Direct Action
The Voice of Anarcho-Syndicalism

DIVIDED BRITAIN

Poverty, Unemployment, Homelessness...THE PRICE WE PAY TO KEEP THEM RICH

Paper of the Direct Action Movement - International Workers Association
As a result of the solidarity call from the Trade Union Coordination in Ardbride, many trade unions in France have decided to support the campaign against the Laura Ashley company in Ardrossan, Scotland (see DA 37). The local TGWU in South Shields and J & J Fashions (involved in wildcat action in November last year) have also supported the campaign. In France the trade unions have been picketing Laura Ashley's in Paris and as a result, the shop is now closed. Meanwhile donations have been received from all across Britain and abroad, including Germany and Italy. In France, the international Solidarity Alliance/IWA have picketed the Laura Ashley shops in Paris and as a result, the shop is now closed. In Germany, the trade unions have been picketing Laura Ashley's in Berlin, Hamburg, Hannover, Stuttgart, and elsewhere. In France, the Comité National D'Action pour la Décentralisation of the NUTGW (National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers) has been picketing Laura Ashley's in New York, in Britain, the DAM (Direct Action Movement) has been picketing Laura Ashley shops in Bath, Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Leeds, London, Manchester, Shrewsbury and elsewhere. In France, the French trade union federation CGT has picketed Laura Ashley in Strasbourg, during the Ardbride dispute. The future of the working class lies in the hands of the trade unions. The trade unions must take action to defend the rights of the workers and to prevent the companies from exploiting their workers. The trade unions must also support each other's struggles to win the fight against the bosses and the state.

T&G treachery doesn't end there. They refused strike pay and a pro-rata grading. This is one of the reasons why the strikers at Laura Ashley have been in a fight to the death. They refused to give up the struggle. The strike at Laura Ashley is an example of the power of the trade unions. The trade unions must always stand together.

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GAINING CONFIDENCE

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We live in a very much divided society, not just North/South as the papers often tell us, but in every town and city. The fact the TGWU (see report from former Dept of Health chief scientist - the report comes out in 1980) shows the widening of the health gap between rich and poor yarning widen. From 1978 to 84 income of the bottom 25% of households fell from 10% to 6% of the total, while the top 10% rose from 44% to 54%. Ownership of wealth shows an even greater disparity. The middle class owns more than the bottom 80%.

HEALTH DIVIDE

The "Health Audit", an update of the Black report by the Health Education Council (and the former Dept of Health chief scientist - the report will appear later this year) shows the widening of the health gap between rich and poor. For example, the 1980s were described as a "poor" decade. In that year, the top 10% had 50% of all the income, while the bottom 25% had 6.4%. This is not the way any society should be.

DIVIDED BY CLASS

The facts speak for themselves. We live in a society divided along class lines. The middle class are more likely to be living on a diet of home-cooked meals while the working class are more likely to be eating at fast food outlets. The middle class are more likely to own their own homes while the working class are more likely to rent. The middle class are more likely to have access to the latest technology while the working class are more likely to be stuck with outdated equipment. The middle class are more likely to have access to the best medical care while the working class are more likely to have to settle for the worst.

In the words of the TGWU report: "Workers are being told by the Government that they must accept cuts in public spending. But workers are not being consulted about these cuts. They are not being given any say in how these cuts will be made."

This is not what any society should be like. We need a society where everyone has a say in how their lives are run. We need a society where everyone is treated fairly. We need a society where everyone has a say in how their lives are run.

ACTIVISTS NOT BUREAUCRATS

Recently a Community Programme worker (Garfield) with Age Concern, North Tyneside, was sacked after an argument with one of the workers. The council has sent a letter to the workers saying that they must work together. This is not what any society should be like.

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SHOP STEWards SACKS WORKER

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VICTIMIZATION

With bus deregulation Cambridge has seen the typical chaos. Many local people blamed the drivers for the mess with letters to the local newspaper. But the drivers were just doing their job. They were trying to do the best they could. They were trying to make ends meet. They were trying to get home to their families. They were trying to do their job.

