

AWL conference 1-2

March 2003

Policy passed: No Sweat

No Sweat

There are signs of a shift in political attitude, especially amongst younger people. The huge anti-war demo and the support shown for the FBU are evidence of this. The new 'anti-capitalist' movement has matured and a shift in the unions, has revealed itself in increased industrial action and the election of a series of left leaders (there is a strong chance that GMB London Secretary, and No Sweat supporter, Paul Kenny will win the GMB Gen Sec election at the start of April). From the start, we have evaluated No Sweat as a broad campaign that can provide a bridge between the protest movement and the trade union movement. In the developing political situation, this role is increasingly important. In the US anti-sweatshop activity has helped radicalise, educate and rejuvenate the protest movement, the student movement and the trade unions. No Sweat can play a similar role here. By the campaign's solidarity work it can help make a practical intervention to assist workers across the world take on their bosses. Through its propaganda the campaign can raise basic working class issues about exploitation, class struggle, the brutality of capitalism and so forth. Through our effective intervention into the campaign, we can assist its efforts and build on this foundation to discuss our distinct revolutionary ideas. One key to recruiting from a layer of people who are new to politics, or who are from NGO/single issue political backgrounds is coupling serious, day-to-day, grass-roots campaign work with political discussion. Local groups can help in this respect.

Over the past year the campaign has made some significant steps forward. No Sweat now has an email list of well over 1,600, a database of 750 members and contacts, and trade union branches and, thanks to the efforts of supporters in the PCS, one national union affiliation. An affiliation resolution has been submitted to the GMB's coming congress and a motion has gone forward to NUS Conference. No Sweat has found it very easy to get articles in union and students' union journals and has made some good links with other campaigning organisations such as Corporate Watch, Simon Jones Campaign and Labour Behind the Label and some very strong links with the GMB in London and with Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council. The campaign is proving capable of providing precisely the bridge between the unions and the protest movement we hoped for. The last No Sweat conference was large and lively. The campaign has had some very impressive meetings, notably on the recent tour with the Mexican comrades in Edinburgh and Durham, and some successful actions including the Commonwealth Games march in Manchester and on the Nike 10k run. No Sweat has raised £5,000 for the Indonesian union organisation, the FNPBI using benefit nights and a big 5-a-side football competition at Craven Cottage. No Sweat took a coach over to the ESF event in Florence and held its own forum meeting. In short this is a popular, punchy campaign with a huge potential.

Over the coming year No Sweat plans a voting conference and a public rally with Greg Pallast speaking, a training weekend at the Tolpudde festival, a Women's Day action on 8 March, another conference and tour... The campaign is outgrowing its structures and resources.

Nationally the AWL should continue to back the work of the campaign and assist its efforts to continue developing.

Every branch should:

- Join their local No Sweat group in their town and college. If there isn't one already, take the initiative in finding potential allies and setting one up.

- Help the campaign organise regular stalls, actions and meetings.

- Get the group invited to schools, colleges and union branches.

- Submit affiliation and twinning resolutions to their trade / student union branches and national conferences.

- Propose to No Sweat that they support and build for the mobilisations at G8 in Evian and the ESF in Paris.

- Contact People and Planet and any other campaigning groups in the town and in local colleges, attend their events and get involved. Invite them to get involved in No Sweat. People and Planet's ability to mobilise and organise people is significant: there has been a radicalisation among some students and youth which has taken place outside the labour movement and through groupings like P&P; they get hundreds at their conferences and organise groups on campuses.

- Use the paper, *Bolshy* and the magazine in No Sweat and other campaigns to help talk to people we come across. Systematically invite new people to have discussions with the AWL. Ask them what their interests and political views are, and offer to hold meetings and educational sessions around those themes. We need to draw as many as possible of the new activists around the general anti-capitalist movement /No Sweat into regular political and campaigning work, and the most interested in them into the AWL.