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BULLETIN OF THE NETWORK
"ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT"

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT ON-GOING DISCUSSIONS IN ULTRA-LEFT MILIEUS

DEBATE ON 'POST-FORDISM' AND NEW METHODS OF PRODUCTION

THE SITUATION IN SPAIN

INDIA:
THE STRIKE OF THE CENTURY
ACTIONS OF FACTORY WORKERS IN FARIDABAD

USA:
SOUP KITCHENS: A GROWTH INDUSTRY
US LABOUR IN THE 80'S
SEEDS OF A LABOUR RESURGENCY
DETROIT NEWSPAPER WORKERS STRIKE

ECHANGES

Bulletin of the network *Echanges et Mouvement.*

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CONTENTS:

This issue of *Echanges*
is, as has often been the case for a while time now, appearing very much delayed. There are a number of reasons for this, personal rather than political, having to do with the life, work and problems of persons trying to put the English edition of the bulletin together. In addition comes the participation in other parts of the 'work' of the network *Echanges et Mouvement*, which includes more than producing the English bulletin: discussions, correspondence, collection of material, etc. The practical work of correspondence and putting out the English and French editions of *Echanges* and the French bulletin *Dans le monde une classe en lutte* (a small bulletin with brief information about class struggles all over the world) is done by a very limited number of people. For the English edition we can 'apologise' for this situation and try to improve, but we can't do more than beyond our possibilities.

Since the previous issue of *Echanges* the subscribers have however received some publications: We have a close collaboration with the US bulletin *Collective Action Notes* and some issues of this bulletin has been sent to the subscribers. The book *Third Camp Internationalists in France during the Second World War* has also been sent to the subscribers.

A main problem for us is the translation into English of material originally written for *Echanges* in French, which is a very timeconsuming task for the comrades doing it - none of them has English as their native language. Much material is translated and awaits publication, but there is presently a big backlog of important material never translated, especially about class struggle in the UK. **Anybody who could help to produce complete or draft translations of smaller or longer material is very welcome to contact us.** *Echanges* has produced a big pamphlet in about the strike movement in France November/ December '95, published in French and Japanese, but not (yet) in English. A plan we hope to realise is to produce two issues of the English edition devoted to class struggles in France: the first with material up to the above mentioned strikes and another more or less the translation of the pamphlet.

Alltogether there's a lot of material (produced by us or received from contacts and correspondents) more or less finished awaiting publication and we'll do what we can to get it out.

***Echanges* has been published for around 10 years now with more or less the same consistent ideas and concerns but very modest about its function and 'importance, differently from many other publications and groups existing only for a short period before disappearing or jumping to something else, and we will probably still continue for quite a while. To achieve this any help from those reading the bulletin is of course appreciated: maintaining subscriptions, finding new interested persons or outlets for sale and distribution of bulletins and pamphlets, contributions in form of articles, sending of material and letters, translations, material and economic support, etc.**

'NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT'

This article was written quite a while ago and published in a circular letter distributed by Norwegian comrades using the name Motiva Forlag. We have in previous issues used material from this circular letter about the ex-USSR and the Nordic countries.

When US president Bush in 1992 made public the decision to withdraw a large part of the US nuclear arsenal, the other nuclear powers followed up saying they viewed this as a positive development they most likely would follow. State leaders, mass media and other 'important' voices of capitalism hailed this as an important step towards a peaceful world. Shortly after, president Gorbachev followed this up by suggesting even larger reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the USSR. Later, an agreement was made banning nuclear weapons from the Korean penisula.

In the process of breaking up the USSR, the question of control of the nuclear weapons has been a central one. Especially the US and NATO have given this question great importance. They are also going so far as to promise active help and support in destroying nuclear weapons. But it is clear that the process of dissolution of the USSR makes things unstable and difficult to control.

In recent years there has been much talking of peace and disarmament, especially here in Europe, the major centre of conflict between East and West. And not only talk; some agreements of disarmament have been concluded. But this new round of disarmament is particular in the sense that a whole class of weapons, tactical or short range nuclear weapons, shall be removed altogether.

The capitalist economy is in a deep and long lasting crisis. It is a general crisis of the system which none of its parts escape. But this does not mean that all parts of the economy are evenly affected. The weaker capitals are harder hit than the stronger ones. Also on the level of national capitals the weaker ones are harder hit than the stronger ones. Little by little capitalism is collapsing. The first to go because they could no longer compete were the so called third world - the weakest of the weak of national capitals. Years ago those economies collapsed. Now, the state capitalist block is in the process of collapse. The events in Eastern Europe can only be understood as the results of the collapse of the economy. In all these collapsing economies huge ammounts of capital have been destroyed, the workers' wages have been lowered to a joke. (For example in Russia *''The average worker earns 350 Rubles a month, equivalent to about £ 1.60 at the floating exchange rate''* - according to 'The Guardian Weekly' no.2/92); but still the crisis has not been overcome.

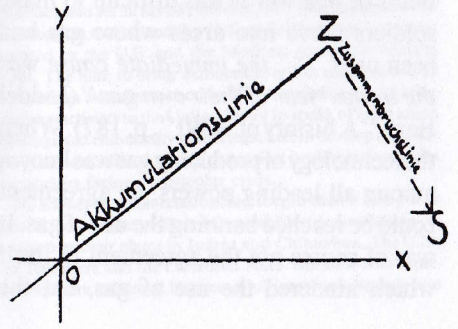
''As we have said before, the resumption of profitable operations depend on the lowering of the organic composition of capital, or the increase, by other means, of the surplus value. The devaluation of capital lowers the organic composition. In practice, this means the ruin of many individual capitalists; from the point of view of total capital, from the point of view of the system, it means rejuvenation. The devaluation of capital is a continous process, an expression of increased productivity of labor, but in the crisis it progresses violently. ... That today this effect is gone merely proves that accumulation has reached a point where devaluation ceases to be an effective element in overcoming the crisis. There are not enough bankruptcies, or the devaluation accomplished is insufficient to lower the organic conposition of capital enough, to make continued profitable accumulation again possible.'' (P. Mattick: ''The permanent crisis'', in 'International Council Correspondence' Nov. 1934)

''Only from our theoretical standpoint can we understand the real function of the war destructions within the capitalist mechanism ... are the destructions and devaluations of war moreover a means to weaken the threatening collapse and provide the accumulation of capital with fresh air...'' (Henryk Grossmann: ''Das Akkumulations- und Zusammenbruchgesetz des kapitalistischen Systems'', p.369)

Capitalist accumulation has reached a stage where its crises can only be overcome through a massive destruction of capital (fixed and variable) by non-economical means, i.e. general or world wars. For total capital war is no means of conquering territories, markets or influence. This might be a goal for individual capitalist states, but are of no importance for the war as a stage in the capitalist cyclus of accumulation. For total capital war only has a meaning as the means of overcoming the general crisis of its economy. The destructions through war is the only solution to the crisis of over-accumulation, and the only way to clear the grounds for a new period of prosperity.

The capitalist system has no wish to destroy itself. The real laws of capitalist accumulation are hidden for the capitalists themselves, but the logic of the system makes individual capitalists to act in accordance with the interests of the system in acting as individual capitalists. Having to pursue a development towards war, but on the other side having no intention of self-destruction, war must be possible while minimizing the risk of an escalation running out of control. In our times, the means of mass destruction are widespread, and once unleashed their use might be out of all control. Pushing the all-out nuclear button is contrary to the logic and needs of the system; thus strategic nuclear weapons are not necessarily a danger for capital. All sorts of tactial nuclear weapons are however a different matter. Thousands of nuclear

Figur I



war heads, bombs, mines, torpedoes... are spread out over large areas of the world, and they are under the command of low-level officers. They are much more difficult to control, perhaps totally out of control in a war. If they are used however, the escalation might be impossible to stop. Another aspect of these tactical nuclear charges is that 'wrong people' might get them in their possession - and use them.

The hurry of the 'world leaders' in removing these nuclear weapons is perhaps the best indicator to the basic need of the system to make a war, and how urgent this war is needed. The removal of the weapons is to start immediately and be carried through in a very short time. I read this as a strong message from president Bush and Gorbachev - or rather the capitalist system whose mouthpieces they are - how strong the system's desire is to impose its crisis solution and the sooner the better.

Capitalism is not only an economical system, it is also a social system and it has in addition to the economical laws of capital also a social and historical dimension. Thus the action of its economical laws are modified - and the system might end up doing things not stricktly within its logical framework. Which is to say that a nuclear war is not entirely impossible, even if it is contrary to the needs and logic of total capital.

There has been a fear of nuclear weapons among many people since they were developed. This fear is of course not totally unjustified, but the history of world wars have shown that even the most barbaric weapons are under some sort of control. The development of industry has also led to development of means of destruction of increasing power. Some of these have correctly been regarded as qualitatively different from 'ordinary' weapons, some have incorrectly been regarded as such. After the first world war, in which gas was used in battle, the bourgeoisie seems to have learned some lessons. On the battle fields of that war it was difficult to make soldiers move into areas where gas had been used; *''... the immediate cause was the troops' fear of their own gas''* (Liddel Hart: ''A history of WWI'', p. 187). When the technology of producing gas was known among all leading powers, an agreement could be reached banning the use of gas. It was of course not the agreement in itself which hindered the use of gas, but the

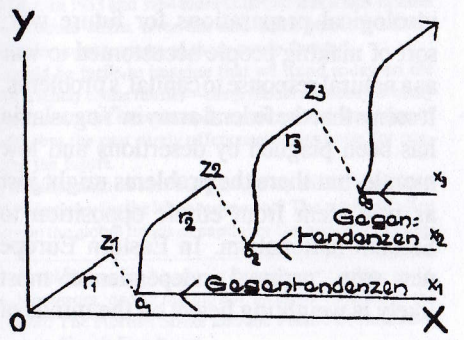
"Generals will remove the stocks of nuclear weapons in the world

Scepticism over the nuclear politics is spreading in high military circles. Today 60 generals and admirals from the USA, Russia and other countries publishes a manifesto for speedy disarmament. One of the most prominent is general George Lee Butler. He is former commander of strategic air force, an assignment usually given to the hawks among US military leaders. One of Butler's predecessors was general Curtis E. LeMay, the model for Jack D. Ripper in the movie "Dr. Strangelove". Butler has after 37 years in uniform reached the conclusion that US nuclear policy is fundamentally irrational and dangerous. He proposes a speedy destruction of all nuclear weapons as the only way to avoid a terrible nuclear accident and prevent the weapons to fall into the hands of terrorists" (Aftenposten 05.12.96)

certain response from the enemy. Thus gas has since that only been used on special occations - usually against 'interior' groups, or against inferior enemies where retaliation would not be feared. During the second world war bacteriological weapons were developed, though only rudimentary, but not used. They were not used because the enemy would be able to retaliate, and because they would be very difficult to deliver and control. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is to a certain extent a ''special'' case, because Japan was totally exhausted and unable to retaliate in any way, because the US was alone in possessing such weapons, and as a message to the Soviet Union, the new enemy. Only when the monopoly of the USA was broken did the possibility of retaliation come to the forefront.

When this withdrawal of tactical nuclear charges is finished, a war can be waged while greatly reducing the risk of it becomming a nuclear war. Anything fired in the war theatres are supposed to be guaranteed non-nuclear. For instance USA has decided to withdraw its nuclear charges from all ships with the exception of strategic submarines. In a war these submarines will have no useful role, except as a deterrent to other powers using nuclear weapons. The rest of the US navy however, will have a big role to play in any war the US is involved in.

Figur II



In a rapidly changing world the alliances of a future war is not settled. The division of the world in two major blocks of strong alliances has been broken up. The block of the USSR has dissolved; the US block has its strong ties weakened. If the war is to fulfill its function in the capitalist accumulation process, it will have to affect the advanced centres of capital. For capital it is of no importance whom fights whom, or who wins or looses. The 'loosers' of the last war are among the winners of the resulting new period of capital accumulation. One of the victors of that war is disintegrating under the pressure of the crisis.

Wars must however have some 'justification' or 'reason' in order to gather popular support for it. Unpopular wars can be fought of course, but not very effectively. The Vietnam war or the war in Afganistan shows the difficulties in fighting unpopular wars. Thus capitalism must have some justification for its wars. Nationalism is perhaps the strongest and most effective ideological basis for capitalism and its wars. Even the second world war which was fought under very strong ideological banners, saw its greatest strenght in nationalism. In prewar times nationalism is thus growing, like we can see today. For example in Eastern Europe we see nationalism growing where there were

earlier contempt towards the ruling class and it's state.

The next war is a certain matter if capitalism is to continue to exist. And it is a certain matter if capitalism is allowed to continue to exist. Thus the war is only to avoid through the revolutionary destruction of capitalism. But capitalism's drive towards war is unchecked until capitalism itself is wiped out. The only force to cleanse the earth of this system is the proletariat, but so far the proletariat is far from beeing able to fulfill this task. The working class has so far not been able to develop itself into a revolutionary force. The capitalist collapse has so far not developed a workers struggle able to develop the self-consciousness of the working class. Neither in the collapsed capitalist states nor in the relatively healthy ones have the working class made major developments. The pressure of capitalism in all spheres of life is strong, and perhaps growing. Collapsing capitalist states have led to a growing nationalism, local wars, a splitting up of the workers along non-class lines. The local wars of capitalism have not led to a working class response. The economical crisis has not led to a proletarian response. Workers struggles does exist, but are a far cry from the development needed. It is also a question if the struggles up until now have been waged in a manner making them able to develop a proletarian class consciousness. Whichever way we look at it, the working class is at present not in a position to overthrow capitalism and thus stop the next war.

Workers face a war as individuals. If war breaks out, the working class is constituted of individuals unable to act as anything but individuals. The state will call up individuals for service, and at the same time the forces of repression will crush any individual response against the state. Historical experience is clear on this. To believe that war can be stopped by massive struggle when it is about to start or has just started is an illusion. To believe that a revolution can grow out of a war is also most likely an illusion. Popular or workers struggles can grow out of a war, but it is not very likely that they can grow to revolutionary proportions.

In recent times capitalism is preparing 'the people' ideologically for war. First the massive military buildup in the Gulf region, and when that could be done without serious popular protest, the Gulf war could be unleashed. This war showed that given a 'righteous cause' a large war could successfully be conducted. The pressure of the involved states was very strong, and at least in the US the partially calling up of reservists must be seen as a test to the prepardeness of the US population to follow the state's call for war.

There is a development in recent times where military response will be used to solve 'political' problems. This is also an ideological preparations for future war; sort of making people accustomed to war as a natural response to capital's problems. It seems that the federal army in Yugoslavia has been plagued by desertions and low morale, but there the problems might just as well stem from ethnic opposition to Serbian nationalism. In Eastern Europe new won 'national independence' most likely is weighting heavy on the minds of

the workers and strenghtening the possibility of the people following the calls of their 'independent' states.

The lessons of the last general crisis of capitalism - in the 20's and 30's - is very clear. Only a war can create the conditions necessary to give capitalism a new period of accumulation and prosperity. And the present crisis has reached a stage where such a war is becoming urgent.

Harry Fyhr

HENRYK GROSSMANN: 'THE LAW OF ACCUMULATION AND BREAKDOWN OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM. BEING ALSO A THEORY OF CRISIS'

The article ''Nuclear disarmament'' quotes both Henryk Grossmann's study from 1929 - *Das Akkumulations- und zusammenbruchgesetz des kapitalistischen Systems (Zugleich eine Krisentheorie)* as well as an article by a writer and activist influenced by it, Paul Mattick. Grossmann's study has only been published in its original German version and a Japanese version from 1930 and is therefore unavailable to most people. The German version was reprinted by Verlag Neue Kritik in 1970 and copies are still available through many secondhand book dealers. An abbreviated, but still lenghty English translation (more than 200 pages) has now been published (1). As the foreword to this latter editioin points out, ''this study of the capitalist collapse was published on the eve of the Wall Street crash that preceeded the great world depression of the 1930s'' and ''provided an impressive theoretical demonstration of Marx's position, through his presentation of the tendencies towards capitalist collapse''.

Grossmann's theory was the subject of debate in many circles, including among the council communists in the 30s. It was defended by Paul Mattick and his Group of Council Communists in the US, whereas others like Anton Pannekoek among other objections accused it of beeing mechanistic, leaving out the importance of class struggle. The introduction to the English edition deals with this question, quoting Grosssmann clarifying his position ''against those who alledged that his book contained a theory of the 'automatic breakdown' of capitalism independent of the intervention of class struggle''. Paul Mattick upheld Grossmann's elaboration of Marx in numerous works from the 30s and onwards, most notably in his book ''Marx and Keynes'' which is available in English, French and many other languages.

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(1) Pluto Press, London 1992. ISBN: 0-7453-0458-3 (hardcover), 0-7453-0459-1 (paperback). Price in bookshops for paperback version around £13.

Norwegian button:

"Down with the rate of profit!"

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT ON-GOING DISCUSSIONS IN ULTRA-LEFT MILIEUS

Discussions which have taken place in various milieus of the 'ultra left', be it about trade unionism, the 'revolutionary project', 'post-fordism'..., proceed from a basic common approach. Be they openly marxist or libertarian, or trying to practice a difficult ecumenicalism, if they express an reformism, alternative or categorical rejection (in relation to the unions to reform them from inside, support/create alternative unions or oppose/ reject them), the people involved in these questions have - beyond their differences - more or less the same prospect: to find a basis for some kind of militant activity. (1)

This common militant preoccupation could be summed up as: ''How to find an action, a way of intervention so that one's own revolt can join the revolt of others in order to change the world ?'' On one hand the deep crisis of the capitalist system (basically the impossibility to stop the fall of the rate of profit and to alleviate its consequences) destroys the previous ideological blankets and the pretended security of the periods of relative prosperity: the day to day life now reveals the actual nature of society and how it works. On the other hand, the fading of this ideological varnish and the fact that the structures of control have become powerless, have made obsolete most of the topics which till recently could give a meaning, a content to this 'intervention'.

In this search for the revolt of the 'others' and for struggles (as a reservoir of 'revolutionary topics' and eventually of militants) in which individuals or 'revolutionary' groups could 'work', most of the discussions make similar statements:

* The economic structures have evolved towards a new world division of labour: In the western contries, the first to have been industrialised, a lot of jobs have been delocated to remote countries. In these new quickly developing industrialised locations, the survival conditions are closer to the conditions of 19th century capitalism. In the old industrialised countries there only remains high technique production, services, management and a high rate of unemployment.

* The rapid evolution of the techniques of production (parallel to and often taken for the new division of labour) which reduces the importance of the productive sector and consequently furthers the development of the non-productive sectors (though these latter sectors are also presently affected by the technical evolution and the crisis).

*The consequent evolution of new methods of work organisation with highly automatised processes and an individualisation of the workers in a new kind of alienation centered on the topics of 'participation' and 'cooperation'.

* An apparent reduction of struggles, according to the official statistics on the number of strikes and of working hours 'lost' due to strikes.

* The weakening of the unions, which see their membership reduced. A growing class collaboration at every level of the economic structures would be the consequence and the cause of this constant shrinking.

However, this latter point in reality appears more as the transformation of the function of the unions in the new methods of work organisation and of the new world distribution of production. This evolution of the unions shows more and more clearly that any attempt to reform the unions from inside remains an illusion. The evident consequence of this evolution has been, especially for the past ten years, the expulsion of militants or groups who had joined with the belief they could install more rank and file democracy or act in a 'revolutionary' way (these evictions being only apparently in contradiction with the weakness of the unions). As many of those evicted still had some illusions about trade unionism, they tried to maintain the rank and file organisations of a concrete struggle or to transform these into or create new permanent structures with a new label to make them distinct from the official unions, often using the general term of 'alternative unions'. However, they ignore the fact that historically quite a lot of parallel unions existed in the past on such a basis, often with different names (independent, unitary, renovated, autonomous, of class struggle, etc...), but always ending up like the official unions.

Groups or parties claiming, in writing, word or actions, to be 'revolutionary' or to work for a new society (i.e. wanting through various reformist, parliamentary or violent means to remove or to destroy capitalism and/or its instruments of domination), have crumbled just like the unions. This has opened some fields of action in areas which have become important only as a consequence of the world domination of capital, but which through an illogical inversion are made into substitutes for the system that's causing and including them: ecology, third worldism, antiracism, feminism, marginalism of the 'autonomists', etc... 'Workerism' even in its recent form of 'operaism', looking desperately for a 'revolutionary proletariat' amongst the emigrants, or in other ways trying to find a layer/section of the worker class being especially more revolutionary,

exploited or suitable for intervention towards, has lost most of its supporters. Some try to use their militancy in only one specific sector, others try to work in various sectors which they try to put together in the same bag: often the previous general political aim is replaced by a kind of strategy working in various directions which becomes a substitute of a real 'revolutionary project', even of any kind of real global coherent thinking. Instead, attempts are made to present these 'new organisations', either unionist or political, and activities as answering to some 'new situation' as a consequence of the capitalist evolution and to construct an ideology laying a new basis for a militant activity for todays 'revolutionaries' looking for a post on which to hang their flags.

