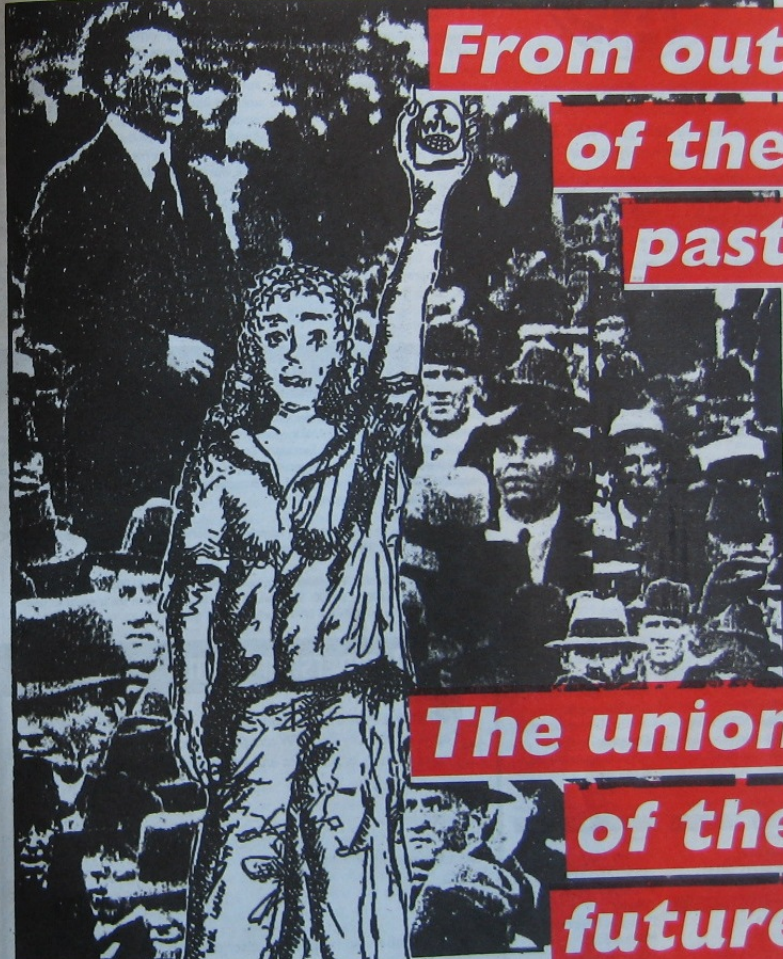


DIRECT



ACTION

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**From out
of the
past**

**The union
of the
future**



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No. 171 Summer 1999-2000
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www.iww.org.au/da/

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Preamble to the IWW Constitution

THE WORKING CLASS AND THE EMPLOYING CLASS have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.

We find that the centring of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Don't Moan, Organise!

Direct Democracy! All policy decisions of the IWW are made by referendum, not by a few big knobs in some smoky back room. Worldwide, the IWW has just one moderately-paid officer—the General Secretary-Treasurer. The 7-member General Executive Board is elected annually by the membership of the IWW. All officers are mandated and recallable. General Membership and Job Branches are autonomous; they decide bargaining and strategy for themselves.

To Join: Cut out or photocopy and complete the form to the left. Send it to: IWW, PO Box 152, Birdwood SA 5234, or contact your local delegate.

The IWW: An Affordable Union! For monthly income up to \$1000, \$5 dues per month, between \$1000 - \$2000, \$10, over \$2000, \$15. Initiation fee is equal to one month's dues. You can join the IWW for as little as \$10...

IWW Membership Form

- I affirm that I am a worker and that I am not an employer
 I agree to abide by the IWW constitution and regulations
 I agree to study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ POSTCODE: _____
OCCUPATION: _____
PHONE: _____
EMAIL: _____

Membership includes a subscription to *Direct Action*

EDITORIAL

Our Violent, Exploitative Century

DURING 1999, Channel Nine aired a series called "Our Century." Predictably, the theme of this series was the triumph of Australian nationalism and how, despite everything, we made it through by sticking together as a country. "Our Country" was heavily nostalgic, and by watching it you would have thought the twentieth century was the best one there ever was.

Needless to say, the twentieth century was not one bit as great as the capitalist propaganda machine, uh, mass media, would have us believe. We need hardly cite the 127 million people who died as a result of war, making "Our Century" the most violent in the history of human "civilisation". We need hardly cite the organised mass murder of eight million people for no other factor than that they were Jewish in the most bizarre display of nationalism and state worship of possibly all time. We need hardly mention the development of the most destructive power that the world has ever seen and its cowardly usage against a defenceless civilian population at the end of the Second World War.

"Our Century" was a violent century, and a century of deprivation. At the end of the greatest century on record, United Nations statistics tell us that 800 million people go to bed hungry every night, and that as many people die from starvation every two years as the combined total of both world wars. Because this century is so wonderful, these facts don't make it onto the nightly news

because they happen all the time, whereas another worthless Kennedy or member of the Royal Family dying is major news because it is actually "new", in that it doesn't happen all the time.

Right here in Australia, "Our Century" was a century of inequality. We need hardly mention the differences in living standards between rich and poor which we have seen and experienced every day of our lives. Figures taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that at the end of "Our Century," 50 per cent of the Australian population owns 97.5 per cent of the total wealth of this country. As Australians, it was "Our Century", but it sure as hell isn't our country—we don't own it. Kerry Packer, the rich yuppie maggot who owns the television channel which aired the "Our Century" series, does. Well, blow me down, what an amazing coincidence.

The last century, if not to say the last millennium, has offered a poor lot to the average person: the opportunity to work and obey, the opportunity to get shot in the name of nationalism or religious fanaticism (or both), and the opportunity to be poor and to not have food or shelter or both when we were not needed for the purposes of profit-making. With the turn of the century and the new millennium just around the corner and much noise being made about our glorious past and our happy future to look forward to, let us spare a thought for those who went before us in trying to create a freer, fairer

and more equal world, and for those who were killed, gaoled and exiled in the process of trying to bring it about—the workers of Russia who were betrayed by their leaders, the workers of Spain during the Revolution of '36 to '39, and our own forebears, the Wobblies of old, amongst many others. Let us draw inspiration from their example and make the next thousand years ones that we can be proud of.

Thanks to all the usual suspects for your articles and contributions to this *Direct Action*, number 171 for the summer of '99. We also got a few new starters; be sure you read the "Green Capitalism" article—it's a gem.

And check out "Taking a Stand in the Shipyard"; this is from the Ohio River valley of the USA. Way to organise, Yanks!

Many thanks also to Stewart Highway for a big, fat, chunky donation of \$150!

We are now running with Ben as layout editor, and he is also getting his computer onto some of the graphic work. The bloke's a star.

An apology to Diana and the Darwin Unemployed Workers Collective for bugging—your poem in our last *Direct Action*. It was our only mistake...I wish!

Have a Merry Christmas and get out and give your boss shit in the New Millennium.

See Yer,
Wal Larkin

MAIL

Your paper looks great, SIFWs. I think we're going to be producing our own here in Kentucky, USA. It's nice to see what others are doing. Good work.

Terry Nikolai Tapp
Louisville GMB, USA

Fellow workers,

Greetings from South Africa. We received the parcel you sent with copie sof *Direct Action*, How to Sack Your Boss, Workers Solidarity ad addressed to WSF in Joburg. As the last International Secretary for the WSF before it disbanded, it was passed on to me. As you will see fromt he enclosed WSF statement, the WSF no longer exists and also that myself and some other ex-members of the WSF

(plus others) are in the process of setting up a Regional Organising Committee of the IWW here in South Africa. We are just waiting for a parcel from GHQ in the US giving us formal recognition as a ROC for SA plus all the necessary documents, membership cards etc.

As the ROC we would very much like to use some of the stuff out of *Direct Action*. The posters Revolution Begins In the Sink and Impress Your Friends are a real inspiration. Also the article entitled ABC's of Revolutionary Unionism we'd like to use as a flyer with a replyform attached. How does this sit with you? I'm not sure of the processes with regards the production and distribution of IWW literature but we're pretty much experienced in this field so it's not really a problem to

reproduce literature. We've been thinking of having a street stall every Friday afternoon selling Wob literature as another rway of distribution. Maybe, in future, we could organise some t-shirts from you (as advertised in *Direct Action*) to sell here! - it's just a thought for now. I haven't proposed this to the rest of the group yet but will get back to you when we have made a decision.

Well that is about it for now. Hope this letter finds you well and look forward to hearing from you.

For the One Big Union

Shane Freeman
(on behalf of the (to be) ROC of the IWW SA)

INTERNATIONAL

Petrol Station Workers Organise With the IWW

WORKERS at a BP service station in Portland, Oregon, USA, have organised a Labour union with the Industrial Workers of the World. Many feared that Tosco, the corporation that owns the station, will illegally fire or lock out any who participate in the union, but the union has been public for two months and no firings have resulted.

Nevertheless, Tosco, a \$13 Billion company, the largest corporate owned chain of gas stations in the US, has made no secret of its hostility to unions, environmentalists, or anyone who questions their right to sacrifice all for the sake of profit. Tosco aggressively sued environmental justice activists from Communities For A Better Environment who dared to criticise Tosco's pattern of contaminating communities and waterways with toxic pollution. The company ignored repeated warnings of desperately unsafe conditions in its refineries, until an explosion on February 22 took the lives of four workers and prompted the government to order the shutdown of the entire Avon refinery in Oakland, California. Because of a persistent pattern of negligence, OSHA fined Tosco a record amount and the California AFL-CIO targeted Tosco for statewide demonstrations this year on Worker's Memorial Day.

Tosco has been forced to deal with unions before. Many Tosco refinery, trucking, shipping, and longshore workers have organised unions and won concessions, but the company has been able to keep all 5,000 of its service stations from organising—until now.

The station on 2020 E. Burnside appears to be the first union shop in the entire chain, but workers in other shops have joined and many are expressing interest.

The new union also plans to bring together consumers, tired of being overcharged at the pump, neighbors, tired of toxic contamination, and workers across the industry who are tired of being underpaid and disrespected. "All of us face a common enemy," said Bill Bradley, a worker at the shop, "corporations and their greed for profits."

For now, the newest members of IWW IU 230 are asking supporters to visit Tosco stations, pass on this invitation to the union, and tip any workers wearing union pins (or contribute to the strike and hardship fund, if you prefer). Supporters should then write on a customer comment card or an ordinary sheet of paper that they support the IWW and it's demand for wages that exceed the federal poverty line.

Where gas workers do organise, the union needs committed volunteers to organise into rapid response teams to defend workers and pressure the company to do the right thing. In the case of a lockout, for instance, supporters could occupy the pumps around rush hour, buying \$10 of gas and staying as long as possible. Church and community leaders should be invited to apply moral and popular pressure, engaging management directly. Artists, Musicians, internet activists, educators, and agitators at large are invited to forward the campaign in the most creative ways possible!

The new union has been able to organise significant mutual aid and support for gas station workers. In Portland, a local doctor has agreed to see union gas workers for free. Two volunteer lawyers supplement the IWW's counsel on retainer. City Bikes Cooperative and individual donations have allowed the IWW to offer the use of bicycles at no charge. The new union is collecting and distributing food to workers, homeless people (sometimes one and the same), and anyone else who wants it. More volunteers are needed for this sort of mutual aid as well as to visit gas stations everywhere and invite workers to join the union.

Of course, the best thing supporters can do to help the IWW is to organise in their own situations to look out for each other, make things better, and build a

labor movement capable of defending the public interest against corporate tyranny.

You can contact the Portland Branch of Oil Workers IU 230 via email at <billbradleyiww@hotmail.com>, or US Mail: IWW, Portland GMB, PO Box 15005, Portland OR 97293-5005.

France: Syndicalists and Farmers Battle McDonalds

MILLAU, Southern France - On 12th August, 1999, five militants of the Peasants Confederation union (Confédération Paysanne) took a McDonald's restaurant/pollution factory apart in protest against an American embargo against French products, which began after the European Union refused to import hormone-treated American meat products. This action was not a nationalist protest but rather a new step against capitalist globalisation.

