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NEEDED: A NEW COMMUNICATIONS MODEL FOR A NEW
WORKING-CLASS INTERNATIONALISM

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Introduction [1]

The purpose of this paper is to examine both the extent and the variety of the communications media whose dramatic expansion has accompanied the re-birth of working-class militancy and working-class internationalism in recent years. The new forms and contents will be contrasted with the traditional ones. An attempt will be made to consider the emerging pattern more generally and theoretically. The conclusion will consider problems and suggest strategies.

The motivation for this piece comes from a longtime engagement with workers, unions, labour and socialist movements internationally. This engagement has been as the paid employee of the communist trade union international in Prague, as an academic in Nigeria and the Netherlands, and as the unpaid editor of the Newsletter of International Labour Studies, also in the Netherlands. Experience in these three different world areas, and in three different roles, has led to the conviction that a new working-class internationalism is today both necessary and possible, and that the creation of new media of international communication is essential to such a project.

The paper is largely descriptive and classificatory. Given the absence of even lists of organisations and publications concerned with international labour studies/education/action, such a sketch of the field should itself provide both information and a stimulus to further work. It may also indicate major communications gaps and suggest areas for cooperation. The descriptive and classificatory sections, moreover, should be accessible to unionists and other activists without the time, qualifications, or possibly the taste, for theory.

The paper, however, is evidently more than an inventory. Even the more descriptive parts are intended to be informed by democratic, socialist and internationalist attitudes. Given, indeed, the limited length of the paper, such attitudes may come out more strongly than the information they are intended to inform! The piece, therefore, presents a clear political critique and policy proposal in this area.

Once again, however, I feel the necessity to go further, and not simply in order to provide the theoretical underpinnings for my political positions. The problem is that the very principles of a 'new working class internationalism' or of the 'alternative media' for such are unclear. This is because there is little if any theoretical writing on these subjects (on the first, however, see Waterman 1984d). And this can mean that we remain prisoners of old theories or models (often unconscious, often absorbed via the mass media), trying to break out of the prison but without having appropriate tools for the job. I have therefore sought for relevant literature on working-class internationalism and alternative media, and will consider to what extent this provides us with new tools for the new task.

The exploratory nature of the paper implies that no systematic methodology is used. Space limitations also prevent comprehensive treatment of the media or media sources listed. Examples are taken sometimes from personal research or experience (thus particularly from India, Nigeria, Western Europe, and international communism or social reformism). [2] If there is a stress on the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions this is because of its power and influence in both capitalist core and periphery, its claim to be free and democratic, and its comparative sensitivity to pressures from below and outside. And if there is a stress on English-language literature this is because -

for better or worse - it remains the major language for the new internationalism.

Part 1 deals with the traditional means of communication for the working-class movement internationally, considers them critically and tries to generalise on their limitations. Part 2 deals with the sources and forms of such new media as I am aware of, and tries to generalise on the challenge they represent. Part 3 then attempts to consider the findings in the light of existing literature on working-class internationalism and the new media. On the basis of this, Part 4 identifies problems facing the new media and makes proposals for overcoming them.

1. Traditional media

This part attempts to survey the major different types of traditional media that interested activists (in the non-communist world) have access to for information and ideas on the foreign national or international labour movements. Part 1.1 provides a survey and characterisation of the sources of such media. Part 1.2 attempts to generalise the findings as well as to add to them where evidence has not been provided.

1.1. Source and nature

1. National and international media. Labour news must not only pass the criteria for newsworthiness quasi-universal in the bourgeois press. It is also subject to systematic anti-labour bias, to a hostile interpretative framework, to handling with a delegitimising vocabulary, and to stress on its activities primarily in terms of disruption and negation. This has been convincingly demonstrated in the work of the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980) and others. It might be thought that the mass media would be less partisan in their handling of international than national labour news. This is not so. If the image the international mass media provide of third world nation states is 'partial at best and patently false at worst' (NACLA 1982:23), then we can hardly expect it to do better by the world's workers. An analysis of foreign news topics covered by the three main American news agencies in the 1970s showed the following percentages devoted to labour: Western Europe 3%, Middle East 0%, Asia 0.9%, Latin America 0%, Africa 0%. By way of contrast, crime and terror got respectively 13%, 11%, 3%, 26%, 6% (cf. Hester 1974, 1978). This refers to quantity, not orientation or quality. Even if, however, the BBC World Service or Time do give a comparatively detailed, objective and sympathetic account of - say - Solidarnosc in Poland, we obviously cannot depend on them 1) to do so for cases that do not confirm their worldview and/or commercial criteria, 2) to handle even this case in a manner stressing collective worker capacity nor 3) to organise and mobilise workers internationally for solidarity! For such purposes the working-class movement evidently requires other media.

2. The International Labour Organisation (ILO). This is a major source of information and ideas amongst trade union professionals. Its publication and education activities ensure these reach rank-and-file activists too. It is, however, in no sense an international labour organisation. Class compromise and classless social development are built into the very structure of this 'tripartite' inter-governmental organisation. Like most inter-state bodies, it is financed, staffed and politically-dominated by the most-powerful capitalist states.

Although ILO decisions, norms and publications may reflect the outcome of class struggles, these reflections are so mediated and formalised as to be deprived of much consciousness-raising or liberating effect. In international labour matters it is a major source of legalistic, technocratic, managerial and developmentalist attitudes.

3. The international trade union organisations. We must concentrate on the major producers of information here, the communist-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the reformist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). To these there must, however, be added the business-unionist American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO). Whether in, out, or again in the ICFTU, this has long operated its own international union agencies and is a major international source of ideas and information. Whilst there are significant differences in origin, membership, ideology and structure, certain generalisations about these bodies and their publications are possible: 1) They tend to reflect or reproduce inter-state or inter-bloc relations, so that even where the ICFTU has dropped its crusading free-worldism this has been largely to adopt the attitudes of an international non-governmental development agency (according to a Scandinavian document in my possession the ICFTU is dependent on state development funding for 42 percent of its total income); 2) The internationals tend to encourage factionalism within third world countries by seeking loyal members, and such member organisations exercise a virtual veto on criticism of 'their own' nation state; 3) It follows from the above that their publications are able to respond to new waves of worker protest (Poland, South Africa, Brazil, Philippines) only in a selective and partisan fashion. In India both the Emergency (1975-77) and the 15-month strike of over 200,000 textile workers (1981-83) were ignored by most if not all the publications of all the trade union internationals.

4. National union and socialist publications. The amount, type and interpretation of international labour news in these will, of course, be coloured by the nature of the organisations behind them, their interest in the working class internationally, and their international allegiances. Some cases: 1) In the 1960s and 1970s the Nigerian communists produced, successively, two professional and attractive periodicals, the newspaper Advance and the magazine New Horizon. Most of their foreign news was dependent upon the international communist movement, and that on the communist countries on state news agencies or local embassy propaganda handouts. New Horizon even reproduced whole sections of the international communist publication, World Marxist Review. It would be reasonable to assume that it was receiving a financial subsidy for this, covering all or part of the total publication costs. 2) Indian Worker, weekly of the government-supported Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) is largely dependent for foreign reports on the orientation and information of the ILO and the ICFTU. The occasional neutral or friendly reference to some communist state's unions only reflects INTUC's endorsement of Mrs Gandhi's diplomacy. 3) Marxism Today is the attractive and non-sectarian monthly of the British Communist Party. It publishes original and controversial articles on British labour and the labour movement, and has indicated its independence of Moscow by its lengthy and generally sympathetic analyses of Solidarnosc. In the three-year period 1980-83, however, whilst it carried 20-25 features on foreign politics (of which five or ten mentioned workers or unions), it had but two concentrating on unions abroad (France, Poland) and none on the third world or on the international re-structuring of labour or on the international working-class movement generally.

