

lists; sent out the bills; inform the bailiffs; and administer the fines for non payment.

Rank and file action by council employees (outside the control of union bureaucrats who don't want the boat rocked) could have a major impact on the poll tax.

Council workers could focus their action in many ways: refusing to put services out 'to tender', boycotting 'registration' work, offering

advice to local anti poll tax groups, and, of course, all out strike action.

This action will be most effective if the struggle in the council workplace and the struggle in the community outside, are linked together in a united campaign of class action.

Delegates and 'street representatives' from the community campaign could meet rank and file council workers to plan coordinated work.

But the crucial area on which the success of the battle against the poll tax depends, will be the non payment campaign.

Those tens of thousands of working class families who simply won't be able to pay their poll tax bills, must become the core of a class wide fight.

The slogan "can't pay, won't pay" must become a reality in working class areas throughout Britain.

# — SMASH THE — POLL TAX

"NO ONE IN our street is going to be paying their poll tax. And it'll be the same all over this estate. Everyone's saying they've had enough. They can charge us what they like: we're not going to pay it!"

That's the defiant message coming from just one of the hundreds of local community anti-poll tax groups that have sprung up all over Scotland in recent months.

Groups that are committed to defeating the poll tax by building a massive campaign of 'non-payment' amongst working class people throughout the country.

It's not surprising that the poll tax is meeting such fierce opposition.

For while the new flat-rate poll tax will mean massive cuts in rates bills for the well-off, especially those living in the leafy suburbs, it will mean huge increases for working class families - especially those living in inner city areas where rates levels are currently low, but where poll tax rates threaten to be very high.

The poll tax - which takes the place of Domestic Rates in Scotland in April

this year, and in April 1990 in England and Wales - will mean that a Company director earning £30,000 a year, and living in a four bedroomed detached house, will pay exactly the same amount as the people who work on the production lines in his factory.

This latest government move to take money from the poor and give it to the rich, is yet another savage attack on the falling living standards of working class people. Coming so soon after the massive cutbacks in unemployment and housing benefit, it promises to be an

appalling extra burden for families already struggling to make ends meet.

And it won't just be in the pocket that we'll be hit by the poll tax.

The poll tax will lead to a massive drop in the revenue a council is able to spend on services: with the rich paying loads less into the council's coffers than before, the burden for paying for the dozens of council services falls even more onto the backs of the poor.

So the poll tax will lead to the axing of council services, and the sacking of council workers, as councils slash their budgets in an attempt to keep poll tax levels as low as possible.

And unless we organise together now to put a stop to the poll tax, we face attacks on two levels: Being faced with the prospect of finding the money to pay huge bills we can't afford, and losing council services that we can't do without.

That's why it's essential that we put paid to the poll tax, through a combination of a collective campaign of non payment, and industrial action by council, and other, workers.

## Why is the poll tax happening?

THERE'S TWO REAL reasons why the poll tax is being introduced.

First, it's a straight forward case of 'wealth redistribution': taking money from the poor and stuffing it in the pockets of the rich.

Second, it's a way of destroying local services, by shifting the burden of paying for those services onto the backs of the poor.

But the poll tax isn't an isolated 'one-off'. It's the

latest in a relentless series of attacks on our class that the Tories have launched in the last ten years.

From attacks on the NHS, and cuts in Housing Benefit, to anti-strike legislation - the details of the attacks, may differ, but the purpose remains the same.

To benefit and protect the class of people at the top of society, whose power and wealth exists through the exploitation of our class.

Defeating the poll tax is one part of the struggle that we must wage to overthrow that whole stinking system, so we can create a society in which we are able to exercise real control over our lives.

The struggle against the poll tax, is one battle in an ongoing class war.

## ACF

THIS LEAFLET HAS been produced by the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) - a national anarchist organisation, whose members are active in local anti-poll tax campaigns.

