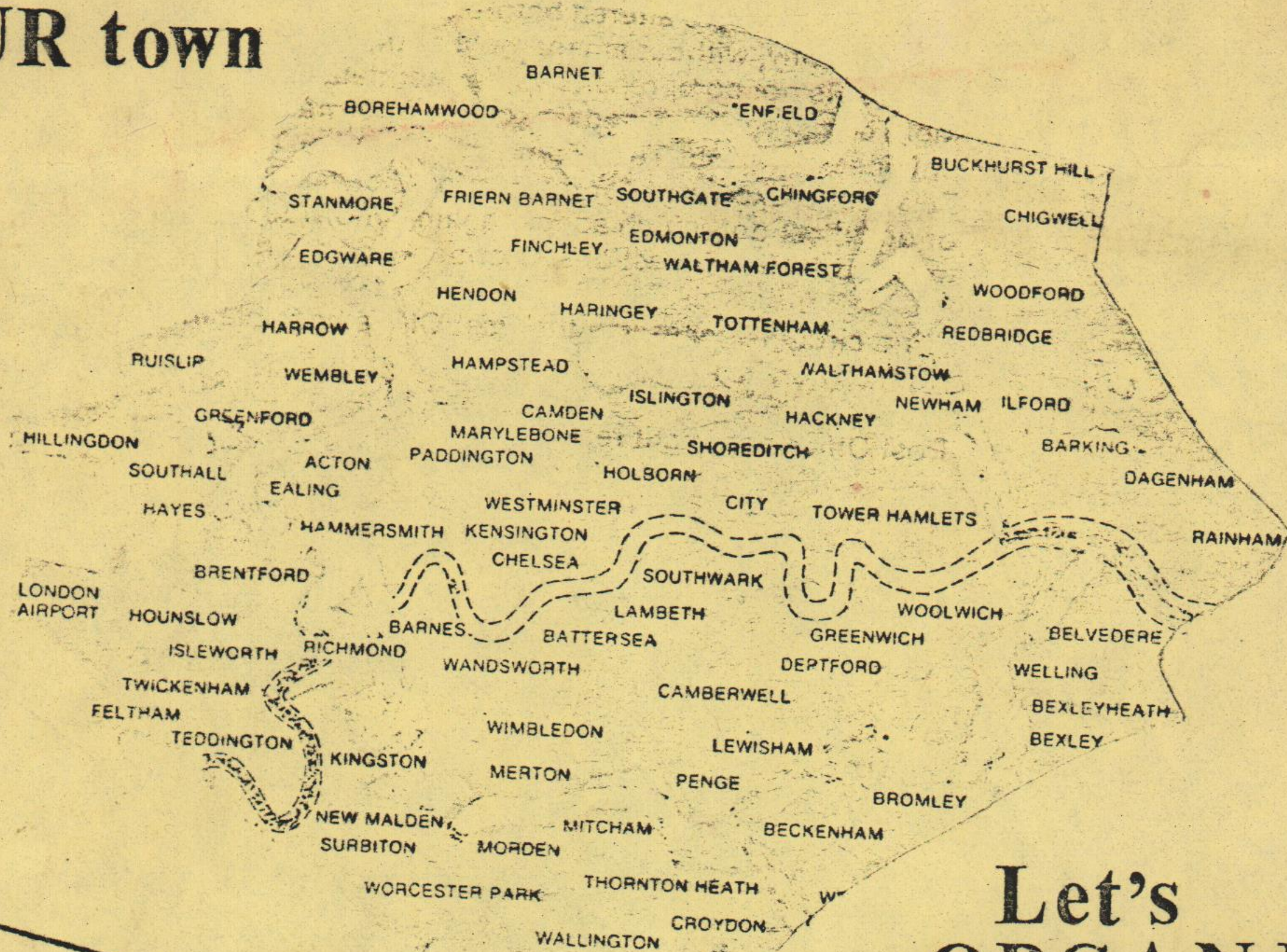


LONDON WORKERS GROUP

Bulletin No. 6

This is OUR town



Let's
ORGANISE
to take it over!

FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.....

35% PAY RISE FOR MPs
The Commons last night approved an immediate pay increase of 35 per cent for MPs as part of a three-stage deal that will raise their salaries to £12,000 plus over the next two years.

.....ISN'T IT WONDERFUL.....

engineering unions announced that their members will now strike for two days a week from September 3 and 4.

the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions

want a national minimum skilled wage rate of £80 and an unskilled rate of £60, shorter hours and extra holidays.

.....IF YOU CAN GET A JOB!

TREASURY forecasts that unemployment will rise to two million and that inflation could reach 20 per cent next year have been suppressed because of their acute political sensitivity.

..... OR IS IT ?

THE CONFEDERATION of British Industry, the Centre for Forecasting and the Charterhouse Group all say this week that high wage claims and a deepening economic recession add up to a double queue of two million by 1980.

TUC has refined its unemployment calculations and believes that 2m could be out of work by the end of next year, which is not out of line with the Government's "Think Tank" projections.

They present a prospect of an almost stationary economy, in which unemployment rises from 1,400,000 to above two million, with the balance of payments posing permanent constraints des-



LONDON WORKERS GROUP
BOX W
182 UPPER St.
LONDON N.1.