The Confédération Paysanne fights against "genetically modified products" and for a "people friendly agriculture" as well as protecting the environment. In June 99, the Confédération Paysanne, CNT [Confédération Nationale du Travail, French revolutionary union] and Indian peasant members of KRRS (Indian's members) burnt a field of genetically modified rapeseed oil. At the international level, the Confédération Paysanne supports the landless movement in Brazil and the Zapatista struggle.

Seven days after the direct action against McDonald's, five members of the Confédération Paysanne were arrested. Four were freed upon payment of an incredible bail of 420,000 FF - 105,000 FF each. Only one, José

Bové, a historical and radical member of the union, remained in gaol, refusing to be released on bail. Under French law, bail is not a common practice but the State uses it to "break" unions or organisations due to the high financial costs! The French State did the same thing against the unemployment movement last year. José was later freed.

After 50 actions against McDonald's, the company continued to ignore her complaint.

For the first time in France, farmers and workers unions are involved in a joint struggle: against international capitalism!

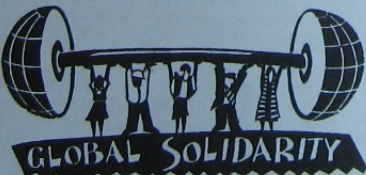
CNT-AIT International secretary
<international@cnt-f.org>

Russian Workers Occupy Paper Mill

During October employers at the Vyborg Pulp and Paper Mill, 85 miles northwest of St Petersburg, were locked out by their employees, who occupied their workplace after having not receiving wages for several months. The paper mill workers took over operations of the factory and began running it themselves.

In an attempt to seize the factory back from its workforce, Russian police attacked the factory with truncheons and tear gas. When this proved unsuccessful, the police began firing on the unarmed workers. In the clash eight workers were injured, who were then taken hostage by the police. In retaliation for the actions of the police, other workers, angered by the takeover attempt, beat up the director of the mill and took him hostage.

Direct Action Media Network



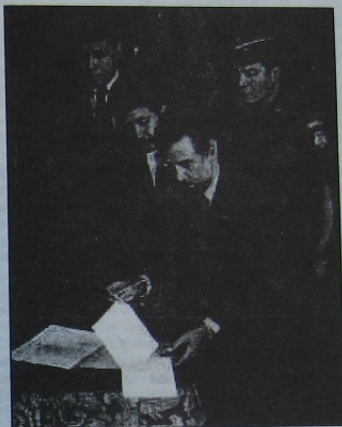
INTERNATIONAL

East Timor is Not Yesterday's Story

ACCORDING to recent reports, the UN mission in East Timor has been able to account for just over 150,000 people out of an estimated population of 850,000. It reports that 260,000 "are now languishing in squalid refugee camps in West Timor under the effective control of the militias after either fleeing or being forcibly removed from their homes," and that another 100,000 have been relocated to other parts of Indonesia. The rest are presumed to be hiding in the mountains. The Australian commander expressed the natural concern that displaced people lack food and medical supplies. Touring camps in East and West Timor, US Assistant Secretary of State Harold Koh reported that the refugees are "starving and terrorised," and that disappearances "without explanation" are a daily occurrence.

To appreciate the scale of this disaster, one has to bear in mind the virtual demolition of the physical basis for survival by the departing Indonesian army and its paramilitary associates ("militias"), and the reign of terror to which the territory has been subjected for a quarter-century, including the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of people when the Carter Administration was providing the required diplomatic and military support.

How has its successors reacted during the current "noble phase" of foreign policy, with its "saintly glow," to quote some of the awed rhetoric of respected commentators in the national press through the 1990s? One way was to increase the support for the killers—"our kind of guy," as General Suharto was described by the Clinton Administration before he fell from grace by losing control and failing to implement harsh IMF orders with sufficient ardor. After the 1991 Dili massacre, Congress restricted arms sales and banned US training of the Indonesian military, but Clinton found devious ways to evade the ban. Congress expressed its "outrage," reiterating that "it was and is the intent of Congress to prohibit US military training for Indonesia," as readers of the *Far Eastern*



Xanana Gusmao signs papers releasing him from imprisonment in Indonesia.

Economic Review and dissident publications here could learn. But to no avail.

Inquiries about Clinton's programs received the routine response from the State Department: US military training "serves a very positive function in terms of exposing foreign militaries to US values." These values were exhibited as military aid to Indonesia flowed and government-licensed sales of armaments increased five-fold from fiscal 1997 to last year. A month ago (Sept. 19), the *London Observer* international news service and the *London Guardian Weekly* published a story-headlined "US Trained Butchers of East Timor." The report, by two respected correspondents, described Clinton's "Iron Balance" program, which trained Indonesian military in violation of congressional bans as late as 1998. Included were Kopassus units, the murderous forces that organised and directed the "militias" and participated directly in their atrocities, as Washington was well aware—just as it knew that these long-time beneficiaries of US training were "legendary for their cruelty" and in East Timor "became the pioneer and exemplar for every kind of atrocity" (Ben Anderson, one of the world's leading Indonesia

specialists). Clinton's "Iron Balance" program provided these forces with more training in counterinsurgency and "psychological operations," expertise that they put to use effectively at once. As they and their minions were burning down the capital city of Dili in September, murdering and rampaging, the Pentagon announced that "A US-Indonesian training exercise focused on humanitarian and disaster relief activities concluded Aug. 25," five days before the referendum that elicited the sharp escalation in crimes—precisely as the political leadership in Washington expected, at least if they were reading their own intelligence reports.

All of this found its way to the memory hole that contains the past record of the crucial US support for the atrocities, granted the same (null) coverage as many other events of the past year; for example, the unanimous Senate vote on June 30th calling on the Clinton administration to link Indonesian military actions in East Timor to "any loan or financial assistance to Indonesia," as readers could learn from the *Irish Times*.

For much of 1999, Western intellectuals have been engaged in one of history's most audacious displays of self-adulation over their magnificent performance in Kosovo. Among the many facets of this grand achievement dispatched to the proper place was the fact that the huge flow of brutalized refugees expelled after the bombing could receive little care, thanks to Washington's defunding of the responsible UN agency. Its staff was reduced 15% in 1998, and another 20% in January 1999; and it now endures the denunciations of the (also saintly) Tony Blair for its "problematic performance" in the wake of the atrocities that were the anticipated consequence of US/UK bombing. While the mutual admiration society was performing as required, atrocities mounted in East Timor. Even prior to the August referendum, some 3-5000 had been killed according to credible Church sources, about twice the number killed prior to the bombing in

[continued on page 22]

INTERNATIONAL

Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan

UPON seizing power, the Taliban instituted a system of gender apartheid effectively thrusting the women of Afghanistan into a state of virtual house arrest. Under Taliban rule women have been stripped of their visibility, voice, and mobility. When they took control in 1996, the Taliban initially imposed strict edicts that:

- Banned women from the work force;
- Closed schools to girls in cities and expelled women from universities;
- Prohibited women from leaving their homes unless accompanied by a close male relative;
- Ordered the publicly visible windows of women's houses painted black and forced women to wear the burqa - which completely shrouds the body, leaving only a small mesh-covered opening through which to see;
- Denied women and girls admittance to most hospitals and from being examined by male physicians while at the same time, prohibited most female doctors and nurses from working.

Women have been brutally beaten, flogged and even killed for violating Taliban decrees.

Even after international condemnation, the Taliban has made only slight changes. A few women doctors and nurses are working. In Kabul and other cities a few home schools for girls operate—although only clandestinely—and women who conduct home schools could be risking their lives or a severe beating. Some war widows who had been reduced to begging to feed their children are now allowed to work in order to survive. Some hospitals have segregated wards for women. But the overall reality of the tragic plight of Afghan women and girls has remained virtually unchanged.

Gender Apartheid—The Consequences

- A woman who dared to defy Taliban orders by running a home school for girls was shot and killed in front of her husband, daughter, and students.
- A woman caught trying to flee Afghanistan with a man not related to her was stoned to death for adultery.
- An elderly woman was brutally beaten with a metal cable until her leg was broken because her ankle was accidentally showing from underneath her burqa.
- Women have died of treatable ailments because male doctors were not allowed to

treat them.

Many women, now forcibly housebound, have attempted suicide by swallowing household cleaner, rather than continuing to live under these conditions.

* 97% of Afghan women surveyed by Physicians for Human Rights exhibit signs of major depression.

Taliban Law is in Opposition To Islam

Prior to the Civil War and Taliban control, especially in Kabul, the capital, women in Afghanistan were educated and employed: 50% of the students and 60% of the teachers at Kabul University were women, and 70% of school teachers, 50% of civilian government workers, and 40% of doctors in Kabul were women.

The Taliban claim to follow a pure, fundamentalist Islamic ideology, yet the oppression they perpetrate against women has no basis in Islam. Within Islam, women are allowed to earn and control their own money, and to participate in public life. The 55-member Organisation of Islamic Conference has refused to recognise the Taliban as Afghanistan's official government. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, regarded by many as an ultraconservative, fundamentalist organisation, has denounced the Taliban's decrees.

Who Supports the Taliban?

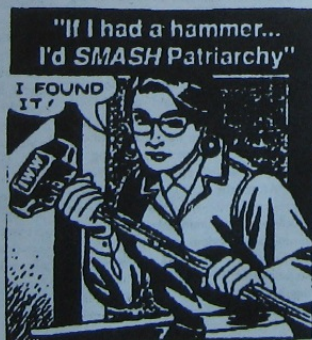
During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980's the United States through a CIA covert operation based in Pakistan supplied billions of dollars to support insurgent militia forces called the mujahideen (soldiers of God). Following the Soviets' withdrawal in 1989, factions of the mujahideen fell into a civil war and in 1994, the Taliban emerged as a dominant force. The Taliban is comprised of young men and boys of Afghan descent who have hardly lived in Afghan society. They were raised in refugee camps and trained in ultra-conservative religious schools (madrasahs) in Pakistan. Pakistan is the primary source of support to the Taliban, supplying military aid and personnel; Saudi Arabia provides

the Taliban with financial support. Additionally, Afghanistan is the one of the world's two largest producers of opium and a major drug-processing center; almost all areas of poppy cultivation are occupied by the Taliban. But perhaps the biggest potential for financial support lies in the petroleum industry.

Corporate Interests and the Taliban

International oil interests are in fierce competition to build pipelines through Afghanistan to link Caspian Sea oil and gas reserves to Central and South Asia. California-based UNOCAL, a U.S. energy company, led the CentGas consortium that planned to build an oil and gas pipeline through Afghanistan. The Taliban stood to gain \$100 million a year from this pipeline. UNOCAL announced it was suspending the project at the end of 1998, citing in part, pressure from feminist organizations protesting the company's involvement with the Taliban. Other U.S. and international corporate interests are vying for business in the country. Recently, Telephone Systems International (TSI), a New Jersey-based telecommunications firm, reached an agreement with the Taliban to install a satellite-based system throughout Afghanistan. Corporate investment under current conditions could mean billions of dollars to shore up the Taliban regime without regard for women's rights.

More information is available at <http://www.feminist.org/home.html>



A Longford Worker Speaks Out

The explosion at the Longford Gas Facility near Sale, Victoria last year killed two gas workers and shut off gas supplies to the entire state for two weeks. Jim Ward, an Esso worker, writing a year after the event, fears another round of scapegoating.

TWELVE months have passed between that day and this, but the nights are still dark, very dark. Outside the eucalypts sway into the night breeze, beside me is the slumbering form of my wife, Liz. Luminous numbers tell me I've been reliving my nightmare for about an hour now.

I'm dismissive of my bedside alarm clock though, barely acknowledging that it once used to herald the new working day. The kind of day I had on Friday, 25 September 1998.

On that day, like many others I spent working at the Longford gas plant over the past 19 years, I showered, ate, then drove to work on a frosty Gippsland mrring. That cold morning would give way to a glorious, cloudless Spring day that would do any tourist brochure justice. Typically, it was a tour of activity that day at Gas Plant One. We were producing mains gas, and lots of it.

The people of Melbourne were feeling the cold. Their hot showers and warm heaters combined with the industrial users of gas to suck hard on the supply pipeline out of Longford, and we in turn were sucking hard on the huge natural gas reservoir that lies below the surging waters of Bass Strait.

