

anarcho-syndicalist

# ideas & action

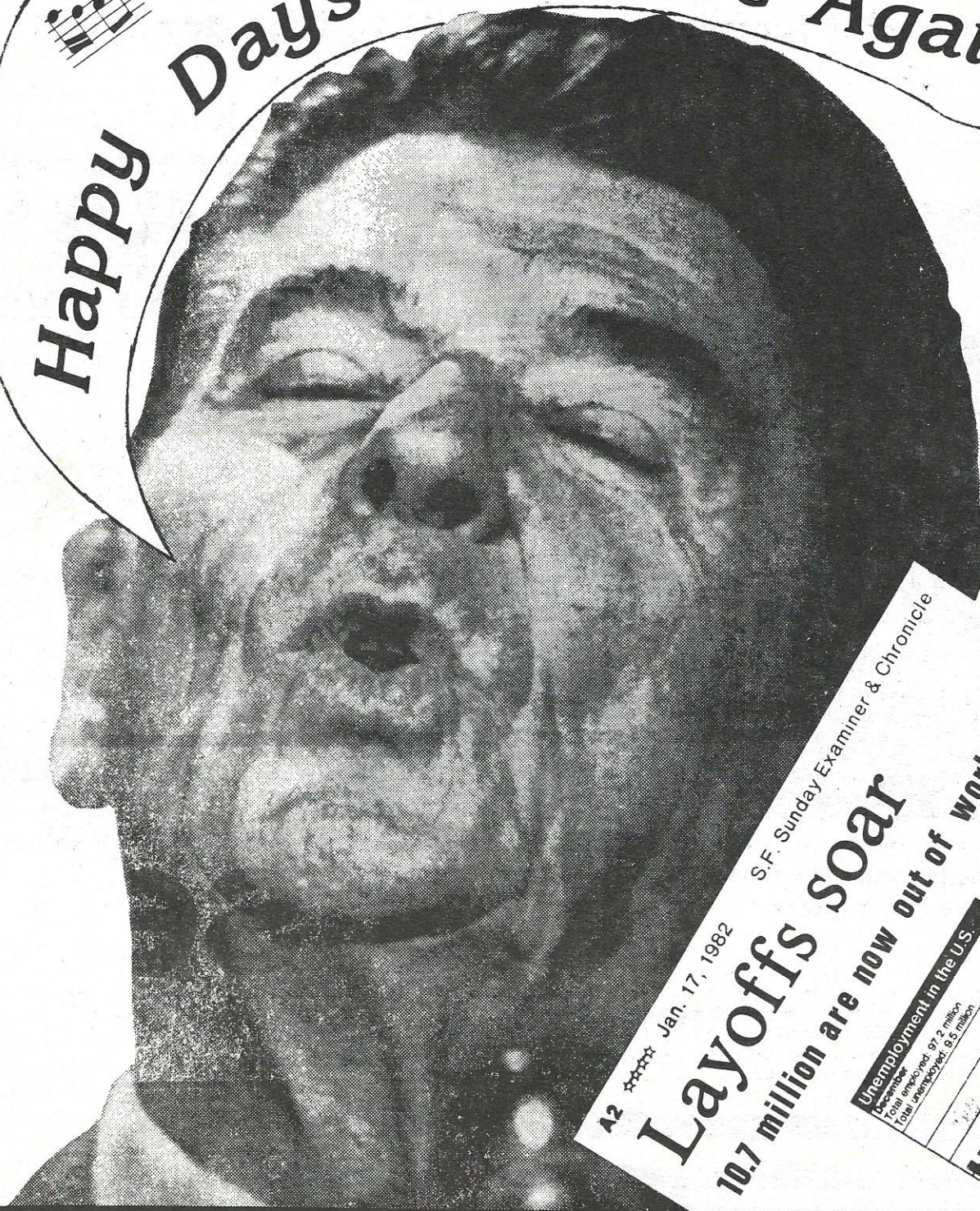
No. 1

January / February, 1982

Happy Days Are Here Again!



Happy



A2 ★★★★★ Jan. 17, 1982

S.F. Sunday Examiner & Chronicle

## Layoffs soar

### 10.7 million are now out of work

Unemployment in the U.S.	
December	
Total employed	97.2 million
Total unemployed	9.5 million
% Unemployed	9.1%



# High school got you down?

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- standing in line?
- doing lots of push-ups?
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- getting injured in stupid military games?
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**Not just a job, a career.\***

\*Actually, we're fudging. The fine print says you can get the school only if we want to give it to you. No matter! Even if you went to school, you wouldn't learn much that's of any use in civilian life anyway. Not much demand these days for people skilled in disassembling sub-machineguns. It's back to the welfare office, kid . . . unless you want to sign up for another hitch. At least we've got cheap booze.

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# FOR OPENERS

Hello out there! What you have in your hands is a discussion journal, a forum for ideas and analysis, from a libertarian syndicalist socialist point of view. The basic framework is provided by the ideas of direct action and anti-statism, anti-parliamentarism and anti-partyism, international worker solidarity and revolutionary unionism, and the ideal of a society run collectively by working people, through organizations based on face-to-face democracy, free of top-down control. "Socialism," in our view, means worker power over social and industrial affairs, not State management of the economy. Without workers' management of production/communication/transportation, genuine socialism can't exist. But such a social order can't be instituted "from above" by those ruling "on behalf of the workers" since the control over the process of social re-construction will determine who controls the new set-up. We could take as our motto the oft-quoted principle from the First International: "The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the workers themselves."

As to the journal's rationale, here is a quote from a letter that was sent out, inviting participation in this project: "To have an effective anarcho-syndicalist movement, we need something more than isolated activists and groups. Libertarian ideas are likely to have more influence on the real world if numbers of people are pulling in the same direction. That's the function of organization. 'Organization' refers to some means of discussing the issues and building a basis for a common front within the struggles of the day. Discussion has to be a shared activity. Because we all learn from each other's arguments and experiences, raising the understanding of the movement as a whole. And we develop an approach towards the struggles of our class that is shared, with collective agreement on what needs to be done. The more who participate, the more communication and sharing of ideas takes place."

For the benefit of those who don't know the origin of this project, setting up this journal was one of the ideas decided on at an anarcho-syndicalist conference held in New York City last 20 July. The conference had been sponsored by the Libertarian Workers' Group and the Syndicalist Alliance, the U. S. groups sympathetic to the tradition and point of view represented by the International Workers Association. (The world federation of anarcho-syndicalist workers' organizations.) The conference was exploratory, a sharing of ideas and experiences. No national organization sponsored the conference and the consensus of those present was that there does not exist at present the basis for a new national (or continent-wide) organization. But there was a consensus that it was possible to continue working together on joint activities. Ac-

tivities for solidarity with the struggles of working people in Latin America was one such area, this journal was another. The conference decided to set up a committee — called Libertarian Aid for Latin American Workers — to produce a newsletter and encourage local libertarian solidarity activities. For information, contact:

Libertarian Workers Group  
P. O. Box 692  
Old Chelsea Station  
New York, N. Y. 10113

Because it was the general consensus that the conference had been worthwhile, it was also decided to hold another conference. To continue our sharing of ideas and experiences. The next conference will be held on Easter week-end, hosted by the Autonomy Collective, in the Hamilton-St. Catharines, Ontario area.

There will only be one more issue of *ideas & action* before the next conference — a March/April issue. To prepare for the discussions at the conference, it would be valuable if pieces were submitted for the next issue on those topics that people want discussed at the conference. (Deadline for the next issue is 1 March.)

Needless to say, contributions to help defray the cost of producing this journal will be appreciated. In any event, we're looking forward to hearing from you.

## ideas & action

P. O. Box 40400  
San Francisco, CA  
94110

## Bill of Lading

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# Trotskyism and the Myth of a "Workers' State"

by Bruce Allen

Last year the journal *New Left Review* resurrected a Trotskyist relic by Isaac Deutscher in response to the recent events in Poland. By reprinting his "22 June 1941" the editors of *New Left Review* did a considerable disservice to contemporary Trotskyism by exposing one of its most unsavory theories.

Deutscher's article was written just months after the German invasion of the USSR. As a Polish Trotskyist his difficult objective was to salvage Trotsky's position on the nature of the Stalinist state in the USSR just after its credibility had hit rock bottom. Apparently Deutscher's arguments must still be reassuring to both convinced and not-so-convinced Trotskyists. However, in the case of this ex-Trotskyist, they left me more convinced than ever of the absurdity of Trotsky's position.

So what does Deutscher have to say about the Soviet/German conflict? He characterizes it as "a battle for the very existence of the workers' movement," pitting revolution against counter-revolution. This is ironic indeed given Trotskyist denunciations

of the "Stalinist Counter-revolution" which they argue took place in the USSR well before this time.

Nonetheless, the heart of the matter is this. It is a cornerstone of Trotskyism that the survival of a predominantly nationalized and supposedly planned economy — in particular in the USSR — represents an "historic gain" for the working class. Thereby the state is still proletarian in nature though with bureaucratic deformations.

Deutscher put it this way:

*Soviet workers and peasants are defending all that, in spite of various deformations, has remained of the revolution: an economy without capitalists and landlords. They defend what they see as their socialist fatherland . . .*

Does therefore, the existence of a state-owned such as this constitute an historic gain worth defending? In large part the answer can be found in the circumstances of the Soviet state in the period he discusses and laments at length.

