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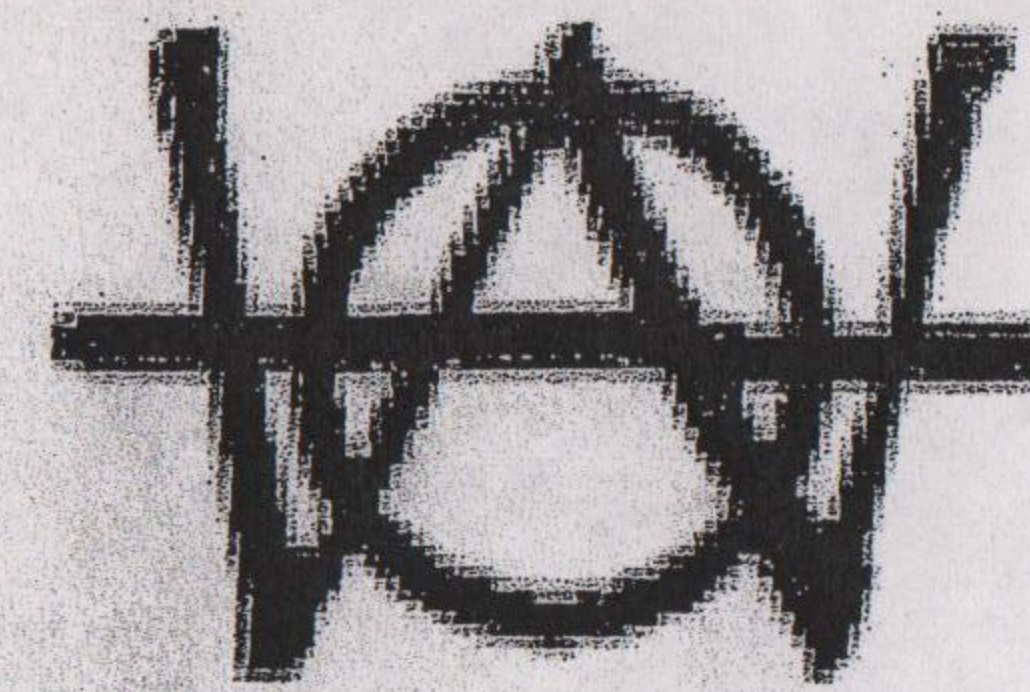
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We have weekly open meetings every wednesday,
8pm at: Sebbon Street Community Centre, Sebbon
Street, Islington, London N1 [nearest tube Highbury
& Islington]



13394
Introduction to the

WOMBLES



White Overalls Movement
Building Libertarian
Effective Struggles



"A message too to those who think a riot shield or prison sentence will protect them:

The anger doesn't fade believe me, not for a moment, not by a long way. Some of us fight to keep alive, some of us are alive because we fight, either way the battle is one & the same.. As one riot cop said in court when justifying the need to get his gun out & start shooting people, "they kept coming, we couldn't stop them". Remind me again why we do this, remind me again why all this is fucking worth it.

The creative urge is an indestructable urge - we know what our anger means. We are dangerous people not simply because we desire freedom, but because we desire it together.

These are the criminal activities of the working class, these are the crimes that we live by. In the words of Bobby TBS "a troublemaker's what you made me" (Anything else would be a crime). If we're not causing trouble, we're not doing it right. This is everything we are. This is all we have.

And I'm proud as fuck to be a part of it - the travelling circus, the whispering conspiracies, the deafening global roar, all the chaos & wonder, courage & warmth, never once, in the face of brutality & murder, doubting itself, the madness & togetherness, the desire & danger & damage done. The fearlessness with which we continue to grab at life. When you dare the world to be special, the world will respond... They kept coming, we couldn't stop them. **THIS** is what our anger means.

Humanity is not the future you try and create, the future is the humanity you refuse to let go of.

We hold it all in our hands..."

Paul Robinson, Gothenberg Prisoner

Introduction to the WOMBLES

September 2000: having experienced the delights of Section 60 orders in London on the N30 and Mayday 2000 actions, many anti-authoritarians went to Prague with a sense of foreboding. But the explosive power of the diversity, courage and ingenuity of the demonstrators in that city galvanised a new sense of confidence and faith in themselves.

Through joining the battle on the bridge with the white overalls, chasing around the valley below, dodging the blast bombs in the main square and creating effective affinity groups, some questions had to be answered. How to create effective actions in the UK, how to confront increasingly repressive police tactics, how to protect ourselves and each other from state violence. One of the answers was to form the White Overalls Movement Building Libertarian Effective Struggles.

