

resistance

anarchist bulletin

Free/Donation
Issue 44 Dec 2002



All fired up!

THE FACTS BEHIND this dispute are simple: The firefighters have been on the same wage scale since 1977. An independent review recommended a 40% wage increase as the modern job requires a more skills and more training – significantly more than the one the current wage scale is based on.

MPs rejected this out of hand, despite accepting the same group's pay recommendations *for themselves* – apparently a 41% increase is good enough for MPs but not for people who actually do something socially useful. A 16% rise was offered, but Prescott stepped in to say no way and 4% was offered instead – unsurprisingly, this insulting offer was rejected and the highest ever vote in favour of strike action followed.

A new offer, based on Bain's report, of 11% over two years but tied to modernisation proposals has also been rejected. Bain's proposals would mean the end of the 'watch system', the 1985 Fire Cover standards, and agreement not to oppose Fire Station closures – in effect dismantling the system and replacing it with a casualised workforce. As we go to press the first of a planned series of eight day stoppages has just begun.

This dispute is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, if the strike is successful other public sector workers will look to improve their own position; this dispute could act as a catalyst for an expansion in open offensive class struggle. And there *is* money available to fund these raises – for example tax avoidance, mainly by large companies, runs at around £100 billion p/a.

Secondly the true role of the media has been exposed, "*Fire union chiefs are stooges of Saddam Hussein*", and "*Flaming Greed*" are just two examples. When it counts, the media rally around the boss



class. They aren't just unsympathetic, they are *actively opposed* to us. This should always be remembered when dealing with these clowns.

Thirdly, when it came to the crunch, the FBU were left floundering, calling off the first strike just as it was due to start, angering it's members and demonstrating to the government that it was desperately looking for a way out rather than a straightforward battle for its members interests. Any action that has taken place is down to the rank and file workers.

To win the strike, Firefighters need to directly link up with other people in struggle. Tube workers showed how this could be done when they refused to work during the strike for "safety" reasons. Train/tube drivers, airport staff, teachers and others have the power to shut down much of the country and back up each other's demands.

This will only be done outside of the unions though – they will never follow a policy that puts their legality at risk. What's required is working class action in support of working class interests not those of the bureaucrats.

The message is clear from this and other disputes – we're not going to take it lying down anymore.

Get down to the picket line and show some solidarity! ★

GLASGOW WIDCAT STRIKE

EIGHT HUNDRED NORTH Glasgow Hospital workers have been on unofficial strike since 9th November.



The strike, for better pay through regrading, though supported by the local branch, was condemned by Scottish Unison national organisers, who demanded an immediate return to work.

Since then they have done as much as possible to undermine and isolate the strikers with an initial backstabbing press release and since then a conspiracy of silence and pressure on the local branch. The clerical and administrative workers are amongst the lowest in the paid public sector.

Sick of repeated promises of a ballot from Unison, they decided to take matters into their own hands. A mass meeting on Tuesday 19th November decided to continue the fight. Direct action in action! Given their already bread-line existence and the proximity of Christmas, the determination of the strikers has been inspiring.

Local firefighters have shown solidarity, offering to divert support funds to them. The key to victory must be the spreading of the strike to other hospitals and other public sector workers as isolation is always demoralising and a real danger.

Without any union funds, financial support is vital. Contributions to their strike fund should be sent to:

Family Support Group, c/o John Kerr, 6 Westray Place, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow G64 1UQ.

Cheques payable to Family Support Group. ★

ON THE FRONTLINE

IT SEEMS THAT the fire-fighters fight-back has encouraged other workers to put their needs ahead of those of the bosses – this year's rise in industrial action has continued for *yet another* month.

First off the blocks this month were – surprise surprise – the posties who forced Royal Mail to abandon plans to sell off its cash handling section to Securicor, a company notorious for introducing redundancies and poorer working conditions. The whole postal system was threatened with shutdown by staff threatening to refuse to handle cash.

