Why, with a British trade union membership of some ten millions, is the miners' strike now in its eleventh month? If ten million workers are united in unions, how is it that they cannot demonstrate that unity is strength by winning the coal dispute through solidarity action?

The answer lies in the nature of the unions in Britain. Although massive, they have little fighting spirit, which is due in part to their partnership with the Labour Party, where the view of the politician always prevails.

TERRORIFIED OF WORKERS' STRENGTH

The Labour Party is as terrified by the idea of a miners' victory as the Tories are. Such an event would show decisively what the strength of workers lies—in industrial direct action and solidarity, rather than the ritual abdication of rights at the ballot box.

The same fears are held by the TUC mandarins—even the leaderships of those unions that have aided the miners pull back from full support.

For example, the NUR only called out 5,000 workers in support of the Coalville Depot railmen (victimized for blacking coal), when what's needed is unlimited strike action in the vital transport and power sectors.

KEY TO VICTORY WITHOUT BROKEN HEADS

The key to victory is still solidarity action. It is not the implementation of TUC guidelines which still allow for the transport of oil. Nor is it mass pickets which can be beaten by the superior strength of police and army, as we learnt at Grunwick, Warrington, Orgreave. Workers' power works not through hand-to-hand fighting with the mercenaries of the State, but through industrial solidarity which can paralyse production effectively and without broken heads.

ANNIVERSARY

This support can't be won through appealing to union and TUC bosses—that's been tried for eleven months. It must be achieved through arguing with the rank and file. It was agreed at the Congress for Industrial Action at Burnley that March 6th—the first anniversary of the strike—would be a good date for the start of such an appeal. Let's work for it and win the struggle at last.

CONGRESS PLANS SOLIDARITY ACTION

On January 18th, 120 trade union delegates, mainly from the NE Lancashire area met for a congress to plan industrial action in support of the miners. Speaking were NUM President Peter Heathfield, Dave Douglas from Heathfield Main NUM and Tony Crowther from Manchester NUM.

It was interesting to hear the differences in opinion between Heathfield, the high-ranking official and Communist, and Douglas whose experience of the strike is that of the picket lines. "Talks about talks" basically summarises Heathfield's approach. His speech was smoothing the way for a compromise with the NGB—that is to say, a defeat.

In contrast, Douglas threatened, "We'll screw Sowell and Heathfield's heads off if they sell us out." He also stressed that workers do not need invitations to join miners' picket line lines.

He also criticised the role of the left—their calls for TUC leadership in the strike and the fact that their solidarity only manifests itself in the pages of their papers. He said this compared unfavourably with the actions of syndicalists such as DAM (who were instrumental in calling the congress) and claimed that the strike could still be won through direct action, given the solidarity of other workers.

The speech from Tony Crowther (NUR) dealt with betrayals: the behaviour of Kimmoch and the Labour Party, and the part played by the NUR leadership in limiting support for the victimised railwaymen of Coalville.

After the speeches the congress split into workshops to discuss establishing support groups in the community and industry, and of course the need to build industrial solidarity in support of the NUR.

On the latter point the congress urged support for the February 14th Day of Action called by the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional TUC. A motion was carried that March 6th, the anniversary of the beginning of the coal strike, would be a good date for a general strike, and it was urged that this call be taken up at the Sheffield Miners' Support Group Conference on February 9th.
SOLIDARITY
OUR BEST WEAPON

The miners' strike has shown once again the crucial importance of solidarity. Solidarity is the foundation of unionism, without it workers can be picked off by group and be set against each other. On this subject we can do no better than quote Rudolf Rocker's book "Anarchist Syndicalism":

"To cherish and strengthen this natural solidarity of the workers and to give all strike movements a more profoundly social character, is one of the most important tasks which the Anarchist Syndicalists have set themselves. For, whatever the direction of strategy, STRIKE is one of their choicest weapons...."

Through it the economic battle becomes a deliberate action of the workers as a class. The sympathetic strike is the culmination of relations, but also unrelated, categories of labour, to help the battle of a particular trade to go on by extending the strike to other branches of labour, wherever this is necessary. In this case the workers are not satisfied with giving financial assistance to their fighting brethren, but go further, and by crippling entire industries cause a break in the whole economic life in order to meet their demands effectively.

"Direct action by organized labour finds its strongest expression in the GENERAL STRIKE in the stoppage of work in every branch of production, by the organized resistance of the proletariat, with all the consequences arising from it. It is the most powerful weapon which the workers have at their command...."

