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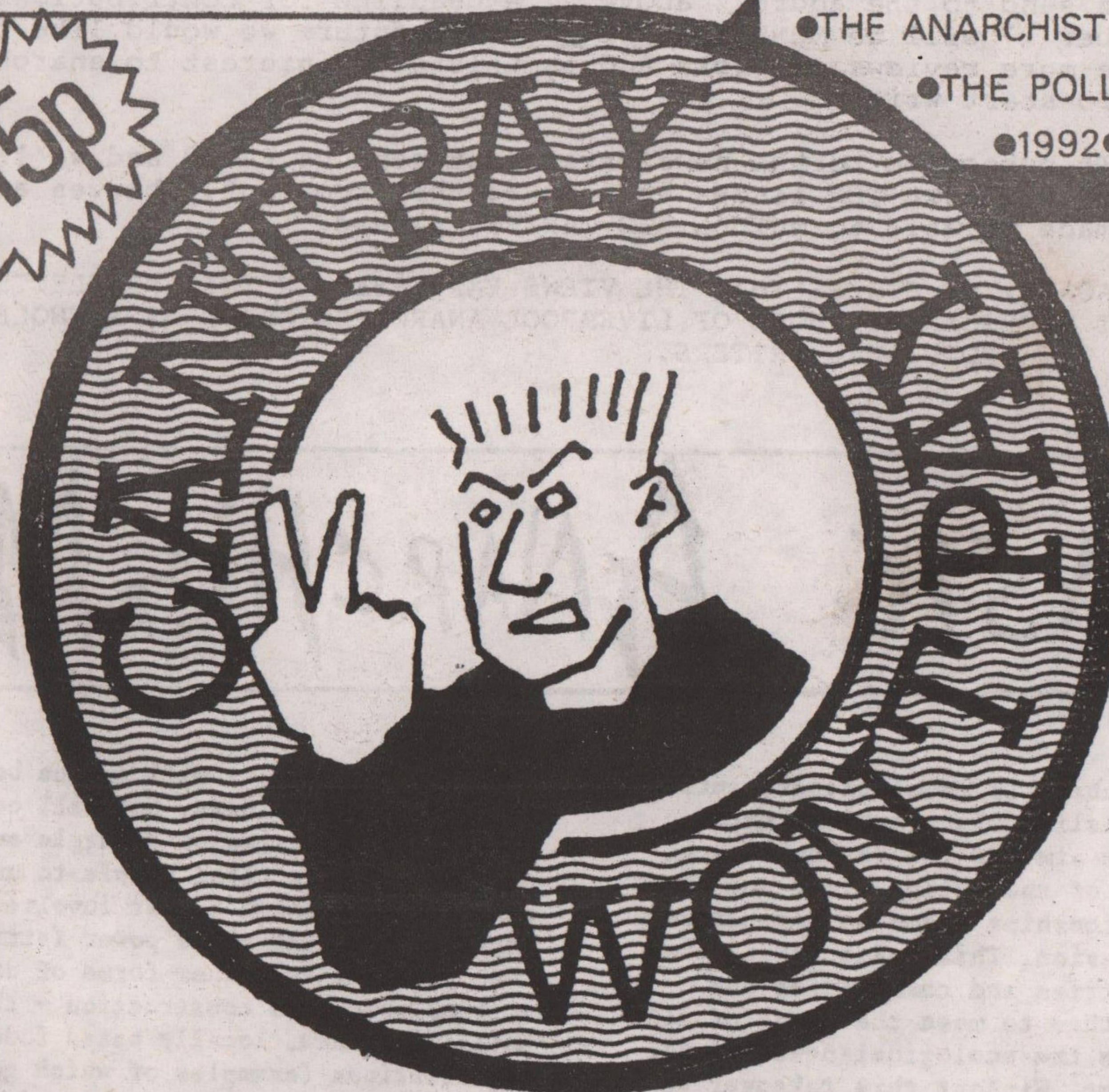
MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST

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APRIL 1990

●1992●

15p



POLL TAX
TOGETHER WE'LL CRACK IT

INTRO.

MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST NEWSLETTER - P.O.BOX 110, Liverpool L69 8DP.

Hello there....

To celebrate our highest ever print run we've made number 16 a bumper 20 page special - and at no extra cost to you (because that's the kind of people we are!)

We always welcome letters and articles from readers, which you can send to the address above. The deadline for contributions to number 17 will be MONDAY APRIL 23rd. In future we would like to include more reviews of books and pamphlets of interest to anarchists. So start writing.

To subscribe to the newsletter just send us £2.00 and we'll send out the next TEN issues as soon as they come out. Cheques and P.O.s made payable to MUTUAL AID CENTRE, please.

AGAIN, WE STRESS THAT THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP AS A WHOLE BUT OF THE INDIVIDUAL WRITERS.

BASIC ANARCHISM.

Anarchism is revolutionary anti-state socialism. In practical terms, anarchists aim for the destruction of the power of the ruling class and of all relationships based on domination and submission. This means taking over our industries and communities and changing them to meet the needs of all, as well as the ecological needs of the environment. Without this takeover we can struggle within capitalism but never replace it.

Anarchism will be created by millions of people, not a dictatorial elite (we are not Marxist-Leninists), and all will have their part to play in shaping it. Power will lie with the organisations thrown up by and for the revolution, not with the political parties who will try to dominate and destroy them.

The new society will not be born through abstract ideas, but will come out of the realities of struggle and the need for working class people to unite. Such struggle doesn't just involve resistance to ruling class power (strikes, mass protests and other forms of direct action), but also construction - the building of new, locally based federal organisations (examples of which go from the original Soviets of the Russian Revolution to the Miner's Support Groups of the 1984/85 strike), plus the forging of solidarity and the willingness to go further.

There is no truce in the class war. The answer to ruling class power is continual and widening struggle - for social revolution and anarchism.

LIVERPOOL ANARCHIST GROUP

CRACK THE TAX.

So, this is it: April 1990 has arrived and with it comes the first wave of poll tax bills for England and Wales. The opening skirmishes surrounding registration are over and now the main battle of wills between non-payers and the powers that be can begin.

Whatever your poll tax, whether you could afford to pay or not, the only sensible response to this tax, the only way to defeat it is through total non-cooperation and active resistance. If you've managed to escape registration, that's excellent. If you get a bill, throw it away: burn it, give it to the dog, whatever. Encourage neighbours, friends and workmates to do the same and to get involved in or set up local anti-poll tax groups.

We want to see a people's victory against the poll tax. We want it to be wrecked by mass non-payment, to be withdrawn because it has been made unworkable by our collective strength. Millions are already saying they won't pay and national and local governments are facing rebellion over implementation. Let's make sure we give it to them.

There can't have been many working class people who didn't get a buzz out of watching the rioting outside town halls across the country last month. These actions didn't just prove the depth of anger over the poll tax, but showed up the true nature of a few interested parties.

Despite the phoney outrage of government ministers and their mock horror at the "violent and undemocratic" scenes, you get the feeling that many Tories are beginning to realise that this time they have gone too far, that they've started something which they can no longer control. Voters are deserting them in droves and cracks are appearing in the party itself, with members and councillors resigning in



reshuffle, but because it simply became obvious that he could not hold his marginal seat at the next election.

However, the Tories have now invested so much in the 'community charge' (politically and ideologically) that they will not voluntarily withdraw it - only a change of leadership, or better still, the failure of implementation can bring this about.

Thatcher was quick to condemn the town hall rioters in the house of commons, but quicker still, up jumped Kinnock with the stomach-churning line, "I agree with everything the Prime Minister has just said". Nasty! We shouldn't be surprised at Kinnock's parliamentary arse licking - he is after all only carrying out the traditional role of the Labour Party. They exist only to provide a moderate counterweight to the Tories and to channel working class anger into useless constitutional protest and the dead-end politics of the ballot box.

Humberside, Oxfordshire and Morecambe. David Hunt, the minister responsible for the implementation of the poll tax has suddenly been removed from the job, not because of some complicated cabinet

Those who believe otherwise and who try to tell us that the party is of the slightest use, should look no further than the Labour-run local authorities around the country. Despite their early anti-poll tax rhetoric every one of them has caved in and gone ahead with implementation. They've spent our money installing the bureaucracy needed to administer the poll tax and will not hesitate to use the police courts and bailiffs against us in their attempts to make it work. One day they're talking about 'solidarity' and 'socialism', the next they're trying to rob us.

