

COUNTER INFORMATION

July/August 1988.

WE WON'T PAY

In Scotland a growing movement is declaring WE WON'T PAY THE POLL TAX.

Only the rich gain from this tax, most lose. Businesses pay less. Through central government control of business rates the Tories aim to force local authorities to implement privatisation and massive cuts. Edinburgh's Poll Tax estimate is now £460 each per year.

All this can only be stopped by a collective refusal to pay the tax. There are now 23 local anti poll tax groups in Edinburgh and 31 in Glasgow. City-wide federations bring the neighbourhood group together. Many groups have street co-ordinators and/or street committees. This way real grass-roots resistance can develop through leafleting and talking to people door to door.

The Labour STOP IT campaign is better named STOP THE STRUGGLE. Its leader, *Brian Wilson, M.P.*, fiercely denounces non-payment. Meanwhile Lothian and Strathclyde Labour Councils carry out poll tax registration. The Scottish Nationalists advocate non-payment, but the Angus SNP Council is enthusiastically co-operating with registration!

Some actions taken against poll tax registration since 1st April:

- **Ruchazie, Glasgow:** residents in one street returned all their registration forms together **BLANK** to the Registration Office.
- **Dunterlie, Barrhead:** Tenants Association members dumped almost all the areas poll tax forms - still blank - back at Paisley Registration Office along with a query about the meaning of a "Responsible Person".
- **Pollokshields, Glasgow:** Poll tax snoopers have needed police protection. In mid May a poll tax canvasser was attacked. Widespread hostility from the public led to a spate of resignations by poll tax registration officers in May.

The real anti-poll tax movement is not to be found in these party games, but in the communities and housing schemes.

Resistance to poll tax registration is important, anyone victimised for non-registration must be defended by everyone. But the authorities have plenty of files available to compile the register.

As April 1989 approaches the central question will be **REFUSAL TO PAY.** The likely arrestment of wages and benefit will necessitate mass community action at the courts, and spreading the fight to the workplaces.

The poll tax is a great chance to reverse the defeats inflicted by the employers and the Thatcher government. Through an active refusal to pay, people can beat the poll tax and also gain a sense of their collective power to overthrow the whole system of exploitation.



DEMONSTRATION...Gdansk, June 1987. A year later on June 13th, 10,000 declare: "We Won't Vote" at a Solidarnosc rally against local elections. FULL REPORT - BACK PAGE.

STAYAWAY STRENGTH

Effective mass opposition to Apartheid has been demonstrated by the Independent black workers movement, COSATU. Facing more severe restrictions in the Labour Relations Amendment Bill, an informal network of COSATU, UDF and other activists mobilised two million workers to 'stayaway' from work on the 6 - 8th June.

The same resolve and willingness to sacrifice wages to make a political stand was shown on the annual anniversary of the 'Sharpeville 6' sentenced to hang after July 19th.

In Britain public opinion has been mobilised around Nelson Mandela's 25th year in prison, but Oliver Tambo and other ANC Leaders refrain from any support to active disinvestment as has been pursued against Shell in the Netherlands.

LEGAL ROBBERS

'THIEVES - BY APPOINTMENT only' read the notice on the door of Aberdeen's NUS (National Union of Seafarers) office. The local NUS members had re-occupied their office after the sequestrators (Spicer & Oppenheim) had them evicted at the first occupation.

Although union leaders also ordered NUS members out of the first occupation, they feared the courts would fine them again!

In the North East of Scotland 90 seafarers still remain sacked from North Sea oil rig supply boats.

In the main dispute at Dover, 750 are still out and a solid 200 strikers form the picket line at the port.

Solidarity actions and support are helping sustain the strikers, who receive no strike pay.

For leaflets/info. write: Community Resistance to the Poll Tax, Pigeonhole CR, c/o 11 Forth St., Edinburgh.

On the 2nd of June a benefit concert was organised in Dover Town Hall by Class War.

The 8th of June saw a 24 hour solidarity strike staged by Belgian seafarers.

And at the recent No Clause 28 Rally in London, almost £1,000 was collected.

In the meantime strikers are touring the country to get support from dock workers, lorry drivers and other seafers, to help try to make the strike bite that much deeper.

P & O strikers need our support, notes of encouragement (five and ten pound notes etc!) can be sent to:

Magness House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent; and/or Seafarers Comfort Fund, c/o Aberdeen Trades Council, 24 Adelphi, Aberdeen.

BZ RESISTS !

