

# IN CHILE TANKS IN EUROPE UNIONS

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Once more a discussion document on the Unions. And yet everything there is to say on the subject has already been said hasn't it? There are cogs in the wheels of capitalist production; they regulate the supply of labour and the needs of the labour force to adapt to changing capitalism from day to day and on a long term basis; they suppress all attempts by workers to find a way but at all levels, from the day to day shop floor or office level to united fronts with capitalism in times of revolutionary upsurges etc. etc.

Nevertheless there is still more and always will be to say on the subject of unions. Increasingly they are losing the confidence of the rank and file, scoffed at, at each instance when using their legal power, delegated to them by the employers in struggles and conflicts, which they no longer control. As a result, they often refurbish themselves taking on more "modern" forms of with the changing face of capitalism in its violent jolts and contradictions. Yesterday "communist" unions versus "social democrats", today the "self-management" movements and all the variants of the "workers control" tendency, tomorrow perhaps something else and so on as long as capitalism and wage labour exist.

The fact that those who work are escaping the stranglehold of structures like these, designed to dominate them, and are acting by themselves and for themselves, constitute capitalism's sickness. The remedy - the unions - is becoming ineffective, but capitalism as long as it lives secretes its own anti-bodies. Each country has its own, some remain ineffective, others for the moment show promising colours. The writings which follow represent the thoughts of different people in different countries on the role of the unions today and they also entail some reflections on what the unions really were in the past as well.

To state and describe is one thing, but we must go beyond this and denounce and call upon workers not to enrol themselves in organisations, which inevitably always play the same repressive role. Some of the texts here discuss this problem, which is central for some, but totally unimportant for others. The discussion remains open.

The notes at the bottom of each page refer, either to other texts, or to reflections made on the subject at the Echanges International get-together at Strasbourg (Easter 1977).

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..... The title of the front page  
"In Chile tanks, in Europe unions"  
is adapted from an Italian graffiti (big painting on a wall in a street): "In Chile  
I carti armati  
In Italia  
I sindacati" .....



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I. 1. FRANCE : NOTES ON THE FRENCH UNIONS TODAY

(by Echanges/Paris)

Two major unions continue to occupy the first place in the trade union movement in France today: the C.G.T. and the C.F.D.T. Their role in conflicts, i.e. their function in French capitalism, tends to be defined in relation to their political associations (this is clearer at the moment in a period of electoral competition which will last on a national level for the next two years).

For the C.G.T. it is not necessary to dwell upon the links it has with the French communist party: the leaders of both are often the same men, plant union branches are often firmly controlled by local party cells, attempts are made to consolidate struggles for the electoral aims of the party. In a general way, the C.G.T. already tends to function, as regards capitalism and as regards the party, as a manager of the labour force. Political changes could only modify the particular orientations of this function. The repression of autonomous shop-floor movements by the C.G.T. is important at one and the same time in relation to the present and the future (in the interests of the complete functioning of the system which the party could be called upon to manage).

The political and religious links the C.F.D.T. has, cannot be so clearly defined. In order to build up a "lare organisation" to compete with the C.G.T. it needs to appear independent, combatative and for workers' autonomy. This was necessary above all to attract the militants of May 1968, disappointed by all the other unions. But behind this facade the C.F.D.T., just like other unions has men well planted in all the economic and social workings of the state and little by little its links with the socialist party and even certain American capitalist groups have appeared.

In fact the two union organisations, the C.G.T. and the C.F.D.T., and the two political parties C.P. and Socialist Party have met on the common ground of a "minimum" political and social programme for the management of capitalism christened by "Common Programme" (Programme Commun). They are all agreed on a certain form of state capitalism in which the unions would fulfill their traditional functions. The differences, especially between the C.G.T. and the C.F.D.T. express rather disagreement on the form and political orientation rather than the content of this neo-capitalism.

Over and above the confrontations (centralism of the C.G.T. as opposed to "self-management" of the C.F.D.T.) there seems to be a certain division of labour in the present function of these two unions. The C.G.T. insists most on planning, differentials, social stratification and through its technocratic approach and its conservatism finds support among the middle ground of wage earners, the highly skilled workers, middle management etc. The C.F.D.T. seems more to concern itself with rank and file conflicts and seems to favourise expressions of shop-floor things and therefore, because its structures are less rigid than those of the C.G.T., they can better absorb social explosions. Many people before joining the C.F.D.T. think they are going to be able to act and speak freely as in an organism of struggle. Because of this the C.F.D.T.

can allow itself to support strikes in certain sectors of industry where the intensity of exploitation leads to a type of violence which doesn't fit in at all with the aims of the C.P. and the C.G.T.

In fact, during such struggles, the C.F.D.T., in another form, carries out its same union function and the same conflicts between the rank and file and the head of the organisation break out during or after struggles, as occurs with the C.G.T.

The activity of the unions and their membership (unionisation is still weak in France) should not blind us to the reality. Many facts show that if they remain in the unions, those who entered the C.F.D.T. or C.G.T. are not ready to follow the orders and slogans of these unions even when they are approached jointly.

In 1973 one national 24 hour strike "day of action" alone represented 560,397 days of work lost; in 1975, four such separate dayhour strikes represented only 198,690 days lost. During this same period unionisation increased and the level of conflicts remained the same. It is possible that we are moving towards an "English" situation with greater formal participation in the union and a more irrepressible autonomy at shop floor level.

"Street demonstrations" in the large cities have always been one of the most used methods in France to channel struggles into political objectives. The leftist groups pay particular attention to them. Having essentially the same particular way of looking at things they try to mobilise their "troops" to try and take over the demos. But these demos can also seem for rank and file sections or those engaged in struggle as a way of expressing their real will to participate in a massif way (temporarily) in expressing these "combative" slogans and in carrying banners opposed to "internal" directives. This rift between the rank and file (whether unionised or not) has appeared in the course of many struggles, in very varied forms during the last few years.

It is difficult to say exactly what the unions mean today for workers, especially young people. Many of these arrive at the factory or office with an experience of struggle (high-school, secondary school, technical school, college, university, unemployment battles, conflicts over military service etc.) in non-sectoral forms (as in the firm or profession, the workshop or office) badly controlled by organisations and leaving a large part of initiative to the rank and file (individual or collective) for horizontal contacts to the rank and file which escapes control by skeleton organisations, which are quickly rejected because they are too political.

In the face of such tendencies - and their results in autonomy of struggle - the C.G.T. continues its same repressive methods changing only its vocabulary, which has become more "leftist" and its methods of struggle only when it is sure it has total control of the organisation (e.g. during the conflict in the newspaper industry around the paper *Le Parisien Libéré* or in the many symbolic occupations of factories facing closure); the C.G.T. has not had any very new problems, only a much greater frequency, almost daily now, of open conflicts and brushes with the rank and file. The C.G.T. has been able to repress with the same violence, the "intruders" in its

demonstrations and in "joint" demos with other organisations and the "intruders" in the factories and in struggles in general.

A strike (wildcat) by miners in two pits in the Pas de Calais (Northern France) was transformed by the C.G.T., as is their custom, into a general strike of miners for 48 hours - followed by 90% of the workers - but when the 48 hours were over, the two pits remained isolated with no perspective but to finish their struggle without obtaining a result. One miner there said: "With the C.G.T., it's never the moment to continue a strike. Today they say, the holidays are too near. In september it will be because it's the return to work and we'll need money for the return to school to equip our children. In december they'll say it's because Christmas is coming and next spring we won't be in a position to engage a conflict because the municipal elections take place then etc. etc. (in "liberation", the French daily, of 10-6-76).

After six weeks of strike in the largest sugar refinery in France - Beghin (Pas de Calais), the C.G.T. decides to go and negotiate in Paris: one of the workers at the refinery commented: "If it does not work in Paris they'll go and negotiate in Switzerland. That way they'll be on even more "neutral" ground" (Liberation, 16-4-76). In March 1976 the days of action and protest organised by the C.G.T./C.F.D.T. had to finish on the eve of the Easter holidays "so as not to inconvenience users". But on the railways the strike didn't end on command as usual and "as planned". For several days afterwards wildcat movements led to total confusion; the unions "finished" the strike by launching another general 48 hours strike.

In June 1977 at Reims a strike was declared by the only union, the C.G.T., at the "Verreries mécaniques Champenoises" (mechanical bottle factory for champagne). The strike pickets were attacked by the fascist union C.F.T. During this attack a worker was killed. After negotiation the C.G.T. obtained certain advantages from the employers and called upon the workers to go back to work and continue the conflict in the factory in the form of go-slows and short limited lightening strikes. The arguments of the unions were repeated a thousand times. After an animated discussion, in a show of hands, the continuation of the strike was voted. The workers didn't want to go back to work before the funeral of their work-mate. In front of all the workers the C.G.T. had to back down. The company employs 800 people, 400 are unionised.

In the public sector, the C.G.T. and C.F.D.T. adopt the same attitude: they are both firmly implanted and have a function to assume. Repression is either joint, or left to the C.G.T. without intervention from the C.F.D.T. It doesn't seem to be the same in sectors where only the C.G.T. is implanted and where it alone has a union function. Because the C.F.D.T. doesn't exist sometimes local branches are set up in which, for a time, the most militant are free to make decisions at least during the time necessary for a C.F.D.T. organisation to give itself a structure which allows it to set itself up in opposition to the C.G.T. and the employers as a "valid negotiator" for that sector.

The repeated and hard fought strikes at the Usinor works (steel) at Dunkerque during 1976 correspond exactly to the pattern described above. Lightening wildcat strikes were supported by the local C.F.D.T. branch, but the C.G.T. isolated these strikes by limited categories of workers and the

employers just let them drag on, from time to time with police intervention, when the unions hadn't the power to keep the strikers within their legal limits. Many examples of this type exist e.g. in the steel industry in Lorraine (Northeast France) and the present moment.

The type of conflict shouldn't however blind us to the meaning invested in joining the C.F.D.T. There is no "union renaissance" in France. In a pamphlet on a strike in the General Motors parts factory in Strasbourg, the authors show perfectly well how the workers saw in the local C.F.D.T. branch merely an instrument to attain their own goals, an instrument which the workers manipulated in their own interests. The story of the Griffet factory (occupation plus "open house" against the shutting down of the factory, which lasted over a year) is a good example of what we have just said: few people were unionised before the conflict. Everyone joined a union as soon as the firm closed down -  $\frac{1}{2}$  C.G.T. and  $\frac{1}{2}$  C.F.D.T. The C.G.T. "withdrew" from the struggle because the actions of those involved were too autonomous. The actions continued and the members of the C.G.T. stayed members of that union.

If the C.G.T. with its strict hierarchy and strong controls can quickly distance itself from real struggles and "condemn autonomous action", the leadership of the C.F.D.T. until recently in adopting a "laissez faire" attitude gave the illusion that they supported such actions. It is interesting to compare the reactions of both union executives against the attempts to create horizontal links between factories on strike centred around "LIP", during 1976. These attempts expressed a response to a deficiency in the unions felt most strongly by those working for firms in liquidation. However, at the same time they expressed, through certain shop-floor delegates, the aims of certain leftist political formations, who saw the occasion as a chance to make a tactical manoeuvre within the union framework. The union bureaucrats quickly exploded the contradictions of this position: the union leaderships cannot allow a union coordination outside of their virtual organisations, because it's their function in the capitalist system to centralise what happens at the level of different firms for a global solution negotiated at the level of a profession or at state level. An entire branch of the C.G.T. print workers section which contained all the workers of the IMRO-printworks at Rouen, who had occupied the works for a year, were expelled en bloc from the union, because they participated in this horizontal link scheme (they were to be "expelled" from the factory shortly afterwards by the police). The C.F.D.T. is more subtle: they haven't "excommunicated" union branches which participated in this plan; but they have openly condemned it and publicly declared that those participating do so in an entirely individual capacity. However, when necessary, they too expell and "dissolve" branches when rank and file groups publicly positions which are too critical of the union or when they get involved in activity of which the executive disapproves (because this gets in the way of their own political involvement). E.g. the local branch for the 8th and 9th arrondissements of Paris were "dissolved" because they put up posters criticising the Socialist Party (and by implication the C.F.D.T. links with it). The departemental union (administrative unit at county level) for the Gironde (Southwest France) was also "eliminated" because it supported the soldiers' committees (which themselves were nevertheless reformist enough - for a "union" for national servicemen).

This repression of the leadership of rank and file initiations unmasks, through particular cases, a situation which is far more general than would

seem according to the few examples cited here. In very different fields, rank and file initiatives involving unionised and non-unionised together invoke actions which practically escape control of these organisations. Rank and file union branches are used whenever this is possible. Other more autonomous means are created if these "means" (union means) are lacking or are "withdrawn" by the bureaucrats. It is paradoxical to see horizontal links publicly condemned because they are made public, while at the same such links are being forged without the unions' knowledge between factories owned by the same firm: or in some cases such links have existed for some years in new sectors as at La Défense on the outskirts of Paris where the links are a direct consequence of the structure itself of the enormous modern complex of offices.

This tension between the unions and "their" rank and file is but in reality an expression at this level of the pressure of an autonomous movement, which is seeking to impose its original forms of action in many ways. Here as well, the list is long of struggles showing these characteristics in 1976; some have already been mentioned. Others have not produced open conflicts between the unions, because the unanimity of the rank and file was so strong that it could not be openly divided. All these struggles are marked as in recent years, by particular forms of action (occupations, sequestrations, attacks against scabs, sabotage of installations etc.) by "popularisation" i.e. taking the struggle out of the factory and informing people (e.g. the Lattaguet atomic energy plant, the seamstresses of the Courrèges fashion house in Paris...), by cases of production during sit-ins to pay workers on strike (C.I.P. factory in the North of France, Courrèges in Paris and again LIP in 1976). These forms of action are sometimes taken up by the unions anxious to keep control in adapting themselves, but only when this can have a political value for them and there is no risk of their losing control (e.g. of the Parisien Libéré conflict for the C.G.T. printworkers union).