LONDON WORKERS' GROUP - AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

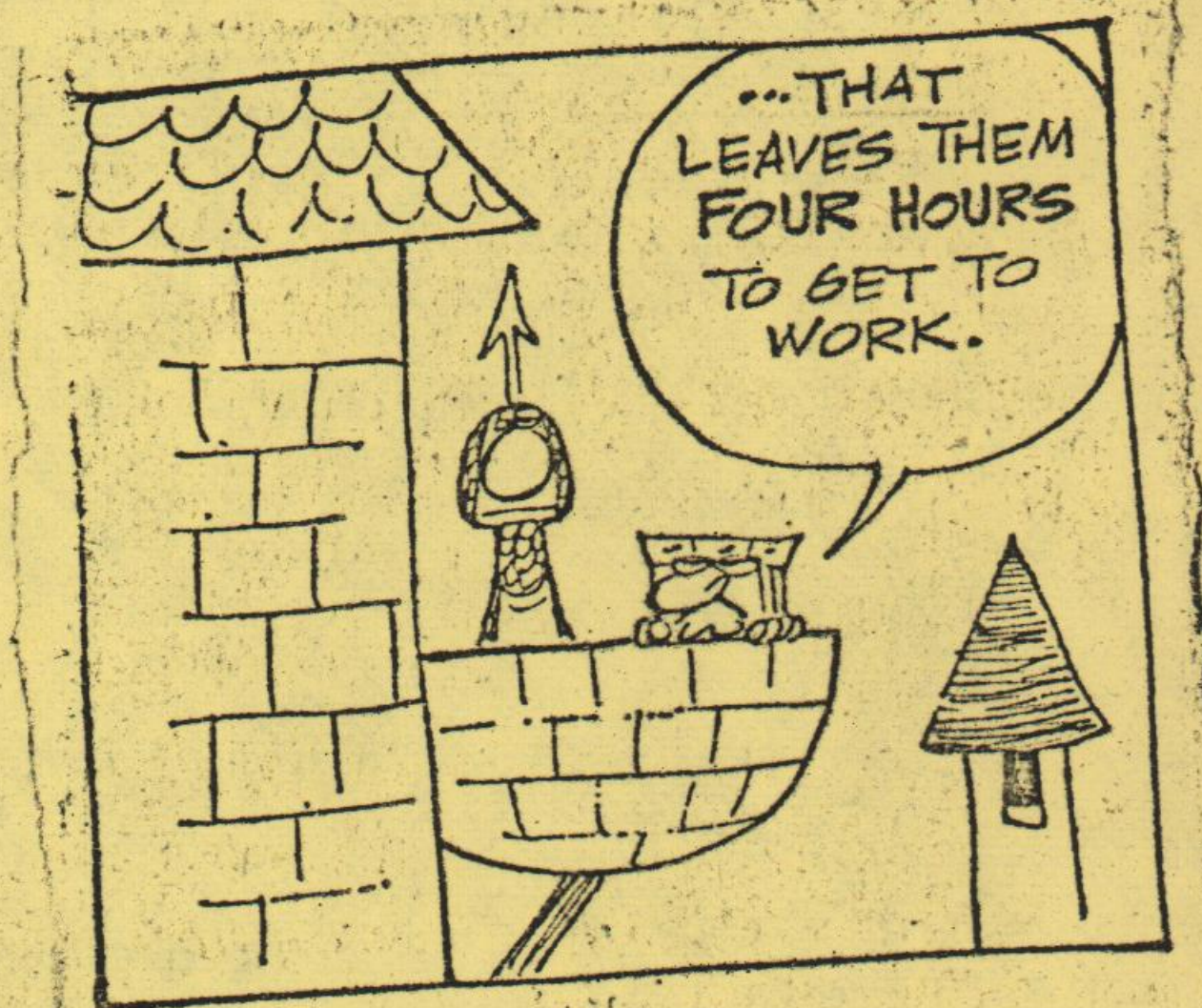
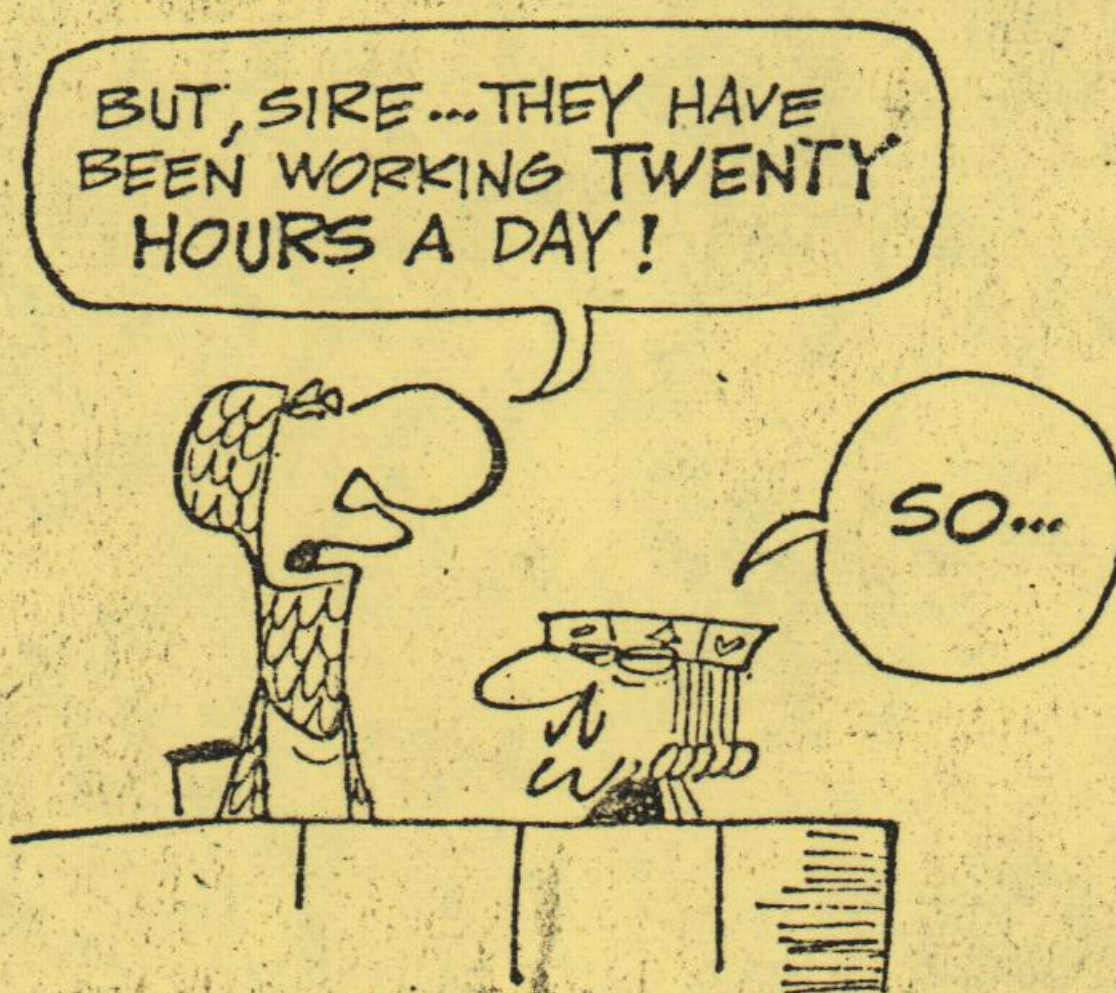
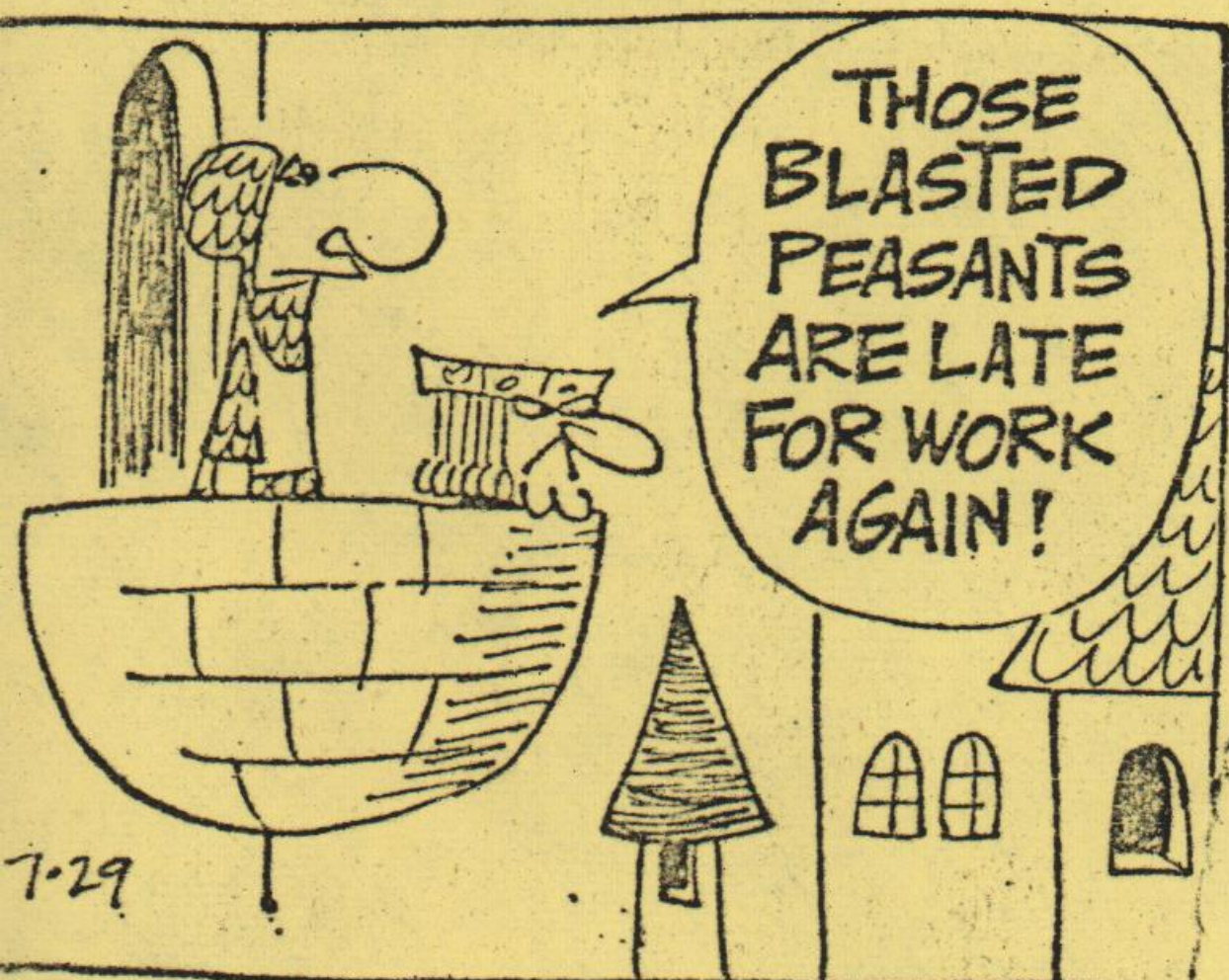
The LONDON WORKERS' GROUP is an organisation of non-party militants working in the London area. Our aim is to establish and encourage communication between workers in all industries in order to:

