

# C.S.A.N. BULLETIN

## No 2. JANUARY 90

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### C.S.A.N. WEEKEND - JANUARY 13/14

SHEFFIELD CO-ORDINATING CENTRE AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT, 73 WEST ST, SHEFFIELD

SATURDAY JANUARY 13th - Will consist of a day of workshops on topics of interest to anarchists, at the above venue from noon to 5pm. If you or your group wishes to run a workshop please try to notify CSAN, P.O. Box 446, Sheffield, S1 1NY beforehand. Failing that, please feel free to turn up on the day to do the workshop.

SUNDAY JANUARY 14th - Is the actual CSAN meeting. As this mailing is a little late, could all groups receiving it please pass on details of the weekend to anyone not on the CSAN mailing list who may be interested. Agenda items should be sent to the address above or brought along on the day. Again, the meeting will run from noon to 5pm at the Sheffield Co-ordinating Centre in West St. (If anyone has trouble finding the Centre, we're told that West St is right in the centre of Sheffield so if you get lost just ask someone!).

Food and accomodation will be provided for both days but to give the organisers an idea of how many people they'll need to put up, please try to let them know beforehand by dropping a line to CSAN, P.O. Box 446, Sheffield, S1 1NY.

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At the last CSAN meeting, someone from Liverpool said they would sort out a few guidelines for the running of meetings - here they are...

AGENDA - Information should be provided to all in the shape of an agenda at least a week before the meeting is held. Minutes of the last meeting should be included in the mailout.

The agenda should state the date and venue of the meeting it refers to. Here's a rough structure:

- 1) Apologies from any groups or areas.
- 2) Minutes of previous meeting, to be looked at by those at the meeting to check for any misrepresentations, omissions etc.
- 3) Matters arising. From last meeting or developments on any issue referred to on a previous agenda.
- 4) Reportbacks, on any issue not on agenda.
- 5) Issues.
- 6) Correspondence recieved by group.
- 7) Any other business.

Anything that anyone wants to appear on the agenda should be sent the week before it is mailed out. Any backup literature or info on the agenda item should also be mailed out so that people are briefed on issues to be raised. This will also help groups to bring in any additional info they may have on a certain issue.

MINUTES - When recording minutes, be very brief. Take down discussions under each heading. Any prolonged discussion should be summarised in brief. Just key issues.

If anyone volunteers to do something minute their name or group etc. Under 'Issues', each should have its own heading and this should make up the bulk of the agenda.

CHAIR - The chair should 'control' the meeting to make it as democratic as possible. S/he should be from the group hosting the meeting and this should be done before the meeting.

S/he should ensure that the agenda is followed in order. Timings for breaks or discussion should be vaguely considered before the meeting is held. A meeting should not last more than two hours.

END.

The concept of 'class struggle' anarchism is one I would agree with. Without the anchor of class struggle, anarchism drifts into liberalism and indulgent precious idealism, where a few people try and compete to live the most perfect moral lifestyle and try and show the rest of us the power of their 'good' example. It is very satisfying I'm sure, but gets nowhere. I think the Peace Movement of the early 80's shows that you can be as spiritually aware as you like, make one moral stance after another, and even show personal courage in doing so but that it can end up being very futile unless you tackle the question of class exploitation head on. History has taught us that the countries where anarchism has become influential at certain times is where people have adopted class struggle anarchism not pacifism. Having said all that I think there is still a danger in being so concentrated on class struggle that one ignores and marginalises other struggles. I feel as a gay anarchist that there is still a great deal of silence when it comes to tackling the question of lesbian and gay liberation, and that people will not mind it being mentioned but 'lets not spend too much time on this diversion from the class struggle'. If we take up too much time of heterosexuals we get accused of being 'single issue' campaigners and are told that its class not sexuality which is important. (Why don't people who think that go and tell the lads out 'queerbashing' that, rather than us.)

We hear arguments against fascism because of its racism, but little comment on what it means to women's or lesbian and gay rights. There is little mention of the rise in attacks against homosexuals and virtually nothing has been said regarding the massive police crackdowns on victimless crimes such as 'gross indecency' which apply to gay men but not to heterosexuals. Its not realistic to simply claim that when the Working Class realise their best interests lie in fighting for revolutionary change, sexism or homophobia will automatically vanish.

So lets keep the anarchist activity rooted in class struggle, but make sure that other forms of oppression - and oppressors - are targetted and confronted.

Mike.

Dear Comrades,

Over the weekend of 9/10 December, a number of anarchists met in Sheffield to discuss the poll tax. This letter, and the accompanying leaflet, has been sent so that we can share those discussions with anarchists who didn't attend.

The discussion focused on two related concerns. Firstly, we talked about the kind of campaign we wanted to see, and what in practice we could do to achieve it. Secondly, we looked at the difficulties encountered by trying to work in national/local federations, and groups, dominated by Militant Tendency, and again what in practice could be done to get around that domination.

