a woman, black or gay.

The results

Bullying causes stress, and harassment inspires fear. Employers are capable of manipulating our emotions just as politicians do - workplaces involve people and so are emotional places. Unscrupulous bosses orchestrate jealousy, hate, fear and a whole range of emotions. Like politicians, bosses use phrases like "in the present economic climate", so that not surprisingly thousands fear they will be

Bullying at the Local Sorting Office

This is the story of a postman, an indoor postman for over ten years. About six years ago, in 1990, a few of his 'colleagues' took it on themselves to inflict on various workers what they apparently perceived as their brand of fun - or 'horseplay'. Some fought back, for some it was no more than name calling.

No-one officially reported anything to anyone. The abuse continued - for that was what it quickly became. Managers knew about it but did nothing - at least one (ex-army) manager allowed it to go on blatantly in front of him and turned a blind eye.

Eventually, it was reported by a postwoman who was concerned for the health of a co-worker. She had witnessed a postman being kicked and punched when he was in the lift. When the door opened those who had been doing the kicking ran off and left him collapsed on the floor. Still nothing was done about it by management, and so for years the lift incident was repeated time and time again.

The Post Office have a disciplinary procedure for bullying at work but in this case the manager decided it was 'horse-play', while the union apparently found it hard to get enough hard evidence together against the perpetrators. Mick was scared that if he named names and those who were getting increasingly violent towards him were still not dealt with (or even if they were) he would be open to further attacks. So he kept quiet.

He did, however, take action. He asked for a change of shift, and started working nightshifts to avoid the bullies. Unfortunately, they also followed suit and were allowed to change their shifts to the same as his. The nightmare continued.

Over a period of years of repeated and sadistic abuse the postman's mental health deteriorated. He became a bag of nerves, unhappy with himself, developed a low self-esteem, and his relationships with family, friends and work colleagues started to go downhill. The bruises never seemed to heal between the beatings. His doctor gave him pills for his nerves.

The postman's wife noticed a change in his personality and attitude to life. He even started taking out anger and frustration on her and the kids. Eventually, his wife had had enough and challenged him to do something about it. He wound up back in the doctors surgery. Meanwhile the bullies' brand of fun continued. One night he was beaten so badly he collapsed and was taken to hospital. The nurse on duty got in touch with his GP and the Post Office to try to find out why he had ended up in such a state. She also phoned the Police and got them to go down to his workplace to follow up her enquiries.

And so we get to the summer of 1996. The current state of play is that three postmen are still suspended without pay, three are back at work although they have been transferred to different sites in the District, and one has been sacked. The (ex-army) manager is back at work but has tried to transfer to Rotherham on the 'advice' of his boss, without success. It is said that Rotherham don't want him.

As for the postman, he is seeking professional help to assist him in getting back to a healthy mental state. It is a slow process, but he feels he is on the way up. There is a lot of damage to his nerves and a lot of built up anger...

This is a true, recent account compiled by a SolFed postal worker, only names have been changed to protect the identity of the individual.

FEATURE: Bullying

made redundant. On a more personal level, we must acknowledge that many good relationships have been destroyed by tensions generated at work, be they caused by financial problems, pressure on time spent together, or unsocial hours. Even the effort of mountingsome resistance to the managers can lead to more stress at home. Many partners have split up because they can't stand the pressure. So what is to be done?

Options for action

Anyone can take an incident up through the official channels. However, I believe there is no real substitute for collective action. The creation of a workplace climate of opinion where harassment is discouraged is essential to counter harassment in the long term. This, in turn, calls for a high level of consciousness, class consciousness. We have to be aware of the issues of race, gender and class, so that individual workers are not left to deal with harassment on their own, and so harassers are made to think again before applying their tactics against us.

Management must come to realise that their harassment of individual workers will be met with a collective response by the labour force as a whole. To resist harassment is to challenge the managers' right to manage; it shows them we are not docile commodities to be used as they feel fit.

As a step to supporting those who have been harassed and bullied, a harassment counsellor is a source of help. Some local authorities have established networks of "sympathetic friends"; women workers who have volunteered to provide support to other women who have been harassed.

Some unions are now responding to harassment, with policies, programs and helplines. The latter has been well used, although while it is understandable that people may prefer

to speak to someone outside the workplace it still has to eventually be dealt with at the site of harassment if it is to be stopped. Bullies have to be

workplace hierarchy whether it be official and visible or unofficial and partially hidden. We must realise that these hierarchies and the "pecking

order" reinforce and feed upon one another and it is these which produce the bullies and the bullying. Put simply, a well organised campaign of workers against bullying and domination is needed, which will open up another area of struggle for the working class, and a new road to workers' liberation.



You better show me some respect sonny, do you know how many arses I had to lick to get this job?

confronted with their actions.

Fighting bullying and harassment certainly cannot be left with unions and counsellors. The existing unions are only just recognising (if at all) that it exists. They speak of harassment, but often give the impression that it is only blacks, gays or women who are continually subjected to this abuse.

However, the truth is that bullying is rampant and widespread. And counsellors, while well-meaning and a source of help for sufferers, can only deal with symptoms, not causes. Spend as much effort and money as you like on quick fixes of this nature and it will not stop bullying.

The attack must be made by workers, for workers. To challenge bullying at work (or anywhere) in this way is a revolutionary act. It destabilises the

The Solidarity

Federation sets its face against all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination, and seeks to organise an effective struggle against the abusive power.

If you want to share experiences over harassment or bullying, or are looking for help and solidarity, contact Manchester Solidarity Federation.

Early in 1997 the Solidarity Federation will be hosting

Assertiveness at Work

A series of Day Schools and Seminars

Many people try to avoid conflict at work by behaving in a non-assertive manner by giving in to the demands of the bosses and the management. They fail to stand up for their rights individually and collectively.

In the day Schools we will be exploring how to put across our needs, feelings and opinions in an effective manner. We will not be expecting you to take on the management single-handed but will be looking at effective group and collective action.

We will be examining ways of avoiding and reducing stress in the context of collective solutions to collective problems.

Write to: **Assertiveness at Work,**
Solidarity Federation, PO Box 29,
Southwest PDO, Manchester M15 5HW

'Look at the bloody paper! "STREETS OF FEAR. Police warn of rising tide of violence in the notorious inner-city area of Pitsmoor. One crack dealer for every two streets."' Leni chuckled the paper down.

'Leave it,' Mel said. 'It's their favourite filler, whenever news is short.'

Leni and Mel were sitting on their front step. In front of them a struggling wild rose hedge and beyond that the mean streets of Pitsmoor: Asian lads setting up a game of cricket in the park, kids cruising up and round on bikes, occasional laughter from the gaggle of girls perched on the wall of the house opposite. A man walked past with three small children straggling behind, up the road from Crabtree Pond. It was late summer in Pitsmoor and everyone was mellowed out from the year's ration of hot days and long nights. Bursts of music from car stereos, windows wound right down. Have wheels, can cruise! Good things cooking somewhere.

Leni had moved here 10 years before from the White Highlands: their trim lawns fenced off from the neighbours, two cars safely tucked into the drive, husband, wife and 2.4 children behind closed windows and locked doors. And anyone who found out where she lived said 'Pitsmoor? Why do you live there?'

