

no.17 free

# COUNTER INFORMATION

Nov/Dec 1987



■ Marching against the cuts in Haringey, London.

## COUNCILLORS FLEE PEOPLE'S POWER

### RESISTANCE is growing to major cuts in London Council services.

In Hackney the cuts will worsen the housing crisis. Measures include:

- £2 rent rises;
- no improvements or transfers;
- repairs reduced;
- wholesale evictions of squatters.

The Labour Council claims the squatters' homes are needed for homeless families in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. But in addition to 1,200 squatters Hackney has **3,800** totally **EMPTY** Council houses! The Council are just trying to save cash and to divide the homeless.

However the Council's eviction programme is in a big mess. On 28th October over 200 squatters took over the Town Hall. The councillors had to abandon their meeting, and the squatters controlled the Council Chambers for 3 hours.

This is the **THIRD** time squatters and tenants have occupied Hackney Town Hall

within a few weeks. On 27th September and again on 12th October 'people's power' forced the councillors to flee.

'No cuts, no evictions, house the homeless' were the occupiers' demands.

The Council are using riot police to throw the homeless onto the streets. But at least 3 evictions were resisted by crowds of squatters and tenants in September. In early October 5 flats were evicted - but they were all re-squatted the same day.

### O.A.P.S BASHED

Labour Haringey Council went to close 3 nurseries, several old folks homes and a day centre for the disabled. Day nursery charges are doubling, pensioners meals going up 40%. Part-time workers are being sacked, vacancies frozen. Rents up £4.

On 22nd October Haringey Council Workers struck against these cuts. 1,000 workers and residents marched on the Civic Centre.

## PRISON REVOLTS

AFTER the recent prison revolts in Scotland (Perth, Shotts and at Peterhead) it has been shown that prisons are nothing more than houses of brutality where people are sent, not to be 'reformed', but to be crushed.

The Shotts prison 24 hour occupation started over a prisoner being transferred from Shotts to the infamous 'cages' at Inverness. This prisoner had taken part in the Peterhead prison roof-top protest last year, and also staged a 40 day hunger strike in Barlinnie, which he came off after children from a nearby housing scheme wrote to him to ask him to finish his 'fast'. A gesture he repaid by organising a charity show to help the scheme's needy children. No reason was offered for his transfer.

During the 5 day Peterhead rebellion prisoners displayed banners denouncing prison officers' brutality. 'Close this asylum' and 'Too far for visits' were among other

slogans.

At all prisons much play was given to the theory of a 'minority of trouble makers' causing all the problems, but it doesn't take much common sense to work out that the people who take part in these demonstrations are usually long term prisoners or 'lifers', who having not got much to lose, these prisoners, rather than the prisoners who may be in for a shorter time, will be pushed to the forefront of the fight for better conditions and more humane treatment for the rest of the prison population.

### RAPISTS

Another theory pushed by some of the media to get public opinion against the demonstrators was that it was rapists and child molesters (terrorists) that were up on the roofs, but these prisoners are held in isolating wings to protect them from the rest of the inmates. They also tend to be inside for a short term since rape is not seen as the crime that it is.

We state again that prisons are not for rehabilitation but for humiliation, and we say that the only vehicle for prison reform is a bulldozer!

Earlier in the month 40 women invaded a councillors' meeting, demanding that there be no closures or cuts in child care facilities.

### HOMELESS

Labour-controlled Camden Council wants to save cash by refusing Bed & Breakfast payments for many homeless people. Irish homeless are to be told: "Go back to Ireland". A play centre has been closed.

4 library workers were suspended for refusing to cover vacant posts. Before walking out in support, their colleagues sent out a message on the computer. 5 other libraries joined the action when the 'strike' message flashed up on their computer screens!

### SHANTY TOWN

Tory Westminster Council plans to sell nearly half its Council houses. Homeless families are to be moved into Portakabin homes on industrial wasteland in East London.

Over 900 Council workers in NALGO struck against these inhuman plans on 22nd September. The same day protesters at the Council housing committee meeting were arrested by police riot squads. The previous housing committee meeting had been broken up by local Council tenants' direct action.

Between them Tory central government and Labour local government are launching a major attack on the quality of life for working class people.