Copenhagen, Denmark, was the scene for a week of action organised by the BZ (squatt-ing) Movement. Between 6th and 13th May they held demos, actions and street theatre - including the painting over of a BZ wall mural on expensive flats in Ryesgade. The mural had been retained for 'cultural value' two years ago - the original squat had been evicted after a famous nine day seige. The week of action had been called to show that the BZ movement will not be silenced or criminalised by a blood thirsty press. Nor will their anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist resistance end.

VIOLENCE

On the final day, 13th May, a house in central Copenhagen was peacefully occupied. The street was then barricaded. Following discussions between themselves and local residents these were removed and the occupation was to end. But, battle dressed cops had sealed off the street and cops swamped the area. A representative of local residents informed the cops that the BZ-ers were peacefully leaving. The police were then ordered to attack and arrest all demonstrators! Many were beaten and 21 arrested. All were later released.

RAIDED

Immediately afterwards a large force of riot, military and Special Branch cops raided the 'Youth House', a large centre for gigs, meetings, relaxation and **ORGANISING RESISTANCE**. The raid was to look for 'stolen paint'!! After being militantly defended all nineteen people present at the time were arrested and charged collectively for

'accessory to violence' (one later released because of her age). A charge similar to that used against the Sharpville 6, since there is *no evidence* against them individually.

To show their anger at the cops actions, a group of people barricaded one of Copenhagen's main thoroughfares. The ensuing battle with police was successful - no arrests, two sergeants hospitalised, one burnt out cop van and four captured riot shields!

The squat in Baldergade they withdrew to was surrounded by riot cops. Their repeated attempts at storming the building were all successfully resisted. The cops were later forced to withdraw to deal with the spontaneous solidarity actions all across the city.

The eighteen prisoners were later released. They had been kept in touch with events via the two pirate radio stations set up during the week of action. The demos and solidarity had undoubtedly quickened their release.

A 'hands off the BZ-ers' demo on 20th May passed without incident - despite police intimidation and harassment.

THREATENED

The BZ house in Baldergade is now under threat of imminent eviction. After the hard lessons of Ryesgade the BZ-ers are preparing to defend the house - and all it represents. Barricades are being improved and local residents kept in touch with what's happening.

[Source - Ekomedia, Arhus].

OCCUPIED

Since 11th March three libraries in Hackney, London, have been occupied by staff members and library users.

These libraries were due to close the next day, along with three others currently shut down. A library service is being run from the buildings and will continue to be until all six are fully restored.

After initial doubts, local people are helping to run them alongside regular workers.

EFFECTIVE

Occupations like this do win

public support, which increases their effectiveness. They also give something positive for everyone to fight for - hence the need for solidarity and support from below to escalate the action to victory. The local NALGO leadership had accepted the closures.....

The Councils Labour Group voted to reverse the closures - but as yet nothing has actually changed.

Info: Local Authority workers network, c/o 84b, Whitechapel High Street, London, E1.

PRAGUE: CZECHOSLOVAKIA, June 18th....Police break up an East-West human rights seminar and arrest 20 local activists.

AGAINST SLAVERY

THE GOVERNMENT ARE moving towards **FORCING** the unemployed to work in return for social security benefits. The new 'benefit plus £10' Adult Training Scheme, and the denial of benefit to those declining the Youth Training Scheme, are the latest steps towards 'Workfare'.

Forced labour for the unemployed weakens **ALL** workers' ability to push for better wages and conditions. It boosts employers' profits. It cuts the unemployment figures. And it subjects the potentially rebellious unemployed to work discipline.

Naturally the Government doesn't admit to such self-serving motives. Instead it mounts a propaganda barrage: "The unemployed are lazy scroungers. They have a duty to work and thus contribute to society."

To counter such arguments we would point out:

- The purpose of almost all jobs is to increase the profits and/or power of employers and the state. Most employed work does not benefit humanity, in fact much is socially harmful.
- The majority of workers detest the boredom of employment and the degradation of being ordered about by bosses.
- The refusal to work to profit an employer is completely justified.
- Many unemployed people are in fact engaged in socially useful activity.
- The problem for the unemployed is not lack of work but lack of a decent income and access to resources.
- Society has the knowledge and resources for all to have free access to food, housing, fuel and other basic needs.
- Work, free of the profit motive and controlled by those doing it, can be creative and enjoyable.

To turn the last two possibilities into reality, today's limited defensive struggles need to unite and develop till we're no longer merely demanding reforms, but are physically **TAKING OVER** society's resources. As the Claimants' Union slogan puts it: "Claim what's Yours - the world".