- (1) learn from each others experience and increase our understanding of industry and trades unions within capitalist society;
- (2) seek out and maintain links with other anti-capitalists and anti-authoritarians. While recognising the importance of organised struggle in all areas of life, we choose to concentrate on the workplace struggle. We believe that the formation of autonomous workers' groups within each industry is vital. The function of these groups is to spread revolutionary ideas and create solidarity among fellow workers. We also would encourage the formation of local workers' groups all over London, to complement the industrial organisations.
- (3) Devise and produce effective propaganda including a bulletin covering industrial news, workplace reports, analyses and theoretical articles;
- (4) and provide support where asked for.

Our aim is the establishment of a non-governmental, classless society of producers/consumers in free association. It is clear that unions and left wing parties serve to perpetuate capitalism, not destroy it. We are opposed to all hierarchical organisation and political dogma, hence our opposition to all political parties. We support all actions that tend towards complete workers control and autonomy as has been experienced through WORKERS' COUNCILS.

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Comment:

UNFREE MARKET ECONOMY

The current Tory government was elected on the strength of promises of tax cuts, to be financed by cuts in government spending. Not surprisingly it turns out that for most people tax cuts will be more than offset by VAT increases, while the only ones to benefit substantially will be the rich. A couple of examples: a single worker on £60 a week now pays £2 a week less tax. A married couple whose income is £100 a week (whether one or both is working) will pay about £3 a week less. But a company director on £25,000 a year, married or single, will now be getting an extra £60 a week cash in hand. Our workers' £2 or £3 a week went last long against 4p on a pint of beer, 10p on a gallon of petrol and other VAT price rises. Clothes, cookers and furniture are now rated at 15 per cent, the same as luxuries like colour TV's, yachts and mink coats.

Public Spending Cuts But increased indirect taxation is not the end of the story. Tax cuts are to be financed by spending cuts in health, education and services - areas which will hit the poorer people who gained absolutely nothing from the much publicised tax cuts.

As an editorial in the bosses magazine "Financial Weekly", 10th Aug, 79, puts it: "What is clear is that in the long run, cuts in education and health are likely to increase the division of the UK into 'two societies'".

MPs Get Big Rises It should be noted that government spending cuts do not extend to the servants of the state. As well as upping MP's salaries by 35 per cent, the government has been given massive increases to the police and army (as did Labour before them). This is obviously an attempt at economic conscription in preparation for a hard winter of industrial struggle. There is no reason to suppose that the Tories will be any less prepared to use troops as scab labour than the Labour government was.

Free Market Dogma So what is the government's economic strategy? Thatcher's main economic adviser, Sir Keith Joseph, is an ideological capitalist who believes in the "free market", but even he is having to learn that capitalists are not an idealistic bunch and will keep clamouring for state hand-outs, so the Tories will end up with much the same corporatist policies as Labour had.

Nationalisation Although nationalisation has all but stopped and in some cases even being reversed (though

not nearly as much as many High Tories would have wished), State intervention in industry is expanding in subtler ways. Capital investment in industry is being dropped as the capitalists desperately grab what they can in quick profits, and industry now looks to the state to provide the necessary finance for that investment. Some forms of finance are overt, others less so.

Enterprise Board Regional aid groups and large scale capital investment by the National Enterprise Board (which is not to be scrapped, although Sir Keith Joseph wanted it to be) fall into the first category. As for the second, "New Scientist", 9th August, 79, reported that "in Britain industry has gradually pulled out of funding research leaving the government to pay for more and more of this vital work. Thus our apparent levelling off in Britain's total research and development effort, actually hides a decline in industrial spending". Similarly, the current shortage in research industries of skilled workers is evidence of the unwillingness of firms even to invest in the training of apprentices, and even this is being taken over by the state, with the Manpower Services Commission's training opportunities, youth opportunities, and other schemes.

Class Collaboration Behind the Tory rhetoric, the government will have to come to some agreement with the union bosses in order to survive, and similarly the union bosses will be looking for a deal with the government to preserve their own power - even at the expense of their members. (cont pg.7. col.2.)

Report:

SOME LESSONS OF THE GARNERS STRIKE

The London Workers' Group took part, to the best of its ability, in supporting the Garners' Restaurants strikers. Eighty four workers in 16 London restaurants came out on strike in January, 78, against disgusting wages and conditions, victimisation of union members and opposition to their attempts to organise in the Transport and General Workers' Union. They attempted to picket fellow workers to prevent them working, but this failing, they then tried to picket customers. After 17 months of activity by the strikers (whose numbers inevitably fell each month) constant harassment by the police and management and the bringing in of scab labour and despite attempts to establish regular mass pickets, they called the strike off at the end of May this year.

The LWG and various friends as individuals took part in raising money but mostly trying to get support for picketing. This was an enormous task for the strikers and, by Xmas, 78, it became obvious that it was time to call it a day and with the strike almost certainly lost. At that stage we sadly decided to turn our efforts elsewhere and so were no longer actively supporting the strikers. The lessons of this strike are very important.

Wage System The system by which people, with only their labour power to sell, are bought and used by those with money and power, has always been slavery. Nowhere is this more obvious in Britain than in the London catering industry. Workers are hired with pathetic contracts (if any), work long hours for low wages, overtime compulsory, can be fired at will and are prevented from organising. On top of this, by using immigrant workers the employers use the added weapon of threat of expulsion from the country if here illegally. There is only one task for slaves - the overthrow of their masters.

Militant Minority Those with families found it hard to struggle month by month, so sought other jobs. But a nucleus of 15-20, were determined to fight either due to lack of other job opportunities, or more importantly due to principle. Most of these, never having been in such a struggle before, showed how class conscious they were, as compared with many "experienced" organised workers who often haven't a clue, allowing themselves to be mesmerised into passivity by "their" unions. Support, if you could call it that, came from various different quarters. T and GWU, other unions, left parties and independent groups and individuals.