But the bus company did not think this was good enough. They sacked the drivers. They said that they had done something wrong. They said that they had broken the rules.

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Arguments over Paul Simon's "Graceland" allude to the old fears of the national, left, and music press. Simon is not explicitly political, but important similarities exist between this controversy and one that raged at Miriam Makeba who have performed count-.:

A wave of general strikes hit Greece last summer. South African produce has blinded many to the lack of a central anarchist movement which is associated with "Militant" trade unionism. A new radicalism made the crucial point that: "The black working class is the only group capable of leading this revolutionary struggle in the interests of all the oppressed."

The controversy over direct links has led to the establishment of many inter-union links. Even the most radical unions are now cautiously approved contacts between unions which, in the past, would have been considered heretical. The possibility of co-operative links when solidarity must be based on an in-depth knowledge of the organisations and personalities involved. Despite the posturing of bureaucrats there is much to be said for a task and file level. Educational activities about strikes in South Africa are an important tool for future struggles and this cannot simply be carried out at the level of International Trade Secretariats or even through conference resolutions, but in the workplace and the local union branch.

The "direct links" issue and the Paul Simon controversy exist in the fact that the upsurge of resistance in the factories, mines and townships also has a cultural dimension. Struggle has always produced new and powerful art forms and appears to be a logical and integral to the revolutionary experience. The postures of May '68 and Sparte 1936, the songs of Paul Robeson, and of the Wobblies, the writings of Victor Serge and George Orwell enrich our understanding of social movements in the past. The present role of the music and township music to a wider audience or the ability to break the intellectual and cultural block on black music is debatable. Whatever side trendy "radicals" take on the color issue we must not allow calls for the isolation of the artistic expression to impede the development of real internationalism amongst working class people.
Women's Rights Under Attack

Maternity benefits and rights have never been a high priority in this country - the maternity grant has not increased since 1969; in 1986 saw cuts in single payments for maternity and baby items; maternity leave has not increased, with us for 10 years. On April 6th 1987 the basic rate of maternity pay will be raised, but the women will undermine women's positions still further.

The £25 maternity grant - a payment which is not paid to all pregnant women and is a non-contribution is to be abolished and replaced by a means-tested payment for women on supplementary family income allowance (FSA). The payment is expected to be £80 maximum which is less than half the maximum amount currently available to supplement family income. There is no longer a lower form of a single payment. Also means-tested benefits have a much lower take-up rate than other types of benefits.

The new statutory maternity pay (SMP) which replaces the existing maternity allowance and pay, will be paid by the employers to women who work in excess of 30 hours per week for at least the first 6 months of their pregnancy. SMP is paid at the equivalent of the lowest rate of statutory sick pay - £32.85, for a maximum of 18 weeks. Employers are not being taken on the agreement that in this period SMP would need to award the payment and women will have increasing difficulty in finding alternative jobs.

Those who've been in their jobs for less than 2 years may find that they could lose their job if they take longer than 2 weeks. There is a belief that the employer can avoid paying out the higher rate of SMP. Women who have been in their jobs for less than a full 5 years or less than 5 years will receive this higher payment which will be nine tenths of her average rate of pay over the 8-week period prior to the claim. Obviously, this specific time period with work or 'normal' pay varies with piecework/bonuses etc. This higher rate will only be payable for the first 6 weeks of maternity leave, the basic rate of SMP will then be paid for the following 12 weeks.

Other cuts include the abolition of free milk and vitamins to pregnant women and now to all vulnerable women, the also the abolition of free school meals. There are more complex changes involved with this attack on maternity rights - to find out more write to: The Maternity Alliance, 59-61 Camden High Street, London.

There is also a white paper in existence, 'Women's Rightful Place', which includes the following proposals: 1. Employers will be exempted from the rules on reinstatement of mothers after maternity leave (currently it is firms with less than 6 employees); 2. The 'hours of work' requirement for maternity rights would be increased from 16 to 20 hours a week for full time workers, and from 8 to 12 hours a week for part time workers; 3. A woman's claim will be heard by the Industrial tribunals which is only refundable if the application is refused.