Once the steel mills had rusted and fallen silent down in the Don Valley, the workers left the solid brick houses on the hillside. The parks, allotments and graveyard were abandoned. The wilderness reclaimed these parts of the city. Everywhere was old brickwork and green bursting through.

'Have you ever met a crack dealer, Mel?'

'Might have. I never ask people for their CV.'

It was right. Leni hated people who wanted a little potted biography. Who are you exactly? Age, sexuality, job. Which pigeon hole can we fit you into? How do we define you, in relation to a man, we mean? Not someone's wife? Then a daughter, perhaps, or a secretary to a man, somewhere, sometime, surely? You've met me, that's what you get, Leni said.

Mel came up to Pitsmoor from London. A group of her friends had made the move and liked it. Word got around the Jewish community fast and now there was a big enough group of them to make even more changes in the Junior schools. As well as Christmas, Divali and Eid, now Hanukkah and Passover featured in assemblies and kosher food on the menus. Only the pagans were still frozen out. Witches not welcome in Pitsmoor, the church said. Magic -too dangerous- and chanting loonies, no thank you.

'Are we going over to Trapeze Truck, then?' Mel reckoned herself as the social secretary of this duo.

'I keep forgetting Cam's camping over at Flysheet. Anyway, I thought they weren't starting up till midnight.'

'There seems to be a lot of action on Abbeyfield.' Mel wandered down to the street. There were groups of people out on the road above the park. It looked very bright and there wasn't a moon.

'They've got the floodlights on, already.'

'OK, let's go.' It was hard for Leni to get herself out these days. Middle age already. Terrible to be so docile. There was so much to do still, but she found domestic life cushioned her. Once she had something to eat and a warm place to sleep, the day's struggle seemed over. This wouldn't do.

They wandered up onto Abbeyfield Road. The air was soft, but moving. Leni liked strolling, meeting her neighbours. And evenings were the best. People had time to pause and talk. Pitsmoor scored on the ethnic mix, of course, but what Leni most liked were events where there were no age barriers. Tonight they were all here, from toddlers to grans, even great grandparents, she guessed.

'Shana, how you doing?' Leni had known Shana since she was doing her GCSE's and needed help to pull her out of the D grades her teachers were quite comfortable with. She'd got a job at the Town Hall, but once she was 18 her parents had arranged a good young man from the Yemen for her to marry. 'It's a bummer,' Shana had said. 'I don't want to settle down. I had a place at University, but how can I go against my parents' wishes?'

'You know what it's like.' Shana glanced at her brothers, standing very close. She was beautiful, Leni thought, a caged bird.

'Can I come round tomorrow, Leni? I need ... a letter writing.'

'Shana. Come on, we're going.' The brothers nodded their hellos to the two women and wandered off with their sister.

'What's going on there, Leni?' Mel asked.

'Live and let live?'

'That's either great wisdom, or dangerous crap. But let's go and watch these daring young people on the flying trapeze.'

Review



i - portraits of anarchists

Photographs by Casey Orr - Music by Chumbawamba

One Little Indian/AK Press 1996

'i', as they call it, is a glossy black (of course) coffee table affair with a six track CD of music by Chumbawamba. The idea seems to be to show that anarchists are all sorts of people and just like your next door neighbour. Each of the glossy black and white photographs is accompanied by a line or two from an interview with the subject, plus a description of the person. The subjects are from all over the world and from different walks of life. Examples include Albert Meltzer, accurately describe as a retired printworker from London (it was released before his death), Murray Bookchin and Vi Subversa, a roadie, a labourer, students, activists and the like. Its a 'nice' book, the photographs are of excellent quality, but on its own I would hardly skim through it.

What is of interest to me is the CD. Six more tracks by Chumbawamba (don't tip toe, nothing tricks me, I can only give/take so much, I am tradition and tomorrow, time after time & you grow old) all apparently inspired by the pictures and the interviews with the subjects. I first heard Chumbawamba in the mid eighties, about the time when the single Revolution came out. Whilst they were never as musically one dimensional as Crass or Conflict, they have come a fair way, both musically and lyrically. Through the acappella 'English Rebel Songs' to the recent albums of Shhh and Anarchy. The songs on i are all fairly similar, slow female voice and music.

Reviews

No Danbert Nobacan vocals are detectable on a couple of listens, but you can't always have everything. If you like the Chumbas you won't be disappointed.

You may however be reluctant to pay the full whack of over £12.00 (everywhere I could see) for 17'15" of music. For the book to be worth that I would have liked to see more of the interviews with the people in the photographs; pretty as they all are, call me a philistine but its hard to tell much about them from one or two lines of quotes. If the idea was to show diversity of anarchists to none anarchists, then maybe a bit more text would have also shown that not only do anarchists look like real people, we are actually fairly nice real people; well, some of us are. I would have also liked to see some lyrics, then I could at least sing along and really piss off my neighbours.

So if you like Chumbawamba, but don't want a glossy coffee table photo album of people you've never met, go to a second hand shop or tape the CD. If you want a nice black coffee table photo album, but don't like the music, buy the thing and sell the CD to your local second hand shop so some other poor sod doesn't end up paying nearly thirteen quid like this mug.



Change

MYCELIUM
Solidarity Federation Benefit

A cassette of ten political folk songs. No, please don't turn over, believe me its not your standard finger in your ear, get as many 'folk' instruments in as possible. The "pick an old tune throw in a tin whistle, fiddle, mandolin, bongos, more fiddles, clog dancer,



what meat is
attached to
this
skeleton
would make
a pretty
small
sandwich

guitar, flute, banjo, second guitar, and the kitchen washboard and mix well with a bunch of beery old blokes in beards" approach to music. Just a three piece of vocals, guitars and mandolin, with a bit of drums here and there. A balanced mixture of original material and versions of other peoples stuff. The original tracks include a song inspired by experiences with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (Front Line Man) which is definitely a first to my knowledge, and experiences from the Poll Tax ..err.. disturbance (Downing Street). The covers include a Levellers song (Another Man's Cause), and Chumbawamba song (Homophobia) and one by Ewan McColl (Go, Move, Shift). The lyrics are not the forced rhetoric set to poorly thought out tunes of oh so many awful political songs. It sounds as if there is some soul there as well as some brain, which makes such a change its worth remarking on.

If you like anarchist inspired or political folk music you should have this tape. If, as I am, you are a bit mistrustful of all things Arran then this is the tape to have in your collection to prove to your friends how catholic your tastes are, and to prove to yourself that not all folk is twee. What is more, it's a benefit for Solidarity Federation and has a red and black cover. Could you ask for more? Thought not.

Mail Order for £4 inclusive from
Mycelium, SolFed, PO Box 1095,
Sheffield S2 4YR. Cheques/POs to
'Direct Action'.



Independence Day

Dir. Roland Emmerich
US, 1996
Cert.12

What can be said about a film with no story, humour or charm? Usually more

than what can be said of Independence Day. From the onset I felt I was being subjected to hidden US foreign policy and wondered when the entire packed audience would spontaneously burst into the streets in search of the nearest Islamic Fundamentalist Careers Office. Not a stir. It proved difficult to pin point any one redeeming feature of the film, except it was at least consistently ridiculous. The tale can be told in a sentence: Aliens arrive and proceed to destroy planet Earth, fortunately America saves the day. What meat is attached to this skeleton would make a disappointingly small sandwich. However lacking in quantity and quality of content, whatever is there seems to have been put there with great care in an attempt to appeal to every section of society. Not only is this product marketed well but it has a dual message too: instructions on how to model your life, and America rules. On the positive side, at least I'll know not to go and see a film rated 12 again.