This new set of thinking often develops an eurocentrist tendency and some narrow views when modern capitalism is quickly expanding all over the world, mainly in the 'backwards' zones which still cover 2/3 of the world population in whole continents like Africa and Asia.
This globalisation and transformation of capital still permits individual capitalists to exploit the enormous differences in the exploitation of labour between the various countries and to suvive in a world of fierce competition. But because of these differences and of the consequent huge accumulation of capital, the rate of profit still continues to fall: the destabilising effect of this situation can be seen in the rush of speculative capital, in the exacerebation of capitalist competition, in the developing crisis itself.

Present ideological activity in western capitalism converges to pretend that the production system is the scene of fundamental transformations, with theories about the 'end' of the proletariat, of social classes and of class struggle, the end of History, etc. All that is not coming by chance, but corresponds to a need of the new techniques of production to work efficiently by participation and cooperation of those involved in these new production processes, which often no longer are called 'workers', 'employees' or 'wage earners'... but 'collaborators', 'cooperators', etc:

"*For 20 years sociologists, philosophers and anthropologists looking for fame have every day foreseen new revolutions which never occured. All this happens as if these 'researchers' projected their wishes and their optimum solutions on the society and on the factory. A small transformation is interpreted as the break with a pretended out of date system... One has too quickly... confused the crisis of capital accumulation and the emergence of new productive structures... This crisis brought about a certain financial restructuring in the economic activities in general and an readjustment of the relationship employers-workers: for a time the positions of capital have become stronger in relation to labour...* [Note by Echanges: This pressure on the individual workers corresponds to a greater fragility of capital at the general level of the vital need to extract an always larger part of surplus value, exactly as the rise of profit of individual capitalists corresponds to the impossibility to stop the fall of the rate of profit]. *It is in the light of this that we have to see the social changes and to consider the reenforcement of capitalist domination to analyse these theories about 'the end of fordism', to understand both the innovations and the continuity... One has too often a tendency to take the details for the most essential thing of the actual movement...*". (Quotation from J.P. Durand: 'La realite fordienne du post fordisme' - Contradictions no. 69-70).

Following this new dominant capitalist ideology, a parallel ideology try to find in the mysteries of 'post fordism' the causes of their dispair as militants and the terrain for a new-born activity. In the past, in a society dominated by the ideology of the value of labour as intrument for liberation, the revolutionary ideologies of 'communism by decree' glorified labour as the main ingredient for the 'building of a socialism'. The present 'revolutionary' ideologies walk in the footsteps of bourgeois ideology by promoting such ideas as the disappearance of the kind of worker which formerly was the symbol of emancipation (with labour as the main agent for liberation); they discuss what could be in such a situation the activity of a 'revolutionary' group or militant, a very hard task indeed in a period where we can see the collapse of all the previous beliefs in the efficiency or even the possibility of any kind of reformism (social democracy) or of a 'communist society ' built after the 'revolutionary conquest' or the destruction of the bourgeois state.

Theories are also constructed which see the 'end of fordism' as a total transformation of capitalism and as the birth of a new system in which capitalism will achieve a total command over labour, wiping out not only the reformist or revolutionary organisations, the official or alternative unions, and reducing the workers to some kind of easily manipulated zombies and the class struggle to a programmed management of survival. The only way out of this *cul de sac* where old ideologies are located, is not, according to these new theories, a fundamental analysis of what their previous relationship to the working class was, but only the definition of a new aim for this relationship. Again, the 'conscious' activity of the militant is at

From metro station in Oslo, Norway:

Long live love, solidarity, socialism

the center of a new theoretical system where the 'imaginary' has to replace the hurricane which would have wiped off all kinds of prospects for a future among all 'active' people (and also the non-active ones): for them and for everybody only the 'individual' revolt remains. These theories are spreading precisely when capitalism is invading not only all possible locations in the world, but also the slightest part of human activity. They neglect as out of date the essential points in any analysis of capitalism (the fundamental features of which 'modernism' has not at all eliminated but on the contrary reinforced), of the class struggle (whose fundamental basis 'modernism' has not at all removed, but only changed some superficial features of), and of the critical analysis which is more than ever needed of a jacobinist revolution concept completely separated from its economico-social context.

The history of capitalism and of class struggle did not start in I917 with the Russian revolution, which with the present perspective appears more like another episode in the geographical expansion of

Transport of ideology by a militant

capital. Leninism and its various children have not distorted in a reactionary way class struggle for decades. They were only - in various forms - different versions of the idea that socialism or communism could be implemented by decrees from a superior authority (the parliament for the reformists, the revolutionary party for others, with the numerous varieties of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', of the conquest or the destruction of the state through a direct attack, etc): this authority would settle the golden rules of a new society. Such a concept was widespread around the first world war and largely shared by reformists and 'revolutionaries' (marxists and anarchists): most of them thought that it will be enough to 'abolish', to conquer and to put something else instead. The fact that such a concept was accepted by a large part of exploited workers for almost one century was not at all by accident, the action of 'bad' leaders or of traitors, or the consequence of propaganda. It corresponded not only with the global ideology of a system pretending to work for 'progress', but also and above all to the economico-social reality of a hierarchised society in which everybody could think it was sufficient to change the top people to transform it into a human society. In a world where the techniques took a larger and larger room, most of the proletariat could think it was completely unable to manage a complex economy and so consider that it had to rely not on the ones who owned but on the ones who knew. It is this last concept which is presently swept away by History, not because of the collapse of the last of Lenin's children but because of the extent of the technical progress used by capital and of the general extension of capital in any world location and in every aspect of social life. It's no longer regimes which needs to be overthrown or leaders which one must change. Even the revolt often has no other meaning that its powerlessness; the revolution has to come from the very inside of the capitalist society and has to be the work of everybody. The 'revolutionary' critique has at first to get rid of all the rags of the past, out of date ideologies - an important concern for all of us irrespective of the 'political school' where we were nurtured.

Preoccupied, not to say obsessed, by the organisation of the big battalions of the Revolution, the whole 'revolutionary' movement has practically ignored those features of the class struggle which weren't the open, direct fights of a certain size allowing some hope that they would expand into a general movement. It also neglected the totality of the various forms of the class struggle (often despising most of them because they were not expressing, according to them, a 'class consciousness', something we also can find today among the apostles of post-fordism). They haven't only ignored the facts themselves, but also the fact that - and the ways in which - the struggle moves from one form to another, for example when the pressure is too strong to allow a previous form (for instance a strike) to exist openly. All the theories about the refusal of work has been pushed aside behind a pretended workers submission to the capitalist imperatives linked to the threat of unemployment. Everything is discussed as if the 10-15% of

unemployed - temporarily or permanently - outside the field of exploitation had not in front of them 85-90% of the workers who are still exploited and still struggling according to their possibilities. The struggles can be less and less visible so a systematical campaign of disinformation can pretend they don't exist any longer, which gives some credit to the thesis about the disappearance of the proletariat, of class struggle and the emergence of a new individualised subject, participating and cooperating in a new concept of labour.

In a study published by the London School of Economics, Simon Milner (quoted by Financial Times 19/5/93) wipe away - with quite a lot of figures - the idea of the disappearance of the struggles opening a new era in the relations of production (this discussion concerns the UK but it could also concern any other industrialised country):

''Most managers must rate industrial relations as the least of their current worries given the virtual disappearance of strikes. But the absence of strikes does not necessarily mean a contended workforce. Currently conflict-free industrial relations appear to result more from worker compliance than from co-operation with management.

The UK has seen important changes in industrial relations over the past decade, with many observers now talking of the ''new industrial relations''' (N.I.R.). One of the most important features of N.I.R. is the decline in strike incidence since the mid-1980s. There has also been a reassertion of managerial prerogatives, the death of the closed shop and a slump in trade union membership.

According to some, we have moved from an era of industrial conflict to one of co-operation, with workplace relations no longer characterised by ''them and us'', but simply referred to as ''us''.

The evidence on strikes is fairly clear cut. Fewer working days were lost due to strikes in 1992 than in any other year since records began a century ago. There were only 240 officially recorded strikes last year, less than a tenth of the number 15 years ago. But other evidence suggests that the NIR label may be somewhat misplaced.

A strike has two basic elements: an unsatisfied grievance and an ability to strike. The reduction in strike activity must have resulted from either a decline in unsatisfied employee grievances and/or a decline in the ability to strike. If advocates of N.I.R. are correct, then a fall in the level and intensity of grievances must be the more important explanation.

There are at least three points to make against the N.I.R. case. The most obvious is the current spring of discontent, with industrial action at the Timex electronics plant in Dundee, on British Rail and buses, in the pits and in schools '. [Note from Echanges: we could make the same statement for Italy, Germany, France, USA, Poland,etc...]

Evidence has also emerged that the official record of strike activity does not tell the whole story. [Note of Echanges: we could say the same for France for instance, not only with a systematic boycott of industrial information and due to the fact that in the previous period figures were artificially swollen by numerous and useless union 'days of action' or similar token actions which don't exist any longer or are not followed at all because of the declining influence of the unions]. Alongside the contraction in strikes was a shift in favour of the overtime ban.

Using information collected by the CBI Pay Databank survey of manufacturing pay negotiations, research at the London School of Economics has revealed that, on average in the period 1979-89, overtime bans were twice as likely to occur as strikes. This was not the case throughout the economy, however, as public sector workers have continued to favour strikes over non-strike action.

Why did employees turn increasingly to overtime bans to pursue their grievances? Contributing factors include: the role of the law which concentrated, before 1988 at least, on stamping out strikes and largely ignore non-strike forms of action; leaner production systems, such as just-in-time and other techniques which made an overtime ban more effective, and high unemployment which appears more effective in discouraging strikes than overtime bans. The common thread is that the overtime ban provides a relatively low-cost way for workers to express their dissatisfaction.

A final piece of evidence on worker disquiet concerns the use of dispute procedures. The recently published Acas report for 1992 reveals that the statutory advisory and conciliation body was busier than ever last year... As strike incidence has plummeted to an all-time low, the number of conciliation requests has stayed stable at around 1200 -1300 a year.

The number of individual conciliation cases shows a more marked trend upwards. Last year, Acas received more than 72,000 requests, up 12,000 on 1991. In part, this increase results from the recession, since most conciliation cases concern claims for unfair dismissal. But it must also result from a decline in workers' ability to pursue disputes in another way.

The decline in strike action... results largely from the most disaffected employees no longer being able to take strike action, rather than from the absence of grievances... The fact that some dissatisfaction is still being expressed through non-strike industrial action and the use of Acas suggests that the foundation of N.I.R. is workplace compliance rather than co-operation.

Compliant employees may be sufficiently productive when labour markets give management the upper hand. But when (and if) unemployment starts to fall, the absence of a co-operative spirit may lead to problems of employee turnover, absenteeism and a lack of effort ... ''

All these explanations can be summed up in some words, more or less what the author of the report above said: the antagonism between labour and capital always exists. It can take quite a lot of different forms, and the movement and changes of the balance of struggle at the state, industry and factory level could see a quick shift of the present specifically adaptated forms of struggle to other more agressive forms. Only a superficial

observation, however, can bring people to think that some forms of struggle have definitely disappeared and that some new forms of industrial relations are developing.

Such a statement does not at all mean that the change in the production techniques has no influence on the form and character of the struggles. In the article quoted above, "La realite fordienne du postfordisme", the author underlines that "*to talk about a break, for example the wages system would have to evolves towards another system of social relations of labour, or even more that the repartition of the social surplus is radically transformed, or that the organisation and division of work is no longer a kind of semi-military dictatorship... In fact, the social transformations we can observe are closely linked to the crisis of capital accumulation since the early 70s and in which the exhaustion of the productivity gains, of the consumer power and the development of the unproductive services (public and private) are the main basic elements.... One has too often the tendency to take the details for the essential of the real movement... post-fordism could appear as an accident in fordism or more like its natural perfect adult form achieved only now after a lot of crisis during its growth...*"

We will not here develop further this point of view which is radically different from the thesis of the advocates of post-fordism and of the consequences it could have on workers combativity, on the role of the unions and on the 'revolutionary perspectives'. On the other hand, we want to underline a field of thinking completely ignored in the debates we're discussing: the role of the development of new techniques and especially of the communication techniques (taken in their widest meaning), not only in the media (it is not essential though most of the attention is directed towards this point), but in the functioning of the whole productive system. This development introduces something at the very center of any productive system: the joining (and the immediate implementation) of the close connection between production and consumption where the socalled market laws are located. On one hand these new techniques bring about a high vulnerability of the whole system (and the need to get a minimum of co-operation from everybody involved in the production process to allow the company to stay competitive and to answer immediately at every moment to the 'needs of the market'). On the other hand the immediate circulation of all data and the quick response in terms of production of what is needed, in a more and more simple way linked to the general appropriation by ever more people of these new information techniques. The utopian prospects which formerly could shape the ideas about the functioning of another society, can be radically transformed into a close reality which is already in front of us.

Another point could deserve to be discussed in these debates on the present form of capitalism and on the consequences of this evolution on the struggles for emancipation: The fact that a large share of the surplus value extracted from the intensive utilisation of the differences in the conditions of the exploitation of labour all over the world is used to maintain (with more and more difficulty) a social status quo in the old industrialised countries (mixing social benefits and a growing repression) and in the developing countries (from the cancelling of debts to local wars). It is a problem which can't be solved: the most profitable sources of surplus value have to be maintained by the use of repression, corruption, etc... and their extension through the global pressure of capital reduces at the same time the possibility of realising this surplus value in the industrialised countries, where a more and more important number of the workers are obliged to manage on the minimum consumption level necessary to maintain the social peace and to allow the crisis not to go deeper. How can such a system be maintained and what are the consequences on the workers movement? This question has to be linked to the accumulation crisis mentioned above, not as a theoretical question but considering the practical effects on the life of the workers and on their struggles.

HS

(1) This article was written by a French comrade and part of the debates and facts pointed to are to a great extent oriented towards French and Italian debates and experiences. The text is consciously written with general references to debates and opinions, without any particular reference to specific groups and journals, without a lot of polemical footnotes, etc.

Concerning the ideas elaborated in the text, we can also refer to other *Echanges* material, for example the pamphlet "Myths of dispersed fordism. A controversy about the transformation of the working class" and to various material in the latest issues of *Echanges* like no.74/75 (debates about Spain and with Spanish comrades), no.76/77 (material about France and Italy and debates about 'alternative unions') and no.78/79 (Discussion about present socety, 'marxism' and workers' struggles).

REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS

He lost his hand in a bright new
automated punch press.

Five digits now none
Taken by a digital computer
Witch
Lo and behold
Makes mistakes just like human beans

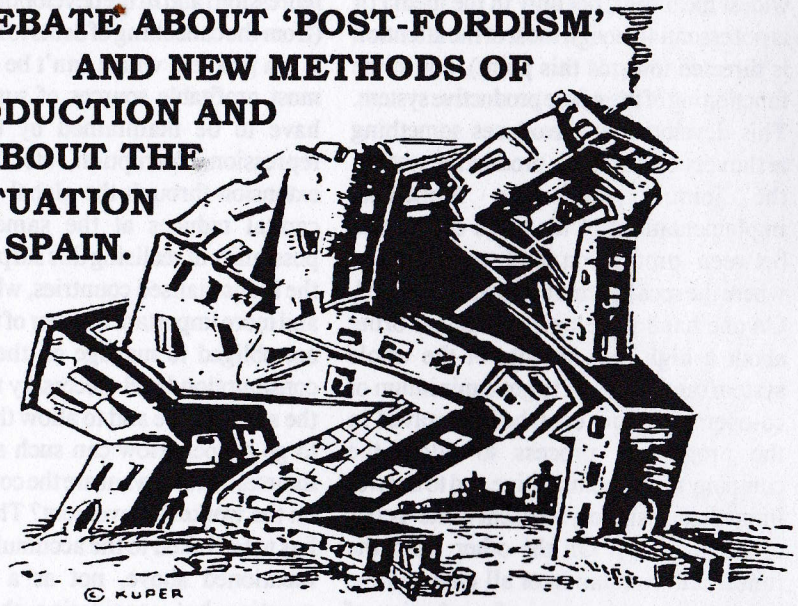
Humanized computer
Computerized human
Its all the same
But it can't hold hands.

Neither can he.
He took his other five digits
and melted them down into a
Fist.

Mr. Toad

From the Bewick Editions pamphlet *"Be his payment high or low". The American working class of the sixties* by Martin Glaberman (see Echanges No. 65, p . 18)

DEBATE ABOUT 'POST-FORDISM' AND NEW METHODS OF PRODUCTION AND ABOUT THE SITUATION IN SPAIN.



The following texts are a continuation of material published in previous issues of *Echanges*. We have for many years used letters and articles from and had a debate with comrades of the journal *Etcetera* in Barcelona.

In no.74/75 we published a dossier of various texts relating to Spain, including a debate about the development of capitalism concerning new methods of production (often referred to as 'post-fordism) and about unions and struggles in Spain. This debate was put out as a separate pamphlet with the title *Myths of dispersed fordism. A controversy about the transformation of the working class.* Similar themes are dealt with in the article *Some thoughts about on-going debates in ultra-left milieus* in this issue of *Echanges*. Below we first reproduce a review of the pamphlet *Myths of dispersed fordism* from no.15 of the UK journal *Here & Now*. This is followed by a letter from Barcelona continuing the debate on 'post-fordism' with particular references to the situation in Spain and the article *Some thoughts...* Then follows another letter from Barcelona with more reflections about Spain after the general strike which took place in January '94. About this strike one could afterwards read a number of triumphant articles in left-wing journals outside Spain, whereas this limited strike well controlled by the unions only was the minimum the unions could do faced with one the one hand the policies of the government to increase 'competitiveness' and on the other hand the unions' increasing powerlessness and lack of support, desperately trying to maintain a role for themselves in society and labour life and to obtain a 'social pact' with government and employers. Other material from Barcelona about the situation up to the 1996 fall of the 'socialist' government has unfortunately not yet been translated into English. Together with the above mentioned material we also publish two other things: An article by a Dutch comrade about *Why are there less strikes in Spain?* and *Notes about some struggles in Spain* compiled from our French bulletin *Dans le monde une classe en lutte.*

FOR DISPERSED FORDISM, READ EXPLOITATION

A debate surroundeding a text by Carlos which first appeared in the Barcelona magazine *Etcetera* has lead to a pamphlet by *Echanges/Advocom*. The text 'Dispersed Fordism' first appears, followed by a letter by Carlos to H. Simon of *Echanges* in which he provides "*more detailed information on the autonomous movement in Spain*". He asserts it is crucial to comprehend that many of the young workers displaced from the countryside have proved, as with the Valladolid Renault dispute, to exhibit "*very radical behaviour... being completely hostile to the unions*".

From this observation, Carlos proceeds to question the relevance of viewing present class conflicts thorugh the theory formed in the area of the classical proletariat, giving rise to a finalism, which conflicts with the present when "*there is no longer a fundamental contradiction, there is only a conflictuality which spreads all over the developed capitalist countries through a lot of small unfair 'cheatings', crimes, insubordinations in the production sphere and in social life in general*".

Although Carlos proceeds to deny that this means a capitulation to post-modernism but to "*its radical transformation corresponding to the present stage in the development of the exploitation of the labour force*", the cat is among the proverbial pidgeopns! Carlos now believes "*it is impossible to develop any kind of serious analysis concerning the theory of communism, i.e. neither an inductive theory(trying ti discover in the present struggles elements which could be seen as prefiguring communism), nor a deductive theory (proceeding from ethical, ecological, teleological)... on the contrary it is an open process*".

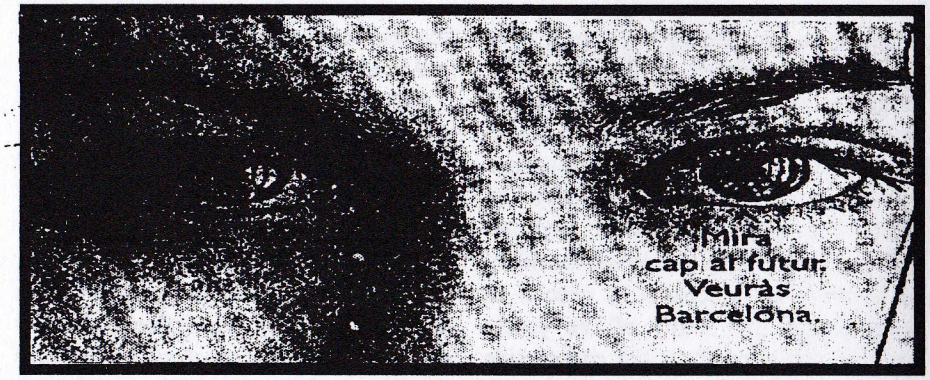
Such openness extends for Carlos into marginal spheres such as music and fashion, and resistance of new social movements around anti-militarism, housing, etc. Crucially he asserts "*we have to consider these new forms of solidarity as the problematic*

☛ p. 24

ETCETERA
correspondencia de la guerra social

ECHANGES READERS UNDERSTANDING SPANISH COULD FIND IT USEFUL TO RECEIVE THE JOURNAL *ETCETERA* PRODUCED BY COMRADES IN BARCELONA, WHICH OFTEN GIVES MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SUBJECTS ELABORATED IN LETTERS FROM BARCELONA USED IN *ECCHANGES*. IN ADDITION *ETCETERA* CONTAINS ARTICLES ON A WIDE RANGE OF OTHER SUBJECTS, REVEIWS, LETTERS FROM READERS, ETC...