The idea was simple. A large padded, well organised block using protective shields, formed as a barrier on mass actions that could be capable of repelling attacks by police.

The constant challenging of ideas and perceptions and traditions has led us to become a diverse group of individuals involved in many different issues all united through a horizontal organisation, direct action and a desire to fundamentally change society.

We initially wanted the wombles to be an anarchist/libertarian communist organisation with new ideas and to continue developing ways on how we could support struggles for social change.

Our openness on our ideological background made us distinct from the white overalls movement in Italy as they had created it not to be specific to any tradition, but for 'civil society' to legitimise civil disobedience against institutions they saw as illegitimate. With this new movement, a new language was also born, which came from a 'legal philosophy', a people's legality that could communicate to an institutional legality. This process went hand in hand with the particular development of the Italian white overalls/Ya Basta! movement. To legitimise their actions they continuously delegitimised their enemies actions, therefore creating a clear form of struggle, manifesting itself in most cases in mass demonstrations against detention centres, biotechnological conferences, transnational business conferences essentially the infrastructure and support systems of the new world order of capitalist globalisation.

These were some of the aspects we attempted to try out here in the UK to varying degrees of success. The tactic, social centres, inclusivity.

In Italy where there is a strong social base of radical activity, primary revolving around institutionalised and non-institutionalised 'social centres', there was already a culture of resistance that in many cases were cross-generational, something in the UK [apart perhaps from old mining communities] we had lost. This proved difficult in terms of mobilising 'civil society' due to the lack of connections people had with radical activity.

We therefore attempted to occupy empty buildings initially for the purpose of having a space to organise and then to create a social basis and service to the local community. We found that the nature of our actions affected the safety of liberated spaces and have led to several places being prematurely closed by police. The combination of political activity linked with social activity in the context of creating social centres have proved to be difficult in this current climate.

We never had any 'official' connection with the white overalls movement in Italy, nor did we thought it was necessary to considering our belief in an autonomy of action and that we had developed from our own political culture in the UK. There was also many criticisms of Ya Basta! which made up a large proportion of the white overalls movement, mainly the hierarchical discipline and authoritarianism on actions. This was seen first hand in Genoa at the G8 actions where some Ya Basta! stewards attacked anarchists and people who smashed a few windows near there march. Whatever view you have of property damage, it is completely unacceptable to physically attack other comrades who have other ways of attacking capitalism. There has been a continued dis-association in part with elements of the white overalls movement after Genoa but the aspects which we are trying to develop here in the UK are still as relevant as a year ago. The creation of a social basis connected with radical activity, the de-legitimation of capitalist institutions through education and direct action and the self-critical nature, therefore non-dogmatic outlook to political and social activity. Underground, Overground, Wombing free!



SEPTEMBER 2000

26 Sept White Overalls affinity group joins the Yellow Bloc to Shut down international Monetary Fund and World Bank meeting in Prague, Czech Republic.

OCTOBER

14 Oct 1,000 leaflets distributed at Anarchist Bookfair about the need for protection on demonstrations.

DECEMBER

20 Dec Mayday 2001 mini-conference at the Button Factory in Brixton, London. Groups from all over London and UK attend to organise Mayday.

JANUARY 2001

16 Jan 10th anniversary of bombing of Iraq action at Parliament Sq with various 'non-violent' civil disobedience groups and Samba band. Parliament Square blocked for an hour. 12 W.O.M.B.L.E.S. form a line and give some protection from police attack.

MARCH

11 March Invasion of Nike Town, London in solidarity with the striking Nike workers in Mexico and the Zapatistas struggle for autonomy. 30 people dressed in white overalls are joined by 50 activists and other passers-by for the action. Nike Town closed temporarily.



17 March No Global Forum, Naples. Some people from the W.O.M.B.L.E.S. join the civil disobedience bloc to shut down the Global Forum meeting of capitalists and politicians. 30,000 people attend. Mucho rioting!

23-25 March Participation of European PGA meeting, Milan. W.O.M.B.L.E.S. call for a white overalls discussion with all interested groups including Ya Basta! Milano, Swedish White Overalls, Finnish Ya Basta!, NYC Ya Basta! Collective, W.O.M.B.L.E.S., L@s invisibles-Madrid. Surprisingly most new white overalls groups started from Prague yellow block and are composed of anarchists alienated from 'traditional' anarchist politics.

APRIL

1 April Sale of the Century public meeting attended by over 80 people. In the lead up to Mayday, heavy media exposure and various visits from the Buzz creates a need for a public meeting to explain what the W.O.M.B.L.E.S. are and what we propose to do on Mayday.