A local conflict like that at the Schlumpf factory in Alsace where workers threatened with redundancy locked up their old-style paternalistic employers and laid siege to his house camping for several days in his garden (he was liberated a few days later by the police) illustrates what just has been said. Several days later an "open house" at the occupied factory grouped together 15,000 people who'd come from all over Alsace. This is an example among others with its original characteristics and ambiguities. Even under official union leadership such rank and file initiatives are so numerous, so constant, so determined, that they finish by breaking through and provoking either conflicts between unions, or between unions and rank and file. It is clear that this part of struggles corresponds to a global balance of power, which is seen as much as possible at the day to day level. In the present situation, it could be considered that it is this whole, which, until now, without major large scale conflicts, has forced French capitalism to keep up the same standard of living as in past years, despite the manipulation of unemployment and inflation. Actual attempts (with the "Barre" plan of the new P.M.) to reduce wage rises by other means can only in the long run provoke an unification of struggles and their aims and of struggles beyond the particular framework of the firm or the industries where employer pressure and struggles exist up to now.

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I. 2. HOLLAND : The unions enter into conflict  
to prevent an autonomous workers struggle

(This text is an amalgamation of an intervention by Cajo Brendel at the Strasbourg meeting and a note written by him some time previously)

Under German occupation before the end of the last war, in secrecy, the employers and union representatives signed a protocol agreement which envisaged a very close collaboration. The pretext for this was the need to reconstruct the Dutch economy, destroyed during the occupation. After the liberation the union movement and the employers collaborated on a legal basis in the "Sociaal Economische Raad (S.E.R./Social and economic Council) and in the "Stichting voor de Arbeid" (Institute of Labour, already existing under the occupation). In these bodies the State, the employers and the unions were represented. Wages were fixed by these bodies' consultations. All rank and file demands were stifled. They were refused by employers and unions alike. This situation lasted for nearly 20 years after the war. Strikes could only be wildcats, because the unions refused to recognise strikes.

After some years the wildcat rank and file movement took on a dimension which could be compared with what was happening in Britain between 1969 and 1974, only in Holland on a smaller scale. The discontent on the shop floor found no expression in words but was shown in the fact that each new conflict threatened the very existence of the union movement.

In the protocol agreement signed by the State and employers the position had been taken that the unions represented the working class, which even at that time was already completely false, because the percentage of workers organised at any moment had never been more than 40%. Confronted by wildcat strikes employers would say: "The union movement must do something, because if the agreement signed between us and the unions is not respected by the workers, then nothing makes sense anymore." This was the period of the strike by the bus drivers on all important bus routes (1960) and the Dutch press became more and more critical of the agreement.

During this strike the situation became critical. It provided the proof that an ever widening gap existed between the workers and the unions. And so among the ruling classes. We began to hear things which the "leftists" had been saying for years, but this instance, for totally different ends. The government took a very significant decision. It wanted to begin negotiations with the unofficial strike committee. The prime minister publicly announced in parliament and in the press, that he would discuss with the bus-drivers. At this moment the union movement (which is also represented in parliament) started up a violent campaign. They said that, if the government wanted to talk directly with the strikers, this would mean the end of the union movement. The myth which has it that the union bureaucrats represent the workers would be finished. The government backed down.

From this time on there grew a movement in Holland which we call the "Critical Union Movement". It's a movement animated by a group in the unions which wants to change the contents of the union movement.

At the same time, two new events occurred which tended towards showing

that the unions represented the workers. The Dutch employers guaranteed to the unions a bonus payment for the union funds for each unionised worker. Half was paid directly to the worker and the other half into the union funds as a union subscription. Thus workers now had a financial inducement to join a union, but the number of unorganised workers has remained unchanged. The other thing was that the union bureaucracy began to understand that their links with the employers were too strong and too open. They could no longer help capitalism because the worst service that the union movement could do to capitalism was to render it too much service.

The unions thus modified their attitude of systematically refusing to support all strikes. They began to support some strikes which made people say of them at the time, that the union movement had changed its attitude, but they were doing this in their own interests. Since that time a sort of game has grown up: at certain moments, if a refusal to support a strike is too dangerous, the union movement supports it, but tries at the same time to change the strike's direction and the strikers' demands, so as to make the strike harmless and limited. In such cases the unions have even supported factory occupations, which they had always condemned previously.

There was a big occupation which has become exemplary in Holland in a big textile trust. After the occupation one of the union bureaucrats told pressmen: "We were forced to support the occupation to stop the rank and file occupying themselves and the fact that we supported an occupation one time doesn't mean that we will support other strikes." In fact, it was sometimes one group of unions, sometimes another which supported the strikes which broke out.

Later in 1973, the workers had become so discontented that the situation became critical again. The unions on their own had now to start up a strike movement, if they were not again to lose many members. But the unions worked it out so that industry should be affected as little as possible by these strikes. Strikes were not declared in all branches of industry but in a few characteristic, well chosen factories

Just before 1972 there had already been similar situations especially in engineering. The metal workers were pushing so hard that the unions were forced to talk about an unlimited, long strike and a very militant too. They threatened the employers who went before the courts and obtained a judgement, suspending the strike. The bureaucrats who had spoken of a long hard strike said to the workers: "we are sorry, we really wanted to fight, but helas we are in a democratic organisation and we must respect the laws and judgements of democracy." The judges' decree was announced at 11 a.m. Two hours later the engineering workers had gone on strike themselves just the same and within a day a new contract was signed with the employers. Since then the tendency to no longer respect industrial court judgements has become common.

In 1973 during the strike movement started by the unions, they were so afraid as the movement spread, that the pre-1972 situation would repeat itself, that the union itself behind the back of the workers signed what is known as Holland as "The Easter Armistice". No worker knew about this. The "Armistice" was signed by the bureaucracy at a very high level. The union executives had wanted this "Armistice" as they felt control of the

rank and file was slipping away from them. They told the authorities that they could not propose a peace formula to their members, because they would lose face. So, if you propose an armistice to us, they said, we'll accept. The bureaucrats finished by revealing their activities at a later date.

After this many workers tore up their union membership cards and when at the beginning of 1977 there was again great discontent the bureaucracy knew that it couldn't allow itself the luxury of a repetition of the "Easter Armistice". This is why in the first three weeks of February Holland was the scene of a huge union led struggle, that hadn't been seen for years and years. One could have been fooled into believing that the main union federations F.N.V. (Federation of the two formally separate Labour Party and Catholic Unions) and the C.N.V. (Christian, i.e. Protestant Union) had abandoned their passive attitude and, by a sort of miracle, had opted for combativity, as had been forecast by the "Critical Union Movement" the main group aiding this change. This movement is characterised by its belief in the possibility of transforming unions into organs of workers' struggle.

Although the union leaders wanted to keep up this image of combativity, the reality was quite different. The spirit of battle had not overpowered the union movement. Although they called our workers on strike after strike, in fact the unions acted unwillingly and their only reason was that the force of events denied them any other path. They followed this route without hesitation, because they had no choice. In front of them was the image of an eventual wildcat movement of the autonomous rank and file, which could have escaped their control. Nothing would have been more difficult and dangerous for their position. The fear of such an eventuality dominated them. While they constantly called to mind the old traditions of working class struggles, they spoke at the same time of the dangers of escalation and that openly!

The president of the F.N.V., Wim Kok, expressed this very clearly from the beginning. He said: "Everywhere in our country there are unions which are deeply frustrated by the fact that we ended a strike movement in 1973. 'By pushing a button' and without consulting our members what we call the 'Easter Armistice' profoundly shocked the working class and we cannot allow a repetition. This time strikes will be ended only by vote and not from above. I assure everyone, employers and workers, that there will be no agreement behind the backs of the workers. Such a situation would put the existence of the unions themselves in danger. If the employers think that this will happen, because our financial possibilities will limit our activity, they are wrong. I prefer the bankruptcy of the union movement to a confrontation like the one in 1973 which would be still more fatal for us."

The inevitability of the conflict was the consequence of employer policy. For many years in Holland there was an annual wage rise for all wage earners which corresponded to the index of price rises caused by inflation. This threshold agreement had become a normal clause in agreements and was regarded as a right which had been gained. However during the whole of 1976 employers had already indicated that they wanted to abandon this practice, because they preferred another system which would of course guarantee a rise in wages since there was permanent inflation, but would render this process less automatic. This idea had hardly begun to be discussed among employers and already there was an enormous anxiety spreading among workers. To maintain the threshold agreements they struck on several occasions in

1976; in May a wildcat strike in the ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam; in September wildcat strike in the port of Amsterdam; in January 1977 wildcat strikes by printers - a newspaper for Enschede in Eastern Holland was not printed for three days. Tension was rising. The union movement was between two stools. Either it took the head of the growing tide, or it risked being by-passed.

It was the president of the dairy industries union, Cees Schelling, himself a member of the "Critical Union Movement", who took the bull by the horns. Of course, neither he, nor any other union bureaucrat, wanted to declare a general strike. They limited the movement to several strikes in different factories, chosen with care and precaution. As soon as the conflicts were declared, the employers threatened to appeal to the industrial judge. The strikes were banned, but the unions couldn't allow a repetition of the spontaneous strikes which had occurred following the ban in the engineering industry in 1972. So they immediately declared strikes on other factories. At the same time, the major federations entered upon the scene. The tension was so great that any delay or hesitation would have been catastrophic. The signed of combativity at shopfloor level were too apparent.

Paradoxaly the strike call of the federations was followed without enthusiasm. Workers remembered the "Easter Armistice". This was why from the beginning, the unions explained and then later at several stages that they would fight all the way this time. For two weeks, 26,000 workers were on strike, under the direction of the bureaucracy, in selected factories and of course not in the branches where the greatest combativity reigned.

In 1972 when the wildcat strike broke out in the engineering industry at the same moment when the unions called off all conflicts, the employers who hadn't wanted to sign an agreement, gave in within 48 hours. In February 1977 when an official struggle was declared, it lasted for three weeks. Far from showing the force of the union movement, such a length of time only shows its weakness, compared with the autonomous workers' movement, which the unions had known how to avoid with success. People spoke of "The war which the union movement had at last declared". In reality it was a war against the real class war.

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### I. 3. GREAT-BRITAIN : The role of the unions today

(a group from Liverpool)

We want to comment on the points made in the document we have received from France. We want to do this not just to raise differences for differences' sake, but because the question of the role of the unions needs all the discussion it can get. The document makes many observations that are quite correct, but we don't think it goes far enough. It isn't sufficient in our opinion to point to the conflict between 'leaders' and 'rank and file', nor to growing bureaucracy and suppression of even the formal aspects of union democracy and leave it at that. For us these are all symptoms of something much deeper.

In Britain we too can point at many instances of how workers come into conflict with 'their' unions. 98% of all strikes in Britain are unofficial - not sanctioned by the unions - and in many cases against their express instructions. In the 1950's and early 1960's before the government began to take control of wages, it was common for small sections of workers to exploit what was then a shortage of labour in industry, to win increases in basic pay, piece rates or other forms of bonus payments. They thereby set the pace for other sections of workers. Many of these actions were initiated or led by shop stewards and it was usually the motor industry which led the way in this kind of action.

Today this picture has changed. It is obvious now that the stewards at the base of the trade union machine were able to push wage rates ahead only in so far as the whole economy was expanding and able to pay as soon as such action began to threaten the system, two things happened. The illusion of independence which shop stewards had enjoyed was shattered. The unions began to exert a firm grip on the activities of 'their' shop stewards. Secondly the government began to play a much more active role in the management of the economy - with wage freezes, 'pay pauses' - income policy, you name it and they've already thought of it.

So the unions and all those associated with them are revealed more and more as part and parcel of the capitalist state. As a consequence they urge 'responsibility' and 'negociation' on the workers. Where before discontent could be bought off with wage increases today workers find themselves up against an unholy alliance of bosses, government and unions. The shop stewards can no longer be relied upon to initiate or lead wildcat strikes - instead they do their very best to divert and channel the inevitable discontent and frustration into avenues that are safe for the system, into 'participation' which is the 'in'-word amongst management, union bureaucrats at British Leyland, or when there is a build-up of popular energy over some question as for example cuts in government expenditure on social services, education etc., they organise a 'safety valve' in the form of long, weary, demoralising processions to parliament to 'protest'.

Before workers can see a way forward, before an independent and as the document calls it 'autonomous' movement can come into existence, such a movement must first come to grips with the unions. This is why we think that the picture painted in the document does not go far enough. We don't think that movements of workers can even begin to organise themselves without coming into conflict with the unions. In this article we want to say why this is so and therefore we urge our fellow workers to abandon any illusions they might have about transforming or utilising the unions as vehicles for their own emancipation.

The first thing we want to point out is the increasing role of the state has come to play in all countries of the world; within this international tendency towards state planning and monetary manipulation which has grown since the second world war, the unions have a very important role and function to undertake. In France for instance, despite the fact that the left is in "opposition, the unions play a direct role in the management of the economy (to be sure under a cloak of 'protecting jobs' or the 'national interest'). As the document points out the unions manipulate workers' struggles for the electoral advantage of the Communist and the Socialist parties. But whether the left wing is in opposition or 'in power' as in Britain makes no difference to the role the unions play in the day to day management of the system. In the recent past under both Tory and Labour governments the unions have enthusiastically collaborated in royal commissions, planning agreements, investigations into industrial relations and so on. The unions sit in with councillors and bosses on regional economic planning bodies. The top officials of the unions have direct access to the very highest government level. If you get sacked and want to challenge it in the courts, it is more than likely that the tribunal that judges the case will be chaired by a trade union official.