Things happened on that day that no one had seen at Longford before. A huge steel cylinder sprang a leak that let liquid hydrocarbon spill on to the ground. A dribble at first, but then over the course of the morning it developed into a cascade. This occupied the attention of men from all levels of workplace skills, experience and seniority. Ice formed on the pipework that normally was too hot to touch. Pumps that never stopped ceased flowing and refused to start. Storage tank liquid levels that were normally stable plummeted.

Things were awry, but the best minds at Longford and in Esso's Melbourne head office were on the task, giving our situation all the consideration they felt it deserved.

What we weren't aware of was just how critical our situation was. Expert engineers have since studied the confluence of events that occurred at Longford that morning and agreed on one thing. If they were where I was on that day, they would

have got everyone out of the gas plant and headed for the main gate. Think "running" as against "walking".

However, they weren't there and I was. And since I don't possess a chemical engineering degree, I was in Control Room One when the first explosion ripped apart a 14 tonne steel vessel, 25 metres from where I was standing. It sent shards of steel, dust, debris and liquid hydrocarbon into the atmosphere.

No, I wasn't standing next to it as supervisors Peter Wilson and John Lowery were. For that I'm thankful, because I could be dead too. No I wasn't adjacent when it threw Ian Kennedy, Reg Foster, Heath Brew, John Wheeler and Mike Shepard through the air like rag dolls. I'm glad about that as well, because my bones weren't shattered, my skin scalded by freezing cold liquid and then flames so hot they cooked flesh to the bone. Nor was my eyesight affected so that even today, 12 months later, normal everyday activities like walking, driving and reading are still difficult if not impossible.

Yeah, I'm lucky. Very, very lucky. My wife and children didn't have to endure the torture of eulogies, of burials, of unsaid goodbyes. I'm lucky because they didn't have to wonder if I was going to live through the night. They didn't have to see me comatose, only to awake to a new world of disfigurement, of pain and scarring, both physical and mental.

Yeah, I'm lucky. The trauma subsidies with every waking hour and God knows there are too many of those. Hourse spent considering a future that once looked certain. A future of churning through the minutiae of family, social, sporting and working life. Esso life. The future's not so idyllic now.

While I'm not facing a lifetime of corrective surgery to mitigate disfigurement, I can't work in a place where I once thought I would spend the next 27 years of my life. I cannot doff my hardhat to a Company that blamed me for the death of two of my workmates, the burning of five others, the

destruction of half-a-billion dollars of gas plant and bid them well, I cannot respect or trust a Company that would gladly have me face the tearful, bewildered stare of a workmate's bereaved family, while the directors of that Company seek refuge in the judicial cocoon of their legal advice.

And now that Esso faces 45 charges brought by WorkCover, I can't help but think that they are likely to point the finger at me again. I know, and the Royal Commission found, that it wasn't my fault - but that may not stop them.

So now I ponder. On this cold dark Gippsland Spring night, alone, while my family sleeps. While Esso sucks gas out of the Strait and into their balance sheet at the rate of a million dollars a day. While their lawyers plot and plan. While the burned and injured heal. While the bereaved go on grieving. While my future ebbs and flows on the tidal whim of a corporate sea.

NOTE A self help group for families and friends and unionists is:

The Industrial Deaths Support & Advocacy, Inc.
PO Box 3095,
Broadmeadows, Vic 3047
Tel/Fax (03) 9309 4453
Email: <idsa@smarrt.net.au>
Web page: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~idsa/>



International Solidarity Conference

ON THE 1st June 120 troublemakers from around the planet met in San Francisco to discuss the levelling of the playing field in the fight against the ever increasing globalisation of capital.

Representing 8 countries and numerous organisations many people from as far away as Sweden and Australia arrived to make two years of planning and hard work a reality—the 199 Conference began...

Primarily organised by the San Francisco branch of the IWW and the WSA/IWA the 199 Conference successfully brought together organisers and radicals from every brand of ideal...from industrial revolutionaries to anarcho-punks, labour organisers to environmentalists; in an attempt to provide a forum for discussion based on our common aims...

Ahhhhhh...
Do I hear mutterings from hardliners about "... learning our lessons from history" and perhaps suspicion of "...a 123rd International." Well rest assured that this author is no fool and has read and learned of the pitfalls that befell our forefathers...but I, like others, also see capitalism dancing on our faces as we have our labour and social/civil rights stripped from us in one country after another...

So yea merrily we may need to join forces in common to create a level playing field or face distinction or at best the right to inherit a planet so polluted and corrupt that they will be giving it away.

This said I would also like to point out that alliances are not bound in stone and I feel assured with the knowledge of our ability to faction and fracture it will take but a short time for our differences to drive us apart...in the meantime perhaps we can catch up with the fight an pose a problem for the greedy capos who too have joined forces in a concerted assault on our rights as workers and human beings.

And thus against all suspicion, browbeating and heel digging the 199 Conference came together as a forum to discuss strategies and tactics, to share experiences and defeats, stories and successes in an international attempt to make our revolutionary movement(s) a force that can reckon with, and defeat, the ever increasing beast that is The New World Order.

Having arrived the day before the conference I managed to take part in the final planning meetings on the Monday (31st May) which included a facilitation and a translators meeting and then a combined report back on that. Fortunately it was found that translators were not necessary (as long as everyone spoke clearly and avoided acronyms) and the facilitation meeting had thrashed out a set of guidelines to operate by which were put to the conference as a whole on the first day...

The conference itself was simple in it's structure with the morning of the first day being dedicated to orientation about the conference, the proposed structure and content and the afternoon being given over to beginning the reports from the various groups represented.

Later this day would be marred with the accusation that there were too many American reports (aka: IWWV) but from an overseas point of view it was the comment (made I believe by American fellow workers) that was USA-centric in its assumption that people such as I knew so much about the USA movement that we need not hear from so many american groups...for my own part I found all the reports to be of interest and that each American IWWV group had something different to offer.

Wednesday through to Friday had a regular structure...the morning would see us all (or the ones that survived the previous night of 'socialising') at the morning assembly to hear the last of the reports and, as the conference developed, report-backs from the various workshops...and then we would break for lunch (an excellent lunch was prepared each day by San Francisco Food Not Bombs for which I will always be grateful and for which they should be applauded).

Following the lunch break would be the days workshops and each day there was a choice of 3 or more than one could attend...inevitably there were numerous clashes of interest although this is more of a credit to the number of interesting workshops available than to any lack of organisation by the people involved.

Whilst the workshops themselves were undoubtedly single issue (in most cases) and often lacked any real strategic planning as far as world labour is concerned they did have at the heart of them a deep rooted class analysis and a willingness to learn from each other...of the workshops available I was lucky to attend two - The Anti-Fascism and the Women and Unions and in which I found a wealth of information and ideas reflected by the various politics and backgrounds of the others attending.

And had it been just assemblies, workshops and lunches the conference would have



been like many others...just a gathering from which each go back to their respective groups and/or camps and continue on...with a warmer inner glow.
But the conference was not about what was advertised...it was about the premise on which had been called and the goings-on within which was to be the far more important aspect; the networking that went on through social activity and through direct but informal organising...I myself was involved in a restaurant and food workers as well as a computer geek group that organised and met outside of the main conference structure and from those meetings has come some far ranging projects through which we can foster and develop the fledgling network that was born...for me this was by far one of the most significant aspect of the conference and what prompted me to fly halfway around the world to attend.

Will there be another conference...one can only hope. But whether the prospect of another gathering becomes reality or not 199, unlike many similar gatherings

left behind it something new...a new network of activists and labour organisers who have built bridges between groups that have until now allowed themselves to be isolated from each other because of histories and grudges that in reality have no relevance to us...and merely play into the hands of the rich who like nothing better than to see us divided.

199 was not about Unity for Unity's sake...nor was it a forum for recruiting (or poaching as some would accuse...although I think it a little rude to consider us no more than eggs) more it was about recognising that we are losing the battle against global exploitation and that concentrating on what we do have in common rather than our differences may open up another avenue to get to the pie in the sky,

fore we die...!

Agitator

Taking a Stand in the Shipyard

THERE'S been a lot going on at the yard. We work with thick welding cables, dragging them over the gunnel and cargo of the barge and when it rains, those generally ragged high voltage cables become a serious safety risk for us (I forgot to mention we're standing on sheet steel). Well, the foremen have been ordering us to keep working in the rain. Five weeks ago, I was working the side hole of the barge when it began to rain. The guys all went to the breakroom except four or so of us that were stuck in the holes and ignorant of the rain. The foremen came to the breakroom en mass and ordered the guys out. Everyone obeyed but one guy, "Johnny Militant," who remained seated. The foremen told him to get out of the yard and report to employee relations in the morning: he was suspended. I climbed out of the hole just as the rain was dying down. I went to the locker room to get another pair of gloves and I see "Johnny" changing clothes. We talk about the situation and about standing up for our rights as workers.

Well, two weeks pass, "Johnny" is still on suspension and it begins to rain once more. I had been talking to several guys about sticking together and how we are the union and we don't have to wait for the union rep or the stewards to help us out with a grievance. Everyone stands there in the rain looking at the grey sky. "Fred Chase," a welder in the cargo hull, turns to me and says, "You been doing a lot of talking. Well, it's raining now, what you gonna do?" What can I do? I put down my tools, climb the cargo stairs, stand on the platform for a moment so that other guys in other barges will see me, and then I walk to the breakroom and have a seat. All the other guys in our part of the yard do the same.

About ten minutes later, a foreman kicks the door open, orders us to get to work, then leaves. We sit. Fifteen minutes later the same foreman's back. He hurls his fat ass through the door and starts shouting while his walks to the front of the breakroom. Nobody moves. Now, of all the guys there at that moment, I am the only one on probation so I am the weak link. The foreman knows this and he walks up to me. He stands beside me yelling, "Didn't you fucking hear me?! I said get to work!" I let him yell then I tell him—gently—that I'll do just what he says, as soon as the rain stops. He stands there silently for several minutes (I think but my judgement of time was off) then leaves. After another fifteen minutes or so, the rain has stopped and he returns asking if we will now get to work. I get up and head back to the barge. "Fred Chase," who I think will join the IWW, tells me he liked the fact that I'll back up my words. It's been over five weeks since "Johnny Militant" was suspended and now we learn he's fired. This is that story, from a post to Barry.

Terrible incident at the shipyard today.

I was on top of a barge welding about eleven o'clock when I see that "Johnny Militant" is being escorted through the yard by armed guards. "Johnny," who's been on suspension for five weeks now for refusing to work in unsafe conditions, was being fired and the guards were "helping" him get his things out of a gang box (a metal box near the river you get for storage if you're lucky). I turned to Lopp, the steelfitter with whom I work, and pointed out what was going on. He said that it was interesting they had armed guards with him since it may be likely that someone would do violence to a foreman or company man but that there's no sticking



A story of union organising from IWW shipyard workers on the Ohio river...

together in the guys anymore and no one's going to start anything to help one guy. I look around and, all over the yard on the tops/gunnels of the barges, guys are watching "Johnny." All those guys, who the bosses are frightened of, themselves to frightened to make a move for fear they'll do it alone.

I put my welding whip and rods down, take off my hood and gloves and walk down the steps leading off the side of the barge. I walk past the security guards who just give me some badpuppy stare like they're aware of their nature for a second. "Johnny" is cleaning out his box and I tap him on the shoulder. I tell him I am sorry to see him go, and I loudly say I am sorry to see that he seems to be in this alone because he is not. Everyone is frightened, we've got families to feed and we're scared to lose what little we have. He thanked me and taked for a minute. I said to him that it's not always gonna be this way, in fact, it's just changed.

They hauled him off and I went back to work. The fucking sun bore down on us today, 102 degrees. I'm still shaky from that heat.

In Solidarity
Terry



From: "KY IWW" <iwwky@hotmail.com>
Subject: Wobbly Victory at Shipyard!!!!
Date: Wed, 13 Oct 1999 17:21:48 -0400

Squishy and Jerky Wobs,
Fantastic news! Our alternate steward found me after lunch at work today. He was out of breath with excitement. Turns out our "Workers' Council," the independent group that's been meeting after shift and talking IWW, scored majorly. I tell the tale: This July several workers in the shipyard filed a grievance against their foreman. The sonofabitch ordered them to work while lightning was cracking overhead. We work on barges and we're welding so that means working with lots of electricity on sheet steel. Not the place to be or the thing to do in a storm. They also said they wanted an apology from the foreman for cussing them a new asshole when they protested that their lives were in danger and they didn't want to die working. We always work in the rain and lightning, to our serious peril.