EASY TARGETS

Once again we see the government attacking the employment and financial rights of women, forcing them to be even more dependent on men. At the same time this will take women out of the workforce and into lower paid work, only to re-establish 'women's rightful place'. Employers will be able to 'compete for work between men and women. Thus male unemployment figures will be reduced. Whenever the economy is in crisis, employers expect changes in the law, thus enabling them to hire and fire women. Women are also the easy targets in these circumstances, as they are less likely to be involved in trade unions and have less power previously. 85% of all part time workers in the UK are women and therefore vulnerable to attacks from both the state and the employer.

In Brief

Women's Imprisonment - Breaking The Silence*, available from: London Strategic Policy Unit, Women's Equality Group. All profits go to the Telegraph Trust, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1.

This new report on the imprisonment of women was first hand accounts to highlight the condition of this neglected group, it shows that the majority of women have been imprisoned for offences against property, women are over-represented - 31% of all female prisoners are from black ethnic groups.

CASHING IN ON AIDS

The London International Company, the Durex contraceptive group is reaping in the profits from the AIDS epidemic rising to £11,713m for the first half of last year. The large sums of money to market condoms as medical opinion is convinced they are the only defence against AIDS, 15,000 of which are are working with health authorities throughout the country, advertising saying "as a socially responsible company and one of the major manufacturers of latex, it is our duty to advise the public to use condoms". This is committed to supporting further education and research. He neglected to mention that they are in fact more prone to the disastrous AIDS epidemic. Ah, "an ill wind that...

DIRECT ACTION NO 38

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Barclays: Still striking it RICH!

Just before Christmas last year, Barclays Bank announced its withdrawal from South Africa. They had been active for years in its branch and political campaigns against them, and the fact that thousands of working class people had boycotted or taken direct action against them. But, Barclays haven't severed their links with South Africa, merely changed the ways they fuel the apartheid economy.

Barclays officially pulled out when they sold their stake in Barclays National, a South African subsidiary. However, Barclays' continued links with South Africa are through a "banking relationship" with Barclays National and co-operation over management, trading, technical assistance, etc. (allowing further lending to happen). Also, nearly £30 million obtained from the sale of its shares in Barclays National was invested in South African money markets, with the intention returning to Barclays. Barclays is also a member of the Technical Committee, a group of international banks assisting the Pretoria government with re-scheduling its debts, some £3/4 billion of which was lent by Barclays.

This move can be seen on 2 levels. First it is an old ploy designed to appease public opinion at home. Businesses contacting student unions who've boycotted Barclays are more likely to convince them to change their policy. They have even gone so far as to say that the ANC won't longer recommend them. The ANC, needless to say, rejected this from the start. Their investment in South Africa is now at a level higher than other "high street" banks, helping to maintain the base. Secondly, the withdrawal of Barclays does not change the current situation. The instability created by the South African economy, and the increased links with South Africa have not lessened. The continued solidarity of the working class worldwide, in every way it can be given, is vital to that struggle.

"Down There"

A Play by Yorkshire Women

For many women cervical cancer is a very frightening and embarrassing subject. We have grown up with "be ashamed" of our bodies, particularly our "private parts", from a very young age. Awareness of cervical cancer is treatable and preventable, if only more resources were available for us to regular check ups, but more importantly, if only women were more willing to have tests taken.

The play "Down There" which has been taken to venues throughout Yorkshire is concerned with cervical cancer and aims to take away women's fears and embarrassment. It is both funny, and highly worthwhile seeing, not just for us women. But for women who are interested in seeing the play, or better still look for your workplaces, clubs, groups, etc. - "Down There" are the Women Theatre Group, on Leeds 820481. It is suggested that more women are aware of the dangers of cervical cancer and should have a smear test every 3 years if any of the following apply:

- You have had intercourse with a man at any time in your life, no matter what age you are now.
- You have never had a test before.
- You have intercourse with a man who has had other partners.
- You notice any changes in your menstrual cycle, such as bleeding between periods, pain, discomfort or discharge.
- You are taking the contraceptive pill.