FASCISTS in DH-SS

Malcolm Skeggs, active fascist in the British National Party has been employed at Lewisham DHSS since December. Since finding out his activities, all staff have been on 'indefinite' strike (April 5th) demanding he be sacked. There's daily picketing at the office and a support demo of 1,000 at the beginning of May.

A DAY OF ACTION was held on 26th May when 20,000 London CPSA civil servants went on strike as well as 85% of DHSS, Dole & Job Centres and some other CPSA workplaces (e.g. British Museum).

Support strengthened in N. London after Tottenham Claimants Union publicised the existence of N.F. activist Paul Nash in Tottenham DHSS.

70 Staff and claimants picketed

there on the *Day of Action* and there's now weekly pickets every Monday where thousands of leaflets are handed out. Staff have been threatened with dismissal if they join the picket.

The DHSS is bad enough without nazis being employed there - get rid of Skeggs and Nash!

STOP PRESS: Skeggs has been moved to an obscure DHSS training centre in Surrey. He was interviewed in three other offices - all staff walked out!

Nash has a brother (another fascist) working in Edmonton S.S. There's no organisation against him in the area, but Tottenham C.U. say when they've finished with Nash they'll start on his brother! And, so the campaign continues.....

STRIKES HIT E.T.

15th June was the first national day of action against the government's new slave labour scheme ["Employment Training"] due to start on 5th September.

TGWU Community Programme Shop Stewards Combine called a one-day Community Programme (CP) Workers strike and organised a national demonstration in Sheffield.

Despite the absence of official union backing the strike call received a good response. In Manchester 6 workplaces were closed and 20 more seriously disrupted.

On Merseyside about 50 workplaces were closed and 14 busloads of strikers and unemployed went to the highly successful demo. 3,000 demonstrators marched on the MSC headquarters, which had to be barricaded to stop them entering the building.

In Dundee a rally was held and there will be a local CP strike on 13th July. About 200 attended an Anti-Slavery Rally in Edinburgh, and some CP workers took strike action.

More activity is planned, including participation in the National Week of Action against

the Employment Training Scheme, starting 5th September.

SOLIDARITY SPREADS

On Merseyside the campaign is now so strong that only a very few agencies still plan to operate the slavery scheme. Since the successful disruption of the CP managers' conference in April 12 CP workplaces have been occupied and a number forced to close down.

On 3rd June CP/YTS workers and unemployed people began an 8 day occupation of Birkenhead Job Centre. Demonstrators outside gave constant support with leafletting and megaphones.

Those inside ignored bailiffs sticking injunction notices on the windows and remained until police arrived to evict them. There was extensive local media coverage and an excellent response to the action.

More action is promised!

Contact: CP Workers Group, c/o EUWC, 2 Cranston St., Edinburgh.

GO FOR IT !

TIRED OF HOMELESSNESS?
So were a group of four people in Belfast. They decided that squatting would solve their housing problems.

They spoke to a legal centre who told them that there was already 1,000 'legal' squatters in N. Ireland, mostly in the Bogside of Derry.

They chose a house in the neutral holyland area.

CARS KILL

100 local people, mostly women with children, barricaded Mount Pleasant Road in Tottenham in April.

This is the latest action in a four year long campaign to stop all through traffic on the extremely busy road. Haringey Council and the police acknowledge the road is dangerous but have done nothing to improve matters.

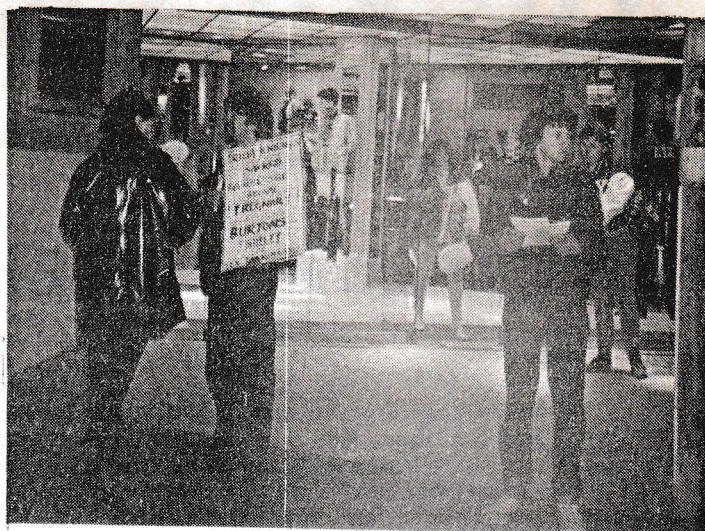
This situation is mirrored all round the country, as the power of the car industry and the road lobby ensures that over 5,000 people are killed on Britain's roads every year.