The "lightening grievance" sat and gathered dust, until five weeks or so ago when the Wobs in the yard --)---formed the "Workers' Council." This grievance, along with a lot of other things, was discussed. The "lightening grievance" was discussed in our "RiverWorker" newsletters (typed and edited by a Wob :) put out so far. NLRA 5 and 207 and Supreme Court inter-the pretensions of OSHA regulations were listed in the RiverWorker but the emphasis was on direct action and solidarity. The pretensions of OSHA regulations were listed in the RiverWorker but the emphasis was on direct action and solidarity. The pretensions of OSHA regulations were listed in the RiverWorker but the emphasis was on direct action and solidarity. The pretensions of OSHA regulations were listed in the RiverWorker but the emphasis was on direct action and solidarity.

Last week it rained and there was lightning across the sky. As the first drops of rain hit, guys began tapping one another on the shoulder and saying, "Hey, we sticking together on this!" We did and the work stopped until the storms had passed (with a few small exceptions).

Today the Company called the workers involved in the grievance in and agreed to their demands. Work will stop when two lightning is present. This is now a yard-wide rule. It is the first concession to workers' demands the company has given in two decades (yeah, I'm thinking it too; shriek a little for me, Ronnie R. if you remember how).

It's really nice to see some power moving back into the hands of the workers. It's also really nice that a number of workers stopped me in the parking lot last week and wanted to talk about how to get the IUB 320 together NOW. It's gonna be real nice to see how this latest RiverWorker hits, since it contains the tax records for our Hoffa-lead local. :)

Check you later,
Terry

Being a Union Organiser

Dear John,
Your post is exactly what I needed. I could just fucking cry it was so right on.

Out talking to workers in new stations today felt so good—it's so obvious to people that we're on to something. The only question is "do they want to commit to building IU230 with us." I have to believe more will, and that more who say they will are going to start following through better.

Just negotiated food coop and credit union membership for IU 230 members.

Food Not Bombs has empowered us to directly do food pickups and distribute uncooked produce right out of the gas station.

The Workers Organizing Committee appears to be giving us a key and a welcome to use their hall as our own.

The old strike and hardship fund from my non-profit job (\$140) just got donated to IU 230.

A worker in the gas station said the IWW is "giving me my life back."

Today is a better day.
Thank you everybody for the support.
I remain yours, always, for the obu.

Bill



FIGHTIN' UNION

JOIN THE IWW & PUT THE BOSSES TO WORK

From recent posts to the internal email discussion list of the IWW...

rather burned his own stree down than bargain with the IWW. All along, he was in total denial that a union existed. He was from Centralia, and didn't want it to exist. Fuck him, it did.

One of our dea wobs scabbed, out of fear for his citizenship in the USA (he was Eretran). One didn't go back, but he didn't hang on the line much either when we struck. So there was four of us, 3 women and myself, who ran the first wob strike in probably 75 years in Seattle. There was no Puget Sound GMB, except on paper—a shit-fight 6 months before had destroyed it. Mark Johnson and us, were the branch. There was no Olympia Branch, no Victoria Branch, no MTW, NO Portland branches. We raised out own strike funds. We went to the food bank together. We cried, argued like cats and dogs, debated, schemed, laughed, tunted scabs, and became more militant as the temprature dropped. People

came down to harass us, to try to intimidate us, just like the old days. One thug accused me of "hiding" the intent out our union. He screamed at the others "do you know what your preamble says!" In union was the response "The employing class and the working class has nothing in common." It scared the shit outta him. We found out later he owned the McD's franchise up the street.

In July we looked like c-store clerks. By February, we looked like brick throwing waterfront workers. We were very scary, and we had the 400 yard stare that kept people out of the store.

None of us had ever been activists. Things I remember are:
An old man coming from the kindergarten up the street, in his nineties, in tears. "Are you really wobblers?" Yep. "I can't believe it, I thought I's never see wobblers agin." Well, we're pretty small

From: SCN User <bp172@scn.org>
Reply-To: SCN User <bp172@scn.org>
To: bill bradley <billbradleyiww@hotmail.com>
Subject: mini marters
Date: Wed, 22 Sep 1999 21:49:22 -0700 (PDT)

Bill,
Don't get discouraged. Being a union organizer is a hard enough job. Being a union organizer in the IWW is the hardest job in the world. I really believe that, which is why I know I will never be happy in any 2 bit business union, or even a four bit union like UE or the ILWU. It wouldn't be challenging enough, well, at least not in the right areas.

When we first strated organizing at LPMM over 3 years ago, we had 6 out of seven people, five signed up (and later a sixth).

It was scabs loyal to the boss on a personal level that killed our strike.

We had no experience. None, zilch. And we were getting our asses kicked, because we happened to be dealing with an employer that would have

The Preamble of the I.W.W.
The Preamble of the I.W.W. is a document that outlines the organization's goals and principles. It is a key part of the IWW's identity and is often recited at meetings and rallies. The preamble emphasizes the importance of workers' solidarity and the need for a union that represents the interests of all workers, regardless of their race, gender, or ethnicity. It also calls for the abolition of the wage system and the establishment of a more equitable society.

How to join
104 W Washington St
Chicago, U.S.A.
350 Castlereagh St
Sydney



now. "Well, you are small, but you have a big idea, a One Big Union." He had scrawled down the words to the *Preacher and the Slave* on the back of an envelope from memory, and sang it to us. He told us that he grew up in a LWIU hall in Aberdeen, the IWW lumberworker's union—his parents were wobs. He is probably dead now. We gave him a gift by doing what we did—we gave him hope that after he was gone, the tradition would come alive again.

At one point we knew that we would never work there again. But the owner, Webb, had been screwing people over in West Seattle for years. A man drove from Okanogan county, 5 hours to tell us: "I saw the picture in the Times. I just wanted you to know that he screwed mme out of \$300 ten years ago. I am glad to see that he is getting what he deserves." This happened all the time, people we didn't even know, who had no idea what the IWW was about, were expressing how glad that someone finally had the balls enough to fuck him back. After what we went through, I can see why. So we decided that our goal was to punish that guy, and use the noise made to send a clear distinct message—the IWW was back, and we would kick ass and take names. That is sort of why some in Seattle have the idea that we don't fuck with us attitude. That was the message we sent to the world of business. We war a wob button in West Seattle and you are either respected, or feared. The Left up here is scared shitless of us. Our immediate boss went from moving up in the corporate world to having to take a job with Fed Ex. He lost his business hack wife. His neighborhood ostracised him on his treatment of us, both at work and on the picket line. He had to move. From store manager with partial ownership to non union working stiff.

We didn't get a shop. But our goal was to resurrect the IWW. We succeeded.

That strike is why I live in the neighborhood now. I live one block from the place. The vacant lot next to me was a victorian house in 1917. It was owned by Mr Jacobson's immigrant parents in 1917. His father was a logger, and carried a red card. Mr Jacobson waltz our line, with members of the teamsters out of local 174, the TDU controlled local.

What you all have is so far advanced than what we had. Hold on to it, and see where it goes. Don't give up the IWW banner. You have already succeeded. Succeeded more! A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. For, where else can we go? Make some memories, and make the OBU a reality.

John



303 W. Washington Ave., Spokane, WA 99201

BECAUSE CAPITALISM CANNOT BE REFORMED!

32

Green Capitalism

ALTHOUGH it was only 7 or 8 years, it seems like a lifetime ago that I worked as a "community activist" for Greenpeace. Community activist was a fancy way of saying revenue raiser or environmental salesperson. I was 18 or 19 and naively idealistic.

Greenpeace fixed that. As with any occupation that is seen as altruistic in nature, the pay and conditions were pretty shoddy, unless you were good at sales. The pay was a flat rate of \$30 a day, for around 5-6 hours of work. However if you were good at signing up new members and could reach the magical quota of \$100 a day you could earn up to 45% of the revenue raised. This meant that there were two types of activist, the respected regular quota ratchers and the retraining activist in need of motivation or new sales techniques. The main task for the activist was membership raising and this was accomplished by doorknocking. Not all activists had to constantly doorknock, the respected activist got to work on stalls, actions or give talks to schools, etc. The re-training activist was too busy re-training and practising sales techniques. This meant that people with impeccable environmental knowledge but no skills or interest in sales were pushed to the point of humiliation. One very principled bloke refused to accept credit cards or direct debit, he lasted 3 months and very rarely made quota.

Greenpeace prided itself on being progressive and therefore it couldn't sack the unsuccessful activist. But boy did it encourage people to quit! This wouldn't have all been so bad if Greenpeace hadn't had its own class system. When I first joined we activists had our own office, but in the spirit of these rationalist times it was closed and we moved in with "The Campaigners". These people were on a lot more than \$30 a day, but hey, "they could make a lot more in private enterprise!" They were real martyrs!

We were now under a lot more direct control and any actions had to pass campaigners scrutiny, which dampened the enthusiasm of more than a few. We were told that through hard work we could become campaigners. I don't remember one activist becoming a campaigner and more than a couple could have (myself included). A us and them mentality developed between

the activists and campaigners. This was highlighted at a christmas party when a campaigner turned comedian told a joke about "the smell coming from the basement". We activists weren't laughing.

The really sad and maddening thing about Greenpeace was that they would employ anyone to work as an activist. I remember once sitting next to a bloke in a suit who chatted away on a mobile phone whilst waiting for the van to take us out on "turf". At the other end of the scale were the long-term unemployed. For some young people Greenpeace was their first job ever and they were prepared to suffer humiliation from the public and their "progressive" boss. Still, I met some amazing people in my time as an activist and this was definitely the jobs saving grace.

As Greenpeace was most concerned with the activist reaching quota and making the organisation money we weren't sent to any old suburb. This led to the insane situation of having to constantly trudge around the North Shore, Eastern Suburbs and the gentrified, inner city areas of Sydney. The areas with cash. I suppose we could have convinced a few to make small reforms in regard to the environment, such as recycling. But all we probably did was sooth the consciences of a few rich people at the bargain basement price of, on average, 50 bucks.

I lasted almost 18 months, which was actually a long time, but it took 3-6 months to get the hang of sales. As the hierarchical nature of the organisation began to annoy, so too did the ideology. The Greenpeace endorsement of the "Green Olympics" and the emphasis upon making industry environmentally friendly seemed nowhere near the solution to our environmental problems. The reproduction of economic inequality endorses and strengthens the capitalist system. It is this system that is responsible for the destruction of the environment.

Green capitalism is not only an illusion but a hoax!

Greenpeace prided itself on being the radical environmental group not afraid to confront industry. The truth is that it is a trendy club for educated middle class kids playing radicals. Kids who will probably end up "earning a lot more in private enterprise!"

Grant



The State of the World

THIS summer, the United Nations Development Programme issued its annual Human Development Report. The document is a stinging indictment of globalization and its horrific impact on the well-being of so many of the world's people.

According to the Report, in developing countries nearly 1.3 billion people do not have access to clean water, one in seven children of primary school age is out of school, 840 million people are malnourished, and an estimated 1.3 billion people live on incomes of less than \$1 a day. Even in the industrial countries, globalisation has taken a grim toll. One person in eight suffers from either long-term unemployment, illiteracy, a life-expectancy of less than 60 years, or an income below the national poverty line.

This human misery is not a consequence of globalisation's insufficient advance. "More than 80 countries still have per capita incomes lower than they were a decade or more ago," comments the Report. In sub-Saharan African and some other least developed countries, per capita incomes are lower than they were in 1970. And some of the countries that are worst off are those that are most integrated into the global economy. Exports account for close to 30% of the gross domestic product of impoverished sub-Saharan Africa, for example, compared to less than 20% for the industrial nations. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where privatisation and the market have expanded most rapidly, "the dismantling and weakening of the welfare state have meant cuts and deterioration in services in health and education—across the board—contributing to the deteriorating human outcomes. Life expectancy was lower in 1995 than in 1989 in 7 of 18 countries—falling as much as five years since 1987. Enrolment in kindergarten declined dramatically."