Smear tests are available at local clinics, and increasingly trade unions

Barclays Teachers Rally Sabotaged

Leeds teachers took strike action on March 19th. Members of the NUT and NASUWT struck for a poor attendance. A planned rally of striking teachers was less of a success. The venue was changed from one football ground to a smaller site with no facilities. The reason given for this was that the union executives were "unsure" that 28 days notice must be given for use of the ground if not used by men claiming to be police officers. The union executive are part of the machinery that give permission for use of the grounds. The negation of the strike activists is that the venue was changed to prevent the rally from being too "successful".

Anarchist-syndicalism is a theory of society and a form of organisation with its roots in the French Revolution. The ultimate aim is to bring the class war to an end and to incorporate the working class in the running of the working class. We see the way for this is through the formation of an organisation, democratically controlling the rank and file, which will smash capitalism and bring about a socialist society. To anarchist-syndicalists, this is the only viable theory from practice. It wasn't concocted in the head of a brainy professor, but distilled from generations of working class struggle.

In the British labour movement there is a long tradition of activism with no real ideology, polished up to appeal to the rank and file, which will smash capital-ism and the state leading the way to a society which is democratic, in which the state is merely the "New Boss Class" of the countries of the Soviet Bloc, China and the so-called socialist countries.

However, a working class movement, no matter how militant, can't operate without a theory which it's "Labourists", according to which it's revolutionary. It is impossible to be an effective trade union without a theory. If it is drawn from working class experience then it will be borrowed from some boss class ideology, policed up to appeal to the workers by the trade union officials, and aims to take away workers' fears of class conflict. It is both funny, and highly worthwhile seeing, not just for us women. But for women who are interested in seeing the play, or better still look for your workplaces, clubs, groups, etc. - "Down There" are the Women Theatre Group, on Leeds 820481. It is suggested that more women are aware of the dangers of cervical cancer and should have a smear test every 3 years if any of the following apply:

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In Russia Lenin Established a New Boss Class

Idea the class struggle can't be won without a "workers' party" to take a party to take over state power, be it the existing state or a new proletarian state. According to this need a party to lead them to the free society.

An anarchist-syndicalist union doesn't recognize a political party. The class struggle is the struggle not of class consciousness, but of the class as a whole against the state, which is the main obstacle to the state's being and survival. The struggle is the struggle of the party leaders forming the core of a new class.

Societies like Russia and China have been described as "state-capitalist" but this ignores and disguises the fact that these are former socialist countries. In the aftermath of bitter revolutionary, anti- capitalist conflicts which have seen a skewed trade union demands today of workers. The reason given for this was that the union executives we lived together for two years before marriage, saying that our marriage was one of convenience, in spite of the fact that the middle classes cannot attain more than a trade union consciousness. We do not think that workers can see the state as an entity. There are serious difficulties to realising that to make the bosses means taking control of the state. It is not for class conscious workers to see that the state is merely the instrument of the capitalists and that it cannot be used as a tool to establish socialism. It is the state which is the creation of such a society, one which is opposed to the state.

The real way forward for the working class is the building of an organisation which unites the political and trade union action - an anarchist-syndicalist union. This is all that is needed to overthrow capitalism and to proceed with the task of setting up a free socialist society.

Jack-boot police

Rose Alas was assaulted and hit in the face by Leeds police officers on August 30th last year. Far from their being charged, Rose was arrested and this research found guilty of attacking them!

Readers of DA 33 will be familiar with the case. Rose, who came to this country in 1979 to flee persecution in her native Uganda, has been systematically harassed by the police, DHSS snoppers and immigration officials. On August 29th last year her 8 year old son, Brian, was threatened and frightened terrorising her girl at her home. When Rose attempted to investigate this, she was told by all the local police stations and immigration officers that no visit had been made to her house. It is not surprising therefore that, when she was visited by 2 men claiming to be police the morning after, she was suspicious. They refused to give identification and left.