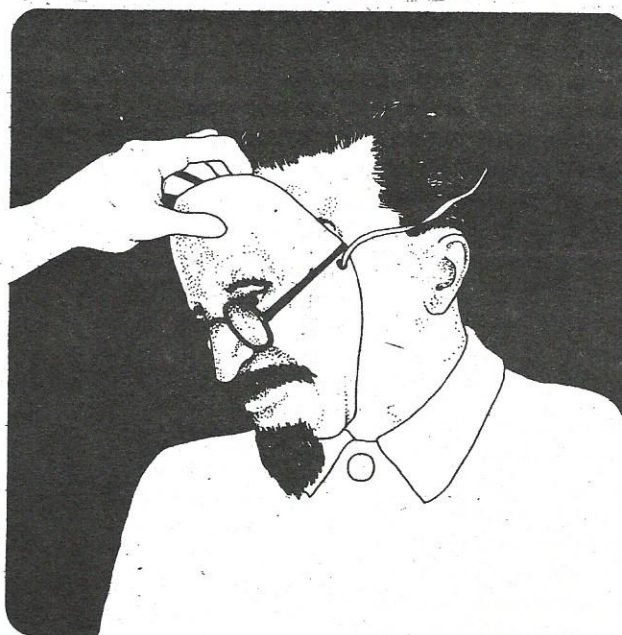
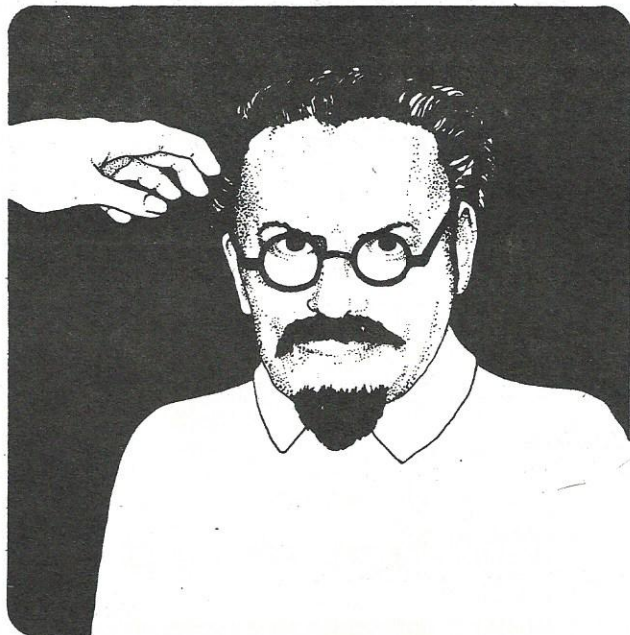
Just consider Soviet policy towards Nazi Germany from the late 1930s until the actual German invasion which so surprised Stalin. The USSR

had gone to great lengths to maintain warm, friendly relations with Germany even as it systematically pursued policies of mass genocide and ruthless conquest.

This was most evident with respect to Poland. The infamous Hitler/Stalin pact, with its secret protocol outlining the partition of Poland, was realized in practice in September 1939. At that time the German invasion of Poland occurred with the Nazis occupying much of the country but stopping at a predetermined point up to which the Soviet Red Army came from the East, annexing everything it crossed.

Upon annexing "their" portion of Poland Soviet administrators carried out a "revolution" by decree. In conformity with Deutscher's model extensive nationalization of industry and the banks took place in addition to the expropriation of large landed estates. There was now an economy without capitalists and landlords, according to his conception of these things.

However, with this "revolution" came the liquidation of all workers' organizations, the suppression of what few democratic rights there had







\* L. Trotsky, November 8, 1920 at Plenum of Central Committee (see I. Deutscher, *Soviet Trade Unions*, p. 41.)

been in Poland and the mass deportation of 100,000s of Poles deep into the USSR and to forced labor camps. Many never returned.

Only Trotskyism it seems is capable of characterizing a state as "proletarian" because of its nationalized economy and as an historic gain which must be defended at all times for the sake of "the very existence of the workers' movement." This even as it is an accomplice in the liquidation of workers' movements and mass genocide throughout much of Europe.

### In the beginning

Nonetheless, a complete explanation is necessarily one which must go deeper still. The earliest years of Bolshevik rule provides some indispensable insights which make Deutscher's position more clearly understandable. It is sufficient to briefly consider the relationship of the one-party state to the class in whose interests it claimed to act.

Right from its inception this relationship was one of adversity and conflict because the Bolshevik's willingness to repress the working class became immediately evident. First the worker-initiated factory committees were suppressed by compelling their integration into the officially sanctioned trade unions. The unions were then subjected to the progressive erosion of their limited autonomy.

In the process capitalist methods of organizing production were similarly implemented. As early as May, 1918 Lenin succeeded in gaining the

party's support for the use of Taylorism, which meant the use of piece rates. Later at the Soviet Communist Party's Ninth Congress held in March, 1920 Trotsky — with Lenin's support — successfully promoted a policy of one-man management in industry. The resulting resolution, entitled "Current Tasks of the Trade Unions," went so far as to state: "One-man management, even in cases where a specialist is in charge, is in the final analysis a manifestation of the proletarian dictatorship."

By this time too, Trotsky had clearly distinguished himself in terms of where he stood on such matters. Specifically, he openly favored the total subordination of the unions to the state and the application of military discipline in the workplace.

In response to this accumulation of anti-worker policies there arose the short-lived "Workers' Opposition" current within the party. With some success it hotly criticized the growing use of capitalist techniques in production, the erosion of trade union autonomy and the stifling effects of the mushrooming Soviet bureaucracy. Having the nerve to openly cite self-evident truths, the Workers' Opposition was all but stating that Bolshevik rule constituted not the dictatorship of the proletariat but dictatorship over the proletariat. Consequently, Lenin, Trotsky and the rest of the Bolshevik leadership found it expedient to effectively silence these voices with the banning of factions at the Tenth Soviet Com-

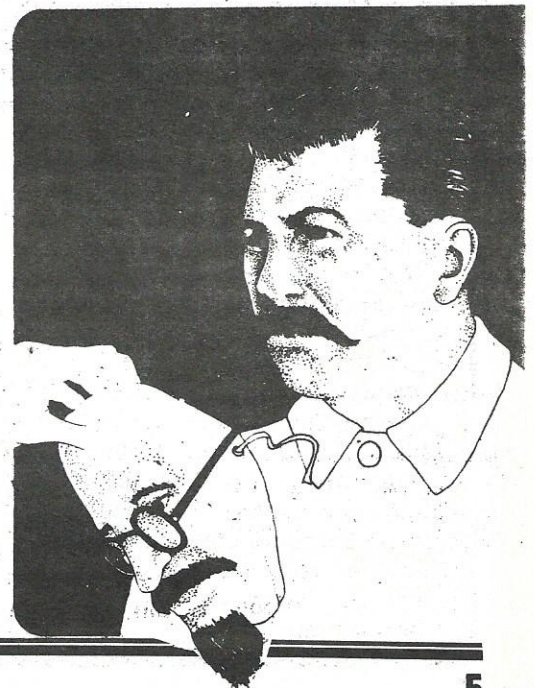
munist Party Congress in March, 1921.

These things reveal the hypocritical absurdity of Trotsky's rantings just a few years later about the same phenomena the Workers' Opposition decried. They also offer insight into why he had to continue to uphold the myth of the "workers' state." Had he not, and had he instead come to recognize openly how the Soviet state was from its inception an entity which oppressed the workers, Trotsky would have shattered all justification for his actions while in power. His credibility would vanish.

His subsequent arguments from Marx, attempting to demonstrate how a state-owned economy makes the Soviet state proletarian, consisted of sufficiently opportune "proof" of the correctness of his position. That very difficult problems with his position on the nature of the Soviet state could easily arise was evident in Deutscher's need to write an article like "22 June 1941." For he was confronted by a situation where the barbarism of the Soviet regime continued to reach new heights.

The same dilemma was only somewhat less evident with respect to those Trotskyists who became sufficiently uncomfortable in the face of this barbarism to abandon Trotsky's position entirely. One can see this in those Trotskyists who characterize the USSR as "state capitalist."

Tony Cliff was prominent among them, given his book *State Capitalism*





# What Solidarity really stands for

Reprinted below are some excerpts from an article in *The Racine Labor* (8/28/81) where Solidarity activists, on a UAW-sponsored tour, outlined their goals to a UAW meeting in Wisconsin.

Area unionists gasped when they heard that the Polish union has grown to a membership of 17 million (in a nation of 36 million people) in little more than a year. (In contrast, the U.S. labor movement has about 20 million members in a nation of 225 million.)

According to the Polish unionists, their union has been built through a difficult struggle against laws forbidding independent unions as well as strict censorship. Their movement has relied extensively on the use of the sitdown strikes made popular in the U.S. in the 1930s to win their demands.

## Trots . . .

in Russia. By arguing that capitalist relations of production can exist within different property relations, Cliff saw the absurdity in calling a state proletarian where the workers were entirely powerless towards it. But in breaking with a fundamental of Trotskyist theory, he meticulously ignored almost everything which pointed up the absurdity of characterizing the Soviet state as a "workers' state" while Lenin and Trotsky were in power. As with Trotsky, the price to be paid for facing up to such realities just too high.

Therein lies the central problem. Both the continued attempts to prove the validity of Trotsky's views on the Soviet state and those which try to separate them from what remains of Trotskyist theory are means to show the on-going need for a Bolshevik strategy which is distinct from the legacy of Stalinism. The trouble is they are devoid of credibility because there is no recognition of the objectively counter-revolutionary essence of Bolshevism. □

### Sitdowns most effective

"We have learned that the sitdown strike is the most effective form [of action] to make the government concede to our demands," said FIAT autoworker Andrzej Kralczynski. "Only in our place of work, when we lock ourselves in, do we feel secure."

"When we walked out into the street, those times always ended with the workers' blood flowing in it. They are just waiting for us to come out of the factories, and they try to provoke us to do that."

The workers' movement in Poland is different from the union movement in the U.S. in some key respects. For example, Solidarity allows managers and supervisors to join the union, unlike unions here which are not permitted to do so by federal law. But the Poles do not allow managers or supervisors to hold union office.