In Liverpool the ruling Labour group have tried to blackmail council staff into support for their budget and £449 poll tax figure. They sent letters to every employee 'asking' whether they should set a rate. The letter just happened to mention that, should the council fail to do the Tories' dirty work, then services would be slashed and (by the way) there would be no money for council workers wages next month! Now there's freedom of choice for you!

the PEASANTS REVOLT against THE POLL TAX

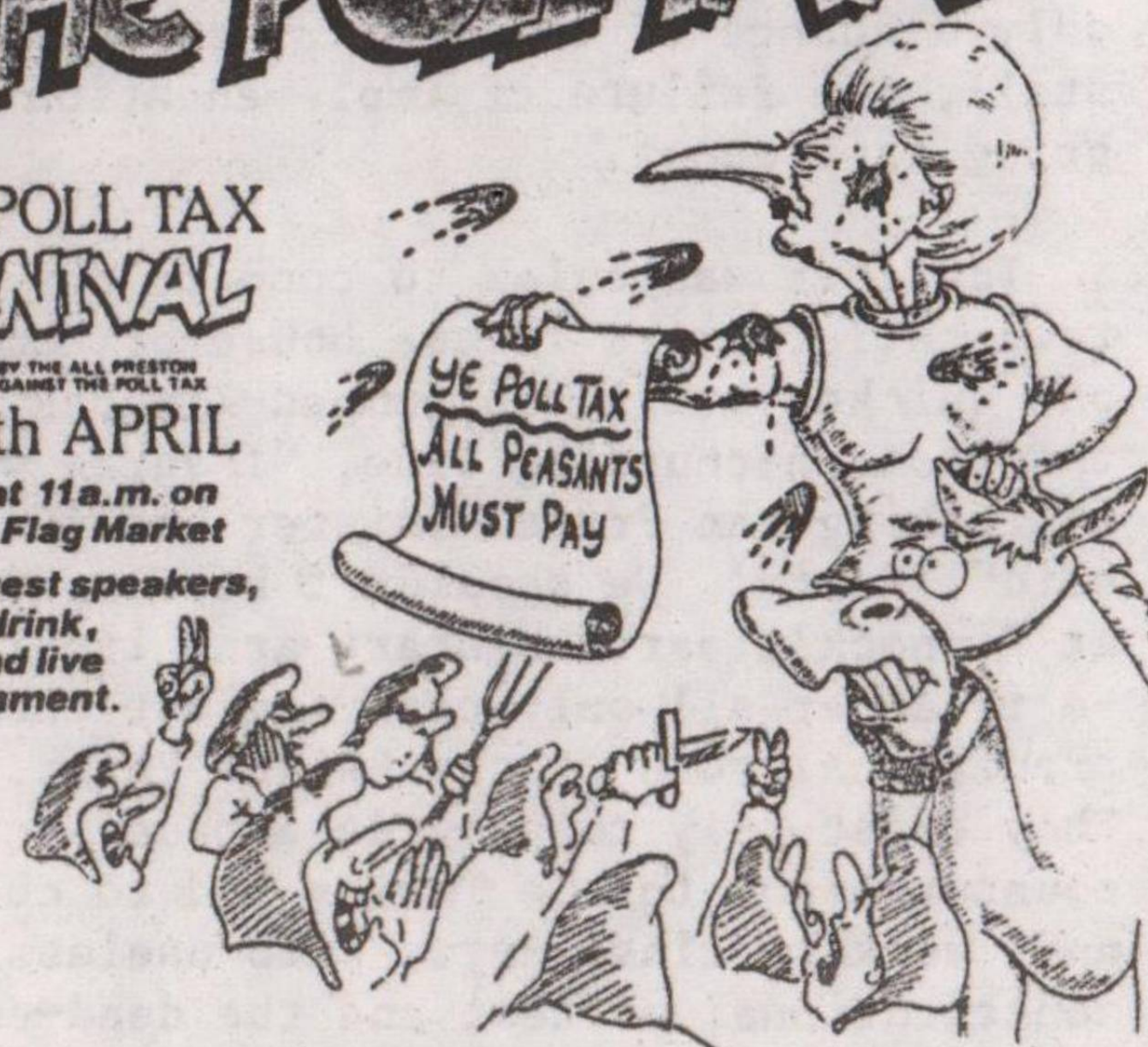
ANTI POLL TAX
CARNIVAL

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Sat. 7th APRIL

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Preston Flag Market

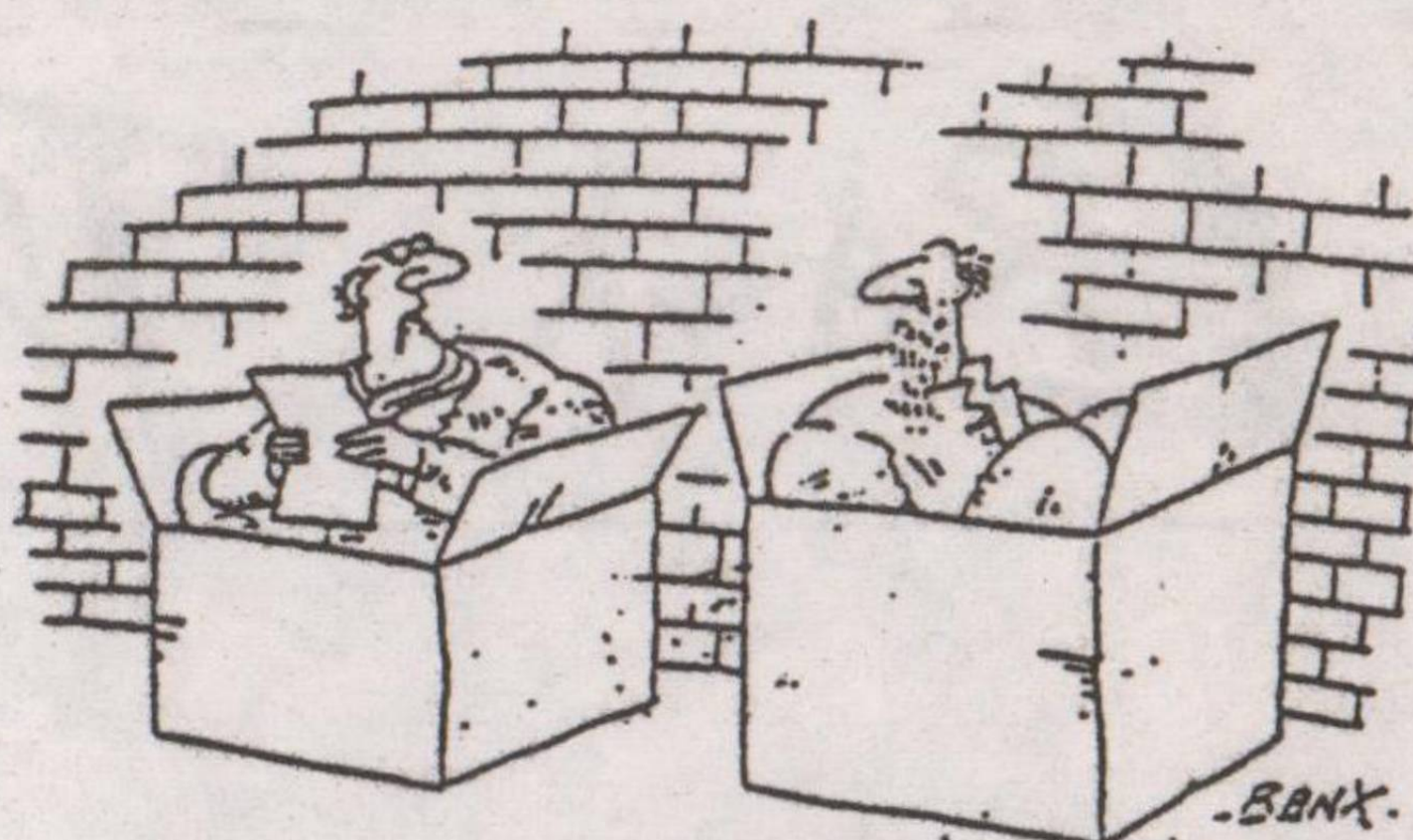
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"IT'S A POLL TAX DEMAND."