2 April Public Civil Disobedience workshop at Hyde Park. Film crews, Forward Intelligence Teams [F.I.T.] and anti bunnys attend an open workshop on tactics.

"My understanding of the Wombles was that it was a simple anarchist organisation, however clearly it seems to be more complex than for example the anarchist federation or the SWP. I have noticed that some of the Wombles are perhaps more hardline in their anarchism than others. The problem I have is that all Marxist and anarchist organisations tend to become hegemonistic in their discourse thereby promoting some kind of a pure proletarian culture which is based on class homogeneity thereby ignoring or at least relegating the reality of cultural, ethnic or religious homogeneity. This can lead to ignorance which is a disease rampant throughout both the left and the right within the framework of Western Orientalist culture. The Zapatistas are challenging this hegemonistic outlook and are a revolutionary movement which acknowledges the reality of class struggle but does not seek to abolish culture or religion, namely the traditions and customs which formulate the basis for the Chiapanecos way of life. Hence the Zapatistas have redefined their cultural and religious traditions in a revolutionary way with regards to Mayan folklore, and Christian Liberation theology thereby combining it with revolutionary and anti-capitalist politics. People are what they are, and with regards to religion, it is clear that it is important to the Zapatista communities and has provided freedom, liberation and some sense of self realisation."

"No one has the right to tell you what to do. If someone pushes you around, (if all attempts at polite remonstrations have failed) then you push them back. So go on, fucking hit me. I'll let you. You'll get knackered, and I'll get stronger".

27 April Mayday Convergence Centre opened by W.O.M.B.L.E.S. underground crew. Over a hundred people attend it over the four days that it was open. Included talks and workshops from NEFAC [North American Federation of Anarchist Communists] who talk about their experiences in Quebec anti-FTAA actions.

MAY

1 May Mayday Monopoly. Decentralised autonomous actions all over the capital. Hundreds of thousands of people decide to stay home for fear of being impaled by samurai swords, most main streets clear of all traffic, £20 million worth of economic damage [i.e. no one bought anything!]. 20 W.O.M.B.L.E.S. along with a thousand strong crowd attempt to break people out of Section 60 orders. Several hundred escape, most don't [oh well!]

JUNE

2 June Solidarity with Mayday prisoners called by WAR and W.O.M.B.L.E.S. as opposed to the globalise resistance liberal fetish of suing the Met police. Banners read "End state repression" and "release all prisoners".

2 June W.O.M.B.L.E.S. Day of workshops. Over 70 people attend a variety of workshops on tactics, politics and future actions.