WRITE TO: EDITORIAL ETCETERA, APARTADO CORREOS 1363, 08080 BARCELONA, SPAIN.



NOTES ABOUT SOME STRUGGLES IN SPAIN

These notes, surely uncomplete, have been taken from our French bulletin 'Dans le monde une classe en lutte' which contains brief information about struggles all over the world.

On 25. November 1993 union demonstrations take place in 50 towns organized by the 'socialist' UGT and the 'communist' CCOO against government plans to impose wage restraints, reduce various benefits and change labour market legislation concerning part-time employment, apprenticeships and dismissal procedures and to achieve a 'social pact' to 'restore competitiveness' discussed since September. In certain towns the demonstrations were followed by riots. The same unions are divided on whether to organize a one day general.

October-December '93: A series of strikes and demonstrations against a restructuring plan of the automaker SEAT (owned by Volkswagen) closing down the Zona Franca plant in Barcelona with 9000 job losses. A four hour strike a the three SEAT plants (two in Barcelona and one in Pamplona) place 28/10. On 9/11 a 24 hour strike takes place, with 30000 participating in a demonstration in Barcelona. A third strike takes place on 11/12.

Jan.94: One day's general strike called against the 'social projects' of the social democrat government (three years wage freeze for the public sector, cuts in all

the social benefits - health, retirement, unemployment, and no state curbs on redundancies) is only half successful. More than 200000 strike pickets controlled millions of strikers. As with previous days of action (in December, 1993 and also similar to protest strikes and demonstrations in Barcelona against the closure of the Barcelona Seat factory), for the unions (UGT, linked to the socialist party, and the CCOO (workers commission, linked to the communist party) it's a question of trying such token actions to keep a control on the discontent, preventing more serious disturbances and preserving their role in the system. Such actions have never stopped the government from going ahead with its austerity policy and with anti-strike measures.

End of July 94: A naval fight between French and Spanish fishermen in the Gascogne Gulf about tuna fishing. Later British fishermen also were involved. This conflict is the result of incoherent national and European fishing rules which aggravate an already sharp competition, leading to a worsening of the working and life conditions of all fishermen. For a short period, Spanish fishermen blocked northern Spanish ports .

SEAT wants to close one of its factories in the Barcelona suburb with 4,500 redundancies. Work stoppages, token strikes and demonstrations were followed by a bargaining package in which the central Social Democratic government obtained the parliamentary support of the Catalan political parties in exchange for the payment to SEAT-Volkswagen of $300 M in subsidies and a promise of new Volkswagen investments in the future.

8.October '94: 3-year contract agreement between unions and SEAT: wage increase of 2,9% in '94, in line with inflation in '95, inflation plus 1% in '96.

November '94: The airline company Iberia finds itself in the same difficulties as Air France. Iberia utilise utilise 146 workers for a flight while its private competitor Air Europa use 46. A number of 24 hour strikes of Iberia employees against a plan to reduce wages by 15% in two years and a job loss of 5200 posts. The legal obligation to provide a minimum service limits the effect of the strikes. But a wildcat strike 28/11 oblige the management to concessions acceptes by the unions UGT and CCOO but refused by the pilots. Their union cancelled a strike call for 28/12 and 8/1/95 after an agreement with management.

12.-13.December '94: two 24-hour strikes by various categories of rail workers for wage claims.

17, January 95: Autoworkers at SEAT hold a 24 hour strike protesting planned layoffs of nearly 10% of the workforce. Workers marched through the streets of Barcelona and clashed with police, who fired rubber bullets at the marchers.

Early May 95: A national strike by doctors demanding higher pay shuts down clinics and other non-essential medical services throughout the country. Strike continues until June 26, when doctors agree to government pay raise.

22.May '95: Hundreds of angry farmers and fisherman descend on the coastal town of Algeciras, disrupting all shipment and processing of Moroccan imports. Fisherman are protesting the lack of a new fishing agreement between Morocco and the EU. On May 19, fishermen stopped a Dutch lorry and threw out all its contents (Moroccan shrimps.) Due to a lack of an agreement, hundreds of Spanish fishing boats are forced to stay idle until negotiations are completed.

20.July '95: Ten thousand workers at INI, the state-owned shipyards hold a one day strike to protest a restructuring plan that would cut 5,200 jobs.

31.August '95: 4 miners dead in an accident in Hunosa in Asturias, leading to a one-day union strike. 32 miners dead in accidents during the first 8 months of the year.

18. September '95: The annoncement of the closure of the shipyards in Seville and Cadix and the sending of 5000 dismissal letters provoke a day of manifestations in Cadix, including an attack on the headquarter of the socialist party. But the unions continue to discuss the 'improvement' of the restructuring of the shipyards - an agreement is reached 6/10 about 1000 dismissals, prepensioning at 76% of the salary and continued acticity at the 9 shipyards after they have beenj 'restructured'.

Mid-september '95: Protesting impending job losses at the Puerto Real shipyard in Cadiz, enraged shipyard workers blocked the port's streets with flaming barricades and hurled bottles and rocks at riot police. Five people were injured (4 police and 1 worker.) A similar incident broke out in Seville (details unknown.)

November/December '95: A salary reduction of 8,5% and a job loss of 3500 in '94 has not been enough for the Iberaia management. A series of strikes mainly by Iberia pilots, but also by pilots of Aviaco take place in Nov./Dec. A minimum service is imposed by the government; the number of cancelled flights varies between 30 and 60%.

These actions fits into a series of strikes by aviation personnel in a number of European countries this year: France, Belgium, Italy, Greece, England, Scandinavia...

(contradictory) expression of the present phase of the capitalist system, as th expression of a decomposition of social life (parallel to the decomposition of the forms of the Fordist aggregation), and as the expression of a certain rise of the resistance of the exploited in the form of new schemes''.

The final insights he offers to Simon is the prediction that the state is utilising social problems such as the drugs traffic to strenghten its powers of repression and surveillance in a cloak of public approval.

The objective of the pamphlet's publishers, however, isn't to give credence to such neo-marxist views but to view Carlo's theory in terms of a latest varient of ''such wild phantasies'' expounded chiefly by sociologists and ex-revolutionaries such as Castoriadis, Gorz, Daniel Bell, C. Wright Mills and Anthony Giddens. The response of Theo Sander, in particular, reads as if this world view was threatened. For example, Sander writes ''*we were convinced*'' that Carlos misses the point, and rewrites current struggles to fit his viewpoint. Proceeding in the same vein, ''*it was thus necessary to emphasize the elements of continuity in working class struggle and working class culture*''. Hence, Marx's famous dictum that ''*a new society could arise out of the dynamic present-day society, almost without the knowledge of the participants...*'' is endorsed by *Echanges*.

In a less strident tone, Simon draws from the French experience to assert that it is easy to overstate the importance of new trends in industrial production and the degree in the past to which factory work exceeded rural labour, shopkeepers, etc. From Italy and France, Simon identifies a historical legacy in coordinating committees in France and the COBAS in Italy from the 'workers councils' form.

Simon alse seizes on trends contrary to decomposition, which includes less hierarchy in labour tasks and the homogeneity disguised under mass culture ''*similar standard of living*''. Simon also question the evaluation of 'conflictuality' as an individualist response on the level of survival, a heritage with a lumpen mentality. In terms of the apparent linkage of class decomposition and party decline, Simon infers that a more complex process is at work explaining the irrelevance of ideological politics to workers today.

Sander's reply centres in the self-destructive impulse within capital based around it's susceptibility to the falling rate of profit, hence viewing the *Etcetera* theorists emphasis on one response of capital to circumvent this trend as essentially peripheral to the overall logic. Dispersed Fordism is a new variant of increased exploitation designed to induce greater productivity which depends on the logistics of heightened transportation and sub-contractual reliability. Carlos is said to have swollowed the ideology of this new managerial strategy and avoided the descrepancy between this design and the global reality.

A final note from Carlos reacts to Sander's tone and intentions, and seeks to relocate his observations within a framework of capital maximising exploitation without falling victim to a 'reductionism' he sees in Sander's

approach. Paraphrasing from Marx he counters that ''*The proletariat is revolutionary in its struggle or it is nothing*'', and that his refusal to be deflected from ''the deforming facts in daily life'' means that any other revolutionary analysis must be aware of this contradictory reality.

To do justice to this debate, you should obtain 'Myths of Dispersed Fordism' from *Echanges*.

J. McFarlane

'POSTFORDISM', NEW RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION AND LABOUR, AND THE SITUATION IN SPAIN

ACADEMIC DIVERSION OF THE DEBATE

Thanks for the copy of the text ''Reality of the post-fordist fordism''. (1) It really raises some interesting questions. On the other hand, I have received some other texts from Rune published on the same subject in the journal *Capital and Class*. What I found in these texts concerning the so-called ''new work organisation'', is more or less the academic diversion of the debate. in the sense of focussing it around more and more formalist questions (neo-fordism, post-fordism, dispersed fordism, etc.). I think that we are no longer interested the definition of a phenomenon, but trying to detect what are the features in it which really contributes to modify the change the conditions and relations between Capital and Labour, and thereby also their limitations.

CHANGES IN THE PRODUCTION SPHERE

There is no doubt that what is presented by the technocrats as the solution to the problems of productivity (declining) reproduces new contradicions. Even more, one can say that there is no coherent capitalist strategy to face the crisis. Something which from a certain point of view also reveals the ideological crisis of the technocratic thinking which implements productivity'' solutions'', more and more limited in time and in the effects on the growth of productivity. For instance, the dispersion of production we can see in certain sectors or in some factories in a certain sector, is balanced by the relocation and concentration of the subcontractor's productive units; we can see that happening with the new SEAT factory (Volkswagen group) in Barcelona. Here they have built a network of subcontractor factories in a limited area of some kilometres around the central unit, which means the reduction of the number of suppliers and an internal reorganisation of the relationship between the various work groups. Of course, the working conditions and the wages are very different in the subcontractor factories, worse than

those of the SEAT workers. Elsewhere, we can see some strategies aiming at concentrating the productive units, for instance in the food processing industry, where all production is made in one or two large units to provide a large part of the market through a network of retail shops and a logistic management - this is the case with Nestle or the breweries.

Besides, the transfer to subcontractors of the activities with only a small amount of added value, poses - in addition to the problems of coordination - first of all the question of quality, which obliges the (small and medium sized) subcontracting enterprises to make investments which in a period of a difficult conjuncture means the impossibility to pay their debts, and by consequence bankruptcy. Even more, in addition to the limitations and contradictions deriving from the new techniques of organisation and management of labour and technological resources, one has to take into account the fact that there exists a (world) market with less and less capacity to absorb the quantity of the produced goods. Therefore, for example in the car industry, the improvement of productivity can't prevent the fall in sales. In fact, the over-exploitation of the labour force in the western capitalist countries as well as in the recently industrialised countries has as consequence a general impoverishment which prevents them the access to the growing offer of goods. This overproduction is not transformed into capital because it has no possibility to be realised on the market. An example is given by the SEAT: the new factory in Martorell (Barcelona), one of the most modern in the world and in production since January 93, is able to produce 1200 cars a day, but the capacity of the market (sales) to absorb them is no more than 500 cars a day. A new restructuring in the old factory of Zona Franca (Barcelona) has been disclosed; it aims at suppressing 7000 jobs (cut of 23000) in the near future.

THE CAPITALIST ATTEMPT TO MANAGE THE CRISIS

Considering what you proposed to discuss (2) about the present form of capitalism, the managers in my opinion play in the contradiction you underline, because they have to sacrifice part of the surplus value to guarantee to be able to govern society, a situation which has a negative effect on the accumulation of capital. This brings us to consider what we could call the

management of the crisis; i.e. to the the ability of the dominant groups to act nationally and internationally in more and more 'critical' conditions. Till now we can see some attempts to manage the crisis, but that does not mean that the ruling class has found a solution to the conditions which bring about the accumulation crisis. Actually the ruling class tries to implement measures - of which the new techniques of organisation of labour are some - to maintain the social peace and a certain level of exploitation. But what is their room of manoeuvre? It is difficult to foresee something, even if it appears that its a room of maneouvre more and more narrow if one takes into account the measures the European leaders have annonced in the sense of a hardening of the living conditions of the wage-earners. I don't know to which extent we can say that presently the ruling class is taking action on various points (wages, unemployed, retirement benefits, etc.) in a climate of general passivity.

IMPOVERISHMENT AND PRECARIOUS WORK

In my opinion the impoverishment of the wage earners is managed in such a way that there is a growing gap between the government figures and the real situation of the concerned people. Consider for example unemployment. Officially in Spain there are 3,6 million unemployed (against an active population of 11,8 million). 245000 get the unemployment benefits and some others a family benefit. But most of the remaining 3 million have no benefit at all. Considering these figures, it is difficult to explain why there is no social protests or even a rise in crime, etc. The reality is that very many of the unemployed are engaged in the underground or parallel economy and in all possible forms of precarious or marginal work which has expanded recently. Of course, the poverty is spreading amongst the less qualified strata of the proletariat, old people, women and young; we can see that in the main towns. But presently what is most characteristic is the relative pauperisation of the wage earners, considering that it is possible to get a job off the book, badly paid and without legal guarantee, but allowing you to get an income. That means that the decomposition of the labour market and the consequent precariousness represent an opportunity for many people to get a job and so to get some money which guarantees

a certain level of consumption. There exists some sectors of production completely dominated by this kind of jobs (textile, shoes, food, small electrical components, etc..). It would be interesting to study the transformation of the living habits of young people (who stay with the parents even when married) or the role played by the feminine work off the book as a complementary income to the husband's salary and how this kind of family income allows their living conditions to be less

difficult. The ruling class relies on all that to manage the conditions of the crisis and to slow the pace of the rising process of the pauperisation. I discuss the management of the crisis in this respect because it seems that the mechanism of the political economy have nothing to do with the structural causes of the accumulation crisis, but that they simply serve to govern its inevitable negative effects.

Considering these mechanisms of the management of the crisis, we could talk about the technical segmentation as underlined by the sociologist Durand in the article you sent and thereby also about the status and the level of wages in the factory. For instance, in industry and services the lowest layers of workers (women, young) have working conditions more precarious than those in the intermediary strata in the hierarchy. This means an evident segmentation of interests between the various layers of workers. An example: the SEAT factory in Landaben (Pamplona). When the managers announced the need to implement a plan for regulating the employment (i.e. for cutting the labour force) all the unions - including the LAB close to the ETA - supported by the permanent workers agreed that these measures should at first affect the workers on a temporary contract.

'SOCIAL PACT'

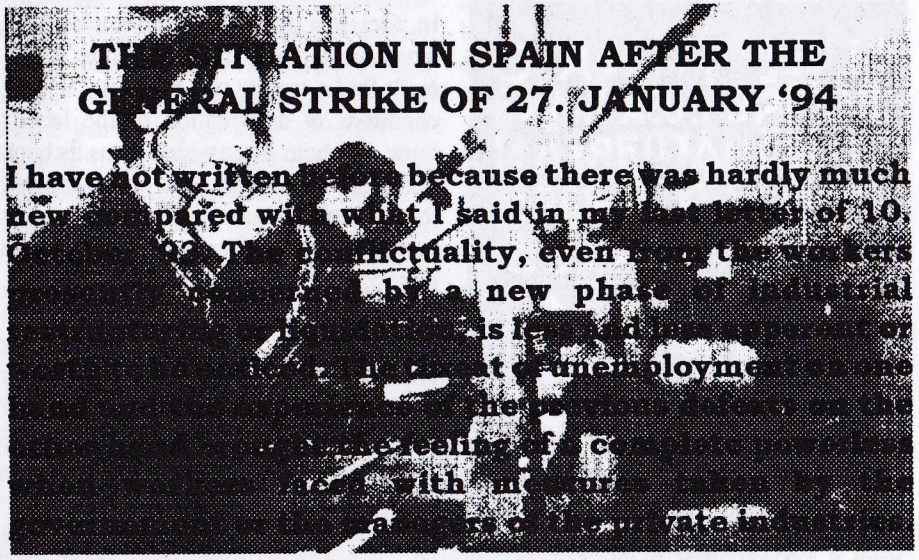
Presently in Spain we are in the middle of discussions about a big 'social pact' proposed by the government aiming at putting a big pressure on the workers (wage rises two points below the official inflation rate, more precarious employment conditions, cuts in the retirement allowances, in the unemployment benefits, no redundancy money for sacked workers getting unemployment benefits, etc.). This will mean at first budgetary savings for the

government and the transfer of some billions of pesetas to private capital in order to try to put in place a plan to develop economic activities. To dam up the negative consequences of this plan, the Madrid government hopes to get 6 billions of pesetas from the EU (taken from the "structural funds" discussed for more than a year). The unions, as usual, has proclaimed their refusal of the plan; they will sign it a little later. The feeling of going nowhere can be seen everywhere because the social democrat government elected in June 93 does not know at all what to do; even now the old anthem that the European Union will solve everything in a beautiful and big Europe has been dropped in the political speeches.

C.V. 9/93

(1) J.P.Durand: 'La realite fordienne du post fordisme'; quoted in the article 'Some thoughts about on-going discussions in ultra-left milieus' in this issue of *Echanges*.

(2) See the last paragraphs of 'Some thoughts about on-going discussions...'.



Of course there was the general strike on 27. January '94. It was more the expression of the fear and of the lack of prospect of a workers' movement which looks like it is in the last stage of its life if we consider its forms and its claims. There was of course as always in the background some kind of generalised discontent, but we are living this discontent in an implosive way, i.e. either in an individualised form or in the closest family circle. This time the response of the workers to the union strike call was less important than during previous strikes. The strike was total in the industrial suburbs

of the main towns, but in the service sector, in the shops, etc... the stoppage was not so strong.

The day after, as usual, journalists and union bureaucrats put on the sideline the main reason for the strike (the reform of the labour laws) (1) to discuss the figurers about the demonstrations, if the strike had been a success or if it had failed. The governement underlined that it was not ready to withdraw its proposals of reform. The unions had reluctantly called this strike because they knew beforehand that the success of the strike, measured by the number of workers following their call and participating in the demonstrations, would be an actual failure considering the importance of the aim: to oblige the government to change its labour policy. It's for this reason that the unions did not react immediately when these labour measures were annonced, but came back to the forefront months later when they could use a far more moderate language. From then on, the union fight was in reality limited to beg the government for a new 'social pact for employment'.

IF WORK WAS SOMETHING GOOD, RICH PEOPLE WOULD KEEP IT FOR THEMSELVES.

A SLOW, BUT IRRESISTIBLE, PAINFUL DECLINE OF THE UNIONS

In fact it's a question of a slow but irreversible agony of the unions which can't find a way to rise again in the new conditons of exploitation of the labour force. A labour force which turns its back to the unions as well as to any organised form of resistance at the workplace, except for some categorial organisations. Even in this corporatist-professional unionism, their influence is very limited. We have to say that most of the workers having participated in the mobilisation against the labour reform were the oldest ones. It looks paradoxical - even more if we consider what happened in France among the students (2) - but the young students of the professional schools (the most threatened category by this reform) saw the strike with indifference.

Of course the failure or the impossibility of a development of an autonomous workers movement during the so-called 'democratic transition' after Franco's death, the role played by the union bureaucracy in the social conflicts and the negotiations of contracts for the industrial sectors, the

ideological media pounding (postmodernism, new collective myths around sport or other spectacular mass performances, etc), the collapse of the left ideologies and their organisational structures..., are some elements which could help to explain the growing gap between the subjectivity of the new proletarian generations and the old ones.

THE STATE OF MIND OF YOUNG PEOPLE

There is a total lack of interest for politics amongst the young people. There is a growing defiance towards everything structural or collective: ones project ot the life is restrained to the most immediate day to day life.

This change concerning the whole outlook of the youngest part of the wage-earners represents a mental and practical break with previous expressions, up to the point where the labour exploitation is lived with a powerless and non-critical resignation, a mixture of fatalism concerning work and of vitality concerning leisure time during the week ends seen as the time to live "up to the end".