4. International socialist publications. Such publications as World Marxist Review (Moscow-line communist), Socialist Affairs (social-democratic Socialist International) and International Viewpoint (trotskyist Fourth International) have the international labour and socialist movement as their stock in trade. Given the absence of any trotskyist government or state, we could expect the trotskyist publication to be the most internationalist and to be the most open to new movements that question the institutionalised socialism of the others. This it is, and the 40 issues published in 1982-83 show an impressive international spread, attention to grassroots worker protest, specific treatment of the world economic crisis and the international (or inter-European) workers' movement, and consideration of such new social movements as those of women, for human rights and against nuclear war. International Viewpoint may have been the only such publication to give prominence (several articles) to the Bombay strike. The limitations of this publication (and by implication of similar ones) would seem to be the following: 1) It represents, above all, a specific socialist ideology and organisation, implying a tendency to exaggerate the role of its supporters; 2) The distinct ideological/organisational orientation means a similarly high ideological profile, encouraging the reader to believe or identify rather than make his/her own analysis on the basis of less-processed information or conflicting alternative interpretations; 3) Whilst the long historical existence gives such bodies experience and authority, they tend to either respond negatively or defensively to new ideas or movements that fundamentally question them.

1.2. General characteristics of the traditional international labour media

Here we are primarily concerned with such of the above as would claim to be labour- or union-oriented. The first three points have to do with the communication sources, the following ones with structure and form.

1. Dependence on capital or state. Here is meant direct economic or political dependence, in whole or part. The ILO is the most obvious case of state-dependence. The WFTU has never published anything unacceptable to the communist states (see the coverage of Poland in World Trade Union Movement 1980-83) and is dependent for all its income on state-controlled unions. I have pointed out that the ICFTU is heavily dependant on state funding, (even if its membership fees come from reformist unions in western liberal democracies that are not so subordinated). In India, Indian Worker accepts advertisements not only from state enterprises but also from at least one of India's largest monopolies - and multinationals - the Tata group. The international operations of the AFL-CIO were earlier financed by US multinationals, as well as being used and sometimes controlled by the Central Intelligence Agency. They are currently dependent upon state funding.

2. Subordination to capital or state. Here is meant an ideological and political subordination even where financial or structural political dependence cannot be demonstrated and may not even exist. We may here include statism - an acceptance of the state in terms of its own claims to representivity, legitimacy and authority. The clearest case for such an optional subordination is of reformist unions in industrialised liberal capitalist societies. It is not because the ICFTU is paid by the MNCs that it exports the notion that these can have a 'positive impact' on 'developing countries'. Nor is it because its leading members are state-controlled that it believes in

'strengthening the capacities of host governments in developing countries' to maximise this positive impact (ICFTU Economic and Social Bulletin, Nos. 5-6, 1983:6). It is because the ICFTU and its leading member organisations still believe that the state in both core and peripheral capitalist countries can serve these societies. Thus, after the state-approved closure of the Ford plant in Amsterdam, a Dutch union leader still declared that the authorities 'are mainly there to protect the weaker members of society' (Lansink 1981b:30). Subordination to the state also has its 'revolutionary' form, as when western communists failed to support workers and unions being repressed during the Emergency in India. This was presumably because the regime was supposed to be of such an anti-imperialist, non-aligned, or 'national-democratic' character as to justify its repression of opposition. Subordination to bourgeois liberal ideology (on the neutrality of the press and the value of 'good industrial relations') is revealed in the very terms of this complaint by a union leader during a strike in the UK:

I am sick and tired of press and TV reports based on information which is wrong and false...The organs of publicity do not contribute to better relations in industry.../They/ damaged the name of the union and made things worse for us. (Financial Times, May 18, 1970).

3. Politicism. By this term I mean the general tendency of traditional socialists and unionists to privilege struggle carried out by the leadership of national unions or political parties with the aim of influencing the state or taking over state power. It is a characteristic shared by the social-democratic and communist traditions, however much they differ in other ways. It is evidently related to the previous characteristic, even where such socialists as the trotskyists are opposed to all existing states. Associated with a privileging of the national political party or union form goes an unavoidable devaluation of everyday mass resistance and protest which, as Robin Cohen (1980a) has pointed out for worker protest in Africa, are often covert in form. Equally associated with such politicisim is either a generalised elitism (of the professional politicians or union leaders) or the vanguardism specific to leninist parties claiming to bring class consciousness to the masses. There is also an inevitable sectarianism, since each claim to leadership of the working class by a political party implies a condemnation of the claims of others. It is politicisim that explains the concentration of Marxism Today on foreign 'politics' (i.e. national-level struggles over the state) rather than working-class struggle even in its conventional sense. And, whilst one must not ignore the local roots of sectarianism and factionalism amongst workers, one is forced to recognise the way the traditional international union and socialist tendencies have imported, or stimulated, ideological divisions amongst third world workers that have no relationship to everyday worker needs and capacities.

4. Hierarchical structures on a world scale. The structures of the traditional international communications media for workers reproduce those of the international media more generally. This means: 1) Control in the hands of an elite, professional or political, whether appointed or elected; 2) Vertical flow of communication from base to peak to base (an A-shaped flow); 3) Following from the above, a flow of information up and of ideology or interpretation down; 4) Also following from above, the inevitable manipulation of data at any political or bureaucratic level up or down the hierarchy. A graphic description of this structure in relation to the Ford Amsterdam close down is given by Cartier (1982).

5. Domination by the printed word and 'world' languages. If the 'medium is the message', what are we to make of the fact that even national forms of supposedly worker-oriented information are inaccessible to illiterate or semi-literate workers - or even to literate workers who cannot read a 'world' language? If the medium is Indian Worker, then the message would seem to be that only union officers literate in English should concern themselves with international (or, for that matter, national) union issues. This is not a problem exclusive to INTUC or India, it reveals a general problem in international labour communication. But this problem represents a political orientation or choice. At an earlier historical period the international socialist movement (particularly the communist tendency between the world wars) stimulated worker photography or worker film movements. There was also a worker Esperanto movement concerned with overcoming the national language obstacle to international worker communication. These activities seem to have been wiped out by capitalist consumerism or communist state media control after World War II. They had a palid postwar echo in the international film festivals sponsored by first the WFTU and then the ICFTU. These were discontinued at some point of time, presumably because both tendencies were primarily concerned with influencing and controlling labour leaderships, not with mobilising the masses.