Capitalism could not function today without the state assuring the level of accumulation, that is the level of profits, through monetary manipulation, (Inflation), taxation and borrowing. As part of this the state needs to be able to plan its labour force and despite their phony protests the unions are only too happy to play this particular ban game. Their job is to ensure a regular supply of docile labour and to prevent the workers' inevitable discontent from threatening the safety of the system. For this reason we cannot agree with the view in the document that the unions represent the interests of the workers at a day to day level over wages and conditions and yet at a national or political level, the 'leadership and the 'rank and file' somehow become opposed. This idea of a double nature or function for the unions is very widespread, because it seems to fit the facts when things are 'quiet'. But unless we are saying that the state capitalism which has become the reality of every country in the world today is somehow at the same time on the interests of the working class, then we have to reject this view.

Which brings us to the second point we wish to make. For us the conflict between workers and the unions is not simply one between leaders and led. Increasingly the struggle of the workers is not about this or that policy but between one class and another - with the unions at all levels down to shop stewards - on the other side. The most recent example of this was the toolmakers strike at British Leyland. The skilled men in Britain are an extremely conservative section of the working class. Their strike was a very sectional and narrowly concerned one. Because of state control of wages their position with regard to unskilled workers had become eroded, they therefore demanded that their position be restored. But they chose to do it by demanding separate negotiation rights for themselves, which cut across a joint union-management plan to 'rationalise' wage bargaining within British Leyland. The union led the fight against these men with the full backing of the government and bosses. The union threatened with expulsion which in Britain, because of the closed shop, means the sack. That the conflict didn't escalate into a full scale battle against the union is due to a 'formula of words' which was sufficient to influence the men back to work. They were on strike for four weeks, took on the union, bosses, government, all just to establish the 'right to nego-

ciate', they didn't even think their strike was against the government's social contract, needless to say their action has won them precisely nothing as the next ten weeks will reveal. Perhaps the most positive feature is that many workers are now seriously questioning whether they too will have to take on 'their' unions in the near future.

Why is this? What we call the old movement of the workers, trade unions and political parties fighting for reforms within the system, have become totally integrated. The unions and labour politicians long ago won their fight for social respectability. Since the second world war we have seen a long boom based on reconstruction; after that war, since the mid '60s we ourselves have taken part in movements for wage increases and better conditions, shorter hours and so on. What has happened? Well on the face of things we 'won'. In the late '60s increases of £10 per week were commonly gained. In 1968 in France many workers 'won' massive increases. In Portugal after the 'carnation revolution' in April 1974 many workers won 100% increases. But what has happened since?

We had to fight again, not to gain more but simply to try and hold on to what we had. We had to 'win' the same increases again each year, inflation has seen to that. Even so we have slipped back, our living standards have been falling continuously for the last three years. And all the while we have fought back section by section, industry by industry. The unions did "their bit" by boxing us off into sections, making us squander out strength in a war of attrition, while they kept on concluding their deals for yet another year of 'wage restraint'. It is the same story in France, Germany, Poland or wherever you go.

In Britain the unions tell us the economy is already part-way socialist - these are the 'reforms' they have 'won' for us:

- a 'free' health service, where every worker pays more and more each week for a declining service. Hospitals close, nurses cannot afford to eat, dilapidated equipment constantly breaks down;
- 'free education', where most of our kids leave school illiterate, where schools are just barracks, where ... 15,000 teachers will soon be unemployed;
- nationalised industries, that are 'unprofitable' so the workers are in constant fear of closure, where the majority of workers pay taxes to keep them in business; etc. etc.

This is the promised land the workers were to inherit after the nightmare of the depression of the 1930's. We could have it all, provided that we made enough for them to pay for it. This is the system the unions, the old workers' movement fought for and brought into being, the system they are tied to. We don't believe that somehow this is in the interest of the working class. If you are an Italian worker, working for Agnelli's Fiat and he pays your health's insurance for you and builds convalescent houses out of the health that you made for him, nobody says: "He is a socialist". They simply say: "He is a clever boss", wanting to keep his work force healthy so they can make a profit for him. The interest of the unions and Agnelli are one. And the same to get the workers to adapt to the 'progress' of capitalist exploitation.

To conclude we think the interest of the unions and the workers are opposed at all levels. It is no surprise to us to find that union democracy is non-existent, that bureaucracy is everywhere, that workers have to spend

An even if they do negotiate workers only get what the employer is prepared to give. Unions are weak in France and yet nobody says that French workers are worse off than British workers where the unions are 'strong'.

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This pamphlet written by John Zerzan is available as an article in Telos magazine/USA or as a reprint (title slightly altered plus afterword by J. Zerzan) by Solidarity/London, 123 Latham Road, London E 6. Or in French published by Echanges/Paris, price 2 FF. The publication and the text and the foreword written by Echanges for the French edition led to a discussion about the "revolt against work" which will be developed in another Echanges pamphlet which is coming out soon. (Polemic chiefly by some people in Paris and the U.S.A. The problem of the unions and people's attitude and behaviour towards work is closely linked like everything which interreacts in the production process.

are all published in a new book "Creation and its enemies: unions  
against revolution" by John Zerzan (64 pp), price \$2 (£1,20) for 5  
copies or more) from Mutualist books, Box 1283, Rochester, N.Y.  
14603 U.S.A.)

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## II. 1. WHO KILLED NED LUDD ?

John and Paula Zerzan

In England, the first industrial nation, and beginning in textiles, capital's first and foremost enterprise there, arose the widespread revolutionary movement (between 1810 and 1820) known as Luddism. The challenge of the Luddite risings - and their defeat - was of very great importance to the subsequent course of modern society. Machine-wrecking, a principal weapon, predates this period, to be sure; Darvall accurately termed it "perennial" throughout the 18th century, in good times and bad. And it was certainly not confined to either textile workers or England. Farm workers, miners, millers, and many others joined in destroying machinery, often against what would generally be termed their own "economic interests". Similarly, as Fülöp-Miller reminds us, there were the workers of Eurpen and Aix-la-Chapelle who destroyed the important Cockerill Works, the spinners of Schmollen and Crimmitschau who razed the mills of those towns, and countless others at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

Nevertheless, it was the English cloth workers - knitters, weavers, spinners, croppers, shearmen, and the like - who initiated the movement, which "in sheer insurrectionary fury has rarely been more widespread in English history" as Thompson wrote, in what is probably an understatement. Though generally characterized as a blind, unorganized, reactionary, limited, and ineffective upheaval, this "instinctive" revolt against the new economic order was very successful for a time and had revolutionary aims. Strongest in the more developed areas, the central and northern parts of the country especially, The Times of February 11, 1812, described "the appearance of open warfare" in England. Vice-Lieutenant Wood wrote to Fitzwilliam in the government on June 17, 1812, that "except for the very spots which were occupied by soldiers, the Country was virtually in the possession of the lawless." The Luddites indeed were irresistible at several moments in the second decade of the century and developed a very high morale and self-consciousness. As Cole and Postgate put it, "Certainly there was no stopping the Luddites. Troops ran up and down helplessly, baffled by the silence and connivance of the workers." Further, an examination of newspapers accounts, letters and leaflets reveals insurrection as the stated intent; for example, "all Nobles and tyrants must be brought down", read part of the leaflet distributed in Leeds. Evidence of explicit general revolutionary preparations was widely available in both Yorkshire and Lancashire, for instance, as early as 1812.

An immense amount of property was destroyed, including vast numbers of textile frames which had been redesigned for the production of inferior goods. In fact, the movement took its name from young Ned Ludd, who, rather than do the prescribed shoddy work, took a sledge-hammer to the frames at hand. This insistence on either the control of the productive processes or the annihilation of them fired the popular imagination and brought the Luddites virtually unanimous support. Hobsbawm declared that there existed an "overwhelming sympathy for machine-wreckers in all parts of the population", a condition which by 1813, according to Churchill, "had exposed the complete absence of means of preserving public order." Frame-breaking had been made a capital offense in 1812 and increasing numbers of troops had to be dispatched, to a point exceeding the total Wellington had under his command against Napoleon. The army, however, was not only spread very thin, but was often found unreliable due to its

own sympathies and the presence of many conscripted Luddites in the ranks. Likewise the local magistrates and constabulary could be counted upon, and a massive spy system proved ineffective against the real solidarity of the populace. As might be guessed, the volunteer militia, as detailed under the Watch and Ward Act, served only to "arm the most powerfully disaffected", according to the Hammonds, and thus the modern professional police system had to be instituted, from the time of Peel.

Intervention of this nature could hardly have been basically sufficient, though, especially given the way Luddism seemed to grow more revolutionary from event to event. Cole and Postgate, for instance, described the post-1815 Luddites as more radical than those previous and from this point imputes to them that they "set themselves against the factory system as a whole." Also, Thompson observed that as late as 1819 the way was still open for a successful general insurrection.

Required against what Mathias termed "the attempt to destroy the new society", was a weapon much closer to the point of production, namely the furtherance of the fundamental order in the form of trade unionism. Though it is clear that the promotion of trade-unionism was a consequence of Luddism as much as the creation of the modern police was, it must also be realized that there had existed a long tolerated tradition of unionism among the textile workers and others prior to the Luddite risings. Hence, as Morton and Tate almost alone point out, the machine-wrecking of this period cannot be viewed as the despairing outburst of workers having no other outlet. Despite the Combination Acts, which were an unenforced ban on unions between 1799 and 1824, Luddism did not move into a vacuum but was successful for a time in opposition to the refusal of the extensive union apparatus to compromise capital. In fact, the choice between the two was available and the unions were thrown aside in favor of the direct organization of the workers and their radical aims.

During the period in question, it is quite clear that unionism was seen as basically distinct from Luddism and promoted as such, in the hope of absorbing the Luddite autonomy. Contrary to the fact of the Combination Acts, unions were often held to be legal in the courts, for example, and when unionists were prosecuted, they generally received light punishment or none whatever, whereas the Luddites were usually hanged. Some members of Parliament openly blamed the owners for the social distress, for not making full use of the trade union path of escape. This is not to say that union objectives and control were as clear or pronounced as they are all today, but the indispensable role of unions vis-a-vis capital was becoming clear, illumined by the crisis at hand and felt necessity for allies in the pacification of the workers. Members of Parliament in the Midlands counties urged Gravenor Henson, head of the Framework Knitters union to combat Luddism - as if this were needed. His method of promoting restraint was of course his tireless advocacy of the extension of union strength. The Framework Knitters Committee of the union, according to Church's study of Nottingham, "issued specific instructions to workmen not to damage frames". And the Nottingham union, the major attempt at a general industrial union, likewise set itself against Luddism and never employed violence.

If unions were hardly the allies of the Luddites, it can only be said that they were the next stage after Luddism in the sense that unionism played the

critical role in its defeat, through the divisions, confusion, and deflection the unions engineered. It "replaced" Luddism in the same way that it rescued the manufacturers from the taunts of the children in the streets, from the direct power of the producers. Thus the full recognition of unions in the repeal in 1824 and 1825 of the Combination Acts "had a moderating effect upon popular discontent", in Darvall's words. The repeal efforts, led by Place and Hume, easily passed an unreformed parliament, by the way, with much pro-repeal testimony from employers as well as from unionists, with only a few reactionaries opposed. In fact, while the conservative arguments of Place and Hume included the prediction of fewer strikes post-repeal, many employers understood the cathartic, pacific role of strikes and were not much dismayed by the rash of strikes which attended repeal. The repeal Acts of course officially delimited unionism to its traditional marginal wages and hours concern, a legacy of which is the universal presence of "management rights" clauses in collective bargaining contracts to this day.

The mid-1830's campaign against unions by some employers only underlined in its way the central role of unions: the campaign was possible because the unions had succeeded so well as against the radicality of the unmediated workers in the previous period. Hence, Lecky was completely accurate later in the century when he judged that "there can be little doubt that the largest, wealthiest and best-organized Trade Unions have much done to diminish labor conflicts", just as the Webbs also conceded in the 19th century that there existed much more labor revolt before unionism became the rule.

But to return to the Luddites, we find very first-person accounts and a virtually secret tradition, mainly because they projected themselves through their acts, not an ideology. And what was it really all about? Stearns, perhaps as close as the commentators come, wrote "the Luddites developed a doctrine based on the presumed virtues of manual methods". He all but calls them "backward looking wretches" in his condescension, yet there is a grain of truth here certainly. The attack of the Luddites was not occasioned by the introduction of new machinery, however, as is commonly thought, for there is no evidence of such in 1811 and 1812 when Luddism proper began. Rather, the destruction was levelled at the new slipshod methods which were ordered into effect on the extant machinery. Not an attack against production on economic grounds, it was above all the violent response of the textile workers (and soon joined by others) to their attempted degradation in the form of inferior work; shoddy goods - the hastily assembled "cut-ups", primarily - was the issue at hand. While Luddite offensives generally corresponded to periods of economic downturn, it was because employers often took advantage of these periods to introduce new production methods. But it was also true that not all periods of privation produced Luddism, as it was that Luddism appeared in areas not particularly depressed. Leicestershire, for instance, was the least hit by hard times and it was an area producing the finest quality woolen goods; Leicestershire was a strong center of Luddism.