250 colleges nationwide were shut by lecturers and support staff walking out over a 2.3% wage offer, whilst London based lecturers also struck on the 15th in support of a fairer London weighting, and schoolteachers are planning to do the same on the 26th.

Train drivers on First North Western and Wales & Borders trains are to strike on 14, 15, 21, and 22 December, whilst it looks likely there will be major strikes at the countries largest airports from November 28th with severe disruption expected. The British Airport Authority has just announced an increase in profits (£350 million in last six months!) but is still only offering a paltry rise of 3% for the next two years.

Across the channel now – Eurostar catering workers didn't bother with any half-hearted bureaucratic negotiations – they simply piled onto the track at Gare du Nord station in Paris and blocked any trains attempting to leave until their demands were met. Surely a lesson for British rail (and other) workers?

The list of General strikes in Europe this year has just grown by one – following hard on the heels of Italy and Spain comes Portugal - where hundreds of thousands went on strike against austerity measures and proposed labour reforms, which resulted in the country practically shutting down. A second strike has been called for December 10th – if past resistance to these reforms in Portugal are anything to judge by this could be a highly explosive dispute.

Worker needs our urgent support

Alex McGuigan, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, is currently off work due to stress related illness. He is willing to return to work, but the company are preventing him from doing so. They have also stopped his sick pay.

Please contact Novas to urge them to reinstate Alex's sick pay. Write to: Mary Connolly, Novas, Chancery House, Paradise Street, Liverpool, UK. Email: policy@novas.org Tel: 0870 9019701

More info from: www.iww.org.uk ★

CELEBRITY PRAT OF THE MONTH

"Now, it is really unpopular to be middle class. It is worse than being upper or lower class. Middle class is the worst." Sophie Ellis Bextor.



Bextor: Prat

SOPHIE ELLIS BEXTOR is spot on but very probably hasn't figured out why. We shall enlighten her. We agree 100% that the pretentious posturings of the so called "middle class" fits them to being the dregs of humanity. Truth be told, all most of them have ever done with their accumulation-fuelled lives is to carry out the bosses' orders, inevitably resulting in us proles having a hard time of it in the survival stakes.

Social positioning is what the average middle class aspirant craves and they have no qualms about realising their petty ambitions on the backs of working class folk. Little wonder they are collectively the most reviled strata of all society. As we state in our "Organise!", capitalism is based upon the power of the ruling class to exploit the

workers. The problem with that (for them) is they don't have the numbers themselves to enslave, as S.E.B. would put it, the "lower orders", into toiling singularly for their own immediate benefit, hence they enlist the "motivated" middle class to do their bidding, with both groups simultaneously feeding off our exertions over a lifetime's labour.

Everywhere, we encounter the values, morals and assumed superiority of the middle class - at work/in school/politics/the community/media/administration/welfare. It is always the middle class dishing out the crap, wielding control in order that their mentors can reap infinite profit from our existence. That's why workers are referred to as "human resources". This conniving relationship perpetuates a lack of class awareness thus clearing the way for the middle class to trample all over us whilst the capitalist overlords gain in influence, wealth and domination. Prats are middle class, right, Sophie? ★

CALM BEFORE THE STORM

PRESSURE IS INCREASING in the build up to the imminent war on Iraq. If we want to prevent the bloodshed of thousands of working class people, we must escalate our efforts of resistance.

There are a number of groups who are taking this lead. The firefighters' dispute is the most prominent of these. The firefighters' struggle is inextricably linked with war resistance. The government can't fight both the class war and an imperialist war, with troops unable to combat both working class resistance and bomb civilians. Amazing how they can always afford bombs but not proper wages for serving the community!

Local groups are also organising against Bush and Blair's murderous plans. We all need to build up resistance in our workplaces and communities.