After three trouble free weeks the landlord accidentally found out. The police were very nasty and gave them half an hour to get out - or else! But they must have realised they were serious about having nowhere to go...the cops never came back! A week later they moved themselves due to renovation work. Another house, a few streets away, was squatted - four months later five of them now live there. They are now busy compiling a list of all the empty houses in the area for others to squat.

As they say themselves: "Even if we do get evicted we've still gained a home for the past five months AND learned that if you go out and try something you CAN get away with it" (And, the legal position is similar in Scotland).

A CARVE UP!

Lambeth Council recently held a police amnesty for knives and offensive weapons. Did the police hand in their C.S. gas, plastic bullets and other offensive weapons? No! But, Town Hall canteen workers quickly responded by handing in all their sharp implements



The industrial tribunal to hear the case of Edinburgh Burton's worker, Tricia Jennings, - sacked after she was off sick with a threatened miscarriage - was due on 29th/30th June.

Pickets of Burton's have continued all over Britain, with Edinburgh, Leicester, Oxford, Cambridge, Norwich, Nottingham, Liverpool, Bristol, London, Manchester, Leeds, Doncaster, Scunthorpe, Portsmouth, Derby, Hull, Bolton and Brighton, all taking actions demanding Tricia's reinstatement.

Contact: Tricia Jennings Defence Committee, c/o CRO, 43 Broughton St., Edinburgh. Tel: 031 557 3366.

BILBAO BATTLES

Workers at the Euskalduna Steelworks in Bilbao (Spain) continue to fight the state's plans for industrial restructuring (redundancies). In 1984 after a worker was shot and killed by Police, workers took over the main bridge at Deusto near the factory - immobilising the city. For weeks workers were able to prevent riot police from entering the occupied factory using barricades, cranes, etc. and giant fans to blow back tear gas! The workers won but in December 1987 the issue came to a head again with the closure of the Steelworks in preparation for the government's final decision on redundancy to be made by 20th May.

The workers held daily assemblies and again blocked the Renso bridge. Demos were held every Tuesday and Thursday, tyres lit to stop cars and police stopped

with catapults. All the workers wore masks and few were arrested. After an Easter truce the demos and assemblies were held daily. These assemblies meant that leftist groups were unable to take over the struggle. Workers have also used their own type of rocket launchers and rubber bullet shields and loudspeakers to attack the police and elicit public support. Many people have been injured. In early May '88 other factories struck in solidarity culminating in a one day General Strike in the area. State owned buses and railway carriages were burned causing £Billions of damage. 18th May - Authorities gave in - workers went back to the reopened factories. At the time of press we still await news of the workers' view of the settlement.

Source: Ekonomia, Barcelona.

Anti-Militarist Action

BARCELONA 4 MARCH: 60 demonstrators occupy the offices of the Director of Social Services to protest at their collaboration with the new state plan for an 'alternative military service' for conscript objectors. Doors were barricaded and protestors spoke on local radio phone-ins before the police broke in two hours later. The National Rail Service RENFE has also offered to employ this 'slave labour' and has been the target of anti-militarists.

Donosti, Zumarruga and Bilbao stations have been graffitied, tracks blockaded, climbing on to the roof of trains to stop departure.

WARSAW: POLAND, June 13th.... 'freedom & peace' activists shower a military band with leaflets against Military Service.

SOVIET UNION....

Sporadic protests for conscientious objection and against military call up in the Ukraine, Lithuania and Moscow.

THE POLISH MAY

An Eyewitness Report

CI no. 18 reported the Warsaw and Gdansk demonstrations swingeing rises in food, fuel and transport prices. The Jaruzelski regime introduced these in its drive towards a "socialist market economy" - an attempt to deal with the country's economic crisis through rationing by price: the few who can afford will be able to buy.

These increases cut heavily into peoples' ability to make ends meet. Basic costs like bus fares were increased to 3 to 5 times the old fare. Throughout the Spring, there was a growing feeling that things couldn't go on this way.

Towards the end of April, groups of workers attempted to recoup their losses. On the 25th, a strike by transport workers in Bydgoszcz, apparently backed by the local OPZZ official trade union, won a large pay rise.