Unions Considering this was a struggle for the very principle of being able to join a union, you would have expected Britain's largest union with two million members, would have stepped in and easily isolated and defeated the Garners' owners - the Margolis family. Instead the mighty T and GWU paid an insulting £6 per week strike pay and made pathetic attempts to black supplies. Whilst individuals from other unions and trades councils dropped by, their unions were similarly half-hearted. Postal workers, who almost never cross picket lines, couldn't risk refusing to hand over mail in the sorting offices to Margolis because in previously doing this at Grunwicks, it was the UPW which defeated and threatened to expel them (and hence get the sack - for such is the power of the closed shop).

This then is the function of the union machinery - to tie up and control workers struggles and when necessary suppress them. In fact, 10,000 or more London Ford workers in the T and GWU were on strike last winter but none saw the connection between their struggle and that at Garners.

In the light of all this, why should workers fight to join unions? If they'd won, the T and GWU would have got the credit and the growth. However, we have to recognise that alternative forms of organisation must be created and spread across London, or, by default, there seems to be no other way to organise except by tactically joining a union. In this respect, we supported the efforts of three or four catering workers from other workplaces, to support the strike and create an independent rank and file catering workers support (cont.pg 4.)

Some Lessons of the Garners Strike, cont:

network. Bearing in mind the conditions in London that was and still is, a difficult and frustrating task - but necessary.

The Left Left Parties are manipulative, dogmatic and authoritarian.

The two main ones involved had very different attitudes. The Sociast Workers Party turned up in bulk every so often for a "mass picket", but were rarely seen otherwise. A populist party, it needs publicity and action to bolster its image, and attract new members. Although many SWP members are concerned and committed militants, the end result is that they are used in their party's cynical strategy of creating front organisations (NON-independent Rank and File) and more-militant-than-them image building.

The other group was the Workers Socialist League (Weasels), also Trotskyist but obsessed with "exposing the leadership" of unions and organising for correct lines a "new leadership". Their strategy is to support picket lines and build up their membership in certain unions, then use these members to pass resolutions to "expose the leaders". They have T and GWU members in a couple of towns and so were dead keen to keep this strike going as long as possible, to further their own ambitions. They, more than any other organisation, took part in picketing daily, leafletting and publicising. I contend that they cynically used the strikers, whose determination blinded them to the reality. The strike should have been called off months before.

Genuine Support Many small groups and individuals took part in pickets - some regularly, others occasionally and were important in the early stages, although becoming disheartened by the enormity of the task. Picketing of customers is a near futile strategy. There was some more useful support activity - the occasional large eat-in without paying, sealing up the locks at night, etc. At the last "mass picket" (200 people), some were suggesting that only bricks and firebombs would slow up Margolis's profits. In a similar strike at present going on in Dublin (to join the union at MacDonalds - a world chain with no union tolerated anywhere, a group of five or six

supporters rushed in with iron bars to break equipment! In most countries of the world such a long strike would arouse such feelings of anger and direct action.

To sum it up, most organised "support" turned out to be of dubious help, if not actively hindering the strikers. More importantly workers have to judge when it is better to call a strike off.

A final word must go to the passersby who, although 95 per cent tourists, refused generally to cross the picket-line. But sometimes there were so many that the restaurant just filled up. Considering the difficulties, the pickets got their point across admirably well with leaflets, placards and arguments.

Opposition Margolis, his family and scabs consistently insulted and occasionally attacked pickets. The police, true to form acted impeccably and did the same, arresting pickets for obstruction, breach of the peace, etc. We saw people with cine equipment arrested while trying to interview pickets. They imposed an unwritten law of "no more than 6 pickets" successfully.

The Press The press was silent except for reports of mass pickets. It could be said that the opposition was feeble except for the police. It should have been a simple matter for an imaginative, active and independent labour movement to close down the restaurants by picketing and blacking and win this battle of principles.

Alternatives Unions act as straight-jackets on workers' struggles, and Left Parties attempt to manipulate them for their own ends - to get workers to vote Labour, join unions and ultimately their party. There's a crying need for libertarian and revolutionary ideas and strategies. These sort of feelings and activities exist all over the place but are almost everywhere drowned or buried as they find no way of expressing themselves or linking up. We, the London Workers' Group, intend to contribute (modestly) to fulfilling this need, and most

(cont.pg.5.)

Report:DIRECT ACTION CONFERENCE

The Direct Action quarterly conference took place in Leeds on the 30th June, and 1st July. Present were DAM members from Manchester, Leeds, Burnley, Sutton in Ahsfield and London. Observers were also present from Sheffield AG, Hull AG, Manchester Solidarity, London Workers' Group, Leeds AG and some AIT members from Australia.

Membership First on the agenda was the question of membership - this was not fully discussed which led to subsequent problems over who was entitled to vote. The circulated draft aims and principles were amended and agreed. Main discussion took place around the question of the need to define "worker" more clearly or not and the exact interpretation to be put on Clause 5 - the perspectives for future organisation. It was suggested this be reworded to make it clear that the DAM was a specifically Anarcho-Syndicalist organisation.

Other opinions felt that as it stood it allowed non anarcho-syndicalists to work in the DAM. This argument was left unresolved and the clause left unaltered.

Constitution Next a draft constitution was circulated and after some alterations, approved. It established the DAM as a card carrying national membership organisation, dues to be £1 a month. The policy making body to be a three monthly conference of all members. A national secretary/treasurer to co-ordinate between conferences and organise a monthly internal bulletin. Alternative proposals that the DAM adopt a federal structure, allowing for group as well as individual membership (thus enabling existing groups to affiliate) and for the retention of all but a proportion of dues at local level was defeated in a vote.

Federal Structure It was felt that a federal structure was weak, that a national unitary organisation was needed to overcome the weaknesses of existing isolated groups and that to build national strength and to end group chauvinism, was necessary. It was made clear that while not adopting an unambiguously anarcho-syndicalist constitution, that this was the perspective of the majority of DAM members.

Proposals to amend the name along these lines, were rejected since the term "anarcho-syndicalist" has no real meaning in this country. It was argued: "thy will find out what we are eventually".

Activity Perspectives for future activity were discussed including an anti-political levy campaign including leaflets, posters and stickers

Broadsheets or leaflets were proposed on the subjects of racism and fascism, new technology and the issue of "democratising the unions".

It was also proposed to update and reissue the Syndicalist Workers Federation pamphlet on Workers Control.

Documents were to be circulated before the next conference.

Strike Strategy In a discussion on the question of strike strategy and industrial organisation it was felt that attempt to form industrial base groups now were premature, given the present size of the DAM.

The next conference was set for Manchester at the end of September.

N.B. It is hoped that members of groups and individual members will take part in a discussion on the development of the DAM, both locally and nationally. We have had one such discussion in the London Workers' Group and no doubt others will be held. It may also be appropriate for members to more fully take part in this discussion by making contributions to this London Workers' Bulletin. There are a lot of very controversial matters raised by the DAM Leeds Conference and the views of all would be most welcome.

Report:RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT CONFERENCE

On the 23rd June, three of us (working in print, post and rail) went to this conference in Manchester - 1,100 participants, all in theory with delegate credentials from their union branch or shop stewards committee. It was run very smoothly behind the scenes by the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). Like an ordinary trade union conference - with a platform (unelected), chaired by a National Union of Teachers executive member, ranks of delegates facing the front and the rostrum from which each speaker (chosen by the platform) spoke. No mention was made at any time of any political party and any unsuspecting delegate present was probably conned by the image present of workers coming together independently to discuss their mutual problems.