Beautiful Thing

Dir. H. Macdonald
GB, 1996
Cert.15

Some two thousand years ago, Epicurus wrote "of our desires some are natural and necessary; others are natural, but not necessary; others, again, are neither natural nor necessary". While the philosopher was talking about pleasure in general, this little but profound remark just about encapsulates the debate on homosexuality. For that's what Beautiful Thing is about: two lads waking up to their heart-felt desires on a south-London housing estate.

Beautiful Thing is a crunchy, raunchy, very funny picture of British moves with race, gender, sexuality and utopianism all mixed together. The

1996-A Year to Remember

This year has seen the death of at least two seasoned and prominent anarchist thinkers in Britain - Albert Meltzer and Robert Lynn.

Albert Meltzer was a lifelong Londoner with impeccable class struggle credentials. He combined the occupations of boxer and printworker with his politics, and was prominent in London anarchism from pre-war years right to his death. Indeed, the stroke which was to prove fatal struck him as the 1996 Solidarity Federation National Conference drew to a close in Weston-Super-Mare in March. His autobiography, "I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels" was released only months before his death to critical acclaim, and paints a picture of a colourful life, from Emma Goldman through the Angry Brigade to the Poll Tax.

Robert Lynn, a veteran of the class struggle in Glasgow, an anarchist whose personal philosophy combined the ultra-individualist ideas expressed by Marx Stirner in "The Ego and Its Own" with a firm commitment to anarcho-syndicalism and to practical solidarity, died in August at the age of seventy-two. Robert's involvement with anarchist ideas and anarchist activity covered a period of fifty-six years, since he first came into contact with an earlier generation of Glasgow anarchists when he was one of the leaders of a strike by young shipbuilding apprentices during the Second World War.

Both will be remembered, not out of reverence or glorification, but for being ordinary people like you and me, fighting ceaselessly for a better world.

and the passion in his speeches is so strong and moving you get a vivid image of what Spain was like after July 19th, 1936.

Of course, the movie does have its flaws. At risk of indulging in dogmatism, Ken Loach's Trotskyism shows through rather strongly: as with Orwell's "Homage to Catalonia", the POUM is painted as a huge organisation and given at least equal weight with the anarchist CNT-AIT. In fact the POUM never numbered in the 10's of 1000's while the CNT-AIT numbered in millions (anyway, most POUM members were also in the CNT-AIT). Anarchists and socialists alike generally tend to forget that it was the anarcho-syndicalist CNT-AIT that was the major driving force in the revolution. Thus, the tendency is to underplay the broad community-based and workplace activist politics that is anarcho-syndicalism.

Having said all this, it is subtly evident that the anarchists played an important part in the struggle; witness black and red flags and neck-ties everywhere. The May Days are particularly well done, with the hero finally seeing Stalinism for what it is. The May Day scenes also provide one of the best lines, when a CNT militia man defending a CNT office shouts across to the Stalinists attacking it, "we're the Durruti Column, we're the best!"

You cannot fail to be moved by the vivid scenes, the street politics, and the feeling of it all happening. If you didn't see it at the pictures, get the video, if you did, watch it again just for the feelgood feeling of seeing the Spanish Revolution and the anarcho-syndicalist ideas which inspired it - then talk about how we'll get it right next time!

The Meltzer Press has been launched in continuation of the work - and in commemoration of the memory of Albert. Write to TMP, PO Box 35, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 2UX for details of publications, etc.

Copies of Albert's autobiography, "I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels", are available from us at DA, SF, PO Box 1095, Sheffield, S2 4YR. (Send cheques/postal orders payable to Direct Action).

two lads present, at first, a fumbling, exploratory, but later out and about in yer face image of homo-eroticism (and homo-sex, we're glad to say; a topping and tailing romance (one lad's mom lets the two school friends share a bed, and for a while they sleep head-to-foot - but only for a while). At times a little magical, you might find it takes you back to your early years, or to what you might have wanted your teens to be. But, for once, Beautiful Thing is a gay film which is 'natural', happy, presents hope and stands up to be counted.



Land and Freedom

Dir. Ken Loach
UK/Spain, 1995
(now out on video)

The Spanish Civil War of 1936-38 was one of the great historical events in the 20th century. It was built upon great heroism and sacrifice on the part of Spanish workers and peasants, and inspired a generation of socialists and democrats in Europe, some of whom gave their lives as volunteers in the fight against Franco's fascists. Land and Freedom is the story of a Liverpool Communist Party member who goes to Spain to fight fascism. Once there, he joins the POUM militia and discovers the revolution at the heart of the struggle against fascism.

The film graphically shows the Stalinist betrayal of the revolution and their lies and repression against the anarchists and POUM. More importantly, it shows the social revolution which swept Spain and inspired the fight against Franco. When the militia liberate a village, the villagers organise a meeting to discuss what to do next. One of the "actors" at the meeting was an anarcho-syndicalist who was there during the revolution

you cannot fail to be moved by the vivid scenes, the street politics, and the feeling of it all happening

60 Years On...

The events of 1936-7 in Spain are commemorated here with a reprint of the original contemporary article "The CNT as I saw it" by Fenner Brockway

Before I visited Spain I appreciated highly the part played by the CNT (the Anarcho Syndicalist Trade Union Confederation) in the fight against Fascism and for the Social Revolution; but that appreciation has been enormously increased by actual contact with the organisation and first-hand knowledge of its work.

I went to Spain to do what I could to assist the POUM, following the arrest of its leaders and the attempted suppression of the organisation. I expected sympathy from the CNT, but I did not feel I had the right to expect more than general assistance.

After all, the CNT and the POUM have a difference of social philosophy which has been historically divisive. The CNT is anarchist. The POUM is Marxist. This has led to differences in policy and even to a certain rivalry in agitation and organisation. The POUM has frequently criticised anarchist tactics and leadership. It has not refrained from seeking to enrol members within the CNT. Under such circumstances it would have been understandable if the CNT had not exerted itself overmuch in the defence of the POUM.

But I found no such reservations. To the CNT it was a matter of principle and in the presence of the principle other considerations were forgotten. The POUM had proved the genuineness of its devotion to the anti-Fascist struggle. It had proved its sincerity in defence of the rights of the workers and in preparing the way for



the large industries were clearly, in the main, in the hands of the CNT - railways, road, engineering, textiles, electricity, building, agriculture..

the social revolution. It was being unjustly persecuted. That was enough. The CNT did not hesitate for a moment in standing by its side and demanding justice for it.

There was a fineness about this attitude which commanded admiration. It was expressed not only in words but in deeds. The Barcelona regional committee at once placed Comrade Augustin Souchy, secretary of the International Department, at my service as interpreter and adviser. It placed cars at my disposal and I travelled over 2,000 kilometres in them. The National Committee in Valencia was equally wholehearted in its support. It



sent a courageous protest against the suppression of the POUM to the Government. Comrade Vasquez, the National Secretary, delivered an outspoken speech to a vast meeting at Valencia demanding justice for the POUM. The CNT instructed one of its leading members, Comrade Pabon, to act as defending lawyer for the POUM.