Second, the Poles have a much broader vision of what their goals are. Unlike American unions, which have generally limited themselves to the issues of wages and working conditions without challenging corporations' "right" to manage, Solidarity seeks to directly confront bureaucratic control of the factories and offices.

"We favor workers' self-

management so that workers participate democratically in decisions which affect their lives and so that competent people are running the show," they said.

While "self-management" is radically different from the way things are currently done in Poland, it does not represent a desire for a Western-style capitalist economy, according to the Polish delegates.

### "We will not return to capitalism"

"We will not return back to capitalism because the means of production, the places of work, are the nation's wealth. As such they ought to be controlled by the nation, not by private enterprise," said tractor worker Andrzej Czupryn.

While rejecting the capitalist model of control by a tiny corporate elite, Solidarity members say "Neither are we interested in what the Eastern block has today," as Czupryn told *The Racine Labor*.

"We want our nation to decide about itself, by itself, under which system it will live, regardless of what you call it. We have not been given that right. We are demanding that the right of self-determination be given to our nation." □





The following leaflet was distributed at a demonstration in San Francisco in December to protest the imposition of military rule in Poland.

## WE ALL LIVE IN POLAND

"If you call for the workers of the world to arise, what's to stop them from arising in your own backyard? Nothing, it appears, except brute force."

— Bill Moyer, CBS News (12-14-81)

### ALL LAW IS MARTIAL LAW

As almost everyone knows by now, martial law was declared in Poland on December 12. Tanks began attacking striking workers in Gdansk December 15 and Soviet transport planes arrived in Warsaw on December 16. These events are intended to turn into outlaws anyone going to a meeting not ok'd by the Communist Party/government or the Catholic Church. Any other sort of organized activity including workplace occupations, strikes or printing leaflets is banned and punishable by military law and possibly execution.

The outlawing of factory occupations should be very familiar to us in the United States because it has been

illegal here since the 1930's. The government here can declare any strike illegal, as witnessed by the recent air controllers' walk-out and the 1978-79 coal miners' strike. Republican or Democrat, Communist or Socialist, all agree that neither the "Free" nor the "Communist" worlds can tolerate extensive workplace occupations or walkouts. Although the U.S. government appears to be incensed at Poland for declaring martial law, the same thing would occur here if 10 million people went on strike. On a smaller scale, it has occurred, such as when the National Guard was called on to intervene against public workers in Massachusetts this year and in 1979 against the coal miners.

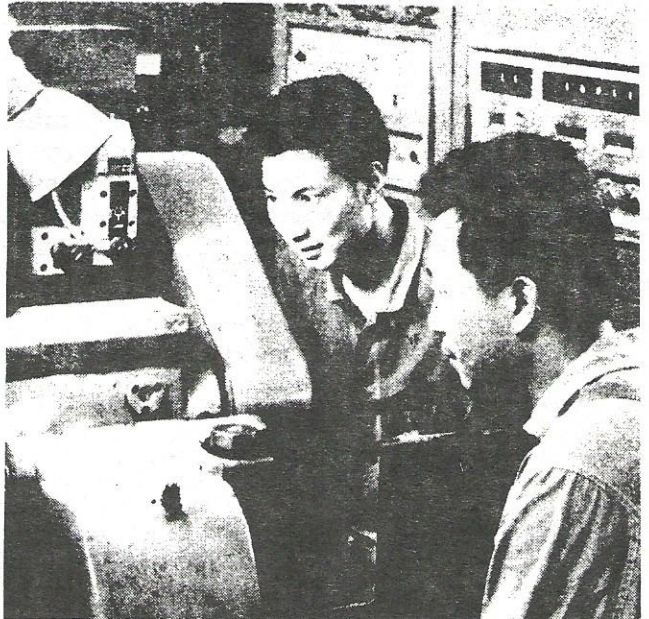
### IN POLAND AS IN THE UNITED STATES

Two complementary events have led to the current weakening of the people's movement in Poland. One was the quick development of a union bureaucracy followed by the discouragement of spontaneous actions and even workplace occupations by this bureaucracy. Lech Walesa and his cadre pushed for a centralized operation with all decisions going through the Gdansk office. He and a few

## breakable rice bowls

PEKING — Chinese workers who violate "labor discipline" or stay away from their jobs without permission are being fired in increasing numbers, the *Peking Review* said today. The magazine said the "iron rice bowl," a euphemism describing China's practice of paying and feeding even workers who do a poor job, was "breakable." The *Peking Review* blamed the problem on the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, when some people, particularly young ones, "were influenced by the anarchist trend of thought" and refused to "mend their ways."

San Francisco Examiner 11/9/81



"Do you think if we strike for better conditions we'll be stuck with bayonets or tried as anarcho-syndicalist deviationists?"

## Many U.S. bankers like new Polish regime

8 THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, Monday, December 21, 1981  
**To Some Bankers With Loans to Poland,  
Military Crackdown Isn't All Bad News**

By JULIE SALAMON

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

President Reagan may denounce events in Poland, but many U.S. bankers see Soviet-style authoritarianism as their best hope for recovering the \$1.3 billion that Poland owes them.

"Most bankers think authoritarian governments are good because they impose discipline," said an executive at a bank with millions of dollars in Polish loans. "Everytime there's a coup d'etat in Latin America, there's much rejoicing and knocking at the door offering credit."

Though few bankers will concede it publicly, many are hoping that a strong Polish government backed by the Soviet Union, or perhaps the Soviets themselves, will pay off the rest of the \$500 million in interest due Western banks. The bankers insist the interest must be paid before they will discuss rescheduling the \$2.4 billion of principal and interest due this year.

What bank executives say is that their business relationship with Poland requires them to abstain from showing political preferences. "Who knows which political system works?" says Thomas Theobald, senior executive vice president in charge of Citibank's international division. "The only test we care about is: Can they pay their bills?"

Worry

Poland and limited their loans there. Total loan volume of U.S. banks has remained nearly constant since 1976, said Arthur Souter, an analyst with Morgan Stanley & Co. While U.S. bank loans stayed at about \$1.3 billion, bankers in other countries—notably West Germany—were eager to lend to Poland. Between 1976 and 1981, the U.S. banks' share of Poland commercial bank debt dropped to 8% from 25%.

"The U.S. banks didn't behave with as much reckless abandon as did competitors in Europe and Japan," said one banker. "But unreasoned lending by Europe caused Poland's loans to swell. We were caught up in a mess that wasn't our making." Poland's total debt to banks and governments has grown to about \$26.5 billion from \$10 billion five years ago.

Professor Herring maintains that the Polish situation, while it isn't overly threatening to the banks, "casts doubt on the banks' ability to analyze country risk. They lent to Poland long beyond when it was prudent," he says. "As far back as 1976, it was clear the economy was in deep trouble."

### Soviet Link

In Professor Herring's view, the banks were willing to overlook Poland's shaky economy under an "umbrella theory." Members of the Soviet bloc, the theory goes, are better credit risks than they might appear because of an implicit guarantee that the U.S. Union would step in to help if they

editors. said he



others became the official spokespeople for the union.

The incidents of anti—police actions, the burning down of a station and the stonings of others, were denounced by Solidarity and union people actually appeared to calm the crowd and appeal to them for the good of Poland. Even anti—Soviet graffiti and leaflets were criticized by the official statements from Gdansk.

The other event is the isolation the Poles have suffered because workers nowhere else have risen with a similar ferocity against their conditions of life and work. This only forces negotiations with the government rather than making a real change in social conditions.

We, in the U.S., can recognize some similarities. The AFL—CIA has actively discouraged workplace occupation and any other spontaneous actions workers under their control might take. At the same time, they and other U.S. union groups somewhat dishonestly support the same actions by those under Solidarity's umbrella.

Unlike the San Francisco Examiner (12—15—81) editorial which says that "the workers have gone too far," the sad fact is that the people of Poland (and those of the U.S.) have not gone far enough.

In previous years ('56, '70, '76), the Poles went very far in that they seized goods from stores and burned down offices of their rulers. Last year hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people seized their workplaces, and goods, in particular food, were provided freely by farmers to workers on strike.

Before and during August of 1980, people were taking control and showing the Communist Party that they didn't need the state but that the state needed them. Local networking was effective on a national level in a show of massive solidarity. Since Solidarity has come to represent the people over the last year and a half, many concessions originally won by the people were bargained away in the name of economic necessity. Also, Lech Walesa was elected to the top position in the union allowing him to influence decisions concerning when, where and who should strike as well as over what issues.

The strike by the women textile workers two months ago was unusual compared to other strikes. The press even commented on it being "without direction." The usual issues, a boss, wages or food shortages, were not at stake. Rather, they struck over the "hardship of life in Poland." Walesa personally appealed for them to return to work.

This they did winning nothing but a promise now broken.

Now the Polish workers have nothing to lose by taking their struggle further. To stop is likely to lead to a massacre, but to carry on leads only to the unknown. The fate of the Polish population depends not merely on what they do, but also on what we do.

There is a lot more to the social movement in Poland than just Solidarity. We support that struggle, the struggle against martial law and against domination and authority in their daily lives.

The choice posed by events in Poland is not one between the "Communist" or "Free" world, but against them both. U.S. banks, in particular, Chase Manhattan and Bank of America, supported by the U.S. government, have loaned over \$3 billion to the Polish government. Polish workers will be expected to make sacrifices to pay back the debts. The Polish standard of living is reported to have declined 20% due to sacrifices made in the last two years.

One can recognize that it's the same banks and government which have demanded sacrifices from us, contributing to the decline in our own standard of living. This is why our government cannot intervene in Poland. Our government is just as treacherous as the governments of the Soviet Union and Poland.