The present miners' strike is a perfect illustration of this. On the one hand we see the struggle spreading throughout all sections of the working-class—the women's food kitchen, the fundraising of the support committees, the efforts of comrades abroad to raise money and prevent the transit of coal to Britain—all are fine examples of solidarity.

But a more important lesson lies in the lack of solidarity. Apart from the limited and essentially peripheral Dagenham and rail strikes, the TUC and the unions have confined their help to fine words and empty promises. How long would this hard hitter strike have had to continue if workers in the transport and power industries had joined it? No government could have withstood that. But in the "I'm all right, Jack" atmosphere of Thatcher's Britain, the lesson of solidarity need learnings all over again.

HAPPY NEW YEAR?

It hasn't turned out to be for all workers in County Cleveland who've been told they're to be laid off...

First came the announcement that 260 jobs are to go with the closure of the Cleveland Bridge foundry and engineering works in Middlesbrough, which is over 100 years old. This has been followed by the announcement that 350 jobs are to go with the closure of the Rank Hovis McDougall bakery in Stockton later this year, and another 250 in Hartlepool whose closure of British Steel's plate mill. Retiring steel union leader and scabbing bastard Bill Birtles must be sad to see the demise of his home town—Hartlepool now has an unemployment rate of over 50% because of Cleveland has the worst jobless figures in the UK apart from Ulster....

But never mind, his coming knighthood should cheer him up.

The lesson should be obvious to everyone—keeping your head down won't save you: they'll kick you in the teeth, just the same. Might as well stand and fight like the striking miners...

-Teesider.

ONLY DOING THEIR JOB

NUM offices at Edlington pit, Doncaster, have been broken into and £2,000 worth of equipment stolen. The office door was smashed in and a bulky photocopier which would have required a kick you in the teeth, just the same. Might as well stand and fight like the striking miners...

POLYPIPE

Polypipe, the Doncaster-based plastic pipe and guttering manufacturers', is coasting through the recession. Despite being only five years old and selling to a rapidly declining building industry, Polypipe has cut its loss to £150,000 a 15% share of the plastic pipe market. Although its rivals, including big names such as Shell and Marley, have seen their profits and sales drop, Polypipe says it has gone up.

Polypipe's rapid appearance as a major player has amazed those who have been brought about by its policy of selling goods... at up to 50% less than rivals. Kevin McDonald, the owner of the firm has been able to produce things more cheaply because of the exploitation of the workforce. In September 1983, 34 workers...
ANARCHISM today
BY PHILIP KANE

its relevance

A short time ago, following a meeting organised by our local Trades Council, I found myself arguing with a member of the Communist Party. "Anarchism", he solemnly declared, "is a dead duck". This is a fairly common view, not only on the authoritarian left. But is it true? The success of the Bolshevik coup in 1917 was certainly a body blow to the anarchist movement in much of the world. Here was an apparently triumphant socialist revolution. The methods of the Bolshevik party — formalised as "Leninism" — soon became the norm against which most revolutionaries judged their own activities. The Bolsheviks' counter-revolutionary actions, for example their suppression of the soviets and factory committees and of the Kronstadt rising, went either unnoticed or uncriticised. The defeat of Spanish anarchosyndicalism in the 1930s seemed to be the "coup de grace" that might finish anarchism as a social movement once and for all.

Yet in spite of this, anarchist ideas continue to attract militant workers. In Spain, the anarchosyndicalist CGT has been revived and other anarchosyndicalist groups and unions have emerged throughout Europe, in North and South America, in Australia and Japan. The anarchist movement has refused to lie down and expire.

Such renewed vitality and growth is perhaps not so very surprising when placed in perspective. The fact that feminism cuts across class divisions is not disputed. And some people will find the dismissal of women's achievements in the Spanish revolution convenient, to say the least.

But it contains plenty to discuss, and a useful feature is the brief glossary clarifying the political terms used, although oddly enough it does not mention the term "anarchist-feminist".

The second pamphlet, from the same source, is a thorough look at the question of pornography, not before time. The author examines the two most common reactions to pornography: the liberal (defending the right of men to make and use porn) and the Socialist-Nationalist (all sexually explicit matter to be made illegal), and explains what is wrong with both. Straightforward sections deal with definitions of porn, its connections with the family, violence, fascism, etc.