The following day, 20,000 workers struck at the Lenin Steel Works at Nowa Huta, near the country's former capital, Krakow.

Their demands were more significant: not merely a 50% pay rise for themselves, but also the reinstatement of 4 sacked Solidarnosc activists, and a pay rise for all industrial and health workers, teachers and pensioners. This last demand moved their dispute beyond the sectional, into a matter dealing with the whole of society.

The demands made by the Nowa Huta workers became widely known. The next day, the strike spread to other steel mills, at Bochnia (near Krakow) and to 18,000 workers at Huta Stalowa Wola in the south. Again, the workers' demands included reinstatement of sacked activists as well as pay rises.

The May Day weekend was now approaching: significant not merely because the regime claims May Day as its own celebration, but also because of the anniversary of the first independent Polish parliament two days later. On Friday 29th April, prominent Solidarnosc activists across Poland began to be detained, and the Militia presence on the street of the citizens increased: foot patrols every fifty yards or so and reserves down side streets.

On the morning of Sunday May 1st, the official parades dragged themselves through the city centres, while confrontations took place elsewhere in 15 cities.

The action which was to claim most media attention, the sit-in at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, birthplace of Solidarnosc, began on May 2nd. But the same day, the strike wave spread to Wroclaw and posters in the centre of Warsaw announced a student strike and occupation of the University for Wednesday. Meanwhile, the Militia were rounding up more known trouble-makers.

On the evening of 3rd May, a Mass in the Warsaw Old Town, commemorating the 1791 parliament, provided the focal point for another confrontation with the Militia. Everyone was anticipating trouble, the Militia had its backup vehicles and reinforcements at the ready. After the Mass, there were scuffles for an hour, while loudhailers told the protestors to go home. By and large, this seems to have been a set-piece action on a symbolic occasion: for example, the red flags symbolising state power still hung at each street corner, and were left untouched by the protestors.

At lunchtime the following day, the student occupation of the University building near the Old Town began. This action used the symbolism of 1980: flowers and banners entwined in the closed gates, intermittent chants of "Solidarnosc". Priests were acting as intermediaries between government and strikers in the various industrial disputes; State and Society seemed to be negotiating again.

REFUSAL

The student protest continued the following day. But in the



■ Students demonstrate at Warsaw University after repression at Nowa Huta Steelworks.

meanwhile, overnight, the Militia had stormed the Lenin Steel works in Nowa Huta and ended the strike there. And, the Militia in Gdansk were threatening to do the same thing at the Lenin Shipyard.

Despite early indications that workers at the Warsaw Ursus tractor factory might support the beleaguered Gdansk strikers nothing came of this, and the Gdansk strike petered-out over the next week.

The State had shown that it had learned from the experiences

of 1980-81: it would grant a pay rise here or there, but would stamp on any demands for different social organisation. The quick concession to the Bydgoszcz strikers' demands and then the appearance of the "social" demands made by the Nowa Huta strikers had perhaps wrongfooted the central authorities. But when further actions fitted forms familiar from 1980-81, the authorities were able to recoup ground. And when the repression came, it had again been well-calculated.

SELF-MANAGED PROTEST

GROWING challenge to austerity protests has reached Belgrade, the federal capital of Yugoslavia.

5,000 striking workers from the Zmaj Tractor Factory led an angry demonstration of 10,000 protestors. They called for the resignation of the Government, for the reversal of pay cuts and 'We Want Bread'.

On the 26th of May, 400 miners made the long march from the Republic of Bosnia demanding the removal of pay cuts.

A different form of unrest is presenting a challenge in Slovenia, the wealthy republic that is increasingly integrated into the West European economy.

The official Slovenian youth magazine, Mladina, published a report of a planned Army coup to overthrow the 'liberal' Government and repress the 'Slovenian Spring' of radical youth protests. The editor, a contributor and an Army Warrant Officer have been interned and face a military tribunal.

The anti-Army sentiment fostered by years of anti-militarist campaigning within the Union of Socialist Youth has led to protests by thousands at a protest rock concert on June 17th and street stands in Slovenian towns. Unlike 'Prague '68', however, it would be the Yugoslav army that is on a collision course with Slovene citizens.

EMERGENCY APPEAL

As summertime approaches our funds have run dry! Please contribute what you can spare to our 'Counter Information' account or ask for a Standing Order form. Ask for bundles and send stamps. Thanks for your support and encouragement.

COUNTER INFORMATION: p/h CI, 11 Forth St., Edinburgh, EH1.