To wonder what was so radical about a movement, which seemed to demand "only" the cessation of fraudulent work, is to fail to perceive the inner truth of the valid assumption, made on every side at the time, of the connection between frame-breaking and sedition. As if the fight by the producer for the integrity of his work-life can be made without calling the whole of capitalism in question. The demand for the cessation of fraudulent work necessarily becomes a cataclysm, an all-or-nothing battle insofar as it is pursued; it leads directly to the heart of the capitalist relationship and

its dynamic.

Another element of the Luddite phenomenon generally treated with condescension, by the method of ignoring it altogether, is the organizational aspect. Luddites, as we all know, struck out wildly and blindly, while the unions provide the only organized form to the workers. But in fact, the Luddites organized themselves locally and even federally, including workers from all trades with an amazing coordination. Eschewing an alienating structure, their organization was wisely, neither formal nor permanent. Their revolt tradition was without a center and existed largely as an "unspoken code"; theirs was a non-manipulative community, organization which trusted itself. All this, of course, was essential to the depth of Luddism, to the appeal at its roots. In practice, "no degree of activity by the magistrates or by large reinforcements of military deterred the Luddites. Every attack revealed planning and method," stated Thompson, who also gave credit to their "superb security and communications". An army officer in Yorkshire understood their possession of "a most extraordinary degree of concert and organization." William Cobbett wrote, concerning a report of the government in 1812: "And this is the circumstance that will most puzzle the ministry. They can find no agitators. It is a movement of the people's own."

Coming to the rescue of the authorities, however, despite Cobbett's frustrated comments, was the leadership of the Luddites. Theirs was not a completely egalitarian movement, though this element may have been closer to the mark than was their appreciation of how much was within their grasp and how narrowly it eluded them. Of course, it was from among the leaders that "political sophistication" issued most effectively in time, just as it was from them that union cadres developed in some cases.

In the "pre-political" days of the Luddites - developing in our "post-political" days - the people openly hated their rulers. They cheered Pitt's death in 1806 and, more so, Perceval's assassination in 1812. These celebrations at the demise of the prime-ministers bespoke the weakness of mediations between rulers and ruled, the lack of integration between the two. The political enfranchisement of the workers was certainly less important than their industrial enfranchisement or integration, via unions; it proceeded the more slowly for this reason. Nevertheless it is true that a strong weapon of pacification were the strenuous efforts made to interest the population in legal activities, namely the drive to widen the electoral basis of Parliament. Cobbett, described by many as the most powerful pamphleteer in English history, induced many to join Hampden clubs in pursuit of voting reform, and was also noted, in the words of Davis, for his "outspoken condemnation of the Luddites." The pernicious effects of this divisive reform campaign can be partially measured by comparing such robust earlier demonstrations of anti-government wrath as the Gordon Riots (1780) and the mobbing of the King in London (1795) with such massacres and fiascos as the Pentridge and Peterloo "risings" which coincided roughly with the defeat of Luddism just before 1820.

But to return, in conclusion, to more fundamental mechanisms, we again confront the problem of work and unionism. The latter, it must be agreed, was made permanent upon the effective divorce of the worker from control of the instruments of production - and, of course, unionism itself contributed most critically to this divorce, as we have seen. Some, certainly including the marxists, see this defeat and its form, the victory of the factory system, as both an inevitable and desirable outcome, though even they must admit that



in work execution resides a significant part of the direction of industrial operations even now. A century after Marx, Galbraith located the guarantees of the system of productivity over creativity in the unions' basic renunciation of any claims regarding work itself. And work, as all ideologists sense, is an area closed off to falsification. Work activities are the kernel, impervious to the intrusion of ideology and its forms, such as mediation and representation. Thus ideologists ignore the unceasing universal luddite contest over control of the productive processes. Thus class struggle is something quite different to the producer than the ideologue.

In the early trade union movement there existed a good deal of democracy. Widespread, for example, was the practice of designating delegates by rotation or by lot. But what cannot be legitimately democratized is the real defeat at the root of the unions' victory, which makes them the organization of complicity, a mockery of community. Form on this level cannot disguise unionism, the agent of acceptance and maintenance of a grotesque world.

The marxian qualification elevates productivity as the summum bonum, as leftists likewise ignore the real story of the Luddites (the ending of the direct power of the producers) and so manage, incredibly, to espouse unions as all that untutored workers can have. The opportunism and elitism of all the Internationals, indeed the history of leftism, sees its product finally in fascism when accumulated confines brings their result: when fascism can successfully appeal to the workers as the removal of inhibitions, as the "Socialism of Action", etc. - as revolutionary - it should be made clear how much was buried with the Luddites and what a terrible anti-history was begun.

There are those who again fix the label of "age of transition" on today's growing crisis - hoping all will turn out nicely in another defeat for the Luddites. We see today the same need to enforce work discipline as in the earlier period, and the same awareness by the population of the meaning of "progress". But quite possibly we now can recognize all our enemies the more clearly so that this time the transition can be in the hands of the creators.

THE LEGEND OF THE UNION MOVEMENT - Cajo Brendel.

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I consider the text "Who killed Ned Ludd?" by John and Paula Zerzan of great importance. It reminds me of discussions raging in the Dutch Council Communist Movement in the 1960's and of later discussions in the period 1972 to 1974.

At the beginning of the 1960's I had a long experience as a "Council Communist". Already before the war when I was associated with the International Communist Group (Pannekoek and Canne Meijer participated) we never forgot to show the hostile attitude of the unions towards all attempts at struggle by workers. Following (more or less) in the steps of Gorter, we regarded the union as a form of organisation, which from all points of view, was in contradiction with the working class organisation and with all rank and file organisation in which workers themselves try to counter-balance employers' power in a way which represents a total break with those forms of organisation, cells of the existing order such as the unions which we met everywhere about us. In the real situation as it revealed itself in front of our eyes we could see only the conflict between the unions function and the workers struggle, whether on the shopfloor or during a strike.

As the years passed this conflict, this contradiction, if you like, became more and more frequently evident. In that post-war period we spoke of "the intergration of the unions into bourgeois society", an intergration which we said was possible because the union movement from its beginnings was the central organ which sold labour power, which demanded, therefore, that inevitably function within the framework of a capitalist economy.

At the beginning of the '60's this type of explanation no longer satisfied a group of us (who subsequently formed the present collectif "Act and Thought"). What exactly does the term "intergration" mean, we asked ourselves? Nothing more than a sort of transformation. An organisation set up in the distant past in favour of the exploited class had gradually become an organisation in favour of capitalism. How, we wondered, had such a transformation taken place? At what moment had it ended? It was precisely when we posed this latter question which meant fixing "the moment" of change that our difficulties began.

I remember well, that when I was 30, the reply didn't cause me any problems. Of course, I said, as is the case with all historical phenomena, the exact date of such a transition can't be given. But we could say that more or less before the first World War the unions still had their character of organisations of struggle and after this they lost it. However, in a few years I saw I was forced to modify this reply. The more I looked into the history of the Union Movement, the more its character, i.e. its myth, of struggle dissappeared.

First of all a book by the English historian G.D.H. Cole, which appeared in 1913, intituled "The World of Labour" taught me that well before the end of the 19th century the unions had become "respectable" i.e. a part of the capitalist order:

"... Our Trade Unions, growing continually in numbers, lost really more than they gained. The community represented by Union membership grew slacker; the Union tended to become a mere benefit society, and to forget that its sole raison d'être was the ceaseless war against Capitalism and exploitation. The fighting spirit slumbered: as, in the Co-operative Societies, dividends became of more account than Co-operation, so, in the Trade Unions, benefits were more than the class-struggle. In a word, Trade Unionism became respectable.

Respectability is the death of all working-class movements. With the change in the public attitude towards Trade Unionism came a change in the social standing of its officials. They too became respectable, and with their new position came their divorce from the working-class point of view, the growing breach between the official caste and the rank and file. Divorced from manual labour, the leaders ceased to understand the needs of the wage-earner, and with the crowning camaraderie of the House of Commons

died the last semblance of the old unity. The Labour leaders entered the governing classes..." etc. page 206 and 207.

It is clear that Cole too was among those who thought that the unions had been transformed from a workers to an anti-workers organisation. Only for him, this transformation was already over before the 20th Century. A short while later I discovered that William Morris in "Lecture on Socialism" in 1885 had already written that the unions

"now no longer represent the whole class of workers as working men but rather are charged with the office of keeping the human part of the capitalist machinery in good working order and freeing it from any grit of discontent."

The first thing to note. A process which Cole situates in the 1890's, Morris situates 15 years earlier. If we compare the opinion of Morris - who still seems in his turn to believe that a period had existed when Unions represented workers as such - with the descriptions of other 19th Century British Labour Historians (e.g. the Webbs, the Hammonds etc.) the same history is repeated and the myth of the Union recedes further and further back.

There was, however, something else in what Morris said which struck me. He gave in 1885 a characterisation of the Union movement which is entirely modern, to which we could easily agree on the basis of our own daily experience.

I began to draw the conclusion that what was in question was something essential and fundamental linked directly to what the Union Movement represents in industrial society.

Had this function of the Unions to save the capitalist economy from the discontent of its labour force and to maintain the human part of its machinery in good working order, not always existed from the beginning of the Union Movement? Is it not irremediably linked with its activity on the labour market? If we reply yes to these questions, does this not mean that the Unions have always had the same character as they have today? Has it not always thus been an ambition of the Unions to appear as organisations for the defence of working class interests, a natural ambition which contributes to its fundamental task of camouflaging by circumstances that certain improvements in productivity can only be obtained by an improvement in workers living conditions?

Already the famous Utopian Socialist Robert Owen knew that wage rises far from being purely a disadvantage for the capitalist entrepreneur could on the contrary - in conjunction with technical development - contribute to a rise in profits. Owen was regarded as "socialist" because he was for better conditions for the exploited. In reality he would seem rather to be a very far-sighted capitalist.

To get back to the Unions, it was around the subject of their real character that violent discussions arose in the Dutch group "Spartacus" (inheritors of the old Council Communist Group) to which we belonged. At one moment those in Spartacus who disagreed with us said that if we defined the Union Movement as an institution which had always functioned in favour of capitalist economy and bourgeois society, we were totally denying the entire heroic past of the workers movement! We were accused of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Many in Spartacus said that it was true that the Unions had been the praetorian guard of capitalism for many years, but nevertheless, in the past they had been something else.

We replied, "what you want to defend in this way is only a legend, a legend which can be explained by the fact that despite its real character, the workers can sometimes use the Unions because sometimes some of their interests coincide with certain interests of capitalism (1)" We also replied, "if you maintain the opinion that Unions in the past were something other than they are now - i.e. that they have undergone a profound change - you must show the cause, which then logically must be an outside cause. This would lead us back to the idea that this transfor-

(1) See further on the text by J. Walker.

mation was produced through the faults of the bureaucracy. We reject such an explanation. It is not the bureaucrats which show the Unions the way, it's the real nature of the Unions (and their function!) which shows the bureaucrats the way. If you don't want to believe that from its origin a conflict existed between Unions and workers, look at the history of the workers movement in Holland. In Holland where the Unions began nearly a century after those in England, at the very moment of their definitive and modern foundation, they tried, in vain, to stop the only railway strike we have ever had in this country".

I won't go into all aspects of this discussion which was part of a wider discussion which led to our group and "Spartacus" parting company. For us it was clear that the way in which the others judged these things was determined by their own general position on the present struggles. There is a connection between the way we view the present and the way we view the past. This is why, through present struggles, "The New Movement" (or rather those who are witness to its birth) has the task of elucidating historic relations which have been too long neglected by official historians. This is why for example the American historian Herbert G. Gutman talks of "new Labour History". I will return later to this idea in relation to John Zerzan.

Later, in 1972, I discussed this again with new contacts and friends (especially the late Joe Jacobs, at that time member of the English group Solidarity). I explained that I had come to think more and more that the Unions had not been changed into something hostile to the workers, but that this hostility was already there at the Union's birth and was proper to its origin and function. Joe told me that for some time he had been of the same opinion and told me that I should read E.P. Thompson "The Making of the English Working Class" where I would find my opinion substantiated.

After reading the article by Zerzan "Who killed Ned Ludd?" I find his short exposé on the subject is even more important than Thompson's book. Zerzan shows that the Union Movement developed as an instrument to stimulate and which did in fact stimulate, the events and the system which Luddism threatened to destroy. This means that Zerzan thinks that Unionism, despite its ambiguous character, which is caused by the fact that it is composed of organisations to which workers adhere and which function in favour of bourgeois society at one and the same time, can be defined as a subdivision of the capitalist system. This point of view can be seen very clearly at the end of his article where he speaks of the defeat (of the working class) which was the basis of the victory of the Unions, and he characterises the Unions as "the organisation of complicity" (with the capitalist world). The paragraph before the last is an attempt to unmask official history and the myths which for one and a half century have grown around the graves of the Luddites.

What is interesting and important to me is that John Zerzan has come to this point of view by another path than I and my friends. We have always gone the other way round: from the nature of the present Union Movement we have reasoned out certain conclusions in relation to its past existence and origin. The Zerzan article is more or less complementary to our work. His point of departure is not the present day but the "pre-history" of the Union Movement. He doesn't speculate about the past armed with a present day concrete experience, but he works like a hunter of historic treasures, which he uncovers outside the dust and cobwebs of ideology.

It is very typical that he declares that the ideologues (i.e. the official historians of bourgeois society and of the unions) ignore the widespread revolt of the Luddites and their challenge to the production process. His conclusion that class struggle is something else for those who produce than it is for the ideologues is spot on and is an attack on all vanguardists of whatever colour or kind.