There is little dodging of issues here: personally I would grumble with two aspects of what is said: the section on the family might do better to be more specific about the "child structure" that might replace the present arrangements; there is evident disapproval of "sex divorced from loving relationships" and the "casual fuck"; the discussion of art, while good as far as it goes, doesn't go far enough. It seems a peculiar irony to condemn Henry Miller by quoting the Nazis while praising Brecht, and the lightning dismissal of William Lawrence is simplistic.

Perhaps most interesting is the suggestion that in a healthy society individuals would have more sharply-defined instincts which might mean they cope quite differently with the pornographic implications of some activities.

By pointing out that "pornography restricts freedom. It limits the ways in which people can relate sexually... we would welcome the sexually explicit if it were truthful and not loaded with male-supremacist values" the author should convince anyone that nothing is "purely pornographic" or that it somehow liberates human sexuality, while her proposals for combating it go beyond the destructive but limited tactics such as graffiti or paint-throwing to a realisation that "the pornographer is a big businessman... workers produce porn-packaging etc" and need to organise for a society where their labour will not be exploited and police sexual hatred and repression, but for the good of all.

A.R.

review

ANARCHISM AND FEMINISM (Medway DAM, 50p).
PORNOGRAPHY AND STATE CONTROL (Medway DAM, 50p).

A welcome to two new pamphlets from Medway DAM to accompany the now rare Hull DAM publication on women and unions. As one of them points out, "It is male chauvinist attitudes that are splitting the movement, not women demanding to have our rights considered", and criticism of DAM for taking little notice of women's concerns is not unjustified.
HOW MUCH IS THAT BABY

Surrogate mothers are now supplying infertile couples with babies. The State is so anxious about who are "suitable parents" that they have pounced on the first such baby born to a British woman, and made her a ward of court, while they ascertain whether the foreign (dreaded word!) father is fit to raise his child. He has no rights because his daughter is "illegitimate." The concept of legitimacy of children seems crazy in the 1980s but the State still uses legalistic violence and when it chooses, to define the rights of individuals.

There are four people involved in this drama whose rights would seem to overlap. The boy probably only wanted to be loved and cared for, and wouldn't mind whether her "family" is black, gay, old, a couple, or rich, providing she is respected as a human being and given the freedom to grow into an individual. Almost certainly, her interests are not served by being put into "care" by the Court.

The father's wife thinks she can "buy" a daughter to fill her need for someone to care for, rather than opening her home to one of the many needy children looking for parenting. She, no doubt, doesn't want a child who fails to fit the media image--beautiful, white, able-bodied, middle-class. In her case, she is presumably unable to bear her own child, but how long will it be before middle-class women would rather "rent a womb" than leave their jobs or lose their figures.

The father has no rights, as I said above, though he could legally adopt his daughter after being vetted by the State. It is only because he can spare £13,000 that he is in this position. What hope for working-class people who want a child when it is money that talks? Here I agree with those who say that you should not be able to buy human life. The pluton buys prostitutes, the capitalist buys workers, the State buys soldiers. NO-ONE should ever be bought and sold, and it is the ruling-class who must be made to understand that we will not sit back and accept it.

The surrogate mother went through nine months of pregnancy, and labour, for the sum of £25,000, a paltry sum considering the inconvenience and risk. (Some surrogate mothers are required not to drink or smoke and to keep to a strict diet during the pregnancy to avoid putting the unborn child at risk -- the same attitude to a woman's right to control over her own body as SPUC and the anti-abortionists.) Working-class women with little hope of employment could well be tempted to "earn" money this way, leaving many children suffering on their part.

Imagine Mr and Mrs Oppressor want a baby Oppressor to take over from them when they are old. They hire Ms Worker to have their child for them, to save Mrs Oppressor unpleasantness, and Ms Worker gives birth to a series of baby Oppressors, until having her health and living to see them grow up and exploit her and her class. With child-bearing the role of mainly working-class women, we need not expect to see much improvement in maternity services, except of course, as they would directly affect newborn infants.

Not only should we have a gut revulsion to the idea of buying babies but we must also examine how it would influence the future population. The State, and the ability to pay would ensure that most babies would be white. Enforced sterilization of blacks will no doubt continue to be part of "aid" packages to developing countries.

White supremacy is intent on black genocide. When the ability to select the sex of babies is also achieved, there will be an imbalance in favour of boys, but that is the subject of another article...