An ACF pamphlet The Poll Tax and How To Fight It, which looks in more detail at the ideas raised here, is available by post from us, for 50p inc p&p.

If you'd like a copy, want more copies of this leaflet, or want to know more about the ACF and our magazine Organise!, contact:

P O Box 125, Coventry  
CV3 5QT.

## Local contacts:

one is sick of the financial burden of supporting the undeserving poor...





# What will it mean?

\* Poll tax, unlike the rates, is a tax on people, which practically everyone over eighteen will have to pay.

\* Poll tax is a flat-rate - so everyone living in the same council area will pay exactly the same amount, regardless of what their income is.

\* The unemployed will have to find 20% of their poll tax bills out of their dole money.

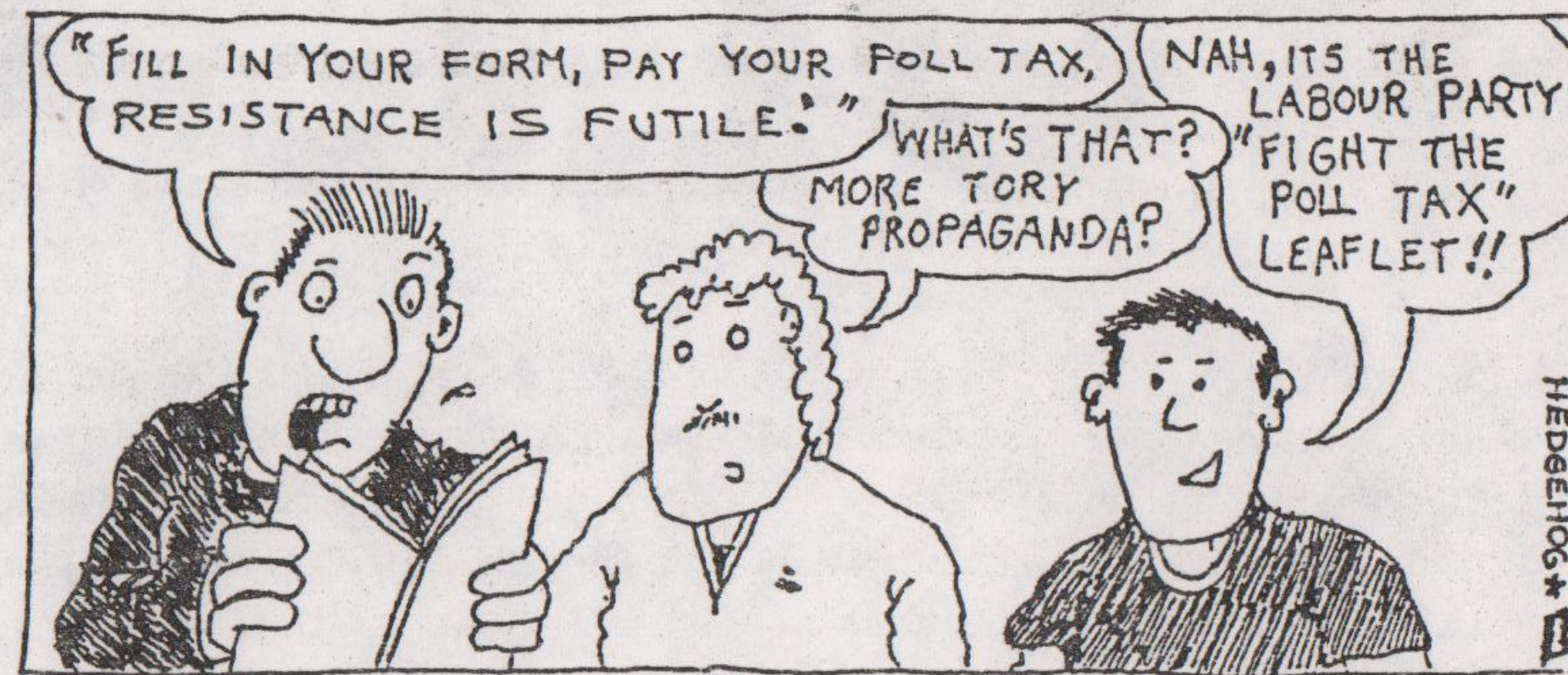
\* Whole new armies of bureaucrats, snoopers, spies

and officials have been formed to enforce the poll tax. And it's us they'll be harrassing.