How was it possible for John and Paula Zerzan to discover what they did and



redefine the Union Movement? They had a penetrating enough vision to understand Luddism in a totally different way. The historical material, knowledge of the facts, that existed already. But it was precisely because they had understood the importance of the refusal of work and similar phenomena in the United States as the beginnings of a new form of workers' movement, that they were able to notice the little, or so-called little, details which others had neglected. This is why we can say that indirectly John Zerzan has in fact followed the same road as us. The "New Movement" showed him the way in a different way. What Herbert Gutman means by "the new Labor history", i.e. a historical science which isn't interested in great events or well-known institutions, but in people and their relationship to daily work, is what aided the Zerzans in penetrating further into the second decade of the 19th century than the ideologues and worshippers of the myth. While we attacked these myths from outside they have pierced them through the heart.

It is significant that Zerzan at the end of his article, after the historical study, again speaks of present day struggles:

"We see today the same need to enforce work discipline as in the earlier period, and the same awareness by the population of the meaning of "progress". But quite possibly we now can recognise all our enemies the more clearly, so that this time the transition can be in the hands of the creators".

There is a direct relationship here with the idea of the "New Movement" and also with phenomena like the "refusal of work", other attitudes towards work, etc. etc. In my eyes this relationship observed by Zerzan himself is the most important of all his research, is not purely historical or scientific. It has a practical meaning.

This is why I was interested in the suggestion made by an English comrade (see Echanges no. 9) that the "New Movement" might rather be a new way of thinking or of looking at things. In my opinion the "New Movement" was not born in our heads. It is something which has begun to exist in social reality outside our heads and is shown in new forms of struggle like refusal of work, sabotage, sequestrations, new forms of strikes, occupations etc. and in new forms of recuperation, either by the bosses or (in reply) in turn by the workers. But at the same time I think that this new reality has forced us to change our ideas, to think differently from the way we did before. What is happening to us can be seen in Zerzan who, with a greater knowledge, coming from his experience of modern struggles, is re-thinking in a different way, past struggles. It is always the same. It isn't new ideas which give birth to the "New Movement", but on the contrary, the "New Movement" which brings another point of view. So, if you ask the question is the "New Movement" a new reality or rather a new way of thinking (or analysing), I would answer it is neither one nor the other. It is both and the two aspects influence each other reciprocally.

This can be seen in any important conflict. Workers don't start a wildcat strike or an occupation because they have new ideas in their heads, they start such movements through the force of events. But during such a struggle their ideas are completely overturned. If it is true that their ideas (and the ideas of those concerned) change through experience, it is nonetheless true that we must have a certain general conception (acquired by experience, I repeat) to discover new details in a certain struggle. This is the difficulty with which we are confronted.

Until now we and many others have compiled as much information as possible to find out what is happening: local newspapers, leaflets, the spoken word etc. Unfortunately, not always but often (and this more and more) those who inform us - journalists, Union delegates etc - blind our eyes. Because they have traditional conceptions they are blind to certain details, exactly those which interest us. This is the real role for a bulletin that like "Echanges". Its aim is to give information which can't be obtained elsewhere. It can only function to the extent

that those who contribute are aware of the relationship between the general conception of the "New Movement" and the details we need to enlarge this conception. After our Strasbourg meeting I now understand that on this point, all those who participated (including myself, of course) must be corrected. I was disappointed with this meeting. Perhaps I hoped for too much. I thought that we would discuss on the one hand all phenomena related to the "New Movement" and on the other "the old movement", and above all the Unions which represent the other side of the coin in relation to the "New Movement" because of their practice. So, I thought, many participants would give examples of their own experience in such a way that it would be possible to intergrate positive examples (of autonomous struggles) or negative ones (of the behaviour of Union bureaucracies or vanguardist leftist groups) in an integral conception, which would represent an enrichment of our knowledge. Helas, what was missing was that intergration, which was missing I think through lack of concrete examples. Of course inside the discussion groups, as in the group on the Unions in which I participated, there were examples, but there were not enough and we ended just where the comparison of different individual experiences and their integration should begin.

Of course I have asked myself why this was so. I have no definitive answer. I can only bring elements for forming an opinion. I think we are responsible because none of us succeeded in pointing out clearly enough the main lines of our opinions or tried hard enough to convince others of what these main themes should be. I think that this omission explains why examples came from so few people. Perhaps - I think - many of the comrades around Echanges are too far away from factories to inform us sufficiently. However even those who could inform us did not sufficiently, but perhaps also there were too few of them.

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#### A T T E N T I O N

We have not had the time or scope to translate the French documents at the end of this pamphlet. We thought, however, they were important enough to be included in the English edition of our pamphlet.

They are:

- on page 35 "employers and communist party town mayors often play the same development game" from the employers newspaper "les Echos" of 7.6.77
- on page 36 are two circulars from the management of important firms warning against the activities of "non-recognized" groups
- on page 37 a leaflet cum pamphlet by a rank and file C.G.T. section of printers in Paris (electro-mechanics working for the newspaper "Le Monde") which uillustrates in a striking manner the contradictions inside the union itself under the pressure of the events (arising from the conflict around the paper the "Parisien Libéré" concerning modernisation of printing techniques).

We apologise for translating these. If those interested can't get someone to translate their end (which would be much appreciated) we will try and translate them of those who want to know their contents in detail write to Echanges.

The death certificate for the union printed on the final page, was originally printed as a leaflet by Upshot in San Francisco, U.S.A.

### III. WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE UNIONS TODAY?

#### SOME REMARKS - by a French Post Office Worker

Since 1974 when Giscard came to Power all social conflicts have more or less ended the same way: they have been defeated in the face of hardening of government attitudes.

Rigorous struggles have sprung up directly from the rank and file without initiatives from the Unions. Union leaders call on the workers after the beginning of the action (I'm thinking, among others, of the "big" postal strike in 1974). Since the signing of the "Common Programme", the "left" seem to have one foot in the doorway of the "Elysée". In effect things are moving everywhere.

.....

To avoid saying anything daft, I'm going to try and stick to what I know because I have experienced it personally i.e. to the work conditions, to the combativity and to all that goes on in an automatic postal sorting office in the Paris suburbs (C.T.A.) where I work and from the Union side, to the C.F.D.T., the Union to which I belong.

.....

The work I do is sorting letters, which is stupid and boring. That said, I must explain what a suburban "C.T.A." is and what role they play.

The "C.T.A." took over from the temporary sorting offices in 1974. These were the "parallel" strike-breaking offices set up in October-November 1974 which later became institutionalised. Some of the scabs are still temporary workers in these centers and young postal workers, for the most part recruited from the provinces or from the DOM-TOM (French dominions and territories overseas i.e. Martinique, Guadeloupe, Reunion etc. - mostly black West Indians therefore) have been taken on progressively.

The role of the "CTA" is, through modern machinery, to rationalise the sorting of letters (we know in advance what this "rationalisation" means to us), to break-up the main Paris sorting offices which are traditionally militant by taking away a major part of their work. The aim is to go back on what the workers in the Paris offices have won in their strikes and go-slows by setting up the new suburban automatic offices with different conditions to those inside Paris. This is easier because the workers are mostly new to the Post Offices and because of their origins do not know their rights very well. But you mustn't believe we are a miserable lot!

.....

In July 1975 we went on strike for one week without warning. 1976 - the same thing. The next lot will be soon.

In addition, we may be young without a tradition of struggle, but we know what struggle is just the same. In any case if there is no tradition of struggle, there isn't any tradition of work either. So we have a fairly high rate of absenteeism and we work at a slower rate than the national average. Combativity is fairly high, even if it doesn't show itself in spectacular ways and confronted with this combativity repression is very fierce indeed. An example: one day after the hour meal break, three postmen came back from the canteen 18 minutes late. The foreman issued a formal warning (after several warnings one is liable for a "P.V. 532" and annual increments at only half normal rate). This is bad because if you get a P.V. 532 you can be refused a change of post and/or promotion and

so can't improve your earnings. Straight away, the entire shift on that section (57 present out of 67-70) signed a paper stating that everyone had come back late. The matter was dropped.

.....

Let's talk about the Unions and reactions to them. First of all a few bare facts: About 50% are Unionised with the C.G.T. and C.F.D.T. dividing about 200 members equally between them and the third Union, F.O. with no more than a dozen members at the most.

For the C.G.T. and F.O. if you want to fight the bosses and continue to do so for a long time to come, you must protect the bosses as well. So, the C.F.D.T. then.

I don't want to talk about the different national congresses and the important declarations, because you can read conference minutes without my butting in. What hits me in the face are the general issues which emerge in a way that I can analyse.

For several years the C.F.D.T. has publicly announced a more militant position than the C.G.T. As far as discussion will allow, the C.F.D.T. has, therefore, been growing in strength. But strong, so that it can have more weight in negotiations. In a nut-shell, the more the Union grows, the more its bureaucrats get nearer to Power (in every possible sense).

In the higher circles of the C.F.D.T. they talk of "self-management" ("auto-gestion") without defining too clearly exactly what they mean, this or that party or group is courted from time to time, a "day of action" a month is organised somewhere or other in order to keep their hands firmly on the controls and while mouthing militant phrases they autocratically dissolve the entire C.F.D.T. section for the Gironde (a Department in S.W. France).

On the shop floor level there are the little daily compromises like the regular meetings with the boss, wasting an entire afternoon which are organised for the workers. But there are as many discussions on the shop floor as there are hours in the day and more and more the lads in the office are saying that they haven't the time and that it is no longer the time to be parading up and down the streets with a banner once a month.

So, when a national Union leader comes to the local Union, he is vociferously attacked because of all these 24 hour national strikes and the lack of real militancy at national level.

So, one day, when our shift met we voted by an overall majority against the new Union proposals i.e. for a national 24 hour strike or a 24 hour for each postal district sector by sector. We wanted on the other hand a 24 hour strike in the whole of the nationalised industries and the public sector which could be automatically prolonged indefinitely without new intervention, if necessary.

The more the two major Unions adopt a policy of wait and see (after 78 things will be better i.e. when "the left" win the elections) the more our desire to struggle more effectively grows and grows and the more the need for autonomous struggle outside the Union framework becomes clear.

As a conclusion, let me tell a little story: at the end of October (1976) we were still working in a temporary building, a sort of shed which was full of drafts and unheated. While walking to work some of us decided to stop work if the temperature falls below 13° C. When we arrived we spread the word around. Everyone agreed. At 2 a.m. (this was the night shift), I said to my neighbours that it was freezing and we should see if we shouldn't stop work. I asked what the temperature was. We didn't stop that night because there was no thermometer. The next day we went to buy a thermometer.

THE ANALYSIS OF A STRUGGLE - Cajo Brendel

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I want to speak about the Solidarity-pamphlet on the women cleaners-struggle in Durham (1). I think the text is very interesting because of what Lynda Finn and Gavin Williams say and also because of what wasn't noticed by them in spite of the fact that the story as it was told lead directly to it. The pamphlet is interesting for another reason also, for Solidarity's own comment, with which I agree partly but with which I partly disagree in a very important aspect which I consider very characteristic. Solidarity didn't see the cardinal point that the pamphlet's authors didn't see either.

Let me explain. The Solidarity postscript says:

"... the trade unions are irremediably integrated into the modern state. They cannot be reformed into organisations 'effectively' representing the true interests of workers. And they cannot play any positive role in the transformation of society... trade union bureaucrats... divide, defuse or smash workers' struggles... not because they like 'betraying' or 'selling out'... They do what they do because their interests are quite different from the interests of the people they allegedly 'represent'. Their power is based on their ability to act as middlemen on the labour market, delivering a relatively passive workforce to private or state employers. This is why they are just as scared as the boss at the emergence of independent working class action, controlled from below..."

This, I think, is perfectly right, on condition that one adds that the integration of the unions into the modern state is not a process that transformed original working-class organisations into something else, but was an integration that existed from the very beginning.

A little further on Solidarity says:

"... It is insufficient to say that union officials don't do the job they are supposed to do. At Durham, even if the officials had acted like everyone's fantasy Super-organiser, would this in the long run have altered the situation?...." And so on.

I agree with the whole paragraph on condition that the underlined word "insufficient" is substituted by the word wrong. Further on Solidarity remarks:

- (1) Bureaucrats and Women Cleaners - Available from "Solidarity",  
123, Lathom Road, London E. 3.

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A SUGGESTION FROM J. ZERZAN

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As the problem for capitalism deepens, there are seen more and more efforts to reform the unions, notably by ever-present leftist sects and their "caucuses". Yet perhaps the time has finally come for the supercession of the manipulative theory of "extra-union" struggles, in favor of a frankly "anti-union" revolutionary approach. Anton Pannekoek, writing in the Twenties, declared, "It is the organizational form itself which renders the proletariat virtually impotent and which prevents them from turning the union into an instrument of their will. The revolution can only win by destroying this organism, which means tearing it down from top to bottom so that something quite different can emerge." And today the awareness that trade unions are, in Glenn Browton's phrase, "inherently oppressive", seems to be spreading everywhere. Those who consider themselves radicals are thus encouraged to catch up with the actual movement of the working classes.



It is "difficult for us to endorse all the formulations of the authors of this pamphlet. We feel uneasy when they urge 'effective union representation' or refer to the need for women to be represented by 'their own union'. We cannot accept their belief that 'with their own branch or sub-branch (the women) can be sure that their own particular problems and circumstances will be taken account of'. We agree with the authors that the unions 'did not act as representatives of the workers' and because we are impressed by the fact that this is the rule, rather than the exception, we cannot follow the authors in their paradoxical conclusion that 'the unionisation of part-time workers, such as University cleaners, is both possible and necessary..."

