PUBLIC IMAGE

One of the more nasty aspects of the current ambulance dispute must be that darling of the media and fine example of left wing reformist trade unionism, NUPE's chief negotiator Roger Poole. He has, it seems, been chosen by NUPE to front their strategy for winning the dispute by being as 'charming' as possible in the hope of winning public support for their claim.

In doing so Poole seems to have brought this tactic to a new low. Instead of concentrating on the issues, the 6.5% pay offer, attempts at privatisation through the hiring off of non-emergency work, the attacks on national bargaining and taking these issues to other groups to win their support and widen the dispute, he has resorted to crude nationalism. Interviews with him are littered with references to Britain, eg., British ambulance men, British public, give the British public a service it can be proud of, and so it goes on.

At a rally in Nottingham on the 4th of November Poole went as far as to praise the British Bobbie. He first thanked the police for voicing their concern at having to do work normally done by ambulance workers and then went on to express his fears for the poor young constables having to live with the fact that they were unable to help someone dying of a heart attack because they were doing a job they weren't trained for. We must presume he is talking about the same poor constables who murder people in cells every year and live with themselves, and the same poor young things who brutally attacked pickets at Wapping and terrorised mining communities during the 1984/85 strike and still managed to live with themselves.

Then again, when we hear these things we should not be shocked, after all, the whole axis of reformist trade unions is moving away from the idea that disputes are won by the strength of working class organisation based on solidarity, to the idea that you win by convincing the public that you have a 'just' claim. For the folly of this way of thinking you only have to look at last summer's 'media-friendly' railway strike. Then, the NUR's campaign won much praise in the media and the strike had plenty of public support. But at the end of the day a group of workers, who after all had paralysed large sections of the country, including the capital, went back to work having 'won' a £3 increase and having not secured any agreement on the main issue of the strike — the retention of national pay bargaining and conditions. They now face having new draconian conditions imposed on them by management in February. What price friendly editorials in the paper and public support now?

It is not just the tactics employed in the ambulance dispute which is worrying, the rush by NUPE to accept binding arbitration in return for a 'no-strike' agreement also gives cause for concern. Indeed, they seem to see such an agreement, if it could be reached, as some kind of victory. Back to Mr. Poole again who, on BBC dinner time news, offered to sit down with the Health Secretary and 'work out a form of arbitration so that British ambulance workers never again have to take industrial action'. How quick these social democrats are to sell the basic right to strike.

Nor should we be fooled into thinking Poole is making out a special case for ambulance workers because of the nature of the work they do. In an interview in The Correspondent (25/11/89) he stated that it's time Thatcher 'realised that trade unions have changed fundamentally in the last decade... (they) are now interested in the future and want proper arrangements for determining pay without ever having to take industrial action'. And there lies the rub because Poole is not some isolated union leader speaking off the top of his head, he represents the authentic voice of trade unionism after ten years of Thatcher. A movement that sees not collective strength but agreements backed by law as the guarantee of workers' rights, who seek a society in which capital, the state, and the unions will sit down to work out problems and run capitalism in the most efficient manner possible.

This is what lies behind the Labour Party's policy of 'positive rights for workers' with its works committees and places for workers on the Board and that's what lies behind the so-called European Social Charter. As 1992 approaches and national economic borders come down European capital will need to undergo massive restructurings. To do this they are going to need the help of reformist unions to manage these changes. And, as the drive for European unity speeds up with the threat of German re-unification, the need to involve the British trade union movement will become more urgent and the pressure will mount for the Thatcher government to accept the European Social Charter and a role for the trade unions they had once sworn to destroy.

But nothing in this world is free and the unions would have to pay for being allowed back in from the cold into the decision making bodies of the country. The price to pay will be that workers are cut off from the real instances and the unofficial strike, the backbone of union militancy, would be crushed, the trade union shown forces with the state to police the workplace.

Of course, as workers, we will have to be as much a social democratic dream if we allow it to happen, to avoid it however will be no small task. Workers would not only have to break with reformist unions but also the whole baggage of reformist politics. To take on the unions and the state workers will have to begin organising in the workplace independent of the reformist unions and work out a clear vision of the alternative to present society. It is that vision of a new and better world that will once again allow workers to plan long term strategies and go on the offensive, and not just react to attacks from capitalism in the form of defensive strikes. In short, it will enable us to see just what we are fighting for, not just against.

With Marxism now dying before our eyes in Eastern Europe, anarchists-syndicalists are well-placed to help build that alternative vision, and with revolutionary syndicalism as its cornerstone, we can offer an alternative to social-democratic unions, we are also well-placed with our international organisation, to help in the essential task of building links at workplace level throughout Europe and beyond. Of course, it would be stupid to underestimate the task facing workers to break free of capitalism. It would also be stupid to underestimate the role of anarcho-syndicalism could play in that struggle. For what is the alternative? Well, what better way to finish them than with an old friend Poole, who in return for binding arbitration, offered 'a copper-bottomed guarantee that his members would never take industrial action'. What a strange thing it would be if just as workers in Eastern Europe have won back the right to strike, here in the West we lost ours — courtesy of the Poole's of this world.
"What's your problem, pal?", said the bouncer to anyone who tried to get into Manchester Free Trade Hall early on Saturday 25th November. Eventually they let us in, and it was a chaos of inefficient registration and a virtual traffic jam to get to all the relevant bits of the agenda. The tank called the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Organising Conference got into gear and clanked on its way.

The high point of ABAPTOC was the ambulance workers' address at the beginning, and it went down hill from the following boring speeches by 'local Labour's own voice'. These included the Deputy Leader of the City Council, who, you're not telling me he voted against Poll Tax implementation and stayed Deputy Leader.

I knew I should have gone home for breakfast while I was still a member of Militant reading The Sun in the cafe where I had breakfast. The main speeches were by Dick Douglas MP, Tony Benn MP, and later on by the NUS National Executive Militant always wheel out in Labour and where their black speaker, and Militant's (sorry, Broad Left) candidate for General Secretary of NALGO.

There were two debates. The first was between Workers Power and Militant, to whether we should start calling for an indefinite General Strike now, or call on the TUC to organise a national demonstration on Sunday 1st April. This was terminated when the chair reckoned a sectional meeting had been established (or was it when the ITN cameras left?).

Out of the blue Tony Mulhearn was announced to talk about the Surcharged Liverpool Labour Councillors (I think he meant Surcharge Liverpool). He told us proudly how much they'd raised, and how with a little more effort, they were threatening to go back and do it all again. How should we have gone to press? What about Hatton's royalties?

The second debate was around a suppressed, or nearly so, amendment calling for an orientation of the Federation towards the participation of the 'most organised groups in society'. The provisions were for the affiliation of black, gay and lesbian, and women's organisations, and for the exclusion of any group that was deemed to be involved in racist, sexist or homophobic activity.

Militant first of all tried to keep to the agenda, then consistently misrepresented it as excluding anyone as racist, sexist, or homophobic behaviour. This only got debated, considerable general outrage, and Militant's attempts to suppress it. Some lunatics got up to yell that he didn't know what 'misogynist' meant as long as they were in favour of non-aggression, and though he may not have been a member of Militant, he was not ejected by the stewards, and their desperate attempts to suppress him suggested embarrassment, rather than opposition.

Although these two issues were felt of the debate, there was no separate debate on each amendment to the Constitution, as we should ensure clarity and keeping to the point. There was at least one Militant speaker for every non-Militant speaker.