We can protest in rallies against martial law and against Soviet and/or U.S. intervention. If the solidarity movement is crushed and martial law lifted, packages of clothing, soap and other necessities will probably be able to be sent to people in Poland. (See address below as we have some contacts.)

The only way bloodshed of workers can really be prevented in Poland or anywhere is if similar actions are attempted everywhere, in other words, if workers everywhere occupy their workplaces to bring the rule of the capitalist and "Communist" worlds to an end. At that point there will be no need for hopeless negotiations in isolation from each other.

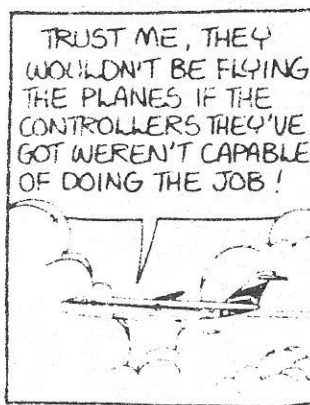
We're interested in a project of this magnitude. How about you?

**Malcontents**

c/o Bound Together Books

1901 Hayes St.

San Francisco, CA 94117





## Spare Change

I was walking to the bus station downtown  
 An aging proletarian asked me if I had spare change  
 so he could get some breakfast  
 His economic condition demands  
 that he be courteous to strangers he is  
 seeking change from  
 My economic circumstances demand  
 that I not give him much  
 Incidents like this one sometimes make me worry  
 Worry that my anger  
 might smother my soul  
 Nobody has enough spare change  
 We won't have enough of anything until we make  
 some change

—Brad Evans

## Beauty Pageant

*It was during my half hour lunch break  
 at the foundry*

*I crossed the street to the grinder shop  
 Somebody had left behind a Woman's Magazine  
 The feature article was about Miss America  
 Miss America, flushed and dazzled,  
 moving across the stage with the refined gracefulness  
 of a promise broken by experts*

—Brad Evans

# PROCESSED WORLD

A totally underground publication, *Processed World* accepts no advertisements and is supported entirely by readers' donations. Produced by a fluctuating group of dissidents and malcontents, most of whom are working in SF's Financial District as "information handlers," the magazine has been established to facilitate contact between dissatisfied, rebellious office workers, and to provide an outlet for critical reflections on the modern world.

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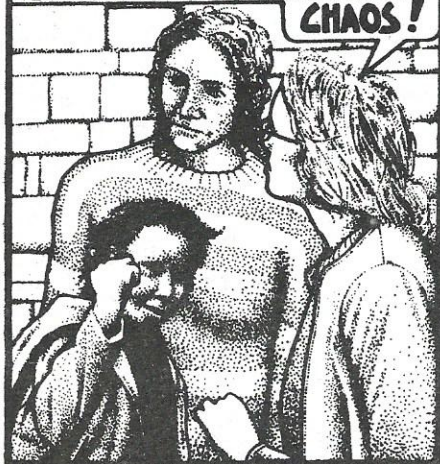
Processed World  
 55 Sutter St. #829  
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## No Need for a "Workers' Party"

*A debate with the "New Unionist"*

DON'T YOU REALISE THAT THE PARTY IS ACTING IN THE INTEREST OF THE REVOLUTION? UNINFORMED CRITICISM OF THE PARTY AT THIS TIME WILL ONLY LEAD TO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHAOS!



*What follows is a debate on the role of the ideological organization with the "New Unionist" group — a De Leonist group in Minneapolis.*

Dear Friends,

I'd like to make a comment on one aspect of your program. Like De Leon, it seems that you accept the anarcho-syndicalist idea that the sort of class-conscious industrial organization that workers need in order to have a more effective instrument in the class fight against the bosses would also be the proper organ for collective workers' self-management of the economy when capitalism is superceded. This idea is certainly much more plausible than the "State Socialist" program, where control of the whole economy would be transferred to a State machine. A nice bureaucratic monstrosity that'd create!

Even if the State were run by a so-called "workers' party," that's no guarantee the working class as a whole would really be in control. The idea that a working class of hundreds of millions could express its will through a party leadership is pretty absurd. Any political party would be even less subject to control by the workers than the present bureaucratic unions — and we know how much control rank-and-filers have in these present-day union outfits! But at least the rank-and-file can vote out officials, vote down contracts, go on an occasional wildcat strike or other job action — and this is more control than the working class would have over any political party. Because the revolutionary unions would involve the direct participation and immediate control of the masses of people, that's why we think they're best fitted as organs of worker power over social and industrial affairs. Right?

But in that case I don't understand why you say that a society of workers' management is to be ushered in through the agency (in some sense) of a political party, gaining a victory at the polls. If you think a political party can really represent

the immediate will and true interests of the whole working class, why not have it run the the economy, top-down, through the State? If you admit that seeking State power is not legitimate for **that** purpose, why admit it is legitimate for **any** purpose? If the revolutionary unions are sufficient for **running** the whole economy, why aren't they sufficient for **creating** it?

To be sure, I'm not saying that there is no role at all for ideological organizations within the working class — groups that can perform a useful and necessary work in contributing to workers ideas and perspective on the social situation and the tasks facing the working class, and so on. But why should such a group contest for State power (in elections or otherwise)? In short, you seem to accept the anarcho-syndicalist **objective** (direct administration of the economy by the revolutionary unions, united on a class-wide basis) but yet you reject the anarcho-syndicalist **means** (collective direct action of the working class).

— Richard Laubach  
Syndicalist Alliance  
Milwaukee

## "New Unionist" response

*The key question that Brother Laubach's letter poses is, "If the revolutionary unions are sufficient for running the whole economy, why aren't they sufficient for creating it?" To answer this question, another question must first be considered: How will the revolutionary unions be created?*

*We of course agree that it will be the new industrial organization, not a political party, that will involve the active participation of all the workers and will allow their direct control over economic and social affairs. As De Leon demonstrated, both the structure of political organization (geographical representation) and its purpose (the administration of class-divided*



# Parr...

was very little to discuss anyway, as the ACF was doing little as a Federation.

Much attention at that conference was focused on the ACF *Basis of Affiliation*. The consensus seemed to be that the document was extremely flawed, that it did more to state what we weren't than what we were (Resurgence [who authored the original draft] of course, disagreed). What was not discussed at as great a length was the cumbersomeness of the document — it imposed a great deal of structure on such a small organization that did so little anyway. I think, in retrospect, we focused a little too much on form instead of content when we critiqued it for being too structureless.

Again the issue was the politics itself — too vague, unclear — incohesiveness was built in to the organization. The year of fading away and senseless infighting that followed Morgantown should have been no surprise. It was for good reason that many of us stayed away from the Champaign conference in December, 1980. It had become obvious that there was nothing to be accomplished.

Let me just clarify the matter of the decision of our group to withdraw. It was not made lightly, but came after months and months of the painfully growing awareness that the ACF was a dead letter. Furthermore, although I and others in our group had discussed the idea with many others in the Federation,

we did not enter the meeting [at which we voted to withdraw] with the premeditated idea of withdrawing. It came after a discussion of almost two hours, and I think we were all surprised when the motion was made and the vote to disaffiliate passed with only one abstention.

Let me end by saying that we should not regret the experience of the ACF, and should understand its demise as being more or less inevitable, given the circumstances. The ACF was a transitional form, a transition from the amorphous do-your-own-thing anarchism of the late sixties and early seventies to the organized class-struggle anarchism we have been trying to forge since the mid-seventies, and that I believe will come to bear fruit before the end of the eighties. We needed to break with SRAF, and once we did, we needed to experiment with a certain organizational form before we could go on to the effort at regroupment that this bulletin is a part of. Of course, there are many things we could have done better, but that is no new story. We should not be paralyzed by our fears and our regrets but go forward and realize our dream of a dynamic, working-class anarchism that will play its rightful role in the coming struggles for social revolution. □

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# Stevens...

examining their own possibilities at all. Maybe it is easier to re-enact ancient failures than to risk failure on your own. If you do exactly what some classical anarchist or syndicalist did and it doesn't work, you can put the blame on him.

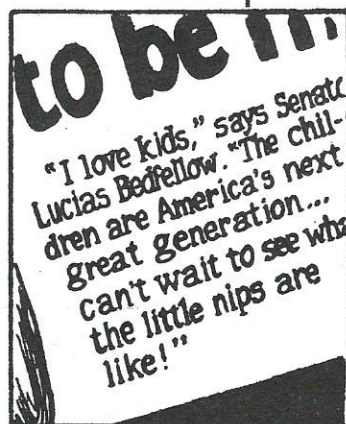
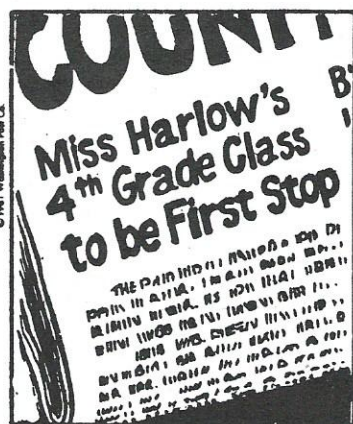
But we know who's really to blame, don't we? All past revolutionary movements *failed* to liberate us from class society. How can we do better?

How can we develop a useful synthesis of the best ideas of past revolutionary movements? Are there altogether new approaches to revolutionary struggle suggested by contemporary class society?

What would an egalitarian mass revolutionary organization look like and what steps could we take in that direction?

In ACF, there were a small number of people who tried to raise and deal with these real questions. Their efforts were resented and, in the context of ACF, unsuccessful. Yet they were the only living revolutionaries in ACF, and some of them, at least, will doubtless be found in the next new attempt to build a revolutionary movement that can go all the way.

But for the ghostly majority, as always, *requiescant in pace*. □





# A labor issue makes its debut

By Andrea Behr

The concept of comparable pay was first used as a bargaining demand by the city employees' union of San Jose last July.