Of course there are resistances, small sabotages, etc... but not significant from a collective point of view, except for the strong opposition to the military draft. The only expression of a resistance bringing together people in a community of struggle is amongst the youth refusing to go to the army (the refusal of the service in the army as well as the social service which are offered as an alternative to it). I don't want to go into some sociological considerations, but to point out some of the reasons which can contribute to a better understanding of the passivity of young people faced with a labour reform of which the consequences are far more serious for them than the Balladur plan in France.

LABOUR MARKET REFORM

The reform annonced by the socialist government in Spain concerns, among other measures, the possibility for the employers to delay the apprentice contracts up to the age of 25, in practice up to 27 years, for the young workers who will receive during this period a wage limited to 75% of the interprofessional minimum wage, limitations in reception of health benefits and unemployment benefits, and the removal of all administrative control on dismissals.

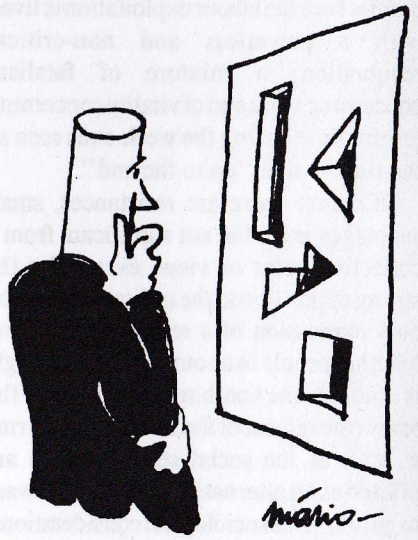
The labour reforms aim at reducing the labour costs and give the employers more

WE WILL NOT BELIEVE THERE'S A CRISIS GOING ON UNTIL THE RICH PEOPLE START TO COMMIT MASS SUICIDE.

flexibility in engaging or dismissing (without indemnity)... This will lower the cost of the labour force and the weight of the social expenses for the employers (the disbanding of the social security system is one of the long term aims) and the quasi-total removal of all the labour laws which will oblige for instance the labour inspectors to look for another job as civil servants. The young people will of course find something in these measures: they will get a short term contract because, once the reform will be implemented the labour market will be very active to substitute young low paid workers to the more expensive older ones. In fact, the labour market will more and more be similar to the labour market when capitalism started rather than to the labour market of the recent time in the european countries.

Confronted by such a situation, the unions are begging the government for any formal gesture which could appear like a kind of social pact legitimising their role of mediation in capitalist society, where presently it looks that they no longer have any role. We have to consider the fact that presently (because of the decomposition of the organisational forms of the labour force inherited from the 70's) most of the employers think they can manage the production with organisation techniques linked to the development of the computerised processes without the need of a political or unionist mediation in their relationship with the labour force. This technocrat vision of the labour relations try to hide the actual existing antagonisms inside the production structures with a language and methods aiming at involving more deeply the so-called ''human ressources'' into the general enterprise management and aims, when actually labour relations are becoming more and more authoritarian, hierarchised and suspicious of the workers.

Of course, it is impossible to tell when and how this latent antagonism will burst into an open antagonism leading to an active opposition. I even ask myself if this new antagonism of the proletarian masses will express itself in the formal terms of a workers' condition differentiated from capital as a proletarian expression. Anyway this expression ('workerism', demand for jobs, etc.) was always a submission to capital, an expression of the submission of the human condition to capital, and can't transcend the limits of capital as we can see with the demands of the Suzuki or SEAT workers (3) asking for a job.



THE CONTRADICTIONS COMING FROM THE CLAIMS OF THE WORKERS MOVEMENT

At least in the old industrialised countries, it seems that the new proletarian condition can't affirm itself only simply in the labour process. I don't say that we have to look for new pillars to build collective oppositions around the consumers, ecology or any other problem. The question I ask myself is if the existing proletarian expansion brings new contradictions concerning the whole dimension of human being, a human being considered in its reduction to the proletarian condition. In this meaning, perhaps labour plays a role, maybe determing, maybe not only a factor among many other factors.

We analyse the SEAT and Suzuli conflicts in this respect. The workers there claim the guarantee of a job from the transnational capital and the government. Doing so, they assert themselves as labour force, i.e. submitted to the logic of valorisation of capital - the same logiv which oblige the managers to eliminate jobs. Here lays the contradiction coming from the claims of the workers movement in the present period: the 'possibilism' which push them to claim for job (which means to affirm itself as a subject dominated by capital) becomes a material impossibility, a potential maximalism which perhaps can bring about a questioning not only of getting a job but of the workers condition itself. It is in that that the disruption of Capital reveals a possibility for the future.

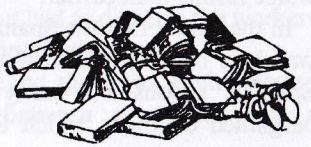
But presently the consciousness of a powerlessness exising among the workers only gives way to the perplexity evident in the slogans at the 1. May demonstrations which asked for ''work and solidarity'' in an atmosphere which hardly can dissimulate a deep discouragement.. I ask myself if the evident inadequacy of trade unionism to answer to the proletarian needs in the present period of the capitalism doesn't bring about also the questioning of the paradigm of the confrontation capital-labour as it has been expressed till now. Of course, as long as there's a capitalist system, there are potential antagonism, contradictions, etc..., but it remains to be seen up to which point the categories forged in the past struggles must redefined or simply dropped.

C.V. 5/94

(1) Note by *Echanges*: Spanish labour laws have been among the most *rigid* (the expression used by the capitalist press like *Financial Times, Wall Street journal*, meaning that the workers actually have some rights making difficulties for companies in sackings, restructuring...) in Europe. The government attempts to take measures against the 'inflexibility of the Spanish labour market' allowing employers to hire young people on special (worse) conditions, paying less than the minimum wage, without pension rights earned, no unemployment benefits when the contract period is ended, etc.

(2) Note by *Echanges*: Reference to the movement in Spring '94 against the socalled 'SMIC jeunes'; an attempt to allow employers to engage young people at 80% of the minimum wage leading to mobilisations all over the country.

(3) See our article about restructuring at SEAT in *Etcetera* 23.



WHY ARE THERE LESS STRIKES IN SPAIN?

(By a Dutch comrade - from no.11/93 of the journal *Daad en Gedachte*)

According to the Spanish labour ministry, in 1992 more than 6 million working days were lost due to strikes, compared with 4,4 million in 1991. In 1992 5 million workers participated in strikes, in 1991 1,9 million. 1992 therefore saw a rise in as well the number of strikes and strikers and working days lost.

In the first four months of 1993, out of a workforce of 15 million, 317000 participated in strikes, compared with 868000 for the same period in 1992. For the whole of '93 there was an important reduction in the number of strikes, and where strikes took place they were of a shorter duration.

How is this reduction of strikes to be explained? The reason must be sought in the economic situation. In no other country of the European Union is the unemployment figures higher than in Spain: 22,3%, around 3,3 million people.

Spanish union leaders, from the UGT as well as the CCOO, have stated that they no longer can achieve any results in the negociations over wages and working conditions because as a consequence of the unemployment their bargaining power has been reduced. But that means nothing else than that these union leaders use the unemployment as excuse for obtaining worse results than earlier.

In the period that the Spanish industry was in a better situation than now, the Spanish unions on many occasions bargained contracts which the workers were not enthusiastic about. In this respect little has changed. What has changes is the combativity of the Spanish working class. In Spain it has been shown once more that the working class is more combative in a situation of a good economic conjuncture.

In a good economic conjuncture, when the rank and file is not satiesfied with what one of the unions have achieved, it is easier to take to a wildcat strike, i.e. an independent action, in order to force through a better result. At any case there is the possibility to attempt this. In times of depression the willingness to take independent action is far less. When employers dismiss workers because they have participated in a strike, with an unemployment rate of 22% the chances are small for the workers to find another job.

Under such circumstances enterprises and government can introduce measures which in another situation were more difficult to enforce. That is precisely what has happened in Spain under the 'socialist' government of Filipe Gonzales. The wages in the public sector are reduced, rents for housing are increased and unemployment benefits reduced.

An economic correspondent of the journal *The European* has written that all these measures prove that the power of the Spanish unions has been considerabley reduced. That is the wrong conclusion. It's not the power of the unions which has been reduced, but the combativity of the workers is under the given circumstances reduced.

C.B. 11/93

INDIA

THE STRIKE OF THE CENTURY, 1981-83

This book (1) describes a long strike of the textile workers in Bombay. It is in some ways an adaptation of a university work on the same subject. As it is, it brings quite a lot of facts which are a good complement to the article on "The class struggles of the 'green revolution' in India" (see *Echanges* 65) and gives more details of what the previous article considers as a consequence of the "green revolution: the proletarisation of an important part of the Indian population and the struggle of this working class in huge industrial estates.

It is evident that this conflict concerns an old industry inherited from the colonialist period, but which can also be connected with the period of primitive accumulation. The book shows well how this new proletariat moving between the shanty suburban towns and the misery of the countryside is squeezed betwen exploitation methods inherited from another century in dying industries and the continuation of the same methods in more modern industries (most of them belonging to multinationals).

So in such a developing country with the complexity and size of India, the proletariat - most of the time in the meaning of a 19th century proletariat - is torn between these two different forms of exploitation and between the official unions closely linked to the dominant Congress Party (shaken by splits and political evictions) and the new unions (also divided according various political or religious tendencies). The fact that the textile workers looked for a charismatic leader to ''lead'' their strike makes one think about a period of the worker movement when the reputation and influence of some leaders were decisive.

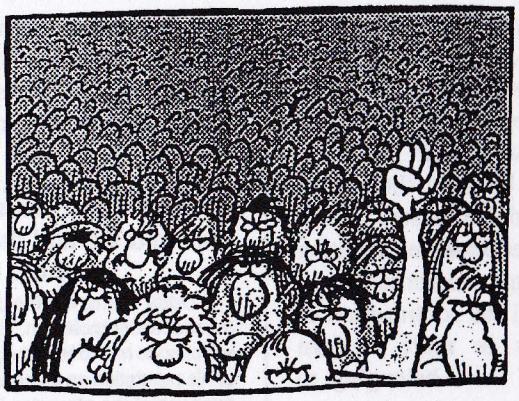
We have below translated the conclusion of the book which is a good summary and an attempt to draw some lessons.

To help the understanding of this text we add the following notes:

* Datta Samant is the union leader and an independent politician. The textile workers will choose him to lead their strike because of his reputation as an honest man and the success of the struggles in which he was previously involved. His union MGKU (Maharatra General Kamgar Union - General workers union of Maharastra) settled in 1977 claimed one million members in 1983.
* Maharastra: large province western India with a population of 50 millions. Capital: Bombay. * Maratha: dominant caste in Maharastra according to their number, their wealth and their dominant position in the political life. * Shiv Sena: Shiva Army, the chauvinistic and populist organisation amongst the hindi population. Popular among textile workers. * RMMS: Rashrya Mills Mazdoor Sangh, the National Federation of textile workers, part of the official union confederation, the INTUC linked to the Congress Party.

THE LESSONS OF THE CONFLICT

"The big Bombay strike is so that it is not necessary to give a very detailed description. Some essential points have anyway to be underlined as a conclusion. At first, we have the great variety and importance of the facts of life revealed by the strike, not a total and definite knowledge of it but the specific and irreplaceable light it throws upon a social practice. The actual economical situation of India is present all the time. The kingdom of scarcity, a narrow market and the weight of the countryside are the background to the events which shake the capital town and explain quite a lot of what we can observe. All these facts are normally summed up in the word "underdevelopment", but we can already see some definite limits of it inside the social events, plenty of possibilities for an evolution out of an unproductive economy, still in separate sectors but certainly going towards radical transformations.

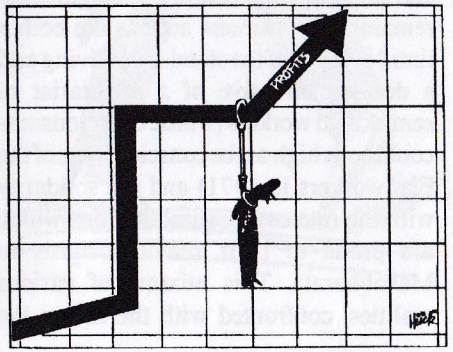


This strike in the textile industry allows us to understand better the peculiarities of the economical development of this subcontinent. The importance of the state intervention in the Indian economy is balanced by serious ans various 'perversions' if we take for granted the declarations of the top managers. The everlasting importance of an old industrial sector brings a paradoxal situation. Capital is so scarce, expensive and unpproductive in India that it is more and more evading the testile sector. On the other hand, this industry with a high rate of employment is supported by the official policy. At the crossing point between these contradictions we can see a growing speculative sector of small, more productive enterprises more linked to the dominating big business. If we consider the means of production involved in the textile sector, we can see a constant regression similar to what we already have seen in other industries: tobacco, matches and leather; but without threatening the capacity of this sector to provide surplus value to more and more demanding and diversified ruling classes.

This evolution leads to misery and revolt of this minority (20%) of the textile workers put to work in the huge factories. Datta Samant, high-level and well protected economist of the Maharashtra which for ten years provided advice and social prescriptions to business men, had no a priori reason to be concerned by this situation. "Samantism" is the art of extracting profit where it is easy to do so and to use these profits in investments in businesses where the known productivity

is the main source of wealth. This liberal practice (in the real meaning of this term) is build on a fierce competition between the various political and unionist plans introducing the practice of competition in an economy based partly on rent. It is very successful in the modern or modernisable factories, far from the old sectors or factories where the social relationship (low wages and low productivity) are tightly maintained through a protection from the state. A declining textile industry, more or less pushed to bankruptcy by its owners, has resisted to the "prescriptions" of the "doctor Samant" only because the strong resistance of the workers.

This happens because India has an effective and powerful democracy since 1947, even if this picture has some black spots. This also happens because - and this point is not the least in importance - ordinary people more and more use the possibilities of choice and of expression given by the parliamentary system. We have to recognize that the workers are ordinary people... At this level, we have not to try to oppose the parliamentary democracy to the possibility of choosing the union leaders, except to observe that the textile workers have no choice at all about the unions and experience this situation as injust and insulting. The freedom of action and to choose its representants has in a certain way a direct influence on the industry which seems, in Bombay, positive considering the imperatives of the development. In the sectors where Samant and some others imposed the workers claims, the factories are in a better situation and the democracy too.



The strike expressed well the social contradiction or, if one prefers, the class struggle of which it is a sudden violent expression. Ob serving this working class in India in action is very instructive. Western observers seeing life in thick blinders and obsessed with their too much specialised interests have always carefully ignored the Indian reality. Workers' strikes are frequent in India since 1920 and present a very clear class character in the meaning that the two sides acting in the industry are clearly separated when they struggle for their economic interests. Beyond the ideological cosmetic which does not cheat anybody in the factory, paternalism has been practically removed from most of Indian industry for a long time. Presently it is as much out of date in the subcontinent than in France.

Actualy the confrontation is between groups of interests with their ambiguities and their various faces. The worker, strongly involved in the textile strike, is obviously a member of the maratha community and a supporter of Shiv Sena. This situation is possible because the industrial conflicts are deeply rooted in the economic relationships and because of the

clear separation between class and community, this ethnic origin to which everybody refers as a belief and a proudness. The class is, for precise historical reasons, lead by leaders from another milieu against whom various tactics of pressure ond of control are used. The class can't become, as we can see it in Europe and particularly in France in the 2oth century, the community itself. This community can be accepted and lived as such, but is constantly disturbed by the interference of other levels of social identity connecting them to the village, to their family, to their land possessions. This does not prevent the castes and other levels of community relationships to be used to control or soften the labour market. Even so, class struggle still is first and foremost a struggle commanded only by pure interests. In India, the workers hardly have the feeling to be a nation inside the nation as in France during the 19th and 20th century. It is the maratha, the mahar or the moslems (...) who have this feeling whatever they are or are not at work in the factories, mines or in fields.

Considering the workers' movement itself, this ''conflict of the century'' represents illustrates perfectly the most relevant example of its recent evolution. The role of professional leaders (which still has the same importance though adapted to the present situation) is completed and balanced by a growing pressure of the workers which take control of the rank and file level ofthe union organisations or organise themselves their own temporary pressure groups. This evolution is not always evolving towards a radicalism. It is more frequently going towards a wider choice between the candidates to the leading union positions and a stronger rank and file power over these leaders. The independent leaders have taken more importance during the 70's, but except for Samant, some of them are very moderate: the needs of the various workers categories are very different. This evolution generally is against the old elites of the workers' movement, still sticking to the out of date practices of tutorship, paralysed by the respect of legality and totally lacking inventive skill. The renewal of the union leaders might take a quicker pace during the coming years.

One of the most striking facts (which is a perfect summary of the meaning of the Indian situations), very different according to the actors and the context, is the juxtaposition of milieus and of social practices that our experiences and above all our way of thinking usually separate. The power of the R.M.M.S. reminds one of Poland in 1983 and its official unions, but the employers are more similar to the businessmen politicians of the USA in the 20's. The state, where the social tensions converge, is vaguely socialdemocrat, bureaucratic, closely linked to the trusts and sometimes presenting some gandhist remains. The workers actions are both a timid defence of the standard of living and a decided offensive of a proletariat of semiskilled workers (whose consciousness could be as high as the consciousness of the Fiat workers in 1971) and the solidarity with the interests of rural families which are proud of their remote origins in Mahabharata. This mixture of various realities, confronted with the life in the

cities, capitalism and History is far from being lived as a trauma, even if the textile workers would happily get rid of their conditions of living which remind us of the most awful conditions described by Dickens in a European capital during the 20th century. This situation is one of the bases of the ambiguity but also of the vitality of the present world of Indian workers.

We would like to tell something about this vitality to end this description of the ''strike of the century''. Most of the Indian observers stubbornly persist to characterise the social conflicts and particularly the workers demands as pathological manifestations. The point is not to rise the strike up in the skies. It might cause more suffering and regressions. But more often it might be the expression of the vitality of the social body and at the same time a real catalyst in the economy. If the Indian economy is still stagnant it is, as we firmly believe, not the consequence of these strikes, but rather the consequence of their failure and of their generally defensive character. It is in Bombay, where the workers had the strongest action, that the economy is the most prosperous. It is also here that the workers of a part of the industry are closer to full citizenship, the economic welfare not being distinct from its social consequences. This is also, for us, a proof of the dynamic resistance of the lower classes in India.''

(1) Gérard Heuzé: *La grève du siècle* (Editions L'Harmattan, 1989)

COLLECTIVE STRUGGLES OF WAGE WORKERS IN FARIDABAD

We have in previous issues of* Echanges *published various material about India, some of it by the group Kamunist Kranti in Faridabad and also a debate with this group about various questions. We refer to* Echanges *no. 63, 65, 66/67, 68/69 and 70/71, which also contains some background information useful for what we publish below: extracts from Kamunist Kranti's paper* F.M.S., *preceeded by an introduction by Kamunist Kranti itself.

It is necessary that attempts be made to differentiate between formal, phoney, real struggles and their admixtures. By and large, the mass media highlights formal struggles. From amongst real struggles only exceptional mass upsurges are reported/postmortemed. A major problem is that not only individual struggles, but even the very large number of daily collective struggles talking place are not known. They do not coalesce in the long term memory of wage workers. One of the necessities for the emancipatory project is to be able to learn from experiences across time and space. Detailed reports of the mundane/daily (real) struggles and their mass circulation amongst wage-workers are essential for this.

Faridabad is a major industrial complex in the suburbs of Delhi. Below are some translations from our monthly Hindi language publication, *Faridabad Majoor Samachar*'s June and July '94 issues. These reports, in comparison to the numerous daily struggles going on, are only the tip of the iceberg even for Faridabad alone.

STRUGGLES IN MAY '94

(Reported in the June issue of F.M.S)

* There was an agreement(1) in **Escorts Railway Division** that workers coming to the factory by their own means or by public transport could enter the factory without any problem untill the factory busses from Delhi arrivecd. After the recent agreement the management started recording the names of those workers who reached the factory after 8 o'clock - although factory busses after detouring to Escorts First Plant, etc.. continued to reach the railway division around 8:15 a.m. Reacting to this, on May 10, workers arriving at the factory before 8 a.m. stopped at the factory gate and soon a crowd of workers on foot, bicycles, scooters, and motorcycles gathered at the factory gate. Only after the factory busses arrived at 8:15 a.m., did workers start entering the factory. Management locked the main gate. Workers faced difficulty in entering along with cycles-scooters-motorcycles from the small side-gate. Soon afterwards, workers who had entered the factory also returned to the factory gate and demanded that the main gate be opened. Assessing the situation, the management quietly opened the main gate of the factory. Since then the management has stopped the practice of taking down names in the Escorts Railway Division.