Later Rose and a neighbour were attacked by the same 2 men, again they refused to give identification. When Rose was attacked, she struggled and was hit in the face. An officer also had his arm scratched by the heel of her shoe. Rose was charged with biting the officer and, despite the fact that photographic evidence did not support this and the fact that she was arrested on a non-arrestable offence (non-payment of a taxi fine), she was found guilty. She has been fined £50 and charged £55 costs, but is to appeal. Once again the police and the courts have proved to be racists and illiterate.

Jack-boot police

Letter

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On 8th May 1987 I will be having my first appeal against the Home Office's decision to refuse my husband, Shackle, entry to the United Kingdom to join me and our daughter, Natalie. I have not seen my husband now for nearly two years and he has never seen his daughter Natalie.

The Home Office refused Shackle entry on the primary Purpose Rule, saying that our marriage was one of convenience. In spite of the fact that we lived together for two years before our marriage.

The appeal hearing will be at Aldine House, Silkstone, West Riding, Salford 3. There will be a demonstration on 8th May at Queens Park, who suggest for my appeal. I urge all my brothers and sisters to join us and help in my struggle. YOUR HELP IS VITAL.

Yours in struggle,

Barbara Ahmed.
**REVIEW**

A Class Portrayed - 'Scotswood Road' - by Jimmy Forsyth

Jimmy Forsyth began taking pictures in the early '50's after losing an eye in an accident as a fitter. Surviving marginality on National Assistance, finding it a struggle to buy his next roll of film, he began to photograph his friends, neighbours and community in Tyneside. Forsyth's pictures are particularly pleasing. On every level he is able to get on with his subjects and there appears to be no aggression, no sense of them and us. It is an honest book of hard times of which we are all aware - you or your mother and father could easily have lived and dressed similarly. The combination of an informative text with regards to the involvement of Scotswood and its relation to the Armstrong Vickers armaments factory and Jimmy's work and images provides a book which is interesting and highly enjoyable.

As Jimmy himself said: "There's not much recorded of the working class now, not really. I'm pleased when people pull up in the street and say: 'Are you that man who took all these photographs?" It gives you a bit of pride in yourself." Jimmy's work is perhaps the most interesting and important document of working class history that has appeared recently. The fact that it nearly didn't appear adds to its magic. As such it stands alongside some of the photographic greats and often runs them into the ground. His intelligence and foresight has led to the production of a marvellous book which is both critical and celebratory of working class life as seen by someone whose involvement is total.

Jimmy still lives in a council flat in the town and continues to photograph his friends and community (even though he is in his 70's) and can often be seen around Tynes-Tees TV have produced an interesting documentary on him and he has briefly appeared on the "Tide" with his work. Individual prints from Jimmy's negatives are available at a reasonable price from the Jimmy Forsyth Collection, Benwell Library, Newcastle. Get the book - it's excellent.

'Scotswood Road' by Jimmy Forsyth is published by Bloodaxe Books - £6.95 (128 pages): Box 11, 118 High Street, Newton, West Yorks.

**DAM Pamphlets**

Anarchism in Action - the Spanish Revolution (see review) £1.00

Tell us lies about the Miners - by Dave Douglass (Hartfield Main NUM) 80p

Anarchism and Feminism - Women Workers and their Struggles to the 1920's - £0.80

Syndicalism in the Russian Revolution - G P Maxmoff 45p

100 Years of May Day 30p

What is Anarchism-Syndicalism? Free

Write to: c/o Direct Action, Box D.A, Raven Press, 7 Piccadilly, Manchester.

Make cheques/postal orders payable to DAM. Add 20% of total price for post and packing.

**ASP Publications**

The Methods of Anarcho-Syndicalism - Rudolf Rocker 50p

The Tragedy of Spain - R Rocker 50p

The Art of Anarchy - Flavio Constantini (Anarchist Black Cross) £3.00

Program of Anarcho-Syndicalism - G P Maxmoff £1.00

My Social Creed - G P Maxmoff 50p

Libertarian Communism - Isaac Puetz 60p

Write to: ASP, 29 High Street, London WC1N DX6, or ASP, P.O Box 96, Doncaster, South Yorks.