I agree with the whole paragraph, on condition, that the underlined word paradoxical is substituted by the word contradictory.

But then follows a declaration I don't endorse. "We think", Solidarity says, "it is about time that workers began seriously to discuss the possibility of industrial organisation and struggle in no way dependant on the apparatus of the unions"... Well, I don't think matters are so simple as this.

To start with: I can understand these words to mean that workers should see that other forms of organisation are a real possibility and should want nothing else than to make them spring out of the ground. This, I believe, is an illusion, an illusion that has something to do with Solidarity's conceptions about the need of a socialist consciousness as a condition for social reform. New forms of organisation (i.e. the new movement) are not the result of reflection but appear as an imperative necessity any time that the workers' problems cannot be solved otherwise. Workers, male or female, are not so eagerly prepared or ready to take their own matters into their own hands as sometimes seems to be supposed. The Durham experience proves this again. The new movement - which is characterised by the fact that it is a movement of the workers themselves - arises not because workers want to decide for themselves but because they are forced to do so. And in the mind of the workers this is a bitter experience, something that contradicts that what in their opinion ought to be! Thus, the new movement, the new form of organisation, doesn't precede the autonomous struggle, it is its result.

In connection with this, you must not forget that the trade union is "a middleman on the labour market". And what does this mean in fact? It means that the union has a precise function inside the capitalist system, namely a function on behalf of bourgeois society as a whole, a function on behalf of the purchasers of the labour force and a function on behalf of the disposers of labour force as well. Trade Unions are indispensable for the whole wage-system. Consequently they will exist as long as capitalism exists and consequently they will have a membership that will permanently come into conflict with its so-called leadership.

When I was young, I thought that the workers would leave the trade unions one day and build up their own revolutionary organisations. Today I've understood that this illusion was based upon an unsufficient knowledge both about the working of capitalist society and the real economic function of the trade unions. New forms of organisation, new forms of class struggle will not arise after a sort of breakdown of trade unionism, no they arise (you can see it before your eyes) side by the side with the trade unions.

When I was young I thought anti-trade union propaganda was necessary. I thought that one should make workers conscious about new forms of struggle and their need (this is what Solidarity seems to stand for). Now I'm convinced that the need of new forms of struggle transforms the workers consciousness. Thus, they don't discuss the possibility of industrial organisation (Whatever that means, as there's even a unionist interpretation of this word!), as Solidarity advocates, and "after" this start building it. On the contrary, they are forced by circumstance to build new forms of organisation, ones they thought not possible before. It is then they start discussion about the real meaning of their own action if they have time and feel the need to do so.

Looking over what I've written so far, I have to make, I believe, a small correction. In the first passage of Solidarity's comment (I said I agreed with) they talk about the "true interests of the workers". Thinking this over I don't know whether this could mean that Solidarity decides what "the true interests of the workers" are. If it wants to do this, I don't agree of course and I have the strong feeling that it is just here, the big difference between Solidarity and us lies (or one of the big differences). Compare their statements here with their point of view in connection with the strike of the Ulster Defence Committee.

Having said this, I want to draw your attention to another point. The women cleaners were (in spite of the well known slogan "The Union makes us strong") weak at the very moment that they referred their case to the union. The GMWU didn't want to do anything on their behalf; the TGWU did very, very little because it didn't want upset the 'spheres of influence' agreement. Leaving it to them the women were helpless in advance. On the contrary the women were strong when they took no notice of the unions and acted for themselves (see p. 7 and 8 of the pamphlet). It was the only moment that the surprised university was forced to give way. That this was only temporarily doesn't alter the fact.

This is absolutely ignored by the authors of the pamphlet, ignored because they don't understand the essentials of what they describe. If you look at the whole context of their writing, this is not very surprising. On the contrary: it's logical. One could call it far more surprising that Solidarity doesn't point to this. I think, for me this isn't so surprising either.

But there's one more thing to say: when the women cleaners went into struggle, deserted by the unions, an important number of them formally belonged to the trade-union membership. This is of secondary importance for reasons that are very obvious from the pamphlet. Their subscriptions had been deducted but they were never issued with membership cards, never informed of union meetings and so on. Their membership practically was nothing but a fiction. This, I believe, gives us the right to call the women's struggle autonomous even though their thinking was completely trade unionist. And right here I'm back to the Solidarity point of view. In the Durham case the women were struggling autonomously (with all the consequences of this) and nevertheless at the same time they were organised in a trade union, but only formally and without suffering all the consequences of this. Thus, their independent activity was by no means preceded by a conscious rupture with trade unionism and thus the Durham experience so far not only contradicts the point of view of the pamphlet's authors but also the Solidarity point of view that workers have to discuss beforehand the possibility of action that doesn't depend on the union apparatus in any way.

Reality is more complex than Solidarity seems to believe. Just like the new society, which is rising out of the bosom of the old one, new forms of struggle are rising out of the bosom of existing forms. Union "struggle" and autonomous action don't appear one after another, but one besides the other. Therefore I doubt whether it is accidental that Solidarity didn't point out what I take for so essential.

ON THE STRASBOURG GENERAL MOTORS STRIKE

- Cajo Brendel

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(The following text is a criticism of the "Provisional Conclusions" of the pamphlet "Grève à General Motors - Mars 1976 - Strasbourg", written by a dozen participants in the strike. The pamphlet is available from Exchanges.)

I do not want to say this is my final opinion. These are spontaneous thoughts arising out of my reading of the conclusions of the pamphlet referred to above. They are something I submit to the reader, hoping they can eventually stimulate a little discussion which might perhaps help others.

I refer to the section of the pamphlet headed "Conclusion provisoire", pages 19 and 20, not to the account of this particular strike, which I think is very well done. I quote first of all

(....) "The criticism of the Unions was theoretical i.e. it didn't have any concrete consequences. Thus, we can notice a total absence of autonomous organisation (strike committee etc.), the commissions which could have been an expression of the rank and file remained purely formal... the workers never dared to step outside the limits of a traditional conflict... there was a will to struggle... but it didn't know how to be organised, and this detail was left to "specialists".... the workers played cards, news (publication of papers, leaflets etc.) was spread by specialists...."

Further on in the conclusion the authors say:

"The force of habit was the greatest obstacle to the struggle"

and they add

"...we didn't know how to get rid of the traditional divisions totally".

If my remarks tend towards a certain protest this is because I cannot get away from the impression that the authors of this provisional conclusion have stressed points which contradict some of the facts which they relate themselves. I realise that to a large extent my protest contains an element of speculation. It seems to me that the authors of the pamphlet - workers at G.M. as they say - are separated from their workmates by the simple fact that certainly (or probably) they have a certain idea of the "New Movement" or if you like, the "autonomous movement" in their heads i.e. a more or less fixed idea of how such struggles as theirs should take place. So, their conclusion is a text which moralizes a bit. If this is the conclusion of a small number of participants, it is at the same time the conclusion of those who stress everything which didn't measure up to their "model". In doing this, they criticise because the reality of the struggle didn't correspond to the absolute character of their "ideal". And it is thus that they give the impression that the struggle at G.M. didn't go beyond a Union struggle (and was, therefore "banal").

Do not reply to me that all serious criticism must stress also all the negative elements and all factors which are a sign of weakness. This is true and at the same time it isn't true. The real role of criticism isn't this. If, for example, you criticise Russia, because the society there has nothing to do with a communist society, that doesn't mean anything at all in itself. But if you criticise Russia showing that its basis is wage labour and that it is, therefore, a capitalist society in which the working class is exploited and oppressed, you unmask a reality hidden behind official mythology. When you do this you do something much more important, you make a criticism which is much more pointed than when saying that Russian society doesn't correspond to your ideas. In showing the situation you show at the same time the contradiction between the reality and what others would have you believe.

With the Strasbourg strike (as with all struggles to which we are direct witness) it's the same. The criticism shouldn't say, such and such a struggle is so far or so near the "New Movement", it should stress what is hidden behind the struggles superficial appearance and show that it contains a kernel of which the participants (who apparently leave everything to the "specialists") are unaware. This kernel is: the contradiction between the workers and "their" organisations, which exists whatever we think of them. When we put the finger on this contradiction we make a much more profound criticism than when saying that "habit" produces "an obstacle". When we say this we are describing something perfectly normal, which is true of every struggle and which despite its stimulated importance, doesn't tell us anything at all - or if you like - no more than "when it rains, we get wet"!

We shouldn't be pointing out that present struggles are something other than a pure or absolute form of the new movement, we should be showing to what extent, hidden under classical, old narrow forms, the autonomous struggle of the workers themselves shows its nose. In other words: we must try and get behind the curtain of appearances.

I am saying all this because in the provisional conclusions of the pamphlet from Strasbourg there are passages which contradict its general tendency, as is the case in the rest of the pamphlet (i.e. in the account of events) itself. For example in the conclusion on page 20, the authors write: (....) "we did nevertheless see signs of a timid attempt towards... what the management called "unreasonable acts". The authors themselves cite the storming of the Dalbourg office, of the factory gates and of the air compressors. They also say "throughout the entire conflict, the strike movement tried to use its cunning to get round the barriers in which people tried to enclose them..." It is precisely at this point that I would have liked a clearer explanation.

What does "the strike movement tried"... mean? The unions or in fact the strikers? Who tried to enclose the movement inside barriers? The Unions? The management? Both? Here lies a weakness, not of the struggle, but on the part of those trying to analyse it.

If you want another example of the contradiction between the general tendency of the conclusion and the events, may I refer to the story of the attempt to issue a leaflet without the usual "CGT-CFDT" heading (page 11) and also the remark in the conclusion (page 20) that it was "during the negotiations when the Unions imposed withdrawals that conflicts broke out between them and the Unions..." In the text the authors speak in a tone which gives an impression that this was something which wasn't so important. In my view this isn't right. Conflicts broke out at this moment, because underlying the events, they had been there during the whole strike, invisible, but in spite of that tremendously important. It should have been exactly the task of the authors to show this. This is the fault of the text. And when they say that these conflicts only expressed themselves during the fund raising "gala" and that this in itself was characteristic, I think they are wrong. It is not "characteristic" because this shows that a struggle is very primitive, it is on the contrary perfectly normal for any struggle primitive or not. This is because contrary to what the authors seem to think, the "consciousness of the real meaning of a struggle doesn't come to the participants until during the course of the fight or even afterwards, caused or provoked by the experience which people have had. I can't get out of the back of my mind the thought that the authors of the pamphlet think that such a consciousness is a condition for moving a struggle onto a higher level. Reality shows us something totally different, every time. It is very important to take this into account to understand better how the autonomous struggle of workers themselves develops.

SOME THOUGHTS ON "NEW" ATTITUDES TO WORK

- John Walker.

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Traditionally, socialists have seen meaningful working class activity as only existing in the context of formal mass organizations - mainly trade unions. High priority was put on work in the unions, and workers who refused to join them were regarded as "class collaborators" having a "false consciousness". Trade unionism was seen as the opposite of subservience to the employer.

With the questioning of traditional leftist assumptions, this view has begun to be challenged. Unfortunately, what is not challenged so widely is the antithesis between unionism and non-unionism itself. While at one time we had "trade unionism versus class collaboration" we now have "trade unionism versus the revolt against work". Trade unions are seen as reactionary institutions preventing workers from actively expressing their new attitudes to work.

But is there really an antithesis between unionism and non-unionism, and are the new attitudes to work really new?

It is basic to classical Marxist economics that workers do not work because they want to; they need their wages in order to buy the necessities of life. Marx points out that, while the capitalists of the nineteenth century tried to lower wages as much as possible, they could not push them down to nothing, since "if the labourers could live on air, they could not be bought at any price", (Capital, Vol. I, chapter 24, section 4). While the bourgeoisie is interested in exchange value, the workers are interested only in use value.

This attitude of the workers towards the products of their labour caused the bourgeoisie many problems in the early days of capitalism. In England, in the seventeenth century, large numbers of peasants were thrown off the land in the creation of the landed estates that became the classical form of English agriculture. Many of these former peasants, rather than become hired labourers, chose to live semi-legally in forest areas, or become vagabonds; these were the "masterless men" who provided much of the support for the extreme radical sects in the English Revolution of 1647-1649. Indeed, one of these sects, as a cure for poverty advocated that the poor borrow money and not pay it back and went so far as to denounce work itself.

It was only as the bourgeoisie cut off this possibility of living outside of commodity production, that the mass of the population accepted their transformation into proletarians. It was after this that the workers created the trade unions. These didn't challenge the system, but worked within it to enable the workers to obtain greater use of the products of their labour; they also worked to improve working conditions and lighten the burden of unemployment. This was the heyday of the "Old movement" and it produced the material basis of the present workers' offensive.

In order to look at the contemporary relationship between the trade unions and the workers resistance to commodity production, I want to return to the example of the Manchester factory that I gave at the Paris conference and which was also mentioned in the discussion on "new attitudes towards work". What happened here was that in 1968, the management signed a closed shop agreement with the unions, which, among other things, gave the shop-stewards certain rights over manning levels on the machines. The stewards proceeded to demand that certain of these have six people operating them, knowing full well that they could manage them with two. What happened in practice was that, on the night shift when there was no management about, two people operated the machine, while the other four played cards. What we have here is not "trade-unionism or the revolt against work" but trade-unionism and



the revolt against work. It is not an isolated case; the same thing also happens in the newspaper printing industry and is the background to the present problems facing the newspapers owners in Britain.