It would seem to give their babies to others to care for in private arrangements of mutual aid, then all well and good, but money must not be the motivation on either side. Just as in a system of GIVEN, not sold, so babies can be entrusted to friends but NEVER sold.

L VERRAN

ABOLISH PRISONS

they don't work

Capitalist society is chaotic and disorganized, a breeding ground for the kind of situation that builds up when people are constantly exposed to degradation and insult. It is easy to misunderstand violence, rape, theft and addiction, they are merely, or that working-class people should tolerate their criminations on each other, even though we should stick together as a class and direct our anger where it really counts: the same goal of the ruling class who benefit from all this misery.

The ruling class and its parasites in the State are in fact the biggest gang of criminals, murderers and gangsters, yet because they are all legal. The answer they propose for every one else is punishment, larger prisons. In this sense, ALL prisoners are political prisoners.

Prisons are there to inflict violence and harm and keep us all in line through fear.

Social Struggles

I was disgusted and horrified at the primitive conditions. The food was foul...I remember on two occasions finding cockroaches in the potatoes...I broke my tooth after biting grit which was in the cabbage...They resort to holding back my mail, tearing it up on three occasions...one member of the censor's staff said "Red fascist scum like you should be shot..." Maggie is too bloody soft..." an inmate suffering from severe back pain...could not stand it...After being refused pain killers he gashed his wrist with a half broken razor in the toilets...It later turned out that he had kidney stones which required an emergency operation...Inmates were given the liquid soap for not obeying petty rules...an inmate forced to a strip cell because he refused to take a medicine which was causing him to vomit and it turned out that the inmate had a bowel which had burst...this goes on...type cruelty should end before some unfortunate inmate is killed.

The only answer to prisons is not to reform them, but to abolish the system they reflect in all its insanity, stupidity and ignorance.

Once the causes of crime have been done away with, in a classless society with new living conditions, people will develop new relationships based on mutual love and respect for the needs of all.

Certain crimes and hang-ups may persist for a time, but shall we punish, or practice more humane methods of restraint without vengeance and cruelty? This would do a lot more to protect a society offering no conditions for crime to thrive. People are quite capable of dealing with problems themselves - we don't need politicians, police, prisons or "executions" to maintain freedom and equality.

The above extracts come from a letter recently sent to D.A. from Strangeways Prison in Manchester, describing conditions there.
S AMERICA: moves to syndicalism?

rejecting political parties

Bolivia's OCB has been a major force in the country's political life for 30 years. The class awareness and organisation of Bolivian workers is the most advanced in the region. During the OCB's stormy history, its members have led an armed insurrection as well as ongoing confrontations against the country's recurring military dictatorships. Again and again it has brought the country to a standstill by declaring an indefinite general strike to force the government to respond to workers' demands.

Yet, despite the obvious differences between Brazil (Latin America's largest country, with a relatively developed economy) and tiny, impoverished Bolivia, the resolutions passed by the last OCB congresses were similar to those passed by the CUT, the Brazilian labour confederation, founded in 1933, which declares itself independent of all political parties and embraces 1.5 million urban and rural workers in 937 different union locals. The OCB emphasized the need for unity among peasants and industrial workers, stressed its independence from the government and its determination to revise Bolivia's chronic economic decline.

After heated discussion, the 1,400 delegates approved a resolution that pledged the OCB to defend the battered "democratic" government  of Hermin Siles Zuazo while at the same time clearly dissociating itself from the government's policies. This came sharply divided the congress because a significant number of OCB members are affiliated with Bolivia's Communist Party, which holds several Cabinet posts. Workers blamed the OCB for the government's inability to stop the country's spiralling inflation, unemployment and consequent drop in workers' real wages. In electing the OCB's new leadership, workers delivered a stinging defeat to the Communists. The CPI did not win a single seat on the Executive Committee, where before it had held seven.

In Latin America, traditional political alliances have been displaced by a generation of labour militancy who reject the integration of the labour movement into the state apparatus. This refusal to identify with governments they suspect do not have their real interests at heart. The new militancy has been expressed, for example, in Uruguay, Chile and Argentina.

The OCB's refusal to become a "party" has paid off in military successes. Since the 1980s, the OCB has neutralized unionism and taken control of many important sectors of the economy. The OCB has also managed to organize large-scale protests and strikes, which have brought government to its knees. In 1990, the OCB led a massive national strike against the government, which was forced to negotiate with the workers' movement.