San Jose prides itself on being the "feminist capital of the world" because it has a woman mayor, Janet Gray Hayes, and a female majority on its city council. Two years before the city had contracted with Hay Associates, a San Francisco firm, for a study of city employees' salaries. Hay analyzed 288 categories and assigned them to 15 grades according to the amount of education they require, their accountability, their responsibility and the amount of physical stress they entail.

The Hay report documented what many women employees had always suspected — that job categories dominated by women commanded lower salaries than jobs that required comparable levels of skill and experience but were performed mostly by men. In 22 female-dominated categories, such as clerical, librarian and recreation supervisor, salaries were 15 percent below average.

The report also found similar disparities in nine job categories

classified as neutral with respect to sex and in seven categories dominated by males. The mayor's secretary, for example, was making \$18,000 a year. A senior air-conditioning mechanic, whose job fell into the same grade, was making \$31,000.

Local 101 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees asked the city for pay parity within four years. The city of San Jose said it couldn't afford the more than \$3 million price tag, and offered to bring the 700 employees working in female-dominated undervalued categories up to within 10 percent of parity within two years.

The strike began July 6 and lasted 10 days.

The settlement was a compromise, and the union's victory was mostly the symbolic one of having the issue of comparable worth legitimized. The new contract included bonuses of from 5 to 15 percent for the female-dominated undervalued jobs, above the regular cost-of-living raises, at an extra cost to the city of about \$1.45 million. Employees working in male-dominated undervalued jobs did not receive bonuses.

The strike was watched carefully in

many quarters. The courts have been poking at the issue with 10-foot poles.

A U.S. District Court in Denver recently dismissed a comparability lawsuit, warning that legitimizing the concept could disrupt the entire economic system. This June the U.S. Supreme Court made haste to explain that it was specifically not ruling on comparable worth per se when it decided that a female prison guard was entitled to the same pay as a male guard even though her job was somewhat different. The states of Washington and Idaho have made studies similar to the Hay Report, but have not acted on them.

The response of the citizens of San Jose to the strike was mixed. One man wrote to the San Jose Mercury, "It is well-known that truck drivers and plumbers average higher pay than college professors. Try justifying that based on know-how or problem-solving. Try blaming it on sexism."

Others agreed with the view expressed on one picket sign, "If the mayor calls San Jose the feminist capital of the world ever again, I'll puke."

## A few more theses on Marxism

by Steve Parr,  
Libertarian Workers' Group

Although it has died down for the present, the debate and discussion on Marxism and the relationship of marxism to anarchism did rage hot and heavy within the North American movement for some time. It ended — or I should say, faded away, without any conclusion being reached. This implies to me that when it flares up again — and I believe it will do so inevitably, that we would probably be beginning again from square one.

My intent here is to state what I think are a few basic premisses that we — as anarcho-syndicalists and libertarian communists, can agree on, and thus bring the discussion forward. There has been no feeling

so frustrating during my almost 10 years in the movement than watching the theoretical tail-chasing that goes on, with issues and ideas being rehashed over and over again. So I offer these theses as a summary of our position (as opposed to that of the anti-theory or red-baiting defenders of the faith who now constitute the rump faction of ACF).

1] Marxism as a theory and a movement is no more monolithic than anarchism. It is simply untrue to brand all Marxists as either Leninists or social-democrats.

2] We must therefore, accept those anti-authoritarian currents of Marxism as a legitimate part of the workers' movement. Furthermore, we should engage in debate and discussion with those Leninists and

social-democrats who may be moving in an anti-authoritarian direction in order to encourage that development.

3] We need to accept that there is a basic soundness to Marxist economic theory which we must —





whether we agree with it or not, come to terms with. It is easy to dismiss Marxian views out of hand. However, until there is an anarchist alternative to *Capital*, we should be wary of closing ourselves off from ideas which we have not yet refuted. Like other aspects of Marxism, Marxian economics is far from monolithic.

4] We must keep in mind that a worker who holds Marxist or even Leninist ideas is still a worker, and that at times the conflict of ideas must be subordinate to the class struggle. We would not be hesitant (at least, I hope not) to make common cause with those at our workplaces who had little or no political awareness beyond workplace issues. How then, can we in good faith exclude Marxist or Leninist workers from our workplace organizations and groups, provided that they — like anyone else, enter on a basis of good faith and respect for opposing points of view.

5] We must recognize that much

of the anti-Marxist rhetoric that is bandied about in the anarchist movement has as its basis anti-intellectualism, which has been a strong current in North American political life over the last two centuries (I recommend Richard Hofstadter's book on this subject). It is a way that some anarchists have used to appeal to the masses by pandering to their worst impulses (the IWW is notorious for this), and comes very close to racism and anti-Semitism at times. If we are to avoid the dead end of mindless activism we must then continue the decisive break we have made with this retrograde pseudo-anarchism when we left ACF. They can do nothing but hinder our development, as they themselves are going nowhere fast.

6] Finally, we must continue the discussion. We need to begin grappling not only with the basic works of Marxism but with the modern day writing as well. For example, it is Marxists — largely of the structuralist school, who

have done the best writing in the last few years on the nature of power and authority in modern, bureaucratic society. If we are to get a better understanding of the micro-dynamics of class domination and oppression, we must begin reading and critiquing these writings. Otherwise, we risk being left behind with a few old saws about liberty and autonomy while others assume the place in the theoretical avant-garde that is rightfully ours.

I do not think that I have said anything particularly new or earth-shaking here. I did not mean to. This is merely a restatement of ideas put forth in the course of the recent debate — ideas which seemed to be those we could unite around on this matter. Our watchword in any future discussion should be: "We reject the label of 'heretics.' We are not afraid to investigate anything, no matter what its label, from which we might learn something." Above all, we can keep in mind the statement of Bakunin, "I cleave to no one system. I am a true seeker." □

## 9 MILLION JOBLESS



"NONE OF US REALLY UNDERSTANDS WHAT'S GOING ON WITH ALL THESE NUMBERS..."

DAVID STOCKMAN  
BUDGET DIRECTOR

## Sign Factory Blues

Wrap that green tape on your fingers, ladies  
Wrap it thick as bacon lard  
Put on your screen-side safety glasses, darlins  
You're gonna be wirin' hard  
So you wake up at four each morning  
And greet the sweet darkness with a moan  
Take a smoke and hold your man softly  
You'll be too tired for either when you come home  
'Cause that factory eats your mind like honey and muffins  
Cement floors crush your ragged feet  
The foreman's yelling splits your ears  
Like snipers gunning up the street  
And every line's the same  
(Whir) with the pulsing impact guns  
(Screech) and the twisting of the screws  
(Bom) the driving of the hammers  
Well, honey, here's some news:  
You're nothing but another tool  
A wiring/pounding/wrapping/screwing machine  
The boss ain't gonna protect you  
He just'll make sure your engine's clean.

— Lisa Grayson



# Debate...

against anarcho-syndicalism. It is open to an anarcho-syndicalist to argue that the ideological organization exists to spread revolutionary ideas within the working class but not to seek power itself — and in that sense, it won't be a "political party." Maybe you don't realize this because you mistakenly identify anarcho-syndicalism with the IWW.

While we agree on the need for a distinction between unions and ideological organizations, still, it seems to me that your concept of an ideological organization is self-contradictory. On the one hand, you say such an organization is needed because revolutionary ideas are only accepted by a minority. But then you say that this ideological organization is to function as the political arm of the whole working class in preventing the use of the government against the working class in the revolutionary period. But if this ideological organization is minoritarian, how can it be an instrument of the will of the whole working class? Won't it be just a separate bureaucratic group? That's what all so-called "workers' parties" have been. Because they are separate from the terrain on which the class struggle is fought out, beyond the reach of control by the workforce. Even when a majority of the working class votes for a labor party, the party does not become a true mass workers organization, with the mass participation of the working class. Even if the ideological organization's ideas originally represented the true interests of the working class, by contesting for and gaining control of the State machine, the party fundamentally alters its relationship to the class, so as to acquire interests that are at odds with the interests of the working class.

You also argue that participation in the electoral struggle, and the contest for State power, is needed to protect the developing workers' movement against repression or a military coup d'etat. But would the IWW have been better able to protect itself by adopting a political arm, as you suggest? Many World War I-era Wobblies bought that argument and later helped to build up the Communist



LNS

Party. But the CP's participation in the mis-named "democratic process" in this country didn't prevent its repression in the 1950s. Nor did the control of the government by marxist labor parties prevent military coups in Chile in 1973 and Spain in 1936.

About anarcho-syndicalism Jeff Miller says:

*The anarcho-syndicalist alternative to political action for destroying the State is the general strike. While the disruption and social breakdown such a strike would engender would surely bring down the government, they would at the same time prohibit the union from assuming power. By walking away from the source of their power, the workplaces, the workers would be unable to immediately begin their re-organization of economic and social life . . .*

Like any business unionist, you define a "strike" as workers "walking away from the workplaces." On that definition a "sit-down" strike — like the Gdansk shipyard occupation that built Polish "Solidarity" — would be a contradiction in terms. If you admit that the workplaces — and not the polling booths — are the source of worker power, then why not simply conceive of the revolution as the workers taking over their

workplaces, and the whole interlocking production/communication/transportation network? The direct and generalized seizure of the production system by the united workforce, direct re-organization of social and industrial life by the whole workforce themselves — that's the anarcho-syndicalist alternative to the politics of parties and elections.