This was all done from a sense of proletarian duty to stand for just treatment of another working-class organisation. There were no heroics about this gesture. It was done as a matter of course, as a matter of principle. I could not be other than moved by this evidence of the moral integrity of the CNT.

But I learned to appreciate it more than that I was impressed by the strength of the CNT. It was unnecessary to tell me that it is the largest and most vital of the working-class organisations in Spain. That was evident on all sides. The large industries were clearly, in the main, in the hands of the CNT - railways, road, engineering, textiles, electricity, building, agriculture. At Valencia the UGT had a greater share of control than the CNT than in Barcelona; but generally speaking the mass of manual workers belonged to the CNT. The UGT membership was more of the type of 'white collar' worker.

I was impressed by the outward signs of the power of the CNT. At Barcelona it has taken over the premises of the largest capitalist concern of the pre-July days. It is a monumental building, comparable with the vast structure

which is the headquarters of the London Passenger Transport Board at St. James' Park. At Valencia the CNT occupies the palace of a Marquis of the old regime. Both headquarters are hives of well-organised activities - secretarial, transport, defence, propaganda, organisation, publication, international departments, etc. And these are only the co-ordinating headquarters. Scattered about both cities one saw large buildings occupied by the various Unions - building workers, electrical workers, transport workers, federated in the CNT.

I was impressed by the organisation of the CNT membership for full participation in the war against the Fascists - the appeal to its members to join the fighting forces, the response to the appeal to join the Column of Death to replace a regiment which had been wiped out, the literature and posters issued to stimulate the workers to give their all in the struggle against Franco.

I was immensely impressed by the constructive revolutionary work which is being done by the CNT. Their achievement of workers' control in industry is an inspiration. One could take the examples of the railways or engineering or textiles. There linger in my mind less spectacular examples, but equally significant.

I think of the film institute in Barcelona. An Italian capitalist concern had decided to erect a technical centre for developing and copying films. July 19th came and the capitalists fled. The workers carried on. They completed the building and now it is working in perfect order. It is one of the most beautiful buildings I have ever entered. The technique of its staff - all CNT comrades - is the equal of that to be found anywhere.

I think of a very different example. A small town. There were seventeen separate barber shops. They have united to form a CNT collective. They have taken over a Fascists club. I visited it on a Sunday morning. In a

finely panelled hall sat workmen awaiting their turn. In a large club room the seventeen barbers worked, with an equipment as efficient as you would find in a West London or New York establishment. It was wonderful to see this example of co-operation.

Most of all I enjoyed my visit to the Agricultural Collective at Segorbe. I must not delay to describe it in

detail; but the spirit of the peasants, their enthusiasm, the way they had contributed their stock to the common effort, their pride in it - all was an inspiration.

**the
anarchists of
Spain,
through the
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working
class**

There are still some Britishers and Americans who regard the anarchists of Spain as impossible, undisciplined uncontrollables. This is poles away from the truth. The anarchists of Spain, through the CNT, are doing one of the biggest constructive jobs ever done by the working class.

At the Front they are fighting Fascism. Behind the Front they are actually constructing the new Workers' Society.

They see that the war against Fascism and the carrying through of the Social

Revolution are inseparable.

Those who have seen and understood what they are doing must honour them and be grateful to them. They are resisting Fascism. They are at the same time creating the New Workers' Order which is the only alternative to Fascism. This is surely the biggest thing now being done by the workers in any part of the world.



READ MORE FOR FREE!

1936: The Spanish Revolution

is a pamphlet produced for the 60th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War.

Send for a free copy. Write (enclosing large SAE) to

Solidarity Federation-IWA
PO Box 17A
Newcastle NE99

Or if you want to dig deeper, write to DA and we'll send you a book list.



How they do it now. The CNT out in force on May Day 1936, in Santander.



Doing the Business

Roundup of just a few recent and ongoing direct actions involving anarchosyndicalists around the world

CHILE

In Concepcion, members of the pro-IWA groups in Chile, have been actively supporting the coal miners in Lota and Coronel in their struggle. The mines and the offices of the company have been occupied in protest against a series of dismissals and also in view of the possible closing down of the mines.

The company is owned by the State. In the summer, the locality was the scene of a communal strike that was very successful. The town was closed with barricades and the community held an assembly in the "pique" (interior) of the mines.

The Communal Commando has been trying to negotiate with the government, while the workers and the Union Coordination of Concepcion -where the pro-IWA group is active- are decidedly against any negotiations that don't include as a priority the reinstatement of the workers who were sacked, presently on hunger strike in the town.

The government's aim is not only privatisation but also to disarm the last remnants of unionist autonomy. Our comrades in the Chilean section of the IWA believe that self-management and the

miners' control of the mines is the only possible solution to this situation.

ARGENTINA

Workers and anarchists have been jailed for fighting unemployment in the increasingly repressive circumstances they find



Chilean mineworkers with supporters from families and the community doing the business..

themselves in. The crackdown and consequent crisis has led to workers' protests in a spiralling situation brought about principally as a result of the application of the harsh economic plan dictated by the International Monetary Fund.

Unemployment is 25% and there is practically no unemployment benefit. Workers are struggling: private factories are being closed and public sector work is being lost through deregulation. In short, global capitalism is on the rampage.

Over 300 workers across the country are facing charges brought against them because they have been active in protests and demonstrations. The government are reviving laws from the former military dictatorship and using a charge called "coacción agravada" (aggravated coercion), whereby organisers are held responsible for any disturbances that take place during a demonstration.

MEXICO

You can read elsewhere about the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional), otherwise known as the zapatistas, who are conducting a long running campaign for self-determination (write to us for info. if you're looking for somewhere to start).

However, while most attention on Mexico has focused on the EZLN, did you know that there are around 30 anarchist groups (with around 500 militants) in the country and that they are capable of gathering 3000 people in demonstrations? Activities are broad-ranging and we'll be bringing more news on specific actions in future issues.

GERMANY

Strikes got a real grip in the summer: postal workers, kindergarten teachers, refuse

collectors, public service and transport workers, all marching out in the streets in response to the freezing of salaries, the reduction of Christmas bonuses, the cutting of sick pay and unemployment benefit, the raising of the pension age and the abolition of laws protecting workers at small companies among other things.

SPAIN

Due to precarious working conditions at Recoletos Cia Editorial in Madrid, a group of workers decided to constitute a CNT section. As a result of this, Miguel A. Fernández, the section's delegate, was sacked. The CNT organised a series of actions demanding the reinstatement of Miguel as well as better working conditions. While the demonstrations continue (see photo) a boycott is being organised. Pearson Group owns the Financial Times and is a major shareholder of this Spanish company.



Spanish CNT demonstrating against illegal anti-union tactics by the Pearson Group company, Recoletos Cia Editorial, in Madrid.

leaflets at the entrance of the restaurants and take-aways. The boycott is proving to be quite effective so actions are still taking place, the latest being the distribution of "tapas", along with the leaflets, to potential customers.



The 20th IWA Congress Madrid

December 1996

New IWA Sections to be confirmed at the Congress;

**Portugal, Russia,
Bangladesh, Chile,
Nigeria, Columbia,
Canada, Ireland,
Bulgaria, Czech Republic,
Hong Kong**

If you want to attend the Congress or get any international information, write to DA now

FRANCE

For much of the year, the French CNT has been active in the fight in support of the African immigrants staging a sit-in at St Bernard church in Paris.