* A thousand workers from **Palwal** side come to work in Escorts plants everyday. They travel five to seven kilometers on bicycles from villages early in the morning to catch the 45 minute train from Palwal, then race from the railway station to the factories; such is the hectic daily life of these workers. The shift lasts not merely 8, but nearly 13-14 hours. Because of this, some workers - wanting a few minutes leisure - try to shift the workload to others, which sometimes leads to shouting, shoving and other "rough" behavior developing. Due to these reasons other workers often start disliking these workers.

To save money, Escorts management has refused to arrange factory buses for Palwal side workers. But on the condition that they put out a full days production, management used to allow these workers an extra 30 minutes grace period to reach their plants (untill 8:30 a.m. instead of 8 a.m.). In the recent agreement, besides increasing the overall work load, management eliminated this small concession as well. As a result, Palwal side workers reaching factory gates after 8 a.m. were now turned back from the gates. On May 10, instead of leaving from the trains and rushing to the plant, Escorts workers got together and headed toward the union office.

The union leaders were panic stricken by this collective outburst. They promptly locked the union office and ran away. Workers then began a sit down at the union office. The union leaders labelled this workers' action an act of "gangsterism" and issued leaflets attacking the sitdown. To create dissension between different groups of workers, old and new skeletons were unearthed from their coffins and seeds for further divisions were sown. According to Majdoor Morcha, this lockout initiated by the union office was similar to management lockouts.

On May 11, after exiting the trains, other Palwal-side Escorts workers joined the sit-down in front of the locked union office instead of going to the factories. Seeing the sit-down continue, both management and the union said that they would jointly consider the issue and announced the restoration of the old grace period untill then. As a result, the workers agreed to end this sit-down at the union office and the lock out of the union office was lifted.

* Dirt, dust and smoke in **Jhani Tools** are of such magnitude that workers are always desperate to get out of the plants. At lunch time most of the workers exit out of the

factory gates. One day when some workers were entering the first plant a few minutes after lunch time was over, management started writing down their names. The next day, all the first plant workers in that shift went out of the factory at lunch time. After the lunch time was over all the workers stayed out far longer than the previous day and then together they returned to the factory. The management did not note anyones names and stopped doing so thereafter.

* Goodyear management has started suspending workers on minor issues. On May 9th, it suspended several workers. After this incident, the rest of the workers on duty decided on their own that no one would work overtime in the place of suspended workers. This collective step of the workers created problems for the Goodyear management.

* Power shoe department workers in the **Bata factory** on May 25 brought the bad quality of the shoe material to the attention of the department head and informed him that the shape of shoes was getting spoiled due to this. As a result of the spoilage, workers would get paid less. (2) The department head yelled at the workers and told them to do their job properly. The already existing grueling pace of work, now coupled with a possible loss in wages due to rejected and threats agitated the workers. Anger spread not only among the Power shoe workers but also among the workers of the other departments. Within minutes workers halted production in the whole factory. Eventually Bata management had to apologize for the behavior of the supervisor.

* In **Escorts' first plant** management has started harassing the workers after the last agreement. The management is trying to appropriate every second of the workers time. The workers sought to counter these management's tactics by taking a collective step. One day, after the shift ending at 4:30 p.m., the workers collectively refused to remove their bicycles or scooters from the racks and all the workers gathered around the gate. The gate was effectively blocked: workers for the next shift could not enter the factory gate and a large crowd now formed on both sides of the gate. Some people tried to convince the workers to clear the jam but did not succeed. The gate was blocked for an hour and the machines lay idle. Beginning the next day, management designated different gates for those coming on duty and those leaving after finishing their shift.

STRUGGLES IN JUNE '94

(Reported in the July issue of F.M.S)

* There is hardly a factory in Faridabad in which the **canteen workers** are directly employed by the company. Everywhere management have instead hidden under the cover of subcontractors and have imposed 12-14 hours shifts, but paying wages which are only one third the legal minimum. In some factories under pressure from workers, the canteen workers are hired as permanent contract workers. They get the minimum legal wages for eight hours work. Even in the factories open discrimination is practiced against the canteen workers.

At **Jhlani Tools**, management paid Aprils' monthly wages on the 18th of May, but the canteen workers were still not paid. When the canteen workers struck work on the 19th of May, the management paid the permanent canteen workers but refused even then to pay the casual workers. The permanent workers refused to take their wages. Management was forced to pay the casual and permanent canteen workers at the same time. Management also had to promise that the wages for May would be paid to the canteen workers along with the other workers. Wages for the month of May were paid on June 11. Among the canteen workers only those of the Third plant were paid. On the 13th, canteen workers of the 1st and 3rd plants struck work. By 8:30 a.m. the news of the canteen workers strike had spread among other workers. Soon afterwards, the welfare officer in the first plant came to the canteen. The canteen workers reminded him of the earlier promise and demanded their wages. Meanwhile, the other plant workers threatened to stop production if they did not get the 9 a.m. tea break. The welfare officer rushed to the personnel officer, who in turn went to the plant manager. After promising that the canteen workers would be paid by that evening, work again commenced in the 1st and 2nd plant canteens. The workers were paid their wages in the evening.

* On June 13th, during a tea break in **Hitkari potteries**, a worker in the canteen complained bitterly to a unuion leader about the watered-down quality of the tea served to workers (in contrast to that served the foremen). The union leader became angry and she (3) complained to the chief

personnel manager about the worker. The next day was that worker's day off. When he reported to work on the 15th, he was stopped at the factory gate. Management handed him a suspension letter falsely charging him with misconduct with that foremans' wife. The news spread and during the 12:30 lunch break, workers started gathering at the cycle stands. Management had to disperse the workers with the help of security staff.

On June 22nd, there was another heated exchange between a worker and a

supervisor. The supervisor alleged that the worker was drunk. Other members of management investigated and finding the supervisors' allegations false, they let the matter pass. When that worker reported to work on June 23rd, he was stopped at the gate and handed a suspension letter. The letter said that the charge against him was so serious that he would be given a charge sheet on July 1st. Following this, the workers of the maintenance department banded together and jointly went to the plant manager.

On June 24th, a male supervisor sexually harrassed a woman worker in the Glazing department of Hitkari Potteries. Afterwards, all the workers of the Glazing department wrote a collective letter informing management of the incident. On June 25th, all the workers went together to meet management and demanded disciplinary action be taken against the supervisor. Management said that it would examine the matter.

* The Plating department of the **Jhalani Tools - Plant 1** was again filled with smoke on May 30th during the second shift. The Plating workers got together and went to the plant manager. A guard was stationed outside the plant managers' office. In light of the increasing incidents of workers collectively presenting their grievances directly to the manager, the management responded by recently posting a guard outside the manager's office and ordering him to deny entry to groups of workers. The guard told the Plating workers, "You cannot meet the sahib together. Get your leader. One of you can go along with the leader to meet the manager." The guard did not relent even after worker's efforts to convince him. While this was going on, an assistant came out of the room with the manager's belongings. The manager followed him, ready to go home. Workers surrounded this manager and demanded that he come with them to the plating department. The manager initially refused to go. But the workers wouldn't back down and he had to go to the Plating
department. The smoke was irritating to the eyes. With tears flowing down his cheeks the manager went to the Harding department. There the workers told him that if they did not complete their work, the material would become soft. Also in this department, the exhaust fans were either not working or had been removed. The workers of the Plating and the Harding department told the manager that they had repeatedly informed the management about the exhaust fans to no avail. Surrounded by the workers, the works manager then ordered work to be stopped in the Harding department for 6 days to improve the conditions there.

* The workers of **Escorts Railway division** had won an informal right to a grace period when their division was shifted from the 1st plant to sector 24. To maintain that right, the workers had been struggling for more than a month up to the 14th of June. To press home their point, every day workers who had reached the factory before 8 a.m. would stop at the gate. A crowd of workers with bicycles, scooters, motorcycles and those on foot would gather at the factory gates. Only after the rest of the workers who came by the factory busses which reached the factory at 8:15 a.m. had arrived did the workers en masse enter the factory together.

(1) An agreement is a formal contract between management and unions and is registered with the government labour department.

(2) In a sense it is piece-rate. If the production is less than 100%, wages are cut and if it is more, an incentive is given. Rejected pieces are not counted and if there are too many of them, workers are charge sheeted.

(3) More than 50% of the 12000 workers are women and there are union leaders from amongst women also.

NOTES ABOUT SOME STRUGGLES IN INDIA

These brief notes have been taken from our French bulletin *Dans le monde une classe en lutte*. They are far from complete and concern only a small part of struggles taking place in India.

13. June '95: Indian Airlines asks the airforce to supply the airline with pilots after eleven members of the Indian Commercial Pilots Association strike, forcing several domestic flights to be canceled entirely and many others delayed. Pilots are protesting a wage structure which they say pays junior pilots less than senior stewardesses and vow
to step up actions unless equity is achieved.

19. June '95: Half a million telephone workers struck for five days over proposed privatization of the state-owned telephone monopoly. Government took the hard line, deploying troops and refusing all negotiations of the direct issue of privatization. Unions caved in after government threatened to fire all strikers, winning only minor concessions on pay for days lost.

21. June '95: A strike by 60 pilots at the ports of Calcutta and Haldia strands 11 oil tankers and 6 general cargo vessels. Pilots are demanding immediate wage hikes.

23. August '95: Sacked without warning by Tower Air, 68 workers at this small U.S. owned airline crashed a company press conference and shoved company officials around. Tower Air states lay-offs were a result of a U.S. government edict banning American carriers from flying over Afghanistan. Workers claim lay-offs are in violation of Indian labor laws forbidding lay-offs without adequate notice or compensation.

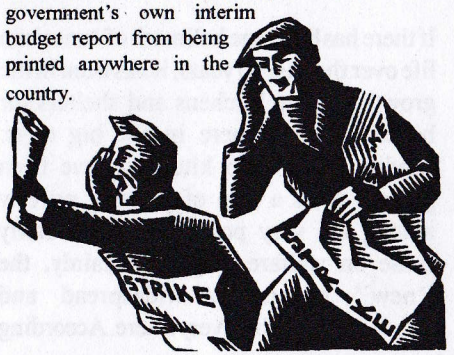
31. August '95: Coordinated by 4 unions, bank workers staged a one day nationwide strike to protest a wage settlement forced on them earlier this year. The government immediately declared the strike "illegal" and threatened strikers with 6 month jail sentences.

29. September '95: Workers in the state-owned insurance industry held a one day nationwide strike, including sit-ins at several branch offices, demanding higher wages.

24. November '95: Demanding an increase in the minimum wage, a one day strike held jointly by industrial and white collar workers shut down the capital city of New Delhi

1. December '95: Striking doctors organized by the Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors shut down many services at 18 municipal hospitals in Bombay.

28. February '96: Shutting down nearly 700 newspapers and news agencies, newspaper workers staged a 24 hour nationwide strike demanding the government approve a 50% pay increase rather than the 20% awarded. The strike was perfectly timed to prevent the government's own interim budget report from being printed anywhere in the country.



U. S. A.

***We have alltogether a lot of material about or from the USA to publish. Much of it comes from the pages of or as a result of contact with the journal* Collective Action Notes *published in Baltimore; a journal familiar to regular* Echanges *readers because some of the issues have been sent to everybody on our subscription list. In this issue we publish first the article 'Soup kitchens: a U.S. growth industry' from* CAN *no.1. and an account of the Detroit newspaper strike from a comrade publishing* CAN.**

We also publish two articles by the US labour historian and activist Peter Rachleff. The first - 'U.S. Labor in the 1980s' is in fact the first chapter of his book* Hard-pressed in the heartland. The Hormel strike and the future of the labor movement. *This book is about the 1985-86 strike at the meatpacking plant Hormel in Austin. The book however doesn't only contain material about the strike, but also more general material about US labour. The second article by Rachleff is called 'Seeds of a labor resurgency' and deals with what the author sees as new tendencies and events US labour movement. We don't necessarily agree with all of Rachleff's conclusions and observations about a new labour movement in general or all details of specific cases like for example the reform of the Teamsters, but find the material useful to publish anyway.

SOUP KITCHENS: A U.S. GROWTH INDUSTRY

If there has been one hallmark of American life over the past 10 years, it has been in the growth of soup kitchens and shelters for homeless everywhere in the big citys. Traditionally, soup kitchens have been pointed to as a sign of growing poverty among the very poor here, particularly those on welfare wages. Certainly, the "new" poverty is widespread and increasingly visible everywhere. According to the last census bureau report, the number of people living below the poverty line alone increased from 25 million in 1980 to 36.9 million in 1992. Since the 1970's, the minimum wage, in real dollars (after adjustment for inflation) has gone down nearly 22% A report issued in New York City in November of 1992 claimed nearly one percent of the city's population had spent at least one night in a shelter over the course of a year. Similar figures were

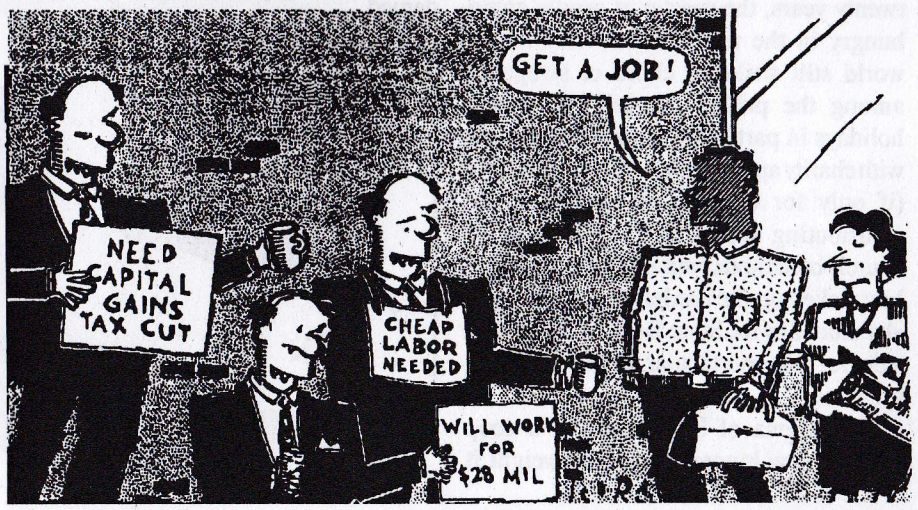
found in Philadelphia. All of this translates into huge numbers of homeless and destitute crowding the downtown areas of American cities.

In response, many city governments, have passed anti-panhandling bills (laws to prevent begging) or authorized privatized security forces, often set up in cooperation with business groups and funded through special tax assessments, to patrol the business districts to keep "order" and repress the homeless.

In the sixties, when protest was much more open, many poor people flooded the welfare rolls in record numbers. Because this increase in welfare applications was a hidden movement, that is, it involved people just acting on their own and not forming formal organizations pressing for reforms (although that happened too in the Welfare Rights movement) much of its significance was lost, especially considering the more spectacular and visible expressions of protest that were then occurring everywhere. The increase in welfare recipients in turn, threatened to bankrupt local governments and contributed in producing the so-called fiscal crisis of the State - or in particular, the fiscal crisis of the large cities, such as New York..

But for the past twenty years (and especially in recent years), cutbacks to social services have forced tens of thousands of people off the roles entirely. Several States have now eliminated welfare for single people and nearly all the rest have set up severe restrictions preventing people from getting on relief. Meanwhile, charities have picked up the burden, although even today they are overwhelmed beyond their slender resources.

One of the ironies in the present situation is that while the State wants to transfer as many social costs as possible back to "the community", even recuperating the 60's catch phrase of "empowerment" to justify doing so i.e. freeing the community from the impersonal and bureaucratic intervention of the public sector, the so-



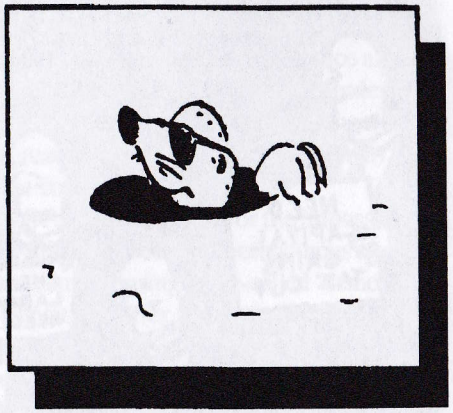
called "community" has been steadily withering away under the onslaught of two decades of economic restructuring. Quite bluntly, there is no mythological community to dump responsibility for providing increasingly unprofitable services on. The community groups, which in the sixties provided some sort of integrating buffer between the State and the neighborhoods, often articulating people's grievances and concerns are all but in the process of disappearing. No one comes to meetings nor is anyone much interested in anything beyond so-called private interests.

More than ever before, and especially in the ghettos, people are just refusing to participate entirely in anything "social." Homelessness, soup kitchens and shelters are just the tip of the iceberg for what are undoubtably worsening conditions for the most precarious U.S. workers and long term unemployed.

But unlike social services (welfare), which has been delegitimated in the past twenty years, the specter of people going hungry in the wealthiest country in the world still strikes a chord of sympathy among the public. Around the winter holidays in particular, people are flooded with charity appeals to help alleviate hunger (if only for one day or one meal) by contributing money to the hundreds of church-based and community agencies who have taken up the burden all too willingly abandoned by the State. But there is another side to this spectacular growth of soup kitchens.

The stigma of being seen in a soup kitchen now longer carries the weight it did ten years ago. Many people I know go to soup kitchens now as a way to maximize their shrinking income and out of a gut feeling that food is something you shouldn't have to pay for. In many of the larger daily soup lines, in fact, sometimes there is almost a festive atmosphere now. Soup kitchens are appropriated an alternative social space to meet and be around people.

This need to maximize your income is contradictory of course. Part of it is consumerism of a very individualistic sort, i.e rejection of the commodity in one area while you embrace it in the other (perhaps in buying drugs or alcohol). But part too, is a new sense of entitlement that is hidden away from the usual charity appeals. People readily acknowledge this fact by pointing to the fact that it is "others" who are always "getting over." For certain layers of the poorest part of the ghettos here, going to soup kitchens becomes a collective way of organizing for survival outside and against the system. You learn to play the beggar if it delivers the goods normally denied.



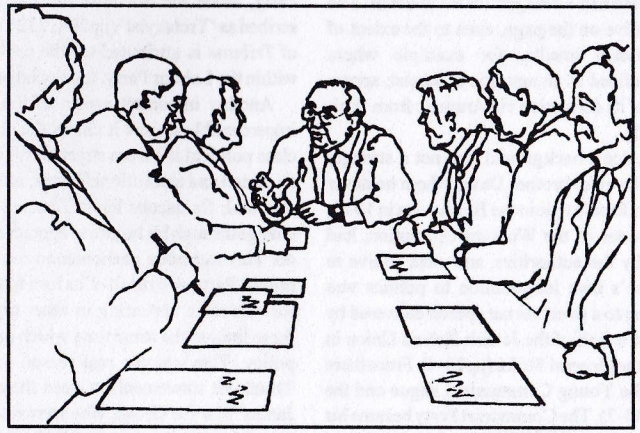
Hard pressed in the Heartlands: The Hormel Strike and the Future of the Labor Movement.

By Peter Rachleff. South End Press, Boston. 135 pages. 12.00 USD

- The dramatic labor struggle against the Hormel Corporation featured in Barbara Koppel's Academy Award-winning documentary *American Dream*, is the undisputed symbol of the current crisis in the U.S. labor movement. Yet, what actually happened and what lessons should be drawn are still hotly contested. Koppel's film concludes that the leaders of the P-9 local should not have taken on Hormel, that the international union was right to try to squash their efforts, and that the rank and file workers were hapless "victims" of their own inept local.

Labor historian Peter Rachleff tells a very different story in *Hard pressed in the Heartland.* As a participant/observer who attended countless union meetings, public rallies, and spoke often with local leaders and rank and file activists during the strike, Rachleff tells a heartbreaking but empowering story of a spirited local union trying to resist management's drive for concessions while fending off a conservative national union leadership unwilling to support its own members. -

South End Press



"Don't get me wrong, gentlemen. I don't *like* ten percent unemployment, but I can live with it."

Joe Jacobs, *Out of the Ghetto*

Phoenix Press, London, 1991, pp320, £9.00

IT IS a real pleasure to take the Opportunity of the appearance of a second edition to recommend this remarkable book to an international readership, since when it first came out our magazine was not yet in existence. It is also a political duty, for here in black and white (Chapter 12) is the true story of the Communist Party's involvement in the Battle of Cable Street from one of the chief protagonists, as opposed to the mythology that is still going the rounds (cf the article "Turning the Tide" in issue no 1 of Anti-Faschist Action's *Fighting Talk).*

Older comrades will remember Joe Jacobs as the expelled former Secretary of the Communist Party's Stepney branch, who joined the Trotskyist movement and then broke with Gerry Healy along with Arnold Feldman to join the Solidarity group, where he gained the dubious distinction of being the only member ever to have been expelled, and this on the motion of Ken Weller. In this group he was known as 'the talkig machine', a real mine of information, and it is his anxiety never to miss a relevant fact that makes this book so extensive a portrayal of Jewish life in the East End, of street politics, of the unsteady growth of the labour movement, and of the pressures that led Jewish workers to become attracted to the Communist Party before the war. He had a real gift for vivid detail. The culture comes alive on the page, even to the extent of discussing Yiddish insults, for example where 'upikoyris' is defined as an agnostic or atheist, apparently unaware of its derivation via Aramaic from 'Epicurean' (pp61-2).