In addition, the OCB has been able to negotiate important gains for workers, including increased wages and benefits, improved working conditions, and the right to strike. The OCB has also been successful in fighting against austerity measures imposed by the IMF and World Bank.

DEATH of the Adriatic

Until recently it seemed impossible that we could kill a whole sea. However the Adriatic has been given two years by the most pessimistic estimates before it becomes the first uninhabitable sea. It's not a recent process, but it has suddenly become acute. The problem is an overabundance of nitrate and phosphates in the water, leading to a chain of events resulting in a lack of oxygen in the water. The sudden multiplication of diatoms and dinoflagellants - tiny life-forms which consume these chemicals - was first noticed in 1975. Areas off the coast of N. Italy became full of these tiny creatures, which are colourful and phosphorescent at night. Then thousands of dead fish were washed up on the beaches. People in the know began to worry, because the Adriatic is an enclosed sea and it has a slow circulation of water. But nothing was done.

Since then the problem has become greater. With increased pollution from agriculture, industry and cities there is less oxygen for the algae. When conditions are right they "bloom", turning the sea red. Just a few days later they die, falling to the sea-bed as sediment. They decompose, and this process requires oxygen. This large mass of dead matter in a small volume of water consumes almost all the oxygen, suffocating the bottom-dwelling fish. These add to the decomposing mass, consuming even more oxygen and killing yet more fish. Inevitably many dead fish are washed up on the shore causing a stink which has been smelt as far as 15 kilo-

WANTED URGENTLY

Comrades in the CNT of France, sister organisation to the MAM, need a supply of Syndicalist literature in Spanish to forward to contacts in Nicaragua. This is urgently needed for educational purposes. All books, pamphlets, etc gratefully received by HAT French Commission, c/o DIREKT ACTION PO BOX 102, HULL.
In The Tradition

The Roots of SOLIDARNOSC

On the 15th December the workers of the world marked the anniversary of "Patriot" Jaruzelski's Polish Labour government and the first independent Trade Union Solidarnosc.

In contrast to what is generally believed, it isn't the first time that a free union has developed and been crushed by the government of Poland. The previous union - the ZZZ - was almost crushed by Pilsudski's regime and was finally crushed by the German and Soviet occupation. The story of the ZZZ is still largely unknown.

In 1927 there were more than 7,000 political prisoners in Polish jails - members of Ukrainian nationalists, white Russians and conscientious objectors, a large number of the Polish opposition. The farther away the prisoners were from civilisation, the more open was the mistreatment of inmates, just as today.

Joseph Pilsudski's government was crushed after an army coup in May 1926, was Poland's white terror in a so-called "Democratic Socialist" government. Political prisoners, a constantly rising level of unemployment (29.4% in 1927) and the police state at work are kept alive.

Increasing use of the police against workers' meetings were everyday reality, and the number of unemployed may have been double the official figure, and a minimal level of public assistance often led to riots in the towns. On 21st December 1928, the police shot at striking miners at Dzwirzyn (in Galicia); 3 were killed, 8 wounded. The rights which workers had won earlier disappeared. The working class was dispersed into countless political parties, and as most workers were organised, turned to the fight for daily bread, and their struggle was reduced to an individual level.

The Socialist Party (PPS) had friendly relations with Pilsudski, which did not worry him. The KPP, the Communist Party of Poland (KPP), were persecuted although they had themselves 6 members of the Sejm, the Polish parliament.

At this time there existed 3 types of union: class struggle organisations that were nearly all in the hands of the PPS, the National Unions, and the Christian Democratic one. But now there was an important due to the mass exodus from unions.

After this time of heavy repression no large unions existed until after 1939. But by 1926 syndicalist workers had established the General Workers' Confederation, along the lines of the French CGT as it had been originally.

In 1937 the ZZZ had 130,000 members, not including the unemployed, who paid no subscriptions. This compares well with the GWC-controlled union movement which numbered 400,000 including the unemployed.

The most significant sections of the ZZZ were metal workers, wood, forestry, and textile workers, workers at the State cigarette factories, together with match workers and those in the communications service, Railway and postal workers, hospital workers, etc. Forbidden by the State to join, but in 1933, the railway workers 35,000 railway workers decided to join the ZZZ with the same happen to 18,000 postal workers. The reaction of the government to post ZZZ members to the most isolated parts of Poland.