Actions taken include legal assistance, continuous presence near the African families, meetings of solidarity committees and various demonstrations. On the 23rd August, a police operation took place as a result of which 300 immigrants ended up in a retention centre and 12 CNT members were arrested (they were released after a few hours).

The CNT managed to gather 4000 people who marched together towards the retention centre in support of the African families and police sponsored riots went on until midnight (see photo).

Solidarity has proved its worth and the actions have made an important contribution to the changing of public attitudes towards the immigrant population. Incidentally, it also prevented most of the 300 immigrants from being expelled from the country.

cont'd on page 27.

IWA News Service

Doing the Business - Worldwide



USA

Workers at the Lincoln Park Mini Mark in Seattle have been on strike as a result of their manager's refusal to talk with them about union matters, low wages and working conditions: they have been getting no medical benefits, sick pay or holiday pay and have no input in decisions made by the management.

The store has been closing three hours early on a daily basis and unconfirmed sources have reported a 90-95% downturn in customer counts.

Also in the USA, the dispute at Borders Books has continued into the autumn. For those who do not know about this case, the Industrial Workers of the World's General Distribution Workers' Industrial Union have been organising at the Philadelphia branch of Border Books (the equivalent of Waterstones in the US). Shortly after a defeat in an election to certify the union as the bargaining agent (25-20), the store

managers turned on the organisers and sacked one of them on a very flimsy pretext.

While the dismissal case goes to court, the union have been picketing and recruiting members across the whole of the US. This has already paid off with some spectacularly successful actions. More information is available from the IWW (UK: 75 Humerstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 4WB).

BANGLADESH

1996 has been a year of action for the National Garments Workers Federation, the several thousand strong anarcho-syndicalist union which has brought a hitherto



The result of the fire at Trinode French and Sutex Garments
unknown level of union recognition to the Bangladesh textile factories.

Bangladesh produces vast amounts of clothes for western markets, mostly involving workers in horrendous working conditions. Furthermore, the tying of digs and basic food supplies to the factory operation (Victorian style in UK terms) means that most workers are virtually slaves. Working hours and poor enforcement of what labour laws there are mean that child labour is rife, and 7-day

weeks year-round are common.

Since forming in 1984, the NSWF has grown through 950 of the country's 1100 factory units for the production of ready-made clothes. Over the past year, established direct action tactics - distribution of wallposters, holding demonstrations and rallies, torchlight processions and so on have been employed. These have been tried and tested in winning single-issue demands, usually over better pay and/or working conditions. Such actions have continued through 1996, as have the legal cases against malpractice by factory bosses, which are undertaken by NSWF members.

Highlights of 1996 have included the ongoing dispute over the closure of the Titas Apparels factory, where 350 workers were made jobless in a blatant refusal to recognise legally union recognition for NSWF; and a devastating fire which engulfed the Trinode French and Sutex Garments factories in June, which left 13 workers dead and led to widespread demonstrations and demands by NSWF over safety and fire precautions, compensations and related issues (see photo).

SOUTH ASIA WORKING GROUP

In response to a major upsurge in anarcho-syndicalist activity in the south-east Asian region in recent years, the Solfed has set up the SAWG to provide liaison and advice where it is specifically requested.

Part of its brief is to assist in developing links between Asian workers (and associated struggles) in the UK and South Asia.

If you wish to get involved, write to SAWG, Solfed, PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester, M15 5HW.



Demonstrations following the fire



Anarchism: The FAQs

This issues questions and answers adapted from *Libertarian Labor Review*, Winter 1989 and Winter 1996.

1. What is anarchosyndicalism? (apart from a long word)

Anarchosyndicalism is a current of thought and principles which appeared at the end of the 19th century. It has these fundamental characteristics:

- The goal of organising the world's workers into unions for the defence of their immediate interests, and to obtain improvements in their quality of life.
- The creation of a structure where there are neither leaders nor executive power.
- The desire for the radical transformation of society, to be brought about by a Social Revolution. Without this goal of transformation, anarchosyndicalism (or revolutionary syndicalism) does not exist.

2. Why were Marx and Lenin hostile to anarchosyndicalist ideas?

Anarchosyndicalism and Marxism represent two different tendencies in the history of the socialist movement: the libertarian and the authoritarian (political) tendencies. Marx and Lenin believed that the working class needed a strong central government directed by an elite of socialist intellectuals and scientists tied to a labour party. Anarchists believe political parties and states are as much an obstacle to working-class liberation as are the capitalists. Thus, it is no surprise that Marx and Lenin were hostile.

In the First International, anarchosyndicalist ideas were being developed by Bakunin and the Spanish, Swiss and Italian sections. Marx and his supporters, although a tiny minority within the International, used their positions on the General Secretariat to try to force everyone else to form labour parties as the only true road to socialism. When this

proved unsuccessful, Marx railroaded Bakunin out of the International on trumped up charges at the Hague Congress. The resulting uproar convinced Marx and his followers that the International would never be won to his views, and the International was sabotaged.

The demise of the First International left the way open for further attempts by the Marxists to present themselves as the only true socialists. The Second International banned anarchists from its beginning. The Third International (set up by Lenin and the Russian communists) was more subtle. The Leninist regime, desperate to break out of its isolation and forced to recognise the strength of anarchosyndicalist and revolutionary unions in many countries, formed a Red Trade Union International as part of the Third International. Although the CNT, IWW and other revolutionary unions sent delegates to the initial congresses of the Third International, it soon became clear that to remain in the International the unions would have to submit to control by the Communist parties in their respective countries. Therefore, the revolutionary unions left to form their own international organisation, the International Workers Association (AIT/IWA).

3. Why do you advocate that neither the State nor political parties can achieve the emancipation of labour?

Throughout history all attempts at setting up "workers' states" have only resulted in a new class of exploiters developing from the party- military bureaucracy. An alternative is anarchism, or "free socialism", where workers and others manage their affairs through popular assemblies and delegates bound by the wishes of these assemblies.

4. So instead of the State, political parties and government, you advocate economic organisation of labour by administration. Yet without organisation or conscious direction, how can this occur?

We have never claimed that society could do without organisation (as should be clear from our use of terms like "unions, administration, self-management, etc.). Rather, we advocate a different set of organisational principles based upon voluntary choices of individuals and communities, collective decisions by all members of the community affected, the freedom to leave organisations that don't fulfil real needs, co-operation with others based upon common interests (not just economic, but cultural and recreational as well); in short, the greatest amount of independence combined with the greatest amount of solidarity. These principles are also referred to as self-management and federalism.

WRITE TO DA WITH YOUR QUESTIONS!

The Sheffield Red and Black Centre and Sheffield Anarchists have organised a WEA course ("So What is Anarchism"). If you would like to attend contact them now (it's already started so get moving!) at
PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY.

If you are a local anarchist group or individual interested in doing something similar, why not drop us a line at DA or write to the Red and Black Centre for advice?

Children without childhood

This translation from the newspaper of the Spanish CNT was written six years ago. It hasn't dated. Nothing has changed. Unless you count things getting worse for the children highlighted in the article.

UNICEF's recent study "The State of Childhood in the World" (1989) states that the situation of children in the poorest countries has deteriorated drastically in the last few years.