The gap between rich and poor has, in the words of the report, today "reached grotesque proportions." In 1960, the countries with the wealthiest fifth of the world's people had per capita incomes 30 times that of the poorest fifth. By 1990, the ratio had doubled to 60 to one, and by 1995 it stood at 74 to one. And the Asian economic crisis of the past few years has exacerbated the marginalisation of the poorest countries.

Within nations, the income gap has been growing as well. Eastern Europe

and the former Soviet Union have experienced "the fastest rise in inequality ever." Russia now has the world's greatest inequality, with the richest 20% having 11 times the income of the bottom 20%. Income inequalities have also grown dramatically in China, Indonesia, Thailand, other East and South-East Asian countries, and in the industrialised countries, especially Sweden, Britain, and the United States. A recent study by the

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (reported in the New York Times of Sept. 5, 1999) found that the richest 1 percent of Americans earned as much after taxes as the poorest 100 million; in 1977 the top 1 percent only (!) had as much as the bottom 49 million. The poorest 20 percent are making less today in real terms (adjusting for inflation) than they were in 1977.

The assets of the world's three richest people, notes the Human Development Report, are more than the combined GNP of all least developed countries on the planet. (This piece of information is already out of date: the statement was based on a report in *Forbes* magazine for Oct. 12, 1998, when Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and Paul Allen had combined assets of \$110 billion; on July 17, 1999, the NYT reported that the first two of these individuals alone were worth more than \$140 billion.) The assets of the 200 richest people in 1998 were more than the total income of 41% of the world's people. The Report observes that a measly 1% tax on the wealth of these 200 people could fund primary education for all the world's children who lack access to schooling.

One major source for the growing inequality and the global suffering is the spread of markets. For example, as the Report points out, for much of human history care-giving—attending to the young, the old, the sick, and the rest of us—was performed by women outside the market, based on a gender division of



labor and female subordination. As women have entered the market—partly by choice and partly by economic pressures—they are still largely responsible for care-giving activities, which has forced a reduction in the time devoted to care, just as state services are being cut back as well. The "expansion of markets tends to penalise altruism and care."

Markets also undermine the environment. "Despite widespread public support for environmental action, the driving forces of globalisation still put profit before environmental protection, preservation and sustainability." The World Trade Organisation, the international body responsible for aligning environmental and trade policy, has instead acted to protect the trading system from government policies designed to protect the environment. The WTO, like the other main international institutions, reflects the interests of the rich nations, "often those of the G-7 [the seven largest industrial economies], or sometimes just the G-1 [the United States]."

But it should not be thought that the rich countries and the multinational corporations are consistent defenders of markets. They favour markets except when it advances their interests to favour state action on their behalf. And so a major aspect of the current globalisation is extending the reach of patents to enhance corporate profits. As the Human Development Report notes, "most developing countries previously exempted agriculture, medicines and other products

from national patent laws, but with the passage of the agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), almost all knowledge-based production is now subject to intellectual property protection, unified internationally. Products developed with public funds are increasingly being monopolised by private firms.

The 1999 Human Development Report is unusual for an official document in being so critical of the powerful and the wealthy. In fact, the new UNDP Administrator Michael Malloch Brown, perhaps worried about his funding, felt obliged to remind us in his foreword to the Report that its authors enjoy "robust editorial independence" and to assure us that the Report "comes down clearly in favour of the power of globalization to bring economic and social benefits to societies." Brown gently admonished the Report's authors: "In listing the negative impacts of markets on people, it is important not to appear to be rejecting markets as the central organising principle of global economic life. Markets need institu-

tions and rule—and too frequently in the global setting they are not yet adequately subjected to the control of either. But the unleashing of competition within countries and between countries has ushered in for many an era of prosperity and liberty." Brown goes on to note that where he "fully agree[s] with the authors is that this empowerment has been uneven." His conclusion is that we need to "keep markets free but fair."

Brown's formulation, however, begs the question. What if "free markets" are inherently unfair? Markets produce and allocate goods based on the number of dollars that demand them, not on the basis of need. A million dollars from a wealthy individual creates more market demand than ten dollars from a thousand needy individuals. Moreover, even if everyone started out with equal incomes, markets work by creating winners and losers, thus generating inequality and leading to domination by the rich. In addition, markets are fundamentally incompatible with building community: they

depend on ruthless competition and penalise those who regard others as human beings. Thus, the necessary consequence of markets is self-centeredness, inequality, and a lack of democratic control over the economy.

Fortunately, however, there is nothing inevitable about globalisation. It is the result of political decisions and as such can be contested. Grassroots political action managed to stop the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, and September 15 was declared an International Day of Action against the World Trade Organisation. All who could ought to have added their voices to the protest.

The full text of the 1999 Human Development Report is on-line at: <http://www.undp.org/hdro/index2.html>.

For many useful resources on the anti-World Trade Organisation campaign, go to Public Citizen's Trade Watch site: <http://www.tradewatch.org/publications/igw-pubs.htm>.

znet - www.zmog.org

Goodbye to Bad Rubbish

"The Employing Class and the Working Class Have Nothing in Common"

THIS phrase has been highlighted for the people of Newcastle like never before. Giant steelmaker BHP recently finished its steel making operations after 80 years in the city: 80 years of exploitation, environmental vandalism and complete disregard for the valid concerns of local people over health problems associated with the steelworks. BHP still denies that their operations cause harmful pollution, but the truth is that they could not even provide a safe workplace for their own workers.

The reaction in Newcastle ranged from anger through sadness to relief. Some said, "Goodbye to bad rubbish," whilst others lamented the passing of an era and wondered this meant for Newcastle. BHP represented not only the regions largest boss, but also the areas conservative working class ethos. For generations the steelworks provided jobs and some stability for many workers and their families. The fact that massive profits were leaving the area was overlooked because, although life was a struggle at times, it was mainly good in "our town."

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the workers were loyal to the end. BHP repaid this loyalty by dumping its workforce on the scrapheap. For the workers the real slap in the face is that their steelworks is still profitable today. It may still be turning a profit, but in terms of opportunity cost it is lagging behind. That's right—after 80 years of

exploiting the people of Newcastle BHP is moving "off-shore." The "Big Australian" is now "The Big ?????" Afro-Australian perhaps? BHP is moving to some poor developing nation where the government is more friendly to Capital (is that possible?) and unions are non-existent or shot at.

A big question that workers may want to ask themselves is where were the unions? It seemed as if the unions rolled over and allowed it to happen as if it was inevitable. This shows the absolute ineffectiveness of the Capitalist "lackey" craft unions. If the workers of Newcastle had all joined together then instead of BHP turning it's back on Newcastle and closing the steelworks, we could have kept the steelworks and asked BHP to leave!

Although the workers of Newcastle have been treated very shoddily, the future BHP wage-slaves will be in for an even rougher time. One only needs to look at the operations of BHP at the Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea to see what is in store for the lucky nations in receipt of future BHP "investment." Newcastle is probably lucky it isn't a "developing" nation or BHP would have left us nothing but a hole in the ground.

So while BHP goes on to exploit in a distant corner of the world, the workers of Newcastle are unemployed. The captains of industry and their politician mates in the Labor Party are assuring Newcastle that this



"So long, partner!"

is a chance for the city, almost a blessing. Now Newcastle can attract tourists and "Clean Green" industry to the area. How many of the now redundant workers from the steelworks will benefit from this? Not a lot, you can probably guess.

The lesson for the working class (soon to be under-class?) people of Newcastle is all too clear. Nationalism is dead. The ruling class has killed it off. They will do nothing but protect themselves, so surely it's time for the working class to do the same. Our rulers don't care about Australian jobs or the plight of their under privileged Aussie "mates," so why should we care about maintaining their privileged positions?

Grant

For Whom do You Write?

Transcript of performance given by IWW members Phil Doyle and Christos Tsiolkas at the 1999 Newcastle Young Writers Festival.

CHRISTOS: We'd like to begin by quoting from the Anarchist poet Harry Hotten who lived and worked in Newcastle. It seems fitting for us to take inspiration from Hotten who was one of Australia's best and most political of poets. His work, of course, is now out of print. This is from *I'll Tell You Something*, a poem he wrote during the years of World War II.

*Momentous events sweep up,
Alter the contours of our era:
Empires arise in the Pacific overnight,
And little men boom mightily in the arena;
World in the throes of birth is convulsed,
And timely things file gently through the area
Men call their minds:*

*There is a shortage of eggs, and a surplus of rats
Attracted by backyard fowl runs,
They've abolished Father Xmas, icing on lolly pigs, cuffs on trousers.
They've cut out crosses on hot cross buns.
There's a shortage of food, and of mouths to feed.
Babies, Australia's best immigrants, we must breed.
But there's no houses and flats lead to divorce and
horses for courses oats for goats Brisbane for
buses Sydney for thugs Melbourne for mugs
Adelaide for Churches Perth for pots.
In the midst of life we are in Perth.
The good earth has gone to sea;
And our soiled sages dreaming of reclaimed land, a
Green corn paradise for rabbits, grasshoppers, sheep, have gone to seed.
And there is some talk of juvenile delinquency (by
adult delinquents at war) and some
Talk of reconstruction, and on one side is the Pacific Ocean
And the steel works are full.*

Christos: But its now 1999 and the steel works are empty and the workers have no jobs. My white trash brother will speak for me now.

Phil: I was born Australian to Greek migrants who escaped peasantry and poverty to make themselves exiles to factory work and to wages. There is fortune in life—what is the history of politics worth if not the teaching us of that lesson? I was fortunate to be born into a tradition of familial responsibility. Though I can now question the worth of my parents sacrifices for their children, I cannot question the benefit of it for me. Life was made safe for me and I know that this is not the family history of everyone. This knowledge has taught me responsibility. I refuse to be ironic about that.

I have written and spoken the following words: I am not

Greek, I am not gay, I am not Australian. I should add that I am not a writer. I write, I speak Greek, I love and have sex with men, I am a citizen of Australia. It is imperative that this difference is understood for I believe that action speaks louder than identity.

I speak two languages. In English I speak to you in the voice of a tertiary educated man who has been trained in the language of the bourgeoisie, trained largely by the bourgeoisie. In Greek I speak the language of rural central Greece. In Greek I have been told that I still "speak like a peasant". My vocabulary in Greek is that of a man who has not been further than primary school. The politics of class and migration—and therefore racism—construct my very thoughts. Raised in two vastly different languages and expressions I cannot forget that not only myself but all of us speak through class.

I am not pretending to you that I am either revolutionary or even radical. As someone who believes that the generation of surplus wealth requires the continuation of poverty and of exploitation I will speak of socialism. As someone who believes that all communities require their heretics, and as someone who will defend the heretic, I will speak of anarchism. I don't do this as a writer—or not only as a writer—but I do it as a political man.

Virginia Woolfe wrote that one needed a room of one's own in which to write. What is often forgotten is that she added that one required 500 quid as well. That was in the 1920s. What would that 500 quid be worth now in 1999?

I wish to speak of three hopes. One is of collaboration, to work with like-minded people in the belief that writing is not a competition but that it too is work and that as a worker I seek camaraderie and solidarity. As a writer I am a storyteller and I know that everyone has a story to tell. Writing is a skill, a trade, it can be learnt and taught. I spoke of responsibility before and I believe that as someone who has had the opportunity of free education I owe a duty to pass on my skills. And I wish to continue being taught. In Newcastle this weekend I had the benefit of a generosity from two teachers: one was a homeless old man who gave me a history of the town, the other teacher was a sex worker in her forties who gave me a history of the town's men.

My friend Phil Doyle has been teaching me. This is a quote from another friend, Sasha Soldatow: "Even if we are forced not to speak, we will still whisper to each other."

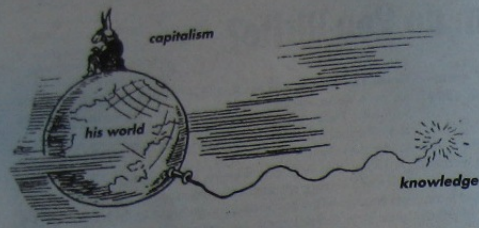
So I whisper to you: I will not stop speaking of class and race and commitment for I have indulged too much in decadence. Politics is not a theme park it is a truncheon in East Timor, the murder of a feminist writer in Algeria and it is the bashing of an Aboriginal man in Queensland by young men who do not believe in his "lifestytle".

Too much decadence is making me ill.