\* If we don't register for the tax, or refuse to pay

it, we're liable to be fined, or suffer a visit from the bailiffs.

\* In Scotland, poll tax rates are already twice and three times what people were paying before. Some are even higher. And it threatens to be exactly the same story in England and Wales



# How not to fight

WORKING CLASS PEOPLE waging war on the poll tax won't just find themselves up against the Tories and the courts.

For the leaders of the Labour Party and the Trade Union movement are just as opposed to the idea of working class people taking independent action for themselves outside of their control.

Kinnock may have 'denounced' the poll tax in speeches in Parliament, but behind this public facade, he and his party are trying to stamp out all attempts to build an effective fight against it.

Kinnock and Norman Willis boss of the TUC are trying

to divert people's anger over the poll tax into useless gestures, which they know won't threaten the poll tax at all: like signing petitions asking Thatcher to think again!

He's repeatedly denounced those calling for a collective campaign of nonpayment, and unofficial action by council, and other, workers.

In Scotland, where the Scottish TUC were faced with the prospect of workers taking unofficial strike action over the poll tax, they called for an absurd 11 minute 'stoppage' last autumn, in a vain attempt to burn up people's anger, and, at the same time give the impression that they were leading the fight against the poll tax!

Once the eleven minutes was up, they rushed around ordering pickets back to work!

Behind these pathetic attempts to delude people, the reality of the Labour Party's opposition to the poll tax is all too clear.

In Labour controlled local authorities throughout Scotland, England and Wales, council leaders are gearing up to implement the poll tax, and push through all the cuts in council services that go with it.

They're busy preparing to send out the bills, and if they aren't paid to dispatch the bailiffs to the homes of working class families, to break down their front doors...

Up and down the country, Labour authorities have joined Tory ones in spending millions of pounds installing the computer systems necessary to collect the poll tax which also hold secret files on everyone who is liable to pay it.

That is what Kinnock and Co.'s 'opposition' to the poll tax amounts to: attempting to sabotage effective action against it, while busily preparing to put it into practice.

# WE CAN BEAT IT!

"FIGHTING AGAINST THE poll tax has really brought people on this estate together. There's an incredible level of anger, and you only have talk to people at the bus stop, or in the supermarket, to see just how many people aren't going to be paying when their poll tax bill arrives".

That's one resident of an estate in Scotland, describing the strength of opposition to the poll tax where they live.

It's a similar story in working class areas throughout Scotland, and, as registration gets underway in England and Wales this April, that level of anger must be spread throughout the whole country.

## Lessons

As the lessons of the anti poll tax work done so far in Scotland have shown, from the beginning, that anger must be focused into building a community based campaign of

non payment, organised and run directly by working class people.

The key to smashing the poll tax lies in such a campaign, backed by industrial action by council workers.

In many cities in Scotland, non payment campaigns have started from small beginnings, when a few people off an estate have called a public meeting in a local centre or hall, or gone canvassing opinion door to door in surrounding streets.

As local campaigns have begun to take off, they've sought out other local poll tax groups in neighbouring areas, and have built federations and 'anti poll tax unions' city wide

Opposing 'Registration': the first battle that these groups have waged, has been to frustrate the compiling of a 'register' in each area of all those liable to pay.

The Tories had hoped that drawing up such a list would be an easy business.

But, all over Scotland, poll tax offices have been overwhelmed, as thousands of registration forms have been returned (still blank) by residents querying a question on the form, or asking for more information. Thousands more forms have 'gone missing'; others have gone up in flames at mass form burnings by poll tax groups.