In reality, the only honest thing Labour councils could do when faced with the poll tax was to resign and to let the Tories implement it themselves. But because they are obviously more interested in holding on to what little power they still have rather than taking a principled stand, they must be treated as the enemy: no better than the scum who dreamed up this tax in the first place.

The media were quick to blame "outside agitators" for the town hall violence and latched on to Militant and the SWP, who are the most vocal trot factions currently leeching on the anti-poll tax campaign. Whether the press blamed them through ignorance or just as a slur isn't clear, but anyone who's experienced groups like these will know that they had nothing to do with "organising the riots" - far from it.

They hate and fear the notion of working class people taking direct action. After all, who needs a 'revolutionary party' when we're doing it for ourselves? No, the violence was genuine anger expressed by genuine people. The only outside agitators present were the cops and the councillors, not a handful of student paper sellers or Labour Party rejects!

If anything, the far left are a hinderance to the anti-poll tax campaign, bringing with them their pathetic faction fighting, which serves only to put people off getting involved. In Liverpool we've had ample evidence of this with Militant going to ridiculous lengths to wreck any group or meeting they can't control. At the end of the day the far left are only milking the issue for recruits and money and will ditch it when the supply of both dries up - the sooner the better in our view.

Luckily we don't have to rely on Labour or the left to defeat the poll tax - look at Scotland where the first bills went out a year ago. Over a million people have payed nothing or never registered in the first place. This isn't due to the Scottish Nationalists or some latter-day Lenin! It's happened via grassroots organisation, through the solid determination of communities who will not be intimidated.

In Liverpool, thousands don't pay the rates as it is, so in reality there's not much down for a higher poll tax being collected. Though this is true around the country, it hasn't stopped the SWP in some areas suggesting that anti-poll tax groups nominate one person as a token non-payer and the rest pay up while giving support to the martyr. Obviously these here today - gone tomorrow revolutionaries fail to realise that the reason most people will default on poll tax payment is because they've got no money. We can't pay so we won't pay and that's all there is to it.

Unfortunately, non-payment alone is not enough to stop the poll tax. If we just refuse as individuals we will eventually be picked off one at a time by the legal system.

All non-payers are going to need support from their groups, their neighbours and their workmates. In Scotland, community resistance has prevented bailiffs from carrying out any warrant sales of people's possessions to cover unpaid poll tax and several employers have withdrawn plans to deduct the tax from workers pay packets after being threatened with industrial action.

If council workers had half decent trade unions, we'd be able to rely on them to stop implementation from ever getting off the ground but as it is, aside from wildcat action on their part (which anarchists must totally support), the battle of wills over the poll tax will be fought out in our streets and the more organised we are the better chance we have of protecting ourselves from the law, and of ultimately seeing off the community charge. That's why, despite the current difficulties with Militant etc, anarchists should be active in their local anti-poll tax groups.

In a way, time is on the side of the anti-poll tax campaign because if it can

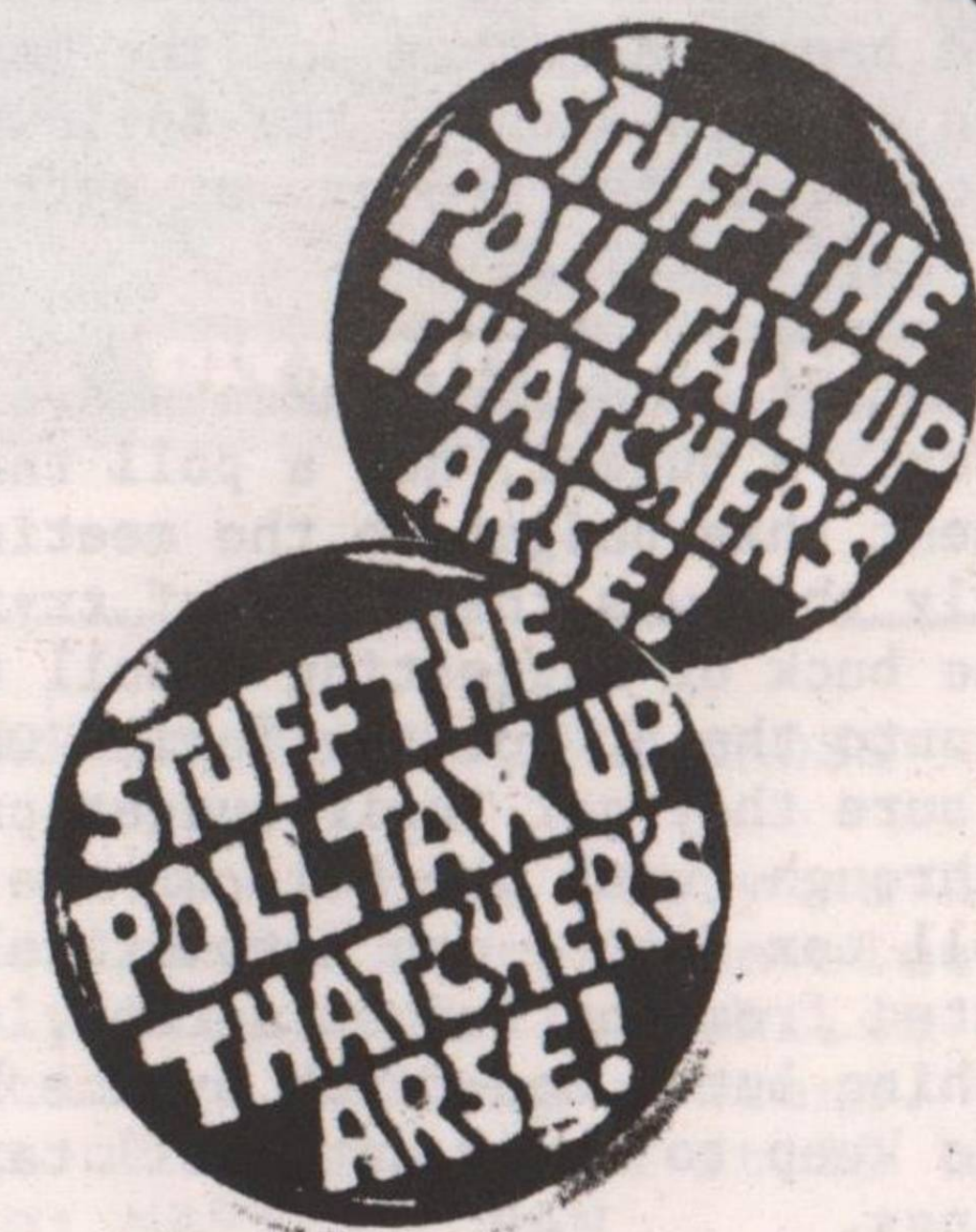
sustain non-payment on a large scale, the amount of uncollected money plus the costs incurred trying to recover it will be added to next years bills, causing yet more people to default and creating a snowball effect which the system cannot deal with. Uncomfortable though it may be, it is true to say that it won't be those who can inflict the most, but those who can endure the most who will win this battle!

In future editions of the Newsletter we will carry articles on the consequences of non-payment and the legal powers available to councils. The articles can hopefully be reprinted in leaflet form for use by anti-poll tax groups.

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FROM P.O. BOX 110, L69 8DP.

BADGES!

CRACK THE TAX.

► After last months' demonstrations against the poll tax, Sefton council met on March 8th to decide its 1990/1 budget and the accompanying community charge figure.

Sefton, unlike Liverpool, is a hung council with no overall majority for any party. Labour though, are the largest group and so it was for them to propose a budget and poll tax figure to the council.

The local anti-poll tax union (as with others across Merseyside, heavily dominated by the 'Militant Tendency') called a demonstration outside Bootle Town Hall for 5.30pm. A number of protestors gathered, around 50 - 60 at any one time and a smaller number inside the public gallery. Things were very quiet and there was a sizeable police presence but after a number of hours the demo was called off without any real explanation of why. It was later revealed that the council debate had been deadlocked and the meeting had been adjourned until the following day to continue the process of setting a poll tax figure.