Before the voting, the last feature was Tommy Sheridan's 'Second Jack, telling long boring stories in the guise of a financial appeal. If every group sending delegates had coughed up the required tenner, and assuming the 2,000 delegates represented 1,000 groups (and some delegations were from both their trades union branch and a local anti-Poll Tax group, others sent only one delegate), that makes £10,000 on the registration fees. Expenses were around £3,000 for the rally, sorry, conference, 50p per delegate for the collection and them like shit. Even after Sheridan's 'secret a committee of the omnitories' speech, they were just as confused by the mixed-up debate and agent shorthand as we were. We even got up and asked of the whole to be held by vote to the 'steering committee' before each vote was taken, to be held by vote to the leaders, but about this time some Socialist Organisation supporters started a constant barracking, from the safety of the Haringey/Lewisham Militant-Free Zone, of 'Tell us how to vote, Tommy!'

The chair of the rally, Maureen Reynolds, ought to be sent back to cadre school for incompetence. She is now Federation Treasurer. One vote's result was announced without even looking up from her notepad, another was announced at all, the classic was 'That's cured, now let's see votes against.'

So the National Secretary is Steve Nally, a man with all the charm of a blockaded drain in August, and the chair is Tommy 'Mr Credentials' Sheridan. Of the other nine members of the Steering Committee, the three who are not members of Militant were all new. Ming

What came out most strongly from this Militant Rally masquerading as an Anti-Poll Tax conference was the irrelevance of it all to the fight against the Poll Tax. What it was actually all about is the flagging fortunes of this social democratic cult. Militant has peaked in the Labour Party, and activists like Sheridan are being expelled. It has abandoned its campaign in the Civil and Public Services Association where its secretariat has been alienated and demoralised the rest of the executive is clear for the right wing. To know Militant is to loathe it. The result is a situation where it is looking for new sources of members and finance to bleed of union equivalents), rather than workers' strength. Militant has used the Poll Tax to stage their own sterile media event. They are seeking to promote themselves not by fighting the Poll Tax, but by claiming to speak for the campaign against it.

Anti-Poll Tax activists will see through them, but then Militant don't want anyone who's committed to winning the election rather than their cult, and regard political consciousness as a bit of a waste. At a local level they are irrelevant where there is an election coming up, although they can prevent a campaign getting off the ground with their slavish adherence to protocol.

What people have been fighting the Poll Tax, while Militant have simply told themselves how clever they are doing, need to sort out how we set up the kind of national structure we need to take the fight forward.

Tony Benn is called West Green Anti-Poll Tax Union in Touemham. The group's second attempt at a meeting (see DA 61) came to nothing, and now the Labour Party and the national union have forced the council to back down on this issue. As it is, the argument that they have all the information necessary to register people anyway has proved successful.

That other bunch of opportunists, Militant, are less of a problem locally, but they have got up the Surcharge group, called West Green Anti-Poll Tax Union, in Tottenham. The group's second attempt at a meeting (see DA 61) came to nothing. The Labour Party and the national union have forced the council to back down on this issue. As it is, the argument that they have all the information necessary to register people anyway has proved successful.

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Finally, 1000 leaflets were handed to workers in Haringey's Finance Department on 1st December by 15 local activists lobbying peacefully, hand in hand, for the retention of the register. Porters locked the side door, and called the police on the workers in the building, which includes the Poll Tax Section, for 'quietly obstructing the wishes of the protesters, and take a leaflet! The SWP have all caught horses to try and stop the lobby, but still turned up to sell pamphlets. Need I say more. It is taken in by some of these opportunists.

Tony Mulhearn and Friends

There was a second meeting of the National Executive Council in the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, in a central London meeting room.

The meeting gained hundreds of signatures for the National Executive Council, and made a surplus of around £500. Attempts to follow the rally will be held on a demonstration around the issue of fines have had to be postponed. However, a date of a few days after the completion of the register on 1st December was agreed. The meeting was chaired by the SWP, who had argued against the rally on grounds of public order, and warned the police would pull it off. When the demo idea, as we all know, was accepted, with reservations about practicality, they did as much to encourage it as they did the rally — sold all.

Fines are a real issue in Haringey, where the Labour council has been in action for 16 weeks. Most recently in Noel Park and Horsnay Vale where there are a high proportion of council tenants, for not registering. These areas have been picked out because the council has enough information on council tenants to positively identify those who have not registered. With hard Labour work, they have forced the council to back down on this issue. As it is, the argument that they have all the information necessary to register people anyway has proved successful.

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These last two months have seen an upsurge of anti-Poll Tax activity throughout Scotland. The Labour Party is so worried that it has asked non-payment campaigners to stop their activity through its mouthpiece John Maxton. Apparently we are hurting people least likely to defend themselves — the poor. Our answer: Stuff it! We will only stop when the Poll Tax is abolished.

The recent exposure of the now disbanded Serious Crime Squad in the West Midlands region has added both the Birmingham and Marjorie Foran Defence Campaign. Certain individuals were released earlier this year: Paul Dandy, Ronald Bolden and Keith Parchment, when the prosecutions instigated by the SCS could no longer be sustained. Also the legal system was made to realise that the Serious Squad had committed a fraud of adverse publicity that quite simply, juries were loathe to convict people who had been charged by them. Fifty-three officers and ex-officers have now been demoted to desk duty, and a couple of them have been suspended.

Ultimately, this unit was an elite group of police officers who seemed to specialise in fitting up suspects, maybe the proverbial ‘rotten apple’ defence should be changed to a concept of the rotten orchard. The complex conspiracies the unit could rosa to well exposed in Paul Foot’s book Murder at the Farm, an account of the framing of four men for the murder of newspaper boy Carl Bridge water in 1978. First published in 1986, this book details the manner in which a confession was first obtained, using the well known tactics of denying a suspect access to a solicitor, mixing pressure, threats and possible concessions if the suspect confesses, along with physical violence. Once a statement is achieved the officers close ranks to fabricate evidence, even employ a couple of dodgy witnesses. Added to public outrage against a certain crime, a guilty verdict can be more or less contrived. This is not justice, but a legal system controlled by a ruling class, and the case of Carl Bridgewater is a prime example.

So far, one of the men has died of a heart attack since being in prison, two others are seriously ill, yet there seems little chance of them being released. The “confessions” of two of them were said to have been made in police custody (later retracted) have not been substantiated by any forensic evidence, the general consensus of the car they were meant to have used was never found, the gun they were meant to have used for the murder was not proven to have been the murder weapon. Four prosecution witnesses have changed their evidence, and another has been discredited. At present a great deal of the prosecution evidence relies now on the word of a police informer.

Significantly, two SCS officers are involved in this case. Detective Constable Davies was involved in the Birmingham Six case, and in Martin Foran’s first assault. The second officer in Detective Sergeant Michael Hornby, who played a major role in the Birmingham Six case and countless others. A House of Commons petition in Parliament that Hornby had been the subject of numerous complaints.