In Walthamstow local anarchists have redecorated a territorial army base (see picture above right). If you want to practice your decorating skills contact them at: Walthamstow Anarchist Group, PO Box 35832, London E11 3WT, Tel: 07810 288 889, Email: info@walthamstowanarchy.org.uk, Visit: www.walthamstowanarchy.org.uk

In Surrey anarchists have vigorously flyposted anti-war posters. You can download a copy by visiting: www.surreyanarchy.org.uk

The Confederation of British Industry got a shock they fully deserved when their annual conference was invaded by anti-war protesters in Manchester.



On Dec 14th a "Mass weapons inspection" will be made at USAF Fairford (Gloucestershire) in response to the arrival of the US Stealth Bombers which will be used to bomb Iraq. For more information Visit: www.gwi.org.uk or Tel: 0117 9514 744. The example set at Shannon in Ireland should inspire anyone wanting to disrupt an airport (see reports in Irish resistance at: www.afireland.cjb.net)

Show your anger! BUILD opposition to the war! ORGANISE with workmates. PUT up posters, CALL meetings, PICKET army recruitment centres, WRITE your opposition on the walls. DON'T go to work the day after war starts. GO to your local MP's house or office and protest. BLOCK roads, CONFRONT MP's at their homes and offices. DON'T let them support murder without feeling some heat in return. Together we can stop them.

The Anarchist Federation has produced a new range of anti-war stickers and posters. Ask for a bundle, contact details on back page. ★

ON THE ATTACK IN ITALY

FIAT, THE ITALIAN car giant, has always played a central role in the political and economic struggles of Italian workers.

Its recent plans to re-structure, which involve laying off about eight thousand workers have

emphasised this. The traditionally rebellious Fiat plant workers have done their predecessors proud by meeting the proposals with fierce resistance. The main centres of struggle have been at the company's huge industrial complexes at Turin and Termini Imerese in Sicily.

The Sicilian workers have been particularly aggressive, with the dispute smashing some of the artificial boundaries which all too often isolate workers' struggles.

Firstly, the struggle has involved many non workers. There is a highly militant Wives and Families support group as well as actions by students, No Global protesters and workers in other industries.

Secondly, the participants in the struggle have not restricted themselves to picketing the factory gates but have shown that they are more than willing to attack any other part of the economy, using direct action as their tool.

On 12 November, after vowing that "not a single bolt would leave the factory" the workers and their supporters completely isolated Palermo's airport by blocking all the underground and overhead railway links and all the motorway links to it.



A couple of days later, with the railway lines still blockaded, the workers moved in on the naval port at Termini Imerese in order to stop the shipment of a consignment of 3,700 Punto cars. The workers positioned them-

selves so as to stop all movement of people and cargo in and out of the port and so it was made impossible for the ship to leave. By the 15th, the blockade of the Straits of Messina became total. Over 1,000 workers positioned themselves at various strategic points around another of the island's major ports – Messina – to impede the arrival and departure of trains and motorised transport.

As well as this, there has been a huge 50,000 strong demonstration at Termini Imerese and a 6,000 strong demonstration of Palermitan students in solidarity with the workers and the arrested "No Global" organisers (see article below).

At the time of going to press, the struggle is moving from strength to strength, with Termini Imerese's rail station currently under occupation by the Wives and Families support group.

This article has concentrated on the resistance in Sicily but in Turin things have been kicking off too with large supporting demonstrations, strikes and occupations of railway lines to stop the movement of goods. Looks like Berlusconi and Co. might have bitten off a bit more than they can chew this time. ★

REPRESSION IN ITALY

FOLLOWING THE MILLION strong attendance at the "No Global" Florence Social Forum (a conference and demonstration about alternatives to capitalism) the forces of law and order in Italy have instigated a wave of repression against the organisers. The arrests have provoked spontaneous demonstrations throughout Italy's towns and cities.

As industrial unrest, of which the Fiat struggle is just one example, continues to spread, and coupled by a vibrant anti-capitalist youth movement, the state can only respond in the way it always has – with force.