The public services affected were *already* totally inadequate and bureaucratically mis-run before these latest cuts.

A fight back is underway. But only by spreading the struggles, by going beyond token gestures and taking real direct action will workers and residents have a chance of beating back these attacks. The Hackney squatters are showing the way!

Info: Hackney Housing Action, c/o 61 Leswin Road, London E8. Haringey Homes for All, 628 High Road, London N17.



# CAN'T PAY WON'T PAY

THE POLL TAX gets more unpopular by the day. The Council Departments responsible for registering all adults over 18 started work on September 14th in Scotland, which (with Wales following a year later) is being used as a testing ground for the phasing-in of the Community Charge in England.

In multi-occupant council and private rented flats in the outer schemes and inner cities, doors have been getting slammed in the faces of those drawing up the electoral register (which will provide data for the poll tax register). Brave language has declared: WE WILL NOT PAY.

The 'Weekend World' (ITV) programme on October 11th highlighted Drumchapel scheme residents stating that they would evade or refuse to pay the poll tax. 'Panorama' featured similar declarations from tenants in Paisley's Ferguslie Park. After all, warrant sales and the seizure of goods are nothing new! In the months ahead it is crucial that news of resistance be widely publicised to encourage others elsewhere.

It is also crucial that those prepared to agitate against the tax organise together independently to canvass their neighbours and circulate information. If this took off contacts could be made, however piecemeal, within and between districts and break down isolation and parochialism.

## STOP THEM

With a fanfare of publicity, the Labour Party has launched the STOP IT campaign "designed to complement the efforts of MPs, political parties and local authorities". It will be vital to rise to their challenge and expose how they will seek to police opposition and keep protests within the law and in the spirit of attracting favourable media coverage.

This Labour Party 'opposition' to the Poll Tax is a total fraud. All the Labour-controlled Regional Councils, such as Lothian and Strathclyde, have - along with all other Regional Councils - agreed to IMPLEMENT the Poll Tax. Council workers could play an important role in the resistance by boycotting and disrupting all work connected with the new tax.

Opposition to this tax offers the best opportunity for years for a genuine community of interest to actively take on the government and appeasers on the left. This will only be possible (as with the Anti-Census campaign in W. Germany) if a large minority are independently organised, determined, imaginative and prepared to do endless groundwork.

An early opportunity for this groundwork to bear fruit will be the door to door Poll Tax canvass, due in April 1988. Driving the canvassers out of the Council schemes and working class areas might not stop registration - they have lots of other sources - but it would be a public defeat for the Government and a great boost to morale and self-organisation among resisters.

## THE POLL TAX: WHAT, WHEN, WHERE...

THE RATING system will be replaced with a Community Charge, better known as the Poll Tax. In Scotland people are to pay the new tax from 1st April 1989, in Wales from 1990. In England the poll tax is to be phased in from 1990-1994. The Poll Tax will be payable at the same rate by all adult residents of a local authority. The level of the charge will be decided by each local authority and will affect all residents - including students - and not just homeowners as in the past. In fact the only exemptions to this charge are those under 18, prisoners, long-term hospital patients, severely mentally handicapped and people in nursing and residential homes.

Claimants will have to pay 20% of the charge. This will be made up by an increase in their giro - but this increase will not reflect how much they will be charged but the national average of the poll tax.

There are NO CONCESSIONS for people on YTS or the Job Training Scheme or trainee nurses or apprentices. They will have to pay the full amount. Local authorities estimate that the average annual community charge in Scotland could be around £350 per person.

The poll tax robs the poor to pay the rich. A Glasgow District Council survey shows that on average people in 44 wards will pay significantly more, while only 8 wards will pay significantly less.

## THE LAST POLL TAX (1381)

MANORS WERE stormed, unpopular lords and lawyers were killed. Rebels converged on London. Supporters opened the gates and the peasants took complete possession. A terrified King and his ministers agreed to all the rebels' demands.

"Things cannot go well in England, nor ever will, until everything shall be in common". John Ball 1381.

## MOAT HOUSE

62 WORKERS were sacked in April for complaining about attacks on their working conditions, joining a union and picketting their workplace. They all work at the Moat House Hotel, Liverpool.