Drawing on our various experiences we sought to define some general perspectives that might usefully guide our future involvement.

### The Campaign

1 It was stressed that anarchists should be involved in the anti-poll tax campaign, despite the evident difficulties. The poll tax is a central plank of this government's current strategy and its defeat will not only undermine that strategy but also boost the confidence of the working class.

2 We need to encourage the organisation of a mass non-payment campaign, firmly rooted in the grassroots communities affected by the tax. Whatever the usefulness of other strategies, this kind of radical campaign has to be encouraged.

To prevent the channeling and directing of the anti-poll tax campaign by Militant (and other leftists), we have to argue for and organise in democratic structures and processes, that emphasise the grassroots and encourage people to get directly and actively involved.

Militant's immediate interest lies not in defeating the poll tax, but in using the campaign to boost their position and credibility within the Labour Party. For that reason they seek to control and steward the campaign, channeling it in a way that appears more radical than the Labour and trades union bureaucracies, whilst at the same time keeping it well behind those bureaucracies. For example: calling on the TUC to stage a national demonstration next year rather than resolving to organise for one anyway and ask for their support; continually pressing for local councils not to implement the poll tax.

To the extent that we do not succeed in generating grassroots involvement and activity, Militant's bureaucratic control of the campaign will be reinforced. In the absence of an active and independent grassroots, we set ourselves up for disaster if (when?) Militant decide that their interests would be better served by winding down the campaign.

3 One area of disagreement concerned the tactic of pressuring local (usually Labour) councils, e.g. by attending pickets of Labour Group meetings. Some argued that such actions simply seem to legitimise the Labour Party and its claims to represent us. Others saw it as a potentially useful tactic, depending on what was involved - harassing local councillors outside meetings as part of a picket hardly amounts to legitimising the council. Such actions could

generate good publicity, create situations where we could argue the need to look beyond (and act against) the councils, and foster goodwill in groups combining different factions (we'll attend your picket, you'll be prepared to support something we propose). This, of course, raised the whole issue of working with the left, which some comrades present expressed a reluctance to do, and the "negotiation" which is part and parcel of any broadly-based campaign.

4 Another more fundamental disagreement concerned the strategy of pushing for non-co-operation by those workers in/directly involved in the implementation of the poll tax. Some comrades argued for a dual strategy of non-payment/non-implementation, citing cases of workers who'd refused to co-operate with the poll tax (WHO? WHERE? Did they mean some London CPSA workers who refused to process information from benefit records?). They stressed the need to make links with CPSA and NALGO workers - sending poll tax to branch meetings, setting up workplace anti-poll tax groups. Others took this further and argued that the campaign had to move into the workplace generally in order to succeed, and that ultimately a general strike was necessary.

Other comrades were more pessimistic. It was noted that the staff directly implementing the tax had often been recruited to do just that, in the full knowledge of what it meant. It was argued that activists in the CPSA had major problems getting workers active on issues directly affecting them. These comrades didn't disagree with the need to build links with CPSA and NALGO workers (which in any case already exist where poll tax groups include people employed by the DSS or local government); but they thought that a strategy of non-implementation was supplementary to a non-payment campaign, and that our limited resources should be concentrated there.

5 It was agreed that the only way in which non-implementation could be at all successful was if a radical mass non-payment campaign already existed. Such a campaign would inevitably spill over into the workplace, through issues such as arrestment of wages, and the simple fact of workers being involved in community campaigns.

So, the immediate practical tasks, whether we prioritise non-payment or push for a dual strategy, are the same.

### The Federation

1 The All-British Anti-Poll Tax Federation is clearly dominated by Militant, as are most local/city federations. Some comrades expressed reluctance to be involved in such organisations, given that Militant's control means that they will never be very successful. Some mooted the idea of new, independent federations.

But it was stressed that "success" at Federation and other meetings shouldn't be measured simply in terms of the number of resolutions and amendments passed or rejected. Given Militant's present hold over Federation meetings and conferences, getting through measures of which they don't approve is highly unlikely.

Our involvement in Federation meetings should not be with the aim of "changing the hearts and minds" of Militant supporters, and it isn't about formal majorities and beating Militant at their own game.

The real criteria of success is the extent to which the Federations can be used to foster an independent movement with a firm orientation toward the grassroots. It was stressed that working within the Federations in no way precludes our working outside of them, whether as part of local groups or as anarchists. We can use the Federations creatively, as a forum to argue and express ideas, a meeting place to link up, share information and plan joint actions with like-minded groups in the anti-poll tax movement.

Working in the Federations, despite Militant's formal control, can assist the encouragement of an independent movement. If we are successful, then as the movement grows Militant will simply be lost in the shuffle.