The Labour group had taken a decision to set only a budget, not a poll tax, and to present this budget to the meeting. Basically this was their way of trying to pass the buck of suggesting a poll tax figure onto the SLD or the Tories while making sure they got their budget proposals through (with the help of the SLD). As a poll tax figure can automatically be calculated from any budget agreed, this was nothing but a con-trick by the Labour group to keep to their anti-poll tax mutterings.

The most amazing thing though was the reaction of the local anti-poll tax union to these events. They took the Labour group at their word and so no-one turned up the following day to demonstrate their opposition, leaving three of us sat there surrounded by police and security inside the council chambers. This decision to put absolute trust in the Labour Party showed their absolute bankruptcy, a totally ridiculous situation.

So, what happened then? Well, the council meeting got under way with no opposition, the police were getting bored looking after their crowd control barriers and there wasn't any crowd to get stuck into!

The Labour group proposed their budget and with the support of the SLD it was voted through. Labour stressed that they were only setting a budget, somehow thinking that everything was going to be OK, but to their surprise the SLD got up and quoted a poll tax figure of £374 per person from the budget. The Labour group panicked and called for a ten minute adjournment to discuss this. Lo and behold, ten minutes later when it came to the vote, the Labour group voted in favour of the SLD proposal! To their credit, five Labour members broke the party whip and voted against the proposal. But in the end it was agreed and the council set a tax of £374 without any opposition from the anti-poll tax union - an absolute disgrace.

This shows beyond any doubt that no matter who thought up the tax (ie the Tories), all other parties are voting for it and are absolutely prepared to implement it. Labour, Liberal or Tory, there's no real difference.....



SEFTON

£374

LIVERPOOL

£449

► Finally, on March 28th, Liverpool's peek-a-boo poll tax was revealed. In trying to distance themselves from it and avoid the blame, Labour did some political dribbling that would make John Barnes gasp! But in the end, like every other local authority, our great "socialist" council caved in and set a rate.

By staggering and delaying the decision, the council managed to head off major displays of anti-poll tax anger, but their smokescreen shouldn't fool anybody - it may be a Tory tax but what counts now in this city is that it's a Labour implementation. When the bills come out, followed by court summonses, backed up by bailiffs, backed up by police, we'll all know who's responsible for it - not Chris Patten, not Thatcher, but the bloody Labour Party. ONLY SCABS IMPLEMENT THE POLL TAX.

On the day the tax was set there was a march through Liverpool. It was terrible. The Militant-dominated anti-poll tax federation hadn't exactly set the town ablaze with publicity for it and only about 150 people turned up - and 99% of them were Milo's, SWP or Labour Party. As the march progressed there were the tired old chants of "Maggie Out" etc - totally inappropriate for the occasion, but when's that ever bothered them? Also it was noticeable that the usually familiar call for 'non-implementation' wasn't heard once on the march. Could this have had something to do with the

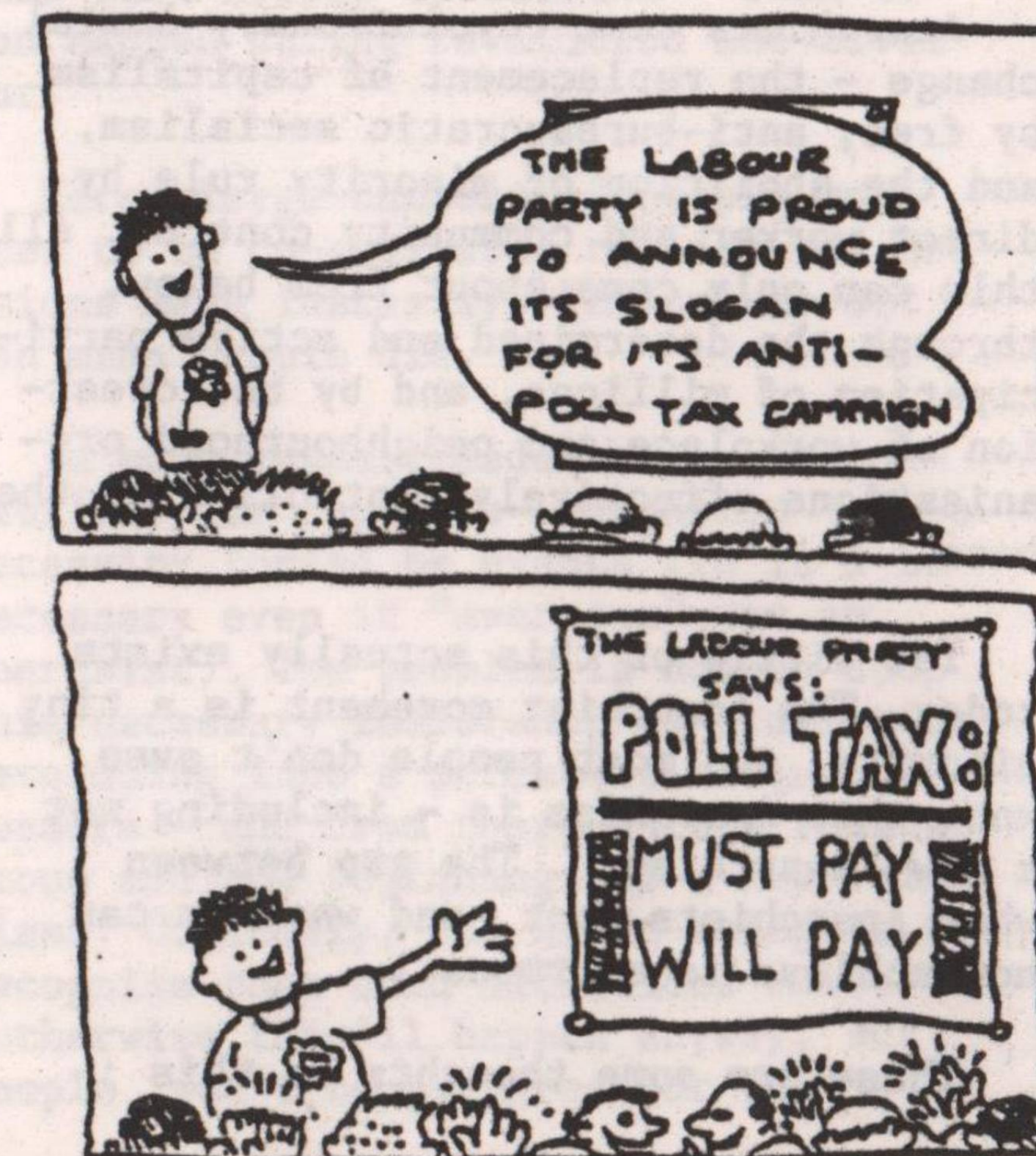
Labour groups decision the night before to set a poll tax? Surely not! Talk about the blind leading the blind.....

When we reached the town hall, Militant had made sure that there'd be no 'trouble'. Only ticket holders were allowed into the public gallery - and no prizes for guessing who was giving them out!

The council meeting was stopped - not by us but by Neil Kinnock! Mid-way through, letters arrived from Labour's national leadership saying that any councillor who voted against implementation would be de-selected and a new candidate imposed on their ward.