14 million children die every year as a result of malnutrition and predictable, curable diseases; 8 million are abandoned because their parents can't afford their up-bringing; and 150 million work exhausting shifts.

The suffocating foreign debt has resulted in the severe reduction of the amount of money to be spent on education and health, typically 25-50% respectively.

One out of five Latin-Americans and one out of three Africans or Asians die of malnutrition, mostly children. It is not draughts, floods, earthquakes or overpopulation that are responsible for this situation; it is the social and economic relations from which industrial countries benefit that cause hunger and suffering in the under-developed south.

Sometimes there are even economic reasons hidden behind so-called natural catastrophes and disasters. Thus, the cutting of 40% of the trees for foreign interests in Ethiopian forests caused forced emigration, draughts, war and hunger, although as with all famines, a major determinant is political. Bangladesh faces more and more catastrophic floods every year for the same reasons.

The defenceless

Children, as the weakest in society, suffer most. There are more than 27

million living in the streets in Brazil. Some of them get some kind of job from organise in gangs; most of them look for something to eat in the rubbish bins. All of them face the possibility of being hit or even killed by the police or para-military groups paid by businessmen.

In Bolivia, malnutrition among 80% of families worsened in 1985 with the devaluation

of tin to less than half its normal price on the international market. This led to massive unemployment and poverty, leaving the relatively lucrative growing of cocaine an only or best option.

Living conditions are unbearable and generate violence and

alcoholism, two of the main reasons for children to run away from home.



Many of them will end up being exploited, some way or another, by drug-dealers.

Exploited at work

150 million children in the world work like slaves doing punishing, menial jobs, without any kind of rights and in exchange of laughable wages (if any).



FEATURE: Children Without Childhood

Deaths caused by disease or malnutrition are frequent.

There are 50 million undernourished children in south-east Asia and 25 million in Latin America (68% of children in Peru). In Bolivia, little girls work as house-keepers in the city, where sexual abuse is frequent. This kind of jobs are often disguised in the form of adoption.

War-games come true

Hundreds of thousands of children end up as soldiers or members of the guerrilla all over the world. It is believed that they are better soldiers because "they do not understand what's going on" and take the fight as a game. The psychological consequences of being brought up surrounded by the horrors of war and the hatred of life are not taken into account.

Since World War II, more than 160 wars have been fought in poor countries, far away from the 'peaceful', 'wealthy' part of the world. Most of the 400 dead Palestinians since the beginning of the Intifada in December 1987 were children. In Mozambique, more than 200,000 children were left orphans due to guerrilla actions funded by South Africa.



Child Prostitution

Children's prostitution is rapidly increasing in Third World cities, not only as a result of sexism, sexual oppression and religious beliefs in those countries but also due to the recently recognised phenomenon "sexual tourism" encouraged and promoted by "civilised", rich countries in exotic places, such as Thailand, the Philippines or Brazil. Most girls (and boys) are from 12 to 16 years old but some are much younger.

Children on Sale

In Bolivia, a child can be sold for up to \$12,000. A Brazilian child can cost \$20,000 in Paraguay, which constitutes a brilliant business since many parents,



sunk in poverty, can accept selling one of their children for \$75. New born babies are often kidnapped before leaving the hospital (sometimes 150 in a single month). Many European, North-American and Israeli couples pay for this kind of "service" in order to avoid the long wait in their own countries. It has also been denounced that these

children's organs are sold in "developed" countries.

Guinea-pigs

Chemical experimentation on children



is common. In 1985, over 84,000 women and children in Bangladesh were given an anticholeric vaccine made by Merieux, a French company, as a result of which, (at least) one little girl died. The project was funded by the Swedish Ministry of Defence.

In Thailand, the company Hoescht has tried a potentially lethal drug called "dipyron" or "metamizol" (prohibited in 10 countries and seriously restricted in many others) on children from 4 to 7 years of age. Needless to say that these experiments would cause a scandal if they were to be carried out in our "civilised" part of the world.

(CNT, N° 110, Jan-Feb. 1990)





Blaired Vision

How do the Labour Party's ideas on Works Councils square up to the optimism and expectation of our declining trade unions?

The likelihood of a Labour government committed to the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty has pushed works councils up the agenda. Already 150 large British firms are due to introduce them, doubling to 300 if Britain opts into the social chapter. This could swell significantly if Labour implements widespread introduction of works councils, albeit on a voluntary basis. TUC leader John Monks has described them as a "valuable, practical way of building a better dialogue" with management. Behind this rhetoric the unions see works councils as part of a process by which they can be rescued from their current obscurity. This new utopia of state regulated industrial relations is not, as many Tories think, some new alien concept from the evil Brussels bureaucracy. In fact, works councils were part of a wide debate in the 60's and 70's when "liberal" elements of the establishment saw them as part of a package of reforms to end free collective bargaining and bring rank and file militancy under control. In the late 60's Wilson's government proposed their introduction from factory to director level in the public sector.

Some on the left, around the Institute for Workers Control, favoured them as a way of extending workers control after the failure of nationalisation to do so. Meanwhile the so-called "hard" left, prominent among them Arthur

the unions see works councils as part of a process by which they can be rescued from their current obscurity

Scargill, were opposed to them, arguing that they were just away of absorbing the unions into capitalism. Unions in general opposed them at shop floor level but supported union appointed directors. A 1973 TUC report left this idea open but went on to state that works councils would "at best duplicate existing structures [and would be] superfluous.... at worse they would displace or supersede existing union arrangements [making them] unacceptable to the trade union movement". The debate came to an abrupt end with the arrival of Thatcher. For her, the solution to workers' militancy was not jobs for the boys as worker directors, but to smash the unions. These were the views of much of the ruling class which never really abandoned the idea that unions had no place in a free market economy.

The unions' Thatcherite nightmare is now closing and salvation beckons in the form of a Labour government. But to hope for a return to union influence promoted by the state is to seriously misunderstand socio-economic forces in the new global market. It may be true to say that Blair belongs to the market regulated economic tradition of northern Europe, as opposed to the unfettered free market loved by many here and in America. However, it seems that, faced with global competition and the dominance of free market thinking, a fundamental rethink of the European state

interventionist economic model is taking place which may pose just as big a threat to collectivism as any free market agenda. At its heart lies Catholic social theory and its practical application through works councils. To examine it we need to trace the coming together of Catholic thinking and works councils to their roots in Germany.

Catholic theory first broke from free market thinking with Pope Leo's encyclical "De Rerum Novarum" of 1890. This message from God via the Pope stressed the value of co-operation between worker and management over the class conflict inherent in the free market. It argued for state intervention to protect workers and small scale manufacturing from the ravages of the market and "international bankers and big business".

These ideas had particular influence in Germany where for many years various social movements had attempted to alleviate the alienating impact of large scale capitalism on the working class. As early as 1848 the Frankfurt Parliament advocated joint owner-worker arbitration committees. These ideas were taken up by liberal capitalists in the Rheinland who set up joint worker-management committees to oversee workplace safety. The Kathedersozialisten movement, a highly influential group of economists and lawyers increasingly alarmed at

workers' alienation, argued in the last third of the 19th century that the state should establish works councils to represent workers' interests and draw them back into the system. These various strands resulted in Bismarck introducing widespread social legislation including rights to set up works councils. It should be stressed that this was not to help workers establish collective organisations but aimed to end the "economic and social strains that threatened the nation" by ensuring social peace through working class integration. In fact Bismarck hoped works councils would end the need for trade unions. Much of the inspiration for these ideas was a highly romanticised vision of feudalism. They hoped works councils would bring the social harmony of the feudal system where all was bright and beautiful and everybody knew their place into conflict-ridden capitalism.