The names of Pat Molly (who died in prison), Vincent Hopkins, Michael Hickey, and James Monks were all used as drawing teachers in art classes, and their names appeared in the Serious Crime Squad. Michael Hickey’s mother, Ann Whelan, has campaigned for years with little support apart from help given to her by sympathetic ‘crusading’ journalists such as Paul Foot. At the moment there is an attempt to unite campaigns centred around police framing in this region in the demand for a Public Inquiry into the activities of the SCS. Such an inquiry would be welcome, but may literally take years to conduct, even if it began tomorrow. Moreover, the Inquiry Lord Gifford conducted into Broadwater Farm has unearthed evidence material to show how repressive state forces have been working in this area, but so far the Inquiry has not led to anyone being released from jail.

As anarchists we know that there’ll always be attacks on the working class from a legal system which is run in the interests of those in power, and we must support all campaigns against police ‘framing’ whilst encouraging the growth of solidarity groups such as the Black Cross. In the past such work has sometimes been derided as ‘charity’ and certain of our Trotskyist comrades have called such activity ‘an ultra left marginal’ issue (Notice how they’ve changed their tune after the release of the Guildford Four and are now trying to link the Birmingham Six bandwagon). Firstly there are prisoners such as Martin Foran and John Perrott who as well as fighting back against the authorities are themselves ready to help other prisoners, it’s not our charity that they need but our active support because they are not intending to be ‘victims’. Secondly, any active revolutionary risks jail to a certain degree, and there may come a time when they find that they can’t be dismissive of such solidarity work.

MS

The Poll Tax is fast becoming a burning issue in East Anglia. On August 12th this year a march led to Norwich City Hall and burned over 200 registration forms (at the time the Poll Tax was 3d). On the day of the march on the 4th November saw a short advice ‘Anti-Tory March’ through the streets of Norwich. This time not only the Anti-Poll Tax Union and all its constituent community groups were represented but also health workers, community groups and the Tory sell-off of water and students campaigning against the intended replacement of grants with loans.

Whilst all this was going on in Norwich, in Cambridge it seems that bonfire night festivities don’t end on the 5th since a good old blaze was started when the local Poll Tax registration office got petrol bombed on the night of the 6th. The local Tory MP was out on the town yelling that the petrol bombing was “not the British way, and certainly not the Cambridge way”. Perhaps local people could persuade him otherwise by having another bonfire and sticking him and the Cambridge Community Charge Registration Office on top.
OFF THE WALL

November 27th and it's two weeks after the 'Peaceline Train' from Dublin to Belfast and back again was blazed across the TV screens, as an act of the 'community' to show their horror, and if you are of a liberal persuasion 'annoyance', at the disrupted rail service between the two cities as a result of IRA bombs, suspect bombs, paper bags and empty beer cans being left on the train tracks, one from the north and one from the south, met at a border crossing in Co. Tyrone. They were there to protest about the deliberate closing of cross-border roads, which have been bombed, dug up, obstructed with iron rails and concrete-filled oil drums. Only this time not by the IRA, but by the British Army. (They were a hard task boys who are raising to keep open the rail link are bombing the road links.)

The South Tyrone-North Monaghan Community Association have decided on a programme of public works, only this form of enterprise has not surprisingly, been seized upon by the government agencies in a further attempt to 'muzzle' unemployment figures in the border areas. This programme involves re-opening the eleven 'unapproved' roads that used to cross the border in that area and link communities that refused to recognise partition. The army, watched from a respectful distance by the RUC (who are busy being non-sectarian these days), have then been following up with government-approved vandalising-destruction of the work of the locals 'in the interest of security'. As one local put it, 'if they're going to shoot someone or bomb someone, one of the hills will do. Who needs roads when you can walk across a field, it has nothing to do with security and everything to do with punishing a community...'

With 1992 approaching, the aim of a frontierless Europe is being bandied about by governments, including Thatcher's. With the spectacular scenes in Eastern Europe as the Wall comes down and the promise of freedom of movement for the citizens of Poland, how long must be comforting for the world to know it isn't wall-free just yet, and that one wall still exists that divides East from West (Belfast in this case). And more comforting still for the European anti-terrorists that a border heavily-armed and guarded around the clock still exists for them. For the working class of Europe 1992 means only more freedom of exploitation, for the working class of Ireland it is a sick joke. For the people of the border areas it means the continued prying of surveillance cameras and helicopters, for the prospect of a unified Irish working class it simply means there can't be one.

The border stands in the way of physical unification, it reassures the unionist community and protects the Orange state, it is a mental barrier to unification. The British state, and its army, must get out of Ireland. Their forces here - the RUC and UDR - must be disbanded and dishonored. The British policy of containment and 'normalisation' has been shown for what it is by Peter Brooke's statement. It's long past time to go.

The recent series of leaks to the British press of documents containing the photographs names and addresses of 'terrorist suspects' and in one case their political 'sympathisers', seem to have awaken some sort of interest in events in Ireland. This week, 300 RUC with army backup swooped on 30 homes of UDR full and part-timers. Four of them appeared in court the next day, charged with having ammunition (other than the standard issue for personal protection) in suspicious circumstances. One claimed that the sixty rounds he had were for personal use! Make of that what you will.

Now, why the leaks, and why the swoops on the UDR? Some say that the information has come from loyalists trying to discredit the Anglo-Irish deal. But it has been common knowledge ever since 1971 that loyalists in the UDR and RUC have access to this sort of material, they use it every day of their working lives. Nor is it unknown for this information to end up with loyalist paramilitaries, seeing as they share a considerable portion of their membership with the UDR. So what had they to gain by passing on such information? On the other hand, there is considerable animosity between the various elements in the security forces and concern has been voiced about the decision to equip the UDR with plastic bullets 'to save lives in potential riot situations... that's right, save lives'.

A report appeared in a Belfast newspaper stating that the information was deliberately leaked by sources within the RUC to discredit the UDR, to try and bring them in line before they have to impartially assist the RUC in riot control. There is speculation that some very influential Brits took the decision in order to show that the Dublin government that they are prepared to crack down on loyalist paramilitaries within the UDR and make the force more acceptable to mainstream Brits, etc., etc. There are so many rumour and subplots you'd think Colin Wallace was back in his old job in the ministry of disinformation.

The DUP has launched a major poster campaign across the North called 'Hands Off The UDR'. They publicly slammed the RUC for having to use such force in arresting 30 UDR men. Meanwhile, in Castlewillian, a predominantly nationalist village in Co Down, five police were stoned when a scuffle broke out between youths after a disco. The DUP press office in Belfast issued a brief statement to local press saying that to send only five 'officers to deal with such a potentially serious... blub blub... was deplorable!'

Organise, Ballymena

BUILDFORD FOUR

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Thursday 19th October and four people convicted of bombing two pubs in England in 1974 go free after spending the last 15 years of their lives held hostage by the British state. In other prisons in England six men are still being kept by the British state as a rason against those resisting the British occupation of the six counties. Again this week their request for an appeal has been refused by that state, despite the inquiry by members of the state gestapo investigating three of the 'off their' who extracted confessions from the six while in detention in Birmingham.

Lord Denning, after an apparent U-turn, has suggested that an inquiry should be made into the cases of the six. Various 'notables', who have no doubt decided that fifteen years is long enough to extract their pound of flesh have also called for the opening of an inquiry.

In Ireland the Haughey government have blessed themselves for their 'instrumental' part in obtaining the four's release. While this is in some part true, it is also a bit of an over simplification of the facts. The four were released by the British state in a deal with the Dublin government to cease the barrage over the UDR. Three Anglo-Irish meetings have been held in the past month with the UDR at the top of the agenda. Britain had to do something to pacify nationalist discontent within the colony. As Paul Hill said after his release: 'We are not hostages as Terry Waite'. If not, more so.