My wog brother will speak for me now.

Christos: Another hope: Writing is largely a middle class hobby. It's pretty hard to make a living out of writing. The way the industry and technology are set up make it an





expensive and exclusive activity. Inevitably voices are silenced because of economic circumstances. Paradoxically writing itself is quite a simple activity: it's telling a story, passing on a bit of information. Because of the bourgeois nature of the industry that drives popular culture, and because we live in a day and an age where the value of things is largely measured by their price, the cultural "industry", which includes publishing, has effectively written working class Australia out of the story.

For to write about is not substitute for listening to. And how can voices be listened to when they can't even speak?

The end result is that the representation of our own culture is diminished, a lot of the story is missed. There is very little that celebrates the strengths of working class communities and of the underclass.

Those who get to write and speak influence the way we see ourselves, they shape parameters, they are part of the process that establishes right and wrong—acceptable and unacceptable, the whole thing is political. It's not that there is a lack of politics in Australian writing, there's just an absence of anything subversive.

And there's a lot in working class communities that is subversive. A lot more than is ever given credit for. The irreverence, the arrogance and the curiosity manifest themselves across gender and race—it's illegitimate.

One writer who did expose it was Wendy Lowenstein with her book *Weevils at Work*. One of the themes that emerged from that book was friendship. Our informal relationships can be contrasted with the bureaucratic structures of capitalism and the formality such a system demands.

A lot of people get on in the world of art and culture because they "know someone". These networks are, by their nature, bourgeois and exclusive. The languages, the values, the assumptions are all pretty much rooted in university educated middle-class Australia. Even in it's informality the bureaucracy acts to exclude a wider community. But if we applied the way we form friendships to the collaboration that is the publishing process, could we widen the number of voices to include the subversive? The working class? The underclass?

I met a guy up here this weekend who got published in Australian Short Stories

last year and still hasn't been paid. The *Big Issue* pays people 10 cents a word. Everyone's got a horror story of being ripped-off. A lot of people have written for nothing or fuck-all. A lot of people know that writing is undependable, irregular and scant of income. Writers themselves are an exploited group. Why don't we act together, in our common interest, to improve this situation? The street press especially should start paying a living wage. The Australian Society of Authors should be, and could be, a bit more militant than it is.

It's up to you? If it is just a hobby for you or you have another means to support yourself, why should you bother? Because storytelling is not a competition. Because it is in the best interest of all writers that all writers have a decent income. And it is in the interest of all of society that all its voices are heard.

Are you winning?

Christos: Are you scared?

Phil: For whom do you write?

Christos: Why should you trust the children of the bourgeoisie?

Phil: We'll finish from another poem of Hooten's.

I don't write my poetry for Ordinary People. Ordinary people have no need for my poetry. Ordinary people are perfect.

I write my poetry for extraordinary overeducated people. To bring them up to the level of Ordinary people.

Economic Democracy

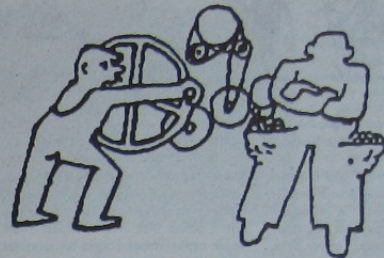
"In a Communist society," Uncle Karl used to say to me, "where no one is confined to an exclusive sphere of society, but can perfect himself in whatever branches he likes, society regulates production as a whole and thereby helps to make it possible to do this today and that tomorrow, to go hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon, tend cattle in the evening, and after dinner engage in criticism, just as it happens to please me, without ever becoming huntsman, fisherman, herdsman or critic."

"Sure Uncle" I would reply, "just don't get me drawing up the rosters." A great man was Uncle Karl, but cranky and slow to see the benefits of other peoples contributions to things. Of course, you had to watch him with the domestic help. I'm not really positive about running a large hospital or railroad on his prescriptions but I was asked to say a bit about economic democracy and economic freedom in half a page or so and the words came to mind.

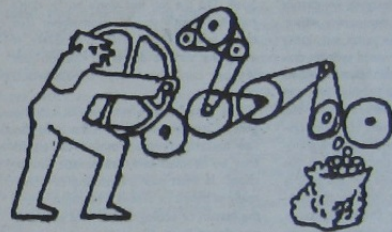
This is a harder task than it should be because there are a lot of people running around who, you would think to look at them, are quite sane and in possession of the full quid, but think that they are free and, whats more, live in a democracy. Poor devils.

Well lets define a few terms to begin with. You are free when your thoughts, your words and your actions are your own to command and only under such restraint as you decide to put on them. Democracy means rule by the people. As "the people" is a rather abstract and hairy thing when scrutinised closely, this is usually taken to mean rule by the majority. Of course, neither unrestrained actions of individuals or majorities are always right and oft times the true rebel must take a stand against particular examples of both.

Every person should have an equal right to a say and a vote in the things touching upon their lives. Real problems come because the social world these ideals operate in is not composed of equal citizens trying to maximise their enjoyment while keeping a



the bosses need us



we don't need them

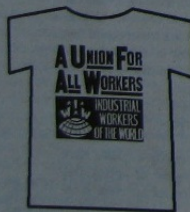
weather eye upon the enlightened pursuit of the common good. It is fragmented into classes. This makes for a complicated arrangement with all sorts of things squirming and twisting together like politicians when you look under a stone. What it amounts to is that one fairly small group of people own and/or manage the means of production, distribution and exchange while the rest of us get by selling our labour. Or labour power as Uncle Karl insisted. This generates a fair amount of tension in the old body corporate but not nearly as much as it should do.

It doesn't matter if the boss is virtuous or a sinner, likeable or a general failure as a human being, energetic or lazy, compassionate or hard hearted (although natural selection does tend to promote the least attractive alternatives). What does matter is that dur-

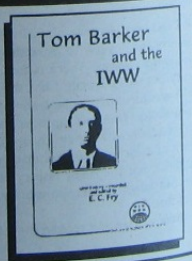
ing a large chunk of the day the freedom of every working man and every working woman is strongly curtailed. These restraints do not come from any majority feeling expressed through any proper instrument of popular control. It is arbitrary authority. Or tyranny.

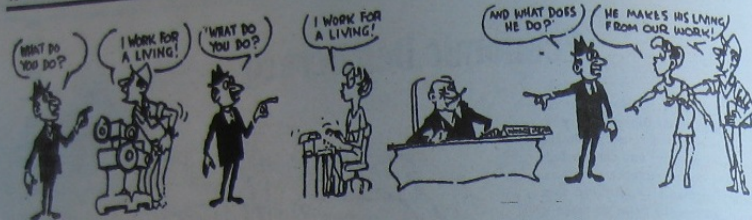
This is not the end of the story. Labour is important stuff. Through it food is grown, clothing is made, shelter and other buildings created and all the trappings of civilisation have to be constantly maintained and refurbished. Now if the central creative force at the heart of all this is unfree and undemocratic then it could put a sort of stamp upon the world arising from the process. We might expect to find, for example, that the more our food is processed the less healthy it gets or that our clothing is produced by sweated labour in some distant coun-

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try or the suburbs where we live are depressing, lacking in services or feeling of community.

"A man's freedom," the Diggers leader Gerrard Winstanly proclaimed, "is where he gets his bread." In retrospect it is a sexist enough comment but, stripping it down to essentials, I rather think he had a point.

The other thing is that if we do not have an economic democracy we cannot really have a political democracy either. Neither the people nor even a majority of them can rule in a world split by dramatic inequalities. Political power follows property, always has and always will, and the more extreme the inequality the harder it becomes to exert any democratic control over the way things are going. Or, to look at it from the other side, the more privilege you have the easier it is to push for a bit more. Rule by the people becomes rule by their delegates which becomes rule by the forces that control the controllers with the people looking on bemused and choosing every three years between two similar political products served up to them by the public relations industry.

So, having outlined the dismal basis of our civilisation I come to the question of what should be done about it. Well if you are one of the few really big capitalist types who benefit from the current arrangement you should, of course do all in your power to keep the workers in the bemused, ignorant and debased intellectual level they have fallen too. If you are, however, a working person then I would recommend the following regime as efficacious to long term mental health.

1) Be aware of the value of what you do. It is through your work (waged and unwaged) that you have your main creative impact upon the world. Measure it for its potential if not for the actuality it might be confined in.

2) Withdraw emotional co-operation from the present set up. No tyranny can be absolute and the knowing of this is

why so many dictators end up going bonkers. Mr. Nelson Mandela while serving his life sentence apparently organised prisoners to start reasserting their human dignity by just walking at a normal pace. No one hurried or ran to impress any prison officer with their keenness. Now under capitalism of course all workers are serving a life sentence of a different sort. So to take a leaf from Mandela's book. Do the job but don't hurry, don't run. Just steady steady. Remember also there is an unemployment problem. If everyone slowed down on the job just ten per cent this would be absorbed completely.

3) Check out where you fit into the general scheme of things. Where do the raw materials come from. How could they be handled in a democratic workshop? Is what you are making or doing really of benefit or would it be better from the human or ecological point of view if it was closed down. (Be ruthless. In an economically undemocratic world the closing down of such a place just means the misery of unemployment. In an economically democratic one things would be made for use not profit and any task rendered unnecessary will just mean a redistribution of labour to a shortening the general working day.) What are the pleasurable parts to the job? How can they be maximised? What are the downsides? How



can they be reduced/eliminated?

4) Investigate the major shareholders, directors and managers of your particular slave outfit. Look them up in the Who's Who and find out what their hobbies are. Then come Monday morning when you wonder why you're there—well you'll know wont you?

5) Talk to your fellow workers. Not all of them of course—that would be silly. But there are always a few receptive ears. Try to be part of the progressive force in life building pride, intelligence and confidence. These discussion groups should, of course, so far as possible be in the bosses time.

6) Try a bit of organisation. Form a grouping. I would recommend the organisation behind this magazine—the Industrial Workers of the World—as a good little group to use as the basis for this. It is our reason of existence, you see, to encourage workers initiative and self-reliance and, through solidarity, to organise this into something that gives better conditions and more job control now while forming the basis to create really democratic industries in the future. We call this building the new world in the shell of the old. Still it doesn't matter if you decide to keep things as informal as a while. Be wary of outside manipulation but link up when your ready. Start thinking now, though, about workplace safety, wages and conditions. Chances are your official union could be anything from a hindrance to half-way useful when the boat starts to rock a bit but just take things one at a time.

7) Start taking control. Try, wherever possible, to arrange the days tasks with your workmates and to leave the boss out of things. The lazier the boss is the easier it will be but some scope is always there. Don't go running to him/her to sort out problems with other workers.

A. Webb

A New Way of Life is Born



On July 19, 1936, an attempted fascist coup d'etat led to the commencement of the Spanish Civil War. In the areas of Spain not controlled by the fascist armies, a revolution was carried out by the largest union existing at the time, the million and a half strong *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, a revolutionary union. This is one brief description of what was undertaken in Aragon, one of the areas controlled by the workers ...

BATTLES between peasants and fascists broke out in towns and villages throughout Aragon immediately after July 19, 1936. In many of the villages the peasants fled to escape the persecution of the fascists. Later, when the antifascist columns entered Aragon from Catalonia and the Levant, the towns and villages were liberated from the Civil Guards and fascists. The peasants returned to their homes. A social transformation then took place that was not equalled anywhere else in Spain for its depth and organization.

Unlike Catalonia, distribution of land in Aragon did not make for very great extremes of wealth and poverty. The majority of the people were small farmers, tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Sharecroppers worked for the few large landholders, as did the landless day labourers. (Both these groups had to find work in the cities for many months of the year because Mother Earth could not feed them.) The war tended to eliminate even these extremes rather quickly, for, as the popular militia advanced, the large landholders and the fascists fled the region. Very few remained to work with the peasants.

The people of the villages held general town meetings in the public plazas and agreed to expropriate the lands of the fascist landholders. Other land was also collectivised or turned over to the village. The people agreed to work together in collectives in almost all the liberated communities. Five hundred towns and

villages with a population of approximately half a million people established collectivism, a type of economy and social system unknown in modern Europe until then. The transformation of private property into a system of collective property was accomplished in a relatively short time and to a surprising degree.