The Correspondence Commission of the Italian Anarchist Federation (our sister organisation in Italy) has released the following statement which we resistance editors support wholeheartedly:

"We should have known... that after the totally peaceful protest in Florence which upset their plans, they wouldn't take this lying down. They have staged their latest provocation and 42 people have been

put under house arrest, most of whom are from the anti-globalisation movement in southern Italy. One of these is our comrade Claudio Dionesalvi from Cosenza. They are accused, amongst other things, of "violently subverting the economic order of the state." Out of the kind of charges used in similar circumstances, this is a relatively new one.

It shows that the repressive mechanisms of the state are aiming their sights at everyone who is not willing to passively submit to the exploitation imposed on the majority of humanity by a privileged few. We wish to show our unconditional solidarity with all victims of state repression. We also warn all our comrades to be extra vigilant, so that yet another attempt at inducing silence in those unwilling to submit to the arrogance of the powerful few, may not happen again."

The London AF is organising a solidarity action to take place on Saturday 30th November. Contact details are on the back page for more info. ★

TIME
BOMB



The Kwangju Insurrection

SOUTH KOREA HAS long been the scene of bitter class warfare – most famously the "Great struggle" of 1987 that brought down the military dictatorship. The Kwangju insurrection of May 1980 is rarely mentioned though – probably because it was a living example of how collective action and solidarity can lead to taking back control of our own lives.

The facts of the uprising are that the military had taken power the previous year, and were faced with escalating protests by students and workers, who had developed a powerful alliance. These protests usually ended in pitched battles with the riot police. Following a rally on May 18th in Kwangju the usual fighting broke out – this time though, the police lost the battle, despite firing thousands of rubber bullets and so much tear-gas that leaves died on the trees.

Virtually the whole of the city now took to the streets. Panicked, the state ordered the Army to open fire, killing hundreds. Big mistake. Workers immediately ransacked their workplaces for weapons caches the state required them to hold, and formed workers' militias. Buses, trams and military vehicles (including Armoured Personnel Carriers) were seized and used to form barricades.

A huge battle took place around the Town Hall – the army eventually retreated. The working class had defeated the riot cops and the Army. What followed during the next week following has been described as "unprecedented" in Korean history. Instead of trading, people shared. Massive communal meals for hundreds were cooked and distributed. Motor vehicles were handed out to keep the city safe, to create a new distribution system that depended on neither state nor capital, and to transport the hundreds of decaying corpses through the springtime streets for identification."

As news of the uprising spread, the military decided to try and re-take the city again. This time they used US trained paratroopers who killed over 2000 protesters in doing so.

Despite these deaths, the students and workers refused to give up, and eventually the dictatorship was thrown out. Kwangju still lives as a shining example of what the working class can achieve when it realises its own power and moves to rid itself of its oppressors – Kwangju can never be retaken! ★

An issue of Merseyside resistance has been produced by AF members in Merseyside. Available via London AF.

INSIDE INFORMATION

Prison Action meeting

A MEETING HAS been booked at the London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, London, (nearest tube Whitechapel) for Saturday December 14th at 4pm to discuss what the new prison action group will do. Come along and get involved.

To join the prison action egroup send a blank Email to: prison_action-subscribe@yahoo.com

Social centre attacked

As we go to press the following report has just come in:

"The Leeds temporary social centre A-Spire was attacked by police 3am Sunday morning. While hundreds of people were partying inside the police forced their way in using tear gas and pepper spray. About 12 arrests have been reported as well as many baton injuries."

To get in touch with the organisers of A-Spire Email: info@a-spire.org.uk or Tel: 07796 343 085.