In the Spanish revolution of the 1930s the anarcho-syndicalist unions didn't "walk away from the workplaces." Instead there was a wide-spread seizure of industry. The unions replaced the capitalist bosses with their own organizations for the management of industry, based on mass assemblies in the shop and elected worker committees. And they formed an internally-democratic worker militia — responsible to the unions — to fight the fascist military machine. The next step — which was never carried out — would have been the replacement of the bourgeois governmental set-up with national and regional worker congresses and administrative commissions instructed by these congresses. This failure happened in part because control of the government by the marxist and liberal parties of the "Popular



Front" made destruction of the governmental apparatus seem less important to much of the working class. This was a very costly mistake.

How can you be sure that your proposed workers' party will not gradually evolve to where it sees the State machine as quite useful after all? When you say that control of the State could be useful for protecting the working class, you are implying that the State machine can be wielded in the interests of the working class. This is one step down the road to "State Socialism." The political process is concerned with disagreements over what State policy should be. Any political leadership — however radical initially — will tend to define what it does in terms of doing X with the State power rather than Y. The prevalence of "State Socialist" ideas in electoral labor/socialist parties is not accidental.

"How will the revolutionary unions be created?" you ask. Although ideological organizations can provide an antidote to bourgeois interpretations of present-day reality, and can make positive contributions to discussions within the working class on the tasks that face us, somehow I find it hard to believe that a revolutionary labor movement will come into being from radical preaching in the electoral circus. Your words and deeds won't be consistent. Class-conscious unions self-managed by the ranks may be what is needed for our class, but your **actions** don't say that to people when they find you running for State office like any other politico.

How will a revolutionary labor movement arise? The main problem

isn't workers' mistaken beliefs about the system. The main problem is that even if workers would agree in the abstract that it would be great to dump the creeps who now dominate our lives, they either aren't aware of the potential power for change that lies in worker solidarity or don't have faith in the capacity of our class to remake the world in a freer and more humane direction. That lack of awareness and lack of faith in worker power — that cynicism or scepticism that views our ideas as "unrealistic," can't be overcome by all the radical preaching in the world — but only by the actual experience of worker solidarity. That's why anarcho-syndicalism puts so much stress on mass direct action.

The class struggle is not just marking time till the revolution — or until the electoral victory of the "correct" De Leonist party — which seems to be how you view it. It is the whole process through which workers acquire the self-confidence, organization and class-consciousness which they must have to take over and run the system.

Can you really believe that the kind of energy and struggle that would have to exist within the working class for a revolution to come to pass, could be channeled through a political party? If they developed the industrial power to change the system, why would workers wait to have it ratified by the creaking constitutional process? If you recognize that all States are instruments for maintaining the material interests of the bosses, then you can't believe that America's elective autocracy is real democracy, real self-governance.

## Geometry

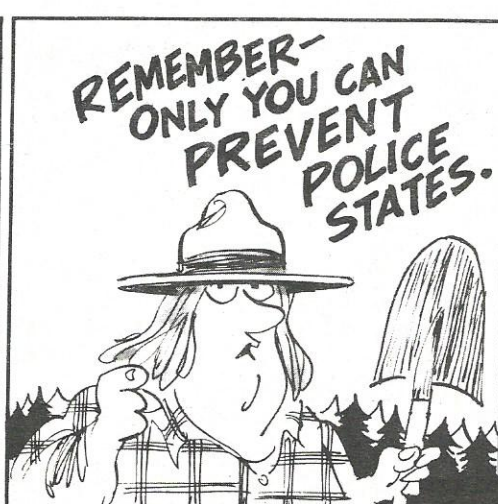
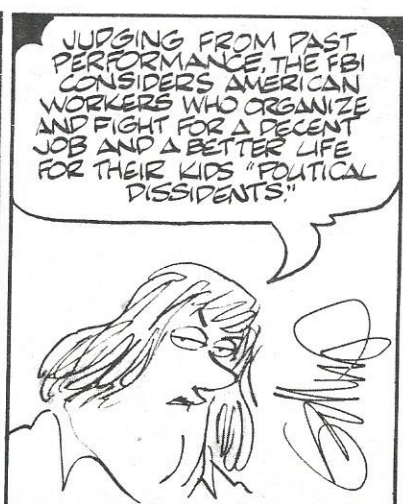
My life was dissolving into lines  
My life was dissolving into lines  
the unemployment line  
the outpatient line  
the nightclub line  
the timeclock line  
the Party line  
So I destroyed the lines  
Fucked them all up  
With my pen

—Brad Evans

Wouldn't the working class realize this also if they had the sort of class-consciousness that would be required before wide-spread revolutionary unionism emerges? Already workers have little faith in government for real solutions to their problems. At least half of the working class doesn't even vote.

To say that a revolution would be "undemocratic" if it doesn't gain a majority vote at the polls is to accept the false liberal identification of "democracy" with the sort of governmental set-up we now suffer under. The only democratic ratification that the revolution for workers' freedom requires is the support of the bulk of the majority class of wage-earners and real democratic rank-and-file control of the revolutionary unions, based on the face-to-face democracy of mass assemblies, which would guarantee a democratic outcome to the revolution.

For a world without bosses,  
Richard Laubach





# Co-ops or workers' revolution?

by richard laubach

People have formed co-operatives or collectively-run businesses for a variety of reasons. To create or save jobs. To get food at lower prices. But apart from limited aims such as these, where the validity of co-ops is not in question, co-ops have sometimes also been advocated as part of a more far-reaching strategy for fundamentally changing society in the direction of workers' control and a freer and more humane social set-up. Co-ops as the road to self-emancipation.

Leonard Krimmerman, in a recent issue of *Social Anarchism*, where he discusses his experiences at a Connecticut workers' co-op, provides us with an illustration of this viewpoint. The co-op in question was International Poultry, originally organized to provide jobs for a group of workers rendered jobless by the closing of a poultry processing plant. Says Krimmerman: "My initial hope . . . in joining IP was to help create an anarchist [i.e. self-managed] workplace, and then a network of such workplaces, and from there to begin once again to launch the entire social revolution."

The working assumption here is that the "self-managed" business can embody on a small scale the ideal of a society without the boss/worker hierarchy, a stateless self-managed society where production is motivated by the people's collective benefit instead of profits for a few. Otherwise, why would one see co-ops as the building blocks of libertarian socialism? The idea is that the collectively-run enterprises represent a kind of embryonic self-managed society outside the profit-driven capitalist framework.

This idea isn't new. It was popular in radical circles in the 1800s. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon is perhaps the most famous early advocate of the co-op strategy for self-emancipation. In 1849 Proudhon organized a credit union in France, called the "People's Bank," to help fund workers co-ops. He thought this would lead to the expansion of a self-managed sector within the intestines of the

capitalist order, until it finally embraced the whole society, with the workers running everything.

When 20,000 people joined the People's Bank in the first six months, Proudhon was ecstatic: "It really is the new world, the promised society is being grafted on to the old and gradually transforming it!" Several hundred workers' collectives were set up. But within a decade only 20 were left. Proudhon's scheme was a fiasco.

Proudhon's strategy is inherently incapable of creating a libertarian future. The case for this conclusion doesn't rest on only the historical failure of particular ventures. Because it exists as a business, a co-operative is not really "outside" the capitalist system at all. Therein lies a fundamental mistake of the Proudhonist approach. A workers' co-op is essentially a "collectivist" form of self-employment. It can be compared to the situation of a printer or hairdresser who owns her own shop. As a business, a co-op's fortunes are tied up with the market for its particular product or service. This puts them into competition with capitalist enterprises. In Proudhon's day, when most people were self-employed and capitalist enterprises were just small shops operated under the watchful eye of the owner, the implications of this may not have been so obvious. Today however, the globe-straddling mega-corporations dominate the world economy, with immense resources, governments at their beck and call, flexibility from their ability to move anywhere and operate at the same time in any number of industries, and solid contacts with powerful financial, manufacturing and distribution networks. Working people can't defeat them with co-operatives, operating on capital's own turf, the marketplace. The power that working people have to defeat the employing class lies elsewhere.

Co-ops do not come with some special ceramic insulation impervious to the acids of capitalist competition. What this means is that co-ops will find that they have to do the same things that more conventionally-structured capitalist businesses are doing in order to survive. The terms of their survival are set by what the top-down, profit-driven big boys are prepared to do.

Krimmerman says that co-ops are of intrinsic value because they "empower" people. But the "control" that people can exercise through a co-op is more myth than reality.

The market, within hierarchical societies, acts as a transmission belt for exploitation. If the workers are too "easy" on themselves, if they take too much of the revenue home instead of putting it into innovation and expansion, if they put the funds into making the workplace a safer and nicer place to



spend their time, they may soon find themselves scanning the "Help Wanted" columns again. So workers in the co-ops will find themselves "deciding" to impose on themselves whatever conditions are imposed by capitalist exploitation. They'll be "self-managing" their own exploitation. A cog in an economic machine that is subservient to capitalist ends. The system will go on producing the same problems — unemployment, inequality, militarism, meaningless and dangerous jobs, militarism and war, environmental degradation, racism, etc. Having real power to control our own lives means having the power to change these things.

Co-ops will have a tendency to act in socially destructive ways for the same reasons that capitalist firms do. Imagine, if you will, a firm that redesigns the product so that it is less likely to harm the consumer (no Pinto-style gas tank) or suppose that they redesign the production process so that it is less harmful to the local environment (no dumping of toxic wastes). This may mean that their per unit costs will be higher than less scrupulous competitors. And of course, they have no guarantee that the competition will not have recourse to socially destructive cost-cutting measures. In that case they would lose their market share to the lower-priced competition. Either the firm will go belly-up, force all kinds of "give-back" demands on its workforce or lose its ability to get loans for further business ventures due to its diminished profitability. Co-operatives would be in the same boat. Just because workers "control" a particular company, this doesn't mean they will control what happens in that

industry. To have power over their own destiny, workers would have to unite to control the whole economy.