6. Absence of debate. Here the labour-oriented international media are worse than many of their bourgeois competitors, for whom liberal tradition requires space for, or reports on, important controversies or policy conflicts. There is no place for this in the magazines of the trade union internationals, the ILO (except on more technical issues), or the trotskyist International Viewpoint. In part this could be seen as a structural problem of international organisations based on official national representatives. But it also reveals a certain attitude: that the formal position taken is authoritative, and that formal official positions are more important than the processes that lead to them. Crucial information is thus concealed from view, and the capacity and power to discuss is reserved for top officials with privileged access. This is true even for the 'free' ICFTU. There is nothing in any of its publications from which one can learn of the debate which must have taken place concerning the re-entry of the AFL-CIO in 1981-2. (Nor is this revealed in the press of its affiliates. I know of it only from confidential documents of the British TUC and the earlier-mentioned Scandinavian document, which reveals concern about ICFTU dependence on the AFL-CIO for over one-quarter of its General Funds). The effect on readers must be to discourage critical thought and action and encourage faith and subordination.

2. New media

This part attempts to survey and characterise the major different types of media that have developed in conjunction with increased worker militancy internationally in the last 10 years or so. Part 2.1 considers the major sources of communication, giving examples or references. Part 2.2 distinguishes the different forms, also with examples. Part 2.3 attempts to generalise about the new media and to contrast them with the traditional ones.

2.1. Sources

1. Geographically-oriented solidarity groups. Solidarity groups with specific foreign countries or regions have long been a feature of industrialised capitalist democracies. The most common since World War II have been anti-imperialist ones, identifying with national liberation struggles or with post-independence struggles against imperialism. Increasingly these have been paying attention to worker movements and stressing connections between worker (and other mass) struggles in such countries and within the core capitalist ones. Examples include: Japan's Pacific-Asia Resource Centre, the North American Congress on Latin America, Holland's Comite Indonesie. To these we can add the organisations or publications in solidarity with people in communist countries, some of which have from the beginning had a special interest in workers and worker protest. Examples include: Solidarite avec Solidarite and Labour Focus on Eastern Europe (NILS 12:6-9).

2. General worker, community or union service centres. Whilst nationally-focused labour research centres have also long existed in core capitalist countries, the notion of the multi-faceted local or national resource centre as a major focus of democratic or socialist intellectual activity seems to have developed in the 1970s, alongside growing shopfloor protest and disillusion with traditional forms of organisation. Examples include: the Community Workshops in the UK, KOR (Workers' Defence Committee) in Poland and the Association Trabajo y Cultura (Work and Culture Association) in Lima, Peru. Some such are themselves internationally-oriented, others linked with bodies concerned with providing international services on or for a particular region: e.g. Australia-Asia Worker Links, Asian Worker Solidarity Links (NILS 17:22-24). Yet others are concerned with the world more generally: e.g. the International Labour Research and Information Group in South Africa; Mayday Publications Cooperative in the UK.

3. Specialised worker service groups. Alongside, or as a development from, the above we find specialised worker service groups with an international orientation. These may be concerned with a particular problem, such as the multinationals: e.g. the Transnationals Information Exchange in Amsterdam (NILS 6:21-22), or IBASE, a Brazilian body additionally concerned with the relations between Brazilian MNC workers and other popular classes and categories locally (NILS 15:6-10). They may be concerned with a particular industry, such as sugar or electricals-electronics, covered respectively by GATT-Fly in Canada (NILS 6:16-18) and SOBE in the Netherlands. They may even be concerned with a specific company, SOBE having a special interest in Philips (NILS 14:1-2). They may, finally, be concerned with a particular type of worker, as with women wage-earners: e.g. Women Working Worldwide, in the UK.

4. Democratic 'single-issue' movements. Organisations concerned with peace, consumer issues, the environment, human rights and women's liberation have increasingly been paying specific attention to workers and unions internationally. The clearest case is Amnesty, which has a union officer at its international office and which carries out active work with the unions in at least North America, the Netherlands and the UK. National and international women's resource centres have also been paying specific attention to women wage-workers, even when they are not specialised on wage-workers: e.g. ISIS Women's International Resource and Documentation Centre in Rome/Geneva (NILS 7:7-10, 19). The US consumer movement provided the basis for the first news magazine de-

voted to MNCs, Multinational Monitor, which inevitably deals with worker issues (NILS 9:26).

5. Radical christian groups. Whilst many independent socialists or radicalised party-socialists may be found amongst the categories above or below, it is uncommon to find them active as members of a particular party or tendency. And whilst christians may be contributing as individuals, they have also been doing so within specific international or national churches or christian organisations. Such an interest descends in part from the 19th century tradition of urban missions, and the post-World War II worker priest movement, but they evidently find their major stimulus in the theology of liberation that developed in Latin America in the 1960s and '70s. Amongst those who have been active on international worker issues or information we can identify: the World Council of Churches Programme on Transnational Corporations in Geneva, the church-supported Asian Cultural Forum on Development in Bangkok which has assisted Asian Workers Solidarity Links (NILS 17:22-24), and the Christian Centre for Labour Concerns in Bangalore, India.

6. Radicalised academics. Again, many academics and professionals will be found in the above groups, but others may not be politically engaged and yet provide significant contributions to new information and ideas about workers internationally. In any case it is essential to identify the base that the universities have provided for the 'new international labour studies' (Cohen 1980b) that has been developing over the last decade or so. Universities, or university-based groups, have provided the base for collective research projects. The Labour in Development, Subordination and Resistance project of AKUT in Sweden represents a distinct shift from a dependency focus to a labour focus by this group (NILS 19:2). The Centre of Developing Area Studies at McGill, Montreal, provides the base for the journal Labour, Capital and Society, with a specific focus on third world labour. And the Conference of Socialist Economists, a British association of socialist social scientists, publishes Capital and Class, a policy-oriented journal which has given particular attention to foreign and international labour issues. The Social Science Programme of the Catholic University in Peru has long been the base of labour-oriented research on workers and unions. In South Africa we find similar activities based in the Sociology Department of Witwatersrand University and the Economic History Department of the University of Cape Town (NILS 20). Similar efforts are being made in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Northern Nigeria (Waterman 1982b).

7. The radicalisation of traditional labour and socialist organisations. The old:new opposition does not only demonstrate itself between organisations or tendencies but also within them - at least in some cases. Thus we must recognise the extent to which the traditional sources have been not only responding to the new problems, new needs and the challenge of the new organisations, but even taking the initiative. Thus the Swedish labour movement has for some years had its own international magazine, AIC Bulletin, and the major Dutch trade union centre, the FNV, usually devotes one page of its fortnightly paper to international articles (which do not always support its official foreign allies). The ICFTU's Free Labour World has itself paid attention to the need for computerised data to aid international union struggles (NILS 19:9-10). The WFTU's World Trade Union Movement has recently published some fresh and relevant analyses of the MNCs and the current world crisis, though it is significant that these are written by an American ex-union leader, based in New York. Trotskyist organi-

sations have responded not only to the dramatic Bombay textile strike, as reported above, but also to the more problematic (for orthodox marxists) movements of rural labourers, outcastes and tribals (Pavier 1983). Nueva Sociedad, produced in Caracas with the help of the West German social-democratic Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, seems to have provided a significant platform for Latin American discussion on the new social movements there. The World Confederation of Labour, whose European base is as much amongst christian aid agencies and intellectuals as in the small and shrinking christian unions, has nonetheless produced a number of documents dealing in an original and critical manner with the MNCs, the state, human rights and other general world social problems (whether in Latin America it practices what it from Europe preaches is a matter vigorously debated in both continents).