Their pickets have been attacked, insulted and threatened with arrest - but they continue. Local support is good. Bin men have refused to collect hotel rubbish. Unionised taxi drivers ignore calls to go to the hotel.

Moat House have 68 hotels in Britain, all non-unionised. In Scotland they are: Bucksburn Moat House, Aberdeen; Forth Bridges Moat House, South Queensferry, Lothian; Lorne Hotel, Glasgow and Dean Park Hotel, Renfrew.

Letters, donations to: Moat House Support Group, c/o T.G.W.U., Transport House, Islington, Liverpool 1.

## STRIKING SARI FABRICS

WOMEN at Sari Fabrics on the Sydenham Estate in London have been on strike now since the middle of September. The firm makes tea towels, bags, table mats and other fancy goods. Many of the strikers, mostly Asian women, have worked there for 10 years or so.

The dispute started with Sari Fabrics slashing rates of pay for pieceworkers by so much that now the average weekly pay is as low as £30.

The company want to get rid of the 'trouble makers' and replace them with Y.T.S. recruits and homeworkers, who will be paid even less.

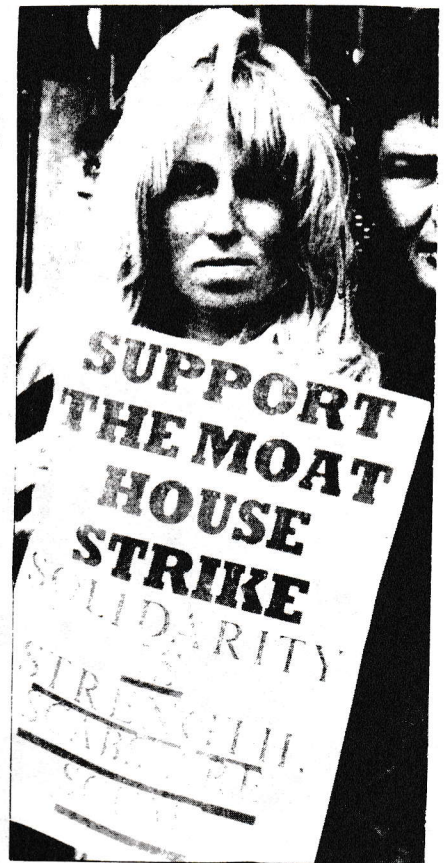
The strikers have responded by setting up picket lines and have succeeded in stopping delivery lorries entering the plant. They've also managed to stop a British Telecom van and a Lynx Express truck from crossing the line.

Source: Black Flag.

## NURSES

NURSES AT the Royal Edinburgh Hospital have been taking industrial action since mid-September.

Their aim is to have more nurses employed at the hospital, to provide an acceptable standard of care for patients. Despite an over-time ban, work to rule and short stoppages Lothian Health Board have to date offered no more staff.



## MINERS

MINERS IN Yorkshire, Durham and elsewhere are protesting that their struggle against British Coal's oppressive new disciplinary code is being held back by the National Executive Committee of the NUM.

Despite the 77% vote to ban overtime, the union leaders have done no more than ban coal production in overtime. Yorks, Durham and North-umberland among others don't produce coal then anyway.

Send SAE for longer article from Doncaster Miner.

## WRECK THIS RACIST SURVEY

UNITED action by claimants and workers has disrupted government attempts to operate racist checks in Job Centres.

From 14th-23rd October clerks in 120 Job Centres were ordered to assess all coming in as 'white', 'black', 'asian', 'other' or 'refused assessment'. Workers in 22 London Job Centres and in Toxteth, Liverpool took industrial action against this 'Ethnic Monitoring'. 9 London offices were shut completely.

A feature of the action was the close co-operation between claimants and civil service workers in organising joint pickets, leafleting and protest meetings.



## ACTION AGAINST SLAVERY

CLAIMANTS are defeating the Government's latest slave labour scheme.

The new Job Training Scheme is a flop. The unemployed are refusing to be cheap labour, refusing to work for our dole.

By September the Government had aimed to have 110,000 on JTS. But numbers have never exceeded 19,000. And 60% of those starting JTS leave the scheme early.

This autumn Tottenham Claimants Union discovered that the 2 local JTS Managing Agents were operating from Council-controlled property. They pressurised the Council and the JTS profiteers were forced to close.