## THE LEAFLET !

- 1 Get involved! (can someone expand on this a little?)
- 2 National and City-wide Federations:

Don't be put off by Militant domination. We aren't interested in the Federations to beat Militant at their own game, but to encourage the development of an independent movement against the poll tax. Being inside the Federations is useful for this. You can:

Put forward motions and resolutions: If Militant disagree they'll use their majority to squash it. But we shouldn't introduce motions only if they'll win. Even motions that lose broaden the agenda, and provide a focus around which independent groups and currents can come together.

Leaflets: All resolutions should be supplemented by a leaflet containing the motion and an explanation of it. It might happen that motions are not even discussed, in which case the leaflet itself - with contact address - can serve pretty much the same focus.

Fringe Meetings: At the Manchester conference a fringe meeting was abandoned after the conference voted to continue through the lunch hour. But its worth trying to organise fringe meetings during or after each Federation meeting. They could provide a meeting point for independent groups. Watch out for Militant attempts to interrupt these meetings.

Caucuses: Anarchists should get together before meetings to discuss the agenda and the various motions, swap leaflets and pass on information. Caucuses should also be arranged between representatives of twinned groups and between independent groups and other contacts. CSAN and other national anarchist groupings could facilitate these.

We aim to use the Federations as forums in which we can link up with other groups, plan practical activities, and help foster an independent, grassroots movement working either through or past the Federations.

Making links: The poll tax is only a part, though a major part, of the Tory strategy. Currently the CPSA is involved in a dispute (if protracted and localised) with the government, also the ambulance workers, who are enjoying enormous public support. Its important to make links with other groups struggling against the government - strikers, pro-choice campaigns, etc. Producing leaflets and posters declaring solidarity, visiting picket lines and other places in support, inviting representatives to speak at poll tax meetings. Unity is strength!

### A NOTE ON PROFAGANDA

In leaflets and other communications, try to avoid the possibility of Militant marginalising what you say and branding your group as splitters or wreckers. Blatant attacks on Militant are probably counter-productive. A growing campaign will bring in people unused to the ways of the left - and anarchists! Our suggestions should be positive and creative, and criticisms of Militant (or other groups) implicit

## BUILDING THE GRASSROOTS

Our best answer to Militant attempts to steer the campaign anyway they choose is to build a strong, grassroots-based movement. We can:

**Canvass:** Leaflets are fine, but there's nothing like face-to-face contact to cultivate interest. We can explain our campaign, personally invite people to come to meetings, find out what they think. Some people might have child-care problems, or a disability which could make it harder for them to attend. A lot of foot work, comrades, but there's no alternative to it.

**Leaflets, Posters, Newsletters:** We should produce and distribute loads! They provide points of contact for people in our areas, keep people informed, and let them know that there's a local campaign.

**Street Reps:** Get your local groups to appoint street reps whose job it is to ensure that literature is distributed, houses are systematically canvassed, all addresses where new anti-poll tax posters appear get a call, and so on.

**Street Meetings:** Perhaps some people don't like the idea of attending large meetings. Smaller meetings are friendlier, more convenient and less intimidating. Meet with your neighbours, discuss the poll tax and what can be done, get to know them at the same time. When the bailiffs come (if they do) we'll all need our neighbours as much as they'll need us.

**Social Events:** Not just run-of-the-mill benefits that draw all the same old faces. Street parties, parades, kids carnivals, even bingo against the poll tax! Get out of that old lefty rut, and organise to attract people from outside the ghetto. If social events make money for the campaign, great - but its just as important that they build confidence and trust, give people a good time, make them feel they're part of something positive.

**Networking:** Try to link up with groups you meet at Federation meetings, and keep in contact with them. This helps spread information, co-ordinate independent local actions, breaks down isolation, and helps prevent the Federation from controlling what information gets where.

**Twinning:** Anarchists in Nottingham and Edinburgh have set up a twinning scheme. Make direct contact with an independent grassroots group in Scotland, share ideas and information, swap leaflets and newsletters. The twinning scheme by-passes the Federations, and can be a source of non-Militant speakers from Scotland.

**CONTACT:**  
TWINS  
Box 5  
Hiziki  
42 Goosegate  
Nottingham

And that's all there is to it! Remember that you can do all these things as part of your local groups, or as anarchists.

BITS & PIECES BITS

In the last minutes there was mention of the SOLIDARITY NETWORK - strike supporters not dominated by party hacks. We now have an address for them -

SOLIDARITY NETWORK  
c/o Ross Galbraith,  
2 Waingrove Walk,  
Abbey Rise,  
Leicester.

If this is out of date, we think they can be contacted via the address for the Granby Plastics strike support fund in Leicester. (Which I can't find - typist!)

Also mentioned at the last meeting was the fact that some groups wanted to translate literature into various languages.

The address below is of a commercial company (who will also do typesetting). We don't know how much they charge but this is the best we can come up with....