2.2. Forms

1. Academic journals. These are evidently a traditional form, often less accessible to motivated labour activists than the ILO's International Labour Review. However, we must note the increasing development of radical and socialist area-studies journals: e.g. Review of African Political Economy, Journal of Contemporary Asia, Latin American Perspectives, Critique (communist studies). We should also note the increased attention these are tending to pay to workers and unions, particularly clear in the case of the Journal of Contemporary Asia. We must also be aware of the development of strategy-relevant socialist journals, such as the earlier-mentioned Capital and Class. The gradual transformation of Manpower and Unemployment Research in Africa into Labour, Capital and Society was both the effect of and a contribution to the radicalisation of third world labour studies in the 1970s.

2. Newletters. These seem to be the favoured vehicle for the new international labour communication. Newsletters in this area tend to be low-cost productions, to have a low ideological profile, to have a consequently high information content, to give much information-on-information. Some are confined to news items or solidarity appeals: e.g. Global Electronics Information Newsletter, Labour Communication (Centre for Progress of Peoples, Hong Kong). Others, whilst equally aimed at or accessible to rank and file activists are clearly intended to provide orientation as well as information: e.g. Brazil Labour Report, Rodo Joho. The Newsletter of International Labour Studies, which attempts to serve as a 'network of networks' for the new working-class internationalism and the new international labour studies, is explicitly aimed at worker-support groups internationally, hoping thus to reach both research-minded activists and action-oriented researchers.

3. Popular researched reports and periodicals. These represent an attempt to overcome the serious:popular opposition by combining systematic research or investigative journalism with an attractive illustrated product aimed at non-specialist audiences. One of the pioneers here is NACLA Report on the Americas, one of whose early products was on class struggle and trade unions in Argentina. Multinational Monitor adopts a news magazine style. TIE-Europe Bulletin has been progressively popularising both headlining and illustration. It has clearly been able to draw on the experience of Counter Information Services, which pioneered the worker-oriented popular report in the UK and has produced outstanding reports on multinationals and on labour in South Africa. TIE has used one of its issues for a CIS-type popular report on labour relations and unions in industrialised capitalist

countries that is also the first of its kind (TIE 1982-3). The women's movement has also been a front-runner here, with a Hong Kong-produced, cartoon-style book on exploitation and struggle in the Asian electronics industry (CCA-URM 1982).

4. Teaching aids. Whilst some of the above are evidently also suitable for teaching (and even research) purposes, others are evidently meant primarily for this purpose. One of the longest-lived is IBON Facts and Figures from the Philippines (NILS 13:2-3), which, whilst concentrating on that country, comes out in English as well as Pilipino (and other local languages) and is thus available for international worker education. IBON also produces other teaching aids. The State of the World Atlas (NILS 13:20-21) represents both a technical and political breakthrough in its presentation of contemporary world structures and conflicts.

5. Book publication, distribution and library services. At national level these are developing in a number of countries, Britain being perhaps one of the best served (Waterman 1982a). But the systematic coverage of and supply to labour movements internationally is only beginning. In the UK we can find the following: Zed Press has started an International Labour Studies book series (NILS 16:14-15); the Trade Union Book Service includes a short international list in its occasional catalogues (NILS 16:6); and Third World Publications in Birmingham is - in addition to listing books on third world labour - considering whether it could not sponsor a third world worker library scheme to follow up an existing Zimbabwe Library Book Scheme.

6. Audiovisuals. At national level there are increasing numbers of unions or worker support groups both using and producing audiovisuals. Given the variety of the media (photo, film, cassette, slide, video, poster, mural, cartoon - to mention some of the two-dimensional forms), and the variety of sources (commercial or state film and TV, 'alternative' producers, union or worker-oriented producers, workers themselves), it is best to give just a few examples most of which are unrecorded: 1) In India a 1983 conference on mine labour and struggles in tribal areas ended with the showing of the British film, 'Tin Mountain', on the Siglo Veinte tin mine in Bolivia; 2) In South Africa, the International Labour Research and Information Group reports showings of films by Polish director Andrzej Wajda (for which see NILS 11:19-21), and a tape-slide on Nigerian workers (NILS 17:25); 3) The Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research reports video shows for workers on the impact of the World Bank and Western education in the third world; 4) In 1983 an Argentinian exile produced a short video film on workers in Sao Paulo, Brazil, specifically aimed at European audiences; 5) The Centre for Education and Communication in New Delhi, India, is sponsoring production of a tape-slide show on women textile workers, to be made available internationally; 6) Both British and Dutch groups supporting 'shopfloor internationalism' have been taking video cameras on union study trips or to worker conferences; 7) 'New Technology: Whose Progress?' (NILS 16:10), a 16mm and video production made on a shoestring in London, is circulating in 50 copies in the UK and has been translated into 15 languages.

7. Bibliographical, documentation and research services. The first serial bibliography on third world labour to give special attention to radical items is that still running in Labour, Capital and Society. The first to concentrate on the new international labour studies is that produced at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague (Klatter 1979-). IDOC International, in Rome, is not only providing sys-

tematic documentation on multinationals for TIE (NILS 6:21-2), and publishing some in its bulletin, but has also been developing information-retrieval techniques - manual and computerised - for grassroots documentation centres (NILS 19:10-11; 20). In Mexico, CIDAMO uses IDOC documentation methods and produces a series of publications, amongst which is one of international documentation and analysis, CIDAMO Internacional. In Brazil, IBASE has pioneered 'activist computing' for workers and other grassroots groups, (Reset, 1983). Asian Labour Monitor is an attempt to provide a systematic news service to labour in that continent and internationally. SOMO, in Amsterdam, is a documentation and research centre on multinationals that provides services, amongst others, to Dutch unions and worker groups. SOBE, in Eindhoven, also in the Netherlands, is more internationally - and action - oriented, and has organised conferences for Philips workers internationally (NILS 1982:1-2). It is interesting to note that one of the few regular coverages of international labour periodicals is given not by a labour documentation centre but a human rights one, Human Rights Internet Reporter.

2.3. Character

This section will characterise the new media in terms of distinction from or opposition to each of the characteristics of the old media identified in section 1.2 above.

1. Autonomy from capital and state and traditional labour organisations. The new media have developed from a recognition of the danger represented by the MNCs internationally, of the inability of the nation state or inter-state structures to combat these (even where they are controlled by socialists or communists), and of the ideological, structural and strategic shortcomings of traditional labour organisations.

2. Rejection of statism. It follows from the above that such media reject not only the claims of 'their own' nation state or bloc, but to adopt a sceptical position toward the state as a form. They tend to see themselves engaged in consciousness-raising and mobilising work, and often present themselves as involved in movements of social transformation. They tend to reject the state-like behaviour of traditional labour organisations, stressing democratisation, united action regardless of ideology or faith, and the necessary inter-connection between workplace and non-workplace struggle, between class and democratic movements.