Selected Speakers Lasting a day, there were four main sessions on wages, unemployment, rank and file organisation, etc. Each person who spoke was carefully chosen (those wishing to speak had to fill out a slip with details and give it to the stewards) for their key position in industry (influential shop stewards combines, district councils of unions, etc.) their involvement in a recent strike (Sandersons, Garners, Bakers, etc) or because they were a SWP shop steward. Most spoke honestly and angrily about their various experiences and there was a very wide range of workers present (a quarter of them women), and this was very valuable to all. The present trends of attacks on workers became obvious.

Obsession with Tories The police, especially the SPG were attacked but in general, although Labour were criticised for "paving the way", there was an obsession with the "Tories" and little class analysis beyond that. One good point made was that union collaboration with five years of Labour wage cuts, had caused a new low in morale amongst workers, undermining the traditions of picketing, blacking and solidarity and allowed the police and army's unprecedented intervention. But there was no discussion possible at all. A call was made for the formation of local rank and file committees with delegates from all workplaces - a radical step outside official union structures, although no speaker condemned unions, all arguing for militant rank and file-ism and more union democracy. Thankfully no one showed much regret for the law, or for the media.

Our Activity For our part we printed about 1,000 leaflets on three or four subjects, handing them out

on the London train and also outside the conference. They were generally well received as were those attacking the Labour Party and its political levy on unionists, handed out by our friends the Manchester Syndicalists.

Manipulative This impressive gathering is a major militant organised presence amongst workers, but is entirely dominated by the manipulative state capitalist SWP. They are now so efficient at setting up front organisations, rank and file, Womens Voice, Anti-Nazi League etc, that they rarely need to advertise themselves directly. Their literature range is enormous and well designed. They are trying to create a large recruiting ground, rather like the Communist Party in the 1930's. No other party is so successful today, the Labour Party and the Communist Party having moved far to the right and the others being mostly student organisations.

Reformist Syndicalism? The basic strategy is a sort of reformist syndicalism within the trade union movement, with a benevolent SWP dictatorship formulating the correct transitional demands, breathing new life into and protecting social democracy and trade unionism by invoking the spectre of the right (Tories, NF, SPG, etc), without attacking the ruling class.

What is Needed There is no doubt that independent workers organisations, industrially and locally, is an urgent need both to defend present conditions and to fight and argue for the seizure of all production and services by workers themselves to create a new form of society. The rank and file movement attempts to fulfill the first need. But its influence (like the existence of all union structures and

(cont.pg.7.)

Rank and File Movement Conference, cont:

political parties) stifles the possibility of libertarian organisation, ideas and resistance. By presenting Social Democracy as "better" than the Tories, the SWP helps to strengthen the state and prevents workers from discovering the only alternative to wage slavery - the creation of workers' councils and assemblies across the land and the armed overthrow of capitalism and the state.

Autonomous Groups To this end, and also to encourage debate and solidarity, workers must create independent workers groups throughout London and in each industry. These groups have important functions - they must respond to the day to day struggles and problems and spread the ideas and practice of autonomous, libertarian forms of organisation and action. They must begin the chronically long-overdue analysis of modern society and convince workers in their thousands of the possibility and desirability of social revolution.

We can participate in the rank and file for the moment, in order to meet fellow workers, but only if we have the strength of our own organisation behind us. Otherwise we will be used for the greater glory of the SWP and aspiring union bureaucrats. Better still for all independent workers' groups and strikers to link up as the base for a genuine rank and file movement.

Dave M.

JOE HILL MEMORIAL.

October 7th will be the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Joe Hill, the famous I.W.W. organiser. He is chiefly remembered for his political songs which were popular with working people throughout North America between the wars. The Industrial Workers of the World attempted to encourage all waged workers to organise one great revolutionary Union. They were brutally suppressed due to their massive influence.

Joe Hill was framed on a murder charge and shot by firing squad. In his last letter he said 'don't mourn, ...organise.' In his honour, we are organising a day-long commemoration. (In this we are joined with other syndicalists and libertarians).

SAT OCT 6th -- all night party, with music, beer and maybe food. Kids room. 9pm on.

At Centro Iberico, the school, 421a Harrow Rd, W9. (Westbourne Pk). £1... (50p unwaged)
SUN OCT 7th. - Speakers corner 12-4pm, speaking, heckling etc! Mass meetings again!
5-10.30 films and discussion, at Action Space, Chenies St, WC1. Bring your friends....

Unfree Market Economy, cont, pg 3:

Again, the "Financial Weekly" (10th Aug, 1979) reports that the TUC and CBI leaders will be meeting in August, to "discuss joint strategy". With the TUC and CBI (how long before we see their initials conjoined - TUC/CBI?) both having the power to influence the government and with government intervening ever more in industrial affairs it seems inevitable that the drift towards corporatism will continue.

Unemployment Rising With unemployment forecast to reach two million before 1981 and attacks on workers living standards continuing, it is obvious that the next few years will see massive industrial battles. No doubt the mindless "lefties" will take the opportunity to call for the re-election of yet another Labour government, but we cannot forget that the Tories are merely continuing where Labour left off - falling living standards, strike breaking by the army, monetarist economic policies and rising unemployment.

Irreversible Trends The whole nature of capitalist industry and even of capitalism as a whole, is undergoing fundamental changes, which Left politicians could not reverse even if they wanted to. The declining standards of living are not unconnected with the increasing capitalistic role of the state itself - in other words the financing of capitalist enterprises by taxes raised from the workers. Left parties and unions serve only the interests of corporate capital, not the interests of the workers. There will be no more wage rises under capitalism, no matter who is in power. The only way forward is to form our own autonomous workers' organisations and fight for the socialisation of industry - in other words, for the Social Revolution.

Ned Ludd.

Report:PUBLIC SERVICE HITS BACK

Public servants, that is those employed in the civil service, local government, the health service etc., are facing grave problems. The coming months or even years will be very difficult for us with the election of the Tories (not that Labour would have made any difference). Wages for those in the service are among the lowest in the country for full time workers - basic wages are often £50 per week for a 40 or 45 hour week and that's before tax

Expenditure Cuts The recent cuts in government expenditure have resulted in the loss of about 20,000 jobs already in the civil service alone and experience has shown that these cuts will affect the lower paid staff - there are not many reductions in senior public servants - instead senior civil servants received a pay rise of 25 per cent on the 1st April this year. The government is buying off the loyalty of those in "authority". The government however increased spending on Defence by £100 million and gave huge wage rises to the army and police - they know there's trouble on the way.

Winter Struggle At the same time as these cuts there have been attacks on workers' organisations - by the press, management and also the trade union leadership. The press got hysterical during last winter's round of public service strikes which ended in total disarray. Only a very minor "victory" - claims for a £60 a week minimum by council manual workers actually yielded for many an increase to about £48 a week before tax! The demands for a shorter working week were lost and the resulting bitterness in the rank and file being sold out by their Labourite leaders is still be felt.

Organisation Attacked Management have been banning sick leave and holidays during industrial action and withdrawing trade union facilities - staff at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, were told that union meetings could no longer be held on hospital premises and never during working hours. Potential militant rank and file organisations have been stamped on by the unions in favour of heavily centralised strong leadership with the resultant dismal failures and collapse of morale.

How can we get out of the rut?

Libertarian Civil and public servants, not managers, just unite at rank and file level to fight back - we must build a Libertarian organisation in the public service unions to push for co-ordinated aims and activities. We must use direct action to fight for our jobs, decent wages and shorter hours in the short term - but must also recognise that the socially useful public services must be socialised by the workers in them and run without the interference of the State and capitalism - that way we will win - no other. If you are a civil or public servant and agree with the sentiments of the above, get in contact with the: Public Service Workers Federation, Box 139k 182, Upper Street, London, N. 1.