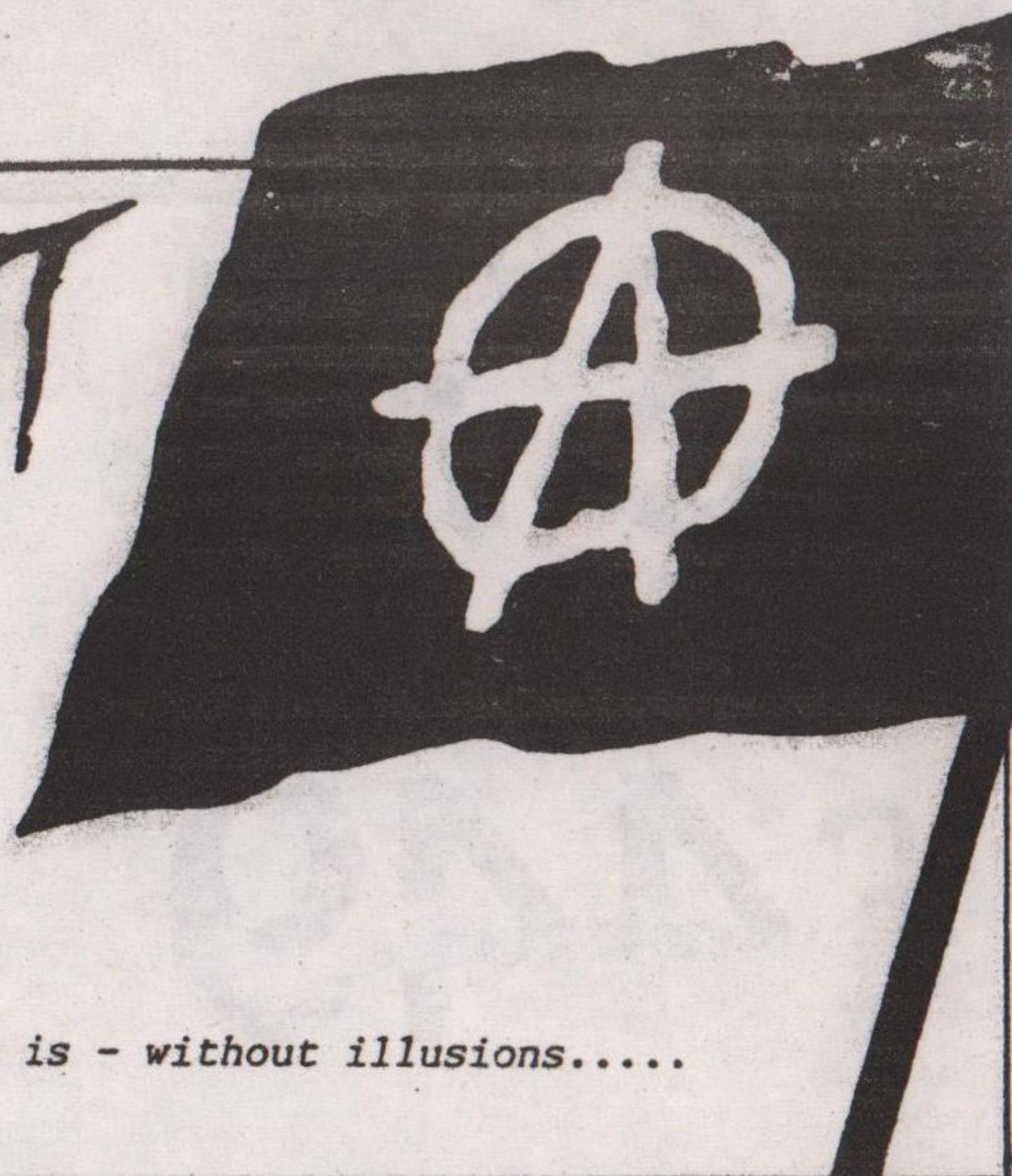
After a delay, 23 Labour councillors voted against implementation or abstained. 5 of them are up for re-selection before the May elections. But whether you see the action of the 23 as the only decent move they could make under the circumstances, or a willing acceptance of martyrdom in Militant's ongoing (and hopeless) fight against the leadership, this event does nothing more than destroy yet again the arguments of those who say that the Labour Party can be changed from within - it never could be and it certainly can't now.

Labour, the Tories and all their poll taxes must be swept aside and made irrelevant by working class action.



THE ANARCHIST MINORITY.

To change the world you have to see it as it is - without illusions.....



Anarchists want revolutionary social change - the replacement of capitalism by free, anti-bureaucratic socialism, and the abolition of minority rule by direct worker and community control. All this can only come about from below, through the determined and active participation of millions, and by the creation of workplace and neighbourhood organisations effectively controlled by the base.

Yet little of this actually exists today. The Anarchist movement is a tiny minority, and most people don't even know what Anarchism is - including not a few "anarchists". The gap between what Anarchists want, and what we can now achieve is enormous....

These are some thoughts on this :

Anarchists and non-Anarchists

First, being a minority isn't just true for Anarchists, but for all political groups including the largest (the Labour Party etc). Even if all political groups were added together - and even if Community and Environmental activists are included - this would still, probably, be a minority - albeit a large one.

For political parties this isn't necessarily a problem. Governments are by definition the rule of minorities, and all parties need, as far as everyone else goes, is votes, or the willingness to act as cannon fodder - ie enough support to gain power.

Anarchists on the other hand, don't want "followers" or seats in Parliament, we want action. We don't want "the Anarchists" to seize power. We want everyone to seize power, collectively, and so demolish and replace today's class society.

So why don't people become Anarchists, or even activists for other movements? And why, even if people agree with a cause, do most people prefer to "support" actions rather than get out, organise and initiate?

Taking the last first: all or nearly all movements have a wider fringe of people around them - people who, while not involved very actively, support the general ideas and are prepared to take part in particular events - like a demonstration - or buy a paper. If such people don't get more involved part of the reason can be lack of experience or confidence. It can seem easier to leave things to people who've been around longer. Or people might not have the time, with family or other commitments. Both these could be at least partially solved with more recognition of the problems people face. Eg better ways of bringing in newcomers, with more sharing of skills, experience and knowledge (one of the problems of the Anarchist movement has been the almost total lack of continuity from one generation to the next - meaning the same mistakes have been made again and again....). Better ways could be found for catering for people with children, etc.

But most people are not on the "fringe". Activists could jump through hoops, most of the time, and people still wouldn't get involved. Activism - let alone Anarchist activism - just isn't seen as a priority. With society structured to exclude participation - except as a spectator or occasional voter - most people, most of the time, turn to individual and personal solutions to change and improve their lives. Consumerism, job changes, careerism, hobbies, family life, or just trying to scrape a living, can all seem more worthwhile and necessary than collective struggle. Active participation in a cause means less time for anything else, and a lot of people don't think it's worth the hassle.

This is especially so as the average view of "politics" is probably one of a waste of time - people running around like idiots and achieving very little.

Meetings, paper-selling, marches, and more meetings. And at the end, either a career up the party ladder, or, more usually, total burnout and a retreat into private life. On the left, this often means a shift from 24 hour activism to the quieter life of the Labour Party - if not into cynical disillusionment and the total abandonment of all hopes and ideals. Cynicism, anyway, is perhaps natural - in a world where ideologies have been seen to have failed (Russia etc), and "radical" politicians sell out almost on principle.

More people are prepared to get involved in Union activity - unions can be a lot more relevant than political sects. But again, most of the time, most people don't get actively involved. Things are usually left to the shop steward (often the only person in the workplace prepared to do the job), or even the union bureaucrats. Again, the problem can be the structure (red tape), lack of free time, and/or lack of interest.

In situations like this, Anarchism, to many, just doesn't seem realistic. If Anarchism is based on self-activity and collective struggle, periods of mass apathy are just the opposite. Outside of mass struggle, or the build up to revolution, when people do begin to move, Revolutionary Anarchist ideas, or even militancy, can seem irrelevant. Struggle produces Anarchists and militants, stagnation doesn't.

So why do people take to the streets? Material self-interest is one main reason - the struggle for well-being and a decent life. When people are attacked as a group, individual solutions aren't enough, and collective struggle can suddenly seem very important. Wage cuts, redundancies, food shortages, bad conditions etc, can all be triggers for action.

But grinding poverty and bad conditions alone don't necessarily lead to Resistance - it can just as well lead to resignation. And better living conditions, while important, won't necessarily lead to capitalism's downfall (unless applied worldwide - "no child a hungry child" means world revolution).

Economic factors aren't enough. Also needed is the psychological will to fight. In turn, this may be backed by belief in a Cause that speaks to wider issues.



Socialism, for instance, was originally about far more than "Bread and Butter" demands. The struggle was for a New World - through combining socialist ideas with the nuts and bolts of labour organising. A far cry from today, where mainstream "socialism" means the left wing of capitalism, and social liberation has been dropped as an embarrassment.