### NASTY

But the Government have another nasty up their sleeve. The new Community Programme (CP) planned for Autumn 1988, will mean working full-time for your dole money plus a small 'top up', probably £6-£15. After expenses, the new CP could leave participants even worse off than on JTS.

The Government hopes that the current acceptance of the Community Programme by trade unions and local authorities will enable the new CP to succeed. But if claimants act we can press for workers and local authorities to boycott the new CP, just as many organised workers and Councils are boycotting JTS.

### THREATENS

Meanwhile resistance threatens against compulsory forced labour for 16 and 17 year olds. On 2nd November 15 supporters of the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign occupied Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. This was to protest against the current

## CLAIMANTS

CLAIMANTS continue to occupy Camden Unemployment Action Centre in defiance of Camden Council's attempts to close them down.

The occupiers ask people to support them by

- writing to them
- condemning Camden Council
- inviting a speaker from the Centre to their meetings
- visiting the Centre.

Contact C.U.A.C., 102 St. Pancras Way, London NW3. Tel: 01-485 6352.

## PLASTIC MAFIA

ON SUNDAY 23rd August strikers occupied Salford Plastic Ltd. in Eccles, nr Manchester. Steel hoppers were used to barricade the factory entrance. The occupation, which lasted 42 hours, was intended to stop the removal of machinery.

Last February 6 workers were indefinitely suspended for 'not working hard enough'. Their mates walked out in support. 43 were sacked.

A 24 hour picket plus a scab workforce (mainly school leavers, paid half the previous wage) has hit production. Machines remain unrepaired

Government Bill denying benefits to young people who refuse the Youth Training Scheme (YTS).

IN EDINBURGH around 700 school and college students struck against compulsory YTS on 5th November.

YTURC also called for strikes in Glasgow, Falkirk, Dundee and Aberdeen.

Meanwhile Department of Employment workers were due to vote on a proposed one day strike for 27th November, to oppose the introduction of YTS into the Civil Service.

Workers at Bolton Job Centre are continuing their 16 week strike against YTS coming into their office. At West Brom Job Centre strike action succeeded in keeping YTS out.

All the new Government schemes point in one direction. The Government's eventual aim is to force the unemployed to work for our dole.

Opposition to such plans will unite country-wide on December 14th. The new 'Congress of Unwaged Groups' is calling for claimants activity everywhere on the theme 'Action Against Slavery - No To All Forced Labour Schemes'.

Info: Lothian Claimants Union, 031-557 0718. Leeds C.U. 0532 753160. Tottenham C.U. 01-801 5629.

## FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

MARTIN FORAN is a prisoner in Parkhurst Prison, framed for a robbery which the man robbed said he did not commit. He was convicted on the word of one policeman.

He has been in solitary for the last few years since he protested his innocence with rooftop demonstrations. His health deteriorated badly but he was refused medical aid. He took a prison officer hostage to try and get medical attention and was rushed to hospital where a colostomy was performed. Three weeks later 3 warders beat him up and pulled off his colostomy bag. His life is now in danger. His colostomy and leg are infected and he has running sores on his stomach. He can only eat Complan and his application for painkillers is often refused. His infection is so bad it can be smelt through the entire unit.

Nevertheless, Martin is determined to fight for justice. Letters of support to Martin Foran CS 1796 H.M. Prison, Parkhurst Prison, Newport, Isle of Wight. Protests to the Governor at Parkhurst.

Chapman, the owner, tried to import hose piping, his main product, from France and Southern Ireland but this was blocked by the National Union of Seamen. He then tried Eagleley Plastics, Bromley Cross, nr Bolton. However, they stopped production in mid-order after a dispute over payment.

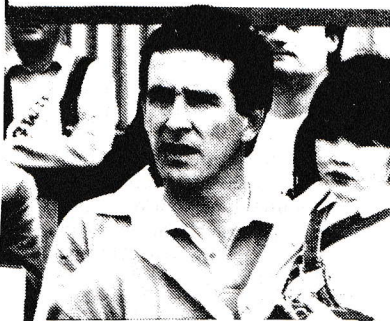
He's now setting up a production unit with a Jim Sheffield (sacked by Eagleley Plastics for suspected fraud) at Deacon Mill between Bromley Cross and Darwen, Lancashire.