3. The shopfloor, the grassroots and internationalism. Against the focus on the nation-state level, we find the combination of daily-life problems on the shopfloor and internationalism. The daily-life focus has two major implications: a rejection of hierarchical structures and elitist definitions of the political, and a concern to build up from workers' experiences, perceptions and capacities for autonomous activity. The internationalism is not simply a rejection of ideological or political chauvinism, it is a recognition that the problems are international, the enemy is international, and the solution must be sought and fought internationally. The contrast of the new with the old here is clear when we compare the differing coverage and interpretation of the Ford plant closure in Amsterdam given by Free Labour World (Lansink 1981a,b) with that of TIE Bulletin (Cartier 1983).

4. Networking internationally. In place of hierarchical structure and political competition what we seem to have is the network structure and the principle of cooperation. Many of the organisations or publications are themselves run on non-hierarchical lines, or are networks of cooperating organisations. But even where this is not so, they tend to require and stimulate non-hierarchical relations of information and cooperation. If the traditional organisation and communication flow is A-shaped, then we must think of these ones as grid-patterned. And if the traditional communication flow exists primarily on a vertical plane, here it lies more on a horizontal one. Because ideas and information are here flowing across rather than up and down, the control inevitable in the A-shaped flow is undermined. The horizontal plane is only exceptionally at shopfloor, grassroots or community level: one can conceive of it as the bar across the A. But, in any case, the producers of the new media are 1) closer to ground level than those of the old, and 2) motivated toward facilitating shopfloor contacts and information flows internationally.

5. Stimulation of audiovisual forms. Whilst it cannot be said that the traditional international labour organisations ignore audiovisuals, and whilst one cannot pretend that the new reject the written word (and world languages), the latter are clearly favourable to audiovisual form.

6. Encouragement of debate. Again, one cannot say that the new media themselves necessarily provide debating platforms. Many seem shy of engaging in ideological conflict with the old organisations, or of taking any kind of explicit ideological position. This is not only because of desire to avoid involvement in traditional 'politics', but also because they tend to adopt towards workers a service rather than a leadership role. The very existence of the new media, however, undermines the power/information monopoly (or oligopoly), presents an alternative, and therefore provides a stimulus to discussion of international labour issues.

3. Some theoretical reflections

It is now necessary to look a little more systematically at the problem area we have so far been simply describing, ordering and then politically characterising. So far we have been treating the 'new working-class internationalism' and the 'alternative media' as if these terms were self-explanatory. They are, in fact, both problematic terms, and terms that - to my knowledge - have not been widely theorised, at least by socialists. And, again to the best of my knowledge, no socialist has dealt theoretically with alternative media for working-class internationalism - or alternative media for any other kind of internationalism. This section pretends to do no more than to consider the relevance of the limited literature I have been able to find on this problem area. 3.1 looks at working-class internationalism. 3.2 looks at alternative media.

3.1. Towards a new working-class internationalism

The latest contribution to recent debate on labour internationalism is that of Haworth and Ramsey (1983). Basing themselves both on marxist theory and on practical experience in union struggle against a multinational, they seem to me to raise doubts about not only traditional union strategies but also the radical and democratic efforts of those attempting to create a new kind of worker internationalism. For this reason they need to be taken seriously.

Firstly a detailed summary (somewhat re-ordered and restated) of their argument. Past trade union internationalism has combined ideological rhetoric with imperialist and cold war politicking (particularly in the third world), and an economic strategy marked by national, local or industrial self-interest. Since the Second World War the internationalisation of capital has been accompanied by a shift from boom to crisis, by a secular restructuring (affecting firms, industries, regions and states) and by increased state control of labour relations. In response to this situation, they say, some experts believe that labour solidarity can and will spread from the national to the international level, others that international bargaining will equalise labour conditions internationally, yet others that the fundamental class interests binding workers across national boundaries will become evident:

What unites these different conceptions...is the faith in international organisation having a material basis which can eventually be grasped and turned to good effect. When in doubt, of course, they can even turn to the master himself: workers of the world, unite!(5)

Yet, what we see in practice is labour continually tail-ending capital, and being forced into defensive postures that cede half the battle to the MNCs before it has begun. The reason for this is failure to recognise the asymmetry of capital and labour. Worker identity is within the workplace, community and nation and 'is dissipated the further away from the workplace we move'(8). The concern of capital is with 'an infinitely flexible international workforce'(9) and it is at the international level that MNC strategies operate. Thus,

the material bases for each to maximise their effects are of a different order, the one inward-looking and locationally specific, the other expanding and generalising across the world economy.(9)

Furthermore, labour and capital are today not even fighting on the same battlefield. The workers are fighting for wages and conditions within the plant or company, but management decisions are eventually determined by financial concerns which are not necessarily related to the production process or the particular plant or company:

In this sense, workers' organisations can never be coincident with the decision-making process in MNCs, because /the latter/ takes place beyond the boundaries of production, and on the basis of different criteria.(9)

Such asymmetry is increased when we take into account the significant role being played by women within the new international division of labour. The wage labour of women is organised on bases intended to obstruct collective organisation. Whether one considers women simply as a special type of waged labour (faced solely by capital) or additionally recognise their oppression within the domestic sphere (therefore faced also by patriarchy), one must also recognise that international solidarity as presently conceived is a male affair and cannot meet the needs of all labourers.

The obstacles to a meaningful and effective internationalism are: 1) Logistical (in the sense of finance, distance, language, organisational and procedural differences, information); 2) Due to state repression; 3) Due to different political affiliations. But the

fundamental obstacle is competition for a reduced number of jobs. Here, however, the divisions between third world and first world unions are little different in cause than those dividing any national union movement, or even particular workforces. What all this suggests, finally, is

the need to go beyond analysis of 'workers' at the point of 'production' to comprehend the possibilities for and obstacles to resistance against capital. If a new approach to local, national and international solidarity against capital is to be forged, then it surely must start from an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses understood beyond the factory gates or the doors of the union office. (16)

Much of the above is compatible with what we have said or implied about the old or new internationalism: 1) The radical critique of past internationalism confirms what has already been said about the traditional international media; 2) The denial of a 'natural' or spontaneous base for a new internationalism is well taken. We have mentioned media concerned with interests and issues defined outside the MNCs. And we have suggested that the new communications pattern is itself subversive of capital and state; 3) The practical significance of the new role of women internationally is recognised in the existence of media concerned both with women wage-workers and with women in general; 4) The possibility for a worker internationalism that goes not only beyond the MNC but beyond the factory gate and union door is allowed for by the existence of the international single-issue movements; 5) The analogy between international and national divisions is being recognised by those national or local organisations and projects simultaneously engaged in local and international work on the same broad principles: mass self-activity against capital, state and all forms of oppression and discrimination.