Meanwhile, the state, while still claiming the North as part of its protectorate, continues to prevent 'Northern' Irish people from freely entering other parts of the 'United Kingdom' (sic). Those who do manage to cross the frontierless zone of Europe find themselves open to the suspicion and racism of the British public, like the Irish building labourers held as 'suspects' in the Deal bombing. The whole Irish community in Britain is under 'suspicion' with the full force of the police and the prying of concerned 'neighbours' preventing their freedom of movement and association.

Organise, Ballymena
The following report was originally presented to the 1989 Annual Conference of the British Movement by the Industrial Strategy Commission. This commission came into being after the conference the previous year decided that it was needed to draw together the different strands of thought & policies that the Movement had developed over the years. The general long term strategy of the DAM was to move away from being a political organisation and to take Anarcho-syndicalism into the workplace, to be politically organised but in the sphere of economics, the aim being Anarcho-syndicalist Trade Union. With this in mind the following report was drawn up after a year debate and investigation by the Industrial Strategy Commission.

It was decided after being accepted by the 1989 conference that the IS commission use it as a base for a pamphlet. However in the meantime it has been decided to reproduce the report in Direct Action. As the DAM, if it is to achieve its aims, has to become more outward looking it was felt that we had a duty to the readers of Direct Action to inform and involve them in the debates that have been taking place within the DAM, and to stimulate debate on the manufacturing amongst a wider audience.

It has to be borne in mind that this report was originally an internal document and consequently many questions may be raised about its nature and shape. It is true. However since this report has held a day school on Industrial Organisation and the debate around this subject. Two points in particular, our relationship with the Social Democratic Unions & Industrial Networking were discussed in detail. A report of the day school will be published at a later date.

In this issue two parts of the Industrial Commission report have been included, the Situation and Principles of Anarcho-syndicalism. In coming issues we will also be printing the sections The Co-operative, Retail, and Industrial Networks, which made up the rest of the report. We hope that it will be the backbone of the DAM’s industrial strategy.

The situation

The world is in turmoil as capitalism responds to the economic crisis it finds itself in. This has led to a growth in the numbers of productive (and non-productive) forces, involving mass layoffs, flexibilisation of industrial companies (making workers work harder, ending restrictive practices etc.) and a general lowering of living standards for most of the working class, leading to wider and greater class differentials.

At the same time, the economic crisis has been the crisis of Socialism, Labourism, Labourism, Labourism. Faced with the choice of defense workers or defending the system or the nation the socialist and Communist Parties have inevitably chosen the latter, as have the unions they control. That the Left Parties and the unions had more and more become a part of the system that they oppose, in their rhetoric, to oppose, was only given final confirmation in the 1980s. (Consider Labour’s 1969 ‘In Place of Strife’, an attack on the idea of change on the working-class wage structure, and the ‘Social Contract’ between the TUC and its affiliated employers and the TUC).

Socialist parties like the French and Spanish that have easier been able to jettison their ‘socialism’ in favour of Thatcherite authoritarian neo-liberalism have been able to govern in this situation. However, the contradictions have torn apart organisations closer (through the unions) to the working class, like the Labour Party, that they have been obviously unable to govern, leaving that job to the new Tory breed of authoritarian neoliberal. In this way, they retain some ability to criticise the ‘excesses’ as well as possibly being able to take over when the Tories push things just too far, returning to Labour’s prewar role as a party of crisis.

The coming to power of the Thatcherites came after progressive failures of the Wilson, Heath and Callaghan Governments being able to govern Britain, and with British Army activity closer to home than 69, it seems that some sort of military coup was being considered in some circles.

At the same time Thatcher was engineered into the Tory leadership and eventually to power with authoritarian populist politics and Thatcher’s 1979 racist comments, her imperialism and jingoism as with the Falklands War, struck a chord with many British People and liberal economics, determined to break the rules of post-war political consensus, all for the benefit of capitalism.

The Thatcher Tory Party is an outgrowth of Capitalist party (championing the market, attacking the welfare state as never before) and has genuinely carried out a political revolution, throwing the other parties into crisis, since Thatcher has drawn the dividing line quite clearly. Real opposition to Thatcher is thus opposition to Capitalism (hence the often mentioned lack of opposition from the ‘Opposition’), so that Thatcher has been able to taint anyone that disagrees with the party with subversion. Given worker’s alienation of self-government it is not surprising that many choose to be ruled by people who are hard and give the strong impression of knowing what they are doing.

The gloves have been taken off, the ruling class are fighting with few holds barred. The time, then, has come for direct work class action from our own perspective, as opposed to that of Capital’s. This will not come from the Trade Unions (even if they do call a General Strike). The time is right to build an alternative unionism that takes its place in the political process and reflects the interests of the working class as a whole (going beyond sectionalism). This is one of the never contains a critique of the whole capitalist system.

Given the increasing internationalisation of the world economy, and within that the move to the Single European Market, the fates of the world’s workers have become more intricately linked than ever. The need to build strong union sections of the IWA throughout the world is pressing.

The principles of Anarcho-syndicalism

We believe the following are the basic principles of libertarian revolutionary unionism:

- Class War: The Union recognises that the interests of the working class are diametrically opposed to those of the ruling class (capitalists and burghers). The Union seeks to defend the immediate and future needs of the working class, affiliated to the Union or not and rejects any collaboration between the working class and the ruling class.

- Revolutionary transformation: Given the irreconcilability of class interests under capitalism (and the destruction that the rule of Capital is causing to the world), the only real solution for the working class is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a self-managed and classless society. This necessarily involves self-management for human needs and a global revolutionary transformation, seeking the immediate improvement of the lives of working people, that realises that any reforms are only ever partial and temporary within class society. Therefore the immediate solution be related to fight for a new world, also, in this way, avoiding a practically worthless abstract revolutionism.

- Anti-statism: Anarcho-syndicalism opposes the existing State as an organ for the defence of class society. It is equally opposed to any idea of a ‘workers state’, a contradiction in terms put forward by a new ruling class: the Red Bureaucracy.

- Direct Action: Anarcho-syndicalism believes that the class struggle can be won directly by the working class against their rulers, in all its political, economic and social aspects, rather than through intermediaries.

- Socio-economic transformation: Anarcho-syndicalism, as a classless society, must be based on voluntary association of workers outside of organisations.

- Anti-militarism: Anti-militarism is an important and intrinsic to Anarcho-syndicalism.

These principles are both practised by the union and advocated to workers outside its structures. To the extent that Anarchist-syndicalist organisations are also how we envisage a free society being run, the future is building the new world within the shell of the old and is a preparation for Libertarianism. However, we reject the conception of the Union as both the organisation of workers' struggle in capitalist society and the administrative basis for the new society.