By 1916 works councils had been established in German industry. Sadly the ungrateful workers, inspired by the Russian revolution, seized control of industry and introduced their own councils to administer the new society without the owners. The revolution failed but it influenced the unions who abandoned even lip service towards a socialist society, instead attempting to build a role within social democratic capitalism using a collective form of works council. The 2 forms of works council came together when fear of the revolutionary left drove the social democratic government and the Catholic Zentrum group into an alliance which introduced in 1920 the Works Council Law based on worker-manager co-operation. This provided the framework for the post-war German economy model based on joint worker-manager councils coming to legally binding agreements with Labour courts to arbitrate disagreements.

However, within this apparent consensus lay 2 conflicting systems: an imperial idea based on Catholic social theory and a social democratic idea based on social partnership of capital

and labour. This conflict remained submerged for much of the inter-war period. However, immediately after World War 2 the owners, resisting Allied plans to break up German heavy industry, enlisted the unions' support. They would recognise the unions as "equal partners of capital in the management of enterprise and industry" including equal representation on supervisory boards of stockholders. This established the social democratic system in the industrialised Ruhr valley. However, outside this industrial heartland, works councils based on the imperial tradition remained.

Conflict came in the early 50's. The Catholic dominated Christian Democratic Union introduced a bill to establish one form of works council. They proposed a system from the workplace up to the board of directors, with one third of the board being elected from the workplace. The aim was to transform individual workers into co-workers (Mitarbeiter) with a vested interest in the company who could no longer be hired and fired at the boss's whim. The co-worker, as a valued member of staff, had the right to be consulted on "all personnel, social, and economic issues pertaining to their job". There was no role for the unions. Works councils were to be elected by individuals, whether union members or not, and were to act independent of, if not in direct competition to, the unions.

This reflected the changing thinking of the Catholic intelligentsia. Before the war they looked to the state to protect workers and integrate them into society. With the horrors committed by the state in the nazi era they developed the "Christian market economy" or, in today's terms, the social market economy. This looked to the market to solve economic problems but rejected the free market idea that people were just a resource to be hired or fired to meet consumer demand. In this system, rather than a source of social conflict, firms would be institutions of employee-employer co-

operation and stability working to satisfy the demands of the market within given social constraints. They would be places which co-workers felt a part of, had a stake in, and where their individual success was linked to that of the firm. The Catholic social theorists' vision was a society where class conflict would be replaced by co-operation, with people, not profit, at the centre of economic activity. Needless to say, this model saw only a minimal role for the unions.

In response the unions put forward their own proposals which they were to argue for, with little success, for the next thirty years. Under these proposals half of company boards were to be elected union members, half of whom would be union officials. They also proposed joint management-union economic boards, firstly at company level to oversee investment, production and employment, then at regional and national level to advise the state on overall economic policy. No doubt the main objective was to extend union leaders' power, but the underlying arguments expose the theoretical weakness of their position. In effect, they were pulling in 2 directions. On one hand the unions based their organisation around the class conflict inherent in the system as the organisers and defenders of the working class. On the other they sought to adapt to social democratic theory based on a consensus that, despite acknowledging differences, sees a society built on common interests. In effect the unions sought to promote class-based structures while, at the same time, sitting down with capitalists as equal partners in a society based on co-operation. Questions like how you could have equal partnership when only one side owned industry, so in reality controlling industry, were never addressed.

Though it may have suited German capitalism to bestow equal status on unions in the post-war boom, in the current recession the true position was soon exposed. With recession came

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..questions like how you could have equal partnership when only one side owned industry, so in reality controlling industry, were never addressed

Works Councils

the need to cut the workers' slice of the capitalist cake. Massive job losses and wage cuts were accompanied by a dismantling of much of the welfare state. The unions, the much-valued equal partners in the post-war economic miracle, were simply swept aside and ignored. Now steeped in consensus ideas, no longer having a mass class conscious base, they could only respond by attempting to buy their way back to the negotiating table by offering a pay freeze in return for limited job guarantees. When this too was ignored, they were reduced to demonstrations and crying out in impotent anger that "the employers want a different country; they don't want consensus; they want conflict", to quote a recent outburst from the head of the DGB, Germany's union confederation. Despite all the legislation guaranteeing union rights, German unions seem to be going the same way as British ones. Since 1991 the DGB has been losing membership at a rate of 4% a year. Of the 34.4 million German workers in employment less than 10 million now belong to the DGB, which is reduced to gimmicks to attract the lost youth and stem their plunging membership.

However, German unions' experience may be similar to that of British ones, the economy is not. The rampant free market system taking hold in Britain is not seen as a solution in Germany. Though state intervention and provision is slowly being scaled down, the state retains a crucial role controlling excess profit, ensuring long term investment, quality training, education and guaranteeing basic welfare. Behind the recession and attacks on workers a new interventionist German economic model is being built. At its core will be high-tech industry and a highly skilled workforce. As heavy industry is replaced so are the class-based social democratic ideas of corporatism.

This shining new economy will be based much more on social democratic theory centred around the individual

and the family unit. The state will curb some of the excesses of the market and ensure its smooth functioning. The market will not be portrayed as a means of making profit but as the satisfier of economic and social needs. The individual will be valued and advancement will not be determined by background but by merit, education and training. With individual fulfilment will come individual

talk of individual rights and responsibilities, it seems much more likely he would like to follow the changes now taking place in Germany. Remarks by the Blairite shadow treasury minister, Alastair Darling, seem to confirm this when he argued for an end to the "us and them" tradition and for a new culture of co-operation based on works councils. At the same time making it quite clear Labour won't be handing back power to the unions and that the draconian anti-union laws will stay. Nor is it too unrealistic to suggest that a Labour government might go further than the Tories banning strike in return for binding arbitration. The individual will have the right to join a union, but a powerless and marginalised one.

If it is Catholic social theory that drives Blair's vision, little wonder he is not shouting it from the roof tops. For he faces powerful opposition from British capitalism, in full free market cry after Thatcher revolution and bitterly opposed to both state regulation of profit and workers' rights, individual or otherwise.

Already a secret body of top industrialists, "The Works Council Study Group", is bent on sabotaging any moves towards works councils. While CBI leader A. Turner recently announced their opposition any Labour plans that would introduce employees' representatives onto Boards.

The point being that even if Blair does succeed in moving the economy away from its current Thatcherite direction towards a more interventionist model, this will not herald the return of union empowered corporatism. For despite all, Labour talk of extending individual rights. Under a Blair government this will mean nothing more than the right of workers to join a still weak and marginalised trade union movement. With the prospect of the unions facing further enfeeblement, with attempts to erode collective culture through the introduction of a works councils system based on the individual.

In Next Issues Closer Look: Social Democracy Hits the Rails



An examination of the effect that new attitudes and ideas on Works Councils have had on union and management thinking and action, with a case study of how these ideas have pervaded management's decisions and union's actions on the railways.