"Socialism", "Anarchism", "the class war", or even "freedom" and "justice" - causes that capture the imagination and provide a broader view, and an alternative to what is - have all been important (at least in the past) in mobilising people, and preventing struggles being bought off by small concessions. Idealism - the power of ideas - as well as economics is a factor for change. Anyone who doubts this should look at history - or any genuine mass movement today.

At the very least, without the belief that victory is possible, if not tomorrow then eventually ("You can kill the revolutionary, you can't kill the revolution" etc), the enthusiasm and drive needed to win just won't be there. Without faith in ourselves, and in our ideas, we're half defeated before the battle's even begun.

Whatever the reasons, people can and

do take to the streets. Where struggles then end depends on many circumstances that can't be predicted in advance. Sometimes action can escalate - new situations can draw in more and more people, what seemed impossible a week ago can become past history today. Strikes can become general strikes; Revolutions can begin through apparently unimportant protests. If the conditions are right, a small spark can set the social fabric on fire. Decades of seemingly total ruling class victory can crumble and fall in days, and Eastern Europe is only one of the more recent examples.

Alternatively, and much more common, struggles get only so far, and collapse when some kind of deal is stitched up, or lack of support or repression forces a retreat. People get involved when it seems important, and when it seems like there's some chance of success. After, attitudes may have changed, people will have learned through struggle, and more people will be looking for political alternatives. But for most people it's back to the routine of everyday life.

So where does this leave Anarchists? Does the fact that struggles can begin spontaneously and that revolutions can sweep away regimes overnight, mean we don't need an Anarchist movement? I don't think so. History and experience shows that revolutions can begin anarchistically enough - with people seizing the streets and taking control of their lives. But they don't usually end that way. Leaving aside defeat from the outside (invasion and counter-revolution), revolutions can be destroyed from within - by not going far enough, and rebuilding the structures of state power. Revolutions, and struggles today, often throw up their own neighbourhood and workplace organisations. Yet some, or even a lot, of the people within these are Party activists, or at least people influenced by Party/governmental ideas. If Party activists are the only ones to offer solutions (wrong though these solutions may be), or if they're given a free hand at manipulating, one way or another minority power will be rebuilt. The "anarchistic" beginning becomes a governmental ending.

Revolutions can only develop what existed beforehand. The only way Libertarian ideas will succeed is if there's an anarchist/libertarian movement already in existence - with a strong social base in both workplace and community. The new world must be built in the shell of the old.

The Anarchist Movement

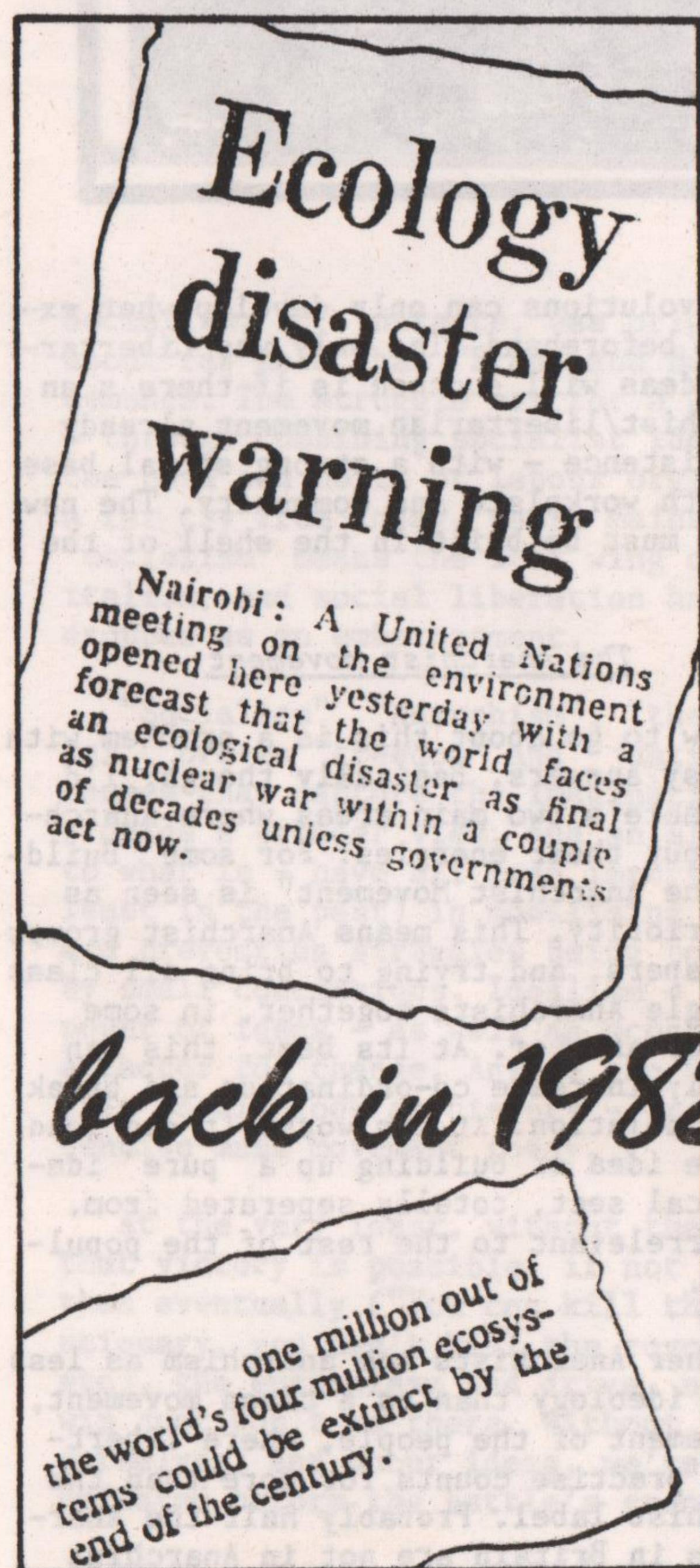
How to go about this is a problem with no easy answers. Basically though, I'd say there's two main areas where Anarchists put their energies: For some "Building the Anarchist Movement" is seen as the priority. This means Anarchist groups and papers, and trying to bring all class struggle Anarchists together, in some form or another. At its best, this can greatly increase co-ordination and break down isolation. At its worst it can lead to the idea of building up a "pure" ideological sect, totally separated from, and irrelevant to the rest of the population.

Other Anarchists see anarchism as less of an ideology than as a class movement, a movement of the people, where libertarian practice counts for more than the Anarchist label. Probably half the Anarchists in Britain are not in Anarchist groups as such and put most of their

energies into industrial and community based organisations - as shop stewards, claimants union or anti-poll tax activists, organisers of libertarian social clubs etc.

Obviously, these 2 approaches don't have to conflict, and I don't think they should. Both have a part to play:

Anarchist groups are important, but are always going to be limited in what they can achieve. Most people today will probably never be "pure" Anarchists, and we can't wait for future generations to be different. If capitalism can't cope with the ecological crisis (as many anarchists and radical ecologists believe) then we may well be the last generations to have any say in the matter. The social



revolution will either be made by the class, by the mass of people alive today, or it won't be made at all.

This means that Anarchism, if it is to be anything other than a political sect, must be given a practice, not just in affinity groups or Anarchist federations, but in mass, class-based organisations. Such class organisations - like the old anarcho-syndicalist unions - are not "pure". They are a means of bringing the Anarchist principles of solidarity, self-management and direct action to life - a means of making Anarchism a force rather than empty words and dreams. Mass libertarian organisations will also be essential in the creation of a future free society, and in the period of reconstruction that must follow any genuine revolution.

So, one role of Anarchists is to support, promote, participate in and help set up Libertarian organisations of struggle. Within these organisations - bearing in mind that Anarchists will be only one element - it means fighting to keep control at the base, preventing bureaucracy or political minorities taking over. And it means pushing for action. Once the initiative goes to the enemy, or enthusiasm dies, momentum for future change can be lost.

Outside of revolutionary upheavals all such practical activity is bound to be reformist - in the sense that the system as a whole still exists. All we can hope for, in this sense, is to push through changes by the most radical means possible, while pushing for still more, and refusing to be trapped by terms set by the ruling class. Though we can't predict when a revolutionary situation will occur, we can prepare for it. And the best preparation for revolution - to push society in an Anarchist direction - is Resistance now.