There are, of course, innumerable cases where workers and union officials come into conflict - the present toolmakers's dispute at British Leyland is a good example. So is the case of the recent strike at "The Times" which prevented it being printed for a week and led to some workers being expelled from the union. As I write this, news has come through from Glasgow that the bus crews, who are refusing to charge the higher fares which the bus company had just introduced, have been instructed by their shop stewards to collect them.

There is then a complex situation, where, at one time the unions can be representing the workers' interests and at another time not. Indeed, both can happen simultaneously, as when, for example, workers may agree but one clause of a union-management agreement. This results from the fact that, while the union officials have interests of their own, which need not be the same as the workers', they need not be the same as the management's either. The workers tend to use the officials when their interests coincide, and they have to fight them when they don't. It is useless to formulate a blanket slogans for all occasions.

But not only is J. Zerzan wrong; so too are the two Paris comrades who claim that the "New Movement" doesn't "put into question the very system itself". Use value is use value, and working class practice doesn't make a distinction between individual and social use. Workers merely obtain the use of things in the easiest and best possible way. If a worker wants a packet of cigarettes he doesn't start up a campaign to demand that the government give him one, he goes down to the shop and buys it. On the other hand, if he wants to use the welfare facilities that the government is cutting back down, as in happening in Britain, then he joins in a political campaign to fight the cuts.

Capitalism is a system based on the accumulation of surplus value; working class practice over the last three centuries has been based on the appropriation of use value. The difference in that practice has merely been one to the changing material conditions under which it has operated. Capitalism has survived because it has so far been able to oppose it or to contain it. Nevertheless, this practice not only questions the system, but is profoundly subversive of it; it is this practice, not any "political consciousness" that will overthrow the system.

(May I help the British export drive by recommending that anyone interested in the "New Movement" in England in the seventeenth century read Christopher Hills "The world turned upside down", published by Pelican at £ 1,00)

Here below is a translation of a French leaflet by the "Anarchist workers of the C.I.C. (Crédit Industriel et Commercial", a big French bank). It tells of an individual case, showing the methods of the C.F.D.T. leadership, which are just the same as of any leadership.

(Indosuez mentioned in the text is the merger of the Banque d'Indochine and the Compagnie financière de Suez, two of the most powerful private finance banks in France)

"On April 1st, Jeanne Imhauser who worked for the section 'social activities - life style' at the C.F.D.T. headquarters was sacked for 'professional misconduct'. (Since then an other office worker this time employed in the unions' library has also been sacked) The reason given against Jeanne aged 42 and at present still unemployed was that "from your post at work you have, on your own initiative, contacted an employee in one of our sections of the departemental union of the Gironde to try and get an interview with her to find out more about the internal problems of this section."

The sacking was carried out in the purest style, the way a real bastard of a boss would do it and a number of C.F.D.T. militants have denounced and continue to fight about it every day. Returning from sick leave, Jeanne was rather coldly received but none of the permanent union reps gave her any explanations.

The personnel officer, Camier, called 'general administrator', rather apologetically in this case then presented her with two alternatives the March 16th 1977:

- she would resign herself in which case she would get redundancy payments and be paid without notice, holidays etc.;
- or she would be sacked without notice and with no payment.

Jeanne was not going to give in to blackmail and gave her reply to Camier on March 25th. On 29th in the evening she received a registered letter calling her to an interview as a prelude to being sacked (in accordance with the law of 13/7/73) for the next day at 9 a.m. in such a way that the union delegate accompanying her to defend her wouldn't have time to prepare a proper dossier. ....

The C.F.D.T. militants of the union at 'Indosuez' knew about this and asked the union of Paris banks to intervene. After several days seeing that no real action was taken and knowing that time was of the importance (Jeanne is 42 and hasn't much money), the Indosuez section decided to inform as many C.F.D.T. sections as possible ... and to look for some work to help Jeanne out (if you are sacked for professional misconduct in France you can get little or no unemployment pay).

When they received 2 propositions for work for Jeanne they came up against a wall from all sides trying to stop them getting in touch with Jeanne, whose personnel address they didn't know. Then they were told off by the union for Parisian Banks, because they hadn't respected the union hierarchy ... Since then they have been taken to task by permanent union reps, suddenly reproaching them for the 'anti-democratic' functioning of their section and accusing them of doing nothing in their bank.

# Patronat et maires PC jouent le plus souvent le même jeu du développement

**D**EPUIS les dernières élections municipales, sur 221 villes de plus de 30.000 habitants, 157 sont dirigées par une municipalité d'Union de la gauche : 51 ont un maire socialiste (48 auparavant), 72 un maire communiste (59), 2 un maire radical de gauche (3) et 2 un maire d'opposition - (4).

Autant de villes, autant de situations particulières. C'est ce qui ressort de l'enquête menée par les correspondants des « Echos ». Il serait dangereux de schématiser, de déclarer abruptement qu'il est impossible d'être chef d'entreprise dans une ville que dirige un maire communiste, ou, à l'inverse, que cela ne pose aucun problème. Chaque situation est spécifique et peut évoluer en fonction du climat général économique et social.

On n'ignore pas, constate, à Thionville, M. Augereau, président de la chambre de commerce et d'industrie, et P.-D.G. des Constructions Métalliques de Yutz. Le principal problème est celui d'Usinor : dans ce conflit, il semble que la CGT et le PC soient un élément modérateur qui s'est attaché à freiner le mouvement qui se dessinait en faveur d'une occupation de l'usine. A Valenciennes, le patronat a vu dans l'arrivée d'un maire communiste une sorte de garantie de paix sociale. C'est une opinion assez fréquente : la municipalité est souvent requise, plus ou moins officiellement, discrètement, comme médiateur. A Sète, par exemple, elle est intervenue auprès de la CCI, lors d'un conflit entre les dockers et acconiers pour que se tienne une « table ronde », d'où est sortie une solution positive. A Nantes, en revanche, le patron d'une petite entreprise textile assure que la présence du maire était

continue, qu'il a mené une « action débordante » pour soutenir un conflit d'ordre salarial qui s'était politisé ; et il est allé plus loin qu'il ne le voulait dans ses concessions aux ouvriers.

Lors des conflits, souvent, la présence du maire et d'élus aux portes des usines est assez mal ressentie par les chefs d'entreprise. « Ceint de leur écharpe tricolore officielle, (les élus) deviennent des meneurs de grève », affirme M. Guy Brochot, président de l'Union patronale de Seine-Saint-Denis, « alors que par leurs fonctions, ils devraient se comporter en arbitres plutôt qu'en agitateurs ».

« Je ne considère comme à la disposition des industriels », rétorque M. Valbon, maire de Bobigny, président du Conseil général de Seine-Saint-Denis. Chargé des relations avec les PME au sein du Comité central du PC, il précise : « nos municipalités ne vont pas à l'encontre des possibilités de développement économique ».

Tant que les rapports entre entreprises et municipalités restent techniques — accueil de nouvelles activités, installation de zones industrielles, équipement, etc. — tout se passe généralement bien. A Martignes ou à Port-de-Bouc, les maires communistes, promoteurs de ZI ne ménagent pas leurs efforts pour faire venir les entreprises. A Amiens, municipalité et responsables économiques mènent des actions communes pour attirer les industriels.

Le consensus établi depuis 1971 à Amiens entre la municipalité et les industriels, tient sans doute à la situation économique, pas difficile sans être brillante. C'est pourtant à Amiens qu'a éclaté « l'affaire Ferodo ».

La cour d'appel, le 17 mars, condamnait un conseiller municipal et trois conseillers généraux communistes à 2.000 F de dommages et intérêts pour un meeting avec tréteaux et haut-parleurs tenu dans l'usine, informant ainsi la décision du tribunal d'instance.

On pourrait multiplier les cas de bonne intelligence. A Saint-Quentin, où la situation de crise grave est largement responsable de l'élection de la nouvelle municipalité dirigée par un communiste, un consensus semble se dessiner. La municipalité a accepté le principe d'une participation financière de 60.000 F au plan d'aide à l'industrie textile mis au point par la CCI — même si cet accord est assorti de certaines conditions et d'une demande d'aide spéciale de l'Etat.

A Valenciennes, M. Houël entretient, selon ses termes, « les mêmes relations avec les entreprises que n'importe quel autre maire de France », et l'implantation du centre d'impression du « Figaro » a été bien accueillie par la municipalité.

C'est quand surviennent des difficultés sérieuses que tout se complique et parfois se détériore. « Nous sommes les élus des travailleurs », affirme la municipalité d'Albi ; et on ne peut citer aucun conflit où une municipalité dirigée par un communiste ait pris position « pour les patrons, contre les travailleurs ». Cela ne signifie cependant pas la guerre déclarée au patronat.

Le soutien qualifié de « moral », se traduit en actions concertées. A Calais, où la situation économique est très difficile, le maire a toujours eu une position « nuancée » même si, depuis 1971, il a toujours

assisté les grévistes. Lors de grèves à Courtauld, aux Câbles de Lyon, chez Dion-La-Voie, la municipalité a voté des allocations financières aux grévistes. Au Havre, on décrite souvent, en de telles occasions, la gratuité des cantines scolaires pour les enfants des grévistes, on renforce la dotation du bureau d'aide sociale pour l'aide aux familles.

A Nantes, par exemple, on envoie aussi des colis de nourriture aux grévistes, et, comme dans la plupart des municipalités, on reçoit des délégations, on intervient auprès des pouvoirs publics, etc.

A Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône, M. Vincent Porelli a constamment apporté son appui aux ouvriers dockers et aux travailleurs de la Solmer dans leurs conflits avec les dirigeants et a pris la tête de manifestations organisées par la CGT. Cette attitude est courante chaque fois qu'un conflit important risque de s'envenimer, et semble plus fréquente en fonction de la taille de l'entreprise.

Dans les rapports entre entreprises et municipalités, communistes ou pas, les hommes ont un rôle déterminant. Seul maire communiste d'une capitale régionale, René Lampe fait à Amiens figure de notable ; tel autre « inquiète », sans plus de raison. Une forte « concentration politique » peut finir par irriter. « Je me réjouis à l'idée de transférer dans peu de temps mon siège en province, à une certaine distance de la capitale », écrit au président du conseil général de Seine-Saint-Denis le président de la société TISCO, installée à Bobigny de puis 1938.

(Enquête de nos correspondants dans les régions.)

## SECTION ELECTRO - MECANIQUE

### AUX DELEGUES DE LA SECTION ELECTRO-MECANIQUE ET POUR INFORMATION AUX DELEGUES SYNDICAUX DES IMPRIMERIES DE PRESSE PARISIENNE

Depuis quatre ans existent des divergences profondes et ascendantes entre la section syndicale et certains camarades électro-mécaniciens du Monde « Italiens », qui pratiquent une activité remuant continuellement en cause les orientations et les décisions définies démocratiquement dans les instances syndicales (1).

Aujourd'hui, cette politique s'apparente à un travail fractionnel, qui se traduit par un désir d'obtenir des accords d'entreprise, mettant en cause l'accord-cadre qui garantit l'emploi sur le plan régional (2).

1) En refusant d'appliquer les décisions syndicales, et notamment la solidarité financière aux travailleurs du Parisien libéré, sur les bases définies par la section syndicale (3).

2) Concernant le conflit du Parisien libéré, élaboration d'un document à caractère démobilisateur, dont l'aspect majeur était de retirer des camarades du Parisien libéré, de la lutte dans laquelle nous sommes engagés, pour satisfaire à des intérêts d'équipe (29 octobre 1975) (4).

3) En remettant en cause aujourd'hui, les principes de placements, qui régissent toutes les catégories du comité inter, et en ayant sur ce problème de fréquentes réunions avec la direction du Monde. Cela indépendamment de la présence des délégués syndicaux de l'entreprise et des responsables de notre section (5).

4) Affirmation d'une volonté d'autonomie dans l'organisation syndicale par une lettre remise à la direction, le 15 octobre 1976, mettant en cause la présence du secrétaire de section dans les réunions futures avec la direction de l'entreprise (6).

Les camarades ont eu à leur demande, toutes les possibilités de développer leur point de vue dans toutes les instances syndicales (7).

Cela s'est traduit par un désaveu unanime :

Par les délégués du conseil syndical de la section électro-mécanique :

Par la Fédération :

Par la Confédération (7).

Leur déniement systématique de l'organisation syndicale, contribue consciemment ou non à favoriser les attaques virulentes du patronat et du gouvernement contre le Syndicat du Livre (8).

Pour toutes ces raisons, le conseil syndical électro-mécanique, dans sa réunion, du 4 février 1977, a estimé à l'unanimité qu'il lui était impossible d'accorder l'investiture syndicale à des camarades, qui par leur comportement quotidien dans leur équipe tentent de faire prévaloir des orientations inverses de celles définies par l'organisation syndicale (9).

Parallèlement le conseil déploiera tous les efforts nécessaires afin de revenir à une situation syndicale normale, conforme à l'intérêt de l'ensemble des travailleurs (10).

Pour le conseil syndical et le bureau de la section électro-mécanique

R. Naze, M. Baramasco

## L'INVECTIVE ET LA RÉALITÉ

(1) A l'évidence, un organisme qui n'est pas constitué démocratiquement ne peut pas prendre de décisions démocratiquement.

(2) Chaque section technique est régie par des annexes valables pour l'ensemble des entreprises de presse de la région parisienne. Chaque entreprise, en plus de ce tronc commun, a des avantages propres qui ont fait l'objet d'accords avec le C.I.A. de l'entreprise.