If Haworth and Ramsay appear overly-pessimistic about the new working-class internationalism, this may be because they are prisoners of their own enemy. This is so in a number of senses: 1) Exclusive concentration on multinationals and internationalisation rather than the re-structuring of capital more generally; 2) Definition of labour solidarity solely in terms of union solidarity; 3) Definition of international solidarity in terms of West-West and West-South solidarity, thus excluding consideration of the significance of the solidarity with Solidarnosc positions of both the traditional Western labour movements and the new ones in Brazil and South Africa. Given these shortcomings, the final proposal of Haworth and Ramsay on 'the need to go beyond' is bound to lack weight. On the other hand, however, none of the qualifications made here would seem incompatible with their general line of argument, suggesting, rather, elements necessary to an all-round consideration of the old and new internationalism. The 'economic' basis for such an extension is provided by Ruivenkamp (1982), who not only reveals the extent to which concentration of MNC control is accompanied by the spread of small, cooperative and domestic enterprise production, but also how international capitalism dominates the nation state and every sphere of private life. The new understanding of 'politics' necessary for such an extension can be found in those marxists and other radicals writing on 'non-party political formations' in India (Sheth 1983) or 'new social movements' in Latin America (Everts 1983). Here we see not only a rejection of the traditional political forms and forums, but new worker movements growing alongside those of women, ethnic minorities, squatters and youth. And we see this interest in the politics of the base as being combined with recognition of the international source of the common problems (Sheth 1983).

Before moving on to consider theory on new media we may note Haworth and Ramsay's salutary warning on the liberatory potential of information as such:

the existence of contacts and intelligence says nothing about...power to cause managements to change decisions...(2)

And:

the collection of information, though a necessary condition for international action, is not sufficient as an impetus towards greater efficacy.(4)

They also stress that whilst union organisers are less fatalistic about the power and actions of the MNCs than rank and file workers (who often see these as Acts of God), this is

because they have explanations and information at their fingertips, but often this is not passed on.(8)

What this suggests is 1) The necessity to recognise that alternative international information is not in itself necessarily liberatory; 2) That we need to be critical and self-critical about the message carried by the new international media; 3) That we cannot be satisfied with the creation of new international flows of information and ideas that are controlled by, or only reach, the union organisers.

3.2. Understanding an alternative communications model

Lipnack and Stamps (1982) are concerned with defining, identifying, classifying, stimulating and coordinating a new type of organisational structure or relationship which they see as challenging the dominant established one in the United States. This structure is the 'network'. The structure of the network differs from the bureaucratic/hierarchical model in so far as the latter is: 1) Composed of self-reliant and autonomous participants; 2) Rejects concentration of power and the classical division of labour; 3) Distributes power and responsibility:

while bureaucracies function along vertical lines, with information flowing up and orders flowing down, networks function along horizontal lines with information and ideas passing from person to person and group to group. (8).

Further, it 4) Tolerates and even encourages many perspectives about goals and means; 5) Rejects power ranking and the power pyramid. The process of networking varies from the classical organisational one in so far as the latter is: 1) Concerned with the quality of relationships rather than quantities of things; 2) Has no clear internal divisions or borders - and makes this a strength; 3) Implies multiple roles of its 'members', who may be at different moments of time be either initiators or links or end points in communication seen as 'the main business of networking' (8); 4) Cedes equal importance to the individual and the group; 5) Coheres by shared values rather than reward and punishment. Lipnack and Stamps see this new form as appropriate to 'Another America', an already existing counter-culture and society in which

health is perceived as the natural state of the body, co-operation is regarded as an effective way to meet basic needs, nature's ecological orchestra is revered as one uni-

fied instrument, inner development is valued as correlated to social involvement, and the planet is understood to be an interconnected whole. (1)

It is recognised that informal networks operate at both ends of the global power hierarchy, but Lipnack and Stamps recognise diametrically opposed ideologies here (222), and consider the ideology or concepts of those outside the dominant organisations that are crucial (233). Such alternative values and attitudes are those summarised in the quote above, and the book then classifies hundreds of American networks into the related categories: health, cooperatives and communities, ecology and energy, politics and economics ('because people want a sane politics and a fair economic system') (5), education and communications, personal and spiritual growth, and global and futures networks attempting to surpass notions of nationalism, of limitless economic growth and of political hegemony. The individual networks listed include a great variety of humanist, libertarian, spiritualist, and other 'alternative' movements, including a small number of labour, socialist and marxist ones - some listed in this paper.

It is impossible to even briefly mention the variety of networks Lipnack and Stamps consider to be challenging the profit motive and power concentration in the US, or the movements challenging industrialism, bureaucracy and international power politics. Nor can we consider the communications technologies they mention, from letters and telephones to newsletters, computer information exchanges and conferencing. What we need to do is to identify the significance of all this for our problem.

Let us firstly consider the network as organisational principle. It is clear that insofar as it is consciously posed against it the network is subversive of the bureaucratic organisation necessary for exploitation and oppression. The network is also compatible (indeed embodied in) computer technology. The first industrial revolution and the nation state required and fostered the hierarchical, technocratic, bureaucratic structure and process. But

The use of the computer runs counter to the very principle of the one-directional bureaucratic hierarchy, and replaces it with the network of interdependence/..../ The bureaucratic, mechanical model of organisation, in which every decision comes from above and has repercussions at every level of execution, is now replaced by the cybernetic model that requires the 'feedback' of dialogue, coordination and participation. (Garaudy 1976:65-6)

However, this cannot be taken as meaning that the network principle is sufficient to overthrow or even undermine the existing structures. This is implicitly recognised by Lipnack and Stamps, when they stress the centrality of certain values to the creation of 'Another America'. These values are generally democratic, egalitarian and solidararian. They are thus implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, opposed to capitalism, the state, nationalism, militarism, racism, consumerism, etc. Although Lipnack and Stamps fail to recognise the centrality of capital accumulation, of the multinational as its most dynamic and dangerous representative (and therefore ignore workers and working-class internationalism), the principles and values they stress are not incompatible with the needs of workers.

Indeed, by showing the range of non- or anti-capitalist interests and movements, Lipnack and Stamps suggest a broad range of popular interests and forces that national and international worker networks could appeal to or draw upon. Much of the experience of the democratic and egalitarian international networks is there for the workers' movement to learn from.

The same is true for the technology Lipnack and Stamps deal with. Much of what they say about the nature and role of newsletters (137-9) is, for example, recognisable and helpful to the present writer. And faced with the general ignorance and passivity of the left concerning the computer (Hamelink 1983) their recognition of its potential for democratic communication is salutary:

While the argument against computers has been sagely presented and sorely experienced by nearly everyone living in over-industrialised societies, the decentralised small computer is one of the most powerful tools ever to become available to networkers. (139).

If Lipnack and Stamps tend to ideological populism and political eclecticism, then it may also be that they provide us with inadequate tools for our specific social force (the working class) and our particular level of operation (the international). Contemporary American experience, moreover, has too many national peculiarities (low level of worker organisation, high technology used by both capitalism and its critics or opponents) to provide a sufficient base for an appropriate communications model.

An avowedly marxist model, drawing on Latin American and international experience - historical and contemporary - and concerned explicitly with the struggle against 'transnationalisation' should be more relevant. Fred Stangelaar (1982) entitles his study 'Alternative Communication'. What follows is a translation and selective presentation of certain relevant passages.