Nonetheless, Joe's background was not a strongly religious one. His elder brother Dave, whom he never met, had gone to Russia to join the Bolsheviks in 1919, became a supporter of the Workers Opposition, had been hounded by the authorities, and went to live in Paris (p12). Joe's own introduction to politics was through listening to a street corner speech delivered by an Anarchist on behalf of the Jewish Bakers Union in the year before the General Strike (pp23-4). From there he went on to the Young Communist League and the adult party (pp43-7). The Communist Party became his life: he played a full part in the anti-Fascist struggle and had a burning interest in all other aspects of the party's affairs, keeping the copious documentation that makes this book so rich a picture. As the anti-Fascist activity of the Communist Party evolved towards a less confrontational style of politics under the impact of the Popular Front, he developed deep differences, was expelled readruitted, and expelled again for the last time in 1952. The party was clearly his world, hermetically sealing him off from other influences. It was international, and yet strangely narrow at the same time. This is illustrated in all sorts of incidents, particularly those where he encountered other tendencies in the labour movement, and it is these that give the book its stamp of authenticity. For example, he discusses the episode of the United Clothing Workers Union founded during the Third Period (p54), without being aware of how Sam Elsbury was first set up and then left in the lurch by the Communist Party, or of the fact that Sam's brother Ben, one of the origial Syndicalists in Britain, later became a prominent Trotskyist. Not long afterwards he describes how the Friends of the Soviet Union organised a meeting to 'explain' a trial of 'Social Democrats', which was so badly attended that an 'inquest' had to be held after it. 'Somehow this did not bother me at the time', he observes 'I must have been wearing blinkers.' (p73) Nor does he seek to avoid his own responsibility for these activities, describing how he helped to break up a meeting at the Circle House in Aldgate addressed after he had left the Communist Party by JT Murphy, 'so that no one would hear what this "traitor" had to say' (p87). The boundaries of his political awareness were clearly set by the Communist Party, since the Socialist League is repeatedly described as 'Trotskyist' (pp264, 272), and the launching of *Tribune* is attributed to 'the neo-Trotskyist group within the Labour Party, the Socialist League' (p268).

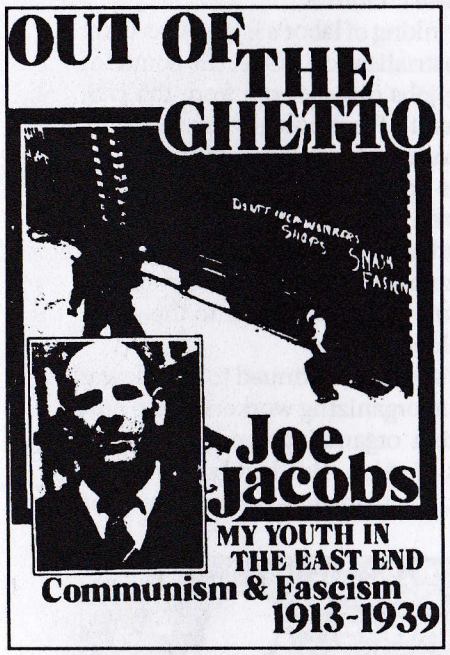
Another important aspect of the book is how by imperceptible degres it charts the change in working class political life from street activities towards' more alienated and institutional forms, either trade union or electoral, for Jacobs himself became a victim of this change through his failure to appreciate what was going on. This was not a phenomenon confined to the Communist Party as a result of its turn to the Popular Front, for rifts were appearing in other organisations along these lines at the same time which did not support this policy. This was the real reason for the split in the Trotskyist movement between the members of CLR James' Marxist Group, who were enthusiastic supporters of the street corner meeting, and Denzil Harber's Bolshevik-Laninists, who preferred to confine their activities to the interior of the Labour Party, leading to

the departure of James' adherents from the united group within months of his going to the USA. As this difference is still with us, it is all the more need to study this book as closely as possible.

But to be honest, none of what I have said is a compelling reason for buying it, or for inducing your friends to buy it either. The plain fact is that it is a joy to read, and deserves to be far more widely known because of this. Were it not for the dommination of Stalinism and the New Left over the cultural life of working class movement, it would have been accepted as a Socialist classic years ago.

Al Richardson

Reprinted from Vol. 5, No. 1 of the trotskyist journal *Revolutionary History*



In Office Computer Wars, Management Strikes Back

By Allen R. Myerson
New York Times Service

NEW YORK — The personal-computer revolution was supposed to transform the office into a high-tech, high-efficiency web of concentration. And maybe it has. But it's also turning it into an electronic sandbox. Computer games, bulletin boards and electronic message systems are creating countless new ways to goof off.

Industry executives estimate that millions of games infiltrate offices each year, despite widespread rules against illicit software or unauthorized computer use. The personal-computer industry, after all, was created by young firebrands who wanted to liberate office computers from bureaucrats and engineers. Some executives still say games are harmless and can even be training tools.

Bosses have software that lets them read employees' screens.

But many a tolerant boss has turned tougher. Richard A. Shaffer, chief of Technologic Partners, mounted a counterattack a few years ago against the advance of Tetris and Armor Alley, telling his staff that the deadlines for the 40 computer newsletters they produced should provide all the suspense they needed.

Game-playing withered. But jokes, movie reviews, party plans and other diversions filled the network until it crashed. Another staff meeting ensued.

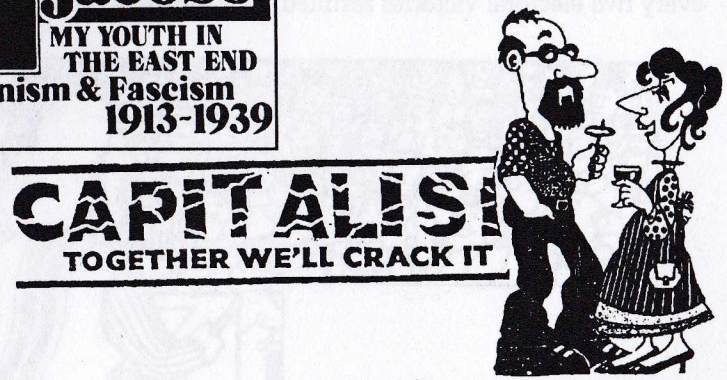
When cyberbosses get angry, though, they're the ones with computing power on their side: software that lets them explore employees' hard disks, read messages they've sent, even see what's on their screens.

The Software Publishers Association, which wants to curb piracy, encourages them to sneak around after hours with a program that can find games. "It kind of surprises management," said Ilene Rosenthal, the association's general counsel. "They don't know that all these games are on the hard drives of employees."

EDS, the data-services concern that was founded but is no longer owned by Ross Perot, deploys a wide array of psychological and electronic weaponry. Data-security coordinators scour workers' computers. The company encourages anonymous tattling. "When someone's sitting playing a game, the other employees are pretty angry," said Todd Carlson, chief of computer operations. "In some cases they go to managers. In other cases they call our hotline."

Still, some bosses think that's not enough. Thomas R. Peltier, who wrote computer rules for General Motors and EDS and is now a consultant, once worked with a security officer from a military base in Hawaii. The officer's tactic for ensuring that workers stuck to their programs? "I pack a gun," he said. "I put them in the brig."

International Herald Tribune 29.07.93



Peter Rachleff: U.S. Labor in the 1980s

Over the course of the 1980s, organized labor became a shrinking island in the sea of the U.S. workforce. In 1980, some 24 million workers belonged to unions, about 22 percent of those eligible. By 1986, unions had fallen to a little more than 17 million members, down to 18 percent of the workforce. Though the absolute decline levelled off in the late 1980s, the percentage continued to fall, sinking to 16 percent in 1990. Among those employed in the private sector, only 10 percent are still covered by union contracts. By 1990, the percentage of unionized workers in the United States ranked lower than Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. It was also dropping faster than in any of these countries.

One important reason for the shrinking of labor's island was what some economists have called "deindustrialization." Over the course of the 1980s, millions of manufacturing jobs disappeared from the U.S. economy. Some of this loss was a result of technological innovation, but the lion's share was due to the closing of factories and the export of capital—and jobs—to the low-wage areas of the Third World. Most of these jobs had been held by unionized workers. In the lexicon of the 1980s, they became "dislocated" workers suitable for "retraining"—that is, to take one of the growing number of low-paying, non-union, service sector jobs. They got pushed off the island and into the sea of unorganized workers and the unemployed.

Another important reason labor's island continued to shrink was the labor movement's lack of success in organizing workers in the new service sector jobs. Roughly one union organizing campaign out of every two succeeded in a victorious election. But barely one out of every two electoral victories resulted in a bargained contract. In sum,

only one-quarter of union organizing efforts led to formal recognition and a legitimate contract.

Increased employer resistance deserves much of the credit for this record. In the context of the Keynesian-influenced growth of the mid-1940s through the late 1960s, most large corporations had grudgingly accepted unions as part of the industrial relations scheme. But as economic growth slowed, profitability declined, and international competition intensified, corporate challenges to unions increased. By the early 1980s, they were buttressed by the emergence of a veritable industry of "management consultants" who preached the virtues of a "union-free environment." At the same time, the Republican-dominated executive branch of the U.S. government relaxed its enforcement of labor laws and actively strengthened the employers' hand.

Employer resistance revolved around three strategies—communication, intimidation, and stalling. The first principle of the "union-free environment" was to co-opt the "voice" function of unions, to give employees the idea that the boss would listen to them. This principle spawned a dazzling array of programs—quality circles, quality of work life programs, labor-management cooperation, employee involvement, the team concept—all of which were intended to give employees the opportunity to communicate with management, or at least the idea that they could. This management strategy was so effective that it also appeared in unionized settings, where it was used to undercut worker allegiance to unions.

The second principle—intimidation—was a lot less subtle. When confronted with a union organizing campaign, management came down hard on the activists. Many consultants carried a bag of "dirty tricks." Here is where lax government enforcement played an important role. Despite the "protections" of the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) of 1935, workers known—or suspected—to be organizing a union were frequently fired. Employers were willing to pay the minimal fines that a slow-moving National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) might eventually assess against them in exchange for being able to intimidate their workforce during a union campaign. While the NLRB had the authority to impose union recognition in the case of blatant labor law violations, it refrained from doing so in almost every situation. Industrial relations researchers estimate that, over the course of the 1980s, 10,000 workers a year were fired illegally in precisely

these situations. This sort of intimidation played a chilling role in most unions' efforts to expand their presence.

The third principle—stalling—was fall back strategy when, miraculously, a union won an election. While management was required by law to bargain "in good faith" with this union, failure to reach a contract within one year of the election meant the election results would be set aside. With the aid of their consultants, corporate management took advantage of this loophole. The law itself never defined "in good faith," and so management developed the skills of "surface bargaining," of sitting at the table and going through the motions effectively enough to satisfy an already pro-management National Labor Relations Board. A year later and—presto!—the results of the election were erased. Typically, this process also led to the attrition of pro-union workers who, seeing little likelihood of union success, became fed up and quit.

Management's three-pronged strategy certainly depended on the support of the federal government. Reagan, and later Bush, appointed men and women to the NLRB and its regional boards who were not inclined to vigorously enforce laws that defended the rights of unions. Similarly, their appointments to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) shared their ideological distaste for government regulation and intervention, further strengthening management's hand. Over his eight years in office, Reagan also appointed some 10,000 federal judges, most of whom shared his anti-union, anti-regulation philosophy. Thus, corporate management could pursue its resistance to union expansion with little fear of government interference.

The entire system of labor relations functioned to dispense what Twin Cities folksinger Paul Metsa aptly called "slow justice." When American Linen Supply Company fired seven women in Hibbing, Minnesota, for exercising their legal right to strike in 1987, it would take more than four years for the NLRB to order their reinstatement and the federal courts to issue the necessary enforcement orders. Similar anecdotes could be recited from every corner of the United States. This "slow justice" not only wore down activists, it discouraged many would-be activists from ever taking risks themselves.

Non-union workers could see that conditions for unionized workers were deteriorating, and that their unions appeared ineffectual

in protecting them. As one somewhat cynical friend put it, "Why do I need a union to negotiate a wage cut for me? I can do that just fine for myself." "Concessions" bargaining—give-backs and take-aways—became the order of the day. Unions struggled to "hold the line" at the status quo. Management demanded, and often received, wage freezes or outright deductions, lower wages for new hires (the so-called "two-tier" system), reduced vacation days, increased co-payments on health insurance, and pension and health insurance cuts for retirees. They also pursued "flexibility" in work rules, which often meant radical changes in job descriptions, gutting seniority systems, erasing "past practices," and disrupting work life. In key industries—auto, steel, meatpacking, and trucking—management succeeded in dissolving industry "patterns" and pitting individual locals against one another in a competitive war. The "winner" (i.e., the one who got the work, kept the plant open, etc.) was the one who gave up the most!

It is obvious by now that yielding to such management demands did not "save" jobs. In many cases, it increased management's access to liquid funds and even hastened relocations and runaways. The net result of concessions bargaining was increased authority for management personnel on the one hand, and an intensified workload and increased insecurity for most workers on the other. In short, unionized workers in the 1980s worked harder, got paid less for it, and looked forward to a very uncertain future.

In *The Overworked American*, Juliet Schor presents data demonstrating that the average American worker puts in one full month more per year now than he/she did 20 years ago. Even with this extra work, his/her real pay check falls short of its 20-year-old counterpart. Schor argues it would take six extra weeks of work just to regain 1973's standards. Furthermore, workplaces changed in such a way that a new sort of injury became epidemic—"cumulative trauma." Back injuries, wrist injuries, painful disabilities due to making the same motion over and over again put the lie to such platitudes as "quality of work life" or "ergonomics." Management's response to this epidemic was to label workers "lazy" and "malingerers" and to agitate in state level politics for reductions in workers' compensation benefits. For many unionized workers, this all too literally added insult to injury.

Nowhere was the decline in organized labor's influence more acutely experienced than at the workplace itself. Conditions didn't just

become more dangerous; work itself became more intense. Some of the pressure came from the introduction of new technologies which, at the same time, increased the monetary value of what workers were held responsible for while it decreased their ability to control their immediate work environments. Some of the pressure also came from the new management approaches that were introduced—what some critics have called "running on yellow" (i.e., on the very margin of breakdown) or "management by stress."

Indeed, a veritable epidemic of stress swept American workplaces. When a major national insurance company conducted a survey in 1990, it found that 46 percent of its respondents reported feeling "highly stressed"; 62 percent reported "exhaustion"; 62 percent experienced "anger or anxiety"; 60 percent suffered from headaches; 45 percent from an inability to sleep; 38 percent from ulcers; and even 33 percent from "depression." These conditions characterized union and non-union workplaces alike.

If, angered by their treatment and determined to resist these trends, unionized workers chose to go on strike, they faced management's most powerful club of all—the right to hire "permanent replacements." While management had enjoyed this legal right since a 1938 Supreme Court decision, it had not been utilized until the 1980s. Emboldened by Ronald Reagan's firing of more than 11,000 air traffic controllers in the summer of 1981 and eager to play all their cards, management added this tactic to their labor relations repertoire. In highly publicized strikes—Brown and Sharpe in Rhode Island, Phelps Dodge in Arizona, Hormel in Minnesota, and Ravenswood in West Virginia—workers with 20 or 30 years seniority lost their jobs for having the temerity to go on strike. State governments, often run by Democrats, proved no more sympathetic than Reagan, as they provided the Minnesota State Police and National Guard necessary to bring scabs through union picket lines.

In short order, the number of strikes declined almost to the point of non-existence. In 1991, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported only 40 major (more than 1,000 participants) strikes, compared to the 1970s average of 269 such strikes per year. Workers certainly knew that employers were willing to resort to the radical tactic of outright replacement. Seventy to 80 percent of the corporations responding to surveys conducted by the Bureau of National Affairs in the late 1980s

reported that they would "consider" hiring permanent replacements if faced with a strike. Technological advances had undermined the value of their skills, no matter how long they had been on the job. Reagan's willingness to replace the air traffic controllers, risking the nation's air safety, further suggested that no one was "too skilled" to be replaced.

Meanwhile, farm foreclosures, factory closings, and economic hard times guaranteed that there would always be a large pool of hungry, unemployed men and women, desperate enough for work to cross a picket line. The federal government's manipulation of unemployment benefits helped swell their ranks. While 72 percent of the unemployed had been able to collect unemployment benefits during the recession of 1975-76, only 45 percent were so fortunate during the recession of 1982-83. Indeed, by the later 1980s, economists estimated that only 30-35 percent of the unemployed were eligible for benefits.

Organized labor's influence declined not only at the bargaining table and in the workplace. In the political arena, Republicans and Democrats alike blithely ignored the plight of working people. Despite the millions of dollars of COPE, CAP, and PAC funds which union leaders funnelled into politicians' coffers, not one significant piece of pro-labor legislation emerged from the federal government. The most dramatic example came in April 1991, when 230,000 workers went on strike against the country's eleven largest railroads. After only eighteen hours, the House voted 400 to 5 to send the strikers back to work. The Senate concurred by a "unanimous consent" motion introduced jointly by Orrin Hatch and Ted Kennedy. Not only did they order an end to the strike, but they imposed the draconian conditions recommended by a "presidential emergency board," condemning more than 30,000 rail workers to the unemployment lines and tens of thousands of others to a lifetime of irregular schedules. At the same time, Congress remained silent while rail management abandoned tens of thousands of miles of track and paid itself enormous salaries and bonuses.

Deregulation, privatization, and free trade became the watchwords—the "Holy Trinity," says David Morris of the St. Paul-based Institute for Local Self-Reliance—of national economic policy. Behind an ideological smokescreen of "supply-side economics," federal policies promoted the greatest transfer of wealth in U.S. history—from the poor and the middle class to the rich. Over the course of the decade, the after-tax incomes of the richest 1 percent of Americans rose 160

percent, while the after-tax incomes of the poorest 60 percent fell more than 10 percent.

State-level policies were little better. Whether Democrats or Republicans held the reins of power, taxes on corporations and the rich were reduced and social spending was slashed. Corporations whipsawed states into offering inducement packages for investment—tax abatements, bond-issue financing, and infrastructure development. And when unionized workers challenged corporate policies by hitting the bricks, governors—Democrats as well as Republicans—responded by providing the National Guard to bring "permanent replacements" safely through picket lines.

The 1980s was a disaster for unions, union members, and all working people. That much is clear. Management anti-unionism and government policies played an important role in the making of this disaster. But the story—and the responsibility—does not end there. Why were unions so ill-prepared for this assault, and why were they so ineffectual in resisting it? To find the answer, we need to begin with the very construction of the modern labor relations system in the late 1930s-1940s. This system began with the most dramatic turnaround in U.S. labor history, but it ended with the construction of a system that—ultimately—hamstrung the labor movement in the crisis of the 1980s.

Unions had declined throughout the 1920s and the early 1930s, almost to the point of disappearance. But then, despite an unemployment rate of nearly 30 percent, well-organized employers, injunction-granting judges, and picket-line-busting county sheriffs, the labor movement made its greatest gains ever, organizing nearly eight million additional workers. The next chapter will tell part of this story by presenting a case study of the Independent Union of All Workers (IUAW), the militant predecessor of Local P-9. But, for now, let's look at the overall picture.

Labor activists in the 1930s refashioned union structures. For the millions of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in mines, mills, and factories, the traditional craft structure of unions no longer made sense. New industrial unions sought to unite everyone who worked for the same employer and link all those who worked in the same industry, so that companies could not use wages as their basis for competition. In some cases, such as the IUAW, unions linked all workers in communities or regions, thereby strengthening all of them.

Inside workplaces, activists encouraged workers to tackle their problems collectively and directly. When workers had a problem or dispute with a supervisor, they'd stop work on the spot until the issue was resolved. Only then would they resume work. Even more often, workers resorted to slowdowns to get their point across in workplace disputes. Such tactics gave unions a strong workplace presence and gave rank-and-file workers ultimate responsibility for the quality of their own working conditions.