There are many examples of co-ops that have become increasingly indistinguishable from more conventional capitalist enterprises during the course of their history. In 1979 the Environmental Policy Institute in Washington, D. C. published a report on rural electric power co-ops in which they charged that, having lost sight of their "original grassroots functions," the electric co-ops now behave just like the capitalist power baronies.

This includes an appetite for nuclear power. Dairyland Power Co-op — the Wisconsin federation of electric consumer co-ops — has operated its own nuke plant at Genoa, Wisconsin, on the banks of the Mississippi River, for a number of years. The Minnesota and Wisconsin power co-ops were part of a consortium that had attempted to build a large nuclear power plant at Tyrone, Wisconsin, a proposal that was ultimately defeated after a lengthy popular struggle against it in upstate Wisconsin.

The midwest power co-ops have also been involved in erecting massive power transmission lines across the midwestern prairies in order to plug into non-union Western coal. The midwest power companies favor this particular venture in part because they see it as a way of undermining the more militant miners' labor movement in the Eastern coal fields.

Another thing that will tend to integrate co-ops further into capitalism is the fact that their existence as a business will tend to isolate them from other working people. Instead of acting as part of a broader workers' movement, co-ops tend to relate primarily to other capitalist institutions — banks, wholesalers, the government, etc. But if co-ops tend to act just the same as corporate capital, how can co-ops embody the ideals of a non-profit self-managed socialist society?

Just as co-ops come to act the same as more conventional capitalist businesses, it shouldn't surprise us if the dynamics of the capitalist economy also facilitates their evolution in the direction of top-down, capitalist-style organization. Krimmerman points out that International Poultry found itself forced to give up on face-to-face worker democracy, "discipline" the workforce, and vest all power of hiring and firing in the board of directors. Even then it didn't survive. And then there is the example of South Bend Lathe, where the workers had to strike the factory that they "owned" because they had no control over shop floor and investment decisions.

A capitalist economy forces businesses to pursue expansion as an intrinsic and primary value, irrespective of the disadvantages to human beings along the way. Businesses have to grow or they will be at a competitive disadvantage. The top-down, techno-managerial structure of the present-day corporation has been evolved in the course of many struggles with the working class over the control of



**"Self-managed" exploitation at International Poultry.**



production, as the most effective vehicle for this expansion.

Co-ops will either tend not to expand, in which case they will remain marginal, or else they will tend to degenerate into hierarchical businesses. One way in which this degeneration can happen is by hiring new people as wage-labor, without an equal say in the running of the enterprise. This is possible because the co-op isn't "owned" by the whole working class but is private property. So long as there exists a class of wage-earners, who must sell chunks of their lives to employers in order to receive their share of the total product created by the community's labor, there is nothing to prevent workers' co-ops from exploiting them as wage-slaves. A number of the co-ops that Proudhon helped to organize ended up as collective employers of wage-labor.

This tendency has also reared its head at some of the plywood co-ops in the Northwest. At Puget Sound Plywood about 10% of the workforce in recent years, and nearly a third at Hoquiam Plywood, have been hired as non-members — they cast no votes, get no share in the year-end profits, are assigned the dirtiest, noisiest jobs, and receive lower wages. In short, the re-appearance of relations that reflect class oppression.

The Proudhonist approach goes wrong because it views "self-management" as an abstract question of workplace "structure," apart from the historical struggles of the working class. But anarchism, as Kropotkin once observed, "is not a utopia, constructed on the apriori model, after a few desiderata have been taken as postulates. It is derived from an analysis of tendencies that are at work already." Worker self-activity is the only "tendency at work already" that could remake society in the direction of worker power over social and industrial affairs — genuine self-management.

"Self-activity" (a.k.a. direct action) is not just anything that working people do. If you spend 40 hours a week cranking out widgets for Mega-bucks International, that production is in the interests of the employer. "Self-activity" refers to activity that lashes out against hierarchy — which fights capital's dominion — in some way. Activity in which we seek our collective benefit. Activity that increases

the social and organizational autonomy of the working class. A "slow-down" on the job, a sympathy strike, formation of a rank-and-file group or an independent union self-managed by the ranks, a mass strike meeting independent of the union tops, a struggle for human rights — all of these can be forms of self-activity.

The bosses provide the motivation for self-activity. Workers are impelled to fight by the very conditions of our lives as a subordinated, exploited class. The existence of self-activity throughout the history of hierarchical, class-stratified society shows that the class of producers at the base of society are not just easily manipulated objects, but tend to refuse their oppression, to fight against it. The anarchist hope for revolutionary change is based on this tendency.

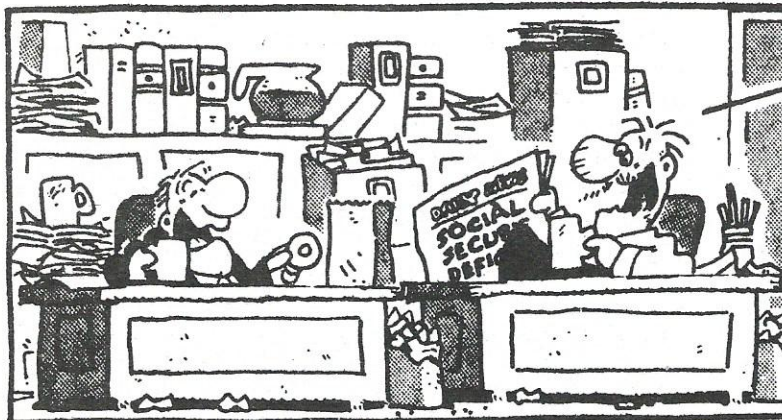
Worker self-activity has power because it is worker activity that keeps the whole flow of goods and information going. Workers are central to everything productive that is done in society because we do these things every day to make a living.

Self-determination — i.e. freedom — is the principle that is implicit in self-activity. Complete emancipation would mean taking over the management of the whole interlocking production/communications/transportation network, putting it to use for our collective benefit. A central part of libertarian politics is the view that genuine self-management can only be created through the self-emancipation of an independently-organized, self-directed mass of humanity, reaching out for freedom with their own hands. Mobilized "from below" in a grassroots fight to take control of our collective future.

How does the working class acquire what it takes for self-emancipation? Self-activity, if we think of it as an historical process, is the way the working class acquires the self-confidence, self-organization, independence and class-consciousness that is needed for self-emancipation.

The most basic problem is that the working class does not now have faith in their ability to make fundamental changes in the direction of a freer and more humane social set-up. People won't seek out sweeping proposals for change if they don't think they have the power to implement them.

What's missing is the nerve to tell the bosses and



IF I'D KNOWN THE  
PRESIDENT WAS GOING  
TO HAVE ME WORKING  
TILL 65, I WOULD  
HAVE TAKEN MORE  
COFFEE BREAKS.

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THAVES 8-14



bureaucrats to get lost and make it stick. Even if working people would agree in the abstract that it would be great to dump the jerks who presently dominate our lives, people are unaware of — don't have faith in — the potential power for change that lies in worker solidarity. It's this feeling that we're just powerless individuals that will incline people to reject ideas of revolutionary change as "unrealistic."

People tend to limit their choices to what they think they can hope to win. And what people think they can achieve depends on their sense of power. If "the feeble strength of one" describes your perception of your situation, then you will tend to strive for only what you can get as an individual. Workers who feel isolated won't base their actions on a faith in working class power.

Collective self-activity can alter the sense of power that people have because it changes the real circumstances of their lives. It changes the situation from the powerlessness of atomized individuals to the power of worker solidarity. This is especially true when working class action and solidarity spreads beyond the "normal" channels and unites — and brings into active participation — ever-larger sections of the working class — as in the "Solidarity" movement in Poland. Once people become aware that there is this class power available to them, this opens new horizons of possible changes. Ideas of changing the world appear realistic only where people have already broken through their own passivity. That's why anarcho-syndicalism was right to place so much stress on mass direct action.

Workers cannot acquire the self-confidence, independence and sense of collective power needed for self-emancipation from running — or observing — a few co-operatives limping around on the margins of the system. Therein lies the fatal weakness of Krimmerman's idea of co-ops as a base for revolutionary change. Because their existence as businesses means that they will be dominated by the capitalist market framework, co-ops are not an organizational means for worker struggle *against* the employing class. They're not a means to working people having power.

From the episodic and isolated struggles of today to self-emancipation and the mass seizure of the economy is a long road. A revolution does not seem just around the corner here in the U. S. But it is quite possible that the path to revolutionary change will not be a gradual, step-by-step process. Revolutionary ideas seem most relevant to people during periods marked by abrupt changes in the scope and militancy of struggle — events on the order of the mass sit-down strikes of the 1930s. Major changes in the character of mass self-activity — changes that are generally not within the power of small minorities of revolutionaries to initiate — can create a sense that it is up for grabs how society is organized.

Also, it is during these periods of heightened struggle that workers move to take over more direct

control of their struggles with the employing class, and in the process, create more independent and non-hierarchical ways of organizing their self-activity. During the "hot autumn" of 1969 in Italy workers at the Fiat and Alfa-Romeo auto plants created mass assemblies, organizations of face-to-face rank-and-file democracy, outside the framework of the bureaucratic unions. This way of organizing, based on direct self-management of the struggle by the ranks, appeared during the 1970s at high points of struggle in Spain and Portugal as well.

This happens because the top-down structures of the hierarchical unions makes them unsuited to carrying the struggle beyond the "normal" channels. The officials who run these unions, with their bureaucratic concern for avoiding risks to their organizations (and their status), will work to contain struggles within the framework of their long-standing relationship with the bosses.