The present DAM policy, since 1989 conference, see revolutionary organisation run by all the working class through workers’ and community councils, not all of whom will be in the Anarcho-syndicalist Union, even if it is predominant. The question is really very simple: we obviously believe that the more workers there are committed to Anarcho-syndicalism the better the revolutionary transformation of society the better. The success of the proletarian revolution cannot be based on the consciousness and experimentation of the DAM, we think it unlikely (to say the union would arise out of workers and workers' struggles within capitalist
Healds Juices, one of Britain’s largest fruit juice producers, got a lot more than it bargained for when it attempted to wipe out increasingly strong union organisation. This was at its factory in Miles Platting, Manchester. 63 workers involved in temporary contracts were ‘laid off’ or sacked with the intention of reminding the bosses’ power (temporary contracts are used specifically to maximise bosses’ power) and of not taking back union activists. Usual management effectiveness was applied to their operation so the nature of the lay off as an attack on workers was fairly obvious. Little clues like one of the lower management lackeys bragging that a shop steward wouldn’t be working for Healds again. Not to mention empty warehouses and full order books.

What they obviously expected was a quick clean cut victory to smash the union. What they reckoned without was the workers in the factory that make up that union. The day shift was laid off on the 14th and the night shift refused to go in. The following morning a yard meeting decided that we were all out until every notice was withdrawn.

For the first time in the factory history the shop stewards were standing together to fight back. The bosses were in a quandary. Picket rotas were organised and we were firmly in control. The.send down threat appeared in the form of a union big wig who wanted us all back at work so that he could negotiate a nice sounding sell out. Not that we workers on strike were unaware of this but trying to keep this particular bastard under control meant we had no time to discuss this openly. We hastily discussed delegations to the company’s interests; such as ‘Fruit Juice Factory union in Maidstone and a dairy in Manchester, which the GM but could have been any, put the first picket lines on the momentum we needed to win.

The second came as drivers for Marks and Spencer (the company’s most important customer) started to cross our picket lines on the instructions of the union. It was the end. No argument. The natural flow to the factory. The negotiations to take the workers back to work were finished by Thursday. Further official meetings were held over the weekend and the UCS paid off the workers in full (including one worker who was illegally sacked).

**OUT OF PRINT**

Management at Jarrold’s print-works in Norwich together with NGA bureaucrats have, to their mutual benefit, agreed plans for a six-week national printworkers’ strike.

The benefits for management are obvious. It seems that the motives of the NGA are also far from principled.

Among the workforce there has been considerable concern about the plans for de-manning shifts, twelve hours, and liquid holidays.

Of equal concern is the manner in which NGA National Officer Chris Harding (the bosses’ lackey) has negotiated away the livelihoods of their workmates. The recent edition of the NGA’s mouthpiece *Printers World* really takes the biscuit, referring to past strikes as “very few dissenters at a chapter meeting”.

NGA members’ interests have far from been represented by their national leaders.

The management’s proposals were never referred to the workforce either at the outset or during negotiations. SOGAT ‘82, with over 100 members at Jarrold’s, throughout negotiations appears to have been kept entirely ly in the dark, no doubt as the brunt of restructuring is to fall on them.

Sixty are to receive early retirement, and the fifty-seven remaining members of the workforce are to be given NGA cards and are expected not only to cover the work tasks at hand, but to cover for those on holiday, etc.

Single union deals such as this are rare but far from unique in printworkers throughout Britain. The reason for the NGA being the management’s collaborators lies with SOGAT ‘82 being marginally more prepared to defend workers’ interests. Hence management’s slamming them as unreasonable.

SOGAT’s response to NGA/management collaboration has demonstrated an equal bank ruptcy of any notion of principle solidarity, by offering their own single deal to manage ment (rejected), and then calling an overtime ban. The result of this is considerable opportunism from all quarters had by this time totally undermined their case as a member’s defence. SOGAT called off the overtime ban when this ban became apparent.

NGA principles are in reality those of gaining maximum membership and flow of money than anything else. It’s a ‘rash to fund the printing plant’ for printers’ interests, with union chapel meetings being relegated to less than a talking shop.

Short Fuse, Norwich anarcho- syndicalist paper

**NUJ-ED OUT**

In early October 120 journalists were sacked by the management of Aberdeen Journal. In August they had been out on strike because of management attempts to drive the union (NUJ) out of their workplace. Bosses had pressured most of the workforce into signing ‘personal’ contracts — those contracts basically mean that the employee has no right to collective ‘bargaining’ or ‘strike’. They then declared that they were no longer prepared to negotiate with the NUJ. The result of the strike ballot was that 120 workers walked out — including those that had already signed the ‘personal’ contracts. An agreement, in which the bosses clim hed down and accepted collective bargaining, was reached after 19 days and the workers went back to work. Less than a month later, however, they were out again because the management had broken the agreement by victimising workers who had been on strike and trying to force two heads of department (who had signed the NUJ contract) to sign ‘loyalty’ contracts — you can guess what they were supposed to be loyal to! The management immediately sacked all the strikers.

The sacked journalists are now waging a consumer war against Aberdeen Journal — encouraging the public not to buy their papers and asking local authorities to stop publishing in them. How could they afford to waste their time with these tactics which failed so miserably? Wapping, the majority of the 78 editorial staff still working are also members of the NUJ. Solidarity action would be a much more effective way of winning these workers their jobs back.

**TIMELESS**

British Aerospace sites at Chester and Preston and the Rolls-Royce plant at Hillington started an indefinite strike at the end of October as a result of the NUJ lockout in the printing of the campaign for a shorter working week.

According to John Banham, Director of the CBU, there is ‘scarce evidence that shopfloor workers really do want a reduction in working hours’.

Absolutely John. That’s why strikers have been joined by more than 7,000 others throughout the country. With the eng ineer’s action spreading management going on the offensive the last thing that is needed is Bill Hytner’s ‘talking compromises’.

Local deals like the one struck at NEI Parsons who have negotiated up from 33 hours to a 22 hour week and made concessions on changing workplace practices is a huge leap in the right direction.

A 35 hour week and no strings has to be the bottom line and not just for the engineers but for all workers. A 35 hour week was the union’s demand two years ago strike action by the engineering unions for a 35 hour week with no strings, and brought into George Square, Glasgow, where workers were still struggling for basic working conditions, pay, and even union recognition.

Support for a 35 hour week must grow in order to succeed.

**FAN-HEARTS**

Evidence from research in Sweden and the United States has uncovered links between job stress and disease and workers with jobs that have a ‘low decision latitude’ — that is those who have little control over their work. Teams of scientists working at Columbia, New York, and the National Institute for Psychological Factors in Stockholm have pin-pointed high risk jobs where machines dictate the rhythm of work, not production lines and certain jobs that bring workers into contact with that general hectic, nerve wracking environment.

The risk to health of these jobs is roughly the same as heavy smoking or having a high level of blood pressure. The studies contradict the popular view that it is senior executives who own the job stress. Too few decisions are far more dangerous it seems! The research now shows that work should be restructured so that workers have more control, so that they could be happier and healthier, but of course much less profitable to the companies under capitalism.

Workers’ control for less heart attacks.

JCB

**INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY CONTINUED**

least) that, given the weight of bourgeois ideology upon our class, the NGA workers will be in the Anarchist-Syndicalist Union. If they are, all well and good!

There is also the question of how the Anarchist-Syndicalist Union now relates to other workers. Again, in line with 1988 Conference, we believe that the DAM now and any future Anarchist-Syndicalist Union should give it’s full support to independent workers’ self-organisation, but that we must not fall into ‘councilism’, since we recognise that such an organisation is only ever temporary, relating to the specific needs of sections of the working class at a specific time. Workers who organise themselves in general associations are effectively killing off strike continuities are certainly waging the class war — but it doesn’t make them revolutionary. Without an anti-capitalist perspective any attempt to make such organisations permanent would tend to degenerate leading to further class collaboration and accumulation to capitalism.