The new unions used strikes as their chief weapon—whether it was a matter of gaining recognition from an employer, gaining a wage increase, or addressing a workplace issue. Strikes were more effective than grievance procedures, negotiation, arbitration, or mediation. When workers found it necessary to go on strike, they often sat down in their workplace, rather than set up a picket line outside. They felt that management would hesitate to send in sheriffs' deputies, the police, or even the National Guard. This strategy also avoided conflict with unemployed workers who might be willing to cross picket lines to seek work.

The new unions also reached out directly to the unemployed. They helped them to organize and took up their issues. Unions demonstrated for unemployment benefits, for government job creation and for fairness in the allocation of those jobs. They made special efforts to retain members who had lost their jobs, charging them only token dues but keeping them involved in the union's activities.

Union organizers also realized that the industrial workforce was incredibly diverse. They published campaign literature in multiple languages, urged the celebration of varied ethnic cultures and opposed racism wherever it appeared. They drew union members' families into the movement through auxiliaries, and they addressed community as well as workplace issues. Labor activists promoted the practice of solidarity. They joined each others' picket lines. They supported strikers by raising funds and collecting food. They not only boosted others' morale through such efforts; they also deepened their own commitment.

Striking workers paid little heed to court injunctions. Some felt that the judges were biased, and therefore considered it legitimate to disobey their orders. Few had enough savings to worry about fines. Even the unions had so little in their treasuries that fines and court attachments were almost meaningless.

In many communities, activists encouraged the organization of labor-based political parties. Even without the existence of formal parties, union members ran for school board or city council. Even when these candidates failed, their involvement put pressure on mainstream politicians to take the labor movement's concerns seriously.

The internal workings of the new unions were another piece of this puzzle. Democracy and participation were the order of the day. In lively union meetings, workers debated local, national, and international issues, and union newspapers presented diverse points of view. In some situations—such as the IUAW—the union became the center of a "movement culture" that prepared participants for the transformation of society as a whole.

Union stewards collected dues directly from the members. Upon paying the monthly dues, a worker received a button. Those without the proper button were pressured by their workmates. Direct dues collection maintained an open channel of communication between the steward and the rank-and-file worker. It was when paying dues face-to-face that a worker was most likely to voice an opinion about how well the union was doing its job. The distance between the leadership and the rank-and-file was small. Many officers continued to work, and even full-time officials earned little more than the workers in the shop. They continued to share the same lifestyles and values, even if they disagreed on specific issues.

While the national and, at times, the state governments were somewhat sympathetic to the labor movement, the new unions rarely looked to the government to solve their problems for them. Rather, they looked to their own rank-and-file, and to the rank-and-file membership of other unions. However, within years of their dramatic emergence, these new industrial unions moved away from these formative experiences and took a new direction that would lay the basis for the disaster of the 1980s.

There were a variety of reasons for this shift in course—the economic collapse of the U.S. economy (what some call the "second trough" of the Great Depression) in late 1937-1938; the shift, especially at the state level, of the political climate in the later 1930s; the impact of the legal channels for unions created by the Wagner Act (upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1937); the worsening sectarian conflict within the U.S. Left, particularly between the Communists and Trots-

kyists; the growing political strength of the Democratic Party's "New Deal Coalition," and the consequent weakening of third party options. In some cases, rank-and-file workers grew tired of crises and conflicts, and sought stability. In other cases, pressure from employers and the government played a role. The contemporary system of labor relations was taking shape, and the internal structure and life of unions, even new unions, were changing.

In this environment, the builders of the CIO unions placed a premium on securing their existence through a contractual agreement with employers. They sought to negotiate "pattern" agreements industry by industry. Such contracts were obviously to be negotiated at a national level, taking much of the bargaining responsibility out of the hands of local unions. And, while these unions certainly supported each other across industry lines—through central labor bodies and industrial union councils—there was no room for essentially "horizontal" formations like the Independent Union of All Workers, which placed solidarity ahead of contractual relations with single employers. Indeed, the new unions' primary internal relations became "vertical," with orders flowing from the national headquarters of the union out to the locals. National union leadership knew that it had to "hold up its end of the bargain" with corporate management, even when this meant enforcing it against the will of some rank-and-file local union members.

The implications of this quest for contractual security did not stop there. The unions sought to involve the government in ensuring the legitimacy of their contracts. This necessitated the sort of practical politics that third parties could not provide. As the CIO unions grew, they tied themselves to the New Deal coalition of the Democratic Party. This was the way to get the legislation, executive branch enforcement, and judicial rulings needed to uphold the existence of the new unions. This political bargain went beyond swearing off third party politics. It also implied the acceptance of existing legal limitations, court orders, and injunctions, until they could be overturned through political action. Thus, when the sitdown strike was outlawed, or when a judge issued an injunction, labor leaders advocated compliance rather than defiance. And, in this sort of situation, rather than turn to their rank-and-file members, they turned to their political "allies."

This emphasis on contractual security also involved recognition of management's right to manage—what has become known in modern

contract language as "management prerogatives"—and a commitment not to strike for the duration of the term of the contract. Even the earliest CIO collective bargaining agreements traded the right to strike during the contract period for a grievance procedure. The typical grievance procedure ensured uninterrupted production by requiring workers to stay on the job while their grievance went through a variety of steps—the foreperson and the shop steward; then the labor relations department and the union shop chairperson; then the company's main office and a representative of the international union. Some grievance procedures added a final step in which an outside arbitrator was to issue a decision. Meanwhile, the worker kept working under management's direction, or suffered the punishment management had meted out. In short, under the grievance procedure, the worker was "guilty until proven innocent." Perhaps even more importantly, it took the resolution of disagreements off the shopfloor and out of the hands of rank-and-file workers and put them in the hands of full-time union officials.

To be sure, if grievance procedures did not bring "justice" to the shopfloor, they did provide workers with some modicum of protection from management. There is certainly no comparison between working under a contractual grievance procedure and working in an "at will" setting. But, historically, the coming of the grievance procedure undermined the use of direct action as a way of resolving disagreements. Of course, workers continued to practice direct action, and would do so for years and years, but the labor agreement now denied the legitimacy of such behavior, union officials refused to sanction it, and the government refused to protect it.

Even before World War II, the new CIO unions had taken major steps in the direction of "business unionism." The centerpiece of union leaders' strategies was the "security" provided by a contract negotiated at a national level with management and enforced by the legal system. They were already showing a willingness to sacrifice direct action, sitdown strikes, defiance of judges and legal authorities, third party politics, inter-union solidarity, and organizing the unorganized on the altar of "the contract." World War II pushed the labor movement further in this direction. It widened the gap between union leaders and their rank-and-file, and it encouraged leaders to look to corporate management and the government for their legitimacy, rather than to their own members.

The organizing core of the new CIO unions in the 1930s had been informal work groups, what labor activist Stan Weir calls "workers' families on the job." These groups had grown especially close-knit during the Great Depression. In the 1920s, many corporate employers had implemented seniority provisions, which meant that older workers were not the first let go during the hard times of the 1930s. Depression also slowed the pace of technological change, leaving the organization of production fairly stable. As a result, informal work groups in most factories, mines, and mills were built on years of familiarity and mutual dependence. These groups were often the key structures in the on-the-job actions, strikes, and unionizing campaigns that swept U.S. industry between 1935 and 1938. Futhermore, once unions came into existence, these groups provided informal mediation between the union leadership and the stewards on the one hand, and individual members on the other.

But World War II disrupted these groups. As Weir puts it, they were "confetti-ized." Many union activists, even men in their thirties and forties, so identified with the war effort (the "good war," as Studs Terkel calls it) that they volunteered to fight. Production in many factories was "converted" from consumer goods to war-time goods, from autos, refrigerators, and the like, to tanks, airplanes, and torpedoes. As these factories expanded, thousands and thousands of new workers entered. Thus, the war transformed the organization of production and shifted the make-up of the workforce. New informal work groups would be constructed, but the ones that carried the experience of the organizing drives and the responsibilities for the day-to-day functioning of the industrial unions had been tossed around like confetti.

As union leaders looked out over this new workforce, they had ample reason to worry. Most of these new workers had little experience with industrial work, let alone unions. Many were women and/or agricultural workers from the South. If corporate management had chosen to undermine the still-new unions, they probably would have succeeded.

But the government loomed as a significant interested party in this situation. It wanted cooperation with the conversion to military production and the guarantee of uninterrupted production. They stepped into the labor-management relationship in ways that went far beyond their enforcement role of the later 1930s, or even their inter-

vention during World War I. The government offered corporate management "cost-plus" contracts to guarantee that they would profit from the conversion to military production. They then encouraged management to offer unions a closed shop. In turn, the unions would offer a "no-strike pledge" for the duration of the war. Corporate management even went one step further. They offered a "dues check-off"—to deduct union dues from workers' pay checks.

In other words, the government became the unions' primary "organizer," and corporate management became the union "treasurer." The union, in turn, began to act as a party independent of the membership, even to the extent of enforcing the no-strike pledge when "wildcats" broke out. Under these conditions, union membership swelled from nine million to fourteen million over the course of the war. But many of these members now belonged to bureaucratic organizations that gave them little role to play or little voice.

At the end of the war, workers and their unions were once again engulfed in a period of instability and turmoil. Peace meant that production in many key factories and mills would be reconverted to consumer goods, and that many soldiers would be returning to reclaim their jobs. The "confetti-ization" process continued, demobilizing the rank-and-file and further empowering the union leadership. There were also deeply felt fears that, with the end of the war and its stimulation of the economy, depression conditions might set in again. Overtime work, which had been plentiful during the war, disappeared overnight, and take-home pay packets shrunk.

In this climate, the no-longer-so-new industrial unions launched a series of massive, industry-wide strikes for substantial wage increases. They demanded these increases be granted across the board, the same percentage for all workers in the industry. They also demanded that these wage increases *not* be passed along to consumers in the form of price increases. In late 1945 and throughout 1946, strikes swept U.S. industry on a scale not seen in a decade. These strikes were not coordinated across industry (and union) lines, although some occurred simultaneously and rank-and-filers often organized support for each other.

These strikes might well have had the potential to alter the trajectory unions were on. But their consequences proved only to confirm and strengthen this trajectory. The strikes themselves were

never linked by union officials. More importantly, most were settled through a simple compromise—the unions were granted the wage increases, but the corporations were allowed to raise their prices. The unions had taken a major step in turning themselves into "interest" groups, acting on behalf of their own members, but not on behalf of a larger *labor movement*, and certainly not on behalf of the working class.

A year later, the infamous Taft-Hartley Act weakened labor even further. It proscribed many traditional union activities as "unfair labor practices"—most importantly, those which expressed active solidarity. It also ensured unions the protections of the law as long as they played "by the rules"—rules that made them "interest groups" able to bargain only on behalf of their own members. The consequences were far reaching.

Taft-Hartley banned two of the most important solidarity actions in labor history—sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts. It said that unions with valid contracts could not strike in support of other unions, that the only legitimate basis for a strike was a direct disagreement with one's own employer. Unions which violated this law—and their contracts—through sympathy strike action could face legal action, damages, and heavy fines. This would become the basis for pressuring unionized workers to cross other workers' picket lines. Similarly, Taft-Hartley limited the legal acceptability of boycotts to direct conflicts between workers and their own employers. Unions could no longer seek to extend boycott action to other related companies in an effort to increase their clout or the base of involvement.

These provisions of Taft-Hartley "outlawed" the two most active expressions of solidarity and sent the message that unions would be tolerated only if they stayed within the confines of a labor relations system that recognized and protected direct bargaining relations between an employer and the union that represented its employees. Yet, it didn't stop there. Taft-Hartley also required unions to sign a "non-communist affidavit" in order to claim even these limited legal protections. Unions had to swear that they had no "communists" in leadership positions. Otherwise, they had no legal standing in the eyes of the National Labor Relations Board or the entire system that it upheld. Some union leaders or staffers resigned and some were fired or expelled in order to satisfy this provision. The unions that refused

to sign this affidavit not only lost their legal status, but the CIO soon expelled them.

This had a tremendous impact on unions' efforts to expand their organization. There were two major organizing campaigns taking place at this time—one aimed at white-collar bank employees, and another called "Operation Dixie," sought to establish a union presence in the largely non-union South. The major push in both drives came from some of these expelled unions. In the wake of Taft-Hartley, both of these vital organizing campaigns ground to a halt.

The focus of expanding union membership shifted away from bringing in people who were new to unions altogether (i.e., "organizing the unorganized"). In its place, an orgy of "raiding"—cannibalism—swept through the labor movement as existing unions, or newly created anti-communist unions, launched raids on the memberships of the ousted unions. The process was simple. A raiding union distributed cards in a workplace already organized by one of the other unions. When they got 30 percent to sign, they approached the NLRB, who would then authorize an election. Since the union already present had not signed the non-communist affidavit, the NLRB refused to list their name on the ballot. The only choices to appear would be the new union or "no union." The existing union then had to urge its members to vote for the "no union" option. If it were successful, it would then have to approach the employer and ask to maintain recognition. If the employer said no, the union then had to take its members out on strike for recognition. Considering that it had just asked these people to vote for "no union," it is easy imagine how difficult this process became for the expelled unions.

This situation encouraged membership raids on other unions. Union leaders knew that it was far easier to convince people who already belonged to a union to switch, than it was to organize, often in a hostile environment, new people who had never belonged to a union before. From this point on, most union growth came from the expansion of existing units (until the organizing of public employees in the 1960s), and no further beachheads were made in key parts of the traditional non-union sea, like the South, or banking, or white-collar work in general.

The year 1948 saw the final broad-based, progressive, third party, national, political campaign in the United States—that of Henry Wal-

lace for president. Wallace, the former New Deal vice president, drew significant labor support. But the political climate in America was becoming increasingly hysterical about a "communist threat," and as the red-baiting of his campaign grew, support for Wallace shrivelled. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party and its allies in the union leadership strengthened their relationship. All alternatives were being relegated to an increasingly marginal radical "fringe."

The mid-1950s merger of the AFL and the CIO was an anti-climactic symbol of the labor movement's capitulation to business unionism. The range of options within the labor movement had narrowed. Two key elements of the context should not be downplayed—the strength of the Cold War and anti-communism on the one hand, and the impact of Keynesian-generated economic growth on the other. That is, while the system of labor relations was maturing and unions were adjusting to it, rank-and-file workers experienced a rising standard of living over a more prolonged period than any generation of U.S. workers had ever known. They also reasonably expected even better for their children. At the same time, they saw what severe punishment could be meted out to those who stepped outside the bounds of the system. Thus, there was little rank-and-file resistance to union co-optation.

Kim Moody, in his valuable study *An Injury to All,* has captured the nature of this adaptation:

> Business unionism as an outlook is fundamentally conservative in that it leaves unquestioned capital's dominance, both on the job and in society as a whole. Instead, it seeks only to negotiate the price of this domination. This it does through the businesslike negotiation of a contractual relationship with a limited sector of capital and for a limited portion of the working class. While this political coloration of American business unionism may range from conservative to liberal, it is the bread-and-butter tradeoff—wages and benefits defined in contractual language—that concerns the business unionist...The notion of a balance of class forces between labor and capital as a whole is foreign to the business unionist...Thus, it is difficult if not impossible for the business unionist to comprehend a shift in power

relations between social classes in any terms other than the profit margins or market shares of specific employers, votes taken by 'friends' and enemies in legislatures, or the dollars and cents of influence peddling.

It was, of course, just such a "shift in power relations between social classes" that took place in America between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, becoming obvious with the union disaster of the 1980s. The unions, well-schooled in this system of labor relations, were ill-prepared to deal with such a change in the overall climate.

Between 1965 and 1975, a variety of factors combined to bring the postwar period of economic expansion to a halt—the rebuilding of the Japanese and West German economies and the consequent increase in international competition; declining profit rates for most corporate enterprises; the domestic pressures of the environmental and health and safety movements; the expenses of both the Vietnam War and the Great Society programs; the energy crisis and the rise in oil prices; the emergence of "stagflation"; the "blue collar blues"; even the political instability of the Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations.

In this changed environment, U.S. corporations launched new strategies, strategies so different from those of the 1945-1965 period that economists like Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison have called them a "great u-turn." These strategies included diversification (especially shifting away from manufacturing), globalization (moving operations around the world), and increased speculation. They also included efforts to roll back the influence of the government in the day-to-day functioning of the economy and labor relations—"deregulation" and "privatization"—as well as shifts in tax policies. The Republican ascendancy of the 1980s facilitated the implementation of these strategies.

Equally important were the new strategies adopted towards labor (what Bluestone and Harrison call a "zap labor" strategy). Corporate management was no longer interested in the status quo of 1945-1965, a "social contract" that tolerated unions who stayed within the confines of the labor relations system and rewarded productivity gains with wage increases. Unions were now perceived as an unwanted impediment to corporate goals—an impediment that could fairly easily be removed.

p. 75

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A PAGE FROM HISTORY?

Seeds of a Labor Resurgency

PETER RACHLEFF

It was a decade in which technological change, a racial, ethnic and gender recomposition of the work force, structural economic shifts, and employer and government anti-unionism decimated the labor movement. From 19.4 percent of the work force ten years earlier, unionized labor plummeted to 10.2 percent. The strike had virtually disappeared as a weapon of labor. Where 4 million workers had hit the bricks a decade before, now only 300,000 dared to do so. As the labor movement withered, wages stagnated and the work week lengthened despite a doubling of manufacturing output. Inequality grew, as the top one-tenth of 1 percent of the social pyramid took in as much income as the bottom 42 percent.

With unionized workers concentrated in declining industries and increasingly distant from the most rapidly growing sectors of the work force—people of color, immigrants, women—the arbiters of public opinion proclaimed the imminent death of organized labor. Union leaders themselves advised a strategy of caution and cooperation. "Labor is understanding more and more," the head of the American Federation of Labor told a gathering of industrial engineers, "that high wages and tolerable conditions of employment can be brought about through excellency in service, the promotion of efficiency, and elimination of waste."

This was the 1920s. Now, at the other end of the century, when fifteen years of open, government-assisted assault on labor coupled with the unprecedented (and also government-assisted) mobility of capital have prompted pundits again to write obituaries for organized labor, this dreary decade bears recalling. For in the darkness of that antecedent period were glimmerings of the movement that would be reborn a few years later. In 1933 and 1934 more than two and a half million workers would strike. Over the next seven years, 8 million would join unions, many of them newly formed.

It would be facile to imagine that we stand today on the cusp of a replay of the thirties—the political economy is vastly changed, as are the fortunes and organizational discipline of the left—but the past surely offers useful signposts for considering the future.

In the aftermath of the NAFTA vote especially, many have asked, What now for the labor movement? The response often centers on the global trends of capital or the political leverage unions might exert in Washington and in electoral contests around the country—all relevant matters. But the beginnings of a more intriguing answer can be found in developments, some as yet discernible only in faint outline, that are changing the culture of the labor movement. Efforts to organize the unorganized, to give greater voice to workers who have traditionally been silent and to redefine the objectives of the already organized point not merely to a labor "revival" but to a future movement that is as markedly different from the one that exists now as the C.I.O. of the 1930s was from the A.F.L. of the 1920s.

Among organizing campaigns, the most exciting are those that resemble social movements more than conventional trade unionism. For more than ten years, Black Workers for Justice (B.W.F.J.) has insisted that the organization of the South,

New constituencies, new ideas and strategies, are energizing the labor movement.

broadly speaking, is vital to the future of labor. Based in North Carolina—which has led the country in both attracting and losing manufacturing jobs while remaining the least unionized state—the group has promoted community and workplace organizing, fighting police brutality and Congressional redistricting as well as workplace inequities. Signing up with an established union is rarely the first step. Rather, B.W.F.J. relies on techniques, like speak-outs and union elections held outside the formal auspices of the National Labor Relations Board, that help build power in communities and rally public support for workplace grievances.

In Southern California, Mexican drywall workers, many of them undocumented immigrants employed by exploitative subcontractors, have established roving pickets who disperse to job sites and recruit workers. They succeeded last summer in spreading their organizing from Los Angeles to San Diego, and in attracting not only thousands of new members but also the attention of the larger labor movement.

Also in Southern California, and a few cities elsewhere, the Service Employees International Union's "Justice for Janitors" campaign has similar elements. The workers—most of them immigrants, some undocumented—have been exploited through a network of subcontracting. The S.E.I.U. campaign targets building owners and contract cleaners alike, using mass protests to aim at a large part of the local industry rather than at particular employers. These protests involve workers' family members and neighbors, are solidly grounded in specific ethnic cultures and make dramatic arguments for justice that have captured the imagination of nonimmigrants. Since 1991 the union has signed unprecedented contracts with major cleaning companies in Los Angeles and Washington.

In other cities, self-organization among immigrant workers

Peter Rachleff teaches history at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and is the author of Hard-Pressed in the Heartland: The Hormel Strike and the Future of the Labor Movement *(South End Press).*

has also emerged. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. has encouraged the organization of Asian Pacific American Labor Alliances in San Francisco, Oakland, Seattle, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York and Washington. In Boston, a network of progressive local unions has helped set up an Immigrant Worker Resource Center, which offers legal aid and English classes, while also organizing picnics celebrating ethnic cultures and disseminating labor news in Spanish and in Haitian creole. In New York City, the longstanding Chinese Staff and Workers Association has promoted independent unionization in the garment, construction and restaurant industries, while organizing protests in support of nonunion workers as well.