ZZZ's twice-monthly paper was called THE WORKERS FRONT with a circulation of 40,000 -50,000. Unemployment in Silesia had become a serious problem and the workers of Silesia had become familiar with the GWC and the works of Sorel, Giluk. A trade unionist who had been a syndicalist through practical work, the theoretical Prof. Zakszewski who had come to syndicalism via the study of Sorel, and the author Zaremba who had many of his books depicted syndicalism in a favourable light.

During the confused period following the split-up of the Socialists, the GWC established the slogan: UNITY ON ECONOMIC AND UNION GROUND AMONG THE POLITICAL PARTIES.

In 1931 the GWC joined with a number of independent unions to form the ZZZ. Its first chairman was Marczewski, who was Prime Minister at the time of the restoration of the Polish state in 1918. He had also been Pilsudski's Minister of Labour, but by 1934 declared he had had enough of political parties. Marczewski, standing on the syndicalist wing of the ZZZ, was once sentenced to 3 years jail for "syndicalist propaganda". At the outset the ZZZ was a mixture of Catholic, Pilsudski's radical and romantic elements as well as the syndicalists from the GWC who had a strong influence and eventually took it over.

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ZZZ's twice-monthly paper was called THE WORKERS FRONT with a circulation of 40,000 - 50,000. The miners in Silesia had their own paper, selling 50,000 - 60,000. In addition the ZZZ set up its own paper, but after 3 months it was closed down by the censor.

The 1930s were hard for the Polish workers - by 1937 there were nine million unemployed. The central figures of the ZZZ were prosecuted for high treason if they called for strike action. In May 1937 there was an attack on Jews in Brest-Litovsk, where many were murdered — a reflection of Poland's domestic problems.

But what really set the repression in motion, and caused the liquidation of Poland's organised working class, was the division of the country between Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. Each took the union movement in their respective sectors. In the country, workers were murdered or incarcerated in workers camps. But the government in Poland, kept our weapons until Poland was built within the framework of a free Europe run on libertarian socialist lines. Because throughout the history of the struggle we must fight for the self-defence of the workers' organisations, the effect of land reforms without compensation, the taxation of private property, industrialism and the granting of privileges to co-operative enterprises. We opposed every proposal for a bourgeois peace which the other trade unions, including the social democratic movement, had opted for.

After the invasion began general repression and the purges become all of the Jewish labour leaders. The editor of ROBONIX, the main organ of the Czezpanski, fell into the hands of the Germans and was transferred East. Jan Maria, the editor of the Polish railway union, and its secretary, Antoni Baginski, went the same way and never seen again.

Likewise Dr. Henrik Einrich, leader of the Jewish workers, Victor Alter, leader of the Jewish unions in Rosental, and Himmelart, chairman of the Tailors' union, also went Enawowo to camps in Siberia.

Thus disappeared the ZZZ from Polish history, a history of struggle in a hard-tested country. But history does not end in death itself, and Solidarnosc's activism is built upon the same ideas as the ZZZ did in its own time.
Get the other side of the story read

Direct Action
Voice of Anarchist Syndicalism

Owing to a number of distribution problems, Direct Action is, in serious financial straits. The DAM is an organisation of ordinary people and has no rich benefactors.

Therefore, we appeal for any cash donations, however small, that can enable us to keep the paper appearing regularly. Remember, it is the only Anarchist-Syndicalist paper to appear nationwide in Britain today.

If this isn't possible, a subscription will help us, while ensuring a regular supply of DAM for you—mutual aid at its best.

Subscription rates per 6 issues:
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Cheques and postal orders should be payable to DIRECT ACTION.

If you live near: Bolton, Bradford, Burnley, Cambridge, Glasgow, Huddersfield, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, London (South or East), Manchester, Medway, Middlesbrough, Rochdale, South Wales, or South Yorkshire, THERE IS A DAM GROUP NEAR YOU.

Contacts are also active in Birmingham, Brighton, Mansfield, Newcastle, Shropshire, Swansea...

Simply write to DAM NATIONAL SECRETARY, 223 GREENWOOD ROAD, BENCHILL, MANCHESTER

Letters

Dear comrades,

As a lifelong syndicalist, I would like to comment on your article "The Future is Ours, or Maybe" (DA 24). It seems to me wrong-headed to forget that the power of the working-class lies at the point of production. I know that, like the rest of the working class in Britain, the Anarchist-syndicalist movement suffers from unemployment amongst its ranks. I know that the experience of this is frustrating, but to create a theory that the unemployed ("the vital underclass") are "essential" in creating social change is mistaken.