Report: Union abolished? cont, pg 9:

There were increasing demands for me to work morning shift (where most of us are working), even though the chair was there to "deal" with problems. Eventually he also felt he should get my two hour release for union business and so I agreed to stand down for him. This seemed to be what everyone wanted, so we called an urgent meeting. Only seven out of 75 members turned up. The chair came in especially from Cheshunt and was disgusted by the turnout. He suggested we both resign, and so we did. So what happens now?

Some people may think "great", the union has been abolished?" But the breakdown of reformist union structure is only a good thing if alternatives are being explored and created. Some form of defence against authority in our place is needed. What is likely to happen is that people will try a new "leader". Back to the drawing board I suppose? Libertarian Postworkers contact: Dave, Box W, 182, Upper Street, London, N.1.

LWG meets every monday, 8pm at the Metropolitan, 95 Farringdon Rd, ECI (Farringd. tube)

Report:ENGINEERS' STOP WORK CAMPAIGN

The current weekly one day stoppages by engineering workers and their ban on all overtime is the biggest industrial action since the Tory government was returned to power. Some 17 unions are involved, and by the second week, over two million workers were involved in over 6,500 firms. Moreover, the strike is in the most decisive sector of British industry and is taking place at a time when Britain is trying to hold its own on the world export market. The object of the strikes is to establish basic national rates, £80 for a skilled worker and £60 for semi-skilled and unskilled, which is very important in calculating overtime. The engineering workers do not rely entirely on nationally negotiated wage rates, since most firms negotiate on a two tier basis, i.e., national and local.

Official Strike The strike has been called officially by the unions concerned and it will be stepped up to two day stoppages, if there is no response from the employers. Most engineering works are out solid and the pickets are for the most part token. Only in one or two places is militancy weak, i.e., the main factory of Lucas, Birmingham, saw an "inspired" demonstration of a number of women workers carrying banners saying "No to strikes" and "A ballot not dictatorship". The latter slogan is, of course, in line with the new Tory governments' line of altering trade union legislation to bring in "compulsory ballots" and to abolish the closed shop. Some 2,000 women were involved in a "round robin" not to strike. However, this "patriotic" demonstration had no serious effect on the rest of the workforce and the strike is solid. Some education needed here!

Bosses Offer The employers have offered a minimum skilled rate of £70 for a 40 hour week, a rise of 16.7 per cent; the unskilled rate offered is £50, or 11.1 per cent. The same applies to semi-skilled workers. At this stage the employers are not making any concessions, claiming industry is in a bad way, with falling production, falling exports and increased basic raw material costs. They also claim that their average rate of profit is falling and on their calculations is some 15 per cent less than a year ago.

Union Leaderships It is argued in some sectors of the left that employers are not now prepared to make concessions, since the British economy is in acute crisis and that the union leaderships will not even try and lead any wage struggles. This current situation, it should be noted, disproves this theory.

The demands of union executives may not be as high, nor as militantly organised as some of the rank and file may want, but they dare not - at least at this stage - refuse to fight at all and come to a national agreement with the employers and government. They would lose all credibility if they did. The militants need to put a firm edge on the weapons of struggle and for this we need independent rank and file organisation, not manipulated pseudo rank and file movements dominated from the outside by political groups of any kind.

AUEW Member.

Report:UNION ABOLISHED?

Six months ago, after over 4½ years at Holloway Sorting Office, frustrated by the bureaucratic control of our union branch by a single person, I stood for and became branch secretary, with another like-minded bloke becoming chairperson. Last week (August 18th) we both resigned. These last six months have been successful small self-organised guerilla action against a GPO/UPW "efficiency" deal, throughout London and elsewhere, in which our office took full part. We've also tried to open up branch facilities (room, notice board, information) to all members, spread an atmosphere of co-operation and militancy as apart from division, suspicion and apathy; all important decisions have gone before branch meetings.

Despite all this, our fellow workers have, in the main, wanted us to "lead"; make all the decisions and do all the negotiating.

(cont pg 8. col.2)

THE ENGINEERS STRIKE - A SYNDICALIST PERSPECTIVE.

The series of one day strikes and overtime ban which have ordered by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, in an attempt to press the demand for an £80. minimum wage, 35 hour week and 2 days extra holiday, and which has now been escalated to two days a week, may on face value appear a reasonable course of action for a reasonable claim, but if we look a little deeper we will find that the way this has come about is the tip of a most discreditable iceberg of bureaucratic administration. This is equally true of most other trade union organisations in Britain. These monoliths of non democratic organisation were set up long before the present day struggles between the "right" and "left", but it is plain enough that neither side has any intention of returning the power of the union to its only rightful holders, THE RANK AND FILE MEMBERSHIP.

The only argument we hear is between a "right" executive who's only intention is to retain power in their own hands and thus further their careers and fame as controllers of the unruly masses, and the "left" who dominate the branches and wish to replace the "right" as leaders of labour, "but no they say, any member can attend his branch and have a say". We Syndicalists do not accept this feeble excuse, we all know perfectly well that few ordinary workers are motivated after their days work to go to an often distant pub meeting which generally has little to do with their own concerns on the job and that is why the main attendance is by long serving branch officers and politicians who bombard them with their own infighting. SO HOW ARE OUR WISHES REPRESENTED. Even if a relevant motion from a branch is accepted without being castrated by the non-recallable district committee and then passed through the still less answerable national committee and by some freak chance the executive see fit to carry this out as instructed, which is by no means always the case, and it is ultimately accepted by the equally undemocratic unions of the C.S.E.U. WHAT DOES IT REPRESENT. The line of the non-recallable, non-accountable "Representatives" many times removed of about 1% of the membership. This

cannot possibly be democratic. We say there is only one acceptable form of organisation, that is where all workers are in an industrial union with works branches and meetings on the job where every member is able to attend with minimum inconvenience, their decisions being binding on their representatives who must be instantly recallable if they deviate from the members wishes. No executive or bureaucracy at the top, but a secretariat to distribute information and the policy of a truly representative national conference of mandated branch delegates. It is because we are denied this sort of democracy that engineering workers are asking why these strikes are being ordered without asking us what we want to do. The important question is how can we get the power of the union back into the members hands and end the bureaucracy. The answer is to join a movement dedicated to freedom and democracy; collectively expand our own knowledge, inform the less enlightened and ultimately create an alternative union structure to replace those unions which will not accept the authority of the democratically organised membership.

A D.A.M. Member

Report:

also ONLY JUST - A WORKER.....

This will be my only report to the L.S.G. on my work for a long while, because there's nothing much to say. I work in librarianship - a job (or "profession" I should say) with liberal middleclass values but without middleclass "professional" pay. My work is very badly paid (though I appreciate there are others worse off) and very busy and tiring. I do have some prospects of promotion, though my political activities won't do these any good, but this means I have to take shit from my employer, in the hope that one day I can earn an average wage. And if I don't work hard, it doesn't hurt my expense-account superior, it means extra work for the friends I work with.

What about workers' action. Well in

politically isolated, and work in a very small institution totally cut off from any sort of mass action in my own workplace. Should I join an outside T.U.C. orientated union. I have joined the L.W.G. and the Libertarian movement. Librarians have very little political and industrial muscle anyway, for obvious reasons and because it is a "profession" although there are militants obviously a lot of people are going to prefer licking boots so they can "get in on life" and when you're in a "profession" and very badly paid it's a real temptation unless you're really militant. Personally, I'm surrounded by typical liberals, people who have some beliefs in freedom and equality, but do bugger all about it. Some are less well-meaning, all are politically a dead loss.