Collectivisation in Aragon constituted a final stage in the transformation of rural life that had been fought for since the start of the Republic in 1931. The agrarian reform offered by the Republic provided no help for the rural proletariat. Very few large landholders were expropriated under the banner of reform. Only the lands belonging to the Church or religious orders were taken over. These were distributed among a relatively small number of peasant families, but the rural masses continued to live in misery.

When the power of reaction was destroyed after July 19, 1936, the peasants realised their ideal: collectivisation. Communes also took control of the land in all the towns and villages of Loyalist Spain. But the process of collectivisation did not develop as far anywhere else in Spain as it did in Aragon.

Collectivisation was not ordered by the State or imposed by force as in Russia. The great majority of the peasant unions supported the ideals of the social revolution. Their goal was to produce work collectively and to distribute the product of their labour with justice to all. No one

issued a proclamation for a particular type of collectivisation. There were no decrees, no government commissions to issue orders, no official orientation to direct the peasants. They acted according to their intuitions. An active minority led the way. The ideal of libertarian communism was strong among the peasants. It was stirring to see how the peasants could hit the nail on the head with their clear, humane thinking even though they did not have a great deal of theory or deep knowledge. With the intuition that people have in exceptional times, the rural population went to work to construct a new life.

News of the collectivisation and libertarian communism in Aragon spread throughout the country. But the actual content of collectivist life in Aragon was not known elsewhere in Spain or abroad. A description of how they were organised, how they reached understanding, had not yet been written. The story of the social revolution in Aragon after July 19th was not yet told.

However, what took place in Aragon is of greatest importance to the world socialist movement. More than half a million peasants, impelled by necessity, by their misery and their ideals, took destiny into their own hands. Equality, Liberty, Fraternity, the great dreams of the French Revolution, have not yet been realised in the world. They were being realised in Aragon. The peasant was free from political oppression and the exploitation of the great landholders. Liberty was won in battle. Equality was organised. Fraternity lived in the hearts of the people.

Structure of the Collectives

The smallest unit of the collective in Aragon was the work group, usually numbering five to ten members, sometimes more. The group might consist of friends, or the neighbours on a certain street, or a group of small farmers, tenant farmers, or day labourers. When one group finished its work, it would help another group. Everyone was obliged to work. Each group member was given a workers' card. A group would go out to

work together led by their delegate, who much of the time worked with his comrades as recording the members' work. Land was assigned to the groups by the collectives. The tools, machinery, and animals needed for work were the property of the collective. The cultivation of the land assigned to them was the responsibility of the group.

The collective was the free community of labour of the villagers. It was created with the influence of anarchist ideas. The CNT and the FAI (National Confederation of Labour and Iberian Anarchist Federation) held general assemblies in all the villages. Peasants, small farmers and tenant farmers attended. That was how the collectives were born. They took possession of the land and the tools and machinery of the expropriated landholders. The small farmers and tenant farmers who joined the collective brought their tools and equipment. An inventory of all property and equipment was made. Whoever did not wish to join the collective could keep the land that he could cultivate without hired labour. Each collective proceeded along the following lines of development.

The distribution of land, labour, tools and fruit of their toil was taken care of first. The collective has to be concerned in the first place with the material survival of its members. The product of the fields was brought to a common warehouse; the most important foods were distributed equally among all. Surplus crops were used for trade with other communes or with collectives in the cities. Produce was distributed to the members free of charge. Depending on the wealth of the commune there would be bread and wine. Sometimes bread, meat and other foods were issued without limit and free of charge. Whatever had to be acquired outside of the commune, through barter or purchase from other communes or the cities, or commodities that were in low supply in the commune, were rationed. Everyone, whether able to work or not, received the necessities of life as far as the collective could provide them. The underlying idea was no longer "a good day's pay for a good day's work," but "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs."

Herein lay one difference between the peasant collectives in Aragon and the industrial and commercial collectives in Catalonia and other parts of Spain. In industry, labour or production was collectivised. Consumption remained individual. In the peasant collectives consumption as well as production was collectivised. The new system was simple in its basic characteristics, varied in forms of application. The customary compensation was quotas and rationing for things that were scarce, unlimited distribution of goods that were in abundance. These are the economic forms of libertarian communism.

The District Federation embraced all the

local collectives in the district. Ten to twenty communes joined together to form an economic unit. The labour collective in each village sent an exact inventory to the Regional Federation reporting the amount of land, machines, means of transport, harvest, property and merchandise on hand. The District Federation maintained warehouses and marketed the agricultural produce of all the affiliated villages and collectives; products for interchange were sent to the Regional Federation and in some cases to Barcelona. The collectives, were able to obtain the goods they needed with the credit built up by the produce they sent to the District. The majority of the District Federations had ample warehouse facilities. The villages were able to obtain what they needed. Everything they needed could be found in the District.

The District Federation was composed of delegates elected by the collectives of the villages. They were responsible for communication and transportation between the villages; they bought new means of transportation, installed additional telephone lines and supported cultural progress in the affiliated villages. The defence against reactionaries and fascists was led by the District Federations during the first months after July 19th. Local Defence Councils received arms and strategic advice from the District Federation. The District Federation in the Barbastro Zone, Huesca Province, conducted the defence against fascism for nine months. They provided food and all necessary war materials to the militia.

All the District Federations of Aragon belonged to the Aragon Regional Federation of Collectives. The Committee of this Regional Federation was the economic centre of the entire region. During the first months there was a certain amount of duplication. The Aragon Defence Council assumed responsibility for defence at the beginning. The Defence Council was recognised by the Government as the official representative body of the region. It had the characteristics of a governmental body. Actually, there was no Defence Council, but an Economic Council.

A Congress of District Federations was held in Caspe in February, 1937. They agreed to make the Regional Federation the economic centre of the agricultural collectives of Aragon. The District Federations would send their produce or other goods to the Regional Federation. The interchange of goods between sections of Aragon could be done through the Regional Federation. Where necessary, there would be transactions with other regions or other countries.

This, briefly, was the structure of the collectives of Aragon. Following is our report of what we saw in some of the villages, the District Federations and the Regional Federation on how the new economic foundation on a foundation of equality and justice.

Collectivism was not new in Spain, Nor was it limited to Aragon. However, it was most widespread in Aragon. The CNT and the anarchists were the most fervent supporters of collectivism, but not the only ones. The members of the UGT (General Union of Workers, Socialist) also favoured collectivism in the city and the country. Spanish syndicalism was the main spark and inspiration of the idea and the movement. The socialist and syndicalist unions worked together frequently with equal zeal for collectivism in the rural areas. Collectivism spread steadily in the villages and towns of the region.

The Socialist and the Communist Party failed to support collectivism. The agrarian program of both parties followed the agrarian reform of the Republic. None of their proposals went beyond the official agrarian reform program, which was limited to the distribution of the large landed estates. Agricultural workers must be made small property owners. France did this during the Great Revolution. Result: a nation of small farmers, a social class that bears the seed of capitalism and conservatism.

The Communist Party advocated the creation of agricultural cooperatives instead of a program of collectivism. They published a set of model by-laws for such agricultural cooperatives in their publication, *la Voz del Campo* (Voice of the Country), May 22, 1937, Valencia. They did not speak of collectivism. They based their proposal for cooperatives on private property. This was in contrast with the program of forced collectivisation of the peasants in Russia, an ambiguous position for the Communist International.

Cooperatives could satisfy Spain's peasants as little as the government's program of agrarian reform. Both kept private property as the basis for farming. Agricultural workers went beyond such petty-bourgeois reforms after July 19th, without waiting for the political parties. They were inspired with the ideal of communism, filled with a deep desire for liberty. They wanted nothing of the private economy of capitalism. They wanted to work together collectively and distribute the product of their labour to all justly. They believed that they could achieve this goal with collectives. They went beyond all half-way solutions, all superficial reforms. Collectivism was the principle of libertarian communism. The individual peasant clinging stubbornly to his piece of private property was not their ideal. The collective was the centre-piece for the birth of the new society. It triumphed over individualism. Collectivism was to be the cradle for the rebirth of Spain.

From "With the Peasants of Aragon", on the web at <http://flag.blocked.net/huelgaloragon.htm>

Radical Unions in Italy

THE last decade has seen the steady growth in Italy of militant workplace bodies outside the control of the country's three major union confederations. These new organisations, most of which style themselves as 'rank-and-file' or 'alternative' unions, now group tens of thousands of members. Well entrenched in a number of key workplaces and industrial sectors, able to organise actions on a national scale - the most recent, a series of strikes against the Balkans war - the 'rank-and-file' unions have had an impact upon Italian working class politics out of all proportion to their size. At the same time, as some of their members freely admit, the new organisations have so far failed to attract most of the growing numbers of workers who have turned their backs upon Italy's major unions. For all these reasons - the setbacks as well as the successes - there is a lot to learn from the experiences of Italy's 'alternative' union scene.

To many Italians, and not only radical ones, the three major confederations have become 'state unions', too compromised by their close associations with the country's leading political parties to be able to defend workers' unilateral interests. Their failure to prevent massive job losses in manufacturing during the eighties has also meant a substantial shift in membership base since that time. For example, today little more than half of the members in the 'left' union confederation, the CGIL, are in workplaces; the rest are retirees. That the major unions continue to find members amongst wage workers is due in part to the sort of social services they provide, whether that be dental cover or job openings in certain government departments. For their part, the leaders of the CGIL aim to deliver a well-priced and willing workforce to employers. In the public sector above all, they have long colluded in a range of measures designed to discipline workers whose industrial action

threatens the 'national interest'.

It's not surprising, then, that many of Italy's newer, 'rank-and-file' unions have formed around groups of workers, activists - and in some cases paid officials - who have been marginalised or expelled from the major unions over the past decade. Along the way, they have come into contact with remnants of the COBAS, unofficial workplace groups which briefly challenged the traditional unions' leadership in a number of public service sectors (education above all) during the late eighties. Together, in the broad alternative union movement, they have been attempting to oppose the many forms of restructuring which occur at workers' expense, and to claw back some space for workers to organise themselves.

The biggest alternative union in Italy today is the CUB. As a confederation, the CUB brings together a number of unions, the largest of which are the RDB (well-established amongst public sector workers, particularly firefighters and social security employees) and the FLMU (a metalworkers' organisation, strongest in and around Milan). With their origins in splits from the major unions, the RDB and FLMU are viewed with some hostility by many activists in other rank-and-file organisations. Reasons offered for this range from their more conventional structure (both unions employ full-time officials and staff), to the preparedness of sections of the RDB to sign agreements which restrict their members' industrial activity. Conversely, other components of the CUB - for example, its small education sector affiliate - are well-known for their non-sectarian advocacy of workers' self-organisation.

Another large alternative union is the SLAI. Begun by auto workers in Milan and Naples, and strongest within private manufacturing firms, the SLAI has since spread to the public sector. The SLAI prides

itself on being 'a union without union officials': as a federation of workplace collectives, it aims to develop a flat organisational structure without any internal bureaucracy. Early in the decade it was widely seen as close both to Rifondazione Comunista, the leftwing remnant of the old Italian communist party, and the left opposition within the major unions. When Rifondazione entered into an agreement with the ruling centre-left coalition back in the mid nineties, the SLAI distanced itself from that party. SINCOBAS, a pro-Rifondazione minority which has a presence at the FIAT auto plant in Turin, left the SLAI soon after.

In Italy's north-east the ADL, a network of workplace collectives with one thousand members, has also affiliated to the SLAI. Close to the region's autonomist movement, the ADL refuses to consider itself a union at all. Unions, it insists, are based upon the delegation rather than self-activity of workers' interests. Inherently bureaucratic, they restrict themselves to so-called 'economic' matters while leaving so-called 'political' questions to political parties. So why join the SLAI? According to the ADL, workers' self-organisation can benefit from the safeguards which come from legal recognition as a union; and in any case, the SLAI is 'not really' a union, whatever its other members think...

A similar refusal of the union form can be found amongst the Confederazione Nazionale COBAS, a body which brings together a number of rank-and-file groups in Rome and elsewhere. Many of these - for example, the COBAS at Rome's Policlinico hospital - also have historical links to the autonomist movement.

The USI is a syndicalist organisation affiliated to the IWA-AITA. A major industrial force until smashed by fascism in the early twenties, the USI has grown alongside the other alternative unions. Recent months have seen the return of many sections - in



East Timor ...