Make cheques/postal orders payable to ASP for post and packing please 30% of total price - minimum is 20p.

Miguel Garcia's Story £1.20

Anarchism: Arguments For and Against - Albert Meltzer 80p

REBEL WORKER (Australian Syndicalist Federation) £1.00

My Social Credo - G P Maxmoff 50p

The Art of Anarchy - Flavio Constantini £1.00

My Social Creed - G P Maxmoff 50p

Libertarian Communism - Isaac Puetz 60p

Write to: c/o Direct Action, Box D.A, Raven Press, 7 Piccadilly, Manchester.

Make cheques/postal orders payable to DAM. Add 20% of total price for post and packing.

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**FEDERATION STREET**

**STREET DIRECT SELL**

**FEDERATION ACTION**

**PUBLIC CONTACTS**

**HEALTHWORKERS**

The NHS is collapsing around us. Wages are too low to meet the conditions. Labour governments come and as many hospitals as the Tories and both keep healthworkers pay down. NUPE and COHSE don't oppose the exploitation but participate in it. In June this year a conference will be held to start a rank & file organisation to fight for healthworkers' interests. If you are interested, write to Rank & File Healthworkers, Box 222, c/o 53 West Ham Lane, London E15.

**LOCAL CONTACTS**

**DONATIONS**

Manchester DAM ------------------ £91.50

Cambridge DAM ------------------ £85.00

Liverpool DAM ------------------ 50p

Belfast DAM ------------------ 50p

A (Corby) ------------------ £7.50

HB (Doncaster) ------------------ £5

K.D (Birkenhead) ------------------ £5

CFP (Cambridge) ------------------ £5

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OVERSEAS:- 6 issues £3.80 ... 12 issues ... £6.60

Send to Box D.A, c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester, M2 5SR. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to DAM.

**WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?**

I would like more information about the Direct Action Movement. Please send me information.

Name ..........................

Address ..........................

Send to DAM/IWA, c/o Box DAM, Cambridge Free Press, 25 Gwydir St., Cambridge.
It isn't alcohol which produces the work headache, as the 1980's people then for half a century are diagnosed. It's the way to finance their own and their family's lives on debt. It's the very thing to a depressing living under the constant threat of final demands and repossession orders so much so that people are made to feel that they are failures. However, the misery that debt causes so many families today isn't an unhappy coincidence. Debt is being used as a powerful economic tool by the government, against working class people.

WOULD YOU CREDIT IT?

Of course debt is nothing new, it's probably been around as long as inequalities in wealth have existed. However, in the 1980's we are seeing a growing reliance being put on personal debt (that is to say, consumer credit) by the economy in general and the big financial institutions in particular, and on a more calculated mass scale than ever before. Consumer credit has been described by a top executive of Barclaycard as, "The most powerful marketing medium yet known to man."

In the 1950's, the use of credit was deliberately used to open up the way for the new "consumer society". In particular the lucrative new market of teenagers and young people was created. For example the prototype version of Thatcher's "betting on the future" - the individual or family who employed the money they had saved for loans was Hire Purchase, pioneered by the shape of the youth market, but taken up by the HP companies, created on the basis of the so-called "youth market boom". In the 1980's, we can see that the economic experiences of the 1950's provided a prototype version of Thatcher's "betting on the future".

The classic 19th century capitalists were either landed gentry who had transferred their assets from agriculture to industry (often supplied by their colonial estates abroad) or the self-made men like Dickson McVitie. The trouble with this arrangement was that it was too simple and too static. For the worker, it was obvious who their enemy was - the individual or family who employed them and kept them poor. However capitalism strives on the constant change of workers, and to that end a major change took place in the method of capitalist ownership during the late 19th century.

This change involved the separation of the roles of "ownership" and "management". Ownership became much more complex with the extension of shareholding to attract more capital to industry and allow greater flexibility to the market. Management, of course, still remained the function of the majority shareholder, often the previous owner.