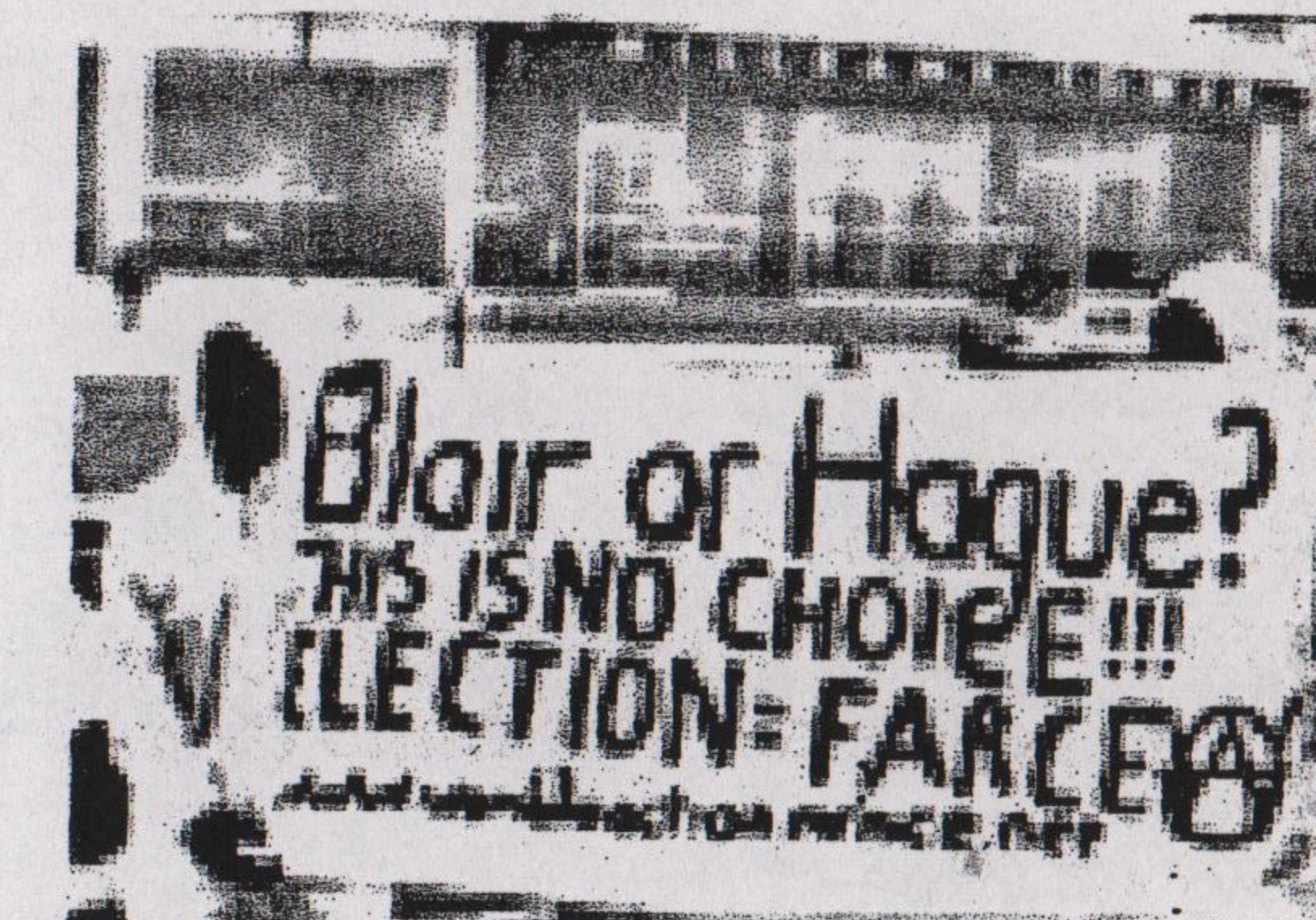
5 June Action against corporate media. Affinity group action to target certain corporate media offices is foiled by dozens of police. Idea of the action was to respond to social criminalisation of dissent on Mayday.

7 June Boycott the elections - part of the Vote Nobody campaign. Affinity group take to the streets and spend election day handing out hundreds of Vote Nobody leaflets.

15 June Anti-EU action in Gothenburg. White Overalls 'civil disobedience' action to shut down the EU summit. Pre-emptive strike by police arrest majority of White Overalls groups and confiscate all 'protective gear. The rest is history, many of our friends have now been sentenced to 1 to 2 1/2 years in prison.

18 June Solidarity with Gothenburg prisoners. Solidarity picket at Swedish embassy. First of several held while comrades are being tried.

29 June March against Racism and Police Brutality, Tottenham. Small contingent of people dressed in white overalls turn up to the march after being invited by several organisations, hearing about Gothenburg and our stance against police brutality.



"It's easier for the WOMBLES to define our concerns than it is our politics: a subject of perpetual discussion.

In conception and origin, the White Overalls movement distinguished itself from other movements in electing to abandon ideologies, thereby eschewing the potential for restrictiveness, repression and alienation incurred by rigid adherence to political doctrine and dogma.

While we do not consider ourselves to be a carbon copy of Tute Bianche, (and aspects of our social context make this unrealistic) I consider this feature to be central to the White Overalls philosophy of inclusivism.

Unlike other unnamed comrades, we are able to recognise the value of, and necessity for, a drive towards unity-in-diversity; of approach, strategy, politics and philosophy. "White is the sum of all colours" as the Italians frequently observe. We can be said to epitomise the rich and vibrant spectrum of the global movement for freedom and equality, against authority and repression.

As such, the WOMBLES are informed, but not bound, by diverse political, philosophical and ideological influences. Open minded, intuitive, and willing to absorb whatever is valuable or relevant.

Our structure is non-hierarchical, so every individual's ideas are equally welcome and valid. Our similarities unite us in a common struggle; our differences perpetuate our evolution, engendering adaptability, spontaneity and creativity."

"My feelings about the wombles are that they are anti capitalist and anti authority and is essentially a group of people with different desires and different backgrounds who support these two ideas, when I put on a white suit (I will only consider myself a womble when I wear white), it will only be to support these two ideas and for whatever reason the specific demo happens to be.

The Italian White Overalls, the Tute Bianche ...how do we relate in terms of symbolism and identity? To me it is clear: from a historical perspective, we are based upon them, draw strongly from them for our inspiration. Yet we are also based upon the Zapatistas and the Ya Basta network - no matter that we are not a formal part of their network and we don't subscribe or donate financially towards the struggle in Chiapas. There are more ways than one of subscribing - to ideas, political philosophies, good will and healing, peace love, kindness and looking after each other."