This is why there is a need for a permanent workers’ organisation committed to class war and libertarian communism, that can solidly resist the incorporation of workers into the system as well as internalising the lessons of periods of major struggle. An Anarchist-syndicalist Union is a voluntary association of working-class people, which helps to spread com bativity, solidarity and revolutionary consciousness throughout the working class through its practical and theoretical approach for those other workers practicing it.

As far as the tactics of an Anarchist-Syndicalist Union are go, we will just say that they depend on anarchist-syndicalist principle and the specific situation faced. We believe that the Jam and Industrial Networks will give us a clearer idea of any appropriate tactic than we could lay down here.

(JCB)
EURO-RACISM

Until comparatively recently Italy was noted as a country of emigrants, exporting its poor people to every corner of the world, not to mention from South to North within its own borders. But now that Italy has found its place in the central European sun (having recently overhauled Britain as an industrial power, for instance), she's now an importer of labour. This has been paralleled by the growth in racism in Italy along British and French lines, reflected in a number of racist attacks which have been widely publicised in the Italian media. Here we reprint an article from Lotta di Classe, paper of the Italian Syndicalist Union (USI).

One of the most strident contradictions of this process is that bosses and state bureaucracies are rushing to set up in 1992 is the increase of discrimination and abuses against immigrant workers and proletarians from third world countries.

In fact, while on the one hand the barriers to the free circulation of workers from EEC countries are coming down, on the other hand 'wall' (legislated repressive, police and social) are being erected against immigrants from outside (Africans in particular, but Asians and South Americans also).

Italy intends to ally itself more and more with countries (Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, France and Germany) which have already moored steps in this direction (for example the "Scheggen Accord") so strictly limit the influx into Europe of non-EEC citizens.

So beside the explosion in our country of ever more violent and organised expressions of racism (from the assassination of the South African exiles Jerry Ernst Masolo to hundreds of other episodes of discrimination and intolerance which daily fill the headlines), we are also witnessing a conscious and precise policy of the government to bring in new immigration controls which will in effect set up a 'guest worker' scheme with secure employment to enter Italy. The host of problems which derive from the phenomenon of immigration from the Third World countries can in no way be resolved by recourse to individual measures. But those measures make the situation worse by favouring on the one hand clandestine immigration, and on the other hand the growth of 'mafas' (here and in the various Asian and African countries) which with the promise of a job will exploit workers forced to emigrate even more.

The history of emigration, in whichever continent it happened, is full of examples which confirm our view.

Quotas, in whatever form they are masked, will allow the capitalists to continue to take from the workers the amount of cheap labour indispensable for their profits (for example, in the agricultural sector), giving in return badly paid, flexible and casual employment. Thus the exploitation of third world countries continues and increases.

We revolutionary unionists of the USI belong to the International Workers Association (IFL), which unites workers and proletarians from every continent and of every race, raising the flag of internationalist solidarity and the destruction of all borders.

We have always been present in the past in the fight against racism, discrimination and all divisions, and today are in the forefront against any repressive immigration. No quotas and no limits to immigration, which for centuries exploited and raped third world countries, must now prepare to receive the immigration of which colonial exploiters and capitalists were the principal causes. But that's not enough.

Concrete initiatives must be launched, with as their starting point, the fight for the right of residence for the immigrants (with or without) already in our country and those who shall come.

they no longer wished to remain a part of the OVb under its present structure. They agreed that there would have to be major changes within the OVb before they would agree to rejoin. The BCS agreed at its congress to continue the existence of the BCS as an independent fighting union. Some comrades could not continue within the BCS because it is an 'offical' union and therefore reluctantly have either stayed within the OVb or joined the TUS. The BCS, under its position, but were determined to press ahead with their plans for the creation of a true militant union. They now had to see it hopefully before the end of the year.

The government is relentlessly destroying the NHS, and has a programme of closing down small hospital wards, while singing the praises of its policy of 'Community Care'. Tories are only interested in Community Care because it is a cheaper option which will save money. Community Care to the Tories means women and families coping with the intolerable with the absolute minimum of professional or financial support with which to do the task.

The government is relentlessly destroying the NHS, and has a programme of closing down small hospital wards, while singing the praises of its policy of 'Community Care'. Tories are only interested in Community Care because it is a cheaper option which will save money. Community Care to the Tories means women and families coping with the intolerable with the absolute minimum of professional or financial support with which to do the task. It means private profit and public squander.

The Dutch syndicalist union, the OVb, has suffered a serious split within its ranks. The union which was founded in the early 1950s developed out of the old pre-war NSV (the former Dutch section of the IWA), has always kept its distance from the international syndicalist movement. This position adopted by the 'leadership' group has not always gone down well with the more militant members who rightly regard international solidarity as a key to the success of the war between labour and capital. In the late 1960's the 'leadership' moved over to a neo-marxist reformist position, killing off all hopes of uniting the Dutch syndicalist movement with the international movement. Regardless of the 'leadership' position, the comrades of the OVb have in the past shown great international solidarity during the Miners' Strike of 1984-85. One of the most active sections within the OVb during that period was the BCS, the section within the union reserved for all workers employed or unemployed who are not part of the special trades sections ie. fishermen, steel, dockers, etc.

The 'leadership' within the OVb has tried to control the militancy of the BCS, and in certain cases comrades were expelled from the OVb. Earlier this year the dispute came to a head when several comrades were suspended from the union, this led to an eventual split. In October, the BCS held a congress in Amsterdam. The congress was called to discuss the future of the general workers section of the OVb and the majority of the BCS comrades present or sending messages to the congress agreed that

NUTTERS

You've seen all the uproar in the media recently about separate religious assemblies at schools for molesmen, hindus, christians, etc., and pupils getting days off for ethnic religious holidays etc:, but get a load of this.

In Barnet, North London, a group of Christian fanatics known as the Exclusive Brethren are refusing, with the full backing of the Barnet education authorities, to allow their children (some 119 in all) to use computers at school, despite the fact that computer lessons are compulsory under the new National Curriculum.

The reason for this is that the Brethren say that computers make people 'independent of God', 'independent of sin', and that computers are, wait for it, 'energised by the full Centre of God's decontamination until 1990'.

To think that this whole blasphemous state of affairs was caused by just one byte from an apple.

OK, so the Exclusive Brethren don't want their kids to use computers, but have they considered the latest product to hit the computer market? Yes, for only £295 you too can be the proud owner of the Franklin Electronic Bible, containing the whole of the Old Testament on one machine. And I always thought that computers were 'energised by the full power of Satan'. Shows how wrong you can be at times doesn't it?

DAM

British Nuclear Fuel's Visitors Centre at Sellafield, Cumbria has been distributing a glossy leaflet to hotel guests, tourist information offices etc., which says what a great day you can have there! However, someone has been going round the tourist offices in the area overstamping the leaflets with an official-looking stamp. The message 'Centre closed due to high levels of radioactive contamination until 1990'.
Dear DA,

Greetings and thanks much for publishing the article on the Pittston Coal Strike here in the USA (DA 61).

I wish that we could report that this struggle is over. It is not. The fines continue to mount (and the total fines to date could wipe out the national debt and probably the debt of most developing countries) but working class solidarity has been strong. Workers from all over the USA and the world, continue to flock to the Virginia coal fields. We cannot impress on our comrades overseas that their material support is still needed. This will be a long fight and workers' families will still be financially pinched for a long time after this struggle ends. So dig deep comrades and help out.