By the early 20th century it was clear that there was something drastically wrong with this method of managing ownership. Based on share speculation was intended to respond more readily to the fluctuations of the market and to surround "management" with such a complex web of mysticism that it would seem inconceivable for anyone not from the bourgeoisie to perform such a complex task as managing their own lives. Its failing was that the laws of the market were so complex and remote to every paranoid whim of the speculator, that no-one could understand them. Financial speculation, originally conceived of as a way of restricting the management of industry to a select capitalis class, had taken on a life of its own. The creation of a "finance culture" had taken place and, like Frankenstein's monster, was completely out of control.

It was falling both to manage a stable society (the unpredictability of the slumps and booms of the capitalist economies constantly threatened the weight of their ruling classes) or to be as successful in deceiving the working class as had been hoped. By the first decade of the 20th century industrial workers had gone a long way towards building their own organisations for fighting their oppression by the ruling classes.

The period up to the 1st World War saw one of the bitterest era of class confrontation ever; for example in of "welfare". This theory as practised by the Labour Party from 1945, derived from Liberal political thinkers of earlier decades, notably from Bainbridge and Keynes. Applied to the means of production, it meant that the state owned (and guaranteed a minimum level of employment in) the heavy industry which formed the basis of the economy: mines, shipbuilding, railways, steel etc. These areas of the economy were then taken out of bounds from the speculators on the Stock Exchange, although the bureaucrats who took over the job of management hardly proved to be any less incompetent.

The post-war "finance culture" was thus not only a necessity, based around the financial rather than the industrial sector. Although the Stock Exchange longer to have a trade, a skill or even just a job, it became more than previously, your ability to be a consumer, as well as a producer. In the market as a buyer - hence the "consumer society".

In the 1980's, this process has been intensified. Thirty years ago it took place on the back of a declining economy - nevertheless Britain was still an industrial manufacturing nation. Today, the massive expansion of the financial sector has taken place simultaneously with a 29% fall in manufacturing and construction since 1979. A clearer example of the difference between the capitalist obsession with generating money and the creation of social wealth, would be hard to find.

The extent of debt in Britain today would surprise many. A few years ago the thought of the money for holidays was ridiculous - not any more. The largest amount of credit circulating in the economy comes from credit cards. There are now 1200 different kinds of cards, the majority being in-store charge cards (which take about 30% interest, roughly 3 times the normal rate). In addition, having credit cards is an increase in consumer spending of between 200 and 600%.

It is estimated that 1 in 10 of credit card holders are more months behind with their payments, and the average credit debt now, is £600 per person. Barclaycard admit that 1% of their customers are "having difficulties" with their payments, and that half a per cent are in long term difficulties, but that shows that that we are too much since they also admit to making a 9% profit on the debt and that goes up when the payment is late.

One of the most sinister developments of the credit boom, has been the proposal a few years ago, as in the USA, the files would contain personal information on your financial status, existing loans in your name, criminal record, etc. Forget about Big Brother - in the 1990's it'll be the man from the Prudential watching you.

CREDIT CARD CON?

The Tories are using debt as a weapon against the working class and to create the illusion of an economic revival. One of the aims of the government on taking power, was to cut inflation. This they have done. However, the massive expansion of the 1970's was caused by the government debts to the IMF. Debt itself is a weapon of the ruling class, therefore the time the debt is being used - transferred from the government, except this time the debt is being used to create the illusion of an economic revival. It's being used to create the illusion of an economic revival, to create the impression of a healthy and self sufficient economy. It doesn't fool us.

Debt is clearly a class problem, but we are supposed to think of it as a personal one, accepting the situation as being of our own making and not a design of the bosses. The "finance culture" has now attained the status of religion, with its own morality and hypocrisy. Debt is one of its cardinal sins.

The money system has always been a con, a cover for the theft of the social wealth of the workers. The rise of the credit card economy and mass debt is a development of this, caused by the economic weakness of the ruling class in the 80's and their urgent need to create the impression of a healthy and self sufficient economy.