Barry Chapman is getting desperate. Orders are being rejected by his main customers, Woolworths (labelled Cuthberts), B & Q and Texas Homecare. He told one worker if he didn't work harder he'd 'blow his legs off'.

Chapman lives at: Casa Pina, Kirkbourne Grove, Baildon, Shipley, West Yorkshire. (Tel. 0274-582434).

Donations to: Jim Billington, 43 Abingdon Road, Urmston, Manchester M31 1GW.

SUPPORT US  
DON'T BUY  
SALPLAS  
HOSEPIPES  
THIS SUMMER



• Salford Plastics strikers call for solidarity.

## ROARING SUCCESS

AS WAS reported in C.I.16 eight branches of Adler - one of Germany's biggest clothing firms - were firebombed by Red Zora (a group of women 'city guerillas'). This was in response to the women of South Korea and Sri Lanka being exploited in Adler's factories, calling for the support of the people in West Germany.

On the 11th of September, another attack was made on Adler's chainstore in Berlin. A group of women called 'The Amazons' - the 'sisters of Red Zora' - placed two firebombs in the store.

They exploded at night and set off the automatic sprinkler system. The whole of the 2nd floor was flooded. The damage to property was said to be 'considerable'.

The Amazons wanted to remind Adler of the demands of Red Zora the month before: basically to resume wage negotiations and to re-engage the sacked women.

Adler now say they will fulfill these demands because as the board of directors say: "the company doesn't see another possibility".

With flaming regards to the women at Adler!

Info: Resistance news from West Germany.

## STATE RACISM BOOSTS PROFITS

THE MAJORITY of 'illegal immigrants' are brought into France by smuggling rings linked to the companies that will later employ them. Workers are housed in run-down hostels, paid low wages and kept in a permanent state of insecurity.

The biggest hostel companies are Sonacotra (for workers from North Africa) and Soundiata (Mali, Senegal, etc.) of which the French state is the main shareholder. Rents are exorbitant.

At Mussy residents have refused to pay rent increases for 2 years. At Rosny-sous-Bois a similar rent strike has been in progress since January 1987. The state has responded with drug searches (police raids) and threats of eviction. On July 9th armed men shot into a Soundiata hostel in the 13th arrondissement in Paris wounding a member of the residents committee.

Residents have now forged links between all Soundiata hostels in the Paris area to co-ordinate defence. Local support committees have been created close to individual hostels.

Info: Cedri, BP 42, 04300 Forcalquier, France.



## UNDER 14's

"WE REALISED what happened to the children in Soweto in 1976, and we wanted to show that their blood had watered the tree of liberation".

Thus spoke Stompo, a 13 year old boy from Tumahole, in the Orange Free State in South Africa. When he was 10 Stompo started a group, made up of children, which initially had four members, but now numbers over 1,500, all of whom are 14 or under.

The group now see themselves as the most organised resistance to the South African state (most of the radical adults have been arrested in the present state of emergency, or are being harrassed by the police).

Their main enemies are the Green Beans (police in green uniforms) and the A-Team (local conservative vigilantes who support government-sponsored townships).

They attack, using dustbin lids and stones for ammunition, which is very effective when the attacking children are several hundred strong.

The group are fighting for a free South Africa for all, irrespective of race, colour or sex - and also making demands for more playgrounds for black children, since white children have a lot more.

The Under-14's, as they are known by the 40,000 people of Tumahole, are making a stand against apartheid and state brutality, and as they say themselves: "We, the children, are now at the forefront of the struggle".

## HAMBURG HAFEN

A FEW weeks ago the Thyssen company who own the docks and harbour announced the closure of one of the docks which will make 1,500 people redundant.

Whilst the bosses were meeting to rubberstamp this decision a small group of militant apprentices burst in. They presented their ideas/demands. Basically they were as follows:

- that production should be for the common good. That is, no war produce, and ecologically responsible production;
- that each new worker should know and understand the reasons, means and techniques of the whole production process, not just parts like rivetting or machining.

This group of apprentices is only a minute fraction of the 1,500 workers facing redundancy. Their ideas are the result of discussion and consultation with a wide variety of social, political and ecological groups.