Let me bounce back a moment on the matter of fines. If anyone ever thought that the courts are a friend of the people think again. Recently the judge handling the Pittston case gave full power of attorney to the Pittston Lawyers to collect the court fines levied against the miners!

Yet there are always the bright spots. A month or so ago, 99 miners physically took over a coal preparation plant for three days. This action, plus 2,000 supporters surrounding the plant, caught both the State Troopers and goons off guard. In fact, neither tried to intervene. Hopefully we will see more of this type of action in the future.

Despite all of the militant actions and real working class support it is a shame that the wildcat strikes of a few months ago were not allowed to continue. It is a fact that such a general strike in the unionized mines, coupled with a one day national general strike (which the bureaucrats are always talking about) would have resolved this and the long standing (eight months now) struggle of the pilots, airplane attendants and machinists at Eastern Airlines. This may have been the real turning point of both strikes and the ability of the American worker to take off the课 of Thatcherism. But history will be the ultimate judge.

Well, dear comrades, keep up your good coverage of workers struggles both in Britain and abroad. As we couldn't agree more with your closing comments in the Pittston article: 'Here lies the true meaning of the class struggle is worldwide'.

Best wishes,
Mitchell Miller, WSA International Secretary.

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Dear DA,

In reply to the Anarchist Communist Federation letter, I would first say read the original article in DA 60. You seem to have a great deal of difficulty grasping the fact that workers sabotage food products. I've worked in a number of food industries, ranging from restaurants to canning plants, and workers spitting in food is not an uncommon event. This form of sabotage is 'I hate my job' activity. It doesn't affect the box in any way as it is not noticed by either quality control departments or by the consumer. It is done purely out of a feeling of being powerless and being pissed off.

The article stated that sabotage is a day-to-day reality in most workplaces. Most of it is small-scale, very similar to the theft from work that is carried out by the workforce. Only occasionally is an event noticed by the boss. What also was argued in the article was that when sabotage is carried out it should be done with a class awareness, preferably involving the whole of the workplace for a specific demand. Maybe there are factors with some of the examples I gave but I would argue for sabotage at the plant level not at the point of distribution which is what you seem to think. If a bottle of vanilla flavouring is added to a five ton vat of beans it will not have the slightest effect on the taste of the beans. If a couple of gallons of vanilla flavouring is added it will have the desired effect. This effect would be noticed by quality control and the whole batch would be withdrawn. For a couple of gallons of flavouring to get in the production line it would take solidarity and silence.

As for the issue that direct action makes working class people feel powerless and brings down representations of those who are doing it. True, the railway strike did piss off a lot of working class people, but couldn't get to work. Demonstrations block the streets when people want to go shopping.

If there is mass dissent on the Poll Tax it will hurt nobody but the councils. But what is it exactly that the Anarchist Communist Federation advocate apart from 're-exposing the true nature of capitalism'? Would you be happy if I had advocated replacing the spaghetti hoops with an essay by Bakunin?

MP

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Dear DA,

In reply to your article Puppet on a String in DA 61. The article should have explained how and why Solidarnosc came about, and why it has become a part of the Polish state. Solidarnosc right from the beginning was and is a reformist union, aiming for changes 'within' the so-called 'state-socialist' framework. Here I would like to add that I have attended to question the existence of the state, to abolish it and replace it with direct workers and community control, anarchy, or in other words, libertarian socialism. It was, and is, run by people who believe that they live under socialism that's gone a bit degenerate, and by Christians who, as you rightly say, want out and out capitalism. Because Solidarnosc wasn't right from the beginning an organisation set up and run on revolutionary aims and principles, a libertarian revolutionary union, it has come from a militant union to a passive one, and ultimately, the government! Solidarnosc is finished, the working class in Poland, and will see this sooner or later, if they don't already, as they will be policed by their union. The Polish workers better be better to duff it and form a union controlled by the workers themselves fighting not just for improvements, but for social revolution, for workers' control.

For workers' solidarity,
G. Liverpool

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On Saturday the 2nd December residents of the city of Edinburgh organized a rally in Edinburgh to coincide with Hearts travelling to Rangers. In the process more than 700 people gathered at the foot of the Mound to hear a series of speakers condemn racist and fascist thugs.

A week earlier Glasgow had a well attended anti-fascist march and on Saturday they sent through two buses to join Edinburgh's. There was a fair amount of police and a couple of ambulances drivers had been out collecting on Princes St. But there wasn't any trouble at the rally until the last time when police confiscated the collection and threatened charging a couple of stewards.

As expected, the plan to march to Haymarket to leaflet fans coming for the game was off given the go ahead. Instead groups of more than ten were taken off along the pavement by a steward. The 200 or so heading for Haymarket clutching leaflets and walking quietly probably attracted as much attention as an 'official' march would have done. At Haymarket the police let half through towards Tynemont, the rest left were to watch the station.

Before kick off four BNP supporters got off the train, saw the reception waiting for them at the stars and hightailed it out of town. Police formed a barrier to prevent the BNP getting it. One woman was arrested but was later released without being charged. Further up the road teams of leafleeters were asking fans to give Fascists a red card.

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A lot took leaflets, a few tore them up, a vocal minority came out with the shite that gives football a bad name.

The rally and the leafletting of the game were positive things to do but they don't attack the root of fascism. In a survey in Edinburgh 85% of black people said they experienced racial abuse and felt threatened on a daily basis.

Racist attitudes must be challenged all the time -- outside and inside work. Racist is allowed to spread through fear and silence. To paraphrase Brecht's lines...

When we all stood up together Nobody came to get me.

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THE TRAGEDY OF SPAIN

Rudolf Rocker

Published to commemorate the Spanish Revolution in 1936, this pamphlet deals in some detail with the hidden aspects of that heroic struggle. Here Rocker points out how the resistance by the independent labour movement, the CNT and FAI, the revolution was eventually betrayed by the Stav罗dzkie. Driven by their desire for power they never ceased their attacks on the CNT-FAI and the POUM. Rocker shows how the CNT-FAI were subjugated to that power. In doing so they totally disregarded the consequences those attacks might have on any successful resistance in the fascists. First published in 1937 at the time of this struggle, it is written by Rudolf Rocker, a life long anarcho-syndicalist.

ASP £1.20

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WASTE PAPER

In mid-November it was quite interesting to see the House of Commons and the House of Lords decide that they too should do something to stop environmental waste by recycling all the waste paper produced at the two Houses. Apparently, according to Lord Trefgarne, the amount of waste paper accumulated each day is at least two tons, and on a busy day as much as four tons. Well, two tons is two tons, but if they were really conscientious they'd pep it up just a little bit more, what with waste paper like the Housing Bill and Community Charge Statutes, to name but two, cluttering up the place...
Want to be a rat-infested H2O, Pb, Cd, Cu, Ni, Cr, Zn, Cu, HCN, CN-, PO4, Cu2+, H2O2, NO3, H+NR, N2. In 1989 the rat population has risen 20% according to the Institute of Environment Health Officers. Remenisell put the figure at 50%.

Rats spread diseases, of which leptospirosis (Well’s Disease) is in severe form (still kills one in 19 of its victims).