## Thousands

All these delaying tactics quickly put the government's poll tax timetable behind schedule. As tens of thousands of Scots joined the non registration campaign, the government has been scrambling to cobble together a list in time for the first demands to be sent out.

But the Tories have learn from getting their fingers burnt in Scotland. When registration starts in England and Wales, it will be far more difficult to 'query' the form without risking being fined.

By far the best tactic to use will be, collectively, to delay returning the forms for as long as possible.

Non Implementation Council workers will be hard hit by the poll tax, particularly as dozens of council jobs and services are axed, in the drive to cut spending.

But council workers are in a unique position to hit back against the poll tax.

It will be council employees who will have to compile the registration





# IS IT JUST 'THE TORIES'

## POLL TAX

MASSIVE BILLS THAT we can't afford to pay, and threats to council services that we can't afford to lose. That's the ugly reality of the poll tax - and the reason we must wage an all-out fight to defeat it. The strength of anti-poll tax resistance in Scotland - both in the community campaign of non-payment, and in the growing wave of industrial action by council and other workers - shows there exists a real possibility of victory.

But it's crucial - as the arrival of poll tax demands in England and Wales draws nearer - that we're clear where the strength of this movement of working class revolt lies. And that we're clearer still who our allies and who our enemies are in this struggle.

The plain fact is, that throughout Scotland the 'hated Tory poll tax' is being ruthlessly administered by local councils controlled and run by the Labour Party: a party supposedly 'opposed' to the community charge.

Labour councils in Scotland have shown an unswerving willingness to implement each and every stage of the poll tax: from compiling registration lists and hiring firms of snoopers; to despatching huge poll tax bills and sending 'socialist' bailiffs to break down the front doors of working class families who've refused to pay up.

They've denounced any suggestion that people should resist the poll tax, and hauled up in front of the courts those who've dared to defy them.

Worse still than their total compliance with the poll tax, have been their pathetic attempts to disguise what they're up to.

Labour councillors in Edinburgh had the gall to lead a march condemning the use of 'warrant sales' against those refusing to pay their poll tax - when they themselves were responsible for sending out the bailiffs in the first place.

The antics of Scots Labour councils have been repeated by local authorities in England and Wales. Whilst busying themselves buying computer systems and building offices to prepare for poll tax, they've tried to disguise their connection with it. Birmingham Labour Council's purpose-built poll tax office - from which all their attempts to wring money from the poor in the city will be run - has been named 'Margaret Thatcher House'.

The problem that the Labour Party faces in trying to sell us the idea that

what it's doing is 'complying reluctantly with the hated Tory tax', is that their compliance has been anything but reluctant.

Despite all the insistence from Labour 'left-wingers' that we should pour energy into fruitless appeals to local councils not to implement poll tax, not a single local authority has seriously considered doing so.

Without exception, every struggle so far fought against poll tax, and every element of the non-payment