Of central importance to anarcho-syndicalism is the emergence of mass worker organization, independent of all the hierarchies of class-stratified society, where the rank-and-file are able to control their own struggle through on-the-job activism and decision-making by the face-to-face democracy of mass meetings of all the workers. Organization encompassing and focusing the subversive self-activity of worker protest. Anarcho-syndicalism has always been based on the concept of mass worker organization that plays a dual role in history, as independent mass organization motivated by struggles that arise within the capitalist framework, and as the basis for seizing and re-organizing the system of production and distribution. This idea is founded on the recognition that the class struggle under capitalism, and the self-emancipation of the people, are inseparable, just two phases in the same historical process.

Revolutions in a number of countries in the 20th century have shown that it is possible to overthrow capitalism without the working class acquiring power over social and industrial affairs. Genuine socialism — workers power — is not the inevitable outcome of the destruction of capitalism. "Revolution" may indicate merely the transition from one form of hierarchy and exploitation to a newer form, more in step with the changing realities in production and social affairs. This has been as true of the Cuban and Russian revolutions in this century as it was of the French revolution in the 18th century.

No social order can come into existence *ex nihilo*. There must already be a basis for it in the social forces that led to the downfall of the old order. For a revolution to mark the transition to a society of face-to-face libertarian democracy and workers' self-management, the structure of libertarian self-management must have been foreshadowed and prefigured in the way the masses of the population had organized their struggles against the powers-that-be. The importance of the non-hierarchical mass workers' organizations lies in the fact that these organizations contain the premises of a libertarian society, a society without bosses.



The self-management that can exist under capitalism and prefigure the whole self-managed society is the direct self-management of the class struggle by the rank-and-file, not the self-management of a business — that's where Proudhonians like Krimmerman go wrong. The emergence of mass non-hierarchical workers' organization is necessary for workers to have the organizational means to play an active and self-directed role in re-organizing society in a freer and more humane direction.

When workers begin to take over the workplaces where they work and the places where they live, they have to reach out to others and base the emerging self-managed system on class-wide solidarity. This would mean ignoring the old boundary lines between capitalist fiefdoms in the same industry (to avoid competition between groups of workers), and the development of some sort of organization that would enable all sectors of the workforce to get together to plan out how we're going to invest our collective resources, what is needed, how it is to be produced and distributed, and so on. Some arrangement of conventions or congresses of the working class — not only at the regional or national level, but at the international level as well, made up of delegates elected to present proposals and ideas decided by the face-to-face democracy of the local worker assemblies. In fact workers would be inclined to do this because it is only through the widespread development of solidarity throughout the working class and a growing tendency of workers to see their personal destiny bound up with the fortunes of the whole class, that workers would gain the power and self-confidence to take over the system of social production and create a self-managed future. The working class can't be free in isolated, atomized chunks but only through collective, class-wide self-determination.

Like the liberals and the marxists, Proudhon failed to realize that worker solidarity could provide the basis for a system of co-ordinating social production based on neither the market nor the State. Just as Proudhon made the mistake of thinking that the capitalist marketplace was neutral turf on which socialism could be constructed (by setting up co-op businesses), his vision of socialism was based on the market also.

Proudhon's idea of socialism is a stateless society made up of worker collectives, each with its privately-owned means of production, competing in a market framework. This is a natural concept of socialism for anyone who accepts the co-op strategy for social change because co-ops relate to others primarily through the relations of buying and selling. If this Proudhonist brand of "market socialism" were to somehow come into existence, it would probably degenerate into a hierarchical, class-stratified set-up. The losers in the market game would be stripped of their means of production by bankruptcy — maybe they made mistakes, didn't innovate, got too far into debt, etc. Once a class of

propertyless people emerge, there would be nothing to keep the remaining co-ops from exploiting them as wage-labor — we've already seen this tendency at work in the Northwest plywood co-ops. Workers would not be able to prevent this from happening without society-wide organization that represents the power of the working class as a whole.

After the revolutionary seizure of production, we don't want the factories, oil refineries, hospitals and railways to become the "private property" of the people who happened to be working there at the moment of seizure. The workers' self-management of these installations would presumably be something on the order of a "sub-contract" from the whole working class, since they must be responsible to the whole society. Instead of basing their work decisions on the estimation of what could be profitably sold on the market, collective class-wide decisions about what we want would provide them with a basic framework for these decisions. The control that the society-wide organs of worker power — the congresses of the working class — have over what goes on in the economy would be the cash value of saying that the production system had been "socialized."

Of course it is likely that the revolutionary re-organization of society will be accompanied by violent clashes. It isn't likely that the David Rockefellers of the world will give up their power voluntarily. I have sometimes heard partisans of the Proudhonist approach argue that the co-op strategy is preferable because it would avoid the violence that would be likely to occur in a revolutionary confrontation between labor and capital. This treats "revolutionary seizure of production" and "peaceful expansion of co-ops" as if they were two equally available options, like a choice between apple cider and grape juice at the local food co-op. True, no one desires violence for its own sake, but, as I've argued, the Proudhonist approach is not a real alternative since it can't reach the libertarian goal.

And anyway, an aroused and self-activated mass of humanity, fighting for their own emancipation, aren't likely to give up the fight even if it involves substantial risk of violence. The whole history of popular revolution shows this. □

## A chorus of protests

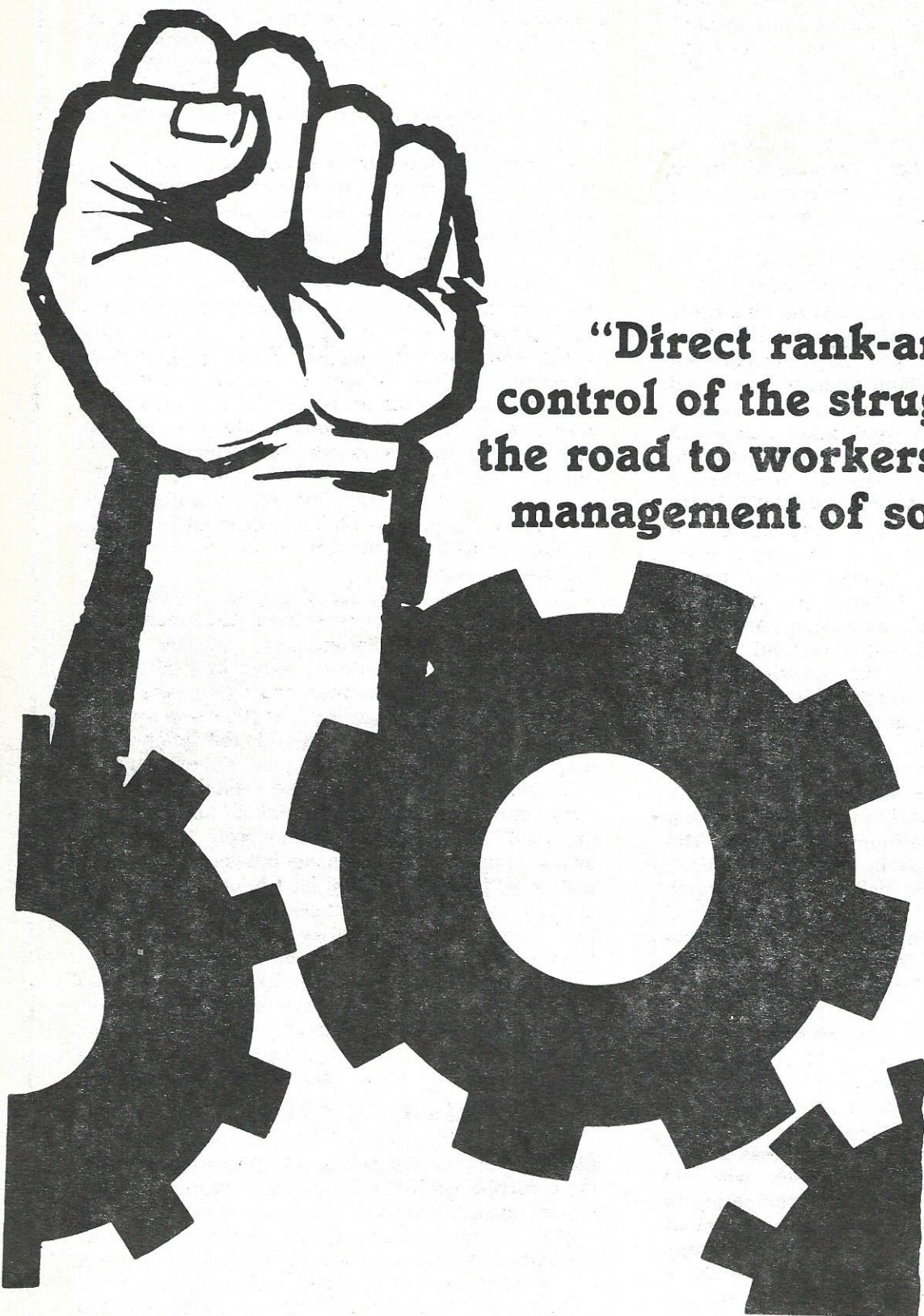
MUNICH, West Germany (AP) — The audience at the Bavarian State Opera had the rare experience of seeing Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* without a chorus when the singers refused to perform.

Minutes before start of the sell-out performance November 26, choir representatives informed the management they would not sing, choosing to support nation-wide union demands for more time off and longer vacations.

The opera manager faced a booing audience after he announced the opera would go on without the temple scene or the famous triumphal march, and despite Italian conductor Gianfranco Masini's refusal to make his German debut under the circumstances.

—San Francisco Examiner (11/27/81)



A black and white graphic. On the left, a stylized raised fist is shown in profile, with the thumb tucked in. Below the fist, several interlocking gears are depicted in a similar stylized, high-contrast manner. The gears are of different sizes and are arranged in a way that suggests a mechanical or industrial theme. The entire graphic is rendered in solid black shapes against a plain white background.

**"Direct rank-and-file  
control of the struggle is  
the road to workers' self-  
management of society"**