Much of the most innovative organizing prefigures new union structures: linking workplaces and communities; revolving around "worker centers," as activists in La Mujer Obrera and Fuerza Unida have called their community-based labor organizations in El Paso and San Antonio, respectively; and breaking from some of the standard forms of union activity. At the same time progressives within the more traditional labor movement have seized on these efforts as sources of inspiration and education for their own union brothers and sisters.

Some of the most significant union victories in the past decade have come on college campuses, where mostly female clerical and technical workers have drawn heavily on feminist ideas. While different unions have formally organized in different places—the Hotel and Restaurant workers at Yale, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees at Harvard and the University of Minnesota—a common thread and common organizers have connected these campaigns, sometimes to the chagrin of their respective internationals, which see their centralized control challenged by an independent network of women organizers.

In 1960, women accounted for 18.3 percent of union membership. By 1990, it was 37 percent. In new organizations that are overwhelmingly female, it is not just a question of more women or more members but of altered approaches, from the time of day they meet and the expanded role of small group meetings to the kind of literature they produce and the issues they address.

Even in the building trades, new ideas have started to percolate. Fifteen unions, inspired by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, have developed the Construction Organizing Membership Education Training program, through which thousands of rank-and-filers have been trained as jobsite organizers. Traditionally, these unions forbid members to work on nonunion jobs. Under COMET, they are encouraged to "salt" nonunion sites to draw members. Some even wear union jackets on the job, daring contractors to discharge them and threatening discrimination lawsuits.

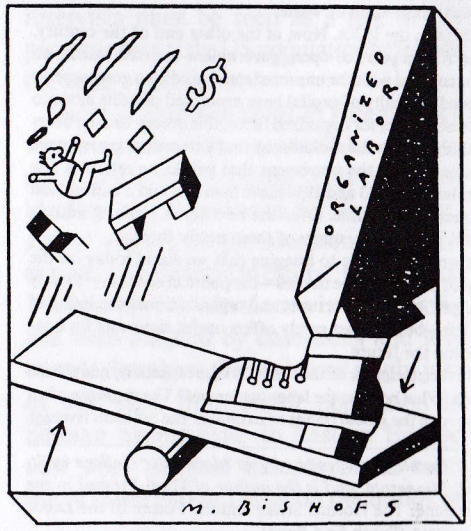
Equally significant are the efforts afoot to reorganize the organized, to shift from a culture of business unionism to what activists are calling an "organizing model" and "social unionism."

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, the postwar "social contract" between business and organized labor has been torn up. During its heyday, full-time officers, hired staff, lawyers and lobbyists had carried the responsibility for the union, while rank-and-file members were expected to do little more than allow dues to be deducted from their paychecks. Bureaucracy and apathy became two sides of the same coin. Economic growth and employer tolerance provided union members with a rising standard of living. But when the historical context changed, business unionism became as discredited as the deal that spawned it.

Of course, the transformation of the Teamsters, still incomplete but guided by the grass-roots reform movement Teamsters for a Democratic Union, is the most dramatic example. But it is not a solitary one. Among rail workers over the past three years, a movement for cross-union solidarity has developed from the bottom up that would make Eugene Debs proud. It grew in the face of deregulation and employer-government collusion to unravel generations of union gains and protections. National union leaders are only beginning to discuss such basics as coordinated bargaining and pledges of mutual solidarity. But at a grass-roots level, from Glendive, Montana, and Alliance, Nebraska, to the Twin Cities, Chicago and Philadelphia, rail workers have been coming together regardless of specific union affiliation to call for a united front against both their employers and the government. In small rail towns across the country, workers and their families have reached out to other workers, and to farmers and small business owners, to build a movement to withstand the greed of today's robber barons.

What rail workers and the "New Teamsters" have in common with each other, and with less visible struggles in dozens of unions—including those of the autoworkers, the postal workers, the paper workers—is a newly energized rank and file and a shift of greater information, responsibility and power to it.

In some unions, leadership at different levels has consciously introduced elements of this new organizing model. In most,



however, there has been significant opposition. Yet the thrust from below, from the ranks, has been unmistakable, and with it has come a new quality to the union, from the meeting hall to the workplace.

This new activist unionism has developed vehicles for communication, such as videos and computer bulletin boards, and organizational networks for mutual support. These include local centers such as the Youngstown Workers' Solidarity Club, the Twin Cities Meeting the Challenge Committee and the Mid-State Central Labor Council in New York; ad hoc labor solidarity committees, which have sprung up around particular struggles like the Hormel strike of 1985-86 or the ongoing Staley lockout in Illinois; new regional bodies, like the Western Nebraska Central Labor Council and the Eastern Montana Central Labor Council; national umbrellas such as Labor Party Advocates and the Rainbow Coalition, both of which seek to promote independent labor action. Kim Moody of "Labor Notes," an excellent monthly newsletter out of Detroit, calls such initiatives an expression of "solidarity consciousness."

The bosses seek a union-free environment; as ever, they have a friend in government.

NAFTA boosted these developments, particularly in terms of coalition building outside the labor movement and beyond national borders. And the popular education, outreach and organization that marked the anti-NAFTA campaign is continuing. The Teamsters, along with the United Electrical Workers (U.E.), the United Automobile Workers and the Communication Workers, have developed relationships with Canadian and Mexican unions, usually to tackle employers who operate in all three countries.

These relationships have strengthened with the organization of the North American Worker-to-Worker Network, based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. NAWWN's very name grows out of its commitment to rank-and-file involvement as a basis for international solidarity. Last December, members of twelve organizations met under its auspices in San Francisco and set an agenda for this year. Their priorities will be to support and expand the "Adopt an Organizer" program initiated by the U.E. and the Mexican Authentic Workers Front. The aim: to bring democratic union organization to the Mexican factories opened by U.S. multinationals; to bring Mexican activists to the United States to speak to local union meetings and community gatherings; and to develop an emergency network able to mobilize support in all three countries for workers facing a particular crisis.

No sooner was that relationship forged than it was put to the test, when Honeywell and General Electric fired union organizers at their plants in Juárez and Chihuahua. The U.E., the Teamsters and the Canadian Auto Workers, who represent workers employed by these multinationals, sprang into action with shop-floor leaflets, petitions and protest campaigns aimed at the companies and President Clinton. More activities are being organized with the assistance of NAWWN and "Labor Notes."

Here, then, are the seeds of the labor movement of the future: the introduction of new forces into the movement, the development of structures that link workplace and community, the evolution of new union cultures on the job and in the union hall, an energized rank and file in more and more unions, the building of coalitions with social movements outside the "house of labor," a rebirth of solidarity and the emergence of cross-border organizing.

Of course, significant forces seek to halt the growth of these seeds. And they bear a striking resemblance to their 1920s-30s forebears.

Employers now have more of a global arena in which to operate, to be sure, but their basic tactics are as old and crude as they ever were: divide and conquer, intimidate and co-opt. They alternate between browbeating and cajoling their workers to "compete"—that is, to produce more while earning less. And they rely on a veritable battalion of management consultants, lawyers, psychologists and paramilitary types, all eager to bring about a "union-free environment."

As ever, the bosses have a friend in government. For a dozen years, overt anti-unionism reigned in Washington and trickled down to the states and cities. The busting of the air traffic controllers union in 1981 was the clarion call of the era. In its wake, anti-union ideologues were put on the federal bench, on the National Labor Relations Board, in the Labor Department and in regulatory agencies. In their worship of the "free market"—translated as freedom for the corporate class and servitude for everyone else—one doesn't have to strain very hard to hear the echoes of the Republican administrations of the 1920s and early 1930s.

F.D.R.'s election and his pro-union posturing in 1933 and 1934 helped break open the floodgates for the tide of new mass labor activism. But when this resurgence—particularly the general strikes of 1934—threatened the deep structures of American capitalism, New Deal reforms such as the Wagner Act served to channel, and to blunt, this rebellion.

Bill Clinton represents a more blatant obstacle in the path of labor revival. At heart his agenda follows the same course that was charted by the Republican stars of deregulation, privatization and free trade. In the interests of "competition" it has a new theme: "labor-management cooperation." Secretary of Labor Robert Reich and Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown appointed a Commission for the Future of Worker-Management Relations whose mandate was summed up by Reich when he said, "The jury is still out on whether the traditional union is necessary for the new workplace." There was no mistaking that what he had in mind by way of alternative was not the kinds of nontraditional unionism I've been talking about here. Their "reforms" would undermine union organization where it exists and prevent it from taking shape where it does not yet exist.

One final parallel to the 1920s and 1930s cannot be overlooked. The emerging labor movement must also face the resistance of its old bureaucratic leadership. As before, these

p.73

DETROIT NEWSPAPER WORKERS STRIKE

Last night (May 1st, 1996), two striking newspaper workers from Detroit came to speak at what was a modestly attended strike support meeting in Baltimore. I was involved with the ad hoc committee that put the event together.

In July 1995, 2000 workers organized in 6 different unions (1) struck the two major Detroit newspapers, *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News*, who far from being rivals, are instead organized in a JOA (Joint Operating Agreement) whereby both papers cooperate in various ways, the most significant being a combined Sunday edition. Both papers are owned by huge national media corporations (Knight-Ridder and Gannet, the latter publishers of *U.S.A. Today*).

Besides the usual horrific concession demands (casualization, merit pay, health care cuts), which followed tremendous concessions already given up during the last contract in 1989 (one striker told how his pay had been cut $10,000 a year alone as a result of this contract!), there is the added fact that Detroit is still one of the heaviest unionized cities still in the U.S. So this naked attempt at union busting was provocative and a sure sign of the puffed-up confidence of the bosses in the current climate. Furthermore, the newspaper management has imported 2000 goons from the Vance Security firm to police the strike - a return to the era of the Pinkertons of a century ago and a brutal sign of how labor relations are steadily peddling backwards in the U.S. (2)

Last summer through early fall, there were several mass rallies and picket lines which attempted to shut down production involving thousands of Detroit workers. The police attacked and beat dozens of workers and on at least one occasion, the Sunday papers had to be airlifted by helicopters out of the printing plant. Rocks and bottles were thrown at the police, who fired tear gas and arrested many. In an attempt to get the paper out, 6 trucks suddenly barreled through a gate just narrowly avoiding running over several strikers. During one such rally, a newspaper truck was mysteriously turned on its side and set on fire while the T.V. cameras rolled - this arson was performed by... the Vance Security firm as part of a disinformation campaign to create an impression that the strikers were violent. The District Attorney's office is investigating Vance for its role in this arson.

The newspapers went to court and rapidly got an injunction limiting the number of pickets which, enforced by the union apparatus, immediately ended the rallies. As one striker pointed out, the courts work real fast when it comes to issuing injunctions and awfully slow on processing National Labor Relations Board complaints (the NLRB is a government agency set-up to process and arbitrate labor disputes, including unfair work practices by employers.) And this is a fact well known to management, who bragged how they would appeal any unfavorable NLRB decisions "until every striker was dead."

Since then, the strike has been at a standstill. The unions have called for a boycott of the papers which has been remarkably successful - circulation has plummeted by tens of thousands, major advertisers have pulled ads and financially it is clear the papers are losing money hand over fist. But since they are owned by large national companies who can afford to plow millions of dollars in to operating at a loss, the boycott, while substantial, has not had the effect it could have.

Strikers themselves have started their own alternative Sunday paper as a way of overcoming the almost total media black-out and this weekly paper now has a circulation of several hundred thousand in the Detroit area. (One amusing anecdote about the advertising boycott: when strikers went to 7-11 requesting they not carry the papers, 7-11 quickly pulled the papers city-wide without an argument; an act which puzzled the strikers until several months later when they were speaking in NYC they discovered that during a newspaper strike there in 1987 (?), several 7-11's had mysteriously had their plate glass windows trashed and a few even set on fire. A sure sign that the bosses exchange such information!)

The unions also printed up bright red and white lawn signs saying "No *News* and *Free Press* Wanted Here" which are up at over 100,000 people's yards. But it is indicative of the viciousness of the newspaper owners that they have issued an informal "off the record" bounty of $10 per sign for each one brought in. So the signs are snatched mysteriously at night (probably by the Vance goons) often with tire tracks on the lawn showing that it has been a hit and run affair. As proof, one union member attached a secret alarm to his lawn sign and when it was snatched, the alarm went off and he was able to confront the thief (a scab newspaper employee) who had half-a dozen other stolen signs in the back of his truck!

Also, quite mysteriously, it seems that there is barely a functioning newspaper sales box in the Detroit area

now - for some odd reason! And in the past, people who went ahead and tried to purchase scab papers anyway from these sales boxes have instead found fresh roadkill in the boxes and nary a paper! How awful!

THE ROLE OF THE UNION APPARATUS

The national AFL-CIO has claimed that winning the Detroit strike is a priority. Despite this rhetorical gesture, it is clear that they have not demonstrated this. So although they provided start-up money for the striker's own newspaper and have sent several key staff to Detroit, what the AFL considers as a priority is getting the vote out for Clinton in November - a commitment where they have put their money where their mouth is, to the tune of 36 million dollars. There is talk now of a National March in Detroit sometime in July (what one striker confusingly called a 'National Strike Day'). There are still tremendous illusions or hopes among the strikers about the AFL and new Sweeney leadership still although any criticisms may have been muted out of diplomacy.

Clearly the experience of the strike has had a radicalizing effect. One of the speakers, a striking Teamster, told how he lives in Sterling Heights (a white suburb of Detroit, probably an area where white workers moved to 'escape' the problems in the inner city) and the local police were on the board of his softball team for local children. Since Sterling Heights was the location of the main printing plant for the Detroit papers, it was there that some of the most militant mass picketing took place last summer. Now he has had to fight these very same cops in the streets when they waded into the picket lines in Darth Vader type leather suits and helmets beating people right and left. This was not supposed to happen in 'The American Dream". This was something that was supposed to happen in the black ghetto but not to white workers in the suburbs who 'played by the rules'.

But as the Detroit newspaper strike amply demonstrates, today there are no such safe areas left any more in the United States. Everything is up for grabs and no one is safe or protected from the current onslaught on wages and working conditions.

A final note about working to build this solidarity meeting: some attempt was made to interest the local unions in coming out or doing something. And it is indicative of both the erosion of basic solidarity and the absolute inertia of the traditional union apparatus (including the lefties and 'progressives' buried deep inside these bureaucratic structures) that there was practically no response whatsoever. A sure sign of the exhaustion of the traditional labor movement...

C. P. 5/96

June 10th Postscript: Since this report was written, there have been no major new developments in the strike itself. Shortly afterwards, a series of rolling 'civil disobedience' actions involving blockades of the newspaper's offices, often engaged in by local church and community supporters, have taken place (and led to several arrests). But such actions have not been successful in forcing the newspaper's bosses back to bargaining again. Not surprizingly either, the national rally the AFL was rumored to call on the one year anniversary of the strike has failed to materialize.

The strikers have a Web page, for those who would like to keep track of the strike: http://www.rust.net/~workers/union/union.html

Notes by *Echanges*:

(1) All groups of workers are involved in the strike: journalists, press operators, typesetters, truck drivers, maintenance workers..., organised in the unions Teamsters, Newspaper Guild, Pressmen, Typographers, Mailers, and pressroom helpers.

(2) The article doesn't mention that management has hired more than 1000 scabs to do the duties of the striking workers. This practice of taking in 'replacement workers' has for many years now been a common practice in US labor disputes.

continued from p. 71

leaders advise conciliation and cooperation with employers and the government, and they are willing to muster their remaining forces to try to strangle internal movements in their infancy.

Indeed, solidarity at the top level of the labor bureaucracy now stands for little more than sticking together against oppositional rank-and-file movements. In 1985-86, Bill Wynn, the president of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, was able to count on the support of the entire A.F.L.-C.I.O. executive board when he set about destroying Local P-9 in Austin, Minnesota, which had dared to buck the corporate agenda of concessions and had garnered the support of 3,000 local unions across the United States in doing so.

So the seeds of a new labor movement have a long way to go to bear fruit. They must resist inclement forces. They must connect with one another in ways that strengthen each—and all—of them. They must inspire the complacent, defy the cynical, make their own history.

This is a tall order, but as a historian I can tell my friends in the labor movement in all honesty that it's possible. Hell, it's been done before. □

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Prices are in pound sterling. Cheques or postal orders have to be in pound sterling or French francs. Notes in any other currency could be sent if they are the countervalue of the total order. Prices include postage. Orders will be answered only if the corresponding payment is joined. Orders can be sent to the following addresses, with an in most cases quicker answer if the Paris address is used:

ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT, BP 241, 75866 Paris Cedex 13,
or
ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT, BM BOX 91, LONDON WC1N3XX, UK.

PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

ECHANGES - Current issue of the bulletin Echanges is available free. Subscription (4-5 issues) is £6 and includes pamphlets and possible books published. Back issues are available, for most of them at the price of photocopying and postage.

Echanges et Mouvement.Presentation pamphlet (free)

Shake it and break it. Class and politics in Britain 1979/1989 - H.Simon, D.Brown - Echanges (90p)

Workers Councils - A.Pannekoek - Echanges. Part 1,2,3&4 (75p each)

The Hungarian Revolution - Council Communist Pamphlet (60p)

The experience of the factory committees in the Russian Revolution - Council Communist Pamphlet (60p)

Poland 1970-1971. Capitalism and class struggle - I.C.O. - Black and Red (2,00)

Poland 1980-1982.Class struggle and the crisis of capital - H.Simon - Black and Red (2,00)

France - Winter 86-87 - An attempt at autonomous organisation - The railway strike - Echanges (60p)

The COBAS - A new rank and file movement - Italy 1986-87 - D.Brown - Echanges (1,75)

The refusal of work. Facts and discussions - Various contributors - Echanges (1,75)

Out of the ghetto. My youth in the East End. Communism & Fascism 1913-1939 - Joe Jacobs - Phoenix Press (6,00)

Goodbye to the unions. A controversy about autonomous class struggle in Britain - Echanges (90p)

Myths of dispersed Fordism. A controversy about the transformation of the working class - Echanges (1,75)

The new movement - H.Simon - Collective Action(75p)

Some thoughts on organisation - H.Simon - Collective Action (75p)

Third Camp Internationalist in France during WWII - About and by Pierre Lanneret - Phoenix Press (1,00)

The Maryland Freedom Union. Black working women doing and thinking - Mike Flug - Collective Action (75p)

BEWICK EDITIONS

Echanges has received for sale a limited number of the following material (for a presentation, see Echanges no.65 p.17-18):

The American Worker - Paul Romano and Ria Stone (3,00)

Wartime strikes. The struggle against the no-strike pledge in the Union of Auto Workers (UAW) - Martin Glaberman (5,00)

'Be his payment high or low'. The American working class in the 60's - M. Glaberman -(1,00)

Punching out - M. Glaberman (60p)

The American worker of the sixties - M. Glaberman (1,00)

PUBLICATIONS IN GERMAN

Advocom Verlag (Steinbrecherstrasse 16, 38106 Braunschweig, Germany) has reprinted a number of Echanges pamphlets which has been added to our list publications above. The following old and new material is also available from Advocom:

Kritik des Leninschen Bolschewismus - Cajo Brendel - 45 Seiten. Contains the two articles ''Kritik der Leninschen Revolutionstheorie'' and ''Lenin als Stratege der bürgerlichen Revolution''; dealing with Russia and the Bolsheviks in general and in particular commenting two of Lenin's most important texts: 'State and Revolution' and 'Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder'.

Indien und der IWF (International Monetary Fund) - Theo Sander -100 Seiten, DM8.

''Des grossen Planes Stimm' und Gang''. Bildungsplanung als Illusion - Theo Sander - 216 Seiten, DM 17,80 - On the DDR (see Germany section in this Echanges)

FIAT. Arbeiterkämpfe in Turin 1974-1980 - Anthology of articles mainly from Italian journals - 75 Seiten, DM6.

Umweltpolitik in Thailand. Ein Land zwischen dauerhafter Entwicklung und schrittweiser Zerstörung - Ingvar Sander - 191 Seiten, DM12.

Polens Arbeiter auf dem Wege der Selbstbefreiung - H. Simon - German version of Simon's book on Poland 80-82 - 60 Seiten - DM 4,50.

continued from p. 68

With the support of the government and the assistance of consultants, corporate management launched its aggressive anti-labor strategy. The consequences of that offensive sketched out at the beginning of this chapter confirm Kim Moody's conclusion: "Business unionism was in no way prepared to deal with increased employer confrontation." The activists of Local P-9 sought an alternative response to the current labor crisis.