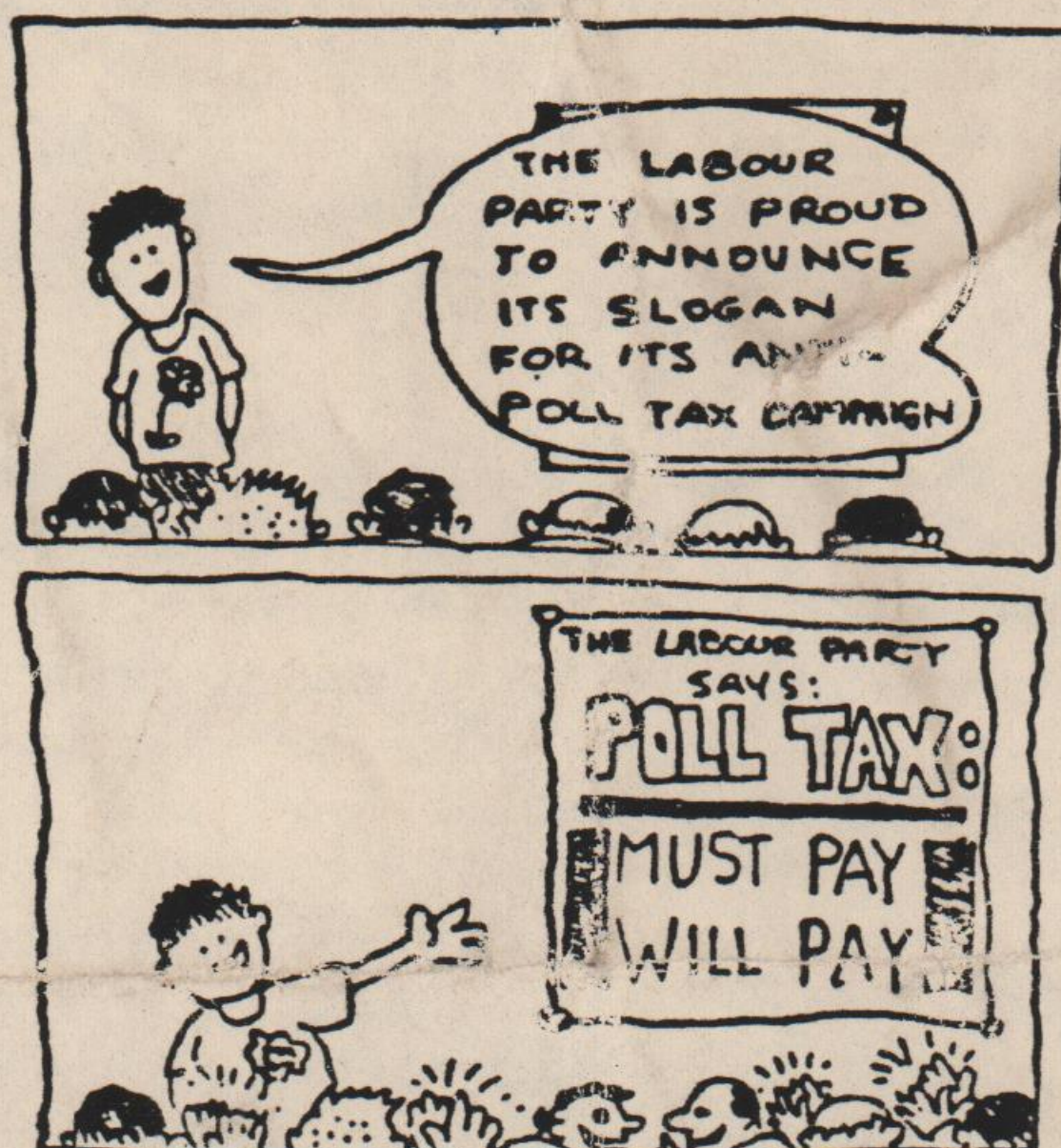
campaign, has been built in the face of total opposition from our municipal 'socialist' administrations.

Labour poll tax spokesman David Blunkett greeted news of the first figures of those not paying poll tax by seeking to 'blame the Tories' for this inspiring level of working class resistance. He stressed that Scottish Labour councils were doing everything in their power to put down this revolt.

Labour's repeated assaults on the anti-poll tax movement have nothing to do with the 'cowardice' of the leadership of the party, and everything to do with their understanding of where their loyalties and interests lie.

Graham Stringer, leader of Manchester Labour Council, announcing his plan for a 25 million pound package of poll-tax inspired service cuts, explained that a refusal to implement the Community Charge would mean Labour 'having no influence on the decisions taken'.

He couldn't have put it more clearly: if hanging onto power means enacting the most vicious series of attacks on the living standards of ordinary working class people - the



## Parasites, who needs 'em?

CYNICAL, MANIPULATIVE AND highly damaging. That's the only way to describe the activities of the Militant Tendency - easily the most prominent Left-ist grouping involved in the poll tax campaign.