Kosovo (with more than twice the population), according to NATO. As atrocities skyrocketed in September, Clinton watched silently, until compelled by domestic and international (mostly Australian) pressure to make at least some gestures. There were enough for the Indonesian Generals to reverse course at once, an indication of the latent power that has always been in reserve. A rational person can readily draw some conclusions about criminal culpability.

At last report, the US has provided no funds for the Australian-led UN intervention force (in contrast, Japan, long a fervent supporter of Indonesia, offered \$100 million). But that is perhaps not surprising, in the light of its refusal to pay any of the costs of the UN civilian operations even in Kosovo. Washington has also asked the UN to reduce the scale of subsequent operations, because it might be called upon to pay some of the costs. Hundreds of thousands of missing people may be starving in the mountains, but the Air Force that excels in pinpoint destruction of civilian targets apparently lacks the capacity to airdrop food—and no call has been heard for even such an elementary humanitarian measure. Hundreds of thousands more are facing a grim fate within Indonesia. A word from Washington would suffice to end their torment, but there is no word, and no comment.

In Kosovo, preparation for war crimes

Radical Unions in Italy ...

particular, its sizable hospital branch in Milan - which had left the organisation in the mid nineties, following a dispute over tactics and alliances.

There are a number of other smaller alternative unions in Italy, some of which originate from larger bodies such as the CUB. Back in the mid nineties, four of the smaller organisations formed a pact called ARCA; critics have suggested that this arrangement exists more for legal reasons than anything else, given that unions covering 5% or more of workers in a sector are granted privileges denied others. Finally, mention should also be made of the COMU, which is a militant craft union of train drivers which broke away from the CGIL in the late eighties.

As can be seen, the Italian scene is something of a dog's dinner. Many of the divisions are a product of personal rivalries

between prominent activists, rivalries which mirror the more stupid argy-bargies between competing left groups. Other divisions stem from real differences in experience and outlook. Should activists stand in state-sanctioned workplace delegate elections, or should they encourage workers to elect new, unofficial committees? Should radical unions sign workplace agreements which provide certain resources (time off for union work, office facilities)? What if those agreements include 'no-strike' clauses? Is the drastic reduction of the working week - say to 30 hours - the best way to stop the bosses' attacks? Or a guaranteed income for all instead? A combination of both? Or neither?

These questions are real issues today within Italy's radical unions. Less often addressed, but still overhanging everything, is the fundamental purpose of a 'rank and file' unionism. Many activists in the CUB,

the alleged plans "have never been shared with me" and that the NATO operation "was not designed [by the political leadership] as a means of blocking Serb ethnic cleansing.... There was never any intent to do that. That was not the idea."

Commenting on Washington's refusal to lift a finger to help the victims of its crimes, the veteran Australian diplomat Richard Butler observed that "it has been made very clear to me by senior American analysts that the facts of the alliance essentially are that: the US will respond proportionately, defined largely in terms of its own interests and threat assessment.... The remarks were not offered in criticism of Washington; rather, of his fellow Australians, who do not comprehend the facts of life: that others are to shoulder the burdens, and face the costs—which for Australia, may not be slight. It will hardly come as a great shock if a few years hence US corporations are cheerfully picking up the pieces in an Indonesia that resents Australian actions, but has few complaints about the overlord.

The chorus of self-adulation has subsided a bit, though not much. Far more important than these shameful performances is the failure to act—at once, and decisively—to save the remnants of one of the most terrible tragedies of this awful century.

Noam Chomsky

Noam Chomsky is a world renowned critic of American foreign policy and an IWW member.

SLAI, and elsewhere, want to create unions 'like they used to be': militant, dedicated to defending workers' wages and conditions. Some - for example, members of the Bologna collective Precari Nati, a group which has done some important work amongst 'casual workers' - suspect that such 'real' unions will quickly come to mirror those they were formed to supplant. Others still suggest that, for all its flaws, Italy's alternative union movement is a valuable breeding ground for present and future struggles, one created by militant workers themselves; and that the unambiguous assertion of workers' self-organised needs already contains the seeds of a new society.

One of the best guides to the Italian radical union scene can be found at the web site of the journal di Base (www.mercatiesplosivi.com/dbase). Some English-language materials can be found at www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/3843/italyht

The Middle Class Left

"Articles must be double spaced, submitted on 3 and a half inch floppy disc in Macintosh Word for Windows 6.0 or higher format"

THESE are the criteria for contributing to the journal that would pride itself in being the foremost forum for critical debate of the current social order from the perspective of the academic left.

What this reveals about the academic left in Australia is that they are the same tired, guilty middle-class that has been riding on this nation's underclass for generations. They are the same middle class that has reduced people's attempt to determine the nature and purpose of their existence to an intellectual exercise, a game. The same middle-class that has monopolised the organised left from the Socialist Workers Party, through the Trade Union Movement, to the ALP and organisations like ACOSS. They are conservatives at heart. They don't want their petit-bourgeois assumptions as to the nature of the poor challenged by outsiders—least of all by the poor themselves.

The real radicals in this society are the Costello's, the Reith's, the think tanks of corporate Australia and the nation's bureaucracy. They hold the whip hand in this country and will continue to do so as long as their only opposition is the irrelevant bleatings of the 'club' that dribbles out of the fashionable departments of Australia's universities.

What I am concerned about is the fact that I am no longer an Australian. The community that I come from is not "Australian," it is the long-term unemployed. There is no point at which we can access public debate about our increasingly intolerable condition.

We are invisible, represented in the media as deserving of our fate. Spoken for by charities and the same middle-class that spawns the insipid left and the arts communities that manage to maintain their profile in Australia. Our cause is hopeless.

Reith and company are right when they say that their radicalism is about choice. It is the choice between crime and poverty, between lying to bureaucracy or having the futility your existence reinforced over and over again with rejection. Between oblivion for four days out of fourteen or the dreary interminable diet of potatoes and two-minute noodles. Between acts of public vandalism and acts of self-destruction. Between ignoring the privations of your neighbours or the futility of trying to address them. Between social isolation or collective self-annihilation. Between putting up with more shit in a week than somebody in a suit has to deal with in a lifetime or reacting and finding yourself out on the street living literally from hand to mouth. Yep it's about choice, and this is the choice that faces the underclass in Australia as we enter the Twenty-First century.

It has become patently obvious to many in the underclass that our enemy is as much the middle-class as it is anything else. The arrogant assumption that everyone has food to eat, somewhere reasonable to live, a tertiary education and—god bless them—a Macintosh Computer shows how far these people are from reality. The arrogance lies in the hypocrisy of believing that people outside this happy state of affairs lacks either the desire or the ability to contribute to a debate about their future. It is the arrogance that creates a homogeneity that is a lot

narrower than these 'open-minded' people would care to admit.

Is it any wonder that in the face of such exclusion - even from organisations 'sympathetic' to the aspirations of Australia's Underclass (the non-people of statistics, work experience from when you wanted to be a social worker, street corners, and the odd letter to The Age) that the dominant reaction to such alienation is to manage your hopelessness through any number of escapism's including suicide? (If you lived in the underclass heroin would appear attractive to you too!)

By engaging such exclusions the academic left buys into the same assumptions about the underclass - that they're too stupid to be able to manage their solutions—only the methodology of the response changes. Charity and the notion of the deserving poor is replaced by state sponsored co-optation into consumerism (welfare) and a picture of the underclass being peopled by some sort of economic noble savage (but never as human beings with their own opinions, observations, conclusions and solutions).

Both responses are paternalistic and irrelevant to the real needs of the underclass—which is cultural worth that comes from being listened to and the resources to be able to speak for ourselves—without being punished (by the right) or ridiculed through patronage (by the left).

It's about class, stupid!

Phil Doyle

Direct Action editor's note: for this paper you can send your copy any way you like, as long as it's readable but keep it short!

The quickest way to bring it on is talking constipation.

I've read my bible ten times through,
And Jesus justifies me
The man who does not vote for me
By Christ he crucifies me.

So bump them into Parliament
Bounce them any way,
Bung them into Parliament
Don't let the Courts decay.

by Bill Casey
Melbourne Wob

From the IWW Songbook

BUMP ME INTO PARLIAMENT
(tune: Yankee Doodle)

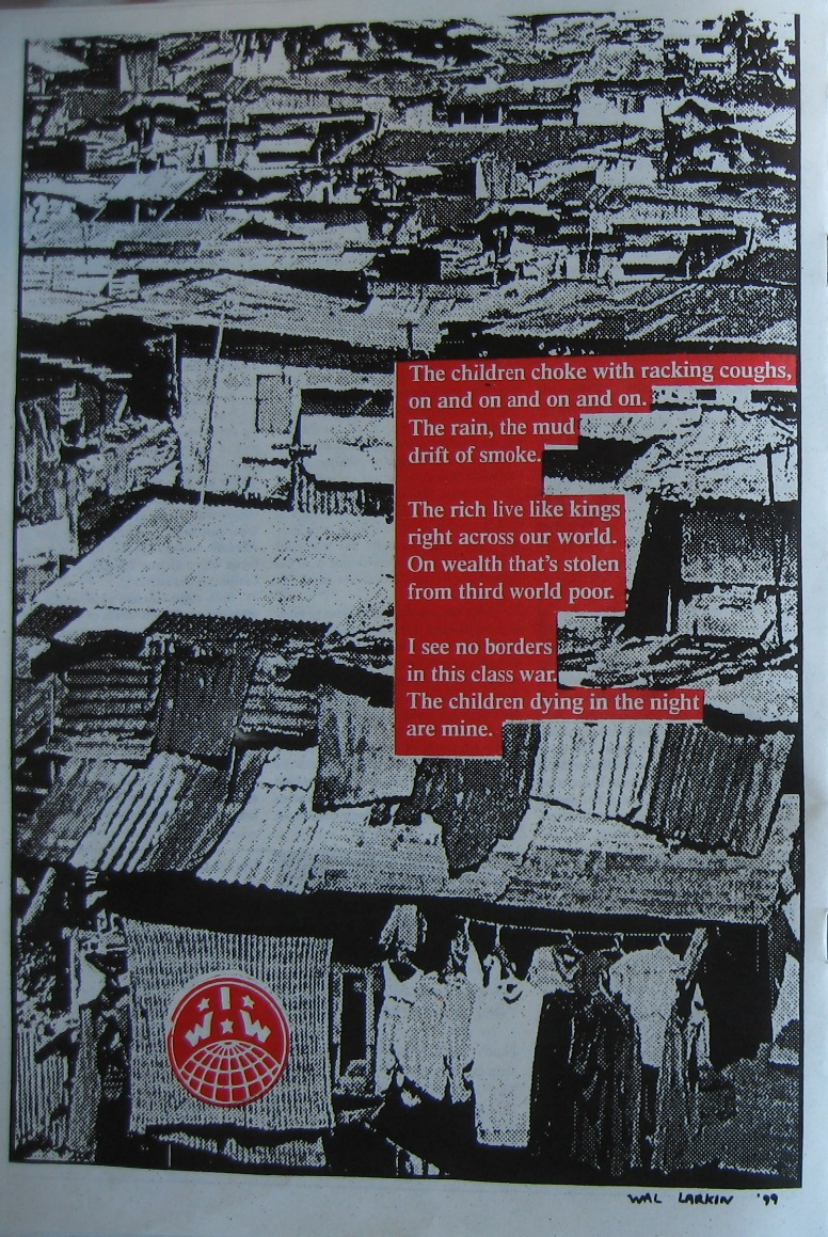
Come listen, all kind friends of mine
I want to move a motion,
To build an El Dorado here,
I've got a bonzer notion.

Chorus:
Bump me into Parliament,
Bounce me any way,
Bang me into Parliament,
On next election day.

Some very wealthy friends I know
Declare I am most clever
While some may talk for an hour or so
Why I can talk forever.

I know the Arbitration Act
As a sailor knows his 'riggins'
So if you want a small advance
I'll talk to Justice Higgins

Oh yes I am a Labor man
And believe in revolution



The children choke with racking coughs,
on and on and on and on.
The rain, the mud
drift of smoke.

The rich live like kings
right across our world.
On wealth that's stolen
from third world poor.

I see no borders
in this class war.
The children dying in the night
are mine.