(3) La solidarité est payée sur la base de 7 % du salaire net. Nous pensons que par définition la solidarité est un acte librement consenti. Nous tirons argument de ce soit « réparé » hiérarchiquement. Les différents taux d'appel établis depuis le début du conflit n'ont jamais fait l'objet d'une consultation des syndiqués. En outre, les comités que nous avons demandés n'ont jamais été établis clairement.

(4) Les idées qu'il contient datent d'avant le conflit du Parisien libéré quatre ans. Il n'est pas possible d'en faire la synthèse en quelques lignes. Nos délégués le tiennent à la disposition de ceux qui voudront le lire.

(5) Nous ne sommes pas attachés au contrôle de l'embauche. Mais, dans un cas, nous ne le mettons pas en cause, à condition qu'il serve les travailleurs. Dans le cas présent, nous nous opposons à une manipulation.

DANGEREUX : implicitement, c'est la remise en cause de la fonction des délégués du personnel, dont la fonction est, selon la loi, de présenter devant le pouvoir les revendications individuelles et collectives de leurs mandataires. C'est grave. Devons-nous en conclure qu'il y a la les premières d'une suppression ? Nous aimerions que de tels soient des garçons sérieux et responsables, ils n'ont pas besoin de nous.

(6) Nous sommes pour une implantation syndicale dans l'entreprise avec une liaison au niveau de la région (Union syndicale). En cela nous ne faisons qu'approuver les orientations confédérales. (Voir le Peuple n° 893-894, 917 et 959-970)

Nous n'avons jamais contesté la présence du secrétaire de section dans des réunions avec la direction. En revanche, dans la lettre citée (6), nous lui contestons le droit de changer, de sa seule volonté, les dates de réunions que nos délégués ont convenu avec la direction.

(7) Les discussions que nous avons eues avec les instances citées étaient très sérieusement à l'embauche du quinquisme électro-mécanique. Par contre, notre mandat n'a pas été destiné à une discussion dans la section syndicale. A ce jour, nous n'avons pas eu de lien. Les fédérations et confédération se sont montrées incapables de nous diriger internes. Elles nous ont demandé de discuter pour trouver une solution. On continue la suite.

(8) Jamais nous n'avons dénigré l'organisation. Il nous est arrivé d'exprimer des désaccords, c'est normal. Depuis des années qu'ils militent dans l'entreprise à des postes responsables, jamais personne n'a eu à reprocher à nos délégués d'être une attitude anti-syndicale. Il est significatif que cette condamnation vienne de l'entreprise. En fait, travailler avec nous, le secrétaire de section n'a rien de plus que de travailler avec nous, plusieurs années.

(9) ANTIDEMOCRATIQUE. C'est une sanction pour refus d'obéissance et d'opinion.

(10) Prochaine sanction : l'exclusion ?

(\*) Si vous désirez en prendre connaissance, Charles Cocu (poste 2271) et Bernard Courtois (poste 2219), nos délégués, les tiennent à votre disposition.

Les syndiqués du service électro-mécanique du journal LE MONDE (Italiens)  
s'adressent au syndiqués C.G.T.

# UNE CERTAINE IDEÉE DE LA DÉMOCRATIE

Depuis plusieurs semaines, des bruits circulent dans l'entreprise et hors de l'entreprise à propos d'un déaccord entre le Syndicat général du Livre, l'U.I.V. et la quasi-totalité des électro-mécaniciens du "Mondino" Italien. Il est vrai qu'il existe, mais pas nécessairement avec les instances citées plus haut. Par contre, il est profond et durable avec la direction de notre section syndicale quant aux choix, aux méthodes, aux pratiques : en un mot, à la vie démocratique de l'organisation. Il fait l'objet de ce tract.

L'organisation syndicale représente avant tout un moyen de défense des intérêts des travailleurs. Nous avons conscience que, groupés, nous sommes plus forts ; que plus nous sommes nombreux, plus nous avons de chance de mettre en échec l'illégalité et l'injustice, ces deux fléaux de la vie sociale que patrons et gouvernants cultivent à l'ombre de leur pouvoir. Pour voir de l'argent avec son corollaire : révolution.

Nous avons adhéré à la C.G.T. pour prendre place aux côtés de ceux qui combattent pour le droit au travail, pour le droit à une vie décente et d'hommes libres. En ce sens, nous souscrivons sans réserve aux objectifs de la C.G.T. Pour y parvenir, comme elle nous pensons qu'il est primordial de rassembler dans une C.G.T. partout et pour tous le plus grand nombre de travailleurs manuels et intellectuels.

Dans la section syndicale, qui est leur organisme de base, il est important que le maximum de syndiqués participent à tous les aspects de la vie et de l'action syndicale. Comme tous les organisations démocratiques, la section syndicale est dirigée en principe par un conseil syndical élu à bulletin secret par tous les adhérents, une fois par an. Ce n'est hélas ! pas le cas à l'électro-mécanique. Pendant plusieurs années, nous avons essayé de convaincre qu'il y avait nécessité de remédier à cette situation, que la démocratie est une force sur laquelle il faut s'appuyer. Nous avons à cet effet,

en octobre 1975, réalisé un questionnaire que nous avons adressé à la section syndicale pour le discuter avec elle. Les réactions ne nous ont pas déçus. Refus rationnel de discuter, à l'exception d'une campagne de dénigrement menée par nos responsables de section, ou l'absence et la calambure tiennent lieu d'arguments dans toutes les entreprises. Le presse, particulièrement chez les techniciens, a été significatif que, s'agissant de problèmes fondamentaux, l'absence de consensus et l'analyse différente ont toujours entraîné les mêmes résultats. Il ne s'agit donc pas d'une affaire de principe, mais d'une volonté d'écarter certains dirigeants en place de conserver le pouvoir à n'importe quel prix. En prévoyant le vote, nous leur faisons courir un risque ; c'est évident.

Privés du droit de défendre tout point de vue et les idées des syndicats, nous devons, avec notre accord, l'accepter de nous, 1975 le conseil syndical. Ils se sont retirés aux ordres. Ils refusent de se rendre aux "Cortès". L'indépendance est une faiblesse, nous ne sommes pas les "agglutins" de l'organisation.

Déormais, la volonté de nous imposer le droit ne connaît plus de limite.

Depuis janvier 1977, nous nous opposons aux manœuvres pour l'ombudsman d'un directeur (voir page 4).

Face à ce problème, c'est l'importance d'une délégation au sein de quarante représentants élus, pour une durée de trois mois, pour discuter et négocier avec les instances citées plus haut. Ce n'est pas un conseil d'entreprise, c'est un lien entre l'entreprise et le syndicat. Nous avons dû promettre la démission de ceux qui ne s'opposent pas à la nomination de Courtyon (membres du C.F. pendant huit ans, dont quatre années syndicales) et Charles Grou (départ depuis 1976, membre du C.F. pendant deux ans et quatre ans représentant syndical). Ils sont déclarés inéligibles d'être des délégués.

(Lire la suite page 4)

Lorsque, aux termes de longues discussions, la direction du journal le Monde a accepté l'embauche d'un remplaçant chargé du service électrique à partir du 3 janvier 1977, la direction syndicale, conformément aux usages et en vertu du contrôle de l'embauche, a été chargée de proposer le nouveau poste. Le choix s'est porté sur l'un des deux électro-mécaniciens du Figeo (Champs-Élysées), l'autre étant placé à l'œuvre. Confirmation de ce choix a été communiquée par téléphone au délégué d'équipe électro-mécanique, Jacques, rien d'anormal. Puis, alors que les contacts étaient établis entre l'entreprise et les nouveaux élus, nous avons demandé de rendez-vous avec la direction, il fut prévu, verbalement, c'est-à-dire chez nous — par téléphone — qu'il n'y aurait plus de Monno, mais à la S.E.I.O. C'est un membre du bureau syndical travaillant en pied dans cette entreprise, qui était désigné pour venir au Monno, lui, devant le remplacer. Plus tard, on nous explique que ce choix avait été fait pour contribuer au rapprochement des groupes italiens avec la section syndicale italienne ; pour procéder au redressement des brisbes égarés.

(Suite de la page 1.)

de la C.G.T. Qu'ils se rassurent. Ils perdent notre confiance et celle de nombreux militants C.G.T. et travailleurs de l'entreprise ! En dépit de ces bassesses, ils restent encore, cette nuit, nos représentants.

Il n'est pas habituel que des syndicats, réunis sur la base de leur service, s'occupent publiquement. Au demeurant, ce n'est pas souhaitable. Mais, dès l'instant où les limites sont franchies, il n'est plus possible de se taire. Pas un homme dans ce nom n'accepterait sans motif d'être traité comme nous le sommes. Nous avons le sens de la discipline syndicale, mais elle a ses limites. Nous ne nous posons pas de problèmes publiquement pour deux raisons :

1) Dénoncer les pratiques et les métho-

Nous nous sommes insurgés contre ce tripatouillage. Nous n'avons pas besoin de directeur de conscience et nous n'acceptons pas que les hommes soient traités comme des pions. Dans le respect des règles du contrôle de l'embauche, et compte tenu que rien n'en justifiait la remise en cause, nous avons décidé de nous en tenir au premier choix. Depuis le 3 janvier, notre camarade travaille dans des conditions telles que nous porterons l'affaire devant l'inspectorat du travail si la direction ne régularise pas rapidement. Elle a beau nous dire que ce n'est pas sa faute et qu'elle a fait tout ce qui était en son pouvoir, c'est sa responsabilité qui est engagée. Les blâmes qu'elle se fait ne sont que prétextes, elle a les possibilités de régler l'affaire sans porter préjudice à quiconque. Pour notre part, nous ne négligerons aucun moyen pour qu'une solution satisfaisante soit trouvée à cette regrettable affaire.

Il faut savoir, et c'est un problème de plus, qu'il n'existe, dans notre section, aucune règle définie du placement. L'arbitraire règne en maître. Nous n'occupons pas.

des fonctionnaires antisyndicaux et antidémocratiques ;

2) Dénoncer ceux qui, par leur irresponsabilité, leur autoritarisme, portent un préjudice considérable à la C.G.T.

Il y a des limites qu'il faut avoir le courage de franchir. Nous espérons ne pas être les seuls à le faire dans l'entreprise et que personne n'aura la faiblesse de se taire devant ces procédés inqualifiables.

On ne va pas à la liberté en la combattant.

Que ceux qui voient dans la publication de ce texte une démarche nihiliste ne se réjouissent pas trop vite. C'est pour l'audience et le rayonnement de la C.G.T. que nous le faisons.



# CARTE CENTRALE

LIASON

1977 n° 16

Mercredi 9 MARS

77/16/2

Source : DIRECTION GENERALE

## « COMMUNIQUE »

Depuis quelques jours apparaissent dans les Services ou les Centres, certains mouvements sociaux ou certains écrits diffusés parmi le personnel, qui ne font référence à aucune organisation syndicale.

C'est l'occasion de réaffirmer que la Direction Générale entend, selon une politique constante, ne considérer comme interlocuteurs habilités à parler pour le compte du personnel et en son nom, que les représentants qualifiés des organisations syndicales représentatives.

Il n'existe aucune disposition conventionnelle ou légale, aucun usage qui reconnaisse, habilite ou autorise la diffusion d'écrits qui ne soient placés sous la responsabilité d'une organisation syndicale représentative, ou encore d'instance officielle comme le Comité d'Entreprise, le Comité d'Hygiène et de Sécurité ou les délégués du personnel, SACAMP,...

ESSO STANDARD  
Société Anonyme Française

Le 4 Juillet 1972

### NOTE AU PERSONNEL DU SIEGE SOCIAL

Pour la deuxième fois consécutive, en quinze jours, des tracts portant simplement la mention "Un groupe d'intérimaires" ont été distribués à l'ensemble du personnel du Siège Social.

Devant ces faits, la Direction juge indispensable de rappeler que le droit de distribuer dans un établissement, aux heures d'entrée et de sortie, des publications et tracts de nature syndicale, appartient exclusivement aux sections syndicales (ou Syndicats) de l'établissement et non pas à des groupes anonymes.

DEATH REGISTRY

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU  
170 MARKET STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
OFFICE OF THE STATE REGISTRAR OF VITAL STATISTICS  
NAME OF DECEASED

**afl-cio**

IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF DEATH		DEATH CERTIFICATE	
A Refusal of workers to be humili- ated any longer by union oppression.		Despite the best ef- forts of management, government, and leftists, this corpse suc- cumbed to workers' desire to end the disease of Organized Labor. Destroyed with such other relics as authority, representation, private property, duty, mediatio rules, productivity, parties.	
DUE TO B Unions' transparent role as wage labor's last effective police force.			
UNDERLYING CAUSE OF DEATH C The AFL-CIO was the enemy of freedom, creativity, pleasure.		DURATION from birth	
OTHER CONDITIONS Racism, pollution, bureau- cracy, corruption, etc.			
DID AN OPERATION PRECED DEATH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO DIAGNOSIS FOR OPERATION (condition: terminal)		KIND OF OPERATION (Several) Unions given progressively greater doses of authority in attempts to discipline members.	
ACCIDENT OCCURRING DURING HOSPITALIZATION		DATE	
VISITING CHIEF		INTERNE	
HOUSE OFFICER		PREVIOUS INTERNE	
CORONER NOTIFIED		BY WHOM	
DATE		ACCEPTED	
TIME		BY WHOM	
AUTOPSY DESIRED		SUPERINTENDENT'S APPROVAL	
PERMISSION FOR AUTOPSY GIVEN BY			
ANATOMICAL FINDINGS			
Subject in advanced state of decomposition.			

BODY DELIVERED TO Unclaimed.

SIGNATURE AUTOPSY SURGEON

**UPSHOT**  
P. O. BOX 40256  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94140