Over a quarter of the people I work with are management of some sort or other, but such is the quality of top management where I work that even three quarters of the lower management are now seriously considering joining a trade union (there's no union activity at all at the moment). Of course it will be a reformist trade union. I tried telling them just to form their own trade union and take their own action, but of course I had no success. I might have had a little more success if the libertarians in this country weren't so divided but I doubt it. They feel that the reformist T.U.C. type unions have muscle, libertarians have no muscle. Some don't want to damage their careers, T.U.C. type unions are usually respectable (what a condemnation of the T.U.C.), careerist "professionals" can safely join the T.U.C. Type unions, and libertarians are not. Also, they just don't believe in anything libertarian, and the disorganised mess that the libertarian movement as a whole is in (I know well that separate parts of it are well organised), does nothing to encourage a belief in a political system which preaches that people are naturally sociable and don't need an over-privileged ruling class. No matter what the state of libertarianism they for the most part wouldn't help, though. I'm not sure that I agree with all this myself, but here it is.

P.D.

SOME LESSONS OF THE GARNERS STRIKE
cont' from pg. 4.

importantly publicising such ideas.

Apart from the numerous strike organisations and ones which spring up temporarily, the FORD WORKERS COMBINE is probably the best example of consistent libertarian organisation in industry, proving itself effective in both attack, defence and helping to spread ideas. Their fine example should be spread to all industries including catering. However it is virtually impossible to maintain such an organisation without it being taken over by Political Parties or absorbed into the Union structure. That is unless Ford workers and their organisation commit themselves to independent and libertarian activity and ideas, and attempt to link up with (and help create) other such industrial networks. It is also vital that they see beyond and transform the endless day to day struggles to the only realistic and worthwhile objective - the seizure and defence of all workplaces and industries by the workers themselves and the creation of councils and assemblies, federating across the country (and worldwide) to run all production.

The creation of local and industrial agitational groups throughout London to spread these alternatives must be our immediate priority. And should anyone think or say it is impossible, 'a pipe dream', we'll say that it must be done and has been done before the Spanish Labour movement for over 100 years has been predominantly libertarian and revolutionary. (Incidentally catering workers are fully organised there). In the early part of this century syndicalist workers movements looked like transforming society in Britain, Europe and the U.S.A. through Industrial Unions and Workers Councils. Now once again workers in France, Italy and Spain are discovering new forms and methods of fighting the wage system. Our turn now. Create workers groups.

REMEMBER.....The L.W.G. MEETS EVERY
MONDAY AT 8pm IN THE METROPOLITAN.
95 FARRINGTON RD. E.C.1.
All workers are welcome. No Party-
builders!

INTRODUCTION TO 'CNT - AN ASSESSMENT': THE SPANISH ECONOMY WAS A PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARY OF THE WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC BOOM (STIMULATED BY POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION) WHICH ENDED IN THE LATE SIXTIES, BUT THE SPANISH 'BOOM' WAS BASED ON THE RUTHLESS EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS UNDER THE FASCIST FRANCO REGIME, AND WHEN THE RECESSION SET IN THEY WERE PARTICULARLY HARD HIT BY THE BELT TIGHTENING, THAT BECAME NECESSARY ACROSS THE WORLD TO MAINTAIN "STABILITY" (OF CAPITALIST PROFITS). THEIR RESISTANCE WAS FULLY AS FEROCIOUS AS THE ATTACKS ON THEM - A SERIES OF STRIKE-WAVES CULMINATING IN THE MASSIVE ERUPTIONS OF LATE 1977. THE INTERNATIONAL WAVE OF RADICALISM (POST 1968) FOUND COMPARATIVELY LITTLE RESPONSE IN SPAIN - THE MAIN RESULT WAS A LOSS OF CREDIBILITY FOR THE MAIN ILLEGAL LEFT PARTIES AND UNION STRUCTURES. UNDER FASCISM LOCAL POLITICAL STRUGGLE WAS ONLY POSSIBLE FOR SMALL AUTONOMOUS GROUPS - THIS CREATED DEEPER ROOTS THAN THE OPEN AND DIFFUSE MASS MOBILISATIONS IN THE REST OF EUROPE. THE NATURAL FORM OF WORKERS ORGANISATION - OUTSIDE THE OFFICIAL FASCIST UNIONS - WAS AND IS THE WORKERS ASSEMBLY, LARGELY FREE FROM THE DEAD HAND OF COMMUNIST OR SOCIALIST CONTROL. THE REGIME DEMOCRATISED ITSELF (INCLUDING LEGALISING LEFTIST UNIONS + PARTIES IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL WORKING CLASS COMBATIVITY) AS MUCH BECAUSE OF THE THREAT OF THE ASSEMBLIES, AS FROM THE NEED TO PRESENT AN ACCEPTABLE FACE TO THE E.E.C. AS OPEN POLITICAL ACTIVITY BECAME EASIER, ONE OF THE WORKING CLASS ORGANISATIONS TO APPEAR IN RESPONSE WAS THE C.N.T. PRIOR TO THE REVOLUTION AND WAR (1936-8) WHICH ENDED WITH FRANCO IN POWER, THE C.N.T WAS THE LARGEST REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS ORGANISATION (2,000,000 MEMBERS). IT WAS ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST - MADE UP OF REGIONALLY FEDERATED SYNDICATES AND BASED ON DIRECT ACTION, REVOLUTIONARY SELF-MANAGEMENT AND ANTI-PARLIAMENTARIANISM. THE BACKBONE OF THE INITIAL RESISTANCE TO FASCISM + OF THE COLLECTIVISATIONS IN 1936, THE CNT SURVIVED IN SPIRIT IN THE ARMED RESISTANCE WITHIN SPAIN UNTIL THE EARLY SIXTIES. It has been reconstituted by the federation of many local anarchist and libertarian groups across

(CONTINUED AT BOTTOM OF NEXT PAGE)

CNT - AN ASSESSMENT

The CNT today is not a monolithic organisation. On the contrary an intense debate is going on which is leading up to a new CNT Congress, to be held in October. Besides the problems of relationships between very different generations of militants (those from the pre-war CNT, and the majority of the new CNT (90% of whom are under 30), there are problems of relationships between exiles and the CNT in Spain itself.

Since the legalisation of the CNT, there have been bitter polemics over the political adherence of CNT members; over the trade union elections; over collective contracts, and specific tendencies have arisen with different perspectives on working in the CNT.

Double membership?

Could members of political parties and religious groups belong and represent the CNT? The national Plenum of autumn 1977 agreed that such people could hold no responsible positions in the CNT. This decision fell on militants of the Libertarian Communist Movement (MCL); the syndicalists and traditionalists rejected the MCL as 'Marxists', although it was not applied against the re nascent Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI).

Union elections - unions and assemblies

At the same Plenum in 1977, the decision was taken to boycott the approaching union elections. The big unions altogether represented only 20% of the workers, and the CNT decided to reinforce the existing assemblies in order to promote working class autonomy. The Valencian regional committee however followed up this plenum

by denouncing this agreement as 'councillist' and 'marxist'. At Fords near Valencia, certain CNT members had been elected by the workers assembly to works committees in the union elections. The Local Federation (50 members) decided to expel the Ford Works Union section (200 members) - for violating the decisions of the plenum (although the Ford unionists were carrying out the wishes of the assembly which wanted representation in the committee). Meanwhile the Valencian CNT maintained its campaign against assemblies

Since then the 'councillists' have suffered verbal (sometimes physical) attacks and expulsions. A purist syndicalist position emerged arguing that the CNT should take part in union negotiations like the other bigger unions - this position was linked to the position that inter-union activity was important rather than assembly work. On the other hand some of the assembleists began

to advocate that the CNT should become a more 'global' organisation -- fighting in *all* areas of struggle. These differences can be summed up as:

* On the level of *content*: global alternative against trade union alternative or in other words - social struggle against economic struggle.