Don't miss the train - spot your next copy of
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**the
individual
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a union, but
a powerless
and
marginalise
d one**

responsibility and loyalty to society and to the company. The aim will be a situation where workers see their interests as inseparable from those of the company. Meanwhile the unions will have a minimal role as workers' problems will be dealt with individually through the works council. This vision may remain just a vision given the challenge of cheap labour based economies in a global market. But there is little doubt that it is based not on collective ideas but is firmly rooted in those of Catholic social tradition which have been influential in Germany for most of this century.

Which brings us nicely to that good Catholic boy with the devil's eyes, Tony Blair. Given the German experience, we can begin to decipher the "stakeholder society". It is wrong to portray Blair as a Tory in sheep's clothing driven by the desire to go further towards an American-style economy. Rather, given all Labour's

Solidarity Federation

The Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994 by the joining together of industrial networks in the Transport, Education and public Service sectors, the Direct Action Movement and other groups and individuals. This was a considerable step forward for anarchosyndicalism in Britain.

The SolFed (SF) provides what has been lacking for many years - a concrete base in the working class for uniting struggles in the workplace with the wider political struggle. In other words a revolutionary social and economic organisation. The ideas and practices of anarchosyndicalism are not new, although they are constantly changing in response to the rapidly changing world. Whilst not a fully fledged revolutionary union, SF is a significant step towards this aim.

As industrial networks grow in members and influence, so does the scope for action. The industrial networks have established a reputation in their industries and are showing real results in membership and effectiveness.

The federation is not just organised through industrial networks. It also organises

locally through "locals".

A local is made up of all SF members in an area regardless of network membership. The work of locals is varied: general solidarity with the networks and other workers; local political campaigns like anti-fascism and environmental issues; holding public meetings; producing and distributing anarchosyndicalist material. Many of the already established locals have or are working towards getting a local, an actual building as a permanent base.

International Workers Association

The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the IWA, giving it the strength of international solidarity and experience from the larger sections such as the CNT in Spain and the USI in Italy.

Founded in 1922, the International Workers Association (IWA) has sections all over Europe, in South America, Australia and the USA.

So 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. 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 these past 74 years? Until the Second World War it had over 5 million people world-wide affiliated to revolutionary unions. A combination of war, fascism, state capitalism and communism all but destroyed it. Following the re-emerge of the Spanish CNT in the late 70's, the IWA had a new lease of life. Today there are sections in over a dozen countries, ranging from propaganda groups to functioning unions. The Solidarity Federation in Britain is currently at a point of transition between these two stages.

AIMS OF THE SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of workers which seeks to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit world-wide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege.

In their place, we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisation based on the same principles - revolutionary unions. These are not Trade Unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues - both in the workplace and outside - which arise from our oppression. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Unless we organise in this way, politicians - some claiming to be revolutionary - will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of **Industrial Networks and Locals** which are

the nuclei of future revolutionary unions and centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on **Direct Action** - action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership.

We welcome all working people who agree with our aims and principles, and who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions. We recognise that the class struggle is world-wide, and are affiliated to the **International Workers' Association (IWA)**, with whom we share the same **Principles of Revolutionary Unionism**.



**THE TORIES
WON'T BE
HAPPY UNTIL
THEY'VE TRASHED
EVERYTHING**



**...if Tony Blair's
the answer
it must've been
a stupid
question**

Elections and party frolics are just a Minor Blur

GROTESQUE FRAME UP AGAINST ANARCHISTS

A little girl, two judges and an unknown character get together and write a farce with anarchists as protagonists. Not one of them knows how anarchists think or act, so the result is quite hilarious, or it would be were it not that when a judge gives vent to his creative urges he has all the repressive apparatus of the state behind his pen.

So on Tuesday September 17 at dawn, in an operation involving a vast number of special operations carabinieri (ROS) with 29 arrest warrants, a blitz took place in all the main towns of Italy, arresting anarchists accused of belonging to a sanguinary armed clandestine organisation complete with inverted name and initials.

One of the comrades arrested, Alfredo Bonnano, editor of Anarchismo Editions, known for about thirty years for his anarchist activity including public debates, analyses, involvement in social struggles, publications etc, is now in prison accused of being the "head" of this "clandestine armed organisation".

In fact the script had been written for some time: a potent cocktail of childrens' nightmares and the delirium of a judge who has spent much of his murderous career arresting militants of communist armed clandestine organisations such as the Red Brigades. It even seemed that modesty had prevailed after a dossier printed first in 10.000 copies then 25.000 and distributed all over Italy had exposed the plot: that of putting one of the more disquieting (for them) parts of the anarchist movement to silence. After raiding about 60 anarchists in November 1995 with warrants going from attempted murder, attacks on public structures, subversive association, and taking away piles of paper, they retreated into silence.

But objective conditions change. Times are hard for the judiciary in Rome. New scandals. Magistrates arrested. Men of their own class denounce plots involving judiciary, pentiti and secret services. Even the much exalted pentiti are falling into disrepute, fast becoming an uncontrollable mass phenomenon with credibility rating falling rapidly, threatening the continued existence of the category so dear to judges like Marini. The socialist government are asking for sacrifices, trade unions threaten a general strike. But the latter no longer have credibility and hundreds of actions of sabotage have taken place in recent years in all spheres of exploitation. These have always been seen positively by the accused anarchists, and they have said so clearly in their publications and public debates. Now they are being accused not only of all the acts of social rebellion that have taken place over past years, but also of murder and kidnapping.

The strategy is clear: separation by fear from those who consider them a point of reference for their own individual rebellion.

And of course, the imminent trial - November 7 - of four anarchists (also included in the list of 29) following a robbery in 1994, accused and sentenced for other robberies in the area on the faltering lies of the young lady in question. A written transcript of her questioning has led to ridicule in the four corners of the world: so she also enhances her status through this grotesque publicity stunt.

The visual impact, in keeping with the spectacular requirements of our times, had been studied to the finest detail. Alfredo Bonnano is presented in a photograph taken twenty years ago, at the top of a pyramid with rows of "subaltern militants" below. Carabinieri and judges in pompa magna eloquating that this is not a trial of ideas but a mad cell expelled from an otherwise respectable anarchist movement. All information concerning the "organisation" came from "declarations made by Namseetchi Mojdeh", which revealed themselves "extremely useful for knowledge of the organisation", "her attendability authoritatively recognised by the court of Trento, demonstrating that there has been no recourse to the phenomenon of judicial theorems....."

Fortunately not all the anarchists have been arrested. The present writer does not have access to the names of those who have been arrested apart from that of Alfredo Bonnano, and those who are already serving sentences for specific events that have been attributed to them in the past.

As far as we know, all those arrested on Tuesday 17 are being held in Rebibbia prison, Rome.

Information can be obtained from Anarchist Defence Committee, c/o El Paso Occupato, via Passo Duole 47, 10127 - TURIN, Italy.

This is one of the most grotesque frame ups ever to take place against anarchists, their ideas and methods of struggle. It strikes not only those arrested or under inquiry, but every anarchist, wherever they may be.

Solidarity Committee: SOLIDARITATSKOMITTEE ITALIEN C/O INFOLADEN MUNCHEN BREISACHERSTR 12, D-81667 MUNCHEN, GERMANY.