For Stangelaar, 'alternative' means opposed to both capital and bureaucracy. Opposition is primarily to the multinationals, their concentration of control, and their spreading of uniform Western bourgeois values through a multiplicity of media channels and products. The alternative society is not an existing or projected model but something to be worked out in struggle by the mass movements and tendencies involved. Although such an alternative may be conceived and proposed by intellectuals and professionals, its construction depends not on their knowledge or theories (and certainly not in their grasping the media for themselves) but in the practical revolutionary work implied by the communication process itself (5-6).

The major source for alternative communication is the practical resistance to international capitalism in general (39), implying also struggle against racism, sexism, propaganda for the state and war (30). Stangelaar is critical of radical communication that

reveals its main strength and effort not where it sees 'capital' but the 'public order' as its opponent, and that draws back from direct intervention in the capital-labour contradiction within the 'private' area. A clear example of this is, for example, the grave lack of concrete company information as a basis for effective worker or union activities. (40).

Because of such criticism, Stangelaar wishes to distinguish 'alternative communication' from other forms of non-dominant communication such as: 1) Marginal communication - not allied to the masses or social and political movements; 2) Horizontal communication - information exchange between dominated groups; 3) Anti-information and communication - which whilst subverting either the content or form of dominant communication does not (or not yet) connect with mass needs and struggles (52).

The four fundamental and interdependent characteristics of alternative communication are 1) A content, language, imagery and symbolism that comes directly from the people, their daily life and struggles, and that confronts those of the oppressors; 2) An orientation towards a total social transformation; 3) A mobilising and organising role, surpassing both vertical and horizontal information flows with a 'spiral' communication model; 4) The active role in both production and distribution of the relevant sector of the population and/or social organisations (53).

Such active participation implies, amongst other things: 1) Interaction between sender and receiver; 2) Messages that further interaction of both the population and the professional communicators; 3) Accesibility of both form and content to the population, at a minimum educational level, this education being part of the communication task; 4) Public access to both production and distribution channels; 5) Participation in the communication education structures; 6) Organisation of a public capable of criticising and eventually correcting the media (205).

Stangelaar sees the necessity of networking between different alternative communication projects as essential not simply for an integration of the different national and international projects, but similarly for the protection of a certain financial and technical autonomy vis-a-vis the dominant media (8, 53). Such networking is also essential for the development of an international alternative. Given the atomisation internationally of alternative media, networking is crucial:

You can spend your whole life next to them without ever hearing of them. There are periodicals, newspapers, bulletins, pamphlets, video-films, super-8 and 16mm - even 35mm - films, radio stations, wallnewspapers, etc., mostly with a restricted reach and directed to a very specific group. Whether you could actually spend your whole life next to them is, however, doubtful, seen that most of them the projects are of short life and little influence. (227)

With this last sobering thought let us consider the implications of Stangelaar.

If Lipnack and Stamps are strong on examples but eclectic in orientation and organisational principles, Stangelaar is strong on the latter even whilst giving few examples. His identification of the multinationals as the main enemy, of the alternative as implying struggle against capital and all forms of oppression, and of the alternative as being formed precisely by and in the struggle against these, give the concept a cutting edge and strategic orientation lacking in Lipnack and Stamps.

His distinction of alternative from other forms of non-dominant communication is crucial for our subject. Most of what I have described in Part 2 above should probably be characterised as anti-information and communication. This becomes even clearer when we consider his four characteristics of alternative communication. For, even where the new international media could claim to conform to criteria 2 and 3 (social transformation orientation, mobilising and organising role), few would claim to conform to 1 and 4 (popular content and form, involvement of masses or mass organisations). Nonetheless, the recognition of such standards - as well as those concerning participation - enable us to judge the products or projects, or to make explicit our reasons for not meeting the criteria.

Stangelaar stresses the central importance of networking between communicators nationally and internationally. It seems to me that most of the examples in Part 2 of this paper are of such international networks of communicators - providing we define 'communicators' to cover teachers, organisers, journalists, researchers, etc. Thus, these new communications forms mostly amount to international networking between those involved nationally in either subverting the existing structures, or building the alternative according to the criteria of mass participation and mobilisation Stangelaar suggests. In so far as we recognise that we are involved in international networking between organisers/mediators/ catalysers or whatever, two interconnected questions remain for those working toward a new communications model for a new working class internationalism: 1) Are we not simply networking internationally between marginal or anti-communicators, giving ourselves self-satisfaction whilst failing to relate to mass struggles? 2) To what extent are we creating an autonomous structure capable of both supporting local projects and synthesising them internationally?

4. Problems and Proposals

The theoretical section may be of help in providing conceptual tools or suggesting aims and norms. It does not seem to be of much direct use in identifying practical problems or suggesting practical solutions to them. This is understandable given that the theory has not addressed to our specific area. The problems (4.1) and proposals (4.2) identified are thus drawn rather from my experience in international networking and reflection upon it. Hopefully my thoughts will be at least informed or inspired by the foregoing theoretical discussion.

4.1. Problems

1. Uneven development. We have within international labour communication both dynamic growth and considerable creativity, but this is combined with the kind of atomisation and instability suggested by Stangelaar above. There are also numerous gaps in geographical or problem coverage, duplication of effort and wasted effort. The world capitalist crisis does not avoid striking those who specialise in struggling against it. One community communicator in the US has suggested that we are at a critical turning point for issue-oriented organisations, which will either have to collaborate and share resources or die (Johnson 1983:15).

2. Lack of labour control. Even where rank-and-file activists contribute to or supervise the new international media, these tend to remain in the effective control of professionals and intellectuals. The limitations and dangers of this have been spelled out above and are exemplified at the national level in the dramatic development of left media and research in Peru:

Its extensive presence is matched by its inorganic structure and its lack of formal and sustained ties to the popular movements. The left-wing intellectual currents have in some cases developed working relations with trade unions, but more often such efforts are divorced from the real world. They also have a tendency to reify the separation: the first step towards the development of a professional caste within which careerist aspirations subordinate Marxist analysis to social mobility. The most pressing need today is for greater articulation between the flourishing intellectual and cultural centres and the mass movements... (Petras, Morley and Havens 1983:46).

Such problems may be less in industrialised capitalist (and communist?) countries as the relative number of knowledge workers increases and the white-collar: blue-collar distinction is replaced by the 'grey-collar' worker sharing characteristics of both. Herbert Schiller (1976) offers a scenario of increasing awareness on the part of such workers, shifting from classical wages and conditions demands to those concerning control. Even today, those who have been refused, or lost, or reject, conventional employment for capital and state, and who are involved with the alternative media, can hardly be thought of in terms of the Communist Manifesto as

a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole' (Marx and Engels 1968:44).

Nor is the model of the late 19th century Russian Narodnik 'going to the people' relevant. Nonetheless, even the lesser separation existing can become reified and struggle against it must continue - from both sides.

3. Concentration in the industrial capitalist world. The reason for this is clear. It is at the capitalist core that consciousness of the problem, finance and technical capacities for responding to it - and political possibilities for doing so - best exist. Yet the existence of international communications projects in Hong Kong or Rio, and the nature of the new communications technology itself, suggest that there is no inevitability here.