It was these young workers who first approached the people of the infamous squatted street, Haffenstrasse, which lies just behind the

## DON'T GO

ON 15th September the Italian navy left Taranto for the Gulf. 2,000 demonstrated against this Italian military intervention until the ships left. The demonstrators were then attacked by the cops.

On 6th October the aircraft carrier Garibaldi arrived in Taranto - a strike was organised in 7 schools, with a mass assembly and demo. Info:

docks. They produced a leaflet jointly with the squatters, saying it was because they are fighting the same enemy.

The link is closer than it looks. The authorities have plans to build an amusement park on the demolished docks. This is part of the 'Hamburg 2000' project. Its aim is to regenerate the docklands for both hi-tech/financial industry, for recreation and so on. The resemblance to the docklands in East London is more than just a coincidence.

Just along the road from the squatted parts of Haffenstrasse there are brand new blocks of luxury flats with more building work in progress.

The area does present a problem for the city authorities. Not least because of its controllers' influence and economic power through prostitution, racketeering and drugs trade.

But the actual character of the area is slowly changing. It's becoming much more respectable, up-market and exclusive. Perhaps by the year 2000 the old reputation will be just a memory and a publicity gimmick for the estate agents and property speculators.

- 31st October: 20,000 people (2,000 masked) demonstrated in Hamburg in support of the squatters in Haffenstrasse.

## AUSCHWITZ

FORCIBLE repatriation of refugees from Europe to the country of origin sentences them to prison or death. Last August Lufthansa flight crews refused to co-operate. Their press statement said: "We do not want to descend to the role of the train drivers who transported Jews to Auschwitz".

*Centro Documentazione Proletaria, Via D'Aquino, 158 1.p, Taranto, Italy.*

■ Resistance in Soweto, South Africa.



## DUMP DUNLOP

THREE YEARS ago B.T.R. (British Tyre & Rubber) bought over Dunlop and almost at the same time sacked 970 workers in the Natal province of South Africa.

The sacked workers, from the Sarmcol rubber plant, were trying to organise workplace resistance to such things as wage imbalances. A black worker would earn four times less than a white worker for doing the same job!

B.T.R. have refused to speak to the strikers, who while picketting have been attacked by police and scabs, and also some strikers have been kidnapped and murdered by 'vigilantes'.

Organising in these conditions has been hard, but the Sarmcol strikers and the Mpophomeni community have set up co-operatives to handle bulk buying of food, growing vegetables and maintaining their own health service, all with the help of support groups in Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

When the strikers organised a one day regional general strike, the police intervened to crush the community resistance. But they were foiled by the youths who built barricades

in the black townships. The long strike means no rents are being paid, no bills settled. But when the 'repossession men' arrive to seize the strikers' furniture etc., the women have united to drive them away.

Now the struggle must spread even further. The Sarmcol strikers are asking for B.T.R.'s products (mostly Dunlop made) to be boycotted.

B.T.R. make a range of goods as diverse as Rest Assured furniture, Dunlopillo mattresses, Pretty Polly tights, tennis and squash raquets (Slazenger), Anker cash registers, and also have contracts with British Coal, the oil industry and the military.

Recently the strikers lost a court case for unfair dismissal, although they will fight the case again - after the judge accepted an invitation to address a seminar - along with four people representing B.T.R. Sarmcol in court!

After 3 years of strike action, it's time B.T.R., through Dunlop, felt the pinch.

Fetching rubber necklaces can be sent to B.T.R.'s manager Sir Owen Green, at Edgehill, Succombs Hill, Warlingham, Surrey. Earning £197,000 a year we're sure he won't tyre of them!

SAWCO, PO Box 156, Howick, Natal, South Africa 3290. Tel: Howick (03321) 2864.

The Counter Information collective invites people to - send us articles and information - take bundles of the news-sheet to distribute - make a much needed donation towards our printing and postage costs - write for info on our Readers Meetings and the CI "Supplement" - contact us if they'd like to join the CI collective. We wish to co-operate with all who share our aims.

COUNTER INFORMATION, C/O 43 CANDLEMAKER ROW [PIGEONHOLE 81], EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND, U.K.

NOTE: The views expressed in reports from outside the collective are not necessarily totally shared by Counter Information. This issue went to press 9th Nov 1987.