As anarchists, our criticisms of Militant have nothing to do with 'sectarianism', but are based on a knowledge of Militant's real agenda. The reason that Militant have poured so many of their resources and members into the poll tax struggle is not because of altruism.

Under cover of their poll tax work, Militant are hoping to rebuild their crumbling power base inside the lower levels of the Labour Party. Their aim is to challenge and direct anger over the poll tax not into the kind of effective action that can topple it, but into 'demanding' that Labour and union leaders take up the fight for us.

Militant's leaders know that such 'demands' are utterly futile - but they hope to pick up members for the Tendency as people are 'disillusioned' as Kinnock and Co ignore their pleas.

Militant - through their control of the All British Anti-Poll Tax Steering Committee - are trying to assert their 'rightful leadership' over the poll tax struggle.

But their claims to be 'leading' the Scottish non-payment movement are plain laughable. It is not the action of Militant - or any other political party - that has built and sustained poll tax resistance, but the action of the working class. That action has been built despite - not because of - Militant's interference.●

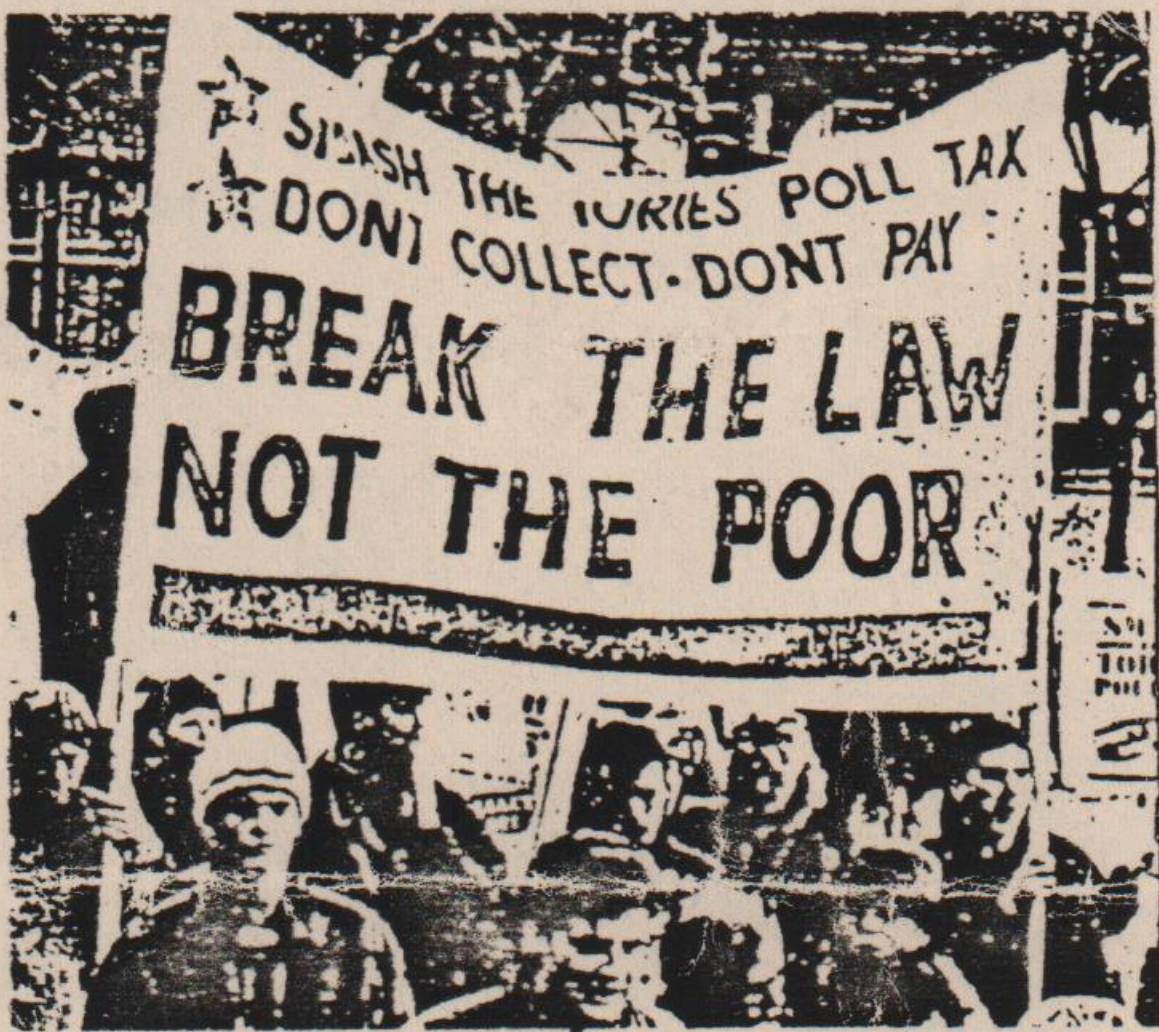


Labour Party can be relied upon to take on the task with brutal efficiency.

The poll tax is the means by which the Tories plan to destroy the dozens of council services that working class people need and use. Because working class people can't afford to vote in councils committed to financing those services through high poll tax demands, the Tories are relying on the Labour Party's determination to cling to power - whatever the cost to the working class - to make this strategy work. The problem with appealing to Labour's 'true class loyalties', is that those loyalties are not to the working class.

Labour's twin strategy of trying to disguise its utter compliance with the poll tax, and spike all effective opposition to it has been ably assisted by whole sections of the Left, who've been equally determined that this should remain a purely 'anti-Tory' fight.

At every stage of the struggle, groups like the Socialist Workers Party and the Militant Tendency have sought to undermine the growing confidence and