Campsfield. Solidarity action for Genoa against G8 and Campsfield. Heavy police presence leads to camp being evicted and plans generally being bugged. Day of Action turns into a Day of Walking around Oxford. Many heated discussions on what went wrong, what went right; hopefully many lessons learned. About 40 people dress in White Overalls; many new people [they can't all be journalists!]

27 July Invasion of Italian Consulate, Cardiff. Splinter action by white overalls in Cardiff temporary occupy Italian Consulat.

28 July Invasion of Benneton, solidarity with Genoa. An affinity group invades Benneton at Oxford Circus while others hand out leaflets and hold a massive 'Castrate G8' banner outside. Much support from people, due to heavy media coverage and natural outrage at what happened in Genoa, who need no explanation on why we are protesting.

SEPTEMBER 2001

11 September Disarm DSEi arms exhibition, London Docklands.

A fiesta for life against death, included a pink and silver carnival, a critical mass cycle action, and actions from London, Bristol, Cardiff and Sheffield WOMBLES. Even as we defended ourselves from police violence, the events in New York brought the whole issue of arms, state violence and the day-to-day oppression of ordinary people to the fore. The cops get jittery....

30 September Gatecrash Labour's Party, Brighton Labour party conference. Organised protests and blockades against the representatives of state sponsored British capitalism. In a complete cop over-reaction, five WOMBLES were arrested for wearing white overalls.

7 October US and British bombs and missiles start to fall on the people of Afghanistan. With "No War But The Class War", WOMBLES took part in a series spontaneous actions to remind the state that their violence will not go unopposed.

13 October Anti-War demo, London. Tens of thousands march against violence, hate and militarism. In solidarity with the people arrested in Brighton for wearing white overalls, and to show that we were not cowed by their repression {OK, and to wind the cops up} a gang of WOMBLES donned some overalls, dragged surveillance pigs through the streets and joined in with diverse groups against the latest capitalist aggression.

JULY

7 July W.O.M.B.L.E.S. picnic, Wimbledon. About 50 people attend picnic on Wimbledon Common supported by two riot vans with FIT scurrying about. Cops distribute leaflets to local community warning of baby-eating anarchists; WOMBLES welcomed into local pubs!

19-21 July Direct action against G8, Genoa. Mobilisation of people interested in the civil disobedience bloc for Genoa. 20 people from the W.O.M.B.L.E.S. go to Genoa including [arrghhh!!] an undercover Telegraph journo!

19-21 July Close down detention centres, Campsfield. Heavy police presence leads to camp being evicted and plans generally being bugged. Day of Action turns into a Day of Walking around Oxford. Many heated discussions on what went wrong, what went right; hopefully many lessons learned. About 40 people dress in White Overalls; many new people [they can't all be journalists!]



" " It's easier for the WOMBLES to define our concerns than it is our politics: a subject of perpetual discussion. "

Why are we hung up on this concept of politics v concerns v tactics. There is no distinction (in my mind) between our 'concerns' and our politics. Our politics are that we care! We want everything for everyone! We want the right to choose for ourselves and for everyone to have complete freedom. Our 'concerns' are all those things that get in the way of that freedom. Be that capitalism, organised religion, government or any other form of illegitimate authority.

The question of being an 'Anarchist' group or not and whether we have an ideology is a semantic point almost. Even an anti-ideology is an ideology of sorts. To argue that anarchism (or the wombles) is not an 'ideology' (defn. 'The body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class, or culture') is wrong. There is clearly a wombles ideology. The distinction is that there is no wombles dogma. We are people that have come together around a common goal with a common set of aspirations. Some of us are happy to use the broad term 'anarchist' to explain those aspirations, some are not. It is pretty bloody irrelevant what label you wear. The struggle's the thing!

I would like to think that the WOMBLES are more than a tactic. If we are a tactic we are a reactive force. We need to be proactive. The least important thing about the WOMBLES to me is the WOM I'm more interested in the BLES bit of the acronym. Like someone said last night, I'm a womble 24/7 it isn't a question of being clark kent till the suit goes on. We should be fighting on all fronts at all times. A demo, to be honest is mostly the least useful thing we can be doing to bring about social change. Let's get down there, pad up and stop that asylum seeker being flown back to some shithole regime. Let's defend the council house and let's build a social movement, let's talk to people in our area, build community strength etc etc etc. The reason I am a womble is not because I have a fetish for baggy white suits but because this