The danger here of course is that by becoming "effective" in today's society, all organisations run the risk of day to day reform becoming an end in itself - with "unrealistic" Anarchism being pushed aside by "realistic" compromise.

This is one reason we need a specific Anarchist movement - to push beyond militant (and not so militant) reformism. The role of the specific Anarchist movement should not be to "control" but to

work in parallel/side by side with the class organisations - to support and defend the mass struggle, by word and deed, and by whatever means necessary - while keeping independence of action.

Being a mass of individuals, submerged within mass organisations isn't enough. For a start we have to face the Party left. Without organised resistance to political manipulation, Anarchists may well be extremely active, but end up paving the way for Party Power.

Also, while we may be able to get respect as activists, without an Anarchist movement as such, Anarchism is likely to be dismissed - if people are looking for alternatives beyond the immediate struggle, they'll join the Parties, if anything.

Finally, we need action that is informed, not mindless. Theory as a guide for action is important, and we need up to date analysis of a changing world, in plain English. If we don't know what we're up against, or what's happening, or if we have to rely on the opposition for info, we'll be forever on the defensive, when what we need is systematic attack.

This means the Anarchist movement needs to put its house in order. Organisational questions aside, this means that basic ideas have to be sorted out. One of these, and perhaps the most thorny, is leadership.

Leadership

Anarchists want a revolution by and for the people. Yet leadership in the sense of influence, providing initiatives, coming up with solutions, acting as a catalyst for change, does exist. Leaders, in this sense, aren't necessarily rulers, and influence isn't necessarily control.

For instance, in the Spanish Revolution (still the largest example of Anarchism in action), when millions seized the land and workplaces, much of the initiatives for change didn't come from "everyone" in general, but from the libertarian minority. In other words, Anarchist workers and peasants - not "outsiders" but union militants, often with years of organising experience, and with clear constructive ideas - were often, or usually, the ones who called the general assemblies of villagers and workers, suggested the take-overs and proposed the new structures of direct

socialist democracy. All this, of course, then being discussed, changed when necessary, and voted on by everyone (1).

Initiative, in these cases is to extend and broaden participation and action - to get people to act for themselves, together. It's the total opposite to Party manipulation, where control is restricted to a few Party hacks, and socialism is imposed from above.

Coming up with the solutions depends on knowing what you're on about. Apart from knowing what the situation is like on the ground, this is why technical preparation may be necessary - thinking ahead about economic reconstruction and revolutionary defence etc. (2). Anarcho-Syndicalist unions weren't blind to this in the past - with their "Defence Committees", and education including courses on economics and self-management.

Experience and technical ability/competence have their place, and "spontaneity" doesn't mean expecting miracles.

None of this means that a label - "Anarchist" means monopoly of truth. Anarchists are not a "vanguard" above the class, but an active element within it. Everyone has their part to play, with their own knowledge, initiative and experience to contribute. Also obviously, without day to day contact with others and without people being prepared to change, the most brilliant suggestions will fall on deaf ears....

On another level entirely is how to deal with crisis situations - such as - can happen during revolution and civil war.

Here, large numbers of people may need to be co-ordinated rapidly and decisions made instantly. Failure to act can mean people die.

In such cases, leadership - responsibility for rapid co-ordination - is a necessity forced by events (ie it'd be necessary even if "everyone" was an Anarchist). The problem is how to stop this necessary leadership/co-ordination developing into a permanent clique of leaders - and from there into a ruling group and the beginnings of a new ruling class. Obviously, the first thing is to recognise that such situations exist (otherwise they'll happen anyway, but people won't be prepared for them).

Second is needed a structure that is accountable. And most important is the existence of an activist base. - people who are prepared to make sure that the structure works, that the responsibility doesn't go to delegates heads, and to pull delegates to account if and when necessary. It's not a case of no "leaders"/co-ordinators, so much as no followers or sheep.

Taking all this into account, I'd agree with the idea of a National Defence Council (presumably with similar structures at regional and local level), as proposed by the Anarchists of the "friends of Durruti" group (3). Basically, this means a council for revolutionary defence, under the control of Anarcho-Syndicalist unions (or workers councils), and with all the posts up for regular re-allocation.

The responsibilities of accountable leadership is something that Anarchists have faced up to in the past - as union organisers and militia commanders. The fact that this may be necessary is something that Anarchists in Britain (or at least the mish-mash that passes for Anarchism) tends to ignore.

Left Wing "Unity"

Anarchists either are or aren't part of the left - depending on what people mean by the term. What is true though is that both Anarchists and Party socialists face a common enemy, are often involved in the same struggles, and have sometimes been lined up against the same walls. Working together may be, and often is, necessary, and there's no problems as long as everyone puts the struggle first - as many genuine socialists do.

The problem comes, especially with Marxist-Leninists, when Party activists make a bid for control. This happens because, for Leninists, all struggles are only stepping stones for building the Party, on its hoped-for road to state power. All other forces, if they can't be ignored, are there to be used. And if they can't be used, must be isolated, neutralised, and if necessary, destroyed. In other words, basic power politics - the main reason why, given the right circumstances, Party firing squads have happily gunned down their allies of yesterday (eg in the Russian and Spanish Revolutions).



**ANARCHISTS SHOT BY THE
COMMUNIST PARTY
(SPAIN 1937)**

For Anarchists, on the other hand, all struggles are to build class power and workers democracy - with unity built in the streets and workplaces. Collaboration with others is to preserve and extend the struggle, with no retreat and no surrender. Where Party manipulation prevents this, with people no longer treated as equals, the only sensible attitude is total opposition. Left wing "unity" at the price of tied hands and surrender to party hacks isn't just stupid but probably suicide.

If it comes to it, better defeat with our "allies" than defeat by those "allies" over the Anarchists. If they need us they'll bend, if not they won't.

In the end, we can expect no help from governments or hacks. We have to rely on our own organised strength - in the streets and workplaces. When push comes to shove we have to be strong enough to win.

Finally

Anarchism isn't a Utopia but a programme for the destruction and replacement of capitalism. Faced with ecological disaster, the "utopians" are those who would do nothing; those who cling blindly to yesterdays certainties and economic "truths" - now exposed as lies and illusions.

Faced with disaster, the only realism is to push for revolutionary social change. If we want a future, we'll have to fight for it. The future will be born through struggle, or not at all.

Notes - (1) See for instance, "Collectives in the Spanish Revolution" by Gaston Leval. (Freedom Press).


(2) E.G. see "Programme of Anarcho-Syndicalism" by G.P. Maximoff, or "Libertarian Communism" by Isaac Puente.

(3) "Towards A Fresh Revolution" (Friends of Durruti) - a pamphlet written from bitter experience in 1938, as defeat stared the Spanish Revolution in the face.

Revolutionary defence is a subject that definitely needs going into. Without the ability to defend the revolution, all economic and social reconstruction will come to nothing. The only serious, recent, article I've seen is Stuart Christie's "Alternatives to Defence" (in the Black Flag Quarterly, Autumn 83, and in "Nuclear Free Defence" by Heretic Books). This is based on defence in depth, with both a regular army and a citizens militia, but doesn't go into much detail about co-ordination beyond the local level - apart from mentioning computer networks in passing.

SOLIDARITY IS STRENGTH

**SUPPORT
CLASS
STRUGGLE
PRISONERS**



This recently produced leaflet about practical support for class struggle prisoners is available from PLYMOUTH BLACK CROSS, BOX 105, PLYMOUTH, DEVON.

UNTIL WE ARE FREE WE ARE ALL IMPRISONED

PLYMOUTH BLACK CROSS

BLACK CROSS NEWS BLACK CROSS NEWS

Martin Foran, whose story we have been following in this newsletter, recently broke his leg whilst attempting a rooftop protest. Letters of support can still be sent to: MARTIN FORAN
HMP FRANKLAND
P.O.Box 40
Frankland-low-Newton
Brasside, DURHAM DH1.

A new 20 page pamphlet outlining Martin's case and his treatment written and produced in HOLLAND! is now available from,
Northern Black Cross
P.O.Box 110, L69 8DP.