Anti-war activists arrested

On October 31st, an anti-war day of "direct action" took place. There were several arrests that evening in Central London, and some are facing serious charges. If you were witness to these arrests please contact: Legal Defence and Monitoring Group, BM Box Haven, London, WC1N 3XX
Tel: 020 8245 2930

Email: ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk

Visit: <http://www2.phreak.co.uk/ldmg/index.php>

Turkish Anarchist's Jail Defiance

Mehmet Bal is a conscientious objector who is being kept in Adana Military Prison. He has faced torture since 25 of October-starting from the first moment that he was put in jail. Despite the repression, Mehmet is clear in this reason for resistance; "Exactly at this point, I as an individual wish to make clear that, under no conditions will I ever submit to rules or values put forth by any system, ideology or religion, and shall live in accordance with my own conscience and will. I refuse to take place in any kind of system that bears inhuman tendencies, whatever the

consequences may be." For now, it is very important to write to the prison authorities in Adana, to prevent further torture. You can write protest letters demanding an end of the practice of chaining Mehmet Bal's arms and legs; to protest the arrest of Mehmet Bal: Adana 6. Kolordu Askeri Cezaevi, Adana, Turkey or fax: +90-322-322 8136

For more info Email ABC-Ankara at: abcankara@yahoo.com

Joint Terrorism Task Force Told Where to Go!

US Eco-defender Craig "critter" Marshall who is currently on a 5 and a 1/2 year sentence for a 1999 arson of three trucks, has been under further pressure from the cop-quango known as the "Joint Terrorism Task Force" (JTTF) to name names. He was offered release from prison if he would grass people up, and threatened with more charges when he refused, but he still didn't cooperate with the authorities. Way to go Critter!

Write to him at:

Craig Marshall #13797662, 777 Stanton Blvd. Ontario, OR 97914, USA. ★



Subvert and resist

Take precautions when going on demonstrations and don't take cameras, booze or drugs. If you're nicked give your name and address then say 'no comment' to any other questions.

Get down to a picket line and show the firefighters some solidarity!

DECEMBER: 1: Anti War Dayschool/Prop making. In preparation for the demonstration on 2nd. Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, off Bruce Road, London E3. 0845 458 2564
voices@viwuk.freeserve.co.uk

2: No War on Iraq War Zone Whitehall. A die-in against war and sanctions on Iraq. 10.30am Whitehall Place, London SW1. 0845 4582564
voices@viwuk.freeserve.co.uk

7: Manchester Radical Bookfair 1pm until 5pm at Bridge 5 Mill, 22A Beswick Street, Ancoats Manchester. info@radicalbookfair.org.uk www.radicalbookfair.org.uk

12: Menwith Hill Women's Peace Camp: Womens day for protest - *details as below.*

13: Menwith Hill Blockade. Women's Blockade (A59): Bring warm clothes, banners, music, good spirit. Info: Helen John, Tel. 01943 468 593.

14: Mass Weapons Inspection Of USAF Fairford: See "*Calm before the storm*" inside.

14: Prison Action meeting, London - *details above.*

20: Showing of film "Argentina in Revolt", 8pm, William Morris Community Centre, Greenleaf Rd, Walthamstow, London, Contact W@G on 07810 288 889, or Visit: www.walthamstowanarchy.org.uk

LEICESTER ANARCHIST FEDERATION meets every FIRST TUESDAY of the month at 8pm, upstairs at the Ale Wagon pub Charles Street, Leicester LE1

Subscribe to resistance

- I enclose £4 (£6 EU, £12 Rest of the world) for the next 12 issues of resistance bulletin (cheques payable to "AF") and send to AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2XL
- I enclose £4 for a year's subscription to *Organise!* the magazine of the AF.
- I am interested in the **Anarchist Federation** and would like more information.

Name.....

Address.....

Join the resistance

The **Anarchist Federation** is an organisation of **class struggle** anarchists aiming to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is **Anarchist Communism**.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the **ruling class** which controls all the power and wealth, and the **working class** which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the **direct action** of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world, its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it, such as working through parliament and national liberation movements, as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

The Anarchist Federation has members across Britain and Ireland fighting for the kind of world outlined above. Contact us at:

Anarchist Federation,

84B, Whitechapel High Street,
London, E1 7QX. Tel: 07946 214 590

Visit: www.afed.org.uk

Email: anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com