* On the *strategic and tactical* level: assembleism against syndicalism, or perhaps workers autonomy vs. union leadership.

* On the *organisational* level: integral/global organisation vs. the syndicalist center.

Collective contracts

Since the summer of 1978 a debate on pacts and contracts has gone on. The building union in Barcelona denounced the contracts as an instrument invented by the bourgeoisie to integrate the working class into the system by negotiating social peace for the length of the agreements. They also denounced the divisions imposed by trade and plant destroying any common platform of demands. A second tendency has argued that the time when the contracts are made is one of large scale mobilisation in which workers defend their interests. To refuse to take part in the negotiations is not only to abandon the workers when they most need support, but is also in the short term accepting marginalisation in relation to the workers struggle. A third intermediary tendency has also appeared. They recognise the building syndicate's criticisms and that the pacts run against the basic CNT principle of direct action. But for them the problem today is the existence of the Moncloa pact (a social contract) and the limitations on wage rises that flow therefrom. It is crucial to break these agreements and if the workers fight for higher wage rises then the pacts can become an opportunity to *break* with capital. Thus contracts become an instrument of rupture.

Apart from the Barcelonan building syndicate no positions have been taken by other unions — so the debate continues (although in fact they take part in negotiations and mobilisations).

TENDENCIES & ORGANISATION

In order to attempt to catalogue these tendencies it seems useful to look at three different levels of organisation.

In examining the various tendencies that exist within the CNT it is necessary to examine their attitude to three main questions. First, what attitude should one take to the assemblies in the factories? Second, what importance should one place on the CNT itself, what should be its role? Third, to what extent should the CNT allow political tendencies to operate within it and how much importance should one attach to them? In considering the various tendencies and their attitudes to these questions, it should be born in mind that any such analysis is necessarily schematic, and that it would be difficult to pigeon-hole many members of the CNT so neatly.

There are 8 main tendencies:

Pure of revolutionary syndicalists. Press organ: the Valencian Fragua Social, c/o Gabriel Marti, Apartado de Correos 1.337, Valencia. They do not recognise the workers assemblies, denouncing them as 'councillist' and a camouflage for 'Marxist' activity, and are bitterly opposed to political groupings active within the CNT. They place all their faith in the CNT leadership and believe that the CNT by itself can produce the revolution.

The FAI, some non-FAI anarchists, and the 'historical anarcho-syndicalists'. Press: Tierra y Libertad, illegal, so no fixed address. They follow roughly the same line in that they oppose 'councillism' and support the CNT leadership. However, they see a role for the FAI in struggles outside the union, in the politics of culture, anti-militarism, ecology, etc.

Critical anarcho-syndicalists and some libertarian communists. Press: Bicicleta, c/o Nave no 12, 20 Valencia 2. They support self-organisation by workers in assemblies and their unity in action at the base. They see the CNT as a class organisation, but don't see it as 'global' organisation as this would entail a centralisation of the libertarian movement of which the CNT is only a part. They are opposed to political groupings within the CNT, as they fear that these would turn into Leninist parties using the union as a 'transmission belt' within the working class.

The anarcho-communist group Askatasuna, some anarchists and libertarian communists. Press: Askatasuna, Apartado de Correos 1.628, Bilbao. They believe in the importance of the assemblies. They believe that the CNT can go beyond a purely union role, can unite all libertarian tendencies and fight in all areas of social struggle. They see scope for political organisations within the CNT, adding to its development of theory.

Other libertarian communists. Press: Palante, Apartado de Correos 42.025, Madrid. Very similar to Askatasuna, but are opposed to

political tendencies in the CNT, following the line that they can only lead to Leninism.

Critical and non-orthodox anarchists. No press. Similar ideas to the followers of Askatasuna and Palante, but believe that while tendencies should produce revues and debate theory within CNT, they should not go beyond this and organise.

Finally, there are two groups outside the CNT, but which are sympathetic and take part in debates with Bicicleta and Palante:—

Libertarian and autonomous Marxists. Press: Emancipacion, c/o Guipouzcoa No 11, 1 Oizqda, Madrid 20. They support the assemblies, and they believe that the CNT, the Organisation of Workers Autonomy and a number of other groups should fuse to form one political union organisation, allowing tendencies.

Spontaneist libertarians. They believe only in the importance of the workers assemblies, there is no need to organise at any other level.

Is the CNT in crisis? It is obvious that all the political and union organisations are going through some sort of crisis, in part as a reaction to the euphoria of 1976/7. The CNT's is perhaps more acute and fundamental, revealing greater differences of opinion. Only the CNT has held no congress since the death of Franco. The congress in October will be the first for 43 years.

This article is a translation and adaptation by T.Z. of an article in Tout le Pouvoir Aux Travailleurs, paper of our French sister-organisation, the Union of des Travailleurs Communistes Libertaires.

(INTRO. CONTINUED) SPAIN. BY MARCH 1977 though technically illegal it WAS CAPABLE OF MOBILISING A RALLY OF 3,000 NEAR MADRID. BY MAY 1977 ITS MEMBERSHIP WAS 40,000 - today it is 300,000. NO LONGER THE ONLY REVOLUTIONARY UNION (THERE ARE ALSO THE MADIST SYNDICATES) ITS CAPABLE OF MOBILISING GREATER NUMBERS ON THE STREET AND THE LEVEL OF ITS INVOLVEMENT IN STRUGGLES IS HIGHER. OF NECESSITY IT WORKS WITH OTHER REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATIONS + MILITANTS THROUGH A 'UNITED FRONT ON THE JOB' UNDER THE COMMON SLOGAN OF WORKERS ASSEMBLIES. IT THUS REFUSES TO TAKE PART IN THE 'LEGITIMATE' LEFT UNIONS INCORPORATION INTO THE TARTED UP "STATE DEMOCRACY". THIS ACTIVITY HAS BROUGHT INTO QUESTION ITS 'UNIONISM' - THE NATURE OF THE C.N.T AS A REVOLUTIONARY UNION. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ITS PAST AND PRESENT, THE TENDENCY TO PURE (ANARCHO)-SYNDICALISM AGAINST THE NEEDS OF LOCAL SOLIDARITY AND REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY HAVE LED TO THE INTENSE DEBATE WHICH THIS ARTICLE SHOWS. THE LESSONS OF THIS DEBATE - FORGED IN THE ACTUAL CLASS MOVEMENTS AND STRUGGLES IN SPAIN - WILL BE VITAL ONES FOR THE AUTONOMOUS WORKERS MOVEMENT WORLDWIDE.

THIS ARTICLE IS REPRODUCED FROM 'LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST' THE JOURNAL OF THE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST GROUP - A SMALL LIBERTARIAN ORGANISATION ALIGNED WITH THE TROTSKYITE DOMINATED 'SOCIALIST UNITY' GROUPING. ITS THE clearest STATEMENT IN ENGLISH OF THE DEBATES WITHIN THE C.N.T, BUT A CERTAIN BIAS SHOULD BE NOTED IN ITS TREATMENT OF THE RULES CONCERNING MEMBERSHIP OF POLITICAL GROUPS - IDEOLOGY APART, THESE ARE NECESSARY TO PREVENT THE REGULAR ATTEMPTS AT 'ENTRISM' BY TROTSKYITE AND OTHER SECTS.

DES TRIBUTIVE.