1992 - A CLASS PERSPECTIVE

Plans to create a Single European Market in 1992, and the effects this will have, often appear bewildering. This article attempts to explain what 1992 actually means, why it is happening and who will benefit from it.

"1992 is the only possible rational response to market globalisation and to the growing competitiveness of the United States and Japan. Europe and its companies have no alternative. 1992 is a necessity". (1).

The European Economic Community (EEC) otherwise known as the Common Market was set up by the 'Treaty of Rome' in 1958 and comprised 6 full members; Belgium, France, Holland, Italy, Luxembourg and West Germany. Britain argued against its structure, not the idea, and joined the 'European Free Trade Area' (EFTA) with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland.

The EEC formed a Common Market with no tariffs or trade controls within it and a Common External Tariff (CET). There is a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the EEC has a large budget, supporting mainly the CAP.

The UK joined as a full member of the EEC in 1973, strengthening its ties with other EEC countries and weakening economic links with those outside of it. In 1972 trade with the original 6 members of the EEC accounted for about 23% of total British trade, EFTA partners 13% and Commonwealth countries 19%. After accession to the EEC, the proportion of trade with other member states rose while that with EFTA and Commonwealth countries fell. Excluding trade with oil exporting countries, British trade with the original EEC members rose to 30% of the total in 1974 and no less than 46% in 1985.

Since the end of the second world war, European capital has been losing its grip on world markets. Initially it was the United States, its economy unscathed

by the war, that clearly dominated world capitalism. But its position has come to be more and more challenged by Japan, and the two are struggling to gain hegemony. The capitalist economy of Western Europe finds itself unable to compete with these rivals, and still less able to cope with recession, so the answer they found was the EEC, its ultimate conclusion of a 'Single Market' and a 'United States of Europe' after 1992.

We shouldn't labour under any illusions, 1992 is about the consolidation and growth of European Capitalism.



VICTIMS OF THE 'ECONOMIC MIRACLE'.

The 'Single European Act' was introduced in 1986 to amend the Treaty of Rome and to establish a free internal market by 1992. The advantages of operating in one large market, and at the same time excluding rivals like the USA and Japan, are obvious. In the USA only two or three companies dominate each area of the mar-

ket for particular goods or services. In Europe, where countries are a fraction the size of the USA, two or three companies dominate the domestic market, competing also against European rivals and consequently never growing to the size of their international opposition. They therefore find it difficult to compete in the world market.

1992 creates a market of 323 million consumers without interference from world rivals. It will also be another step towards political as well as economic integration.

With the massive restructuring of individual economies to fit with the main objective, there will of course be winners and losers. The winners, as usual, will be the capitalists; bigger and stronger and better able to compete. The losers will be the European working class, along with the 'third world' as capitalism monopolises into three main economic power blocs.

The situation in Eastern Europe is increasingly showing the irrelevance of NATO as the Warsaw Pact crumbles and leaves Western Capitalism to concentrate on what it does best, ie massive economic exploitation, not only of the new markets in Eastern Europe but also in the developing countries - a new division of the world is emerging; Monopoly Capitalism (Imperialism) versus the poverty stricken people's of the developing nations.

For the European working class, the words of Sir John Harvey-Jones (former head of ICI) say it all, "In the next ten years, more than half of the factories of Europe would be closed down, with half of Europe's companies either taken over or no longer in existence", - the survival of the fittest.

The reformist European Trade Union movement, Confederation, (of which the British TUC is a part) see the survival of European capitalism as their main concern too. This is why they support 1992 and all that it entails, pinning their hopes on the Social Charter to protect the European working class (and of course their own jobs), but otherwise see no fundamental problems in the 1992 programme. On the contrary, they believe that 1992 is a good thing. What's good for European capital is good for European workers! Believing that, all they argue is that the economic advantages of 1992 should be maximised to increase the living standards of the European working class and reduce the social inequalities across the continent. The TUC's General Council has shown its total concern for the health of British capital by stating in its report on 1992 ('Maximising the benefits, Minimising the cost') - "The TUC is greatly concerned that investments by British companies in people and new products must not be put at risk by takeovers based on short term profit considerations".



A NEW DEAL, OR THE SAME OLD SELL OUT ?

MONETARISM IS SOLVING THE CRISIS

The TUC believes wholeheartedly that the interests of the bosses and the workers are the same, showing their total refusal to recognise the essential class conflict between capital and the working class, and consolidating its role as a full and essential part of the state machinery and the ruling class and essentially ensuring the control of the working class by the state.

What is needed is a 'Class Strategy'. Any grouping on the Left which puts its faith in the Labour movement and the TUC cannot put forward this strategy which is so essential to both the working class in Europe and the developing countries.



"Look! We're already drawing the benefit."

Regular readers of this Newsletter will be familiar with our view that Anarchists must take sides on the issue of the war in Ireland, not just through instinctive solidarity with those communities struggling against the British state, but because we have many lessons to learn from their 20 years of resistance.

With this in mind we always urge Anarchists to go on the delegations to the Six Counties organised by the Troops Out Movement and the Women & Ireland Network. The next T.O.M. delegation will be over the weekend of August 10th - 13th. It will be hosted by Sinn Fein and delegates will stay in West Belfast with families involved in the Republican Movement.

We are advertising this now as application forms are available (see address below) and there are only 120 places on the delegation.

During the four days in Belfast, there are workshops and discussions on many aspects of the Irish struggle and issues related to it. Visits are arranged to many places of interest and some delegates choose to visit Republican prisoners serving sentences in the notorious H - Blocks. (NB - this must be arranged well in advance so please state in your letter if you wish to visit a prisoner.)

The delegation co-incides with the West Belfast Festival and the annual march and rally to commemorate Internment, which for many is the highlight of the weekend. As well as the political content of the four days, socials will be arranged and delegates can visit the many Republican clubs each night.

Direct contact with those involved in the Republican Movement is the best way there is of cutting through

The 'Social Charter' or 'Social dimension' of 1992 is totally dependent upon the growth of European capitalism. There is no social dimension to capitalism and workers in Europe will pay the price if 1992 fails. If it succeeds, the working class of the developing nations will suffer. It can only succeed if the working class and the reformist trade union movement co-operates with it, but if it does succeed how will this really benefit the working class of Europe? After suffering unemployment, cuts in services and having had working and social conditions dragged down to the lowest level, how can we expect the rich to distribute the wealth?

In reality we will pay the price for capitalist reconstruction but will get nothing in return, save for an increase of the division within the working class, that is, between those in a good, well paid job and those in low paid work or without a job at all; those who see their interests in capitalism and those who look to social change.

We are told of the benefits to European workers that 1992 will bring in the way of free and easy movement across frontiers. At the same time however, the borders with non-EEC countries are being

state imposed censorship and broadcasting bans. It enables us to see and hear for ourselves the other side of the story and to raise any questions we may have.

After the delegation, those who have attended are asked to report their impressions and experiences to any organisations they're involved with - trade unions, political groups, campaigning groups etc. The main aim of going to Belfast is to tell people in Britain what is happening across the Irish Sea and to build support for that struggle.

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tightened. Immigration controls will continue to harass and divide workers.

With the European super-state will come the introduction of national identity cards, the formation of a European F.B.I. that goes much further than the info-swapping of Interpol. It unites state forces and makes the control of workers easier, not as some would say, bringing the workers together. Also there are moves to increase military integration, strengthening the hand of the Euro-bosses who can then argue more aggressively for their overseas interests.

There is no solution to our problems in European economic integration and the formation of an EEC super-state. Workers unity can only come about through Social Revolution. Of course, we are not in a position to fight against the 1992 proposals and the Single European Market, but we have to be clear why it has been introduced and whose interests it serves.

Notes - (1) Carlo De Beneditti, head of Olivetti, December 1988.

* This article has been put together with reference to a discussion document on 1992 put out by the Direct Action Movement,

People who cannot attend the delegation are asked to send a donation to help cover the costs of unwaged and low paid delegates.

Donations, application forms, requests for speakers, and enquiries should be sent to -

DELEGATION ORGANISING COMMITTEE
BOX 90,
52 CALL LANE,
LEEDS,
LS1 6DT.

1990 DELEGATION.