The number of people contracting rat-borne diseases rose from 21 in 1986 to 28 in 1988 and remained 20 by October of this year.

Water Authority funding has not increased to meet the problem of contamination. The three have reported a decrease in funding.

While the advertising campaign to sell off water costs millions, the water authorities continue to put lives at risk, to make profitability greater.

Symptoms of Well’s Disease include fever, headache, sickness, diarrhoea or constipation. In fact, the symptoms are similar to flu and are treated as such in many cases, thus correct diagnosis does not take place in some cases until it is too late.

Sometimes sufferers have swollen glands, stiff necks and muscle weakness. It can also cause liver, kidney or nervous system damage. It can be cleared within weeks if properly diagnosed and treated.

Leptospirosis and Well’s Disease are caused by contact with infected water or infected animal urine. Up to 50% of wild rats are carriers of Well’s Disease.

Although the traditional risk areas are sewers, the disease may be contracted in any water with rat infestation. This includes inland lakes and waterways where sports and recreation can take place. For instance, in 1988 a man died from Well’s Disease which he contracted from windsurfing in a Warwickshire lake.

And the strange chemical formulae of the heading? Well, when water is eventually sold the buyers will not only be buying the water, but also all these strange chemicals which are pumped into the water supply.

Perhaps the tourist industry abroad should issue warnings to would-be visitors to these shores who drink the water at your own risk!

Recently it was decided to create an anarchosyndicalist network of people working and studying in education in the North West of the country. This network is open to all those involved in the industry, as its aim is the creation of an anarchosyndicalist union. DAM Education Workers, Dalston, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2BU.

MEDIACRACY

Murdock’s News Corporation, a subsidiary of News International, has reached the other side of the Iron Curtain with an agreement that may see 30% of the shares of two Hungarian newspapers. Reform, a weekly with a circulation of 380,000 and Maip, a daily with a circulation of 80,000. The other 50% of shares will be held by Hungarian shareholders.

Under the heading of ‘Civil Liberties’, the TUC at Blackpool backed a call for a genuinely independent media free from government control. However, the media unions clashed with the TUC’s General Purposes Committee when they were told that: ‘The media we need’ couldn’t be circulated to delegates because of its close relevance to modern broadcasting and civil liberties?"
The despatch industry is a classic product of the Thatcher era. The firms are engaged in a cut-throat war to undercut each other, or to win clients by providing the 'most professional' service which is just so much bullshit. There are millions of pounds to be made for the bosses who are ruthless enough. But the city and the young entrepreneurs setting up and 'making good' are numbered, as the big firms such as TNT and Federal Express buy out the small concerns. This process will probably accelerate after 1992. Incidentally, the bosses' organisation, called the Despatch Association, is one of the main bodies pleading for the abolition of the Post Office monopoly.

From the workers point of view, the despatch industry is not all a bed of roses. If you liked cycling or motorcycling before, then the novelty will soon wear off. True, you can earn £3-£4 per week. Some riders and drivers earn even more than that but those people are the voluntary slaves who work from early morning until eight at night, then collapse until the next day. More common are the school leavers who risk their lives every day racing around town on a moped for £100 per week.

The wages at first seem reasonable until you consider that you are "self-employed" (read self-exploited) and have to pay out for your vehicle, your running expenses, your income tax, and put money aside for sickness, holidays, etc. So £400 per week is only really worth about half that.

But fortunately there is a light at the end of the (Rotherithe) Tunnel. The Despatch Industry Workers Union was started in March 1989 by just four despatch riders (three DAM members) and has since had some steady success in recruiting people and defending members. The DAM members are now in a small minority.

Meetings are the life and soul of the DIWU and the place where all the decisions are made. This might sound obvious, but if you have been a member of a traditional trade union you will know that all the major decisions are not made by the workers but by the higher-ups in the union. Therefore, the participatory democracy of the DIWU meetings gives us all a sense of responsibility, satisfaction and a belief in ourselves and what we can achieve.

Even clearing £500 per week hardly compensates for the job. Despatch riders have to work in all weathers. Most work 9-10 hours each day without more than a few minutes break. The stress of riding or driving in heavy traffic is exhausting and dirty. There's no job security. And last, but not least, despatch riding is probably the most dangerous job in Britain in terms of fatalities and serious injuries.

In response to the low pay, in relation to the terrible conditions of work, there has been a significant amount of industrial militancy. Usually this has taken an individualist form, i.e., the despatch rider/driver has a go at the boss and then jacks the job in straight away. But there has been organised militancy, in the form of strikes, at Capital Parcels, London and City Couriers, Greater London Cars, Southbank Couriers and First Courier. Of these, only the strike at Southbank was lost. The strikes are usually only for a few hours or even minutes. Undoubtedly there have been many, many more strikes that have not been reported.

The Transport and General Workers Union have tried at least twice to unionise the despatch industry but have failed miserably because almost nobody wants anything to do with a mob like them. Besides, it is acutely embarrassing trying to recruit people into a trade union which you know yourself to be a pile of shit. The TGWU was largely to blame for the scabbing drivers at Wapping and for the collapse of morale and resistance during this summer's dock strike.

August this year saw the start of a reorganisation of local social security offices which could eventually reduce one quarter of the staff to small branch offices with fifteen staff or less. The public will only be able to visit the branch office where staff will have to try and deal with all public callers and make counter payments.

The Constitution of the DIWU is, for want of a better word, anarcho-syndicalist. All workers in the industry are welcome to join, but no management. The DIWU aims to improve pay and conditions today, but also plan for a better society tomorrow. The Constitution has a healthy wariness of trade Union bureaucracy and political parties, instead stating that collective direct action is the best way to achieve its ends. And significantly, point four of the Constitution states that 'Union members should never cross picket lines, unless the strikers consent'. This is the age-old basis of working class solidarity, and a point that has been forgotten by virtually all of the trade unions in Britain today.

The DIWU has attracted a lot of attention from the media which is a mixed blessing. There have been enquiries, articles or interviews by LWT, Capital Radio, a video company, City Limits, Ride Magazine, Moving Target magazine, the in-house newspaper for first class free-lance journalists. The DIWU now has a policy that any journalists who want an interview must write their questions down, which will then be discussed and a reply sent in writing. This seems to be the best way to avoid them twisting what you say.

The DIWU is a new union in the despatch industry, and hopefully it will grow and grow until all workers in the industry become active members. But there is more to it than that. The DIWU is the first attempt in Britain to start a union along anarcho-syndicalist lines. Admittedly, the despatch industry is a marginal and expendable section of the British economy, but nevertheless the idea that anarcho-syndicalism can work in this day and age will hopefully spread to other industries by the DIWU's good example.

If you work in the despatch industry, or you know someone who does, put them in touch with the DIWU at PO Box 574, Brockley, London SE4 1DL.

SM

DAM Despatch Riders

WHO'S BENEFIT?

The unions are opposing the move. The few staff in the branch office will not be able to cope with the workload. An obvious tactic to overload the system and cause maximum disruption, increased waiting time and extra work for the DIWU staff. Of course, this all could have nothing to do with a major change called 'benefit agencies' to be set-up by 1991 to introduce the benefit system with the market ethos.

Privatisation of everything in sight has become an obsession with the unions. It will bring increased costs and greater profit to the few whilst the many suffer. The workers in the CPSA have started actions in London. Claimants should support their actions and help to resist 'benefit agencies'.

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