ARTWORKERS TYPSETTERS  
402a St John Street,  
London,  
EC1V 4NJ.

Tel 01 833 0425.

Below is a copy of a poster produced by Liverpool DAM which has proved popular on many a picket line. For an A3 version to copy, send a large SAE to Liverpool DAM, 82 Lark Lane, Liverpool 17.

**DO NOT  
CROSS  
PICKET  
LINES.  
SOLIDARITY  
IS STRENGTH.  
SCABS ARE SCUM.**

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1. Over the last few years there have been lots of changes in the anarchist movement. Most of these have been positive: it's obvious we need to get seriously organised, for example. But recently we've seen too many 'libertarians' bending over backwards to imitate the approach of the Left, appealing only to other middle class libertarians. It's great that we're getting beyond the comic-book politics of anarcha-punk and the sad days of Crass; but what's the point in replacing it with dusty old academic bullshit? One step forward, two steps back.
  2. It's taken a lot of us years to come to our present conclusions (class struggle anarchism). And when we look at how inaccessible most political material is, it's a wonder we ever got here at all. Our adoption of class struggle anarchism could have come about years ago, if we'd come across the ideas in a relevant and appealing way. When you look at some of the rubbish so-called 'anarchists' publish, we wonder whether the people behind these ideas really want change - or whether they're happy to be stuck in the grey old world of politics.
  3. What the fuck happened to relevance and accessibility?! It's great to produce anarchist material, but what's the point if it's not accessible to working class people? Everything we produce should be accessible. For instance, we can't just assume that everybody knows what 'imperialism' is. Or what 'socialism' is. We desperately need to promote class struggle anarchist ideas. But we will see an anarchist society when anarchist ideas make sense to the mass of the working class; not when half a dozen intellectuals discover the correct line. If this was the case we would have seen change many moons ago.
  4. All too often there is something missing at the heart of anarchist politics. It's as if we've read our textbooks and done our calculations - and somewhere the realities of life have been left out. Things like lack of confidence, isolation, hopelessness: these are part of the way we are kept down and kept apart. Decent revolutionary propaganda should aim to cut through these barriers, not reinforce them. If you think it can't be done, look at what 'Merseyside Anarchist' and 'Counter-Information' have achieved...

So if you think revolution is more than a hobby for the middle classes, and you want to see good direct propaganda, we want to see you on 3rd-4th February in Liverpool. If you are thinking of coming, let us know; and tell us if you need accommodation etc, and what you want to see on the agenda. If you can't make it but want to be involved, write and let us know and we can keep you in touch.

PROPAGANDA  
Box 25  
52 Call Lane  
Leeds LS1 6DT

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**● There's no better time than now to step up the printing of anarchist / class struggle / related material. So we have arranged a weekend meeting for all anarchist printers, publishers and distributors.**

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**● We want to:**

- co-ordinate printing
  - co-operate in publishing
  - improve and extend distribution
  - find out what resources we have access to
  - increase the output of revolutionary anarchist literature
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**● We invite everybody involved or interested in these activities to come. It will be a chance for us to meet, to discuss ideas and to consider possible joint projects.**

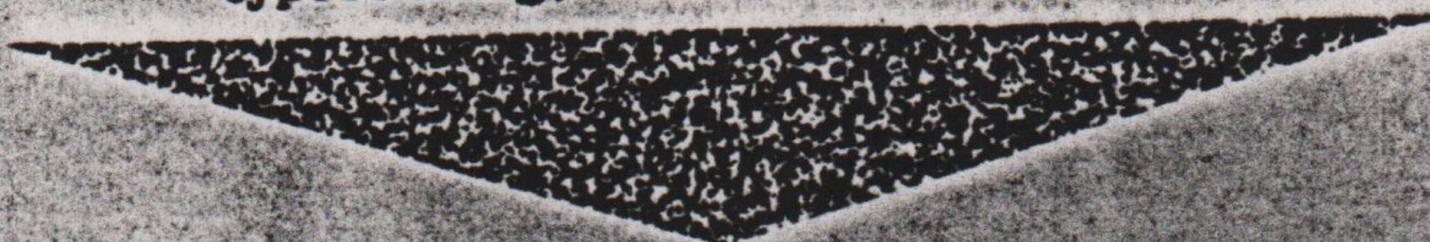
**3 - 4 F E B R U A R Y**

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**MUTUAL AID CENTRE  
45 SEEL ST  
LIVERPOOL 1**

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**● If you're thinking of coming, we need to know:**

- if you need a creche
  - if you need accommodation
  - which group you represent (if any)
  - if you have ideas/proposals for an agenda
  - what resources you can offer (printing, typesetting, distribution, artwork, cash)
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**P R O P A G A N D A**

**Box 25, 52 Call Lane, Leeds LS1 6DT**

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**P R O P A G A N D A**