independence of working class poll tax resistance - arguing that only the support of the leadership of the Labour Party can guarantee victory for the struggle. But the actions of Labour councils across the country are proof-positive that a strategy built on 'demanding that Labour leads the fight' can only be a recipe for defeat, not victory.

The action that can sink the poll tax is independent, autonomous working class action against all branches of the poll tax machine - Labour councils included. Taking the fight against poll tax 'inside the council offices' doesn't mean futile pleas to council officials. It means building links with only group of people really capable of putting a spanner in the works there: council workers.

Successful action depends on uniting the mass community campaign of non-payment directly with the industrial action being organised by council - and other - workers. Council workers face mass job losses because of poll tax, the rest of us face massive bills. Our common interest in seeing poll tax defeated means there's an immediate basis for the kind of effective collective class-action that can send poll tax packing.●

# POLL TAX STARTS TO CRACK

IN SCOTLAND THE poll tax is in deep trouble. Hundreds of thousands of working class people are refusing point-blank to pay a single penny of their first poll tax demand - nearly ten months after the first bills were sent out. Hundreds of thousands more have paid only one or two installments and are now well in arrears.

Despite all the predictions that 'it couldn't be done' the actions of ordinary working class people on estates and housing schemes across Scotland have built and sustained a campaign of mass refusal to accept the poll tax. It's a mass movement that's defying the best efforts of Scottish Labour Councils to crush it:

- \* Strathclyde Labour Council sent out 300,000 'final demands' to some of its poll tax refusers at the end of December - ordering them to settle the whole year's poll tax bill in 7-days, or 'face the consequences'. When well over 80% of those threats were totally ignored by those united in not paying, council officials admitted that they were 'disappointed' at the response, and unsure what to do next.

- \* Attempts to break the non-payment movement by sending bailiffs to raid the homes of poll tax resisters have failed as communities have mobilised to protect those under threat. Many council have abandoned these raids as 'unworkable'.