4. Language problems. The first problem is the domination of English. This creates obvious linguistic and social barriers to international grassroots, shopfloor or community communication. If we move from one predominant language to the use of several (or many) we may hypothetically overcome the linguistic problem, but would then be faced with that of the European Economic Community. Here each new member implies not an addition to but a multiplication of translation costs which have become a major constraint on EEC development. The third problem is the social one of illiteracy or semi-literacy, restricting the ability to even read the international publications.

5. Technology. Here we can only mention the kind of issues that are arising. 1) Even if we agree to employ 'user-friendly' personal or micro-computers (Graham 1983), to which users (workers, documentalists) are they to be friendly? 2) Microfiche documentation services are becoming increasingly cheap relative to printed ones, especially for international purposes, but printed matter is 'eye-legible' whilst microfiche has to be scanned by a (relatively cheap) viewer; 3) Tape/slide is relatively cheap, allows for adaptation, editing and translation, but is limited in impact and reach; video equipment is expensive and complex, but gives access to almost infinite (pirated?) programmes, and can be hypothetically broadcast.

6. Domination. The new media are breaking the domination of the old oligopoly, but are themselves dominated by those with sufficient funds, by intellectuals and professionals, and by the core capitalist countries. There is, for example, a clear danger that those within, or deeply compromised with, old media or movements may make concessions to new needs or organised demands whilst restricting access to the new media or retaining control of them (a question relevant to the new international union computer network discussed by Graham 1983).

4.2. Proposals [3]

1. Coordination. It is obvious that we need an international inventory or register of those active in this area. We need to know both what exists and what doesn't yet. This does not imply centralisation or hierarchy but a 'network of networks' based on the earlier identified technology and principles. An equivalent to the ISIS Women's International Information and Communication Centre or the Human Rights Internet would be the best solution. Alternatively, a series of specialised international worker networks (Latin America, Women, Health and Safety, etc.) with one coordinating centre to provide common services and encourage technological compatibility. We also urgently need national coordinating centres for internationalist labour information, education, research and action. Even in countries where multiple activities exist (e.g. UK, Netherlands) there seems to be actual resistance to providing this essential base for both national and international work.

2. Training. It has already been suggested that alternative communication should imply communication training. Some of the techniques and principles necessary for international communication and documentation are taught and spread by IDOC in Rome. But these are not oriented directly to international labour communication, nor passed down to rank-and-file activists. In so far as international labour communication is recognised as crucial and specific, the necessary training will also need to be developed.

3. Spreading. Assisting and stimulating media centres outside the core capitalist countries is also necessary. In a number of national cases (Peru, South Africa) there may be more experience with worker-oriented media than in Britain or the USA. There are also advanced international or inter-regional projects, such as Asian Labour Monitor and CIDAMO, based in the third world. Simply publicising the existence of such organisations, and how they support themselves, would assist their spread.

4. Solving the language problem. Various possibilities occur: 1) Reviving the Workers' Esperanto Movement; 2) Awaiting a technological solution via computer translation; 3) Making systematic use of the

language skills which - thanks to education and migration - exist amongst both activists and rank-and-file workers. This last possibility is the most immediately possible (as revealed in the Amsterdam Ford case by Cartier 1983). But serious and systematic consideration needs to be given the first two.

5. Alternative technologies. A broad and experimental approach would seem necessary here. We also need systematic study and discussion, such as has begun with the use of computers. Whilst the cheapest and most widely accessible forms and capacities (street theatre, wall newspapers) should be employed, so should the latest capitalist technologies. Video is intended to be a means of privatised consumption of capitalist- or state-produced messages, images and values. But in industrialised liberal democracies one to five percent of TV material is potentially consciousness-raising. Shown to the right audience in the right way it can be revolutionary. Making video can be even more so.

6. A research/action project. All the above suggests the necessity for research, ideally action-research carried out according to the principles suggested in Part 3 above. The creation of a project to study and stimulate the development of international media for a new working-class internationalism should appeal to certain church bodies, as well as to advanced tendencies within social-democratic solidarity organisations or grassroots-oriented development aid agencies. Institutes or individual academics concerned with democratic communication should also be interested.

7. A declaration of principles. The above paper should provide sufficient ideas for a Declaration of Principles, an Action Plan or at least a short Discussion Document on new media for a new working-class internationalism. Indeed, this paper will have failed in its purpose if it does not lead to some such immediate and tangible political outcome. I would rather that this came from some other individual or group, since it would then come as a response to this paper rather than a summary of it - and since this paper represents only an initial sortie into the communications jungle. I fear that if the initiative for such a practical action is not taken now by those involved in the new media, either the impetus represented by its growth so far will fade, or the project will be realised by those compromised with the old internationalism or the old media. If not us, who? If not now, when?

Footnotes

1. 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread'. If this paper is less than foolish it is because some angels have at least tiptoed into this field and others have marked a track up to the gate. In addition to those cited, extra thanks are due to Cees Hamelink. Apart from encouraging me and producing relevant statistics and quotable quotes, he also led me to a number of other angels - some marxist. The paper is dedicated to Bill Ridgers, a many-sided alternative media man and supporter of shopfloor internationalism, who practices quietly where I loudly preach.
2. For more extensive bibliographies and resource lists in this area see Waterman 1982a, b; 1983a, b, Waterman and Klatter 1983 and Waterman 1984a. Apart from the last two these are collected together with other materials relevant to this paper in Waterman 1984b. See, further, the Newsletter of International Labour Studies, from which many cited examples have been taken and in which many uncited ones may be found. An index to NILS appears in NILS 20. Other continuing sources of relevant listings are TIE-Europe Bulletin and International Labour Reports.
3. Since the first draft of this paper, in February 1984, certain steps have been taken to translate the proposals below into action. I have made a proposal for a research-action project on this area (Waterman 1984c). I am hoping to discuss this with colleagues at the Union for Democratic Communications conference, Washington, October 1984. I am also seeking further reactions before formalising and submitting the project, hopefully in early 1985. I have been involved, secondly, in the creation of an International Labour Research Education and Information Foundation (ILERI). This provides a potential vehicle for some of the activities indicated below. So far it has minimal human and zero financial resources. Its first activity has been the publication of a collection on international labour (Waterman 1984d). Its second will be to provide a more secure resource base for NILS. Its further development depends on new inputs of time and money from interested individuals and groups in the Netherlands and internationally.

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- International Labour Reports. Bi-monthly popular-style magazine concerned with creating a new working-class internationalism and oriented towards labour movement activists in Britain and abroad. Address: 300 Oxford Rd, Manchester M13 9NS, U.K. Tel: 061-273-8717. Subscription: (individual, abroad): £13.50.
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- Reset: News on Activist and Grass Roots Computing. Appears approximately bimonthly. Deals with attempts to use computers and develop computer networks amongst anti-nuclear, environmental, social service and other such groupings. Address: c/o Mike McCulloch, 90 E. 7th St., No. 3A, New York, NY 10009, USA. Tel: (212) 254-3582. Subscription: \$0.50 per issue.
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