For the working class, both with us in France and with yourselves, a disaster because it robs workers of the power to withdraw their labour—only sanction, I do not wish to deprecate the unemployed, but it were to be sad to see what thinking underlines the aims and policies of the DAM. I must also comment on your question whether this is the "age of Anarchism." Anarchism is important as much as it influences the labour movement. It is through labour movements inspired by libertarian ideas that mass revolutionary organisations can arise. Anarchism alone cannot attract workers in any number. Syndicalism, imbued with a libertarian morality can.

Yours fraternally,
Edouard Doba, Lille.

Direct Action is now produced by Hull DAM.

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DIRECT ACTION VIOLENCE?

"The State in violence, domination by violence; masked where possible, open and brutal if necessary."

Mikhail Bakunin.

There's been a lot of nonsense talked about violence during the miners' strike. And violence, by the State or by people in opposition to it, is problematic for some people, even on the Left. Anarcho-syndicalists, on the other hand, have a very clear perspective on this.

TRAITORS

During the miners' strike, traitors like Kinlock and Willis have used picket-line violence (by the strikers, mind, not the police) as the excuse to cover their betrayal of the people they claim to be representative of. Their cowardice will have sickened many strikers and their supporters, especially those who have been on the receiving end of "law and order" as meted out by the police during the strike, while Kinlock and Willis were nowhere to be seen.

SCARGILL

Although there's much in Arthur Scargill's brand of socialism with which we anarcho-syndicalists would disagree, the man has to be respected for having steadfastly refused, despite great pressure, to condemn NUM members for defending themselves as best they can, while all about traitors sneered and cowards chimed.

At the other end of bourgeois politics from Kinlock and Willis, after the Brighton bombing the Government tried to use the event to criminalize all opposition. Thus McGregor compared the bombing to what had been happening on the picket lines.

STATE VIOLENCE

The State is violence institutionalised; representation and containment of unrest on behalf of the ruling class. The apparatus of this domination are the police and the courts—as we've seen throughout the course of the miners' strike. When the police lines are breached the armed forces come into play, as in Ulster. And when the ruling classes of different states fall out they throw their armies at each other (at least, before they got nuclear weapons: now we are all conscripts). The result is, and has been throughout history, the slaughter of millions of poor people in the wars of their masters. When the State condemns political opponents for resorting to violence (as for instance in the case of the IRA), it talks with its hands dripping with the innocent blood of generations.

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Having established, I hope, that the State is violence, what then should our response be to the violence of people who, for a variety of reasons, clash with the State? It cannot be a blanket condemnation of violence, since anarcho-syndicalists are neither pacifists nor opportunists like Kinlock. We recognize the legitimate right of people to defend themselves from oppression and injustice, and also to go on the offensive against their oppressors. However, as with our politics generally, we view violence with an ethical perspective. The indiscriminate bombings of various nationalist groups around the world for instance are indefensible—though even here we look at the disease, not the symptoms. Whether it be the British presence in Ireland, the dispossessed Palestinians or whatever.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEATH

The killing of the taxi driver hit by a lump of concrete dropped from an overhead bridge while taking a scab to work in South Wales is a case in point. We regret the death, more sincerely than the likes of Thatcher and Kinlock. Whenever workers are set against workers it's the boss that stands to gain (and it's the boss that's set them against each other, usually). Thus we lay the responsibility for this death and the several others of strikers (which were quickly forgotten by the media) squarely at the feet of Thatcher, McGregor, and their class. And despite all their condemnations of violence on the picket lines, traitors like Kinlock and Willis bear a responsibility too, for with their betrayal they have aided the bosses and prolonged the strike.

JUDGES

Long after Willis has received his thirty pieces of gold (like Lord Chapple and Lord Murray), history will condemn the real violence of the last 11 months: the threatened destruction of thousands of livelihoods and entire communities, the use of legal thugs (police) to try to batter defiant and courageous workers into submission, the use of the laws and courts of the rich to try to hamstring the miners' union organization—by people who say they support free trade unions in Poland.

Victory to the miners!

B. Harrow.

The Miners' Struggle is YOUR Struggle.

SUPPORT THEM!