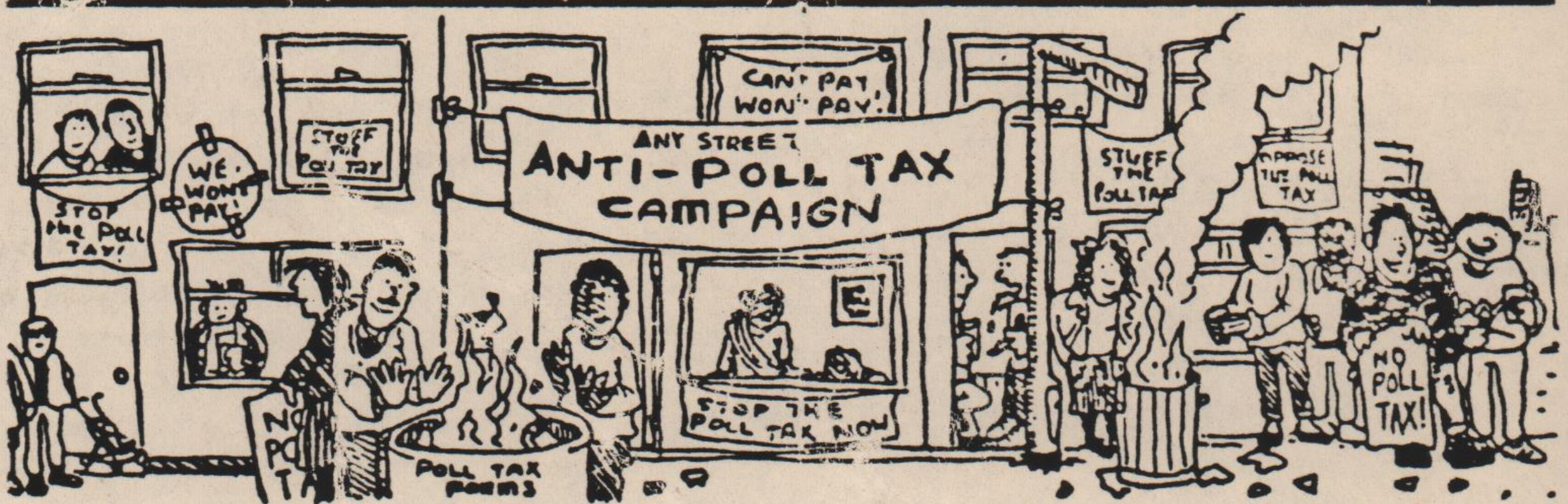
- \* Workers in council and dole offices have thrown their weight behind the anti-poll tax fight. In London dole workers have taken strike action and refused to pass information from claimants files to poll tax offices. In Edinburgh council workers are pledging mass walkouts if any worker in their offices is threatened for non-payment.

And in Leicester, 17,000 council workers have voted for industrial action if council leaders try to cut a single job because of poll tax spending limits.

Councils in Scotland are panicking about the strength and confidence of the opposition that they're facing. Lothian council has been the first authority to admit that it may have to 'write-off' large sums of unpaid poll tax because it simply can't cope with chasing up even a small percentage of those refusing to pay.

Councils in England and Wales have warned the government that they're way behind schedule with implementing poll tax - some are saying they won't be ready to send out the first bills until May or June: putting everyone two months in arrears to start with.

The size and scale of organised opposition to poll tax in Scotland, should help build the confidence of the movement south of the border - as should the chaos that so many councils' poll tax machinery is in.●



This leaflet has been produced by the Nottingham group of the Anarchist Communist Federation - a national class struggle anarchist organisation whose members (like many other anarchists) are actively involved in anti-poll tax campaign throughout the country.

We think that the actions of working class people, organising together - outside the control of all political parties and other would-be leaders - is the only way not only to defeat the poll tax, but to really set about changing the society we live in.

If you're interested in any of the ideas in this leaflet, you can contact us at: ACF, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham.●